

ASIAN LAW INSTITUTE DISTINGUISHED LECTURE

JUDGING HISTORY IN THE COURTS: ASIA AND THE LIMITS OF INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Raul C. Pangalangan

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Former Judge, International Criminal Court (The Hague)

Chairperson: Mr Jeffrey Chan Wah Teck, S.C.
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WEDNESDAY, 17 SEPTEMBER 2025
5.30 PM to 7.00 PM

NUS LAW (BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS), WEE CHONG JIN MOOT COURT

SYNOPSIS

Asia has contributed to the growth of International Criminal Law: the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal and the post-WW2 national trials against the Japanese, the Cambodian proceedings against Khmer Rouge leaders, the trials from the East Timor independence struggle, and most recently, the International Criminal Court (ICC) cases against former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte for murders committed in his "War on Drugs" and against a Burmese general for the genocide against the Rohingya. The principle of command responsibility actually originates from the trial of General Tomoyuki Yamashita in Manila, and was upheld all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Yet Asia is the least represented region in the Rome Statute that establishes the ICC. The theme of "Asia's ambivalence" to international law has been deeply and admirably analyzed by distinguished scholars at NUS. I propose to pursue that same theme in relation to ICL in particular: the selectivity in the cases and crimes being prosecuted; the creativity entailed in getting mass atrocity crimes to fit within a judicially manageable trial; the lingering resonance of the "sovereignty" argument vis-à-vis the complementarity principle which says that the ICC is a court of last resort which steps in only after the national state has shown itself "unwilling or unable" to prosecute.

I propose that Asian states hesitate to join the International Criminal Court not because it is *international* but because it is a *court*. After all, if domestic courts are seen as politically vulnerable and manipulable, why trust a global court to be any different?

ABOUT THE SPEAKER



Raul C. Pangalangan is a former Judge at the International Criminal Court at The Hague, where he tried cases of war crimes involving child soldiers, forced marriages and attacks by religious police against cultural heritage.

He is a Member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (The Hague) and has been elected to the *Institut de Droit International*. He was recently a Fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C. He is also Co-Chair of the Editorial Board of the *Asian Journal of International Law* and Editor-in-Chief of the *Philippine Yearbook of International Law*.

He is now Professor Emeritus of Law at the University of the Philippines where he had earlier served as Law Dean. He received his LL.M. and S.J.D. from the Harvard Law School. He holds the Diploma of The Hague Academy of International Law.

PROGRAMME

5.00PM: Registration
5.30PM: Lecture by Professor Raul C. Pangalangan
6.30PM: Q&A Session
7.00PM: Dinner Reception

REGISTRATION



There is no registration fee for this lecture. Visit [HERE](#) or scan the QR Code to register

Closing Date: 10 September 2025, 5.00 PM

Contact: asli@nus.edu.sg

CPD POINTS



Public CPD Point: 1
Practice Area: International Law
Training Level: Foundation

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