International criminal tribunals and human rights law: Adherence and contextualization

Zeegers, K.J.

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CHAPTER 3  HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATIONS OF THE ICTS 
BASED ON THEIR INTERNAL LAW AND 
PRACTICE 

1. Introduction

This Chapter investigates whether and how the ICTs are bound by IHRL based on their internal law and practice. The previous Chapter has shown that as legal persons (or organs thereof), the ICTs are, in principle, bound by general IHRL. At the same time, several factors have been shown to complicate the assessment of their actual human rights obligations. This Chapter therefore investigates whether, and if so, how their internal law and practice has addressed the question of IHRL’s bindingness vis-à-vis the ICTs. This will result in a more complete understanding of the nature and scope of the ICTs’ obligation to respect international human rights norms.

The ad hoc Tribunals are discussed in the first part of this Chapter. Although their internal legal instruments do not incorporate an obligation to respect international human rights norms, the circumstances surrounding their creation and, more importantly, their judicial practice provide strong support for the conclusion that they are bound by IHRL. The second part of this Chapter addresses the ICC. Article 21(1) of its Statute allows the Court to consult IHRL as a subsidiary source of applicable law. More importantly, Article 21(3) obliges the Court to respect ‘internationally recognized human rights’. This provision creates a general duty for the Court to subject all its interpretation and application of law to a mandatory review of consistency with such human rights standards.

It is therefore clear that the ICTs are bound by IHRL. However, the actual implications of this remain difficult to determine. First, it remains unclear how the ICTs must determine which exact norms bind them. Second, the ICTs retain a certain measure of freedom to deviate from accepted interpretations of human rights norms, based on the specific context in which they operate. As a result, the scope of application of international human rights norms in the specific context of an ICT may be difficult to determine a priori. Such methodological obstacles must accompany a discussion of the binding nature of IHRL vis-à-vis the ICTs, because they will necessarily impact on their actual interpretation and application of human rights norms, and their use of IHRL in this process.
2. The ad hoc Tribunals

Where the ICC Statute enshrines an obligation for the Court to respect internationally recognized human rights, the legal instruments of the ad hoc Tribunals do not incorporate such a general obligation. However, it has rightly been argued that this provision in the ICC Statute was based on existing practice before the Tribunals.\(^1\) This part shows that the law and practice of the ad hoc Tribunals indeed incorporate an obligation on their part to abide by internationally recognized human rights.

2.1. Internal law and practice

First and foremost, their Statutes and the RPEs themselves impose human rights obligations on the Tribunals. These legal instruments partly reproduce human rights norms contained in international and regional treaties, thus creating human rights obligations for the Tribunals.\(^2\) Article 21 of the ICTY Statute, and 20 of the ICTR Statute enshrine accused person’s right to a fair trial and are based on Article 14 of the ICCPR.\(^3\) In addition, the Statutes impose a general duty on the Tribunals’ Trial Chambers to ensure that trials are fair and expeditious.\(^4\) However, other human rights norms that are of immediate relevance to the work of the Tribunal, such as the right to liberty, are not included in the Statute. This could be explained by the fact that the Tribunals were created in ‘conditions of relative urgency’, as a result of which their procedural rules were quite limited, an issue which was envisaged to be remedied by the creation of RPEs by the Judges.\(^5\) The RPEs remedy some of these apparent omissions, and at the same time, clarify and elaborate a number of rights that are provided by the Statute. For example, suspects’ and accused persons’ right to be informed of their rights and be communicated with in a language they understand is enshrined in the Rules.\(^6\) Similarly, the right

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\(^3\) Gradoni (n 1), 75.

\(^4\) Art 20 ICTY Statute; Art 19 ICTR Statute.


\(^6\) Rule 3(B) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE provide a general right to an accused person to use his own language. In addition, a number of provisions elaborate this right: Rule 42(A) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE protects the right to be informed of rights prior to questioning in a language the suspect understands; Rule 43(i) ICTY RPE protects
to legal assistance, including the right to have legal assistance of one’s own choosing and the right to free legal assistance if one is unable to bear its costs is protected in the Rules in addition to in Article 21(4)(d) of the Statute. The right to be tried by an impartial tribunal, provided implicitly in the Statute, is protected more explicitly in the Rules. There is no provision that enshrines the right to liberty; instead, the Rules provide for certain procedural requirements for arrest and detention, which are intended to prevent arbitrary deprivations of liberty. Finally, the Rules allow for the exclusion of evidence if the means by which it has been collected violated human rights. The internal legal instruments of the ad hoc Tribunals thus convey an intention to ensure that the Tribunals abide by human rights norms. This has been called the ‘legislative influence’ of IHRL on the Tribunals. Such persisting legislative influence is further illustrated by the fact that the Judges of the ad hoc Tribunals changed the

7 Rule 40 bis (D) ICTY RPE protects the right to be assisted by counsel during hearings concerning prolonging the provisional detention of the suspect (no exact replication in ICTR RPE although it requires “inter partes hearings”, there is no explicit mention of defence counsel assistance); Rule 40 bis (F) ICTY RPE and Rule 40 bis (j) ICTR RPE provide that upon his transfer to the Tribunal, the accused, assisted by counsel shall be brought before a judge; Rule 62(A)(i) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE require the Judge to confirm, during the accused’s initial appearance, that his right to counsel is respected; Rule 42(A)(i) and (B) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE protect the right to counsel during questioning during the investigative phase; Rule 63 ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE protect the right to counsel during questioning during the Trial phase; Rule 45(A) ICTY RPE protects the right to free legal assistance (no exact parallel in ICTR RPE, however, Rule 45 ICTR RPE does regulate quite detailed the procedure for assignment of counsel, the right thus seems protected implicitly).

8 Rule 15(A) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE provide for the disqualification of a Judge if his impartiality is affected; Rule 14(A) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE provide that Judges must take a vow of impartiality.

9 Rule 40 bis (B) ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE. See also Rule 40 bis (C)-(F) ICTY RPE and Rule 40 bis (F)-(J) ICTR RPE, which provide the requirements for a Judge to order the provisional detention of a suspect, and the right of a suspect to have his detention reviewed by a judge; Rule 40 bis (D) ICTY RPE and Rule 40 bis (H) ICTR RPE, which limit the length of provisional detention of a suspect to 90 days; Rule 64 ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE provide that an accused shall be provisionally detained once he has been transferred to the seat of the Tribunal; while Rule 65 ICTY RPE and ICTR RPE lay down the conditions for provisional release.

10 Rule 95 ICTY; the test to be applied by the judges is whether the means by which the evidence has been collected (I) casts substantial doubt on its reliability, or (II) if its admission is “antithetical to, and would seriously damage, the integrity of the proceedings (idem ICTR); Rule 89 (D) ICTY (NO parallel ICTR RPE), judges can choose to exclude evidence if its probative value is substantially outweighed by the need to ensure a fair trial.

Tribunals’ provisional detention regime to bring it in line with ‘customary international law as reflected in the main international human rights instruments’.12

The circumstances surrounding the creation of the ad hoc Tribunals, particularly that of the ICTY, clarify that the importance of respect for human rights norms by the Tribunals as such was not a matter of debate. Quite the contrary: concerning the ICTY, it was ‘portrayed as an obvious fact that the new international tribunal would embrace the highest standards of fairness towards defendants.’13 Statements by representatives of states having a seat in the UN Security Council (UNSC) at the time of the adoption of the ICTY Statute evince an intention to ensure that human rights norms would be applicable to the Tribunal. For example, the report circulated in the UNSC by France that became the basis for negotiations on the resolution establishing the ICTY, provided that one of the foremost aims of the Tribunal would be to ‘offer the utmost guarantees of impartiality in respecting the rights of the defence’.14 The report further clarified that it was ‘[n]aturally of the greatest importance that the defendants should benefit fully from all the guarantees provided by contemporary criminal procedure systems’, in which context it referred specifically to Article 14 of the ICCPR.15 Furthermore, the draft Statute proposed by France included a provision regulating the rights of the defence, modeled after Article 14 of the ICCPR, an example that was followed by several other states in their proposals.16 Submissions by other states also emphasized the importance of respect for the rights of defendants and, in that context, often referred to IHRL, in particular to the ICCPR.17 The proposal of the USA, which was highly influential in the drafting of the Statute, emphasized that the Tribunal ‘must be fair and must be seen as fair’.18

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12 ICTY, Decision on Momčilo Krajišnik’s Notice of Motion for Provisional Release, Dissenting Opinion of Judge Patrick Robinson, Prosecutor v. Krajišnik and Plavšić (IT-00-39&40-T), 8 October 2001, 2; see further on this issue, infra Chapter 5, section 3.2.
15 ibid, 116, the report further recommended that the ICTY Statute reproduce parts of Article 14 ICCPR.
16 ibid, 65: Article X Rights of the Defence; similarly UNSC, ‘Letter Dated 16 February 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Italy to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General’ (17 February 1993) UN Doc S/25300, 6: ‘Article 11 Principles of proceedings’, and 14, where the explanatory notes to the draft provisions explained that the provision had been based on Article 6 ECHR and Article 14 ICCPR; UNSC, ‘Letter Dated 5 April 1993 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General’ (6 April 1993) UN Doc S/25537, 7: Article 17: Judicial Guarantees; UNSC, ‘Letter Dated 5 April 1993 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General’ (12 April 1993) UN Doc S/25575, art. 20 Rights of the Accused person after Preliminary Hearing; further reference to the rights of suspects and accused persons were made in Articles 14 and 17.
17 UNSC, ‘Note Verbale Dated 12 March 1993 from the Permanent Mission of Mexico to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General’ (16 March 1993) UN Doc S/25417, 15, where the need for the tribunal to ‘guarantee the right of due process and the protection of individual rights of the accused’ is emphasized; UNSC,
The draft Statute, created under the auspices of the UN Secretary-General (UNSG), contained a provision on the rights of accused persons modeled after Article 14 ICCPR. The report accompanying the draft stated that it was ‘axiomatic that the International Tribunal must fully respect internationally recognized standards regarding the rights of the accused at all stages of its proceedings.’\(^{19}\) This statement is often seen as establishing that the ICTY is bound by internationally recognized human rights because it expresses the legislative intent of the Tribunal’s creators.\(^{20}\) Furthermore, this report has subsequently been endorsed by the UNSC and can be seen as an ‘authoritative interpretation of the Statute’, as has also been confirmed by the Tribunals themselves.\(^{21}\) The Tribunals have often referred to this report and this phrase to justify their reliance on international human rights norms.\(^{22}\)

\(^{18}\) UNSC, ‘Letter Dated 5 April 1993 from the Permanent Representative of the United States of America to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General’ (12 April 1993) UN Doc S/25575, 2. See also Morris and Scharf 1995, 32.

\(^{19}\) UNSC, ‘Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Security Council Resolution 808’ (3 May 1993) UN Doc S/25704, 106.


The UNSG report further clarified that such ‘internationally recognized standards’ are contained, in particular, in Article 14 ICCPR. The report also ruled out the possibility of in absentia trials because that would be inconsistent with this provision. There was thus an assumption that the Tribunal would be bound by IHRL pertaining to the right to a fair trial, in particular as laid down in the ICCPR. However, the report does not address the possible applicability of other human rights norms, such as the right to liberty, or rights contained in regional human rights instruments or customary international law. The draft Statute proposed by the UNSG was adopted without amendment by the Security Council and appended to resolution 827, creating the ICTY. Spain’s representative in the Security Council emphasized that the Tribunal’s activities will be governed by ‘the general principles of law, in particular respect for the guarantees of due process and the rights of the accused’. The ICTR Statute was adopted by the UNSC in November 1994. Its preparatory works are less extensive than those of the ICTY, since the latter’s Statute provided a blueprint for that of the ICTR. The UNSC even considered extending the mandate of the ICTY, so as to create one single Tribunal. Given the identical nature of the ICTR and ICTY Statutes, the considerations regarding the importance of fairness can safely be assumed to apply equally to both Tribunals. In fact, one of the main reasons to establish an international tribunal for Rwanda, as opposed to allowing for municipal prosecutions, was that an international tribunal would be better placed to conduct fair trials in an impartial manner. This sentiment was also expressed, Prosecutor v. Furundžija (IT-95-17/1-A), 21 July 2000, 177; ICTY, Decision on Motion for Judicial Assistance to Be Provided by SFOR and others, Separate Opinion of Judge Robinson, Prosecutor v. Simić et al (IT-95-9-PT), 18 October 2000, 3; ICTY, Appeal Judgement on Allegations of Contempt against Prior Counsel, Miljan Vujin, Prosecutor v. Tadić (IT-94-1-A-AR77), 27 February 2001, 3; ICTY, Decision on Miroslav Tadić’s Application for Provisional Release, Prosecutor v. Simić et al (IT-95-9-PT), 4 April 2000, 8; ICTY, Decision on Momčilo Krajišnik’s Notice of Motion for Provisional Release, Dissenting Opinion of Judge Patrick Robinson, Prosecutor v. Krajišnik and Plavšić (IT-00-39&40-T), 8 October 2001, 4; similarly Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 98.

24 ibid, 101.
25 Sloan (n 20), 481, who notes that ‘[t]he ICCPR is singled out as a minimum standard, while the obligation of the ICTY is broader, to respect ‘internationally recognized standards regarding the rights of the accused’.
26 UNSC, Provisional Verbatim Record of the Three Thousand Two Hundred and Seventeenth Meeting’ (25 May 1993) UN Doc S/PV.3217, Observations on behalf of the government of Spain, 39-40.
28 Similarly Virginia Morris and Michael Scharf, The International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (Transnational Publishers 1998), 101: ‘the Secretary-General’s Report on the former Yugoslavia provided a sufficient analysis of the relevant legal issues relating to the establishment of such a tribunal and the Yugoslavia Tribunal Statute provided an acceptable blueprint for its statute.’
pressed by a number of state representatives after having voted on the resolution establishing the ICTR. The axiomatic duty to respect internationally recognized human rights of suspects and accused persons thus applies equally to both the ICTY and the ICTR.

However, none of the sources quoted above unequivocally clarify whether the ad hoc Tribunals are bound by the entire corpus of IHRL. Instead, focus is mostly on the rights of suspects and accused persons specifically. In addition, the legal basis for the application of IHRL is not clarified, although the ICCPR is often mentioned. Unlike that of the ICC, the Statutes and RPEs of the Tribunals do not resolve the applicability of external sources of—international—law. The UNSG Report identifies customary international humanitarian law and a limited number of international conventions as the applicable substantive law. However, the report does not spell out the applicable sources of procedural law.

It has been noted that the absence of a provision on applicable law is ‘regrettable, as it has led to inconsistent interpretations.’ Generally, however, the case law of both Tribunals

Security Council Resolution 935 (4 October 1994) UN Doc S/1994/1125, 136: ‘[m]unicipal prosecution in these highly emotionally and politically charged cases can sometimes turn into simple retribution without respect for fair trial guarantees. Even where such trials are conducted with scrupulous regard for the rights of the accused, there is a great likelihood that a conviction will not be perceived to have been fairly reached.’; similarly UNSC, ‘Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 5 of Security Council Resolution 955’ (13 February 1995) UN Doc S/1995/134, 42, which states that the Tribunal should be international and located outside of Rwanda so that the fairness of its trials are guaranteed, and that this will also increase the appearance of neutrality and impartiality.

31 UNSC, ‘Verbatim Record’ (8 November 1994) UN Doc S/PV.3453, 5, Statement of the representative of New Zealand: ‘there is a need for an international tribunal to deal with the principal perpetrators, a tribunal that will be demonstrably impartial. Only then will it be possible for all Rwandese, including those outside the country, to see that there is a guarantee that justice will be delivered fairly — that justice will, in fact, be done. [emphasis added, KZ]; idem, 8: Statement of the representative of Argentina, who emphasized that the Tribunal would ensure ‘that justice will be applied with impartiality and independence’, and that the resolution could adequately ensure ‘the human rights and fundamental freedoms of those accused.’; idem 12, Statement of the representative of Spain, which emphasized independence as the most important attribute of the international tribunal and that one of its main concerns in its decision to vote in favour of the tribunal’s establishment was that its Statute provided ‘legal guarantees to safeguard the rights of the accused’; 13, Statement of the representative of Nigeria: ‘[t]he international and impartial character of the Tribunal will, in our view, enhance the prospects of national reconciliation in Rwanda. Justice and fairness will also be the cornerstones of the Tribunal.’

32 However, the US proposal for the RPE did include a provision regarding ‘secondary sources’, which provided the following list of sources: ‘(A) international conventions, whether general or particular, (B) international custom, as evidence of general practice accepted as law; (C) general principles of the law of nations; and (D) judicial decisions and the teachings of other international tribunals and States. The provision did not make it into the final RPE. See: Rules of Procedure and Evidence for the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Former Yugoslavia, Suggestions Made by the Government of the United States, IT/14 (1993), reprinted in Morris and Scharf (n 28), Vol 2, 543; Affolder (n 21), 484.

33 UNSC, ‘Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Security Council Resolution 808’ (3 May 1993) UN Doc S/25704, para 33; UNSC, ‘Report of the Secretary-General Pursuant to Paragraph 5 of Security Council Resolution 955’ (13 February 1995) UN Doc S/1995/134, 12, provides that the ICTR takes a more expansive approach, as a result of which its applicable substantive law includes a number of conventions regardless of their customary status; similarly Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 99.

confirms the—subsidiary—relevance of the sources of international law. Cassese has held that the ad hoc Tribunals are required to apply international law because they are international courts. He argued that, first and foremost, the tribunals must apply their own Statutes and RPEs, then the treaties to which their internal legal instruments refer explicitly, such as the Geneva Conventions, as well as customary international law. Subsidiarily, if the Tribunals cannot solve a legal problem based on these sources, they may also refer to general principles of international law or, failing that, to the ‘general principles of (criminal) law recognized in the major legal systems of the world’. The ICTY seems to have endorsed such an approach in its case law. However, as has been noted, the Tribunals have not been consistent in their identification of relevant sources, or in the hierarchy between these.

