



CONNECT

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- The IJR 2025 AGM
- Africa's Fight for Justice: Geopolitics, Reparations & Peace
- Youth, Peace and Security Lab
- Gertrude Shope Women's Mediation Network's Solidarity Conference
- The IJR hosts Capacity Building Training for Namibian IPC Party
- CSOs Gather to Shape Revision of National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security
- Democracy at a Crossroads: Navigating the Challenges of a Multipolar World Order
- Launch of Massive Online Open Course: Policy making in the African Union
- Commemoration of Africa Day with Reflections on Justice, Solidarity, and Sustainability
- The IJR's Africa Day Celebration
- The IJR Engages Mining Communities on Climate Justice and Reconciliation
- Roundtable Meeting with the Okedongmu Children in Korea Delegation
- Traditional Women Leaders Inform South Africa's New National Action Plan on WPS



Note from the IJR Executive Director

Dear Friends and Partners,

May is Africa Month. Accordingly, the IJR was proud to host and participate in a number of critical engagements that serve to mark and celebrate Africa. We also held our Annual General Meeting, dialogues on climate justice, peace and security labs for youth, and peace tables aimed at providing solidarity with women in conflict areas and implementing our National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security (WPS). The IJR also continued to play a key role in unpacking and shaping narratives on global peace and security and continental policy making.

Our 2025 AGM offered a moment to take stock of our collective progress and impact over the past year and to reaffirm our strategic direction for the years ahead. We were honoured by the presence of long-standing partners and new stakeholders who remain committed to advancing justice and peace alongside us.

Africa Month was also a time of mourning and tribute. We joined the continent in celebrating the life and legacy of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, a pioneering voice in African literature and thought leader for justice, identity, and transformation.

We also bid farewell to Ma-Gertrude Shope, an extraordinary liberation struggle icon and women's rights advocate who embodied the courage and vision of her generation. Her contribution to South Africa's liberation, gender equality and the global Women, Peace and Security agenda will remain etched in our memory and practice.

At IJR, we are reminded daily that peace and reconciliation is not a destination, but a journey.

Thank you and we hope you enjoy reading this newsletter. – **Prof Cheryl Hendricks**

The IJR 2025 AGM



On 30 May, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at its offices in Cape Town. The gathering offered an opportunity to reflect on the organisation's key achievements in 2024 and the first quarter of 2025, to draw important lessons, and to chart the strategic direction for the next five years.

The meeting was opened by Mr Lorenzo Angus Davids, Acting Chairperson of the IJR Board, who commended the Executive Director, Prof Cheryl Hendricks and all the IJR staff for their dedication and impactful work throughout 2024.

Prof Hendricks reminded attendees of IJR's guiding vision – a Pan-African organisation that seeks to build fair, inclusive, democratic, and peaceful societies in Africa. She further outlined the institution's strategic focus:

- Empowering policy actors to integrate peacebuilding and governance research into policy processes.
- Encouraging communities to assert agency in transforming divided societies.
- Supporting the implementation of peacebuilding and transitional justice policies, programmes, and processes.

The IJR's increasing presence at global, continental, and national levels was a defining feature of 2024. Internationally, the IJR engaged with the United Nations and African Union on reforming the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the peacebuilding architecture, and contributed to the Summit of the Future.

Participation in the Women Mediators Retreat in New York and the FriEnt Peacebuilding Forum in Berlin, further positioned the organisation as a global thought leader in peacebuilding.

[READ MORE >](#)

Africa's Fight for Justice: Geopolitics, Reparations & Peace

From May 20 to 22, the Centre for Pan-African Studies (CPAS) at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, hosted Prof Tim Murithi, as a Visiting Scholar at SOAS, and Head of Peacebuilding Interventions at the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, to conduct three CPAS seminars exploring Africa's role in reshaping global governance, advancing reparations, and implementing transitional justice. The CPAS is a leading centre of excellence undertaking cutting-edge research on issues that relate to Pan-Africanism as well as issues across the African continent. The seminar discussions highlighted urgent calls for systemic change, historical redress, and community-led peacebuilding across the continent.

