

WAR ON TERROR: LEGACY, JUSTICE, ART

11 - 12 MAY 2026

Day 1: 5pm - 7.30pm
Day 2: 1pm - 8pm

Are we prepared to abandon principles in order to defend them?

of a cover up. It would make the CIA look bad.

sued the CIA to get the materials unredacted.

Speakers

Shami Chakrabarti | Baher Azmy | Maya Foa
Rebecca Mignot-Mahdavi
Cathy Scott-Clark | Max Houghton | Crofton Black
Edmund Clark | Diane M. Amann
Joshua Castellino | Chris Esdaile | Maha Hilal

Organised by

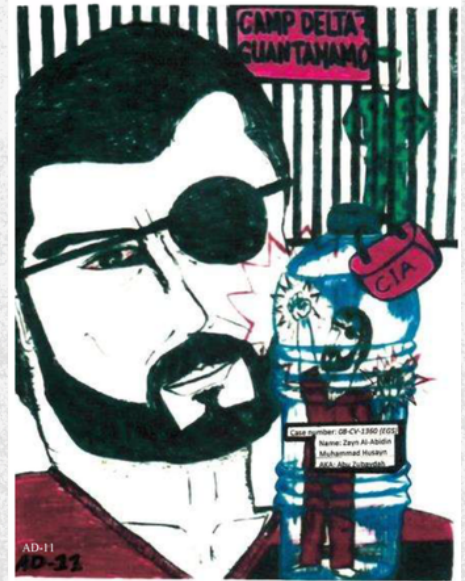
Marie Petersmann (LSE), Gerry Simpson (LSE)
and Helen Duffy (Leiden)

'War on Terror': Legacy, Justice, Art

Organised by Helen Duffy (Leiden), Marie Petersmann and Gerry Simpson (LSE)

The conference brings together international law scholars, practitioners, journalists, and artists to reflect on the legacy of the 'war on terror' (WOT) and its future implications. It examines both continuities and transformations, tracing how patterns such as militarisation, dehumanisation, legal imperialism, and exceptionalism have evolved since the WOT began nearly a quarter century ago. It also looks ahead, exploring synergies between international law, media, and the arts in responding to emerging challenges. The discussion—and accompanying exhibition—invites reflection on the relationship between artistic expression and the pursuit of justice, particularly where legal avenues are limited.

The backdrop is widespread and flagrant violations of international law worldwide, echoing the WOT's logic, methods, and justifications. Examples include extra-judicial killings of alleged 'narco-terrorists' by the US in Caribbean waters, increasingly transactional imperialism in interventions and regime change in Venezuela, and the US-Israeli military assault on Iran, including the assassination of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei under shifting justifications reminiscent of the WOT era. More broadly, the WOT's shadow persists in the designation of migrants, civil society, protesters, and political opponents as 'terrorists', evolving migration policies, ICE brutality, detention at Guantánamo, and the repression of dissent across the Middle East, Latin America, Africa, and Europe. These are often justified by narratives of endless wars, ill-defined enemies, and great power exceptionalism.



Many emblematic WOT violations remain unaddressed and increasingly overlooked. This is exemplified by ongoing detention and torture at Guantánamo, continued impunity for CIA torture involving multiple states, and the lack of meaningful reparations for victims despite decades of advocacy.

The conference provides an opportunity to reflect on the WOT's influence on current rule of law challenges and what can be learned from responses to them. It asks how we assess the role of law, the limits of justice and accountability, and the effectiveness of multilateral mechanisms. Do patterns of Western legal double standards—from Guantánamo to Gaza to Tehran—undermine the legitimacy of international law, and what are the implications? What roles have the arts and media played alongside legal processes, and how might their synergies better advance human rights in difficult contexts?

The discussion will be followed by the launch of the exhibition 'Art/Justice by Abu Zubaydah', the first UK exhibition of the original work of the CIA torture victim and Guantánamo detainee, held without charge for 24 years. The UK government recently settled a civil case concerning its complicity in his torture and rendition, raising questions about further accountability. The exhibition opens as the UK's relationship with US military and legal exceptionalism faces renewed scrutiny, amid involvement in a conflict described as an illegal war of aggression.

Art from Guantánamo | by Abu Zubaydah

Exhibition dates: 11 May - 5 June 2026

LSE Atrium Gallery, Ground Floor, Old Building, Houghton Street, LSE, London, WC2A 2AE

Film Screening: The Forever Prisoner

Monday 11 May 2026 | 5PM - 7.30PM

MAR 2.05, 2nd Floor, Marshall Building, Houghton Street, LSE WC2A 2AE

Screening of *The Forever Prisoner* HBO documentary by Alex Gibney (2021) on the US torture and extraordinary rendition programme, which began with Abu Zubaydah being the first 'high-value detainee' subject to the CIA's programme.

The screening will be followed by a discussion with **Cathy Scott-Clark**, co-author (with Adrian Levy) of the book *The Forever Prisoner: The Full and Searing Account of the CIA's Most Controversial Covert Program* (2022).

'War on Terror' Conference

Tuesday 12 May 2026 | 1PM - 6PM

MAR 1.09, 1st Floor, Marshall Building, Houghton Street, LSE WC2A 2AE

13.00-13.30pm: Opening Session: welcome and opening remarks by conference organisers

Gerry Simpson: Professor, Chair of Public International Law, LSE Law School.

Marie Petersmann: Assistant Professor, LSE Law School; Director, Sustainability Law & Policy Clinic.

Helen Duffy: Professor of Human Rights & Humanitarian Law, Leiden; Director, Human Rights in Practice; author of *The 'War on Terror' and International Law* (2015).

13.30 – 14.45: Panel I – The Legacy of the 'War on Terror'

Shami Chakrabarti: House of Lords; former Shadow Attorney General; Visiting Professor, LSE Law.

Baher Azmy: Legal Director, CCR; former Guantánamo lawyer.

Maya Foa: CEO, Reprieve.

Rebecca Mignot-Mahdavi: Assistant Professor, Sciences Po; author of *Drones and International Law: A Techno-Legal Machinery* (2023).

14.45 – 15.15: Coffee Break

15.15 – 16.30 | Panel II: The Role of the Media, Storytellers and Artists

Cathy Scott-Clark: Journalist (*Sunday Times*, *The Guardian*); co-author of *The Forever Prisoner*.

Max Houghton: Co-founder, Visible Justice; MA lead at LCC (UAL).

Crofton Black: Investigative journalist writing on extraordinary rendition.

Edmund Clark: Artist exploring state censorship; author and prison artist-in-residence.

16.45 – 18.00 | Closing Session – Reflections on Art, Law and Justice and the way forward

Diane M. Amann: Visiting Professor, LSE; Professor Emerita, University of Georgia.

Joshua Castellino: Executive Dean, Brunel; Professor of Law.

Chris Esdaile: Senior Legal Advisor, REDRESS.

Maha Hilal: Executive Director of Muslim Counterpublics Lab, author of *Innocent Until Proven Muslim: Islamophobia, the War on Terror and the Muslim Experience Since 9/11* (2022).

18.30 – 20.00 | Exhibition and Drinks Reception - Art by Abu Zubaydah at the LSE Atrium Gallery
Ground Floor, Old Building, Houghton Street, LSE, London, WC2A 2AE

ART -/- JUSTICE?

ART BY ABU ZUBAYDAH

12 MAY 2026 | 6.30PM

LSE ATRIUM GALLERY