The question of the sources of international criminal law has received ample academic attention. For example, many commentators have questioned the utility of public international law sources and methodologies for the purposes of a criminal trial. Similarly, the hierarchy of sources has been hotly debated, with a particular focus on the possible subsidiary and

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35 Cassese, ‘The Influence of the European Court of Human Rights on International Criminal Tribunals’ (n 11), 19.
36 ibid, 20.
37 See, eg: ICTY, Judgement, *Prosecutor v. Furundžija* (IT-95-17/1-T), 10 December 1998, para 178; see also Benjamin Perrin, ‘Searching for Law while Seeking Justice: the Difficulties of Enforcing International Humanitarian Law in International Criminal Trials’ (2007) 39 Ottawa L Rev 367, 371: ‘judges of the modern ad hoc tribunals adopted Article 38(1) of the Statute of the International Court of Justice as their own to provide a normative superstructure to define applicable sources of international criminal law’; similarly Margaret McAuliffe deGuzman, ‘Article 21: Applicable Law’ in Otto Triffterer (ed), *Commentary on the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court: Observers’ Notes, Article by Article* (2nd edn, Beck 2008), 703: ‘in practice, these Tribunals have looked in the first place to their Statutes and RPEs and in the second place to the sources of law enumerated in Article 38 of the ICJ Statute.’; Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 100: ‘[i]n identifying sources of applicable law, ICTY judges naturally resorted to categories listed in Article 38 of the ICJ Statute, thereby assuming their applicability and relevance to the work of the court.’
38 See also ICTY, Judgement, *Kupreškić et al* (IT-95-16-T), 14 January 2000, 591: ‘Indeed, any time the Statute does not regulate a specific matter, and the Report of the Secretary-General does not prove to be of any assistance in the interpretation of the Statute, it falls to the International Tribunal to draw upon (i) rules of customary international law or (ii) general principles of international criminal law; or, lacking such principles, (iii) general principles of criminal law common to the major legal systems of the world; or, lacking such principles, (iv) general principles of law consonant with the basic requirements of international justice.’; on this issue, see eg Sergey Vasiliev, ‘General Rules and Principles of International Criminal Procedure: Definition, Legal Nature, and Identification’ in Göran Shitter and Sergey Vasiliev (eds), *International Criminal Procedure: Towards a Coherent Body of Law* (Cameron May 2009), 62-80.
gap-filling function of custom and general principles of law.\footnote{Göran Sluiter, *International Criminal Adjudication and the Collection of Evidence: Obligations of States* (Intersentia 2002), 36: ‘customary law is applicable and binding when the statute and rules are silent on a particular point. In the hierarchy of sources applicable to the tribunals customary international law fulfils a gap filling function and is inferior to the statutes and RPE.’; Affolder (n 21), 489: ‘the practice of international tribunals reflects a reliance on general principles in formulating, interpreting and supplementing rules of procedure, but strong affirmations that international tribunals are bound to apply general principles of law are lacking.’, and idem, 470, where she address the gap-filling function of general principles, noting that they are used in ‘addressing the silence in international instruments on certain areas of evidence and procedure. See also Schabas 2009, who addresses the relevance of VCLT regime for ad hoc Tribunals specifically; Akande 2009, 43: ‘since international criminal law is part of international law, international criminal tribunals will be called upon to apply the sources of general international law.’; Fabián Raimondo, ‘General Principles of Law as Applied by International Criminal Courts and Tribunals’ (2007) 6 L & Pract Int’l Cts & Tribunals 393, who addresses general principles of law as a subsidiary source of international criminal law, and an interpretative tool. \footnote{Similarly Gradoni, ‘International Criminal Courts and Tribunals’ (n 20), 623; McDermott (n 13), 59, who notes that ‘references to the fact that ICTs see themselves enshrining the highest standards of procedural fairness can be found not only in the tribunals’ jurisprudence, but also on their websites and in external speeches made by court authorities.’} In the present study, it is neither possible nor necessary to address these debates at length, in particular because their focus is mainly on substantive law and they have little implications for an investigation into whether the Tribunals, as legal entities, are themselves bound by human rights standards.

The practice of Tribunal officials clearly conveys an assumption on their part that the Tribunals are bound by international human rights norms.\footnote{UNSC, ‘Annual Report of the International Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law Committed in the Territory of the former Yugoslavia since 1991 (29 August 1994) UN Doc S/1994/1007, 22.} Numerous official documents of the Tribunals can be quoted in support of this contention. For example, the first annual report of the ICTY to the Security Council discusses the influence of the ‘international bill of human rights’ on the Statute and the Tribunal: the report details that human rights have had a ‘significant impact on the development of international criminal law. These standards are reflected in the statute and rules of the Tribunal in a number of ways’, which illustrates the legislative influence of IHRL.\footnote{UNSC, ‘Fourth Annual Report of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Prosecution of Persons Responsible for Genocide and other Serious Violations of International Humanitarian law Committed in the Territory of Rwanda and Rwandan Citizens Responsible for Genocide and other such Violations Committed in the Territory of Neighbouring States between 1 January and 31 December 1994’ (7 September 1999) UN Doc S/1999/943, 41.} Similarly, an annual report of the ICTR stated that ‘the judges are mindful of the due process requirements of international law and of the Statute of the Tribunal.’\footnote{Similarly Gradoni, ‘International Criminal Courts and Tribunals’ (n 20), 623; McDermott (n 13), 59, who notes that ‘references to the fact that ICTs see themselves enshrining the highest standards of procedural fairness can be found not only in the tribunals’ jurisprudence, but also on their websites and in external speeches made by court authorities.’} These quotes show the perceived relevance of human rights standards to the work of the Tribunals, which seems required by international law and is reflected in the Statute. Furthermore, in 1999, an expert group conducted a review of the functioning of both Tribunals, in which they used human rights standards as a yardstick with which to measure the
Tribunals’ effectiveness. This clearly shows the perceived importance of the Tribunals’ obligation to comply with international human rights standards.

The presidents of the ICTY and the ICTR have similarly expressed their conviction that the Tribunals are bound by IHRL. While the Statutes of the Tribunals do not allow for compensation for defendants whose rights have been violated, the presidents of the Tribunals have urged the Security Council to amend the Statutes in order to change this and bring them in line with international human rights standards. This was considered necessary because the Tribunal ‘wishes, by definition, to abide fully by the internationally recognized norms relating to the rights of suspects and accused persons’. What is more, the letters state that, due to the Tribunal’s status as a subsidiary organ of the Security Council, its actions are attributable to the UN, which, in turn, considers itself bound by generally accepted human rights norms. Accordingly, the UN will be ‘legally bound to compensate persons whose conviction by the Tribunal is subsequently overturned’. Clearly, the Tribunals’ presidents were convinced that the Tribunals must respect internationally recognized human rights norms of suspects and accused persons, even those that were not included in the Tribunals’ own legal documents.

One final avenue for considering the applicability of IHRL to the ICTs could be their legal status as subsidiary organs of the UN, created by the Security Council. As a result, the ad hoc Tribunals are arguably bound by the same international obligations as its parent organ.

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44 UNGA, ‘Report of the Expert Group to Conduct a Review of the Effective Operation and Functioning of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda’ (22 November 1999) UN Doc UN Doc A/54/634, 46, 51, 67, 77, 79 and 91, which refer to standards contained in the ICCPR, or general international human rights law, or the importance thereof.


46 Jorda Letter (n 45), 3; Pillay Letter (n 45), 3.

47 Jorda Letter (n 45), 3-4; Pillay Letter (n 45), p 3.

ization. Although the UN Charter (UNC) is not an ‘internal’ legal instrument of the Tribunals, it is the constitution of its parent organization as a result of which the Tribunals are arguably bound by it by extension. It has often been argued that the UN is bound by human rights norms based on its Charter. If this were the case, these obligations would extend to the Tribunals as subsidiary organs.

Article 1 of the UNC provides the organization’s purposes and principles, one of which is to ‘promote and encourage … respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms’. Article 55(c) provides that the UN shall ‘promote … universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all’. It has been argued that the UN is bound by human rights norms based on these provisions. However, this approach has been criticized for lacking ‘juridical finesse’. The Charter tasks the UN with promoting respect for human rights among its member states; however, nowhere in the Charter is the UN explicitly singled out as being bound by IHRL or the addressee of any obligation to respect human rights. Schwarzenberger emphasized the importance of distinguishing between an obligation to promote human rights, applicable to the UN, and an obligation to protect human rights, which ‘remains in the prerogative of each Member State’.

As a matter of policy, morality, and legitimacy, however, it cannot be denied that the UN should respect human rights in the exercise of its functions. Explicitly tasked to promote respect for human rights, it would be inconsistent for the UN not to respect human rights in the exercise of its own functions. However, from a formalist and legal perspective, the Charter does not appear to provide a strong legal basis for human rights obligations of the UN.

49 Fedorova and Sluiter (n 34), 21: ‘the ad hoc Tribunals, as UN organs, inherit their obligations under general international law from the obligations incumbent upon the UN as an international organisation.’ Similarly Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 126: ‘it is generally accepted that an international legal persons’ organs are bound by its international legal obligations’.


52 Quénivet (n 51), 119; similarly Sluiter, International Criminal Adjudication and the Collection of Evidence (n 40), 31: ‘the purposes and principles of the organization are extremely broad in scope and are hardly synonymous in most respects with specific rules of international treaties and general international law. In other words, it is fiddifcult to distill from the principles clear-cut obligations of the Security Council.

53 Georg Schwarzenberger, Power Politics: a Study of World Society (3rd edn, Stevens 1964), 462. See also Stavrinides (n 50), 39-40, 44-45, who advocates strongly in favor of human rights obligations for the UN itself, based on the Charter. However, these obligations do not extend beyond the ‘promotion’ of respect for human rights by Member States.
Even if one accepts that the UN is bound by ‘human rights’ within the meaning of the Charter, this does not clarify which human rights are meant and thus has a limited utility for establishing specific obligations. Even more so given the fact that the vast majority of international human rights treaties were concluded after the establishment of the UN, which makes it difficult to determine which human rights the UNC refers to. Although the UN’s obligation to promote respect for human rights might place the Security Council under an obligation to ensure that the organs it creates will respect human rights, the question whether the Security Council is restrained by human rights in the exercise of its powers is a matter of contentious debate. A full examination of this question is not possible within the scope of this study, nor is it necessary, given the fact that there are clearer and more convincing legal arguments for considering the ad hoc Tribunals bound by IHRL.

2.2. Case law

The case law of the Tribunals confirms that they are bound by IHRL. One of the first decisions of the ICTY addressed the applicability of international human rights norms. Relying on the UNSG report quoted above, the Chamber held that ‘[i]n drafting the Statute and the Rules every attempt was made to comply with internationally recognized standards of fundamental human rights.’ The Chamber further emphasized that Article 21 of the Statute ‘provides minimum judicial guarantees to which all defendants are entitled and reflects the internationally recognized standard of due process set forth in Article 14 of the [ICCPR].’

In Tadić, the ICTY strongly affirmed its obligation to respect human rights norms when it had to assess its own legality. The Appeals Chamber held that the Tribunal was required to have been ‘established by law’, which emanated from human rights law. To satisfy that requirement, the Tribunal must have been ‘established in accordance with the proper international standards’ and it must ‘provide all the guarantees of fairness, justice and even-

54 Similarly Eric De Brabandere, Post-Conflict Administrations in International Law (Martinus Nijhoff 2009), 97; Quénivet (n 51), 119. However, see, eg: De Wet (n 50), 13, proposes that the ‘International Bill of Rights’, ie the UDHR, ICCPR, and ICESCR, would bind the UN, because they ‘represent an elaboration upon the UN Charter’s original vision of human rights found in Article 1 (3) and Articles 55 and 56. See further: De Wet 2004, 191-195; Akande 2009, 46: strong arguments, derived from the UN Charter, may be advanced regarding the potential invalidity of resolutions which violate human rights obligations’.

55 See eg Hafner (n 48), 654: ‘there is no doubt that by virtue of their binding force and of Article 103 of the Charter, SC resolutions can override customary law and treaty law’; Alvarez (n 51), 129-135; Stephan Hollenberg, ‘Challenges and Opportunities for Judicial Protection of Human Rights against Decisions of the United Nations Security Council’ (PhD Thesis, University of Amsterdam 2013).


57 ibid, 25.
handedness, in full conformity with internationally recognized human rights instruments’; a requirement that the Appeals Chamber formulated on the basis of the ICCPR.\(^{58}\) The ICTY thus premised its own legality, and thereby its very existence, on the requirement of respect for internationally recognized human rights norms, which suggests that the latter norms are superior to the legal instruments of the Tribunal itself. Although the Appeals Chamber’s conclusion that the Tribunal indeed operated in accordance with such norms was not thoroughly reasoned and was based on a cursory examination of the Statute and RPE,\(^{59}\) the decision did unequivocally affirm Tribunal’s obligation to respect international human rights norms. In *Kanyabashi*, the ICTR employed a similar line of reasoning in its decision on jurisdiction, and held that ‘when determining whether a tribunal has been ‘established by law’, consideration should be made to the setting up of an organ in keeping with the proper international standards providing all the guarantees of fairness and justice.’\(^{60}\) Subsequent decisions have reiterated the *Tadić* decision, and confirmed that the Tribunal must ‘genuinely afford the accused the full guarantees of fair trial set out in Article 14 [ICCPR]’.\(^{61}\) This case law implies that the exercise of jurisdiction by the Tribunals is subject to IHRL, since their shared Appeals Chamber was prepared to set aside the Statutes if it found their non-conformity with those standards.\(^{62}\) As a result, it has been argued that ‘departures from universally established human rights principles by the Tribunal must … render the exercise of jurisdiction by the Tribunal illegal’.\(^{63}\)

Many subsequent decisions confirm this proposition. In an early decision, the ICTR held that the right to be tried without undue delay was *provided* by Article 14 ICCPR and reaffirmed in Article 20 of the Statute, thus suggesting that the Tribunal was bound by IHRL


\(^{59}\) ibid, 46.


\(^{62}\) Similarly Virginia Morris and Michael Scharf, *An Insider’s Guide to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia: a Documentary History and Analysis* (Transnational Publishers 1995), 39-40: ‘the ICCPR ensures every individual the right to a fair trial by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal established by law. These are essential requirements, as a matter of international law, for the legitimate exercise of criminal jurisdiction by a permanent or an *ad hoc* Court.’; Gabriele McIntyre, ‘Defining Human Rights in the Arena of International Humanitarian Law: Human Rights in the Jurisprudence of the ICTY’ in Gideon Boas and William Schabas (eds), *International Criminal Law Developments in the Case Law of the ICTY* (Koninklijke Brill NV 2003), 193: ‘[i]n the first case brought before the ICTY, it premises its legality as a functioning legal institution upon its full adherence to the rule of law. It interpreted the rule of law at international law as obliging it to adhere fully to international human rights principles’; Gradoni, ‘International Criminal Courts and Tribunals’ (n 20), 871; Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’, 85.

\(^{63}\) McIntyre (n 62), 197.
The ICTY Appeals Chamber relied on the UNSG report in stressing that ‘the Tribunal, which encompasses all of its organs, including the Office of the Prosecutor, must abide by the recognised principles of human rights.’ The ICTY has further held that the use of ‘methods and practices that would, in themselves, violate fundamental principles of international law and justice would be contrary to the mission of this Tribunal.’ In the same decision, the Tribunal also formulated its own ‘paramount duty and responsibility to respect fully the norms developed over the last decades [regarding protection of the rights of the accused], especially within, but not limited to, the framework of the United Nations.’ The ICTY has also held that it is obliged to respect ‘internationally recognized standards regarding the rights of the accused.’

The ICTR has similarly relied on its obligation to respect ‘generally accepted international human rights norms’. It even employed this obligation to substantiate its power to grant compensation to a defendant whose rights had been violated, despite the fact that the legal instruments of the Tribunal did not provide for this possibility. The ICTY Appeals Chamber has held that, in addition to the right to a fair trial, ‘other guarantees provided for in the context of the European Convention on Human Rights should also be respected’. Furthermore, the ICTY has emphasized that although Article 9 of the ICCPR ‘is not reflected in the International Tribunal’s Statute ... as one of the fundamental human rights of an accused person under customary international law, it is, nonetheless, applicable, and

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67 ICTY, Decision on Defence Motion Challenging the Exercise of Jurisdiction by the Tribunal, Prosecutor v. Nikolić (IT-94-2-PT), 9 October 2002, para.110: ‘This Tribunal has a paramount duty and responsibility to respect fully the norms developed over the last decades in this field, especially within, but not limited to, the framework of the United Nations. For this reason, this Tribunal has a responsibility to fully respect “internationally recognized standards regarding the rights of the accused at all stages of its proceedings.” Such standards “are, in particular, contained in Article 14 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights”; such standards are eg also contained in Articles 5 and 6 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of 4 November 1950. This Chamber observes that these norms only provide for the absolute minimum standards applicable.’
68 ICTY, Decision on Miroslav Tadić’s Application for Provisional Release, Prosecutor v. Simić et al (IT-95-9-PT), 4 April 2000, 8
indeed, has been acted upon by this International Tribunal.’ 72 Similarly, it has been held that ‘[a]rticle 14 ICCPR reflects an imperative norm of international law to which the Tribunal must adhere.’73 It is therefore clear that the ad hoc Tribunals are bound by human rights norms.

