

AFRICA

INTEREST GROUP NEWSLETTER

About AIG and This Newsletter

Rwanda and The Democratic Republic of Congo Sign Landmark US-Brokered Peace Agreement in Washington.



INTRODUCTION

The ASIL Africa Interest Group (AIG) is committed to examining and organising events that foster dialogue on contemporary legal and socio-political issues that directly impact the character and well-being of African states and African people on the Continent and in the Diaspora. This newsletter is a place for African citizens, academics, scholars, workers, and allies to access recent developments in the field of international law, along with thought-provoking analysis and opinion pieces.

The Africa Interest Group newsletter also wants to hear from you and is inviting contribution pieces for our forthcoming newsletters! If you would like to contribute to the forthcoming issue, please contact our editors, Youssef Aziz (yha2009@nyu.edu) and Alois Aldridge Mugadza (alois.mugadza@uwi.edu).

The following section presents an overview of recent developments across the African continent.

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AFRICAN REGIONAL NEWS

The Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda Signed a US-brokered Peace Agreement

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda have signed a peace deal brokered by the United States, ending their 30-year conflict.¹ The Agreement aims to promote bilateral relations and economic development, as well as prevent further hostilities. It also calls for the safe return of refugees and internally displaced people and requires support for ongoing DRC-M23 negotiations, which Qatar is mediating. This follows recent violence by the M23 rebel group, which captured the cities of Goma and Bukavu earlier this year.

The East African Community (EAC)

EAC Assumes Leadership of Tripartite Task Force, Pushes for Unified Resource Strategy and Regional Trade Integration

The East African Community (EAC) has assumed leadership of the Tripartite Task Force (TTF), a regional integration body comprising COMESA, EAC, and SADC, for the next year, taking over from SADC during an AU summit in Malabo. EAC Secretary General Veronica Nduva called for a unified African resource mobilization strategy to replace fragmented efforts and emphasized the need for blended financing, greater private sector involvement, and the integration of technology.² As preparations continue for the official launch of the Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA), which entered into force in July 2024, the EAC will focus on finalizing tariff offers, completing rules of origin, and encouraging further ratification. The aim is to deepen regional trade integration, enhance competitiveness, and support inclusive industrial development in alignment with Agenda 2063.

Egypt

Egypt Highlights Regional Security and Development Goals at AU Summit

At the African Union's 7th Mid-Year Coordination Meeting in Malabo, President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi reaffirmed Egypt's commitment to advancing peace, security, and development across the continent, emphasizing its leadership of the North African Regional Capability of the African Standby Force.³ He detailed Egypt's progress in strengthening regional readiness through reforms and joint training, and called for sustainable financing and deeper AU collaboration. As Chair of AUDA-NEPAD's Orientation Committee, Al-Sisi highlighted priorities such as closing the development financing gap and implementing Agenda 2063, alongside achievements like mobilizing funds for skills and population initiatives and launching a climate change center in Cairo. In bilateral meetings, he discussed economic integration, trade, and regional security with leaders from Equatorial Guinea, Angola, and Ghana.

Sudan

UN warns of worsening humanitarian crisis in Sudan as displacement, hunger and disease escalate

The humanitarian crisis in El Fasher, North Darfur, has reached catastrophic levels amid ongoing conflict between Sudan's rival military factions. Nearly 40% of children under five suffer from acute malnutrition, water infrastructure has largely collapsed, and cholera is spreading rapidly due to poor sanitation and low vaccination coverage. Since April 2023, around 780,000 people have been displaced from the area, with famine declared and aid access severely limited. Despite the urgency, the UN's \$4.2 billion humanitarian response plan is only 21% funded.⁴ UN officials warn that without immediate humanitarian access, countless lives remain at risk.

