



Deadline for  
submission of  
abstracts

**31**  
MAR  
2026

# Call for papers

Conference:

## Landmark Judgments by African Union Human Rights Bodies

Future Africa Campus,  
University of Pretoria, South Africa

**25 - 26 June 2026**



**The South African National Research Foundation Chair in International Constitutional Law, the Centre for Human Rights, Faculty of Law, University of Pretoria, and the Faculty of Law, Monash University, will co-host a conference dedicated to the judgments of African Union (AU) human rights bodies.**

## **BACKGROUND**

The year 2026 marks twenty years since the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (Court) commenced its operations. While the Court became operational in 2006, its first merits judgment – *Tanganyika Law Society; Mtikila v Tanzania* – was delivered only on 14 June 2013. Since then, the Court has handed down around a hundred merits decisions, finding violations in most of these cases.

The Court is not the only African Union (AU) human rights body to have developed a substantial body of jurisprudence. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights made public its first merits decision in its 8th Annual Activity Report in 1995 and has since adopted close to 150 merits decisions on a wide range of range of topics. The African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child decided its first communication – *IHRDA & Open Society Justice Initiative (on behalf of children of Nubian descent in Kenya) v Kenya* – on 22

March 2011. By early 2026, the Committee will have delivered ten merits decisions, with a further three matters resolved through amicable settlement.

Despite this steady growth in decided cases, academic engagement with the judgments of AU human rights bodies has remained limited. Only a handful of these judgments have become the subject of scholarly scrutiny in academic and other journals. The African Human Rights Yearbook has received a trickle of annual submissions for Section C of the Yearbook, in which case discussions are published. It is fair to state that the decisions of AU human rights bodies have largely remained invisible in both specialised and more general legal discourse. As a result, these judgments have received limited attention from domestic actors, including national courts.

## AIM OF CONFERENCE

The Conference therefore aims to:

- highlight and critically engage with the jurisprudence of the AU human rights bodies;
- stimulate greater academic interest in and engagement with their judgments;
- promote deeper awareness and understanding of the actual and potential role of these judgments;
- encourage wider dissemination and practical use of the judgments of the AU human rights bodies by relevant domestic constituencies, including practitioners and government officials; and
- subject these judgments to greater analytical rigour and critique, with a view to enhancing the jurisprudence of these bodies.

## CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

The programme is structured around two thematic strands. While analytically distinct, these strands are intended to complement one another, bringing together consolidation and critical reflection on African human rights jurisprudence.

It will comprise two focuses.

- **Landmark judgments:** The first – and main part – of the Conference will be devoted to an examination of ‘landmark judgments’ of the three bodies (Court, Commission, Committee). The notion of a landmark judgment may be approached from multiple perspectives. For some, the concept ‘landmark judgment’ would have a legal dimension: A judgment could be understood as a ‘landmark’ if it changes the interpretation of existing law, sets an important legal precedent, advances legal understanding, or establishes new legal principles. For others, a judgment’s ‘landmark’ status may lie in the reliance placed on it in subsequent

cases, or the extent to which it is used as a source of teaching and study. A ‘landmark’ status of a judgment can also be determined with reference to its role in or influence on its historical or socio-political context. From this perspective, a ‘landmark’ judgment is one that has had a major impact on a particular society, its politics, or public policy. It may, for example, represent a turning point in how a legal issue or institutional roles are understood within a particular societal or political context.

- **Rewriting judgments:** Drawing inspiration from the **Feminist Judgements** and **Critical Judgements Projects** this part of the Conference seeks to reimagine landmark judgements of the Court, Commission and Committee through a consciously African lens. It opens space to think about how judicial reasoning in these decisions could be revisited or reframed in light of African domestic jurisprudence, regional and sub-regional tribunal decisions, African scholarship, and indigenous knowledge

systems - sources that have often been peripheral in the jurisprudence of the African human rights system. In rewriting these landmark judgments, an exploration of how African intellectual traditions, social contexts, and lived realities might inform alternative ways of interpreting or reasoning and how dominant interpretive frameworks shaped by Eurocentric legal norms might be unsettled or rethought is encouraged. Points of engagement might include post-colonial theory, Afro-feminism, intersectionality, African communitarianism, and questions of power, gender, culture, and community. Rather than prescribing outcomes, this part of the Conference seeks to prompt discussion about the possibilities opened by such re-imaginings, including how they might contribute to broader conversations around the decolonisation of African human rights law and the development of jurisprudence that resonates with the continent's diversities.

## SUBSEQUENT PUBLICATION

Selected papers presented at the Conference will be published, by 31 December 2026:

- Selected 'landmark judgments' discussions will be published in the 2026 *African Human Rights Yearbook*. (Section C, Case Discussions).
- Selected 'rewritten judgments' will be published in a separate publication edited by Frans Viljoen and Gina Bekker.

## CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

Abstracts are invited in the two categories described above. Abstracts should be between 250 and 300 words, and should be submitted to [thenette.mulder@up.ac.za](mailto:thenette.mulder@up.ac.za), by **31 March 2026**.

## Abstracts should contain the following:

### For 'landmark judgment' discussions:

1. Identify the category: Landmark Judgment
2. Provide the name of the author (s); email address; qualifications; current professional position, ORCID (this information is not included in wordcount.)
3. The name and citation or reference of the case (a single case; but the 'judgment' discussed could cover separate inadmissibility, merits and reparations judgments in that case)
4. Provide a clear descriptive but not overly lengthy title.
5. Explain how the concept 'landmark judgment' is understood or defined for the purpose of the discussion.
6. Explain in some detail why the judgment in this case can be considered a 'landmark judgment'.
7. Add any other relevant elements of the judgments to be discussed.
8. Indicate whether funding support is required and provide a brief motivation

### For 'Rewriting a judgment':

1. Identify the category: Rewriting Judgment
2. Provide the name of the author (s); email address; qualifications; current professional position, ORCID (this information is not included in wordcount.)
3. The name and citation or reference of the case (a single case; but the 'judgment' discussed could cover separate inadmissibility, merits and reparations judgments in that case)
4. Provide a clear descriptive but not overly lengthy title.
5. Explain how the judgment would be 'rewritten' – what critical perspective will inform the rewriting; what aspects of reasoning, interpretation, or legal methodology will be revisited.
6. Add any other relevant elements of the judgments to be discussed.
7. Indicate whether funding support is required and provide a brief motivation

## PROCESS AND TIMELINES

- **Abstracts submission – by 31 March 2026**
- **Selection of abstracts – will be announced by 15 April 2026**
- **Selected abstracts developed into full papers, shared with organisers – by 1 June 2026**
- **Presentation of papers (in person or virtually) – on 25 and 26 June 2026**
- **Selected papers published – by 31 December 2026**

## LOGISTICS

The two-day hybrid Conference is scheduled to take place on 25 and 26 June 2026 at the Auditorium, Future Africa Campus, University of Pretoria, South Africa.

There is limited funding available with for covering travel cost and accommodation costs. Please indicate whether funding is required as part of the abstract submission. Participants who are able to present in person are encouraged to explore accommodation options with Future Africa, see: <https://www.futureafrica.science/our-campus/guest-accommodation/>

No registration fee will be charged.