All these decisions reaffirm, in one way or another, the Tribunals’ obligation to respect international human rights norms. Very few of them, however, elucidate the legal basis of this obligation, or its exact content. For example, the terms used to describe the body of law that the Tribunals are bound by differs across decisions and include ‘internationally recognized standards’, ‘recognised principles of human rights’, ‘fundamental principles of international law’, ‘fundamental human rights’, ‘internationally recognized standards of fundamental human rights’, ‘imperative norms of international law’ and ‘generally accepted human rights norms’. The decisions do not rely on specific sources of international law, but instead single out a certain category of norms, which is described with inconsistent terminology. Such inconsistency and lack of clarity render it difficult to ascertain what norms of international law can be considered binding on the Tribunals.74

A small number of decisions do address the source of the Tribunals’ obligation to respect human rights norms. Some of the decisions discussed above relied on the UNSG report as an authoritative interpretation of the Statute. Further, in Barayagwiza, the ICTR Appeals Chamber held that it would apply the ICCPR because it formed part of ‘general international law’ and that it would rely on the ECHR and the ACHR and the case law of their respective courts because they ‘are persuasive authority which may be of assistance in applying and interpreting the Tribunal’s applicable law.’75 The regional treaties and the related case law were regarded as evidence of international custom.76 This approach was confirmed in Kajelijeli, where the Appeals Chamber referred to the ICCPR as reflective of customary international law, and to the ACHPR, the ECHR and the ACHR as ‘persuasive authority’ and as ‘evidence of international custom’.77 The assumption is that human rights norms are binding on the tribunals by virtue of their status as customary norms. The Tribunals have also held that they are bound by customary international law.78

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72 ICTY, Decision on Preliminary Motions, Prosecutor v. Milošević (IT-99-37-PT), 8 November 2001, 38
73 ICTY, Appeal Judgement on Allegations of Contempt against Prior Counsel, Miljan Vujin, Prosecutor v. Tadić (IT-94-1-A-AR77), 27 February 2001, 3
74 See further infra section 4.
76 ibid.
78 See eg ICTR, Decision (Prosecutor’s Request for Review or Reconsideration), Prosecutor v. Barayagwiza (ICTR-97-19-AR72), 31 March 2000, 69; ICTY, Decision on the Prosecution Motion under Rule 73 for a Rul-
However, these decisions eschew the question of why the Tribunals are bound by customary international law.\(^79\) One notable exception is an ICTR decision in *Rwamakuba*, where it had to determine whether it was obliged to provide compensation to an acquitted accused. This decision considered many aspects relevant to the applicability of IHRL. The underlying assumption was that the legal basis for the application of human rights norms to the Tribunal would be customary international law.\(^80\) At the same time, the Chamber relied on the Tribunal’s obligation to respect ‘generally accepted international human rights norms’.\(^81\) The Chamber listed four legal bases for this obligation: it endorsed both the subject and the transfer thesis, it relied on the UN’s purposes and principles, including the promotion and encouragement of respect for human rights, and it reiterated the UNSG’s statement that it was axiomatic that the ICTY was to fully respect internationally recognized standards regarding the rights of the accused.\(^82\) In addition to the four separate rationales offered in *Rwamakuba*, several decisions of the ICTY have relied on the fact that the states in the former Yugoslavia were party to the ICCPR and, for the most part, to the ECHR. Therefore, no distinction should be drawn between persons standing trial on the domestic and on the international level.\(^83\) The Tribunals have also quoted more general justifications of their obligation to respect human rights norms. For example, the ICTY has held that its ‘important role in affirming and strengthening international human rights’ requires it to respect human rights to a degree that does not fall below that offered by the ECtHR.\(^84\) The ICTY also held that respecting individual rights of the accused was important to ‘ensure the legitimacy of the proceedings and to set a standard for proceedings before other ad hoc tribunals or a permanent international criminal
court of the future’. While the ICTR has emphasized that the Tribunal is ‘an institution whose primary purpose is to ensure that justice is done’.  

Finally, the Tribunals’ reliance on international human rights norms and their interpretation by international courts and supervisory bodies has been justified by the similarity of the provisions contained in the Statute and those contained in human rights treaties. The Tribunals have often confirmed that their Statutes reflect international human rights norms, referring mainly to the ICCPR, but also to regional human rights conventions. This could explain the Tribunals’ reliance on interpretations of these norms by human rights courts and supervisory bodies.

The Tribunals thus consider themselves bound by international human rights norms. They have interpreted and applied their applicable law in a manner consistent with internationally recognized human rights norms. At the same time, the Tribunals have exceeded the terms of their legal instruments to ensure respect for internationally recognized human rights by creating procedural remedies that found no explicit support in their legal instruments. In addition, they have displayed a willingness to set aside their Statutes if these would be inconsistent with such norms. The normative force of internationally recognized human rights in the law and practice of the Tribunals thus seems substantial. However, several important questions remain unanswered. First, the Tribunals have not consistently clarified the legal basis for their being bound by human rights norms. As a result, it is not clear whether the Tribunals’ acceptance of their being bound by human rights norms is declaratory or constitutive of this bindingness. Second, they have failed to define clearly the scope and content of the category of norms that they are bound by.

3. The ICC

The Rome Statute purports to regulate the position of international human rights norms in the legal framework of the ICC. Article 21(1) lays down the sources of applicable law, and paragraph (3) of the same provision requires the Court to interpret and apply the law contained in those sources in a manner consistent with internationally recognized human rights. The following analysis therefore takes this provision as its starting point. The first section scrutinizes Article 21(1), and the second addresses Article 21(3).

3.1. Article 21(1): Applicable law

Article 21 was the first provision of its kind in international criminal law. The primary reason for the drafters to include this provision was to constrain the discretion of the judges in defining the applicable law themselves. This provision has been described as complex, uncertain and ambiguous, since many of the terms used are open to multiple interpretations, and it does not follow the generally accepted terminology for the sources of international law. It can be regarded as *lex specialis* that lays down the applicable law specifically for the purpose of the ICC, thus deviating from the general sources of international law as reflected in Article 38(1) of the ICJ Statute. The first paragraph of Article 21 provides a hierarchical system of sources of applicable law before the ICC. This section investigates whether and how the ICC may resort to sources of IHRL under this provision.

3.1.1. Internal legal instruments

Article 21(1)(a) provides that the primary source of applicable law for the ICC is its own internal law, which comprises its Statute, the Elements of Crimes and the RPE. The latter two

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89 McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 702; Grover (n 39), 559; Hochmayr (n 88), 656.
instruments are subsidiary to the Statute. The Statute has multiple purposes: it enshrines the agreement between the parties and their obligations vis-à-vis the Court, but it is also the constitution of the organization, laying down its powers and the limits thereto, and finally, it is a code of criminal law as well as of criminal procedure.

The Statute regulates the ICC’s applicable procedural law to an extent that far surpasses in detail the statutes of the ad hoc Tribunals. It enshrines a number of procedural rights of suspects and accused persons that are also recognized in IHRL. For example, Article 67 lays down the rights of accused persons to a fair trial, and, like the parallel provisions in the Statutes of the ad hoc Tribunals, is similar to Article 14 ICCPR. It even expands the minimum guarantees laid down in the ICCPR, for example, by adding subparagraph (i), which recognizes the right ‘[n]ot to have imposed on him or her any reversal of the burden of proof or any onus of rebuttal.’ Furthermore, Article 66 enshrines the presumption of innocence and Article 55 provides for the rights of persons under investigation. In addition to the inclusion of human rights norms, the Statute also provides for procedures that are intended to safeguard the rights of persons implicated by the activities of the Court. For example, the procedure for the issuance of an arrest warrant is regulated thoroughly in Article 58, and Article 40 enshrines the independence of the judges, but neither provision is formulated as containing ‘rights’ of suspected or accused persons.

The key provisions in the Rome Statute laying down the rights of suspects and accused persons reveal the legislative influence of IHRL, which has also been noted with respect to the ad hoc Tribunals. These provisions have been inspired by, or modeled after,

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93 Art 51(5) ICC Statute provides that, in case of conflict between the Statute and the RPE, the Statute will prevail. Similarly, Article 52(1) provides that the Regulations of the Court must be ‘in accordance with this Statute and the Rules of Procedure and Evidence’.


97 A complete examination of the Statute and all subsidiary legal instruments of the Court would doubtlessly reveal more examples of the legislative influence of IHRL. However, such an examination extends beyond the scope of the present study. The examples mentioned here are intended to illustrate the legislative influence of
international human rights norms, and even go further at times, thereby ‘setting a standard of respect for the rights of the accused that surpasses most if not all domestic legal systems.’

Although the ICC Statute represents an improvement from the legal instruments of the ad hoc Tribunals, in that the catalogue of rights provided for by the Statute itself is more exhaustive, the conclusion that it would ‘surpass most if not all domestic legal systems’ might be an overstatement. For example, a much-cited omission is the absence of the right to privacy.

3.1.2. Hierarchy of sources

In addition to the internal legal instruments, Article 21 lists subsidiary sources of law. The provision creates a hierarchy between the sources laid down in the three subparagraphs, which clearly appears from the ordinary meaning of its wording. The chairman of the working group on applicable law noted that the debates prior to and during the Rome Conference evinced a ‘very clear majority in favor of establishing a hierarchy.’ The Statute, RPE and Elements of Crimes (EoC), provided for in subparagraph (a), are applicable ‘in the first place’, whereas the sources in subparagraph (b) are applicable ‘in the second place’, which is further limited by the insertion of the phrase ‘where appropriate’. The source mentioned in subparagraph (c) only come into play ‘failing’ the application of paragraphs (a) and (b), and may only be relied upon if the result would be ‘consistent with [the] Statute and with international law and internationally recognized norms and standards’.

The Court has thus far been hesitant to use its subsidiary sources of applicable law to IHRL, while the subsequent Chapters will address the interpretation and application of specific human rights norms in the law and practice of the ICTs in depth.

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101 Saland (n 92), 214.

102 McAulliffe deGuzman (n 37), 705, who notes that the insertion of the phrase ‘where appropriate’ serves to emphasize the discretion the Court enjoys in determining when treaties or principles and rules of international law are applicable.
adopt procedural innovations that are not provided for by its primary legislation. It has highlighted the phrase ‘where appropriate’ to justify its restrained approach. The Appeals Chamber has confirmed that Articles 21(1)(b) and (c) only come into play if there is a gap in the Statute, the EoC and the RPE. For example, the Appeals Chamber has rejected a prosecution submission that a gap in the ICC’s statutory framework existed because it failed to provide for a procedure for extraordinary review of decisions, which the Chamber considered to be an intentional omission by the drafters of the Statute. The same line of reasoning was followed by the Appeals Chamber, when it found that the statutory framework of the Court exhaustively defines its power to relinquish jurisdiction and that, therefore, no lacuna existed and no remedy could be created by resort to Article 21(1)(b) or (c). According to one commentator, the subsidiary sources will only come into play in cases where the Statute is ‘incomplete’, or where ‘the point at stake is not as such concerned with its provisions’. For example, when the Court cannot avoid settling questions of public international law that the drafters of the Statute could not have contemplated.

3.1.3. Applicable treaties

Article 21(1)(b) provides for the subsidiary application of ‘applicable treaties’ and ‘principles and rules of international law’. The first question raised by this provision from the perspective of this study is whether the ICC can apply human rights treaties under this heading. Ar-

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103 William Schabas, *The International Criminal Court: a Commentary on the Rome Statute* (OUP 2010), 390, specifically n 62; similarly Hochmayr (n 88), 661, who notes that ‘[s]o far, such lacunae have rarely been found.’

104 ICC, Decision regarding the practices used to prepare and familiarize witnesses for giving testimony at trial, *Prosecutor v. Lubanga* (ICC-01/04-01-06-1049), 30 November 2007, 44.


107 ICC, Judgement on the Appeal of Mr Lubanga against the Decision on the Defence Challenge to the Jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to Article 19 (2) (a) of the Statute of 3 October 2006, *Prosecutor v. Lubanga Dyilo* (ICC-01/04-01-06-772), 14 December 2006, 34.

108 Verhoeven (n 94), 11

109 ICC, Decision on the confirmation of charges, *Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo* (ICC-01/04-01-07-717), 30 September 2008, 508: ‘principles and rules of international law constitute a secondary source applicable only when the statutory material fails to prescribe a legal solution.’
guably, treaties concluded by the Court itself constitute the primary category of ‘applicable treaties’. The relationship agreement with the United Nations and the Headquarters Agreement with the Kingdom of the Netherlands are primary examples, and the Court has indeed applied the former, citing Article 21(1)(b). The Court, however, is not party to human rights treaties, which begs the question whether it could apply such treaties under this provision. Debates during the negotiations on Article 21 centred on the question whether it should refer to ‘applicable’ or to ‘relevant’ treaties. According to the chair of the drafting committee on applicable law, debates focused particularly on the relevance of the VCLT and the Convention Against Torture, international treaties to which the Court is not party, but which many states felt should guide the Court’s application of law nonetheless. Additionally, it has been noted that a narrow reading of the term ‘applicable’ could prevent the Court from applying international human rights treaties, since it is not party to them. Therefore, it is open to question whether such conventions may be ‘applicable’ in the sense of Article 21(1)(b). The fact that a deliberate choice was made for the term ‘applicable’, instead of ‘relevant’, militates in favour of strict interpretation of this part of the provision. Arguably, the ICC should therefore refrain from applying human rights treaties directly under the heading of Article 21(1)(b), since the Court is not party to them and they are not ‘applicable’ within the strict meaning of this term.

Another way in which treaties could be rendered ‘applicable’ is if they were in force in the state with regard to which the ICC is exercising jurisdiction. The Court once considered that the DRC had ratified the Geneva Conventions, prior to applying their provisions. Since these treaties applied to the DRC, this may have rendered them ‘applicable’ before the Court in the case against Lubanga. A similar construction could perhaps be used for human rights treaties, but there is no further practice of the Court confirming such an approach to date.

110 Schabas, *The International Criminal Court* (n 103), 390; similarly Verhoeven (n 94), 5; Vasiliev, ‘General Rules and Principles of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 38), 66; Pellet (n 90), 1053.
111 Schabas, *The International Criminal Court* (n 103), 390; ICC, Judgment on the appeal of the Prosecutor against the decision of TC I “Decision on the consequences of non-disclosure of exculpatory materials covered b art. 54(3)(e) agreements and the application to stay the prosecution of the accused, together with certain other issues raised at the status conference on 10 June 2008, *Prosecutor v. Lubanga* (ICC-01/04-01/06), 21 October 2008, 51.
112 McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 705; Saland (n 92), 215.  
113 Saland (n 92), 215.  
114 McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 705.  
116 However, an approach in which the applicability of human rights treaties would depend on their ratification status by the state with regard to which the ICC is exercising jurisdiction would raise problems regarding, for
3.1.4. Rules and principles of international law

The second part of Article 21(1)(b) refers to ‘principles and rules of international law’. The particular wording chosen is unusual as a reference to applicable sources of international law. The phrase originated in the 1993 ILC draft Statute, the commentary to which explained that such rules and principles included general principles of law, but did not mention custom.\(^\text{117}\)

The wording of this phrase evolved considerably during the deliberations of the Ad Hoc- and Preparatory Committee. The Rome conference commenced with a draft that referred to ‘applicable treaties and the principles and rules of general international law [, including the established principles of the law of armed conflict]’.\(^\text{118}\) The Working Group on applicable law changed the wording of this subparagraph during the final stages of the conference, which resulted in the current Article 21(1)(b). The preparatory works shed no further light on the exact scope of this provision, as the only explanation appended by the Working Group stated that international law should be understood to mean ‘public international law’.\(^\text{119}\) Apparently, an explicit reference to customary international law was controversial, which is why no explicit reference to custom was included in the end.\(^\text{120}\) Nevertheless, most commentators agree that the phrase refers to general international law, or to custom specifically.\(^\text{121}\) The ICC has indeed referred to customary law citing this provision.\(^\text{122}\)

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\(^\text{120}\) Pellet (n 90), 1070; McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 707; Verhoeven (n 94), 9; Vasiliev, ‘General Rules and Principles of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 38), 64; Schabas, *The International Criminal Court* (n 103), 391, who suggests that the phrase is a references to the sources of international law, generally, and thus to treaties, custom, and general principles of law, within the meaning of Article 38(1) of the Statute of the ICJ; Degan (n 39), 80; William Schabas, ‘Customary Law or “Judge-Made” Law: Judicial Creativity at the UN Criminal Tribunals’ in José Doria, Hans-Peter Glaser and Mahmoud Bassiouni (eds), *The Legal Regime of the ICC: Essays in Honour of Prof I P Blishchenko* (Koninklijke Brill NV 2009), 78, who calls it ‘a nod in the direction’ of custom; Mégret (n 5), 71: ‘a broad ‘principles and rules of international law’ is included which is understood to comprise custom’; Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 107; Hochmayr (n 88), 668-669.

\(^\text{121}\) ICC, Decision on the Confirmation of Charges, *Prosecutor v. Lubanga* (ICC-01/04-01/06-803-tEN), 29 January 2007, 311, and 274, where it referred to Hague Regulations and noted these were part of customary international law.
If the provision is thought to refer to ‘general international law’, this would also comprise ‘general principles of law’ as a distinct source of international law within the meaning of Article 38(1) ICJ Statute. However, Article 21(1)(c) already refers to ‘general principles of law derived by the Court from national legal systems’, which begs the question regarding the difference between the ‘principles’ included in both subparagraphs. Some authors have advanced a straightforward answer to this: while Article 21(1)(c) addresses general principles derived from national laws, 21(1)(b) refers to principles of international law. The doctrinal controversies surrounding these sources are further complicated by persisting debates in legal scholarship about the nature and scope of general principles of law as a source in and of itself. This study, however, will not attempt to settle these debates, as Article 21(1) of the ICC Statute can be rationalized as lex specialis to the generally accepted definition of sources of international law enshrined in the ICJ Statute. The ICC Statute will therefore be taken at face value. Regardless of the scope and content of these sources under Article 38(1) of the Statute of the ICJ, Article 21(1)(b) of the ICC Statute allows the Court to apply (rules and) general principles of international law, while Article 21(1)(c) allows it to apply general principles of law, derived from a comparison of national legal systems.

