

**DIGITAL BATTLEFIELDS OF TRUTH:
SOCIAL MEDIA AS A NEW FRONTIER IN THE
DOCUMENTATION OF WAR CRIMES AND ITS IMPACT ON
EVIDENTIARY STANDARDS IN THE PROSECUTION OF
ATROCITIES IN THE RUSSIA–UKRAINE WAR**

*Theshani Milindi Weligamage**

**This article written by Theshani Milindi Weligamage
won the WALTER & JUDITH PINTO Memorial Gold Medal
and scholarship - 2024**

ABSTRACT

The full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine has positioned social media as a vital instrument for documenting war crimes and generating open-source evidence. This article examines this transformation and contends that real-time, civilian-generated documentation of atrocities necessitates a recalibration of international criminal evidentiary standards. Albeit these platforms facilitate immediate and detailed recording of violations, they also introduce legal challenges, including authentication, information disorder, and increased demands on the enforcement of International Humanitarian Law. Centred on the Russia-Ukraine conflict, this study explores the balance between social media's capacity to democratise justice and the operational challenges it poses for prosecutors. It addresses evidentiary issues and assesses emerging judicial responses to digital evidence and concludes that robust, standardised legal protocols for open-source intelligence are essential to ensure the admissibility of such documentation and to shape the future prosecution of atrocities in digital warfare.

**Keywords – Digital Evidence, Information Warfare, Disinformation,
ICL Enforcement**

* LL.B. (Colombo), BSc. (University of London), MHR – Reading (University of Colombo).