

CHRISTOF HEYNS

In Memoriam: 1959 – 2021



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This book is dedicated to the memory and legacy of Professor Christof Heyns

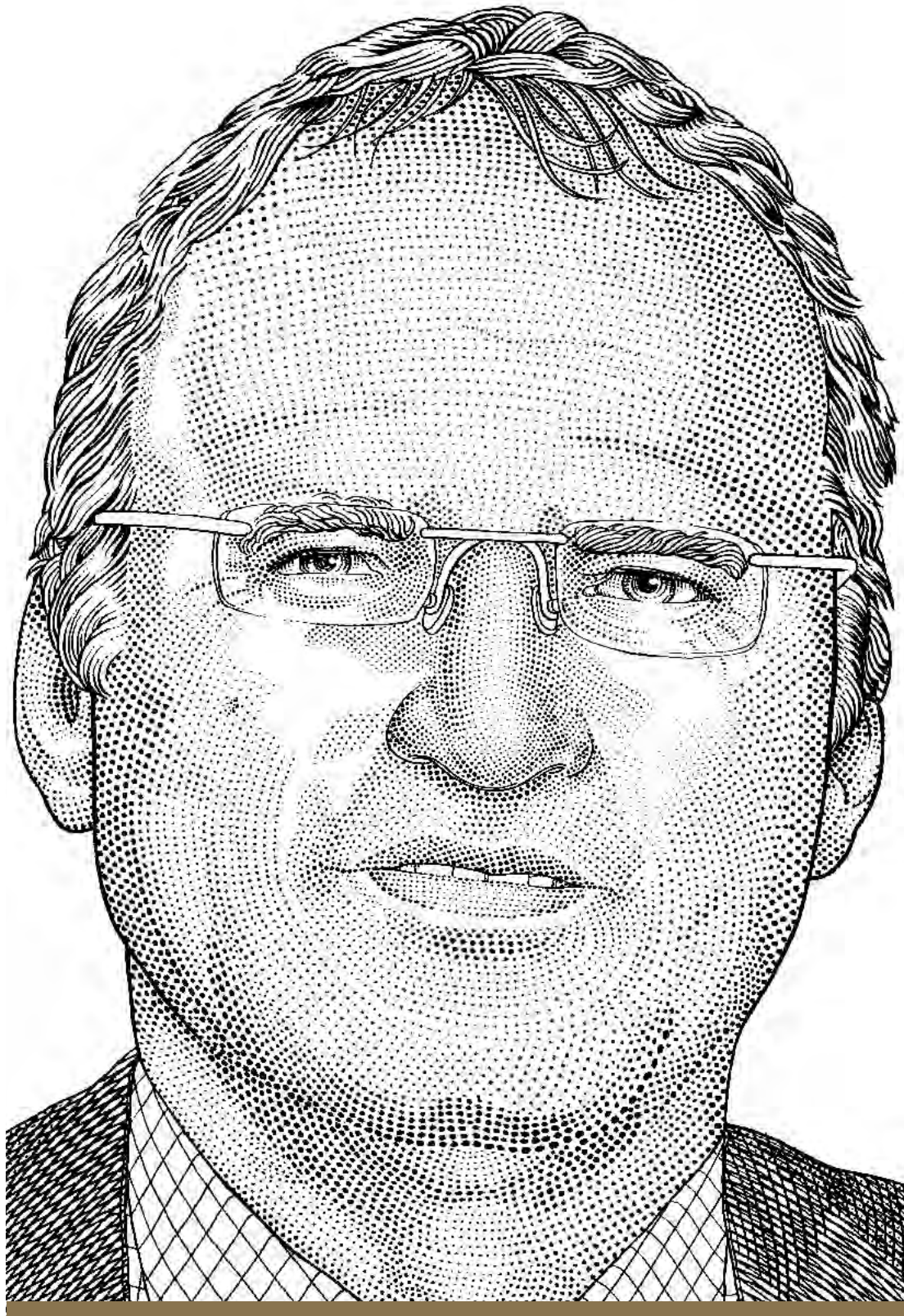
It was compiled by the Centre for Human Rights and the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, to honour the memory of Christof Heyns at an event on 15 November 2021 where a tree was planted at the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa on the Hatfield Campus at the University of Pretoria

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In memory of Christof Heyns
www.facebook.com/christofheyns

Opgedra aan Fearika, Renée, Willemien, Adam, Renée, Arné en Isak



Portrait by Daniël du Plessis

CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Centre for Human Rights mourns the passing of former Director Christof Heyns (10 January 1959 – 28 March 2021)

The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (UP), is deeply saddened by the sudden passing of its previous Director, Professor Christof Heyns. His death is an incredible loss, and he will be truly missed by us and so many others across the world.

Christof was so many things to so many people.

To us at the Centre, he was a founding father, a trail-blazer, and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

He was our dynamic initiator-in-chief. He played a pioneering role in positioning the Centre as a pan-African centre of excellence. Constantly brimming with new ideas and grand schemes, plans and projects, he propelled the Centre into new directions and challenged it to explore different dimensions. To Christof, if something could be conceived, it could be achieved. Among these initiatives are landmark events that will be there for many years to come, including the African Human Rights Moot Court

Competition, which in 2021 celebrates 30 years; the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition; and the National Schools Moot Competition (which was later extended to countries beyond South Africa, under the aegis of the Global Campus of Human Rights).

His passing is too soon, and too sudden. It is such a loss. He still had so much to offer. But what a legacy this giant leaves.

Christof was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights from 1999 to 2006. He was Dean of the Faculty of Law at UP from 2007 to 2010. After stepping down as Dean, he became the founding Co-Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa (ICLA) at UP. He was United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016; and was a member of the UN Human Rights Committee from 2017 to 2020.

In each of these positions, he made significant and original and long-lasting contributions.

As Director of the Centre, he left his fingerprint on the heart and soul of the Centre. The Centre logo – Africa as a butterfly – was his brainchild, based on the notion that a minor or seemingly insignificant change or action can have momentous or consequential outcomes or consequences. He captured our essence in the phrase “excellence with Ubuntu”. It was Christof who took the initiative towards establishing the Master’s in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa programme, which is part of the Global Campus of Human Rights.

As Dean of the Faculty, he insisted on a greater focus on post-graduate studies, and in particular doctoral studies at the Faculty. He secured funding for full-time doctoral students, and made the Faculty a magnet for talented prospective students from across the African continent.

As Special Rapporteur, he drew attention to cutting-edge issues such as the use of force by private security providers in the law enforcement contexts; the use of drones and autonomous weapons in armed conflict or counter-terrorism operations; and the role of forensic science in protecting the right to life. During 2016, he chaired the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi.

As member of the Human Rights Committee, he was pivotal in the drafting of General Comment 37, the right of peaceful assembly (article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).

As an academic, he was recognised internationally as a leading expert in the field of international human rights law, including right to life issues and regional human rights mechanisms. He has published widely on these matters. His experience as

Special Rapporteur drew him to explore an area surprisingly neglected by legal academics – the ‘right to life’ and ‘freedom from violence’. He published widely around these themes. He also was a member of the Working Group on Death Penalty, Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. He has been leading discussions at the level of the Commission on how to curb the excessive use of police force in Africa.

Over many years and to generations of students, Christof was an inspiring teacher and mentor. He supervised a number of doctoral candidates who are in their own right contributing as South African legal academics: Bernard Bekink, Henk Botha, Willem Gravett, Magnus Killander, Wessel Le Roux, Frans Viljoen. Other supervisees of Christof include Thompson Chengeta, Waruguru Kaguongo and Zambian Judge Mumba Malila.

His academic interest was varied, and included expounding on the ‘struggle theory’ of human rights, and exploring the life and times of Jan Smuts. One of his abiding passions was to better track and understand the actual effect of international human rights on the real lives of people. This concern led him to devise a far-reaching study of the effect of the core United Nations human rights treaties in twenty UN member states, which culminated in the publication Heyns and Viljoen *The impact of the United Nations human rights treaties at the domestic level* (2002). This work has been described as ‘seminal’. Christof has energised a follow-up study, which tracks the changes in impact over the subsequent 20 years. During his sabbatical in Stellenbosch, he was preparing the results of this study, involving twenty country-based researchers or teams, for publication.



Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



Christof was also a great editor and collector of materials, with a view to make inaccessible documents available to a broader public. At a time when the African regional human rights system was largely unknown, he collected and published a number of volumes of texts and commentaries. In this way, he breathed life into an almost non-existent field of academic study. The collection Heyns and Killander (eds) *Compendium of key human rights documents of the African Union* (PULP, various editions) has served – and will still serve – as a source of reference to generations of students of African human rights law.

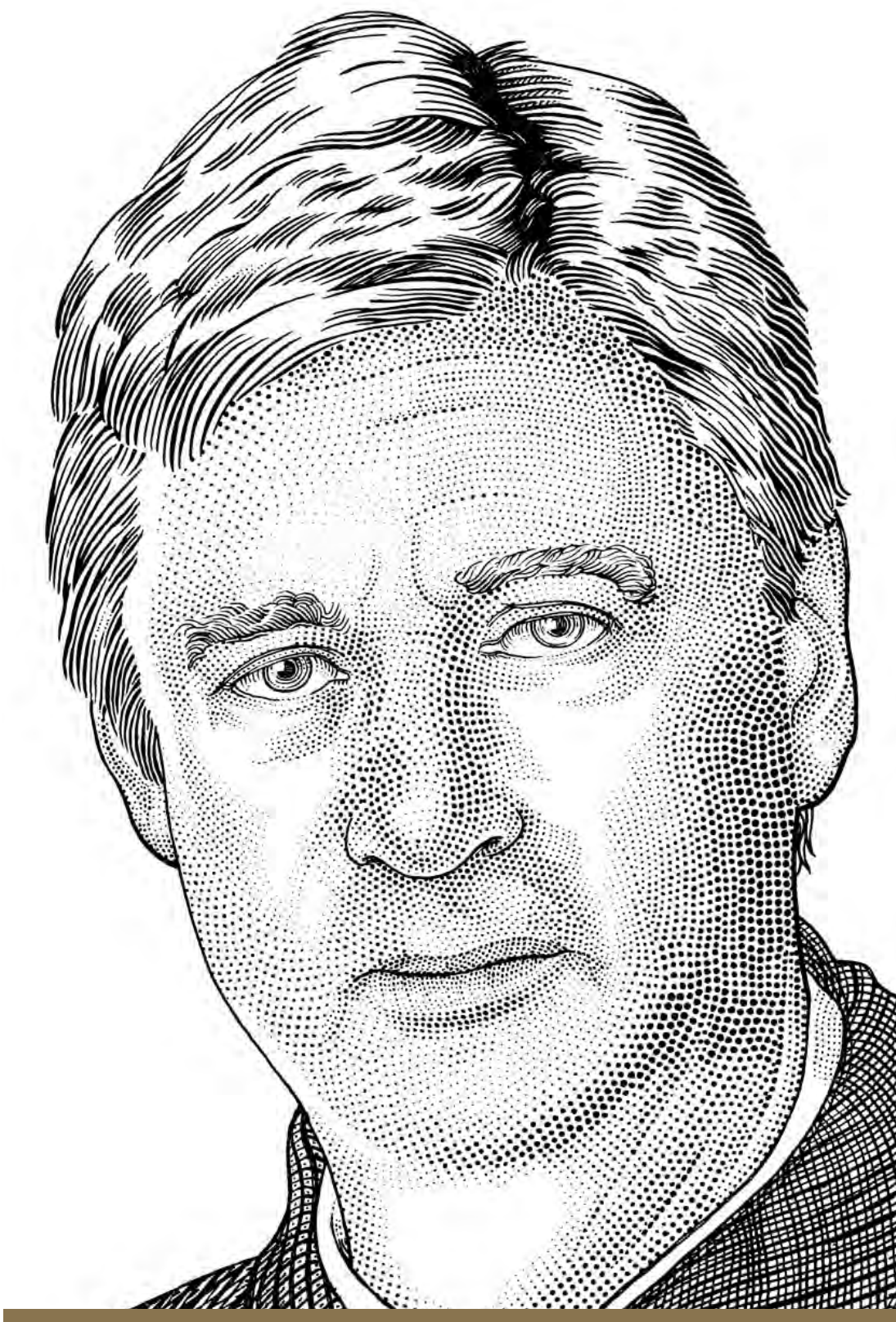
It was also his passion to see others publish, and was involved in the founding of two such endeavours. First, he was the (co)founding editor of the *African Human Rights Law Journal*, which has been published since 2001. Second, together with Faculty colleagues, he forged the Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) into being. PULP just published a landmark publication edited by him and Professor Philip Alston, Sarah Knuckey, and Thomas Probert, *Alston and Heyns on Unlawful Killings: A Compendium of the Jurisprudence of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2004-2016*.

Christof Heyns was an internationalist. He found great pleasure in regularly teaching at the University of Oxford and at the American University in Washington, D.C. He has been a Humboldt Fellow at Heidelberg University, a Fulbright Scholar at Yale Law School and a Fulbright Fellow at Harvard Law School.

There were so many dimensions to Christof, each of which he inhabited so fully and so completely. Whether it was rowing, being a father, a family man, a grandfather, playing the guitar, appreciating a good book or a piece of music, or working for human rights. He was a good and deeply moral man, integrity personified, warm-hearted, had a quirky sense of humour, and was ready with a witticism for every occasion. His enthusiasm was boundless and infectious, leaving no one untouched whose life intersected with his. He was immeasurably wise.

Our heart-felt condolences and wishes of comfort and strength go to his wife Fearika, his children Willemien, Adam, and Renée, his mother, other family, and all his friends and colleagues who had the privilege of walking some part of his path with him.

May his spirit soar. We all honour, appreciate and have been touched by his consequential life.



JOHANN VAN DER WESTHUIZEN

Christof Heyns gedagtes

The untimely death of Christof Heyns is deeply painful. He still had much to give to his family, friends, colleagues, country, the world... and me. The Grim Reaper in *Monty Python's Meaning of Life* made a mistake. Whilst the dark old spoilsport jealously swept through the Stellenbosch mountains on a beautiful Sunday, he took the brightest one simply because he was right there, enjoying himself nogal.

For more than 40 years I was privileged to know him as my student; colleague; advisor and co-conspirator; travel companion on three continents; fellow biker and hiker; and friend. He influenced my life. I hope that I contributed to his.

With colleagues, I founded the Centre for Human Rights, primarily as opposition to apartheid. Christof soon joined it, as well as the Department of Jurisprudence, which I headed. He succeeded me as the Centre's director, led it into the rest of Africa and made it hugely inspiring and influential.

The third director, Frans Viljoen, further built it into a beacon of hope and a famous example of success in the mostly uphill struggle for good, often through more defeats than victories.

Christof's awesome achievements on many fronts are well-known. He wanted to save Africa - and later the world - with his impressive intellect; vast knowledge; philosophical insight; endless enthusiasm; original ideas; hard work through many nights; visits to dark and dangerous places where perils like Ebola were lying in waiting; and, of course, moot courts in several corners of the world. He touched many lives.

He was one of very few people with whom I could talk about matters that mattered. I miss him.

Without disagreement, friendship means little. We mostly overcame ours with open minds and rational debate. During events in the UP Law Faculty in 2019 our friendship got caught in the cross fire ... and was

wounded. Collateral damage. But, I believe that it survived ... and is surviving.

Christof brought Bob Dylan's song "It's not dark yet (but it's getting there)" to my attention. In vain moments I compiled a list of music pieces to be played at my funeral, where people would be expected to be sad. I put this song on the list; and got some pleasure out of imagining how Christof would cry when he heard it on that occasion. When we disagreed I even wondered if the

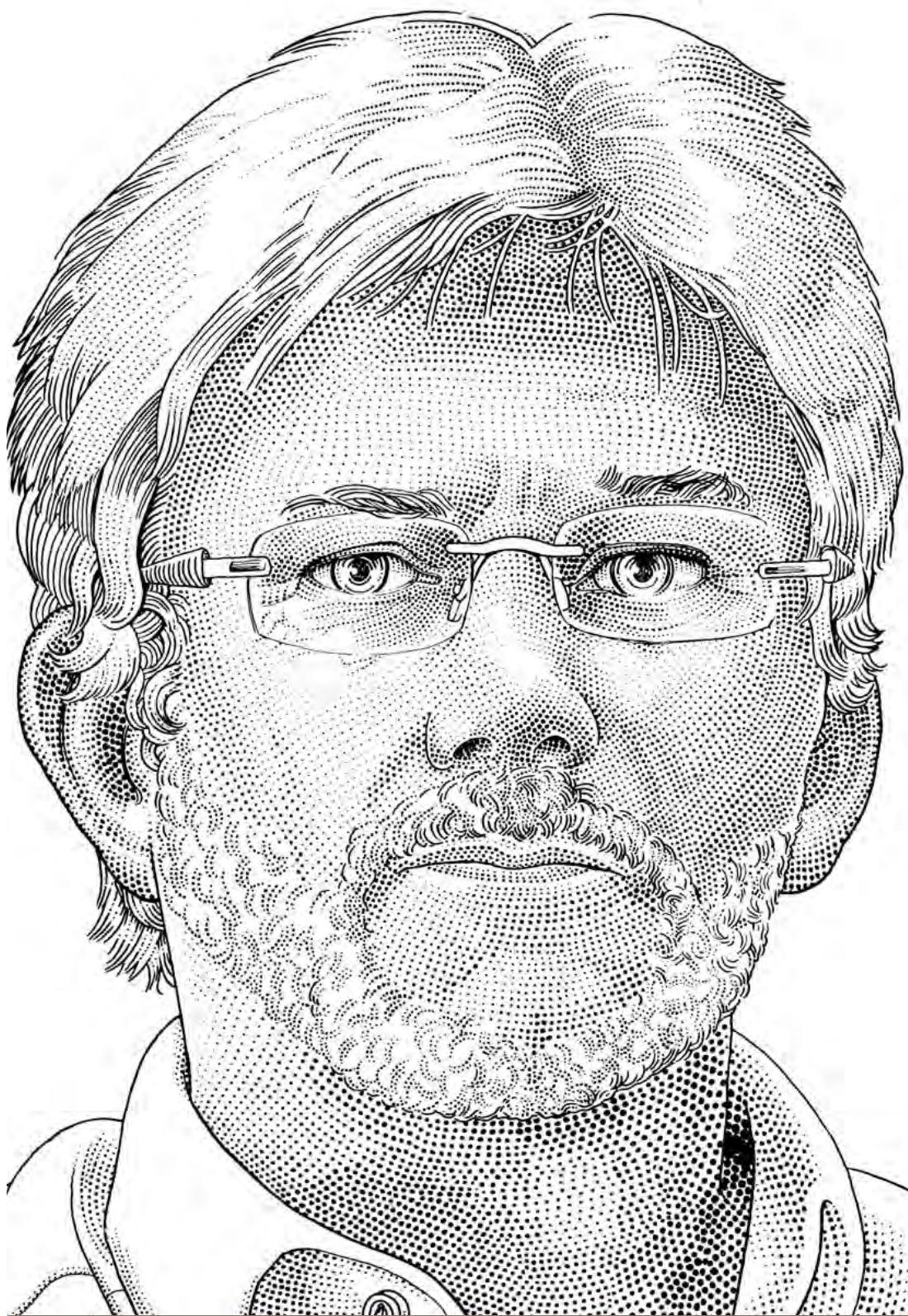
song would spite him and make him feel sorry. After all, I dearly wanted him to be there.

Then, suddenly, I found myself crying.

I suspect that one of the many things we agree on is: To fight about petty nonsense is a woeful waste of our short time on earth; but during our lifetime we have a sacred duty to show our appreciation of life by fighting for justice in the lives of others.

It's not dark yet (but it's getting there)

*Shadows are fallin' and I've been here all day
It's too hot to sleep and time is runnin' away
Feel like my soul has turned into steel
I've still got the scars that the sun didn't heal
There's not even room enough to be anywhere
It's not dark yet but it's gettin' there
Well, my sense of humanity has gone down the drain
Behind every beautiful thing there's been some kind of pain
She wrote me a letter and she wrote it so kind
She put down in writin' what was in her mind
I just don't see why I should even care
It's not dark yet but it's gettin' there
Well, I've been to London and I been to gay Paris
I've followed the river and I got to the sea
I've been down on the bottom of the world full of lies
I ain't lookin' for nothin' in anyone's eyes
Sometimes my burden is more than I can bear
It's not dark yet but it's gettin' there
I was born here and I'll die here against my will
I know it looks like I'm movin' but I'm standin' still
Every nerve in my body is so naked and numb
I can't even remember what it was I came here to get away from
Don't even hear the murmur of a prayer
It's not dark yet but it's gettin' there*



FRANS VILJOEN

Christof Heyns: an impactful life, so wonderfully and worthily lived

During the outpourings of grief, a number of recurring words and metaphors (“giant”, “trail-blazer”, “baobab”) shone through and lit up the gloom. One of these is the word “impact”. So many of us testified and witnessed to the influence Christof had on our lives, whether arising from a chance encounter, or stemming from conversations and collaborations over three decades, as in my case.

To Christof, “impact” was also a scholarly pursuit. I had the privilege to work with him on a study and book assessing the impact of the United Nations human rights treaties at the domestic level. This impact-work serves as a prism through which I see refracted three dimensions through which Christof, in turn, beamed his own impact onto us at the Centre for Human Rights.

The first is his immeasurably innovative and expansive vision. Our impact study started in the late 1990s, in the years when Ms Mary Robinson was High Commissioner for Human Rights. This was a time when

the discursive turn in international human rights law from standard-setting towards human rights impact had hardly begun. Christof has the foresight to anticipate this shift, and the vision to conceive of a study that would combine the width of a multi-country study with the depth of close documentary analysis and targeted interviews. In the process, he helped blaze the trail for a whole new academic discipline. Previously, by painstakingly assembling the various volumes of the evolving reference work *Human rights law in Africa*, Christof was pivotal in forging the discipline ‘African human rights law’ into being. When he became Special Rapporteur, he did the same for the surprisingly neglected scholarly field of ‘freedom from violence’.

At the Centre for Human Rights, Christof’s visionary leadership is the stuff of legend. He was part of the enthusiastic pioneers who 35 audaciously established the Centre for Human Rights. It is his vision of excellent and contextual human rights education, drawing African students to study in Africa (and “not in the Yales and

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*The Three Directors: Johann van der Westhuizen, Christof Heyns and Frans Viljoen
at the Centre for Human Rights (2016)*



*The Three Directors: Christof Heyns, Johann van der Westhuizen and Frans Viljoen
at the Palais de Nations in Geneva, Switzerland (2016)*

Oxfords of the world”, as he liked to say), that became the Centre’s flagship Masters in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa programme. It is his beautiful creative mind that conjured up three moot court competitions, for schools at the domestic level, for Africa at the continental level, and for the world. It is wonderfully apt that the African Moot Court Competition was renamed the Christof Heyns African Human Rights Moot Court Competition in September 2021, during the 30th edition of this event. And it is his resolve to make documents and scholarly texts freely accessible to African audiences that led to the birth of the Pretoria University Law Press – another of his magnificent hobby horses.

The second dimension is his spirit of collaboration. Christof always sought out forms of working together, and in the process invariably brought out the best in others. Our impact study involved close collaboration between us and 20 researchers in countries across the 5 UN regions. Within the Centre, Christof found great joy in building teams, and in creating and shaping relationships. It is his sense for the collaborative that made him see every team member as a complex individual worthy of his special touch.

The third dimension is follow-up. In impact studies, a core concept is follow-up. Our impact study was published in 2001. I recall the morning we met, a few years ago, his eyes falling on the 2001 book, saying: “It will soon be 20 years.” From that day forward, Christof’s perseverance propelled us to update the initial study, a task that was almost complete by the time of his untimely passing.

With unparalleled passion and purpose, he never shied away from putting in the

hours to ‘follow up’ on his dreams. No task was too menial; and he did not shy away from keeping the midnight oil burning. I provide just two Centre examples. I recall, in 1993, Christof travelling through Lusaka at midnight to knock on the door of the University of Zambia’s Chief Transport Officer. Lusaka had run definitively out of fuel. Our students would be stranded without transport, and the final round of the 2nd African Moot Competition would be a disaster. Mixing persuasion and tact, Christof negotiated the release of highly coveted fuel reserves, and saved the day. With PULP, he shepherded numerous manuscripts into books, paying meticulous attention to the details of layout and consistency.

Christof not only saddled wild horses, he also rode them through rough terrain. He was an exceptional visionary with the wherewithal to make dreams real.

We at the Centre – including all our partners and alumni – have been blessed with this remarkably gifted, fearless, warm and compassionate colleague, mentor and friend. I can proudly say that I am a teacher and mentor largely because Christof taught and mentored me. In him, I had the most ardent cheerleader, brotherly friend, inspiring and supportive teacher, supervisor and mentor, and guide.

Although we all miss you dearly, Christof, your impact remains inscribed on our lives and in (y)our continuing work.





*Centre for Human Rights Staff Members
(2017)*



UP Law
@UPLawFaculty

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It is with great shock, bereavement and sadness that the Faculty of Law (UP Law) at the University of Pretoria (UP) has received the news of the passing today (28 March 2021) of one of its internationally esteemed and stalwart colleagues and friends, Professor Christof Heyns.



9:20 PM · Mar 28, 2021 · Twitter Web App

FACULTY OF LAW

Passing of a legal giant, Professor Christof Heyns
(10 January 1959 to 28 March 2021)

It is with great shock, bereavement and sadness that the Faculty of Law (UP Law) at the University of Pretoria (UP) has received the news of the passing today (28 March 2021) of one of its internationally esteemed and stalwart colleagues and friends, Professor Christof Heyns (born 1959), who was the Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa in UP Law until his untimely passing.

Professor Christof Heyns, a Professor of Human Rights Law at the University of Pretoria, where he has also directed the Centre for Human Rights and was the Dean of the Faculty of Law for a four-year period, has engaged in wide-reaching initiatives on human rights in Africa and internationally.

In 2020, Professor Heyns played an instrumental role in the drafting of General Comment 37 (2020) of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee, which offers global guidance on peaceful assembly. As an expert in human rights law at UP Law, Professor Heyns was the rapporteur (main drafter) of the committee that published the

General Comment in July 2020. He worked with colleagues and students involved in the *Freedom from Violence project* based in the Faculty of Law. Professor Heyns made a presentation alongside Secretary-General of the UN, António Guterres, at the UN General Assembly event about peaceful assembly. Professor Heyns also managed the drafting of another document with the Office of the High Commission of Human Rights, which is called the *UN Human Rights Guidance on Less Lethal Weapons*, which was also released in July 2020. These two documents summarised and restated the international law standards and UN standards on peaceful and not-so-peaceful assembly.

During this presentation, Professor Heyns emphasised that the role of these two documents was to guide states and provide clarity on what their obligations and rights are. ‘The goal is to create an environment where member states empower citizens with enough knowledge about what their rights and responsibilities are when it comes to assembly. Simultaneously, law enforcement agencies are also reminded of their roles.’

Professor Heyns further stated that ‘It is a fundamental human right for individuals to join a peaceful assembly to express themselves, to celebrate, or to air grievances. Together with other rights related to political freedom, it constitutes the very foundation of a democratic society, in which changes can be pursued through discussion and persuasion, rather than use of force. Everyone, including children, foreign nationals, women, migrant workers, asylum seekers and refugees, can exercise the right of peaceful assembly, which may take many forms: in public and in private spaces, outdoors, indoors and online.’

Professor Heyns has advised a number of international, regional and national entities on human rights issues. In August 2010 he was appointed as United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and in 2017 he was the South African candidate for election to the (UN) Human Rights Committee, the treaty monitoring body of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, starting in 2017.

Professor Heyns was also one of three experts appointed to conduct the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi and served as its chair. He has held a Humboldt Fellowship at the Max Planck Institute in Heidelberg, Germany, and a Fulbright Fellowship at the Human Rights Programme at Harvard Law School. He served on the editorial boards of academic journals in South Africa, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Brazil, Uganda, Turkey and Costa Rica.

As a South African, his strongest engagement has been with the African regional system. He has served on several occasions as technical adviser on human rights to the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. In particular, Professor Heyns served as adviser to the African Commission in developing its influential General

Comment on the Right to Life, adopted by the Commission in 2015. Professor Heyns frequently conducted human rights seminars at master’s level at Oxford University and at the American University in Washington DC, where he was an Adjunct Professor.

Professor Heyns held the degrees BLC, LLB, BA (Hons) and MA (Philosophy) *cum laude* from the University of Pretoria, a Master’s of Law from Yale Law School (where he was a Fulbright Scholar); and a PhD degree on the history and legal aspects of the non-violent part of the struggle against racial domination in South Africa.

Musicality and creativity run in the family and Professor Heyns was a well-known member of UP Law’s rock band, ‘The Bandits’, who performed at many UP Law Faculty Festivals over a decade.

In February 2020 Professor Heyns and wife Fearika welcomed their first grandchild, Isak Hendrik Rust.

In her reaction to this shocking news, a deeply saddened Dean Professor Elsabe Schoeman of UP Law said that ‘Christof will be sorely missed by all. His enthusiasm for life, his dedication as a UP Law academic, his national and international contributions, influence and work are unequalled. Our deepest condolences to his wife, Fearika, his son Adam Heyns, and two daughters, Willemien Rust, Renée Heyns, son-in-law Arné Francois Rust, mother Renée Heyns and grandson Isak Rust.’

*‘When great trees fall,
rocks on distant hills shudder,
lions bunker down
in tall grasses,
and even elephants
lumber after safety...’*

- Maya Angelou





Prof Tawana Kupe at the official renaming of African Moot to the Christof Heyns African Human Rights Moot Court Competition, which was held at Stellenbosch University (2021)

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

A eulogy to Professor Heyns' legacy by Prof Tawana Kupe,
Vice-Chancellor and Principal, University of Pretoria

Good morning, good afternoon, good evening to all who are joining us from around the world today, as we mourn, commemorate and celebrate a life well-lived, yet taken too soon. Exactly one month ago, our worlds were rocked as we heard the news of the sudden passing of Professor Christof Heyns. Tributes poured in from every corner of the globe, and they continue to do so, expressing shock and sadness at this great loss, and reflecting on the impact of this propeller, magnet, rainmaker and blessing of human rights – to use some of the more creative descriptions given. What has come through in each and every message is that he was deeply respected as a man of both extraordinary accomplishment and character – his brilliant legal mind matched only by his warmth, gentleness, humility, passion and wit. As a colleague, teacher, mentor and friend to so many at the University of Pretoria, he will be sorely missed.

We are honoured to have his wife, Fearika, here with us today, and, on behalf of the UP community, we extend our heartfelt

condolences to you and your family as you walk this road of grief. We know that Christof held family first, and we are extremely grateful for how you nourished him with the love, stability and support that clearly enabled him to achieve the remarkable things he did.

Just last week we were reeling from the news and graphic images of the University of Cape Town burning; in particular the Jagger library housing many irreplaceable artefacts and manuscripts. This tragedy got me thinking about the things that we work towards in our lives that are imperishable; the things that flames cannot destroy. Today we are going to hear from speakers across a variety of distinguished organisations, who will all attest to Christof's inextinguishable impact in their sphere. There are likely many more, but I would like to draw attention to and celebrate four areas where Christof's hard work and dedication has created a legacy that will live on.

The first is his contribution to weaving the fabric of democratic South Africa. Justice

Dikgang Moseneke, former Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa, says in his tribute that he personally knew Christof in the dark days of apartheid and colonialism. Unlike many others, he says, Christof opposed apartheid openly and embraced notions of an inclusive and socially just society. As a founding father of the Centre for Human Rights, at what was then a white conservative University of Pretoria, his implementation of the Integrated Bar Project in the late 80's, ensuring the access of black students to traditionally white law firms, as well as his passion for SASVO, the South African Student Volunteer Organisation, which aimed to improve the quality of life in rural areas by working with community members on various projects, are just two examples of how he lived his motto, "From human wrongs to human rights". The alumni of the Masters' degree programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa recall his optimism about a non-racial future for South Africa based on human rights and the rule of law, and how he worked tirelessly for a new democratic South Africa. His contribution towards our constitution is notable not only as it is our supreme law, but even more importantly, it is an articulation of the values and spirit of humans in our country.

The second area where Christof lit little fires everywhere was in his tireless efforts in educating several generations of students to become accomplished human rights lawyers. Having been the Director of the Centre for Human Rights from 1999 to 2006, he served as Dean of the Faculty of Law for four years, before becoming the founding Co-Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law (ICLA). He was also an adjunct professor at the Washington College of Law of the American University and since 2005 a Visiting Fellow at Kellogg

College at Oxford University. His profound impact in kindling a passion for human rights is seen in the thousands of notes of appreciation from past and present students that have flowed in. A past student from UP's Moot Society writes, "Only when I read his obituary did I fully realise how many of the experiences that shaped me I owed to Prof Heyns. He was behind everything, from my first international moot and the journal I was first published in, to my LLM programme and my first pay cheque. His legacy will be more than his achievements. It will be the many, many young lives like mine that he changed completely. I will always be grateful." Another student writes, "Prof Heyns was a mentor, an inspiration, a supporter, a giant. Generations of law students benefitted from the tradition that he has established, and his influence will resonate with many more over the years to come – especially those who use their skills to make the world a better place."

The third sphere where Christof has left indelible footprints is in his role as an international activist. From 2010 to 2016, he was UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. His many important achievements in that role included a ground-breaking report on Lethal Autonomous Robotics and the right to life. He also played a key role in helping update the Minnesota Protocol on The Investigation Of Potentially Unlawful Death, published in 2016, and in the same year chaired the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi. From 2017 he took on his most recent role of being a member of the UN Human Rights Committee. He led the drafting of the widely acclaimed General Comment No. 37 on the right of peaceful assembly, which was published last July. He also led the team that drafted the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement,

launched two months earlier in May 2020. These two documents provide important analysis and guidance on the international law and UN standards relating to peaceful and not-so-peaceful assembly, and their significance and relevance will long outlive their principal creator.

