



African Judiciaries Research Network (AJRN) newsletter, no. 34, May 2026

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If anyone has any **information that they would like included in the next newsletter** (to be circulated the week of 1 June 2026) please email ajrn-network@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 ajrn-network@warwick.ac.uk.

Workshops & conferences:

African judiciaries stream, African Studies Association of the UK (ASAUK) conference, Durham, 10-12 September 2026

The AJRN is organising a stream of panels on African judiciaries at the ASAUK biannual conference on 10-12 September 2026. If you would like to submit an abstract or panel, please go to the submission portal and select the “African judiciaries” stream.

<https://pay.durham.ac.uk/event-durham/abstract/eyJpdil6lkxESkIOU01UWFpDQzJsa3U4UWQ5UWc9PSIsInZhbHVlIjojWjJhNTRpLzQrM014Tzd6MytaOTROQT09liwibWFjIjojNWQxNjA1MGM2MTNiYTU1NmUyZTcwM2U2Z>

[WEwNjg4NzJkOTkzNjA2NDRmYjZU4ZGY1YjEyMjc1M2E0NWVhNCIsInRhZyI6IiJ9](#). Please note that the deadline for individual paper submissions has been extended to **22 May 2026**.

Stream abstract: African politics and societies are becoming increasingly judicialized. How judicial actors deal with cases and litigants, whether they act independently and impartially, why different stakeholders bring cases, how they argue them and how they respond to controversial rulings, and whether justice is seen to be done, will help to determine the future of African judiciaries, democracy, and stability. Despite their importance, African judiciaries remain relatively understudied. This stream welcomes papers on any aspect of African judiciaries. This includes the history of courts, judicial reforms and current practices; how judges behave both in and out of courts and explanations of their decision making; the ways in which different actors – from governments to lawyers and litigants – engage with, use and respond to the courts; the relationship between different legal systems; and public opinion. The stream is organised by the African Judiciaries Research Network in collaboration with the British Institute in Eastern Africa.

Grant opportunities

Institut Français de Recherche en Afrique (French Institute for Research in Africa (IFRA)) Fieldwork Grants 2026

IFRA-Nairobi invites applications for fieldwork grants aimed to support Masters, PhD and postdoc students who conduct research in the social sciences and humanities in East Africa (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, Rwanda, and Eastern Congo). The fieldwork is scheduled to take place in 2026. IFRA prioritizes support to the following research themes:

- Elections, Governance in East Africa
- Land Question and Agrarian Transformation
- Youth and Politics, Gen Z
- Food Studies

Beyond these priority research themes, grants may be given to non-priority project proposals when considered academically relevant (other IFRA's Research Themes (<https://ifranairobi.hypotheses.org/programs>)). There is no condition of nationality. Applications can be submitted in English or French and include the following documents:

- A cover letter (in PDF) of about 2 pages including a summary of the project in 15-20 lines and explaining your profile, short profile; contact of the master or PhD supervisor(s); why you need financial support, and if you already have support from other institutions and for how much.
- A detailed curriculum vitae (in PDF), including relevant publications.
- A research project proposal (in PDF and word) of maximum 3 pages that includes information about the context, research questions, methodology that will be used, bibliography and details about the fieldwork location and research planning.

Deadline for submission: **19 June 2026**. Applications are to be sent to: info@ifra-nairobi.net. For additional information about this call, click [here](#).

Maria Sibylla Merian Institute for Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) Fellowships

MIASA offers different types of fellowships. Central to the thematic identity of MIASA is that the research topics must match MIASA's umbrella topic of 'sustainable governance', ideally covering one or more of the three main thematic corridors – environment, democracy and peace – and/or the intersectional topics addressing our cross-cutting issues – landownership and acquisition, migration and mobility, restitution of colonially acquired cultural objects, African cities, and Human Rights.

Interdisciplinary Fellow Groups (IFGs): MIASA runs a substantial proportion of its fellow programmes in group formats, with teams of early career fellows and senior fellows in so-called Interdisciplinary Fellow Groups (IFGs). MIASA funds two IFGs per year. IFGs bring together a group of four fellows, including two convenors (one of whom must be from the University of Ghana), for a duration of four months. The IFGs centre around a research question which necessitates the input of experts from different academic fields and backgrounds. The selection is based on the excellence and the composition of group members, the fitting into MIASA's main theme and/or sub-themes, the originality of the research theme and the feasibility of the research plan.

Tandem Fellowships: In order to strengthen the research ties between Social Sciences and Humanities scholarship in Germany and Africa, MIASA offers up to two research tandems per year (for 3-5 months), each involving one fellow based at a German institution and one fellow based at an African institution who collaborate on a joint research project. Among the top criteria for the selection process are the fit of the proposed topic with MIASA's overall aims and intellectual programme, and its contribution to a sustainable research alliance between Africa and Germany.

Individual Fellowships: MIASA offers up to ten classical individual fellowships for the duration of 3-10 months each per year. Applications are welcome from all disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences and will be judged, among other things, on the fit of the relevant research topics with MIASA's thematic fields and overall aims.

