

## **FOREWORD BY IGOR SZPOTAKOWSKI**

As someone who has recently joined the School of Law, it is a great honour to have been asked by the Managing Editor of the Leeds Student Law and Criminal Justice Review, Maria-Anda Busuioc, to write the foreword to its fifth volume. For a research-intensive institution such as the University of Leeds, a proud member of the Russell Group, it is vital that a culture of research and intellectual curiosity begins from the very start of a student's academic journey. In terms of research, the School of Law is home to four centres that exemplify its breadth and expertise: the Centre for Business Law and Practice (including the newly established Technology, Governance and Intellectual Property Law Group), the Centre for Criminal Justice Studies, the Centre for Innovation and Research in Legal Education, and the Centre for Law and Social Justice. These centres not only underpin the School's research excellence but also provide students with opportunities to engage in innovative, interdisciplinary, and impactful scholarship.

The idea of a student-led journal within the School of Law is therefore especially important. It not only promotes emerging talent but also provides a platform to showcase the diverse and wide-ranging research undertaken by our students. Much of this work originates in dissertations written at the University of Leeds, and this journal plays a valuable role in elevating and sharing those insights more broadly. It is particularly impressive that this initiative has continued now into its fifth volume, reflecting both the dedication of successive editorial teams and the enduring enthusiasm of our students for contributing to scholarly discourse.

The articles featured in this volume address a wide range of timely and significant legal and social issues, including refugee protection, the use of artificial intelligence in predictive policing, mental capacity, children's rights in the digital age, and gender norms in law enforcement. Collectively, they reflect the School of Law's commitment to promoting critical analysis, interdisciplinary

engagement, and practical reform, showcasing research that not only interrogates existing legal frameworks but also proposes meaningful solutions to contemporary challenges. Higher education is also undergoing profound change with the widespread use of generative Artificial Intelligence, which is reshaping the ways in which we write, research, and learn. In this context, student-led scholarship is more important than ever, as it encourages originality, critical thinking, and independence, qualities that cannot be automated and remain central to academic excellence, and which are especially close to our hearts here at Leeds.

The volume begins with an article by Sedek Abraham, which critically examines how Western countries interpret Articles 1 and 33 of the 1951 Refugee Convention. The paper demonstrates that restrictive applications of these articles often prioritise immigration control over the protection of refugees. Abraham uses the recent Rwanda Asylum and Immigration Bill as a case study to illustrate this trend, showing how responsibilities are outsourced to countries with weaker asylum protections. These practices, according to the author, compromise the Convention's humanitarian goals, justifying the need for reform to restore its original protective intentions.

The second article in the volume, authored by Swati Krishnakumar, explores predictive policing in the United Kingdom, revealing how such tools risk reinforcing bias while being presented as objective and efficient. The author calls for stronger statutory measures focused on protecting individuals, inspired by the European Union's Artificial Intelligence Act and surrounding legislation, to safeguard against discriminatory policing practices.

The next article, by Joseph Nicolle, examines the Mental Capacity Act 2005 in the United Kingdom, questioning whether it has fulfilled its promise of protecting and empowering individuals deemed unable to make decisions for themselves. The author critiques the law's distorted approach to autonomy and capacity, highlighting interpretive shortcomings in statute and case law, and

proposes reforms, drawing on international perspectives, to close both theoretical and practical gaps in safeguarding incapacitated individuals.

The volume continues with an article by Eva Wainwright, which examines the rise of family vlogging on YouTube and its impact on children's rights and safety. The paper shows that the merging of public and private spheres online often compromises children's well-being, as current laws in England and Wales prioritise parental rights and remain reactive to privacy breaches and exploitation. Wainwright argues that existing legal frameworks, including those governing child labour and the misuse of private information, are inadequate for the digital age. The author advocates for comprehensive safeguards to protect children from exploitation and ensure their rights are upheld.

Finally, Caroline Bjørnstad's article examines how gender norms in both domestic life and policing affect policewomen's ability to reconcile paid and domestic work. Through interviews, the study reveals that entrenched expectations around household labour and masculine policing cultures limit flexible work opportunities and contribute to stress and conflict for women officers. The article highlights the need for further research and organisational reforms to support work-life balance and improve the lived experiences of policewomen.

Many thanks to the authors and editors for their efforts in bringing this volume together. We hope that readers find the contributions thought-provoking and engaging, and that the volume sparks reflection, discussion, and further exploration of the issues raised. We hope you enjoy reading and reflecting on the topics presented.

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