



ANNUAL REPORT 2025

ADVANCING THE RULE OF LAW, JUDICIAL
INDEPENDENCE, AND DEMOCRATIC
GOVERNANCE ACROSS AFRICA



Pan-African Network of Eminent
Judges and Jurists

Registered
NPO 114-472NPO
South Africa

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Africa Judges and Jurists Forum

Annual Report 2025

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independence, and democratic governance
across Africa*

Pan-African Network of Eminent Judges and Jurists
Registered NPO 114-472NPO — South Africa



About AJJF

Formed in 2012, the Africa Judges and Jurists Forum (AJJF) is registered as a non-profit organization 114-472NPO in South Africa. Its offices are located in Uganda (Kampala) and South Africa (Johannesburg). AJJF is a pan African network of eminent judges and jurists who are committed individually and collectively, to promoting the rule of law and development in Africa.

Governance Architecture

The governance architecture of AJJF consists of the **General Convention**, the **Judicial Elders' Council (JEC)**, the **Board** and the **Secretariat**.

JEC consists of eminent former Chief Justices. Currently, JEC is constituted by retired Chief Justices who have a distinguished career in promoting judicial independence and the rule of law. Members of the JEC are:

- Honourable Retired Chief Justice **Willy Mutunga** (Kenya) — ***President of the Judicial Elders Council***
- Honourable Retired Chief Justice **Mohamed Chande Othman** (Tanzania)
- Honourable Retired Chief Justice **Ernest Sakala** (Zambia)
- Honourable Retired Chief Justice **David Maraga** (Kenya)
- Honourable Retired Chief Justice **Andrew Nyirenda** (Malawi)

The Secretariat of AJJF is headed by the **Secretary General Martin Masiga**, supported by a team of legal experts, administrators, communication and finance practitioners.

Thematic Areas

AJJF's work is organised around the following thematic areas:

- Promoting democratic, free and fair elections
- Promoting the rule of law, human rights and access to justice
- Strengthening democratic governance
- Promoting efficient crisis response and economic transformation



Message from the Secretary General

The year 2025 has been one of significant impact and strategic growth for the Africa Judges and Jurists Forum. Across the continent, the rule of law has faced mounting pressures — from executive overreach and judicial underfunding to the disruptive arrival of artificial intelligence in justice systems and electoral processes. In this challenging landscape, AJJF has remained steadfast in its mission to defend judicial independence, promote democratic governance, and advance access to justice for all Africans.



Our continental study on judicial independence, published this year, lays bare the threats facing judiciaries across Africa — patterns of persecution against independent judges, corruption, and financial strangulation of courts. It is a sobering document, but also a call to action, and we have already placed it in the hands of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers.

I am particularly proud of the draft Principles on Judicial Funding developed with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung and the Southern and East Africa Chief Justices Forum. For too long, judicial independence has been undermined by the power of the purse. These Principles offer a roadmap for reform, and I look forward to their adoption at the 2026 SEACJF Annual Conference.

Our partnership with the United Nations Special Rapporteur bore fruit in a landmark report on artificial intelligence in judiciaries — a topic that will only grow in urgency. The voices of sixteen African experts were heard in New York, and their insights now inform global recommendations on ensuring that AI strengthens, rather than weakens, judicial independence and access to justice.

The same theme carried through our work on electoral justice. The toolkit on judicial oversight of AI in African elections, developed with Yiaga Africa and the Africa Electoral Justice Network, equips judges across the continent to adjudicate disputes in an era where deepfakes, algorithmic disinformation, and AI-driven campaign tactics are rewriting the rules of democratic engagement.

On reparative justice, AJJF helped convene the African-Caribbean Dialogue at the University of Pretoria, contributed to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Peoples of African Descent, and co-organised the Africa Reparations Surgery Workshop — all part of a growing movement to translate the moral case for reparations into actionable legal strategies.

In Malawi, the Lilongwe Pact on Civic Space demonstrated that multi-stakeholder dialogue can protect democratic freedoms even in the heat of an election. Malawi's peaceful, credible general election in 2025 is a testament to what is possible when the judiciary, the executive, the legislature, and civil society commit to a shared vision of democratic governance.

