



THE JURIST_{Ke}

Human Rights, Constitutionalism, Democracy and The Rule of Law



JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

ECONOMIC JUSTICE
AND DIGITAL RIGHTS

MEMBERS' CORNER

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Dear ICJ Kenya Members, Partners and Friends,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you the third edition of The Jurist Ke Magazine, 2025. This issue captures the breadth of our recent efforts to advance justice, safeguard human rights, and uphold the rule of law in Kenya and across Africa.

A defining highlight of this period was the hosting of the Democracy Forum 2025, in partnership with our new partner, the Innovation Foundation for Democracy.

This regional convening created a vibrant space to reaffirm our shared commitment to democracy, accountability, and the rule of law across the continent.

We also deepened our work in enhancing access to justice through Alternative Justice Systems (AJS), training paralegals in Meru and Transmara to better serve their communities.

Additionally, we held targeted sensitization workshops for paralegals and community health promoters, focusing on Kenya’s evolving health laws, policies, and service delivery systems.

These milestones would not have been possible without the dedication of our staff, the steadfast support of our partners, and the continued engagement of our members.

Your collaboration and trust have been integral to driving our mission forward. I invite you to explore the magazine for a deeper look into our recent work and collective achievements.

Yours Sincerely,

Protas Saende
ICJ Kenya - Chairperson



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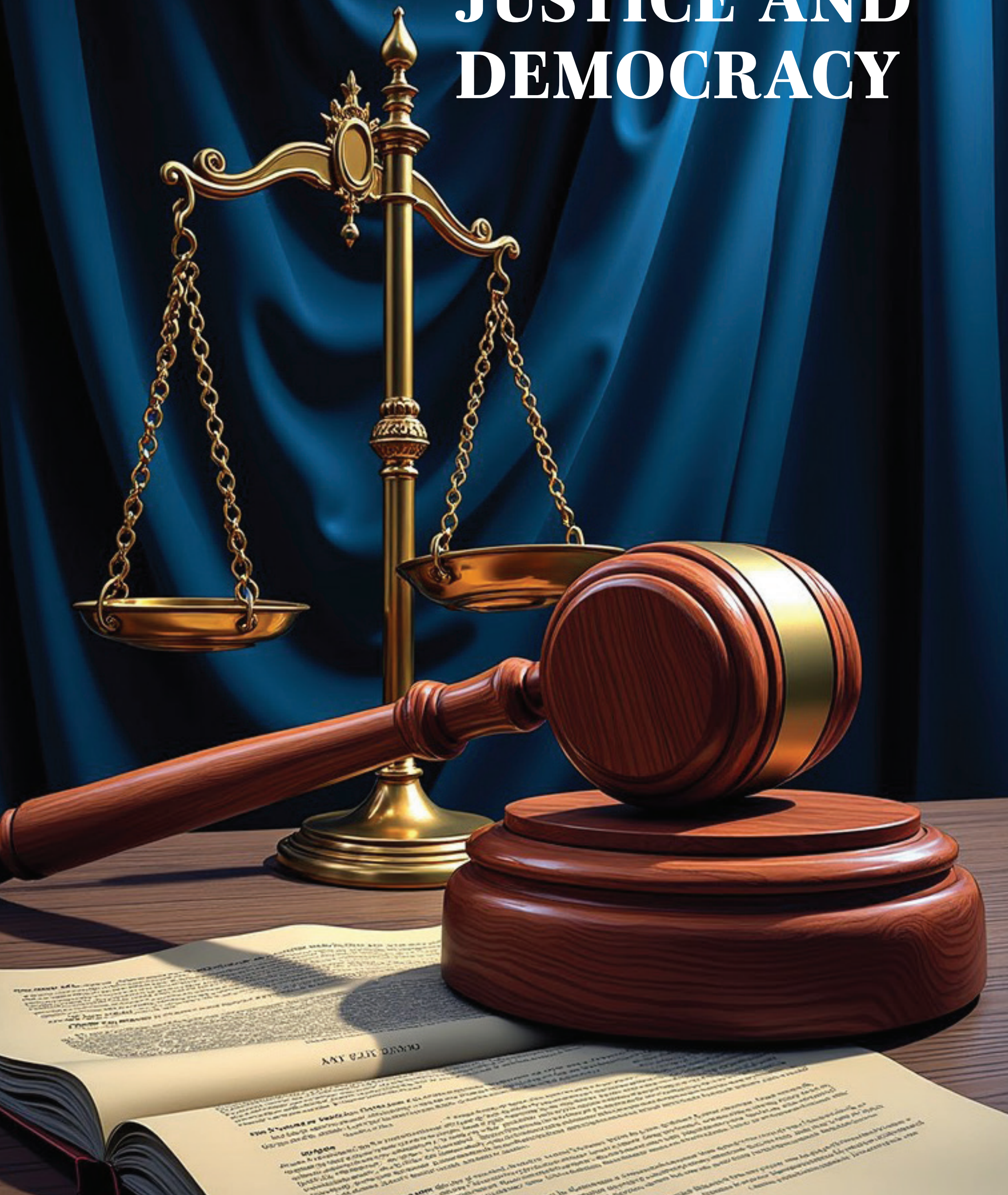
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JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY



Memorandum on Judicial Independence



By **Beatrice Monari**

On 9th September 2025, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) submitted a comprehensive memorandum to the Judicial Service Commission (JSC) regarding the ongoing recruitment of judges across Kenya's courts.

The process, announced in June 2025, seeks to fill vacancies for 15 Judges of the Court of Appeal, 20 Judges of the High Court, 10 Judges of the Environment and Land Court, 100 Resident Magistrates, and 5 Kadhis.

ICJ Kenya emphasized that the recruitment process is a critical constitutional exercise that determines the competence, independence, and public credibility of the judiciary.

The memorandum emphasised that the JSC's mandate under Article 172 of the Constitution must be carried out with transparency, inclusivity, and fidelity to constitutional and international standards.

Drawing from regional and international experiences, ICJ Kenya highlighted the importance of safeguarding judicial independence, competence, and diversity at all levels of the bench.

It further observed that a judiciary that reflects Kenya's diversity and is appointed through open and accountable processes will inspire greater public trust in the administration of justice.



Representatives of Civil Society Organisations appearing before the Judicial Service Commission (JSC). Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Among the issues raised, ICJ Kenya highlighted the importance of publishing position-specific criteria for each vacancy to ensure clarity and accountability, and of adopting deliberate gender inclusion measures, including gender-balanced selection panels.

The memorandum stressed the need for strategic planning of appointments to avoid gaps created by retirements, thereby ensuring continuity in judicial leadership.

It also called for accessibility for persons with disabilities, recommending that the JSC provide reasonable accommodations throughout recruitment and service.

ICJ-Kenya further urged the JSC to enhance transparency by publishing shortlists and rationales at each stage of recruitment and to involve civil society and professional bodies as observers in order to strengthen public trust.

The memorandum also highlighted the critical role of specialised courts such as the Environment and Land Court in addressing land justice and emerging climate-related disputes,

emphasising that appointments to these courts should reflect both expertise and Kenya's diverse social fabric.

By submitting this memorandum, ICJ Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to advancing judicial independence, constitutionalism, and public confidence in the judiciary.

ICJ-Kenya called on the JSC and Parliament to ensure that the 2025 recruitment cycle strengthens the rule of law and sets a benchmark for merit-based, transparent, and inclusive judicial appointments across the continent.

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

Electoral Justice in the Digital Age



By **Thuku Mburu**

ICJ Kenya was honoured to support and participate in the Africa Electoral Justice Network convening held in Livingstone, Zambia, which brought together over 100 judges and judicial officers from across the continent to deliberate on the theme: “Charting the Future of Electoral Justice in the Age of AI and ICTs.”

The convening explored how technology is transforming election management and dispute resolution, highlighting both its promises, such as efficiency, transparency, and speed and its challenges, including bias, cybersecurity risks, and equitable access for marginalized groups.



Delegates pose for a photo during the Africa Electoral Justice Network Conference. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Kenya’s judiciary was represented by Justice Isaac Lenaola (Supreme Court), Court of Appeal President Daniel Musinga, and Hon. Elizabeth Tanui (Head of Automation Services, Judiciary of Kenya).

ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua Matheka contributed to the discussions by presenting on “Building Public Confidence in Electoral Dispute Resolution”, drawing from Kenya’s experience where legitimacy is strengthened through fairness, transparency, and responsiveness in judicial processes.



ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Julie Wayua making her presentation during the Africa Electoral Justice Network Conference. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

A key takeaway from the convening was that Africa can define its own path in electoral justice.

By combining judicial independence, strong institutions, civic trust, and locally developed expertise, the continent can leverage technology to enhance democratic processes while safeguarding fairness and inclusion.

ICJ Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to this mission, ensuring that electoral justice in Africa is not only done, but is seen to be done, promoting credibility, accountability, and public confidence in democratic governance across the continent.

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

often under the guise of public order.

International Day of Democracy 2025



By **Beatrice Monari**

On 15th September 2025, ICJ Kenya participated in the national commemoration of the International Day of Democracy (IDD) held at the Chandaria Auditorium, University of Nairobi.

The event, convened by ForumCiv in collaboration with government, civil society, academia, and development partners, was part of the global observance of IDD under the theme “Reclaiming Space, Reimagining Democracy.”

The commemoration brought together hundreds of participants for a vibrant programme featuring panel discussions, activism, exhibitions, and a televised breakfast dialogue.

For ICJ Kenya, this resonated deeply with its ongoing work to counter systemic repression, challenge discriminatory laws, and strengthen accountability within state institutions.

A key takeaway for ICJ Kenya was the central role of youth and marginalized groups in democratic renewal.

The event emphasized that reclaiming civic space requires not only defending constitutional freedoms but also ensuring meaningful participation for those historically excluded from decision-making.

ICJ Kenya echoed the call for stronger legal empowerment, reforms in governance, and cross-sector partnerships to safeguard democratic values.

The commemoration also underscored the importance of solidarity.

Participants reflected on the need for collaboration between civil society, development partners, and state actors to confront authoritarian tendencies and reinforce democratic norms.



Delegates pose for a photo during this year’s International Day for Democracy. Photo /Courtesy

The conversations provided a timely opportunity to reflect on Kenya’s democratic journey, the challenges facing civic freedoms, and the role of citizens in shaping governance.

ICJ Kenya’s delegation joined peers in interrogating the worrying trend of shrinking civic space in the region.

Discussions highlighted growing restrictions on freedoms of assembly, association, and expression,

ICJ Kenya reaffirmed its commitment to fostering such partnerships while leveraging its legal expertise to advance policy reform, strategic litigation, and community empowerment.

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

Human Rights Guide on Criminal Reforms



By **Beatrice Monari**

On 29 July 2025, the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Institute of Commonwealth Studies in collaboration with the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ), hosted the Africa regional launch of the Practitioners' Guide on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Criminal Law, with a Focus on the Decriminalisation of Poverty and Status.

The event was held in Nairobi and drew participants from across the continent, including representatives from the judiciary, civil society, academia, and intergovernmental organizations.

The launch forms part of a wider global campaign to challenge the criminalisation of poverty and status.

These practices, deeply rooted in colonial-era laws, continue to manifest through offences such as loitering, begging, and informal trading, which disproportionately target marginalized and vulnerable groups.



Delegates pose for a photo during the launch of the Practitioners' Guide on a Human Rights-Based Approach to Criminal Law. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

By framing poverty as a crime rather than a condition requiring social and economic interventions, such laws undermine constitutional guarantees, clog criminal justice systems, and perpetuate cycles of exclusion.

The Practitioners' Guide provides practical tools and frameworks to address these systemic challenges. Grounded in international human rights law and informed by comparative experiences, it offers guidance to policymakers, legal practitioners, judges, and civil society on aligning criminal law with human rights principles.

The Guide builds on the 8 March Principles developed by the ICJ and provides pathways for reform that emphasize dignity, equality, and justice.

The Africa launch was an opportunity for regional stakeholders to reflect on the shared legacies of criminalisation and to forge stronger collaboration in advancing reform.

The discussions highlighted the importance of collective advocacy, strategic litigation, and policy reform in dismantling discriminatory laws and replacing them with rights-based approaches.

The event also underscored the role of cross-regional solidarity in ensuring that criminal justice systems serve as instruments of protection rather than oppression.

Beyond introducing the Guide, the launch provided a platform for knowledge exchange and networking among diverse actors committed to justice sector reform.

Participants agreed on the urgency of pursuing decriminalisation as both a legal and social imperative, recognizing that sustainable change requires empowering communities, strengthening institutions, and holding states accountable to their human rights obligations.

The Nairobi gathering marked a significant milestone ahead of the Guide's presentation at the 2026 Commonwealth Law Ministers Meeting in Fiji.

It reaffirmed a shared commitment to restructuring criminal law frameworks across Africa, ensuring they promote equity, uphold rights, and advance justice for the most vulnerable.

