



## International Association of Women Judges

### 17TH BIENNIAL CONFERENCE

April 9-12, 2025

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Hosted by the South African Chapter of the  
International Association of Women Judges



### *Call for Speakers*

### *17<sup>th</sup> IAWJ Biennial Conference Cape Town, South Africa, April 2025*



The International Association of Women Judges is thrilled to announce a call for speaker proposals for its 17th Biennial Conference, taking place in Cape Town, South Africa, from April 9-12, 2025. We are eager to delve into our conference theme, 'Resilience: Women in Leadership to End Gender-Based Violence & Femicide.' This exploration promises to offer fresh insights and ignite dynamic discussions.

IAWJ members (Justices, Judges, Magistrates – at all court levels), Amicus Judicii (Friends of the IAWJ), Experts and Academics are invited to submit speaker proposals under the plenary sub-themes outlined below. Speakers will have 15-20 minutes for their presentations. PowerPoint or other visual aids are encouraged.

#### ***Speaker requirements***

- Speakers must register for and attend the conference in person.
- Speakers are responsible for paying the full registration fee, unless awarded a scholarship for a reduced registration fee.
- Travel, accommodation, and personal expenses are the responsibility of the speaker.
- Invitations to speak are non-transferable and apply only to the individual selected.
- Interpretation services will only be available in English, French, and Spanish.
- The IAWJ reserves the right to modify, add, or cancel speaker panels, as the number of proposals received for each panel may vary.
- Speakers are required to ensure that their presentation topics align with the conference sub-themes.

### ***Selection Criteria***

A successful proposal should be thought-provoking, informative, and engaging, offering practical insights that resonate with and benefit the diverse global audience of conference delegates. Priority will be given to a diverse range of speakers from various types and levels of courts, as well as the broader legal profession. While written papers are not required, they may be submitted for inclusion on the conference website. PowerPoint presentations or other visual aids are encouraged.

### ***Submission***

If you are interested in being selected as a speaker, please complete the speaker proposal submission form. All proposal summaries must be submitted through the conference webpage by 5:00 PM EST on December 15 , 2024.

As a respected platform in the field of law, our conference consistently attracts leading members of the judiciary, academics, practitioners, and thought leaders from around the world. Due to a limited number of speaking slots, we regret that not all proposals can be accommodated. **Only selected proposals will receive confirmation by January 15th, 2025.**

We look forward to your valuable contribution, which will enrich the conference discussions. Find an overview of the conference sub-themes below

***2025 IAWJ Biennial Programme and Education Committee***

## *Conference Sub-themes (Plenary and Breakaway Sessions)*

- Thursday 10 April 2025

### ***Plenary Session A: Resilient Leadership: Diversity, Equality and Inclusion***

The format supports a panel of 3 speakers.

***Synopsis:*** Gender-Based Violence as a human rights issue is of universal significance and is wide-ranging, adversely impacting persons with diverse backgrounds and identities in different ways. There is a need for continued advocacy and sharing of knowledge to understand diversity, advance equality and promote inclusivity, not only in our courts but society at large.

For this plenary session the IAWJ seeks speakers able to share by practical means, knowledge and experiences on systemic inequalities that perpetuate gender-based violence for vulnerable persons such as- Women and Children in War and Conflict-ridden territories; Rural Women affected by economic violence and LGBTQIA+ persons affected by hate crimes; discriminatory laws i.e. criminalizing same-sex relationships and Judicial bias and prejudice influencing decisions in courts.

We are looking forward to presentation topics, promoting lively debate, raising awareness and enhancing understanding for the plight of persons in the stated vulnerable categories. Reference to case studies, legislation and strategies, which illustrates the impact on the integration of diversity, equality and inclusion is encouraged.