Artists in Residence: MIASA invites artists in residence to accompany Interdisciplinary Fellow Groups on a selective basis. Artists have the capability to express and present globally challenging topics in a way which can enrich the sciences by introducing disruptive ideas as well as vice versa, the scientific discourse can nourish the creative processes of the arts. Artist in residence stays are for 3 months each.

Self-funded Fellowships: MIASA offers fellowships for both junior and senior researchers who come with their own funding, i.e. researchers who are either on paid leave or who receive external funding. Self-funded fellowships are for 3-6 months. Applications are welcome from all disciplines in the Humanities and Social Sciences and will be judged, among other things, on the fit of the relevant research topics with MIASA's thematic fields and overall aims. Applications can be submitted at any time but at least 4 months prior to the envisaged fellowship start.

All fellows and groups are selected by MIASA's highly distinguished [Academic Advisory Board](#). Former fellows can apply for a second research stay if it is for a different fellowship type (e.g. former IFG fellows can apply for an individual fellowship etc.).

The call for **self-funded residential fellowships** is currently open. See <https://miasa.ug.edu.gh/fellowship-programme/> for greater details.

PhD success

Congratulations to Dr Christine Olando for successfully passing her PhD viva at the University of Warwick Law School for her dissertation on “The Right to Higher Education and Certification: A Case Study of the Provision of Higher Education in Kenya in the Law Discipline”.

Publications

Recent publications by AJRN members

Michael Asiedu (2026) When courts become weapons: How Chad jailed its opposition leader. *The Loop*, <https://theloop.ecpr.eu/how-chad-jailed-its-opposition-leader/>.

Trésor Muhindo Makunya (2026) *Between legal tradition and transformation: Constitutional interpretation of fundamental rights by the Constitutional Courts of Benin, the Democratic Republic of Congo and South Africa*. Pretoria University Law Press. Available open access here <https://www.pulp.up.ac.za/monographs/between-legal-tradition-and-transformation-constitutional-interpretation-of-fundamental-rights-by-the-constitutional-courts-of-benin-the-democratic-republic-of-congo-and-south-africa>

Christine Olando (12 March 2026) *Breaking the hierarchy: Tackling power dynamics in Kenya’s law schools*. <https://lacuna.org.uk/justice/kenyas-law-schools/>.

Network information:

AJRN member profile of the month



Michael Asiedu is a Researcher affiliated with the Institute of Political Science, University of St. Gallen, Switzerland and an incoming Postdoctoral Residential Fellow of the Merian Institute for

Advanced Studies in Africa (MIASA) at the Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra, beginning September 2026. His research sits at the intersection of comparative judicial politics, authoritarianism, and digital governance in Africa, with sustained attention to how courts behave under political pressure. His doctoral thesis, 'Internet Shutdowns before Authoritarian Courts in Africa', defended at St. Gallen in September 2025, drew on 56 elite interviews across ten countries, fuzzy-set qualitative comparative analysis of 36 litigated cases, covariational and statistical analyses, and discourse analysis of civil society organisation (CSO) litigation and judicial reasoning. Fieldwork in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe, and Ghana anchored the interview programme and grounded the analysis in the perspectives of civil society litigators and the judges who heard their cases. The study documents a 64 per cent civil society success rate in shutdown litigation across the continent and identifies soft capacity features of CSOs and individual judge characteristics, rather than institutional design, as the primary driver of outcomes in domestic forums and ECOWAS regional forums.

His incoming MIASA project, 'Judging Power: Judicial Autonomy in Africa', extends this agenda from a digital-rights focus to a broader account of when and why African judges assert independence in politically sensitive cases. The fellowship phase pilots a paired comparison of Ghana and Malawi before scaling to a wider cross-national dataset of politically sensitive judicial decisions. The project treats individual judges rather than courts as the unit of analysis and traces their strategic choices through career incentives, regime expectations, and personalised political networks. This analytical move is developed further in 'Inside the Bench: The Power of Individual Judges and Courts in Challenging Digital Authoritarianism' (planned submission to *Law & Society Review*). Related work examines authoritarian judicial control of elections in Francophone Africa (under review at *Political Studies Review*), ruling-family prosecutions in African authoritarian transitions (under revision at *Democratization*), the recent suspension of Ghana's Chief Justice, and the judicial certification of authoritarian rule in Guinea, Gabon, and Chad. The Chad analysis, on the use of criminal courts to jail the country's opposition leader, was longlisted for the ECPR Best Blog Prize 2025. Recent reviews of the comparative courts literature, including Philipp Schroeder's 'Putting Courts Under Pressure' (OUP 2025), have appeared in *Democratization*. Asiedu is a member of the African Judicial Research Network (AJRN) and will rely on member expertise for case-country insights across several of the MIASA project's jurisdictions.

AJRN webpage

The list of members is now included on the AJRN website (<https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/pais/research/ajrn>). **If you want to be included in the list of network members on the website, then please send a photograph and a bio in the standard format** with details of positions and institutional/organisational affiliation, up to 5 keywords on relevant research interests, and contact email/social media handle to ajrn-network@warwick.ac.uk.