



THE JURIST_{Ke}

Human Rights, Constitutionalism, Democracy and The Rule of Law



JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

ECONOMIC JUSTICE
AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

MEMBER'S CORNER

SC PHEROZE NOWROJEE
SPECIAL TRIBUTE

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Dear ICJ Kenya Members, Partners and Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the second edition of the ICJ Kenya Newsletter for 2025. This publication offers insights of our recent work in promoting justice, human rights, and the rule of law in Kenya and across Africa.

One of the highlights of this period has been the launch of our 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, a visionary roadmap that will steer our efforts over the next five years as we strive to uphold constitutionalism, democracy, and fundamental freedoms.

During this time, we have also deepened our knowledge sharing efforts, including the release of our latest

publication, *Preserving Digital Civic Space: An Analysis of Internet Shutdowns in Kenya*. In addition, we conducted targeted sensitization workshops for paralegals and community health promoters, focusing on Kenya’s evolving health laws, policies, and service delivery landscape.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to our dedicated staff, committed partners, and ICJ Kenya members whose steadfast support and collaboration have made these achievements possible.

I would like to extend my heartfelt appreciation to our dedicated team, committed partners, and ICJ Kenya members. Your continued support and contributions have been instrumental in driving these impactful initiatives forward.

I invite you to explore the newsletter for a deeper look into our recent work and collective achievements.

Yours Sincerely,

Protas Saende
ICJ Kenya - Chairperson

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Join us in advancing justice, human rights, and the rule of law in Kenya. Your support enables us to drive impactful advocacy, provide legal aid to vulnerable communities, and empower citizens to defend their rights.

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2025 - 2030





ICJ Kenya council and secretariat pose for a photo after the launch of the 2025-2030 Strategic plan. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

ICJ Kenya Unveils 2025 - 2030 Strategic Plan

The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) launched its 2025–2030 Strategic Plan in a ceremony marked by strong affirmations of its role in promoting justice, democratic governance, and human rights across Africa.

The event was graced by Supreme Court Judge Hon. Justice Isaac Lenaola who served as the Chief Guest.

In his keynote address, Justice Lenaola lauded ICJ Kenya as a “steadfast beacon of democracy,” calling the new strategic plan a “significant milestone in the pursuit of human rights, justice, and the rule of law.”

“You have been instrumental in holding power to account in more ways than one,” Justice Lenaola noted.

“Through your advocacy, public statements, and engagement with key institutions, you have consistently demanded accountability from the executive, parliament, and even the judiciary.”

The launch marked the beginning of a six-year roadmap designed to build a just, inclusive, and equitable society where every person lives in dignity.

Speaking during the event, ICJ Kenya Chairperson Protas Saende emphasized the need for reflection, learning, and bold action to meet the challenges ahead.

“This plan will serve as the roadmap to achieve our vision and fulfill our mission of championing human rights, upholding democratic governance, and strengthening justice and the rule of law across Africa,” said Saende.

The strategic plan focuses on enhancing judicial independence, capacity-building for legal practitioners, and expanding grassroots access to justice.

ICJ Kenya has already trained 180 paralegals and 100 community justice actors, demonstrating its commitment to empowering local communities and building public trust in justice systems.

Notably, ICJ Kenya is a recognized authority in international criminal justice on the continent.

It has supported justice initiatives for atrocity crimes in Sudan, Burundi, and Rwanda and intervened in 20 landmark cases involving international crimes and gross human rights violations over the past five years.

The organization has also made strides in advocating for media freedom, decriminalization of petty offenses, electoral justice, and police reforms.

Saende acknowledged the critical role of development partners, legal

peers, and civil society allies in supporting these initiatives.

In developing the new strategy, ICJ Kenya conducted a comprehensive review of its mission, vision, and operational frameworks.

The resulting Theory of Change aligns with its refined goals, emphasizing institutional resilience, digital activism, youth engagement, and a stronger research culture.

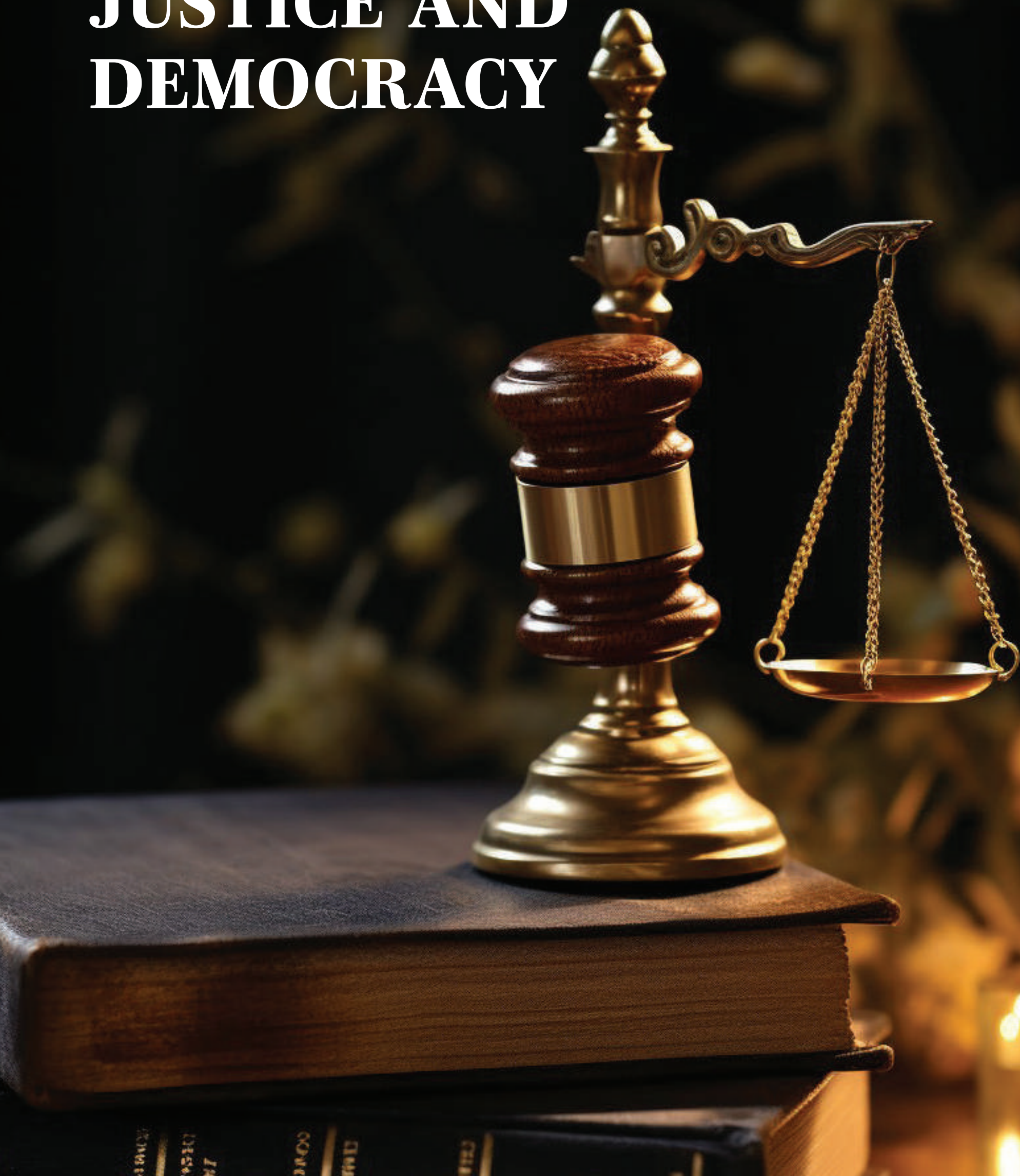
"We are committed to fostering a resilient and impactful organization that champions the rights of all individuals," Saende added, pledging to grow ICJ Kenya's membership base and cultivate new avenues for civic engagement and governance reform.

As the organization prepares for the future, it called for continued collaboration and support amid evolving global and regional challenges.



Supreme Court Judge Isaac Lenaola is all smiles as ICJ Kenya launch strategic plan. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY



A New Rhythm for Democracy

By Thuku Mburu

On the morning of April 30, 2025, Nairobi witnessed a unique gathering titled *The Citizens' Assembly*. Convened under the bold theme "Rethinking Democracy: Charting a People Powered Future," this was not a typical meeting.

It was a deliberate, people-centered intervention that challenged traditional models of democratic engagement and reaffirmed the right of citizens to define and shape their own democratic futures.

Unlike conventional conferences, the Citizens' Assembly was crafted as a democratic commons, a space where ideas met conviction, memory met imagination, and critiques met constructive alternatives.

Participants drawn from diverse sectors and generations, including scholars, community organizers, activists, youth leaders, and seasoned practitioners, gathered not as guests but as co-owners of the democratic project.

The keynote address by Prof. PLO Lumumba set the tone for the day.

"Democracy must return to the hands, hearts, and homes of the people," he declared, urging the audience to imagine beyond the ballot box and to embed democracy in the rhythms of daily life.

The first panel, *From Ballots to Betrayals*, offered a piercing analysis of Kenya's electoral history.

Speakers unpacked the gap between formal electoral processes and substantive outcomes, noting how elections are held regularly, yet accountability, equity, and genuine representation remain elusive.



ICJ Kenya council and secretariat pose for a photo with Prof. PLO Lumumba during the Citizens' Assembly. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

The session called for a new electoral imagination, one that treats credibility and integrity as routine rather than seasonal concerns.

Another critical session, *Safe or Silenced?*, tackled the dangerous conflation of public safety with repression.

Contributors challenged the notion that civic freedom must be sacrificed for state order, emphasizing that real safety is inseparable from justice. A society that stifles dissent, they warned, merely postpones conflict.

A particularly powerful moment came during *Generations in Dialogue*, a panel that brought together veterans of the Second Liberation and new generation digital-era activists.

Their intergenerational exchange underscored that democracy flourishes when memory and imagination work in concert.

The session *Broke and Betrayed* was perhaps the most sobering. It explored how ballooning debt, corruption, and economic mismanagement corrode democratic institutions and civic trust. The panel emphasized that democracy must also make economic sense to the people to truly take root.

Across the sessions, three core insights emerged: democracy must go beyond elections; civic space

must be defended as essential for democratic expression; and intergenerational collaboration is vital to sustain democratic movements.

The Citizens' Assembly concluded with a strong sense of purpose and resolve.

Participants committed to a set of practical actions including advocating for civil liberties through sustained legal and policy reforms; expanding civic education to foster meaningful political agency; establishing citizen led platforms for public finance and security oversight; and supporting grassroots innovation and civic experimentation as vehicles for democratic renewal.

By hosting the Assembly, ICJ Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to bridging institutions and communities, and anchoring democratic renewal in people's lived realities rather than elite abstractions.

Future Citizens' Assemblies are already being planned across the country.

Each will build on the lessons of this first gathering, with the aim of deepening the democratic imagination and strengthening the belief that a people-powered democracy is not only possible, but necessary.



By **Thuku Mburu**

Reclaiming Justice for Sudan

In the face of a deepening crisis in Sudan, the demand for justice has never been more urgent.

From 28–30 May 2025, ICJ Kenya, in partnership with the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (IFFM) for Sudan, convened a high level regional consultation in Nairobi.

The convening brought together Sudanese survivors, civil society leaders, legal scholars, regional practitioners, and international experts to examine accountability options for international crimes committed in Sudan.

The three-day consultation provided a rare and timely platform to reckon with the gravity of ongoing atrocities and the long arc of unaddressed violations.

Participants engaged in powerful exchanges that wove together lived experiences, legal expertise, comparative case studies, and policy recommendations, all with a singular goal: justice for the people of Sudan.

The consultation sought to take stock of past and present accountability initiatives at domestic, regional, and international levels; explore feasible accountability mechanisms tailored to Sudan's unique context; center victims and survivors in justice and reparation processes; and foster a coordinated and sustained response

to end impunity and prevent future atrocities.

Sessions tackled key themes that have defined the accountability crisis in Sudan, from the collapse of domestic institutions and selective legal reforms to the need for a robust response to systemic sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

Lessons from other contexts such as Sierra Leone, Rwanda, The Gambia, and the Central African Republic provided a rich comparative lens for what could work in Sudan, and what must be avoided.



Testimonies and reflections from Sudanese civil society and experts reaffirmed that accountability must go beyond the courtroom.

It must address structural impunity, social healing, and collective memory, rooted in local ownership, moral legitimacy, and strategic international support.

The consultation generated compelling recommendations, including establishing a hybrid accountability mechanism that combines Sudanese leadership with international technical expertise and regional oversight; creating a national reparations program and a survivor-centered victims' fund that incorporates both material and symbolic reparations; enacting legal reforms to criminalize SGBV, ensure witness protection, and align Sudanese laws with international human rights standards; and launching a truth and reconciliation process that complements criminal justice, rather than substitutes it.

Other recommendations included strengthening survivor participation, especially among women and youth, through advisory roles and decision making spaces, and leveraging regional and international tools such as universal jurisdiction and AU mechanisms where domestic options fall short.

Rather than closing the chapter, the consultation ignited new momentum. The message was clear: justice for Sudan is not a distant ideal but a present necessity.

Survivors are watching, documenting, and speaking.

The international community must respond with decisive support and action.

ICJ Kenya calls on governments and multilateral actors to support justice mechanisms; donors to invest in survivor-centered efforts; African states and regional bodies to pursue cross-border accountability; and Sudanese civil society and diaspora to lead the movement with courage and clarity.

