

The Justice Cascade: The Origins and Effectiveness of Prosecutions of Human Rights Violations

Kathryn Sikkink¹ and Hun Joon Kim²

¹Department of Political Science, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; email: sikkink@umn.edu

²Griffith Asia Institute and School of Government and International Relations, Griffith University, Queensland 4111, Australia; email: h.kim@griffith.edu.au

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Abstract

The justice cascade refers to a new global trend of holding political leaders criminally accountable for past human rights violations through domestic and international prosecutions. In just three decades, state leaders have gone from being immune to accountability for their human rights violations to becoming the subjects of highly publicized trials in many countries of the world. New research suggests that such trials continue to expand and often result in convictions, including some of high-level state officials. This article summarizes research on the origins of the justice cascade and its effects on human rights practices around the world. It presents evidence that such prosecutions are affecting the behavior of political leaders worldwide and have the potential to help diminish human rights violations in the future.