



JOURNAL OF
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The *Journal of Perpetrator Research* (JPR) is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, open access journal committed to promoting the scholarly study of perpetrators and perpetration of political and mass violence, terrorism, and genocide. One of the journal's aims is to engage critically with the very concepts of 'perpetrator' and 'perpetration'.

JPR fosters scholarly discussions about perpetrators and perpetration across the broader continuum of political and mass violence, without confining its attention to any particular geographical region or historical period. The journal's mission is to provide a forum for scholarship taking place across a broad range of fields, including history, criminology, law, forensics, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, psychology, political science, memory studies, cultural studies, literary studies, film and media studies, museum studies, and education. JPR was created with the explicit aim of providing an inter- and cross-disciplinary space for the study of perpetrators and perpetration, including critical reflections on theories, methods, and approaches beyond, and between, disciplinary boundaries.

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Editorial

Yeşim Yaprak Yıldız

It is a pleasure to write my first editorial for our new issue as a new member of the JPR editorial board. With cases ranging from Nigeria to Romania, and drawing on diverse disciplines and methods, the contributions in this substantial issue highlight the ways in which legal frameworks, extra-legal mechanisms, institutional cultures, and ideological commitments shape perpetration of mass violence. Together they show how perpetrators translate law and policy into practice and exercise discretionary power; how violence becomes normalized through institutional cultures and impunity; and how it emerges from interactions between international and domestic support. They explore the reordering of social and moral boundaries through ideological shifts, legitimizing violence in the eyes of perpetrators and the wider society, and the role of legal awareness, self-interest and competing interpretations of dominant ideologies in the distribution and understanding of individual and political responsibility. Although many of the contributions focus on historical examples, their themes resonate urgently today particularly in relation the systematic and widespread atrocities on civilian populations and destruction from Gaza to Sudan. The moral, legal and political crises we are facing highlight how formal legal frameworks, the active or tacit support of external states, perpetrator narratives and implication of wider populations together create the conditions under which mass violence is committed, enabled, justified, and legitimized.

This issue brings together four standalone articles, a special section comprising five articles, and six book reviews. The standalone articles cover a wide range of themes from authoritarian governments' different responses to nonviolent resistance; theoretical interventions that rethink the concept of dehumanization; analyses of how perpetrators explain their own and others' actions; and close readings of theatre plays that highlight perpetrator trauma, implicated subjects, and the limits of a simple perpetrator-victim binary. The special section on Holocaust Perpetrators and the Law examines how legal frameworks, extra-legal mechanisms, and perpetrators' legal awareness shaped the enactment and justification of violence in Germany and Romania.

'Fight or Flight: How Authoritarian Leaders Respond to Nonviolent Resistance Movements', by criminologists Maartje Weerdesteijn and Willemien Born, examines why some authoritarian governments concede to nonviolent resistance while others repress it. The authors offer a layered framework that accounts for multiple levels of analysis: international support and pressure (macro), the loyalties and interests of domestic elites (meso), and the leader's own beliefs and calculations (micro). Applying their framework to Kyrgyzstan in 2005 and Belarus in 2020, they explain how these

factors explain the divergent responses of these regimes to nationwide protests.

Engaging critiques that view dehumanization as not always a necessary precondition for killing and building on Leader Maynard's theorization of ideology, political scientist Katharina Storch's article entitled 'Revisiting Dehumanization through the Lens of Ideology' reconceives dehumanization as a dynamic, interpretive process. Through a study of empirical analyses by prominent critiques of dehumanization theory, she shows how fluid collective identities and heterogeneous commitments shape perpetrators' conduct and moral reasoning. In this framework, dehumanization gains meaning through broader patterns of meaning-making and social ordering, resisting any universal definition of what counts as 'human' or 'dehumanized'.

In 'Excusing the Self and Blaming Others: Participation in Genocide and the Fundamental Attribution Error', sociologists Jamie D. Wise, Hollie Nyseth Nzitaira, and Mehr Mumtaz examine how perpetrators explain their own actions in comparison to those of others. Based on 165 interviews with Rwandans incarcerated for the 1994 genocide, they reveal asymmetries consistent with the Fundamental Attribution Error (FAE). Respondents overwhelmingly externalized their own actions referring to coercion, fear, or bad leadership while more often attributing others' participation to internal traits such as greed or malice.

