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Note from the IJR Executive Director



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR – PROF CHERYL HENDRICKS

Welcome to the April edition of the IJR Connect Newsletter. In this month, we engaged in productive discussions and impactful interventions with our partners and stakeholders in our areas of focus. We tackled critical challenges and opportunities for advancing gender equality and peacebuilding efforts across Africa at the "Critical Conversations on Women, Peace, and Security in Africa" conference in Johannesburg. Additionally, we conducted a successful training of trainers for the Women's Election Mechanism for Peace and commemorated South Africa's Freedom Day.

Our work included hosting an expert roundtable and authors' workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, with a focus on "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Transitional Justice Interventions." We also briefed the diplomatic corps in Addis Ababa on "Africa's Approach to Transforming the Multilateral System," emphasising the redesigning of the United Nations Security Council.

This edition of the newsletter features our Reparations Project with SACTJ. It also covers our staff engagement with South African youth on the electoral system. Prof. Tim Murithi, our Head of Peacebuilding Interventions, launched a new book titled "African Union and Transitional Justice: Healing the Past and Restoring Human Dignity." Our latest publication, "Preventing Violent Extremism in Kenya: Revisiting Approaches," is also now available.

We hope you enjoy this month's IJR Connect!



Critical Conversations on Women, Peace and Security in Africa

The 'Critical Conversations on Women Peace and Security in Africa' symposium took place in Johannesburg, with participants from various sectors extending their support for the dialogue. They emphasized its crucial role in advancing gender-inclusive peace processes across the continent.

As the clock ticks towards the 25th anniversary of the Women Peace and Security Agenda, stakeholders from across Africa gathered in Johannesburg for a pivotal high-level dialogue. Guided by the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325, this dialogue, hosted by International IDEA, Women in Political Participation, and the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, supported by the Government of Sweden and the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa, sought to scrutinize the journey, progress, and challenges faced in the implementation of the WPS Agenda in Africa.

As the dialogue kicked off, Ms Josephine Mwangi, Programme Manager at International IDEA, and Prof Cheryl Hendricks, Executive Director of the IJR, emphasized the critical importance of this gathering as a catalyst for transformative change, towards a future where women are not only safeguarded from conflict but also actively contribute to building lasting peace on the African continent.

In her message of support, Ms Aletta Miller, UN Women Representative, South Africa Multi-Country Office, stated that, "It has been 24 years of the UNSCR 1325, and since then, Africa, has made progress. A significant number of countries have adopted National Action Plans on Women, Peace and Security, and this must be celebrated."

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Preventing Violent Extremism Through Transitional Justice Interventions



The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation convened an Expert Roundtable and Authors Workshop in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, focused on exploring innovative strategies to prevent violent extremism through transitional justice interventions.

The backdrop for this gathering is the alarming rise in terrorism-related deaths across sub-Saharan Africa, accounting for 48% of global terrorism fatalities in 2021. Previously unaffected regions are now grappling with the scourge of violent extremism, often fueled by governance challenges and human rights abuses. Traditional responses, largely militarized and externally influenced, have failed to address the underlying drivers of extremism, exacerbating human rights violations and perpetuating cycles of violence.

Recognizing the limitations of conventional counterterrorism strategies, there is a growing consensus on the need for alternative approaches rooted in transitional justice.

Transitional justice, as part of broader peacebuilding efforts, offers a promising avenue for addressing the root causes of extremism and fostering reconciliation in conflict-affected societies.

However, transitional justice mechanisms have been underutilized, overshadowed by militarized narratives and strategies.

The roundtable sought to achieve several key objectives, including generating new knowledge on the nexus between preventing violent extremism and transitional justice. The goal was also to promote evidence-based approaches to conflict management and extremism prevention, as well as to establish a network of experts committed to advancing alternative narratives and strategies for combating extremism in Africa.

Reparations Project in South Africa



Individuals and communities who endured gross human rights violations during apartheid have the right to reparations, as outlined by both international and South African law. However, the South African government has yet to fully implement the recommendations for reparations set forth by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Thanks to funding from Open Society – Africa, the South African Coalition for Transitional Justice (SACTJ) now has the resources to advance its reparations project.

Since the publication of the TRC reports, civil society has been engaged in a prolonged struggle to compel the government to fulfill the reparations recommended by the TRC. SACTJ and its members, including the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, have spent decades advocating for comprehensive reparations.

Two decades after the TRC concluded its work, most victims of apartheid-era gross human rights violations still await redress or reparations. The government has lacked a mandated policy guiding reparations, instead implementing administrative regulations that have failed to provide adequate and inclusive redress. Despite the post-Apartheid state's commitment to reparations, the recommendations of the TRC, and international obligations to implement reparations, the government has fallen short in providing redress to victims of apartheid-era gross human rights violations on multiple fronts.

The reparations project aims to rally civil society and stakeholders to develop a mandated policy and process that is inclusive, victim-centered, and human rights-based. This initiative seeks to recognize and provide redress for individuals who suffered gross human rights violations under apartheid.

Honouring Pioneers in Women, Peace and Security

Together with partners, the IJR paid tribute to three exceptional individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of Women, Peace, and Security in Africa:

Hon Betty Bigombe: Special Envoy of the Republic of Uganda to the South Sudan Peace Process.

Hon Nozizwe Madlala-Routledge: Director of the Quaker United Nations Office, Geneva.

Ms Emma Kaliya: Executive Director of the Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre (MHRRC) and Commissioner at the Malawi Peace and Unity Commission.