Confronting Colonial Legacies: Africa's Demand for Global Democratic Reform

On Tuesday 20th May, the first CPAS seminar entitled: "Pan-African Perspectives on the Emerging Global Order" included a presentation by Prof Murithi providing an analysis of Africa's historical inclusion from the formation of the multilateral system as well as a critical analysis of the exploitative underpinnings of the global system. From the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade to colonialism and apartheid, the seminar discussed and emphasised how Africa has long been marginalised by the Post-World War II order, which has now come to an end. Prof Murithi argued that the end of the Post-World War II order presents a crucial window opportunity for the African continent to propose and advocate for the evolution of the multipolar reality towards a more global democratic order.

The IJR, in partnership with the International Peace Institute (IPI), has conducted a series of Expert Surveys in South Africa, Kenya, and Nigeria that has revealed growing support among African governments for invoking Article 109 of the United Nations Charter, which allows for the convening of a General Conference to review the organisation's founding document.


[READ MORE >](#)

Youth, Peace and Security Lab



From 9 to 11 May, the IJR, with support from the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa, hosted the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Lab in Pretoria. The Lab brought together 20 emerging youth leaders from across Southern Africa to strengthen the implementation of the YPS Agenda, as outlined in UNSCR 2250.

The YPS Lab created space for critical reflection, learning, and innovation in peacebuilding. Over three days, participants analysed peace and security challenges facing the region and co-developed strategies aligned with the evolving conflict landscape marked by violent extremism, shrinking civic space, and democratic decline. Sessions included action planning, and collaborative problem-solving.

A participant shared: *"Over the past three days, we've been inspired by thought-provoking discussions, meaningful connections, and the unwavering commitment of young people across Southern Africa. We leave this space with renewed hope, knowing the future rests in the hands of passionate youth driving change in their communities."*

Despite increased global attention on the YPS and Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agendas, implementation remains limited, especially in rural and underrepresented areas. The YPS Lab addressed this by equipping youth leaders with the tools to lead peacebuilding efforts, influence National Action Plans, and strengthen cross-sector collaboration.

The Lab forms part of the broader WaY Peace Labs initiative, which includes a WPS Lab held in March 2025. Together, they seek to nurture a new generation of feminist peacebuilders who drive transformative change and ensure that youth and women are not only included but are leading peace efforts across Southern Africa.

Gertrude Shope Women's Mediation Network's Solidarity Conference



Convened under the theme "Escalation of Conflict and its Impact on Women, Peace and Security and the Protection of Human Rights", the Gertrude Shope Women's Mediation Network's Solidarity Conference, was held by DIRCO, with support from the IJR, on 9 May in Pretoria.

The conference underscored the fact that from forced displacement to heightened risks of gender-based violence, women bear the disproportionate burden of war yet, remain largely excluded from formal peace negotiations. It was in this light that South Africa's Minister of International Relations and Cooperation, Mr Ronald Lamola, delivered a keynote address, expressing hope that the Gertrude Shope Women's Mediation Network will become a powerful amplifier of women's voices in negotiations across Africa and beyond.

A diverse cross-section of women leaders and peacebuilders participated in the conference—from civil society, government, and international organisations—sharing experiences, strategies, and solutions. The conference also brought to the fore the devastating and gendered impact of armed conflict on women and girls, with women's experiences shared from conflict-affected countries including the DRC, Palestine, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Mozambique.

Prof Cheryl Hendricks, Executive Director of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation co-moderated sessions at the conference, highlighting women's participation in peace processes that is essential for achieving just, sustainable peace.

An outcomes document was produced from the conference, feeding into WPS policy platforms at the United Nations, African Union and regional economic communities.

Sadly, Africa mourns the passing of Ma-Gertrude Shope. The former ANC Women's League president was an educator, freedom fighter, trade unionist, and former Member of Parliament in South Africa, who passed away at the age of 99 on 22 May 2025. She illuminated the path for generations of women peacebuilders.

The IJR hosts Capacity Building Training for Namibian IPC Party



On 4 June, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, in collaboration with Afrobarometer and the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (PMG), hosted a Capacity Building Training session for members of the Namibia's Independent Patriots for Change (IPC) Party, the official opposition party in the country.

