

Draft Conference Program

Witchcraft Accusations and Human Rights: Stakeholder Responses to UN Resolution 47/8

Grand Palace Hotel, Mzuzu, Malawi | 10-11 November 2026

Daily conference hours: 9:00 am to 5:30 pm

Conference	Witchcraft Accusations and Human Rights: Stakeholder Responses to UN Resolution 47/8
Venue	Grand Palace Hotel, Mzuzu, Malawi
Dates	Tuesday 10 November 2026 and Wednesday 11 November 2026
Daily conference hours	9:00 am to 5:30 pm
Evening events	Conference dinner each night

Day 1: Tuesday 10 November 2026

9:00 am - 10:00 am

Opening Ceremony and Official Welcomes

Grand Ballroom

- Welcome from the conference convenor
- Welcome from host institution / organising partners
- Welcome from Government of Malawi representative
- Welcome from partner organisations and supporters

10:00 am - 10:15 am

Survivor Address

Grand Ballroom

10:15 am - 10:45 am

Morning Tea

10:45 am - 12:15 pm

Parallel Session 1

Room A: Belief Systems, Social Order, and Human Rights

- Peguy Ndonko, *Accusations de sorcellerie et harcèlement moral: Le "Ngu" comme rite de purification et forme de violence insidieuse au Cameroun*
- Nendimma Dogo Gonet, *Witchcraft Belief System as a Recipe for Social Disorder among the Ngas People of Central Nigeria: A Historical Perspective*
- Hezekiah Obwoye, *Epistemic Authority and Human Rights: Reframing Witchcraft Accusations among the Abagusii of Kenya in Light of the UNHRC Resolution 47/8*

Room B: Faith, Theology, and Pastoral Responses I

- Daniel Rotich Kandagor, *The Limits of Faith Among the Pokot: Challenges and Opportunities for Religious Leaders Combating Witchcraft Accusations in Kenya*
- Lileni Mangani, *The Engagement of Churches, Faith Leaders, Faith-Based Organizations, and Religious Leaders in Preventing Witchcraft Accusations, Responding to Violence, and Shaping Community Attitudes*
- Brian Aggrey Theu, *The Church and Witchcraft Beliefs: Examining Pastoral Responses to Witchcraft Accusations, Violence, and Stigmatization in Northern Malawi*
- George Ezekiel Aberi & Peter Gutwa Oino, *Religious Intertextuality: Biblical and Indigenous Texts in Justifying or Contesting Witchcraft Accusations*

Room C: Children, Protection, and Institutional Responses I

- Agbo Mathew Oga, *Traditional Institutions and the Fight Against the Molestation of Children Accused of Witchcraft in Igedeland, Benue State, Nigeria*
- Carolyn Gent and Miranda Forsyth, *A Child's Eye Perspective: Research into Children's Experiences and Attitudes Towards Witchcraft Accusations*
- Retta Getachew, *Uncovering Our Hidden Shame: Lessons from Child Protection Systems in Addressing Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks in Africa*

12:15 pm - 1:15 pm

Lunch

1:15 pm - 2:45 pm

Parallel Session 2

Room A: Legal Frameworks, Regulation, and Redress

- Achileus Dzeverynyuy Tardzenyuy, *Reparations for Harmful Practices against Persons with Albinism: Stakeholder Roles and Gaps in Implementing UN Resolution 47/8*
- Michelle St.Ange-Ebrahim, *The Spirits and the Law - The Role of Superstition Laws in Modernity in Kenya and Seychelles - A Literature Review*
- Juliet C. Sigauke, *Regulating the Invisible: Witchcraft Accusations, Traditional Healers, Religious and Legal Response in South Africa and Zimbabwe*

Room B: Traditional Authorities and Community Governance I

- Hope Herbert Nkhoma, *Traditional Authorities and Local Governance in Malawi: Addressing Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks*

- Anderson Simfukwe, *The Influence of Traditional Authorities, Community Leaders and Local Governance Structures in Addressing Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks*
- Samson Sibande, *Influence of Traditional Authorities, Community Leaders and Local Governance Structures in Addressing Accusation of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks (Mzimba Kingdom, Malawi)*

Room C: Women, Welfare, and Social Exclusion

- Phoebe Faith Chifungo, *The Impact of Witchcraft on Elderly Women in the Central Region of Malawi and the Role of the Presbyterian Church*
- Govind Kelkar, *Structural change, patriarchy, and violence affecting rural and indigenous women in Northeast India*
- Pachalo Mnkondya, *Witchcraft Accusations and Elderly Welfare in Rural Malawi: A Case Study of Traditional Authority Dzole, Dowa District*

2:45 pm - 3:15 pm

Afternoon Tea

3:45 pm - 5:15 pm

Parallel Session 3

Room A: Narratives, Media, and Public Discourse

- George Ezekiel Aberi, *Constructing the Global Crisis: Intertextuality, Human Rights, and NGO Framing of Witchcraft Accusations in Kenyan Media*
- Charlotte Baker, *The role of the media in shaping attitudes about albinism in Sierra Leone*
- Sudesh Ghoderao, *Refined Overview: Insights into Addressing Witchcraft Beliefs and Spirit Possession in India*

Room B: Practical Responses, Prevention, and Protection I

- Bomai Witne, *Indigenous responses to sorcery accusation related violence through culturally relevant kapori and peacebuilding in Papua New Guinea*
- Bawa Abdulai Yakubu, *Gushegu as an Example of Strategy in Implementation of UN Resolution 47/8*
- Mary Sibande, *The Engagement of Faith-based Organizations, Law Enforcers, the Clergy and Community Leaders in Preventing Witchcraft Accusations and Harmful Practices in Malawi*

Room C: Policing, Evidence, and State Adjudication

- Leo Igwe, *UN Resolution and Policing Witchcraft Accusations in Africa: A Case Study from Nigeria*
- Carolina Becker, *Epistemological Limits of the Brazilian Refugee System: Witchcraft Persecution Claims and Country of Origin Information as State Technologies of Classification*
- Keith Silika, *From Belief to Evidence: Policing Witchcraft-Related Harm through Investigative Frameworks and Decision-Support Tools under UN Resolution 47/8*

5:15 pm - 5:30 pm

Day 1 Plenary Reflection

Grand Ballroom

- Reflections from panel chairs
- Key themes emerging from Day 1
- Announcements for Day 2

7:00 pm

Conference Dinner

Grand Palace Hotel

Day 2: Wednesday 11 November 2026

9:00 am - 9:30 am

Plenary Session: Independent Expert on the rights of persons with Albinism, Ms Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond

Grand Ballroom

9:30 am - 11:00 am

Parallel Session 4

Room A: Faith, Contestation, and Religious Authority II

- Cletus Suhfree, *Manufacturing Witchcraft, Mockery of Human Rights and Harvesting Cash: Deconstructing the Political Myth Behind Nigeria's Mega-Churches*
- Peter N. Mose, *Standing in the Way of the Implementation of the UN Resolution 47/8: An Examination of the Role of Religious and Cultural Beliefs among the Gusii of western Kenya*
- Joseph Bekeh Undie, *The Juxtaposition of Catholicism with Neo-Protestantism in the Fight Against Witchcraft Accusations in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria*

Room B: Children, Youth, and Faith-Based Engagement II

- Nathan Chiroma, *The Role of Theologically Trained Children and Youth Workers in Mitigating Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Nigeria*
- Carolyn Gent, *The Heart of the Matter: An Effective Faith-Based Intervention Approach to Witchcraft Accusations Against Children*
- Odoh Nathaniel John, *Faith, Law, and Child Protection: The Role of Faith-Based Organisations in Combating Witchcraft-Related Human Rights Abuses Against Children in Akwa Ibom State.*

Room C: Comparative Drivers of Violence and Vulnerability

- Ali Moloney, *Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence: Current Trends in Papua New Guinea*
- Peter Gutwa Oino, *Droughts, Deaths, and Blame: Climate Stress, Moral Economies, and Stakeholder Responses to Witchcraft Accusations in Western Kenya*
- Scholastica Atata, *Witchcraft Accusation and Social Class Dynamics in Nigeria*

11:00 am - 11:30 am

Morning Tea

11:30 am - 1:00 pm

Parallel Session 5

Room A: Stakeholder Governance, Reform, and Community Protection

- Ibrahim Babangida Lawal, *Faith, Authority and Protection: Nigerian Stakeholder Pathways for Implementing UN Resolution 47/8 - An Evidence-Based Approach*

- Edward Ngubo Moracha, *Negotiating Culture and Human Rights: Reforming Gusii Traditional Governance to Address Witchcraft Accusations and Violence in Kisii County, Kenya*
- Nyasha Chikowero, *A People Unjustly Displaced? Traditional Authorities and the Persistence of Witchcraft Accusations in Southwestern Zimbabwe*

Room B: Practical Responses, Prevention, and Protection II

- Robert Rachami Gutwa, *Engaging Faith Actors to Address Witchcraft Accusations and Violence in Kisii, Kenya*
- Milan Ivic, *Aid projects addressing accusations of witchcraft: protection, education and human dignity*
- Edith Akiror, *Building a Church-Led Coalition for SARV Prevention in the Papua New Guinea Highlands*
- Anton Lutz, *The Big Ah-ha! Forging Philological and Etymological Tools to End Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea*

Room C: Gendered Harm, Health, and Psychosocial Response

- Mapenzi Thérèse Mema, *Heal the psychosocial trauma to prevent individuals and community violence related to witchcraft accusation and Sexual and gender-based violence*
- Peter Mintir Amadu, *Examining the Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs of Women Alleged as Witches in Northern Ghana: A Mixed-Methods Study*
- Rodgers Shijenje Lukano, *Intersections of Gender, Poverty and Theology in Stakeholder Responses to Witchcraft Accusations Globally*
- Ali Moloney, *The Prevalence, Impact and Systemic Challenges of Traumatic Fistulas in Papua New Guinea Arising from Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence*