Lastly, and perhaps most profoundly, is Christof's legacy in having lived a life which was an embodiment of ubuntu, the ideology that says, "I am only well if you are well." The Botswana Centre for Human Rights shared that they were always struck by how genuinely respectful Christof was, reflecting this spirit. He was always keen to learn about the experiences of others, regardless of their age and experience. This is the basis of human rights, they say, respecting the dignity of all, above all else!

At the tribute hosted by The Faculty of Law, I spoke of the first time Christof and I sat together in my office and how, through his spirit of generosity, he agreed to assist me with some things. From then on, we were fairly close, and I asked for his advice on a number of occasions. He gifted me with a book recently, *The Humanist*, and we were due to meet up to discuss it. This is just a small example of how he genuinely cared for people, and while he may have been an international giant, it is likely that those who were privileged to meet him and know him, were most touched by his deep humanity.

Son of Africa, your untimely passing has left us in cold, dark grief. But let us be comforted by your unforgettable glow, and go on to shine brighter for having known you.

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



UNITED NATIONS OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Message by Michelle Bachelet, High Commissioner for Human Rights

Dear Mrs. Heyns,

It is with great sadness that my colleagues and I received the news regarding the untimely passing of Professor Christof Heyns. Alongside the deep personal loss to you and your family, all of us in the human rights community, across every part of the world, have lost a towering beacon, a tireless and visionary scholar, and a powerful and determined defender for the rights of all.

I fondly recall our conversations, his sharp intellect and his always-apt concern to uphold and defend the bedrock principle of our shared human dignity. He firmly believed in the United Nations human rights system, and served in many distinguished capacities to better our world through its work. From his appointment as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from

2010-16, to his Chairship of the United Nations Independent Investigation in Burundi, 2015-16 to his election to the Human Rights Committee in 2016, he has

been a longstanding ally to my predecessors as High Commissioner and myself, as well as our Office. His loss is keenly felt by so many of our staff both past and present.

His contribution to moving human rights law forward will be one of his lasting legacies for us. Most recently, he was the driving force behind General Comment 37 of the Human Rights Committee, providing authoritative interpretation of one of the most vital and relevant rights in our world today, the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly. Drawing on the deep wealth of his experience and knowledge, he also led the landmark United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement the first United Nations document to provide guidance in this complex area of law enforcement.

In addition to advancing the United Nations' human rights work, I witnessed his passionate commitment to advancing human rights on the African continent as well. His belief in the value and importance of the African human rights system in

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

particular and regional human rights systems more widely has also been inspirational to a generation of new leaders and practitioners. His tireless efforts in educating several generations of human rights lawyers is another enormous legacy he leaves, including the establishment of the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition in collaboration with our Office.

For everything that he achieved and stood for, Christof's passing is a huge loss to our community of human rights defenders. Our

deepest sympathies are with you and your family, his colleagues at the University of Pretoria and the human rights community in South Africa and across the world. Our world is more just for the life he has lived, and new generations of scholars and human rights activists will take forward and honour his legacy.

Please accept our deepest condolences.

Yours sincerely,

– **Michelle Bachelet**
High Commissioner for Human Rights



Albie Sachs, Michelle Bachelet, Ambassador Nozipho Joyce Mxakato-Diseko and Christof Heyns at the inaugural Nelson Mandela Human Rights Lecture in Geneva, Switzerland (18 July 2019)

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Christof Heyns: A tribute to a giant of human rights

This weekend, respected human rights lawyer **Professor Christof Heyns** passed away, aged 62.

Most recently, Professor Heyns was the Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria, and had also served as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016.

In his distinguished career, Professor Heyns worked closely with and inspired Amnesty International staff and volunteers around the world. Here, his friends and colleagues pay tribute to a giant of global human rights.

Dr. Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, said: “Christof Heyns was a brilliant human rights lawyer and thinker, gentle person...He leaves behind such an extraordinary legacy.”

Shenilla Mohamed, Executive Director of Amnesty International South Africa, said: “A mighty baobab has fallen! The untimely

death of renowned human rights law expert, Professor Christof Heyns, is a devastating loss. In Africa the Baobab Tree is considered a symbol of power, longevity, presence, strength and grace. Professor Heyns was a baobab in the human rights world. A giant in his field, he fought hard for a just world. As Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa, he was involved in a number of critical initiatives. His contributions included: Chair of the UN independent investigation on Burundi, leading on the drafting of UN human rights guidelines on peaceful assembly and the use of less lethal weapons. He also served as the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions. Hamba Kahle Professor Heyns, Ke a Leboga, Enkosi, Ngiyabonga, Thank you for your service to humanity. You have left indelible footprints and we salute you!”

Sam Dubberley, Amnesty International’s Head of Crisis Evidence Lab, said: “Christof’s support for establishing a hub of Amnesty’s Digital Verification Corps at the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria was unequivocal. He gave time,

advice and space for this project to emerge, and welcomed the Amnesty team on every visit to Pretoria despite his always frantic schedule. Christof made everyone feel valued, and was a source of energy and sage advice. How he will be missed.”

Netsanet Belay, Research and Advocacy Director of Amnesty International, said: “Words fail me to express the profound sense of loss with the sudden passing of Professor Heyns. Like many, I had the privilege of working with him and benefited much from his wisdom, mentorship and guidance. He was a rare breed, one of Africa’s great legal minds, a passionate human rights defender and a kind, passionate, humble person. He nurtured and cultivated a cadre of human rights experts and activists in Africa, including by transforming the human rights centre at the University of Pretoria into a world class institution that produced Africa’s leading human rights scholars and practitioners. His publications on various human rights issues in leading academic journals are testament to his brilliance, wisdom and dedication. He was a true pan-Africanist, as exemplified in his work to champion and strengthen the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. His passing is also a great loss to Amnesty International. As [recently] as last week we were working with Professor Heyns on the draft report by the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the use of force by law enforcement officials in Africa. We shall strive to ensure his last vision [is seen] to fruition. Rest in peace dear brother!”

Rasha Abdul-Rahim, Director of Amnesty Tech, said: “It was devastating to hear of the passing of Professor Heyns. All my thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends. Not only was Christof a renowned human rights expert, he was fiercely justice-focused and an absolute joy and pleasure to work with. Christof wrote the seminal Human

Rights Council report that put the human rights risks of autonomous weapons systems on the agenda. He was always extremely generous with his expertise and time. This is a huge loss for the human rights movement, and we will miss him deeply.”

Avner Gidron, Senior Policy Adviser on Amnesty International’s Law and Policy Programme, said: “I worked most closely with Professor Heyns on The Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death in 2016. It’s a practical tool for human rights defenders and advocates around the world seeking accountability for unlawful killings; and it is now a small, but important, part of Christof’s vast legacy. As well as his importance as a brilliant legal mind, scholar and activist, I will remember Christof for actually embodying human rights values: being an incredibly warm, generous and considerate human being. His death is a tremendous loss for the human rights movement, and an unimaginable tragedy for his family and friends.”

Simon Crowther, legal advisor at Amnesty International, said: “Christof was a legal giant who approached his work with kindness, humility, humour and immense intelligence. He will be greatly missed.”

Anja Bienert, Senior Programme Officer at Amnesty International Netherlands, said: “I first met Christof in 2013 and immediately felt connected to him: his sharp mind, the careful and perfectly articulated thoughts on the many pressing human rights issues, but more importantly, his warm and welcoming personality, with whom it was a pleasure to discuss. Since then, he was an ongoing source of inspiration to me and a great ally in the fight for greater protection of human rights. He constantly strove not just to write excellent publications, but to have a real impact for the respect of human rights across

the world. We will miss him incredibly. It will be our mission to uphold his great legacy in the field of human rights.”

Jan Wetzel, senior legal advisor at Amnesty International, said: “Christof Heyns was extremely open and welcoming in engaging with civil society in the improvement of human rights standards. At the same time, he rigorously challenged NGOs, including Amnesty, to ensure that our advocacy was firmly based on international law.”

Hilary Power, Amnesty International’s Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, said: “It is hard to find words to express the profound sadness we all feel at the loss not only of a brilliant human rights scholar, lawyer and activist, but a kind and gentle soul with immense warmth, dedication and a great sense of humour. His ability to achieve human rights impact was a result not only of his academic excellence and strategic thinking, but his ability to connect and empathise with people. A teacher and mentor to so many of us, he touched so many lives

and will be so incredibly missed. I send my deepest condolences to his family.”

Solomon Sacco, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Law and Policy Programme, said: “Professor Christof was an stunningly warm, kind and generous man, whose conceptual and radical approach to human rights has stayed with me since I first heard him lecture at the University of Pretoria more than 15 years ago. In addition to being a passionate and strong defender of human rights, he was an engaging and generous man who remembered and listened to his students whenever he met them. The world has lost a great spirit.”

Oluwatosin Popoola, Legal Adviser at Amnesty International, said: “Professor Christof Heyns was a very kind, helpful and welcoming man. His death is a great loss to the world and the international human rights system. May his soul rest in peace and his family have the fortitude to bear the loss.”





Lloyd Barnett, Member of the Inter-American Institute of Human Rights and Christof Heyns, as a Human Rights Program Visiting Fellow, at Harvard (2012)

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Gone, But Never Forgotten: Dullah Omar Institute and the Faculty of Law at the University of the Western Cape

Jaap de Visser, Nico Steytler, Benyam Mezmur, Jacques de Ville, Wessel le Roux and Riekie Wandrag; all the alumni of the Masters' degree programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA Alumni - Centre for Human Rights) at UWC's Faculty of Law: Gladys Mirugi-Mukundi, Usang Maria Assim, Annette May, Henry-Paul Gichana, Thandeka Khoza, Yonatan Fessha, Anthony Diala, Carmel Van Niekerk, Chesne Albertus, Jamil D Mujuzi and Nimrod Muhumuza; and all other members of the Dullah Omar Institute and the Faculty of Law at the The University of the Western Cape.

We are deeply saddened by the untimely death of Christof Heyns, a person who did so much in building and protecting the rule of law in South Africa and the world. At a time when the very edifice of the rule of law in South Africa is under threat, his commanding presence and commitment to this value is sorely missed.

During the final dark years of apartheid, Johan van der Westhuizen and Christof

Heyns established in 1986 the Centre for Human Rights (CHR), at the then white conservative University of Pretoria (UP), an achievement in itself. Christof's motto was, as the motto of the CHR, "From Human Wrongs to Human Rights". With an extraordinary zest for life and optimism about a non-racial future for South Africa based on human rights and the rule of law, he worked tirelessly for a new democratic South Africa. In those days already, he was a missionary for justice and an image of a different future of what Afrikaner people could be in this society. His vision also enclosed the rest of Africa, and he became the expert on the protection of human rights in Africa.

Soon after the Community Law Centre (CLC) was established in 1990 at the University of the Western Cape (since 2015 renamed the Dullah Omar Institute for Constitutional Law, Governance and Human Rights, DOI), the CHR reached out to Dullah Omar, CLC's founding director, to establish an inclusive partnership across the prevailing university divide in South Africa. The CLC thus became one of the founding partners of the African



Human Rights Moot Court Competition at its inaugural event in Harare in 1992.

After Christof assumed the CHR directorship in 1999, the CHR launched the Masters' Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) in 2000, with the CLC as one of the founding partner institutions that both taught in the programme in Pretoria and received students for the second semester to write their dissertations. At the end of each year, we joined in celebrating the graduation of these students in Pretoria. Through this partnership, the CLC gained a talented crop of students, some of whom continued with their doctoral studies and/or even still work at UWC. In 2003, the CHR also established a partnership with the UWC Law Faculty in presenting the Masters' Programme in Trade and Investment Law in Africa. In many formal and informal ways, the relationship with CHR continued. It also continued with Christof after he left the CHR.

Over the past five years, the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa (ICLA) at UP, of which Christof was the director, and the SARCHI Chair in Multilevel Government at DOI have hosted the Stellenbosch Annual Seminar on Constitutionalism in Africa.

In June 2020, DOI and ICLA convened a successful expert panel titled "The Pandemic

and International Law: Thinking about humanitarian impact and human rights implications" to discuss timely and pressing issues such as the duty of cooperation, responsibility for outbreaks, and immigration-related issues in the context of COVID 19. The first segment of the panel discussed the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations and its consequences for humanitarian action. The second segment, where Christof spoke, focussed on the extent to which the pandemic justifies interference with individual rights and liberties.

As a very active member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee, Prof Heyns served as a rapporteur for General Comment 37 on the right of peaceful assembly. In April 2019, he engaged with UWC post-graduate students in a Conversation Session on issues such as the definition of 'peaceful', online assembly and technological means to stifle peaceful assembly, such as facial recognition cameras and internet shutdowns. Many students attended, and were enthralled by his passion for social justice. Prof Christof Heyns also co-supervised with staff at the DOI, and often served as an examiner.

Christof will be remembered as a true mensch – warm hearted, engaging, energetic, always smiling – deeply committed to the positive contribution that the rule of law and human rights can make to the advancement of humanity.

THE CONVERSATION

Christof Heyns: South African scholar who left his mark on the world's human rights systems by Thomas Probert

The South African academic Professor Christof Heyns, who has died at the age of 62, was a world-renowned human rights advocate and academic. He was a thoughtful scholar of both the African and UN human rights systems, and an incredibly popular teacher and activist.

He leaves behind a remarkable legacy among generations of students across the continent and around the world.

But in addition to his shaping of the University of Pretoria's contribution to human rights issues across the continent, Heyns also achieved a global impact by serving over the past decade in two high-profile United Nations positions. He was Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (2010-2016); and a member of the UN Human Rights Committee (2017-2020).

From those positions he made an extensive impact on the global human rights landscape. He made important visits to a range of countries, including The Gambia,

Turkey, Mexico, Honduras and Papua New Guinea, casting new light on their protection of the right to life. And he sent numerous urgent appeals to states around the world, including, for example, on many cases involving the death penalty.

Heyns was also a passionate advocate of the potential role for regional mechanisms as part of an international system for the protection of human rights. Both as a special rapporteur and later as a member of a treaty body he sought to involve and consult regional experts. He was particularly eager to enhance the collaboration between the UN and the African Union's African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, working with them closely in 2015 as they developed their General Comment on the right to life.

Human rights and peaceful protests

He took over the mandate on summary executions at a propitious moment. Protests were beginning to sweep across the Arab world and oppressive reactions to peaceful assemblies around the world were at centre stage.

Having written his doctorate on civil disobedience, Heyns was immediately ready to make a contribution. His focus would be on the cases where the use of force – or other mismanagement of assemblies – led to arbitrary loss of life. But his work would also have significant implications for the broader rights linked to peaceful protests.

This remained a recurring theme of the decade, both in terms of the global events he was called to respond to, and in terms of his clarification of the applicable human rights norms. For example, he worked with fellow special rapporteur Maina Kiai from 2014 to 2016 to write an influential joint report providing practical recommendations for the management of peaceful protests.

Four years later, he would drive forward the Human Rights Committee's process of developing a definitive guide to the state's obligations to respect and facilitate the right of peaceful assembly, in its General Comment No.37, published in 2020.

Use of force in law enforcement and armed conflict

Heyns also focused on broader questions of the use of force by the police. In addition to addressing specific events, he used his thematic reports to the UN Human Rights Council and General Assembly to draw particular attention to more persistent and structural factors. These included the domestic legal framework within which police operated, their training and equipment, and the accountability mechanisms available to review their conduct.

A long-term result of this focus was the development of the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement. It was published last year.

His predecessor as special rapporteur had already responded to the increasing use of armed drones for targeted killing during the early 2000s. Heyns continued this work. He set out in a very clear report for the General Assembly that, while not inherently unlawful, it was vital that the use of drones followed the established laws of war.

But his real influence with respect to the impact of new technologies on the battlefield was in a seminal 2013 report on the risks posed by autonomous weapons systems (“killer robots”). The debates about these weapons will likely continue for years, but Heyns' report is at least partly responsible for ensuring that, moving forward, a human rights perspective will be central to shaping an international response.

Accountability for unlawful deaths

Though he contributed a great deal to the clarification of the norms around many of the themes of his mandate, he was firmly convinced that the challenge was often not a disagreement about the norms but rather a lack of clarity about the facts on the ground.

With this in mind, one of his long-term projects was updating the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death. This UN document lays out the necessary standards for an effective forensic investigation of death, and details the range of circumstances in which such investigations must take place.

The failure to conduct such an investigation, to pursue accountability for potentially unlawful killings, amounts in itself to a violation of the right to life. Heyns would ensure this fundamental tenet of his work was reflected in the Human Rights Committee's General Comment on the right to life when it was adopted shortly after he joined the Committee in 2017.

Lasting legacy

Heyns made these and many other substantive contributions to the development of international law – contributions that will be long-lasting.

But they only make up part of his impact on the international human rights community.

He will be remembered as much for the manner in which he undertook his work – collegial and consultative, with a vision for the widest arc of the work as well as an attention to the granular detail of processes and people who make them work.

He shared his vision generously, constantly seeking new projects, partnerships and collaborations. His memory will inspire all of us fortunate enough to have worked with him. His legacy will be an agenda.

Thomas Probert served as a research consultant to the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on summary executions from 2013-2016, and worked closely with Prof. Heyns in developing many of the standards discussed in this article.



Prof Tiaan de Jager, Dr Thomas Probert, Prof Christof Heyns and Prof Stephanie Burton at the 'Promoting peaceful and inclusive societies' lecture at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (2018)

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



LITNET: IN MEMORIAM

Christof Heyns in herinnering deur Murray Hofmeyr

Maandag het ek in die bos by Nuweland gaan stap. Dit was net meer as 'n week na my vriend Christof se dood, tydens 'n staptog teen 'n berg by Stellenbosch. Ons het mekaar ons hele lewens lank geken. Sy pa was predikant van Ysterplaat en myne van Langa toe ons gebore is. Ons ouers was lede van 'n eetklub van meesal jong Kaapse pastoriegesinne. Voor ons regtig herinneringe kon versamel van daardie tyd, is ons weg uit die Kaap. Maar ons het later jare altyd gepraat van ons tyd saam in doeke. Ek het hom eers weer raakgeloop as student aan die Universiteit van Pretoria. Hy het Radio Tuks en Regshuis begin. Soos hy baie ander dinge begin het.

Die stap by Nuweland was 'n soort bedevaart. Ons het dikwels teen berghange fietsgery of gestap en dan het hy my van sy idees vertel. Of ons het saam dinge uitgedink. Dit is byna ondraaglik om te dink dat ek en baie ander vriende en kollegas nou alleen moet verder.

Die fokus van Christof se werk was die reg om lewe. Hy was versot op die lewe

en het syne daaraan gewy om alle mense se reg om te lewe te bevorder. Sy pa was 'n teologieprofessor wat vir ons met sy effense Hollandse aksent in die klas gesê het: “Menere (ja, ons was destyds net 'n groep menere), die liefde is 'n ruimteskeppende gesindheid!” Christof het dit so gestel: Dis om vir iemand 'n *gap* te gee.

Hy was 'n mens van groot idees en die daad by die woord sit. Van my beste tye was toe ek saam met hom aan 'n projek kon werk. Hy het regte as loopbaan gekies omdat hy op skool reeds vir homself uitgemaak het dat die bevordering van menseregte die mees effektiewe manier vir ons tyd was om die lewe te bevorder en die wêreld 'n beter plek te maak. Hy het vas geglo dat dit moontlik is en het 'n baie goeie begrip gehad van wat dit verg aan die bou van institusies en die aanvaarding van verdrae. Hy kon baie opgewonde raak oor 'n boek wat hy ontdek het, en het dan sommer 'n klomp kopieë daarvan gekoop en hulle links en regs uitgedeel. In die maande voor sy dood was dit *Humankind – a hopeful history* deur die jong Nederlander Rutger Bregman wat hy by

almal aanbeveel het. Dit het sy onwrikbare oortuiging gesterk dat mense die potensiaal het om beter, meer lewensbevorderende maniere van saamleef uit te werk.

Christof Heyns is op 28 Maart 2021 oorlede. Hy het die Sondagoggend saam met sy oudste broer Stephan teen die hange van die berge naby Stellenbosch gaan stap en het waarskynlik aan 'n hartaanval beswyk. Hy het die laaste jare groot plesier daaruit gekry om tyd in Stellenbosch deur te bring, die dorp waar hy as laerskoolkind gewoon het.

Die 62-jarige Christof was professor in menseregte aan die Universiteit van Pretoria en 'n vennoot van Stias, die Stellenbosse Instituut vir Gevorderde Studie. Na hy in die 1980's 'n meestersgraad in die internasionale reg aan Yale-universiteit in die VSA behaal het, promoveer hy in 1992 met 'n regsfilosofiese studie oor burgerlike ongehoorsaamheid onder Johan van der Vyver by Wits. Sy mees onlangse werk het weer by hierdie tema aangesluit – as lid van die Menseregtekomitee van die Verenigde Nasies het hy 'n leidende rol gespeel in die proses wat gelei het tot die publikasie van 'n algemene riglyn van dié internasionale liggaam oor die reg op vredevolle (en minder vredevolle) byeenkomste. Die proses wat gelei het tot die aanvaarding van hierdie kommentaar, meesterlik bestuur deur Christof, is 'n teksboekvoorbeeld van hoe 'n mens 'n groep kundiges uit verskillende lande en met verskillende ideologiese oortuigings sover kan kry om mekaar sodanig te vertrou dat konsensus uiteindelik bereik kan word.

Hierdie werk was maar een faset van 'n loopbaan wat deur baanbrekerswerk gekenmerk was. In die middel-1980's was hy 'n medestigter van die Sentrum vir Menseregte aan UP. In 1991 bring hy saam met kollegas die All African Moot Court

Competition tot stand. Spanne van al die regs fakulteite in Afrika ding jaarliks mee deur 'n menseregtesaak voor 'n paneel van hoofregters uit Afrikalande te verdedig. Die publikasie wat die verrigtinge van een van die eerste kompetisies boekstaaf, dra 'n tipies Christof-titel: *From human wrongs to human rights*. Die kompetisie dien terselfdertyd die doel om die beste ontluikende regsbreine in Afrika te werf vir 'n meestersgraad in menseregte en demokratisering wat deur 'n vennootskap van Suid-Afrikaanse universiteite aangebied word. Vandag bekleed alumni van hierdie program belangrike posisies op die kontinent en in wêreldliggame gemoeid met die bevordering en toepassing van die beginsel van die oppergesag van die reg en menseregte. Heelwat van hulle het sedert Christof se dood hulde gebring aan sy rol in hulle lewens en loopbane op die Facebookbladsy wat die Sentrum vir dié doel opgerig het.

In die middel-1990's stig Christof saam met kollegas 'n studentevrywilligerorganisasie, die Southern African Student Volunteers (Sasvo), wat jongmense die geleentheid bied om 'n tasbare bydrae tot die bou van ons nuwe demokrasie te lewer. Die idee vir hierdie inisiatief is in 1994 tydens 'n fietsrit gebore toe Christof vir my in die Soutpansberg kom kuier het. Ons het albei as studente aan sendingwerkerskampe deelgeneem en het gepraat oor hoe bemagtigend dit was om self dinge te moes beplan en vaardighede soos messelwerk te leer. Jongmense moes die geleentheid kry om fisies by te dra tot ons nuwe demokrasie, het Christof gevoel. Die energie en Building Africa Ourselves-gesindheid van die studente wat in spanne na die uithoeke van die land en selfs na ander SADC-lande toe is om klaskamers te bou, tuine aan te lê, wiskundeklasse te gee, gemeenskapsteaterproduksies te inisieer,

vigs te bekamp en menseregte te bevorder, het plaaslike gemeenskappe geïnspireer en leerders besiel met die idee dat hulle beter verdien en tot beter in staat is. Dit het ook die kinders van apartheid 'n geleentheid gegee om vriendskappe te smee rondom saamwerk aan projekte. Dit bly een van die groot teleurstellings dat Christof se voorstel dat Sasvo 'n permanente restitusieprojek in die wike van die WVK moes word, nie aanvaar is nie.

Die Skole-Skynhofkompetisie wat elke jaar sy finale ronde in die Konstitusionele Hof hou, is ook deel van sy nalatenskap.

Na 'n termyn as dekaan van die Regsfakulteit aan UP word Christof aangewys as die spesiale rapporteur van die Verenigde Nasies oor buiteregtelike moorde en arbitrêre doodslag. In 'n dokumentêre film oor sy pa, Johan Heyns, 'n voormalige moderator van die NG Kerk wat in 1994 in sy huis doodgeskiet is, verduidelik Christof dat sy belewenis van die moord op sy pa 'n motiverende faktor was in die werk wat hy vir die VN in dié verband gedoen het. Deur sy toedoen word die tema van robotoorlogvoering en wapens sonder menslike beheer op die agenda van die VN geplaas. 'n Leidende nuwe boek getiteld *Alston and Heyns on Unlawful Killings: A Compendium of the Jurisprudence of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2004–2016* is pas gepubliseer. Philip Alston was sy voorganger as VN Spesiale Rapporteur.

Sedert die nuus oor Christof se ontydige dood bekend geraak het, het mense oor die hele wêreld hulde gebring nie net aan 'n mens wat begeesterd sy bydrae gelewer het om menseregte en demokrasie te bevorder en uit te brei nie, maar aan 'n buitengewone vriend wat ons lewens op 'n diep en beduidende manier geraak het. Hy het ons

aangespoor om die tyd uit te koop en sonder verskonings te leef. Sy entoesiasme was 'n natuurkrag. Hy het hom nie aan bande laat lê nie. Met hom was die lewe 'n avontuur, en waar daar 'n tekort aan vaardigheid was, kon mens steeds ver kom met die louter genot wat geput word uit die aanvaarding van die uitdaging.

Een van sy groot liefdes was musiek – met 'n besliste voorkeur vir musiek met elektriese kitare daarin. Hy het kitaar gespeel en gesing saam met verskillende bands met name soos The Hip Replacements, die Outlaws, en Stadig die Somer. Bob Dylan, Leonard Cohen, Koos du Plessis en Valiant Swart was boaan sy lys van gunsteling.

Hy was ook 'n entoesiastiese fietsryer en stapper. Dit was vir hom heerlik om elke dag op die proefplaas naby hulle huis te gaan stap. Nog een van sy groot idees het hy so gekry – die plan om Future Africa te bou, die verbeeldingryke projek van die UP wat gehuisves word in 'n asemrowende nuwe gebou op die proefplaas teen Lynnwoodkoppie. Sy uitnodiging het altyd gestaan: Kom slaap oor dan gaan stap ons vroegoggend. Dit was kosbare gesprektyd.

Sy ander passie was om branders te ry met sy surfski. Hy het altyd gesê kinders moet kan surf en kitaarspeel; die res sal vanself kom. Desember was dit strand toe en dan is hy die see in met wie ook al lus was vir die branders. Sy vrou Fearika se familie aan moederskant, die Streichers van die Overberg, het 'n lang verbintenis met Stilbaai, en die Heynse het ook sinoniem met vakansies op Stilbaai geword. Christof was 'n krag wat almal aangetrek het en gou is die kitare uit of het 'n mens 'n roeispaan in die hand. Hy, 'n ware workaholic, het by sulke geleenthede gereeld gesê: “Nee man, werk is overrated!”



Sy lojaliteit aan sy vriende was legendaries. Hy het tyd gemaak en aandag gegee. Van die gedeelde avonture het later neerslag gevind in kortverhale. Dit was 'n ander belangstelling – kreatiewe skryf. 'n Paar van sy kortverhale is gepubliseer, soos “Begrafnis op Stilbaai” op LitNet. Hierdie verhaal verwys na sy betrokkenheid by die openbaarmaking van videogetuienis oor die 2009-moorde deur regeringsoldate op Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka.

Die beplanning van dokumentêre films was nog een van sy passies. Hy was nou betrokke by die film oor sy pa wat onlangs op TV uitgesaai is as deel van die reeks *Die Afrikaanse leiers*. Hy het ook 'n film beplan oor Jan Smuts, een van die groot inspirasies vir sy denke en werk.

Die laaste jaar van sy lewe kon Christof nie uitgepraat raak oor sy kleinseun Isak Rust nie. Hy was in totale verwondering oor die vreugde en vernuwing wat die klein lewtetjie gebring het. Vir sy vriende was dit 'n groot plesier om hom te sien groei in die nuwe rol van oupa. En dis dan ook hier waar 'n mens die hartseerste raak oor die verlies. Sy kleinkinders en ons kleinkinders gaan hom slegs uit ons onthou ken. Een van die laaste video's wat hy met vriende gedeel het, was van hom wat 'n boom snoei en Isakkie wat kraai van die lag elke keer as hy knip en 'n tak waai. Die titel van die video was “Hoekom ek my hele boom afgekap het”.

My diep meeleving gaan aan Fearika, sy dogter Willemien en haar man Arné Rust, sy seun Adam, sy dogter Renée, sy kleinseun Isak, sy ma Renée, en sy broers Stephan en Johan-Dirk en hulle gesinne.

JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS

UNAIDS joins human rights community in mourning Christof Heyns, legal academic and expert

Tributes have been pouring in since the announcement of the sudden passing of Christof Heyns, the South African human rights academic and expert. For Amnesty International, he was, “A baobab in the human rights world. A giant in his field, [who] fought hard for a just world.” For Edwin Cameron, a former judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa and a leading global voice on HIV and human rights, “[Christof] was a meticulous, conscientious, persistent, courageous fighter for justice and human rights.”

A former member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (2017–2020), Mr Heyns served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial Execution from 2010 to 2016 and as a member of the Working Group on Death Penalty, Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights. In 2015–2016, he chaired the United Nations Independent Investigation on Burundi.

Mr Heyns was one of the world’s most prominent experts on the African human rights system. He was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria from 1999 to 2006 and Dean of the Law Faculty from 2007 to 2010. He later helped to establish and led the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the same university.

To many of his students, colleagues and partners, he was an accessible lecturer, a trusted ally and a thought leader who embodied the values of excellence with ubuntu (humanity). I first met Mr Heyns in August 2001 as a third-year law student representing the University of Abidjan in Côte d’Ivoire at the 10th African Human Rights Moot Court competition in Pretoria, South Africa. It was an exhilarating opportunity. This was my first-ever air travel. And it took me to no other place than South Africa, the land of Nelson Mandela, the (then) vibrant beacon of human rights optimism. The theme for the continental oratory joust that year focused on human rights violations against people living with HIV—how fitting.

Some two years later, I was privileged to be awarded a scholarship to join what is arguably one of Mr Heyns's most enduring legacies, the Centre for Human Rights' master's programme on human rights and democratization in Africa. Since 2000, this programme has trained a generation of human rights scholars, practitioners and activists from across Africa and other parts of the world. During his tenure as the Director, Mr Heyns enabled the transformation of the Centre for Human Rights into a world-class academic and activist institution that took an active role in education, advocacy and litigation.

As he later became involved as a member of United Nations human rights mechanisms,

Mr Heyns took with him the values of dialogue and academic generosity that he had honed in South Africa. In a world that overemphasizes uniqueness, he was an internationalist who championed experience-sharing and cross-fertilization across human rights systems. It was thus naturally that UNAIDS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights turned to him when we were seeking allies for a joint dialogue on the human rights norms and practice relating to sexual orientation and gender identity between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations from 2015 to 2018. Mr Heyns was at the time the United



Christof Heyns with other participants during the joint thematic dialogue on sexual orientation and gender identity between the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the United Nations, Kairaba Hotel, Banjul, the Gambia (3 November 2015)

Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial Executions and I was working as the Senior Human Rights and Law Adviser with UNAIDS in Geneva, Switzerland. Throughout the process, Mr Heyns was generous with his ideas, and, as ever, courteous and considerate with his peers as well as with support staff.

This year will mark 30 years since the creation of the African Human Rights Moot Court competition. We will miss Mr Heyns but his spirit will be with us as we mark this milestone. Across Africa and globally, his legacy will live on with those he defended as a human rights expert, and in the continued fight for justice and democratization of the thousands of students, academics, practitioners and activists that he has supported and nurtured.

Au revoir professor, the struggle approach to human rights shall continue.

“It is argued that legitimate resistance is the conceptual and historical counterpart and the ultimate guarantor of human rights. Human rights = legitimate resistance ... The ongoing nature of history is emphasized, as well as the creative potential of members of the present generation to influence history, and as such the nature of human rights, through their struggles.” Christof Heyns, 10 January 1959–28 March 2021.

– **Patrick Eba**

UNAIDS Country Director for the Central African Republic



HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM & INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CLINIC, HARVARD LAW

In Memoriam: Christof Heyns

Christof Heyns, a towering figure in the human rights community, passed away on March 28, 2021. Professor Heyns was Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa and Professor of Human Rights Law at the University of Pretoria. In 2012, he was one year into his term as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, when he came to HRP as a Visiting Fellow. He focused his research on the legal framework concerning the death penalty, the use of force by the police during demonstrations, and armed drones; he contributed immensely to the intellectual life of the university. Professor Heyns touched many lives — at HLS and beyond. Past and current members of HRP who knew or worked closely with him pay tribute below.

Christof changed my life. Or perhaps he didn't change it so much as make it possible: Christof showed me the kind of lawyer I wanted to be and shaped my life through his many lessons. I worked for Christof during my three years at HLS: first as a research assistant while he was at HRP, then as a summer intern with him in Geneva and Pretoria, and finally as a researcher on his Special Rapporteur mandate, accompanying him on a mission to Turkey and Mexico, attending meetings in Florence, Geneva, and New York, drafting documents together late into the night and over early morning coffees. I could not have had a more exhilarating law school experience or a more thoughtful, brilliant, loving mentor.

