



## Prosecuting Companies for Human Rights Violations Abroad? 2 June 2017, Law Faculty JBH University of Basel

9am – 4pm, Pro Iure Auditorium

Could – and should – companies and their CEOs be charged with offences relating to human right violations allegedly committed overseas? If so, should that liability be triggered by the acts of persons associated with a company’s foreign subsidiaries, subcontractors or suppliers?

Public concern about the accountability of corporations and their managers has given rise to initiatives aimed at holding corporate actors accountable for certain rights violations of subsidiaries in their business activities. At the international level, the UN Human Rights Council adopted the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNHRC 17/4 of 16 June 2011, so-called Ruggie Principles). The 2014/95/EU Accounting Directive establishes reporting requirements on human rights compliance, with some members of the EU Parliament pushing for further reform with regard to criminal liability. At the end of 2016, 120’000 Swiss citizens had signed the “Responsible Business Initiative” [<http://konzern-initiative.ch>]. It launches a far-reaching attempt to implement the *Ruggie Principles* into Swiss law, but clearly keeps criminal law out of the picture. Other countries consider criminal prosecution – and NGOs target such remedies.

A global movement towards the expansion of corporate criminal liability law is thus not unidirectional. The challenge of making good in cases of human rights violations is of particular relevance for states, such as Switzerland, that are hubs for multinational corporations operating in “high-risk” areas of commerce and jurisdictions. New business and human rights frameworks present lawyers in practice with a new range of crucial questions, not only about where – and when – a company or its managers may be brought to court – and for what type of wrongdoing, but also about a sustainable strategy to avoid human rights violations abroad: For academics and activists, there are related concerns about the credibility of threats to charge entrepreneurs with overseas misconduct and the effectiveness of such reform in the light of the goals of the Ruggie Principles and the overall objectives of corporate law.

Please register until 15 May 2017  
per e-mail to [Claudine.Abt@unibas.ch](mailto:Claudine.Abt@unibas.ch)



## Friday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>, Program

09:00-09:15

**Introduction: Ruggie Principles and the Jurisdictional Issue**  
*Sabine Gless, University of Basel, Switzerland*

09:15-10:45

**I. Panel 1**  
**“Responsible Business Initiative” – and Criminal Law?**  
*Mark Pieth, University of Basel, Switzerland*

**Holding Companies liable: The Australian Approach**  
*Radha Ivory, University of Queensland, Australia*

**Discussion**

10:45-11:15

**Coffee Break**

11:15-12:30

**II. Panel 2**  
**“Two steps forward, and one back” – The U.S. Case Law**  
*Sara Beale, Duke University, U.S.A.*

**“Hands-off Prosecution” – Feasibility of the European Approach**  
*Cedric Ryngaert, Utrecht University, Netherlands*

**Discussion**

12:30-13:30

**Lunch Break**

13:30–15:30

**III. Panel 3 & Round Table**  
**“Restoring those who have been injured” –  
The challenges of making good**  
*Kenneth Gallant, University of Arkansas at Little Rock, U.S.A.*

**Round Table**

**“What is a responsible and feasible approach to liability?”**  
*Mirna Adjami, Basel Institute on Governance (Chair)*  
*Felix Ehrat, Novartis, Switzerland*  
*Flavio Noto, Staatsanwaltschaft Basel-Stadt, Switzerland*  
*Urs Rybi, Public Eye Switzerland*

