Law's Wars
The Fate of the Rule of Law in the US 'War on Terror'

Richard L. Abel
UCLA

The US ‘war on terror’, which Bush declared and Obama continued, repeatedly violated fundamental rule of law values. Law’s Wars: The Fate of the Rule of Law in the US ‘War on Terror’ is the first comprehensive account of efforts to resist and correct those violations. It focuses on responses to abuses in Abu Ghraib, efforts by Guantánamo Bay detainees to improve conditions of confinement in and win release, exposes of and efforts to end torture and electronic surveillance, and civilian casualties on the battlefield, including targeted killings. Abel deploys a law and society perspective to construct and analyze detailed narratives of the roles of victims, whistle-blowers, the media, NGOs, lawyers, doctors, politicians, military personnel, foreign governments and international organizations in defending the rule of law. Only by understanding past errors can we hope to prevent their repetition in what promises to be an endless ‘war on terror’.


Advance praise: 'Law's Wars offers an intensely detailed, richly sourced, immensely sobering account of five battles where the rule of law was at stake following 9/11. Abel's gripping legal and political narrative will stand as a monument of record to the failure of rule of law institutions, yet also to successful counter-attacks by branches of the state, civil society and market. The rule of law is not dead for Abel, nor for the US, however soiled its currency in the war on terror.'

Terence Halliday,
Co-Director, Center on Law and Globalization, American Bar Foundation

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