



RETHINKING ACCOUNTABILITY IN INTERNATIONAL LAW: THE ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

This article explores the evolving role of local authorities in the implementation and protection of human rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Drawing on extensive case law from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), it illustrates how municipalities and regional bodies are increasingly recognised as both duty-bearers and potential violators of Convention rights. The analysis spans key areas such as the protection of vulnerable individuals, freedom of expression and assembly, non-discrimination, family life, procedural guarantees, education, environmental protection, and the governance of artificial intelligence. Despite their growing responsibilities, local authorities remain legally peripheral in international law, which continues to vest formal accountability solely in the State. The article critically examines this tension and considers emerging models of multilevel governance, particularly the European Union's direct effect doctrine, as potential pathways for strengthening local accountability. It concludes that embedding human rights standards in local governance is both a legal obligation and a practical necessity, calling for clearer normative frameworks, capacity-building, and institutional support to align practice with the evolving multilevel human rights architecture.