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Lunch

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm

Parallel Session 6

Room A: Belief, Interpretation, and Social Drivers

- Neelesh Kumar Singh, *Belief Explains Accusation, Power Explains Violence: Rethinking Stakeholder Responses to Witchcraft Accusations under UN Resolution 47/8*
- George Ezekiel Aberi, *Discursive Struggles over Truth: Evidentiality and Argumentation in Witchcraft Accusation Narratives in Kenyan Media*
- Ali Moloney, *Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea -- Both Sides of the Story*

Room B: Regional Collaboration Roundtable

Room C: International Online Panel Hosted from the United States

- Josh Hutchinson and Sarah Jack, *The Unbroken Thread: Demonological Continuity and Contemporary Witchcraft Persecution*

- Marissa Brinkley, *Translating Invisible Harm: How Asylum Adjudicators Assess Claims of Witchcraft and Spiritual Persecution*

3:30 pm - 4:00 pm

Afternoon Tea

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm

Final Plenary: From Analysis to Action

Grand Ballroom

- Rapporteurs from each stream report back
- Discussion of priority actions and next steps
- Development of a possible Mzuzu statement or summary of practical commitments

5:00 pm - 5:30 pm

Closing Session and Closing Address

Grand Ballroom

- Final reflections from conference organisers
- Closing address
- Thanks and farewell

7:00 pm

Conference Dinner

Grand Palace Hotel

Session Abstracts Grouped by Program Session

This section groups accepted paper abstracts under the revised conference sessions. It includes speaker names, paper titles, and abstracts only.

Day 1: Tuesday 10 November 2026

10:45 am - 12:15 pm - Parallel Session 1

Room A: Belief Systems, Social Order, and Human Rights

Peguy Ndonko

Accusations de sorcellerie et harcèlement moral: Le "Ngu" comme rite de purification et forme de violence insidieuse au Cameroun

S'interroger sur les réalités qui nous entourent, c'est vouloir comprendre les éléments qui les constituent, en déterminer leur sens, leur forme, ou qui les causent telles qu'elles apparaissent sous notre regard. Emile Durkheim (1894) avait déjà dit avec des mots de pertinence que l'homme ne peut vivre au milieu des choses sans s'en faire une idée d'après laquelle il règle sa conduite. C'est dire en réalité que, du moment où nous considérons la sorcellerie comme un fait social, elle mérite aussi réflexion dans un processus de rationalité et d'explication organisée. La sorcellerie est un sujet auquel depuis notre tendre enfance, nous avons entendu parler et recevons des réponses aux différentes questions qui se rapportent à elle. Si le Conseil des Droits de l'Homme s'intéresse aux accusations de sorcellerie, c'est que le phénomène prend de l'ampleur pour devenir un fait social total (Marcel Mauss, 1923) dans différentes sociétés humaines et a atteint les couches sociales les plus diverses. Le "Ngu" est cette pratique rituelle dont la fonction première est d'expier une faute en subissant une peine imposée. Cette pratique devient de ce fait une forme de violence morale et insidieuse pour les victimes. Les Bamileke de l'Ouest Cameroun ont soumis obligatoirement leur population à ces formes de pratiques entachées de gestes, de jurons, des injures et de la honte afin de déposséder leur semblable de leurs biens et des pratiques de sorcellerie à l'origine des inégalités de forces. Comment comprendre le "Ngu"? Comment cette pratique influence-t-elle la prise de décisions des autorités en rapport avec les résolutions des droits de l'homme? Comment renforcer la promotion des droits de l'homme et la protection des victimes des accusations de sorcellerie? Quelles recommandations sont-elles envisageables pour réduire le fossé de ces représentations?

Nendimma Dogo Gonet

Witchcraft Belief System as a Recipe for Social Disorder among the Ngas People of Central Nigeria: A Historical Perspective

This paper critically examines witchcraft belief systems among the Ngas people of central Nigeria from a historical and socio-anthropological perspective, with particular emphasis on their implications for social order and human rights. Situating the study within broader global discourses on witchcraft accusations and the protection of vulnerable populations, it engages with the normative concerns articulated in United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 on the elimination of harmful practices linked to witchcraft beliefs. The paper argues that witchcraft among the Ngas transcends a purely metaphysical or spiritual construct; rather, it constitutes a socially embedded system of meaning that historically

functioned as a mechanism for moral regulation, social control, and the interpretation of misfortune. Drawing on theoretical frameworks such as social constructionism, moral panic theory, and African cosmology, the study interrogates indigenous categories such as Nenzhi and Mbilala within Ngas epistemology. These categories structure local conceptions of causality, responsibility, and justice, particularly in contexts of illness, death, and economic uncertainty. However, in the contemporary era—characterized by religious pluralism, legal rationality, and socio-economic transformation—these belief systems increasingly generate contestations and social tensions. Employing qualitative methodologies, including participant observation and oral interviews, the study reveals that witchcraft accusations often involve multiple actors, including adherents of traditional religion, Christian institutions, and agents of the criminal justice system. The overlapping and sometimes competing claims to authority among these actors produce normative ambiguities that frequently culminate in stigmatization, ostracism, banishment, and, in some cases, retaliatory violence. The paper concludes that addressing witchcraft-related social disorder requires culturally sensitive, human-rights-based interventions that promote dialogue among community institutions, religious bodies, and state actors. Such interventions must balance respect for indigenous belief systems with the imperative to safeguard human dignity and social justice. Keywords: Witchcraft, Belief System, Social Disorder, Ngas People, Human Rights, African Cosmology

Hezekiah Obwoye

Epistemic Authority and Human Rights: Reframing Witchcraft Accusations among the Abagusii of Kenya in Light of the UNHRC Resolution 47/8

This study interrogates the contested terrain between indigenous epistemologies and global human rights frameworks in the adjudication of witchcraft accusations among the Abagusii of Kenya. Despite heightened international concern—exemplified by the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8, which calls for the elimination of harmful practices linked to witchcraft allegations and ritual attacks—such accusations remain deeply embedded within local systems of authority and governance. Among the Abagusii, clan elders, traditional leaders, and community figures continue to wield significant epistemic authority in defining, legitimizing, and resolving claims of witchcraft, often perpetuating practices of exclusion, violence, and ritualized harm. Adopting a qualitative, ethnographic methodology, the research explores how these actors interpret and respond to witchcraft accusations, and how their practices intersect with, resist, or adapt to international human rights norms. The analysis is situated within theoretical frameworks of epistemic authority, legal pluralism, and postcolonial critique, thereby illuminating the tensions and negotiations between customary governance structures, state institutions, and global human rights regimes. By foregrounding the lived realities of communities navigating these overlapping normative orders, the study contributes to broader debates on the challenges of reconciling culturally embedded practices with universalist human rights principles, and on the implications of legal pluralism for the pursuit of justice and social protection in postcolonial contexts.

Room B: Faith, Theology, and Pastoral Responses I

Daniel Rotich Kandagor

The Limits of Faith Among the Pokot: Challenges and Opportunities for Religious Leaders Combating Witchcraft Accusations in Kenya

The issue of witchcraft has been a major challenge to social cohesion among Pokot people living in northwestern Kenya. It has been a big test for religious leaders. This paper will discuss "the limits of faith" by highlighting the challenges as well as opportunities that have been emerging for Christian leaders who are trying to combat violent witchcraft accusations. The church plays a central role in Pokot people's lives, but witchcraft is still deeply rooted among them. This has created a spiritual environment that is characterized by syncretism. This has been the first challenge that has been emerging. Theological attempts to condemn witchcraft as evil have been unable to address underlying social concerns, individual grievances, and fears that are driving witchcraft accusations. Religious leaders have often been challenged because they have been unable to match the immediacy of counter-measures. Nonetheless, this is a crisis with important opportunities, and this paper holds the point of view that religious leaders have a unique opportunity to function as mediators and peace agents. They have the power to leverage their moral authority to transform biblical teachings on justice and compassion to combat fear and mistrust. The most powerful approaches include making the transition from a purely spiritual perspective to a more holistic, praxis-oriented practice. This means encouraging dialogue between opposing parties, working with local elders and secular authorities, and encouraging education as a solution to superstition in the long term. In conclusion, this paper holds the point of view that by transcending the boundaries of their role and engaging with the socio-cultural dimensions of the problem, religious leaders have the potential to play a key role in stopping the violence and achieving justice in Kenya.

Lileni Mangani

The Engagement of Churches, Faith Leaders, Faith-Based Organizations, and Religious Leaders in Preventing Witchcraft Accusations, Responding to Violence, and Shaping Community Attitudes

Witchcraft accusations remain a serious human rights concern in many communities worldwide, disproportionately affecting women, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. These accusations frequently lead to stigmatization, displacement, torture, and murder. Churches, faith leaders, faith-based organizations, and religious leaders hold profound moral authority and community trust, making them uniquely positioned to address this crisis. This proposal seeks to develop a comprehensive, faith-informed intervention framework with three objectives: (1) Preventing witchcraft accusations by equipping religious leaders with theological education that challenges harmful beliefs and promotes human dignity. (2) Strengthening response mechanisms to violence by training faith communities in victim identification, psychosocial support, and referral to legal and medical services. (3) Reshaping community attitudes through sustained public engagement, including sermons, interfaith dialogues, and community workshops that foster tolerance and critical thinking. The project will operate through partnerships between local churches, FBOs, traditional leaders, and civil society organizations to ensure cultural sensitivity and broad reach. Expected outcomes include a measurable reduction in accusation-related violence, increased community willingness to protect accused individuals, and stronger collaboration between religious institutions and child protection or human rights agencies.

Brian Aggrey Theu

The Church and Witchcraft Beliefs: Examining Pastoral Responses to Witchcraft Accusations, Violence, and Stigmatization in Northern Malawi

Witchcraft beliefs remain a significant feature of social and religious life in Northern Malawi, often shaping community interpretations of misfortune, illness, and death. While these beliefs provide

culturally meaningful frameworks for understanding suffering, they can also fuel accusations that result in violence, social exclusion, and the stigmatization of vulnerable individuals, particularly women, the elderly, and other marginalized groups. Within this context, the Church occupies a critical yet complex position, navigating the intersection of Christian theology and deeply embedded cultural belief systems. This paper examines pastoral responses to witchcraft accusations, violence, and stigmatization in Northern Malawi, exploring how church leaders and congregations engage with, resist, or accommodate prevailing beliefs. Drawing on theological analysis and practical theology, the study investigates how the Church can prevent witchcraft accusations and respond effectively to related violence and stigmatization. The paper argues that while some pastoral approaches inadvertently reinforce fear-based narratives, others offer transformative possibilities rooted in theological ethics, human dignity, and restorative justice, highlighting the need for contextually grounded pastoral frameworks that promote compassion, challenge harmful beliefs, and contribute to peacebuilding and social cohesion.

George Ezekiel Aberi & Peter Gutwa Oino

Religious Intertextuality: Biblical and Indigenous Texts in Justifying or Contesting Witchcraft Accusations

This study investigates how Biblical and indigenous texts are used to justify or contest witchcraft accusations, focusing on the role of religious intertextuality in shaping discourse. The study addresses three research questions: How are Biblical and indigenous texts mobilised to support or challenge witchcraft accusations? What linguistic and rhetorical strategies are employed to construct authority, credibility, and moral judgment? How do these intertextual resources reflect broader cultural, social, and human rights concerns? Guided by Critical Discourse Analysis, intertextuality theory, and argumentation theory. Data from sermons, community meetings, local media reports, and NGO narratives referencing both religious and indigenous knowledge. Findings demonstrate how actors strategically blend Biblical and indigenous texts to reinforce or contest accusations, revealing tensions between belief, tradition, and human rights. Key terms: witchcraft accusations; religious intertextuality; Biblical texts; indigenous knowledge; CDA; argumentation; evidentiality

Room C: Children, Protection, and Institutional Responses I

Agbo Mathew Oga

Traditional Institutions and the Fight Against the Molestation of Children Accused of Witchcraft in Igedeland, Benue State, Nigeria

This study examines the role of traditional institutions in combating the molestation of children accused of witchcraft in Igedeland, Benue State, Nigeria. The prevalence of child witchcraft accusations has led to severe physical and emotional abuse, neglect, and even death of innocent children. Despite efforts by government agencies and NGOs, the practice persists, highlighting the need for traditional institutions to take a more proactive stance against it. This study employed a qualitative research approach, using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to gather data from traditional leaders, community members, and victims of child witchcraft accusations. A total of 30 traditional leaders and 60 community members were purposively selected from two local government areas in Igedeland. Additionally, 10 victims of child witchcraft accusations were interviewed. Data were analyzed thematically, using NVivo software. The objectives of the study are: (1) to examine the role of traditional institutions in preventing child witchcraft accusations, (2) to identify factors contributing to the persistence of child witchcraft accusations, and (3) to assess the effectiveness of traditional institutions' interventions in protecting

victims. Findings provide insights into the critical role traditional institutions play in combating child witchcraft accusations and promoting the welfare of children in Igedeland.

Carolyn Gent and Miranda Forsyth

A Child's Eye Perspective: Research into Children's Experiences and Attitudes Towards Witchcraft Accusations

Communalife created a research framework in the form of semi-structured interviews, which were then performed by trusted local collaborators in different areas of Nigeria, in Eastern Kenya, and in the Goma region of D.R. Congo. These interviews gave children and young people the opportunity to voice their experiences of witchcraft accusations and their attitudes towards and thoughts about them. So far as we are aware, this is the first research of this kind directly involving children in localities where child witch accusations are common. The revealing, illuminating, and at times troubling results were analysed by Prof. Miranda Forsyth and Dr. Reynol Cheng of ANU, with editorial input from Carolyn Gent of Communalife, and written up as the report entitled "A Child's Eye Perspective". This presentation will present the main findings of the research and highlight the availability of the report to interested parties.

