



CALL FOR PAPERS

ESIL Interest Group on International Law and Technology

Pre-Conference Workshop

Annual Conference of the European Society of International Law

Freie Universität Berlin, Germany 10-13 September 2025

Forensic and Counter-Forensic Approaches to Reconstructing International Law – A Cartography and Anatomy of Genocide

The ESIL Interest Group on International Law and Technology invites submissions for a workshop on the transformative role of forensic and counter-forensic methodologies in (re)constructing international legal analysis. Inspired by the reports of UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese and the pioneering cartography of Forensic Architecture, this workshop will examine the interplay between legal and forensic analysis of the crime of genocide in Gaza. It will explore how forensic investigations – including satellite imagery, open-source intelligence, digital modeling, and counter-mapping – reshape evidentiary practices and redefine accountability in international law.

This workshop will put [*Cartography of Genocide*](#), a project developed by Forensic Architecture, in conversation with the [*Anatomy of a Genocide*](#) report by Francesca Albanese, exploring how these investigations can complement and challenge each other in factually and legally reconstructing patterns of genocidal violence in Gaza. The discussion will highlight the intersections of forensic methodologies and international law, revealing how digital evidence can both challenge and substantiate legal accounts, exposing inconsistencies and reinforcing accountability structures.

Keynote Panel

- UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese
- Eyal Weizman, Director of Forensic Architecture
- Chaired by Nahed Samour, Research Associate at Radboud University

Background and Theme

The 2025 ESIL Annual Conference will explore the theme of *Reconstructing International Law* – a timely reflection on how international law must evolve to respond to contemporary challenges. In the context of international law and technology, forensic and counter-forensic methodologies play a crucial role in reconstructing the evidentiary foundations of international law, uncovering hidden violence, countering the structural inequality in the access to knowledge and vision, and challenging dominant legal narratives. This is particularly powerful in a context where, as argued in *Anatomy of a Genocide*, the invocation of international law functions as a form of ‘humanitarian camouflage’ which aims to conceal material structures of violence and the intent behind them.

Forensic Architecture’s pioneering work demonstrates how new technologies expose violations of international law that might otherwise remain invisible. The concept of forensic architecture reconfigures traditional legal fact-finding by incorporating spatial analysis, architectural modeling, and digital reconstruction to counter state narratives. This approach promises to have a profound impact on international accountability, enabling new forms and fora of legal advocacy.

By engaging *Cartography of Genocide* and the *Anatomy of a Genocide* report in a direct dialogue, this workshop considers their implications for (re)constructing international legal accountability. The workshop will feature keynote lectures by Francesca Albanese (UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories) and Eyal Weizman (Founder, Forensic Architecture).

Key Questions

We encourage submissions addressing the following themes and questions:

- **Humanitarian Camouflage, Counter-Forensics and Counter-Narratives:** Critical scholars have long pointed to the indeterminate nature and legitimizing function of international humanitarian law (IHL). What are the modalities by which international law is invoked to ‘camouflage’ international crimes? How to respond to and counter such strategies of justification and obfuscation? Can forensic methodologies help to challenge state-controlled narratives and contribute to alternative accounts of violence, destruction, and human rights abuses?
- **Reconstructing International Law Through Forensic Evidence:** The [ICJ has established](#) that there is ‘a real and imminent risk that irreparable prejudice will be caused to the rights found by the Court to be plausible’ – referring to ‘the right of the Palestinians in Gaza to be protected from acts of genocide’. The ICC has been investigating the Situation in the State of Palestine since 2021. How can digital reconstructions, spatial analyses, and satellite data contribute to redefining legal accountability? Are there convergences or conflicts between these forensics and the forms of truth-telling at play in international adjudication processes?

- **Technological Innovations and Legal Frameworks:** What role do machine learning, geospatial analysis, and open-source intelligence play in expanding forensic investigations, and how do they integrate with international legal institutions?
- **Historical and Theoretical Approaches to Reconstructing International Law:** How can insights from forensic architecture reshape our understanding of past international legal frameworks and inform their future development?
- **Limitations and Risks of Digital Forensics in Legal Reconstruction:** What ethical and legal challenges arise from the increasing reliance on digital forensics in reconstructing international legal claims and accountability mechanisms?

Submission Guidelines

We welcome submissions from scholars, practitioners, and researchers in international law, human rights, humanitarian law, digital forensics, architecture, and related disciplines. Abstracts should be no more than 500 words and should clearly outline the research question, methodology, and relevance to the workshop theme.

Deadline for Submission: 18 April 2025

Notification of Acceptance: 30 April 2025

Workshop Date: 10 or 11 September 2025

Please submit your abstracts via email to esilig.technology@gmail.com with the subject line: **ESIL 2025 IG Workshop Submission**. For any questions, please contact the organizers at the same email address.

Selected papers may be considered for publication in a special issue or edited volume following the workshop. The Interest Group is unable to provide funding for travel and accommodation. Some [ESIL travel grants](#) and [ESIL carers' grants](#) will be available to offer partial financial support to speakers who have exhausted other potential sources of funding. All participants at ESIL Interest Group workshops are required to register for the Annual Conference. There will be an option to register to attend only the IG workshops; however, all participants are warmly invited to attend the entire event.

Selected speakers should indicate their interest in being considered for the ESIL Early-Career Scholar Prize, if they meet the [eligibility conditions](#) as stated on the ESIL website.

We look forward to your contributions and to an engaging discussion on the role of forensic and counter-forensic methodologies in reconstructing international law.

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