

HRRC Salon
Thursday, April 9, 2026

Imge Akaslan (Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law, Heidelberg)

Human Rights Due Diligence and Norm Translators

Abstract

Human rights due diligence (HRDD) has taken center stage within the business and human rights (BHR) regime. However, research on the process of HRDD and the responsibilities of various actors within the BHR context in terms of regulation and implementation remains limited. This research addresses this gap by exploring the vital but overlooked actor in global supply chains: sourcing agents, their responsibilities, and their potential contribution to HRDD mechanisms in global supply chains. Sourcing agents are intermediaries between global buyers and local suppliers in supply chains. They receive orders from multinational buyers, find suppliers, and coordinate all the steps of the production process in the local context, including social compliance process. Therefore, those agents act as norm translators, as they translate global human rights norms to local settings. Drawing on the Turkish garment and textile industries as a case study, this article shows that effective HRDD mechanisms require collaboration with domestic-level actors for corporations to adequately “know and show” their respect for human rights. Using the four main steps points of human rights due diligence (HRDD) outlined in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the paper demonstrates how sourcing agents can be more effectively integrated into global supply chain governance. Building on these insights, this article argues that a key policy priority for better labor rights standards in global supply chains should be including domestic level actors in the design of human rights due diligence processes.

Bio

Imge Akaslan is a Guest Researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law. Her research focuses on the labor standards in global supply chains, actors in the business and human rights regime, and social compliance mechanisms. She holds a B.S. in Global and International Affairs from Middle East Technical University, an M.A. in Political Science from State University of New York at Binghamton, and a Ph.D. from University of Connecticut. She previously served as a Senior Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Comparative Public Law and International Law.