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





By **Maxine Nkomo**

Inaugural Katiba Day 2025

As Kenya marked its first-ever Katiba Day, rights groups criticised Parliament for failing to uphold its constitutional duty as a watchdog over the Executive.

The day, proclaimed by President William Ruto to be observed annually through civic education activities, commemorates the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, a milestone in Kenya’s democratic journey.

Katiba@15 Commemoration Conference

Theme: The Bill of Rights at Fifteen: A Critical Reflection on Constitutional Transformation in Kenya

Save the Date

25, 26, & 27 August

25 and 26 August – Kabarak Law School, and virtually

27 August – Kabarak Law School, Movenpick Hotel, and virtually



Photo /Courtesy.

Speaking at the inaugural Katiba Day celebrations, ICJ Kenya Executive Director Eric Mukoya called on Kenyans to reflect on the Constitution’s promises and to question how far the nation has drifted from its founding ideals.

“Fifteen years ago, on the 27th of August 2010, our nation stood at the edge of history,” he said.

“After decades of struggle, pain, and sacrifice, we proclaimed a new social contract, a constitution that promised to heal the wounds of our past and chart a path towards a just, equitable, and democratic society.”

Mukoya said that the vision of the 2010 Constitution, to cure poor leadership and governance, has been undermined by leaders who disregard integrity and constitutional values.

“We have legislators and an Executive, save for a few, who pay no respect to integrity and tenets of leadership,” he said.

“Services serving tokenism, opportunities driven by patronage, and anchored on nepotism. We birthed new marginalisation.”

He decried the recycling of election losers and political allies into senior government positions, describing it as a betrayal of the electorate’s will.

“We have recycled election losers and other political nemeses into executive positions of power, undermining critical decisions of the electorate, an expense so annoying and excruciating,” he remarked.

Mukoya further warned that the principle of separation of powers, central to constitutional governance has been eroded.

He noted that the Judiciary continues to face threats and political interference, while Parliament, envisioned as an independent and ideological institution, has traded its mandate for political favours and financial gain.

He also condemned the Executive’s continued attempts to defund Independent Offices and Constitutional Commissions, calling such actions “a joke of the Bill of Rights.”

As Kenya celebrates 15 years since the adoption of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, the country’s democratic renewal depends not only on laws written in the Constitution but on the political will to live by them.

The Writer is a NOREC Exchange Fellow at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Defending Civic Space



By **Eric Mukoya**

In Africa, The Politics of Suffering and Smiling, Patrick Chabal observes that chronic state violence leads to the degradation of the human body, the collapse of shared values, and the breakdown of social order.

Across East Africa, many citizens live as both victims and survivors of deliberate political control, as leaders exploit their monopoly over state resources.

This exploitation fuels impunity, corruption, and widespread abuse of the rule of law.

On 16 November 2024, Ugandan opposition leader Kiza Besigye was forcibly removed from an apartment in Nairobi.

The silence from Kenyan authorities, particularly the President, was troubling.

Such political cruelty in both Kenya and Uganda mirrors the brutality of slavery and exposes the region's growing intolerance.

Similarly, the attempted abduction of Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai on 12 January 2025 drew little concern from Kenyan officials, reflecting an alarming pattern of impunity and disregard for the safety of regional citizens.

Allegations of extra-judicial militias acting with state complicity deepen fears of democratic backsliding.

The Treaty establishing the East African Community (EAC) obliges member states to uphold democracy, rule of law, and human rights as outlined in Article 6.

Yet, Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania have abandoned these ideals. Despite ratifying international human rights instruments, their leaders continue to suppress dissent and shrink civic space.

The right to assembly, speech, and association fundamental pillars of democracy faces unprecedented restrictions.

Seven months after Besigye's deportation, Tanzanian authorities harassed legal and civil society leaders, including Martha Karua and former Chief Justice Willy Mutunga.

These events underscore the erosion of democracy and the betrayal of principles that once guided liberation movements across the region.

The fear of democratic inclusivity now shapes governance, as leaders weaponize laws and security forces to silence opposition.

In Tanzania, even observing court proceedings involving opposition leader Tundu Lissu has become a punishable act.

In Uganda, sympathizing with Bobi Wine invites intimidation.

Such actions make it impossible to achieve East Africa's Vision 2050, Africa's Agenda 2063, or the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Governments elected on democratic platforms are now undermining the very social contract that legitimized them.

The African Union and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights must go beyond condemnation to work with civil society in combating this culture of injustice.

The attack on youth voices and activists through intimidation, hate speech, and legal repression widens inequality and erodes faith in justice.

This divide between those favored and disfavored by the law fosters exclusion and nurtures authoritarianism.

Security structures are increasingly used to maintain political power rather than protect citizens.

To safeguard democracy, the independence of the judiciary must be defended. Courts remain the last bastion against impunity, even as they face political interference.

While Uganda's military trials of civilians and Tanzania's ban on opposition parties show deep executive overreach, Kenya's judiciary despite its flaws still offers hope for accountability.

Liberating democracy from executive capture requires solidarity from civil society and international partners.

Only through collective resistance and unwavering defense of human rights can East Africa reclaim its democratic promise.

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



International Commission of Jurists
KENYAN SECTION | Since 1959

Democracy Forum 2025

By Shukri Wachu

The Democracy Forum 2025, hosted by the Innovation Foundation for Democracy (IFD) in partnership with ICJ Kenya, convened in Nairobi from July 2 to 4, drawing activists, artists, jurists, youth leaders, and civil society actors from across East Africa.

United under the theme “East Africa’s Democratic Future Examined Through Law, Art, and Gender Equality,” the forum offered a bold and nuanced space to reflect on the state of democracy in the region and imagine its next chapter.

From the opening sessions, participants examined how democracy extends far beyond ballots and constitutions.

Speakers urged the audience to see it as a living practice, one that is shaped daily by questions of identity, justice, and inclusion.

Law and policy, they argued, must coexist with creative expression and gender equality to give democracy depth and meaning.

They also interrogated the gaps in electoral processes, questioning how systems could become more transparent, participatory, and accountable to citizens between election cycles.

The conversations reflected a shared understanding: democracy must deliver beyond the vote. The forum’s closing sessions pulsed with youthful energy and reflective dialogue.

Young leaders spoke passionately about redefining politics and dismantling the structural barriers that exclude them from decision making.

Their voices resonated during an Intergenerational Baraza, where elders and youth exchanged insights on leadership, mutual respect, and the need for adaptive institutions that reflect changing times.

In the culminating discussion on Building Substantive Democracy in East Africa, participants committed to turning ideas into tangible action, transforming democratic ideals into lived realities.

Over three vibrant days, the Democracy Forum 2025 became more than a conference, it was a collective act of imagination and resolve.



Delegates pose for a photo during the launch of the Democracy Forum. Photo/ICJ Kenya

It was within this spirit of collaboration that ICJ Kenya and IFD formalized a Memorandum of Understanding, a milestone that promises deeper cooperation on civic engagement, legal empowerment, and democratic resilience across the region.

As discussions unfolded, attention turned to the vital role of civil society in defending civic space and advancing electoral integrity.

Panelists confronted the uncomfortable realities of shrinking space, legislative restrictions, and intimidation facing activists and journalists.

Through jurisprudence, art, gender advocacy, and intergenerational dialogue, participants reaffirmed that democracy is neither fixed nor finite. It thrives only when people nurture it, question it, and shape it together.

With the new ICJ Kenya–IFD partnership, there is renewed momentum to carry these insights forward, into policy, activism, and everyday acts of participation that keep East Africa’s democratic promise alive.

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

Historic Payout to Survivors of Post-Election Sexual Violence

By **Shukri Wachu**

In a landmark development for human rights and transitional justice, the Government of Kenya paid KSh 16 million (approximately USD \$124,000) in compensation to four survivors of sexual violence from Petition 122 of 2013, marking the first time in Kenya’s history that victims of conflict-related sexual violence have received official compensation from the state.

This payment, nearly five years after the High Court’s groundbreaking 2020 judgment and thirteen years after the case was first filed, represents far more than financial redress.

For the survivors, it is recognition, an affirmation that their pain has been seen, their voices heard, and that justice, though delayed, is possible.

The 2020 judgment had found the Government of Kenya responsible for failing to protect and investigate violations against four petitioners, three assaulted by state security officers and one whose report to police went uninvestigated.

“I thought I would die before receiving my court-ordered compensation. Many thanks to the Government of Kenya for humanizing me and for hearing our cry.”

Yet, even amid this milestone, the struggle continues. The Civil Appeal E645 of 2021, filed on behalf of the four survivors whose cases were dismissed by the High Court remains pending.

The appeal argues that the state also bears responsibility for failing to prevent and respond to violations by non-state actors during the 2007–2008 post-election violence.

Twice postponed, the Court of Appeal’s decision is eagerly awaited, as it could further define Kenya’s obligations to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence.

Human rights advocates are urging the government to treat this compensation not as an endpoint, but as the beginning of sustained action through the adoption of a reparations policy, operationalization of the Restorative Justice Fund, implementation of the Victim Protection Act, and payment of compensation to survivors from other regions and time periods.

While the world marked International Justice Day on July 17, survivors of Kenya’s post-election violence have long known that justice does not follow a calendar.

They have carried their stories through years of indifference, stood up in courtrooms again and again, and held onto hope in a country that too often looked away.



Establishment shot of Milimani Law Courts. Photo Courtesy.

While the disbursed amount covers only the principal award, with interest still pending, this first tranche marks a powerful victory for the survivor-petitioners and their advocates who have spent over a decade fighting for accountability.

“This moment is not just about money,” said one of the survivors, overwhelmed with emotion.

Their courage has now rewritten history and in doing so, offered hope to countless others who still wait for justice. “We will remain with the survivors,” the petitioners’ advocates vowed.

“Until the pending interest is paid. Until the appeal judgment is delivered. Until every survivor is acknowledged. May justice be our shield and defender.”

Strengthening Electoral Justice

By **Ndolo Anderson**

ICJ Kenya’s Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, joined key stakeholders at the launch of the Judiciary Committee on Elections (JCE) Operational Plan 2025–2028, a blueprint designed to fortify Kenya’s electoral justice system in preparation for the 2027 General Elections.

The Plan outlines a clear roadmap to enhance institutional reform, stakeholder engagement, and transparency within the Judiciary’s handling of electoral disputes crucial pillars in upholding the rule of law and safeguarding public trust.

Speaking at the event, Demas underscored the significance of the initiative, noting,

“This is not just a document; it is a critical step towards strengthening public confidence in the Judiciary’s role as a neutral arbiter and guardian of constitutional democracy during electoral periods.”

He also cautioned against persistent electoral threats such as vote buying, misuse of public resources, and hate speech, warning that these practices continue to erode Kenya’s democratic foundations.



Chief Justice Martha Koome (Center) alongside representatives from the Government and Civil Society Sector during the launch of the Judiciary Committee on Elections (JCE) Operational Plan 2025–2028. Photo/ICJ Kenya

As the country gears up for the next election cycle, ICJ Kenya reaffirms its commitment to advancing credible, fair, and peaceful elections, and to working with the Judiciary and other partners in promoting electoral integrity and justice.

The Writer is a Graphics Designer and illustrator at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Judiciary Perception Survey



By **Ndolo Anderson**

ICJ Kenya, in collaboration with the Africa Voices Foundation and the Judiciary, has begun preliminary discussions on launching a pilot Judiciary Perception Survey aimed at deepening public trust in Kenya’s justice system.

The initiative will collect insights directly from citizens about their experiences with the justice system, their perceptions of judicial performance, and areas in need of improvement. By centering the voices of ordinary Kenyans, the survey seeks to guide reforms that make the Judiciary more transparent, accessible, and responsive to the needs of all.

As the discussions progress, partners underscored a shared belief: justice works best when guided by the people’s voices. Earlier in the year, ICJ Kenya signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Africa’s Voices Foundation (AVF) to kickstart this collaborative journey.

The partnership aims to harness citizen-generated data to deepen insights on public trust, accessibility, fairness, and accountability in the Judiciary, reinforcing the shared commitment to a justice system that truly reflects the will and confidence of the people.



ICJ Kenya secretariat together with representatives from AVF pose for photo during a consultative meeting focused on initiating a pilot Judiciary Perception Survey. Photo/ICJ Kenya

Electoral Reforms in Kenya

By **Shukri Wachu**

ICJ Kenya Executive Director, Eric Mukoya, joined civil society organizations under the Uchaguzi Platform for a high-level consultative meeting with the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) commissioners to discuss urgent reforms needed to strengthen Kenya’s electoral processes.

During the meeting, civil society leaders emphasized that the credibility of elections depends on transparency, inclusivity, and consistent citizen engagement throughout the electoral cycle, not only during voting.

They urged the Commission to fast-track pending by-elections, reopen continuous voter registration, and roll out nationwide voter education to ensure that all eligible Kenyans are informed, registered, and empowered to participate meaningfully in upcoming elections.