In this week of heartbreak, people have referred to Christof as a giant and a baobab tree. Absolutely, he was grand — sometimes even larger than life to me. But it was also the great honor of those early years of my career to see Christof as just human — giddy when he held a baby on his lap, excited to talk about the outdoors, books, film, his wonderful wife and children, the beauty of everyday life. I'll never forget the way Christof showed his humanity in his giant role: the way he listened to survivors who testified before him, thanking them for sharing and trusting him with their stories, affirming their dignity. Although he was a brilliant legal thinker, it was the humans in human rights law that I saw move him.

His life's work seemed to me to be about investing in those human connections: in his students and colleagues, teaching us to believe in ourselves as he believed in us; in the fundamental right to life – and to live with dignity – in his Special Rapporteur work; and in the power of local systems of investigation, accountability, and expertise in his commitment to regional human rights mechanisms. In these connections, his selflessness was beyond compare. I know Christof's wisdom and example have shaped the way I understand humanity and the law. My heart aches for his family and all his students and communities around the world. Thank you for changing, for making possible, our lives, Christof. We owe you a debt of gratitude – and a deep well of love.

– Tess Borden JD'14

International Human Rights Clinic Alum

Christof Heyns was a very important scholar of human rights in Africa, as well as a leading expert of the UN human rights system. His efforts to document the work of the African regional human rights system, and his critical examination of its effectiveness, were foundational. As a UN special rapporteur, and a very dedicated member of the Human Rights Committee, his deep knowledge and careful legal analysis made major contributions. As the main author of the Committee's General Comment No. 37 on freedom of assembly, he provided extremely valuable guidance on a crucial right that has been gravely threatened in recent years.

– Gerald Neuman

*Co-Director, Human Rights Program;
J. Sinclair Armstrong Professor of
International, Foreign, and Comparative Law,
Harvard Law School*

While Christof Heyns championed a multitude human rights causes, I knew him best through our common work on “killer robots.” As special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, Christof sounded an early alarm about the human rights implications of fully autonomous weapons, weapons systems that would select and engage targets without meaningful human control. In 2013, Christof brought his concerns to the United Nations, urging the Human Rights Council to take action against this emerging technology. Three years later, he and the special rapporteur on free expression explicitly called for a ban on killer robots. Through publications, presentations, and persistence, Christof compelled countries to recognize the dangers of delegating life-and-death decisions to machines and prompted them to initiate deliberations on fully autonomous weapons in a major disarmament forum.

Christof was not only a brilliant and effective lawyer but also a kind, generous, and self-effacing individual. He treated students and colleagues with respect and compassion, and he went out of his way to learn from others. I remember Christof peppering me with questions about the Clinic's work on fully autonomous weapons when he was a Human Rights Program fellow in 2012; our first conversation over lunch at the Hark led to many more. Christof also worked closely with civil society, including the Campaign to Stop Killer Robots, a global coalition with which the Clinic partners. Campaign members have exchanged memories and messages of mourning since news of his death broke. Christof was a perfect advocate for a ban on killer robots because he exuded the humanity he was fighting to preserve.

– Bonnie Docherty

*Associate Director, Armed Conflict and
Civilian Protection Initiative; Lecturer in
Law, International Human Rights Clinic*

For the past two years, Christof Heyns served as a valued partner to HLS Advocates for Human Rights. Through this collaboration, a team of students had the opportunity to work with Christof to contribute research to his global study into the impact of human rights treaties. The groundbreaking study sought to gather evidence of whether and how human rights treaties have influenced domestic laws and translated into traceable impact on the ground in countries around the world. Christof's vision for the project was grand, but he never hesitated to take the time to engage with students on the details of their research, methodologies and challenges. Christof modeled for all of us how the field of human rights is best served when strong vision is combined with deep dedication, humility, and compassion. His passing is a tremendous loss for the human rights community, and he will be dearly missed by all of us who had a chance to work with him.

– Beatrice Lindstrom

Lecturer in Law, International Human Rights Clinic; Supervising Attorney, HLS Advocates for Human Rights



Solomon Ayele Dersso, Christof Heyns and Meskerem Geset Techane at the celebration of 20 years of the Master's programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa (HRDA) (2019)

AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Statement on the passing of Prof Christof Heyns by Commissioner Solomon Ayele Dersso

It is with deep shock and sadness that the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (African Commission) has learnt the sudden passing of Professor Christof Heyns.

The African Commission joins his family, friends, colleagues and students in mourning the loss of a brilliant legal mind and a very dedicated and passionate advocate for human and peoples' rights in Africa and the world over.

Christof Heyns, a Professor of Law at the University of Pretoria and member of the UN Human Rights Committee, has served as a member of the Working Group on the death penalty, extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary killing and enforce disappearances in Africa, for the African Commission.

He made enormous contribution with no parallel for the advancement of the African human rights system through, among others,

- Transforming the human rights center at the University of Pretoria into a world class institution that produced Africa's leading human rights scholars and practitioners including those in the African Commission;
- His large number of publications in leading academic journals on the work of the African Commission, thereby making the African human rights system known to the world;
- Serving as resource person for the various activities of the African Commission, including in the drafting of the African Commission's General Comment No. 3 on the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the right to life (Article 4); and
- Taking personal initiative for establishing and maintaining close working relationship between the African Commission and the global human rights system.

A passionate contributor to the work of the African Commission, at the time of his passing, Prof Heyns was working on supporting the African Commission on the development of a study on the use of force in Africa, an issue that has become more pressing in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

His shocking untimely passing is a major loss for our Commission and for the human rights community.

I wish to extend the African Commission's deepest condolences to Prof Heyns' family, friends, colleagues, students and the entire human rights community.

– Solomon Ayele Dersso

*Chairperson of the African Commission on
Human and Peoples' Rights*

STELLENBOSCH INSTITUTE FOR ADVANCED STUDY (STIAS)

Tributes to a great South African and global leader

“The STIAS community is deeply shocked and saddened by the untimely and unexpected passing of Professor Christof Heyns, Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria and STIAS fellow and board member,” said Edward Kirumira, STIAS Director. “Heyns was a truly inspirational human being and a continental and global leader who will be sorely missed. His most recent work as the main drafter of UN documents on the right to peaceful assembly and guidance on less-lethal weapons in law enforcement couldn’t be more topical and necessary in the times in which we live. He was a great African and global mind who leaves behind an important legacy.”

Professor Christof Heyns was Professor of Human Rights Law at UP, where he also directed the Centre for Human Rights and was previously the Dean of the Faculty of Law. He held BLC, LLB, BA (Hons) and MA (Philosophy) *cum laude* degrees from UP, a Master’s of Law from Yale Law School (where he was a Fulbright Scholar); and a

PhD degree on the history and legal aspects of the non-violent part of the struggle against racial domination in South Africa.

He was also a Humboldt Fellow at the Max Planck Institute in Heidelberg, Germany, and a Fulbright Fellow at the Human Rights Programme at Harvard Law School. At STIAS Christof served on the Board of Directors and was also in residence as a STIAS Fellow at the time of his death.

The countless highlights in his illustrious career include advising international, regional and national entities on human rights issues. In August 2010 he was appointed as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, and in 2017 he was the South African candidate for election to the UN Human Rights Committee, the treaty monitoring body of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Within the continent he has served on many occasions as technical adviser on human rights to the African Union and the African

Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. Specifically, he was adviser to the African Commission in developing its influential General Comment on the Right to Life, adopted in 2015. He was also one of three experts appointed to conduct and chair the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi.

Heyns regularly conducted human rights seminars at Oxford University and at the American University in Washington DC, where he was an Adjunct Professor, and served on the editorial boards of academic journals in South Africa, the United Kingdom, The Netherlands, Brazil, Uganda, Turkey and Costa Rica.

In 2020, he was the main drafter of two important UN documents – the *General Comment 37 of the UN Human Rights Committee*, which offers global guidance on peaceful assembly and the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less Lethal Weapons, both were released in July 2020. These documents summarised and restated the international law standards and UN standards on peaceful and not-so-peaceful assembly. He presented an overview of these important documents at his seminar at STIAS on 9 March.

Speaking of the importance of the right to peaceful assembly, he said: "Peaceful assemblies are often a way or pursuing truth and establishing the extent of support for an idea. They have become a major force in society and an integral part of social change. People without other forms of power use this to address what they see as structural violence – where the system itself works against them. Many of the rights we take for granted today came through this kind of disruption," But he also pointed to the need for rules for both sides. "They are collective gatherings versus the power of the state. Because this is such a potentially disruptive

terrain, the different parties need rules of engagement."

Also in touch with his artistic side, Heyns was a huge music lover and a member of the University of Pretoria's Law rock band, 'The Bandits', which regularly performed at UP Law Faculty Festivals.

He leaves behind his wife, Fearika, his son Adam Heyns, his daughters, Willemien Rust and Renée Heyns, son-in-law Arné Francois Rust, mother Renée Heyns and grandson Isak Rust born in February 2020.

STIAS Board members, friends and fellows in residence sent the following messages of condolence and remembrance:

This is a shocking and saddening loss. My memory of meeting Christof Heyns at STIAS after the AAB meeting is fresh, very fresh. His brief conversation with me was very forward looking, focused on expanding his networks and literature, especially on matters of human rights and various civic and social movements in the rest of the continent. His was not the attitude of a person who in any way suspected an imminent death. What a great loss! May he rest in perfect peace. Do please extend my condolences to his family.

– **Francis B. Nyamnjoh**

This is a tremendous shock. How little did I know that, when we were corresponding towards the end of last year about the African Webinar platform for doctoral students in law in Africa that was setting up, it would be the last time that we would be in contact. His work on human rights internationally, but especially his work on promoting human rights on our own continent and the deep relationships that he

brokered on the continent, is a magnificent monument to him. It is hard to realise that this energetic worker for a better world will no longer be firing off all those brilliant ideas. A great South African has passed away.

– **Danie Visser**

Suddenly he was there in our small community of STIAS fellows. Open-minded, curious, friendly, demonstrating what STIAS intends to be: a platform for exchanging ideas without disciplinary boundaries. He arrived with a reputation second to none, but talked to everybody. Lunches with him were opportunities where not the (excellent) food was the most important, but the intersection of his and your ideas. On the day of his seminar we heard him and saw the family with a grandchild happily crawling around. The expression 'Fröhliche Wissenschaft' may be inextricably linked to Nietzsche, but Christof demonstrated what it could mean in daily life. Despite the fact that his themes and tasks were not always very joyful. Yesterday, this all stopped unexpectedly. 'A legal giant' wrote the UP. This is true, but I was struck by the poem at the end of the obituary: 'When great trees fall, rocks on distant hills shudder...

Although it was only for a short time, he has enriched our life. With deep condolences,

– **Ed & Inge Noort**

I'm greatly saddened to hear this. I was so impressed by his seminar 9 March on peaceful assemblies, and he seemed then like he would be lovely and a delight to know. John and I send our deepest condolences to Professor Heyns' family. With sorrow and love,

– **Regenia Gagnier**

I join you all in deep sorrow for Christof's unexpected loss. It is hard to believe and will be even harder to cope with his conspicuous

absence. I'll hold with special tenderness, his sparkling eyes and mellow words. My most heartfelt condolences to his family, fellows and friends. Know that my thoughts and prayers will remain with you and Christof during this difficult time.

– **Marcella Faria**

I also want to express my deep condolences to the family and friends of Christof Heyns. I did not know him before I met him here at STIAS in recent weeks. I had some very fruitful exchanges with him on questions of peace, human rights and also on Gandhi. Just last Friday morning I had a long chat with him in the entry hall at STIAS. We talked about patriotism versus cosmopolitanism and quickly shared our interpretations of John Lennon's song 'Imagine' that we both have used in class. I did not know that Christof was also playing in the UP Law's rock band 'The Bandits'. Now I understand better why we quickly discussed Leonard Cohen last Friday, too. He could recite many texts of Cohen by heart and told me that he recently listened often to Cohen's song 'Nancy' with its references to a 'House of Honesty' and a 'House of Mystery' when he was driving to STIAS. We finally also talked about Cohen's song 'Almost Like the Blues' with the criticism of 'the great professor' who claimed that 'there is no God in heaven / There is no hell below / So says the great professor / Of all there is to know'. We professors sometimes forget that our knowledge is limited. Being aware of these limits he told me with laughter that his wife Fearika would sometimes use Cohen's line about 'the great professor' to remind him that even professors may sometimes be wrong. Supporting human rights wherever we see the necessity to strengthen them may be the best way to appreciate Christof's legacy. May he rest in peace.

– **Wolfgang Palaver**

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



I participate in the sorrow of Christof's family, his friends and colleagues. Inspired by Christof, we will have to continue his work. May his memory be a blessing for all of us.

– **Ephraim Meir**

We are all shocked and saddened by this news. My heartfelt sympathies to the family.

– **Brian Arthur**

I share everyone's sorrow and shock. I cannot quite believe this awful news. I had become very fond of Christof in a very short time and we had been reading each other's work and exchanging feedback. I notice too that I shared a birthday with him, the day before I came to STIAS. It's hard to imagine our cohort without him. I send my condolences to all and especially to his family. It's hard to imagine what they must be going through.

– **Tamar Garb**

This is such shocking news and a terrible loss. It is hard to think of this cohort without Christof's jovial, energetic presence. My condolences to his wife and family, and to STIAS staff and fellows.

– **Tsitsi Dangarembga**

This is unexpected and sad news! My heart goes out to Christof's family and I will hold them in prayer. May his soul rest in peace.

– **Emmanuel K. Akyeampong**

This is indeed terribly sad news. We were talking a couple of days ago about the film he and his son made on the life and work of his late father. He promised to send it to me... My deepest condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

– **Mamadou Diawara**

This is truly sad and unexpected news. My deepest condolences to his family, friends and colleagues. It was a pleasure to have known him as a 2021 Fellow, even for this short while.

– **Patrice Haynes**

Is this life still to be grasped?

It evaporates under my fingers

Like snow crystals, and falls from me

Like tender apple blossoms in the frost

– 'Besinny', WEG Louw, Afrikaans poet (own translation).

This incomprehensible transition from larger and more vibrant and energetic than life itself, to RIP.

– **Louise du Toit**

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



Prof Christof Heyns, Abigail Noko and Prof Tawana Kupe at the Global Webinar on Peaceful (and not so peaceful) assemblies (16 December 2021)



*Colleagues at the Faculty of Law,
University of Pretoria*

TRIBUTES IN MEMORY OF CHRISTOF HEYNS

This is a very sad loss for all who value human rights and social justice. Christof is an example to us all of dedicated commitment at both personal and political level. Please convey my condolences to the family.

– Abdul Paliwala

Emeritus Professor of Law, University of Warwick

Dear Mrs. Heyns,

We had the pleasure to meet a few times during Christof's frequent trips to Geneva.

It is with deep sadness that staff of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights learned of the passing of Christof Heyns. He was a compassionate and inspirational friend to many of us and we mourn his untimely passing with you, his family and loved ones.

We thank you for your generosity of sharing his gifts with so many people across the globe and wish you the strength and fortitude at this difficult time.

With deepest sympathies,

– Abigail Noko,

*Regional Representative: Regional Office for Southern Africa,
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights*

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Dear Frans, Eduardo, Mati, and colleagues at the Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria,

We at the Academy received with great sadness the news regarding Christof's passing, and we would like to express our deepest condolences to you, his family and his team at the Center. We had the fortune to work closely with him and to get inspired by his passion for human rights not only at a personal level but also at the work that we do in the Academy as a whole, our staff and volunteers. He was a respected and loved professor at our summer program and a number of his former students have reached out to us to express their shock and sadness.

Christof was a visionary and an innate collaborator that got us involved in a number of collaborative projects, including the co-sponsoring of the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition. We all know that in each of the positions he occupied, he made significant, original, and long-lasting contributions that will stay with us forever. We remain committed to continue to support his work and legacy.

To honor Christof's memory we published the following in the Academy's social media and website.

Christof will be deeply missed because the world was a better place with him among us.

Please convey our deepest condolences to Christof's family and your colleagues at the Center.

With all our solidarity,
The Academy Team

– Academy on Human Rights and Humanitarian Law

*American University Washington College of Law,
Washington, D.C*

Obituary and message of condolence to the family and friends of Professor Christof Heyns.

With immense sadness, the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) and the Steering Committee of the Forum of NGOs in the Work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) received news of the demise of Professor Christof Heyns, former United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions on 28th March, 2021.

Professor Christof Heyns, a legal luminary, an eminent scholar and a giant in the field of human rights both regionally and globally. He was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights from 1999 to 2006

after which he moved to become the Dean of the Faculty of Law at University of Pretoria from 2007 to 2010. He then became the founding Co-Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa (ICLA) at University of Pretoria before serving as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (2010 – 2016). He chaired the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi in 2016, and was a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee (2017 – 2020), where he served as rapporteur for General Comment 37 on the right of peaceful assembly.

Professor Heyns also served as a member of the Working Group on Death Penalty, Extra-Judicial, Summary or Arbitrary Killings and Enforced Disappearances in Africa of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and has engaged in wide-reaching initiatives on human rights in Africa among other roles. He has advised a number of international, regional and national entities on human rights issues.

A generous, accommodating, courageous man of an unassuming disposition, this illustrious son of Africa, with notable bonds across the aisle of state and non state actors, alike, will surely be missed.

In paying tribute to the dearly departed, Mrs. Hannah Forster stated that “Death has indeed dealt us a blow! Africa has lost an eminent giant. I have known Professor Heyns for over two and half decades and his dedication to the application of human rights can only be equaled by his quiet determination and always ready and infectious beam”.

On behalf of the Governing Council ACDRSACD Chairman, Management and Staff of the ACDHRS; the NGOs Forum Steering Committee and indeed participants of the NGOs Forum, we extend our heartfelt condolences through the United Nations and Centre for Human Rights to his family, colleagues friends and loved ones.

May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace!

– African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS) and the Steering Committee of the Forum of NGO in the Work of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR)

Bonjour. Toutes mes condoléances les plus attristés. Que Dieu lui repose en paix lui accorde son paradis. Amen.

– Ahmed Malide

May his soul rest in eternal peace. Prof. has left at the prime of his career. Gone too soon.

– **Akinyi Marygoretty**

Baie dankie vir die epos en die berig. Ek dink ek glo nou eers regtig dat Christof nie meer by ons is nie. Daardie laaste week was hy in Stellenbosch en ons het nog gewonder of dit moontlik is om mekaar te sien. Dit bly 'n groot skok en 'n nog groter verlies. Ons is in die Kaap en sal dus nie die diens persoonlik kan bywoon nie. Maar as dit kan, dra asseblief my diepste medelye oor. Ek het groot bewondering vir Christof en sy werk gehad.

– **Allan Boesak**

Prof. Heyns will remain as an amazing example in his capacity to combine humanity, kindness, patience and respect, with a fantastic and inspiring expertise. Thanks for every touch you leave, Mr. Heyns. You are already thoroughly missed.

– **Albane Prophette-Pallasco**

Christof was a wonderful role model of a human rights academic for so many of us. A tower of knowledge and ideas, consistently bringing theory and practice together. I will not forget the lecture he gave as part of the evening side events in Oxford. His dilemmas and the way they explained them to the audience became our own dilemmas on the topic for the years to come. He influenced the evolution of international law through his work. And although he knew it, he had the quiet confidence of someone at ease with themselves, unassuming, approachable and open.

He was such good fun to be with him, it was such a pleasure to spend time with him in Oxford and South Africa. Always ready to laugh with the next joke, to participate social events, to tell us the funny story; and the perfect host... I was so lucky to spend time with them repeatedly in Pretoria and it was wonderful. Being with him and Fearika was always a real joy.

We will miss him but he is in our hearts and in the ways we shape ourselves in this discipline. A big kiss to Fearika and the kids and a big hug to you all, as we all feel the loss.

– **Alexandra Xanthaki**

A sad, sad loss! Christoff was a visionary who turned dreams into reality! His insights, wisdom and passion for life would be sorely missed! He played a key role in establishing our Law Faculty as one of note. Colleague we Salute you! Our friendship will be treasured! RIP!

– Prof Andre Boraine

Former Dean, UP Law, University of Pretoria

Dear family members, Dear faculty members,

I am writing to express, on behalf of ODIHR's Human Rights Department, our heart-felt commiserations. The news about the passing of Christoph Heyns prompted shock and sadness for us as an institution, and at a personal level amongst our staff - many of who had the honor and pleasure of working with this "giant of human rights work" - as he has appropriately been described.

It is hard to find suitable words here, but we feel the urge to at least share with his family and friends the appreciation and admiration that Christoph Heyns has enjoyed at ODIHR. Amongst the many interactions, official and informal, there are some we remember particularly fondly. One is his assistance on freedom of peaceful assembly and his willingness to come all the way to Warsaw to participate in an expert meeting where he generously shared his immense expertise. Another is the essay he agreed to write for ODIHR's report on the death penalty. In his usual compelling way, he enunciated why capital punishment is irreconcilable with human rights. The article was instrumental in communicating this message to our participating States and other key audiences in the OSCE-region, benefiting from his legal wit and enormous international weight.

As on so many other occasions, he contributed tons, and asked for little. As always, he cared about the human rights issue, not his own advantage. As many of us will never forget, he showed incredible kindness and was never snobbish - even though he would have had reason to be.

Our staff was inspired by him, and will continue to be. We cannot believe he passed away and hope that we thanked him enough while he was still wondering our halls, in Warsaw and in our mailboxes.

Let me express again our sympathy!

– Andrea Huber

Head of Department for Human Rights:

OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

I was so saddened to hear the news of Christof's untimely death. I had the opportunity to work with him on the use of force on various occasions and was always touched by his kind and warm personality in addition to his incredible legal and human rights leadership and knowledge. I would like to express my sincere condolences to his family and friends. May he rest in power.

– **Anna Giudice**
UNODC

Dear All,

I have heard the very sad and devastating news about the untimely passing of Christof Heyns. I wish to convey my heartfelt condolences to you and, hopefully through you, to his family. The suddenness of his departure still in the fullness of his life must be absolutely heart-breaking for the family. For all who lost a dear colleague and friend, we mourn his loss with you at the Centre for Human Rights and Faculty of Law.

I have known Christof for many years and truly admired his innovative ideas, work, writings and the outstanding contribution he made to both the United Nations and human rights in Africa. He was very well respected internationally for his human rights work. In the words of the moving obituary: a legal giant has fallen. Indeed, a giant, a lion of Africa has fallen and we deeply mourn his demise. His influence and impact on African and international human rights law but also on legal education has been really exceptional (such as in the philosophy underpinning the LLM in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa). Christof was a catalyst and a trailblazer: the Centre for Human Rights, the African Moot Court Competition, the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court, the National Schools Moot Court Competition and many other initiatives.

Christof was always full of ideas and someone who most enthusiastically and smartly created learning opportunities for students and learners. I worked with him from its inception on the National Schools Moot Court Competition - it was such a great joy and privilege to work with him. We were most delighted to see the young school kids take up the case of the South African Constitution and Bill of Rights with great dedication and argue skilfully before judges at the Constitutional Court. Those were joyful events and we cherish those moments with Christof – always getting things done always promoting human rights. We also knew that the circle is round when the same young learners, after high school complete their law studies and come back as young attorneys with new ideas. One among many of his legacies.

Christof was always inspirational and a kind human being too – a beautiful soul.

My thoughts are with his wife and children, mother, relatives, friends and colleagues at the University of Pretoria. May they find comfort in the beautiful memories and his lasting contributions. His impact and unwavering commitment to justice will live on in the minds and work of generations of students and in all others he inspired. His flowers will bloom all over the world. He walked the road an honourable man, a lion of Africa, may his soul rest in peace.

With great sadness,

– **Annette Lansink**

Head of Department: Public Law, School of Law, University of Venda

A giant of human rights with a big heart has passed. We commemorate Christof Heyns as someone who fought for human rights with an academic pen, and taught and inspired generations of students. For many years, he contributed with his expertise to countless reviews of articles in the Netherlands quarterly of Human Rights - we remain very grateful for his work and commitment. He will remain in our thoughts, like a butterfly who eternally moves human rights forward. Our thoughts are with his close family, friends and colleagues.

– **Antoine Buyse**

Utrecht University (on behalf of the Netherlands Institute of Human Rights (SIM) and the NQHR)

With great sadness, we received the news, that our colleague, outstanding human rights expert, Professor Christof Heyns passed away on March 28, 2021. Professor Heyns has advised a number of international, regional and national entities on a variety of human rights issues. Professor Aslan Abashidze, member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), had a great pleasure to work with Professor Christof Heyns on different topics.

Professor Abashidze together with two members of our Department - Associate Professors A.E. Koneva and A.M. Solntsev - are involved in an ambitious research project “The Impact of the United Nations Human Rights Treaties on the Domestic Level”, launched in 2018 by Ch. Heyns and F. Viljoen, with the support of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), to study the impact of the all core international human rights treaties on the human rights situation in 20 States, including the Russian Federation.



20th anniversary of the Centre for Human Rights with Justice Pius Langa, Prof Kobus van Rooyen and Justice Johann van der Westhuizen (2006)



Signing the funding contract with Ambassador Lodewijk Brit, Head of European Union Delegation to South Africa (2005)

Professor Christof Heyns will be remembered as a kind, big-hearted person and high profile professional. We express our deepest condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Professor Christof Heyns.

– **Prof. Aslan Abashidze**

Head of the Department of International Law of the RUDN University (Moscow, Russia), Member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights, Honored Lawyer of the Russian Federation, Doctor of Legal Sciences

Professor Heyns did impact me in many respects. The lessons I learned from him during my time as a member of the Right to life clinic will be relevant to me always. May God grant his immediate family and the entire human rights family the fortitude to bear this irreplaceable loss, Amen.

– **Bamisaye Olutola**

HRDA 2014

So sad, please accept our condolences.

– **Rev. Bartholomew B. Colley**

Acting Chairperson, INCHR-LIBERIA

On behalf of the East African Centre for Forced Migration and Displacement, please receive our heartfelt condolences on the passing of Prof Heyns.

As you are well aware, Prof Heyns inspired and shaped many of us in the continent. On a personal level, his words and advice during the All Africa Moot Court in Maputo as well as when he later taught me at Lucerne University in Switzerland immensely contributed to my passion for, and interest in, human rights.

We thank you for lending him to us and we mourn his passing with the UP and CHR family.

Hamba Kahle Prof Heyns!

– **Benjamin Ng'aru**

East African Centre for Forced Migration and Displacement

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Good evening everybody, I just come across the bad news of our Director passing away. I am deeply touched by this death of this great personality, an intellectual who built a hope for all Africans. As an alumni of 2002, I would like to associate myself to all generations of students to convey my condolences to the Centre for Human Rights. May his soul rest in peace.

– **Bienvenu Alogninou Hounbedji**

LLM 2002

To Christof's family,

It has taken me a long time to write this. The shock of Christof's passing paralysed my responses, and I am sorry I am only writing at this stage. I suppose I can only repeat the same messages that have surfaced hundreds of times around the world. I share the huge sense of loss, both personally and professionally. I am one of the many people who felt that Christof supported, guided and encouraged in my professional life. It is staggering to think of being an academic without him in academia.

What I do also want to say is this: when I am in tough situations, I often think of what other people would do. I hold in mind a handful of people I admire and respect and whom I would like to emulate. These include my late mother, Lord Woolfe, and Joel Joffe (names I am sure are familiar to you). They also include Christof. Christof's integrity, kindness, unflappable enthusiasm and quiet implementation are gifts that I receive regularly. In this small way, please know that Christof is most present and cherished.

I send you my most sincere condolences and share a small piece of the great grief you must be experiencing. I will miss Christof very very much.

Boni.

– **Professor Bonita Meyersfeld**

Associate Professor of Law; Advocate of the High Court of South Africa

Gracias Profesor Heyns, por haber tenido la oportunidad de intercambiar algunas ideas sobre la importancia de que los órganos de Tratados sesionen en las regiones!! Usted quería que se mirara el mundo de cerca en su diversidad y sus circunstancias, no solo desde Ginebra. Si, en los lugares donde las cosas pasan, donde la personas claman porque se respete sus derechos y por querer hacer ese acercamiento más real, y más humano. Descanse en paz.

Thank you, Professor Heyns, for having had the opportunity to exchange some ideas on the importance of the Treaty Bodies sitting in the regions! You wanted the world to be looked at closely in its diversity and circumstances, not only from Geneva. Yes, in the places where things happen, where people are clamoring for their rights to be respected and for wanting to make this approach more real and more humane. Rest In Peace.

– Carmen Rosa Villa

Christof was a good friend and an excellent colleague. We thank him for his academic and UN battles defending human rights. His legacy will remain forever.

– Carlos Ayala
Venezuela

I don't think Christof will ever know the impact he had on so many peoples' lives, including my own. As an academic, scholar and international figure, he was legendary, but for me it was very much more personal. I have known and worked with Christof for 29 years and he was always there for me when I was having a hard time in my personal life, he would offer advice, a kind word, a cup of coffee and just be there. I always knew where I could go for help if I needed it. He was so excited about being a grandfather, and he would share his videos and stories with me of his grandson and his children and family. Your incredibly presence will be sorely missed, and your pursuit of excellence and pushing us all to reach our best will always be remembered. Hambe Khahle Christof. May the wind be beneath your wings.

– Carole Viljoen

Dear Christoph, It was a pleasure to know you and work with you. I am so sad you are no longer here. We had that article - on the SRP - in the pipeline, remember? Perhaps I will complete it in your absence, as a tribute to you, in your memory. My heartfelt condolences to your family and friends.

– **Caroline Dommen**

On 28 March 2021, human rights lawyer Professor Christof Heyns, passed away. Professor Heyns was an internationally esteemed legal professional, an expert on human rights and a close friend of the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre) in Geneva. He will be deeply missed.

In his most recent role, Professor Heyns was the Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria. During his brilliant career, he had previously served as Director of the Centre for Human Rights in Pretoria as well as a Consultant to the UN Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, the African Union and the South Africa Human Rights Commission. One of the most recent projects Professor Heyns worked on was the drafting of General Comment 37 (2020) of the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Committee, which offers global guidance on peaceful assembly.

“Professor Heyns was not only an incredibly skilled human rights professional, with a true passion for his work, but also a strong supporter of civil society and a close friend of the Centre” said Patrick Mutzenberg, Director of the CCPR Centre.

Professor Heyns collaborated with the Centre on several occasions. Among others, he joined the Centre during a follow-up mission to Eswatini and participated in collaborative activities around CG 37.

“He really believed civil society organisations could play a key role in the protection of Human Rights worldwide and worked intensively to support their work at national and international level”, said Lázaree Eckeloo, Human Rights Officer at the Centre.

“His passion, enthusiasm and knowledge will be truly missed” Mutzenberg continued. “We will make sure we uphold his legacy by continuing to strengthen the efforts of civil society organisations and human rights defenders worldwide.”

– **Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre)**

Dear Sir/Madam,

I hope this message finds you well during these difficult times. Everyone at the Universal Rights Group (URG), Board members and staff, were shocked and greatly saddened by the news that our friend and Board member, Professor Christof Heyns, had passed away on Sunday.

Sincerely,

– **Charlotte Marres**

Researcher: Universal Rights Group-GVA, Geneva, Switzerland

My condolences to Christof's family, friends and the CHR family. An inspiring remarkable person, dedicated to the human rights cause. May his soul RIP.

– **Charmaine Pillay**

The members of the Programme for Studies on Human Rights in Context (Ghent University, Belgium) are deeply affected by the sudden passing of professor Christof Heyns. His work will be remembered for his many achievements in the advancement of human rights. We extend our deepest condolences to Prof Heyns' family and the entire Pretoria human rights community.

– **Clara Burbano-Herrera**

So sorry to hear the news...We were planning to have him in the moot court activities this year. I am in shock...wonderful guy and colleague. Very sad...Warm regards to you and everybody at the Centre. We are keeping you all in our thoughts.

– **Claudia Martin**

American University Washington College of Law

This is a tragedy. Christopher's passing is a tremendous loss for the human rights movement. Please convey our condolences to his family and to your university.