The people of Sudan deserve more than sympathy, they deserve systems that deliver truth, redress, and lasting peace.

ICJ Kenya reaffirms its commitment to stand with Sudanese communities to ensure that the legacy of impunity does not endure.

The Writer is a Programme Officer at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Environmental Justice and Youth Empowerment

By Beatrice Monari

ICJ Kenya took part in a community dialogue organized by the Ngong Social Justice Centre on Saturday, May 31st, and Sunday, June 1st, 2025.

The event, held at the Ngong People's Park, once a dumpsite and now a thriving symbol of community reclamation and resilience, brought together residents, grassroots leaders, youth groups, civil society actors, and local partners to reflect on the critical links between environmental justice, community well-being, and youth empowerment.

The event served as both a celebration of the community's ongoing work and a call to collective action.

Ngong Social Justice Centre has, over the years, spearheaded numerous campaigns promoting sustainable environmental practices with the understanding that environmental degradation and social injustice are deeply interconnected.

The gathering provided an opportunity to highlight community achievements while engaging in forward-looking conversations about how best to protect and sustain the environment through collaborative efforts.

Central to the dialogue was the community's commitment to riparian land conservation along the Ngong River.

Participants demonstrated how bamboo planting has become a key strategy for stabilizing riverbanks, preventing erosion, and improving water quality.

Residents expressed pride in the use of bamboo as an indigenous and environmentally friendly solution, while also calling for greater government support and public education on the legal protections of riparian ecosystems.

The discussion reflected a strong awareness among participants of the need to balance ecological stewardship with human settlement needs, especially in densely populated informal settlements.

The importance of public green spaces was also raised as a vital contributor to physical and mental well-being, especially in urban areas where such spaces are rare.

Community members shared testimonies of how Ngong People's Park has become a safe space for recreation, dialogue, and healing, offering much more than just ecological value.



Community dialogue organized by the Ngong Social Justice Centre at the Ngong People's Park. Photo/Courtesy.

The transformation of the park from a neglected, polluted area to a vibrant community hub illustrated the power of grassroots-led change.

A significant focus of the event was on youth engagement.

Young people from Ngong and surrounding areas were recognized for their leadership in environmental clean-up campaigns, awareness creation, and advocacy.

Their stories were a testament to the transformative power of civic engagement.

Many spoke of how their involvement in environmental work helped steer them away from the dangers of crime, substance abuse, and social exclusion.

There was a strong call to invest more in youth-led initiatives and to create pathways for youth to participate meaningfully in local governance and environmental decision-making.

ICJ Kenya contributed to the dialogue by reinforcing the constitutional right to a clean and healthy environment, and the critical role of legal empowerment in defending this right.

ICJ encouraged communities to utilize legal mechanisms to hold duty bearers accountable and protect public resources.

Emphasis was placed on the power of collective organizing, rights awareness, and access to justice in confronting both environmental and social injustices.

The event closed with a renewed sense of purpose, as participants committed to continuing the work of protecting the environment, strengthening community networks, and nurturing youth leadership.

ICJ Kenya commends the Ngong Social Justice Centre for its tireless efforts and looks forward to ongoing collaboration in advancing justice and equity through community driven environmental action.

The Writer is a Programme Consultant at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.



By **Beatrice Monari**

Electoral Reform Roadmap

On 20th June 2025, the International Commission of Jurists – Kenya Section (ICJ Kenya) participated in a one-day retreat organized by the Elections Observation Group (ELOG).

The retreat brought together members of the Uchaguzi Platform and key electoral stakeholders to reflect on, validate, and concretize the 10-point priority reform agenda proposed during the Follow-Up on Recommendations Implementation Conference (FURIC) held in March 2025.

ICJ Kenya actively contributed to the deliberations, providing legal insights on electoral reform priorities, constitutional compliance, and the need for sustained advocacy in safeguarding democratic integrity.

The forum was convened as a technical working group meeting aimed at synthesizing the FURIC engagement outcomes and developing an actionable roadmap that reflects both the dynamic political environment and lessons from past electoral cycles.



Voters casting their vote during an election. Photo/Courtesy.

During the discussions, ICJ Kenya emphasized the importance of strengthening the legal framework for the independence and accountability of the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC), revisit amendments of the Political Parties Amendment Bill No.2, protecting civic space, addressing the criminalization

of political expression, and enhancing access to electoral justice mechanisms.

The commission of jurists also advocated for inclusive reforms that reflect the voices of women, youth, and marginalized communities, as well as reforms that respond to emerging threats such as digital disinformation and the misuse of state resources during electioneering periods.

The retreat provided an important platform to reaffirm ICJ Kenya's long-standing commitment to electoral justice, legal reform, and rights-based advocacy.

Participants reviewed each of the ten priority areas, refined them based on feedback, and contributed toward the development of a strategic framework to guide implementation over the 2025/2026 period.



The session concluded with an agreement on timelines, collaborative responsibilities, and advocacy touchpoints to guide sector-wide engagement ahead of the 2027 General Election.

The Writer is a Programme Consultant at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.



By **Beatrice Monari**

On 21st and 22nd May 2025, ICJ Kenya, in partnership with the Undugu Society of Kenya, conducted legal aid clinics in Dandora, Mathare, and Huruma to address the persistent and systemic criminalization of homelessness and poverty.

The clinics served as a platform for legal empowerment and community dialogue, and revealed deep-rooted violations of constitutional protections.

The sessions drew large numbers of residents eager to learn about their legal rights and to share the lived experiences that continue to define the urban poor's relationship with law enforcement.

A striking pattern emerged: despite constitutional guarantees under Article 49 and Article 50 of the Constitution of Kenya, arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions, and widespread police abuse remain rampant.

Participants shared that one of the most misused charges in informal settlements is "preparation to commit a felony."

This ambiguous offence, often applied without any evidentiary threshold, is regularly used by police to justify arresting individuals without due process.

These arrests are carried out without warrants, in homes and public spaces alike. Residents recounted multiple instances of police breaking into houses or apprehending individuals on the street without explaining the reason for arrest, clear violations of constitutional safeguards.

End Criminalization of Homelessness and Poverty

Another alarming concern was the increasing frequency of enforced disappearances, particularly of young men.

Several participants described situations where individuals were arrested, only for families to lose contact with them completely, with no trace or official record provided by the authorities.

Access to justice also remains a major hurdle. Many detainees are held for more than 24 hours without being presented in court, in violation of the constitutional timeline.

Even where court appearances are made, arrested individuals are often denied access to their charge sheets until the date of the hearing.

Fabricated charges, the planting of evidence, and the widespread solicitation of bribes to secure release were also commonly reported.

These challenges are compounded by the difficulty many face in acquiring national ID cards and birth

Importantly, participants recognized the value of community-led strategies in countering these systemic issues.

Recommendations included registering with community groups to ensure collective advocacy when someone is arrested or disappears, insisting on documentation in all interactions (including lease agreements and police statements), and continuing to inform others about their legal rights.

A resounding call from the sessions was the need to extend legal education to law enforcement officers.

Many community members expressed that while empowering citizens was critical, change would remain limited if those with arresting powers are not held accountable or trained on human rights standards.

Participants recommended that ICJ Kenya and its partners engage police officers directly through tailored legal awareness sessions to address



ICJ Kenya and Undugu Society representatives pose for a photo with community members after training. Photo/Courtesy.

certificates, particularly through Huduma Centres, due to corruption and inefficiencies.

This exclusion from legal identity leaves many particularly vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and detention.

unlawful practices such as arrest without warrant, detentions beyond 24 hours, and abuse of vague charges.

Advancing Justice Through Accountability

By Shukri Wachu

ICJ Kenya's Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, participated in a high-level convening organized by the National Council on the Administration of Justice (NCAJ), bringing together stakeholders from across the justice sector.

The forum served as a reaffirmation of the sector's commitment to people-centered service delivery, equity, and transparency.

A key highlight of the event was the launch of NCAJ's Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) Guiding Framework, a strategic tool aimed at strengthening accountability, tracking progress, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement within justice institutions.

This forward-looking framework is more than a bureaucratic tool, it represents a shared vision of justice that is accessible, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all, particularly the marginalized and underserved.

By anchoring justice delivery in measurable outcomes and learning loops, the MEL framework paves the way for a more transparent, coordinated, and citizen-focused justice system.

ICJ Kenya welcomes this development and remains committed to working alongside sector partners in advancing a justice system that truly serves the people.

Embrace Alternatives to Custodial Sentencing

By Shukri Wachu

The Second Cohort of the Magistrates and Kadhis Annual Colloquium brought together over 300 judicial officers for a renewed national dialogue on criminal justice reform, with a particular focus on progressive sentencing practices and the decriminalization of minor offenses.

Among the key voices at the event was Julie Wayua Matheka, Programme Manager at the International Commission of Jurists Kenya Section (ICJ Kenya), who delivered a compelling presentation on sentencing policies and the importance of non-custodial alternatives.

Her remarks highlighted the urgent need to reclassify and decriminalize petty offenses, many of which continue to disproportionately impact poor and marginalized communities.



ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka addressing delegates at the second cohort of the Magistrates and Kadhis Annual Colloquium. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Ms. Matheka spoke during a panel session that featured other leading figures in the justice sector, including Dr. Christine Obondi, Secretary of the Probation and Aftercare Service; Hon. Justice Kanyi Kimondo, Presiding Judge of the Criminal Division at the Milimani High Court; and Hon. Justice Margaret Muigai, Chairperson of the Community Service Order Committee.

In her presentation, Ms. Matheka underscored ICJ Kenya's ongoing efforts to promote legal reforms that protect individual rights and challenge outdated laws that criminalize poverty, social status, and peaceful activism.

She noted that ICJ Kenya has developed key frameworks and guidelines aimed at supporting the judicial management of minor offenses, while advocating for legislative reforms grounded in human rights principles.

The colloquium, now in its second phase, continues to serve as a critical platform for judicial officers to reflect on the effectiveness of custodial sentencing and consider more restorative approaches to justice ensuring that Kenya's legal system evolves in line with constitutional values and international standards.



By Shukri Wachu

Missing Voices Report: End Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances

Over the past year, Kenya's democratic landscape experienced a seismic shift few could have foreseen.

Not since the days of the second liberation movement, when the bold, reform-driven "Young Turks" challenged the status quo has the country witnessed such a palpable surge of change.

This new wave stirred the national consciousness, reshaping conversations around governance, justice, and the power of collective action.

That multiparty struggle was a tour de force, a historic uprising that dismantled the grip of one-party rule and carved out space for democratic expression.

But the Gen Z-led movement of 2024 was an entirely different force. Raw, decentralized, and digitally fueled, it emerged from the depths of economic frustration and political alienation, yet radiated with creativity, audacity and unrelenting speed.

Unlike the structured, ideological resistance of the past, this new wave was agile and meme-powered, emotional, spontaneous, and deeply rooted in the realities of a hyperconnected generation.

It didn't just demand change, it redefined how change itself is imagined and enacted.

Despite the energy and innovation of the Gen Z-led movement, the old ghosts of state repression quickly resurfaced.

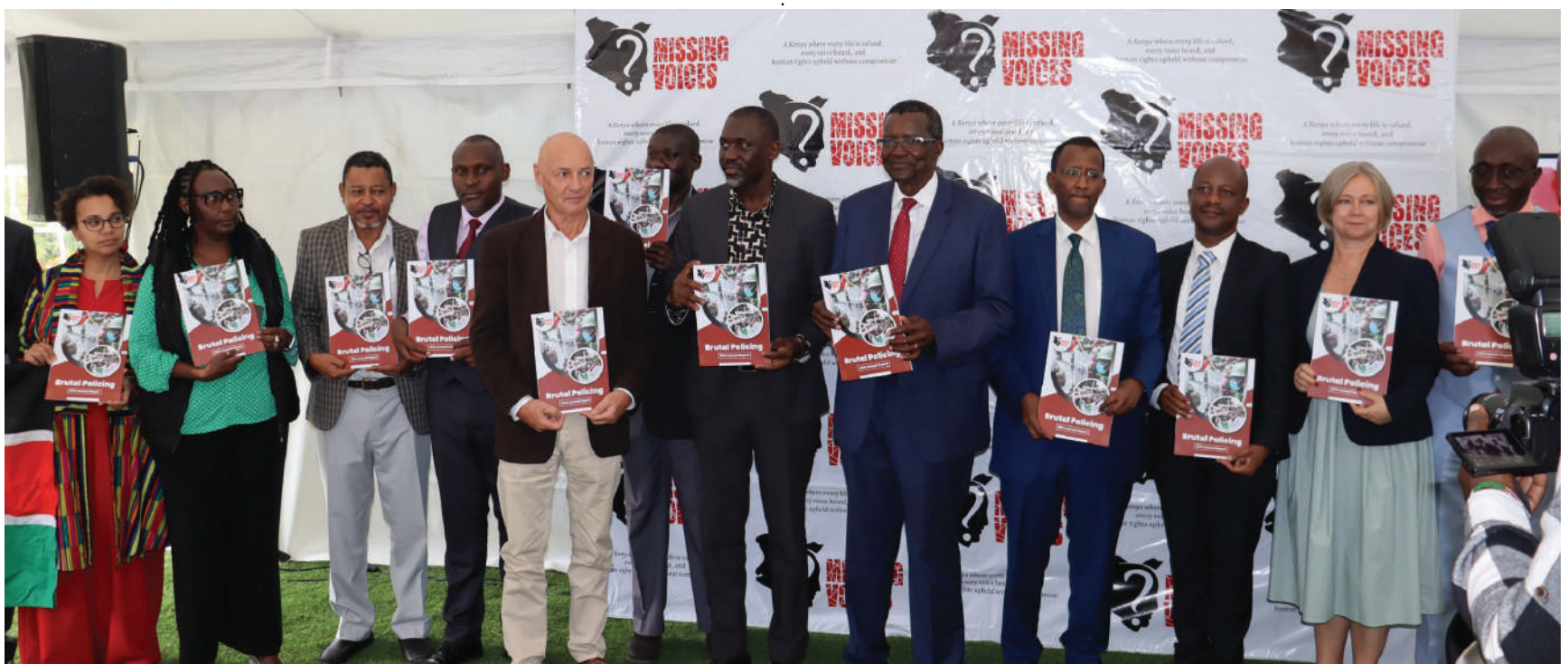
The government responded with a familiar script, deploying heavily armed police to the streets in a bid to quell the protests.