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1 Divyabharthi Baradhan, *DR Congo and Rwanda sign US-brokered peace agreement*. JURIST (28 June, 2025), <https://www.jurist.org/news/2025/06/dr-congo-and-rwanda-sign-us-brokered-peace-agreement/>

2 The Tanzania Times, *East African Community Takes Over Tripartite Task Force Leadership From The SADC* (14 July, 2025), <https://tanzaniatimes.net/east-african-community-takes-over-tripartite-task-force-leadership-from-the-sadc/>

3 Daily News Egypt *Al-Sisi reaffirms Egypt's commitment to African security, development at AU Mid-Year Summit* (13 July, 2025), <https://www.dailynewsegypt.com/2025/07/13/al-sisi-reaffirms-egypts-commitment-to-african-security-development-at-au-mid-year-summit/>

4 UN News, *UN warns of worsening humanitarian crisis in Sudan as displacement, hunger and disease escalate* (7 July, 2025), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/07/1165340>

African Regional News —continued from page 2**Ghana****Tech Revolution in Africa's Malaria Fight**

Malaria poses a significant threat to the health and economy of Africa, costing the continent \$16 billion each year and claiming the lives of 600,000 people, most of whom are children under the age of five.⁵ Japanese start-up SORA Technology is addressing this issue by using AI-powered drones to accurately identify and treat mosquito breeding sites. This approach is more cost-effective than traditional methods. It represents a significant step forward in addressing one of Africa's most pressing development challenges.

IN THE COURTS**Semenya Wins Partial Victory in Landmark Human Rights Case**

The European Court of Human Rights ruled that Caster Semenya's right to a fair hearing had been violated by Swiss courts when they upheld World Athletics' testosterone regulations, which barred her from competing in her signature 800 m event.⁶ While the judgment does not overturn World Athletics' differences of sexual development (DSD) rules, it represents a partial victory for Semenya, who has described the case as a human rights issue affecting all athletes. The case will now be returned to the Swiss authorities for reconsideration. However, World Athletics maintains that its hormone regulations are necessary to ensure fair competition in women's sports.

Nigeria**Ghana's Chief Justice Challenges Suspension in Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court Over Rights Violations**

Ghana's Chief Justice, Gertrude Torkornoo, has filed a lawsuit at the ECOWAS Community Court, alleging that her

suspension violated her human rights.⁷ She claims that she was removed from her constitutionally appointed position without proper due process. The legal battle began in March 2025, when President Mahama suspended Torkornoo following petitions for her removal. This decision was later upheld by Ghana's Supreme Court, despite Torkornoo's arguments about procedural irregularities. In a national address, Torkornoo warned that the unprecedented nature of her removal proceedings threatened Ghana's democratic norms and could set a dangerous precedent for judicial independence.

REFLECTIONS**IACtHR Landmark Ruling Links Climate Crisis to Human Rights**

On 3 July 2025, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) issued an advisory opinion (OC-32/25) in San José, Costa Rica, in response to a request from Colombia and Chile.⁸ The Advisory Opinion declared that the climate emergency poses a threat to human rights. It affirmed the right to a healthy climate and obliged States to take urgent mitigation and adaptation measures. States are required to protect ecosystems, ensure a fair transition for vulnerable groups, and prevent climate-related harm by implementing effective policies. UN experts have praised the decision, emphasising that international cooperation and reparations are essential for achieving climate justice.

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5 Africanews, *AI drones lead breakthrough against malaria in Africa* (7 July, 2025), <https://www.africanews.com/2025/06/26/ai-drones-lead-breakthrough-against-malaria-in-africa-business-africa/>

6 BBC Sport, *Semenya's right to a fair hearing violated - ECHR* (7 July, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/sport/olympics/articles/c7vr04v3vpdo>

7 Halima Abena Kyerewah Adam, *Ghana dispatch: Chief Justice Gertrude Torkornoo challenges suspension in West African regional court*. JURIST. (11 July, 2025) <https://www.jurist.org/news/2025/07/ghana-dispatch-chief-justice-challenges-suspension-in-human-rights-lawsuit/>

8 Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *UN experts hail landmark Inter-American Court opinion on states' extensive climate obligations* [11 July 2025]. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/07/un-experts-hail-landmark-inter-american-court-opinion-states-extensive>

Reflections —continued from page 2**ICJ Issues Historic Advisory Opinion on Climate Obligations**

On 23 July 2025, the International Court of Justice issued a landmark Advisory Opinion affirming that States have binding legal obligations under international law to prevent dangerous climate change and limit global warming to 1.5°C. Drawing on sources including the Paris Agreement, human rights law, the law of the sea, and customary international law, the Court emphasized that States must exercise stringent due diligence to mitigate transboundary harm. The Opinion also underscores the centrality of nature protection and a human rights-based approach to climate action. It aligns with recent opinions from the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, marking a turning point in the legal landscape for climate accountability and international environmental governance.