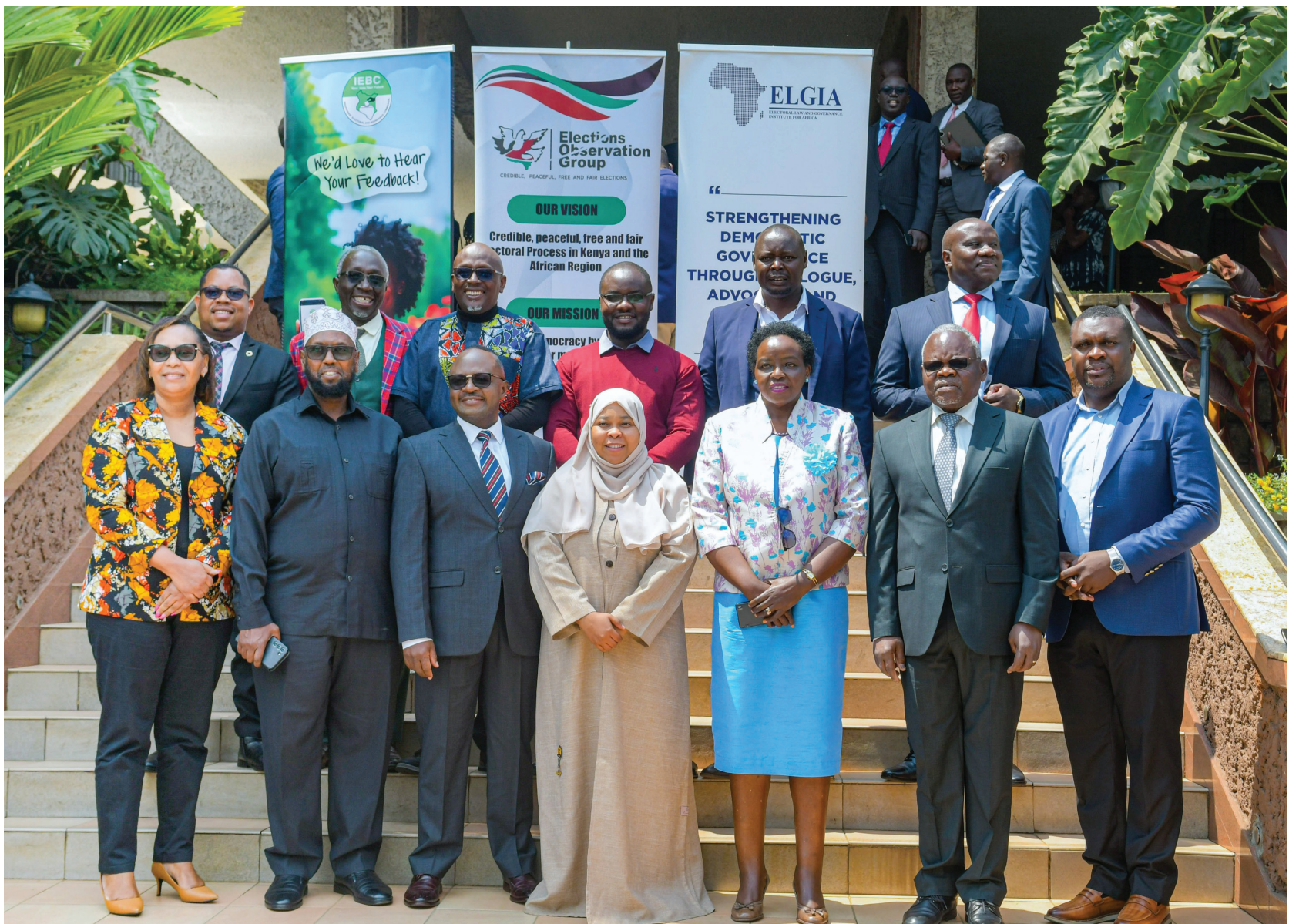
Participants also called for greater transparency in election technology, including the publication of clear

audit mechanisms for results transmission systems, and implementation of campaign financing reforms to promote fairness and curb the undue influence of money in politics.

Mr. Mukoya reaffirmed ICJ Kenya’s commitment to advancing electoral justice, noting that credible elections are the cornerstone of a functioning democracy.

“For citizens to trust the process,” he said, “the IEBC must operate with openness, consistency, and accountability at every stage.”

The Uchaguzi Platform and its partners reiterated that Kenyans continue to call for an IEBC that upholds transparency, inclusivity, and citizen-centered electoral processes, ensuring that the ballot remains a true expression of the people’s will and a pillar of constitutional democracy.



Delegates pose for a photo during a consultative meeting hosted by IEBC on Electoral Reforms. Photo/Courtesy.

Abolition of the Death Penalty

By Shukri Wachu

ICJ Kenya recently convened a capacity-building workshop with journalists from across the country focused on the abolition of the death penalty.

Leading the initiative, Programme Manager Vincent Kimathi engaged participants in detailed sessions exploring Kenya’s historical and legal context on capital punishment.

Journalists examined laws prescribing the death penalty, landmark rulings, including the Supreme Court decision declaring the mandatory death penalty unconstitutional and the broader human rights implications of capital punishment.

The workshop also provided a platform for robust discussions on abolitionist arguments, coupled with an in-depth review of the Penal Code (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which proposes replacing the death penalty with life imprisonment.

The bill seeks to safeguard the right to life and eliminate cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment for those facing capital sentences.

As a member of the World Coalition Against the Death Penalty (WCADP), ICJ Kenya continues to play a leading role in national and global efforts advocating for the universal abolition of the death penalty, while empowering journalists to report knowledgeably on this critical human rights issue.



ICJ Kenya Programme Manager Vincent Kimathi making his presentation during the Capacity Building Workshop for Journalists on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Photo/ICJ Kenya

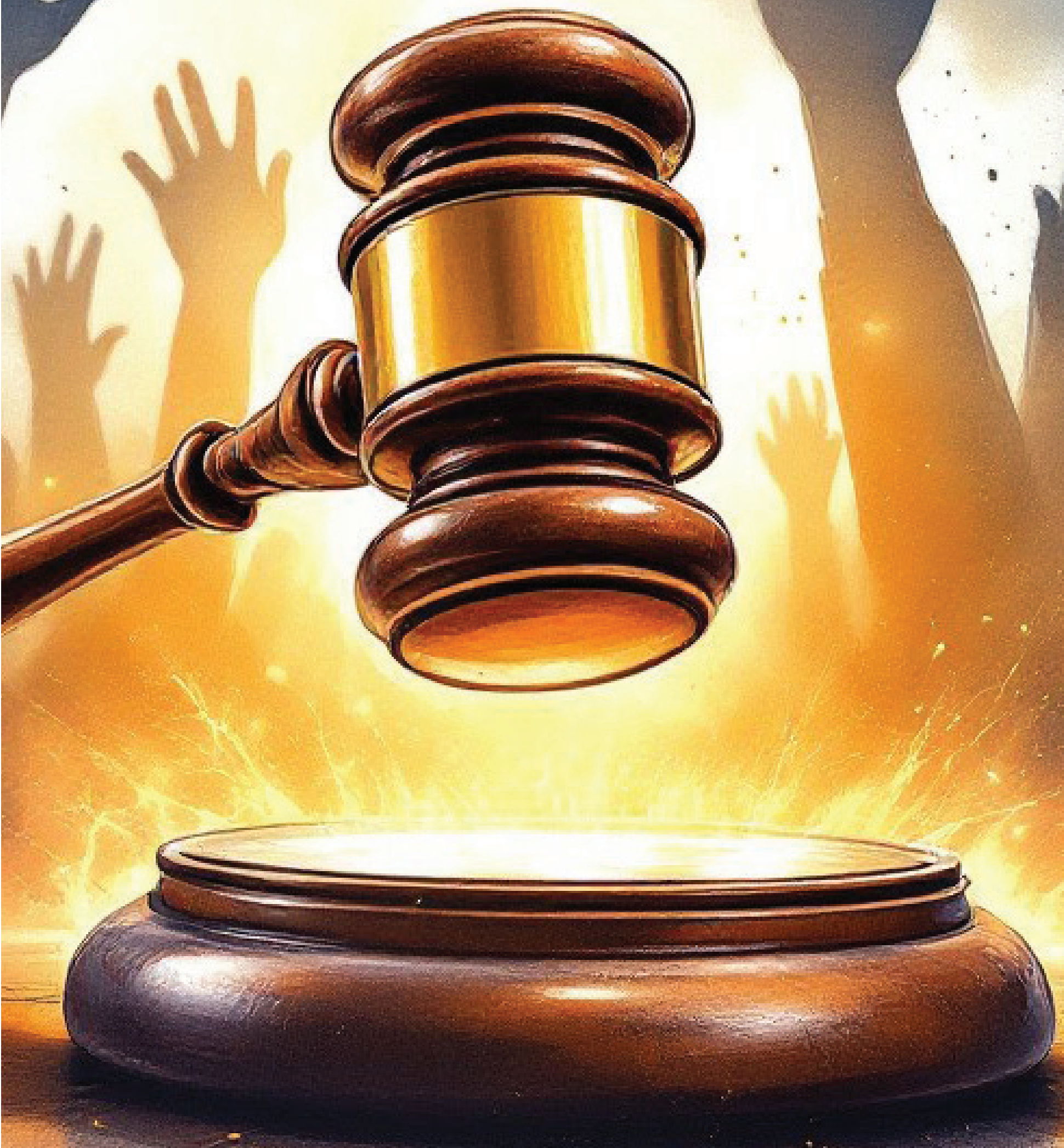


Ntv Journalist Duncan Khaemba during a plenary session at the Capacity Building Workshop for Journalists on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Photo/ICJ Kenya



Journalists during a Capacity Building Workshop on the Abolition of the Death Penalty. Photo/ICJ Kenya

ACCESS TO JUSTICE



AJS Sensitization workshops



By Damaris Kemunto

African customary law has historically governed native communities, deriving its structure from their socio-economic way of life.

The community's collective spirit was central to life and it became a defining principle of its justice system.

However, the introduction of the formal justice system has revealed barriers to accessing justice, as the conventional court processes are lengthy with high costs, barring the indigent who cannot afford it.

As a result, ICJ Kenya has prioritized strengthening access to justice, particularly through Alternative Justice Systems (AJS).

This approach aligns with Article 159(2)(c) of Kenya's Constitution, which endorses traditional dispute resolution mechanisms, and is further supported by the Judiciary's institutionalization of AJS through its comprehensive policy.

Data from the State of the Judiciary and the Administration of Justice Annual Report (2023-2024), demonstrates the growing efficacy of AJS, with a significant success rate of resolution of disputes at 85% compared to 41% in the previous year, underscoring the critical role AJS plays in enhancing access to justice and legal redress.

ICJ Kenya acknowledges that paralegals are indispensable in operationalizing the AJS policy, serving as the primary point of contact for justice needs within their communities.

They are uniquely positioned to offer legal advice and technical support, leveraging their trusting community connections.

This is particularly vital in Meru and Trans Mara, regions where traditional customary law has historically played a significant role in dispute resolution, revolving around the socio-economic setup and fostering restorative justice principles.

By building the capacity of paralegals in these regions, ICJ Kenya enhanced their ability to apply different AJS models effectively, ensuring that justice is both accessible and culturally pragmatic.

These workshops not only equipped the paralegals with advanced skills in restorative justice but also provided a crucial platform for sharing best practices, further embedding sustainable and community-led dispute resolution.

These initiatives in Meru and Trans Mara directly contributes to ICJ Kenya's overarching human rights work by entrenching paralegalism and promoting access to justice for the poor and marginalized.



Delegates pose for a photo during a sensitization workshop on AJS. Photo/ICJ Kenya

Despite the formal legal system's presence, the deep-rooted spirit of collectivism in Meru and Trans Mara means that AJS models are not just an alternative but often the preferred and most effective path to resolving conflicts, facilitating offender accountability, victim reparation, and community participation.

In this breadth, ICJ Kenya, conducted AJS sensitization workshops Meru and Trans Mara regions.

Meru, with its strong communal structures and historical reliance on customary law, presented an ideal environment for strengthening the linkage between formal and informal justice systems.

As a gazetted member of the National Steering Committee on the implementation of the AJS Policy, ICJ Kenya is committed to collecting data and advocating for the integration of traditional values and beliefs into the justice system.

By investing in paralegal capacity building in Meru and Trans Mara, we aim to ensure that restorative justice principles are effectively applied, leading to more equitable, timely, and community-driven resolutions for disputes.

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

Confronting GBV and the Hidden Scars of Mental Health



By **Samantha Lubulwa**

On 16th September, ICJ Kenya had the privilege of participating in a workshop on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and its intersection with mental health, organized by the Amani Training Centre and Counselling Institute (ACCTI).

The workshop, held at the ACCTI offices, brought together key stakeholders and policymakers to explore the complex link between trauma, justice, and healing.

