Between the Right to Truth and Rape by Deception

Leora Bilsky

The last two decades have witnessed the emergence of a new human right: the right to truth. While principally elaborated by regional human rights courts, lately there have been attempts to import this right into international criminal law, in particular via the recognition of victims' rights of participation in the criminal process. Another, less noticed, development occurring in various national criminal courts is the recognition of a new crime of "rape by deception." This development has been applauded by some feminists, seen as an expression of protecting women's autonomy and choice, while others warn against its discriminatory employment against members of minority groups such as transgender people. So far, these two developments have not been analyzed together. However, by reading them together through the lens of the right to truth, I wish to reveal a common rationale and discourse that obscures their real significance. I argue that underneath the discourse of a victim's right to truth one discovers a substantial expansion of both the prosecution and courts' discretionary powers, without creating the parallel checks and balances on such powers.