

Global Minority Rights Summer School (GMRSS) 2026: Self-determination and Minority Rights

July 5-10, 2026

The *Tom Lantos Institute* (TLI), the *Ludovika University of Public Service* (Budapest), the *Human Rights Consortium* (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London) and the *Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization* (UNPO) invite applications for the fourteenth **Global Minority Rights Summer School**. The theme of the 2026 Summer School is “Self-determination and Minority Rights”.

Background

Self-determination is one of the core concepts of international law in general and international human rights law in particular. The concept is equally dominating current geopolitics of all major regions of the world. According to the UN Charter, developing friendly relations among nations based on the principle of self-determination of peoples is one of the purposes of the organisation. Article 1 of both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) unequivocally declares that “[a]ll peoples have the right of self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”. In several seminal cases, the International Court of Justice and other international and regional human rights bodies articulated self-determination as a peremptory norm (*jus cogens*), creating an international legal obligation of universal nature (*erga omnes*) on states.

What do these robust legal pronouncements mean from the perspective of minority rights? If all peoples have the right to self-determination, who exactly are these ‘peoples’? Do minorities qualify as a ‘people’ for the purpose of self-determination, thereby creating legal obligations on the states they live in? Most importantly, what does this right to self-determination entail: can minorities demand special treatment as part of this right, or demand autonomy and claim a share of the state-power, or even break with existing states and create one of their own? This is where the very important concept of self-determination appears to be murky, leading to an ambiguous and often paradoxical relationship between self-determination and minority rights.

Some aspects of self-determination, such as participatory decision-making and democratic governance, are very much part of contemporary minority rights discourse, whereas other aspects, such as territorial autonomy and secession, are far more contentious and commonly seen by states with suspicion. A global study on peoples under threat (Minority Rights Group, 2019) reveals that of the 115 countries that the study ranked by level of threat, all but 43 faced conflicts involving claims to self-determination. While demands for self-determination are not necessarily violent, the way states respond to such demands largely set the tone for a peaceful or violent aftermath. Thus, issues around strategies for minorities’ mobilization for self-determination and peace negotiation are important. Notably, the same study finds that with a few exceptions, all the countries in the list are postcolonial states. Therefore,

the relationship between self-determination and minority rights in the postcolonial context deserves special attention.

With an exclusive focus on minority rights perspectives, the 2026 Global Minority Rights Summer School is designed to explore these complex issues related to self-determination and their implication for minorities. The Summer School will provide participants with an in-depth understanding of what self-determination means in the contexts of decolonisation, beyond its traditional framing, internal self-determination, and external self-determination, and how the meaning of 'peoples' as well as the legal scope of their rights vary in each of these contexts. While legal technicalities and the language of rights alone should not dictate minority groups' advocacy for self-determination, a sound understanding of the limits and potentials of the law can enrich advocacy itself by, for instance, identifying gaps in minority rights and suggesting possible ways to reform and improve the existing normative framework. In this regard, the curriculum incorporates a discussion on mobilisation strategies for self-determination and its implications for minority rights.

In addition to these political and legal dimensions, the Summer School will also specifically focus on cultural and economic dimensions of self-determination from minority rights perspectives. Although various dimensions of self-determination are interlinked, specific focus on each highlight how they interact with each other. The final segment of the curriculum showcases cutting-edge research in self-determination challenging conventional wisdom: self-determination as a peace strategy, self-determination in the digital space beyond territorial links, and decolonial approaches to self-determination. Taken together, the curriculum will not only offer an in-depth understanding of classical themes in the discourse on self-determination but also introduce innovative insights on the concept.

The Summer School is designed in a way that each of the lectures on various theoretical aspects of self-determination will be complemented by a presentation on relevant case studies so that participants can easily contextualize theoretical discussions and link to real-life experiences. The case study presentations will be made by selected participants. In the application form, please select topics you would like to present a case study on. A couple of participants will also have an opportunity to speak on a panel on 'Mobilization Strategies for Self-Determination'. Moreover, with inbuilt Q&A slots in each lecture, the Summer School aims to offer an engaging and participatory learning environment.