The discussions were deeply enlightening, underscoring that while the physical scars of GBV may be visible, the psychological wounds often linger unseen manifesting as trauma, depression, anxiety, and loss of self-worth.



True justice, participants noted, must therefore go beyond legal remedies to include sustained psychological care and social support for survivors.

A powerful insight from the session was that GBV is not a women’s issue alone, men too suffer in silence.

In many African societies, entrenched notions of masculinity discourage men from expressing vulnerability or admitting to abuse.

Those who attempt to speak out often face disbelief or ridicule, trapping many in cycles of pain that remain hidden.

This silence, in turn, perpetuates injustice and deepens social stigma.

ICJ Kenya emphasized the urgent need for a cultural shift, one that redefines vulnerability not as weakness, but as an essential part of being human.

Encouraging men to seek help and creating safe spaces for them to speak without fear or shame are vital steps toward more inclusive healing.

The workshop also reinforced that mental health is not a privilege but a fundamental human right.



Photo /Courtesy.

This right is enshrined in international instruments such as Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Article 12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as in Kenya’s own legal frameworks including the Sexual Offences Act (2006) and the Protection Against Domestic Violence Act (2015).

To make these laws more effective, mental health support must be integrated as a core element of justice delivery.

Ultimately, the conversations at ACCTI were a reminder that addressing GBV requires a holistic approach, one that embraces both women and men, and cares for the mind, body, and spirit.

ICJ Kenya remains steadfast in its commitment to advancing initiatives that combat GBV in all its forms and to standing with institutions that promote dignity, justice, and healing for all.

The Writer is a NOREC Exchange Fellow at The International Commission of Jurists Kenyan Section - ICJ - Kenya.

Economic Justice and Digital Rights



Advancing Health Justice



By **Christine Akinyi**

The Constitution of Kenya 2010 provides a solid legal background for citizens and civil society actors to deploy litigation to pressure the government for the realisation of the right to health.

Articles 22 and 258 of the Constitution empower anyone to institute court proceedings where provisions of the Constitution are violated or where there are threats to the violation of provisions of the Constitution.

In addition to a person acting in their own interest, Article 258(2) (a) empowers a person to act on behalf of another person who cannot act in their own name; sub-section (b) enables person to act in the interest of a group or class of person; subsection (c) empowers individuals to act in the public interest; and sub-section (d) ensures that associations are empowered to act in individual interest or interests if its members.

On 31st July 2025, ICJ Kenya convened a one-day learning session on advancing the right to health through litigation in Nairobi.

The session sought to enhance civil society organizations, community paralegals, and legal practitioners' awareness of health rights litigation.



ICJ Kenya Programme Officer Christine Akinyi (left) and delegates during a learning session on advancing the right to health through litigation. Photo/ICJ Kenya

The meeting provided a platform to discuss landmark cases across diverse themes including: access to health services; quality of care, patient safety, and professional accountability; sexual and reproductive health rights; public health emergencies and security; health financing; autonomy and consent to treatment; social determinants of health; human resources for health; leadership and governance; mental health; health information, health products and technology.



ICJ Kenya Programme Officer Christine Akinyi issuing her remarks during the learning session on advancing the right to health through litigation. Photo/ICJ Kenya

The participants also discussed practical strategies for impactful litigation

These include the need to research to inform litigation; link health rights to dignity, life and equality; involve communities for client centred litigation; build coalitions with civil society actors, academia and the media; combine litigation with policy advocacy and public mobilization; involve the judiciary through continuous judicial training on health rights; undertake litigation to create guiding jurisprudence, especially post-2010 Constitution.

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

Strengthening Health Rights

By Christine Akinyi

On 26th August 2025, ICJ Kenya convened a one-day workshop in Machakos County aimed at empowering local civil society and citizens to better engage with emerging health rights issues.

The meeting equipped the participants with knowledge and understanding of the right to health, highlighting how the existing laws and policies related to health rights fall short of the promise enshrined in Kenya's Constitution, and offered a roadmap for reform.

The meeting also sensitized participants on Kenya's Universal Health Coverage (Health) legal framework, with a focus on the recently enacted laws, including the Social Health Insurance Act, Digital Health Act, Primary Health Care Act, and the Facilities Improvement Financing Act.

Despite recent health law reforms, the meeting noted the need to strengthen governance at both national and county levels.

Build equitable health systems that serve all Kenyans. Leverage technology for better service delivery. Combat corruption in the health sector. Foster collaboration across government institutions.

The plenary session raised pressing concerns about the lack of effective feedback channels with the government. Barriers to access under the Social Health Insurance Act. Limited health information transparency from county authorities.



Delegates from Machakos County pose for a photo during a training workshop on emerging issues on right to health. Photo/ICJ Kenya

These include the need for constitutional alignment of health laws and policies. A call for affirmative action to protect vulnerable groups from catastrophic health costs.

Strengthening intergovernmental coordination for equitable healthcare access.

Establishing a national tariff policy to reduce healthcare costs. Regulating private healthcare to ensure equity and accountability. Fixing supply-chain gaps that lead to stockouts in health facilities.

Addressing the shortage and mismanagement of healthcare workers. Reforming the health emergency and referral system for better service delivery. Creating safe civic spaces for public participation in health policymaking.

The need to review public finance laws to ensure adequate health sector funding.

The participants called for community conversations with duty bearers to address local health challenges and committed to advocating for accountability in the health sector to ensure the full realization of the constitutional right to health.

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

Amplifying Voices for Health Equity in Makueni



By **Geoffrey Odhiambo**

ICJ Kenya was in Makueni County implementing its flagship project, "Health Equity Advocates: Amplifying Civil Society's Voice in Healthcare Governance."

The initiative seeks to strengthen healthcare governance by enhancing the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs) in policy and legislative processes.



Delegates from Makueni County pose for a photo during a training session focused on health rights in Kenya Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Leading the effort, Programme Officer Geoffrey Odhiambo noted that the project's goal is to ensure that Kenya's healthcare policies are shaped through inclusive dialogue and reflect the principles of equity, accountability, and transparency.

During the community engagement sessions, participants held candid discussions on the pressing challenges facing the healthcare sector, from resource gaps to governance inefficiencies and proposed practical solutions to build an efficient and effective healthcare system that serves all Kenyans.



Delegates from Makueni County during a plenary session. Photo/ICJ Kenya

Through capacity-building initiatives, policy dialogue platforms, and community outreach, the project aims to amplify the voices of citizens and CSOs in decision-making spaces.

As ICJ Kenya emphasized, public participation in healthcare governance is essential, as it ensures that policies embody the needs, rights, and priorities of all citizens.

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

Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018



By **Demas Kiprono**

Representatives from The Bloggers Association of Kenya, Article 19 Eastern Africa, Law Society of Kenya, and ICJ Kenya appeared before the Court of Appeal, before Judges Patrick Kiage, Weldon Korir, and Aggrey Muchelule, to present submissions challenging the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018.

ICJ Kenya Deputy Executive Director, Demas Kiprono, emphasized that any restrictions on fundamental rights must be clear, pursue a legitimate aim, and remain necessary and proportionate within a democratic society.



Court of Appeal Judges Justice Patrick Kiage (right), Weldon Korir and Aggrey Muchelule (Centre) during the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018 hearing. Photo/ICJ Kenya



ICJ Kenya Digital Rights Lead Charles Jaika (left) alongside ICJ Kenya Deputy Executive Director Demas Kiprono making their submissions during the Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes Act, 2018 hearing. Photo/ICJ Kenya

The coalition argued that the law is unconstitutional, undermining freedom of expression, access to information, media freedom, and privacy rights. Particular concern was raised over Sections 22, 23, and 27, which were criticized as ambiguous, overly broad, and disproportionate.

The provisions were said to effectively reintroduce criminal defamation, previously struck down by the courts in 2017 for violating both constitutional and international standards.

He added that the intervention reflects the coalition’s commitment to safeguarding free expression and democratic principles in the digital age, ensuring that Kenya’s legal framework aligns with constitutional guarantees and international human rights norms.

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

Digital Innovation in Africa

By **Shukri Wachu**

At a groundbreaking conference hosted by the Innovation Foundation for Democracy in partnership with ICJ Kenya, leaders, experts, and advocates from across East Africa convened to explore how digital innovation can transform governance, enhance accountability, and amplify citizen voices.

Dr. Richard Makon, Regional Coordinator for East & Central Africa at the Innovation Foundation for Democracy, opened the proceedings by stressing the importance of equipping young people with the skills to create innovative digital content that promotes democracy and good governance.

The programme, he noted, aims to strengthen the capacity of youth, civic actors, and associations by leveraging social media, podcasts, and artificial intelligence to advance political freedoms, accountability, and the rule of law.

Echoing this vision, Dr. Jean-Marc Segoun, Representative of the General Director at the Innovation Foundation for Democracy, underscored the Foundation’s mission to advance democracy through innovation and to foster inclusive participation across the continent.

In his remarks, ICJ Kenya Chairperson Protas Saende observed that the arrival of the internet, social media, and mobile technology has reshaped Africa more profoundly than any other region, placing the power of connectivity directly in the hands of citizens.

Delivering the keynote address, Dr. Monica Kerretts-Makau, Executive Director of Africa Initiatives and Professor of Practice at Thunderbird School of Management, highlighted the power of technology in driving transparency and accountability.

She urged the media and civic actors to use data for social good and to harness the collective power of communities to strengthen democratic processes.

Across the continent, youth are no longer passive recipients of governance, they have become active monitors, fact-checkers, and participants, using digital platforms to track parliamentary debates, organize community meetings, and hold leaders accountable in real time.



Delegates pose for photo during the launch of the Digital Innovation Laboratory hosted by IFD. Photo/ICJ Kenya

Demas Kiprono, Deputy Executive Director at ICJ Kenya, affirmed that the partnership with the Foundation reflects a shared commitment to advancing democratic governance in an era defined by innovation, inclusivity, and resilience.

He highlighted how digital transformation, through social media, mobile connectivity, digital infrastructure, and emerging technologies such as AI, has opened new avenues for women and youth to participate meaningfully in decision-making.

This growing movement signals the rise of a new form of digital democracy, one that is of the people, by the people, and for the people anchored in innovation, collaboration, and the shared pursuit of justice and good governance.

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



ICJ Kenya Members' Corner



ABDUL NOORMOHAMED

Director Civic Voice, Katiba Institute Board Chairperson, Human Rights Advocate and Policy Strategist



You've held leadership roles in organisations ranging from ICJ Kenya to Luminare and now Civic Voice. What personal values have guided you across these different spaces?

In every role, my guiding principles have been justice, integrity, professionalism, and inclusive leadership.

From human rights programming at ICJ Kenya and the KNCHR to shaping philanthropic strategies at Luminare and OSF, and co-creating civic platforms at Civic Voice, I've consistently believed that meaningful change must prioritise the voices and experiences of those most impacted.

Empathy and strategic clarity have guided me, ensuring that every initiative I lead is both technically sound and emotionally resonant.

I prioritise collaboration over hierarchy and aim to create ecosystems where youth, particularly from marginalised communities, can lead, question, and reimagine civic spaces independently.

I believe in the power of storytelling and data to influence narratives and policy.

Whether curating participatory forums or designing movement-building curricula, my goal is to bridge the gap between institutional power and grassroots agency, always with humility, curiosity, and a shared sense of purpose.

As Director of Civic Voice, you focus on youth-led civic engagement and democratic renewal. What inspired the founding of this initiative, and what impact do you hope it will achieve?

Civic Voice emerged from a deep frustration with the disconnect between Kenya's youth and the democratic institutions meant to serve them.

Although they are the majority, young people are often sidelined in civic discourse, treated as beneficiaries rather than architects of change. I aimed to shift that narrative.

Years of working across philanthropy, civil society, and policy spaces inspired me, revealing both the transformative potential of youth-led organising and the systemic barriers that stifle it.

Civic Voice aims to build a platform that amplifies youth voices and equips them with the tools, networks, and political literacy to lead civic renewal independently.

Our impact vision is bold yet necessary: we aim to see a generation of young Kenyans who not only vote but also shape public policy, hold power to account, and build movements rooted in justice, inclusion, and digital rights.

Through participatory townhalls, techjustice campaigns, and intergenerational dialogue, we're creating civic spaces where youth agency isn't just welcomed but foundational.

Looking back at your tenure as Executive Director of ICJ Kenya, what are you most proud of, and how has that experience shaped your current work?

My experience at ICJ Kenya fundamentally shaped my approach to civic leadership.



Abdul Noormohammed. Photo/Courtesy.

I learned that anchor human rights institutions in Kenya, including ICJ Kenya, need to evolve their programming to adapt to new realities and demands.

Previous models worked well for civil society in the past, but now have a diminished impact.

We are in a more digitally connected world with a more knowledgeable and empowered demographic, and governments are savvier in their engagement with civil society.

I'm proud of how we evolved ICJ Kenya's human rights programming to meet the moment, especially during the pandemic, by transitioning to digital platforms and expanding civic engagement.

We kept the membership engaged with weekly webinars and developed a strategy that included data and digital rights.

That experience reinforced the importance of adaptive leadership, a highly professional Secretariat, and the necessity of being nimble to respond to changing needs quickly.

These lessons now guide my work at Civic Voice, where we're building youth-led movements for democratic renewal.

You've worked extensively on digital rights and tech justice. What do you see as the greatest opportunities and risks posed by technology for democracy in Africa today?

Technology has immense potential to democratise access to information, amplify the voices of marginalised individuals, and mobilise civic action at scale.

From youth-led digital campaigns to open data platforms, new forms of accountability and participation are emerging across the continent.

Risks such as surveillance, disinformation, digital exclusion, and algorithmic bias threaten to entrench inequality and silence dissent.

Without robust digital rights frameworks and inclusive tech governance, technology can easily become a tool of repression rather than liberation.

The opportunity lies in building tech ecosystems that are transparent, rights-based, and locally grounded.

This means investing in digital literacy, protecting online civic space, and ensuring that African youth are not just users of technology, but also co-creators of its democratic potential.

Around the continent, civic space has faced increasing restrictions. What strategies do you believe are most effective in pushing back against authoritarianism and safeguarding fundamental freedoms?

The most effective strategies combine principled resistance with strategic innovation.

First, we must invest in youth-led organising, building movements that are agile, inclusive, and grounded in lived realities.

Young people are often the first to challenge authoritarian drift, and they need platforms, protection, and political literacy to do so sustainably.

Second, digital activism must be matched with digital resilience.

As governments weaponise technology to surveil and silence dissent, we need robust digital rights frameworks, secure communication tools, and coordinated regional advocacy to defend online civic space.

Third, solidarity matters. Cross-border coalitions, intergenerational alliances, and intersectional approaches help amplify impact and protect vulnerable individuals and groups.

Legal support, storytelling, and international pressure remain vital tools, but they must be locally anchored and community-driven.

Ultimately, safeguarding civic space requires courage, creativity, and collective action. It's not just about resisting authoritarianism; it's about reimagining democracy from the ground up.



Abdul Noormohammed. Photo/Courtesy.



Public interest media was one of your key focus areas at Luminate. How can we protect independent journalism while adapting to the challenges of disinformation and digital disruption?

Protecting independent journalism today requires more than defending editorial freedom; it demands rethinking the entire media ecosystem.

At Luminate, we focused on strengthening public interest media by supporting investigative outlets, advancing media viability, and promoting legal protections for journalists.

To counter disinformation and digital disruption, we must invest in media literacy, help independent media diversify their revenue models, and build coalitions that defend press freedom across borders.

Tech platforms must be held accountable for the algorithmic amplification of falsehoods, while journalists need tools to navigate digital threats and engage audiences in new and effective ways.

Ultimately, safeguarding journalism means ensuring it remains a public good, accessible, trusted, and resilient in the face of political and technological pressure.

Coalition-building has been central to your work. What makes an effective coalition in advancing justice and democratic reform?

Effective coalitions are built on shared purpose, trust, and strategic complementarity.



Abdul Noormohammed. Photo/Courtesy.

It's not enough to gather organisations around a common issue; there must be clarity on roles, values, and the long-term vision for change.

The strongest coalitions I've worked with prioritise inclusion, common understanding of the shared goals, and ensure that power is distributed, not concentrated.

Transparency, consistent communication, and a willingness to navigate tensions are also key.

Coalitions must be agile enough to respond to political shifts yet grounded enough to sustain momentum beyond moments of crisis.

When anchored in mutual respect and collective strategy, coalitions become more than alliances; they become movements capable of reshaping civic and democratic landscapes.

In today's landscape, human rights organisations can no longer afford to operate in silos.

The instinct to gate-keep information or claim dominance in a particular field is not only outdated but also counterproductive.

Resources for human rights work are increasingly scarce, and that reality demands a shift in mindset.

We must embrace collaboration over competition. By pooling our human and financial resources, we can amplify impact, avoid duplication, and build more resilient movements.

The most powerful coalitions aren't defined by size or visibility; they're defined by attitude.

When we approach this work with humility, solidarity, and a shared sense of purpose, we remind ourselves of a simple truth: we're all in this together.

You've mentored and collaborated with many young activists and lawyers. What advice would you give to the next generation of civic leaders and human rights defenders?

Lead with conviction but stay open to learning. The most effective civic leaders are those who balance courage with humility, speaking truth to power while also listening deeply to the communities they serve.

Build movements, not moments. Sustainable change comes from collective action, strategic alliances, and long-term vision. Don't chase visibility, chase impact.

Protect, protect, protect your integrity. In spaces where compromise is constant, your values must remain your anchor.

And finally, take care of yourself. I can't emphasise that enough. Activism is a marathon, not a sprint.

Stay physically and mentally healthy, rest often, reflect on what this work means to you, and surround yourself with people who remind you why you started.

Serving on boards such as IMLU and the Human Rights & Rule of Law committee of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, and recently as the new Chairperson of the Katiba Institute, you've bridged local and global advocacy. How do you balance these two levels of engagement?

Balancing local and global advocacy starts with anchoring everything in lived realities.

My work on the board of IMLU has kept me close to grassroots struggles, whether it's police accountability or access to justice, giving me a better understanding of the challenges facing civil society organisations in these times.

Serving on global platforms, such as the Human Rights and Rule of Law Committee of the Commonwealth Lawyers Association, allows me to elevate these issues in broader policy and legal reform conversations.

The key is reciprocity. I don't see global spaces as detached from local ones; they're amplifiers.

I use them to spotlight Kenyan and African perspectives, while also bringing back insights, tools, and solidarity that strengthen local movements. It's a constant dialogue, not a hierarchy.

Ultimately, effective advocacy at both levels requires humility, strategic alignment, and a commitment to ensuring that global frameworks reflect and respond to local truths.

What does democratic renewal mean to you in practical terms, especially for Kenya and Africa more broadly?

Democratic renewal means rebuilding trust, relevance, and accountability in our civic institutions.

In practical terms, it's about creating inclusive spaces where young people, marginalised communities, and grassroots movements can shape public decisions, not just react to them.

For Kenya and Africa, it means investing in civic education, protecting digital rights, and ensuring elections are not just procedural but participatory and just.

It's about dismantling elite capture, resisting authoritarian drift, and reimagining governance as a shared, lived experience, not a distant bureaucracy.

Ultimately, democratic renewal is not just a slogan; it's a commitment to power that is transparent, responsive, and rooted in the equality and dignity of every citizen.

As a long-standing member and former leader of ICJ Kenya, what does this community continue to mean to you personally and professionally?

ICJ Kenya has been more than a professional chapter; it's been a compass throughout my civic journey.

It's where I learned that principled leadership, legal rigour, and collective advocacy aren't just ideals, they're daily practices.

I am eternally grateful to colleagues like George Kegoro and Njojo Mue, who led this organisation through some very turbulent times and made it a name to reckon with.

During my tenure as ED, Kelvin Mogeni and Brenda Kamau, who served as Chair and Secretary, provided immense support to our work, and I remain deeply grateful for their guidance.

Even now, ICJ Kenya remains a touchstone. In moments of uncertainty or challenge, I return to the values I honed working here: lead with clarity, act with courage, and always uphold the rule of law.

It reminds me that justice work is not about perfection; it's about persistence, solidarity, and the quiet power of institutions that choose to stand firm.

In a world that often rewards noise over nuance, ICJ Kenya remains a conscience: steady, principled, and unafraid to speak truth.

That legacy lives in me, and it shapes how I show up in every space I now occupy.



Abdul Noormohammed. Photo/Courtesy.

BEVERLINE ANYANGO ONGARO

Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, Human Rights, Rule of Law & Governance Expert, UN Specialist on Rule of Law and Accountability



You've worked within Kenya's Judiciary, the United Nations, and civil society. What personal values have guided your diverse and impactful career?

In every role, my guiding principles have been justice, integrity, professionalism, and inclusive leadership.

From human rights programming at ICJ Kenya and the KNCHR to shaping philanthropic strategies at Luminate and OSF, and co-creating civic platforms at Civic Voice, I've consistently believed that meaningful change must prioritise the voices and experiences of those most impacted.

Looking back, which role or experience do you feel most shaped your perspective on justice and accountability?

My perspectives on justice and accountability were deepened when I worked within communities and interacted with victims of human rights violations while providing legal aid, particularly children in conflict and contact with the law.

I often weighed how a single decision within the wheels of justice could either singularly shape or shatter one's life for a lifetime.

Therefore, today I continuously retain a deeper appreciation and acknowledgment that the legal system ought to exist to serve the people rather than the other way round; and that as a legal practitioner I have to delicately wield my 'sword of power' as learned friend for the public good.

You've successfully engaged with government institutions, independent commissions, and grassroots communities. How do you adapt your leadership style across such different spaces?

I have always adopted transformative leadership whose bottom line is to answer the questions, what is the existing challenge that needs to be addressed in a fashion that leaves people I engage with better?

And how can I amplify what I have applied? Responding to these questions have often required I continuously communicate with as opposed to, employ social and emotion intelligence by listening attentively to perceive unobvious, co-create with colleagues and affected communities, and courageously take a stand.

As you can perceive, these approaches I have employed are not instilled as part of legal training, yet the law and lawyers are hallowed as the panacea to all society's problems!

Nonetheless, every work experience has been a learning curve but rewarding one.

I am fortunate that I have had mentors who mentored and coached me on transformative leadership, believed in me when I missed the mark and afforded me opportunities to be a better legal practitioner.

In this sense, I am deeply grateful to Mr. Francis Ang'ila, a venerable legal practitioner and ICJ-Kenya member who has been such a wonderful mentor and coach.

Similarly, I am certainly fortunate to have sharpened my leadership skills as an alumna of the Leadership and Advocacy for Women in Africa, Georgetown University, Washington D.C, wherein I received education on Masters in Law.



Beverline Anyango Ongaro. Photo/Courtesy.

You’ve done groundbreaking work on masculinities and promoting healthy male cultural engagement. What lessons have you drawn from this experience in advancing gender equality?

This has been a building block. First, let me reminisce this work in deep appreciation to Prof. Willy Mutunga, the Chief Justice of the Republic of Kenya and President of the Supreme Court (Emeritus 2011-2016) who introduced me to this body of work and connected me to Men for the Equality of Men and Women (M.E.W) wherein I worked as its Research and Documentation Officer under the tutelage of Reverend.

Dr. Timothy Njoya; and continued in this work with Ambassador Dr. Maurice Makoloo. In responding to this question, I draw from experiences at M.E.W and my LL.M thesis titled, ‘Am I My Sister’s Keeper? Involving Men Through Restorative Justice in Addressing Intimidate Partner Violence’ but summarise my response which would require a half-day seminar, as a chapeau and three key lessons.

The chapeau is simply that both men and women are part of the humanity ecosystem facing distinct challenges that nonetheless impacts us all collectively, and therefore one cannot empower one without empowering the other: the Kiswahili saying, ‘kidole kimoja hakiuwi chawa’ ‘one finger cannot kill a louse rings true in this regard. The three key lessons are:

- Patriarchy affects both women and men. While working with MEW we conducted research that revealed in Meru and Kisii communities’ women outlive men by 35 years while in the rest of Kenyan communities, women outlive men by 15 years.

This is simply because of unattainable patriarchal and cultural expectations imposed on men that impairs their relationships, and well-being and invalidates their humanity.

I know this statement is loaded yet it is poignant and true so we can expound it in another forum.

- Language contributes to disempowerment of men and women, as language is the first tool we use as human beings from birth to understand our environment and relate to one another.

When I trained pre-teenage boys who were healing from circumcision, as a rite of passage, they were emphatic ‘we are now men’ and I had to remind the boys they were still children according to the law on account of being under eighteen years.

It was not surprising that in such communities’ school dropouts among boys were high.

- Candid conversation devoid of cancel culture between men and women is important to address

deep fears each has. Deep fears based on suspicions of each gender are inter-generationally transmitted as absolute truths and unfortunately find their way in policies and laws.

By way of comparison, authoritarianism and all the vice ‘ism’ are premised on fear and so are gender inequalities and violations.

Your current UN role focuses on prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV). What do you see as the biggest opportunities and challenges in addressing GBV in Kenya and the region?

Consistent awareness creation coupled by implementation of national, regional and international human rights frameworks provide opportunities to constructively engage both ‘traditional’ and ‘non-traditional’ actors to curb gender-based violence.

Especially, as stigma associated with this violence is being chipped at consistently: hopefully, one day this diabolical tower of babel will fall.

The biggest challenges are two. First, gender-based violence is like a malignant cell that mutates in its various forms, when you think you have vanquished it, another form emerges.

At present, high incidents of sexual violence against boys are close in heels to femicide: we have to relentlessly slay these violations.



Beverline Anyango Ongaro. Photo/Courtesy.

