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The Power and Purpose of International Law

Mary Ellen O'Connell

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The world is poised for another important transition. The United States is dealing with the impact of the Afghan and Iraq wars, the use of torture and secret detention, Guantanamo, climate change, nuclear proliferation, weakened international institutions, and other issues related directly or indirectly to international law. The world needs an accurate account of the important role of international law and *The Power and Purpose of International Law* seeks to provide it.

Mary Ellen O'Connell explains the purpose of international law and the power it has to achieve that purpose. International law supports order in the world and the attainment of humanity's fundamental goals of peace, prosperity, respect for human rights, and protection of the natural environment. These goals can best be realized through international law, which uniquely has the capacity to bind even a superpower of the world. By exploring the roots and history of international law, and by looking at specific events in the history of international law, this book demonstrates the why and the how of international law and its enforcement. It directly confronts the notion that international law is "powerless" and that working within the framework of international law is useless or counter-productive. As the world moves forward, it is critical that both leaders and their citizens understand the true power and purpose of international law and this book creates a valuable resource for them to aid their understanding. It uses a clear, compelling style to convey topical, informative and cutting-edge information to the reader.

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