- Thursday 10 April 2025

### ***Plenary Session B: Human Trafficking and Marginalized Communities (Adjudicating cases involving multiple forms of Gender-Based Violence)***

The format supports a panel of 2 speakers

***Synopsis:*** Speakers are invited to explore the unique challenges and complexities that arise when adjudicating cases of gender-based violence within marginalized communities, with a particular focus on human trafficking. Intersecting identities—such as race, ethnicity, disability, and socio-economic status, exacerbate vulnerabilities, making persons more susceptible to violence and abuse, such as trafficking, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation. We call on speakers to share experiences and expertise in the adjudication of cases in which combinations of factors not only impacts on the experiences of victims in seeking justice, but also complicate the legal processes, through difficulties faced by judges, in recognizing and responding to the layered nature of trafficking and related matters.

■ Thursday 10 April 2025

**Plenary Session C: Women in Leadership-Work Place Safety for Judicial Officers (Mental Health and Self-Care)** The format supports a panel of 2 speakers.

**Synopsis:** Speakers are invited for any one of the two concept notes below

- i. The sharing of unique insights and experiences from different jurisdictions, focusing on challenges faced by especially women judges, in the context of instances of gender-based violence within the work space that hinder professional growth and wellbeing. Consideration may be given to sharing information on the existence and need for an anti- sexual harassment policy and procedure for judicial officers, as well as other strategic support mechanisms, asserting the interest and security of judicial officers in their work place.

*Alternatively*

- ii. Judicial officers often encounter significant stress due to the high stakes of their decisions, long working hours and emotional demands. Burnout can manifest as exhaustion, cynicism and reduced sense of accomplishment. The importance of mental health and self-care is critical for both personal well-being and professional effectiveness. We call for proposals from speakers to creatively lead discussion on the importance of mental health and self-care, with a focus on exploring the unique mental health challenges faced by judicial officers, effective self-care strategies, including organizational support tailored specifically for judges and how these practices can enhance both personal and professional performance. Your contribution to this critical segment of our programme, may assist in shaping a healthier, more resilient judicial community.

■ Thursday 10 April 2025

**Plenary Session D: End Femicide -What have we learned?**

The format supports a panel of 2 speakers

**Background:** There is no single agreed definition of femicide. United Nations General Resolution 68/191 (A/68/457, 2013) “Taking action against gender-related killing of women and girls” uses “gender-related killing of women and girls.” Other formulations have included “intentional murder of women because they are women,”<sup>1</sup> or simply “the killing of women.”<sup>2</sup> The multiple definitions risk inconsistent data collection – a challenge that UN Women and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime sought to address in 2022 by approving a new statistical framework for data collection<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See, [Explainer: What is femicide and how bad is it globally? - CNN](#)

<sup>2</sup> See, CAMPBELL, J., & RUNYAN, C. W. (1998). Femicide: Guest Editors’ Introduction. *Homicide Studies*, 2(4), 347-352. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088767998002004001>.

<sup>3</sup> [UN approves new statistical framework to measure and characterize femicide for more effective prevention measures \(unodc.org\)](#)

**Synopsis:** For this panel, IAWJ is seeking to move beyond definitional wrangle, by inviting proposals by speakers who can address either: (a) evidence-based initiatives around lethality or (b) their own personal experiences either as judges who have presided over cases in which a woman who sought protection from an abuser was murdered or as human beings who have lost friends, family or colleagues.

- (a) Under evidence-based initiatives, IAWJ knows of initiatives such as fatality-review committees, lethality assessment programs (such as the Maryland and Massachusetts models in the United States) which use algorithms to make resource allocation decisions in domestic violence cases and algorithmic risk assessment tools (black box and otherwise)<sup>4</sup>.

We are also aware of Artificial Intelligence initiatives applying machine learning to different data sources, such as social media accounts, court records, police and health data to improve predictions<sup>5</sup>.

*We are looking for speakers who can share information about evidence- based strategies for preventing femicide.*

Please do not submit proposals focused solely on definitional differences.

- (b) Under personal experiences: IAWJ has lost members to femicide and is aware of the secondary trauma (and agonized second-guessing) of members who have lost either litigants who came before them or colleagues and friends to femicide. We know that when there is a death, judges invariably ask themselves (whether as part of a fatality review committee or simply as human beings): what did I miss? What could I have done differently that might have led to a different result. It is not our wish to retraumatize members who are haunted by these questions. However, if you have hard-earned wisdom to share, please tell us your story. (If the story is about an identifiable victim, please obtain written approval of next of kin.)

