

Dear Colleagues, dear Ladies and Gentleman,

Thank you for joining us today!

I am glad to welcome you to our lecture series on current and pressing questions of public international law in the 21st century

Last year the German Foreign Minister spoke of a world in disorder due to – inter alia – the actions of international terrorists, and the ongoing armed conflicts, especially the one in Syria.

Since last year, more terrorist attacks took place and the suffering especially of civilians in Syria did not end; already in July 2016 the situation in Aleppo was “devastating and overwhelming” according to the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Even the most horrible weapons - for instance chemical weapons - were used and are being used in armed conflicts today.

So sometimes I think: what can we - as legal scholars and law students – do in this world of disorder?

It is not astonishing if one has a feeling of great insecurity about the current order of the world (and of Europe!), and it is not astonishing that - some of us sometimes - also have some doubt about why and how what we are doing matters, especially if we deal with international law, human rights law and the laws of armed conflict.

But my view is that in a world of disorder, it is more than ever important to stress the key concepts that might stabilize the national and international order: and these are, inter alia, legally binding international human rights.

But because there is still dispute about whether human rights matter in times of armed conflict and outside the borders of a State, it is important to explore them in more detail:

It is important to identify the major features of international human rights and the laws of war from different perspectives in order to understand the way these rules and concepts are interconnected and separate and how they can be developed and improved.

In the end, the overall aim of our work as legal scholars is to examine potential solutions for finding ways to stabilize the national and international order in the 21st century.

This is an ambitious aim; and therefore I am very grateful that today we have - as our distinguished speaker - Commander Ian Park, who will speak about

„International Human Rights Law in Armed Conflict - Where are we now?“

Commander Ian Park

is a graduate of Oxford University from which he has a Doctorate in Law.

He is also, or has been, a Hudson Fellow at Oxford University, a Visiting Fellow at Harvard Law School (actually we shared an office at the Human Rights Program at Harvard Law School!), and a Freeman of the City of London.

But he is not only a legal scholar:

He joined the Royal Navy in 1998, was selected for legal training shortly thereafter and called to the Bar of England and Wales in 2003.

Currently, he is the Royal Navy's senior international lawyer providing advice on international humanitarian law, the law of the sea, and international human rights law.

Ian has deployed on several occasions to the Middle East and, in 2011 and 2012, to Afghanistan, where he was a legal adviser at the ISAF Joint Command in Kabul.

Additionally, he has advised the Royal Navy and the Ministry of Defence on matters of international law in respect to many other military operations.

Thus: our speaker knows the law in the books and the law in action; and therefore we are very keen to hear what you will tell us:

Ian, I am very am grateful and honoured that you are with us – you have the floor: