

Human Rights@Harvard Law

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About

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Bonnie Docherty

Senior Clinical Instructor
Lecturer on Law

Bonnie Docherty is a lecturer on law and senior clinical instructor at the International Human Rights Clinic. She is also a senior researcher in the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch. Docherty specializes in disarmament and international humanitarian law, particularly as they relate to civilian protection during [armed conflict](#).

As both a field researcher and lawyer, Docherty has played an active role in the campaign against [cluster munitions](#). Her on-site investigations of cluster munition use in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and Georgia helped galvanize international opposition to the weapons. She also participated in negotiations for the Convention on Cluster Munitions and has promoted strong implementation of the convention

since its adoption in 2008.

Docherty has documented other effects of armed conflict on civilians in Ethiopia, Gaza, Israel, Libya, and Nepal, and she has advocated for stronger international law on [incendiary weapons](#). Most recently, she has taken a lead in the emerging movement against fully autonomous weapons, or “killer robots,” which could select and fire on targets without human intervention.

Docherty also has expertise in the field of [human rights and the environment](#). She has researched the effects of mining on disadvantaged or indigenous communities in British Columbia, Guyana, and South Africa. Her current scholarship in this area focuses on climate change refugees.

Docherty received her J.D. from Harvard Law School and her A.B. from Harvard University. Between college and law school, she spent three years as a journalist. Docherty worked full-time at [Human Rights Watch](#) before joining the Clinic in 2005. In 2008-2009, she was a national security fellow at Harvard’s [Carr Center for Human Rights Policy](#).

Related Work

Courses

[Armed Conflict and Humanitarian Protection](#)
[Combating the Human Costs of Armed Conflict](#)
[Human Rights and the Environment](#)
[The Promises and Challenges of Disarmament](#)

Chapters and Articles

[“Climate Change Migration and Social Innovation”](#)
Harvard College Review of Environment and Society (May 2014)

[“Ending Civilian Suffering: The Purpose, Provisions, and Promise of Humanitarian Disarmament Law”](#)
15 Austrian Review of International and European Law 7 (2013)

[“Human Rights and Climate Change Adaptation at the International Level”](#)
Yale Journal of International Law, online symposium (June 2012) Co-author: Tyler Giannini

[Chapters on Articles 2, 6, 7, and 8 in *The Convention on Cluster Munitions: A Commentary*](#)
(Gro Nystuen and Stuart Casey-Maslen eds., Oxford University Press, 2010)

[“Breaking New Ground: The Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Evolution of International Humanitarian Law”](#)

33 Human Rights Quarterly 934 (2009)

[“Confronting a Rising Tide: A Proposal for a Convention on Climate Change Refugees”](#)

33 Harvard Environmental Law Review 349 (2009) Co-author: Tyler Giannini

Selected Reports

[Tackling Tough Calls: Lessons from Recent Conflicts on Hostile Intent and Civilian Protection](#)

(International Human Rights Clinic, March 2016)

[Staying Strong: Key Components and Positive Precedent for Convention on Cluster Munitions Legislation](#)

(Joint report: International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Watch, September 2014)

[Shaking the Foundations: the Human Rights Implications of Killer Robots](#)

(Joint report: International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Watch, May 2014)

[Assistance Overdue: Ongoing Needs of Civilian Victims of Armed Conflict in Nepal](#)

(Joint report: International Human Rights Clinic, Center for Civilians in Conflict, September 2013)

[Losing Humanity: The Case against Killer Robots](#)

(Joint publication: International Human Rights Clinic, Human Rights Watch, 2012)

[Explosive Situation: Qaddafi’s Abandoned Weapons and the Threat to Libya’s Civilians](#)

(Joint publication: International Human Rights Clinic, Centers for Civilians in Conflict, and Center for American Progress, 2012) Co-authors: Nicolette Boehland, Anna Crowe, and Rebecca Richards

[Meeting the Challenge: Protecting Civilians through the Convention on Cluster Munitions](#)

(Human Rights Watch, 2010)

[Bearing the Burden: The Effects of Mining on First Nations in British Columbia](#)

(International Human Rights Clinic, 2010) Co-authors: Susannah Knox, Lauren Pappone, and Anne Siders

Opinion Pieces and Media Coverage

[“Arms Control Groups Urge Human Control of Robot Weaponry”](#)

(The New York Times, 4/11/16)

[“Fighting for Disarmament”](#)

(Harvard Gazette, 1/2/16)

[“Killer Robots and the Laws of Man: Who’s to Blame for Mission Malfunction?”](#)

(The Mark News, 5/28/15)

[“The Human Rights Implications of Killer Robots”](#)

(JURIST, 6/9/14)

[“Taking on ‘Killer Robots’”](#)

(Just Security, 5/23/14)

[“The Trouble with Killer Robots”](#)

(Foreign Policy, 11/19/12)

[“White Phosphorous: The New Napalm?”](#)

(Salon, 6/8/12) Co-author: Steve Goose

[“Viewing Mining’s Effects on First Nations through the Lens of Aboriginal Rights”](#)

(West Coast Environmental Law, 10/31/11)

[“Cluster Munitions Bill Is a Law of Loopholes”](#)

(The National Times, Australia, 8/17/11)

[“Cluster Munitions Treaty—A Milestone, but a Long Way to Go”](#)

(The Great Debate UK, 8/1/10)

[“Make No Exceptions to Ban on Cluster Munitions”](#)

(The Great Debate UK, 6/24/09)

[“Russian Attacks in Georgia Show Need for Convention on Cluster Munitions”](#)

(JURIST, 8/19/08)

[“Cluster Munitions Convention Is an International Humanitarian Law Milestone”](#)

(JURIST, 6/2/08)

[“US Pressure Felt at Dublin Cluster Munitions Conference”](#)

(JURIST, 5/28/08)

Selected Blog Posts

[“Hostile Intent and Civilian Protection: Lessons from Recent Conflicts”](#)

(Just Security, 3/10/16)

[“New Perspectives on an Old Conflict”](#)

(Human Rights Program blog, 6/20/13)

[“Reflections on a Partnership: Advancing Assistance for Civilian Victims of War”](#)

(Human Rights Program blog, 2/16/12)

[“Inside the Classroom: Using Literature and History to Introduce Disarmament Law”](#)

(Human Rights Program blog, 9/30/11)



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