

A More Humane Approach to Addressing the Harm of Criminal Behaviour Starts with Victims*

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Summary: This paper argues that the critical problems in relation to crime are not the people who commit crimes but the harms that have resulted from the crime, the harms that have caused the crime and the harms that result from inhumane and ineffective ways of addressing crime. Most crime is inhumane because it violates the dignity of human beings, because it can weaken social relations and because victims generally experience it as unjust. The commission and consequences of crime can dehumanise both the victim and the perpetrator. More humane approaches to addressing the harm of criminal behaviour are based on the dignity of the individual, on the solidarity of people supporting each other and on social justice. More humane approaches activate in practical and effective ways people's agency, victims' ability to act to recover from harm and perpetrators' ability to act to redeem themselves. More humane approaches build pro-social relationships that support recovery and desistance from offending. More humane approaches bear witness to and strive to reform abuses of human rights, discrimination and stigmatisation.

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