– **Claudio Grossman**

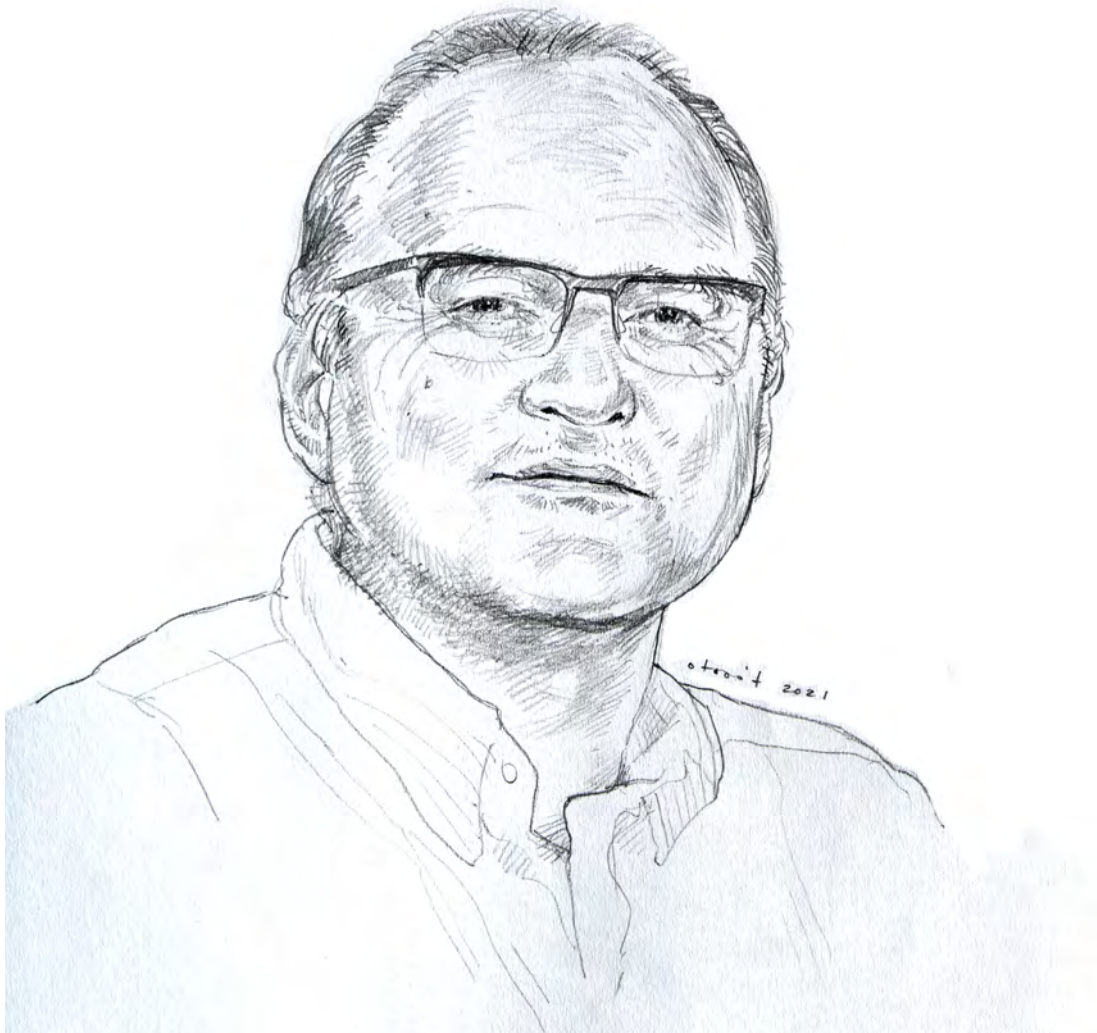
American University Washington College of Law

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

The Communications and Advocacy Team sends its condolences to everyone touched by Prof Christof Heyns' passion and hope.

– **Communications and Advocacy Department**

Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria



Vir Christof,

Christof was a visionary who inspired, and also changed, the lives of many. As a colleague he was always kind and sought to create opportunities for us to become involved in projects with humanitarian objectives. Notably we shared a love for the music of Leonard Cohen and enjoyed many philosophical conversations about Cohen's music and Lorca's poetry although I must admit, Christof had to educate me on the meaning of some of the more esoteric lyrics of our man, Leonard. I recall how, after he became ill whilst on an overseas trip a couple of years ago, he told me that, having recovered, he felt as if he was given a second chance at life and how grateful he was for it. His life had incredible depth and his contribution was vast. More than an academic, he was also a husband, father and son – and that is where he will be most sorely missed. For now, we salute him and look forward to Christof's third life – the one that he will be living through all those who love him and who carry on his good work.

“Now I greet you from the other side
of sorrow and despair
with a love so vast and shattered
it will reach you everywhere.”

(Heart with no companion - Leonard Cohen)

– **Prof. Corlia van Heerden**

My several meetings with Christof over more than three decades, always left an impression of a jurist of excellence and integrity and a person with a heart with compassion. He was respected and admired by so many who will miss him greatly. It is heartening to see that so many of his students have continued his legacy of human rights practice and education.

– **Curtis Doebler**

I was happy to meet Christof in 2014 when I became a special procedures mandate holder. During next years I had opportunity to learn a lot from him - his wisdom, experience, passion and warmth. I still remember very well his nice words when we had a farewell gathering in Palais Nations in Geneva, June 2016 to thank Christof in the end of his rapporteurship. So sad. Condolences to family, friends, colleagues.

– **Dainius Purasformer**

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health



Award ceremony of the UNESCO Prize for Human Rights Education, awarded to the Centre for Human Rights (2006)



Edouard Jacot-Guillarmod and Christof Heyns at a braai for the LL.M students (Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa) at the Heyns residence (2005)

Christof Heyns was not only a generous human being, he was also a creative thinker and an effective activist. One clear example of this is the role he played in the creation of the LLM in International Trade and Investment Law for African lawyers. As a human rights lawyer, international trade and investment law were far outside his areas of expertise and even his comfort zone. Nevertheless, he understood that international trade and investment could contribute to sustainable and equitable development in Africa. In addition, he could see that for it to play this role, international trade and investment lawyers should know about human rights law. Consequently, he wanted to ensure that the Centre for Human Rights was able to offer a first rate LLM in international and investment law that ensured that its graduates had both the skills and expertise to be effective trade and investment lawyers and the values to make sure that they and their clients were contributing to the sustainable and equitable development of Africa. His efforts to raise funding for the programme and to recruit lecturers for it played a critical role in the success of the programme.

There is a Jewish legend that before each human being dies, an angel comes to them and asks: “what have you done to ensure that the world you are about to leave is a better place than the one you entered when you were born?” I like to think that Christof bought himself at least an extra hour of life describing to the angel all the things he had done to make the world a better place! He was a real *mensch*!

The passing of Christof Heyns is a tragedy for his family, legal education in South Africa and the promotion of human rights in Africa. He made impressive contributions as a legal scholar and as an activist for the cause of human rights in Africa and around the world. He also was deeply interested in creating a cadre of young African lawyers who had the skills, the values, the knowledge and the determination to promote more equitable and sustainable development across the African continent. To this end, in addition to all his work in regard to educating human rights lawyers, he was instrumental in the creation of the LLM in Trade and Investment Law in Africa, which is dedicated to educating socially conscious and technically skilled African business lawyers. He was also a wonderful and stimulating lunch companion that I will sorely miss.

– Prof. Daniel Bradlow

SARCHI Professor of International Development Law and African Economic Relations

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

The greatest of men, with the warmest of hearts. My God I'll miss him. My kindest thoughts to all his colleagues and friends and especially to Fearika, Willemien, Adam and Renée.

– **Prof. David Kinley**

Chair in Human Rights Law: Sydney Law School, The University of Sydney, Australia

I am very shocked and saddened to hear of Christoff's passing. The Centre's eulogy says it all. Truly a giant humanitarian has fallen. Please convey my deepest condolences to everyone at the Centre and to Christoff's family.

– **David Mcquoid-Mason**

Christof was a champion--as a professional and as a person I benefitted from both his expertise and his warmth during our short time together on the Human Rights Committee. The world has lost a great man, who made the world a better place.

– **David-Natalie Moore**

My condolence goes to his family, immediate family, relatives, friends and to Centre for Human Rights for passing on this great icon and may God rest his previous soul in paradise and blessing his children. Amen.

– **Deng Khot**

These are shocking news. In the last few years I had the opportunity to see Christof in many occasions in Geneva when our Committee sessions overlapped and strengthened our institutional relationship through the Mandela Moot Court cooperation and his participation in our programs. I am without words. He was a delightful colleague and very influential human rights scholar and advocate. We will miss him dearly. Please receive my condolences and make them extensive to all the colleagues in the Centre, with all our solidarity.

– **Diego Rodriguez-Pinzon**

American University Washington College of Law

Dear Law Dean,

I am writing to express my deepest condolences to the partner and family of the departed Prof Christof Heyns. I am deeply saddened and hurt that he passed away whilst he had so much still to contribute to the abiding quest for a better and more just world.

I personally knew Christof in the dark days of apartheid and colonialism. He had no doubts at all about the horror of that race-based oppression and the exclusion of others for only how they looked - their gender, class and race. Unlike many others, he opposed apartheid openly and embraced notions of an inclusive and socially just society. This he did despite the heavy price his family had paid when his esteemed father was murdered.

During and beyond the collapse of the apartheid regime, he stayed the course to make our world a fairer and tolerable place to live in. The creation of the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) spoke meaningful volumes. At his invitation I addressed many functions of the CHR at UP Law School where he trained bright LLM sparks from the rest of the African continent. We shared the hope that those young people would return to their countries to unseat long-serving, predatory despots in favour of democratic practices and socially just systems. Christof, more than many, understood that a revolution is certainly not an event. He knew that we have to continue to set ourselves against horrible ruling elites in favour of the good of the broader populace. His passion for fundamental rights and freedoms drove him to his legendary contribution to the United Nations human rights system.

May he rest in peace and hopefully one day rise in glory.

– Dikgang Moseneke
Emeritus Deputy Chief Justice

We were always struck by how genuinely respectful Christoff was - an embodiment of botho (ubuntu). A quiet, gentle man with palpable presence and wisdom. He was a born sharer of knowledge and an eternal student too... always keen to learn about the experiences of others, regardless of their age and experience.

This is the basis of human rights - respecting the dignity of all, above all else!

We shall miss you dearly, Christof.

– Ditshwanelo
The Botswana Centre for Human Rights
(On behalf of the Board and Staff)

Prof Christof Heyns: A tribute to an unparalleled and amiable teacher and mentor.

From the outpouring of great and brilliant tributes following the passing of Prof Christof Heyns, it is evident that his reach transcended borders due to his unmatched devotion to the advancement of human rights across the globe.

As his doctoral students in the Freedom from Violence Project, Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa (ICLA), University of Pretoria, we count ourselves greatly fortunate that he shared a fraction of his life with us.

Despite the multiple commitments competing for his time, Prof Heyns gave each one of us particularised attention. He was reachable and responsive to all our questions and concerns and would always offer his support even without prompting. As a mentor and a teacher, he greatly invested in our studies and professional growth. Prof would gently push and direct us towards unleashing our potential, share opportunities with us and introduce us to other professionals working in our respective fields.

Beyond his towering intellectual stature, he was a father figure.

Each one of us can speak to his wisdom, gentleness, kindness, generosity, and thoughtfulness.

Without doubt, Prof Heyns touched our lives in many profound, pleasant, and memorable ways. His passing has made our hearts sink in deep sorrow and pain. We will greatly miss his presence.

Prof was a man that we greatly loved and admired. It is sad that we never told him this in person, in the hope that we would do so during the occasion of our graduations, which he had greatly looked forward to. It is painful that we now write this tribute on his untimely demise. However, we find solace in the fact that his immense investment in his students' academic and professional growth will have a lasting impact in the advancement of human rights in Africa and beyond.

Our deepest sympathies, comfort and love go to his wife Fearika, his children Willemien, Adam, and Renée, grandson, mother, and other members of his family.

– Doctoral Students,

Freedom from Violence Project, Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa (From 2018 – 2021)

It is with the heaviest of hearts that I share this picture of our beloved Professor Christof Heyns, taken moments before starting my PhD defense just last week. We spoke a lot about human rights impact that day, a topic which I learned to love from him throughout these years.

Well, dear Christof, the impact you have had on my life and that of so many more around the world is simply impossible to measure. It has been the honour of a lifetime to share such precious moments with you.

Grazie di cuore Prof.

– **Domenico Zipoli**

Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

My sincere condolences. May his family be comforted during this sad time. May the work he started continue to bring light in this world.

– **Dorothy Nyika**

Dear Prof Schoeman,

It is with great sadness that our Faculty of Theology and Religion, and especially our Department of Systematic Theology and Historical Theology, received the news of the passing away of Prof Christof Heyns.

For more than ten years now, the Department and Faculty hosted the annual Heyns Lecture in commemoration of the father of Christof, Prof Johan Heyns. For this and other good reasons, there have been many years of a close relationship after the tragic death of Prof Johan Heyns, with the Heyns Family, especially with his wife Rene, and two of his sons, Stephan and Christof. Prof Danie Veldsman, Christof's nephew, was instrumental in connecting the Heyns Family with the Faculty.

With you as Faculty we are deeply saddened by your loss of one of your esteemed colleagues. I write this on behalf of our Faculty, not only in deep appreciation of his father's footsteps in our Faculty, but also in appreciation of the contact we had with Christof as a Faculty.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the Faculty of Law, family and friends of Christof.

– **Prof DP Veldsman**

Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria and

– **Prof Jerry Pillay**

Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



*Christof Heyns and George Bizos at the John Dugard Public Lecture
held at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (2007)*



*Christof Heyns and the Deputy Minister of Basic Education Mr Enver Surty
at the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition, held at the University of Johannesburg (2005)*

Words fail me to express my deepest condolences to those who must be devastated and are affected by the untimely demise of Chris Heyns.

He was one of the most decent human beings with whom I have ever had the pleasure of interacting, and, for a period, we met fairly frequently in Pretoria in the noble cause of promoting a culture of human rights in post Apartheid democratic South Africa.

Although we had not been in touch recently as much as we should have been, I never doubted his commitment to what had drawn us together—promotion of a human rights culture in a changing South Africa— and indeed the continent.

South Africa is poorer consequent upon his departure, and may his soul rest in eternal peace, and may his Family, colleagues and his close friends know that I for one held him in very high esteem.

I mourn his death, but I equally celebrate his track record in the human rights discipline.

– Adv Dumisa Ntsebeza aka Bra D

The last time I met with Christof was in February 2020 in Bangkok at an expert consultation on the draft General Comment 37 on the right to peaceful assembly. We caught up over a meal, and he talked about his many ongoing projects.

He taught regional human rights mechanisms to our Masters' cohort at Oxford University. He was also Emerlynne Gil's dissertation supervisor. She was very stressed out meeting him (though she did well to hide her anxiousness from him).

Christof inspired all of us. He clarified - for me at least - the value of regional systems despite human rights' continuing pessimism over their effectiveness. It is worth fighting for and fighting over. Always patient, he would endure our endlessly long (and sometimes stupid) questions over the future of human rights. Etched in my memory is his "struggle approach" to human rights, which reasonably explains why we are still at it.

We were supposed to have met again in March 2020 at a retreat in Glion, Switzerland over the draft General Comment but alas, Covid-19 stopped me from flying. A friend suggests that we should remember all the good things about him and for the memories to warm the heart. This we shall do. Rest in peace, Christof.

– Edmund Bon Tai Soon

The Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences (EMS) at the University of Pretoria is deeply shocked by the sudden passing of Prof Christof Heyns.

Apart from his well-known work in the human rights space, he was also very passionate about the development challenges of the African continent. In this regard he was instrumental in leading the initial and subsequent discussions on a cross-disciplinary master's degree.

The Master's in Development Practice program was subsequently approved and has now been successfully offered for the past three years. We wish to salute him and the legacies he left behind. Our sincere condolences go to his family and friends.

– Elsabé Loots and the EMS Team

University of Pretoria

He was one of the kindest men I have ever known. He was a very patient dissertation supervisor who knew I was going through very tough times. He was generous with his praise and inspired me to write on. I will never forget how kind you were when I was at the verge of tears in front of you because I was unprepared for both (a) my meeting with you in your capacity as the drafter of the General Comment the meeting was focusing on, and (b) the chapters I repeatedly promised I would give you to check in your capacity as my professor.

Thank you and I will always be grateful for your mentorship.

– Emerlynn Gil

I am incredibly saddened to hear about the passing of Prof. Christof Heyns. I had the great privilege and honour of working closely with him as a student researcher with the Impact Database 2020+. His commitment to human rights and work to determine the impact and efficacy of the United Nations human rights treaty system has had a great influence on me.

My decision to pursue a career in human rights was ultimately sparked by my participation in the World Nelson Mandela Human Rights Moot Court Competition, which was the brain child of Prof. Heyns. Christof was an incredibly kind, intelligent, and inspiring human rights defender. I will take his inspiration and guidance with me throughout my career.

– Emily Williams

National University of Ireland, Galway

Beste Elsabe,

Dis met groot hartseer dat ons gister van Christof se heengaan verneem het.

Ontvang hiermee die Wits Skool vir Regsgeleerdheid se innigste meegevoel. Christof was inderdaad 'n groot gees en sy heengaan laat 'n groot leemte in die akademie .

Met vriendelike groete,

– **Engela Schlemmer**

Waarnemende Hoof: Wits School of Law

Beste Fearike, kinders en voormalige kollegas,

Dit was met groot skok en leedwese dat ek verneem het van die skielike afsterwe van vriend en kollega Christof Heyns.

Ek het Christof in die negentigs leer ken toe ons saam by die Max Planck Instituut in Heidelberg, Duitsland, navorsing gedoen het. Later was ons kollegas in UP se regs fakulteit.

Sy huis en kantoor het altyd oopgestaan. Met die Wêreldbeker Rugby-toernooi het hy almal vanuit Afrika, wat hulle toe in Heidelberg bevind het, genooi om saam te kyk en te vier. Ek is seker Birgit Kuschke ('Beertjie') onthou ook nog die avontuurlike rit saam met Christof, Fearike en die kinders in 'n ou Mercedes stasiewa na die suide van Duitsland.

Christof het 'n groot liefde vir die natuur en avontuur gehad, en het al op die Amasone of Dusi riviere geroei, by Stilbaai geseil of die natuur te verken.

UP se regs fakulteit en die groter regsgemeenskap het voortydig 'n leidingewende intellektuele ligdraer verloor.

Jou voorbeeld en nalatenskap sal my altyd by bly.

– **Dr. Ernst Basson**

Ernst Basson Attorneys

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

The ECNL team is extremely saddened to learn about the passing of Prof. Christof Heyns. It was an honour to know him and learn from him. A great legal mind and a kind, passionate, humble and respectful person.

He left a big legacy in the human rights field, strengthened protections for our freedoms and inspired us to persevere with his and our work. Thank you, Professor Heyns.

– European Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)

I received with shock and sadness the news of the passing of Professor Heyns. He was an accomplished scholar, a visionary, a wonderful and kind person. It has been a great honor to know him – since 1997 – and learn from him.

The many initiatives that he championed including the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition, African Human Rights Law Journal and the Africa-focused LLM programs gave many young lawyers on the continent, including myself, the opportunity to engage on international law issues, establish networks with other lawyers across the region and shaped the choices many eventually made on our legal careers.

His legacy will live on for many years in the thousands of lawyers all over Africa who were touched and enriched by his scholarship and vision.

May his soul Rest in Peace.

– Evarist Baimu

Senior Counsel, World Bank

To the family of Professor Heyns and the Centre for Human Rights, kindly pass on my sincerest condolences on this untimely loss. I met him during my time at the AU Commission (2012-2017) and he was a critical figure in work of the AU human rights instruments and architecture.

Rest in power.

– Fébé Potgieter
ANC General Manager

Everybody knows Christof Heyns' intelligence, a legal giant...but knowing him in person is a whole other experience. A humble, caring, friendly person.

This was how I began my doctoral journey, with him as mentor, received with such big smile. I will sorely miss him.

– Fkr Tinsae

I was utterly blessed to cross paths with professor Heyns and learn from him, both humanely and professionally. My deepest condolences to his beloved family, his friends, his colleagues and his students. I am crying with you.

I will never forget when we arrived in Glion in March 2020 for the informal expert meeting on General Comment 37 and just as we got off the train, professor Heyns proposed to walk all the way uphill to the hotel rather than take the cable-car "to enjoy the sun and fresh air and have a chat along the way": little did we imagine that we would be sweating, puffing and panting for more than two hours and would arrive at the hotel with our tongues wagging on the ground - all of us except HIM, who was tired but still cheerful and enthusiastic about the trek! This image to me is now a metaphor of your always reassuring and encouraging support against all odds, professor. Thank you ever so much for being part of our lives.

– Francesca Fanucci

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Dear Professor Kupe, Dear Professor Schoeman,

I learned with great sadness and shock of the passing of our dear colleague and friend, Professor Christof Heyns. This is a great loss to the University of Pretoria and to the African human rights community as well as the United Nations.

I join you and our colleagues in the University of Pretoria to mourn his passing. Please know that I am thinking of you all and wish I could be there at this time.

I hope that Christof's family and loved ones can take some solace in the fact that his work of transformation and his brilliant legacy will live on.

With all best wishes from myself and colleagues at King's College London.

Funmi

– **Professor Funmi Olonisakin, FKC**

*Vice President & Vice-Principal International Professor of Security,
Leadership & Development
King's College, London*

Please accept my deepest condolences on the passing of Prof Heyns, he was one of the great ones.

– **Furaha-Joy Sekai Saungweme**

*Regional coordinator (Africa), Africa End Sexual Harassment Initiative
(AESHI)*

Lord, what a monumental loss to the Centre, to the country, continent and to all of us. He was my mentor alongside Prof Viljoen, Hansungule, Padilla and others. His contribution to human rights in the world is iconic. I am profoundly devastated. MHSRIP.

– **Adv Gabriel Shumba**

I met Prof in the Faculty lift. I needed help with an NRF form while completing my LLM in Constitutional and administrative law. As I looked worried because of the deadline, he asked me whether I needed any help. And help, he provided. I submitted the form and got the funds.

Later that week, I saw him near the library and went to thank him, reminding him of what he did. His answer: I was not going to leave you miss that bursary, was I!

Thanks again, Prof. I did finish that LLM degree. May you rest of your labour. Heartfelt condolences to your family. You were truly an exceptional human being.

– Gen Kikango

MYHSRIP, there was a time that I came to do some short courses in human rights and the Professor himself, Prof Christof Heyns, took us in some modules. A loss indeed this one and a great loss to the Human Rights Centre and the broader fraternity.

– George Chimembe, Zambia

Dear Mrs Heyns,

It is with great sadness that we learned about the passing of Christof Heyns. In this sorrowful time, we would like to extend to you and your family our heartfelt condolences. The Geneva Academy will miss Professor Heyns immensely: he was a much appreciated and respected professor, expert, colleague and friend. He was an incredible force of inspiration for all of us at the Geneva Academy – students, researchers and professors alike.

His courageous interpretations of the law and initiatives always had a clear purpose: to uphold human dignity and to bring human rights protection to the next level. Thanks to his exceptional personality, gravitas and sense of diplomacy he managed to bring people together, to create consensus without ever imposing his views.

His humility, kindness and extensive knowledge will remain unparalleled. Professor Heyns will remain forever one of the key figures of international human rights law. We will never forget his devotion to the human rights cause.

With our deepest sympathy,

– Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Dear Dean Schoeman,

I'm writing to express our deepest condolences for the sudden and untimely passing of a great colleague and renowned human rights expert, Professor Christof Heyns. I hope you can transfer these words to his family, in these difficult days for them.

Christof's death was very shocking and saddening news, as I, as many others at our Centre, were looking forward to continue to enjoy his warm personality and work together with him, after he completed his mandate with the UN Human Rights Committee in 2020. The Norwegian Centre for Human Rights had the pleasure to have him with us just last Tuesday, 23 March, for the PhD defence of Domenico Zipoli.

Christof was a giant in the human rights field, yet humble, unpretentious, and always supportive of those around him. Those who had the privilege to cross paths with him, appreciated both his human rights expertise and affable personality. His life and legacy will live on, especially among others through his work on the Minnesota Protocol on investigating potentially unlawful death (2016), the General Comment 37 on freedom of assembly (2020) and the UN manual on the use of less lethal weapons (2020), and many other contributions. Importantly, his life and legacy continues through the many Master and PhD students he has supervised and nurtured over the years, and professional advice and support he has generously given to many, at the national, regional, and international level.

Our sincere condolences go first to his wife Fearika and his children and grandson. Christof was overjoyed when Isak was born, as a proud grandfather, and at the UN Human Rights Committee we shared that joy with him. Condolences also to all those friends and colleagues who are mourning him.

We wish everyone a lot of strength to overcome these difficult moments! A kind and well-lived life was cut way too soon! Vale Christof!

Sincerely,

– **Prof. Gentian Zyberi**

Head of the Norwegian Centre for Human Rights and Member of the UN Human Rights Committee

Dear All,

Christof was such a lovely, warm vibrant man and this is such a shock. James and I were regularly invited to teach on his Pretoria Human Rights and Democracy Programme which he initiated and which reflected his values and in-depth commitment and understanding of human rights - it is such a successful programme in part because of him. At Kellogg he was also so popular and great fun. We went with him to Stratford on Avon to see an uncut version of Richard iii and after 3 hours and continuing he said - just give him the horse!

We will miss his strength and integrity. Go well Christof.

Geraldine and James

– Professor Emerita Geraldine Van Bueren QC

Queen Mary, University of London, Hon Senior Fellow the British Institute of International and Comparative Law and Visiting Fellow, Kellogg College, Oxford

The loss of Christof is a tremendous blow to so many. Fearika, Adam, Willemien and Renée has shared him with us – this has come at a price for them – but we are so thankful to you for that sacrifice, and you are in my thoughts continuously.

Christof was my mentor. I first met him in 2006 as a final year law student, I was standing in front of the law building at UP getting my backpack and motorcycle helmet ready to go home – he was waiting for Fearika to pick him up, as his car was in for a service. I had admired him since arriving at UP, but never spoke to him until that day. This chance meeting set in motion a friendship that has changed the course of my life.

I have so many amazing memories – burning the midnight oil in hotel rooms in Geneva to ensure we have the correct language for the Council (Christof had an amazing capacity to work very long hours); walking to Christ's College (Jan Smuts's college at Cambridge) to see his portrait (a quick dash between sessions on consultation on right to life of journalists); and just the late afternoon chats we use to have in his office before going home.

Many, many others have pointed out the tremendous contribution Christof has made, as well as his genuineness and modesty as a person. All this is correct, and then some. But what I always admired most of Christof was his unparalleled ability to devote himself so fully to human rights yet balance that devotion with his devotion to his family. This is what I aspire to most when I think of Christof as my role model.

– Gus Waschefort



*Christof Heyns, Gus Waschfort and Cheryl-Lee Botterill
at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (2006)*



*Christof Heyns and the Former Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon
(2013)*

he left
a mark
every word
every moment
every sigh and
every half-smile

he left
a mark

a.j.

see you later old friend...

– Hazel Willson-Kirsten

Just a short note to express my sincere condolences to you and all CHR colleagues on this enormous loss.

I came to know Christof when he was still director of CHR and I was on occasion invited to comment on the research proposals of the Human Rights LLM students: I was completely in awe of his expertise.

He will be sorely missed, but I believe that we will still see his legacy in the African - and global - human rights contexts for many years to come.

– Prof Heléne Combrinck

Faculty of Law, NWU - North-West University

I have received the news of the sudden and untimely death of Christof Heyns with disbelief and incomprehension. He leaves behind an extraordinary legacy in the human rights space, especially regarding his work on the African continent and in international fora. The country has lost a fine scholar and a person with exemplary vision. As a friend I want to convey my condolences to his family and the colleagues at the UP faculty of law.

– Hendrik Andries Strydom

Research Professor, SARChI International Law, University of Johannesburg

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Thank you for holding this commemoration and for letting us all be a part of it. I received the news of the death of Prof. Heyns or Christof as he preferred to be called with shock and sadness - the Centre, the Continent and indeed the human rights world has lost a true son of the soul, an advocate and a pioneer in his time.

I first met Prof Heyns - could never address as Christof despite his insistence when I participated in a SASVO project in 1995/96 he was a kind leader, inspiration and motivator who encouraged our participation and treated all of us the same - he listened to what we had to say even if we were young students with lots of assumptions, cockiness and misinformation as students have; I enrolled for the LL.M in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa because of the encouragement and passion he showed and I have no regrets - if any of us is as half fulfilled in our human rights work as he was we count ourselves lucky; we were blessed by his presence and his work.

– **Hope Ndhlovu-Chanda**

The Pioneer Class of 2000, HRDA Alumni - Centre for Human Rights

On behalf of HURIDOCS, our sincere condolences to Christof Heyns' family, friends, colleagues. What a loss for the African and international human rights community.

– **HURIDOCS**

Geneva, Switzerland

It is with great sadness that the International Commission against the Death Penalty (ICDP) mourns the sudden demise of the eminent human rights lawyer, scholar, human rights defender, practitioner and our friend Professor Christof Heyns. Professor Heyns had worked closely with ICDP in his role as United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016 and was very generous with his kind and inspirational advice, reflecting his deep belief, commitment and wisdom in deepening abolition of the death penalty, and his important reports as Rapporteur.

– International Commission against the Death Penalty

To the Family Heyns, Dear Fearika,

Only a few days ago we met at the Warenmarkt and spent a wonderful evening together, laughing, joking, enjoying one's company. It is unbelievable and incomprehensible that Christof is no longer there. We are under shock. We only knew Christof since a few weeks. How much more unreal must it be for you and the whole family. I want to express my deep condolences to you for this immeasurable loss. No words of comfort are coming up to me, but I wish you all the strength you need in the days to come. Christof has impressed me a lot and I am glad I had the opportunity to meet him.

With feelings of deep sympathy,

Warm greetings,

– Ingeborg Noort-Rabens

Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study (STIAS)



We, participants in the International Social & Economic Rights Project (iSERP), express our profound sorrow upon the death of Professor Christof Heyns. He was a great champion of human rights, a friend and colleague to many of us, and an inspiration to all who care about equality, social justice and human rights. A thoughtful, kind, and compassionate person, he was a visionary leader in the human rights field, an outstanding scholar, and a generous collaborator in so many projects. We extend our deepest condolences to his wife Fearika, his children Willemien, Adam, and Renée, his extended family, and his colleagues at the University of Pretoria Faculty of Law, Centre for Human Rights and Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa.

– The International Social and Economic Rights Project

Catarina de Albuquerque, Lisbon, Portugal
Ana Paula de Barcellos, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
Danie Brand, Bloemfontein, South Africa
Iain Byrne, London, UK
Lilian Chenwi, Johannesburg, South Africa
Christian Curtis, New York, New York, US
Dennis Davis, Cape Town, South Africa
Martha Davis, Boston, MA, US
Jackie Dugard, Johannesburg, South Africa
Octávio Ferraz, São Paulo and London
Roberto Gargarella, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Esteban Hoyos-Ceballos, Medellín, Colombia.
Serges Alain Djoyou Kanga, Pretoria, South Africa
Karl Klare, Boston, MA, US
Brenda K. Kombo, Bielefeld, Germany
Miloon Kothari, Delhi, India
Sandy Liebenberg, Stellenbosch, South Africa
Domingo Lovera, Santiago, Chile
Kirsty Mclean, Johannesburg, South Africa
Frank Michelman, Lexington, MA, US
Aoife Nolan, Nottingham, UK
Colm O’Cinneide, London, UK
Bruce Porter, Muskoka, Canada
Komala Ramachandra, Washington, D.C., US
Jayshree Satpute, Delhi, India
Katie Young, Boston, MA, US
Namita Wahi, Delhi, India
Lucy Williams, Boston, MA, US
Stuart Wilson, Johannesburg, South Africa

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



Frans Viljoen, Edouard Jacot-Guillarmod, Christof Heyns, Raul Pangalangan, Jane Connors, Albie Sachs, Veronica Gomez, Manfred Nowak and Norman Taku in Geneva, Switzerland (2016)



Callie Pistorius, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria and Christof Heyns shortly after he was appointed as Dean of the Faculty of Law (2006)

That is very sad news. Christof was an important, intellectually rigorous scholar, a skilled administrator and a leader. His presence will be missed. He was a thoroughly decent man too. My sympathies to his family and many friends.

– J. Brooks Spector

It was with a heavy heart that we learnt of the recent untimely passing of Prof. Christof Heyns. On behalf of The Conversation Africa Team, please accept and on our heartfelt condolences to his family and the University of Pretoria community. Over the years as The Conversation, we have often called on his expert opinion, which he generously gave. He has left behind an honourable legacy for the human rights and legal fraternity not only in Africa but also across the globe.

Sincerely,

– Jabulani Sikhakhane

Editor: The Conversation Africa

I was deeply saddened to learn of Christof's sudden and untimely death. I was privileged to work with him in many contexts, including in his early work on human rights treaty bodies and later, when he was Special Rapporteur. I was delighted to support him as he set up the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Competition and participate in its first Geneva session.

Christof was a man of brilliance, imagination, kindness and humility. He was beloved by the staff of the Special Procedures Branch and carried out his functions with exceptional legal skill and dedication. He contributed greatly to the legal framework of human rights and will be missed enormously.

I send my condolences to Fearika, who will remember that she, Christof and I enjoyed dinner together on a boat on Lake Lucerne some years ago, and Christof's children, grandchild and the rest of his family. Sympathy also to the Faculty and students of the University of Pretoria.

In great sorrow,

– Jane Connors

Christof's and my paths first crossed in 2011, where I had the privilege to meet him in Pretoria at the newly founded Institute of International and Comparative Law in Africa. After that, we met on a variety of occasions, among other in Geneva, Stockholm and again in Pretoria. Christof was kind enough to involve me in the work at ICLA and we collaborated on the Freedom from Violence project. It is hard to find words that do justice to Christof's significance as a colleague and friend, but to me 'warmth', 'wit' and 'wisdom' are three that encapsulate a portion of what made him so special. My thoughts go out to his family and friends. What a loss!! R.I.P.

– **Jann Kleffner**

Saddened to learn about Christof's departure. His visit to Mexico on June 2013 as UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial executions was an unforgettable opportunity to witness first-hand his devotion to human rights and his closeness to other people's suffering. He listened to several activists and victims at the siege of OHCHR in Mexico City. — at Oficina de Alto Comisionado de las Naciones Unidas.

– **Javier Esteban Hernández Valencia**

Good Morning Prof. Schoeman,

What a gut punch the news was! My sincerest condolences. Be assured that my thoughts and prayers are with Prof Heyns' family, colleagues and friends. A kind, humble and generous soul had been called home. Prof Heyns was as kind as he was brilliant and as humble as he was distinguished. The mark of a man is when he leaves a lasting impression in the lives of ordinary people like myself. Twenty plus years ago I met Prof Heyns and through the years whenever I had a question or needed direction Prof took the time to answer my emails, no matter how busy he was. Seeing Prof again at the LLD contact session in 2019, it was clear that Prof was a lot more pensive, but his warmth and kindness remained unchanged despite the heights he had reached over the years. There are not many people who make a lasting imprint on the lives of ordinary people. Prof Heyns was one of the chosen few whose passing leaves a gaping hole in the lives of the distinguished and well-known as well as in the lives of the common folk, like me. I'll be grateful if you'll convey my sincerest condolences to Prof Heyns' family, friends and colleagues.