I am equally encouraged by the Norec Exchange Programme, which placed eight young lawyers across four countries in a year-long experiential learning exchange. These emerging legal professionals represent the future of justice in Africa, and their success in developing a new USD 1 million programme on climate justice and the rule of law is proof that investing in the next generation yields tangible returns.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our Judicial Elders' Council, our Board, our partners, and the small but formidable Secretariat team. I thank them all.

As we look to 2026, we do so with a clear agenda: finalise and launch the Principles on Judicial Funding, deepen our engagement with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, expand the Norec Exchange Programme, and continue to defend the independence of the judiciary wherever it is threatened.

The rule of law is not a given. It is built, defended, and renewed by each generation. AJJF remains committed to that task.

Martin Okumu-Masiga Secretary General, Africa Judges and Jurists Forum (AJJF)
December 2025

Key Activities in 2025

Continental Study on Judicial Independence

AJJF conducted a continental study on judicial independence. This study resulted in the publication of a report that identifies and analyses key contemporary challenges and threats against judicial independence in Africa and makes recommendations on possible measures that can be undertaken to address these threats and challenges by various stakeholders who include the judiciaries themselves, governments and the relevant bodies that fall under the African Human Rights System.

Amongst the key threats discussed in the report is patterns of persecution of independent and impartial judges, corruption involving judiciaries, executive pressure and judicial underfunding.

AJJF launched this report at a webinar held in November 2025 and was attended by judges, jurists, lawyers and policy makers from across all the regions of the continent. The report was also shared with the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on Independence of Judges and Lawyers**, and the **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Focal Point Person on Judicial Independence**, for use in their engagements with governments in Africa.



Launch webinar for the Continental Study on Judicial Independence, November 2025

2025 AJJF / SEACJF Annual Conference

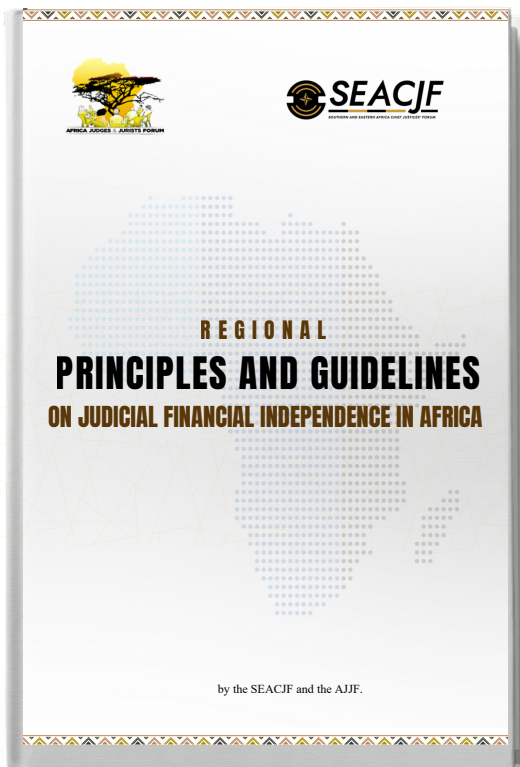
AJJF partnered with the **Southern and East Africa Chief Justices Forum (SEACJF)** to hold its 2025 annual conference. The conference was held in **October 2025** and was hosted by the **Judiciary of Botswana**. His Excellency, **President Duma Boko** of the Republic of Botswana officially opened the conference.

16 Chief Justices from East and Southern Africa, academics and civil society organisations participated in the conference. The conference's theme was on promoting judicial independence and accountability in the age of democratic regression.

Delegates exchanged insights on how the threats faced by judiciaries and how these threats can be mitigated or addressed. They also shared insights on best practices for holding judges accountable as well as strategies for mitigating the abuse of judicial accountability procedures to persecute impartial judges.



Leading the AJJF delegation, Secretary General Martin Masiga was joined by an eminent team including Retired Chief Justices David Maraga (Kenya), Andrew Nyirenda (Malawi), Justices Charles Mkandawire (Malawi), Thomas Masuku (Eswatini/Namibia), Lady Justices Lilian Tibatemwa (Uganda) and Dr. Shale (Lesotho), Dr. Justice Mavedzenge, Arnold Tsunga, Selina Jacobs, and Christine Wainana (Norec Fellows).