As a new political party in Namibia's Parliament and the official opposition, the IPC participated in the training to build the capacity of its members for more effective parliamentary engagement. The training focused on two key themes: the use of Afrobarometer data to inform policy decisions and the value of parliamentary monitoring through PMG's comprehensive tools. Together, these resources offer political leaders practical ways to promote accountability and evidence-based governance, contributing to the development of a fair, democratic, and inclusive society in Namibia.

Founded in 2020, the IPC is a new political party rooted in grassroots participatory democracy, with a mission to restore dignity and uphold the values of honesty, integrity, and the rule of law. The party advocates for inclusivity, representing all Namibians regardless of background or previous political affiliation.

The day's proceedings began with an introduction to Afrobarometer, including its data methodology and Online Data Analysis tool, presented by Dominique Dryding, Afrobarometer's Capacity Building Manager.

"We have the trust and hope to really contribute to a better Namibia for all and in short, that is why we are here," said Christine Esperanza Aochamus, National General Secretary of the IPC, as she reflected on the importance of data-informed governance.

[READ MORE>](#)

CSOs Gather to Shape Revision of South Africa's National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security

South Africa's commitment to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda is deeply rooted in its own liberation history — a history that vividly demonstrates the pivotal role women have played in advancing peace, justice, and security in times of conflict and transition. Guided by the principles of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, South Africa recognises that true human security is impossible without peaceful states — and that lasting peace is unattainable without the safety and inclusion of all citizens, especially women and girls.

The country's National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace and Security reflects this understanding and is built on four foundational pillars: Participation, Prevention, Protection, and Relief and Recovery. These pillars not only mirror South Africa's constitutional values but also serve as instruments for transforming the peace and security landscape. It is against this backdrop that a diverse group of civil society actors, women leaders, policymakers, and peacebuilders gathered in Johannesburg on 25–26 May 2025 for a landmark consultation to revise South Africa's NAP.

The two-day Civil Society Peace Table and NAP Consultation was convened by CSO partners: The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR), South African Women in Dialogue (SAWID), Human Rights Institute of South Africa (HURISA), and the African Women Leaders Network (AWLN) South Africa. Partners also included the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO), UN Women– South Africa Multi Country Office and the Embassy of Ireland in South Africa. The gathering marked a critical step in ensuring the next generation of the plan reflects the women's realities and advances inclusive, sustainable peace across the country and the continent.



[READ MORE>](#)

Democracy at a Crossroads: Navigating the Challenges of a Multipolar World Order



The political landscape of the world is changing dramatically. The traditional dominance of Western democracies in determining international affairs is coming under threat as the globe enters the “Roaring Twenties” of the twenty-first century, which has been characterised by the COVID-19 epidemic, the war in Ukraine, and the fighting in Gaza. Global South emerging countries like Brazil, India, and South Africa are making their voices heard, demanding a place at the table, and seeking changes to the Liberal International Order (LIO). Urgent questions are brought up by this multipolar reality: What does democracy imply in a world where power is no longer centralised in the hands of a select few? And in the face of increasing geopolitical fragmentation, how can democratic values flourish?

Democracy Beyond the West: Rethinking Power, Rights, and Global Order

Traditional definitions of democracy rooted in Western institutions, elections, and individual rights are being challenged as the world grows more multipolar. A deeper, more expansive vision is emerging, one that prioritises:

1. People over process – Democracy isn’t just about formal institutions; it’s about whether citizens experience fairness, dignity, and agency in their daily lives.
2. Norms over laws – Binding treaties and legal frameworks matter, but so do informal practices, cultural values, and shared global principles.
3. Borders as bridges, not barriers – Climate change, pandemics, and inequality don’t stop at national lines. Democratic governance must operate across them, not just within them.

[READ MORE>](#)

Launch of Massive Online Open Course: Policy making in the AU

On 30 May 2025, the Data for Governance Alliance (a consortium of CSO partners in East, Southern, and West Africa, including the IJR) officially launched a free Massive Online Open Course titled “Policy Making in the African Union: African Solutions to African Problems.” The launch brought together stakeholders from across the continent to explore how this new learning platform can transform public engagement in African Union policymaking processes.

The course was developed in response to persistent challenges around limited access to the African Union’s policy spaces. It aims to empower civil society organisations, parliamentarians, government officials, diplomats, researchers, journalists, and educators with the knowledge, tools, and strategies to engage meaningfully with the African Union.