– **Jeanette Buis**

Adieu, Prof Christof, the one who through many ways inspired our dream not to live for ourselves alone but for the purpose of addressing human rights wrongs.

I remember his teaching on human rights and the struggle approach in 2008. I remember the difficult questions we asked. I remember still how unoffendable and gracious he was in his responses and typical smile.

Your memories will warm our hearts for long!

– Jegede Oluborode Ademola

Saddened to learn about the loss of Christof Heyns. I had the great privilege of working with Christof during the MN Protocol revision process. As a Special Rapporteur, a member of the Human Rights Committee, and as an academic, he made great contributions to the advancement of human rights globally - his legacy lives on. My thoughts are with his family, especially Fearika, during this difficult time.

– Jennifer Prestholdt

The loss of Christof is unbearably sad. I met him in 1986 or 1987, when we were both students at Yale Law School. He was studying for his LL.M. I was a JD student. We didn't know each other well then, but in later years, especially after I began teaching the human rights clinic at Yale, we interacted from time to time. He would come by when he was in New York for UN work. We hosted him to give a talk at the law school once or twice. He hosted me for a talk at the University of Pretoria. I saw him in Geneva. It always made me happy to see him. I admired him for the remarkable quantity and importance of his contributions to human rights protection and to his students. He was one of the rare people who had original ideas and the ability to realize them. Most of all, I cherished him as one of the kindest people I've ever known, always generous, humble, gentle, caring and good humored in every situation. My thoughts and sympathy are with Christof's family and close friends. I hope rich, warm memories and the love of people all over the world bring you, in time, a little comfort.

– Jim Silk



*Jan Kleffner and Christof Heyns at the Institute for International and Comparative Law,
Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria*



*Loretta Feris, Riekie Wandrag, Christof Heyns and the participants
of the Annual African Trade Moot Court Competition (2006)*



Barney Pityana, Cheryl de la Rey and Christof Heyns at the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition, held at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (2010)



Christof Heyns and John Dugard at the John Dugard Public Lecture held at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (2007)

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

This is a very sad news. I met Christof in 2017 at the UN Commission for Human Rights' consultations on draft guidelines on the Effective Implementation of the Right to Participate in Public Affairs, in Addis Ababa. He asked that we collaborate on an academic paper to be based on the consultations.

With two others we worked on the paper and it came out in 2019. He was such a pleasant man to work with - he was so patient and understanding with me, which I immensely appreciated as an upcoming researcher and scholar. Thank so much for letting me know. May Christof's Soul Rest in Peace.

– **Jimmy Kainja**

I express my heartfelt condolence upon the demise of a human rights champion prof Christof Heyns from Nepal!

As a student of Kathmandu School of Law, we are acquainted the Nelson Mandela moot court competition, (which prof Heyns since has a praiseworthy role as a founder), since our college is also participating in the event!

Prof Christof Heyns will be remembered as one of the revered figure in the field of human rights from the global south!

– **Jiwan Acharya**

Sad day for the Centre. Sad day for all who knew Christof. And sad day for the many who benefitted from his wisdom and courage. He was a very special person.

– **Prof John Dugard**

Very tragic, my heartfelt condolences to his family and to the wider human rights family.

– Julie Stewart

We learn with sadness the passing on of Christof Heyns. On behalf of Zambia National Women's Lobby, I would like to express our condolences. May His Soul Rest in Eternal Peace. In this trying moment, may the Lord strengthen his family and you the staff of the Centre for Human Rights.

– Juliet Kaira Chibuta

Executive Director, Zambia National Women's Lobby

On Professor Christof Heyns. In just a few days, it would have been 7 years since your 1 April 2014 report to the Human Rights Council as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions.

I met you for the first time under the Miquel Barceló ceiling of the Palais des Nations. I was moved by your efforts to remind us that in order to ensure the protection of human rights, we must keep an open mind and work together - whichever side we worked for.

I remember I was seated at the corner of our training room when I first read your work. Since then every observation and recommendation you've made remain relevant and (as much as I hate to say it) very close to home.

You said in discussing the role of law enforcement officials in protecting society from violence, enforcing justice, and securing the rights of people, "one of the State's central duties is to protect life. It is a particularly serious breach of this duty when its own agents violate this right – leaving little hope that they will be effective in preventing violations by others. The first step of securing the right to life is thus the establishment of an appropriate legal framework for the use of force by the police, which sets out the conditions under which force may be used in the name of the State and ensuring a system of responsibility where these limits are transgressed."

The world certainly lost a beacon. You have certainly left a legacy that will continue to shine on. It is rare to truly learn, but through your work I have experienced that rarity. Thank you, Professor #ChristofHeyns. It was a pleasure meeting you. May you find the peace you've worked your life for, in the hands of our Creator.

– Justein Redoble





Years ago, from Christof's red pen and scribbles in the margins of countless drafts of written outputs, including my master's thesis, I learned to write. Not least, I learned to always justify, to omit 'flowery' words (I've even deleted some from this post) and to always triple check my footnotes. Unfortunately, what I did not learn from the owner of that red pen was how to write a tribute to him upon his passing.

I was privileged at the beginning of my professional career to work for Christof. Although given his extreme humility, I know he would prefer it to be said that I worked alongside him not for him as the latter would imply hierarchy. I heard Christof more than once boast about his knack for hiring the right people. He was a visionary, and according to him he knew how to choose those who could implement his fantastic ideas. It may be true that he had a particular headhunting talent, but I wonder if he realized that as much as he may have spotted talent, he developed and inspired it. As for myself, I know I did my best and contributed positively to the Centre for Human Rights (I hope!) not because of what I brought to the table when I was invited but because of Christof's mentorship, kindness, belief in me, the opportunities he provided to do new things, and because of his dedication and leadership that inspired me everyday.

Christof was an exceptional human being and while I am so sad he is gone too soon, I am grateful that my path intersected with his on our respective journeys. His journey was too short, but his footprints will remain.

– Karen Stefiszyn

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Kathmandu School of Law mourns the untimely death of Prof. Christof Hyens and has decided to dedicate the first edition of Nepal School Moots of Human Rights to be held in April to Prof. Christof Heyns.

– **Kathmandu School of Law**

Christof was a wonderful colleague. He will be greatly missed. Christof was not only a distinguished and erudite scholar in the field of human rights and international law, but also a very fine gentleman. Please accept my sincere condolences on the passing of our good brother and friend, Prof Christof Heyns. MHSRIP.

– **Kenneth K. Mwenda**

Program Manager, Voice Secondment Program (VSP), World Bank

We would like to extend our heartfelt condolences of the passing away of Prof Christof Heyns. Our prayers and thoughts are with his family and all of you who worked with him. May his soul rest in peace.

– **Kudakwashe Dube**

The Human Rights Protection Division, Ministry of Justice family, Republic of Liberia extends its heartfelt condolences to the Center for Human Rights and to the deceased family for the loss of an individual who spent his life impacting the World through the promotion of human rights. May his soul rest in perfect peace.

– **Kutaka Togbah**

On Sunday, March 28th 2021 transitioned , the University of Pretoria lost a legal giant, an academic, a human rights activist, colleague, mentor and a friend .

We, the students, lost a source of inspiration and a mentor. A man who was the epitome of dedication and humility. A man whose legacy has left footprints on our hearts. A man whose legacy will live on for decades to come.

Professor Heyns had outstanding commitment and dedication towards the fulfilment of human rights and this is illustrated in the fact that he co-founded the Centre for Human Rights, which is a leading research institute in Africa, he was responsible for shaping so many legal young minds and exposed them to the legal world.

He also founded Law House, the law faculty student body at the University of Pretoria in his undergraduate years .Through Law House, students are given an avenue through which they can address grievances with the faculty, students are given the opportunity to participate in various sporting, cultural and outreach activities. Through Law House, many students have been given the opportunity to serve as student leaders, many of us were given the opportunity to leave our mark on the faculty and many of us were given the opportunity to implement projects to the benefit of the student body. None of this would have been possible without Prof Heyns, during our term Prof made valuable contributions to the success of our term.

We are eternally grateful to him for what he has done for the law faculty student body. Thank you Prof Heyns, rest peacefully.

Issued by
Mankhuwe Caroline Letsoalo III
On behalf of the Law House EC 2017/18

– LAW HOUSE EC 2017/18

C'est avec une grande tristesse que j'apprends le décès tragique du Professeur Christof Heyns, ancien Directeur du « Centre for Human Rights ». A cet effet, j'adresse mes condoléances les plus attristées à sa famille biologique, à tous les membres du CHR et à l'Université de Pretoria tout entière.

La disparition du regretté Christof Heyns est une grande perte pour nous tous qui l'avons connu. Que son âme se repose en paix!

– Dr Lamine Moustapha

Ancien Représentant de Faculté (Université de N'Djaména) au Moot Court, N'Djaména, Tchad

Prof Christof Heyns lived a visionary and purpose driven life.

His impact on constitutionalism on the African continent is unparalleled.

At the end of apartheid and as the Congress of the South African people (CODESA) mulled the interim constitution, he identified the need to build a rich body of lawyers equipped to make the constitution a lived reality in the lives of South Africans.

This prompted him to conceptualise and deliver what may be the first Masters Degree program in Human Rights and Constitutional Practice in 1996. I was very privileged to be admitted and to graduate from the second class in 1997.

In later years, he expanded the program to deliver the program in partnership with several African Universities.

He is a great loss to the African legal fraternity. Condolences to his family, all at the CFHR and others whose lives he touched.

– Lebo Modiba

I studied under Professor Heyns at Oxford; and recall reading his “struggle approach to human rights” as an absolute game-changer in how I understood the cause we both shared. Not only an excellent academic and human rights activist; he was a committed educator and a jovial, approachable person that went out of his way to make sure everyone felt included in the discussions. His accomplishments are too many to list here; but I wanted to share on how important meeting him was to my personal development. My condolences to his family and to the many friends he made around the world.

– Leonardo Nader

Dear Prof.,

My deepest condolences to you and your staff in the Faculty of Law with the passing of Prof Heyns. You are in my thoughts and prayers.

Regards,

– **Letticia Jooste**

Our deepest condolences to all those at the Centre with the Centre's loss. I knew Christof from school days, and reconnected later in my career with him. What a loss indeed. Gone too soon, but his legacy will live on in every student and staff member he impacted on. May his soul rest in peace.

– **Lidia Pretorius,**

Disability Empowerment Consultant and Life Coach:

I feel deeply saddened by the news of Christof Heyns' passing. What a great privilege it was to have worked with him and learned from him over the years. He was as kind and inspiring as anyone I've met, and a gentle giant in the human rights community. My deepest condolences to his family, as well as his many friends and colleagues. I will remember you always with much gratitude for your friendship, dear Christof. I knew Christof from his work with us at the UN in Geneva. Deepest sympathies to you all.

– **Lisa Oldring**

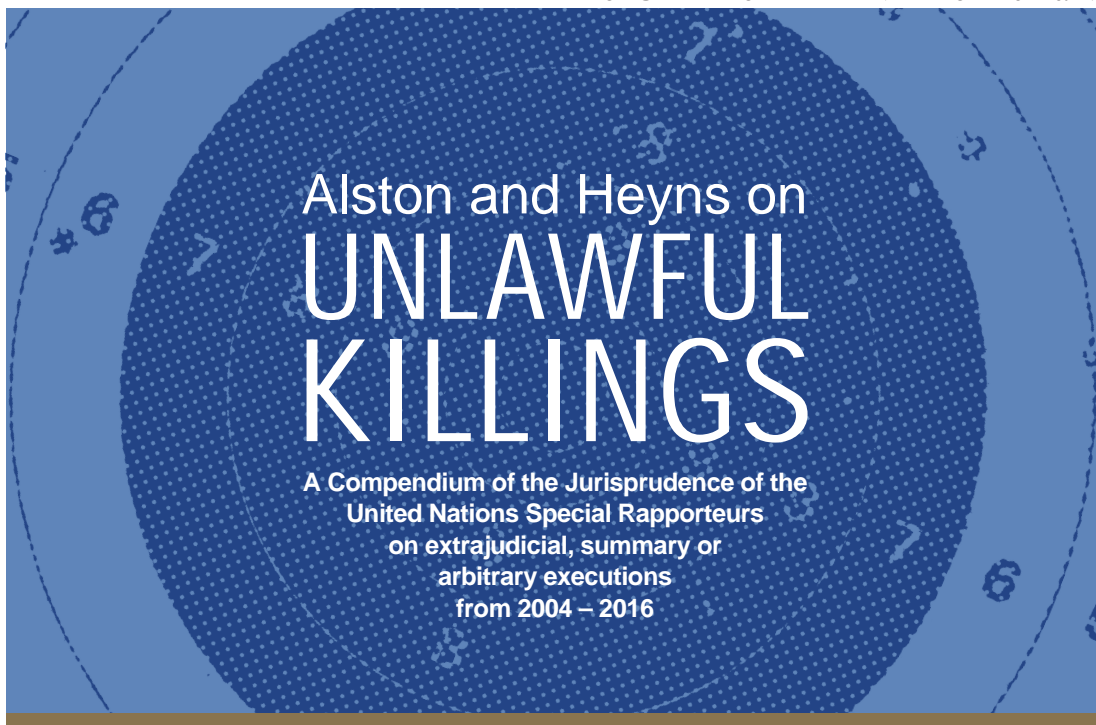
I am so saddened about the demise of Christof. He was so passionate about human rights and driven by a free society he touched so many lives. His contribution to human rights jurisprudence speaks volumes of a person of rare qualities. When we met at Harvard Law School for an Experts meeting on the Death Penalty, he impressed me so much on his wide knowledge of the subject. Fare well Christof.

– **Dr Livingstone Sewanyana**

*Executive Director, Foundation for Human Rights Initiative (FHRI),
and UN Independent Expert on Promoting a Democratic and Equitable
International Order*



Students on the Master's programme in Human Rights and Democratisation in Africa, studying at the Heyns residence (Photo by Liz Griffin)



Cover: Alston and Heyns on Unlawful Killings: A Compendium of the Jurisprudence of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2004-2016 (PULP)

The last time I saw Christof and family was at their home in Pretoria. I took a few pictures which I share here today. But, where's Christof and family and what's going on here you might ask?

Well, you don't see them because in classic Heyns family style they'd all gotten out of the way for the sake of human rights. More specifically, on this occasion, the entire family had decamped to the kitchen and given up the rest of their house to myself and the students to hold classes there because we couldn't get onto campus! And they didn't just do it for a day, we took over their house for an entire week! Christof would pop in from time to time to see if we had everything we needed and he'd graciously let us grill him about what he thought.

Christof was completely, utterly and selflessly devoted to human rights education. I had the great privilege to teach along side him at universities around the world for over a decade. He was a great teacher, scholar, leader and diplomat that's for sure. But above all he was one of the most impactful human rights activists I've ever met. He didn't scream and shout like many activists do. He understood that the greatest potential for social change lay in quietly and carefully educating the next generation of advocates. He gracefully, quietly, kindly and humbly followed his vision and calling and built up a sustainable movement of activists in Africa and beyond. Christof also built up the Centre, academic programs in Pretoria and at universities around the world, but he wasn't an empire builder. He was a movement builder and activist par excellence.

The movement now mourns the loss of such a bright shining guide and light, a man who embodied so completely the values of human rights that we pursue. Many of us have also lost a dear friend.

My deep condolences to Fearika and family.

– Liz Griffin

Dear Christof, it seems only fitting that I am writing this at 3:00am, your 3:00am email will not be there this morning. Your new book is ready – you were supposed to get the first 2 printed copies early Monday morning, you would have been excited and thrilled! You would have thanked and praised all involved, and come up with wild ideas to market it as you so often did in the past. So, I will use this platform in your honour (as you would never pass on an opportunity like this) to show and tell.

You touched my life in the most profound way and there is no way to explain how I will miss you – you built a team that will continue to use and implement the tools that you taught – to dream BIG, to achieve BIG, never accept a POSSIBLY but only a DEFINITELY!

And I did forget to say “thank you” while you were around to hear it and to praise you where praise was due. Job well done Christof – you may rest!

– **Lizette Hermann**

Prof Christof was a good man who imparted his wisdom with humility to so many African law students who were inspired to initiate their own projects in their different spaces. Your legacy will live on forever. Rest in peace Christof.

– **Lloyd Kuveya**

Christof, in my oë was jy een van die beste mense op aarde. Dankie vir die enorme positiewe impak wat jy op soveel mense se lewens gehad het. Jy het my geleer dat een persoon alleen 'n geweldige verskil kan maak. Dit was 'n groot eer om soveel jaar saam met jou te werk. Ek gaan jou mis.

– **Lourika Pienaar**

It is with deep sadness that we learn of the recent passing away of Professor Christof Heyns, former director of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, and respected global human rights lawyer.

Oxfam South Africa expresses its heartfelt condolences to you and all staff at the Centre for Human Rights. Prof Heyns' sudden passing is a tragic loss, and his work will be remembered for his many achievements in the advancement of human rights, including his commitment to the strengthening of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, his role as United Nations Special Rapporteur and his service as a member of the UN Human Rights Committee.

I personally had the pleasure of working with Prof Heyns at the SAHRC in the period between 1996 and 1998 as well as at the Constitutional Assembly before that time.

I was particularly inspired by his keen enthusiasm for the missions he organised with young people to integrate the teaching of human rights with practical realization through the construction of physical infrastructure in various parts of the continent.

Staff at OZA have also had the benefit of learning with Prof Heyns at the graduate level including on foundational leadership theory. Beyond being a dynamic human rights advocate, Prof Heyns is viewed as being very passionate on sustainable development issues, teaching his students about how to develop an appropriate leadership approach to implementing responses to sustainable development challenges.

Prof Heyns' achievements will be long remembered, and he will continue to be an inspiration to all who had the honour of working with him.

We are truly sorry for your loss, and express our deepest sympathies to all staff at the Centre for Human Rights.

– Louisa Zondo

Acting Executive Director, Oxfam South Africa

Our heartfelt condolences to UP, family, friends our prayers are with you during this trying time. May Prof Christo Heyns departed soul rest in eternal peace. Sorry for the sad loss his legacy will continue to shine globally.

– Madikizela Bokaba

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



It is still hard to believe that Christof is gone. He meant so much to so many. He gave so much to so many.

Christof, the great mentor. I first met Christof in November 2002. He was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights and I had arrived from Sweden for a six-month internship. Christof was my mentor and we collaborated on many projects, in particular related to the African regional human rights system. Deciphering Christof's handwritten comments on drafts was always a challenge but deeply rewarding in forming my own thinking. Talking to Christof always gave new insights. Christof always had time for you. I'm forever grateful to Christof for taking me on as his doctoral student and for securing funding for me to stay at the Centre beyond my initial internship.

Christof, the great teacher. Christof has formed the minds of generations of human rights students in Pretoria and across the world. One of his many ideas was to bring students from the African continent together for what became the masters programme in human rights and democratisation in Africa. Christof always found time in his busy schedule to teach on the programme and he was scheduled to have taught the 2021 class yesterday. In February he shared his vast knowledge on the right to life and freedom of assembly with the class. Little did I know that I would talk to him for the last time on the road outside Future Africa on his way to teach his last class. All who were taught by him, all whom he met, were touched by his intellect and his humanity. His legacy will live on.

– Magnus Killander

Today, words fail me. I cannot express how sad and sorry I am at the passing of our colleague, the incomparable Prof Heyns. We have lost a giant in our field, and a truly towering voice of morality and humanity. Prof Heyns was an inter-generational figure who transcended all the chasms and hatreds that make our world so intolerant and inhumane. I know this -- his legacy will live forever. May we all find peace and strength in this difficult time, and may his family know that we embrace them with love and gratitude for sharing this giant with us.

– Makau Mutua

To the Heyns Family and Dean Elsabe Schoeman,

On behalf of the International Committee of the Red Cross, we continue to be saddened and shocked by the news of Prof Heyns' sudden passing and wish to send our heartfelt condolences. His never ending kindness, consideration and generous nature will be deeply missed by so many across the world. Not only did he play a monumental role in shaping the international legal landscape he also touched thousands of people's hearts and minds. His legacy truly is one of giants. For the ICRC our engagement with Prof. Heyns was manifold, both in Africa and internationally. He played an instrumental role in bringing humanitarian issues to the fore and finding ways in which we could address these. There was no request too big or small and it is with deep gratitude and honor that we appreciate his multiple efforts and tireless quest. His contributions to the work of the ICRC are extensive and he has participated in many an expert meeting and provided brilliant insights in to many issues particularly when it comes to the use of autonomous weapons. For us in Southern Africa we are indebted to him for his passion for teaching, influencing and inspiring so many minds. He will be dearly missed by us all and we thank him for his unfailing support and dedication. It is with great appreciation that we acknowledge our time with such an extraordinary man and hope to continue the legacy he so humbly created. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with you during this time.

With our kindest regards,

– **Mamadou Sow**

*Head of Regional Delegation: International Committee of the Red Cross,
Pretoria Regional Delegation*

After Prof Heyns established the Centre for Human Rights, he led the process where a group of South Africans was taken to the University of Lund, Sweden to learn International Human Rights Law. I was part of that group. RIP Prof.

– **Mandisa Fatyela**

Respected Professor Heyns would be dearly missed by the global human rights community and academia. His contributions are unmeasurable and his kindness will remain alive in our hearts. It was a privilege to know him and work with him. Sharing a picture taken few steps from his office in the U of Pretoria and that embodies his work. Gracias maestro!

– **María Del Carmen Vivar**

The Embassy of the Argentine Republic in the Republic of South Africa presents its compliments to the Centre for Human Rights and would like to convey a message of condolences and sympathies by Chargé d' Affaires Counsellor María Florencia Segura for the passing of Professor Christof Heyns.

On behalf of the Government of Argentina and the Embassy of the Argentine Republic in South Africa, I would like to convey my sincere and deepest condolences to the family of Professor Christof Heyns and to the Centre for Human Rights for his sad passing. Professor Heyns has not only been an international expert and professor on human rights but also a great activist with solid convictions on the respect and promotion of human rights worldwide. He had been a very good friend of Argentina, and particularly to this Embassy. It's a great loss for the international movement for human rights and we should continue with his legacy.

– Counsellor María Florencia Segura

I was so sad to read this news. He was such a treasure. The accolades from around the world have been wonderful. My heartfelt sympathies to all his colleagues at the Centre. You will always miss him. You are all so honoured to have been inspired by his life, leadership, knowledge and companionship. Hugs to you all.

– Marian Shinn

Respected Concerned,

Professor Heyns was my research supervisor during my studies at Oxford. Despite my intellectual limitations, he used to admire and adore me a lot. He was a great source of Inspiration during one of the most turbulent phases of my life. I'll be ever grateful for his kind and sincere contribution towards my life. For sure I'll one day tell my newborn daughter how a graduate student from one of the impoverished countries of the world was nurtured by such a reputable yet very kind-hearted professor. I know words are insufficient to console your loss. Professor Heyns will live in my heart forever and I'll remember him. May he rest in peace.

– Md Al Ifran Hossain Mollah

Senior Lecturer in Law from Bangladesh

I have just learned, with profound sorrow, of the passing of our great friend and Colleague, Prof Christof Heyns. I was very privileged to meet him and travel all over Africa with him in the All Africa Human Rights Moot Court Competitions. I also worked with him as a Fellow dean in the Southern Africa Law Deans Association. He was unfailingly courteous and a pleasure to work with.

Please convey my deepest condolences to his family and colleagues at the Centre. May his Soul Rest in Eternal Peace.

– **Melvin Mbao**

This is really very sad news. Prof Heyns contribution to human rights was immense. He was very kind hearted person. He will be missed. My deepest condolences to his family and friends.

Mesenbet Assefa (PhD)

Asst. Professor of Law, Addis Ababa University, School of Law-Partner

It is with a truly heavy heart gorged with pain and disbelief that I write this message. I heard and I am overwhelmed by the sad news of the sudden passing of our dear friend Christof. He was a model of a perfect person and a giant of a scholar. His commitment to a better world was unparalleled. Our world will be diminished without Christof and we will not be able to stop mourning this great loss. For you and those even closer to him than us I cannot begin to imagine the pain.

Please accept my deepest condolences and kindly pass on these condolences to his family. Please be assured of our prayers for his saintly soul to rest in perfect peace.

– **Michael Addo**

I first met Christof in 2010 after he was appointed as a UN Special Rapporteur and I was privileged to get to know him much better in recent years as he worked to craft General Comment 37 on the right of peaceful assembly.

It was always clear that he relished working on vital issues that he held dear (his own doctoral thesis having been a jurisprudential analysis of civil disobedience in South Africa).

As so many have said, he had a brilliant legal mind – but it is his desire and ability to bring people together, and to do so in his characteristically warm, gracious and supremely modest way, that I will remember most. I always left a conversation with Christof feeling inspired – that there was much more to be done, but purpose in trying to do it.

His ideas, his memory and the connections he made will all live on.

I'm heartbroken at this terrible news and send deepest sympathy to his family and to all who knew and loved him.

He will be so very dearly missed.

– Michael Hamilton

Associate Professor of Public Protest Law, UEA Law School

The news of Christof's passing is terrible.

In his memory I have recorded a short piano piece with variations on the melody C-H-Re-mI-eS-Ti-dO-F.

Please send my heartfelt condolences to Fearika and the whole family.

I was just talking with my wife and our kids about the wonderful dinner we had together at the lakeside in Geneva with Christof, Fearika and Willemien almost two years ago.

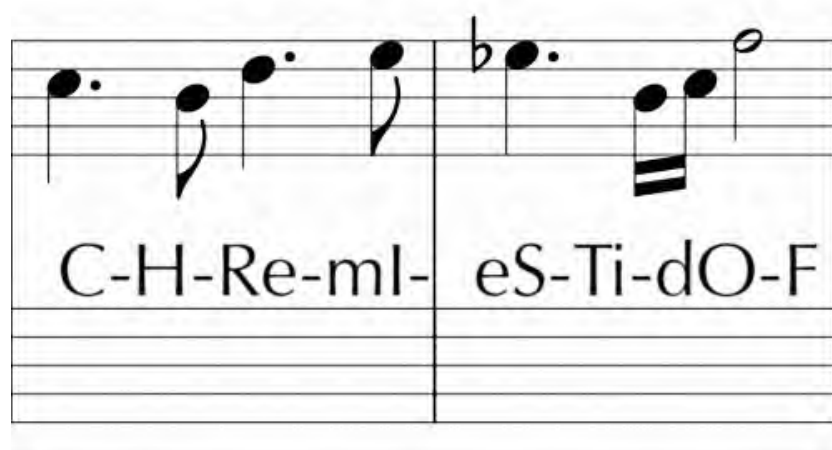
– Michael Wiener

OHCHR

In memoriam
Christof Heyns
(1959-2021)

Variations on C-H-
Re-mI-eS-Ti-dO-F

Piano
improvisation by
Michael Wiener



Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

I have just learnt about the passing of Prof Heyns. I would be grateful if you could convey my condolences to Prof Heyns' family and colleagues.

He leaves behind a substantial body of work on Human Rights, specially the pioneering contribution he and his colleagues at the Human Rights Centre have made to promotion of African Human Rights.

His untimely death is a great loss for everyone working for the advancement of human rights.

I am confident that the Centre will continue the great work and I wish you all the best.

– Milan JN Meetarbhan G.O.S.K

Barrister-at-Law, Mauritius

Soft spoken, humble and an all-round great human being who always had time to engage on human rights issues.

Condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

– Molefhi Phorego

Dear Christof, you will be missed as a friend, a colleague and an inspiration. Thanks for all that you have done for human rights, the victims and humanity: you will never be forgotten!

– Morris Tidball-Binz

I am totally lost for words on this monumental loss of a human rights giant and legal luminary.

I met him in the early 90s as he was organising the then Southern African Moot Court Competition and made me a part of the organising committee representing Zambia.

Since then I have followed with great admiration his groundbreaking human rights work and innumerable contributions in this area both regionally and globally.

He accepted to serve as external examiner for the School of Law at the University of Zambia when I was Assistant Dean Postgraduate and made unbelievable sacrifices. He later gracefully supervised my

LLD dissertation and encouraged me all the way particularly when on account of my heavy work schedule as Attorney General of Zambia I contemplated giving up.

I benefitted immensely through my interactions with this sterling academic who was ever warm and generous with his time. Now I sit in the Supreme Court of Zambia confident that I had the benefit of learning from one of the world's best legal mind.

Rest in Peace Christof.

– Mumba Malila

My heartfelt condolences to the fraternity.

– Musole Kenneth Chihinga, Solwezi, Zambia

May his soul rest in eternal peace. We have indeed lost a great man, a man of character, a statesman in his own rights. His death is untimely given the grandeur and legacy that Prof Heyns has left at his age. Were he to leave longer, there was greater change that he would bring. But lets celebrate his life, which he lived with greater fortitude and resilience. He is indeed worthy of emulation.

RIP Prof Heyns.

– Mzimkhulu Sithetho

Geneva International Centre for Justice Commemorates the Life of Professor Christof Heyns

Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ) is saddened to hear of the unexpected passing of human rights legend Professor Christof Heyns. His wisdom and passion shined through in his roles as a professor, advocate, expert and friend. Professor Heyns left a mark on the human rights community that will never be forgotten. For this, we owe him our deepest gratitude.

GICJ had the honor of communicating and collaborating with Professor Heyns on numerous occasions when he was acting as the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial or summary executions as well as during his membership in the Human Rights Committee. We will continue to ensure that our work honors the legacy of Professor Heyns by upholding the values of dignity and equality that he held dear.

Professor Heyns' legacy will live on and can already be seen from his recent contributions to international law, especially in his drafting of General Comment no. 37, which was published in July of last year. This document came during a time of severe global unrest and will serve to provide global guidance on the standards of peaceful assembly for decades to come. Just a few months earlier, Professor Heyns also led the effort to draft the United Nations Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement. Due to the strength of Professor Heyns' intellect, we have been bestowed with two seminal documents which will prevent crimes and help victims around the world access justice.

Christof Heyns constantly strived to make the world a better and more peaceful place and he will be sorely missed. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the Heyns family during this difficult time.

– Naji Haraj

Executive Director at Geneva International Centre for Justice

Thank you for informing me of this sad news. I remember Christof fondly from my visit to PU for the World Human Rights Moot Court competitions. He also visited Jamaica many years ago. I last saw him in Geneva. I am very saddened.

– Nancy Anderson

Attorney-at-law, Norman Manley Law School, Kingston, Jamaica

I would like to extend my personal condolences to the bereaved family, relatives, colleagues and friends of Professor C. Heyns. My good friend Rosario Domingue who has unfortunately passed away also and myself were among the first academics from UOM to establish close links with the HRC spearheaded by C. Heyns.

He has contributed a lot in the field of Human Rights. He was not only an outstanding academic, but imbued with humanity and a dedicated activist.

I also had the opportunity to meet him in Geneva and was impressed by his utmost professionalism at the international level.

I will pray for his noble soul to rest in peace and continue to influence the consolidation of Human Rights, in a remote manner, from wherever he is. Possibly a part of the great architect of the Universe.

– Narsinghen H

Senior Lecturer, Department of Law and Management, University of Mauritius

With profound sorrow and sadness, I learned of the passing of Professor Christof Heyns. His death is a great loss not only to his family and friends, but to the University of Pretoria (and especially the Faculty of Law and the Centre for Human Rights); the human rights fraternity and institutions working in this space in South Africa, within the African Union, and the United Nations family.

During my tenure as UNESCO Chair of Human Rights at the University of Fort Hare I was privileged to work together over human rights training workshops and seminars, and at a time when there were very few dedicated ambassadors working in this field. He will be remembered not only for his prolific energy and professional manner in which he executed his work but as well for the gentleness and warmth of character, and above all, for the many lives he groomed and touched. May he find eternal peace!

– Prof Nasila Selasini Rembe

Formerly UNESCO ‘Oliver Tambo’ Chair of Human Rights, University of Fort Hare

I am extremely saddened to hear of the passing of such an exceptional professor, giant of human rights protection and such a kind-hearted human soul. I still remember Prof Heyns classes in 2015 when I was a student of the LL.M. Beyond theories, he would give particular attention to showing how human rights violations affect human lives and realities. I will never forget how he invited our whole class at his house one evening. Most of us didn't have family in South Africa, and this dinner with his family was a blessing in the middle of a difficult year. It really felt like home. Thank you Professor Heyns for your invaluable contribution to human rights in Africa, for planting the human rights seeds in so many of our minds and for always keeping a beautiful and heart-warming smile on your face. My deepest condolences to his family. We have lost a hero but he will continue shining in all of us.

– **Nastasia Thebaud-Bouillon-Njenga**

2015 HRDA Alumna

I met Professor Heyns in Geneva in 2017 when I was doing my masters. He later became my thesis supervisor. I once asked to talk to him to ask advice on how to start up my career in the African human rights systems institutions like the African Commission where he was a Commissioner at the time. I was surprised by his humbleness when he was such an influential personality at the international level. Prof. Heyns not only gave me career development advice but he also asked how I was doing personally as an African student who had newly arrived in a foreign, different and expensive city as Geneva. He also shared his personal experience of back in time when he was a student in a foreign country, the challenges he faced and all. He was a unique professor. His way of teaching would attract anyone to get interested with human rights; given his passion and knowledge of human rights education. I feel lucky to have benefited from his knowledge. I was touched by his humanity and kindness associated with professionalism at the same time. Rest peacefully professor! My deepest condolences to his family.

– **Nathalie Menyimana**

Devastated by the sudden and untimely passing of Professor Christof Heyns, a stalwart of our international human rights law programme at Oxford, a noble champion of all victims, fantastic colleague, inspiring educator, noted scholar and UN expert both as UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions and then member of the UN Human Rights Committee, Dean at Pretoria; gentle, caring, thoroughly decent collaborator to so many. After years dedicated to the

UN, Christof was going to return to teach for us in July. My heart goes out to his colleague at Pretoria, in the UN, to our Oxford alumni and of course most sincerely to his wonderful wife Fearika and their children.

