With this issue, the *Journal of Human Rights Practice* celebrates its tenth anniversary. There are plenty of academic journals in the human rights field, but still none that fill the gap that our founding editors, Brian Phillips and Paul Gready, identified in 2009. It seemed to them then—and seems to us still—that there was a place for sustained critical reflection on the practice of human rights and, in particular, the interface between human rights and the academic world. ‘Human rights’ seemed to exist in two separate and parallel universes, one theoretical and predominantly legal, the other quotidian and pragmatic. Yet the two worlds are clearly connected: the editors of the Journal in 2009 and today have all crossed back and forth between the academic and activist spheres in a way that no longer seems unusual.

In 2009, we set ourselves a number of tasks. The relationship between academia and human rights practice seemed to be shifting away from debates about the intellectual validity of human rights as a way of framing the world towards an exploration of implementation: do human rights make a difference in practice? (No coincidence that Brian’s academic home at the time was the Centre for Development and Emergency Practice at Oxford Brookes University and Paul’s the Centre for Applied Human Rights at the University of York.) This focus on implementation also seemed to imply steps towards an interdisciplinary approach and away from the stranglehold of law and international relations. It implied a focus on relatively neglected issues, especially in the field of economic and social rights, and actors, such as persons with disabilities. Both practice and practitioners have been interpreted in a capacious and inclusive manner. Brian and Paul’s editorial in the first issue contained a very long list of potential practitioners for whom the Journal was intended as a platform for debate:

academics, NGOs of various kinds, policy think-tanks, governments, inter-governmental agencies, the UN and regional systems, business and other professional bodies, the police, military and intelligence experts, social movements and community groups, and more.

It would be fair to say that not all of those groups have been equally reflected in our pages, but neither have we felt narrowly confined to the spheres of academia and NGO activism, even though these have been strongly represented here. Transitional justice, national human rights mechanisms, and regional and international bodies have all been explored in some depth as sites of human rights practice, as well as civil society in many forms.

The global context in which the Journal was launched ten years ago has changed, but not unrecognizably. We were then still in the shadow of 9/11, with widespread assaults on
civil liberties. In the intervening years there has been scant reckoning and accountability for those human rights violations, many of which persist. The conflicts of the 2000s have shifted in their location, but have been every bit as bloody in the past decade. The role of human rights practitioners in situations of armed conflict remains just as urgent. The persistence and expansion of conflict has led to increased (and arguably unprecedented) refugee flows, which have moved to the centre of human rights practice in many countries and have, we hope, been adequately reflected in this Journal. Framing all these issues is the impact of anthropogenic climate change, which we identified as a central question confronting human rights practitioners ten years ago. The urgency of reducing and mitigating global warming is ever more urgent today, although neither human rights practitioners nor the Journal itself have done all that they might have done.

While the populist surge of the past three or four years was not anticipated in 2009, the shrinking space for civic activism in many countries was an issue that we did anticipate and have sought to address. One of our first duties is to defend the right to human rights practice itself, which is under threat as it always has been.

How far we have succeeded in addressing these issues is for our readers to judge. This special anniversary issue consists of a number of reflective essays on important contemporary human rights themes. Like the Journal itself over the past decade, it does not comprehensively cover every matter of importance, but hopes to be stimulating and useful. If there are questions that we are not addressing adequately, the solution lies in the hands of our readers, who are invited to submit their own research and arguments.

We are grateful to Oxford University Press for giving us a home and for their patient support; to Maggie Maloney for her quite exceptional dedication and skill as our copy editor; to our editorial board for sharing the burden of building the Journal; and above all to our contributors, peer reviewers, and readers for their part in whatever success we have achieved.

Richard Carver

Ron Dudai

Paul Gready