Retta Getachew

Uncovering Our Hidden Shame: Lessons from Child Protection Systems in Addressing Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks in Africa

This paper draws on the 2022 African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) report – Uncovering Our Hidden Shame: Addressing Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks – to explore how these forms of violence inflict significant harm on children and how different stakeholders respond to address the issue. Conducted against the background of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 (2021), the research examined child protection systems in five countries (Benin, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Malawi, Morocco and Tanzania) through document reviews, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with government officials, NGOs, religious leaders, traditional authorities, law enforcement and affected communities. The findings reveal both encouraging progress and persistent challenges. In Malawi, for example, existing structures have successfully brought together key stakeholders such as ministries, police, NGOs, and community representatives. The National Action Plan on Persons with Albinism (2018–2022) delivered tangible results through improving civic education, enhancing security measures and sensitisation on the Witchcraft Act which contributed to a sharp decline in ritual attacks against persons with albinism. Similar initiatives, though often less resourced and less integrated into national systems, are also emerging through the efforts of NGOs and faith-based actors in the other countries studied. Across all five countries, however, severe under-resourcing of frontline child protection workers, weak data systems, limited engagement of faith and traditional leaders in prevention and weak implementation of existing laws continue to affect progress. The paper argues that fully integrating witchcraft accusations into national child protection systems through law reform, multi-stakeholder coordination, capacity building and increased domestic funding provides a pathway to translate Resolution 47/8 into meaningful protection for children. The paper concludes with concrete recommendations for preventing accusations and attacks while also minimising the harmful impact on children once such accusations have occurred.

1:15 pm - 2:45 pm - Parallel Session 2

Room A: Legal Frameworks, Regulation, and Redress

Achileus Dzevernuy Tardzenyuy

Reparations for Harmful Practices against Persons with Albinism: Stakeholder Roles and Gaps in Implementing UN Resolution 47/8

Accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks continue to expose persons with albinism to grave harm in parts of Africa, despite growing awareness and international concern. UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 represents a significant step in recognising these harms and encouraging collective action. This paper draws on practical insights from the Africa Albinism Network to explore how stakeholders are addressing harmful practices through both preventive measures and early efforts at redress. The paper highlights emerging practices by civil society organisations and community leaders to support survivors including advocacy for compensation, memorialisation, and public recognition of harm. At the same time, it critically reflects on enduring barriers to effective reparation: legal ambiguity, underreporting, limited classification of attacks under criminal frameworks, and weak State engagement. These challenges often leave victims without meaningful redress, even where violence is well documented. Through case reflections and stakeholder analysis, the paper identifies promising pathways for embedding reparations into local and national responses, including community-driven initiatives and cross-sector partnerships. It calls for a more systematic, coordinated approach to reparation that complements prevention and protection efforts. In doing so, the paper contributes to ongoing discussions about how best to implement Resolution 47/8 in a way that is inclusive, restorative, and responsive to the lived experiences of victims particularly those with albinism, whose realities remain under-addressed in mainstream responses.

Michelle St.Ange-Ebrahim

The Spirits and the Law - The Role of Superstition Laws in Modernity in Kenya and Seychelles - A Literature Review

This article examines the legal and socio-political dimensions of superstition-related offences in Kenya and Seychelles, highlighting how cultural beliefs intersect with crime, law, and state power. Rather than viewing witchcraft and superstition as mere cultural relics, this analysis underscores their entanglement with modern political agendas and governance challenges. Legal responses to superstition, including anti-witchcraft laws, may paradoxically reinforce societal fears and legitimise witch hunts, fostering cycles of persecution. Drawing on Foucault's theories of power and knowledge, this article argues for a nuanced legal approach that differentiates between harmful acts and legitimate expressions of belief. A balanced framework must protect citizens from harmful practices while upholding fundamental freedoms, aligning with international human rights standards. This article is divided into four parts: first, a conceptual map of superstition, religion, and witchcraft; second, Foucault's power/knowledge as an analytical framework; third, the statutory and case-law frameworks in Kenya and Seychelles; and finally, a comparative synthesis and implications for reform.

Juliet C. Sigauke

Regulating the Invisible: Witchcraft Accusations, Traditional Healers, Religious and Legal Response in South Africa and Zimbabwe

This paper examines the complex relationships between witchcraft accusations, traditional healing practices, religion, legal and human rights in contemporary South Africa and Zimbabwe. While international human-rights frameworks increasingly condemn harmful practices associated with witchcraft accusations, including violence, stigmatisation, and ritual attacks, witchcraft beliefs continue to be interpreted as a lived social reality with deep moral, spiritual, and legal implications. In many communities, witchcraft remains an important part of everyday life and shapes how people understand illness, misfortune, conflicts and death. The adoption of United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 has intensified debates surrounding how states, religious institutions, traditional authorities, and communities should respond to accusations of witchcraft while at the same time protecting freedom of religion or belief. This paper interprets and gives meaning to data that were collected during fieldwork in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The findings were obtained through document analysis and semi-structured interviews, which helped better understand how individuals/organisations/professionals perceived and responded to witchcraft-related issues. The research was guided by a multi-site ethnography and descriptive approach, which helped in the analytical and discussion process of the study. The discussions also answered the questions, why witchcraft accusations are gendered and how the religious, cultural and legal circles respond to the phenomenon. It also shows how the legal fraternity negotiate questions of evidence, spiritual harm, protection, and justice in contexts where witchcraft is denied by formal legal systems yet treated as socially real by communities. Drawing on decolonial religion studies and legal pluralism, the paper critically debates whether contemporary human-rights approaches can effectively address harmful practices without infringing on religious freedom and African indigenous cosmologies and healing traditions. It proposes that sustainable interventions require culturally informed and community-engaged approaches. Responses to witchcraft accusations should include local communities, traditional and religious leaders, lawmakers and traditional healers and must move beyond belief versus modernity, religion versus law, or tradition versus rights.

