

Call for Conference Papers:

Submission of Abstracts
by 15 May 2025

As part of the 34 th Christof Heyns African Human Rights Moot Court Competition, the Centre for Human Rights at the University of Pretoria and the Faculty Law at the University of Cape Town will on **Monday 30 June 2025** co-host a one-day international conference on a theme specified below. The working languages of the conference are English, French and Portuguese, with simultaneous interpretation available.



The conference will focus on two themes:

The first theme will address themes related to the 2025 African Moot Court hypothetical case:

statelessness; and the right of migrants (non-nationals) to participate in politics (vote and 'protest');

The second theme will explore

challenges to, and best practices on, the teaching of the African human rights system at African Universities.

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BACKGROUND AND AIM OF THE CONFERENCE

The International Organization for Migration (the “IOM”) produced their annual report on the global situation of migration in 2024 (the “Report”). The Report indicates that the quantity of international migrants has increased during the past 50 years,¹ with the estimate of international migrants sitting at 281 million migrants in 2020.² This figure accounts for 3.6% of the global population,³ which is an incremental increase from the 2.3% of the global population that international migrants reflected in 1970.⁴ Individuals who have been displaced due to conflict, or persecution or disaster comprise of a smaller proportion of international migrants, whilst the majority of international migrants move for reasons of “work, family, and study.”⁵

A rise in migration has resulted in the adoption of much stricter migration policies and legal frameworks that treat migration as a threat to national security. Accordingly, more and more states are linking migration and security “through misinformed ‘threat’ narratives that seek to paint international migrants as endangering countries and communities”.⁶ In this process, migrants are being “othered” and treated as individuals to whom different legal regimes are applicable. This has the potential to adversely impact the fundamental rights to which migrants are believed to be entitled, like the right to a nationality, and the right to fight for those rights.

Theme 1: Statelessness and the exploration of the durability of citizenship and migrants’ right to political participation and protest

In today’s post-World War II global order, it is certainly true that the arbitrary, and mass deprivation of citizenship by sovereign states is less likely to occur. This is due, in part, to the fact that denationalization is seen as “abhorrent to the ‘rules-based international order’”⁷ and primarily associated with totalitarian regimes.⁸ It is also due in large part to the fact that the arbitrary deprivation

1 International Organisation for Migration World Migration Report 2024, 21 May 2020 at 21 available at: <https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2024> [last accessed 14 April 2025].

2 Ibid at 19.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid at 22.

5 Ibid at 19. The migration that takes place in these circumstances is “mostly safe, orderly and regular.”

6 Ibid at 162.

7 Adams ‘Emerging Voices: Denationalization, International Justice, and the Principle of Good Faith’, *Opinio Juris*, available at: <https://opiniojuris.org/2019/08/22/emerging-voices-denationalization-international-justice-and-the-principle-of-good-faith/>.

8 Prener ‘Denationalisation and Its Discontents – Citizenship Revocation in the 21st Century: Legal, Political and Moral Implications’ *Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy in Europe* vol 52 at 15 available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/366964243_Denationalisation_and_Its_Discontents_-_Citizenship_Revocation_in_the_21st_Century_Legal_Political_and_Moral_Implications.

of one's nationality is now explicitly prohibited under international law.⁹

In order to overcome the hurdle of arbitrariness, more and more states are creating legal bases on which to strip their citizens of their nationality, by adopting legislation that permits denationalization on the grounds of "national security" and "counter-terrorism", and enabling the denationalization of, among others, individuals suspected of so-called terrorist conduct.¹⁰ Some scholars argue that denationalization practices are illustrative of a weaponization of citizenship,¹¹ as seen through the targeting of dissidents and individuals whose conduct does not align with the politics of the state. A current and relevant example of the stripping of legal status on these bases can be seen in the United States of America (USA), where the state is undertaking detention and deportation practices that are targeting individuals legally present in the USA, but who have expressed support for the plight of the people of Palestine.¹²

The prevalence of denationalization practices calls for the exploration of the concept of citizenship, and a determination of the extent to which citizenship can be said to be durable in nature. It also calls for a consideration of the distinct implications of denationalization on migrants that acquire citizenship through means other than birth. What does it mean to be a citizen? Is citizenship a right or a privilege? Does citizenship bestow a sense of belonging and identity that is taken away when the status is stripped from the individual? Are there legal and/or ethical considerations, other than the potential for statelessness, that states should take into account when determining whether to revoke citizenship?

In most democracies, the right to vote is reserved for citizens,¹³ even though the practice of extending this right to non-citizens is becoming more common.¹⁴ However, the right to freedom of expression is not limited to citizens.