Course Overview:

Module 1: African Solutions to African Problems:

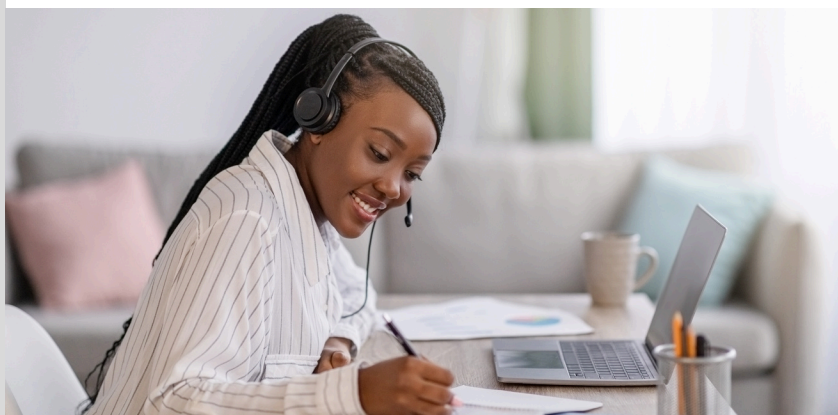
This module offers insights into how the AU develops policies to address Africa’s most significant challenges through ideas crafted within the continent.

Module 2: Influencing AU Policy Development: This module is designed to empower participants to step into the policymaking arena, offering insights on influencing AU decisions, building coalitions, and championing change.

Module 3: Influencing AU Policy Implementation: This module transcends theory and focuses on the practical application of policies in real-world settings, where their impact is most significant.

Module 4: AU Policy Toolbox: Access the essential resources for effective leadership. Harness data, educational materials, and advocacy tools to transform ideas into impactful actions.

The launch highlighted the course’s potential to raise awareness, increase participation, and build stronger networks for collaboration around African Union policies. This launch marks a significant step toward making African policymaking more inclusive, informed, and responsive—guided by the principle of African solutions for African challenges.



Commemoration of Africa Day with Reflections on Justice, Solidarity, and Sustainability

The IJR, in partnership with the Mandela Institute for Development Studies (MINDS), Africa Philanthropy Network, Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF), Centre on African Philanthropy and Social Investment, and Wits Business School, hosted a vibrant and thought-provoking Africa Day Commemoration in Johannesburg on 23 May. It was held under the theme: "Justice, Solidarity, Sustainability for Africa: Pathways of Hope and Regeneration."

The commemorative event brought together diverse stakeholders in governance, academia, civil society, and youth leadership for a day of reflection, dialogue, and renewed commitment to Africa's development.

Held at Wits Business School in Johannesburg, the event marked a moment of collective introspection on Africa's journey, its triumphs, challenges, and the enduring spirit of its people. The 2025 theme drew from the African Union's focus on justice for Africans and people of African descent, and echoed South Africa's G20 presidency objective of fostering solidarity, equality, and sustainable development.

In his opening remarks, Prof Mills Soko, Professor of International Business and Strategy at Wits Business School, highlighted the timeliness of the theme in the context of the 20th G20 Summit, being hosted on African soil. Setting the tone for a day rich in insight and purpose, he underscored the importance of leveraging the global spotlight to elevate African priorities on justice and sustainable development.

Prof Thuli Madonsela, Director of the Centre for Social Justice at Stellenbosch University and South Africa's former Public Protector, reflected on the immense potential within Africa to address its challenges and contribute innovatively to global development.

[READ MORE>](#)



Africa Day CELEBRATION

The Role of Culture in Shaping Positive Societal Transformation



Recognising that culture can act as a bridge between diverse African communities, promote healing, and create spaces for dialogue and collective action, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation commemorated Africa Month through a celebratory webinar held on 29 May.

The webinar was themed "The Role of Culture in Shaping Positive Societal Transformation." It brought together leading analysts, academics, cultural practitioners, and artists to explore how culture remains central to Africa's unity, identity, and future.