Second, because of pervasive gender-based violence it is now becoming intergenerational hence normalised. Behavioral scientists have anecdotally proved that primary and vicarious victims have potential to be perpetrators.

With this knowledge, we can adapt effective approaches beyond Dostoevsky's crime and punish approaches while maintaining outrage and rage at gender-based violence.

You've also worked to advance children's rights among pastoralist communities. What unique challenges do marginalized communities face, and how can the justice system respond more effectively?

I observe that eschewing the central role of distinct justice system among the marginalised community coupled by historical socio-economic marginalisation has contributed to 'otherism', which can significantly undermine advancement of children's rights within these communities.

In advancing children's rights, I had to employ dialectal approach which entailed spending substantive time understanding the alterative justice system of marginalised community and engaging the 'gatekeepers' to discuss the children's rights enshrined in the Constitution and human rights instruments and at times use relevant religious texts to make a case for the children's rights.



Beverline Anyango Ongaro. Photo/Courtesy.

I was fortunate that I lived among the marginalised communities away from the comforts of Nairobi which afforded me the time and opportunity to learn about marginalised communities' culture and their opener words, adopt their dressing style, and spend time with them for which I earned their trust for such dialectal approach. It was enriching and rewarding.

The justice system can respond to advancing children's rights by engaging marginalised communities as an equal rather than mere recipient to be 'civilised'.

Fortunately, we are on track in Kenya as the Judiciary, Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and Children Services have decentralised their services among the marginalised communities with residential officers, who interact with communities, thereby instilling public confidence.

During my engagement among the marginalised communities, officers from these criminal justice systems would often trek in and out of the community hence perpetuating the notion among the marginalised communities, 'watu kutoka Kenya' people from Kenya, as the communities perceived themselves as non-Kenyans.

You've strengthened criminal justice systems across multiple African countries. From your experience, what are the most critical ingredients for building institutions that people trust?

Critical ingredients include: First, political goodwill among leadership as without it, significant time and resources will be deployed to no avail.

Second, centering people while building institutions to garner public confidence through strong public participation approach.

Third, mutual partnership for accountability to demonstrate institutions being built are not being established to meet requirements of countries' external partners or driven by foreigners.

Electoral processes often determine the health of democracies. How can human rights be more effectively integrated into elections across Africa?

This can be done by integrating human rights during non-electoral years by all duty-bearers and rights holders so as to create a healthy ecosystem for democracy and on the occasional episodic timeframe of elections.

We often overlook the fact that human rights compliance during non-electoral years within democratic processes by Parliament, Executive, Judiciary and constitutional offices is a barometer on how we will ensure human rights are integrated in elections.

Elections are simply a magnifier on our existing bill of health on human rights and democracy.

I have taken a divergent premise from yours as I think that the health of everyday democratic processes is determinant of electoral processes rather than the converse.

Civic space is shrinking globally. What strategies do you believe are most effective in ensuring citizens can speak and act freely in pursuit of justice?

The most effective strategies include: First, advancing the notion that personal is public and vice versa.

The dichotomy between personal and public creates the false perception that civic space and pursuit of justice is only a preserve of a few, the noisy busy body activists and human rights defenders to the exclusion of others.

Second, recognising that we are our brothers' keepers as what happens elsewhere has a bearing upon us since we are a global community, but this should not be a basis to engage in voyeurism.

It is interesting to observe trends wherein people are deeply moved by suffering elsewhere but ignore the ones within their proximity since it imposes heavy emotional demands on scrutiny upon themselves of how they might be benefiting from the suffering of those within their proximity.

Third, employing intergenerational approaches with diverse stakeholders.

It is because a keen observation of current shrinking civic space shows it is a reinvention of what has happened in the past, and we can learn from the venerable elders how they navigated shrinking spaces during their prime days.

Fourth, and importantly, where there is safeguard of civic spaces to loudly appreciate, highlight and replicate these good practices as a means of covertly and overtly condemning shrinking spaces.

You're a member of ICJ Kenya, FIDA-Kenya, and several professional associations. How have these networks influenced your advocacy and professional growth?

Let me start with ICJ-Kenya. I did my internship at ICJ-Kenya during which I became a member.

It is at ICJ-Kenya I did inception work of training paralegals (barefoot lawyers) and collaborated with them in advancing human rights.

At ICJ-Kenya, I had hands-on interaction in international human rights as I was part of the drafters of Kenya's reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Children and the Human Rights Committee.

ICJ-Kenya provided me an opportunity to publish various articles and advocate for legislative proposals alongside with formidable colleagues including Hon. Priscilla Nyokabi.

The legislative proposals we advanced include notably access to information; victim, witness and whistleblower's protection; and reparations.

It is gratifying that these have been actualised and constitute part of Kenya's legal framework save for whistleblowers law that the current Attorney General has published for enactment.

As a member of FIDA-Kenya I have the opportunity to not only advance women's rights but also interface it with my gleaned experiences at Men for the Equality of Men and Women wherein I was engaging men and boys to advance healthy masculinity and equality of men and women.

In this sense I have a rich and vantage perspectives from both men and women, and I seamlessly engage in female and male only forums, and as well heterogenous forums.



Beverline Anyango Ongaro. Photo/Courtesy.

Many young lawyers and advocates look up to you. What advice would you give them about sustaining a long and meaningful career in human rights and governance?

I advise as follows. First, take up volunteer work as through such opportunities you get to distinguish what areas of human rights and governance are of innate interest, and therefore persist in the midst of the challenges therein.

Human rights and governance can be challenging and if you are a rent seeker, chances of negatively impacting people you are working with are high as you will simply run out of fuel. This branch of law needs a lot of patience!

Second, mentorship and coaching are important as it provides a safe space to grow and do a reality check in demanding professional life from the towering heights of seasoned practitioners.

You do not need reinvent the wheel, and as we say in Kenya colloquialism, 'don't suffer silently.'

The Women on Board Network founded by a seasoned legal practitioner and governance guru Ms. Catherine Musakali wherein I am member has been an enriching and empowering coaching platform for me.

I recommend this Network to all female lawyers, and the Lawyers Male Forum that was launched in 2025 at the Law Society of Kenya annual conference to male lawyers.

Third, governance and human rights situate one to interact with human brokenness and broken systems, and inevitably because of being human to become a broken lawyer because of systematic injustices one encounters and vicarious trauma.

With this knowledge, it is important to prioritise self-care to face another day in battlefield; and deliberately extend grace to fellow colleagues, constituents and contenders within governance and human rights as they may be equally broken as you.

What's next for you in your mission to strengthen justice and equality?

My foundation and goals are to continue wearing my pair of matching boots of justice and equality regardless of the roles and positions I find myself in.

With this as a compass and coupled with my personal belief, it should be possible to remain anchored in my values, as I continuously engage in diverse jurisdictions and with various distinct people in equal measures.

As an ICJ Kenya member, what does this community mean to you both personally and professionally?

ICJ-Kenya has been an incubator of my work on human rights and governance as it afforded me a platform to apply theoretical human rights learnt in law school, professional growth and earning friends.

ICJ-Kenya has also been an intellectually stimulating and fulfilling legal knowledge hub especially in my nascent years.

Not to mention, ICJ-Kenya afforded me an opportunity to meet with legal titans in non-intimidating environment and have a tete-a-tete with them as a freshly minted lawyer! In my current vantage position, I attempt to pass it forward as an ICJ-Kenya member to enrich the organisation in the equal fashion it has enriched me.

VALENTINE KHAMINWA
Vice Chair, National Civil Aviation Administrative Review Tribunal, Advocate of the High Court of Kenya, Human Rights & International Law Specialist

You've had an expansive career across Kenya, Zimbabwe, the U.S., and international institutions. What inspired your journey into law, and how has working in different jurisdictions shaped your practice?

Aside from growing up on Perry Mason and L.A. Law series? Given that everything has a legal connotation, I chose the legal profession because it is a diverse and dynamic arena, permitting one to venture into almost any aspect of life or work.

Further inspiration came from my father who too was a lawyer. I also enjoy reading and writing; English language, and appreciate how the legal profession is all about communication skills, it requires the good use of language in a way that other professions may not.

As Vice Chair of the National Civil Aviation Administrative Review Tribunal, how do you see your role in strengthening aviation law and regulatory justice in Kenya?

The National Civil Aviation Tribunal addresses a rapidly developing and ever-changing area: of aviation law. In my multi-pronged areas of practice, I particularly enjoy the Tribunal as it entails the application of international law.

It is a unique forum for strengthening aviation law as the Tribunal consists of a hybrid of aviation experts, former pilots and engineers as well as legal practitioners.

We issue judgements by consensus so it develops the law by incorporation of subject matter expertise and opinions alongside international law and of course domestic law.

You've practiced both locally and internationally, from Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association to law firms in Washington DC. What lessons stand out from these diverse experiences?

I grew up the majority of my life in post-colonial Harare, Zimbabwe. After studying my LL.B Bachelor's degree in the U.K. in addition to private commercial practice, I worked at Zimbabwe Women Lawyers' Association, akin to Kenya's FIDA, for a couple of years.

I worked on human rights advocacy initiatives in Zimbabwe, whereas in Washington D.C., after completing

my LL.M I worked in the civil rights space. The lessons gleaned from both jurisdictions are that essentially legal and development problems are prevalent and pervasive.

Whereas human rights pertain to pressing urgencies; civil rights can be considered the higher standard of these rights and norms.

This was interesting because Zim has acceded to way more international human rights conventions without reservation, compared to the USA, yet the in the USA it is safe to say that many of these norms, despite the legal variances of a civil law federal system of justice; are: to a better extent, satisfied despite non-accension.

In short, human rights may be defined as universal, inherent rights that all people possess simply by being human, recognised through international law like the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



Valentine Khaminwa. Photo/ ICJ Kenya

In contrast, civil rights are specific legal protections and/or freedoms granted by a particular Country's government to its citizens and sometimes residents, designed to ensure equality and prevent discrimination within that nation's legal system.



While both aim to protect against injustice, human rights are global and fundamental, while civil rights are national and context-specific.

Much of your early career focused on women’s rights and minority issues. How has this work influenced your perspective on justice and equality today?

In sum, I would like to believe that my prior work on minority issues has influenced my perspective on justice by revealing systemic inequalities, the intersectionality of discrimination, and the importance of diverse voices in decision making processes / institutions.

This experience, it is safe to say, has fostered improved understanding that true ‘equality’, ‘development’ or some of the goals that we aim for, require addressing both gender-specific and minority-related challenges, leading to a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to justice that values the full human potential of all individuals.

You’ve researched topics ranging from education rights in India to discrimination against Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic. How does comparative international experience enrich Kenya’s legal reforms?

I had a unique opportunity to research and write on interesting and diverse issues during my tenure at the office of the then UN Independent Expert on Minorities.

The comparisons with Kenya may, in very general terms, be said to illustrate how in general the challenges are the same for most.

These comparative studies offer an opportunity to learn and improve from jurisdictions where the goals and ends are being better attained.

Looking back at your work with organizations like the Equal Rights Center and ABA Rule of Law Initiative, what impact are you most proud of in advancing anti-discrimination law and practice?

The ABA rule of Law Initiative offered a platform for international jurists to discuss legal ideas and channels for development, akin to ICJ’s work.

One of the pivotal accomplishments was being part of a team that developed an online toolkit for documenting CEDAW compliance measures across all acceding Member States.

At the Equal Rights Center, one of the key accomplishments was being part of the ‘earlier’ lobby groups for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization, which was recently passed by the House in May 2025.

We did our lobbying through comparative testing, research and report writing on the experiences that

women victims of domestic violence experienced when seeking to access federal ‘affordable housing’, what is referred to as Section 8 housing in the USA.

You’ve contributed to important publications on housing rights, anti-discrimination, and education. In your view, what role should research and writing play in shaping public interest litigation?

Research and writing are key indicators of where things stand.

Research is key proof, especially in the age of a lot of information and disinformation, it is compelling to be able to establish how one arrives at its findings.

Intellectual property, civil litigation, and regulatory compliance all feature in your practice. How do you balance such wide-ranging areas of law while maintaining depth in each?

While many areas of law are cross-cutting, I think collaboration would be the key to any aspect of legal work.

While eventually most practitioners end up specializing in a certain aspect of law, it is good to have a working knowledge of as much as possible.



Valentine Khaminwa. Photo/ ICJ Kenya.

In Kenya for example, wide-ranging areas of law are almost implicit because of the cross-cutting areas of law.

The Kenyan legal syllabus is reflective of this in that when one qualifies from law school, they qualify as a general practitioner, whereas in other Countries one is required to specialize almost from the jump.

What trends do you see emerging in Kenyan legal practice particularly in areas like data protection, compliance, and alternative dispute resolution?

With technological advancements, legal advancements will ensue.

I think litigation has been a forum for very few so for alternative dispute resolution, this forum will probably gain traction.

On data protection and compliance, as we become more and more aware of our rights, these protections and enforcement mechanisms will likely increase.

