



**ELIZABETH M. ZECHENTER, Ph.D., J.D.**

**SOCIAL SCIENTIST, INTERNATIONAL ATTORNEY and a LEGAL SCHOLAR**

Dr. Elizabeth M. Zechenter is a US-trained international attorney, social scientist, academic researcher, and public speaker holding J.D. (international law), M.A. (Latin American history), and Ph.D. (archaeology/evolutionary anthropology). She is currently a visiting professor at the Faculty of Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw.

She was born in Poland but educated mostly in the U.S. She began her education at the Jagiellonian University in Krakow under Professor Godlowski. She continued her studies in the US at Emory University and at UCLA. She worked on the evolutionary issues and economic foundations of social complexity in the late preceramic Peru and directed a large multi-disciplinary research project (Proyecto PARAISO) in the Supe valley of the Central Peruvian coast. She also participated in other research projects including excavations of the Middle Intermediate Period settlements in the Montaro Valley of Central Peruvian Highlands as well as in the excavations of Inca habitation in that area.

After obtaining J.D., she worked on international public and private law issues at two major US law firms (Hogan and Lovells and Morgan and Lewis) until joining a large multinational corporation where she served as an Assistant General Counsel responsible for international legal operations, research and development in Asia, Latin America, and finally worldwide for the GlaxoSmithKline.

She combines both law and social science and works on the issues of international human rights and the rule of law. She is the author of several articles (both scientific and popular ones) and a frequent public speaker. Dr. Zechenter has taught international law and human rights law courses at the Georgetown University Law Center as well as social science courses at UCLA, University of Pennsylvania, Temple and Rutgers Universities.

She has served as an associate editor of the *International Law Journal of Georgetown University Law Center* and worked as a summer clerk to Judge Sloviter, Chief Judge, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit.

Her current research interests include the theoretical foundation of modern human rights laws and their applicability in a diverse world, especially in cases of culturally disadvantaged and discriminated groups such as women, minorities, and indigenous populations. She is currently involved in several projects involving violations of human rights, international law projects aimed at supporting minority populations,

women, and other vulnerable populations, as well as projects aiming at supporting free elections, independence of judges, and the rule of law.

Dr. Zechenter has held several elected offices, among them, chair of the International Human Committee of the Philadelphia Bar, chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights of Indigenous Peoples for the Human Rights Committee of the American Bar Association (ABA) and was a member of the International Human Rights Steering Committee for Section of International Law and Practice of the ABA. She was a member of the Working Group on Law and Anthropology of the American Anthropological Association's Commission for Human Rights. She was also a presidential appointee to the Advisory Board for the Center of Human Rights of the ABA.

Dr. Zechenter currently serves as the chair of the Women's Interest Network (WIN) and the chair of the International Human Rights Committee of the American Bar Association; she is the president of the Jagiellonian Law Society and the board member and secretary of the Philadelphia Chapter of the Kosciuszko Foundation as well as Kosciuszko's Foundation National Advisory Council.

She also serves on the Ukrainian Task Force of the New York Bar Association (NYSBA) and has published several articles and has been speaking on the issues concerning the war in Ukraine as well as organized two webinars on the crime of genocide as related to Ukraine with outstanding intentional faculty and key-noted by the US Ambassador Stephen Rapp.

She has been active in various *pro bono* projects, including:

- a) Representing a young Ethiopian woman from the minority Oromo ethnic group who was raped and harassed by the local government officials from the dominant ethnic group but denied US political asylum. On appeal, Dr Zechenter won asylum for that client even though rape and gender-based violence are hard to prove and afforded lesser levels of legal protections than other forms of political violence. Received the **Human Rights GURU Award** from Hogan & Hartson for that work.
- b) As Chair of the Working Group on Law and Social Science for the Commission of Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association, she advised the Commission on legal and social issues facing indigenous people in Latin America, and especially Amazonian tribes.
- c) Representing pro bono clients in various social security matters in the US while at Hogan and Hartson: advised Nigerian clients in their asylum case; provided legal advice to the Guardian Ad Litem to a minor Jamaican girl who applied for US asylum after years of sexual and other abuses suffered when in custody of the US citizens. Received "**I Met the Challenge Award**" for that work.
- d) Advising Committee for Human Rights on the El Salvador Amnesty Law and its compatibility with the international treaty obligations. Drafted a position paper on the validity of that law for the use by the Inter-American Court for the Organization of American States
- e) Providing pro bono assistance leading to the creation of an American tax-exempt non-profit corporation needed to solicit funds for a *Children Hospital in Warsaw, Poland*, and
- f) Serving as an *Election Observer for the OSCE-ODIHR Parliamentary Elections Observation Mission* in Ukraine, traveled as a member of the US Department of State delegation to Ukraine to observe elections in the Vinnica region, 1998.

