



Janet Benshoof, Esq.
President and Founder, Global Justice Center

Janet Benshoof is an internationally recognized human rights lawyer who has established landmark legal precedents on women’s reproductive and equality rights, the right to free expression, freedom of religion, and gender crimes in transitional justice law. Ms. Benshoof has litigated in courts in over forty states and in the United States Supreme Court. As President of the Global Justice Center, Ms. Benshoof is currently developing new legal tools to implement gender equality, focusing on transitional democracies and enforcing criminal accountability during conflict. Ms. Benshoof has been selected by the National Law Journal as one of the “100 Most Influential Lawyers in America”, and is the recipient of numerous awards including the prestigious MacArthur Foundation fellowship in recognition of her singular contributions to advancing women's legal rights.

Ms. Benshoof graduated Summa Cum Laude from the University of Minnesota and received her Juris Doctor from Harvard Law School. As Director of the American Civil Liberties Reproductive Freedom Project, for fifteen years she spearheaded national litigation focusing on shaping Supreme Court jurisprudence on gender equality and reproductive choice. In 1992 Ms. Benshoof founded the first international human rights organization specializing in reproductive choice and equality, now the Center for Reproductive Rights (CRR). In the organization’s first ten years, under Ms. Benshoof’s leadership, CRR obtained consultative status to the UN, established legal projects in over 40 countries, and won major class action constitutional cases in the United States Supreme Court.

Ms. Benshoof lectures at law schools and universities globally and has taught human rights law at Bard College and Harvard Law School. Ms. Benshoof is an international law advisor to several Burmese exile groups and is currently working on a project to refer the military in Burma to the International Criminal Court. Since 2005 Ms. Benshoof has conducted three human rights law trainings in Iraq, including a historic three-day training on gender rights and international law for Iraqi women leaders and the Judges of the Iraqi High Tribunal. This training resulted in the first legal decision by a high court in the Middle East according women rights under international law. In the precedential Anfal decision the Iraqi High Tribunal adopted the gender crimes standards of the International Criminal Court and held the officials directing the genocide guilty of rape as an element of genocide, crimes against humanity, and torture. Ms. Benshoof is also advising women from Burma and Kurdistan, Iraq, on constitution drafting and writing a book on the exclusion of women in Burma from political leadership from 1886 to the present.

Ms. Benshoof has published numerous articles in the Harvard Law Review, The Journal of the American Medical Association, The New York University Journal of International Law and Policy, the Law Ka Nat, a Journal of The Burma Lawyers’ Council, among other respected publications. She has appeared on the BBC, CBS evening news, Good Morning America, ABC evening news, Nightline, and McNeil /Lehr. She is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and served on its Burma Task Force.