Room B: Traditional Authorities and Community Governance I

Hope Herbert Nkhoma

Traditional Authorities and Local Governance in Malawi: Addressing Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks

Accusations of witchcraft in Malawi remain widespread and deadly, disproportionately affecting vulnerable groups such as elderly women, children, and people with disabilities. These accusations often escalate into mob violence, forced displacement, and long-term stigmatization. In Katola village, Lilongwe (February 2024), two elderly individuals aged 71 and 85 were nearly killed by a mob after being accused of bewitching a child, with police intervention narrowly preventing their deaths (Nyirenda, 2024). Amnesty International (2021) documented multiple cases where individuals accused of witchcraft were murdered, while the Malawi Human Rights Commission (2022) reported that dozens of deaths occur annually due to ritual attacks and witchcraft-related killings. In December 2023, a 78-year-old woman was bludgeoned to death in Mulanje by her grandsons after being accused of witchcraft (DW, 2024). Traditional authorities, chiefs, and village councils in Malawi can either perpetuate harmful practices or act as agents of change. Chiefs hold immense cultural legitimacy, and their pronouncements often determine whether an accused person is protected or condemned (Banda, 2023). While some leaders reinforce superstition, others have collaborated with NGOs, churches, and law enforcement to

mediate disputes, prevent mob justice, and promote reconciliation. By situating these experiences within the framework of UN Resolution 47/8, this paper argues that empowering traditional leaders through training, dialogue, and accountability mechanisms is essential.

Anderson Simfukwe

The Influence of Traditional Authorities, Community Leaders and Local Governance Structures in Addressing Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks

This paper examines the influence of traditional authorities, community leaders, and local governance structures in addressing witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks, with specific focus on Zambia. The country presents a compelling case study where customary and formal legal systems operate in parallel, often with significant tension. In Zambia, witchcraft beliefs remain pervasive -- a 2018 Zambia Law Development Commission study found that 79% of Zambians believe in witchcraft -- and traditional leaders (chiefs, headmen, and healers) frequently serve as primary arbiters in such matters. These authorities typically resolve disputes through community courts, employing restorative mechanisms such as fines and ritual cleansing to maintain social harmony. However, this customary jurisdiction operates in complex tension with Zambia's colonial-era Witchcraft Act (1914), which criminalizes professing supernatural knowledge yet provides no clear definition of witchcraft, making prosecution notoriously difficult in formal courts. The influence of traditional structures yields contradictory outcomes: while chiefs can prevent mob violence through swift intervention, instances of vigilante justice persist, as evidenced by the September 2025 mob killing in Chama District following witchcraft accusations. The high-profile 2025 conviction of two men under the Witchcraft Act for allegedly plotting to curse President Hichilema further exposed tensions, raising fair trial concerns and prompting debate over whether colonial-era legislation can appropriately address culturally complex phenomena. This case illustrates the broader challenge facing Zambia: reconciling deeply held traditional beliefs with constitutional protections for fair trial, cultural expression, and human dignity within a plural legal framework.

Samson Sibande

Influence of Traditional Authorities, Community Leaders and Local Governance Structures in Addressing Accusation of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks (Mzimba Kingdom, Malawi)

This paper analyses traditional authorities, community leaders and local governance structures in addressing accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks in Mzimba kingdom. The study used quantitative descriptive research design and purposive sampling. Data was collected through questionnaire and key informant interviews of 245 respondents comprised of seven witchcraft doctors, ten chiefs, ten singers in the choir of witchcraft doctors, eight antiquities houses, ten chief's clerks, fifty women in traditional witchcraft structures, fifty three men in traditional witchcraft structures, thirty one chief's advisors, twenty drum beaters of witchcraft doctors, fifteen women who have ever been accused of witchcraft, eight men who were accused of being a wizard, one District Commissioner, sixteen court clerks and sixteen court chairpersons. This paper found that coordination among traditional authorities, community leaders and local governance structures plays a vital role in shaping witchcraft beliefs and responses in many African societies. They act as mediators who often validate the existence of witchcraft while attempting to manage related violence, operating within a system where misfortune is interpreted through supernatural lenses. The study concluded that these structures have powers to

influence in addressing accusation of witchcraft and ritual attack, and recommends replication of this model in other districts in Malawi. Keywords: witchcraft, ritual, governance, structures and authority.

