



Interest Group on
International Legal Theory & Philosophy
IGILTP

A World without Rules? The Responsibility of International Law Scholars in Times of Fatigue

Pre-Conference Workshop – ESIL Annual Conference 2026, Facultad de Derecho,
Bulevar Louis Pasteur, Málaga (Spain)

Wednesday 2 September 2026, 15:00-19:00 (Aula 4)

Description and Purpose

Convened by the ESIL Interest Group on International Legal Theory and Philosophy, this workshop explores what a ‘world without rules’ entails for international law scholars. For some, international law is a decaying institution that loses ground to the rule of the strongest. For others, reports of international law’s demise are exaggerated: despite current turmoil, international law remains deeply embedded in the daily life of States and peoples, so it will weather the storm, displaying resilience through adaptation and mutation as required. The whirlwind buffeting the international order tests the confidence, and even the conscience, of many of us. It causes a deep sense of fatigue: anxiety about the future coupled with frustration that our expertise and repeated appeals are doomed to fall on deaf ears. In such a dystopian scenario, the ethical question of what international law scholars ought to do arises. Should we translate critical insight into *praxis*, as theorised by Bernard Harcourt, through concrete actions and proposals to reconstruct the damaged or destroyed house of international law? Or, should we simply ‘keep calm and carry on’ and confide in the resilience and adaptability of international law?

Programme

Each speaker will have up to 25 minutes for their presentation.

15:00-15:05 Words of Welcome (Andrea Carcano and Nina Mileva)

15:05-16:30 Session 1: Diagnosing the Pathology between the Need for Stability and the Quest for Change

Chair: Andrea CARCANO (University of Modena and Reggio Emilia)

Emanuele CIMIOTTA (University of Perugia) – A Crisis of International Law or of Political Commitment and Mutual Respect?

Milena STERIO (Cleveland State University)– Lawyers Are Not Potted Plants: The Role of International Legal Scholars during Times of Crises

Q&A and discussion among participants

16:35-18:00 **Session 2: The Responsibility of Scholars between Exhaustion and Commitment**

Chair: Nina Meva (Asia School of Business)

Matina PAPADAKI (University of Glasgow) – A Treatment Regime for International Law? Emotions, Crises, and Sources of Law

Liliana TYMCHENKO (European Humanities University) – The Responsibility of International Law Teachers in Times of Normative Fatigue

Q&A and discussion among participants

18:00-19:00 **Contemplative Group Session: [The International Legal Profession in Times of Fatigue](#)**



The International Legal Profession in Times of Fatigue

Contemplative Group Session

- ❖ How does it feel to practice and research international law in seemingly “rule-less” times?
 - ❖ How do we detect professional fatigue and what are ways of dealing with it?
- ❖ Is it advisable, is it important, for us as international lawyers to reflect on these questions?

Join us for a contemplative group session facilitated by Nina Mileva and Valentin Jeutner of the IG on International Legal Theory and Philosophy (IGILTP), in connection with the ESIL Conference in Málaga, Spain.

Date: 2 September 2026

Time: 18:00 – 19:00