In a statement delivered by Prof Tim Murithi, Head of Peacebuilding Interventions at the IJR, Executive Director Prof Cheryl Hendricks shared that her key message for this year's Africa Day is a simple one. "You cannot truly develop on the basis of trying to assimilate into the culture of others. Culture shapes thinking, practices, values and beliefs, relationship to politics and society, and our relationship to each other. It defines who we are, and where, and how we want to develop. Culture is therefore our source of identity, our source of innovation and our source of creativity. It is the basis for our development."

Opening the session, Mwanja Ng'anjo, the IJR's Head of Communications, paid tribute to renowned Kenyan author and intellectual Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, one of Africa's most brilliant literary minds and cultural giants. "His influence is immeasurable," she said.

Guest speaker Dr Raj Chintaram, Programme Officer for Civil Society Engagement at the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (AU ECOSOCC) Secretariat, reflected on the historic founding of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) in 1963.

[READ MORE>](#)

IJR Engages Mining Communities on Climate Justice & Reconciliation



For the past 25 years, the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation has championed the need for South Africans to confront the legacies of the past, heal the deep wounds left by systemic injustice, and seek pathways toward a more inclusive and equitable future. As part of this ongoing mission, the IJR recognises the need to address the persistent economic and environmental injustices facing many communities today.

While a relatively new theme for the IJR, Climate Justice is now a key focus area for the organisation. This evolving strand of work seeks to create inclusive spaces for community voices to be heard, connect stakeholders across sectors, and shape a Just Energy Transition (JET) that is participatory, equitable, and environmentally responsible.

To support this vision, the IJR launched a year-long initiative to engage coal mining communities across South Africa. The goal is to facilitate meaningful dialogue between communities, government representatives, civil society organisations, and mining corporations. This process begins at the grassroots level, by entering communities, listening to their lived experiences, and identifying key challenges they face. This is then followed by community consultations, stakeholder engagements, and the development of an advocacy strategy aimed at influencing public policy.

Between January and April 2025, the IJR initiated the first phase of the project by establishing partnerships with local non-governmental organisations and community activists. This was followed by a scoping exercise that was conducted in May to assess the environmental and social challenges faced by mining communities in Middelburg and Carolina in Mpumalanga. These visits involved community dialogues on climate change, environmental justice, and community-led solutions.

[READ MORE>](#)

Roundtable Meeting with the Okedongmu Children in Korea Delegation



On 6 June, the IJR had the honour of hosting a roundtable meeting with representatives from Okedongmu Children in Korea (OKCK), a South Korean non-governmental organisation dedicated to peacebuilding and reconciliation on the Korean peninsula. The delegation included Prof Dong Jin Kim and Mr Jiwoo Kim from OKCK, alongside Associate Professor Helen Scanlon from the University of Cape Town.

The name “Okedongmu” translates to “children with their arms around each other’s shoulders,” a powerful symbol of friendship, unity, and the hope for reunification between North and South Korea. OKCK’s mission is rooted in supporting children affected by the division of the Korean peninsula, with a special focus on humanitarian aid for children from North Korea, and peace education initiatives for youth across the region.

The purpose of their visit was to learn more about the IJR, our work and impact, to exchange cross-border methodologies in justice and reconciliation, and to explore how the arts and youth engagement can contribute to long-term peacebuilding.

OKCK’s work is both humanitarian and creative. The organisation provides nutritional, medical, and educational support to North Korean children, ensuring they have the foundations to live healthy and dignified lives. Through peace education programmes, OKCK encourages children from both North and South Korea to reimagine a shared future built on empathy, respect, and cooperation.

One of the most poignant elements of OKCK’s work involves art. The organisation collects paintings and drawings created by children in Korea and beyond, using these artistic expressions to amplify their voices and raise awareness of the trauma caused by decades of division. These artworks serve as a platform for storytelling and healing, bringing visibility to the lived experiences of children affected by political separation.

[READ MORE>](#)

Traditional Women Leaders Inform South Africa's New National Action Plan on Women, Peace, and Security



As South Africa prepares to renew its National Action Plan (NAP) on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) beyond 2025, traditional women leaders have stepped forward to ensure that the next iteration reflects the lived realities, agency, and leadership of women in customary and rural settings. The current NAP, adopted in 2020, prioritises the meaningful participation of women and girls, along with gender non-conforming persons, in peace processes and decision-making in both conflict and non-conflict contexts.

