

Editors' Note

It is our great pleasure to welcome our esteemed readers in Africa and beyond to this Special Issue on COVID-19 and the Law in Africa. Since its outbreak in December 2019, the COVID-19 pandemic has presented, and continues to present, a major challenge worldwide. It constitutes, in the words of the World Health Organization, a public health emergency of international concern that has profound political, economic, societal and environmental reverberations. Law, at the domestic, regional, international and transnational level, has played a critical role in framing and shaping responses to the pandemic. Even a cursory examination of developments over the last two years demonstrates how swiftly the pandemic has affected all spheres of life, including law and the legal profession.

The COVID-19 pandemic is international in scope. Yet, it has had specific regional impacts and prompted distinctive responses in different regions. In Africa, initial hopes that the continent might escape the brunt of the pandemic have given way to concerns about its short, mid- and long-term consequences. Weak public health systems, limited availability of vaccines, and political and economic fragilities represent an ongoing threat to lives, health and livelihoods across Africa and a stress test for domestic, sub-regional and regional governance, including legal systems.

It was against this background that the *Journal of African Law* issued its call for papers on COVID-19 and the Law in Africa in May 2020. The response to this call has been inspiring and we would like to thank all authors for the range of submissions on a great many topics. Due to limitations of space, we have unfortunately not been able to publish more papers, many of which have been excellent. In selecting the articles for this special issue, we focused on publishing a combination of thematic and regional / country-specific contributions, as well as detailed analysis and case notes.

The *Journal of African Law* would like to extend its special gratitude to Professor Ebenezer Durojaye who joined our team as guest editor for the special issue. His exemplary professionalism, astute insights and unfailing judgment made him inspiring, and a delight to work with. Professor Durojaye's editorial contributions, particularly on the right to health, have been pivotal and the special issue would not be the same without them.

We are delighted to present this special issue, which has been some time in the making, following the publication of our most recent Special Issue on Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, published as volume 65, supplement S1 in May 2021. We hope that it will serve as a source of information, critical reflection and analysis of initial legal responses and

legal challenges pertaining to COVID-19 in Africa, and will inspire further scholarship on the subject.

On a final note, we would like to express our gratitude to the journal's editorial managers, Raphael Jacquet and Rowan Pease, and to our copy editor, Rachel Wright, for their professionalism, commitment and support in making this special issue happen.

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