What followed was a disturbing surge in cases of police brutality, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings.

Scenes of young protesters being tear-gassed, beaten, or arbitrarily arrested echoed Kenya's darker chapters, reminding the nation that while the players may change, the state's default response to dissent remains deeply entrenched in violence and impunity.

The clash between a fearless new generation and a system unwilling to yield laid bare the unfinished business of Kenya's democratic journey.

The aftermath of these brutal crackdowns became tragically clear when the Missing Voices report last week laid bare the macabre statistics.



Civil Society Leadership pose for a photo alongside Chief Justice Emeritus David Maraga and the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA) Chairperson Issack Hassan. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

The report documented a grim pattern, dozens of lives lost to extrajudicial killings, scores of enforced disappearances and a justice system either complicit or indifferent.

Behind each statistic was a name, a face, a story cut short, young lives erased simply for daring to dream of a better Kenya.

The report documented a total of 159 cases of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances in 2024. Out of the 159 cases, 104 (65%) were incidents of police related killings while 55 (35%) were those of enforced disappearances.

2024 marked the year that the coalition recorded the highest number of cases of enforced disappearances, before then, 2019 had the highest cases of enforced disappearances at 38.

The year 2024 had an increase of 24 per cent of cases of enforced disappearances and policing killings compared to 2023.

However, cases of police related killings saw a drop of 12 percent from 118 in 2023 to 104 in 2024.

Enforced disappearances on the other hand increased by 450 per cent from 10 cases in 2023 to 55 in 2024.

45 of the incidents of enforced disappearance reported during the year were male, 9 were female while gender of 1 was not indicated.

During 2023, all incidents of enforced disappearances were men.

This implies that even though men continue to be more vulnerable to be victims of enforced disappearance, women too face a resurging danger of being victimized.

This could have resulted from the fact that the Gen Zs and Millennials protests which were the main victims of enforced disappearance during the year, saw unusually very high number of young women exercise their constitutional rights to picket and protest.

According to the report, it is worth noting that less than two per cent of police-related extrajudicial killings are in court while most victims of enforced disappearances were neither prosecuted nor allowed to demonstrate their innocence in a court of law.

They have not received justice or compensation by the time of the report.

The coalition has recommended the ratification of all human rights conventions and frameworks including those relating to enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings.

These conventions and frameworks should be domesticated through enactment and/or full implementation of relevant legislations and provided with adequate budgetary allocations.

These include ratification of the Convention on Enforced Disappearances, full implementation of Prevention of Torture Act (No. 12 of 2017) and operationalization of the National Coroner Services Act (No. 1 of 2017).



ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya (right) with Chief Justice Emeritus David Maraga (center) alongside ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka (left) in a candid conversation. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Tribute



**SC Pheroze
Nowrojee**



Pheroze Nowrojee: Legal Titan, Human Rights Defender and Voice of Conscience

By Shukri Wachu

Kenya lost one of its brightest legal minds, a resolute defender of justice, and a deeply principled voice in matters of national conscience.

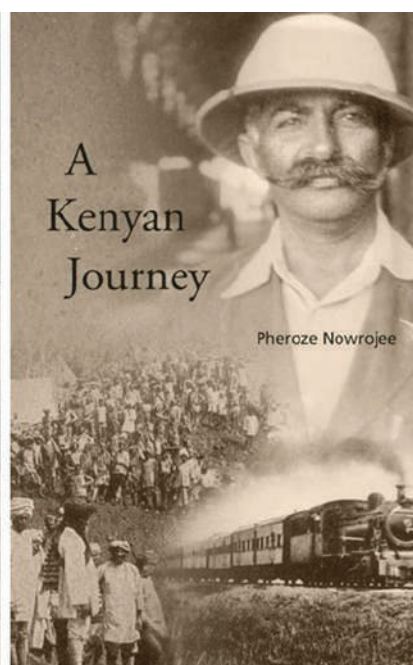
Senior Counsel Pheroze Nowrojee passed away on April 5, 2025, at the age of 84. His death marks the end of a monumental chapter in Kenya’s legal, human rights, and democratic history.

But even in passing, his legacy will remain woven into the very fabric of the nation he so diligently served.

Born in 1941, Pheroze Nowrojee hailed from a family steeped in Kenya’s early history.

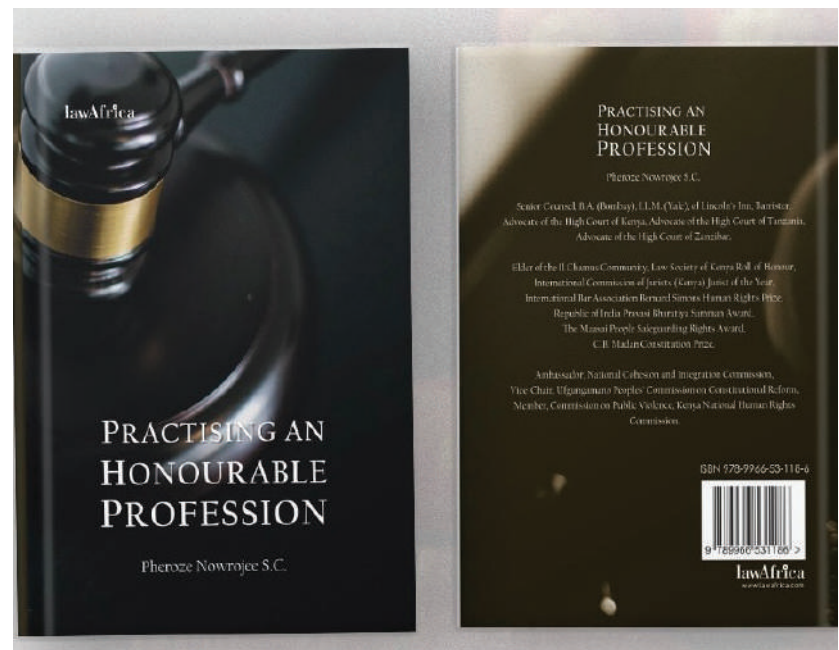
His grandfather, arrived in East Africa in April 1896 as an engine driver for the Uganda Railway, an experience Nowrojee once eloquently described as a turning point for his family in his moving memoir *A Kenyan Journey* (2015).

That book, both poetic and political, not only traces his family’s trajectory but also acts as a personal reflection on colonialism, migration, and the formation of Kenya as a modern nation.



This strong sense of rootedness and identity would become a guiding light throughout Nowrojee’s six-decade career, a career shaped by his deep commitment to justice, human dignity, and the rule of law.

Nowrojee was called to the Bar in Kenya in 1965 and later obtained a Master of Laws from Yale University.



His early legal training in both Kenya and the United States gave him a unique blend of local understanding and global perspective, a duality that informed his work throughout his life.

Over the years, he became widely regarded not only for his deep legal intellect but also for his quiet charisma, humility, and sharp analytical mind.

He was often described as a lawyer’s lawyer, the kind of advocate who pursued justice over grandstanding, and who believed in the sanctity of the Constitution, even in the most turbulent political climates.

During Kenya’s darkest political moments, particularly under the one-party regime of the 1980s and 1990s, Pheroze Nowrojee stood firm in defense of human rights and constitutionalism.

He represented numerous political detainees, activists, journalists, and opposition leaders who were victims of state oppression.



SC Pheroze Nowrojee, John Khaminwa and Akhaabi Geervase appearing in Court for Kijana Wamalwa. Photo/Courtesy.

He was not just a lawyer; he was a moral compass in an era where many chose silence.

As he once noted in a public lecture, "The lawyer's duty is not just to argue the law. It is to argue justice, even if that justice is inconvenient to power."

Beyond the courtroom, Nowrojee played a critical role in shaping Kenya's legal philosophy.

He published widely on constitutional law, human rights, and the importance of judicial independence.

His essays and speeches are studied by law students and legal scholars alike, revered not just for their insight but for the grace with which they are written.

Despite his towering intellect, he was immensely generous with his time and knowledge.

He mentored generations of lawyers, judges, and scholars, many of whom now occupy senior positions across the country's legal institutions.

He believed mentorship was not an option but an obligation, and he fulfilled it with characteristic humility and grace.

Jurist of the Year Award

In 1995, the Kenyan section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) awarded Pheroze Nowrojee the Jurist of the Year, a recognition reserved for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights, justice, and the rule of law.

In the citation leading to his recognition, he was hailed for consistently, fearlessly and impartially promoting the rule of law and human rights in Kenya and across Africa.

Over the years, SC Nowrojee immensely contributed to ICJ Kenya's mission and work.

His unwavering support, wisdom, and commitment to justice enriched the organization and helped shape its impact on Kenya's legal landscape.

When the idea of creating a permanent headquarters for ICJ Kenya began to take shape, it was Senior Counsel

Nowrojee who became the driving force behind turning that dream into a reality.

Through a remarkable act of leadership and generosity, he rallied support from his closest circles, family and trusted friends, raising substantial funds that laid the foundation for what would become the ICJ Kenya House.

In July 2019, this vision was realized with the official opening of our



SC Pheroze Nowrojee speech after receiving the jurist of the Year Award in 1995.

Photo/ICJ Kenya.

home, a symbol of his unwavering dedication and strategic vision. His contribution was not just financial, it was deeply symbolic.

By helping establish a permanent home for the organization, he strengthened our identity and reaffirmed his lifelong commitment to justice, integrity, and institutional resilience.

Today, his legacy echoes through every hallway.

The images on our Wall of History, the words of wisdom he shared, and the resource center that proudly bears his name are more than just tributes, they are daily affirmations of the values he lived by and instilled in us.

His impact is indelible, woven into the very fabric of ICJ Kenya. Even in his later years, Nowrojee remained active in public life.

In August 2024, he delivered a memorable keynote address at

the Law Society of Kenya Annual Conference in Diani, Kwale.

His speech, touching on the moral obligations of lawyers in times of political uncertainty, earned him a standing ovation.

Pheroze Nowrojee was not confined by the courtroom. He was a poet, a historian, a public intellectual, and a quiet revolutionary.

He believed in the dignity of all people, regardless of their station, and he used his voice and his pen to ensure that dignity was recognized in law and in practice.

As Kenya celebrates one of its most distinguished sons, it is incumbent upon the legal community and the nation at large to carry forward his legacy.

Not merely by memorializing his name, but by living the values he espoused: justice, integrity, humility, and above all, service to humanity.

SC Pheroze Nowrojee Life in Highlights

Senior Counsel Pheroze Nowrojee, was an Advocate of the High Courts of Kenya (1967), Tanzania (1970) and Zanzibar (1989) with a practice mainly in constitutional, political and human rights cases.

He has also appeared in the High Courts of Uganda and the Seychelles.

Born in Nairobi, he studied in India (B.A., Bombay, 1957), in the U.K. (Of Lincoln's Inn, Barrister, 1965) and in the U.S.A. (LL.M., Yale, 1974).

He has taught at the University of Dar-es-Salaam (1974-1977), the University of Nairobi (1979-1985), and the Kenya School of Law (1968-1970, 1978-1985).

His political offices include FORD-Kenya, Member of National Executive Council (NEC), 1992-1999, FORD-Kenya, Secretary for Legal & Constitutional Affairs, 1994-1999, National Treasurer, Social Democratic Party, 2002-2012.

He was Vice-Chair, Ufungamano People's Commission on Constitutional Reform 2000-2001.

Over many decades he has been an influential part of the political and social movements for constitutional and social change in Kenya.



SC Pheroze Nowrojee before the Supreme Court of Kenya. Photo/Courtesy.

He is the author of Pio Gama Pinto: Patriot for Social Justice (2007), A Vote for Kenya:

The Elections and the Constitution (2013), A Kenyan Journey (2014), and Conserving the Intangible (2015).

His awards include the International Commission of Jurists (Kenya) ICJ Jurist of the Year, 1995, the International Bar Association (IBA) Bernard Simons Human Rights Prize, 2002-2004, the Law Society of Kenya Roll of Honour, 2005, the Maasai People, Safeguarding Rights Award, 2007, and the CB Madan Constitution Prize 2014.

He is a Co-Chair of the Asian African Heritage Trust, an Indian Diaspora/Kenyan history trust.

He is the author of several books, and of numerous articles on law, Kenyan public affairs, and legal history.

He is a BBC Africa Poetry Competition Prizewinner (2001).

Nowrojee cited the nullification of the 2017 presidential election in Kenya by the Supreme Court and the lifting of the ban on the Nairobi Law Monthly magazine during the KANU regime as some of his stand out cases.