Development of Principles on Judicial Funding

Following a request from the **Southern and East Africa Chief Justices Forum (SEACJF)** during their 2024 Annual Conference, AJJF in collaboration with the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) foundation commissioned a study that resulted in the development of draft principles on judicial funding in Africa.

These draft principles draw from relevant regional and international normative standards on judicial independence and access to justice as well as a study of legal frameworks and progressive practices in comparative jurisdictions from across the world.

Once finalized, AJJF aims to use these Principles to engage relevant stakeholders, including governments and relevant regional and international bodies, so that they can use them as a resource for reforming legal frameworks in support of judicial financial independence.

The draft principles were presented at the **2025 Annual Conference of the Southern and East Africa Chief Justices Forum** where they were reviewed by the Chief Justices. Subject to the incorporation of comments made by the Chief Justices, the Draft Principles will be officially adopted and endorsed by the Southern and East Africa Chief Justices Forum at its **2026 Annual Conference**.



Drafting of General Comment on Article 26 of African Charter



At the meeting in Dar Es Salaam, AJJF represented by our Secretary General Martin Masiga and Programs Director Justice Mavedzenge.

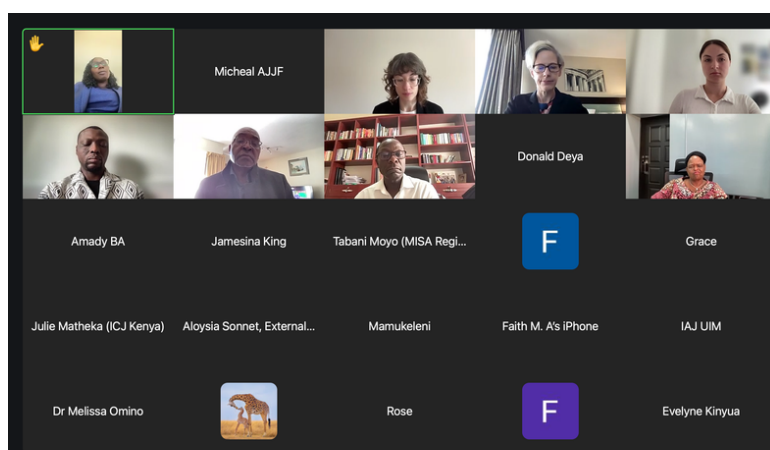
AJJF was invited by the **African Commission on Human and People's Rights (African Commission)** to support and participate in the drafting of a General Comment on **Article 26 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights (African Charter)**.

The planned General Comment will flesh out the interpretation of States Parties obligations on the independence of judiciaries and national human rights institutions as provided for under article 26 of the African Charter.

AJJF supported and participated in the inception meeting (held in March 2025 in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania) during which the technical drafting team developed a roadmap towards the drafting of the envisaged General Comment as well as agreed on the scope of the General Comment.

Consultative Meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur

As part of its on-going collaborative partnership with the Mandate of the **United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers (UN Special Rapporteur)**, AJJF organised and co-hosted a meeting in **May 2025** during which the UN Special Rapporteur consulted and obtained views from African Judges, jurists and academics to be incorporated into the 2025 report to the United Nations General Assembly.



The UN Special Rapporteur's 2025 report focuses on the use of **Artificial Intelligence in judiciaries** and their implications on settled norms and standards regulating judicial systems.

Sixteen African experts (consisting of judges, jurists and academics) took part in the meeting and made contributions based on their experiences and observations on the deployment of Artificial Intelligence in the African justice systems. The views that were shared during this meeting were

incorporated into the UN Special Rapporteur's final report, and this report makes recommendations on measures that should be considered to ensure that the deployment of AI strengthens rather than weaken judicial independence and access to justice.

Participation at the Fourth Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Peoples of African Descent



Our Programs Director, Justice Mavedzenge, speaking on the role of the legal profession in advancing the Reparatory Justice Agenda, during the 4th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent held in New York 13-17 April 2025

AJJF participated at the **fourth Session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Peoples of African Descent** held in **April 2025** in New York, United States of America.

AJJF made oral submissions during the panel discussion on **"Reparatory justice for Africa and people of African descent."** Through its submissions, AJJF called for the reform of the international legal system to promote the right of Africans to redress for the harm suffered as a result of slavery and colonialism.