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<sup>4</sup> See, e.g., [An Algorithm Told Police She Was Safe. Then Her Husband Killed Her. - The New York Times \(nytimes.com\)](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/03/12/us/police/femicide-algorithm.html)

<sup>5</sup> See Hui V, Constantino RE, Lee YJ. Harnessing Machine Learning in Tackling Domestic Violence-An Integrative Review. Int J Environ Res Public Health. 2023 Mar 12;20(6):4984. doi: 10.3390/ijerph20064984. PMID: 36981893; PMCID: PMC10049304.

- Friday 11 April 2025

**Plenary Session E: *Gender Based Violence-Harmful Practices***

The format supports a panel of 3 speakers

**Background:** All over the world, people are relegated by harmful practices (including religion, culture or beliefs). Reams of data and a generation of United Nations reports and declarations confirm that many practices, typically deeply entrenched in social norms are forms of gender-based violence or render vulnerable groups e.g. women and girls more vulnerable to gender-based violence. Legislatures have responded to these data and international declarations by passing both civil and criminal laws banning practices such as child marriage, forced/early marriages and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM). To date legislative reform and especially criminal proscriptions have fallen short, of the goal of eradicating harmful practices. Some prosecutors may be reluctant to press charges; witness intimidation and community pressures can thwart even ardent prosecutors.

**Synopsis:** For this panel, we are interested in narratives from members who have confronted cultural norms in cases that came before them. Have you had cases in which the government tried to enforce one of these proscriptive laws (whether successfully or unsuccessfully) Or have customary practices come up in other litigation contexts? For example, have you had a case in which:

- a rape accused claimed as a defense that he was practicing an ancient custom of “marriage by capture”?
- you were petitioned to approve a girl’s early marriage by parents who claim they have no option, because pubescent girls are at risk of rape coming and going from school? Or a child has sought an injunction against a marriage?
- Practices such as- Son preference and female feticide; ‘Honour’ killing, Ritual or Muti murders (where the killing of children or persons with Albinism -for ‘magic’ body parts) is believed to bring supernatural benefits to name but a few known harmful practices from around the globe.

We are particularly interested in the narratives from judges, about ways they were able to protect the law *and* obtain community acceptance. We seek to hear from members about the reality that they face in the courts; how such harmful practice cases came before you, and the decisions you may have made.

- Friday 11 April 2025

**Plenary Session F: *AI, Technology, and Cyberviolence:(Innovation in Combating Gender-Based Violence)*** The format supports a panel of 3 speakers

**Synopsis:** This panel will explore the dual impact of technology on gender-based violence, focusing on how AI and digital tools can both perpetuate and combat cyberviolence. It will address the rise of digital harassment, stalking and deep fake abuse, enabled by technology, while also highlighting innovative AI-driven interventions that can detect and prevent such violence. This subject matter includes ethical and legal challenges of using AI in a justice system, the need for effective regulation in a rapidly evolving digital landscape and case studies from jurisdictions leading in tech-based solutions. The aim of this sub-theme is to empower women judges with recent developments and knowledge to navigate and leverage technology to protect victims and uphold justice.

- Friday 11 April 2025

**Plenary Session G: *Judicial Activism in Gender-Based Violence Cases***

The format supports a panel of 2 speakers

**Synopsis:** Speaker proposals may include, defining judicial activism by exploring the concept and its evolution including its various forms and manifestations. Analyze case law where judicial activism played a central role in shaping laws related to gender-based violence and femicide. Discuss the role of judges, including the tension between judicial restraint and activism. Investigate how judicial activism may contribute to responding to the scourge of gender-based violence in its varied forms, also prevent secondary trauma for gender-based violence survivors.