Pheroze Nowrojee Conscience of A Nation

By ICJ Kenya Secretariat

ICJ Kenya reflects with both pride and sadness on the legacy of Senior Counsel Pheroze Norwojee, whose presence in the corridors of justice was defined by a profound commitment to human rights.

These corridors, designed to be quiet, were often filled with the calmness and professional expertise of SC Norwojee, providing the comfort that those seeking justice needed in a challenging and sometimes ambiguous legal system.

His unwavering dedication to justice, fairness, and accountability remained consistent, regardless of whether the Constitution was old or new.

In the expansive field of legal practice and among its dedicated practitioners, the impact of SC Norwojee remains palpable, even after his passing.

He embodied a commitment to truth and a quest for freedom, even in times when fear overshadowed reason and objectivity.

Norwojee was a man whose gentle voice carried the weight of great significance and influence. We extol SC Norwojee;

As a teacher to many. A patient mentor and coach to most if not all.

every individual's dignity is non-negotiable.

Whether in the courtroom or at community gatherings, he wielded the law like a lantern, illuminating the path, exposing injustice, and guiding the nation through some of its darkest times.

It is insufficient to merely describe his intellect for he was truly larger than life.

No single description or account can fully capture who SC Norwojee was and what he represented.

Pheroze, with his trademark wit and subtly mischievous smile, reminded us that the struggle for justice can be accompanied by joy.

His humor disarmed the proud and comforted the weary. He had a unique ability to share hard truths with warmth, much like a father who corrects not to condemn, but to uplift.

In 1995, the Kenyan section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) awarded Pheroze Nowrojee the Jurist of the Year, a recognition reserved for individuals who have demonstrated exceptional commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights, justice, and the rule of law.

In the citation leading to his recognition, he was hailed for consistently, fearlessly and impartially promoting the rule of law and human rights in Kenya and across Africa.

At ICJ Kenya House, we hold great respect for him, not just for his advice but also for his generosity.

The Norwojee Resource Centre is a living testament to his spirit—a place where ideas converge, silence is valued, and law meets imagination.



SC Pheroze Nowrojee file photo. Photo/Courtesy.

In his demeanor, SC Norwojee embodied an exuberant commitment to service and ethics that upheld the dignity of individuals, even when institutions and political leaders failed to act with moral integrity.

He was a model of values and a reflection of the utopian society that our country has sought to create, nearly half a century after independence.

His contributions were integral to the establishment of a roadmap that culminated in the 2010 Constitution.

And to this country, an unwavering conscience.

Pheroze was not just an ordinary lawyer; he was a guardian of principles, a defender of the voiceless, and a skilled practitioner of the Constitution.

He lived and breathed the ideals of human rights, embracing them as a way of life rather than just a profession.

His belief in equality was not merely rhetorical; it was radical and deeply rooted in the conviction that

The legend of the desk he donated is indeed true.

That first desk, now worn smooth from years of thoughtful use, remains a pilgrimage site within the office.

It is often said, half in jest and wholly in truth, that when legal officers and researchers face challenges, when inspiration eludes them or words escape them, they are drawn to that desk.

Some quietly share their thoughts with it, while others sit in contemplation, breathe deeply, and start anew. Miraculously, it seems to listen, respond, and provide a sense of freedom.

In fact, a small but persistent petition is quietly making the rounds among staff, requesting to “liberate” one of Pheroze’s chairs to be donated to the resource centre, so as to borrow just a bit more of his magic.

We celebrate not only a remarkable individual but also an era.

This legacy is one that cannot close or be forgotten; it lives on in those who embrace his ideals and continue to draw wisdom and a sense of purpose from his values and commitment to humanity.

Like Mandela, he reminded us that courage is not the absence of fear, but the triumph over it.

Like Gandhi, he demonstrated that true strength lies not in domination, but in principle.

Senior Counsel Pheroze Norwojee did not just practice law; he ennobled it.

In doing so, he made us believe that justice is not a distant ideal, but a daily pursuit. He walked lightly, yet his footprints were deep.

In our work, in our hearts, and in every whispered thought, we carry him still.

His calmness, sobriety, integrity, and courage are so much needed during these turbulent times in our country.

These will remain imprinted in our conscience as we carry on the struggle for the rule of law and constitutionalism.

At ICJ Kenya, we are consistently reminded of his commitment that never departed from his ideals.

As Mahatma Gandhi said, ‘My life is my message’; in the same way, was SC Norwojee’s.

Farewell, Great Teacher,

Rest, Conscience of a nation.

The Struggle continues, and we are better because you walked with us.



ICJ Kenya council and secretariat pose for a photo with Chief Justice Emeritus David Maraga at the Kenya Ideas Festival honouring SC Pheroze Nowrojee. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

ACCESS TO JUSTICE





By Vincent Kimathi

Kenya's Universal Periodic Review Journey

Following Kenya's recent review under the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process at the United Nations Human Rights Council, a new chapter begins one that moves from advocacy and recommendation to domestic action and implementation.

The review culminated in Kenya accepting a range of human rights recommendations, noting others, and, in some cases, rejecting.

While the international spotlight shifts, the responsibility now firmly rests on civil society organisations and other local actors to ensure that the accepted recommendations translate into tangible human rights reforms in Kenya.

ICJ Kenya having been at the forefront of the UPR process, we strongly believe that the next phase which is the post review phase, is the most critical part of the UPR process.

Now that Kenya has concluded its review and submitted its position on the recommendations, the next step must be the development of a comprehensive implementation matrix which should outline; the accepted recommendations, the government agencies and supporting



institutions responsible for each action, timelines for implementation, monitoring and reporting mechanisms and opportunities for engagement with civil society and rights holders.

Without such a roadmap, there is a risk that the momentum built around the UPR process could be lost, and the commitments made may remain on paper, with limited accountability. It is important to note that the success of any UPR follow-up process depends on collaboration.

While the state holds the primary responsibility for implementation, it cannot act alone. Civil society organizations, independent institutions, international partners, and development agencies all have a role to play.

Among the recommendations that enjoyed Kenyan government support during the UPR process included implementation of the National Coroner's Service Act 2017, providing the necessary support to the National Commission on Human Rights Obligations to ensure it carries out its mandate, investigating allegations of extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances and excessive use of force by security agents, taking substantial steps to better ensure accountability of law enforcement officials and to prevent excessive use of force, full implementation of the Prevention of Torture Act, 2017, conducting impartial and effective investigations into the excessive use of force against protesters and bring those responsible to justice,

strengthening protections against gender-based violence, including femicide amongst others.

The supported recommendations are deeply connected to the everyday lives of Kenyans.

Therefore, the implementation process must be grounded in inclusive, participatory approaches that ensure the reforms are not only adopted, but also internalized and felt by citizens.

In conclusion as Kenya moves into the critical implementation phase of the UPR process, ICJ Kenya remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing justice and accountability. "Our presence in Geneva and participation in the UPR Info Pre-sessions laid the foundation for a more inclusive and accurate representation of Kenya's human rights situation.

But advocacy does not end at the doors of the UN." Indeed, the next chapter begins at home. In light of the above, ICJ Kenya will work alongside civil society organisations, government institutions, and international partners to ensure that the accepted recommendations are not just promises on paper, but translated into tangible reforms that improve lives.

The Writer is a Programme Manager at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Combating GBV through Legal Empowerment

By Damaris Kemunto

Legal empowerment in response to GBV has been critical in mitigating justice barriers for survivors.

Through this approach, we embarked on a series of capacity building workshops within select regions in Kenya.

During this quarter, the workshop targeted paralegals and key local actors including chiefs, police officers, and children's officers within Kitui and Nyahururu, underscoring the importance of multi stakeholder approach in mitigating and addressing the justice barriers faced by the survivors.

The two-day workshop focused on foundational legal concepts surrounding GBV, equipping participants with the knowledge necessary to effectively address and prevent such violence within their communities.

Kitui and Nyahururu, like many regions, faces persistent challenges in curbing GBV.

Often, survivors lack awareness of their rights or the legal avenues available for redress, while frontline responders may not fully grasp the intricacies of GBV legislation and response procedures and mechanisms.

This knowledge gap perpetuates cycles of abuse and impunity. By empowering paralegals and local authorities with a deeper understanding of GBV laws, reporting mechanisms, and survivor support frameworks, we strengthen the local justice ecosystem.

These empowered individuals become vital in guiding survivors through legal processes and ensuring accountability for perpetrators.

Community paralegals are critical to the realization of access to justice needs in their communities.



ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Vincent Kimathi leading a training session.

Photo: ICJ Kenya.

They are mostly organized in Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) or social justice centers to provide the much-needed legal assistance to people facing legal challenges.

In a bid to promote self-regulation in line with the PBO Act 2013, ICJ Kenya under the PLEAD project piloted paralegal chapters in the western and coastal regions with paralegals drawn from diverse CBOs and social justice centers.

The objective of these chapters is to promote self-regulation through adopting a unified leadership structure and ethical standards of operation.

Additionally, these chapters are essential in fostering long-term collaborative initiatives amongst the paralegal CBOs in the region.

Further, it is expected that these chapters will strive to address the region's specific challenges since its membership is drawn from the region.

Moreover, to strengthen paralegalism, these chapters can foster partnerships with chapters from other counties, presenting an opportunity for exchange of best practices which will steer robust growth.

We acknowledge that self-regulation is a new concept in the realm of paralegalism in Kenya and it is

important for the paralegals to understand the underpinnings of this concept in depth.

In addition, the survey exercise by ICJ Kenya in 2024 revealed capacity gaps amongst majority of the paralegals on self-regulation.

As a result, ICJ Kenya, with the support of the EU through UNDP Amkeni Wakenya hosted a three-day workshop in Kisumu, themed; strengthening paralegalism through self-regulation.

The workshop, interrogated in depth, the provisions of the PBO Act 2013 with emphasis on the self-regulation concept in paralegal practice within the western region paralegal chapter.

In partnership with CFF through PEN Kenya, and guided by case studies such as Viwango, PEN Kenya, explored the importance of self-regulation in enhancing accountability, transparency and sustainability in the realm of paralegalism.

The workshop further emphasized on the need for upholding high ethical standards, by adopting a code of conduct to govern the standards of the Western region paralegal chapter to enhance its self-governance.

Moreover, the workshop, also empowered the paralegals on resource mobilization as a sustainability strategy for the Western region paralegal chapter.



By **Ndolo Anderson**

Justice and Reparations for Victims of Post-Election Violence

The International Commission of Jurists – Kenya Section (ICJ Kenya) joined hands with key civil society organisations and members of the media in a renewed call for justice and reparations for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence and other human rights violations stemming from the 2007–08 post-election violence.

The convening, held in collaboration with the Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC), Utu Wetu, the Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU), and the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), brought together representatives from the Kenya Editors' Guild and senior editors from media houses across the country.

ICJ Kenya's Human Rights Programme Manager, Vincent Kimathi, engaged in robust discussions with the media professionals, focusing on the experiences of victims and the longstanding gaps in redress mechanisms.

Particular emphasis was placed on the plight of survivors of sexual violence, many of whom continue to face stigma and a lack of psychosocial and economic support nearly two decades later.

Participants revisited the findings and recommendations of the 2013 Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) report, which called for a comprehensive reparation framework for victims of historical injustices, including the post-election violence.

The engagement also underscored the critical role of the media in keeping the issue alive in public discourse and holding the state accountable.

Editors present at the convening pledged to use their platforms to



Civil Society actors meet representatives from the Editors Guild. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Despite the gravity of these recommendations, the government has yet to operationalize the Sh10 billion Restorative Justice Fund announced by former President Uhuru Kenyatta on March 26, 2015.

amplify victims' voices and report consistently on the stalled reparation efforts.

The forum served as a call to action for both the state and media stakeholders to prioritize justice, healing, and national reconciliation.



Civil Society actors meet representatives from the Editors Guild. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Time to Implement Restorative Justice Fund

By Ndolo Anderson

ICJ Kenya, joined a coalition of human rights defenders, victims' groups, and transitional justice organizations to commemorate the United Nations International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations and for the Dignity of Victims.

The event, held in Nairobi, brought together representatives from Utu Wetu, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights (KNCHR), the National Victims and Survivors Network, and the Kenya Transitional Justice Network.

It provided a platform for renewed calls for accountability, reparations, and the full implementation of truth-seeking measures in Kenya.

ICJ Kenya was represented by Deputy Executive Director Demas Kiprono, who emphasized the urgent need for justice for victims and survivors of both historical and ongoing human rights violations.

"The right to the truth is not merely symbolic it is a crucial pillar of justice and national healing," Kiprono stated.

Central to the discussions was the long-delayed implementation of the Sh10 billion Restorative Justice Fund, announced by former President Uhuru Kenyatta on March 26, 2015.

The fund was meant to provide reparative support to victims of the 2007–08 post-election violence (PEV), but a decade later, it remains unimplemented and undisbursed.

Stakeholders also raised concerns over the government's inaction on the recommendations of the 2013



Coalition of human rights defenders, victims' groups, and transitional justice organizations commemorate the United Nations International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) report, which laid out a clear roadmap for reparations and institutional reforms.

With the country approaching the 2027 general elections, speakers at the event underscored the importance of concrete and timely action to ensure accountability and prevent a repeat of electoral violence.

They warned that failure to address past injustices continues to erode trust in state institutions and poses a serious risk to Kenya's democratic stability.

Victims and survivors reiterated their demand for inclusion in decision-making processes related to reparations and transitional justice, asserting that their dignity and rights must remain central to any national healing process.