In 'Beyond Complicity: Perpetrator Trauma and Implicated Subjects in Ahmed Yerima's *Heart of Stone* and *Pari*', literary scholars Adewuyi Aremu Ayodeji and Abdullahi Salih Abubakar analyze how two plays by Nigerian playwright Ahmed Yerima portray perpetrator trauma and implicated subjects within the context of Boko Haram terrorism. They argue that focusing solely on blaming perpetrators obscures the complex identities and social relationships that sustain the conflict. Drawing on Saira Mohamed's work on perpetrator trauma and Michael Rothberg's concept of the implicated subject, they show how Yerima's characters exhibit trauma symptoms while also revealing the roles of non-perpetrating but complicit societal actors. Ultimately, the article concludes that these plays highlight collective responsibility as essential for addressing terrorism in northeastern Nigeria.

The special section, 'Holocaust Perpetrators and the Law', emerges from an April 2024 conference at the University of Central Florida and builds on a 2020 panel at the American Historical Association. Conceived by Thomas Kühne and Vladimir Solonari, it highlights compar-

ative work on perpetrators' legal awareness during their crimes, with a particular focus on Germany and Romania. The contributions show how divergent legal regimes, legal procedures and judiciary shaped motives, actions, and post-war narratives of responsibility. Edward B. Westermann traces the evolution of the legal fiction 'shot while trying to escape', from its Weimar-era uses to its routinization as a tool of summary execution under Nazism. Vladimir Solonari examines Romanian policy toward the Roma deported to Transnistria between 1942 and 1944, showing how neglect, violence, local hostility and inconsistent administration produced a genocidal outcome even without a uniformly articulated plan. Verena Meier examines the role of criminal police officers in the persecution and incarceration of Sinti and Roma under the Nazi regime, carried out in close cooperation with the Gestapo and the judiciary, showing how the pragmatic and racialized application of the Nazi 'dual state' enabled the criminal police to expand repression through an interplay of legal frameworks, anti-gypsyism, prejudice, ideological motivations, and personal self-interest. Emanuel-Marius Grec's study of post-war Romanian trials shows how shifting legal frameworks, political pressures, and self-exonerating narratives shaped uneven judicial outcomes for perpetrators of the Odesa massacre. Finally, Corneliu Pintilescu shows how the Romanian gendarmerie's interwar institutional culture, rooted in legal state of siege powers and extra-legal practices, enabled mass shootings of Jews and so called 'political suspects' in Bessarabia in 1941, emphasizing the agency of individual perpetrators aware of the illegality of their acts.

The issue concludes with six book reviews, including Hagar Abdalbar's review of *Maged Mandour's Egypt under El-Sisi: A Nation on the Edge* (I.B.Tauris, 2024); Sabah Carrim's review of Bruce Robbins's *Atrocity: A Literary History* (Stanford University Press, 2025); Cora Cuenca-Navarrete's review of Vicente Sánchez-Biosca's *The Death in Their Eyes: What Perpetrator Images Perpetrate* (Berghahn Books, 2024, trans. by Martin Boyd); Ivan Stacy's review of Stephanie Bird's *Responses to Nazi Perpetration in Fiction: Complicity and Continuities* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024); Donald L. Wallace's review of Brett E. Sterling's *Hermann Broch and Mass Hysteria: Theory and Representation in the Age of Extremes* (Camden House, 2022) and Maximilian Wegener's review of *The Oxford Handbook on Atrocity Crimes* edited by Barbora Holá, Hollie Nyseth Nzititira, and Maartje Weerdesteijn (Oxford University Press, 2022).

We are pleased to present you an issue rich in comparative insight, methodological rigour, and thought-provoking analysis. We hope this

volume and the dialogue between historical and contemporary cases will further advance the study of perpetration and perpetrators of violence. As always, we are grateful to the authors, section editors, peer reviewers, copyeditors, and typesetters for their hard work and commitment.

On behalf of the editorial team,

Yeşim Yaprak Yıldız