– Naz Gh

Dear colleagues

We've been sharing our profound sadness with so many of you since yesterday, when we were devastated and shocked to hear of the untimely passing of our dear colleague, Professor Christof Heyns.

Many from around the world have been sharing their admiration of Christof as a great legal scholar, human rights champion, activist, dean, educator, and a deeply empathetic and warm character. He guided UN processes, innovated academic partnerships, carried many responsibilities and yet was always ready to encourage and exchange with others.

He'd been part of our IHRL programmes over 13 years, as supervisor, assessor, course tutor and enabler of the Commonwealth Scholarships. He'd been less present in the summer residentials in recent years due to his UN Human Rights Committee responsibilities, but we were looking forward to him teaching a full course for the Masters again this July. Indeed, Andrew had agreed with him to only 'let him go' to the UN on condition of his return as soon as possible.

In processing the required 'Global Talent Visa' for him, and in his characteristic good humour, he quipped just last month that it was flattering to be certified by Oxford as a global talent and that he was looking forward to showing that to his mother. We remember his warmth and generosity of spirit - his sharing of his early ideas around his report on lethal autonomous weapons as UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary and arbitrary executions, him jamming and singing Beatles with students in a garden party, marking his 30th wedding anniversary with chocolate cake 5 years ago, him joining a wonderful set of performances in New College a decade ago, and so many other memories.

We express our deepest condolences to all of you, but especially to his dear wife Fearika and their children and grandchild. We look forward to your suggestions about how we can attempt to appropriately honour him in Oxford and we know that the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights is keen to do so as well, as they too enjoyed many interactions and joint projects with him, and he served on their international council.

Sharing with you in sadness.

– Naz, Shreya, Laura, Thiago

University of Oxford Department for Continuing Education (OUDCE)

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

What a monumental loss, a great scholar of International repute. An unassuming personality and accessible to his students as a lecturer and Co-Director at the Institute of Comparative International Law, University of Pretoria, South Africa. Working as Research Assistant under you and having the rare privilege of you accepting to Supervise my Thesis on Targeted Killing were experiences that will live with me for a life time. You may have gone from our sight but your voice and everything you stood for will continue to echo through your numerous Academic works, Reports and Comments all around the globe. Your have indeed blazed the trail and your footprints will forever be indelible on the sands of time.

Sleep on my Great Academic Supervisor, mentor and a true Professor of Human Rights.

– Nick Egbonwonu

This is a man who was an extraordinary academic, a giant consultant and a profound great researcher, leave away his position of being a Prof. However, all these attributes and more were nothing to him, He was a HUMAN BEING AND LOVED PEOPLE. He lived the spirit of Ubuntu. He was ready to listen and speak to anyone for the betterment of the career of young generation. Being the reality that traces of racism are deniable and inevitable, his life taught me that it can be fought by people by loving each other and not waiting for the state machineries to do the needful. He was a person willing to help and see things done. He is a person who was more than a mentor and role model in all aspects and by all standards.

I wished one day, amongst other...he would have become my supervisor. Rest In Peace Prof. We loved you more but God loved you the best. God created you and He took you. Let His Name alone be glorified and we believe you fulfilled the purpose he created you for because we really have a lot to learn from you. This is a man who lived “LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR DOCTRINE” no matter what... so approachable and so approaching, what a simple man in nature but complex in academia, consultancy and research. We have lost a brilliant fellow in this generation and the other to come.

May God comfort his family, the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa, AU, Africa, UN and the universe. R.I.P. Sir, Amen.

– Njiti Batty

I'm truly sorry for the loss. I would like to offer his family my deepest and most sincere condolences and may his soul rest in peace.

– Nonjabulo Gwamanda

After one of his classes on “the use of force”, we had a short break and I seized the moment to have a chat with him. We had a brief chat and he invited me to go see him later in his ICLA office. When I went to see him I told him of my friend Joe Kilonzo, and how he'd talked highly of him when Joe was prepping me for the programme. When I was selected to go to Geneva for my second semester, he put me through to his friend Mr. Marc Limon (who was my boss in Geneva). Whenever he came to visit, he treated me as his son. Before leaving for Geneva he'd asked me to contact him if I ever needed any help, especially money. Life in Geneva was damn expensive so I dropped him an email

. Two minutes later he responded asking me to drop his secretary an email stating the amount of money I needed. In 24hrs, the good prof had made good his word. I mentioned him visiting Geneva (official duties since he was a Commissioner). He took me out to nice restaurants and introduced me to some of his friends. He was an academic giant with a golden heart. His legacy surely lives forever!

– Obwogi Jonathan

Tribute to Christof Heyns

We would like to take this opportunity to pay a heartfelt tribute to Christof Heyns, who passed away suddenly and unexpectedly in his home country, South Africa, on 28 March. He was just 62 years old.

Professor Heyns, whom many of you have reported on and interviewed over the past decade in his various roles with the UN, was one of the giants in the world of human rights. He was also an extremely warm and generous man, greatly liked and admired by all those of us at OHCHR who knew or worked with him.

In his most recent role, as a member of the Human Rights Committee from 2017 to 2020, Christof Heyns led the drafting of the widely acclaimed General Comment No. 37 on the right of peaceful assembly, which was published last July. He also led the team that drafted the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement, launched two months earlier in May 2020. These two documents provide important analysis and guidance on the international law and UN

standards relating to peaceful and not-so-peaceful assembly, and their significance and relevance will long outlive their principal creator.

Prior to serving on the Human Rights Committee, Professor Heyns was UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016. His many important achievements in that role included a ground-breaking report on Lethal Autonomous Robotics and the right to life. He also played a key role in helping update the Minnesota Protocol On The Investigation Of Potentially Unlawful Death, published in 2016, and in the same year chaired the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi in 2016.

His tireless efforts in educating several generations of students to become accomplished human rights lawyers will be an important part of his legacy, including the establishment of the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition, about which he was especially passionate.

Until his passing, Christof Heyns was Professor of human rights law and Co-director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria. In addition to his work with the UN, he played a major role in advancing human rights in Africa, serving as a technical adviser on human rights to the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

As the High Commissioner said in a message to all OHCHR staff after hearing the sad news of his death, “In addition to all his professional achievements, we remember Christof Heyns as a delightful person. He was invariably wise, gentle and pleasant. His warmth, optimism and generosity equalled his expertise. He cared for all people – those he worked with and those he worked to support and protect. He was the friend and colleague of many of us, and will be missed terribly.”

An event to commemorate the life of Christof Heyns will be held tomorrow, 10 April. It will be livestreamed and details can be found on a special memorial page on Facebook. See: <https://www.facebook.com/christofheyns/>

This page also contains moving tributes from human rights defenders, colleagues, students, and provides a glimpse of just how many people have been inspired by the life and works of Christof Heyns and, like us, mourn his passing.

– Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

Briefing Notes

Marta Hurtado

Spokesperson for United Nations Human Rights

Geneva, 9 April 2021

Prof. Heyns was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the time I participated in the All Africa Moot and when I did my Masters. He was part of the team that pioneered both the moot and the masters, which had such a profound impact on me on a personal level, so I can say that I am one of those who benefitted directly from his work. He was the type of person who was always willing to take time to speak to everyone and treated everyone as an equal. Even in subsequent years post university when I encountered him he remembered me and had a kind word. He was a man of incredible accomplishments but he carried himself with great humility and never made you feel that you were in the presence of greatness. He is definitely gone too soon but he lived a life of incredible impact, which is all we can really hope for. My deepest condolences to his family, friends and colleagues.

– Okyerebea Ampofo-Anti

Je suis extrêmement triste aujourd'hui. Nous avons perdu un grand universitaire un grand défenseur des droits de l'Homme, et il va terriblement nous manquer en des temps où nous avons vraiment besoin de lui, de son énergie, de ses projets, de sa culture et de sa sagesse. Mais c'est aussi la personne que je pleure, son honnêteté, son intégrité et son infinie gentillesse. J'ai eu la grande chance de le côtoyer pendant une dizaine d'années, des procédures spéciales au comité des droits de l'homme. Il était toujours très attentionné, modeste, humain... Le genre de personne dont on se dit, quand on le quitte : "je me réjouis de le voir la prochaine fois". A la prochaine Christof!

I am extremely sad today. We have lost a great scholar, a great human rights defender, and he will be sorely missed in times when we really needed him, his energy, his projects, his culture and his wisdom. But it is also the person I mourn, his honesty, his integrity and his infinite kindness. I was very fortunate to work close to him for about ten years, from special procedures to the Human Rights Committee. He was always very caring, modest, human ... The kind of person you say to yourself when you leave him: "I'm looking forward to seeing him next time". See you next time Christof!

– Olivier de Frouville

So sad. Professor Christof Heyns was the pioneer of human rights course, training and research in Africa. All my deepest condolences to his family. My prayers and thoughts are with his family.

– Omer Kalameu

Senior Human Rights Adviser, OHCHR / Madagascar

While I was studying for my LL.M. in 2005, Professor Christof Heyns was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria. He was a calm, always-smiling, man.

We often remember people by particular incidents and circumstances. My lasting memory of Professor Heyns was a class discussion about legal theory and human rights. It was both a boisterous and highly-charged discussion but Professor Heyns remained calm as he maintained his theoretical position. At the time, legal theory and jurisprudence was not my thing but an interest was sparked that day. A few years later, I would go on in my PhD dissertation to examine and write about different legal theories. Such was the impression that discussion had on me.

No doubt, Professor Christof Heyns was a legal giant who left his mark on the the study and practice of law and human rights in Africa and the world.

He will be missed.

– Opeoluwa Ogundokun Badaru

Dear Fearika and family,

Christof was a dear friend and I fondly recall our many moments together both professionally and personally. I had the great pleasure of working with him on many initiatives when he was special rapporteur including in relation to the death penalty, lethal robotic weapons, country situations including groundbreaking work using new technologies in relation to Sri Lanka and his consistent efforts to reach out to States to affect positive change. We also broke new ground with initiatives with Harvard and Cambridge Universities where I had the pleasure of attending events with him. Even after he left the mandate we would regularly exchange ideas. He was a strong supporter of having treaty bodies reach out of Geneva and hence was constantly texting me during the 84th session of the Committee of the Rights of the Child held in Samoa in March 2020 and encouraged me to proceed with this initiative. His wisdom, expertise, kindness, wit and humanity is something very rare and precious. His loss is personally huge. He is and will be deeply missed.

– Orest Nowosad

We deeply mourn the passing of Professor Christof Heyns, a towering figure in the world of human rights protection and, in our own particular field, the freedom to peacefully assemble.

Christof's immense legacy includes several standard-setting texts on the right of peaceful assembly – most recently, both General Comment No 37 and the UN Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons in Law Enforcement.

Panel members had the privilege of being able to participate in discussions with Christof during the drafting of General Comment No 37 in Warsaw, Geneva and Cambridge. It is a landmark document, ground breaking in its scope, and its impact will be felt around the world for many years to come. The text and the inclusive process through which it came into being stand as a fitting testament to Christof's vision, energy and leadership.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Christof's family, and to all his colleagues and friends.

**– From members of the OSCE-ODIHR Panel of Experts
on Freedom of Assembly: Nina Belyaeva, Anja Bienert,
Milena Costas Trascasas, Katerina Hadzi-Miceva Evans,
David Goldberger, Michael Hamilton, Neil Jarman, Muatar
Khaidarova, Serghei Ostaf, Alexander Vashkevich, Yevgeniy
Zhovtis**

I have read the works of Prof. C Heyns, particularly related to Extrajudicial disappearances and illegal deaths in Kenya. I am most touched by his passing away. Please share my condolences with the Faculty. May God grant you strength and consolations at this hour.

– Otieno Aluoka
Advocate, Kenya

I have been in shock with the news of Christof's passing and of course offer his family deep condolences.

I had the privilege of meeting Christof while we were both Special Rapporteurs, but more importantly, of getting to know him better while we were both members of UNIIB, along with Maya Sahlí-Fadel, and therefore had to travel to Burundi twice and to be in close contact over a period of months (an experience that led to the three of us being PNG'd by the government, in this particular case, in my opinion, a reflection of the fact that we did our job well). We also coincided in Oxford, when I taught in 2015.

Christof was a big person in every sense; a big man, with a big intellect, and a big heart. Like many people I admire, a perfect example of the fact that one can be kind and gentle, and yet very strong. That one need not be in a constant ‘crusading’ mindset to show constant commitment. And that every once in a while being fun-loving is a perfect complement to seriousness.

Christof had been kind enough to agree to talk to my students next week. I will miss him, dearly, like the rest of us. May the memories of such an extraordinary person help his family, in particular, in these difficult times.

– **Pablo de Greiff**

I interacted with the works of Prof Heyns. As a proponent of Ubuntu, I have lost a mentor whose “excellence with Ubuntu” touched my life in ways profound. Will hopefully join the Centre for Human Rights, my dream institution despite failing to be considered in previous attempts.

– **Patrick Okoyo**

My very saddened condolences to Chris’ wife, children and mother as well as to all colleagues of the Center of Human Rights of the UP which he created and developed. It is a great shock for all those who have worked with him and got to know him, his talents, humanity and struggles for the respect of Human Rights in RSA and the world. I remember the days when he was leading legal struggles in the 1980’s when I was representing the ICRC in RSA and when he regularly invited me to teach in the Centre and in the Masters in HR and Democratization in Africa, or also when he was Special Rapporteur and visited Mexico where I now live. I always kept a regular exchange with him ever since 1985 and especially since 2000’s. I shall never forget him, his enthusiasm, commitments, courage, initiatives, struggles... which will continue to inspire all of us in these difficult times.

– **Patrick Zahnd**

Some news really hit you harder than anything else! For starters, Prof. Heyns, the then UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial summary or arbitrary executions, is particularly special to me because he recruited me for 3 years (2014-2017) to work for the African Commission on Human and People’s Rights as a legal fellow/researcher on the right to

life following the expansion of the mandate of the then working group on death penalty to include also extra Judicial, summary and arbitrary killings in Africa. This recruitment was uniquely important because I had just failed to secure a student visa to go to the national university of Singapore for my PhD in 2013 having completed my masters at the Centre for Human Rights (CHR) in 2012. During my time with Prof., Heyns we collaborated and assisted the African Commission draft among other things General comment No. 3 elaborating the norms under article 4 of the African charter dealing with the right to life. What is more, I went ahead to start my PhD in 2014 under his supervision before changing to Prof. Killander and Prof. Waris. Prof. Continued to inspire my approach to work and education even after I left him in 2017. The news of his passing today has really shocked me to the core and I hope they are just rumors. May God keep all of us safe!

– Paul Ogendi

This story will be fuzzy in parts because of the long passage of time. But although some details may be slightly different, 'strue. So I must tell the tale before those last few grey cells that hold the memory get blitzed by the box wine.

It was on the Berg River Canoe Marathon that Christof Heyns came to tell me was pulling out of the race. Why!? I asked, dismayed. He'd fallen out in the frigid flooded Berg river and lost his glasses. Couldn't see past his nose, so it was way too dangerous to carry on in the mid-winter Cape cold and the flooding brown water in the gale-force wind that was the 1983 second day.

Hell, no, I said, I've got a spare pair, you can use mine.

He rolled his eyes and smiled sadly at my ignorance. His eyes were very special, his glasses were very thick and there was no way just any 'arb' specs would do, he *mansplained* patiently. In his defence, he didn't know I was an optometrist, that I was wearing contact lenses, that I had a spare pair of specs in my luggage and another tied to the rudder cable in my boat; nor could he know that I had a very good idea of what his prescription was from seeing his glasses on his nose both on this race and on a Tugela trip we had been on together earlier. I knew about his eyes better than he knew about my soul (he might have known a bit about that, as his Dad was a very *belangrike dominee* in the Much Deformed Church – top dog, in fact).

So I said, trust me swaer and went and fetched my spares. He put them on and was amazed. I can see! he shouted like I was Jesus who had just restored his sight. I know, I said.

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

So he wore the glasses and finished the race and I said keep them till we next meet.

Many months later I saw an article in the SA Canews, the paddling magazine, titled: “*My Broer se Bril*”. Christof wrote the story of how he had lost hope when some arb oke said “Here, try mine” and he could see! And he could finish the race.

He ended off by saying “Actually they were so good I’m wearing them to this day”. Ja, you bugger, I know, I thought. I could have written an article “How a dominee’s son appropriated my bril,” but I didn’t. I’m way too kind! In his defence, we haven’t seen each other since that race. . . and today – April 2021 – I heard he died, aged only 62. Damn!

belangrike dominee – important churchman; flock leader; the lord is my shepherd, I am a sheep;

swaer – bro;

my broer se bril – my brother’s spectacles;

mansplain – when a man laboriously, carefully and ‘kindly’ explains something to you that you already know; usually inflicted on women;

Kind regards,

– **Peter Swanepoel**

To My Friend, Christof Heyns’ Family, as well as, his inner circle of friends and colleagues at the University of Pretoria and around the world, please, accept my Deepest and Heartfelt Condolences, for Christof’s passing came as a massive blow to some of us.

He was an amazing friend to my late Dad and I, but more than anything else, his our age difference, made him akin to an older Brother to me.

Christof had a very special place in our hearts, and in spite of the painfully numbing feeling evoked by his passing, I am going to reap Solace from the Comforting knowledge that he is now in the company of Angels God has specifically and specially designated for him now that he has finished his race. May God Continue to Bless your Precious Heart Abundantly, in Jesus’ name, Amen.

– **Peter William Makhambeni**

Advocate and Member of the Johannesburg Bar

Dear Prof Schoeman,

I am writing to share my condolences with the family of our colleague and friend, Christof. I was scheduled to 'meet' with him on Zoom tomorrow morning and was very much looking forward to catching up. We first met many years ago when he was working on a study of the impact of UN human rights treaty bodies. Christof was also my successor as UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions and I was very often in touch with him in the early years of his mandate. Just a few weeks ago, the UPP published a book that he and I had put together over the period of several years presenting the approach of international law to issues involving unlawful killings.

Christof was a path-breaking scholar with a deep dedication to promoting respect for human rights and seeking to identify new and more effective ways of achieving that goal. He was never complacent and was always looking for the next challenge. His gentle and thoughtful demeanour belied his strength of character and his determination to make an important contribution.

I hugely admired Christof for all that he stood for and for all of the extraordinary contributions he made to the development of international human rights law. We in the human rights field have lost an exceptional friend and colleague and he will always live on in our hearts.

With my deepest sympathies,

– Philip Alston

Please note my and Moira's sincere condolences to the Centre and to Christoff's family and colleagues on his untimely death.

I particularly appreciated the opportunity to experience something of Christoff's broad vision in the creation of the AfricLaw blog.

– Philip van der Merwe

My condolences and sympathies to his family and friends. Our thoughts and prayers with the family and May his soul rest in eternal bliss.

– Dr Phitalis Were Masakhwe PhD

Mes souvenirs avec le Prof Heyns remontent à mes participations au 3rd Annual African Trade Moot Court Competition en 2006 et au Moot Court on Human Rights en 2007.

J'ai en mémoire l'image d'un homme souriant et humble. Il avait toujours une écoute attentive quel que soit le sujet.

Il nous a certes quitté, mais il demeure éternel pour ceux qui l'ont connu.

– **Pierre Olivier Lobe**

Law Consultant-Côte d'Ivoire

Dear Mrs Heyns and family,

It is 7 minutes before 12 midnight and I am stuck in the UP law faculty boardroom, finalising my Doctorate, an endeavour of mine Prof Heyns was especially proud of and invested in financially as well. Next to me, is a human-size portrait of my dearly beloved 'Prof', Christof Heyns. Perhaps this is the reason I work in here; his memory and his spiritual presence keep me going. He was proud of the star that I am, and enjoyed my drive. If he was like this with me, I can only imagine his immeasurable love for you. I am deeply sorry for your loss. The tears have somewhat dried on my end hence, I can now write to you, this tribute to him.

I came to the University of Pretoria in 2010 from Zimbabwe, as a 1st year BA Law student. I got to know Prof Heyns immediately, as he was one of the Faculty members who had presence and was very pleasant. I only got to know that he was the Dean, weeks later. This speaks volumes of his modesty. Since then, I had wished and prayed for the golden opportunity to work with him and learn from this legal eagle but, as God would have it, I would only get the opportunity to do so, 10 years later, specifically 8 months before he died. God favoured me for I just made it!! And looking at what he imparted to me, I was that fortunate that I can say, 'I just made it!!'. Prof Heyns' work ethic was unrivalled. Often times, the hardest worker is praised for resting, not in between the task, but only when the job is done and the mission has been accomplished. As the legendary Kobe Bryant would say, 'Rest at the end, not in the middle.' However, Prof redefined the notion of a 'hardworker', as he just would not take a break. Having accomplished one mission, he would move on to the next. He had one goal after another set, and surprisingly, achieved. It was in this way, that he was a man of standards, as he set a standard by which to operate and set the tone for his colleagues and subordinates, in the law faculty, the UN, and the world at large. It is in this sense that his discipline made him a much beloved leader and trailblazer because he inspired me and many

others to work hard and achieve great feats, and in the end, we willingly followed him as our leader. It is for this reason that his leadership had everything to do with his character and sense of integrity. Nonetheless, it was a double-edged sword, as his leadership also had a lot to do with his personality. In him was a beautiful fusion of inspiring and magnetic confidence and charisma, neutralised with a self-deprecating sense of humour and humility. This made him approachable and afforded him the rare privilege of being the diplomat that he was. Not only was he the face of the faculty at the UN and various other international fora, but he was also the son a diverse South Africa was proud of.

We met every Friday afternoon and I remember in one of our meetings, him and I talking about life and how we were such hard workers and would not rest. In his fatherly wisdom, he advised me to take one-day off in the week to rest. We both agreed on Sundays as that day of rest. Is it not ironic that you would find your final day of rest on Sunday the 28th of March 2021 Prof? Perhaps I stood to gain a lot from my interactions with Prof Heyns, in his capacity as a mentor, because I had the rare privilege of making a mistake in front of him and being corrected. This marked the beginning of our personal mentor-mentee/father-daughter relationship, for a mentor is meant to see a mentee's blind spots, more so pertaining to character, call them out and correct them in love. With me, and I suppose a few others (allow me to feel special), this is exactly what he did. In the course of our interactions, I had asked him so many questions and pointers on life – especially on a very dear topic to me, that of my country Zimbabwe – to which he graciously answered insightfully as he could relate (having grown up in apartheid South Africa). The next question I needed to ask him, and never got the chance to, was how he so beautifully managed to spot the rare combination of talent and character in his mentees and subordinates. I believe the secret to Prof's success, in addition to his innate brilliance, was not so much about delegation, as it was about the exceptional people with whom he worked and to whom he delegated tasks. These he also valued and credited his success towards. As a leader, I end with this conviction, that Prof's lesson to me, was that of being able to master the art of choosing the right people with whom to surround myself, and accomplish my life's mission on this earth. For his indeed was a life of purpose. May your soul rest in perfect peace Prof. Thank you so much for being a great father to me.

I pray for you his dear family, you were his reason for living and being.

– **Primrose Kurasha**

*Research Officer in the Office of the Dean of Law,
Doctoral Candidate, University of Pretoria Faculty of Law*

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

I am so honoured to have known Christof. I first met him and Prof Viljoen in the mid 1990s when I visited South Africa to draw upon his then already deep knowledge of the African human rights system. I have since been privileged to work on various projects with him over the years and have always been touched by his humility, passion and enthusiasm. I am deeply saddened by his passing and send my heartfelt thoughts to his family and all his colleagues and friends in Pretoria, and across the world.

– **Professor Rachel Murray**

Director, Human Rights Implementation Centre, University of Bristol Law School

My profound and heart-felt condolences to you all and to Prof. Heyns' family. I too am devastated by this loss of a very deeply significant South African. I was so blessed to get to know him better on the Board of Stias. He was remarkable. May a cloak of comforting memories cover us all at this time.

– **Raenette Gottardo**

We have heard with great shock and sadness, the passing on of Prof Christof Heyns, the former director of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Pretoria.

On behalf of the University of Ghana School of Law, I wish to express my deepest sympathies to his family, the Centre and the University of Pretoria for this irreplaceable loss.

May his soul rest in peace.

– **Prof. Raymond A. Atuguba,**

Dean, University of Ghana School of Law:

My deepest condolences for the sad loss of our former dear doctor. May he rest in eternal peace.

– **Rejoice Sibanda**

It is with deep shock that we learnt of the sudden death of Professor Heyns.

On behalf of my colleagues at the Registry and on my personal behalf, I extend sincere and heartfelt condolences to his family, the Centre – current and former students, the African and global human rights family.

I never ceased to admire Prof for his commitment to human rights and gentleness with which he tried to impart that knowledge on others.

An African Human Rights Baobab has been uprooted.

May His Soul Rest In Perfect Peace.

– Dr. Robert Eno

Registrar of the Court, African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights:

Dear UP friends,

I was shattered when I heard the devastating news of Christof's passing. It is hard to process. I am proud to have called Christof my friend. I first met him shortly after his appointment as SR on summex, at a press conference in Geneva I chaired for him. He was much loved by many at OHCHR. He was also a favourite of the media. His smile and warmth was infectious, and intellect off the charts.

I later interacted with him on the Nelson Mandela Moot Court. His enthusiasm for the Moot was evident from the start. He constantly came up with new ideas on how to make the event more accessible and to promote it above and beyond. The success of the Moot is largely due to his boundless passion for teaching our new generations and social justice, evidenced in so many other ways.

He was a larger than life figure who taught me lessons which I will always carry with me.

My love, respect and deepest condolences to Fearika, Renée, Adam, Renée, Willemien, Arné, little Isak, and to Christof's extended family and friends.

Sincerely,

– Rolando Gómez

Media Officer: Human Rights Council, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

I was fortunate enough to be one of Prof Christof Heyns' students in the MSt IHRL at the University of Oxford in 2005. From him, I learned about regional human rights systems, his 'struggle approach' and Ubuntu. It's fair to say that my, back then, mainly Eurocentric based education had a brand new 'perspective door' blown opened by Prof Heyns. Given both our backgrounds, discussions about nationalism, terrorism, extrajudicial killings, 'rights' and 'wrongs' were inevitable. But we also talked about his father, the late Dr Johan Heyns. If Prof Heyns' academic knowledge was impressive, his attitude and humanity were even more so. It was a privilege having met him and, to this day, almost 16 years later, I treasure having had the opportunity to learn from such a kind, conscientious, encouraging and gentle human being.

It's with a very heavy heart that I send my condolences to all his family and friends.

Vale Prof Heyns.

– **Rosa Maria**

We are sorry to hear about the loss of this important person, may he rests in internal peace. Thanks Yolanda for sharing with us our condolences to the family and friends. Rest in peace our Christof Heyns and we will continue cherish his work.

– **Rose Umutesi**

On behalf of myself and my colleagues at the Advancing Rights in Southern Africa Program (ARISA) and Freedom House, I would like to express our deepest condolences at this huge loss, not only to the Prof's family and friends but also to the human rights community as a whole. We wish his family, friends and colleagues strength during this difficult time. May you take solace in the fact that his legacy will live in many generations to come. Take care.

– **Roshnee Narrandes and colleagues**

Advancing Rights in Southern Africa (ARISA)

I am saddened to learn of his untimely passing. It is a great loss to the country and the Centre. Kindly accept my deepest condolence to yourselves and his family.

– Adv Salim Ebrahim

Dear Family, Friends and Colleagues of Christof at UP Law Faculty and the Centre for Human Rights,

I would like to express my deepest condolences to all of you on Christof's untimely passing. My heart and thoughts go out particularly to Christof's family during this time of deep sorrow and mourning.

It was with a sense of great shock and disbelief that I heard the news from Ann Skelton on Sunday afternoon that Christof had died that morning. We had been in touch on Friday by Whatsapp and had arranged to have lunch together in the Botanical Gardens in Stellenbosch on Monday. Unfortunately, this meeting (which I was greatly looking forward to) could not take place due to the tragic circumstances.

I have a long history with Christof going back to the period of the drafting of the Constitution when he was very supportive of the idea of including socio-economic rights in the Bill of Rights, a project I was passionate about. He proposed that, alongside judicial enforcement, the SA Human Rights Commission should be given a specific role in the Constitution in monitoring the realisation of these rights. This proposal found its way into the Constitution, and is reflected in section 183(3) (what Christof referred to as "the domestic reporting process").

Later when I was co-coordinator of the Socio-Economic Rights Project at the Community Law Centre (now Dullah Omar Institute) at UWC we collaborated along with Danie Brand on producing a quarterly publication on socio-economic rights, ESR Review (which is still being produced). Alongside others, Christof and I worked closely with the SA Human Rights Commission to conceptualise how they would fulfil their mandate in relation to socio-economic rights.

Over the years, Christof and I kept in touch, and he and Frans Viljoen involved me in teaching and seminars of the Centre for Human Rights from time to time.

However, particularly in the last four years when I was serving on the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and he was he was serving on the UN Human Rights Commission, we got to see more of each other – ironically in Geneva. Christof was very supportive to me in my new role, and helped show me the ropes. I was deeply inspired

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

by his commitment and dedication to the cause of advancing human rights across the world. I cherish many good memories of Christof during this period, including many laughs shared.

Christof always seemed larger than life, brimming with ideas and energy. Although he was a consummate scholar and at the cutting edge of regional and international human rights developments, he was kind, gentle and patient with everyone who crossed his path. I particularly admired his dedication to training and mentoring the younger generation in human rights through, for example, the African and Schools moot court competitions.

He made an inestimable contribution to research, teaching and the practice of human rights in South Africa, the African Continent and internationally. His work will have an enduring impact and inspire many generations to come.

Christof will be sorely missed, and I hold all of you in my thoughts during this very difficult period of coming to terms with his death.

Warmest regards,

– **Sandy Liebenberg**

*H.F. Oppenheimer Chair in Human Rights Law
University of Stellenbosch Law Faculty*

*Now cracks a noble heart.
Good-night, sweet prince;
and flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.*

As members of the Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN (WGHR), we have been deeply saddened by the untimely demise of Prof. Christof Heyns. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to all of you and share your grief and loss in these difficult times.

We had the privilege of knowing Prof. Heyns — as a colleague and a friend — and witnessing his unwavering commitment to justice, peace and human rights through the years. He was not only a brilliant legal mind and an academic and teacher par excellence, but also a steadfast and principled human rights advocate, who has touched many lives across the world.

As a group, we worked closely with him during his country visit to India in 2012 as the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and remained in touch with him since. We greatly admired his

dedication and compassion during that visit where he spent many hours listening to scholars, activists and human rights defenders but above all the victims and survivors of human rights violations in North Eastern and Eastern India, Kerala and Jammu and Kashmir. This was just one of the many instances of him devoting his time, ears and mind to the people adversely affected by abuse and impunity. While he was hurt by the response of the Government to his findings, we conveyed to him that it was a sign that it raised uncomfortable questions of the people in power and sought accountability for abuses.

Over the years, we continued to engage with him as a member of the UN Human Rights Committee and also with his colleagues at the UN as well as civil society members. The one thing that stood out was that beyond his tireless passion, excellence and scholarship, he was a truly humble, gentle and kind man. He was always willing to engage, explain and listen. He appreciated intellectual debate and was open and accepting of diversity of views. As our youngest colleague — who had the opportunity of assisting him at the UN — said, “I could learn more in my interactions with Prof. Heyns than any textbook could possibly teach me. And he definitely taught more than the law.” His empathetic presence, his expertise and his passion for human rights will be sorely missed by us. We once again extend our deepest sympathies with you and wish to remember with all of you a noble person, a dedicated colleague, a dear friend, a resolute human rights lawyer, a wise mentor and a kind human being – Christof Heyns. May he rest in peace and power!

With sincere regards,

– Sanjoy Hazarika

*Convenor | Working Group on Human Rights International Director |
Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative*

As HRDs, We mourn the death of the passing of this great and strong, inspirational personality in Christof Heyns. We have never met him, but we knew good things from him indirectly!

As one team, ACPDH present our condolences to his family and to all his friends and communities he has helped. May his soul rest in peace for ever! In Solidarity.

– Sake Mayhieu

Founder, Policy & Programming Officer, ACPDH, Burundi

Dear Fearika and family,

I had the great pleasure and honour of being one of Christof's students in the MSt in International Human Rights Law program at Oxford from 2004-2005. I greatly admired his leadership, warmth and humour, and I have tremendous admiration and respect for his contributions to the advancement of human rights around the world. His bright light will continue to shine through the legacy he leaves behind. My deepest condolences and best wishes to your family.

Warmly,

– **Sara Austin**

Founder & CEO of Children First Canada

I knew three Professor Christof Heyns.

I knew Prof Heyns the hero; our hero, for his courageous intellectual endeavour in the most risky days of and post apartheid. He then stood for anti apartheid discourse and took a daring step in joining the establishment of what will subsequently become one of the leading human rights educational institution in Africa and the world; ie the Centre for Human Rights, which has produced generations of the top lawyers in Africa.

I also knew a second Prof Heyns: the activist yet refined intellectual. He will forever be remembered for his very own “struggle approach” to human rights. He gave an unforgettable testimony to the postulate that academics are and should foremost be activists especially when they stand in the defense of rights and the rule of law.

Finally, I knew a third Prof Heyns: the humanist. He went out of his way and almost de-my(s)thified academic titles and honours as known to those of us who originate in the so-called “Francophone” (there is no such thing) sphere. He broke the socio-political ice to reach out to younger lawyers from diverse backgrounds including through a personal involvement, support, opportunity creating and sharing; and talents nurturing.

It is my deep belief that Prof Heyns deserves a tribute that will resonate beyond Pretoria and its academic institutions and impact the entire continent; beyond books, seminars, awards, I think of a foundation as I do not believe he deserves less than one of those around who bear the names of famous political, social, intellectual figures.