ICJ Kenya council vice-chairperson Tina Alai (left), Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, (center) and Busia Senator Okiyah Omtatah. Photo/ICJ Kenya.



By **Damaris Kemunto**

Artistic Expression and Intellectual Engagement

The mistreatment of students from Butere Girls High School following their performance of the play “Echoes of War” at the 2025 Kenya National Drama and Film Festival drew strong condemnation from the International Commission of Jurists – Kenya Section (ICJ Kenya).

The students were disqualified from the festival, subjected to intimidation, and targeted for performing a play that critically examined governance and leadership in the country.

ICJ Kenya described the actions taken against the students by the Ministry of Education, festival adjudicators, the National Police Service, and the Kenya National Drama and Film Festival Secretariat as a violation of their constitutional rights, particularly the right to freedom of expression and the right to education as guaranteed under Articles 33 and 43(1)(f) of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010.

ICJ Kenya emphasized that the play, “Echoes of War”, constituted a legitimate form of artistic expression and intellectual engagement.

The Commission argued that art has long served as a powerful tool for holding authorities accountable and challenging abuse of power, and political satire through theatre, music, cartoons, and other forms has historically played a key role in shaping democratic discourse.

The organization expressed concern that instead of encouraging such creativity, the government responded with censorship and repression, particularly targeting youth who dared to raise uncomfortable truths about society.

The Commission of jurists commended the High Court’s intervention on April 9, 2025, which reversed the students’ disqualification and affirmed their constitutional rights.

The ruling ordered the inclusion of the Butere Girls’ play in the national competition and served as a critical reminder that the rule of law must prevail over administrative overreach.

However, ICJ Kenya decried the use of tear gas by police officers to disperse crowds during the festival, stating that the presence of children made the forceful dispersal not only unnecessary but also unlawful.

The organization pointed to Article 53 of the Constitution and the Children’s Act, 2022, both of which safeguard the rights and wellbeing of children, as having been violated by the actions of the police.

Further, ICJ Kenya expressed solidarity with journalists who were harassed while covering related events, including those at Kirobon Girls High School in Nakuru County.

It endorsed the statement by the Crime Journalists Association of Kenya and called for urgent government action to uphold media freedom and protect journalists from intimidation or harm.

In light of the events, ICJ Kenya called on the Ministry of Education to issue a public apology and commit to upholding artistic freedom in schools.

The organization also urged the Parliamentary Committee on Education to carry out an independent investigation into the conduct of all officials involved.

Additionally, it called for a national dialogue on censorship and the shrinking of civic and creative spaces in Kenya, particularly within educational institutions.

ICJ Kenya reiterated that no child should be punished for expressing themselves artistically or thinking critically and reaffirmed its commitment to defending constitutionalism, human rights, and the rule of law across all sectors of society.

The Writer is a Programme Officer at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Reinforcing Regional Solidarity

By Shukri Wachu

In a powerful display of regional solidarity and commitment to justice, ICJ Kenya, under the leadership of Executive Director Eric Mukoya, hosted a high-level consultative meeting with Dr. Solomon Dersso, Commissioner at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).

The convening brought together prominent human rights leaders including Amnesty International Kenya Executive Director Irungu Houghton, Defenders Coalition Executive Director Kamau Ngugi, and East Africa Law Society President Ramadhan Abubakar.

The meeting served as a crucial platform for engaging in candid dialogue on the state of human rights across Kenya and the wider East African region.

Participants raised deep concerns over the growing trend of human rights violations, highlighting recent distressing incidents in Tanzania involving the unlawful and degrading treatment of Kenyan and Ugandan human rights defenders.

These events, including the targeting of respected figures like Martha Karua and former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga, have drawn sharp international condemnation and exposed shrinking civic space in the region.

ICJ Kenya and its partners voiced alarm at the rising hostility towards civil society actors and legal professionals, calling out the urgent need for accountability and adherence to the rule of law.

As a commission of jurists, ICJ Kenya reiterated its unwavering stance in defending those who courageously champion justice, even in increasingly repressive environments.

Dr. Dersso, in his keynote remarks, warned of the serious implications of democratic backsliding and authoritarian resurgence on the continent.

He underscored the erosion of constitutional norms, suppression of dissent, and the weakening of oversight institutions as grave threats to the survival of democracy in Africa.

Crucially, Dr. Dersso called on civil society, legal bodies, and defenders of human rights to forge stronger coalitions.

He emphasized that only through coordinated and sustained efforts can the region effectively push back against authoritarianism, demand justice, and protect fundamental freedoms.

This timely convening not only strengthened bonds among key actors in the regional human rights ecosystem but also reaffirmed a collective resolve: to defend the space for civic engagement, to safeguard constitutionalism, and to stand firm for justice and human dignity across Africa.



Amnesty International -Kenya Executive Director Irungu Houghton (left), ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya, Dr. Solomon Dersso, Commissioner at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka and East Africa Law Society President Ramadan Abubakar. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Tanzanian Gov't Urged To Respect Rule of Law

ICJ Kenya strongly condemned the detention of Senior Counsel Martha Karua and advocates Gloria Kimani and Lynn Ngugi at Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam.

The three Kenyan advocates were denied entry into Tanzania, where they had planned to observe the trial of opposition leader Tundu Lissu, an action that violated their rights and undermined the principle of transparency in judicial proceedings.

Denying them access to the courtroom undermined the fundamental right to a fair and public hearing, a cornerstone of international human rights law.

This incident significantly eroded regional and global confidence in Tanzania's judicial and electoral processes and raised serious concerns about the country's respect for due process and the rule of law.

As a signatory to multiple international and regional human rights instruments, including those under the United Nations framework, Tanzania was expected to uphold its obligations by facilitating the work of human rights defenders and legal observers.

Instead, the detention of these advocates represented a troubling move away from democratic norms and regional cooperation.

ICJ Kenya called for their immediate release and demanded that they be allowed to observe the trial as originally planned.

We reaffirmed that standing in solidarity with those seeking justice should never be criminalized, and emphasized the need for all states to respect and protect the role of legal professionals and civil society actors in promoting accountability and safeguarding human rights.



Amnesty International -Kenya Executive Director Irungu Houghton (left), Executive Director Defenders Coalition Kamau Ngugi, ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya, Dr. Solomon Dersso, Commissioner at the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka, ICJ Kenya Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, Thuku Mburu Programme Officer and East Africa Law Society President Ramadan Abubakar. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Economic Justice and Digital Rights





By **Christine Akinyi**

Kenya's Evolving Right to Health

In a significant stride towards realizing the right to health for all Kenyans, ICJ Kenya organized a transformative two-day learning workshop on 3rd and 4th April 2025 in Nairobi.

This event brought together twenty-seven passionate community stakeholders from ten diverse counties, including Kiambu, Laikipia, Nairobi, Kilifi, Nyeri, Machakos, Kirinyaga, Kakamega, Isiolo, and Homabay.

The workshop aimed to equip the participants with knowledge about the legal and policy frameworks related to the right to health, recommendations for legislative and policy reforms, propose actionable solutions and secure commitments from communities to support these reforms.



Delegates pose for a photo during the training session on Kenya's evolving Health Rights landscape. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

The workshop featured two key presentations, one, reviewing the legal and policy frameworks that inhibit access to health rights.

Two, an analysis of the recently enacted laws aimed at strengthening the legal framework for Universal Health Coverage and health financing including the Social Health Insurance Act 2023, Primary Health Care Act 2023, Digital Health Act 2023 and Facility Improvement Financing Act 2023.

The presentations raised significant concerns among participants including the rising cost of healthcare services, privatization of healthcare, poor regulation of private healthcare providers, delays in costing of devolved health functions and disbursement of funds to counties, insufficient healthcare technology use, overreliance on donor funding for health services, frequent strikes by healthcare personnel, lack of meaningful public participation in health decision making processes, poor intergovernmental relations between national and county governments, inadequate emergency treatment infrastructure and corruption in the health sector.

The workshop concluded with an action planning session, guided by a comprehensive framework.

The key action focuses identified include: Civic education to increase public awareness and understanding of the right to health and social health insurance; Build civil society actors' capacity in public interest litigation on the right to health; Advocate for health law and policy reforms to align with constitutional and devolved governance principles.



Delegates during the training session on Kenya's evolving Health Rights landscape. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

The learning workshop was a pivotal step towards empowering community stakeholders and enhancing health service delivery in Kenya.

By addressing the challenges and proposing actionable solutions, the workshop fostered a collective commitment to realizing the right to the highest attainable standard of health for all as guaranteed in the Constitution.

The journey towards equitable and accessible healthcare continues, driven by the voices and actions of dedicated individuals and organizations at the community level.

The Writer is a Programme Officer at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.



By **Christine Akinyi**

Menstruation and Everything In Between

ICJ Kenya collaborated with Janet Mbugua, founder and Executive Director of the Inua Dada Foundation, for the second edition of Dada Culture, held on 24th May 2025 under the theme “Menstruation and Everything In Between.”

The event served as an inspiring and inclusive platform to amplify women’s voices, challenge menstrual stigma, and share lived experiences around menstruation.

Dada Culture continues to evolve into a powerful space for rights-based advocacy and cultural dialogue that centers the realities of women and girls in Kenya and beyond.

Our Programme Manager, Julie Wayua Matheka, contributed to the session on “Menstruation and Policy,” where she unpacked Kenya’s legal and policy frameworks governing menstrual health.



ICJ Kenya Programme Officer Christine Akinyi, Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka and Inua Dada Foundation’s Janet Mbugua. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

She highlighted key protections enshrined in the Constitution of Kenya, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the Maputo Protocol, the Basic Education Act, and the Menstrual Hygiene Management Policy.

Despite the existence of these robust frameworks, Ms. Matheka emphasized that menstrual health continues to be treated as a marginal issue, with significant implementation gaps undermining the rights and dignity of many.



ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka and Inua Dada Foundation’s Janet Mbugua. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

She called attention to the limited access to menstrual products, the lack of comprehensive menstrual health education, and the persistent cultural stigma that restricts open conversations and equitable access.

Her message was clear, menstrual health is not a privilege, it is a fundamental human right.

She called for intensified advocacy and resource investment to confront the systemic challenges that hinder safe, dignified, and equitable menstrual health and hygiene for women and girls in Kenya.

ICJ Kenya remains committed to supporting inclusive, policy-driven efforts like Dada Culture that advance menstrual justice and uplift the rights of women and girls.

The Writer is a Programme Officer at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.



By **Geoffrey Odhiambo**

In April 2025, the Health Equity Advocates project, under the leadership of ICJ Kenya, with support from the Commonwealth Foundation, convened community and civil society dialogues in Kilgoris (Narok County) and Kakamega County to engage residents on the current state of healthcare delivery.

The meetings brought together a diverse mix of participants, including community members, civil society organisations, local administrators, religious leaders, and opinion shapers, to assess the state of health rights at the grassroots level and explore ways to advance equitable access to healthcare.

These engagements were anchored on the principle that the right to health is not merely access to hospitals, but encompasses a wide range of social, economic, and cultural factors that influence the ability of individuals and communities to live healthy lives.

Unfortunately, the reality on the ground paints a different picture. Many communities in both Kilgoris and Kakamega are yet to fully enjoy this fundamental right.

In Kilgoris, particularly in Transmara, residents highlighted the immense challenges posed by long distances to the nearest health facilities.

In some cases, patients must travel over 20 kilometers to access basic medical services, a situation made worse by poor road networks.

This severely limits access to timely care, especially for expectant mothers, children, and the elderly.

Community Conversations on Health Equity



ICJ Kenya Programme Officer **Geoffrey Odhiambo** leading a training session on Kenya's health rights. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Cultural barriers were also identified as a major impediment, with some communities still relying on traditional birth attendants and community midwives for maternal care.

While these caregivers play a significant role in filling service gaps, they often lack formal training, equipment, or access to emergency referral systems.

Consequently, maternal and neonatal outcomes remain a cause for concern.

In both Kilgoris and Kakamega, participants raised the alarm over the gradual downgrading of health facilities and the chronic shortage of qualified medical personnel.

Health centres that once operated 24 hours now close early due to staffing shortages.

Essential medicines and equipment are often unavailable, and overworked health workers are stretched thin.

These systemic issues undermine confidence in public healthcare, pushing some residents to seek expensive private alternatives, if they can afford them at all.

A particularly pressing concern voiced during the sessions was the need for better integration of social determinants of health into healthcare planning.

Issues such as poverty, inadequate housing, food insecurity, and lack of clean water all contribute significantly to the health outcomes in these communities. Yet, they often remain overlooked in health policies and budgeting.

ICJ Kenya, through its Health Equity Advocates project, is committed to changing this narrative.

By facilitating inclusive community and civil society dialogues and amplifying grassroots voices in policy spaces, the organisation aims to ensure that health policies and investments reflect the real needs of the people.

As these conversations continue, ICJ Kenya remains steadfast in its mission to promote the right to health for all, ensuring no one is left behind due to where they live, how much they earn, or the cultural practices they observe.

The Writer is a Programme Officer at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Digital Rights





By Charles Jaika

The 2025 Employment and Labour Relations Court (ELRC) Judges Conference brought together key stakeholders from the judiciary, civil society organizations, and the broader justice sector to engage on the theme: “*Insolvency, Labour Rights and Technology.*”

ICJ Kenya’s Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, was among the key speakers on the opening day, delivering compelling remarks on how technological innovation continues to reshape both the world of work and the administration of justice.



