INITIATIVE FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA

COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE ON TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA

COMMUNIQUÉ

Civil Society, Civic Space and Transitional Justice in Africa



NAIROBI, KENYA | 13 OCTOBER 2026

A collective statement by members of the Community of Practice on Transitional Justice in Africa

INITIATIVE FOR TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE IN AFRICA • COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE • NAIROBI 2026

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Preamble

We, the members of the Community of Practice on Transitional Justice in Africa, are civil society organisations, victims' and survivors' groups, researchers, academics and practitioners from thirty organisations in twenty-five countries across West, East, Central, Southern and North Africa. Established under the Initiative for Transitional Justice in Africa (ITJA), a project of the African Union and the European Union coordinated by the International Centre for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) with the African Transitional Justice Legacy Fund (ATJLF) and the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSVR), we met in Nairobi on 12 and 13 October 2026. We came together to examine the state of civic space for transitional justice and to agree on a collective response.

We seek to sustain the work of non-state actors in transitional justice, as a complement to the primary responsibility of Member States under the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP), which commits States to remove impediments to transitional processes and to guarantee space for debate and advocacy. Today, the conditions that allow victims, survivors, affected communities and civil society to organise, speak, document and participate safely and independently are increasingly imperilled. We issue this Communiqué to share our concerns, to call on each stakeholder to act within its mandate, and to set out our own commitments.

Shared concerns

We are concerned that:

1. Civic space for transitional justice is shrinking. Restrictive registration, intimidation, surveillance, and legal and political constraints limit civil society's ability to document violations, support victims, and influence decisions.
2. Insecurity is deepening. Communities, human rights defenders and those working for justice face threats and reprisals, and in some areas armed groups now dictate what civil society can do.
3. Civil society is engaged too late. CSOs are often brought in only at implementation, rather than in the design of transitional justice processes, policies, and frameworks.
4. Genuine dialogue is lacking. In some contexts, structures aligned with public authorities replace independent CSOs in consultations.
5. The independence of civil society is under pressure. Regulations are not always facilitative or consistent with African and international human rights standards, and some authorities interfere in the management of donor funding.
6. Funding is shrinking and unevenly shared. Donor funding is declining, and national transitional justice budgets rarely reach CSOs, threatening the sustainability of organisations and the continuity of experienced practitioners.
7. Commitments stall. Truth commission reports often remain unpublished and their recommendations unimplemented, denying civil society the information it needs to monitor and advocate.
8. Coordination between State and non-state actors is weak. Without structured platforms for collaboration, the implementation of transitional justice is fragmented, and the contribution of civil society goes unused.
9. Women face compounded barriers. Shrinking civic space affects women and women-led organisations most severely, and their inclusion in transitional justice too often remains symbolic.
10. Young people are left out. Although they are the majority of Africa's population, young people are rarely included meaningfully in transitional justice processes
11. The psychosocial cost is unaddressed. Victims, survivors, and everyone working on transitional justice carry trauma that restrictive environments deepen. Without mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), survivors cannot participate fully, and practitioners cannot sustain the work.

Recommendations

In the spirit of partnership, we call on each stakeholder to act within its mandate.

Member States are urged to include civil society from the design stage of transitional justice processes, recognising CSOs as technical partners and budgeting for their participation alongside State institutions; to ensure that laws governing civil society are facilitative, consistent with the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and respectful of CSOs' independence, and to protect human rights defenders, victims and witnesses; and to publish truth commission reports, implement their recommendations and establish national transitional justice forums that coordinate State and non-state actors.

The African Union and its organs are called upon to strengthen implementation and monitoring of the AUTJP and related instruments on civic space, engaging CSOs as technical partners in national implementation; to review accreditation requirements, including for the Economic, Social and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC), so that transitional justice organisations can participate; and to convene, with partners, a continental forum on transitional justice and MHPSS.

Regional Economic Communities and regional mechanisms are encouraged to monitor and respond to restrictions on civic space that affect transitional justice, giving civil society avenues to raise concerns at regional level; and to integrate transitional justice into regional programmes, including the transnational documentation and redressing of violence against women in conflict and post-conflict settings.

National Human Rights Institutions are urged to strengthen protection and solidarity mechanisms for human rights defenders, victims and organisations under threat, and to work with civil society to monitor and report publicly on the implementation of transitional justice recommendations.

Transitional justice mechanisms are encouraged to place victims and survivors at the centre of their work, through safe, trauma-informed and gender-sensitive participation that includes women, young people and marginalised groups; and to bring processes closer to affected communities, building on community-based practices that uphold human rights.

Development partners and donors are called upon to provide predictable, flexible and long-term funding, including for women- and youth-led organisations; to make MHPSS a central pillar of transitional justice support, with dedicated budget lines for survivors and those working on transitional justice; and to encourage States to respect the independence of civil society.

The private sector and philanthropic foundations are invited to invest in transitional justice, peace and social cohesion through their corporate social responsibility and philanthropic strategies, and to support public–private partnerships that fund the transitional justice work of civil society while respecting its independence.

Practitioners and civil society organisations are encouraged to strengthen coordination at local, national and regional levels, including through national communities of practice, and to adopt trauma-informed, do-no-harm approaches that care for survivors and colleagues alike.

Victims and survivors, with whom we stand in solidarity, are encouraged to continue organising and to bring their priorities to the Community of Practice, whose advocacy will amplify their voices.

Conclusion

We reaffirm that civil society is an essential partner in transitional justice in Africa, and that an open, inclusive and safe civic space is a precondition for truth, justice, reparations, reconciliation and healing. Meaningful participation is impactful participation; it is measured by whether civil society's voice shapes outcomes for victims, survivors and affected communities. For our part, we commit to speak with one collective voice, to strengthen solidarity and peer support among our members, and to introduce the Community of Practice to Member States as a resource for transitional justice.

Adopted in Nairobi, Kenya, on 13 October 2026. Members of the Community of Practice on Transitional Justice in Africa