Invited Speakers

The summer school will bring together other internationally-known experts, activists, policy makers, civil society representatives, academics, and other key stakeholders in a one-week interactive program. Preliminarily confirmed lecturers include the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Professor Nicolas Levrat, Hon. Dr. Litha Musyimi-Ogana, Chairperson of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations/Communities and Minorities in Africa of the Africa Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and Professor Mohammad Shahabuddin of Birmingham University School of Law. The full agenda for the summer school will be released in the spring of 2026.

The Summer School will host approximately 20-25 participants from around the world, providing them with the opportunity to gain theoretical knowledge and practical skills from leading experts and practitioners in international human rights law, political science, international relations, and other fields. Participants will be given an opportunity to make presentations on relevant subjects of interest to them, including existing research and/or advocacy work.

Information about previous Global Minority Rights Summer Schools [is available here](#). In addition,

videos from previous years are [available at this link](#).

Outcomes

Learning aims of the summer school will include:

- Gaining a critical overview of the normative framework governing the rights of minorities at the international and regional levels;
- Learning about recent developments in the international minority protection regime and opportunities to engage with it;
- Discussing current norms, issues, and challenges related to minority rights and self-determination;
- Exploring the roles that various international and regional mechanisms, civil society, and other actors play in addressing minority rights and issues related to self-determination;
- Examining case studies related to specific minority groups and to the issue of self-determination and minority rights;
- Developing participants' own insights through opportunities to present case studies and speaking on a thematic panel.

Who should participate?

- MA and PhD students who wish to acquire knowledge and skills beneficial for their future careers in academia or in practice-oriented professions;
- Public servants, decision-makers, teachers in higher education institutions and journalists with an interest in minority rights, diversity, equality, and relevant international law;
- Members of civil society organizations, minority rights organizations, and other practitioners;
- Everyone who is interested in recent developments, current theories and advanced training in the field of minority rights protection.

A strong command of English is required.

Tuition Fee and Financial Support

The tuition fee is 200 Euros. The fee partially covers the cost of the course tuition, meals (breakfast and lunch), and accommodation. The remainder is generously funded by the Ludovika University of Public Service.

Financial support is available in the form of full and partial scholarships offered by TLI and the Ludovika University of Public Service respectively. Full scholarships cover the tuition fee and travel to Budapest, while partial scholarships cover the tuition fee only.

Applicants for scholarships must have:

- A proven current interest or work in the field of minority rights;
- A strong motivation to improve their understanding and skills;
- Demonstrated plans for future activities or a career that would utilize the knowledge, contacts, and skills acquired.

The number of full and partial scholarships is extremely limited, particularly given the high number of applicants. **Scholarship recipients will be expected to give presentations or participate in the panel discussion at the summer school.** Preference is given to persons belonging to national or ethnic, linguistic, religious or racialized minorities, as well as Indigenous people to apply for the Summer School. **Only those participants with demonstrated financial need and the inability to self-fund their participation should apply for scholarships.**

Location and Institutions

The Summer School is organized by the *Tom Lantos Institute* (TLI), the *Ludovika University of Public Service* (Budapest), the *Human Rights Consortium* (Institute of Commonwealth Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London), and the *Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization* (UNPO). The summer school will be held in-person at the Ludovika University of Public Service (Budapest). Preparatory information and learning materials will be available via the RESHAPED University of London online learning platform. Some guest lectures may be delivered in a hybrid format.

As part of the summer school program, the Ludovika University of Public Service provides accommodation to all participants in shared dormitories on campus. Breakfasts and lunches are provided in the University's canteen. Participants will be responsible for their own dinners, except for the gala dinner on the final evening of the summer school.

Application Procedure

To apply, fill in the application form, save the file with the following name, Lastname_firstname_2026GMRSS, and submit it along with a **signed letter of recommendation** from a professional or academic reference to gmrss@tomlantosinstitute.hu. Please do not send any other documents. Late or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The deadline for applying is Monday, March 9, 2026, 09:00 CET. Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible following the deadline.