



# International Human Rights and Mental Disability Law: When the Silenced are Heard (American Psychology-Law Society Series)

*Michael L. Perlin*

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Society is largely blind-often willfully blind-to the ongoing violations of international human rights law when it comes to the treatment of persons with mental disabilities. Despite a robust set of international law principles, standards and doctrines, and the recent ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, people with mental disabilities continue to live in some of the harshest conditions that exist in any society. These conditions are the product of neglect, lack of legal protection against improper and abusive treatment, and social attitudes that demean, trivialize and ignore the humanity of persons with disabilities. International Human Rights and Mental Disability Law: When the Silenced are Heard draws attention to these issues in order to shed light on deplorable conditions that governments continue to ignore, and to invigorate the debate on a social policy issue that remains a low priority for most of the worlds nations. Examining the mistreatment of persons with mental disabilities around the world, Michael Perlin identifies universal factors that contaminate mental disability law, including lack of comprehensive legislation and of independent counsel; inadequate care; poor or nonexistent community programming; and inhumane forensic systems. Using examples from Western and Eastern Europe, South America, Africa and Asia, Perlin examines and summarizes the growing field of international mental health law, arguing that governmental inaction demeans human dignity, denies personal autonomy, and disregards the most authoritative and comprehensive prescription of human rights obligations. As Perlin argues, these issues pertain to all citizens of the world who value human rights and who care about how we treat those of us who may be most vulnerable. International Human Rights and Mental Disability Law is an indispensable resource for scholars, policymakers, governmental officials, and mental health professionals who care about the treatment of those with disabilities, and to human rights advocates and activists worldwide.



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