WHAT'S NEXT**Zimbabwe Prepares to Host Global Wetland Summit as COP15 Nears**

From 23 to 31 July 2025, Zimbabwe will host over 1,000 delegates from 176 countries at the Ramsar COP15 Wetland Summit in Victoria Falls. The only second time that this significant conservation event has been held on the African continent. African wetlands play a vital role in maintaining Africa's ecological balance, serving as natural water filters and flood barriers, providing habitats for endangered species, and sustaining livelihoods through fisheries and agriculture. Preserving them is crucial for maintaining the continent's biodiversity, water security, and climate resilience.

OPINION**“The Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation: ‘Independency’ is a relevant feature, but what if ‘independency’ is coupled with the limitation of its mandate? An honest assessment**

Gino Naldi⁹ & Cristiano d’Orsi¹⁰

Our work focuses on the tasks and actual work of the Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission (IPRHC), instituted by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), an organization to which 27 African states are parties, exactly half of the total number of African sovereign states (54).

In 2011, the OIC, an intergovernmental, transnational organization defined by religious affiliation, which views itself as ‘the collective voice of the Muslim world’, adopted the Statute of a dedicated human rights body, the IPHRC. The IPHRC, an integral part of the OIC’s institutional structure, is the principal human rights organ of the OIC. It consists of eighteen human rights experts nominated by the member states but elected by the Council of Foreign Ministers, who serve in a personal capacity for a renewable term of three years. They must be independent, impartial, and persons of good character. In this framework, the nomination of women is encouraged. In this framework, the IPHRC’s overarching function is ‘to advance human rights and serve the interests of the Islamic Ummah’ (Muslim community). The IPHRC also issues public statements on a variety of controversial issues in defence of Islamic rights, primarily.

Based on our study, the IPHRC is likely to develop a quasi-legislative function in the future, as it has been assigned the task of adopting an evolutionary approach to the development of OIC human rights norms and standards. There are, however, notable omissions in the Statute regarding the IPHRC’s mandate; its flaws are manifold. It has few powers, and in the field of investigation, its powers

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9 LLM, PhD (University of Birmingham, UK)

10 Senior consultant at Witness Experts (London); former lecturer at the University of Johannesburg and at the Centre for Human Rights (University of Pretoria)

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are limited. It is not a supervisory body as such. Nowhere in the Statute or the OIC Charter is the concept of ‘protection’ or of a protective body to be found; they are conspicuous by their absence. No form of control machinery is provided or envisaged. No quasi-judicial competence is made available to consider individual petitions. The IPHRC has no enforcement powers. It is therefore quite incapable of providing the merest modicum of restraint upon member states or of acting as a guardian of rights. The mandate conferred on the IPHRC is limited to a loose, facilitative role. Given the egregious abuses of human rights committed by the repressive member state regimes, the absence of some form of control mechanism may be considered a fundamental failing.

It is apparent from a reading of the Statute that the IPHRC is in a subordinate role both to the governing organs of the OIC and, what is deeply regrettable, to the member states. In many instances, the IPHRC’s involvement is dependent on the prior consent of a member state. Doubts may therefore be expressed as to its capacity for independent action. The IPHRC is envisioned as an institution with a ‘light touch’, a weak organ with no enforcement powers. It may play an important promotional and cooperative role. However, under present circumstances, it is unlikely that the IPHRC will make any meaningful contribution towards the tangible protection of the rights of the individual.”