ICJ Kenya Digital Rights Lead Charles Jaika, Deputy Executive Director Demas Kiprono and Tech and Human Rights Manager from Amnesty International Kenya, Victor Ndede
Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Mr. Kiprono highlighted how the integration of technology into the justice system through artificial intelligence powered legal research, e-filing platforms, and virtual courtrooms has significantly improved efficiency and access to justice.

ELRC Judges Kick Off Conference with Focus on Tech, Labour Rights

However, he cautioned that these advancements also raise pressing concerns related to ethical standards, digital inclusion, accountability, and the safeguarding of workers’ rights in an increasingly digital economy.

“Our courts are already grappling with cases that challenge the labour practices of major technology platforms,” he noted.

“This is a crucial moment for Kenya to not only embrace its Silicon Savannah status but to ensure that technological advancement goes hand in hand with the protection of workers’ rights.”



Delegates pose for a photo during the Employment and Labour Relations Court (ELRC) Judges Conference. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

As conversations continued throughout the conference, participants were encouraged to explore how legal frameworks can keep pace with the rapid evolution of digital labour markets while ensuring that no one is left behind.

The Writer is a Digital Rights Lead at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.



By Demas Kiprono

Safeguarding Media Freedoms

In a firm show of support for press freedom and democratic governance, ICJ Kenya reiterated its commitment to calling for the promotion of ethical journalism, accountability, and the rule of law.

Recognizing the media as a cornerstone of democracy, the jurists' organization continues to champion the critical role journalists play in advancing transparency, justice, and national values.

Speaking during annual media summit, ICJ Kenya's Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, who also serves as the Chairperson of the Media Complaints Commission (MCC), highlighted the need for a responsible and free press that operates within a framework of integrity and professionalism.

"It is an honour to address you at this pivotal moment, where we reflect on the critical role of a free, responsible, and ethical media in strengthening our democracy," said Kiprono.

"Kenya's media is vibrant and influential shaping public discourse, holding power to account, and empowering citizens. But with this influence comes great responsibility."

Mr Kiprono acknowledged the formal gazettelement of the MCC by the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) and the Cabinet Secretary, calling it a



ICJ Kenya Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono addressing delegates at the Annual Media Summit. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

significant step toward strengthening independent media oversight in the country.

"The Media Complaints Commission, which I am proud to chair, exists to ensure that media power is exercised with integrity," Kiprono said.

"Our work is anchored in the Code of Conduct for the Practice of Journalism, Article 34 of the Constitution, which protects media freedom, and Article 10, which enshrines national values such as accountability, transparency, and public participation."

He emphasized that media regulation is not about censorship but about upholding truth, fairness, and national cohesion.

"We intervene when reporting risks harming individuals or society not to punish, but to correct, educate, and uphold professionalism.

We've built jurisprudence on critical issues like the protection of children and responsible headlines," Kiprono noted.

In an age where misinformation spreads faster than facts, amplified by artificial intelligence and social media Kiprono urged the media to self-regulate diligently and prioritize accuracy over speed.

"We must ask ourselves: Does this story uphold the public and national interest? Does it respect human dignity and reflect our shared values?" he posed.

Mr Kiprono reaffirmed his commitment to supporting a media environment that balances freedom of expression with responsibility, calling for collaboration between journalists, regulators, and the public.

During the summit, the Media Council of Kenya (MCK) launched the revised Code of Conduct for Media Practice 2025, a pivotal step to strengthen ethical standards in the nation's evolving media landscape.

The Writer is the Deputy Executive Director at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Preserving Digital Civic Space

By Charles Jaika

Concurrent with the courtroom challenge, ICJ Kenya launched a comprehensive report titled “Preserving Digital Civic Space: An Analysis of Internet Shutdowns in Kenya.” While full text details are on ICJ Kenya’s website, the report provides: A systematic examination of internet disruptions in Kenya, including data and case studies from 2023–2024 events.

Analysis of the legal and constitutional framework governing digital rights, including Articles 24, 32–38 and international obligations under the ICCPR and African Charter.



Delegates pose for a photo during the launch of the report: “Preserving Digital Civic Space: An Analysis of Internet Shutdowns in Kenya. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

The report criticizes emerging tactics of digital censorship throttling, app-blocks, localized shutdowns as insidious tools of authoritarian control.

The central aim is to inform policymakers, the judiciary, civil society, and the general public about the legal obligations and real-world impact of shutdowns, on political rights, economic activities, media operations, education, and emergency services.



ICJ Kenya Digital Rights Lead Charles Jaika at the launch of the report: “Preserving Digital Civic Space: An Analysis of Internet Shutdowns in Kenya. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

The report also proposes legal reforms: judicial oversight mechanisms, stricter proportionality tests, and formal recognition of internet access as a fundamental right.



ICJ Kenya Finance Assistant, Joseph Deusdedit Ongong’o, Admin Assistant, Walter Bulimu and Katiba Institute’s Monitoring and Evaluation Officer Dennis Ondieki. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

By situating Kenya’s experience within broader African and global trends, the publication seeks to build momentum for regional safeguards and guide digital rights advocacy across the continent.

The Writer is a Digital Rights Lead at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.



By Charles Jaika

Landmark Internet Shutdown Case

On 14 May 2025, ICJ Kenya, alongside six other organisations (BAKE, PIN, KUJ, Katiba Institute, LSK, CIPESA), filed a ground-breaking public interest petition at the High Court challenging arbitrary internet disruptions in Kenya.

The defendants include the Communications Authority of Kenya, the Attorney General, the Cabinet Secretary for Information, as well as telecom giants Safaricom and Airtel.

These legal actions follow documented internet throttling and platform blocking, such as Telegram, during major events including the 2023 #RejectFinanceBill protests and the 2024 KCSE exams.

Evidence collated by Cloudflare, IODA, and OONI reveals systematic interference by state actors.

The petition argues such shutdowns violate constitutional rights: freedom of expression (Article 33), media freedom (34), access to information (35), and economic and social rights (43).

Once filed, Judge Bahati Mwamuye issued interim conservatory orders halting any further disruptions while the case proceeded.

The plaintiffs seek a judicial declaration that shutdowns without due process are unconstitutional, an injunction to stop future disruptions, transparency mandates, and possibly compensation.

This case represents a major milestone in defending digital civic space and could set precedent across the region.

The Writer is a Digital Rights Lead at The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ - Kenya).



ICJ Kenya Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, the Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE) chairperson Kennedy Kachwanya and Paradigm Initiative (PIN), Kenya, programme Officer Miriam Beatrice addressing the media. Photo/ICJ Kenya.



ICJ Kenya, The Bloggers Association of Kenya (BAKE), Paradigm Initiative (PIN), Kenya, and The Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA) representatives pose for a photo. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

A high-angle, dimly lit photograph of several people in business suits sitting around a table. They are looking at various documents and papers scattered on the table. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights, creating a professional and focused atmosphere.

ICJ Kenya Member's Corner

PRAXEDES TOROREY Trailblazing Legal Mind, Advocate for Gender Justice and Public Sector Reformer

You've had a distinguished career spanning the Judiciary, electoral governance, and IPOA. What principles have guided your journey through these different institutions?

Throughout my career in the Judiciary, forest management, electoral governance, and policing oversight, I've been guided by integrity, accountability, and a deep commitment to justice and public service. Integrity ensures that every decision I make is rooted in fairness and the rule of law.

Accountability, both personal and institutional, has been key to building trust and ensuring ethical conduct.

Most importantly, I've remained committed to justice as a lived experience for all citizens, working to build systems that uphold dignity and human rights.

While each institution came with unique challenges, these core values have remained constant in shaping my leadership and public service.

How has your focus on women's rights shaped your legal work, especially in traditionally male-dominated spaces like public security and electoral law?

My focus on women's rights has deeply shaped my legal work, particularly in areas like justice administration, electoral law, and policing oversight where gender disparities are pronounced.

With a Master's in Women's Law, I've consistently worked to center women's voices, needs, and rights in spaces where they've long been marginalized.

At IPOA, this meant advocating for gender-sensitive policies, pushing for accountability on gender-based violence, and conducting police sensitization workshops.

In electoral law, I've championed gender parity by supporting quota reforms, challenging discrimination, and partnering with civil society to elevate women's leadership.

Even in the Judiciary, I trained Magistrates and Judges under the auspices of Kenya Women Judges on the Jurisprudence of Equality.

For me, women's rights are integral to the law, it's how I interpret, advocate, and envision justice in more inclusive and equitable ways.

Reflecting on your time at the IEBC during one of Kenya's most complex political transitions, what lessons stand out to you about leadership, law, and resilience?

My time at the IEBC during a politically charged period taught me that leadership in times of national strain requires calm, clarity, and an unwavering commitment to the Constitution.

Upholding the law, not selectively but fully, proved essential in maintaining institutional credibility and public trust.

Resilience was also vital, not just personally but systemically. Institutions must be equipped to withstand pressure and safeguard integrity.

That experience reaffirmed the importance of principled leadership and legal precision, especially when democracy is most vulnerable.

You've worked on developing training manuals and codes of conduct across multiple institutions. What role do you believe institutional culture plays in upholding the rule of law?

Institutional culture is crucial in ensuring that laws are upheld not just in theory, but in everyday practice. While policies provide structure, it's the internal values and norms that shape outcomes.



Praxedes Tororey. Photo/Courtesy.



Praxedes Tororey (Centre) posing for a photo at the Nairobi Legal Awards. Photo/Courtesy.

I've seen that real change comes when institutions cultivate environments of accountability, ethical conduct, and professionalism.

A code of conduct only works when staff view it as a guide to principled service.

That kind of culture must be modeled by leadership and reinforced through consistent training and mentorship. A strong institutional culture makes the rule of law a lived experience.

Many young women in law look up to trailblazers like you. What advice would you offer them as they enter into public service or leadership roles?

To young women entering public service or leadership, I say, know that you belong.

Hold on to your integrity, it is your strongest currency. Lead with confidence, even when your presence is questioned, and let your work speak for itself.

Build supportive networks, seek mentorship, and uplift others along the way. Most importantly, be patient with yourself.

Progress is often slow, but every step forward widens the path for those who follow. Leadership is not about titles, it's about the impact you create with integrity and purpose.

At IPOA, your role included oversight of policing and human rights. What are the biggest opportunities you see for reform and accountability in Kenya's security sector today?

There is significant potential to transform Kenya's security sector into one that is people-centered and accountable.

Strengthening independent oversight through well-resourced bodies like IPOA is critical, as is ensuring their recommendations are implemented transparently.

Building a human-rights culture within the police requires more than training, it demands a mindset shift rooted in empathy and non-discrimination.

Community policing initiatives, such as Nyumba Kumi, have shown promise, particularly when they involve inclusive local partnerships.

Technology also holds promise, body cameras, digitized OBs, and CCTV can increase transparency, but must be accompanied by privacy safeguards.

Finally, we must professionalize the service, modernize police training to align with constitutional values, and clearly define agency roles to avoid overlap and militarization of civilian policing.

Recognition programs like the OPSA Awards are a good step in reinforcing positive policing culture.

You're also involved in community work, particularly with children's rights. How do you balance high-level legal work with grassroots engagement, and why is this connection important to you?

Balancing national-level roles with grassroots engagement is essential to staying grounded in the realities that laws aim to address.

My early experiences as a Magistrate in Narok exposed me to the harms of child marriage and inspired community dialogues to challenge these norms.

Whether through the Nanyuki Children's Home or the One More Day for Children Foundation, my work with vulnerable children keeps me connected to the heart of justice.

It's one thing to draft policy; it's another to witness its direct impact or absence on a child's life.

That connection shapes how I advocate for reform, reminding me that justice must be tangible and rooted in lived experiences.

As a long-standing member of ICJ Kenya, what does the organization mean to you personally and professionally?

ICJ Kenya has been both a professional compass and a source of personal inspiration. It has offered platforms for

legal thought, policy reform, and meaningful collaboration, whether through training judicial officers, supporting access to justice, or defending judicial independence.

Serving on the Jurist of the Year Award Committee has also allowed me to celebrate and recognize those who advance human rights and democracy.

ICJ Kenya represents a collective commitment to justice not just in principle, but in action.

Being part of this community has reinforced my belief in the law as a tool for equity, and in solidarity as a force for change.

You've witnessed Kenya's legal landscape evolve over decades. In your view, what has been the most transformative legal reform since the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution?

Devolution stands out as the most transformative reform post-2010.

It restructured governance by bringing services closer to citizens and increasing civic participation.

It's also catalyzed new jurisprudence around public finance, minority rights, and intergovernmental relations.

While challenges remain, particularly around local accountability, devolution has shifted power dynamics in profound ways.

Other critical reforms include the creation of constitutional commissions that safeguard democracy and the growing inclusion of marginalized groups in Parliament.

The constitutional gender rule, though not fully realized, has ignited a national conversation on representation and inclusion.

Looking back, is there a particular case, project, or moment in your career that you feel best defines your legacy in advancing justice and human rights?

One defining moment was helping to establish accountability mechanisms within IPOA during a time of low public confidence in security institutions.

Developing investigative protocols, complaint-handling systems, and human rights-based training helped lay the groundwork for more transparent policing.

This work addressed both systemic issues and individual justice, providing redress to victims while pushing institutions to do better.

It encapsulates what I believe public service should be: principled, people-focused, and persistent, even in the face of complexity.

What's next for you in the realm of justice and governance?

