Call for Papers: Special Issue on “Business and Human Rights in Africa”

By:

Ibironke T. Odumosu-Ayanu

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A number of factors have placed Africa, as a geographical region, in a uniquely unusual position regarding the application of business and human rights (BHR) standards: dissonance between the abundance of natural resources on the one hand and extreme poverty on the other; notoriety for the region’s weak governance regimes; and an acute tension between trade and investment liberalization policies; and the lack of effective regulation of foreign direct investment. Above all, the levels of adverse corporate human rights impacts are particularly high, especially on vulnerable groups.

The emergence of international and regional standards such as the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (UNGPs) has provided opportunities for scholars and practitioners to reflect further on what impact these standards have on the region. Yet, whatever contribution Africa has made to the practice and norms on BHR has not been fully recognised, nor studied systematically.

This Special Issue of the Business and Human Rights Journal (BHRJ) aims at addressing that gap in scholarship and practice. The primary ambition of this issue is to provide a platform for reflection on and analysis of the contribution that the region has made and could further make to BHR.

We invite scholarly articles (of 9 000 – 12 000 words) on any of select four themes listed below. The contributions must constitute uniquely African reflections to the practice and scholarship on BHR in the region by drawing as far as possible on the significance of African concepts, philosophies and values towards a better understanding and realization of BHR ideals globally, regionally and domestically.

The four themes are the following:

- Critiques of conventional BHR philosophy in the African context and the relevance of African philosophical approaches;
- Critical reviews of the applicability, place and impact of international initiatives on BHR such as the UNGPs, the OECD Guidelines and the ILO Tripartite Declaration on MNEs;
- The contribution, limits and potential of regional and sub-regional initiatives (such as those adopted by African Union Commission, the African Union Commission on International Law, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and sub-regional courts) on BHR; and
- Reflections on specific BHR concerns in Africa such as the impact of weak governance regimes or conflict on BHR; emerging constitutional and other legal mechanisms for protecting the vulnerable in Africa from adverse human rights impacts of business enterprise; the effect of corporate capture, and anti-corruption and (illicit) financial transfer regimes on BHR in Africa; the challenge of informality for BHR; and the value of BHR in responding to the human rights challenges posed by the extractive industry in Africa.

We also invite shorter pieces (2000 – 3000 words) for the Development in the Field (DiF) section of the BHRJ focussing on current laws, policies, practices and activities concerning BHR in Africa. These pieces are expected to appraise official government activities including legislation, debates, plans and projects as well as the work of non-state actors including business enterprises and non-

governmental organisations, and decisions, opinions and recommendations of courts, national human rights institutions, arbitration tribunals and traditional actors.

Abstract and paper submission and timelines

Please send an abstract of no more than 500 words to bhrj-africa-list@nd.edu by **15 October 2023** specifying author(s), affiliation, email and draft title of the intended paper. Please indicate clearly whether your abstract is for a scholarly article or a DiF piece. All submissions should follow the BHRJ style guide: CityULR - Call for Paper (cambridge.org).

The anticipated timelines for the special issue are as follows:

- Deadline for submission of abstracts: 15 October 2023
- Notification to authors regarding acceptance of abstracts: 31 October 2023
- Deadline to submit drafts of the article or piece: 28 February 2024
- Deadline to submit complete draft: 30 June 2024

Writing workshop

The authors of selected scholarly articles and pieces will be invited to present their drafts at a writing workshop to be held at the University of Cape Town in March-April 2024. Participation in the workshop is strongly encouraged. More information will be shared with the selected participants in due course, including potential funding for some authors.

Guest Editors

Michael Addo, University of Notre Dame Law School, United Kingdom

Danwood Chirwa, University of Cape Town, South Africa

Ibironke Odumosu-Ayanu, University of Saskatchewan, Canada

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