For her work, Dr Zechenter was elected **Fellow, American Bar Foundation** (“The Fellows of the American Bar Foundation comprise a global honorary society of attorneys, judges, law faculty, and legal scholars whose public and private careers have demonstrated outstanding dedication to the highest principles of the legal profession and to the welfare of their communities. Membership in the Fellows is limited to one percent of lawyers licensed to practice in each jurisdiction. Fellows are recommended by their peers and elected by the Board of the American Bar Foundation”).

She was also awarded **Lifetime Achievement Award** for the work on human rights of women, at the Third Annual International Law Conference on the Status of Women held in the lead-up to the 66th Regular Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and co-sponsored by the New York City Bar, American Bar Association, and New York State Bar Association. Awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award for advocacy and humanitarian work on behalf of the human rights of women and various disadvantaged populations.

Due to Dr. Zechenter’s contributions to *Ukraine Task Force* and her providing monthly reports and insights into Polish society and the mass social response to the influx of Ukraine refugees, the Secretary of the Ukraine Task Force organized a successful fundraiser, not for Ukraine but for Polish NGOs helping Ukraine. This is how she described what happened:

“Because of Elizabeth, I felt compelled to individually sponsor and finance a Fundraiser in September 2022 for both Poland and Ukraine utilizing the International Law Firm of Paul Weiss Rifkind Wharton & Garrison as a location and The United Jewish Federation of Northeastern New York, raising monies in the five digit sums. Many people have been hosting various Ukrainian fundraisers, but it is the people of Poland, not the government, who were the ones opening their homes, that are the unsung heroes. It was Elizabeth, the unsung hero, whom I credit, that taught me that the world needed to know Poland’s long history of generosity that needed recognition. The Fundraiser is still raising money as a result of her.”

## **ORGANIZER AND MODERATOR – RECENT EVENTS ONLY**

2023 LEMKIN, GENOCIDE, AND THE MODERN WORLD – two webinars dealing with the crime of genocide, the UN Convention, and Rafael Lemkin, a Polish lawyer who was the father of concept of “genocide” as well as with the analysis of how the crime of “genocide” can be applied to crimes committed in Ukraine and elsewhere. Two part webinar series key-noted by the US Ambassador at Large, Stephen Rapp.

Seminar 1

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/jx9qmpimw0knh35/Lemkin%20-%20part%201.mp4?dl=0>

Seminar 2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvCtfiDRI6Q>

2022 LEMKOS AND UKRAINIANS IN POLISH LANDS seminar in the series “Ethnic Minorities in Polish Lands” organized by the Jagiellonian Law Society and the Kosciuszko Foundation.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyb5iih7fpy>

2022 OPERATION L – POLISH EFFORTS OF SAVING AFGHAN JUDGES, a webinar of the Jagiellonian Law Society and the Kosciuszko Foundation. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GerYpvNkc1o&t=363s>

### Selected PUBLICATIONS

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS: SOCIAL SCIENCE

2023 “U.S. Supreme Court and the Rights of Native Americans: 2023 Term,” *American Society of International Law, Rights of Indigenous Peoples Interest Group Newsletter* (ASIL RIPIGN), volume 10: 39-53

2023 “Uses of Rape as a Military Weapon by Russian Forces in Ukraine,” *International Law News* 50(2): 7-13

2023 “Operation L: Polish Efforts to Save Afghan Women Judges and Lawyers,” *Middle East Review Special Issue On Afghanistan, January 24, 2022*: 60-70

2023 “Women’s Interest Network: Annual Review of Significant Legal and Political Developments that Impacted Women Internationally in 2022,” with several co-authors, *The Year in Review: An Annual Survey of International Legal Developments*, 57: 287-307

<https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/international-law-year-in-review/yir-2023-v57.pdf>

2023 “Women-Led Revolution in Iran”, Section 6 of the article International Human Rights Review of Developments in 2022, *The Year in Review, an Annual Survey of International Legal Developments* 57:399-412 <https://www.americanbar.org/content/dam/aba/publications/international-law-year-in-review/yir-2023-v57.pdf>

2023 “U.S. Supreme Court and the Rights of Native Americans: 2023 Term,” *American Society of International Law Rights of Indigenous Peoples Interest Group Newsletter* (ASIL PIRG).