I remain committed to strengthening justice systems and mentoring future leaders.

I hope to take on more strategic roles, advisory, policy-based, or within regional bodies, that promote rule of law and democratic governance.

I'm particularly focused on mentoring young professionals, especially women, through platforms like IRIIP GAA and the Professional Criminologist Association of Kenya.

My goal is to bridge the gap between policy and lived reality, ensuring legal reforms are not only well-designed, but also felt by those they're meant to serve.

The context may evolve, but my mission remains to help build institutions that are inclusive, principled, and trusted.



Praxedes Tororey. Photo/Courtesy.

CYNTHIA MUDAYE Advocate of the High Court, Board Member at FIDA-Kenya and Human Rights Defender

What inspired your journey into the legal profession, and how have your personal experiences influenced your focus on justice and human rights?

The disparity in the rights accorded to women in various countries and cultures whereas men's rights remain comparatively constant and unquestioned.

I have seen how these imbalances are woven into legal systems, policies and everyday lived realities.

These have in turn influenced my work as I strive to advocate, empower and challenge these barriers and hopefully contribute to building a world where equality is a lived reality.

As a board member at FIDA Kenya, what drives your commitment to women's rights and legal empowerment?

There has been massive advancement of the law with regards to the expansion of women rights for the past 40 years that FIDA Kenya has been in existence.

However, there is a glaring disconnect between the progressive constitutional and legislative frameworks and the reality on the ground coupled with their incomplete implementation in a way that truly serve women.

Despite these legal advances, there is still widespread discrimination and deeply ingrained cultural norms, often reinforced by various dogmas-that keep women in vulnerable positions.

The lack of gender responsive policies and resources fail to address the lived realities of Kenyan women leaving women vulnerable and marginalised.

My belief is that the law must not only exist on paper but must be birthed to life in ways that genuinely protect, empower and advance the rights of all Kenyan women in every part of their lives.

How has being a member of ICJ Kenya contributed to your professional growth and advocacy work?

ICJ Kenya has deepened my understanding of constitutionalism and the rule of law.

Their trainings and forums have expanded my appreciation for the practical application of human rights and provided invaluable networking opportunities with like-minded advocates.

You've been involved in championing gender justice. What do you see as the biggest challenges facing survivors of SGBV in Kenya today?

SGBV is a crime often cloaked in shame and stigma.

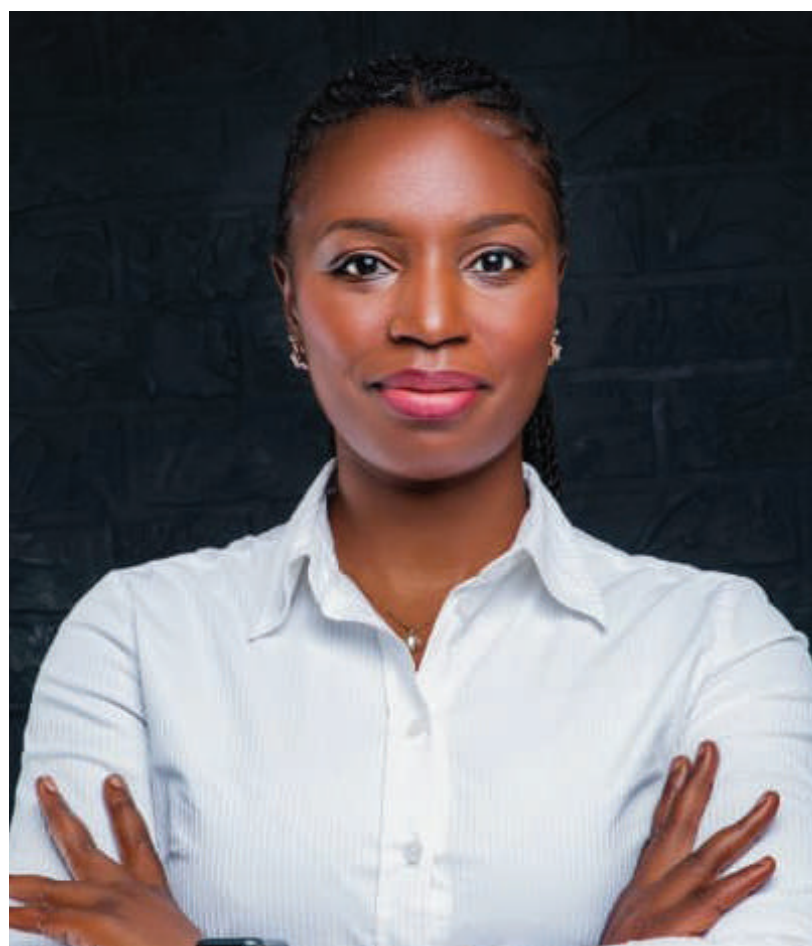
Survivors face numerous societal challenges, including victim-blaming, lack of support services, fear of retaliation, and limited access to justice.

These barriers deter reporting and hinder survivors from receiving timely, dignified, and comprehensive care.

How can legal practitioners, civil society, and the judiciary collaborate better to ensure timely, survivor-centered justice in SGBV cases?

There must be prioritization of SGBV cases to ensure timely hearings and prosecutions.

This requires survivor-centered training for judicial officers and prosecutors, improved coordination between service providers, and dedicated court sessions or units for SGBV cases to minimize retraumatization and delays.



Cynthia Mudaye. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

What legislative or policy reforms do you believe are urgently needed to improve SGBV prevention and response mechanisms in Kenya?

The government must recognize the profound societal impact of SGBV and allocate sufficient resources for its prevention and response.

We must move from reactive, post-facto justice models to proactive, prevention-based approaches rooted in social transformation.

This includes full implementation and resourcing of existing policies, like the National Policy on Prevention and Response to GBV, and investment in survivor services, safe houses, psychosocial and medical care, and legal aid.

Law enforcement must be trained in human rights and survivor-centered approaches.

Specialized sexual crimes units and adequately resourced gender desks within the National Police Service are critical for thorough investigations and effective justice.

What role do you think AJS can play in enhancing access to justice, especially for women and marginalized communities?

AJS provides affordable, faster, and less adversarial justice mechanisms that are often more accessible to marginalized communities.

These systems emphasize community harmony and relationship preservation, making them particularly effective in family and community-level disputes.

From your perspective, how can Kenya ensure that AJS processes uphold human rights standards, particularly in cases involving vulnerable groups?

First, the full implementation of the AJS policy is key, it must provide clear structures and guidelines that align with constitutional and human rights principles.

Second, AJS mechanisms must actively address power imbalances, especially in cases involving women, children, and persons with disabilities.

This requires rights-based training for mediators and community leaders, public awareness campaigns, and mechanisms to ensure informed consent.

User-friendly templates for documentation can enhance transparency and monitoring.

Additionally, AJS forums must offer specialized support, such as interpreters, separate mediation spaces, and psychosocial services to protect vulnerable participants.

What approaches do you believe are most effective

in mentoring and empowering the next generation of women lawyers and human rights defenders?

For me, mentoring the next generation means being visible, standing in solidarity, and working hand-in-hand across generations.

Young women need to see themselves in leadership and hear stories that reflect both success and struggle.

True mentorship is rooted in mutual respect, not hierarchy, it should empower new voices and encourage innovation.



*Cynthia Mudaye at the Africa Litigation Surgery Conference.
Photo/ICJ Kenya.*

Intergenerational collaboration is key, blending the wisdom of experienced advocates with the bold ideas of emerging leaders.

Governments, male allies, and religious leaders also play a vital role in shifting cultural norms when guided by justice and dignity.

Above all, the women's rights movement must stay united, purposeful, and global to create real, lasting change.

How do you personally stay grounded and motivated in the face of slow progress or setbacks in advocacy work?

In the line of work that FIDA Kenya does, frustration can creep up as progress can often feel painstakingly slow and setbacks are inevitable.

FIDA Kenya has been doing advocacy for the past 40 years, so I do remind myself that change is gradual, strengthened by the resilience of the women of Kenya whom we serve and the unwavering support of the entire women's rights movement.

Also, each setback reminds me of the power of collective action and the importance of amplifying women's voices.

Personally, immersing myself in any form of art, spending time in nature, exercising and being with loved ones helps me to recharge.

Feminist literature and articles on the women's rights movement help me to reaffirm my commitment to feminist advocacy.

EDIGAR KAVURAVU Advocate of the High Court , Senior Manager, Africa – Pro Bono Services, Center for Reproductive Rights Human Rights Advocate

You've spent your career advancing human rights and access to justice across Africa. What first drew you to this path?

I was drawn to this path by a deep conviction that the law can be a powerful tool for justice, especially for the most vulnerable.

Growing up in Kenya, I witnessed systemic injustices and knew I wanted to be part of the solution.

My early work at Kituo Cha Sheria (Legal Advice Center), supporting victims of the post-election violence, cemented my commitment to human rights.

As Senior Manager for Africa, Pro Bono Services at the Center for Reproductive Rights, what does your day-to-day work look like, and what impact are you most proud of?

My daily work involves engaging law firms and bar associations across Africa to support litigation, advocacy, and capacity-building on reproductive rights.

I am proud of creating a robust, continent-wide pro bono network that not only contributes meaningfully to landmark reproductive health cases but also strengthens grassroots movements.

By working closely with national and regional bar associations, I've helped deepen a culture of pro bono practice, promoting its recognition as a vital tool for advancing human rights and social justice.

Pro bono legal services are often seen as a bridge between marginalized communities and justice systems.

How do you ensure these services are meaningful and sustainable?

Sustainability begins with aligning pro bono work with long-term litigation and advocacy goals.

We focus on building strong, lasting relationships with law firms, providing thorough onboarding, and ensuring they remain actively engaged throughout the process.

At the same time, we are fostering a culture within the legal profession that values and embraces pro bono as an integral part of advancing justice.

Access to justice is a recurring challenge in many parts of Africa. What are some of the most persistent barriers you've seen and how do we begin to dismantle them?

Access to justice, particularly for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) in Africa, is hindered by a range of persistent challenges, including restrictive and punitive legal frameworks, widespread legal illiteracy, and deep rooted stigma surrounding issues such as abortion and adolescent sexuality.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes legal empowerment at the community level, reform of discriminatory laws, training of justice sector actors on SRHR and gender sensitivity, and strategic litigation to drive systemic change.



Edigar Kavuravu. Photo/Courtesy.

Pro bono legal support plays a critical role in bridging gaps in legal representation, enhancing access to justice for marginalized groups, and strengthening accountability.

Building strong partnerships with law firms and bar associations across the continent is essential to ensure sustained and rights-based legal support for those most affected.

You previously worked at ICJ Kenya; an organization deeply rooted in defending the rule of law. How did that experience shape your legal and advocacy philosophy?

ICJ Kenya was foundational for me. It taught me the power of strategic litigation, coalition-building, and evidence based advocacy.

It's where I learned to integrate national, regional, and international legal mechanisms in the fight for justice.

Reproductive rights remain a contested space in many countries. What gives you hope in the fight for dignity, autonomy, and healthcare for all?

What gives me hope is the resilience of women and girls who continue to speak out, the commitment of pro bono partners, and the progressive decisions coming from courts affirming bodily autonomy and access to reproductive healthcare.



Edigar Kavuravu. Photo/Courtesy.

Collaboration with lawyers and law firms is central to your role. What does an effective partnership in pro bono work look like?

Collaboration with lawyers and law firms is central to my role, and effective pro bono partnerships are built on shared values, clear communication, and a genuine commitment to advancing justice.

These partnerships go beyond transactional engagements, they involve mutual trust, long-term collaboration, and a shared vision for impact.

The most successful pro bono relationships are those where firms are not just legal service providers, but active allies in advocacy, capacity-building, and systemic change.

What advice would you give to young lawyers who want to make a meaningful impact in human rights or pro-bono work?

Start local, stay curious, and be patient. Impact takes time. Seek mentors, take up pro bono opportunities early, and remember that meaningful change often starts with one client, one case, one law.

The legal profession is evolving, especially with technology and shifting political landscapes. What opportunities and risks do you see for human rights work in this moment?

Technology is a double-edged sword, it enhances access to justice but also facilitates surveillance and misinformation.

We must leverage digital tools ethically while safeguarding freedoms, especially in shrinking civic spaces.

Finally, what does being a member of ICJ Kenya mean to you personally and professionally?

It means being part of a principled community committed to justice, the rule of law, and human dignity. Professionally, it grounds me in values that continue to guide my work across Africa.



Edigar Kavuravu (Centre). Photo/Courtesy.

EMMACULATE AKINYI HYIMO Prosecution Counsel, ODPP, Advocate of the High Court, Human Rights Defender, SDG & Youth Leadership Champion

You currently serve as a Prosecution Counsel at the ODPP. What inspired you to pursue a career in public prosecution, and what keeps you passionate about criminal law?

My passion for seeing justice served has always been one of the key reasons I chose to pursue a career in public prosecution.

I am driven by a desire to advocate for legal equity, serve the public, give back to society, and better understand human behavior in response to crime.

Additionally, I've always been eager to work on complex criminal cases such as human trafficking and to play a role in protecting community values.

Alongside your prosecutorial work, you've been deeply involved in human rights advocacy. How do you bridge these two worlds in your day-to-day legal practice?

As a prosecutor, I champion victims' rights and ensure fairness in prosecution.

This naturally aligns with human rights advocacy, where justice and compassion converge.

My role involves not only enforcing the law but also upholding fundamental human rights.