- Friday 11 April 2025

**Plenary Session H: *Moot Court-Gender and Climate Change***

The format supports a panel of 3 speakers

**Background:** On April 9, 2024, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) issued its landmark decision in **KlimaSeniorinnen and Others v. Switzerland**, widely heralded as a “landmark case” brought by an association of more than 2000 elderly women and four individual claimants, arguing that Switzerland’s failure to take sufficiently aggressive steps to limit carbon emissions had violated the claimants’ rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. The Court’s 261-page opinion is available here: [KlimaSeniorinnen v Switzerland \(ECtHR\) - Climate Change Litigation \(climatecasechart.com\)](https://climatecasechart.com/cases/klima-seniorinnen-v-switzerland-ecthr/).

The international press covered the decision,<sup>6</sup> which is expected to encourage future challenges at the intersection of gender and climate change<sup>7</sup>. The European Convention does not allow “*actiones populares*”—a term from Roman law referring to suits by individuals, claiming that law is inadequate or being inadequately enforced. Claimants need to demonstrate that they are actually harmed by the government’s actions or inactions.

The women in **KlimaSeniorinnen and Others** pointed to data showing that the elevated temperatures Switzerland has experienced in recent summers, has led to excess mortality and that elderly women are most at risk of death. The four individual women (all in their eighties) pointed to their individual health conditions, potentially caused or exacerbated by climate change and which put them at extreme risk—detailing the ways in which they had been forced to curb their activities as temperatures rose.

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<sup>6</sup> See, [European court rules human rights violated by climate inaction - BBC News](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-64111111), [Swiss women win landmark climate victory at human rights court | The Independent](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/swiss-women-win-landmark-climate-victory-at-human-rights-court-b2111111.html), [Climate crisis: Switzerland violated human rights, European court finds, in landmark climate case brought by 2,000 women | CNN](https://www.cnn.com/2024/04/09/europe/climate-crisis-switzerland-violated-human-rights-european-court-finds-landmark-climate-case-brought-by-2000-women/index.html).

<sup>7</sup> See, [New climate frontier: Gender-based lawsuits - E&E News by POLITICO \(eenews.net\)](https://www.eenews.net/stories/1097111), **Global trends in climate change litigation: 2024 snapshot** <https://www.lse.ac.uk/granthaminstitute/publication/global-trends-in-climate-change-litigation-2024-snapshot/>, [Older Swiss women just set a global legal precedent for challenging their nation’s climate change policy \(theconversation.com\)](https://www.theconversation.com/older-swiss-women-just-set-a-global-legal-precedent-for-challenging-their-nations-climate-change-policy).

**Synopsis:** Moot Court panelists are invited to envisage that the success of the “KimaSeniorinnen” litigants encouraged women’s groups in their respective countries, to bring similar litigation. The common denominator with the envisaged litigation (brought by e.g. elderly women, indigenous women, rural women or women engaged in agriculture etc.) should be the disproportionate burden placed on women by climate change. In considering your approach, you might want to address the following questions:

1. Does your country have laws authorizing private individuals to vindicate the rights of citizens generally affected by government action or inaction? (*Actiones populares*) If so, how would the courts rule on competing lawsuits, one brought by a woman’s group or individual women claiming not enough is being done to accomplish climate goals, and a “backlash” suit funded by the fossil fuel industry claiming that the government’s efforts are too strict, and are infringing on the citizenry’s right to development?
2. If your country does not allow *actiones populares* suits, what would plaintiffs have to demonstrate to show standing to file suit? What is the legal standard? What kinds of claims have/have not been allowed? Specifically, have claims of disparate impact (sometimes called “indirect discrimination”) sufficed to establish standing?
3. Suppose the government’s lawyer makes the following argument: “The government does not contest the fact that women are disproportionately burdened by anthropogenic climate change, because climate change disproportionately burdens the poor and vulnerable – and women are disproportionately poor and vulnerable. In seeking to mitigate climate change, the government necessarily makes resource allocation decisions through the political process. There may be tradeoffs, for example, between budgetary allocations to feed children today (because crops have failed due to climate change) or to use the money to decrease emissions and protect the food supply of future generations. Those generations will not be born if we fail to feed children today. It is for the legislature and the executive, not the courts, to make these decisions.”
4. How would the courts in your country rule on these types of cases?

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