2022 “A Survey of Immigration Models and Refugee Protection Schemes and their Consequences: The Case of Ukrainian Refugees,” with van Kampen at al., *Journal of Human Trafficking, Enslavement and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, 3 (2) 141-197. <https://lnkd.in/euzBttZx>

2021 “Why is the Polish Government Opposed to the Istanbul Convention and Why Does it Matter?” *ABA IHRC Newsletter*, Spring 2021, 6: 1-15

2021 “The Recent Abortion Decision of the Polish Constitutional Tribunal: Legal Considerations and Social Unrest” *International Law News*, 48(3): 33-47

1997 “In the Name of Culture: Cultural Relativism and the Abuse of the Individual,” *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 53(3): 273-347

1997 “Is Modern Human Rights Regime Appropriate in Light of Human Diversity?” *ASIL HIG Newsletter*, 7(3): 16-22

#### **SELECTED PUBLICATIONS: EDITORIALS**

2022 “Poland cannot support influx of Ukrainian refugees on its own” *New York Law Journal*, May 13, 2022, <https://www.law.com/newyorklawjournal/2022/05/13/poland-cannot-support-influx-of-ukrainian-refugees-on-its-own/>

#### **SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING: SOCIAL SCIENCE AND LAW**

2020 “Polish Judicial Reforms and the Independence of Judiciary” presented at the *webinar Poland and the Rule of Law: Where Are We Now*, presentation at the joint American Bar Association and the Jagiellonian Law Society webinar, April 16, 2020

2019 “The First Two Modern Written Constitutions: US and Polish Constitution of 1787 and 1791”  
Lecture at the Museum of American Revolution, Philadelphia, October 2, 2019

2019 “Polish and American Constitutions: Two Examples of Early Constitutional Democracies and Their Legal Principles” Continuous Legal Education lecture, Jagiellonian Law Society, Philadelphia, April 23, 2019

2019 “Judicial Independence in Poland and the Case of Judge Alina Czubieniak” – an invited presentation at the UN OSCE-ODIHR Human Dimension Implementation Meeting, Warsaw, September 23, 2019

2019 *Recent Trends in Modern Human Rights Law - Is there Still a Universal Standard?* - lecture for the International Law Committee of the Philadelphia Bar Association, Philadelphia, PA

#### **SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING: HUMAN RIGHTS and INTERNATIONAL LAW**

2023 Invited speaker, at the American University Washington College of Law Symposium on “Rule of Law and Judicial Independence in Poland.”

2023 Speaker at the Annual ABA’s International Human Rights Committee webinar commemorating the 75th Anniversary Of The Universal Declaration Of Human Rights, on the “Worldwide Backsliding in the Human Rights of Women”

2023 Program co-chair “Women’s Equality Around The Globe: Marking The Centennial of The Proposed Equal Rights Amendment To The U.S. Constitution” ABA International Law Section Annual Conference 2023, New York, NY, May 2, 2023

2022 Speaker at the “Third Annual International Law Conference on the Status of Women on the “International Human Rights Laws And the Rights Of Women in A Culturally Diverse World” March 2022

2022 Speaker at the webinar organized by the Kosciuszko Foundation and the Polish Cultural Institute of New York. Topic: “May 3rd Constitution - Its Genesis, Meaning, and Legacy”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=meqaabs4764>

**SELECTED PUBLIC SPEAKING: PUBLIC AND PRIVATE INTERNATIONAL LAW RELATED**

2023, Invited speaker, International Conference on the Foreign Policy and Security Studies organized by the Center of American Studies. Delivered a talk on “International Law and Legal Responsibility for the War in Ukraine,” August 20, 2023.

2022 Speaker at the American Bar Association International Legal Skills Clinic on Human Rights in Business about “How the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights Impact Lawyers and the Practice of Law” March 22, 2022,

[https://www.americanbar.org/groups/international\\_law/publications/articles/esg-regulations-united-nations-principles-on-business-and-human-rights/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/international_law/publications/articles/esg-regulations-united-nations-principles-on-business-and-human-rights/)