

Outstanding Women  
of International, European  
and Constitutional Law



2026



Universität Hamburg  
DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

FAKULTÄT  
FÜR RECHTSWISSENSCHAFT

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The project “**Outstanding Women of International, European and Constitutional Law**” is the result of an initiative driven by motivated students and young researchers, which emerged from a seminar held by Verena Kahl (Ass. iur., M.A.) and Prof. Dr. Markus Kotzur, LL.M. (Duke Univ.) at the University of Hamburg in 2021. Its aim is to make distinguished women and their contributions to the development of the national and international legal order visible and more widely known.



This has led to the publication of a first pocket calendar in 2022 consisting of twelve short portraits of outstanding women in the fields of International, European and Constitutional Law. Ever since, annual pocket calendars showcase twelve women, their achievements and challenges throughout the course of their career path, which may not be without controversy, of course. Each calendar edition aims to feature women of different eras and distinct backgrounds, seeking to follow an intersectional approach.

Since 2024, the collaboration *Verfassungsblog x Outstanding Women* has been in place, with an amplified blogpost for each portrait being published every month. Readers find a **QR code** on each page directing them to the blogpost on the *Verfassungsblog* website. Please note that the blogpost will only show in the same month.

For more information, please visit the project's UHH website (<https://uhh.de/rw-womencaender>) and Instagram (@outstanding\_women\_jura\_uhh).

## CONTRIBUTORS AND NOTES

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**01/01** Neujahr  
New Year's Day

**01/05** Tag der Arbeit  
Labour Day

**03/10** Tag der Deutschen Einheit  
Day of German Unity

**03/04** Karfreitag  
Good Friday

**14/05** Christi Himmelfahrt  
Ascension Day

**31/10** Reformationstag  
Reformation Day

**06/04** Ostermontag  
Easter Monday

**25/05** Pfingstmontag  
Pentacost

**25/12 - 26/12** 1. und 2. Weihnachtsfeiertag  
1st and 2nd Day of Christmas

\* public holidays for Hamburg



## Abigail Smith Adams

November 1744

While history readily remembers Abigail Smith Adams as wife to one, and mother to another US president, she was an outspoken figure in her own right. Adams was highly opinionated on American Independence, the emancipation of enslaved peoples, and most other political debates of her time. She did not shy away from making her voice known and was perceived as a very influential political figure. Adams' extensive correspondence paints an invaluable picture of life and legislation in the young American republic.

« [...] I desire you would remember the ladies, and be more generous and favorable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the husbands. Remember all men would be tyrants if they could.

© Gilbert Stuart, Public Domain <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abigail\\_Adams\\_by\\_Gilbert\\_Stuart.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Abigail_Adams_by_Gilbert_Stuart.jpg)> via Wikimedia Commons



Author: Ada Klenner

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2W 3W 4W 5W

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## Rosa Luxemburg

5 March 1871

Rosa Luxemburg was born into a Jewish family in Poland. She was an excellent student who became politically interested very early in life. After finishing school, she studied natural sciences and economics at the University of Zürich. In 1898, she moved to Germany, where she fought for social democracy and revolutionary Marxism. She opposed nationalism, militarism and capitalism. She was imprisoned several times, inter alia for giving anti-war speeches or criticizing the emperor. On 15 January 1919, Rosa Luxemburg was murdered by counter-revolutionary soldiers in Berlin.

« *Freedom is always freedom for those who think differently.*

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Author: Lilian Langer

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## Zheng Yuxiu

20 March 1891

Zheng Yuxiu, China's first female lawyer and judge, challenged tradition early on by rejecting both foot-binding and an arranged marriage. Trained at the Sorbonne, she became a trailblazer in law and politics, shaping Republican civil law and advancing gender equality as a revolutionary, diplomat, and educator.



*The Constitution guaranteed absolute equality for women, but I wanted to be sure.*

© Fu Bingchang, Image Courtesy of C.H. Foo, Y.W. Foo and Special Collections, University of Bristol Library



Authors: Junge Juristinnen  
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Deutscher Juristinnenbund e.V.

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## **Amalia González Caballero de Castillo Ledón**

*18 August 1898*

Amalia González Caballero de Castillo Ledón was a diplomat, politician, writer and feminist activist. She represented Mexico at the United Nations Conference on International Organization in 1945 and served as a delegate to the Commission on the Status of Women, contributing to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Amalia became the first female ambassador and member of a presidential cabinet in post-revolutionary Mexico. She founded organizations to help secure women's right to vote ("suffrage") in Mexico as early as 1932 and campaigned decades before women's suffrage was introduced in 1952.

« *Full political rights for women must be recognised, as a matter of principle, as a natural right.*

© Fototeca Amalia González Caballero, A 3/1 S.84 Ej. 5, Acervo Histórico Diplomático, Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, México



Author: Julia Clara Lips

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## Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah

22 July 1915

As one of the first Indian Muslim women of her generation to leave the seclusion of women (purdah), Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah was a pioneer of women's emancipation. She was the first Muslim woman to obtain a doctorate at the University of London and one of only two female representatives in Pakistan's first Constituent Assembly. She also became the country's first female civil servant. As a delegate to the United Nations, she contributed to the formulation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Genocide Convention. Ikramullah further served as Pakistan's ambassador to Morocco.



