

SAMPLE 1)

Working Title: Non-State Actors and the Provision of Protection: The Kurdish Regional Government's Response to the Influx of Syrian Refugees

Research Questions

1. Can non-state actors provide protection to refugee populations?
 - a. What qualifies as 'protection' or 'effective protection'?
 - b. What/who qualifies as a non-state actor?
 - i. International Organisations
 - ii. Multinational Forces
 - iii. Clans or Tribes
 - iv. Other Parties or Organisations
2. Is the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) able to provide protection for the influx of Syrian refugees?
3. What implications would there be for the protection of refugees and refugee status determination should non-state actors like the KRG be considered actors of protection under international law? Disadvantages/Advantages?
4. Overall, why or why not should non-state actors be considered actors of protection under international law? Do non-state actors bear responsibility under international law? Do they have international obligations of their own? Can they enforce them? If not, how can the effectiveness of the rights of the individuals concerned be maintained / guaranteed?

SAMPLE 2)

Working title: A Feminist Analysis of the 1951 Refugee Convention: Does Reliance on the 'Particular Social Group' Convention Ground in Cases of Female Genital Mutilation Reveal an Underlying Gendered Politics?

Research Questions

1. What are the main feminist critiques of international law and how do these impact the understanding of international refugee law?
2. How have decision-makers at the national level approached FGM as a ground for asylum?
3. Recognising that the issue lies not in the absence of explicit recognition of gender-related persecution, but in the social and political context in which the claims of women asylum seekers are adjudicated, how can this be transformed?
4. Should the PSG in FGM cases be construed broadly as simply 'women' cases?
 - What has been the impact of construing the PSG narrowly in FGM cases?
 - Have efforts to define the PSG narrowly in such cases (in order to 'fit' the refugee definition) served to reinforce the gendered stereotype of third-world women as victims?
5. Does the refusal to categorise FGM cases under the 'political opinion' Convention ground reveal a gendered politics?
 - What does this tell us about the way in which the Refugee Convention is interpreted in relation to gender-based persecution more generally?

SAMPLE 3)

Working Title: The Legality of Borders Fences and 'Passive Refoulement'

Research Questions

1. Are physical barriers along state borders that intentionally or unintentionally prevent access to territory legal / compatible with Articles 31 and 33 of the Refugee Convention? Do they amount to 'passive refoulement'?
2. How is 'passive refoulement' to be defined?
3. Are there circumstances that could justify the erection of physical barriers along the border (mass influxes, states of emergency etc.)? Are these in line with the principle of *non-refoulement*?
4. If passive *refoulement* may be justified in certain circumstances, what responsibilities do states have towards forced migrants stranded at their border?
5. What remedies exist for the protection of forced migrants attempting to cross border fences?
6. What are the implications of the *N.D. and N.T. v. Spain* ruling?

SAMPLE 4)

Working title: Is the UK National Referral Mechanism (NRM) for Trafficking Determination compatible with the 1951 Refugee Convention?

Research Questions

1. What is the NRM?
2. How does it relate to refugee status under the 1951 Convention?
3. Are the procedural rules on which it is based compatible with the guarantees implicit in Article 16 of the Refugee Convention?
4. Does the decision in *MS (Pakistan)* mean that new evidence will not be able to be presented in an appeal on asylum grounds?
5. What is the threshold for deciding if an NRM decision was "irrational" or "perverse"?
6. Where does the burden of proof lie and what are the standards of proof in NRM decisions and asylum claims? Do they differ? If so, what are the consequences for trafficking victims-refugees?

SAMPLE 5)

Working title: Is the administrative detention of refugees ever justified under the Refugee Convention?

Research Questions

1. Is there an absolute right to liberty of refugees under the Refugee Convention (RC)?
2. How is the movement of asylum seekers regulated under Article 26 RC? How is 'necessity' to be determined, as set out in Article 31(2) RC?
3. Is there an obligation under international refugee / human rights law to consider alternatives to detention? Is there an obligation under international refugee and human rights law to consider the vulnerability of particular applicants (e.g. children, victims of trafficking) before decisions to detain?
4. What is the impact of the ECtHR ruling in *Saadi v UK* (2008) on detaining asylum seekers? Are individual grounds required? How is proportionality determined? How long can periods of detention be?
5. What is the impact of the UNHCR Guidelines on the Applicable Criteria and Standards relating to the Detention of Asylum Seekers (2012)?
6. What are alternative solutions to detention?