

# Foreword

The participation of victims in criminal justice has fluctuated and changed throughout history. Although victims were once instrumental in bringing their offenders to justice, the prevailing practice in recent history has been to relegate victims' interests to the sidelines in favour of the interests of society as a whole. However, contemporary international criminal justice has been turning its focus to elevating and legitimising victim participation, and to recognising the need to better take into account the restorative dimension of the international criminal process.

As this book demonstrates, this shift in focus has resulted in the acceptance of victim participation as integral to modern international criminal justice processes. Yet no consensus exists among practitioners or academics around the precise form this participation should take at the international level. Reflecting the diversity of perspectives on the issue, the frameworks and rules currently in place at international courts and tribunals differ in important ways from one another, and no one model replicates any particular national approach. We thus find ourselves in a place where both theories and the actual practice of victim participation continue to evolve.

With their experience to date, international courts and tribunals, in addition to already achieving a measure of justice for victims, have served as laboratories for the benefit of future endeavours. This book, through its comprehensive coverage of and thoughtful commentary on that experience, is an essential contribution to the international discussion. It makes clear that victim participation is a work in progress and reminds us that critical questions for the international justice community concerning effectiveness, expeditiousness and cost remain. Part of the book's significant value will be to stimulate debate that is necessary for progress.

It will also have immediate utility in proceedings. Victim participation at the international level is multifaceted and challenging. Among the issues that arise are the right to participate, how such participation is determined, the timing and manner of participation, victims' well-being and compensation. As the first practitioners' guide for victim participation work at international courts and tribunals, and one grounded not only in theory and the existing rules but also in the now

extensive record of practice, this book will enable victims' interests to be better represented and heard through international criminal justice efforts, as well as enlighten other judicial and non-judicial actors with responsibilities pertinent to victims.

Her Honourable Judge Ivana Hrdličková  
President of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon