

The Past Can't Heal Us

In this innovative study, Lea David critically investigates the relationship between human rights and memory, suggesting that, instead of understanding human rights in a normative fashion, human rights should be treated as an ideology. Conceptualising human rights as an ideology gives us useful theoretical and methodological tools to recognise the real impact human rights has on the ground. David traces the rise of the global phenomenon that is the human rights memorialisation agenda, termed 'moral remembrance', and explores what happens once this agenda becomes implemented. Based on evidence from the Western Balkans and Israel/Palestine, she argues that the human rights memorialisation agenda does not lead to a better appreciation of human rights; instead, contrary to what would be expected, it serves to strengthen national sentiments, divisions and animosities along ethnic lines, and leads to the new forms of societal inequalities that are closely connected to different forms of corruptions.

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The Past Can't Heal Us

*The Dangers of Mandating Memory
in the Name of Human Rights*

Lea David

University College Dublin



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This book is a product of my intellectual growth – from my PhD, when I timidly dared to start developing my own perspective, throughout four postdoctoral fellowships, during which I learned how to dive bravely into the depths of knowledge, without fear and intimidation.

Though I hope this book will contribute to our academic efforts to provoke a meaningful debate on moral remembrance and to disclose the often hidden relationships between ideals and politics and between wishful thinking and real outcomes on the ground, as well as the spectrum of complexities that define those relationships, this book also sheds some light on its author. In a sense, similar to the ways in which anthropology of the body uses scars, bodily deviations or a tooth index to narrate life stories, this book discloses my own, unique path. The imprints I leave here are all a testimony to people who have inspired me, supported me along the way or disputed my approach. My gratitude, my contemplations, my anxieties – all are engraved here in theories and arguments I have used, in particular examples I have showcased and in the voids and silences that appear sporadically in the text.

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Abbreviations

AAA	American Anthropological Association
ASA	American Sociological Association
BADIL	Resource Centre for Palestinian Residency and Refugee Rights NGO
BDS	Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement
BiH	Bosnia and Herzegovina
CFP	Combatants for Peace
CNA	Centre for Nonviolent Action
CSF	Civil Society Facility
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EP	European Parliament
EU	European Union
FBiH	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina
FGD	focus group discussion
FGYO	Southeast Europe Initiative of the French–German Youth Office
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
ICTR	International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for Yugoslavia
IDF	Israeli Defense Forces
IDP	internally displaced persons
IFI	international financial institution
IHRA	International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance
IMTFE	International Military Tribunal for the Far East
INGO	international non-governmental organisation
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPCRI	Israel–Palestine Center for Research and Information

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IPSOS	Ipsos Group S.A., a global market research and consulting firm
IPTF	International Police Task Force
ISA	International Sociological Association
IW	Impunity Watch
JAT	Yugoslav Airlines Transportation
JNA	Yugoslav People's Army
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community
MECA	Middle East Children's Alliance
NANSEN	NANSEN Dialogue Centre
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NORAD	Norwegian Directorate for Development Cooperation
NSSP	Neveh Shalom/Wahat el Salam School for Peace
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OHR	Office of the High Representative
OPT	occupied Palestinian territory
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
P2P	People 2 People Programme
PA	Palestinian Authority
PCFF	Parents Circle–Families Forum
PLO	Palestinian Liberation Organization
PLU	person like us
PNA	Palestinian National Authority
PRIME	Peace Research Institute in the Middle East
R2P	Responsibility to Protect
RECOM	Regional Commission Tasked with Establishing the Facts about All Victims of War Crimes and Other Serious Human Rights Violations Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia from 1 January 1991 to 31 December 2001
RS	Republika Srpska
RYCO	Regional Youth Cooperation Office
SFRJ	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SUBNOR	Association of Fighters of the National Liberation War
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commissions
UDHT	Universal Declaration of Human Rights

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UN	United Nations
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USHMM	United States Holocaust Memorial Museum
VLJI	Van Leer Jerusalem Institute
YIHR	Youth Initiative for Human Rights

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