



African Judiciaries Research Network (AJRN) newsletter, no. 24, July 2025

If anyone has any **information that they would like included in the next newsletter** (to be circulated the week of 11 August 2025 (a little later than normal due to annual leave)) please email g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk. Similarly, if you have suggestions of people who we should contact about joining the network or would like to unsubscribe from the newsletter please email g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk.

Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association Conference, September 2025

The Commonwealth Magistrates' and Judges' Association is organising its next Triennial Conference on the Theme: "Innovations in Judicial Practice: Embracing Change for A Better Future". The conference will be held in Banjul, the Gambia from 21-26 September 2025. Information on registration is now available on the CMJA's conference website: www.cmja.biz.

Conference on "the role of a judiciary in a democracy" at the Southern African Institute for Policy and Research (SAIPAR) in Lusaka, Zambia, 21-22 October 2025

The AJRN, SAIPAR, and University of Zambia are holding a two-day conference at SAIPAR to coincide with the launch of an edited book celebrating 50 years of the Zambian Supreme Court. For good or ill, the Supreme Court has significantly shaped the country's life by determining high-profile cases across various branches and disciplines of the law. The call for papers has now closed, but any queries about the conference should be directed to Dr Pamela Towela Sambo, University of Zambia (pamela.sambo@unza.zm), Dr O'Brien Kaaba, University of Zambia (Obrien.kaaba@unza.zm), Mr Chanda J. Chungu, University of Zambia (xhanda.chungu@unza.zm), and Dr Marja Hinfelaar, SAIPAR (marja.hinfelaar@saipar.org).

AJRN at the European Conference of African Studies (ECAS), Prague, 25-28 June 2025

The AJRN organised two panels on African judiciaries at the ECAS conference on 25-28 June. Unfortunately, Jessica Hickle, Mariam Kamunyu, Mikhail Nyamweya, and Oscar Sang had to withdraw due to funding and visa-related issues, and so we had the one panel with:

Mahlubandile Ntontela, “Established principles for quality judgement writing practices: A lesson or two for African courts”

Jeanne Hefez, “Domestication of the Maputo Protocol in the Democratic Republic of Congo: Leveraging regional human rights commitments for abortion decriminalization and access”

Sophie Andreetta, “Judicializing fear: Special courts as a tool for social control?”

Gabrielle Lynch, “The judicialization of politics and public opinion of the Kenyan Supreme Court”



Future AJRN events

The AJRN is currently in the process of planning additional meetings in Nairobi in September 2025 on alternative justice systems and in Nairobi in April 2026 on disabilities and inclusivity. More details will be shared in future newsletters.

If members have ideas for other events, or details of relevant events, please do get in touch. So far, the AJRN has co-organised meetings in Kenya, South Africa, and Zambia and so it would be great to branch out to other countries and parts of the continent.

Grant success

Gabrielle Lynch has been awarded a European Research Council Advanced grant for a 5-year project on “Judges’ Off-Bench Activities: Evidence and Theory on Judicial Politics from Africa (Off-Bench)”. For the project Gabrielle (University of Warwick, UK) will be working with Tinenenji Banda (SAIPAR, Zambia), Elena Gadjanova (University of Exeter, UK), and Duncan Okello (South Consulting, Kenya). Warwick will soon be recruiting a part-time project manager and – in 2026 – two post-doctoral fellows.

Project summary: Rather than focusing on judicial rulings (the mainstay of academic study) Off-Bench undertakes the first systematic study of what judges do outside of their courtrooms as part of their official duties and public engagements. The project will investigate what off-bench activities reveal about how judges understand their role in a democratic society and the impact of these activities on judicial rulings, public support for the courts, and judicial independence and the democratic space. Off-Bench focuses on contemporary Africa as a most likely case for off-bench significance and to build theory from the Global South.

Recent publications by network members

Dawuni, J. Jarpa (ed.) (2025) African women judges: Storytelling as freedom (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan)

https://trebuchet.public.springernature.app/get_content/3aedf69a-0668-4f4b-8b0f-afbfe4179be4?sap-outbound-id=E768EF693F8D63995C9CB51022612044DD87B245

Kuwali, Dan (2025) *Jus ad Pacem*: Ending the Beginning of War in Africa. *US-China Law Review* 22 (1): 1-22

Opportunities to write on African judiciaries

The **Commonwealth Judicial Journal** is always looking for articles on issues of interest to judicial officers across the Commonwealth. Articles should normally range from 2,000 to 3,500 words in length. Any references and/or citations should be integrated in the main body of the manuscript, as footnotes/endnotes will normally be removed. Hyperlinks should not be embedded in manuscripts submitted for publication. Papers should be submitted to info@cmja.org. All manuscripts received are evaluated by the Editor in consultation with the editorial board.

AJRN has teamed up with [Democracy in Africa](http://democracyinafrica.org) to launch a series of opinion pieces on African judiciaries and democracy. For details on how to write an article for **Democracy in Africa** go to <http://democracyinafrica.org/join-the-new-african-judiciaries-research-network-ajrn-today/>.

The AJRN has also been in touch with **The Conversation Africa** and **The Elephant** and is happy to report that:

The Conversation Africa welcomes articles on African judiciaries that are based on research. These can be republished anywhere in the world under a Creative Commons licence, giving your work a wider reach and introducing it to new audiences. You can pitch your idea for an article [here](#). You can subscribe to the Conversation Africa newsletter [here](#).

The Elephant welcomes articles of 1,500-3,500 words on African judiciaries. The Elephant is a popular online Kenyan news platform which seeks well researched, honest critiques, critical essays and sharp-eyed perspectives on a broad range of topics addressed from a Pan African lens. For details on how to submit a pitch and write for *The Elephant* see <https://www.theelephant.info/write-for-us/>.

AJRN member profile of the month



Fiona Shen-Bayh is an Assistant Professor of Government & Politics at the University of Maryland. She studies the politics of authoritarian regimes, specifically the legal and judicial instruments of power. Her book [Undue Process](#) (Cambridge University Press, Studies in Law and Society Series) examines these themes in the context of postcolonial Africa, drawing on a variety of historical and archival material on the development of authoritarian judiciaries in Anglophone African countries. In 2023, it won the [Theodore J. Lowi First Book Award](#), the Giovanni Sartori Book Award, and the Juan Linz Best Book Prize in the Comparative Study of Democracy & Autocracy.

In other works, she examines the challenges of promoting access to justice and the legacies of autocratic rule. As a faculty affiliate of the [Interdisciplinary Lab for Computational Social Science \(iLCS\)](#), she draws on a variety of digital tools and data to analyze the political economy of development in the global South.

Her research has been published in *American Political Science Review*, *The Journal of Politics*, *World Politics*, *Annual Review of Political Science*, Cambridge University Press, and Oxford University Press. She is also a faculty affiliate of the [Center for International Development and Conflict Management](#) at the University of Maryland and a research affiliate of the [Centre on Law and Social Transformations](#) at the University of Bergen. She earned her PhD in Political Science from the University of California, Berkeley and her BA in Economics from Vassar College.

AJRN webpage

The AJRN has a webpage (<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/ajrn>) where you can find past newsletters as well as information on events, opinion pieces and members. **If you want to be included in the list of network members on the website and future newsletters, then please send a photograph and a bio in the standard format (see list of network members below)** with details of positions and institutional/organisational affiliation, up to 5 keywords on relevant research interests, and contact email/social media handle to g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk. E.g.

If you have already sent a bio for the newsletter, then please do send a photo for inclusion on the webpage.

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