Report: The Survivor Behind the Accused: Gender Violence and Due Process Failures in Malawi

In March 2023, the University of Southern California Gould School of Law’s International Human Rights Clinic (USC IHRC), in partnership with the Clooney Foundation for Justice’s TrialWatch Initiative and the Center for Human Rights Education and Advice and Assistance (CHREAA) in Malawi, conducted groundbreaking research to examine the treatment of women detained for violent offenses. Led by Professor Hannah Garry and former Interim Director Henna Pithia, a team of four student attorneys participated with partners in a survey across nine prisons with respect to sixty-three detained women in Malawi—many of whom were survivors of gender-based violence (GBV).

The research aimed to assess the offenses leading to women’s incarceration, vulnerabilities faced by female detainees, and compliance with due process and fair trial

rights under international human rights law. Data was collected through prison interviews and case documentation. The USC IHRC designed the questionnaire and interview protocol from a trauma-informed approach, creating a model for future evaluations of justice systems globally.

The report reveals alarming gaps in Malawi’s justice system, including a lack of counsel, prolonged pre-trial detention, and gender discrimination. 43% of incarcerated women’s arrests or charges originated in the context of GBV or defense against a violent intimate partner, yet courts failed to consider the abuse as a defense or mitigating factor. None of the sixty-three women had legal counsel during arrest or initial investigations, and only 25% of convicted women had representation at trial. Ten women also reported physical abuse in custody.

In discussion with Malawian stakeholders, the report provides a roadmap for systemic change, including expanded legal aid and representation for women; gender-sensitive trainings for police, prison officials and judges; and legislative reform to reduce prolonged pre-trial detention, recognize self-defense in GBV contexts, and integrate trauma-informed best practices across the proceedings.

Professor Khadeija Mahgoub:¹¹**Rule of Law and Accountability for Crimes Against Humanity and Other War Crimes in Sudan**

In his discussion of the rule of law in international law within the international legal order, Lord Bingham emphasizes its complementary role to that of individual states’ national laws.¹² As part of this complementary role, Khadeija Mahgoub participated in Fikra for Studies and Development’s (FikraSD) webinar on ‘The Dialectic of Governance and Justice: Conceptualising and Implementing the Rule of Law in Sudan’ on Saturday, June 21st.¹³

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11 Assistant Professor – Faculty of Law – University of Khartoum – TILIG Co-Chair.

12 Tom Bingham, *The Rule of Law* (2nd edn, Penguin Books 2011) 110.

13 Study available in: [Publications - FikraSD](#) (Last visited 14th July 2025).



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The ongoing armed conflict in Sudan has sparked debates about the role of rule of law mechanisms and accountability issues. The FikraSD study argued that a hybrid form of accountability tribunals, combining international and local measures, is the best approach. In this context, Khadeija Mahgoub's main argument was that the complementary role of international law should not be overlooked. By avoiding generalized narratives and common stereotypes of African (Sudanese) judicial systems as invalid,¹⁴ the most effective approach would be to prioritize local Sudanese accountability measures before advocating for hybrid forms to hold those responsible accountable. Arguably, numerous positive indicators suggest that multiple elements of accountability measures already exist in Sudan. While she echoed the overall perspective of the study—to create “a uniquely Sudanese understanding of Rule of Law”—she outlined potential areas for further research, emphasizing the importance of avoiding generalized narratives and continuing to explore and evaluate purely Sudanese accountability frameworks before integrating recent international law developments to create a Sudanese accountability model from within. She also emphasized the importance of discussing the concept of the rule of law on the global stage.

14 James T. Gathii, 'Africa' in Bardo Fassbender and others (eds), *The Oxford Handbook in the History of International Law* (OUP 2012) 407.

MEMBER UPDATES

New Book by Dr. Damilola S. Olawuyi

Title: Sustainable Development Law: Principles, Practices, and Prospects (Oxford University Press, 2025)

Link: [OUP Website](#)

Dr. Damilola S. Olawuyi has published a new book with Oxford University Press exploring the foundations and future trajectories of sustainable development law. The book offers a comprehensive treatment of key principles, emerging trends, and regional perspectives on sustainable development governance.

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