The Court has adopted such a reading of these provisions. When it derives a principle from a comparison of domestic legal systems, it refers to Article 21(1)(c). In such an understanding of the provision, principles of international law are those that relate to basic relations between states and amount to what may be termed as constitutional or fundamental rules of the order of the international community. One could think of principles such as sovereign equality of states, the prohibition of the use of force and the principle of _pacta sunt servanda_. Such principles could, for example, serve the purpose of filling possible gaps or of making a particular construction prevail when two or more interpretations are possible. It is not apparent why the ICC would have to turn to overarching constitutional principles that govern inter-state relations in order to decide on the most appropriate interpretation in the context of the administration of international criminal justice. However, such need cannot be

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123 See eg Fabián Raimondo, General Principles of Law in the Decisions of International Criminal Courts and Tribunals (Dissertation, University of Amsterdam 2007), 45; Antonio Cassese, _International Criminal Law_ (2nd edn, OUP 2008), 21; McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 706-707. For an overview of the different views and positions in this debate, see: Vasiliev, ‘General Rules and Principles of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 38), 31-42 and the sources referred to there.
124 See: infra section 3.1.4.
125 Antonio Cassese, _International Law_ (OUP 2001), 188; Verhoeven (n 94), 9; Vasiliev, ‘General Rules and Principles of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 38), 37.
127 Cassese, _International Law_ (n 125), 188; Vasiliev, ‘General Rules and Principles of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 38), 38.
ruled out. The declaration of acceptance of jurisdiction by the Palestinian Authority is but one example of a situation that may require the Court to enter into questions of public international law regarding statehood.128

The Court has not formulated its own understanding of the sources enumerated in Article 21(1)(b). Most of the time, it refers to sources without explaining under which heading it considered them to fall. For example, it has relied on Common Article 2 of the Geneva Conventions,129 the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions,130 and the Genocide Convention,131 and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.132 It is not clear whether the Court considered these sources to constitute applicable treaties, principles of international law, or rules of international law. Thus far, the Court has mainly resorted to Articles 21(1)(b) in decisions related to substantive criminal law, for example to define the scope of the crime of conscripting children.133 This focus on substantive law seems in keeping with Article 21(1)(b)’s reference to the ‘established principles of the international law of armed conflict’. At the same time, this focus lessens the likelihood that the Court will apply rules of general IHRL for procedural purposes under the heading of this provision. Nevertheless, the wording of Article 21(1)(b) would surely allow for such an approach, as it mandates the Court to resort to customary international law and general principles of law.

3.1.5. General principles of law derived from national legal systems

Article 21(1)(c) provides for a source of law based on a comparative examination of national legal systems and the search for common principles contained therein, followed by their ‘transposition to the international sphere’.134 Given the fact that IHRL may have impacted the

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128 For an overview of the currents status of the investigation, see: ICC Website, Structure of the Court, Palestine <http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/structure%20of%20the%20court/office%20of%20the%20prosecutor/comm%20and%20ref/pe-cdpn/palestine/Pages/palestine.aspx> accessed 26 September 2014.

129 ICC, Decision on the Confirmation of Charges, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-803-tEN), 29 January 2007, 206ff; ICC, Judgment pursuant to Article 74 of the Statute, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-2842), 14 March 2012, 541.


133 See, eg: ICC, Decision on the Confirmation of Charges, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-803-tEN), 29 January 2007, 245.

134 Pellet (n 90), 1073; McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37); Schabas, The International Criminal Court (n 103) 2010, 393.
development of domestic legal systems, the ICC may be expected to apply human rights principles under this provision.\textsuperscript{135}

Article 21(1)(c) poses several methodological difficulties. For example, how should the Court determine which domestic legal systems it must examine and how many must it examine? Arguably, it needs to examine a representative survey that includes the world’s principal legal systems.\textsuperscript{136} Similarly, how should the Court derive one formulation of a particular principle given the undoubtedly different ways in which principles are codified across different states?\textsuperscript{137} However, these questions exceed the scope of this study.\textsuperscript{138} For present purposes, it is sufficient to note that Article 21(1)(c) creates the possibility for the ICC to derive human rights principles from domestic legal systems, and apply these in its proceedings. To date, the Court has rarely resorted to Article 21(1)(c). The decisions that have addressed this provision have not formulated a principled understanding of the scope of this source. Two notable examples of decisions on this provision did relate to issues of procedural law, unlike its decisions on Article 21(1)(b), but the Court’s examination did not touch upon human rights related issues.\textsuperscript{139} As a result, it is difficult to assess this provision’s potential for importing IHRL principles into the law and practice of the Court. Still, the wording of the provision supports such potential, and the possible human rights principle that the Court may derive could arguably be considered general principles of law as a source of international law within the meaning of Article 38(1)(c) ICJ Statute.

3.1.6. Interim conclusion

Article 21(1) provides a hierarchical list of sources of law that the Court may apply. Both subsidiary sources listed may contain international human rights norms. ‘Rules and principles of international law’ are generally considered to refer to customary international law, and general principles of international law. As a result, insofar as international human rights

\textsuperscript{135} Pellet (n 90), 1068.
\textsuperscript{136} McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 710; Pellet (n 90), 1073; Raimondo (n 123), 57.
\textsuperscript{137} See eg Raimondo (n 123), 52, who notes that in order to derive a general principle, the specific rules in domestic legal need not be identical, but the principles underlying the rules should be similar and the Court should look for the common denominator.
\textsuperscript{138} For an interesting interpretation of the meaning of this provision, see: Hochmayr (n 88), 670-672.
\textsuperscript{139} See eg ICC, Judgement on the Prosecutor’s Application for Extraordinary Review of PTC I’s 31 March 2006 Decision Denying Leave to Appeal, Situation in the DRC (ICC-01/04-168), 13 July 2006, 24-32, where the Appeals Chamber assessed the Prosecutor’s submissions regarding the existence of a general principle of law ‘entailing the review of decisions of hierarchically subordinate courts disallowing or not permitting an appeal; ICC, Decision on the Practice of Witness Familiarisation and Witness Proofing, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-679), 8 November 2006, 37-42, where the Pre-Trial Chamber examines the Prosecutor’s submissions regarding the existence of a general principle of law permitting the practice of “witness proofing”.
norms are contained in these sources of law, the ICC may apply them under Article 21(1)(b). The same goes for Article 21(1)(c), which refers to principles derived from national law: as a result of their incorporation in domestic legal systems, international human rights norms may have impacted on the formation of such general principles of law.

In addition, IHRL has had a legislative influence on the ICC through the incorporation of particular human rights provisions in the internal legal instruments of the Court. The internal legal instruments of the ICC provide for rights of suspects and accused persons, and contain numerous procedures aimed at safeguarding such rights. At the same time, Article 21(1)(b) and (c) allow the Court to make further use of IHRL, where its primary law is silent. However, the case law of the Court to date has done little to clarify the nature and scope of the subsidiary sources of applicable law and resort to these subsidiary sources of law has thus far focused almost exclusively on issues of substantive law, not on the procedural rights of suspects and accused persons. The ICC’s reliance on external sources of IHRL with regard to procedural issues has almost exclusively occurred under the heading of Article 21(3), which is the subject of the subsequent section.

3.2. Article 21(3): Consistency with internationally recognized human rights

Article 21(3) purports to regulate the impact of international human rights norms on the law and practice of the ICC, in providing that ‘the interpretation and application of law pursuant to this Statute must be consistent with internationally recognized human rights’. This provision has been the engine of the ICC’s employment of sources of IHRL and precedents from human rights courts and supervisory bodies. Essentially, it obliges the Court to act in full accordance with international human rights norms. Thereby, it creates a normative hierarchy, in which such norms are superior to those contained in the Court’s internal legal instruments, including the Statute. Despite the clear wording of the provision, Article 21(3) has given rise to debates about its normative effect. This section first addresses whether the provision elevates human rights norms to a status superior to the ICC’s internal law. Second, it will be argued that Article 21(3) creates an obligation for the Court to subject all its actions to consistency review with human rights norms, and that this review duty extends so far as to oblige to Court to set aside the Statute if internationally recognized human rights so require. Third, this section addresses the persisting confusion regarding both the normative effect and the scope of Article 21(3).
Although Article 21(3) gave rise to much debate at Rome, the *travaux préparatoires* of the Statute reveal that the part of the provision that is relevant to this study was subject to little to no discussion during the drafting of the Statute.140 The draft provision first appeared in the official Preparatory Committee documents in the draft Statute during its March-April 1998 session.141 However, it did not include further comments as to the exact meaning of the terms used, nor did it further specify the envisaged implications of the provision. Discussions on Article 21(3) centred on the desired definition of gender (or sex) as a prohibited ground of discrimination, not on the provision that relates to human rights.142 This might mean that there was little objection to subjecting all the ICC’s application and interpretation of law to the requirement of consistency with internationally recognized human rights.143

3.2.1. *Superiority of ‘internationally recognized human rights’*

A plain reading of the text of Article 21(3) actually leaves little room for discussion: all interpretation and application of law by the Court must be in line with internationally recognized human rights. This makes these norms a type of *lex superior*. Nevertheless, several authors have contested the conclusion that Article 21(3) makes internationally recognized human rights superior to the Statute.144 According to Gallant, such rights are adopted ‘as part of the ICC Statute’, and ‘[t]hey are not stated as being superior to the ICC Statute itself’; therefore, any inconsistency between the Statute and an internationally recognized human right should not be automatically solved in favor of the right.145

Similarly, it has been argued that Article 21(3) does not explicitly establish the superiority of human rights ‘as such’; according to Hafner and Binder, a distinction has to be made between the scope of the norm and its application. The interpretation and application of

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142 Schabas, *The International Criminal Court* (n 103), 398.

143 United Nations Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court, ‘Summary records of the plenary meetings and of the meetings of the Committee of the Whole’ (1998) UN Doc A/CONF.183/13 (Vol.II), 221-224; only the Islamic Republic of Iran suggested that ‘in view of the differences between the various legal systems as far as the concept of human rights was concerned, it might be better to speak of human rights norms recognized by the international community or recognized by the main legal systems’, but this comment was not followed up.


rules of the Statute may have to be consistent with internationally recognized human rights, but in their reasoning, that does not mean that the Statute as such is inferior to human rights. Furthermore, they argue that the placing of Article 21(3) as the final paragraph of the provision on applicable law militates against superiority of human rights. If that had been intended, the paragraph would have been placed earlier on in the provision. Moreover, other provisions of the Statute also refer to internationally recognized human rights, for example, with regard to the exclusion of evidence. According to these authors, this would not have been necessary if Article 21(3) had already established the absolute superiority of these norms. Also, given the exhaustive and detailed nature of the procedural and substantive legal framework of the Court, it has been argued to be unlikely that the drafters intended to allow ‘a notion as imprecise as internationally recognized human rights’ to trump the Statute. Finally, they propose that the wording and structure of Article 21 actually indicate a primacy of the Statute, while they concede that other sources of applicable law are inferior to internationally recognized human rights.

Similarly, Verhoeven contends that Article 21(3) cannot imply that human rights systematically trump the Statute. In his reasoning, that would mean that if the court found a rule in its statutory framework to conflict with ‘internationally recognized human rights’, it would have to create law, which is, according to Verhoeven, not for a (criminal) Court to do. In addition, he argues that criminal law rules are of an ‘ordre public’ character, which, according to the author, means that they should preferably be construed in the way so as to avoid conflicts with other norms of such a character, including human rights. However, if consistent interpretation appears impossible, ‘they cannot be set aside simply because of such inconsistency’. In order to solve such interpretational problems, Verhoeven suggests that where the procedural and substantive norms of the Statute cannot be reconciled with internationally recognized human rights, the Court must turn to ‘the will of the international community’. However, he does not elaborate this further.

The ordinary meaning of the terms of Article 21(3) does not allow for a different conclusion than that it elevates human rights norms to the status of lex superior. Although the

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146 Hafner and Binder (n 144) 174; see also Gallant, ‘Individual Human Rights in a New International Organization’ (n 98), 702.
147 Hafner and Binder (n 144), 174.
148 ibid, 175.
149 ibid.
150 ibid, 176-177.
151 Verhoeven (n 94), 14-15.
152 ibid, 14.
153 ibid, 15.
Statute is the primary source of applicable law, Article 21(3) requires the law contained in this source, as well as the other sources listed in Article 21(1), to be interpreted and applied in a manner that is ‘consistent with internationally recognized human rights’. Article 21(3) makes no distinction between the different sources listed in the first paragraph of the provision, as a result of which the consistency review must apply to all sources, including the Statute. A proper understanding of Article 21(3) therefore implies that if the Statute or the other sources leave room for an interpretation of their terms that is in accordance with such rights, this line of interpretation must be followed. However, if the judges conclude that inconsistencies arise between the Statute and internationally recognized human rights that cannot be solved by means of interpretation, the Court cannot apply the provision in question. Any other conclusion would contravene the wording of Article 21(3), which does not provide for any exceptions to its mandatory rule of consistency. If the drafters of the Statute had not intended Article 21(3) to create a superiority of internationally recognized human rights over the Statute, this could have simply been specified in the provision by exempting the Statute from the consistency requirement.

Verhoeven’s argument that a power of the Court to set aside statutory provisions if they are inconsistent with internationally recognized human rights would be in contravention of the principle of legality is not without merit. Criminal courts should be strictly bound by the limits of their provisions on definitions of crimes and modes of responsibility, so as to respect the principle of nullum crimen sine lege and the rights of the accused. However, the principle of legality, enshrined in the Rome Statute in Articles 22 through 24, is part of internationally recognized human rights.154 As a result, a proper understanding of Article 21(3) would also require the application and interpretation of law in a manner that is consistent with the principle of legality.155 Furthermore, during the drafting of the Rome Statute, ‘there was virtual unanimity among delegations as to the desirability of stipulating that the interpretation of law must be consistent with internationally recognized human rights.’156 The chair of the drafting committee has noted that this part of the provision was never seriously questioned during the drafting.157

154 See generally: Kenneth Gallant, The Principle of Legality in International and Comparative Criminal Law (CUP 2009), 156-230, where the author traces the development of this principle in IHRL.
155 Grover (n 39), 562, who argues that Article 21(3) must be read in conjunction with the principle of in dubio pro reo, enshrined in Article 22(2) of the ICC Statute, which would work in conjunction to prevent the broad construction of definitions of crimes and modes of liability.
156 McAuliffe deGuzman (n 37), 711
157 Saland (n 92), 216; similarly Hafner and Binder (n 144), 167: ‘the need for the court to adhere to human rights standards when exercising its functions seemed widely accepted.’
Pellet has described the system created by Article 21(3) as ‘a super-legality in favor of international human rights law’, and he contends that human rights norms take precedence over all other applicable legal rules. Similarly, it has been held that ‘the ordinary meaning of the text is that the law referred to in art. 21 cannot be applied where inconsistent with human rights norms’, which means that human rights norms trump norms contained in the Statute, in case of conflict. Any other interpretation of the provision, according to which the Statute would be superior to human rights, would still allow the ICC to interpret and apply norms in a manner that would violate such rights, which would go against the terms of Article 21(3). As a result, ‘the standards specified in Article 21(3) will prevail, by virtue of higher normative force, over any other applicable norm of the ICC law, by shaping the manner in which it must be interpreted and applied.’

Such a reading of the provision is supported by the practice of the Court. For example, the Appeals Chamber has stated that ‘Article 21(3) makes the interpretation as well as the application of the law applicable under the Statute subject to internationally recognised human rights.’ The Appeals Chamber continued to explain that ‘[h]uman rights underpin the Statute; every aspect of it, including the exercise of the jurisdiction of the Court. Its provisions must be interpreted and more importantly applied in accordance with internationally recognized human rights’. Numerous other decisions have confirmed, implicitly or explicitly, that internationally recognized human rights are superior to the Statute. This is illustrated most neatly by the decisions of the ICC, discussed below, to create procedural remedies that find no explicit support in the Court’s internal legal instruments, and by its decision to set

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158 Pellet (n 90), 1077, 1080; Daniel Sheppard, ‘The International Criminal Court and ”Internationally Recognized Human Rights”: Understanding Article 21(3) of the Rome Statute’ (2010) 10 Int'l Crim L Rev 43, 46, who calls it a ‘quasi-constitutional provision’, because it places human rights norms even above the provisions of the Statute itself, Perrin (n 37), 398: ‘Article 21 has taken the unprecedented step of raising all [human rights] norms to the level of quasi-constitutional status in a manner that can allow the judges of the ICC to effectively rewrite international criminal law with the stroke of a pen.’; Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 132: the provision ‘unequivocally elevates internationally recognized human rights to the status of superior norms’.

159 Akande (n 39), 47; similarly Britti (n 88), 303; Göran Sluiter, ‘Human Rights Protection in the ICC Pre-Trial Phase’ in Carsten Stahn and Göran Sluiter (eds), The Emerging Practice of the International Criminal Court (Koninklijke Brill NV 2009), 463: ‘both primary sources of law – the statute, rules and elements of crimes-, and the secondary gap-filling sources are subject to a consistency-review in light of international human rights standards’; Hochmayr (n 88), 677.