AJJF Programs Director, Justice Mavedzenge with CARICOM Ambassador HE David Comissiong, after their panel discussion on the sidelines of the 4th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent, in New York held from 13-17 April 2025

AJJF also participated in the side events organised by civil society. In particular, the AJJF representative appeared on a panel that discussed the role of the legal profession in supporting the agenda for reparations to redress the harms associated with slavery and colonialism.

Through its participation at this session of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Peoples of African Descent, AJJF ensured that the voice of African jurists is represented in the international discourse on the push for reparative justice.

African-Caribbean Dialogue on Justice through Reparations



African-Caribbean Dialogue on Justice through Reparations

Justice à travers les réparations:
Dialogue Afrique-Caraïbes

PROGRAMME | AGENDA

Future Africa Campus,
University of Pretoria,
Pretoria, South Africa

Campus Future Africa,
Université de Pretoria,
Pretoria, Afrique du Sud

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IN-PERSON
ATTENDANCE
PRÉSENCE EN
PERSONNE

VIRTUAL
ATTENDANCE
PRÉSENCE VIRTUEL

2 - 3 JUNE 2025
2 - 3 JUIN 2025



AJJF in collaboration with the **University of Pretoria's Center for Human Rights**, the **University of The Bahamas** and the **University of Goma**, cohosted the **African-Caribbean Dialogue on Justice through Reparations**. This conference was held in **June** at the University of Pretoria.

It featured presentations and discussions amongst academics, civil society and policy makers from the Caribbean and Africa regions. These discussions were aimed at facilitating knowledge exchange on research and advocacy on reparative justice to redress the harm associated with slavery and colonialism.

In addition to co-hosting this conference, AJJF representatives participated in panel discussions and made submissions through which they shared information and analysis of domestic caselaw that supports the idea of enforcing accountability against private companies for reparative justice. They also made submissions on the significance of the **International Court of Justice** as an avenue for seeking reparative justice.

Delegates at this Conference adopted a Communique through which they recommitted themselves to the cause for reparative justice and identified specific areas for joint collaborations.

Africa Reparations Surgery Workshop

In collaboration with the **Africa Reparations Hub at the University of the Free State**, the **University of Western Cape** and **Strathmore University**, AJJF co-organised a seminar that brought together **50 participants** who included community leaders and legal experts mainly from Southern and East Africa.

This seminar was aimed at creating a platform for legal experts and reparations activists to design strategies for litigating reparations claims. Participants identified pathways for litigating claims for reparations through domestic and international legal systems.



4th Africa Electoral Justice Network Conference



In collaboration with the **Judiciary of Zambia**, the **South Africa Judicial Education Institute (SAJEI)**, the **Southern and Eastern Africa Chief Justices' Forum (SEACJF)**, **Yiga Africa** and the **Kenyan Section of the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ Kenya)**, AJJF convened the **4th annual conference** of judges who are engaged in electoral legal disputes in Africa.

Held in **September 2025**, the conference theme was on the emerging role of Artificial Intelligence in elections in Africa. Through discussions at this conference, delegates exchanged information and insights on the opportunities presented by AI on electoral justice and the potential challenges, including worsening mistrust and undermining the integrity of electoral processes.

Delegates adopted a communique through which they recommitted themselves to promoting electoral justice and identified specific areas for further collaborations.



Operationalization of the Lilongwe Pact on Civic Space

Following the signing of a pact (facilitated by AJJF) between the Judiciary, the Legislature, the Executive and Civil Society on protecting civic space in Malawi in 2024, AJJF was invited by the **Youth and Society of Malawi (YAS)** to facilitate a meeting on the implementation of this pact.

Held in **February 2025**, this meeting brought together representatives from Malawi civil society, judiciary, parliament and the executive to discuss priority areas that require joint action in order to protect civic space in Malawi in the context of the then impending general election.

Delegates at this meeting recommitted their institutions to protecting civic space including by encouraging political actors as well as enforcing laws to protect civic space related human rights like freedom of expression and freedom of assembly during and after the then impending general election.

Malawi has since held a peaceful and smooth election that was considered to be free, fair and credible.

Norec Exchange Programme (2025)

The **AJJF** together with **ICJ Kenya**, **FHRI-Uganda**, and the **Legal Resources Foundation (Zimbabwe)** implemented the Norec funded programme in 2025 to strengthen the justice sector in East and Southern Africa through the exchange of young legal professionals.