Having worked with institutions like UNIFEM, UNDP, and civil society organizations, what lessons on leadership have guided you throughout your career?

A lot of my work with these organizations was part of NGOs or non-profit organizations.

On leadership these institutions and forums indicated the importance of collaboration, mentorship programmes and gender mainstreaming in leadership.

Many young women lawyers look up to you as a mentor. What advice would you give them about building a career that spans both local advocacy and international engagement?

That is a serious compliment! I would encourage mentees to seize as many opportunities as possible.

With the emergence of technology there is so much opportunity for learning online and this is inexpensive.

A rewarding legal career, can be facilitated by having a mentor or two, knowing that it takes a lot of time and patience and of course hard work to get to cruising level.

You are multilingual and active in professional associations like Toastmasters and the Diaspora African Women's Network. How have these communities enriched your personal and professional growth?

Toastmasters was a branch of Rotaract/Rotary which I joined at High School in Zimbabwe. Toastmasters was a great way of learning and honing communication skills, especially public speaking.

The Diaspora African Women's Network was an organization which I joined while studying abroad, primarily of African Women in Washington D.C. where we would network and discuss ideas pertaining to our home Countries.

It was a social and professional networking forum and we remain in communication to date, sharing ideas and work opportunities with each other.

What do you see as the next frontier for Kenya in terms of human rights and rule of law reforms?

I would say enforcement. In general, we have the greatest platform in the form of our 'new' Constitution, we now need to holistically seek the ongoing goal of rights enforcement.

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

It is truly a privilege to be a Member of ICJ Kenya.

Membership in ICJ expands your network, provides industry updates, enhances your resume, and offers a unique platform for thought-leadership and the exchange of great ideas.

I really enjoy ICJ and often replay the organizations podcasts and presentations because there is so much to glean.



Valentine Khaminwa. Photo/ ICJ Kenya.

CHARLES MWONGELA

Advocate, Former ICJ Kenya Council Member, Constitutional and Commercial Law Specialist

You have a broad practice spanning constitutional law, electoral disputes, commercial law, land and environment, and employment relations. What drew you to these areas of specialization?

My initial encounter with legal practice was at Kimani & Michuki Advocates, my pupil masters, and my first employers.

They were largely in commercial and insurance law, hence invariably I got entrenched in that area.

Although one of the partners, the late Ernest Kimani was mostly engaged in insurance and commercial law, the other partner, Jane Michuki was additionally in civil society working very closely with the late Grace Githu.

I for instance recall Jane Michuki travelling to Rome when the Rome Statute establishing the ICC was being operationalized.

And it is Jane Michuki who introduced me to ICJ - Kenya while I was still a pupil, and on one occasion we travelled to Mombasa by road (van) for an ICJ - Kenya fully sponsored seminar at Nyali.

We were with among others, the late Mirugi Kariuki who bought us roast game meat at Hunters Lodge.

Along the way, those gurus shared a lot of their life experiences with us. Experiences interwoven with struggles for multi – democracy, constitutionalism and the rule of law.

I always admired electoral and constitutional law practice.

I recall while at Parklands Campus of the U.o.N., one afternoon when we did not have a lecture, I and my classmates, inter alia, Kibe Mungai decided to walk to town and see what happens in the Court of Appeal which was then based at the present-day Supreme Court.

We sat in the gallery and watched a civil appeal pitting Dr Gibson Kamau Kuria against Githu Muigai before a bench of Richard Kwach, A.A. Lakha and Philip Tunoi.

The court was hearing only two matters hence both the bench and the Bar would prepare heavily.

Although the bench was quite and unnecessarily hostile to the counsels compared to the Court of Appeal, and indeed even the other courts of today.



I would say that the sum total of these experiences and many others happenings contributed heavily in shaping my areas of practice to this day

Serving as a Council Member at ICJ Kenya is an important leadership role. What did you take away from that experience, and how did it shape your outlook on the legal profession?

I learnt service leadership. At ICJ - Kenya the council are not paid at all. It is sheer sacrifice.

It teaches one to be humble. It also opens many avenues for interaction in conferences and seminars and this broadened my perspectives and communication skills.

Picking from that servant leadership, I accepted to sit in my rural secondary school boards as a way of giving back to society without expecting pay in return and presently I chair the B.O.M. Ankamia Day Secondary School.

Where I live I, equally chair the residents infrastructure committee, again pro bono.

Serving council taught me that being a legal professional is broader than just bettering one's life and that of the immediate family.



Charles Mwangela. Photo/ ICJ Kenya.

That there is greater satisfaction when you extend your legal skills, even in a small way, for the sake of the greater society or those in need.

You've also taught Law of Tort as an adjunct lecturer at Mount Kenya University. What was it like balancing academia with practice, and how did teaching influence your approach to the law?

Teaching while still practicing is quite taxing. Especially considering the humongous number of students.

It really calls for extreme discipline in time management.

The experience also taught me to be more patient with the newly qualified advocates and to know that their training today faces more challenges than it did in our times when the government cushioned us heavily, including by providing accommodation, subsidized meals, book allowance etc.

Constitutional and electoral disputes often carry high stakes for democracy. From your perspective, what reforms are most urgently needed to strengthen Kenya's constitutional order?

Timely resolution of electoral disputes. The Nairobi Court of Appeal, for instance, is virtually moribund.

I am aware of an electoral dispute emanating from the 2022 electoral disputes cycle that is yet to be allocated a mention date for directions, yet the parliamentary term is more than halfway.

Courts are grossly lacking in manpower and resources too.

Electoral justice is often contentious. How do you think lawyers can help build public trust in the dispute resolution process?

Electoral justice remains one of the most delicate areas of democratic governance.

Lawyers occupy a central role in safeguarding its integrity by ensuring that disputes are resolved fairly, transparently, and within the confines of the law.

To build public confidence in these processes, practitioners must demonstrate impartiality, uphold ethical standards, and communicate legal outcomes clearly and responsibly.

Moreover, there is a growing need to promote Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanisms to address grievances that do not necessarily require full litigation.

Encouraging ADR fosters dialogue, reduces hostility, and allows only the most complex or contentious matters to proceed before the courts.

This approach not only enhances efficiency but also reinforces public trust in the justice system as both responsive and fair.

Commercial disputes, land conflicts, and labour relations remain some of the busiest areas of Kenyan litigation. What trends or challenges have you observed in these sectors recently?

As the adage goes, whereas human populations keep increasing, the land mass remains constant.

Competition of the diminishing land resources will therefore always be a reality.

The trends I have lately observed in this sector include conflicts between informal settlers and national or county governments.

Attempts to say construct a road through an informal settlement, which could be occupying public land, inevitably result in people displacement.

Another trend I have observed is people increasingly litigating these land conflicts as constitutional rights before the Environmental and Land Court.

An example being contraventions on zoning, failure by developers to provide for basic amenities such as schools, recreational grounds, etc.



Charles Mwangela. Photo/ ICJ Kenya.

Environmental and land law is evolving quickly, especially with climate change and sustainable development debates. What role do you see lawyers playing in advancing environmental justice?

Lawyers can contribute by ensuring equity in the sharing of carbon credits, for instance.

Although third world countries such as ours are receiving carbon credits to motivate more planting of trees etc., the formula for calculating those credits needs to be more transparent.

They can also explore litigation geared towards mitigating environmental protection.

As a lawyer who has served in leadership at the ICJ Kenya Council, what role do you believe professional associations should play in strengthening the rule of law and supporting young lawyers?

Mentorship is key. And appreciation that the present-day practitioner is increasingly facing new challenges, including but not limited to those related to technology and artificial intelligence, and encroachment of the traditional lawyers' turf by other professions, e.g. accountants, surveyors etc.

What advice would you give to young advocates who want to build a career that bridges litigation, governance, and public interest work?

Young advocates should begin by cultivating a strong foundation in legal practice through exposure to diverse cases and mentorship under experienced practitioners.

A firm grasp of procedural and substantive law is indispensable.

Beyond that, they should actively engage with issues of governance, policy, and human rights to understand how the law operates within broader social and institutional contexts.

Building a career at the intersection of litigation and public interest work requires curiosity, resilience, and a commitment to continuous learning.

Above all, young lawyers must uphold integrity and service to the public as guiding principles, the true measure of professional success lies not only in personal advancement but in one's contribution to justice and societal transformation.

You've already worn many hats, litigator, council member, lecturer. What's next for you in your professional journey?

Bettering myself as a practitioner of law and mentoring upcoming lawyers remains my goal.

Every time I have trained a pupil and watched them grow into self – reliant counsels, I feel fulfilled.

Slowing down to create more time for myself, and to know God better.

ICJ KENYA MEMBERS IN



FOCUS

ICJ Kenya Congratulates

our member and former Executive Director, Abdul Noormohamed, on his appointment as the Chairperson of the Katiba Institute Board.

Abdul is a seasoned human rights advocate and policy strategist with extensive experience advancing justice, accountability, and civic participation across Africa.

He currently serves as Director of Civic Voice, and has previously held leadership roles including Vice President for Africa at Luminare, Executive Director of ICJ Kenya, and senior positions at the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights and Open Society Foundations (Eastern Africa).

ICJ Kenya is proud of Abdul’s continued contribution to the promotion of constitutionalism, human rights, and the rule of law, and we wish him great success in his new role.



Abdul Noormohammed. Photo/Courtesy.

ICJ Kenya Congratulates

Lawrence Mute, our 2012 Jurist of the Year, on his appointment as a Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ).

Adistinguished human rights lawyer, academic, and practitioner, Lawrence brings over 29 years of experience working at the sub-national, national, continental, and international levels.

His expertise spans international and regional human rights, disability justice, gender equality, sexual minority rights, freedom of expression, prevention of torture, and legal drafting.

Currently a lecturer and researcher at the Faculty of Law, University of Nairobi, and Chief Adviser at ALT Advisory, Lawrence has made significant contributions to advancing justice, equality, and inclusion across Africa.

Speaking on his appointment, Lawrence described it as “a great honour and privilege,” adding that it aligns with his lifelong commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights globally.

As a person with disability, he reaffirmed his dedication to advancing non-discrimination and equality for all marginalised populations.



Lawrence Mute. Photo/Courtesy.

Building Partnerships

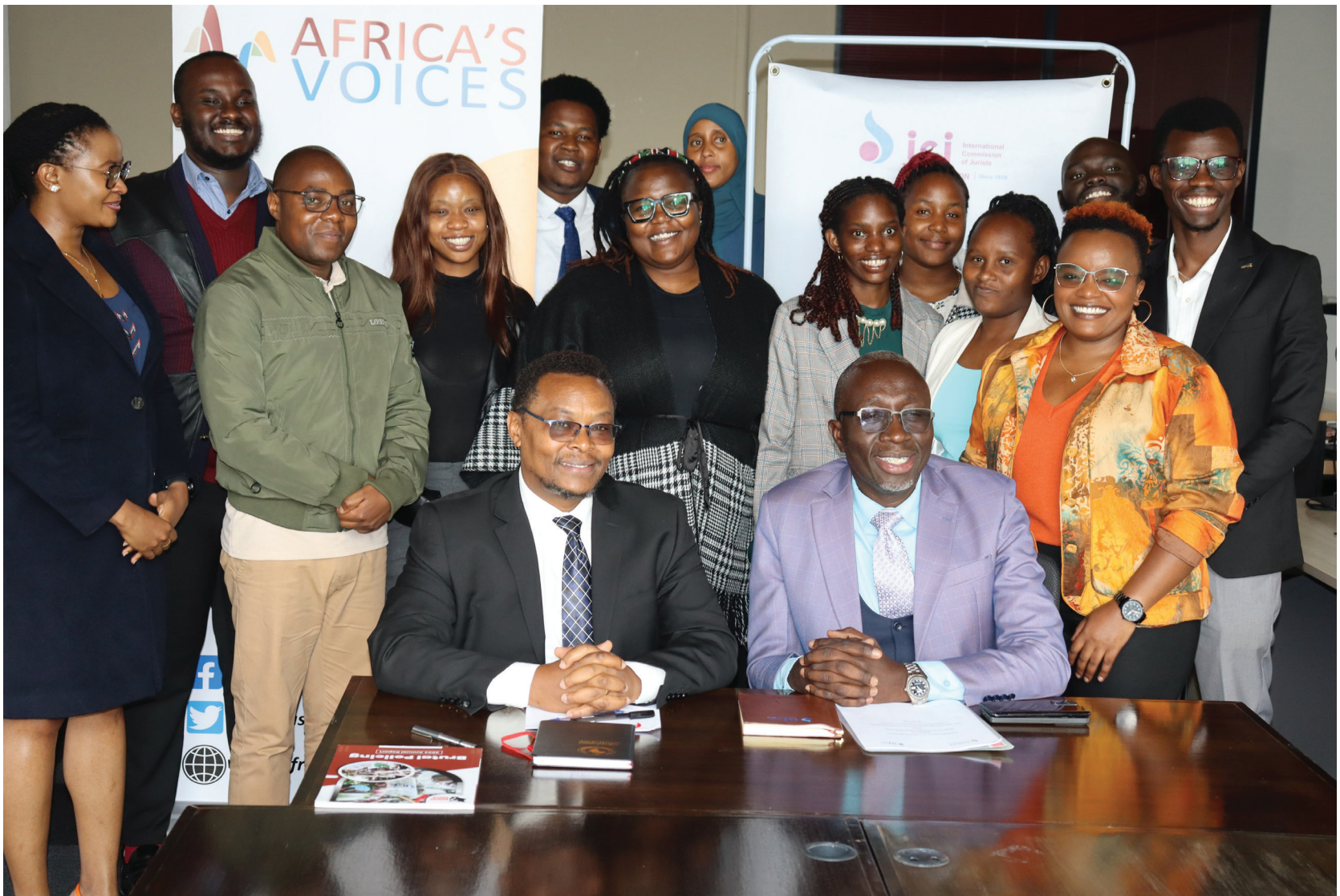
ICJ Kenya, AVF Sign MoU

The Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya) has entered into a new partnership with the Africa’s Voices Foundation (AVF) through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), marking the start of a collaborative effort to advance justice and accountability.