160 Sheppard (n 158), 59.

161 Vasiliev, ‘Proofing the Ban on Witness Proofing’ (n 91), 215.

162 ICC, Judgment on the Appeal of Mr Lubanga against the Decision on the Defence Challenge to the Jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to Article 19 (2) (a) of the Statute of 3 October 2006, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-772), 14 December 2006, 36; see also ICC, Decision on Victims’ Participation, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-1119), 18 January 2008, 35.

163 ICC, Judgment on the Appeal of Mr. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo against the Decision on the Defence Challenge to the Jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to Article 19 (2) (a) of the Statute of 3 October 2006, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-772), 14 December 2006, 37.
aside the Statute when applying its provisions would have violated internationally recognized human rights.

3.2.2. Normative effect: Mandatory review of consistency with human rights

Some uncertainties remain regarding the normative effect of Article 21(3). Some authors have contended that the provision imports human rights into the applicable law of the court, thus adding a source of law to those enumerated under Article 21(1). Others, however, maintain that this is a principle of interpretation, which does not create an additional source of law, but rather subjects the applicable sources to consistency review with certain norms. The latter view is adopted here. Article 21(1) exhaustively lists the sources of law, and had ‘internationally recognized human rights’ been intended to be an additional and distinct source of applicable law, it would have been included there. These rights are not a source of law in the formal sense, but rather provide a set of rules and principles that the Court must follow in its interpretation and application of its applicable law. Internationally recognized human rights constitute a category of norms, which have been selected on the basis of their subject matter, rather than their formal status. Article 21(3) does not establish a formal hierarchy of sources, but a substantive hierarchy of norms. These norms ‘defy the hierarchy of sources’, since they must be considered regardless of which source of law the Court is employing. As a result, the provision is a mandatory principle of consistency. The applicable law, and the hierarchy among the applicable sources, is provided in Article 21(1), while Article 21(3) provides that the interpretation and application of these sources must be consistent with internationally recognized human rights norms.

The ICC has confirmed this understanding of the provision, stating that ‘prior to undertaking the analysis required by Article 21(3) of the Statute, the Chamber must find a provision, rule or principle that, under Article 21(1)(a) to (c) of the Statute, could be applicable

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164 See eg Sheppard (n 158), 60; Hochmayr (n 88), 677.
165 Similarly Schabas, The International Criminal Court (n 103), 385; Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 133.
166 Pellet (n 90), 1077: ‘the formal hierarchy created between the sources of applicable law (in Article 21(1)) is overlaid by another substantial hierarchy between the applicable norms: some are superior to others, not by reason of their formal source, but due to their subject-matter or their veritable substance.’
167 Vasiliev, ‘Proofing the Ban on Witness Proofing’ (n 91), 214.
168 ibid, 216; Saland (n 92), 213, the author, who chaired the Working Group on Applicable Law during the Rome Conference, refers to the provision as a ‘general consistency test’; similarly Gallant, ‘Individual Human Rights in a New International Organization’ (n 98), 704; Rebecca Young, ‘Internationally Recognized Human Rights’ before the International Criminal Court’ (2011) 60 Int’l & Comp L Q 189, 207.
169 Similarly Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 132, who contends that Article 21(3) formalizes the function of internationally recognized human rights norms as ‘the obligatory and prime interpretive devices’ for the Statute.
to the issue at hand.\textsuperscript{170} The normative force of human rights is arguably just as strong, or even stronger than if they had been included as a source of law, because in such an understanding of the provision, it allows human rights norms ‘to soar, in terms of its normative force, above all applicable norms regardless of their origin in any of the ICC sources, with the crucial obligation on the Court to use it ceaselessly in the review of possible outcomes of its interpretation and application of the entirety of ICC law’.\textsuperscript{171}

The Court generally employs an understanding of Article 21(3) as a mandatory framework for the interpretation and application of the applicable sources provided by Article 21(1), with the added function of creating the power to override these sources where they are inconsistent with this framework.\textsuperscript{172} Two similar approaches can be discerned in the Court’s case law. At times, it notes its obligation under Article 21(3) prior to its analysis of the applicable law and lists a number of provisions from international human rights treaties that it has taken into account.\textsuperscript{173} More often, however, the Court reiterates its obligation under Article 21(3) subsequent to its analysis of the issues at hand, and simply notes that the decision it has reached is consistent with internationally recognized human rights.\textsuperscript{174}

However, it must be noted that the Court’s interpretation and application of the provision ‘is yet to reflect a consistent understanding’.\textsuperscript{175} This manifests itself predominantly in

\textsuperscript{170} ICC, Decision on the Practices of Witness Familiarisation and Witness Proofing, \textit{Prosecutor v. Lubanga} (ICC-01/04-01/06-679), 8 November 2006, 10; similarly ICC, Decision on Amicus Curiae Application and on the “Requête tendant à obtenir présentations des témoins DRC-D02-P-0350, DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 aux autorités néerlandaises aux fins d’asile”, \textit{Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo} (ICC-01/04-01/07-3003-tENG), 9 June 2011, 62, where it stated that Article 21(3) required the interpretation and application of the sources from Article 21(1), in a manner that is consistent with internationally recognized human rights.

\textsuperscript{171} Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 133.

\textsuperscript{172} ibid, 134; Young (n 168), 198: who regards it as ‘a mandatory rule which affects the identification and use of all sources of law under the statute.’


\textsuperscript{174} ICC, Judgment on the appeal of the Prosecutor against the decision of Pre-Trial Chamber I entitled “First Decision on the Prosecution Request for Authorisation to Redact Witness Statements”, \textit{Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo} (ICC-01/04-01/07-475), 13 May 2008, 57; ICC, Decision on the Prosecutor’s Application for a Warrant of Arrest against Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, \textit{Prosecutor v. Bemba} (ICC-01/05-01/08-14-tENG), 10 June 2008, 90: ‘In reaching this decision, the Chamber has taken account of internationally recognized human rights in accordance with Article 21(3) of the Statute.’; ICC, Decision on Application by Victims to Participate in the Proceedings, \textit{Prosecutor v. Lubanga} (ICC-01/04-01/06-1556), 15 December 2008, 95; ICC, Judgment on the Appeal of Mr Germain Katanga against the Decision of Trial Chamber II of 21 November 2012 entitled “Decision on the Implementation of Regulation 55 of the Regulations of the Court and Severing the Charges against the Accused Persons”, \textit{Prosecutor v. Katanga} (ICC-01/04-01/07-3363) 27 March 2013, 86. See also Young (n 168), 202, who notes a similar pattern.

\textsuperscript{175} Young (n 168), 189.
the Court’s approach to the scope of ‘internationally recognized human rights’. It remains unclear how the Court decides which norms fall within this category. At the same time, the Court has at times shown a lack of certainty as to the actual effect of the provision. For example, it has been referred to as a general principle of interpretation that only comes into play if there is a gap in the Statute, which fails to acknowledge the mandatory consistency that the provision requires. In principle, Article 21(3) can be regarded as an interpretative principle, as long the mandatory nature of consistent interpretation is acknowledged and put into effect.

Some—early—decisions have displayed this limited understanding of Article 21(3). For example, the Appeals Chamber once held that it did not consider it necessary to address the human rights aspects of the pre-trial detention of the appellant, because it had already come to a conclusion ‘based on the fundamental legal texts of the Court’. Similarly, a Pre-Trial Chamber has held that gaps in the Statute must be filled by resort to Article 21(3). These decisions suggest the superiority of the Statute over internationally recognized human rights, in that the latter only come into play once a gap in the former is established. Such an understanding of Article 21(3) is contrary to the wording of the provision, which establishes a clear obligation of result, that all interpretation and application of law must be consistent with internationally recognized human rights.

However, this lacuna-approach to Article 21(3) has disappeared from the later case law of the Court. The majority of the Court’s decisions that refer to Article 21(3) affirm that the provision creates a normative hierarchy in which internationally recognized human rights trump the Statute. The Appeals Chamber has consistently reiterated that it is imperative that the provisions of the Statute, and indeed the entire Statute, be ‘interpreted and applied in accordance with internationally recognized human rights’, as required by Article 21(3).

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176 See further infra section 4.
177 ICC, Judgment on the Appeal of Mr. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo Against the Decision of Pre-Trial Chamber I Entitled “Décision sur la Demande de Mise en Liberté Provisoire de Thomas Lubanga Dyilo”, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-02/04-01/06-824), 13 February 2007, para 107.
178 ICC, Decision on the Prosecution’s Application for a Warrant of Arrest against Omar Hassan Ahmad Al Bashir, Prosecutor v. Al Bashir (ICC-02/05-01/09-3), 4 March 2009, 44, 156.
179 Bitti (n 88), 303; similarly Young (n 168), 201.
180 ICC, Judgement on the Prosecutor’s Application for Extraordinary Review of PTC I’s 31 March 2006 Decision Denying Leave to Appeal, Situation in the DRC (ICC-01/04-0168), 13 July 2006, 38; ICC, Judgment on the Appeal of Mr Lubanga against the Decision on the Defence Challenge to the Jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to Article 19 (2) (a) of the Statute of 3 October 2006, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-772), 14 December 2006, 36; ICC, Judgment in the appeal by Ngudjolo Chui of 27 March 2008 against the decision of PTC I on the Application of the Appellant for Interim Release, Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo (ICC-01/04-01/07-572), 9 June 2008, 15; ICC, Judgment on the appeal of the Prosecutor against the decision of TC I “Decision on the consequences of non-disclosure of exculpatory materials covered b art. 54(3)(e) agreements and the application to stay the prosecution of the accused, together with certain other issues raised at the status conference on 10 June 2008, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-1486), 21 October 2008, 46; ICC, Judgement...
and Pre-Trial Chambers follow a similar approach. For example, the importance of disclosure to the defence, the threshold of ‘reasonable grounds to believe a crime within the jurisdiction of the Court has been committed’, and the scope and content of victims’ participatory rights, as well as the right of the accused to a fair trial and to be presumed innocent have all been shaped in light of internationally recognized human rights.\textsuperscript{181} The Court thus employs Article 21(3) as a mechanism that ‘works in conjunction with, and thereby expands human rights protections that are specifically enumerated in the Statute.’\textsuperscript{182} The Court often refers to Article 21(3) as a general principle of interpretation.\textsuperscript{183} Such references to Article 21(3) as a principle of interpretation do not detract from its normative force; it is only when the Court employs this principle as a gap-filling mechanism that the superiority of human rights is not properly acknowledged.

Another question concerns the methodological implications of Article 21(3). The provision provides the Court with a power to create procedural remedies where the Statute is

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182 Young (n 168), 199-200.

silent on a matter, or even to alter the legal framework of the Statute if doing so is necessary to ensure consistency with internationally recognized human rights. Academic commentary has often referred to the generative power of Article 21(3). The Court has endorsed the interpretation of Article 21(3) as mandating the ICC to go beyond the provisions of the Statute if internationally recognized human rights so require. Early on in its case law, the ICC has held that the Chamber may be required to ‘exceed the specific terms of Article 67 of the Statute’ to ensure the proper protection of human rights. Furthermore, the Appeals Chamber relied on Article 21(3) when it concluded that the remedy of a stay of proceedings, although absent from the Statute, was an inherent power of the Court. It emphasized that ‘[a] fair trial is the only means to do justice. If no fair trial can be held, the object of the judicial process is frustrated and the process must be stopped.’ When the Chamber decided to actually stay the proceedings, it also did so relying on Article 21(3). The Court’s power to stay the proceedings, based on Article 21(3), has been reaffirmed in subsequent case law. This is not the only example of the generative power of Article 21(3). For example, the ICC has also held that it has a positive obligation to fund the visits of family members to detained accused persons, in order to ensure their internationally recognized human right to family life, despite

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184 Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 3), 93; Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 135: ‘the provision may be deemed to have an overt generative function, a power-conferring function, or to enable the court to deduce – rather than generate – remedies that are already implicit in its applicable law and follow from it as a matter of course.’ Sheppard (n 158), 60, who states that human rights law is therefore somewhat of a ‘source of applicable law in and of itself;’see also Bitti (n 88), 300, 303.


186 ICC, Judgment on the Appeal of Mr. Thomas Lubanga Dyilo against the Decision on the Defence Challenge to the Jurisdiction of the Court pursuant to Article 19 (2) (a) of the Statute of 3 October 2006, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-772), 14 December 2006, 37.


188 ICC, Decision and Abuse of Process Challenges, Prosecutor v. Bemba (ICC-01/05-01/08-802), 28 June 2010, 252: ‘On the basis of the rights of the accused enshrined in the Statute, and applying the provisions of Articles 21(3) and 64(6)(f) of the Statute, the Chamber should stay the proceedings if a violation of the accused's rights render a fair trial impossible.’ ICC, Redacted Decision on the “Defence Application Seeking a Permanent Stay of the Proceedings”, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-2690-Red2), 7 March 2011, 160: ‘the doctrine of abuse of process has had, ab initio, a human rights dimension (given it is largely associated with remedying breaches of the rights of the accused), that the rights of the accused safeguarded by the Statute should be interpreted and applied subject to internationally recognised human rights standards (see Article 21(3) of the Statute). In this context the jurisdiction of the Court is to be exercised in accordance with internationally recognised human rights norms’.  

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the fact that the Court’s internal legal instruments did not provide for such a power.189 These decisions confirm that the Court’s obligation to respect internationally recognized human rights extends beyond the Statute, which has been termed the ‘power-conferring function of human rights norms’. 190

In addition to its interpretation of law, Article 21(3) requires the Court to apply the law consistent with internationally recognized human rights. This supports the contention that Article 21(3) requires more than consistent interpretation of existing sources of law in conformity with human rights.191 The Appeals Chamber has emphasized that ‘Article 21 (3) of the Statute makes the interpretation as well as the application of the law applicable under the Statute subject to internationally recognized human rights.’192 Such an emphasis on application as a distinctive and equally important aspect of the obligation enshrined in Article 21(3) can be found in numerous decisions of the ICC.193 Such emphasis on application underlines the normative force of Article 21(3), because it suggests that, when the applicable law of the Court cannot be interpreted in the manner consistent with human rights norms, this law cannot be applied and the applicable law, including the Statute, must be set aside.194 This is not a

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191 Pellet (n 90), 1080, where he argues that describing Article 21(3) as only relevant for interpretative purposes neglects the very wording of the provision, which speaks of interpretation and application having to be consistent with internationally recognized human rights, which therefore take precedence over all other applicable rules. Similarly Hafner and Binder (n 144), 172.


194 Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 135.
gap-filling function but a ‘logical corollary of the interpretation and application of the proper
law of the ICC in light of internationally recognized human rights’.195

The ICC has confirmed that Article 21(3) requires it to set aside the Statute if doing
otherwise would violate internationally recognized human rights.196 The Court faced an un-
precedented situation in which several detained witnesses had requested asylum in the Neth-
erlands, but had to be returned to the DRC pursuant to Article 93(7) of the Statute. The wit-
nesses attempted to halt their return. In its decision on this issue, the Chamber relied on the
right to request asylum, the principle of non-refoulement, and the right to an effective reme-
dy. It held that ‘[a]s provided in Article 21(3) of the Statute, the Chamber must apply all of
the relevant statutory or regulatory provisions in such a way as to ensure full exercise of the
right to an effective remedy.’197 Subsequently, the Chamber considered the right to request
asylum to be an internationally recognized human right and decided that sending these wit-
nesses back to the DRC would violate their rights. Therefore, the Court was ‘unable to apply
Article 93(7) of the Statute in conditions which are consistent with internationally recognised
human rights, as required by Article 21(3) of the Statute.’198 As a result, it decided to set
aside its obligation under Article 93(7) of the Statute and, instead, to keep these witnesses in
detention pending the outcome of their asylum requests in the Netherlands. This also shows
that the scope of protection of Article 21(3) extends to anyone implicated by the activities of
the ICC.199

3.2.3. Persisting uncertainty: The ICC and the detained witnesses

Subsequent developments in the case involving the detained witnesses reflect that confusion
persists regarding the normative effect of Article 21(3). It must be admitted that the Court
faced an unprecedented situation, with witnesses caught in a diplomatic struggle between the
Court, the DRC, and the Netherlands. As a result of its decision of August 2011, the Court
could not return the witnesses to the DRC as long as their asylum applications in the Nether-
lands were pending, because doing so would violate their right to request asylum. The ICC
has held, on multiple occasions, that it would not be able to hold the witnesses in custody

195 Vasiliev, ‘Proofing the Ban on Witness Proofing’ (n 91), 218-219.
197 ICC, Decision on Amicus Curiae Application and on the “Requête tendant à obtenir présentations des té-
moins DRC-D02-P-0350, DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 aux autorités néerlandaise aux fins d’asile”,
Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo (ICC-01/04-01/07-3003-tENG), 9 June 2011, 70.
198 ibid, 73.
199 Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 3), 86.
indefinitely.200 However, despite repeated urges to the Netherlands to decide swiftly on the asylum applications and to enter into negotiations with the Court on the status of these witnesses, they have been detained at the ICC’s detention unit for more than three years.201

After around two years of detention, the witnesses applied for interim release, alleging that their continued detention without any possibility for review was in violation of internationally recognized human rights. In its decision on this issue, the Chamber backtracked from its previous position regarding the effect of Article 21(3). It held that the ICC itself was not responsible for the detention of the witnesses, because the title of their detention was Congolese. Therefore, the Chamber held that it was unable to review their detention, because that would require it to review the reasons for their detention, which was within the exclusive purview of the Congolese authorities. If it would decide to do so, said the Chamber, it ‘would evidently be acting as a court of human rights – it was never conceived as such, and Article 21(3) of the Statute does not require it to ensure that States Parties respect internationally recognised human rights in their domestic proceedings.’202

What is more, the Chamber offered additional considerations regarding the scope and effect of Article 21(3) that significantly detract from its previous approach. According to the Chamber, Article 21 of the Statute ‘enshrines in no uncertain terms the primacy of the Rome Statute as the founding text over the other sources of law enumerated by the provision.’203 It then reinterpreted its previous decision, in which it had set aside the Statute, as having been based on ‘the risk of the immediate violation of a fundamental norm of international customary law whose peremptoriness finds increasing recognition among States and from which no derogation is permitted’, ie the rule of non-refoulement.204 However, the original decision

200 ICC, Decision on Amicus Curiae Application and on the “Requête tendant à obtenir présentations des témoins DRC-D02-P-0350, DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 aux autorités néerlandaises aux fins d’asile”, Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo (ICC-01/04-01/07-3003-tENG), 9 June 2011, 85; see further: ICC, Decision on the Request for Release of Witnesses DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3352), 8 February 2013, 11-12; ICC, Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRCD02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3405-tENG), 1 October 2013, 23: ‘the Chamber has considered it necessary to underline on a number of occasions, notably on 8 February 2013, that the processing of the witnesses’ asylum applications could not be the cause of unreasonable extension of their detention in The Hague and that, pursuant to Article 21(3), among others, the Court could not contemplate holding them in its custody indefinitely. In so ruling, the Chamber was seeking to demonstrate how imperative it was, in its view, for the Dutch authorities to adjudge the asylum applications forthwith and to even consider, if necessary, taking on the witnesses’ custody hitherto assumed ad interim by the Court.’