15:30-16:30

**End of Conference /Fare well Coffee – La Pausa**



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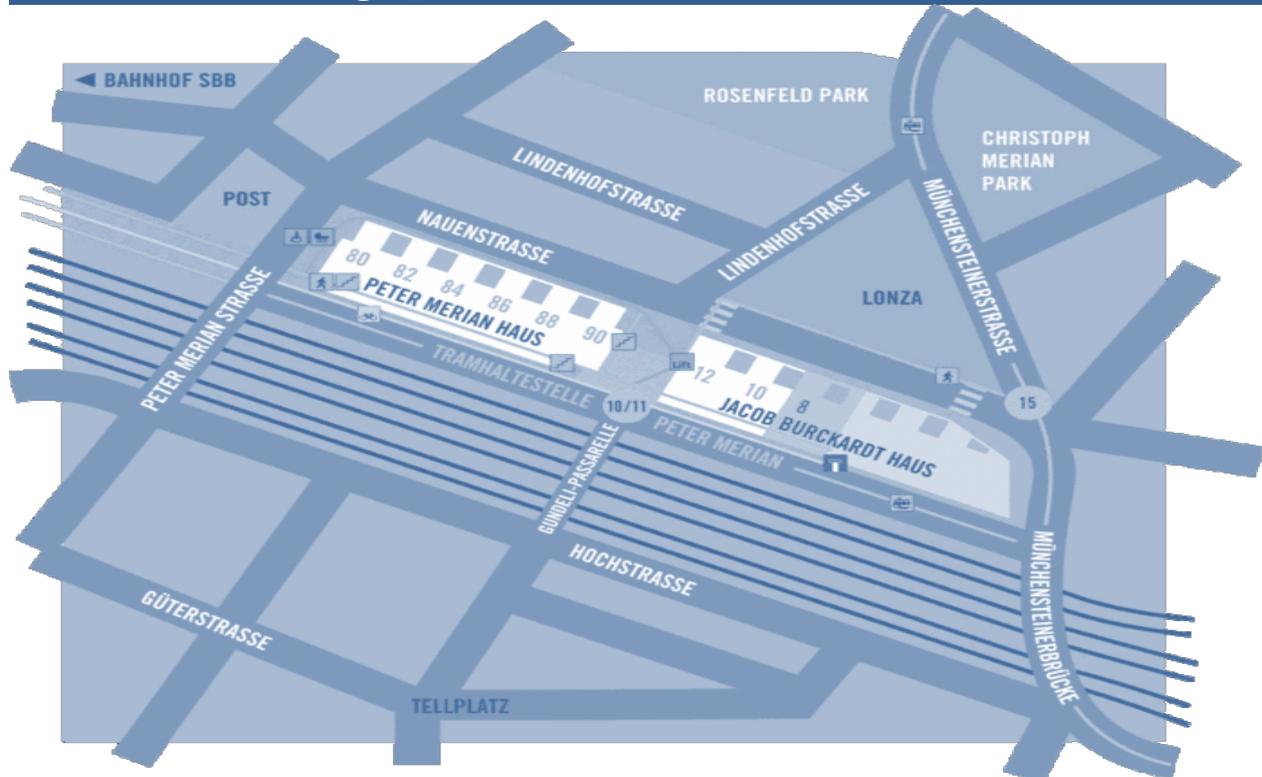
Juristische  
Fakultät



Association Internationale de Droit Pénal  
International Association of Penal Law  
Asociación Internacional de Derecho Penal



## Directions to the Law Faculty of the University of Basel *Peter Merian-Weg 8, Basel*



<https://ius.unibas.ch/fakultaet/>

### From EuroAirport Basel/Mulhouse:

Take bus no. 50 to Bahnhof SBB; at Bahnhof SBB change to tram no. 10 in direction "Dornach" or no. 11 in direction "Aesch"; get off at the stop "Peter Merian".

### From the main train station Bahnhof SBB:

Take tram no. 10 in direction "Dornach" or no. 11 in direction "Aesch"; get off at the stop "Peter Merian".

There will be no attendance fee due to the generous funding of

Schweizerischer Nationalfonds, Stiftung zur Förderung der rechtlichen und wirtschaftlichen Forschung an der Universität Basel, Juristische Fakultät der Universität Basel

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per e-mail to [Claudine.Abt@unibas.ch](mailto:Claudine.Abt@unibas.ch)