



African Judiciaries Research Network (AJRN) newsletter, no. 19, February 2025

If anyone has any **information that they would like included in the next newsletter** (to be circulated the week of 3 March 2025) 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.

African Judges Preventing and Responding to Political Attacks, Queen Mary University of London, 26 February 2024

The Centre for Governance and Democracy at QMUL and AJRN are organising an informal workshop on Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 10am-4pm (UK time) at Queen Mary University of London, Mile End, E1 4NS (and online).

Political attacks on judges have long been a feature of politics in sub-Saharan Africa. In recent years, however, they have become prominent in even more seemingly consolidated democracies with powerful and assertive judiciaries, such as Kenya and South Africa. The main aim of this workshop is not simply to criticise politicians for making these attacks. Instead, it aims to 1) understand why these attacks have surfaced when and where they have, and 2) to ask how judges might therefore best prevent and respond to them. Our answers to the second question will be enriched by listening to experiences from across the continent, where the (in)formal norms governing how judges should engage in public debate have differed enormously between jurisdictions.

Organiser: Peter Brett (p.brett@qmul.ac.uk)

Women in African Judiciaries, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, 17-18 March 2025

The AJRN, International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), and School of Law, University of Witwatersrand are organising a two-day event at the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg on 17-18 March 2025. The first day will be an in-person only event and will bring together women judges from across Africa (including a number of ICJ commissioners), state officials, civil society leaders, and academics to discuss women's experiences on the bench and to celebrate the life and work of the late Justice Yvonne Mokgoro (South Africa's first black women judge and an ICJ Commissioner) and appointment of Justice Maya as South Africa's first female Chief Justice. Chief Justice Maya will also give the keynote. The second day will consist of a hybrid academic workshop on women in African judiciaries.

Organisers: ICJ, Cathi Albertyn (cathi.albertyn@wits.ac.za) and Gabrielle Lynch (g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk)

Law in Development workshop, British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi, 1-2 April 2025

Has the idea of development outlived its usefulness? What role has critical scholarship on law in development to play in contemporary contexts? Would it be better to focus on specific social and economic injustices? What is the role of the law and of legal professionals and judicial officers in socio-economic and political development in contemporary Africa? What challenges do civil society organisations encounter when they engage with the law?

To mark the 60th anniversary of the University of Warwick and the Warwick Law School's long history and continuing engagement with law in development scholarship, the AJRN, Department of Politics and International Studies, Warwick Africa Hub, and Warwick Law School are hosting a two-day workshop at the British Institute in Eastern Africa in Nairobi on 1st and 2nd April 2025.

Day 1 will consist of a hybrid academic workshop and on Day 2 there'll be a writing workshop to support early career researchers participating in the workshop to prepare their paper for publication.

If you would like to attend Day 1 either online or in person, then please contact g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk

Legal update

For the first time in 30 years under its modern Constitution Malawi has passed a **set of judicial reform bills** that are set to transform the judicial practice and regulation in Malawi. This has taken sustained efforts from the country's bar association, the Malawi Law Society led by Patrick Mpaka (an AJRN member) collaborating with civil society, the church, business community and working with the three government branches to deliver this milestone in judicial history in Malawi. The President of the country Lazarus Chakwera assented to the bills on 24 January 2025 after Parliament passed them on 20 December 2024 and these reform bills have now been published and form part of Malawi law from 31 January 2025.

Recent publications by network members

Gayoye, Martha (2025) The coloniality and evolution of African customary law. *Oñati Socio-Legal Studies*. <https://opo.iisj.net/index.php/osls/article/view/1976>

Awards

Visiting Fellowship: Prof. Karuti Kanyinga will be visiting the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Warwick for three months in May 2025 as a Warwick Institute of Advanced Studies Visiting Fellow to work with Prof. Gabrielle Lynch on an article on the Kenyan judiciary and participate in collaborative activities with other colleagues and research centres at the University. Prof. Kanyinga is a Research Professor of Development Studies at the Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi.

Opportunities to write opinion pieces/blogs on African judiciaries

AJRN has teamed up with [Democracy in Africa](http://democracyin africa.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://democracyin africa.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



Sophie Andreetta is a Research Associate/*Chercheure Qualifiée* with the National Fund for Research (FNRS) and the Director of LASC (Laboratory of Social and Cultural Anthropology) at the University of Liège (Belgium). Her work explores the use of law and public institutions among different categories of actors – including bureaucrats, legal professionals and marginalized (non)citizens – towards specific goals, initially in the Global South and then in the Global North. At the intersection of social–legal studies and the anthropology of the state, her publications use ethnographic methods to delve into (non)citizens’ relationships with law and state institutions, and the concrete implementation of public policies.

Focusing on West Africa, her research on African judiciaries first investigated the implementation of family law in inheritance dispute cases in Cotonou. This allowed her to explore the training and daily work of the service professions in Benin – such as lawyers or public notaries – which remain largely understudied (Andreetta 2018, 2020). Turning her attention to the contrasted histories of bar associations, she then paid particular attention to the changing relationship lawyers have to the state and the rule of law in different contexts, considering Benin’s recent political changes (Andreetta, *forthcoming*).

Her most recent publications include an edited volume ‘Governing Migration Through Paperwork. Legitimation Practices, Exclusive Inclusion and Differentiation’, published with Berghahn (with L.M. Borrelli), and a forthcoming special issue (in the JLA) titled ‘Trust in the State. Negotiating Legal and Bureaucratic Encounters’ (with F. Eiro). For a list of publications see <https://orbi.uliege.be/ph-search?locale=en&uid=u210421>.

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 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.

Prof. Gabrielle Lynch, Professor of Comparative Politics, University of Warwick, UK; judicial behaviour, election petitions, Kenya, Uganda, Zambia; g.lynch@warwick.ac.uk; @GabrielleLynch6.

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

Network members

NB: If you want to be included in the list of network members in future newsletters and the website, please send a photo and bio in the standard format (see 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.

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