The tributes underscored the importance of continued collaboration and dialogue to address the complex challenges facing women in peace and security. The conversations also underscored the interconnectedness of gender equality and peacebuilding efforts.

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South African Youth: Seize the Power

-by Danielle Hoffmeester,
Project Leader,
IJR



Across South Africa, a generation stands at a pivotal crossroads, their voices echoing the complexities of a nation in flux. From the Eastern Cape to Kwa-Zulu Natal and the Northern Cape, young voices are shaping the narrative of democracy in the so-called 'Rainbow Nation.'

Over the past few months, I've had the privilege of engaging with young people across these diverse landscapes, facilitating dialogues on democracy, civic participation, and the role of youth in shaping South Africa's future. What emerged from these conversations was a rich tapestry of perspectives, reflecting both the aspirations and disillusionments of South Africa's youth.

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Women’s Election Mechanism for Peace: Training of Trainers



A collaborative effort led by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, the Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, Media Monitoring Africa, and the South African Women in Dialogue organised a four-day training of trainers for the Women’s Election Mechanism for Peace (WEMP), in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Over the course of the training, WEMP peace monitors engaged in a comprehensive programme, aimed at fortifying their capacity to safeguard democracy and promote inclusivity in electoral processes.

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Africa’s Approach to Transforming the Multilateral System



The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation and the Life and Peace Institute jointly hosted a diplomatic briefing on “Transforming the Multilateral System: Leveraging the Insights from the African Union Transitional Justice Policy to Remake the Global Order,” in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 17 April.

The briefing was a platform for exchanging policy ideas on Africa’s approach to the transformation of the multilateral system, with an emphasis on the redesigning of the United Nations Security Council. A transitional justice approach to transforming multilateralism recognises that the UN system is un-democratic in its current design, and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council wield a disproportionate degree of power, which undermines the peace and security of Africa and the rest of the world. In attendance were Addis Ababa-based diplomats, decision-makers, government officials, CSO practitioners, analysts, academics, and inter-governmental actors, working on issues that relate to governance, peace, security, transitional justice and multilateral affairs relating to the African continent.

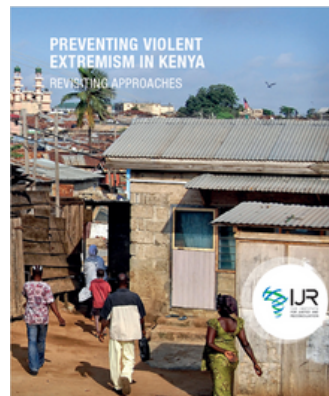
South Africa’s Freedom Day

- Message from Prof Cheryl Hendricks

As we celebrate Freedom Day on April 27th, it is important to take time to contemplate the difficult path that was paved for us to enjoy the freedom that we now have.

The struggle for freedom against the oppressive regime of apartheid, which enabled us to cast our votes, on this day in 1994, is evidence of the steadfast commitment to justice and equality that the people of South Africa continue to hold. Freedom Day marked the dawn of a new era, instilling hope for a brighter future for all. South Africa commemorates 30 years of democracy this year. Nelson Mandela’s words continue to resonate, reminding us of the numerous challenges that lie ahead:

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Preventing Violent Extremism in Kenya: Revisiting Approaches

Kenya has increasingly taken a whole-of-society approach to countering and now preventing violent extremism. This is encapsulated in the development of national and county action plans for P/CVE, which are lauded for their ability to assign roles and responsibilities, avoid a duplication of work and allow for context-specific responses. This approach should be shared with other countries on the continent, which face similar challenges of extremism.

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African Union and Transitional Justice: Healing the Past and Restoring Human Dignity

A new book, edited by Prof Tim Murithi, IJR’s Head of Peacebuilding Interventions, has been launched. The new publication’s title is “African Union and Transitional Justice: Healing the Past, Restoring Human Dignity.” In February 2019, the African Union Assembly of Heads of State and Government formally adopted the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP), which outlines a broad range of processes for addressing the legacies of past violations and mechanisms for building peaceful, inclusive and stable societies. The AU’s adoption of this policy is a unique innovation, as it is the first time in its history that the African continent has enumerated and institutionalised its own approach to addressing the past. Despite the adoption of the AUTJP there is a need for African governments and societies to engage and implement the policy at the national and communal levels.

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Empowering Today’s Youth



The Youth Identity project, spearheaded by IJR’s Danielle Hoffmeester, facilitated discussions with South African youth on democracy, civic engagement, and the vital role of young people in shaping their envisioned future.

In a special initiative, youth from Umzimkhulu composed a democracy-themed song with the following translated lyrics from isiZulu:

“Celebrate freedom
Freedom is ours
Celebrate our struggle heroes.”

You can watch the song and dance performance on the IJR YouTube channel.

[WATCH HERE >](#)

Upcoming Events

22 - 23
APRIL
2024

South Africa’s Pre-election Survey Results Launch
Webinar

South Africa’s Pre-election Survey Results Launch
Pretoria, South Africa

24 MAY
2024

Celebrating Africa Day: Influence and Intersection of African Cultures and Modern Justice Systems

Cape Town, South Africa

28 - 30
MAY
2024

Deployment of 300 Peace Monitors in Five Provinces for the 2024 General Elections in South Africa

Eastern Cape, Gauteng, Kwa Zulu Natal, Limpopo, and Western Cape, South Africa



WEBSITE
IJR.ORG.ZA



EMAIL US
INFO@IJR.ORG.ZA

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