



CALL FOR PAPERS

Special issue: Legal Mobilization and Infrastructures of Protest Culture

Guest Editors

Mikel Diez Sarasola (EUR), Jeff Handmaker (ISS-EUR), Daniela Raad Sierra (LMP)

Institutional Sponsors

The International Institute of Social Studies, Erasmus University Rotterdam (ISS-EUR); Universidad del País Vasco UPV/EHU; Legal Mobilization Platform

Deadline for Expressions of Interest: 15 October 2025

Motivation for the Special Issue

Protests have long been a fundamental, yet also contested mechanism for citizens to express dissent, demand accountability and challenge authority. The right to protest, which is enshrined in states' constitutions, has been severely tested. In some issues especially, interests can collide with other public and private interests and the state or other private actors can shrink the opportunity for expressing the right to protest.

For example, in the Netherlands, those advocating for attention to the climate crisis and animal rights have collided with the economic and labour interests of farmers. In 2019 and 2023, farmers blocked public roads, protesting planned nitrogen regulation. In 2023 and 2024, Extinction Rebellion protestors also blocked public roads, albeit for very different reasons.

Other examples are in Poland, where a wave of “Black Protests” spread during 2020-21, responding to abortion restricting laws and constitutional challenges. The scale of the pro-choice street protests was unprecedented, yet there have not been changes in the legislation.

Meanwhile, in the Basque Country, demonstrations are taking place against judicial decisions against the normalization of the Basque language in the public administration, raising questions about the relationship between protest in defense of ethnic identity and individuals’ fundamental right of access to public employment.

Pro-democracy protests have also been taking place in Egypt (2019-20), Ghana (2021-24) and Sudan (2019-22) and were responded not only with state repression-tear gas, rubber bullets, mass arrest of civic actors, but also showed the limitations of European democratic values and the impediments for democratic mobilization.

In relation to some issues, such as protests for Palestinian rights, pressures have been acutely felt across different countries. Throughout Europe, Australia, USA, Canada and in Israel-Palestine, especially from October 2023, the right to protest, particularly by young people regarding Israel’s widely reported atrocities in Gaza, has been experiencing severe pressure.

There is also an intersectional element observed, whereby environmental activists, anti-racist and Palestinian solidarity activists have joined to form a consolidated movement. This has led to massive “Red Line Protests” in 2025 calling for a ceasefire in Gaza and for accountability, which attracted the largest number of participants for any protest in decades. Meanwhile, there have been calls from within the Dutch government to restrict the opportunity to protest, particularly for climate and Palestinian solidarity activists.

This path of collective reflection and research has brought together academics from different parts of the world. This special issue brings together critical reflections on protest and legal mobilization from interdisciplinary perspectives.

Themes of the Special Issue

We invite articles from scholars and practitioners, to reflect on:

1. Suppressing and policing protest as an oppressive use of law (i.e. lawfare)
2. Conceptualising and analysing protest as a legitimate tactic of legal mobilization
3. The cultures of protest
4. Protest as dissent and counterpower
5. Historical evolution of protest

Expressions of Interest

We invite expressions of interest for papers comprising: (1) a cover letter, and (2) an abstract (maximum 350 words). The cover letter should include a one-paragraph bio (maximum 200 words) together with a few sentences outlining the context of the paper: i.e. whether part of a PhD project, based on empirical research, part of ongoing research, etc.

Please submit the pdf by email with the Subject: '**Special issue: Legal Mobilization and Infrastructures of Protest Culture** before 15 October 2025 to LMP@iss.nl

The initial selection process will be based on the abstract's quality and its relatedness with the core themes of the project, and other submitted proposals. Decisions on accepted papers will be communicated by 30 November 2025.

Successful contributors will be invited to submit a full-length paper for a preparatory, online workshop to take place in the Spring of 2026, allowing for rigorous, peer-review prior to submission, and with the hope that your paper will be part of this edited Special Issue collection in a highly-ranked (ISI), peer-reviewed academic journal.

Please note: formal acceptance of your paper depends on a positive review by reviewers of the Journal.

About the Legal Mobilization Platform

The Legal Mobilization Platform (LMP) is an intersectional and interdisciplinary collaborative network of academics, lawyers, and social justice organisations committed to advancing and realising human rights. The network brings together more than 350 individual members and over forty institutional partners, especially from The Netherlands, but also other countries.

The LMP focus has been on researching the role of law and human rights in social and political struggles. For lawyers and activists, the Platform provides opportunities to inform researchers about key issues and to reflect on strategies for holding states, companies, and third-party actors accountable. Throughout its work, the LMP aims to understand, discuss and strengthen various forms of legal mobilisation to address accountability challenges at both local and global levels, supporting the rule of law and contributing to systemic justice.

The LMP disseminates research, findings and reflection to its members and broader audiences through webinars, panels, podcasts, workshops, trainings, and reports. See more about the Platform at: www.iss.nl/LMP