*The ideas emphasized in the Declaration of Human Rights are far from being realized, but there is a goal, to which those who believe in the freedom of the human spirit can try to reach.*



Author: Lauritz Wilde

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## Shirin Ebadi

21 June 1947

Shirin Ebadi is a well-known Iranian lawyer, former judge, and human rights advocate. She was the first woman to serve as a judge in Iran and received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003 for her dedication to democracy and the protection of women's and children's rights. Living in exile since 2009, she remains a vocal supporter of justice and human dignity.

« *If you can't eliminate injustice, at least tell everyone about it.*

© Javaid Montazari



Author: Muskan Kakkar

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## Diane Otto

1952

Prof. Dianne Otto is a foundational figure in feminist and queer theory and international law. Coming to law later in life, Otto blends her erudite insight into theory with a commitment to activism for equality. She has held many prestigious posts and received several honours. In particular, Ai Weiwei included Otto in his exhibition honouring Australian Human Rights advocates. She has mentored many juniors through her warmth, kindness, and critical insight.



*By changing meanings, unsettling taxonomies and inverting conventions, it is my hope that queer curiosity can open new ways to imagine a more peaceful, equitable and inclusionary world, and offer fresh means and methods to work towards its realisation. In 'Queerness as Curiosity' in Queering International Law (Routledge 2017)*

© Taken by Emily Jones in 2019 at the rainbow stairs in Istanbul



Author: Tamsin Phillippa Paige

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# Asha-Rose Mtengeti (Migiro)

9 July 1956

Throughout her tenure in various governmental positions, Tanzanian politician Dr. Asha-Rose Mtengeti continuously promoted reforms aimed at enhancing the nation's development, specifically in her position as the first female Minister of Foreign Affairs. In 2007, she became the third person to be appointed Deputy Secretary-General to the United Nations.

Before entering politics, Mtengeti earned an LL.B. and LL.M from the University of Dar-es-Salaam, where she served as senior lecturer and head of department. Mtengeti received her doctorate from the University of Constance.

Author: Ann-Sophie Hartmann



*I believe the best way to empower women is to empower communities – through education, good healthcare and opportunities to balance work and family life. It is very important to convey values to communities such as equality, dignity and respect for all. Inclusion is absolutely key to development as no nation can progress if women or any other section of the population are left behind.*

© Rune Stoltz Bertinussen/Justis- og politidepartementet (Children's house in Tromsø), CC BY 2.0 <[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asha-Rose\\_Migiro.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Asha-Rose_Migiro.jpg)> via Wikimedia Commons

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## Juliane Kokott

Prof. Dr. Dres. h.c. Juliane Kokott,  
LL.M. (Am. Univ.), S.J.D. (Harvard)

1957

As the third woman to hold this office, Juliane Kokott has been serving as an advocate general at the European Court of Justice since October 2003. Kokott previously obtained her doctorate and habilitation from the University of Heidelberg and received the “*venia legendi*” for German and foreign public law, public international and European law. She has worked as a professor at various universities. In addition to her many functions and activities, Kokott is the mother of six children, making her a role model also for balancing family and career.



*I think most people experience self-doubt or setbacks—it's how you deal with them that matters. [...] The doubts have not kept me from taking action, and that is what matters.  
(translated by the author)*

© Gudrun-Holde Ortner, Heidelberg



Author: Franziska Bachmann

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## Phoebe Okowa

1 January 1965

Okowa's extraordinary expertise in the field of Public International Law resulted in her being the first African woman elected to the International Law Commission, effective 1 January 2023. She was a member of the Permanent Court of Arbitration and, since 12 November 2025, elected as a judge at the International Court of Justice, after having advocated on questions of International Law before domestic and international courts.

Her research focuses on questions of State responsibility and environmental justice, and she has taught at numerous universities.

« I want to see whether or not the existing framework of international law can be progressively adopted as an instrument of accountability.



Author: Vanessa Domingues

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## Tracy S. Robinson

20<sup>th</sup> century

Jamaican professor Tracy Robinson holds law degrees from the University of Oxford, Yale Law School and the University of the West Indies, where she now teaches family law, human rights and constitutional law. Since beginning her career as a lecturer in 1996, she has published on a variety of topics including gender equality, regulation of sexuality and the impact of colonialism on the Caribbean legal system. From 2012 to 2015, she was a member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights where she served as Rapporteur for the Rights of Women as well as Rapporteur for the Rights of LGBTI Persons.



*I think of human rights work as involving lifelong partnerships with others. Those communities are especially important for women and others who find themselves in places where they do not always belong, but have important work to do. And you choose the community.*



Author: Alena Schröder

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« *This feeling, you know, when the sand is slipping between your fingers, that's what it feels like for us, when we're trying to hold onto our languages, our cultural practices, our land, and it's slipping between our fingers like that, because of the adverse effects of climate change.*



© Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change

## Cynthia Houniui

1990s

Houniui was born and grew up in the Solomon Islands. There, she was taught by older generations how to live with and from the land, as well as the value it adds to life. Witnessing the negative impact of climate change, she decided to study law and co-founded the organization Pacific Islands Students Fighting Climate Change (PISFCC), becoming its president. Their advocacy led to the landmark Advisory Opinion on “Obligations of States in respect to Climate Change” issued in July 2025 by the International Court of Justice. During the oral hearings, Houniui presented the statement of the PISFCC.



Author: Christian Raby