It is under this commitment that the IJR, with its partners and civil society allies, convened a consultation on 12 May in Johannesburg. This gathering offered a platform for traditional women leaders to shape the emerging priorities of the new NAP.

The consultation spotlighted the critical and often under-recognised role of women traditional leaders in advancing peace and stability in South Africa. Participants from the Institute of African Royalty (IAR), the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA), and other traditional structures expressed a strong desire to be acknowledged as essential contributors to peacebuilding. They highlighted their day-to-day work in conflict resolution, promoting social cohesion, preventing gender-based violence, and safeguarding cultural values that uphold women's dignity and rights.

Opening remarks by Prof Cheryl Hendricks, Executive Director of the IJR, and CONTRALESA's Hon.

Zolani Mkiva, framed the day's discussions within the broader national peace architecture, calling for collaboration between state, civil society, and traditional authorities. Traditional women leaders emphasised the need for the new NAP to formally recognise their authority and increase support for their community-based efforts. They also called for tailored training, funding, and inclusion in national peace forums to amplify their impact.

Prof Cori Wielenga, Associate Professor in the Department of Political Sciences and Acting Director of the Centre for Mediation in Africa at the University of Pretoria, emphasised that conflict resolution efforts on the continent often falter because solutions are imported from elsewhere, failing to align with local contexts. Prof Wielenga underscored the importance of recognising and integrating indigenous knowledge systems, stressing that traditional women leaders possess vital skills in mediation and peacebuilding. She called for greater co-learning between formal institutions and traditional structures to achieve more sustainable and contextually relevant peace outcomes.

The consultation concluded with remarks from Ms Catherine Chegero, Program Specialist for Women, Peace, and Security at UN Women, who assured participants that the issues raised by would be taken into consideration in the drafting of the new NAP. Her assurance reaffirmed the importance of inclusive dialogue and reinforced UN Women's commitment to ensuring that the voices of women from all sectors, inform the future of South Africa's WPS agenda.



NOW AVAILABLE:

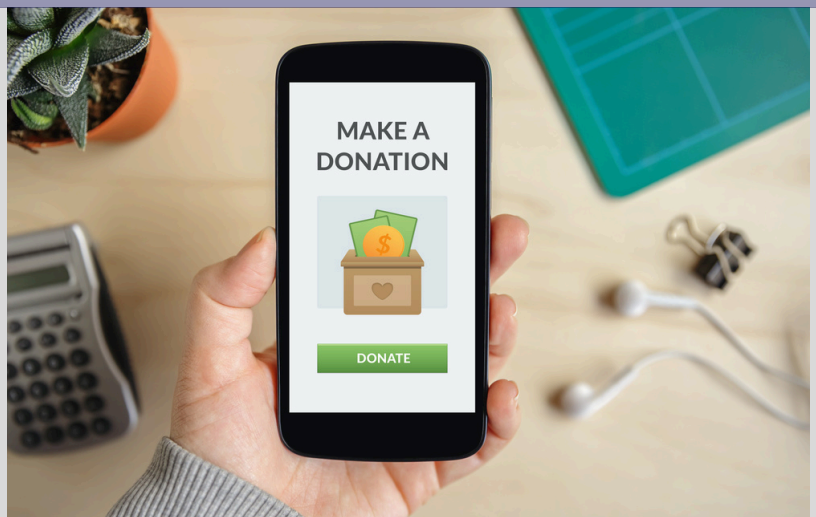
IJR'S 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Collaborating for a Peaceful and Just Future for Africa

[DOWNLOAD IT HERE>](#)

#IJRTurns25

**Help Make a Difference!
Donate Today and Support the Work of the IJR**



At the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, we are committed to supporting the building of fair, inclusive, democratic and peaceful societies across Africa.

Our work bridges the gap between grassroots action, evidence-based research, and policy advocacy, ensuring that healing, justice, and accountability are not just ideals, but lived realities. Join us in making transitional justice, peace and reconciliation a lived experience for all.

To make a donation of your choice, visit:

www.ijr.org.za/donate-page

or scan the QR code:



WEBSITE
IJR.ORG.ZA



EMAIL US
INFO@IJR.ORG.ZA