201 See, eg: ICC, Decision on the Request for Release of Witnesses DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3352), 8 February 2013, 22.

202 ICC, Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRCD02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3405-tENG), 1 October 2013, 27.

203 ibid, 29.

204 ibid, 30.
was primarily based on the witnesses’ right to request asylum, albeit in conjunction with their right to an effective remedy and the principle of non-refoulement. This is further illustrated by the fact that the ICC subsequently decided that it had received sufficient guarantees from the DRC so that it could return the witnesses without impinging on the principle of non-refoulement, yet it still decided that the witnesses could not be returned to the DRC, pending their asylum application.\textsuperscript{205}

The Chamber drew a distinction between what it called the fundamental rule of non-refoulement and the right to liberty, which it said ‘cannot be considered an intransgressible or peremptory norm of international law.’\textsuperscript{206} In addition, the Chamber held that the witnesses could challenge their detention before the Congolese authorities.\textsuperscript{207} Interestingly, the Chamber did appeal to the Netherlands again, considering that it might have ‘the duty in certain circumstances to take the necessary measures to prevent or end a human rights violation on their territory’, essentially hinting that if the Netherlands considered continued ‘detention by the DRC’ on Dutch territory ‘antithetical to their international obligations, they could consider themselves duty-bound to take all appropriate measures.’\textsuperscript{208} This is peculiar, since the Court itself had just determined that the detention of the witnesses was not in violation of internationally recognized human rights.

This decision displays a high level of unease with the detention of the witnesses, but it seems as though implicit considerations led the Court to refrain from acting in line with the right to liberty, as would have been appropriate. Judge Van den Wyngaert dissented and issued an opinion in which she criticized the majority’s finding. Aply, she noted that ‘[d]espite the clear language of these previous decisions, my colleagues’ view regarding the scope of Article 21(3) seems to have changed.’\textsuperscript{209} She confirmed the suggestion that the Chamber refused to review the witnesses detention because doing so ‘would undermine the essence of the cooperation regime and would affect the fundamental principle of state sovereignty.’\textsuperscript{210}

Regarding the majority’s distinction between the effects of the rule of non-refoulement, on

\textsuperscript{205} ICC, Decision on the Security Situation of witnesses DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo (ICC-01/04-01/07-3128), 24 August 2011, 15.

\textsuperscript{206} ICC, Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRCD02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3405-tENG), 1 October 2013, 33, where the Chamber noted, amongst other things, that there are numerous exceptions to the right to liberty (and its corollary, the prohibition on arbitrary arrest and detention).

\textsuperscript{207} ibid, 34.

\textsuperscript{208} ibid, 35.

\textsuperscript{209} ICC, Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRCD02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Dissenting Opinion of Judge Christine van den Wyngaert, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3405-tENG), 1 October 2013, 3.

\textsuperscript{210} ibid, 3.
the one hand, and of the right to liberty, on the other hand, she pointed out the shortcomings of their reasoning. She noted that Article 21(3) requires the Court to interpret and apply the Statute in line with *internationally recognized human rights*, not norms of *ius cogens* or non-derogable norms. Furthermore, she noted that the majority’s assertion that the right to liberty is not intransgressible or peremptory is of ‘doubtful legal merit’, and more importantly, fails to answer the question whether this right could be limited in this specific case.\(^{211}\) According to Judge Van den Wyngaert, ‘the Majority’s total deference to the state sovereignty of the DRC not only completely ignores the Court’s obligations under Article 21(3) but also undermines [IHRL], which exists precisely in order to protect individuals against the powers of the state.’\(^{212}\) In the remainder of her dissent, Judge Van den Wyngaert applied a correct understanding of Article 21(3), assessing the continued detention of the witnesses based on their right to liberty, as enshrined in human rights conventions and the case law of the HRC, E CtHR, and the IACtHR.\(^{213}\) According to Judge Van den Wyngaert, ‘the Court is under an obligation to apply and interpret the Statute in conformity with internationally recognised human rights norms in all circumstances, including when they are exceptional and unprecedented, it therefore seems necessary for the Court to review the arbitrariness of the continued detention of the Detained Witnesses itself.’\(^{214}\) She found their detention to be in violation of the witnesses’ right to liberty, and concluded that ‘[t]he only remedy for this continuing violation is [their] immediate release.’\(^{215}\)

The Appeals Chamber subsequently declined to allow an appeal on the matter, because of the limited scope of the right to appeal, as enshrined in the Statute.\(^{216}\) This also goes against the wording of Article 21(3), which enshrines the supremacy of human rights vis-à-vis the Statute. Judge Song dissented, relying on Article 21(3) and the right to liberty, in particular on the right to review of detention. He considered that the witnesses were currently detained ‘as a result of a decision of this Court … Accordingly, it is the Court’s responsibility

\(^{211}\) ibid, 6.
\(^{212}\) ibid, 7.
\(^{213}\) ibid, 12-14.
\(^{214}\) ibid, 20.
\(^{215}\) ibid, 21.
\(^{216}\) ICC, Decision of the Appeal against the “Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRC-D02-P0236, DRC-D02-P0228 and DRC-D02-P0350”, *Prosecutor v. Katanga* (ICC-01/04-01/07-3424), 20 January 2014, 30: ‘The Appeals Chamber considers that the Detained Witnesses’ arguments regarding Article 21 (3) of the Statute are misplaced. The Detained Witnesses do not identify, nor does the Appeals Chamber find, an internationally recognised human right to appeal that requires the Appeals Chamber to expand its limited subject-matter appellate jurisdiction under the Statute, beyond the scope of the powers vested in it by the States Parties.’
to ensure their human right to judicial review of the lawfulness of their detention.’217 According to Judge Song, the Appeals Chamber’s narrow understanding of the right to appeal, as enshrined in the Statute, was irreconcilable with the obligation to interpret and apply the Statute consistently with internationally recognized human rights. ‘It would be an especially peculiar result for a court such as the ICC, which is meant to provide a forum to address the most serious human rights violations, not to be able to address and remedy human rights violations for which it itself is responsible.’218 He therefore held he would remit the matter to the Chamber, ordering it to decide on the lawfulness of the witnesses’ detention.

On the same day, the Appeals Chamber, acting proprio motu, also issued a decision in which it set aside all previous findings regarding the ICC’s inability to return the witnesses to the DRC, and ordered the Registrar to arrange for the witnesses’ imminent transfer.219 In what can only be qualified as a narrow understanding of the Court’s obligations under Article 21(3), the Appeals Chamber, by majority, considered that Article 21(3) could not require the ICC to ‘violate’ its obligation under Article 93(7) of the Statute to return the witnesses to the DRC. According to the Chamber, such an understanding of the provision ‘would seriously damage the Court’s ability to enter into future cooperation agreements with States, which would undermine the Court's ability to obtain needed testimony and evidence and render it more difficult to establish the truth in the cases before it.’220 Thereby, it exposed the underlying practical justifications for its decision to reverse its previous findings. The Appeals Chamber further noted that it was for the Netherlands to determine whether or not it had to intervene in the return of the witnesses to the DRC, were it to consider that its taking part in their return would violate its own obligations under national or international law regarding the asylum procedure.221 After all, the actual transfer of the witnesses from the Court’s detention facilities to the airport and onwards had to be carried out by the Dutch authorities. The Appeals Chamber thus shifted the responsibility for the protection of the rights of these witnesses to the Netherlands, neglecting its own possible – partial – responsibility. The Appeals Chamber did emphasize that the ICC had already found that its own obligations under the rule of non-refoulement had been discharged, given the assurances for protective measures.

218 ibid, 17.
220 ibid, 26.
221 ibid, 29.
from the DRC regarding these witnesses, which the Court had ordered in June 2011.\(^222\) However, the Appeals Chamber ignored another decision, taken simultaneously with the order for protective measures, that even if the DRC complied with the Court’s order for protective measures, it could only return the detained witnesses once and if the Dutch authorities had rejected their request for asylum.\(^223\) Regarding these findings, the Appeals Chamber instructed the Registrar to ‘consult with The Netherlands in order to establish a procedure for this implementation that permits the Host State to determine whether it is necessary to intervene based on its own obligations in relation the Detained Witnesses’ asylum claims.’\(^224\)

This approach seems similar to the one taken by the *Lubanga* Chamber when it was confronted with a comparable issue. In that case, the Chamber also limited its own obligation under Article 21(3) to ensuring that the witness has a real opportunity to request asylum, which obliged the Court only to grant him access to his lawyers while in ICC detention.\(^225\) The Chamber held that it was for the Netherlands to decide whether or not to intervene in order to take control of the witness, so as to allow the Netherlands to discharge its international obligations regarding the asylum request.\(^226\)

The ICC seems keenly aware of the human rights issues raised by these matters, but, faced with uncooperative domestic authorities of the Netherlands, which refused to accept these witnesses into their jurisdiction, the Court interpreted its obligations under Article 21(3) in a way that is at odds with its own established case law and the ordinary meaning of the provision. Admittedly, this situation was unprecedented and confronted the Court with a dif-

\(^{222}\) *ibid*, 31; ICC, Decision on the Security Situation of Three Detained Witnesses in Relation to their Testimony before the Court (art. 68 of the Statute) and Order for Request Cooperation from the DRC to Provide Assistance in Ensuring their Protection in Accordance with Article 93(1)(j) of the Statute, *Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo* (ICC-01/04-01/07-3033), 22 June 2011.

\(^{223}\) ICC, Decision on the Security Situation of Three Detained Witnesses in Relation to their Testimony before the Court (art. 68 of the Statute) and Order for Request Cooperation from the DRC to Provide Assistance in Ensuring their Protection in Accordance with Article 93(1)(j) of the Statute, *Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo* (ICC-01/04-01/07-3033), 22 June 2011, 42.

\(^{224}\) ICC, Order on the Implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between the Court and the Democratic Republic of the Congo Concluded pursuant Article 93 (7) of the Statute, *Prosecutor v. Ngudjolo* (ICC-01-04-02/12-158), 20 January 2014, 31. Subsequently, The Appeals Chamber reiterated its order for the transfer of the witnesses to the DRC after four months of inaction: ICC, Decision on the “Registry’s urgent request for guidance” and further order in relation to the Appeals Chamber’s “Order on the implementation of the cooperation agreement between the Court and the Democratic Republic of the Congo concluded pursuant Article 93 (7) of the Statute”, *Prosecutor v. Ngudjolo* (ICC-01-04-02/12-179), 21 May 2014, 8; subsequently, the witnesses were released from ICC detention and taken into ‘asylum detention’ by the Dutch authorities, which, after the rejection of the witnesses’ asylum request, sent them back to the DRC. See eg Tjitske Lingma, ‘The Hague Deports ICC Witnesses to DRC (International Justice Tribune 163, 9 July 2014) [http://www.justicetribune.com/Article/?tx_ijnArticles_homecarousel%5BArticle%5D=546&tx_ijnArticles_homecarousel%5BACTION%5D=show&tx_ijnArticles_homecarousel%5BController%5D=Article&cHash=b504824b5054dc38f5d2e6bd2c62176 & accessed 5 September 2014.

\(^{225}\) *ibid*, 87.

\(^{226}\) *ibid*, 31; ICC, Decision on the Security Situation of Three Detained Witnesses in Relation to their Testimony before the Court (art. 68 of the Statute) and Order for Request Cooperation from the DRC to Provide Assistance in Ensuring their Protection in Accordance with Article 93(1)(j) of the Statute, *Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo* (ICC-01-04-01/07-3033), 22 June 2011, 42.
ficult dilemma of either forcing the Netherlands to accept these individuals into their jurisdiction, or sending them back to the DRC, thereby hampering the effective application of their right to request asylum in the Netherlands. The Court’s decision to order the return of the witnesses to the DRC, while emphasizing the Netherlands’ possible obligation not to effectuate such transfer, and accept them into its jurisdiction instead, may have been implicitly intended to force the Netherlands to accept these individuals into their jurisdiction. However, from the perspective of the Court’s obligations to interpret and apply its applicable law consistently with internationally recognized human rights, the Court should have taken a more principled and explicit stance on the matter. As aptly noted by Judge Van den Wyngaert, the Court’s obligation under Article 21(3) also applies to exceptional and unprecedented cases.


Based on their internal law and practice the ICTs are bound by ‘internationally recognized human rights’. However, several questions remain regarding the scope and content of this category of norms, which complicates the ascertainment of the actual human rights norms that bind the ICTs.

When it comes to the ad hoc Tribunals, it is not entirely clear what category of norms is binding on them because they have been inconsistent in the terminology used to describe it. As has been seen in the above, the Tribunals have employed a wide variety of terms to describe the body of norms that they are bound by, including ‘internationally recognized standards’, ‘recognised principles of human rights’, ‘fundamental principles of international law’, ‘fundamental human rights’, ‘internationally recognized standards of fundamental human rights’, ‘imperative norms of international law’ and ‘generally accepted human rights norms’. The oft-quoted report of the UNSG stated that the ICTY had to respect ‘internationally recognized standards regarding the rights of the accused’. The content of these standards, however, remained ‘shrouded in obscurity’. In addition, the Tribunals have also been inconsistent in their identification of the source of their obligation to respect human rights norms. Such inconsistency betrays uncertainty regarding the applicable norms and

227 See supra section 2.2.
228 UNSC, ‘Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to Paragraph 2 of Security Council Resolution 808’ (3 May 1993) UN Doc S/25704, 106.
229 Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 96-97.
230 ibid, 110, where he notes that the approach to these issues has been inconsistent both across and within tribunals.
corresponding obligations of the Tribunals under IHRL. At the same time, it significantly diminishes the coherence and predictability of their approach to defining their human rights obligations.

The ad hoc Tribunals’ approach to the identification of the human rights norms that they apply in practice has been far from consistent. They have referred to a large variety of sources of human rights norms and granted them various degrees of authority, ranging from irrelevant to persuasive to binding. The ad hoc Tribunals have also proposed an equally wide variety of justifications for these approaches. For example, some decisions provide that the tribunals are bound by the ICCPR because it forms part of general international law, while the ECHR and ACHR are said to have ‘persuasive authority’, as a consequence of their being ‘evidence of international custom’.

However, these decisions fail to explain why the ICCPR is part of ‘general international law’, why the ECHR and ACHR are ‘evidence of international custom’, or what the concept of ‘persuasive authority’ means. Moreover, a subsequent decision of the same Appeals Chamber referred to the ICCPR as having ‘persuasive authority’, without acknowledging or justifying its apparent departure from its previous decisions.

Furthermore, a number of decisions of the ICTY have held that the Tribunal has an obligation to respect the ECHR, the legal basis for which was said to be that no distinction could be drawn between people standing trial at the domestic level and at the international level. At the same time, the ICTY has held that it is free to deviate from existing human rights standards because it is more akin to a military tribunal, with limited due process rights. Thus, the Tribunals have at times denied being formally ‘bound’ by human rights

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231 ICTR, Decision, Prosecutor v. Barayagwiza (ICTR-97-19-AR.72), 3 November 1999, 40; See also ICTR, Appeals Judgement, Prosecutor v. Kayijuli (ICTR-98-44-A-A), 23 May 2005, 209, where the Appeals Chamber referred to the ICCPR as being ‘reflective of customary international law’, and to the ACHR, the ECHR and the ACHR as ‘persuasive authority’ and as ‘evidence of international custom’.

232 ICTR, Decision on Appeal against Decision on Appropriate Remedy, Prosecutor v. Rwamakuba (ICTR-98-44C-A), 13 September 2007, 25, where the Appeals Chamber employed the ICCPR as ‘persuasive authority in determining the Tribunal’s powers under international law’.


234 ICTY, Decision on the Prosecutor’s Motion Requesting Protective Measures for Victims and Witnesses, Prosecutor v. Tadić (IT-94-I), 10 August 1995, 28; the military tribunal parallel has not resurfaced in subsequent case law. However, the ICTs’ alleged power to deviate from human rights standards has been relied on more often, in various degrees. This issue will be central in the discussion of the ICTs’ interpretation and application of specific human rights norms in the subsequent Chapters.
law, treating it (and interpretations thereof) as persuasive authority instead, which has been argued to ‘suggest significant room for maneuver’. 235

However, the most prevalent use of human rights norms has been for the Tribunals to refer to several human rights treaties without clarifying why they do so and what normative force and effect they have actually been given. In that regard, the Tribunals have referred extensively to the ICCPR, ECHR, ACHR, as well as the case law of the ECtHR and IACtHR, mostly without distinguishing between international and regional treaties and between treaty norms, and between decisions of regional human rights courts and views of the HRC.