Migrants who fight for better living and working conditions, access to socio-economic rights, and service delivery are increasingly being branded as undesirable or underserving of any form of durable status. All of the aforementioned issues in respect of which a migrant may find it necessary to voice their views in public platforms are often issues that affect all individuals living in a state—the only difference is that those to whom the right to vote is extended have an opportunity, through the exercise

9 See for example Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 at 15(2); American Convention on Human Rights, 'Pact of San Jose' 1969 at 20(3). Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights Relating to the Specific Aspects of the Right to a Nationality and the Eradication of Statelessness in Africa 2024 at 3(2).

10 Maria Jose Recalde-Vela 'Book Review: Denationalisation and its discontents: Citizenship Revocation in the 21st Century: Legal, Political and Moral Implications' at 172 available at: [file:///C:/Users/u14044481/Downloads/645-Article%20Text-2049-1-10-20240823%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/u14044481/Downloads/645-Article%20Text-2049-1-10-20240823%20(2).pdf).

11 Rainer Baubock 'Weaponized Citizenship: Should International Law Restrict Oppressive Nationality Attribution?', Global Citizenship Observatory, available at: <https://globalcit.eu/weaponized-citizenship-should-international-law-restrict-oppressive-nationality-attribution/>.

12 Kate Selig 'What We Know About the Detentions of Student Protesters' The New York Times available at: <https://www.ny-times.com/2025/03/27/us/students-trump-ice-detention.html>. See also Recalde-Vela, supra n 10 at 172–3.

13 Patti Tamara Lenard 'Residence and the Right to Vote' (2015) 16 Journal of International Migration and Integration 119–32 at 119. I argue that long-term residence, because of what residence entails, should motivate extending voting rights to all residents of a territory, independent of citizenship status. Historically, states have adopted diverse practices with respect to the right to vote and I begin by outlining them; they are so diverse that they do not guide us well in identifying whether residents should, as a matter of principle, be entitled to vote. I then justify to whom my argument applies; in particular, I shall explain why my argument applies to all lawful (and some unlawful

14 Elif Naz Kayran & Merve and Erdilmen "When do states give voting rights to non-citizens? The role of population, policy, and politics on the timing of enfranchisement reforms in liberal democracies" (2021) 47 Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies 2855–76 at 2855.

of that right, to dictate the identity of the officials that will represent them and who will contribute to addressing some of those issues.

Do migrants have an equal right to the realization of basic human rights within their host state, and if so, how should they fight against the violation of such rights? Given their precarious position within society, should greater emphasis be placed on providing them with the ability to speak up when actions of the state are violating their human rights? And should the right to vote be an entitlement that accrues to migrants?

Theme 2: Teaching of and on the African human rights system

The second session explore challenges to, and best practices on, the teaching of the African human rights system at African universities. A low level of awareness has long been one of the challenges associated with the African Charter and its monitoring body, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. One of the core ambitions of the African Moot Competition has been to increase awareness among new generations of African lawyers, and to advance the teaching on the African human rights system by anchoring the African human rights system within the curricula of law schools on the continent, and by using the Moot as a teaching tool.

This year marks 30 years since the Moot expanded to the whole region and took on the name 'All Africa Human Rights Moot Competition'. It presents a distinct opportunity to take stock, share experiences and reinvigorate teaching on the African human rights system. Relevant questions to consider include: To what extent do undergraduate and postgraduate programmes at universities in Africa include the African human rights system? What challenges have been encountered in introducing and delivering such programmes? Are there some best practices on teaching the African human rights system that others can learn from?



The Call

We invite abstracts and papers that identify and address a specific question that falls under one of the two themes specified above. The timelines for the submission of abstracts and papers are specified below.

For session 2, the organisers also welcome short contributions, which need not be developed into full academic articles. Please indicate if your submission falls into this category.

Paper selected for presentation at this conference will be considered for publication in a respected international journal such as the African Human Rights Law Journal.

Abstracts should be between 250 and 350 words, and should have:

- *a clear and descriptive title;*
- *indicate the main question(s) to be addressed;*
- *outline the methodological approach; and*
- *state the expected results.*
- *the author's contact details and brief biography*

Authors should also indicate whether their participation will be in person or virtually.

All abstracts should be sent to: africanmootconference@up.ac.za, on or before 15 May 2025.

Important dates

There are three main stages in the process: submission of abstracts, presentation of a draft paper, and submission of a full article.

Stage 1

Abstracts should be submitted to : **africanmootconference@up.ac.za** by **15 May 2025**.

Authors of selected abstracts will be informed by **22 May 2025**;

Stage 2

Draft papers should be sent to : **africanmootconference@up.ac.za**, by **20 June 2025**

Papers will be presented in person or virtually on **30 June 2025**.

Stage 3

Presented papers, revised after presentation, must be submitted as full articles for peer-review by **31 July 2025**.