– **Sègnonna Horace Adjolohoun**

*Principal Legal Officer, African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights;
Extraordinary Lecturer, Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria*

Some of us have never met a more humane and brilliant person. Rest in peace Prof.

– Seun Solomon Bakare

A great professional and the kindest person. Remembering him from my time in OHCHR country offices when assisting his visits.

– Silvia Lava

Dear Frans,

I've been lost for words since hearing the news of Christof's passing on Sunday evening. Just shocked, gutted and really sad. That's no doubt a world away from you, called upon for many words. Reading the Centre's touching statement helped greatly to find words, memories and emotions - so thank you for that.

I'm really sorry for your loss, which I know you will feel deeply personally as well as on behalf of all at the Centre and its wide network. Sending my condolences and heartfelt wishes for you and all the Centre and in Pretoria.

Besides being a founding figure of CGHR at Cambridge and a close collaborator and mentor, Christof was the guy I always wanted to work with more if ever time would allow. Doing great things but also having good times was definitely a special knack he had, and spread wide it could change worlds. God knows how many unfinished, conceived, just-about-to-be-imagined important projects his absence leaves behind. In good time...

For now, I'm remembering all that he did achieve and the bonds he forged.

Sending my condolences and heartfelt wishes for you and all the Centre and in Pretoria.

In solidarity,

– Dr Sharath Srinivasan

Co-director of the University of Cambridge's Centre of Governance and Human Rights (CGHR), David and Elaine Potter Lecturer in Governance and Human Rights in the Department of Politics and International Studies and a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021

Oh this is very sad. I first met Professor Heyns in 2000 when he was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights at University of Pretoria. He was a committed human rights teacher and activist whose scholarly contributions to human right and international law jurisprudence was immense. His engagement with the U.N. human rights system was huge.

May his gentle soul rest in perfect peace. My condolences to his family. Another human rights giant is gone.

– Dr. Sonny Onyegbula

Prof. Heyns was my Dean when I started my undergraduate studies. I felt comforted by his presence. he always had a smile on his face. I remember how awesome it was seeing him perform at every UP law Faculty Festival rocking out with his guitar. It was an honour and privilege to have him as my Dean and later on as my colleague in the Faculty. His warm smile will be missed greatly.

– Sophie Baird

To our colleagues,

We have just learnt with sadness of the passing of the former Director, Mr. Christof Heyns.

The Ambassador of the State of Kuwait and the staff would like to convey their deepest condolences to his family and the Centre for Human Rights – Faculty of Law at the University of Pretoria. May His Soul Rest in Eternal peace.

Best Regards.

Yours Faithfully,

– Ambassador and Embassy of the State of Kuwait

What a giant we have lost. Condolences to his family and many friends & colleagues.

– Sue Valentine

I have been thinking of you all and want to offer my deepest condolences.

I was completely shocked and saddened by the devastating passing of Christof last week.

It has been quite surreal to properly comprehend and I can only imagine the great loss and sadness yourself, his family and friends and your colleagues must be feeling.

It was truly a great privilege to get to know Christof and support your and his research. His passion, enthusiasm and openness really set him apart; discussing human rights issues and the chapter with him, I felt inspired to give my very best and truly committed to work in human rights and serve others.

It was an honour to not only support his work; but also get to know him personally - I really enjoyed our dinners in Geneva which always felt so relaxed and familiar.

Christof was such a kind and loving person and will be truly missed.

– Tess Mitchell

The Advocates for Human Rights is saddened to learn of the sudden loss of Christof Heyns. Christof was the director of the Centre for Human Rights and Professor of Human Rights Law at the University of Pretoria. From 2010 to 2016, he served as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; from 2017 to 2020, he served as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

Christof used his UN mandate to pursue justice and accountability for some of the world's most egregious human rights abuses. As Special Rapporteur, he also led the effort to update the Minnesota Protocol on the Investigation of Potentially Unlawful Death. The Minnesota Protocol is the groundbreaking set of international guidelines for death investigations that was developed by The Advocates for Human Rights and adopted by the UN. The Advocates' staff worked closely with Christof on the Minnesota Protocol update and awarded him the Don and Arvonne Fraser Human Rights Award in 2016.

Christof's work has been critical to our work to prevent and hold people accountable for extrajudicial killings in Minnesota. As we wrestle with the standards for our police and our government when private citizens are killed by armed state actors, we can see how strong international standards can help us as well.

International law recognizes that effective investigation, legal process, and accountability are essential to prevention.

In his work on law enforcement and use of lethal force, Christof advanced the international legal standard that life may only be taken as a last resort, if it is the only way to protect another life. His work truly is as relevant to our community as to any around the world.

Christof lived his life in a way that exemplifies the human rights principles of dignity, equality and respect. We join countless others in mourning his death but know that Christof leaves the world better equipped to hold governments accountable and ensure justice for the victims of human rights violations and their families. We thank him for that.

– The Advocates for Human Rights

Condolences to his family, friends, neighbours and the UP. He will always be remembered. May His Sole Rest In Peace.

– Themba Moko

Christof was a wonderful man, capable of rare empathy. Never interested in his own brilliance, he always looked for and encouraged the brilliant in others. I was lucky to know and work with him. Laura and I send all our love to Fearika, his children and grandchildren.

– Toby Fisher

International Law, New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Before I knew Prof. Christof Heyns the Academic and UN Human Rights Rapporteur extraordinaire, I knew Christof Heyns the rock star. Together with The Outlaws, he was one of my favourite features of the annual Law Faculty Festival at UP. An avuncular figure giving a rendition of Pink Floyd's Another Brick in The Wall (part 2) so terrible that it was good... couldn't beat it. My best friend Zenia and I would be at the front of the stage singing along and dancing to all the hits. And at the end, he would declare that the show was over, because he had done all the songs he knows, but would promise to be there the next year "at the same place, same time, with the same songs," and every year we would be there to cheer and dance to them.

I am saddened to learn today of his passing. Above being an accomplished academic and human rights guru, Prof. Heyns was a good man, and he will be sorely missed.

– Tonderai Theodore Matanda

I had the honor and privilege to work with Christof when he started his mandate as Special Rapporteur on EJs. An outstanding human rights lawyer and a great human being - always humble and kind, with a perennial smile on his face. He will be greatly missed.

– Ugo Cedrangolo

Dear Elsabe,

It has been a week now and I still find it hard to believe that Christof is not with us anymore to work on his projects and to share so many wonderful camaraderie moments like that evening of December 2019 when your and I saw each other last.

He was a beloved, admired and influential figure in our global family of universities. During the last year, he was more present than ever in our lives. In the case of our university in Argentina and regional programme for Latin America, we were working with him in the UN Treaty Impact Study and we were soon to start planning a Moot Court for schools' pilot, two projects close to his heart. Our staff in Buenos Aires always looked forward to sharing a moment with him via Zoom. Our following engagement was to take place last Tuesday --a day in which he was also scheduled to speak to the students of the African Master's.

But despite the sad acknowledgement of his sudden physical departure and the pain of losing a friend, a colleague, a mentor, or someone

admired we all --around the world-- feel that his legacy as a human rights defender, as an expert but most of all as an educator, is monumental. The human rights community are immensely proud and thankful for what he set in motion and nurtured at the University of Pretoria. The lives he touched with the support of your institution are his monument.

I hope we can talk sometime.

Warmest regards,

– **Verónica Gómez**

President, Global Campus of Human Rights

Dear colleagues, it is with a huge sense of loss and sadness that we at the International Service for Human Rights in Geneva have learnt about the tragic and sudden death of Christof Heyns. He was a formidable and passionate human rights advocate. We were looking forward to working with him and the team on documenting and improving the impact of the core international human rights treaties on the ground. We, and more broadly the global human rights community, will sorely miss him. May he rest in peace. Sincere condolences to the team and his loved ones.

– **Vincent Ploton**

Director of Development and treaty body advocacy, ISHR, Geneva

A great band mate and an even better person to have been able to call friend.

– **Wandile Nzuza**

Condolences. The late Prof Heyns was a great intellectual, a humble man and indeed an international figure in the field of human rights. I personally met him, together with Dr Granville Whittle, (then Director: Race and Values, Dept of Education) before the start of the National Schools Moot Court Competition in the country. I was then an official in the Race and Values Directorate, Department of Education. May His Soul Rest in Peace.

– **Wonga Tabata**

Deputy Director: Social Inclusion and Equity, Department of Higher Education and Training

I would like to add my voice to tell my sadness after Cristof's death. He was a great person, both scientifically and humanely. Each of us who have known him can remind exchanges and stories. His commitment to the academic world and the defence for human rights will remain an inspiration. My thoughts go to his family and to all members of the Human Rights Center. This is a loss for all of those who approached him but he will remain a source of inspiration for all those who advocate for a better world.

– Xavier Philippe

Please accept my deepest condolences on the death of Christof. Christof was a close ally in our work in the UN together and also on the Moot Court.

I was reflecting on how long I have known Christof and its more than 25 years. We first met when I came to the foundation and he was developing the protocols for the South African Human Rights Commission which the Foundation funded.

Then of course the engagement on the Moot Court for so many years which he was so passionate about. We also had our UN interests, when I served on the Secretary General's Panel on Sri Lanka and he in fact as the Special Rapporteur played a role as well.

Over the years our common interests in Geneva saw us meeting quite often. Andrew Clapham my colleague on the Commission on Human Rights for South Sudan is devastated.

It's really sad, we don't have many people like Christof coming along in one's lifetime.

Here is the link for the video. It was quite a critical moment for the Sri Lankan case as he confirmed the summary executions.

– Yasmin Sooka

Human Rights Lawyer

Kindness, humility, caring, gentle, with a brilliant legal mind, and a musical touch .

What a privilege is has been to know you, to work with you, and to share this Algerian couscous with you Christof. It has been a true honour .We shall sorely miss you My prayers and thoughts are with your loved ones . — with Yadh Ben Achour and Fay Pazartzis.

– Yasmine Hadjoudj

My condolences to his family and friends, he has left such a remarkable legacy that he would always be remembered for. I pray that the lord comforts his family and grant them the fortitude to bear the loss, we would really miss him at UP. May his soul rest in peace.

– **Yenum Okoh**

The last two days have been immensely difficult. I have lost a dear dear colleague, friend and mentor.

I still cannot believe that he is gone. I still cannot believe that I will never receive his one liner emails at 03:00 in the morning. I still cannot believe he won't be sending me new scribbles to add to his Powerpoint presentations. I still cannot believe that he will never ask me to design his book covers, brochures or websites. I still cannot believe I will never see him again in high spirits in Geneva. I still cannot believe I will never have the opportunity to teach alongside him again (a once-off humbling experience!). I still cannot believe that he is gone. I have learnt so much from Christof. I know we all did.

Christof Heyns was a *mensch*. We at the Centre for Human Rights are immensely saddened by his passing and the sense of loss is overwhelming. We truly are humbled and grateful for what he has taught us, not only as a professor of human rights law, but as a human being.

Vaarwel Christof! Gaan jou goed. Ek gaan jou mis.

– **Yolanda Booyzen**

Christof, mense soos jy gee ander mense hoop. Dis die mees kosbare talent in ons stukkende wereld. Ek kan nie van jou praat in die verlede tyd nie, jou gees is te groot.

– **Yolanda Spies**

Woke up yesterday morning to learn of the sad news of the death of Professor Christoff Heyns, one of Africa's greatest advocates for human rights. Among other things, he will be remembered for the one who first brought the question of lethal autonomous weapons to the attention of the Human Rights Council in 2013, when he was Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. These are weapon systems that could be programmed to make decisions to take life. His point was that the taking of human lives could not be entrusted to machines, however well programmed.

Out of dismay at the prospect of deployment of such weapons, as Sierra Leone's Permanent Representative of Sierra Leone, which was at the time a member of the Human Rights Council I pursued this matter when it was referred to the Committee on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) and served as a friend of the Chair for the sessions on the subject in 2014 and 2015, when I had the pleasure of interacting with him. The CCW is still discussing this issue and it is hoped that some legal agreement could be reached to regulate or ban their use.

MAY HIS SOUL REST IN PERFECT PEACE.

– Yvette Elizabeth Stevens

My Human Rights Career was inspired by you. I remember watching you in awe and frantically scribbling endless notes when you spoke! You were one of a kind. It was an honour to be taught by you. Rest in Peace Proff.

– Yvonne Masarakufa:

We also mourn the passing of a wonderfully warm and caring human being who was a good friend to us. South Africa, Africa and the world have prematurely lost a human rights lawyer and activist whose contribution to the struggle to achieve human rights will always stay with us. Our sincere condolences to his family, his colleagues and friends.

– Zak and Anu Yacoob

My Condolences! It is a big loss, hope the legacy he left in Moot court competitions will flourish.

– Zecharias Fassil

Prof Heyns had a profound impact on me, & his contributions were shown in his character. Not only an extraordinary teacher, a Legal Eagle & a Champion of Human Rights, he was a wonderful human being with true humility, generous with his time & knowledge. I am deeply saddened.

– Zunaida Moosa Wadiwala



The Three Directors: Johann van der Westhuizen, Christof Heyns and Frans Viljoen at the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition (2012)



Benyam Mazmur, Christof Heyns, Partick Eba and Abiola Idowu-Ojo at the joint thematic dialogue on SOGIESC in Washington DC (26 March 2018)



At the briefing of the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition, held in Geneva, Switzerland (2018)



Zak Yacoob, Ann Skelton and Christof Heyns at the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition, held at the Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria (2011)



Tributes pour in after death of human rights activist Christof Heyns

Pretoria – Tributes are pouring in following the death of well known human rights activist Professor Christof Heyns.

He passed away on Sunday morning, apparently due to a heart attack.

The Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, where Heyns was the previous director, said in a tribute that it mourns his passing.

Heyns, 62, was also a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

In praising the legal giant, the university said it is with great shock and sadness that the faculty of law has received the news of the passing of the internationally esteemed Heyns.

Professor Frans Viloen, director at the university's Centre for Human Rights, said Heyns's death is an incredible loss and that he will be deeply missed by the university as well as many others across the world.

“Christof was a deeply moral man. His life was one of consequence and meaning, in which he used his considerable talents and energy to change ‘human wrongs’ into ‘human rights’ wherever he could,” Viljoen said.

The centre said that to them, Heyns was a founding father, a trail-blazer, and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. “He was our initiator-in-chief. He played a pioneering role in positioning the centre

as a pan-African centre of excellence. Constantly brimming with new ideas and grand schemes, plans and projects, he propelled the centre into new directions and challenged it to explore different dimensions.”

It is said that to Heyns, if something could be conceived, it could be achieved. Among these initiatives are landmark events that will be there for many years to come, including the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition, which in 2021 celebrates 35 years; the Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Court Competition and the National Schools Moot Competition.

Heyns was the Director of the Centre for Human



Rights from 1999 to 2006. He was Dean of the Faculty of Law from 2007 to 2010. After stepping down as Dean, he became the founding director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at the University of Pretoria.

He was United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016; and was a member of the UN Human Rights Committee from 2017 to 2020.

In each of these positions, he made significant and original and long-lasting contributions.

As Dean of the Faculty, he insisted on a greater focus on post-graduate studies, and in particular doctoral studies at the Faculty.

He secured funding for full-time doctoral students, and made the Faculty a magnet for talented prospective students from across the African continent.

As Special Rapporteur, he drew attention to cutting-edge issues such as the use of force by private security providers in the law enforcement contexts; the use of drones and autonomous weapons in armed conflict or counter-terrorism operations; and the role of forensic science in protecting the right to life.

During 2016, he chaired the UN Independent Investigation on Burundi.

As an academic, he was recognised internationally as a leading expert in the field of international human rights law,

including right to life issues and regional human rights mechanisms. He has published widely on these matters.

Heyns leaves his wife Fearika and his children Willemien, Adam, and Renée behind. He is the son of Professor Johan Heyns, former NG Church moderator, who was assassinated on Guy Fawkes night 1994 at his home in Waterkloof Ridge. He was shot at close range with a heavy calibre rifle and his killer was never caught.

– IOL

*By Zelda Venter
29 March 2021*

Professor Christof Heyns was a mensch devoted to developing leaders to advance democracy and human rights

The sudden death of Professor Christof Heyns on Sunday, 28 March, is a terrible loss to his family, academia, the global human rights movement and South Africa. Although Heyns' name may be unfamiliar to people outside of the human rights movement, his contribution to South Africa, Africa and the world has been enormous.

The University of Pretoria, where Professor Christof Heyns was the director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa and previous director of the globally respected Centre for Human Rights (CHR), said that his "enthusiasm for life, his dedication as a UP Law academic, his national and international contributions,

influence and work are unequalled".

The CHR, in its tribute, called him their "founding father, a trail-blazer, and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement. He was our dynamic initiator-in-chief. He played a pioneering role in positioning the Centre as a pan-African centre of excellence. Constantly brimming with new ideas and grand schemes, plans and projects, he propelled the Centre into new directions and challenged it to explore different dimensions.

"To Christof, if something could be conceived, it could be achieved."

From Sunday evening news of his death started to spread rapidly over social media. On

Monday, the CHR created a memorial page on Facebook in his memory which, within hours, contained hundreds of entries from all over the world. The reactions registered on Facebook, on WhatsApp groups and emails speak volumes about how highly Heyns the man, the mentor, the "rock star" and the lawyer was regarded.

Below are some of them.

"The sudden demise of Professor Christof Heyns is a real tragedy to us as a community of human rights activists in southern Africa. As a member of the United Nations Human Rights Committee his contribution to production of General Comment Number 37 on the right to peaceful assembly is invaluable at a time when we

are experiencing democratic regression and authoritarian consolidation globally. He is irreplaceable and shall be sorely missed. May his soul rest in eternal peace.”

– **Arnold Tsunga**
*Chairperson of the
Southern Africa Human
Rights Defenders Network*

“Prof Christof Heyns was one of South Africa and the world’s great thought leaders and moral authorities on human rights. Beyond his contribution to academia, his work as a UN Special Rapporteur stands as a towering tribute to the right to life in a world where algorithms and lethal autonomous weapons can make life and death decisions that are core to who we are as humanity. His work will live on in the many principled human rights fighters and public intellectuals that have had the privilege to encounter him and to be mentored by him. He will be greatly missed.”

– **Raenette Taljaard**
*Former politician and
independent analyst*

“So very shocked and sad to hear that Christof Heyns has passed on. Such a gentle, wise and self-deprecating soul. I was lucky to be taught by him (about the African regional

human rights system) and he supervised my master’s dissertation just over a decade ago.

“He did so much to advance human rights in very real, meaningful ways, especially with his work on the African regional system (he was a true pan-Africanist!) and on the right to life at the UN.

“He shared with me and other classmates his ‘struggle approach’ to human rights, which is still the foundation for how I think about the law’s role in the world. We will remember you, Christof, and carry with us the ideas that you shared.”

– **Jason Brickhill**
*Human rights lawyer
and former director of the
Constitutional Litigation Unit
at the Legal Resources Centre*

“Around 1995 I was young and green in my first job, working in the Idasa Pretoria office. Ivor Jenkins, our director, talked me into meeting with a Moroccan delegation visiting the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria to discuss human rights law. Prof Christof Heyns hosted the delegation. I was probably terrible in that meeting but Prof Heyns was warm and encouraging and I became very interested in the work of the Centre.

The next year I registered in the LLM programme at the centre which was a pioneering programme at the time for students all over Africa interested in human rights law. Later I would teach annually in that same programme. Much later, complete my doctorate through the UP law school and then teach at the law school myself. If Ivor Jenkins had not thrown me in at the deep end that day, I wonder if I would have any history with UP – a historically Afrikaans university – and that is now such a positive part of my life. RIP Prof Heyns, a warm and inspiring man and pioneer in human rights law.”

– **Faranaaz Veriava**
*Head of the Basic
Education Rights
programme at
SECTION27*

“What sad news. I met Christof in the late 1980s through my work with the Ford Foundation. Christof was an innovative human rights academic who was a trailblazer for a number of important rights-focused training programs. In addition, in all my interactions with him over the years, I found him to be a very decent human being.”

– **Alice Brown**
*Former resident coordinator,
Ford Foundation*



Christof Heyns and US Supreme Court Judge Ruth Bader Ginsburg at the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria. (2006)

“It is absolutely devastating news. We were contacting each other on Friday by WhatsApp as he was here in Stellenbosch and had arranged to have lunch today in the Botanical Gardens. He was so full of life, projects and was going to speak to me about involving me in a project on the UN treaty-body system. It is a massive loss for human rights for South Africa, Africa and the world.”

–Sandy Liebenberg

Chair in human rights law, University of Stellenbosch, and a former member of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

“What a sad occasion. He was such a mensch, resolutely devoted to developing leaders to advance democracy and human rights in this continent.

“The news of the passing of Christof Heyns hit me like a ton of bricks. I have known Christof for all my grown-up life.

“A quintessential professional, Christoff invested a lot in developing leaders that are anchored in a sound knowledge and values system regarding human rights and democracy. He was passionate about the African continent and building scholarship in the continent on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

“In the early nineties I spent a wonderful couple of weeks with him as we did an impact assessment of EU human rights funding in SA during apartheid. My favourite moment was us rushing like hungry kids at a sweet store as we sought and eventually pounced on brand factory shops in Mauritius when we only had three hours to do so before rushing for our flight.

“The country, the continent and the entire world is poorer because of Christof Heyns’ untimely passing, yet richer because of the legacy he leaves behind. It is said leaders do not die, they multiply. Christof leaves pieces of himself among the many scholars he nurtured and policymakers he touched.



May his great soul Rest In Peace.”

– **Thuli Madonsela**

*Former Public Protector,
current law trust chair in
social justice, University of
Stellenbosch*

“We deeply mourn the untimely passing of Prof Christof Heyns, a giant in the promotion of human rights. Empowering young people has always been his passion. I first met him in the late 1980s/early 1990s when he and I ran a project that sought to open opportunities for final-year law students from the then historically black universities to find placements in commercial law firms. At the time, it was hard for many black law graduates to be admitted to

articles of clerkship and even harder – almost impossible to get placed in commercial law firms.

“For a number of years he and I worked hard on opening these opportunities, which in the course of time spawned a number of black-owned commercial law firms. The idea had been the brainchild of Professor Michael Reisman of Yale Law School, Sipho Mahamba and former Constitutional Court Judge Johann van der Westhuizen.

“Today South Africa boasts a large number of black-owned commercial law firms. There were also experienced black commercial lawyers when transformation came and they fitted well in existing formerly white commercial law firms

when these firms started to diversify.

“Another empowerment project that Christof Heyns employed significantly to empower the youth was the moot court competitions that he and his colleagues took beyond the borders of South Africa, the borders of SADC and beyond the boundaries of the African continent. Recently, he had taken the promotion of human rights to schools in the basic education environment, a project that he passed on to the South African Human Rights Commission once it had taken a firm hold among basic education schools.

“He was a visionary who believed in investing in the youth in order to build a strong human rights culture.

The country has lost a true human rights activist. He will be sorely missed.”

– **Bongani Majola**
*Chairperson of the SA
Human Rights Commission*

“Really terribly shocked and saddened by Christof’s sudden death yesterday. He was a meticulous, conscientious, persistent, courageous fighter for justice and human rights.

The accolades and grief I’ve just seen well warranted.”

– **Edwin Cameron**
*Former Constitutional
Court judge*

“Very very sad. Prof Heyns raised the African continent high with his contributions at the ACHPR [African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights] and UN.”

– **Rose Hanzu**
*Director of Zimbabwe
Lawyers for Human Rights*

“So saddened to learn of the death of Prof Christof Heyns. Many of you may know him. He was my teacher and I suspect a few others on this group. What a dedicated

Human Rights Activist he was. Beyond teaching, he will be remembered for drafting the General Comment on Freedom of Assembly ... he was until his death after a heart attack while hiking a member of the HRC. MHSRIP”

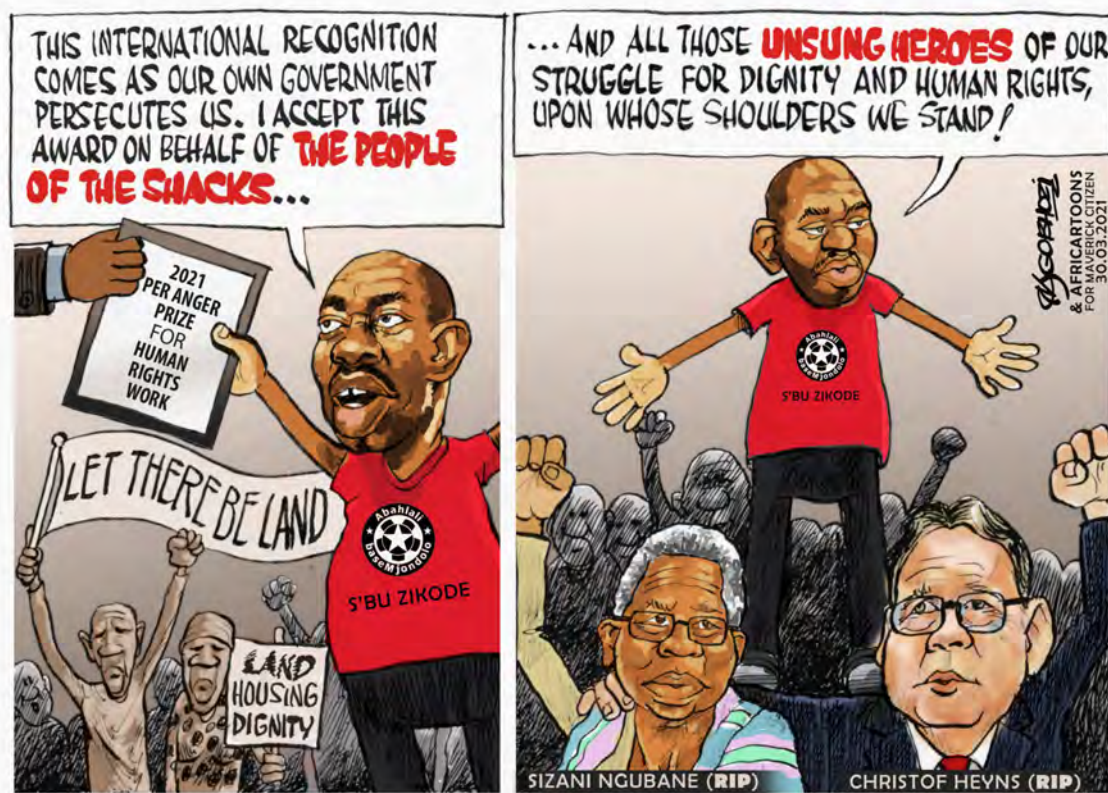
– **Muleya Mwananyanda**
Amnesty International

“Oh no, this is so sad and shocking news. I met him twice – first in Lund for a two-hour conversation just the two of us and again at the Danish Institute for a meeting on collaborations between our institutions. He was a wonderful person and so easy to engage with. He will be sorely missed by many all around the world.”

– **Steven LB Jensen**
*Danish Institute for Human
Rights*

The Centre for Human Rights has created a memorial page on Facebook in memory of Prof Christof Heyns. They have invited anyone and everyone to share how Heyns affected their lives.

– **Daily Maverick**
*By Mark Heywood
29 March 2021*



Unsung Heroes

– Daily Maverick

Cartoon by Mqobbozi and Africartoons
30 March 2021

Tribute to a human rights legend

ZELDA VENTER

zelda.venter@iml.co.za

TRIBUTES are pouring in following the death of human rights giant and legend Professor Christof Heyns. He died on Sunday morning, apparently after a heart attack.

The Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria, where he was a previous director, said it was with great shock and sadness that the faculty of law received the news of "the death of the internationally esteemed Heyns".

Heyns, 62, was also a member of the UN Human Rights Committee.

Professor Frans Viljoen, the director at the university's Centre for Human Rights, said Heyns's death was an incredible loss and that he would be deeply missed by the university as well as many others across the world.

"Christof was a deeply moral man. His life was one of consequence and meaning, in which (he) used his considerable talents and energy to change 'human wrongs' into 'human rights' wherever he could," Viljoen said.

Professor Ann Skelton of the University of Pretoria and member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, said: "Christof was a renaissance man, a fully rounded individual who, although a giant in the field of human rights law, looked beyond it."

She said when he was the Dean at the Law Faculty, he invented the Law Faculty Festival which was a celebration of art, music, poetry, food – anything that students were passionate about.

"His band The Bandits famously (if imperfectly) rocked the students each year to *We don't need no education* ... But he was a brilliant educator, a believer in young talent. He thought the world's problems could be solved through moot courts argued by students."

Skelton remembers fondly that there was a soundtrack to every aspect of his life.

"He worked Bob Dylan lyrics into his lectures. He was a life force, a visionary, a generous friend, a loving family man."

"His loss is huge for everyone,



PROFESSOR Christof Heyns has died.

including on the world stage where he was a famous South African, a proudly South African brand ambassador."

The Free State Centre for Human Rights said Heyns occupied an enormously important place in the South African human rights landscape.

"He was a leading scholar of human rights law, publishing widely on particularly regional human rights law and the African human rights system; teaching regularly at Oxford University and the American University in Washington; and serving as a Humboldt Fellow at Heidelberg University; a Fulbright Fellow at Harvard University; and a Board member and Fellow at the Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Study."

"But what we will perhaps remember Christof most fondly for, is the vision, energy and spirit with which he thought up, planned and then created a range of important human rights-related initiatives, either on his own or collaborating with others."

The UP Centre said Heyns was a founding father, a trailblazer, and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

He headed the centre from 1999 to 2006 and was Dean of the Faculty of Law from 2007 to 2010.

He leaves behind wife Fearika and children Willemien, Adam and Renée.

– Pretoria News
by Zelda Venter
30 March 2021

† PROF. CHRISTOF HEYNS (62)

'n 'Reus in regswêreld' sterf



Prof. Christof Heyns is Sondag dood. Foto: VERSKAF

Marietie Louw-Carstens

'n Reus in die regswêreld. 'n Ware leier met 'n briljante brein. 'n Inspirasie.

Dit is hoe prof. Christof Heyns (62), internasionale menseregte-kenner, deur kollegas en studente van oor die wêreld heen beskryf is ná sy dood Sondag.

Heyns is die seun van dr. Johan Heyns, oertydse moderator van die NG Kerk, wat op 5 November 1994 in 'n sluipmoord in sy huis in Pretoria doodgeskiet is.

Heyns het Sondag saam met sy broer, Stephan, buite Stellenbosch teen 'n berg gestap toe hy vermoedelik aan 'n hartaanval dood is.

Heyns se ma, Renée, het in Januarie haar 90ste verjaardag gevier.

Volgens Murray Hofmeyr het Heyns in 'n dokumentêre rolprent oor sy pa verduidelik dat sy belewenis van die sluipmoord op sy pa vir hom 'n motiverende faktor was in die werk wat hy vir die Verenigde Nasies (VN) oor buiteregterlike moorde en arbitrêre doodslag gedoen het.

Heyns was die afgelope maand as genoot verbonde aan die Stellenbosch Instituut vir Gevorderde Studie (Stias).

"Hy het ons as sy vriende aangespoor om die tyd uit te koop en sonder verskonings te leef. Sy en

toesiasme was 'n natuurkrag. Met hom was die lewe 'n avontuur," sê Hofmeyr.

Hy was tot met sy dood direkteur van die Instituut vir Internasionale en Vergelykende Reg in Afrika aan die Universiteit van Pretoria (UP).

Hy was voorheen die dekaan van die UP se regs fakulteit asook die direkteur van die Sentrum vir Menseregte aan die UP.

Die sentrum sê in 'n verklaring hy is diep bedroef oor Heyns se skielike dood.

"Hy was ons stigterstid en 'n voortdurende bron van inspirasie en benoediging.

"Sy heengaan is te skielik en te vroeg. Dit is 'n geweldige verlies, want hy het nog soveel gehad om te gee. Hy laat 'n reusagtige nalatenskap agter."

Heyns het verlede jaar 'n groot rol gespeel in die opstel van 'n VN-dokument met internasionale riglyne vir vreedsame byeenkomste.

Vincent Ploton, direkteur van ontwikkeling by die internasionale diens vir menseregte in Genève, Switserland, sê in 'n verklaring Heyns was 'n "formidabele en passievolle menseregte-advokaat".

Dr. Livingstone Sewanyana, uitvoerende direkteur van die beweging vir die menseregte-inisiatief en onafhanklike kenner by die VN oor die bevordering van

demokrasie, het Heyns as passievol oor menseregte beskryf.

"Hy het soveel mense se lewe geraak. Sy bydrae tot menseregte wys watter uitsonderlike mens met seldsame eienskappe hy was."

Prof. Daniel Bradlow van die Sentrum vir Menseregte aan die UP beskryf Heyns se dood as "'n tragedie vir regsonderrig in Suid-Afrika sowel as vir die bevordering van menseregte in Afrika".

Heyns was ook 'n besoekende professor aan die Universiteit van Oxford.

Die Oxford Kashmir Forum sê Heyns "was 'n buitengewone menseregte-prokureur en 'n baie gewaardeerde mens. Christof het 'n blywende indruk op ons almal gemaak."

Hy en sy vrou, Fearika, wat 35 jaar getroud was, het verlede jaar hul eerste kleinseun, Isak Rust, verwelkom.

"Hy kon nie uitgepraat raak oor sy kleinseun nie."

"Hy was in totale verwondering oor die vreugde en vernuwing wat die klein lewettjie gebring het," het Hofmeyr gesê. Heyns word oorleef deur nog 'n broer, Johan-Dirk.

Hy laat sy seun, Adam, 'n akteur, en twee dogters, Renée Heyns en Willemien Rust, agter. Sy familie was gister nog te geskok om oor sy dood te praat.

