



## **Call for Applications: East Africa Women Litigation Surgery**

*23 to 25 August 2022, in Nairobi, Kenya*

---

[Media Defence](#) is calling for applications from women lawyers based in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda to participate in a forthcoming litigation surgery on the right to freedom of expression and digital rights, with particular focus on online violence against journalists. This litigation surgery will be the first litigation training within our new project *Empowering Women in Digital Rights Advocacy* and is designed for women lawyers with demonstrated interest in building foundational knowledge around freedom of expression and litigating digital rights in East Africa.

Successful applicants will be provided with learning material and invited to participate in the in-person East Africa Women Litigation Surgery in Nairobi, Kenya from **23 to 25 August 2022**. Participants will become active members of our Media Defence network, which will provide opportunities for engagement regionally and internationally in order to develop a sustainable network of women lawyers.

### **Litigation Surgery Objectives**

Media Defence provides legal support to journalists, bloggers and independent media, as well as focused seminars to lawyers working with the right to freedom of expression. In that context, this litigation surgery will serve as an introduction to digital rights and relevant legal knowledge tailored to women lawyers in East Africa.

The objectives of this litigation surgery are:

- To develop knowledge about freedom of expression and its challenges online, with particular focus on online violence against journalists;
- To engage with key principles of international law as well as with regional and international mechanisms relevant to litigating freedom of expression online;
- To address legal challenges which are particularly relevant to women journalists and lawyers;
- To discuss emerging trends in digital rights and potential litigation strategies;
- To build a digital rights network and help facilitate its engagement with international legal mechanisms and global civil society initiatives; and
- To support and develop working relationships amongst women lawyers who take on cases relating to digital rights and freedom of expression online and to whom women journalists can more easily turn.

Media Defence will meet these objectives through three days of on-site training consisting of presentations and knowledge sharing which builds on training material.

## **Criteria for Eligibility**

Participants will be selected on the following criteria:

- The litigation surgery is open to women lawyers who work and reside in Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda;
- Applicants must have a demonstrated interest in and/or knowledge of freedom of expression, digital rights, internet freedom and/or related issues;
- Applicants must be proficient in English;
- The women lawyers can either be working in private practice or be working for or be affiliated with NGOs promoting the right to freedom of expression in East Africa through litigation. Exceptionally strong applications from lawyers who have not yet undertaken freedom of expression work, but have experience litigating other human rights cases and have a strong interest in undertaking freedom of expression work will be considered as well;
- With their application, applicants are requested to submit a case study of a case that they are litigating or intend to litigate and that could be discussed during the litigation surgery. However, it will be sufficient for participants who do not have a case that is pending to have identified a relevant law, practice or policy relating to online freedom of expression that they would like to challenge in court. Such participants must demonstrate their ability and willingness to pursue the case after the surgery;
- The following non-exhaustive list of themes are a guide for the type of cases that could be submitted with the application:
  - Cybercrime laws
  - Access to the internet
  - Data privacy
  - Data protection
  - Defamation
  - Hate speech
  - National Security
- Potential for future collaboration with Media Defence; and,
- Commitment to the continued engagement with the network of digital rights lawyers in the region.

A maximum of 12 participants will be selected. Media Defence is committed to equality and diversity and will therefore consider gender, age and country of origin in the selection of participants. Due to gender disparity in previous litigation surgeries, this event is exclusively for women lawyers.

## **How to apply**

Please complete the application form available here and submit it to Hanna Uihlein at [hanna.uihlein@mediadefence.org](mailto:hanna.uihlein@mediadefence.org). The deadline for applications is **27 June 2022**.

Shortlisted applicants will be notified soon after the closing date.

For information about how Media Defence will use and protect your data, please see our [privacy policy](#).

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q: What is a litigation surgery?**

A litigation surgery is a focused seminar where participants are able to present a case they are working on to peers and experts and have a discussion about the case. The surgery's focus on preliminary problem identification, framing of violations, formulation of human rights arguments and remedies. The surgeries also provide an in-depth understanding of strategic litigation and litigating before regional and international human rights bodies.

### **Q: I am not a lawyer but I am interested, can I apply?**

Litigation surgeries are only open to practicing lawyers. Rare exceptions will be made for lawyers who are not in practice or other people providing legal assistance to civil society organisations that work on the right to freedom of expression.

### **Q: What is the purpose of a litigation surgery?**

Litigation surgeries are intended to be a space for litigators to receive technical legal expertise on the relevant thematic issues. It is also a space for litigators to network and find out what other litigators in East Africa are working on.

### **Q: Where must surgery participants be from?**

This call for applications relates to Burundi, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda. Only lawyers who reside and practice in this region are eligible to apply. Legal advisors based in the global north who provide assistance to lawyers working in domestic courts are not eligible to apply; their local partners should apply.

### **Q: Who pays for the costs of participation?**

Media Defence will cover the costs of travel, accommodation and per diem.

### **Q: Is the litigation surgery exclusive to women lawyers?**

Yes, this litigation surgery is exclusive to women lawyers. Due to the fact that less women participated in our previous litigation surgeries, which reflects the general gender disparity within this field, while many legal challenges in relation with freedom of expression and digital rights are particularly relevant to women lawyers and journalists, we aim to overcome previous gender disparities by providing a platform which is tailored to women lawyers. However, we will continue hosting other litigation surgeries and events for all genders. For more information on our latest events, please see on our website.

### **Q: Is there any follow-up?**

Media Defence plans to help facilitate a network of lawyers who are interested and active in defending digital rights and online freedom of expression cases. The objective of this litigation surgery in particular is to develop a network of women lawyers. Therefore, all participants of the East Africa Litigation Surgery will be invited to our peer-to-peer event for women lawyers, which will take place in 2023, to exchange experiences and foster a stronger network. Further details will be provided during the litigation surgery.

In addition, Media Defence's lawyers will discuss with participants how Media Defence can assist with their cases and provide follow-up. Media Defence will also discuss the possibility of providing further assistance to the freedom of expression cases participants work on after the surgery, either by way of providing ad hoc legal support or by way of partnerships. As Media Defence is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to providing legal defence to

journalists, bloggers and independent media across the world through its networks, it is always interested in following up on participants' cases and working with participants on cases in the future.