You've gained certifications from the Centre for Human Rights in South Africa and Media Defence in London. How have these international experiences shaped your approach to justice and human rights?

These experiences have broadened my understanding of human rights advocacy by helping me embrace multidimensional perspectives, develop practical skills, and appreciate the importance of collaboration across different sectors.

They have refined my professional practice and deepened my commitment to advancing dignity and equality both locally and globally.

You've litigated across various legal fields, insurance, regional integration, labour law, data protection, and more. What has this diversity taught you about Kenya's evolving legal landscape?

These diverse experiences have kept me in step with Kenya's legal system, which continues to evolve in response to rapid social, economic, and technological changes.

Working across different legal fields has allowed me to understand how law interacts with society.

I've come to appreciate that every area, whether insurance or regional integration, reflects Kenya's growth, challenges, and aspirations.

These lessons underscore the need for a legal system that responds to our local realities while aspiring to meet global standards.

As someone actively engaged in civic education and human rights awareness, what strategies do you find most effective in reaching and empowering the public?

Understanding your audience is key, identifying their needs, concerns, and values helps tailor the message.

Clear, accessible language, using social media for advocacy, community-based education, and partnering with local leaders and organizations have proven most effective in raising awareness and fostering public engagement.



Emmaculate Akinyi Hyimo. Photo/Courtesy

You've also served as a judge in moot court competitions, like the recent Unwanted Witness Protection Moot. What role do such forums play in shaping the next generation of lawyers?

Moot court competitions enhance legal knowledge and its application, develop advocacy and communication skills, and foster teamwork.

They also provide mentorship and feedback, help instill professional ethics, and prepare students for real-world litigation challenges.

These forums encourage specialization, inspire passion, and create valuable networks between students and legal professionals.

The intersection of law and technology is becoming increasingly important.

From your perspective, how can legal practitioners better adapt to the digital era?

Legal practitioners must embrace legal tech as society continues its digital shift.

This includes staying informed about cybersecurity laws, improving digital literacy, and leveraging data analytics.

Practitioners should also adapt to remote work environments and explore emerging legal areas like data protection, digital IP rights, cybercrime, and digital fraud.

You're a strong advocate for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). How do you incorporate SDG principles like gender equality, access to justice, and youth empowerment into your legal and advocacy work?

Incorporating SDG principles into my work is essential.

I advocate for equitable laws that protect all genders, provide civic education to combat discrimination, and ensure fair representation in the justice system.

I engage with youth through civic education in prisons and court user forums, and I support diversion programs for minor offenses, offering young people a second chance at reform.

As a young professional, what challenges have you encountered in the legal field, and how have you navigated them?

Some challenges I've faced include difficulty in networking due to conflicting schedules or limited access to mentors, negotiating fair compensation early in my career, balancing work with a social life, and managing societal expectations.

I've navigated these by being proactive, learning from colleagues, staying flexible when opportunities arise, and maintaining resilience and focus.

What role has ICJ Kenya played in your personal and professional development?

ICJ Kenya has deepened my understanding of domestic and international human rights through seminars, training, and awareness campaigns.

My active involvement has sharpened my critical thinking, improved my problem-solving skills, and expanded my professional network.

Additionally, through their policy work and specialized training, my research and legal skills have significantly improved.



Emmaculate Akinyi Hyimo. Photo/Courtesy

Serving as a moot court judge across East Africa through ICJ Kenya has also opened doors to mentorship and professional growth.

If you had the power to reform one aspect of the criminal justice or human rights system in Kenya, what would it be and why?

I would improve resource allocation for key actors in the criminal justice system.

This includes training investigators for better evidence gathering, enhancing facilities for remandees, providing appropriate holding cells for children in conflict with the law, and upgrading prison clinics to offer better healthcare for both remandees and convicts.

Looking ahead, what legacy do you hope to build in Kenya's legal and human rights space, and what impact do you want your work to leave on future generations?

I hope to be remembered as a champion for marginalized communities, amplifying their voices and ensuring equitable representation in legal and human rights spaces.

I aim to leave a legacy of promoting reforms grounded in fairness, transparency, and efficiency, while nurturing the next generation of human rights lawyers.

Ultimately, I want my work to stand as a testament to justice, equity, and the belief that dignity and human rights are everyone's birthright.



Emmaculate Akinyi Hyimo at the Unwanted Witness Moot Court Competition. Photo/Courtesy

Building Partnerships

Strengthening Regional Collaboration on Access to Justice

While in Kigali, ICJ Kenya's Executive Director, Eric Mukoya, and Programme Manager, Vincent Kimathi, paid a courtesy visit to the Legal Aid Forum – Rwanda.

The visit offered a valuable platform for dialogue on deepening collaboration between the two institutions.

Discussions focused on shared priorities, including advancing access to justice for the poor and marginalized. Both teams explored ways to harness their collective strengths to promote human rights and expand legal empowerment across the region.



ICJ Kenya's Executive Director, Eric Mukoya, and Programme Manager, Vincent Kimathi, paid a courtesy visit to the Legal Aid Forum in Rwanda. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Advancing Transitional Justice Through Strategic Partnerships

ICJ Kenya, led by Executive Director Eric Mukoya and Programme Manager Vincent Kimathi, visited the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kigali, Rwanda, for high-level discussions on ongoing collaboration with the Dutch Ministry of Justice.

The meeting focused on strengthening support for transitional justice initiatives, reflecting a shared commitment to accountability, healing, and the rule of law in post-conflict contexts.

The engagement underscored the importance of international partnerships in advancing sustainable justice reforms across the region.



ICJ Kenya's Executive Director, Eric Mukoya, and Programme Manager, Vincent Kimathi, visited the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Kigali, Rwanda. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Strengthening South-South Exchange: ICJ Kenya and Norec Review Progress

ICJ Kenya recently held a progress review meeting with its development partner, the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (Norec), to evaluate the ongoing regional exchange programme.

The discussions centered on the experiences and development of two Norec participants currently hosted by ICJ Kenya—Samantha Lubulwa from Uganda and Maxine Nkomo from Zimbabwe.

The session provided a platform to reflect on their contributions, growth, and integration into ICJ Kenya's work.

The meeting was attended by ICJ Kenya's Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono; Programme Manager, Julie Wayua Matheka; and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Moses Murithi. Representing Norec were Frank Tore Tveit and Amalie Dalland Senneset.

Beyond the progress review, the teams explored broader aspects of the exchange programme and discussed strategic directions for its future, reaffirming their shared commitment to strengthening regional solidarity, skills development, and cross-cultural collaboration.



ICJ Kenya held a progress review meeting with its development partner, the Norwegian Agency for Exchange Cooperation (Norec), to evaluate the ongoing regional exchange programme. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

ICJ Kenya and Undugu Society Advance Justice for Street-Connected Communities

ICJ Kenya and the Undugu Society of Kenya have officially sealed a new partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), reaffirming a shared commitment to advancing justice for street-connected individuals.

The agreement, signed by ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya and Undugu Society Executive Director Mwongera Mutiga, marks a significant milestone in efforts to protect the rights and dignity of some of the most marginalized members of society those often excluded from legal and social protection systems.

This collaboration aims to drive inclusive policy advocacy, expand access to legal aid, and support holistic, community based interventions that reflect the complex socio-economic realities of street-connected populations. It underscores a shared vision to dismantle systemic barriers

and promote justice that is truly accessible to all.

ICJ Kenya has long championed the decriminalization of poverty and status both nationally and regionally.

The organization recognizes that laws targeting people based on their socio-economic conditions are inherently discriminatory, reinforcing cycles of exclusion and injustice.

Through strategic litigation, policy reform, and civic education, ICJ Kenya continues to push for legal frameworks that uphold the rights and dignity of all individuals, regardless of their background or circumstances.

This new partnership with Undugu Society builds on that mission, working toward a society where justice is inclusive, equitable, and transformative.



ICJ Kenya and the Undugu Society of Kenya leadership pose for a photo after signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Strategic Alliance for Justice and Accountability

As part of ICJ Kenya's ongoing efforts to build transformative partnerships that advance human rights, democratic governance, and the rule of law across Africa, Executive Director Eric Mukoya recently hosted Mr. Samuel Kimeu, Executive Director of Africa's Voices.

The meeting served as a valuable opportunity for exploratory dialogue on potential areas of collaboration, with a particular emphasis on strengthening the capacity of adjudication institutions across the continent.

Their discussions reaffirmed a shared vision: to foster robust, independent, and accountable institutions that deliver justice and uphold the rights of all people.

The engagement underscored the importance of collective action and innovative partnerships in driving sustainable reform and institutional integrity.



ICJ Kenya host Africa's Voices Executive Director Mr. Samuel Kimeu at ICJ Kenya house. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

ICJ Kenya Hosts Swedish Student Delegation

ICJ Kenya recently had the pleasure of hosting students from the Association of Foreign Affairs in Uppsala, Sweden, along with their sister organization from the city of Lund.

The delegation was warmly received by Executive Director Eric Mukoya, who led an engaging discussion with Ludwig Nordin, the representative of the Uppsala association.

Founded in 1948, the Association of Foreign Affairs is dedicated to promoting international dialogue and fostering a deeper understanding of global affairs, international relations, and political developments.

The exchange was enriching for both sides, as ICJ Kenya shared insights into its work advancing human rights, constitutionalism, and the rule of law in Kenya and across the continent.

The students, in turn, offered thoughtful reflections and perspectives on international justice and governance, contributing to a dynamic and thought-provoking conversation.

Their curiosity and keen engagement brought fresh energy to the dialogue.

ICJ Kenya was pleased to offer a Kenyan and regional lens to support the students' continued learning journey and to strengthen cross-cultural understanding on issues that shape our world.



ICJ Kenya secretariat pose for a photo with students from the Association of Foreign Affairs in Uppsala, Sweden, along with their sister organization from the city of Lund. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Celebrating Norway's Constitution Day

ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya joined dignitaries and partners in celebrating Norway's Constitution Day last Friday, at a reception hosted by H.E. Gunnar Andreas Holm, Norwegian Ambassador to Kenya, Somalia, and Seychelles.

Held at the Ambassador's residence, the event offered a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the shared values of constitutionalism, democracy, and the rule of law principles that underpin both Norway's and Kenya's governance traditions.

ICJ Kenya remains steadfast in its mission to promote justice and human rights, and values the continued collaboration and dialogue with diplomatic missions such as the Royal Norwegian Embassy.

Moments like these reinforce our collective pursuit of accountable, democratic institutions that serve and protect all people.



ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya with dignitaries and partners celebrating Norway's Constitution Day. Photo/Courtesy.

ICJ Kenya Engages with Raoul Wallenberg Institute

ICJ Kenya, led by Executive Director Eric Mukoya, recently held a productive engagement with the Raoul Wallenberg Institute team to explore collaborative strategies for strengthening human rights accountability across the region.

Central to the discussions was a shared conviction: that peace and justice are inseparable pillars of sustainable development.

Both institutions reflected on how strategic partnerships can help build transparent, people-centered systems that promote accountability while fostering stability.

This dialogue marks a significant step toward deepening regional collaboration in the pursuit of justice.

It reaffirms our collective commitment to a future where human dignity is protected, rights are upheld, and peace is never pursued at the expense of justice.

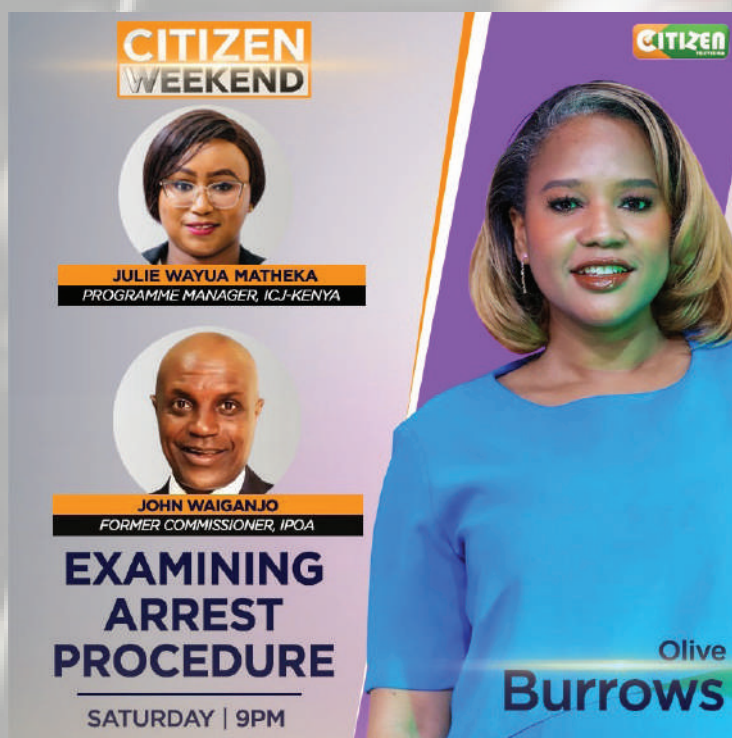


ICJ Kenya, Executive Director Eric Mukoya, (left) poses for a photo with representatives of the Raoul Wallenberg Institute team. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Media Watch

In this edition of Media Watch, ICJ Kenya is prominently featured across leading newspapers, Radio and television platforms. The organization's ongoing efforts to promote justice and human rights are garnering significant attention, reinforcing its pivotal role in shaping public discourse.

This segment provides a closer look at how ICJ Kenya's initiatives are being highlighted in the media, reflecting its continued influence and commitment to advocacy and accountability.



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