The same can be said of the ICC. Article 21(3) of the Statute requires consistency with ‘internationally recognized human rights’, but fails to specify the scope or content of this category of norms, or a method for its identification. 236 The travaux préparatoires do not help fill this gap, nor has the Court clarified its understanding of this term and the respective methodology. 237 The chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Rome Statute has stated that Article 21(3) ensures respect by the ICC for ‘human rights instruments that are universally recognized as part of international customary law.’ 238 It has also been held that ‘internationally recognized human rights’ can be discerned from those rights ‘listed in the universal or regional treaties protecting human rights, to the extent at least that they have a customary (general) character.’ 239 However, a majority of commentators agrees that the customary status of a right is not decisive in determining whether it is ‘internationally recognized’ within the meaning of Article 21(3). The threshold for being ‘internationally recognized’ is generally regarded to be lower than for being ‘customary’. 240 Given the difficulty of identifying the content of customary international (human rights) law, it is appropriate and more practical not

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235 Frédéric Mégret, ‘Beyond “Fairness”’: Understanding the Determinants of International Criminal Procedure’ (2009) 14 UCLA J Int’l L & Foreign Aff 37, 52-53: ‘this ambiguity arguably limits the role human rights law might have, in contrast to its status in legal systems, where it clearly forms part of a supra-legality to which all the procedure must conform.’

236 Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 133: ‘the content of internationally recognized human rights is unclear and potentially very broad.’

237 Sheppard (n 158), 44: the court ‘has yet to articulate rules that explain why the sources they rely on generate applicable rules and how those rules are to be applied.’ Similarly Young (n 168), 198.


239 Verhoeven (n 94), 14; similarly Gallant, ‘Individual Human Rights in a New International Organization’ (n 98), 705: ‘custom, general principles of internationally recognized law, and other sources may be consulted, as well as law derived from those treaties or declaratory documents that a large majority of countries have acceded to or approved’; Hafner and Binder (n 144), 187.

240 Gallant, ‘Individual Human Rights in a New International Organization’ (n 98), 705: the source of human rights law to be applied under Article 21(3) ‘is broader, and should be given a more concrete form, than the often limited or vague rules of international custom.’
to require the Court to establish the customary status of any given human rights norm it wishes to apply under Article 21(3).241

However, how should the Court decide which norms fall within the scope of Article 21(3)?242 The term ‘internationally recognized’ has been said to denote ‘a certain level of broad acknowledgement and acceptance of the human rights in question.’243 In addition, it has been held that, because it refers to internationally recognized rights, as opposed to generally recognized ones, it relates to treaty norms rather than customary ones.244 Such broad acceptance can arguably be established by reference to any given right’s inclusion in treaties, without having to assess international practice and opinio iuris. As shown below, the Court has indeed adopted this approach.

The question remains how to decide whether a treaty contains ‘internationally recognized human rights’: does this apply only to global treaties that are almost universally ratified or can regional human rights treaties contain ‘internationally recognized’ rights as well? Commentators agree that ‘universal’ acceptance of the right is not required.245 Hafner and Binder have proposed a methodology for the ICC to determine whether a given right is indeed ‘internationally recognized’, which includes an assessment of the number and geographic distribution of the parties to a given treaty, as well as the possible reservations to the specific provision in question.246 Thus far, however, the practice of the ICC has not included such in-depth assessments.

The Court has not formulated a general understanding of the meaning of the term ‘internationally recognized human rights’.247 Some limited guidance regarding these questions

241 ibid, 705.
242 Similarly Hochmayr (n 88), 679, who notes that ‘it remains unclear how internationally recognized human rights are identified.’
243 Young (n 168), 193.
244 Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 3), 86.
245 Bitti (n 88), 301; Sheppard (n 158), 47. See also Hafner and Binder (n 144), 185, who discuss the drafting history of Article 69(7), which contains an identical reference to ‘internationally recognized human rights’, and with regard to which they note that proposals to refer to universally recognized human rights were rejected because it would be too limiting.
246 Hafner and Binder (n 144), 188-189.
247 One exception is a Separate Opinion of Judge Pikis, who has argued that ‘[i]nternationally recognized may be regarded those human rights acknowledged by customary international law and international treaties and conventions.’ However, he then relied on the fact that the right to a fair trial has been enshrined in the ICCPR, the UDHR, the ECHR, the ACHR, and the ACHPR, stating that the right’s ‘incorporation in international instruments denotes comprehensive assent to its emergence as a principle of customary international law.’ He fails to clarify whether the fact that the right in question is enshrined in these conventions renders it ‘internationally recognized’ or ‘customary’. ICC, Decision on the Prosecutor’s “Application for Leave to Reply to ‘Conclusions de la défense en réponse au mémoire d'appel du Procureur’”, Separate opinion of Judge Georgios M. Pikis, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01/04-01/06-424), 12 September 2006, 3; See also Georgios Pikis, The Rome Statute for the International Criminal Court – Analysis of the Statute, the Rules of Procedure and Evidence, the Regulations of the Court and Supplementary Instruments (Martinus Nijhoff 2010), 89-90.
can nonetheless be derived from the Court’s practice under Article 21(3). The Court generally refers to a number of concurrent sources, mostly international and regional human rights conventions, to support a given right’s status of being ‘internationally recognized’. This has been described as a ‘shotgun-approach’ and criticized for being haphazard. The Court does not distinguish between international and regional human rights treaties. It has often referred to case law of the ECtHR and, to a lesser extent, of the IACtHR under the heading of Article 21(3). However, it has never explained or justified its use of such case law, as a result of which its authority or persuasive force remains unclear or at least unspecified. Finally, the Court has also relied on so-called ‘soft law’ standards, although the Appeals Chamber emphasized that the Court may only be ‘guided’ by them.

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248 Sheppard (n 158), 49; Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 3), 88: ‘human rights instruments are referred to cumulatively or interchangeably.’ The ICCPR is the most cited instrument, the ECHR follows it for a short distance and the ACHR too, is often mentioned.’ Young (n 168), 203: the Court has consistently looked to ‘human rights norms and their related jurisprudence from a geographically broad spectrum, which commonly includes references to the global UDHR, the ICCPR, and the CRC, and the regional ECHR and IACHR.’

249 Sheppard (n 158), 49, 44: ‘the use of external legal norms requires some greater explanation. Unfortunately, these norms have been used haphazardly and without full accounting, rendering judgments unclear and less convincing, even if ultimately correct.’


252 Nicolas Croquet, ‘The International Criminal Court and the Treatment of Defence Rights: A Mirror of the European Court of Human Rights Jurisprudence?’ (2011) 11 Hum Rts L Rev 91, 109: ‘in several instances, the ICC has simply applied the ECHR’s case law without theorizing as to the legal basis for its incorporation into its reasoning.’ Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 120-121: ‘in the ICC, reasons for deference to the ECHR and the HRC have not always emerged clearly in its case law’, 122: ‘they refer to human rights jurisprudence, but provide explanation neither of the reasons for using it nor of its authority.’; Sheppard (n 158), 52: ‘[the Court] fails to articulate how these very sources are being used.’


254 ICC, Judgment on the Appeals of The Prosecutor and The Defence against Trial Chamber I’s Decision on Victims’ Participation of 18 January 2008, Prosecutor v. Lubanga (ICC-01-04-01-06-1432), 11 July 2008, 33: ‘The Appeals Chamber notes that the Trial Chamber in referring to the Basic Principles of 2005 was "guided" by the language set forth in Principle 8. However, as noted above, its decision was based on its analysis of rule 85 (a) and rule 85 (b) of the Rules. The Appeals Chamber finds no error in the Trial Chamber's reference to the Basic Principles of 2005 for the purpose of guidance.’ See also Sheppard (n 158), 51.
The Court thus appears to interpret the requirement of ‘international recognition’ as ‘being enshrined in international and/or regional human rights treaties’. However, the flexibility of this approach implies a large measure of discretion for the Court. In addition, such uncertainty regarding the norms that bind the Court has been said to impose a great burden on the parties, because it is difficult to predict which norms the parties can invoke in the proceedings before the Court. More fundamentally, it can lead to questionable decisions, which is illustrated by the Court’s decision in the case of the detained witnesses, discussed above, where the majority decision drew an incorrect, and irrelevant distinction between the right to liberty and the rule of non-refoulement and held that the former, in contrast with the latter, ‘cannot be considered an intransgressible or peremptory norm of international law’. The distinction drawn by the majority finds no support in the wording of Article 21(3) and conflicts with the Court’s previous approach.

The ICC’s approach to Article 21(3) and its obligation to respect internationally recognized human rights has not been a formalist, source-driven process. The decisions of the ICC involving the interpretation of human rights norms do not rely on a formalist approach to identifying norms contained in the sources of law that apply to the Court as a subject of international law. Instead, a certain category of norms has been singled out as applying to the ICC, and the precondition for that is that they be ‘internationally recognized’, ie laid down in international or regional human rights treaties. The approach of the ad hoc Tribunals has been comparable. It has been argued that Article 21(3) can be seen as a codification of existing

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255 Sheppard (n 158), 44.
256 ICC, Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRC02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3405-ENG), 1 October 2013, 33, i.a. because there are numerous exceptions to the right to liberty (and its corollary, the prohibition on arbitrary arrest and detention; a decision aptly criticized by dissenting Judge Van den Wyngaert: ICC, Decision on the Application for the Interim Release of Detained Witnesses DRC02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 and DRC-D02-P-0350, Dissenting Opinion of Judge Christine van den Wyngaert, Prosecutor v. Katanga (ICC-01/04-01/07-3405-ENG), 1 October 2013, 6: ‘who noted that Article 21(3) requires the Court to abide by ‘internationally recognized human rights’, not only by underogable norms or norms of ius cogens.
257 Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 116: ‘a conservative source-based approach to establishing the requirements of IHRL that can be deemed to make part of general international law has proved to be a deficient methodology for the tribunals. They sought to supplement and surmount it by interpretive techniques that were more capable of leading to intuitively correct outcomes’; Young (n 168), 205-206: the Court’s approach ‘is not rigid and is not restricted to human rights norms as embodied in traditional sources of law such as treaty, custom and general principles.’
258 See, on the ICTs, generally: Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 3), 88: a general reference to internationally recognized human rights without specification of which sources are meant ‘dovetails with the practice generally followed by the ICTs, which do not pay much attention to the standard-selection problems, including, most prominently, the identification of customary norms’; see also Göran Sluiter, ‘International Criminal Proceedings and the Protection of Human Rights’ (2003) 37 New Eng L Rev 935, 938, who has explained this tendency, observing that ‘the application of human rights treaties and their authoritative interpretations by (quasi-) judicial bodies is a far more attractive alternative to attempting to identify customary rules and/or general principles of law’.
practice before the ad hoc Tribunals. Like the ICC, the ad hoc Tribunals have never formulated a principled understanding of what norms that they consider binding. In the absence of a principled understanding or consistent methodology, the ICTs retain more leeway to change the scope and content of human rights norms binding on them.

5. Contextualization: Adapting Human Rights to the ICTs’ Context

When determining the human rights obligations of an ICT, two questions arise. The first is whether an ICT can be bound by certain norms related to its functions and the areas in which it exercises public power. The second question is how an ICT can be bound by certain human rights norms, ie how its obligations under these rights can be established, whether under customary international law, general principles of law, or pursuant to its obligation to adhere to ‘internationally recognized human rights’.

An important caveat to the application of general IHRL, or ‘internationally recognized human rights to ICTs, lies in their fundamental difference from states. As has already been noted in Chapter 2, ‘large areas of international law are patently inapplicable to international organizations, which have no territory, confer no nationality and do not exercise jurisdiction in the same sense as states.’ International law has developed as law governing the conduct of states, primarily vis-à-vis other states, and increasingly vis-à-vis individuals. The functioning of an international organization and of an ICT is fundamentally different from that of a state. It cannot simply be assumed that norms of general international law apply in the same way to those different subjects of international law. The way international organizations relate to other subjects of international law, including states and individuals, is difficult to compare to the way states do, and their exercise of power is normally far more circumscribed than that of states. International organizations are often defined as ‘non-state actors’.

259 Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 132: ‘Article 21(3) ‘purports to crystallize an interpretative technique that has been used with relative regularity by the ad hoc Tribunals’; Gradoni, ‘The Human Rights Dimension of International Criminal Procedure’ (n 3), 74-75.


262 See eg Philip Alston (ed), Non-State Actors and Human Rights (OUP 2005); Andrew Clapham , Human Rights Obligations of Non-State Actors (OUP 2006); Jean D’Aspremont (ed), Participants in the International Legal System: Multiple Perspectives on Non-State Actors in International Law (Routledge 2011); these volumes discuss international organizations as ‘non-state actors’ (amongst other non-state actors such as multinational
definition in legal doctrine is thus based on a distinction from states. Conceptually, it is difficult to grasp how the obligations of international organizations and ICTs under international law could be identical to those of states.\textsuperscript{263} The application of one uniform body of customary or general international law to different subjects of international law is contested.\textsuperscript{264} General international law, state-oriented as it is, cannot be mechanically transposed and applied to govern the behavior of non-state actors, such as ICTs. Even if the applicability of a certain set of norms of general international law to ICTs is accepted, the interpretation of those norms may require adaptation, including possible (partial) non-application, based on the fundamental differences between states and ICTs.\textsuperscript{265}

Many authors propose that a solution to the questions raised by the fundamentally different nature of international organizations as compared to states, can be found in a functional approach to their obligations under international law.\textsuperscript{266} Under such an approach, international organizations can only be bound by rules of international law in the areas in which they exercise public power.\textsuperscript{267} The obligations that can be binding on them should logically be connected to their function.\textsuperscript{268}

Applying this logic to ICTs, the functional approach requires that they be bound, for example, to respect general international law pertaining to the right to a fair trial. For instance, these courts and tribunals cannot be considered bound by general international law pertaining to the right to freedom of movement on their territory (art. 12 ICCPR), for the simple reason that they have none. Predictably, however, there is a substantial grey area where it is possible to argue either way. Is an ICT capable of protecting the right to privacy? Some might argue that they are not, since they do not have full control over investigations conducted on their behalf by national authorities. Does this imply that they are under no obligation to ensure respect for the privacy rights of persons affected by their investigations to the extent possible? An affirmative answer to that question would meet substantial re-

\textsuperscript{263} Similarly Hirsch (n 260), 36, who notes that the differences between states and international organizations necessitate adjustments of the rules governing their respective behavior.
\textsuperscript{264} Lindsey Cameron, ‘Human Rights Accountability of International Civil Administrations to the People Subject to Administration’ (2007) 1 Hum Rts & Int’l Legal Discourse 267, 273.
\textsuperscript{265} Naert (n 260), 395.
\textsuperscript{266} See supra Chapter 2 Section 3.2.
\textsuperscript{267} Schermers and Blokker (n 260), 993; Naert (n 260), 394.
\textsuperscript{268} As has been stated in Chapter 2, This finds support in an ICJ Advisory Opinion, where it was held that ‘the rights and duties of an entity such as the United Nations [ie international organizations] must depend upon its purposes and functions’: ICJ, Advisory Opinion, \textit{Reparations for Injuries}, 11 April 1949, 9.
An ICC Pre-Trial Chamber has noted that it was questionable whether it could be bound by the rule of non-refoulement, because it is not a state and therefore unable to respect this fundamental rule in the same way as states. However, this begs the question whether this means that an ICT has no obligations under this rule at all or other obligations within the ‘grey area’? This goes to show that the operation of human rights norms in the context of an ICT may have to be different from how these norms operate in a state context.

This brings us to the second question. It may be possible to establish that a given human rights norm is customary or provides an ‘internationally recognized human right’, or even to identify specific obligations that stem from it. But even in such cases, these obligations will be addressed to a state, not to an ICT. The question is therefore how to establish the specific obligations of an ICT under a given human rights norm? Answering this question requires an assessment of the differences between states and ICTs and of their possible impact on the ICTs’ capability to bear certain obligations under human rights norms. IHRL has developed in the domestic context for the protection of individuals against the abusive exercise of state power. As a result, human rights are addressed to states and are formulated with reference to the way those entities operate. For example, human rights norms impose obligations on all branches of government: the executive, the legislature and the judiciary. International organizations generally, and ICTs specifically, have a fundamentally different institutional design. The nature of human rights obligations evinces a presumption of the existence of a state, ie the actor that is capable of protecting rights such as the right to freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, or the right to a fair justice system. As a result, it is uncertain whether and to what extent ICTs can practically have such obligations, or how such obligations would apply to them. It may therefore be necessary to translate and contextualize such rights before they can adequately function before an ICT.