The partnership seeks to harness citizen-generated data to gain deeper insights into public trust, accessibility, fairness, and accountability within Kenya’s judiciary. By amplifying the voices of citizens, the two organizations aim to inform and shape more responsive and inclusive legal systems.

ICJ Kenya’s Executive Director, Eric Mukoya, noted that the collaboration will “support evidence-based legal and policy reforms, strengthen civic participation, and foster institutional accountability.”

Echoing this sentiment, Samuel Kimeu, Executive Director of Africa’s Voices Foundation, highlighted the organization’s commitment to using its innovative data collection and engagement approaches to enhance public accountability, institutional responsiveness, and inclusive governance.



ICJ Kenya signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Africa’s Voices Foundation (AVF). Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Strengthening Democracy in East Africa

In a move set to bolster democratic resilience across East Africa, ICJ Kenya and the Innovation Foundation for Democracy formalized their shared vision through a newly signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU).

The partnership signals a pivotal moment in the region’s efforts to strengthen civic engagement and promote innovative approaches to governance.

Under the agreement, the two organizations will collaborate on legal empowerment, democratic innovation, and youth participation, while advancing research, advocacy, and capacity-building initiatives aimed at countering authoritarian tendencies.



ICJ Kenya and the Innovation Foundation for Democracy pose for a photo during the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). Photo/ICJ Kenya.

By joining forces, ICJ Kenya and the Innovation Foundation for Democracy reaffirm their mutual commitment to accountability, human rights, and inclusive governance, laying the groundwork for a new era of collaboration in the pursuit of a stronger, more participatory democracy.

Strengthening Civil and Political Rights

ICJ Kenya joined fellow civil society actors in paying a courtesy call to Hon. Chief Justice Martha Koome to discuss the Judiciary’s vital role in safeguarding civil and political rights in Kenya.

The engagement provided a forum to deliberate on how the justice system can better uphold the rights of individuals appearing before the courts, particularly young people and other vulnerable groups who often face barriers in accessing justice.

By fostering constructive dialogue between the Judiciary and civil society, the meeting underscored the shared commitment to strengthen protections, enhance accountability, and build a justice system grounded in fairness and dignity.

As a commission of jurists, we reaffirm our dedication to collaborative engagement with key stakeholders in advancing the rule of law, defending human rights, and ensuring that no one is left behind in the pursuit of justice.



ICJ Kenya joined fellow civil society actors in paying a courtesy call to Hon. Chief Justice Martha Koome. Photo/Courtesy.



Advancing Justice Across Africa

ICJ Kenya, led by Executive Director Eric Mukoya, held a strategic engagement with colleagues from the International Commission of Jurists – Africa, led by Director Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh.

The meeting provided a platform to reflect on the shared mission of upholding the rule of law, human rights, and democratic governance across Africa, while identifying new opportunities for deeper collaboration.

Discussions focused on key thematic areas such as disability rights, gender equality, access to justice, and the strengthening of global accountability mechanisms.

The engagement reaffirmed both institutions' commitment to coordinated, strategic responses to emerging challenges and to advancing legal and institutional reforms that centre dignity, equality, and justice for all.

ICJ Kenya looks forward to expanding this partnership and working jointly with ICJ Africa to promote justice, accountability, and the protection of human rights throughout the continent.



ICJ Kenya, led by Executive Director Eric Mukoya, held a strategic engagement with colleagues from the International Commission of Jurists – Africa, led by Director Kaajal Ramjathan-Keogh. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Norec Project Partnership

ICJ Kenya joined partner institutions for the Norec Project Partners meeting coordinated by the African Judges and Jurists Forum (AJJF) and hosted by the Legal Resources Foundation in Harare, Zimbabwe.

The Norec-funded Exchange Programme brings together ICJ Kenya, the Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (Uganda), the Legal Resources Foundation (Zimbabwe), and AJJF (South Africa) to strengthen collaboration, build institutional capacity, and promote learning among young legal professionals aged 18–35.

Partners reflected on lessons from past exchange rounds, shared fellows' experiences, and explored ways to sustain an alumni network.

Fellows shared inspiring stories of cross-cultural learning across East and Southern Africa.

Looking ahead, the partners agreed to focus the Norec project on empowering young lawyers to advance climate justice, protect vulnerable groups, and promote the rule of law in line with the SDGs and African human rights frameworks.



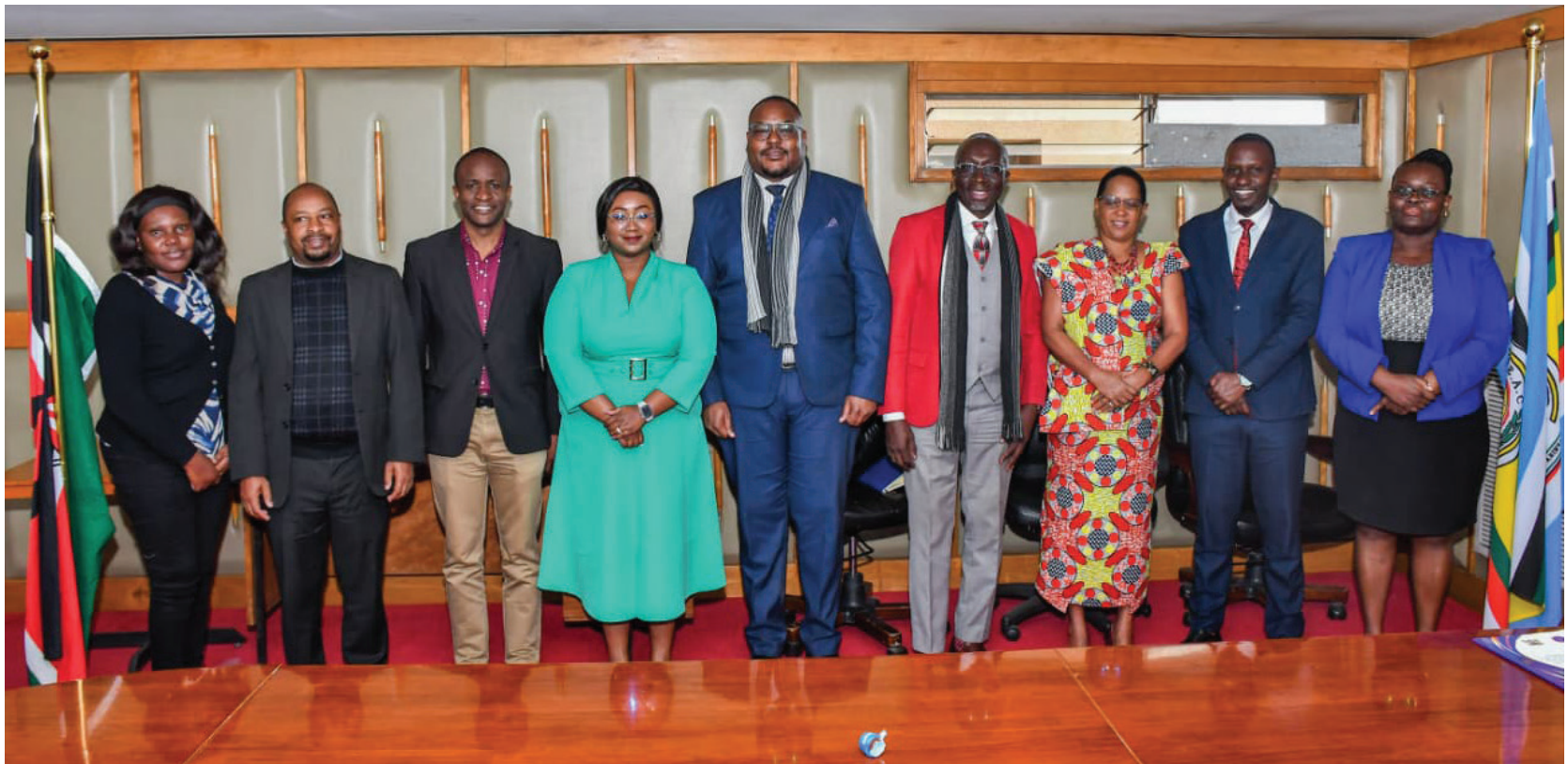
ICJ Kenya joined partner institutions for the Norec Project Partners meeting coordinated by the African Judges and Jurists Forum (AJJF) and hosted by the Legal Resources Foundation in Harare, Zimbabwe. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Justice and Human Rights

ICJ Kenya paid a courtesy call on the Principal Secretary for Justice, Human Rights, and Constitutional Affairs, Hon. Judith Pareno, to explore areas of collaboration in advancing justice and human rights.

During the meeting, ICJ Kenya presented its 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, which prioritizes human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. Discussions also covered potential partnerships in supporting legislative reforms, including the Public Participation Bill, 2025, and the National Coroner’s Service Bill, 2025.

The engagement reaffirmed a shared commitment to strengthening legal frameworks, enhancing accountability, and ensuring that justice and human rights remain central to governance in Kenya.



ICJ Kenya paid a courtesy call on the Principal Secretary for Justice, Human Rights, and Constitutional Affairs, Hon. Judith Pareno. Photo/Courtesy



ICJ Kenya Hosts Royal Norwegian Embassy

ICJ Kenya, led by Executive Director Eric Mukoya, was honoured to host Ms. Camilla Ravnsborg Aschjem, Counsellor for Development Cooperation for Kenya and Somalia at the Royal Norwegian Embassy, alongside Margaret Komen, at the ICJ Kenya House.

The meeting provided a valuable opportunity to exchange insights on advancing justice, human rights, and good governance in Kenya and the wider region.

Both parties reaffirmed their commitment to upholding constitutionalism, the rule of law, and access to justice for all, emphasizing the importance of strategic partnerships in driving sustainable democratic development.

ICJ Kenya looks forward to building on these conversations and deepening collaboration with the Royal Norwegian Embassy in promoting a more just and equitable society.



ICJ Kenya, led by Executive Director Eric Mukoya, was honoured to host Ms. Camilla Ravnsborg Aschjem, Counsellor for Development Cooperation for Kenya and Somalia at the Royal Norwegian Embassy. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

ICJ Kenya - Katiba Institute Partnership

ICJ Kenya paid a courtesy call to Katiba Institute, our long-term partners, to explore new opportunities for collaboration in advancing constitutionalism, human rights, and the rule of law in Kenya.

The meeting provided a platform for both institutions to reflect on their shared values and mutual areas of focus. Discussions centered on enhancing cooperation in legal and policy reform, public interest litigation, civic education, and institutional strengthening.

Both organizations recently launched their new strategic plans, which align closely in their vision of promoting accountable governance, protecting human rights, and ensuring access to justice for all.

The engagement reaffirmed their joint commitment to deepening collaboration, sharing expertise, and implementing joint initiatives that advance democratic governance and social justice in Kenya.



ICJ Kenya paid a courtesy call to Katiba Institute, our long-term partners. Photo/ICJ Kenya.

Advancing Digital Rights and Consumer Protection

ICJ Kenya's Executive Director, Eric Mukoya held a strategic meeting with Luã Cruz from the Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC), Brazil's leading consumer protection organization to explore collaboration in advancing digital rights and consumer protection.

The discussions focused on consumer rights, telecommunications, digital public infrastructure (DPI), data protection, and health rights, as well as landmark litigation related to WorldCoin, internet shutdowns, and cybercrime.

Both teams exchanged valuable lessons from Brazil and Kenya, highlighting shared challenges and opportunities for joint advocacy, strategic litigation, and global collaboration to promote inclusive, rights-based digital transformation.



ICJ Kenya's Executive Director, Eric Mukoya held a strategic meeting with Luã Cruz from the Instituto Brasileiro de Defesa do Consumidor (IDEC). Photo/ ICJ Kenya.



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