– Die Burger

deur Marietie Louw-Carstens

30 Maart 2021

‘Heyns had nog soveel om te gee’

Moord op pa spoor sy werk by VN aan

Marietie Louw-Carstens

‘n Reus in die regswêreld. ‘n Ware leier met ‘n briljante brein. ‘n Inspirasie.

Dit is hoe prof. Christof Heyns (62), internasionale menseregte-kenner, deur kollegas en studente van oor die wêreld heen beskryf is ná sy dood Sondag.

Heyns is die seun van dr. Johan Heyns, eertydse moderator van die NG Kerk, wat op 5 November 1994 in ‘n sluipmoord in sy huis in Pretoria doodgeskiet is.

Murray Hofmeyr, ‘n goeie vriend van Heyns en nasionale direkteur van die Studietrust, sê Heyns het elke dag gestap en het ook van fietsry en roei gehou.

Heyns het Sondag saam met sy broer, Stephan, buite Stellenbosch in ‘n berg gestap toe hy vermoedelik aan ‘n hartaanval dood is.

Heyns se ma, Renée, het in Januarie haar 90ste verjaardag gevier.

Volgens Hofmeyr het Heyns in ‘n dokumentêre rolprent oor sy pa verduidelik dat sy belewenis van die sluipmoord op sy pa vir hom ‘n motiverende faktor was in die werk wat hy vir die Verenigde Nasies (VN) oor buitege-regtelike moorde en arbitrêre doodslag gedoen het.

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Prof. Christof Heyns (62)

en sonder verskonings te leef. Sy entoesiasme was ‘n natuurkrag. Met hom was die lewe ‘n avontuur,” sê Hofmeyr.

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Hy het soveel mense se lewe geraak. Sy bydrae tot menseregte wys watter uitsonderlike mens met rare eienskappe hy was.

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— Beeld
deur Marietie
Louw-Carstens
30 Maart 2021

Die internasionaal hoogaangeskrewe menseregtekenner prof. Christof Heyns het verlede Sondag gedurende 'n staptog buite Stellenbosch beswyk. Hy was 62.

Heyns was 'n professor in regte aan die Universiteit van Pretoria (UP), waar hy ook die Sentrum vir Menseregte gelei het. Hy was vir vier jaar dekaan van die regs fakulteit.

Heyns was tot met sy afsterwe hoof van die Instituut vir Internasionale en Vergelykende Reg in Afrika aan die UP. Sy fokus was op 'n projek met die tema dat mense op vryheid van geweld kan staatmaak as hulle van mekaar verskil of wil protesteer.

Hy het geglo dit is 'n fundamentele mensereg vir individue om by 'n vreedsame vergadering aan te sluit om hulself uit te druk.

Saam met ander regte wat verband hou met politieke vryheid, vorm dit die grondslag van 'n demokratiese samelewing waarin veranderinge nagestreef kan word deur middel van bespreking en ooreding, eerder as die gebruik van geweld.

Almal, insluitende kinders, buitelandse burgers, vroue, trekwerkers, asielsoekers en vlugtelinge, kan die reg vir vreedsame vergaderings uitoefen, wat baie vorme kan aanneem: in die openbaar, in private ruimtes, buite, binnenshuis en aanlyn.

Heyns was die seun van die kerkleier prof. Johan Heyns, wat koelbloedig deur 'n skerpskutter voor van sy kleinkinders vermoor is. In 'n onderhoud vertel Adam (die seun van Christof Heyns) hy was vyf jaar oud. Hulle het in Duitsland gewoon en het daar van die sluipmoord gehoor.

"Ek onthou nie baie nie, maar ek kan die skielike somber atmosfeer in die motor herroep. Ons het van sy dood oor die Duitse radio gehoor."

Heyns het in 'n podsending op Netwerk24 vir Linda van Tilburg vertel sy pa se moord is nooit opgelos nie omdat die ondersoek nie behoorlik gedoen is nie.

Gedurende die dekade wat hy aan die Verenigde Nasies (VN) verbonde was, het hy tien lande, onder meer Mexiko, die Oekraïne en Papoea-Nieu-Guinee besoek.

In Burundi is hy tot persona non grata



'n Lewe
deur
Herman
Lategan

Prof. Christof Heyns

| FOTO: LISA HNATOWICZ

Menseregtekenner laat groot voetspore na

Heyns het geleef om 'n verskil te maak.

verklaar omdat hulle nie wou hê hy moet verder daar krap nie. Hy het gespot en gesê dat om sy tipe werk te doen nie juis 'n goeie besigheidskaartjie in lande was wat iets gehad het om weg te steek nie.

Heyns het gehou van sy werk by die VN omdat hy nie as 'n akademikus grotendeels in sy kantoor gesit het nie, maar op grondvlak kon rondbeweeg. In sy reise oorsee het hy ook met die menseregtekenner Amal Clooney (die vrou van die akteur George) saamgewerk aan hofsake.

Heyns is al in vooraanstaande publikasies soos *The New York Times* en *The Guardian* aangehaal.

Oudregter Johann van der Westhuizen sê: "Oor meer as 40 jaar het ek hom geken as student, kollega, reisgenoot en vriend. Sy teenwoordigheid was altyd puur plesier.

"Oor waardes het ons meestal saamge-

stem. Verskille het ons gedebatteer, want daarsonder beteken vriendskap min. Hy was een van min met wie ek kon praat oor sake wat saakmaak."

Sy lewe het nie net om werk gedraai nie. Hy was 'n bekende lid van die UP-regsfakulteit se rockgroep The Bandits, wat oor 'n dekade op vele regs fakulteitfeeste opgetree het.

Heyns was lief vir roei, fietsry en om met sy gesin te ontspan. Hy was iemand met 'n aweregse humorsin. Sy laaste treë was op een van sy geliefde buitemuurse aktiwiteite - om te stap. Dit is klinkend dat hy groot voetspore nagelaat het.

Hy word oorleef deur sy moeder, Renée, vrou, Fearika, seun, Adam, dogters Willemien Rust en Renée Heyns, skoonseun, Arné Francois Rust, en kleinseun, Isak Rust.

† Christoffel Hendrik Heyns, gebore 10 Januarie 1959, oorlede 28 Maart 2021.

Christof Heyns would not be held ‘like a drunkard under the cold tap of facts’

On Sunday, 28 March, Christof Heyns died while walking with his brother in the mountains surrounding Stellenbosch. We worked with Christof Heyns in different capacities, and also at different times during his career. In the course of these short interactions, Christof gave us a great deal. We wish to impart some of that in his memory, to show who it is that we have all now lost.

Since his death, much has been written of Christof’s sterling legal career and the manner in which he pioneered human rights in South Africa, Africa and internationally. His role as a leading scholar of regional human rights law and a practitioner serving as United

Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions (2010 to 2016) and as a member of the UN Human Rights Committee (2017 to 2020) has been celebrated.

All told, he was a giant of the human rights world.

But to us, what is more important than what Christof achieved, is the way in which he did it – in a manner that showed precisely who he was.

He was an ideas man who dreamt big dreams – an idealist, constantly imagining a world that was different from the one in which he happened, at the time, to find himself.

At the same time, Christof had his feet firmly on the

ground. He combined an acute practicality with a dogged determination – qualities that made it possible for him to create what he imagined. Once he had thought something up, he worked furiously to create it and to make it work. In kind with one of his favourite artists, Leonard Cohen, Christof refused “to be held like a drunkard under the cold tap of facts”.

If something did not work at first, he would try another way. Failures and setbacks were met only with a shrug and wry smile; followed directly by a new plan. If the “world” resisted his ideas, Christof pushed back, until the “world” gave way.

Christof was also, at heart, collaborative. He had a knack for enthusing people, and for getting them on board with his plans. This was, of course, in part to enlist one's aid. But far more clearly, this was because Christof was himself so enthusiastic about his ideas, wanting people to share in them and benefit from them. Christof would involve one, asking advice, and giving real responsibility.

In the process he taught and mentored, exposing others to experience – and he opened doors. Once part of Christof's team, you never left, in the best way possible. Although all three of us, as invariably happens in long professional associations, were at times in disagreement with him – always soon after a disagreement, an email would come in which Christof would wonder whether it was not time to resurrect this or that dormant project; or just to find out whether one remembered some line from a Valiant Swart song.

These combinations of idealism and practicality, dreaming and determination, coupled with a truly collaborative spirit, enabled Christof to think up and then actually create, in consort with others, a host of important and enduring human rights-related

initiatives. These include, but are in no way limited to, the University of Pretoria's Centre for Human Rights (UPCHR) and ICLA; the South African Student Volunteer Organisation; the Pretoria University Law Press; the LL.M. in Human Rights and Democratisation; the All-African Human Rights Moot Court Competition; the African Human Rights Law Reports; the African Human Rights Law Journal and many, many more.

Recollections

Here are three brief recollections, one from each of us, to illustrate Christof's spirit:

Jacob van Garderen

Christof will no doubt be remembered for his incredible contribution to the promotion of international human rights law. To me, however, it was his efforts to expose African students to the real-life developmental and human rights challenges in the region, and to inspire us to roll up our sleeves and be part of the solution.

In 1994, Christof founded the Southern African Student Volunteer Organisation (Sasvo), which initially involved small teams of student volunteers to

do voter education in preparation for the 1994 South African elections. Sasvo quickly grew into a formidable enterprise, involving thousands of students from across southern Africa – fixing dilapidated schools in Mozambique and Rwanda, building houses in rural Tanzania, and running weekend tutorial classes in township schools in Soshanguve and Mamelodi.

Sasvo, motto "Building Africa Ourselves", was inspired by Christof's pan-Africanist approach to all his work. So, the concept was simple, to take students from the safe environment of university campuses straight to the realities of poverty and inequality left by decades of apartheid and conflict. Groups of students would volunteer their time and labour, and work alongside communities on existing development projects. While actual impact of the volunteer work may have been limited, it was the unique opportunity for young people from vastly different backgrounds and nationalities to spend a few weeks together doing physical work in very basic conditions, sharing experiences and ideas that will last a generation.

One of my fondest memories was a train trip from



Johannesburg to Maputo in 1997 with 15 students from Lesotho, South Africa, Swaziland and Botswana, to fix the Unidade II Secondary School, outside Maputo. The last stretch of wobbly track between the Ressano Garcia border post and Maputo was a reality check to us all, with evidence of the recent war still obvious – burnt-out tanks and buildings scarred by bullet holes.

Sadly, Sasvo did not survive, despite the energy and vision of Christof.

There was never enough funds to cover the ever-increasing list of projects and, on more than one occasion, Christof had to take out a second bond on his home to subsidise our adventures.

The impact the programme had on myself and other students of that time will continue for generations.

Karin van Marle

Christof taught me legal philosophy in my third year as a law student at UP. For the exam we had to answer only one question, “What is the law?” As someone who didn’t share the passion for rules and procedures, and parroting facts and names of cases of some of my fellow students, I was relieved and intrigued by the freedom given to us. Even now, decades later, I remember the joy of crafting that essay.

In the same year I applied for the position of departmental assistant in Christof’s

department. Christof interviewed me and after asking only a few questions told me that I didn’t get the position. When I asked him why, he said that “I didn’t look to him like someone who will be willing to make photocopies and perform the kind of administrative duties that would have been expected from me”.

I was taken aback at the time, but of course realised eventually that Christof was right – I didn’t then, and probably still don’t, like making photocopies.

This first interaction paved the way for our future working relationship. I wasn’t part of Christof’s immediate team. But I had the privilege to work closely with him

later as part of the faculty management team. When the head of department position became vacant, I agreed to act until a suitable candidate could be found. After about 10 months of acting with no luck in securing a permanent HoD, Christof said to me, “you’ve been doing this for so long, it can’t be that bad”. And it wasn’t.

I applied and will always remember the term as HoD with Christof as dean as a special and exciting, challenging and rewarding time.

Of course, Christof will be remembered for his immense contribution to human rights law, but many will remember also his hand in starting the annual faculty festival, a day that, like many of his other projects, provided space and time for those who were willing to see it, to become part of something extraordinary, albeit fleeting. “I’ll remember you well” [Christof] ... you’ve got the music”.

Danie Brand

In her tribute to Christof, Sandra Liebenberg recalls his contribution to the drafting of the 1996 Constitution of South Africa.

Christof proposed that a version of the human rights reporting systems that operate in the international and

various regional human rights systems be introduced at domestic level in South Africa, with organs of state required to report regularly to the Human Rights Commission on their progress in realising socioeconomic rights.

Fresh out of my LLB I had just started working at the UPCHR and Christof roped me in to assist him in preparing his submission to the Constitutional Assembly. When the time came to present the proposal in person at the public hearings that formed part of the drafting process, Christof asked me to accompany him to Cape Town.

I thought I would be there to carry bags and drinks, but to my surprise, on our arrival, Christof said that, as I had assisted him in drafting the proposal, it was only fair that I should get to present it at the public hearing. And there I was then, just graduated, standing up in Parliament before a host of people I had only read about and were in awe of and saying Christof’s piece. Of course, nervous and inexperienced, I made a hash of it; but the force and clarity of Christof’s proposal ensured that it was nevertheless included in the Constitution, as section 184(3).

Afterwards, true to his nature, Christof also involved me in

a project he had set up with Sandra to advise the Human Rights Commission on its implementation of section 184(3). Again, I was in the thick of things, thanks to Christof, as I would be many more times in other contexts thereafter, always thanks to Christof.

Thinking and doing; self and others

Christof Heyns was someone who could see a different world and make it, for himself and for others. In a world where universities have degenerated into places of the possible only and not of ideas, where our country has become subsumed by the politics of the grubby, of what I can grab for myself, Christof’s capacity to dream and to do, and to do for others as well as himself, in addition to his warmth, wit and generosity is what will most sorely be missed now that he is dead. DM/MC

Professor Danie Brand is the director of the Free State Centre for Human Rights at the University of the Free State. Professor Karin van Marle is the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of Law at the University of the Free State. Jacob van Garderen is the director at the Public Interest Practice.

– Daily Maverick

*By Danie Brand, Karin van Marle and Jacob van Garderen
5 April 2021*

Tuks mourns loss of legal legend Heyns

Reitumetse Mahope

The University of Pretoria (UP) this week bid a sad farewell to Christof Heyns, a professor of human rights law who was internationally recognised for his wide-reaching initiatives on human rights in Africa and beyond.

Heyns was 62 years old when he died last Sunday.

"He will be sorely missed, not only by his colleagues but also by the law fraternity further afield," said UP vice-chancellor and principal Professor Tawana Kupe.

"The loss of his expertise and knowledge will leave a significant gap throughout the world."

Kupe said the university offered their deepest condolences to his family.

Heyns was director of the institute for international and comparative law in Africa at UP's law faculty.

"On several occasions he had served as a technical adviser on human rights to the African Union and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights," said UP spokesperson Primarashni Gower.

He had notably served as adviser to the African Commission in developing its influential General Comment on the Right to Life, adopted by the Commission in 2015.

Heyns also directed UP's human rights centre and was law faculty's dean for four years.

"In 2020, he played an instrumental role in the drafting of general comment 37 of the UN human rights committee, which offers global guidance on peaceful assembly."

"To this end, he worked with colleagues and students involved in the freedom from violence project based at UP Law."

She said that Heyns also managed the drafting of another document, called the UN Human Rights Guidance on Less-Lethal Weapons.

"This was done with the office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and was also released in July last year."

Gower said these two documents summarised and restated the international law standards and UN standards on peaceful and not-so-peaceful assembly.

She said Heyns advised a number of international, regional and national entities on human rights issues.

Heyns held a BLC, LLB, BA (Hons) and MA (Philosophy) cum laude from UP and a PhD degree on the history and legal aspects of the non-violent part of the struggle against racial domination in South Africa.

He also had a Master's of Law from Yale law school, where he was a Fulbright scholar.

"His death is an incredible loss and he will be truly missed by us and so many others across the world," said director of the Centre for Human Rights Prof Frans Viljoen.

"To us at the centre, he was a founding father, a trailblazer and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement."

He was our dynamic initiator-in-chief.

"He was constantly brimming with new ideas and grand schemes, plans and projects. He propelled the centre into new directions."

"His passing is too soon and too sudden."

"It is such a loss. He still had so much to offer."

"But what a legacy this giant leaves."

He leaves behind his wife, son Adam, his two daughters, Willemien Rust and Renée Heyns, son-in-law Arné Francois Rust, mother Renée Heyns, and his grandson.



– Rekord

Pretoria East

By Reitumetse Mahope

Week of 9 April 2021



'n Vrou kyk Saterdag na foto's van prof. Christof Heyns by sy roudiens in Pretoria.

Foto's: DEAN VIVIER

ROUDIENS VIR MENSEREGTEKENNER

**‘Hy was gom
van ons gesin’**

Heyns los verskille op 'met humor'

Dennis Delpont

Hy was die gom van sy gesin, die leier van die *band*.

Dit was Saterdag die voorde van Fearika Heyns, vrou van wyle prof. Christof Heyns, in sy roudiens by die Universiteit van Pretoria.

"Ek is God ewig dankbaar vir die 35 jaar wat ek saam met hom kon spandeer."

Heyns, 'n internasionaal bekende menseregtekenner wat ook in die menseregtekomitee van die Verenigde Nasies gedien het, is op Sondag 28 Maart dood aan 'n hartaanval terwyl hy saam met sy broer, Stephan, buite Stellenbosch in 'n berg gestap het.

Hy laat sy vrou en drie kinders, Renée, Willemien en Adam, agter.

Heyns is die seun van dr. Johan Heyns, eertydse moderator van die NG Kerk, wat op 5 November 1994 in 'n sluipmoordaanval in sy huis in Pretoria doodgeskiet is.



Prof. Christof Heyns se gesin, Arne Rust, skoonseun, Willemien Rust, dogter, Fearika, vrou, Adam, seun, en Renée, dogter, Saterdag in die roudiens.



Fearika Heyns, Heyns se vrou, lewer 'n huldeblyk.

Fearika sê haar man het haar baie dinge oor die lewe geleer.

"Toe ons 40 jaar gelede begin uitgaan het, het my ma my altyd gewaarsku teen regsgeleerdes. Sy het gedink ek sou nooit 'n argument kon wen nie. Ek het natuurlik nie vir haar geluister nie.

"In die beginjare het ons nogal verskil van mekaar. In die middel van 'n argument sou hy vir my sê: 'Hoekom sê jy nie eerder dit nie, of waar-



Valiant Swart tree op by die roudiens.

om redeneer jy nie eerder so nie?' Die probleem is dan sommer opgelos met sy humor."

Sy sê hulle was in 'n mate dankbaar vir die inperking omdat hy toe permanent saam met sy gesin by die huis was.

Fearika sê hoewel sy werk vir hom baie belangrik was, het sy gesin eerste gekom.

"Indien sy gesin in gevaar was, het hy nie gekroom om alles op sy sakereis te kanselleer en terug te keer na Suid-Afrika nie. Dié keer kom hy

egter nie terug nie."

Adam, Heyns se seun, het vertel sy pa was baie lief vir musiek. "Ek moes 'n paar dae gelede sy foon oopmaak. Ek het gesien die laaste liedjie waarna hy geluister het, was 'n liedjie van Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. Die liedjie se naam is 'Wonderful Life'. Die lirieke sê: 'It's a wonderful life, if you can find it.' En dit is presies wie my pa was. Hy kon in die donkerste van plekke iets wonderliks vind. Pa, ek dink nie ek het ooit genoeg gesê hoe lief ek jou het nie," het Adam huilend gesê.

Murray Hofmeyr, 'n vriend van Heyns wat die roudiens diens gelei het, het vertel hoe lief Heyns vir Valiant Swart se musiek was. Swart het in die roudiens sy liedjie "Waar die dromers dwaal" aan Heyns opgedra. "Hy was 'n dromer," het Swart gesê.

Volgens Johan Badenhorst, 'n jare lange vriend, was Heyns onlangs op sy gelukkigste. "Hy was op 'n besonderse plek."

Badenhorst het sy vriend van meer as 40 jaar gegroet met dié aanhaling uit "Groet sonder woorde" van Koos du Plessis: "Jy hoor my nie meer nie, ek sê maar totsiens. Ek sal jou nie steur nie, ek loop ongesiens. Want jy is in oorde waar drome nog blom. Ek groet sonder woorde, want hartseer is stom."

– Beeld

Deur Dennis Delpont
12 April 2021

✠ **CHRISTOF HEYNS**

Gesin was altyd eerste in sy lewe

‘Dié keer kom hy egter nie terug nie...’

Dennis Delpont

Hy was die gom van sy gesin, die leier van die *band*.

Dit was Saterdag die woorde van Fearika Heyns, vrou van wyle prof. Christof Heyns, tydens sy roudiens by die Universiteit van Pretoria.

“Ek is God ewig dankbaar vir die 35 jaar wat ek saam met hom kon spandeer.”

Heyns, ’n internasionaal bekende menseregtekenner wat ook in die Menseregtekomitee van die Verenigde Nasies gedien het, is op Sondag 28 Maart dood



Fearika Heyns, vrou van wyle prof. Christof Heyns, lewer Saterdag ’n huldeblyk tydens sy roudiens.

aan ’n hartaanval terwyl hy saam met sy broer, Stephan, buite Stellenbosch in ’n berg gestap het.

Hy laat sy vrou en drie kinders, Renée, Willemien en Adam, agter.

Heyns is die seun van dr. Johan Heyns, eertydse moderator van die NG Kerk, wat op 5 No-

vember 1994 in ’n sluipmoord in sy huis in Pretoria doodgeskiet is.

Fearika sê Heyns het haar baie dinge oor die lewe geleer. “Toe ons 40 jaar terug begin uitgaan het, het my ma my altyd gewaarsku teen regsgeleerdes. Sy het gedink ek sou nooit ’n argument kon wen nie. Ek het natuurlik nie na haar geluister nie.

“In die beginjare het ons nogal verskil van mekaar. In die middel van ’n argument sou hy vir my sê: ‘Hoekom sê jy nie eerder dit nie, of waarom redeneer jy nie eerder so nie?’ Die probleem is dan sommer opgelos met sy humor,” vertel sy laggend.

Sy sê hulle was tot ’n mate dankbaar vir die inperking omdat hy toe permanent saam met sy gesin by die huis was.

Fearika sê hoewel sy werk vir hom baie belangrik was, het sy gesin eerste gekom in sy lewe. “Indien sy gesin in gevaar was, het hy nie gekroom om alles op



'n Vrou kyk Saterdag na foto's van prof. Christof Heyns by sy roudiens in Pretoria.

Foto's: DEAAAN VIVIER



Hy kon in die donkerste van plekke iets wonderliks vind.

— ADAM HEYNS

sy besigheidsreis te kanselleer en terug te keer na Suid-Afrika toe nie. Dié keer kom hy egter nie terug nie . . .”

Adam, Heyns se seun, het Saterdag vertel sy pa was baie lief vir musiek. “Ek moes sy foon oopmaak ’n paar dae gelede. Ek

het gesien die laaste liedjie waarna hy geluister het, was ’n liedjie van Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds. Die liedjie se naam is ‘Wonderful Life’. Die lirieke sê: ‘It’s a wonderful life, if you can find it.’ En dit is presies wie my pa was. Hy kon in die donkerste van plekke iets wonderliks vind.

“Pa, ek dink nie ek het ooit genoeg gesê hoe lief ek jou het nie,” het Adam huilend gesê.

Murray Hofmeyr, ’n vriend van Heyns, het Saterdag vertel hoe lief Heyns vir Valiant Swart se musiek was.

Swart het Saterdag tydens die roudiens sy liedjie “Waar die

dromers dwaal” aan Heyns opgedra. “Hy was ’n dromer,” het Swart gesê.

Volgens Johan Badenhorst, ’n jare lange vriend, was Heyns onlangs op sy gelukkigste.

“Hy was op ’n besondere plek.”

Badenhorst het sy vriend van meer as 40 jaar gegroet met dié aanhaling uit “Groet sonder woorde” van Koos du Plessis: “Jy hoor my nie meer nie, ek sê maar totsiens. Ek sal jou nie steur nie, ek loop ongesiens. Want jy is in oorde waar drome nog blom. Ek groet sonder woorde, want hartseer is stom.”

— Die Burger
Deur Dennis Delport
12 April 2021



Reflection: Mourning human rights activists

In recent weeks South Africa has lost three of its finest human rights activists. How should we remember them? How do we honour their contributions meaningfully?

*Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a heaven in hell's
despair.*

(William Blake, The Clod and the Pebble, Songs of Experience, 1794)

At the height of the Aids epidemic in the early 2000s, when Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) activists were dying at a rate of several a week, there was a point where I became afraid that I was becoming immune to the full weight of loss and grief that death gives rise

to. I was subconsciously normalising premature death. Now that we are in another season of death and loss there is again a danger that once the memorial services and funerals are over, fellow activists move on too quickly, are too accepting of mortality, too quick to resume “normal life”.

Activism is always a rush and always urgent.

But in the past few weeks the sudden and premature death of three respected activists, the latest in a growing line of friends and comrades taken by Covid-19 and other causes, forced me to pause and think deeply about their values, what their lives meant, and how we will carry them forward.

Christof Heyns, born in 1959, died of a heart attack on 28 March while walking in the mountains at Stellenbosch. Graeme Bloch, born in 1956, died on 9 April after battling progressive supranuclear palsy for years. Sindi van Zyl, born in 1976, died on 10 April as a result of Covid-19.

South Africa is one of the world's largest exporters of human rights activists and ideas – and we are losing a lot of them. Christof, Graeme and Sindi are but three people in a proud, deep and enduring tradition of human rights activists. Yet, they were both special and symbolic. Their biographies, when written, will tell how they came from very different social milieu: experienced different types of trauma at different times in their lives, had different



political or religious influences and epiphanies.

But by different paths and accidents, their life experiences had, from an early age, led each one on a journey to furthering the ideas and realisation of human rights, using skills they acquired in their chosen fields and expertise.

The mantra they followed was entombed in international law in 1948 after one of the last great disruptions of human society, World War 2 and Nazism: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.”

More than 70 years later we may be far from it, but that’s the point of working for change.

Christof did it as a lawyer and teacher; Graeme as a freedom fighter and educationist; Sindi as a doctor and advocate for healthcare rights. Each wove the fabric of democratic South Africa and the world, but did so in ways that were understated and usually unrecognised apart from by those in their circles of friendship or influence.

Despite their and others’ efforts and sacrifices, human rights activists are under attack worldwide; the very notion of human rights and universality itself is being questioned; inequalities are rising.

They did it by little out-of-sight actions and ideas as much as by grand gestures, radical rhetoric and political performance. When asked, their invisible hands would often stretch out to strangers in need of help. They

didn’t bill by the hour for their humanity or boast about it afterwards. Their interventions were not about ego or self-promotion, but about building agency, power, self-realisation and purpose in others.

They acquired material security and comfort, but not by selling their souls, accumulating money or abandoning consciousness of all the inequality and suffering around them.

What was also striking about all three was their how central love and a love of living was to their activism.

Each loved music, nature, sports, literature and other people. They literally revelled in life. But they were able to live full lives in a way that did not cause other people to be hurt or suffer; in fact, they proved that helping humanity

and advancing other people's rights can be something joyous and rewarding.

Sometimes activism requires ultimate self-sacrifice, as we know from our history, but for the most part human rights activism is usually about forgoing lesser things in life, things we find we don't need anyway. It's about not being driven to constantly accumulate, to measure worth only by what you can privatise for yourself, rather than protecting and developing the richness of public places and spaces, including our natural world.

The deaths of these three activists should be a cause for pause. Take stock.

Despite their and others' efforts and sacrifices, human rights activists are under attack worldwide; the very notion of human rights and universality itself is being

questioned; inequalities are rising.

We are back in English poet William Blake's 18th-century nightmare.

This calls for individual introspection by activists. We need more quality, less quantity; more doing, less talking; more talking with and less talking at; more vulnerability and self-doubt, less arrogance; more work on investigating and sketching out paths of hope that will galvanise and inspire than reactive critique and denigration that debilitates.

Last week, in *Maverick Citizen's* editorial about suicide and the unprecedented levels of despair beneath the surface of our society, a despair that has taken further lives in days just passed, I wrote about the need for critical introspection,

Ubuntu, and talked about the Constitution as an "articulation of the values and spirit of the humans of South Africa".

I realise now that subconsciously the role models I had in mind were Christof, Graeme and Sindi.
DM/MC

– Daily Maverick

*By Mark Heywood
13 April 2021*

Christof Heyns: 1959 – 2021



CHRISTOF HEYNS

HUMAN RIGHTS SCHOLARSHIP

Applications are invited for the award of the first Christof Heyns Human Rights Scholarship.
Applications are open to current or prospective doctoral candidates
studying towards a doctoral degree in human rights at the University of Pretoria.
The Scholarship is for study in 2022.

ABOUT CHRISTOF HEYNS

The Christof Heyns Human Rights Scholarship (the Scholarship) is instituted in memory of renowned human rights scholar, Christof Heyns, who was professor of human rights law at the University of Pretoria (UP) until his untimely death in March 2021. Christof was the Director of the Centre for Human Rights from 1999 to 2006; Dean of the Faculty of Law from 2007 to 2010; and was the founding Co-Director of the Institute for International and Comparative Law in Africa at UP. He was United Nations Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions from 2010 to 2016; and was a member of the UN Human Rights Committee from 2017 to 2020. Prof. Heyns pioneered and supported numerous human rights education initiatives in the course of his life, including by providing opportunities to deserving students to pursue human rights education.

ABOUT THE SCHOLARSHIP

The Scholarship is established to continue the legacy of Prof. Heyns in expanding human rights scholarships and giving opportunities to deserving but economically disadvantaged African students to undertake human rights related postgraduate studies in human rights at UP.

The amount of the Scholarship is R180,000. It is provided for a maximum of three calendar years for doctoral studies. The Scholarship award is reviewed annually, for continued funding, on the basis of satisfactory academic progress by the recipient.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

Applicants must:

- meet all the requirements for admission to doctoral studies in human rights at UP;
- be a citizen of an African country;
- have an excellent academic record, based on previous tertiary studies; and
- demonstrate the need for economic support to achieve their academic goals.

(If the Scholarship is awarded to a student who is not currently registered for doctoral studies at UP, the award will be provisional on the student being successfully registered with UP.)

HOW TO APPLY

Applications must consist of:

- a letter of motivation,
- at least two letters of support, with referees' contact details indicated;
- for prospective doctoral students: a brief proposal of around 5 pages, setting out the research problem, locating the proposed research in the existing scholarship; the research question(s); and the proposed research method/methodology;
- for currently registered doctoral students: a progress report by the supervisor; and
- the applicant's most recent academic results.

Submit applications to carole.viljoen@up.ac.za

CLOSING DATE

The last day for applying is 4 October 2021.

CONTACT DETAILS

Enquiries related to the scholarship can be directed to carole.viljoen@up.ac.za





CHRISTOF HEYNS

Memorial Thesis Award

Pretoria University Law Press
PULP
www.pulp.up.ac.za

Thesis Prize promoting African scholarship launched to honour memory of Professor Christof Heyns

To honour the memory of our colleague whose untimely death on 28 March 2021 has been an incalculable loss not just to the University of Pretoria and academia at large, but particularly to us at the Pretoria University Law Press (PULP), we have decided to rename what was previously announced as the “Pretoria University Law Press Thesis Prize” as the “Christof Heyns Memorial Thesis Award.”

The late Professor Christof Heyns was not only instrumental in the establishment of PULP but was the brain behind this thesis prize. This prize underlines his exceptional passion for promoting scholarship and a life devoted to initiating innovative ideas to make the world a better place for all. There can be no better way to begin to recognise the enormous contribution that Professor Heyns has made. We are also pleased to announce that 16 doctoral theses from all over Africa were submitted for this prize.

The PULP editorial committee has appointed Professor Hennie Strydom, Research Professor and holder of the South African Research (SARCHi) Chair in international law at the University of Johannesburg as the chairperson of the panel of experts who will review and determine the winner of this prize. In accordance with the rules governing this Award, Professor Strydom will identify the other two panel members.

The winner of this inaugural Christof Heyns Memorial Award will be announced in October/November 2021. The winning thesis will be published as a PULP monograph.

Renaming of the African Human Rights Moot Court Competition

The final round of this year's African Human Rights Moot Court Competition was hosted by the Stellenbosch University, Faculty of Law. The event coincided with the 100-year celebration of the Faculty of Law, and 35 years since the founding of the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria. The Centre annually co-organises the Moot together with a faculty of law at an African university. Over its 30-year history, the African Moot Court Competition has taken place in 19 different African countries, with 175 universities participating. One university – Université Assane Seck, Ziguinchor, Senegal, participated for the first time in 2021.

At the closing ceremony of the 30th African Human Rights Moot Court Competition, the competition was officially renamed as the 'Christof Heyns African Human Rights Moot Court Competition'.

Professor Tawana Kupe, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, who presided over the renaming, explained that the renaming was in “memory and recognition of Christof’s role as the Moot’s founding father and sustaining driving force over many decades”.

Professor Heyns, internationally renowned human rights lawyer, a legal educator and founding father of the African Moot Court Competition passed away in March this year while hiking in the mountains just outside Stellenbosch.



CHRISTOF HEYNS

African Human Rights Moot Court Competition
Concours Africain de Procès Simulé des Droits de l'Homme
Concurso Africano de Julgamento Fictício Sobre Direitos Humanos

The Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, is deeply saddened by the sudden passing of its previous Director, Professor Christof Heyns. His death is an incredible loss, and he will be truly missed by us and so many others across the world.

Christof was so many things to so many people.

To us at the Centre, he was a founding father, a trail-blazer, and a constant source of inspiration and encouragement.

His passing is too soon, and too sudden. It is such a loss. He still had so much to offer. But what a legacy this giant leaves.

May his spirit soar.

We all honour, appreciate and have been touched by his consequential life.