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269 See, eg: Edwards (n 100); De Meester (n 100), 302-303, who points out the possible need for a ‘contextualised’ right to privacy.
270 ICC, Decision on an Amicus Curiae application and on the “Requête tendant à obtenir présentations des témoins DRC-D02-P-0350, DRC-D02-P-0236, DRC-D02-P-0228 aux autorités néerlandaises aux fins d’asile” (Articles 68 and 93(7) of the Statute), Prosecutor v. Katanga and Ngudjolo (ICC-01/04-01/07), 9 June 2011, 64; where the Pre-Trial Chamber held that ‘since [the ICC] does not possess any territory, it is unable to implement the nonrefoulement rule.’
271 Mégret and Hoffmann (n 51), 320; Colin Warbrick, ‘International Criminal Courts and Fair Trial’ (1998) 3 J Conflict & Sec L 45, 51: ‘there is only limited guidance which can be gained from the basic human rights law. human rights treaties like the covenant and the European convention are posited on the existence of national legal orders which will be the primary guarantors of the rights of individuals.’; similarly Gallant, ‘Individual Human Rights in a New International Organization’ (n 98), 696: ‘most international human rights have developed in the context of protections from states rather than from international organizations.’; similarly Sluiter, ‘International Criminal Proceedings and the Protection of Human Rights’ (n 258), 940; McIntyre (n 62), 194;
For example, the right to be tried by an independent and impartial tribunal, being part of the right to a fair trial, should surely apply to an ICT under a functional approach to its human rights obligations. However, the requirement of independence and impartiality in IHRL is closely connected to Montesquieu’s conceptions of the separation of powers. Since no such structures apply at the international level, the question arises how this requirement should be shaped when applied to an ICT. Similar considerations apply to concepts such as limitations and derogations, which equally presume the existence of a state. For example, states may limit the enjoyment of certain human rights, provided that such limitations are ‘prescribed by law’, ‘pursue a legitimate aim’, and are ‘necessary in a democratic society’. States are also permitted to derogate from certain human rights obligations in times of ‘public emergency threatening the life of the nation’. How should such requirements apply to an ICT? Can they also limit human rights and, if so, what meaning should the terms such as ‘prescribed by law’, ‘democratic society’, and ‘the nation’ be given in the context of an ICT? They cannot simply be copy-pasted and applied to an ICT because its law is fundamentally different from that of a state; it is not a ‘democratic society’ nor does it have a ‘nation’ whose life can be threatened. Given the ICTs’ limited mandates and the fundamentally different way in which they exercise public power, it is not obvious how such requirements could operate in their context. If these norms are to be applied to non-state entities, they must be translated and be given a meaning that fits the ICTs’ context.

When the ICTY was established, the human rights norms it had to apply had only been employed in the context of domestic criminal justice. The Tribunal was the first to apply such rules and principles in international criminal proceedings. These norms had been crafted and subsequently interpreted to apply in domestic legal systems, which differ in many respects from the context in which the ICTs operate. Since human rights norms ‘can only have meaning in context’, the ICTs may, or even must ‘develop [their] own set of human

Fedorova and Sluiter (n 34), 30: ‘[a]nother interpretative difficulty arises from the fact that international and regional human rights treaties were formulated to apply to a domestic level’.


273 See José Alvarez, International Organizations as Law-Makers (OUP 2005), 376: ‘it is less clear whether the ICTY and ICTR constitute the “independent” tribunals “established by law” anticipated in the ICCPR. The independence of these tribunals appears to be a matter of degree. What would happen if the Council were to demand that one of these tribunals, which presumably were established pursuant to the Council’s power to establish subsidiary bodies, that a defendant’s trial be expedited or dealt with in a particular fashion? Are these courts independent of political control in the sense anticipated by the ICCPR if they cannot require the arrest of suspects or the securing of evidence without the effective cooperation of the Council?’

274 See on these concepts and the requirements underlying them supra Chapter 2, section 4.2.

275 Fedorova and Sluiter (n 34), 37-38.

276 McIntyre (n 62), 194.
rights standards in light of [their] context as international criminal court[s] dealing with crimes committed in times of war.²⁷⁷ Indeed, ‘the applicability of general international law does not prevent international criminal jurisdictions from developing, through interpretation and taking account of their specific situation and exigencies, their own human rights judicial policy.’²⁷⁸ This possibility is further supported by the fact that, from a formalist perspective, the ICTs’ legal instruments could be classified as lex specialis that develops special human rights law to govern the functioning of an ICT and which could take precedence over general IHRL. The differences between domestic legal systems and international criminal justice may require the contextualized interpretation and application of human rights norms by the ICTs, simply because the ICTs and domestic courts are ‘not in comparable situations.’²⁷⁹ According to Cassese, the Judges of the tribunals have perfectly understood this need to take the specificity of international criminal justice into consideration when applying international human rights norms or using their interpretations by human rights courts and bodies.²⁸⁰ Judge Shahabuddeen has similarly opined that human rights treaties ‘were made by states for states. The Tribunal is not a state and is not party to those instruments.’²⁸¹ He argues that although the ICTs are bound by human rights norms, they are authorized to give them their own interpretations that reflect the differences between states and ICTs.²⁸² Judge Shahabuddeen has further argued that ‘internationally recognized human rights instruments do not apply to the Tribunal lock, stock and barrel’.²⁸³ The exact content of human rights norms applicable before an ICT can only be established when taking into account the specific characteristics and context of the ICT in question.²⁸⁴ However, taking the specificity of ICTs into account in interpreting human rights norms should not be misconstrued as automatically allowing for ‘more limited rights of due process’, contrary to what the ICTY

²⁷⁷ ibid, 194; similarly DeFrancia (n 20), 1393-1394: ‘another difficulty is the sui generis nature of the legal system of international criminal law. Domestic and international norms of due process can undergo substantial transformation when incorporated into a new legal system.’
²⁷⁹ Møse (n 11), 179, 189, see also 208: ‘some provisions that originally were inspired by the CCPR and other human rights instruments now generally live a life of their own in the specific context of the Tribunals’; similarly Mohamed Shahabuddeen, International Criminal Justice at the Yugoslav Tribunal - A Judge's Recollections (OUP 2012), 231: ‘human rights … can only be transposed to the Tribunal if they take into consideration the ‘specificities’ of that body of law’.
²⁸² ibid.
²⁸³ ibid, 19.
²⁸⁴ Deprez (n 250), 723.
has once held in an early decision.\textsuperscript{285} This has also been reaffirmed by Judge Shahabuddeen, who noted that what applies to the Tribunal is the ‘substance’ of the standards or goals that are set by human rights norms, not the provisions in international treaties, while ‘the supreme goal is fairness’.\textsuperscript{286} Similarly, while international criminal justice might have different requirements regarding the contents and application of defence rights, the function of those rights cannot be different.\textsuperscript{287}

Contextual interpretation of human rights means that in determining, for example, what ‘fairness’ means before the ICTs, they cannot be strictly bound by international instruments or interpretations thereof, which ‘are suited for a different context.’\textsuperscript{288} Instead, the interpretation and application of such standards before the ICTs must be done in a manner that takes due account of the specific legal and factual context in which they operate.\textsuperscript{289} This by no means detracts from the universality and applicability of human rights norms.\textsuperscript{290} Instead, it means, as has been stated above, that such rights can only have meaning in context, and that the context of an ICT is fundamentally different to that of a domestic legal system.

However, such a contextual approach poses risks for the effective protection of human rights norms, particularly in the absence of external review mechanisms. Key questions are which contextual factors may legitimately impact on the ICTs’ interpretation and application of human rights norms, and how these factors may impact on this process. These considerations should be kept in mind, and will be further elaborated in the final Chapter of this study. It has been held that the basic differences between the ICTY and a domestic legal system lay mainly in the former’s ‘complete reliance’ on state cooperation for, ‘amongst other


\textsuperscript{287} Michail Vladimiroff, ‘Rights of Suspects and Accused’ in Gabrielle Kirk McDonald and Olivia Q. Swaak-Goldman (eds), \textit{Substantive and Procedural Aspects of International Criminal Law: the Experience of International and National Courts} (Kluwer Law International 2001), 421; similarly Robinson (n 20), 9: who argues that before the ICTY, fairness must have the same face as fairness in a domestic court, subject only to differences yielded by contextual and teleological interpretation of the basis of the VCLT.


\textsuperscript{289} Patrick Robinson, ‘Ensuring Fair and Expeditious Trials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia’ (2000) 11(3) Eur J Int’l L 569, 572; similarly Shahabuddeen (n 279), 231: ‘these differences may affect the interpretation to be given to normal human rights principles in their application to the Tribunal.’

\textsuperscript{290} Robinson, ‘Ensuring Fair and Expeditious Trials’ (n 289), 573; similarly Gideon Boas and others, and others, \textit{International Criminal Procedure} (CUP 2011), 466: ‘this does not mean that [rules of international criminal procedure] are always interpreted and applied in a manner consistent with human rights law or international law more broadly. The regime of icp applies rules that, while broadly consistent with the right to a fair trial, can vary or modify the application of what are described in the tribunals’ statutes as ‘minimum guarantees … These variations do not undermine the legitimacy and coherence given to icp by human rights principles. Quite the contrary, they show that this body of law holds together despite differences in application.’
things, access to evidence, execution of arrest warrants and protection of victims and witnesses and their families’. Generally, their complete dependence on state can indeed be regarded as one of the most significant differences between the ICTs and states. The ICTs themselves have often referred to it and highlighted their reliance on states essentially for all matters related to the investigation, including arrest of suspects. Academic literature has often referred to the ‘fragmented nature of the investigation, in the context of which the ICTs must rely on states for the collection of evidence, the arrest of suspects and the identification but also the protection of witnesses.’ Other differences include the fact that the ICTs’ procedural systems are an amalgamation of civil and common law elements; budgetary constraints; the often volatile security situation in which investigations must be carried out; the gravity of the crimes that they adjudicate; and legal and factual complexity of these crimes. One commentator has argued that these differences are so substantial, that they are ‘not just a matter of degree but of kind.’

The ICTs thus do not operate in situations that are similar to the contexts to which

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291 Swaak-Goldman (n 288), 215, 221.
292 See eg ICTR, Decision, Prosecutor v. Barayagwiza (ICTR-97-19-AR.72), 3 November 1999, 42: ‘[u]nlke national systems, which have police forces to effectuate the arrest of suspects, the Tribunal lacks any such enforcement agency. Consequently, in the absence of the suspect’s voluntary surrender, the Tribunal must rely on the international community for the arrest and provisional detention of suspects.’; similarly ICTY, Decision on Motion by Radoslav Brđanin for Provisional Release, Prosecutor v. Brđanin and Talić (IT-99-36-PT), 25 July 2000, 18; ICTY, Decision on Momčilo Krajišnik’s Notice of Motion for Provisional Release, Dissenting Opinion of Judge Patrick Robinson, Prosecutor v. Krajišnik and Plavšić (IT-00-39&40-T), 8 October 2001, 10.
293 See eg Fedorova, Verhoeven and Wouters (n 20), 66; similarly Gabrielle Kirk McDonald, ‘Problems, Obstacles and Achievements of the ICTY’ (2004) 2 J Int’l Crim Just 558, 559; McDermott (n 13), 178-179: ‘investigations are often complex cross-border affairs, carried out after the atrocities under investigation occurred and without judicial oversight. The trial process is beset with difficulty in obtaining witness attendance, communicating thousands of pages of documents between the parties and limiting complex legal arguments to reasonable time-frames’; Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1) 2014, 6, 138: ‘the uniqueness of the tribunal context imples features that make it different from domestic systems, including the unavailability of police force and the ultimate dependence on states for a variety of matters.’ See also Stapleton (n 95), 567; Warbrick (n 271), 52; Vojin Dimitrijević and Marko Milanović, ‘Human Rights before International Criminal Courts’ in Jonas Grimheden and Rolf Ring (eds), Human Rights Law: from Dissemination to Application: Essays in Honour of Göran Melander (Martinus Nijhoff 2006), 149.
294 ICTY, Decision on the Prosecutor’s Motion Requesting Protective Measures for Victims and Witnesses, Prosecutor v. Tadić (IT-94-I), 10 August 1995, 22; similarly Deprez (n 250), 726; Mégret, ‘Beyond Fairness’ (n 235), 61: ‘the tribunals’ multicultural backdrop creates pressure to accommodate various traditions, yet it provides little structural guidance on how to do so. This means many practices, both international and domestic, risk being “lost in translation”’.
296 Cassese, ‘The ICTY and Human Rights’ (n 295), 341.
297 Dimitrijević and Milanović (n 293), 150.
298 ibid, 149-150.
299 Warbrick (n 271), 52.
human rights instruments were anticipated to apply.\textsuperscript{300} The differences between domestic
courts and the ICTs mean that the latter may be led to adopt a different approach to defining
human rights.\textsuperscript{301} Such differences require the adaptation of human rights standards, which
can sometimes result in departures from them.\textsuperscript{302} The point is that the specific position of the
ICTs and the particular difficulties they face have an impact on the way in which they protect
human rights.\textsuperscript{303} Turning a blind eye to these differences and demanding that the ICTs me-
chanically implement human rights norms in the same way that states should, will not result
in the effective protection of these rights. Therefore, ‘the human rights practice of the tribu-
nals by definition is—and should be—the process of contextualization.’\textsuperscript{304} How to determine
the limits to this process, however, remains the crucial question.

6. Conclusion

Despite the significant differences between the legal frameworks of the ad hoc Tribunals and
the ICC, their approach to IHRL is comparable, both regarding the sources of human rights
law to which they refer, and regarding the normative effect ascribed to these norms.

The so-called ‘legislative influence’ of IHRL has led to the incorporation of its norms
into the legal instruments of the ICTs. This goes for the ICC Statute, and, to a lesser extent,
for the Statutes and RPEs of the ad hoc Tribunals. IHRL has thus clearly had an \textit{a priori} im-
pact on the legal instruments of the ICTs. In addition, Article 21(1) of the Rome Statute pro-
vides a hierarchical list of sources of applicable law before the ICC, including subsidiary
sources of general international law, and general principles derived from national legal sys-

\textsuperscript{300} Swaak-Goldman (n 288), 221; similarly Warbrick (n 271), 51: ‘It might be asked whether human rights
standards, directed as they are to national trial processes, have any real relevance to an internatonal process
because the international court will have to operate in a much sparser legal environment and in much different
factual circumstances than a domestic court.’

\textsuperscript{301} Gallant, ‘International Human Rights Standards in International Organizations’ (n 48), 400; similarly Dimi-
trijević and Milanović (n 293), 150: ‘these distinct features of international criminal proceedings make it im-
possible to simply transpose to them the human rightst standards developed in the context of domestic criminal justice.’

\textsuperscript{302} Gabrielle McIntyre, ‘Equality of Arms Defining Human Rights in the Jurisprudence of the International
Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia’ (2003) 16 Leiden J Int’l L 269, 270: ‘The Tribunal is an interna-
tional criminal forum unsupported by the mechanisms of a domestic society and reliant on the cooperation of
states, including those of the former Yugoslavia. The tribunal’s statute is crafted to suit its unique position as an
international legal forum without the support of domestic institutions. Thus in some instances the Tribunal has
necessarily had to depart from a strict adherence to human rights standards as understood in domestic proceed-
ings. It has made those departures to protect the effectiveness of its proceedings, and it has justified those depar-
tures by reference to its unique structure, status, and subject-matter.’

\textsuperscript{303} Mirjan Damaška, ‘Reflections on Fairness in International Criminal Justice’ (2012) 10 J Int’l Crim Just 611,
614: ‘The criteria for evaluating fairness in international criminal justice should thus be crafted with an eye to
the specific position of international criminal courts and the peculiar difficulties they face. Given their innate
weakness, the complexity of crimes they process and the multiplicity of their goals, some departures from do-
meric conceptions of fairness should be expected and accepted.’

\textsuperscript{304} Vasiliev, ‘International Criminal Trials’ (n 1), 138.
tems. These subsidiary sources may contain IHRL, as a result of which the ICC can theoretically apply such law directly if lacunae exist in its internal legal instruments. The practice of the ad hoc Tribunals reveals a similar approach.

More fundamentally, the ICTs have an obligation to adhere to ‘internationally recognized human rights’. This obligation has manifested itself in different ways in the case law of the ICTs. First, they consistently refer to such norms when interpreting and applying norms contained in their own legal instruments. Second, both the ad hoc Tribunals and the ICC have created legal obligations and procedures that find no explicit support in their internal law, but are based on their obligation to respect international human rights norms. Third, the ICC has even set aside its obligations under the Statute because doing otherwise would violate internationally recognized human rights, a willingness that the ad hoc Tribunals have also displayed in subjecting their exercise of jurisdiction to consistency with such norms. According to their own law and practice, IHRL thus constitutes lex superior before the ICTs. Human rights norms have been held to constitute ‘a foundational part of the construct of international criminal law’, since international criminal procedure derives its coherence from its compliance with these norms.

However, the decisions of the ICC in the case of the detained witnesses reveal a persisting ambiguity regarding the normative superiority of human rights norms. One Chamber has even held that these norms cannot be regarded as superior to the Statute, which is at odds with the Court’s previous case law on the matter. In addition, uncertainty persists regarding the exact scope of the category of international human rights norms that bind the ICTs. In the absence of a consistent methodology as to how the ICTs determine whether an ‘internationally recognized human right’ exists, they retain a large measure of freedom in determining the existence, content, and scope of their human rights obligations.

Finally, there are fundamental differences between the context in which human rights norms normally apply, and the context of an ICT. As a result, the process of interpreting and applying human rights norms before an ICT may have to be a process of contextualization. In order to ensure the effective protection of human rights before them, the ICTs will sometimes have to adapt these rights to the specific context of international criminal justice. These considerations must necessarily accompany the conclusion that the ICTs are bound by internationally recognized human rights, because they will have a profound impact on the way in which the ICTs will actually interpret and apply these norms. A meaningful assessment of the

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306 Boas and others (n 290), 466.
human rights practice of the ICTs therefore consists of two components. The first is the ICTs’ obligation to adhere to internationally recognized human rights. The second is the fact that the specific context in which the ICTs operate may and sometimes must have an impact on the way in which they interpret and apply these norms. Human rights can only effectively fulfill their purpose if the ICTs take due account of their specific context when they interpret and apply them. These components jointly compose the theoretical framework against the background of which the actual interpretation and application of specific human rights norms by the ICTs will be assessed in the following part of this study. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 address the interpretation and application of, respectively, the right to privacy, the right to liberty, and the right to be tried without undue delay by the ICTs. Chapter 7 will further assess the strengths and pitfalls of the ICTs’ approach against the backdrop of the ICTs’ obligation to adhere to IHRL and the possibility to interpret human rights contextually, in order to develop a methodological framework that is envisaged to improve the ICTs’ interpretative practice.