The programme involved **8 young lawyers** (6 female and 2 male) placed across Uganda, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and South Africa for one-year experiential learning exchanges. The initiative promoted cross-border collaboration, professional growth, and the development of a regional community of practice focused on access to justice, judicial integrity, and the rule of law.



Key Achievements

- Participants undertook research and produced articles on access to justice issues in the region
- Engaged with regional and international human rights mechanisms, including the **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)** and UN bodies Contributed to strategic litigation and advocacy on electoral irregularities, abductions, enforced disappearances, and fair trial rights
- A landmark case was filed before the **East African Court of Justice** on Tanzania elections of October 2025
- Participants supported judicial and legal training initiatives, including conferences on electoral adjudication and emerging issues such as artificial intelligence in elections
- Participants monitored and documented threats to judicial independence and access to justice, while using innovative advocacy platforms such as webinars and **X Spaces** to amplify rule of law concerns



April 16, 2025 | 13:15 – 14:30 | Room CRE, UN NYHQ

United Nations Group of Experts on People of African Descent

Side Event at the 4th Session of the Permanent Forum on People of African Descent

The Enduring and Evolving Role of Civil Society in the Pursuit of Reparatory Justice



Amb David Comissiong
Ambassador of Barbados to Caribbean Community



Dr Bina D'Costa
Chairperson/Reporter - UN WGEAD
Professor - International Relations,
Australia National University



Dr Justice Alfred Mavedzenge
Programs Director Africa Judges & Jurists Forum (AJJF)
Adjunct Senior Lecturer of Public Law,
University of Cape Town



Dr Esther Ojulari
Director of Programme
Barbados Center for Innovation



Rev. Dr. Angelique Walker-Smith
Strategist for Pan-African and
Orthodox Faith Engagement
World Council of Churches
President from North America



Dr Roger Wareham
Ambassador of Barbados to Caribbean Community



Georgia Boon
Director of Planning and Engagement
Church Commission for England



Dr Barbara G Reynolds
Member - UN Working Group of Experts
on People of African Descent

For more information- indico.un.org/event/1015090/



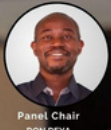
AFRICAN COURT COALITION STAKEHOLDERS' PLATFORM ON THE MARGINS OF THE 76TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COURT ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS
30 JANUARY - 3 FEBRUARY 2025
PAPU TOWER, ARUSHA TANZANIA

DAY 3:
SESSION 7:

Discussions on the AU 2025 Theme on Reparative Justice; "Justice for Africans and People of African Descent Through Reparations" AND the 2025 African Court theme "Advancing Justice through Reparations"

KEY NOTE ADDRESS

PANELISTS:



Panel Chair
DONDEYA
Pan African Lawyers Union
PALU



HENRIETTA EKEFE
African Judges and Jurists Forum
AJJF



BRIAN KAGORO
Open Society Foundations - OSF



WAIKE WANYOKE
Open Society Justice Initiative
OSJI



DR. RUDO SITHOLE
African Museums and
Heritage Restitutions
(AFRIMUHERE)



WILLIAM CAREW
AU-ECOSOC



GRETCHEN ROHR
Open Society Justice Initiative
OSJI

africancourtcoalition.org info@africancourtcoalition.org [CoalitionACHPR](https://twitter.com/CoalitionACHPR)



AYTJ Capacity Building Webinar

YOUTH-LED REPARATIONS ADVOCACY: MOBILIZING A NEW GENERATION FOR JUSTICE AND REDRESS



Useni Odum
African Union



Henrietta Ekefe
Africa Judges & Jurists Forum



Yael Gathouth
Africa Youth for Transitional
Justice | PAPA Africa

11 APRIL 2025 11 AM WAT 1 PM EAT [zoom](https://zoom.us)

For More Information
[@AU_AY4TJ](https://twitter.com/AU_AY4TJ)
[in AY4TJ](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ay4tj/)

"Reparations are not merely an act of financial restitution, but a broader call for justice, acknowledgment, and healing."

Major Achievement

A major achievement of the programme was the successful development by the participants under supervision, of a **new USD 1 million Norec-funded programme (2026–2028)** on climate justice and the rule of law, demonstrating strengthened capacity in programme design and resource mobilisation by the young Norec Fellows.





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Get In Touch

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