

Book

‘Necropolitics and Mass Violence: Power, Death, and Resistance in Global Perspective’

Call for Contributions

Editors

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Presentation

We invite chapter contributions for an interdisciplinary edited volume that examines how power and death intersect with regimes of mass violence around the world. This book will explore how necropolitics - the power to dictate who may live and who must die (Mbembe, 2019) - operates across diverse global contexts, and how communities confront and resist these deadly structures of oppression. The volume's scope spans theoretical and empirical approaches, with a special emphasis on perspectives from the Global South. Scholars, practitioners, and activists from sociology, criminology, anthropology, history, political science, law, human rights, forensic science, and related fields are encouraged to participate. By bringing together case studies and critical analyses, the book aims to foster new frameworks for justice, accountability, and social transformation in the face of state violence and social injustice.

Rationale

Around the world, we continue to witness the entanglement of power, death, and state violence as tools of governance. Contemporary regimes, whether democratic or authoritarian, colonial or neoliberal, often normalise death and disappearance as forms of political order. Necropolitics, as a concept coined by Achille Mbembe (2019), extends beyond direct killing to encompass the social and political power to determine who may live and who must die. It includes the exposure of certain populations to death, the imposition of social or civil death, and other forms of political violence that mark some groups as disposable. This edited volume builds on the mission of the ISA RC48 Necropolitics and Mass Violence Research Network by interrogating how diverse structures of authority deploy mass violence and lethal neglect, and how such practices are challenged in the pursuit of social justice.

Under necropolitical logics, mass death, enforced disappearance, genocide, border violence, and other forms of state-sanctioned or tolerated violence are deployed as tools of governance and social control across different contexts. Examples abound: at militarised borders, aggressive deterrence policies result in humanitarian disasters where migrant lives are treated as expendable. For instance, thousands of migrants have drowned in the world's oceans. These deaths are far from accidental and are in fact a part of the necropolitical framework which sacrifices the lives of some (non-citizens, or 'outsiders'; those who do not belong to 'us') in favour of the right of states to 'defend' their borders. In such scenarios, the 'collateral' deaths of refugees and undocumented people are not merely ignored but tacitly accepted as a sovereign strategy to reinforce boundaries and notions of national belonging.

State violence is also manifest in more direct and authoritarian forms. History and current events provide stark cases of regimes using terror, extrajudicial killing, and atrocity to impose order. In some countries, the line between crime control and state terror is blurred: for example, in Venezuela, one analysis found that by 2018, one in every three homicides was committed by state security forces, a pattern described as a clear expression of the necropolitics of an unaccountable state. Similarly, experiences of genocide, military dictatorship, and police brutality from Latin America to Africa and Asia demonstrate how authorities wield death to suppress opposition and instil fear. The lingering legacies of such violence often include unhealed social trauma and contested memories that span generations.

Necropolitics can also operate through structural violence and neglect, where systemic inequalities and policy ‘omissions’ lead to the slow deaths of marginalised populations. Achille Mbembe’s insight that sovereignty resides in the power to make live or let die resonates in settings where certain communities are effectively abandoned to premature death. Neoliberal governance, for instance, can enforce austerity measures that decimate public health and welfare, disproportionately harming the poor and racialised. Furthermore, drastic cuts to social supports under global capitalism amount to structural racism, massive poverty and class divisiveness, with public institutions serving biopower for the privileged while the social and political arenas become pure instruments of necropolitical global capitalism. During the COVID-19 pandemic, such logics were laid bare: already vulnerable groups suffered the highest mortality as governments accepted an acceptable number of deaths among the poor and people of colour in the service of economic expedience. In the words of cultural critic Henry Giroux, the most vulnerable are treated “as disposable, unnecessary burdens on state coffers, and consigned to fend for themselves”.

In this context, this volume seeks to unpack these silent violences, from neglected disaster responses and inadequate healthcare to environmental toxicity and apartheid geographies, that condemn populations to suffering through indifference and design. Crucially, necropolitical power is never absolute or uncontested. Alongside analyses of repression, this book will foreground resistance, survival, and memory as forces that challenge the politics of death.

Across the globe, communities and movements have mobilised to resist necropolitical regimes and keep hope and dignity alive. Families of the disappeared and victims of state terror have led grassroots campaigns to demand truth and accountability, from the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo in Argentina to activists documenting police killings in Ferguson or Lagos. Where states seek to erase atrocities, forensic exhumations and memory work emerge as acts of defiance. Unmarked mass graves left behind by war or political terror are ‘lasting traces of violence’ that haunt communities with unresolved grief. Yet when circumstances permit, digging up these graves can transform silent suffering into collective reckoning. The painstaking work of forensic teams and local volunteers to recover human remains, in countries as varied as Spain, Bosnia, Colombia, Rwanda or Mexico, has proven to be as much about restoring justice and memory as about scientific evidence. Exhumations and memorialisation efforts, often led by survivors and civil society, confront the state’s control over narratives of violence and create spaces for healing and historical truth.

