

# **AUTHORITARIANISM, LAW, AND THE REMAKING OF SOCIETY**

Please register to attend.  
Limited seating available

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DATE: June 19-20, 2025  
VENUE: SOAS University of London  
ORGANISED BY: Social Life of Law an Academic Research Project  
FUNDED BY: Leverhulme Trust  
REGISTRATION LINK: <https://forms.office.com/e/28EgyF7PjX>

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# Authoritarianism, law, and the remaking of society'

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19 & 20 June 2025

## DAY 1

### Welcome and introductions

10:00 – 10:15am

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### Panel 1 – 10:20 – 11:30am: Authoritarianism in affective registers: From the ordinary to the spectacular

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This panel will look at ideas of belonging and othering, and the ways in which every day affective registers are invoked to construct such identities.

**Bhargabi Das:**

Affect, ambivalence, and the National Register of Citizens (NRC)

**Birgitte Stampe Holst:**

Hospitality, refugees and manoeuvring the law

**Surya Ghildiyal:**

Prefiguring legal violence: Ordinary violence as a frame of reference for authoritarian legality.

**Piyush Chhabra:**

Popular culture and the spectacle of authoritarianism

*Discussant: Deepa Das Acevedo*

### Panel 2 (11:40 – 12:30): Authoritarian temporalities

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This panel unpacks the grammar of time. Papers will examine the continuities and ruptures in authoritarian legal strategies employed around the world.

**Sakshi Rai:**

Temporalities of Authoritarian Legalities and the Civilification of Criminality: Reflections from UAPA Tribunals in India

**Shatakshi Singh:**

Chronicles of an Eviction Foretold: Time, Law and Resistance in New Delhi

**Zoha Waseem:**

Webs, Walls, and Watchmen: Imperial Entanglements, Authoritarian Policing, and Digital Counterinsurgency in Pakistan

*Discussant: Deepa Das Acevedo*

Lunch (12:30 – 13:30)

### Panel 3 (13.30 – 15:00) Geographies of violence: The urban, 'home', and ecology

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This panel will explore how authoritarian lawmaking engages with notions of spatiality and remakes public and private spaces.

**Devansh Shrivastava:**

Housing tenure in a spatially polarized city: Politics of prohibition and segregation at urban margins in Ahmedabad, India

**Arvin Jake A. Adovo:**

A theatre of submission: Authoritarianism, waste in the Philippines, and the geographies of law

**Jothie Rajah:**

Curry and Sedition: Re-constituting Home, Nation, and Citizenship through Everyday Authoritarian Legality

**David AK Singh:**

Delhi's 'bulldozer raj': authoritarian uses of the law and reconfiguration of India's urban frontier

**Arjin Tas:**

The Role of Law in Urban Restructuring and Counterinsurgency in the "Risky" Areas

*Discussant: Sylvia Croese*

## Panel 4 (15:15 – 16:00): Constructing dissent and the dissenters

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This panel will explore how the authoritarian State adopts new vocabularies to earmark dissent and target dissenters in contemporary times. Papers will also ask the question of who is labelled as a dissenter and examine the implications of such labelling.

**Sagar Abraham-Gonsalves:**

Life and Resistance in Authoritarian Contexts: A Case Study of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act in India

**Nguyen Van Bao:**

How Civil Society Organizations Develop Coping Strategies Under Authoritarian Regimes

**Mercedes Malcomson:**

Human rights defenders in Russia\*

# Day 2

## Panel 5 (10:30 – 11:30): Policing bodies through law: Between the carceral and the everyday

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This panel unpacks the everyday impact of carcerality in authoritarian times, focusing on how it is embodied by the State and the non-State and how the effects of carcerality travel beyond institutional spaces such as prisons.

**Nidah Kaiser:**

Rough Justice: A study of Vigilante Violence and the Law in Authoritarian States

**Fariya Yesmin and Mamoon Bhuyan:**

Political economies of goru bepsha (cattle trade): An ethnographic study of everyday authoritarianism in the borderland chors (river islands) of Western Assam, India

**Sayali Sudhakar Suradkar and Ashok Kumar Mocherla:**

Authoritarianism through the Indian Jail Craft: Gender, Social Status and Patterns of Treatment in Women Prisons

**Snehal Sharma:**

Propaganda, Law, and Resistance: Marriage in the Time of Hindu Nationalist Regime

*Discussant: Akanksha Awal*

## Panel 6 (11:45 –12:40): Imagining resistance: Modes, optics, and politics

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This panel looks at how people defy authoritarianism, finding ways to both engage and rescript legality to articulate resistance through alternate modes.

**Gulal Salil:**

Without Permission—Illegible laws against legible graffiti

**Debby Sze Wan Chan; Alvin Hoi-Chun Hung:**

From Collective Deference to Subtle Dissent: Evolving Legal Consciousness among Court Spectators in Hong Kong

**Nicole M. Wright:**

Livestreaming as a Matter of Life and Death: Online Legal Influencers Transmitting Legal Knowledge to Disenfranchised Minority Audiences under Racialized Capture of the Justice System

*Discussant: Anat Rosenberg*

## Lunch (12:45 – 14:00)

## Panel 7 (14:00 – 14:50): Producing knowledge in authoritarian times: From the individual to the institution

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This panel peels back authoritarian legality to the process of knowledge-making, focusing on who makes such knowledge, what grammars do they use, and what are the challenges to disrupting these processes of knowledge-making.

**Eve Darian-Smith:**

Policing the Mind: The global authoritarian attack on scholars and students

**Lubhyathi Rangarajan:**

A Legal Black Box: Experiences with “Difficult” Data in India

**Saumya Maheshwari:**

Defrauding the law and abusing religion: “Love jihad” laws as the afterlife of judicial objections to religious conversion for marriage

*Discussant: Raphael Susewind*

## Debrief, closing remarks, way forward (15:00 – 15:30)

In this session, we will try to round up a list of questions which emerge from the workshop, theoretical frames, and identify points of divergence too. We will also discuss next steps in terms of publication opportunities.