Therefore, this edited volume will highlight such resistance and memory practices, from community archives and truth commissions to art, literature, and protest, that fight against forgetting and reclaim the dignity of those cast aside by regimes of terror.

Aligning with the mission of the ISA RC48 Necropolitics and Mass Violence Research Network, the book emphasises critical, decolonial, and intersectional perspectives. We aim to centre Global South experiences and the voices of those most affected by necropolitical violence, while also interrogating dominant frameworks of human rights and transitional justice. Contributors are encouraged to engage with feminist, Indigenous, and anti-racist critiques that expose how colonial legacies and patriarchal structures shape contemporary violences and struggles for justice. By drawing together insights across disciplines and regions, the volume seeks not only to analyse how death and power intertwine, but also to illuminate pathways of resistance, remembrance, and social change. Ultimately, this collection will

serve as a platform for understanding and confronting the politics of death, from border zones to mass graves, from statecraft to everyday life, and for imagining emancipatory responses that affirm life against the forces that would devalue or destroy it.

Suggested Thematic Sections

The volume will be organised into thematic sections that bridge theory and case studies. We welcome chapters including (but not limited to) the following areas:

- 1) **Border Necropolitics.** Deaths and human rights crises at militarised borders and in migration regimes; analyses of how policies of deterrence, detention, and exclusion turn borderlands into deadly spaces, and the implications for sovereignty, citizenship, and humanitarian ethics.
- 2) **Forensics and Memory.** The politics of mass graves, forensic investigations, and memory work. Studies of exhumations, identification of remains, and commemorative practices in post-conflict or post-authoritarian settings, and how these processes contribute to truth, justice, and collective memory.
- 3) **State Violence and Authoritarianism.** State terror, genocide, and authoritarian practices of violence. Examinations of how regimes use direct violence (extrajudicial killings, disappearances, torture, ethnic cleansing) as instruments of governance, and the legacies of such atrocities on societies. Contributions can also address how even democratic states deploy necropolitical tactics (e.g. police brutality, counterinsurgency) to maintain order.
- 4) **Structural Violence and Neglect.** Slow death by systemic marginalisation. Analyses of how social structures and policies (neglect, deprivation, racial capitalism, environmental racism, public health failures) produce excess mortality among the poor, racial/ethnic minorities, or other marginalised groups. We seek perspectives on phenomena like neoliberal austerity, healthcare inequities, colonial and indigenous dispossession, and other forms of 'letting die' that reflect necropolitical values.
- 5) **Resistance and Memory Practices.** Strategies of survival, resistance, and remembrance. Explorations of how communities, activists, and social movements contest necropolitical violence and keep the memory of its victims alive. Topics may include grassroots human rights activism, survivor networks, social movements and collective actions, protests against state violence, alternative memorials and museums, art and literature of witness, and the role of cultural memory in fighting impunity and denial.

These sections are indicative; we remain open to additional relevant themes that engage with the core focus on necropolitics and mass violence. The volume aims to capture a wide range of geographical contexts (with particular interest in Global South case studies), time periods, and methodological approaches.

Submission Guidelines

Abstracts: Please send a chapter abstract of 350–500 words outlining your proposed contribution (including its argument, case material or theory, and relevance to the book's theme).

Author Info: Include a short biography (approx. 150 words) for each author and a tentative chapter title with your submission.

Submission Email: Email your abstract and bio as a Word document to the book editors at n.maystorovich@unsw.edu.au, a.peate@westminster.ac.uk, and c.a.tamayogomez@hud.ac.uk
Please use the subject line: Necropolitics Book Chapter Proposal – [Your Last Name].

Chapter Length and Review: Authors will be notified of abstract decisions as per the timeline below. Full chapters of 5,000–8,000 words (including references) will be required by the draft submission deadline and will undergo a peer-review process. Feedback from editors and external reviewers will be provided to authors for revisions prior to final submission.

Timeline

Abstract submission deadline: 15 December 2025

Notification of accepted abstracts: 01 February 2026

Draft chapters due: 01 May 2026

Peer review period: May – July 2026

Final revised chapters due: 01 October 2026

Expected publication: December 2026 (with Emerald Publishing)

This edited book is an outcome of a collaborative alliance between the University of New South Wales (Australia), the University of Huddersfield (UK), the University of Westminster (UK), and the RC48 Necropolitics and Mass Violence Research Network (RC48) of the International Sociological Association (ISA).

Join us in this critical inquiry into the politics of death and the struggles for justice. By examining necropolitics and mass violence across borders and disciplines, this volume seeks to deepen understanding of how societies are scarred by loss yet galvanised by resistance. We look forward to diverse and insightful chapter proposals that will help illuminate the global landscapes of death and power, and the inspiring efforts to reclaim life and dignity from their shadows. Together, we hope to produce a landmark interdisciplinary work that speaks to scholars, practitioners, and activists alike, and that contributes to transformative conversations on human rights, memory, and the possibilities of social change.

We are looking forward to receiving your submissions!

Kind regards,

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