Room C: Women, Welfare, and Social Exclusion

Phoebe Faith Chifungo

The Impact of Witchcraft on Elderly Women in the Central Region of Malawi and the Role of the Presbyterian Church

The issue of witchcraft is not a new thing; it has existed for ages. Our forefathers battled with it and even the Bible acknowledges its existence. It is therefore tempting to think that with the new technology and exposure of many people to education, this problem of witchcraft should subside, unfortunately, the opposite is true. The new technologies have in fact worsened the situation since people share the rumors just within seconds. What is more surprising and painful is that most suspects of witchcraft are old people and mostly women. In Malawian context, which is mainly patriarchal, women are already vulnerable; their voices are not heard, they are not decision makers, they are inferior compared to men. This itself already situates her at a disadvantaged position. So, becoming an old woman just worsens the situation of being more vulnerable. The problem is that almost every old woman is a suspect of witchcraft. If anyone dies in the village, you become the suspect of causing that death. This is not respect of culture; whether matrilineal or patriarchal. One of the blessings in the Bible is to age and have grand/great grandchildren. But in Malawian context, this is no longer a blessing but a threat to your health/life. It is behind this background that this paper emanates; to critically analyze the impact of witchcraft on the Malawian elderly women and discuss the role of the church and society. This will be carried out through social identity theory and will use qualitative method. This will involve Focus Group Discussion and in-depth interviews through personal and telephone interviews. Keywords: Witchcraft, elderly women, church, society, suspect, Malawi.

Govind Kelkar

Structural change, patriarchy, and violence affecting rural and indigenous women in Northeast India

This study proposes to examine the interrelated factors in the transition from a forest-based indigenous economy to a social system characterised by an agricultural economy and a technology-oriented society, with patriarchal state control over resources and governance. This transition is marked by new inequalities largely caused by new consumption patterns, emergent communication technologies and new forms of mobility, leading to an increase in social gender inequalities and patriarchal forces. Such structural changes caused by capitalist institutions, however incomplete and complex, have devastating effects on a large percentage of women among rural and indigenous peoples. The Northeast India comprises over 130 major indigenous communities and eight states: Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura. In consideration of the diversity of gender systems, we selected four indigenous communities in the two states: Khasi and Garo in Meghalaya and Angami and Sema in Nagaland. The two communities of Meghalaya are matrilineal, with women having rights to land and lineage, control of resources and knowledge of ritualistic activities. The two communities of Nagaland are patriarchal, with men holding virtually all formal positions of power and control over land and political decision-making. Naga women can neither inherit any land and are excluded from the decision-making processes of village councils, nor can they be village heads. Even the constitutional and legal provision of 33 per cent reservation for women in the local bodies has not been

possible, as it was perceived as the Indian State's interference in the Naga culture. In 2017, a woman's attempt to buy a piece of land was considered an act of witchcraft, and there was an attempt to set her on fire. These communities are going through trauma of cultural and structural changes, largely related to rights to land, control over resources, and women's agency and knowledge of ritualistic activities. Women's assertion of having resources and engaging in accusation of ritualistic knowledge is seen as a transgression of traditional, patriarchal norms, and thus, they are seen as inviting punishment to themselves. This study intends to explore social beliefs and cultural practices as well as economic concerns that give rise to witch violence and ritual attacks, yet at the same time create social and legal spaces for human rights-based discourses questioning the practice of witch-hunts and ritual attacks. As an outcome, we would like to see the social systems of Meghalaya and Nagaland, where witch-hunts will not be seen as a normal part of indigenous cultures.

Pachalo Mnkondya

Witchcraft Accusations and Elderly Welfare in Rural Malawi: A Case Study of Traditional Authority Dzole, Dowa District

Witchcraft accusations remain a serious but often overlooked challenge in many rural communities in Malawi. In areas such as Dowa District especially in Traditional Authority Dzoole, elderly people particularly women are frequently accused of practising witchcraft, leading to social exclusion, violence, displacement, and loss of livelihoods. While global frameworks such as UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 call for the elimination of harmful practices linked to such accusations, there is still a gap between policy commitments and lived realities on the ground. This study explores how witchcraft accusations affect the everyday welfare of elderly people in Traditional Authority Dzoole. It focuses on access to basic needs such as food, shelter, healthcare, and personal safety, while also examining the emotional and psychological effects, including fear, isolation, and loss of dignity. The research further investigates the underlying drivers of these accusations, including poverty, cultural beliefs, and local power relations. Using a qualitative approach, the study draws on interviews and community-level experiences to understand both the problem and the responses from families, community leaders, and local institutions. By linking these local realities to the broader human rights framework of Resolution 47/8, the paper highlights the challenges and opportunities in addressing witchcraft-related harm at community level. The study aims to contribute practical, context-based insights that can support policymakers, civil society organisations, and community leaders in designing more effective and locally grounded interventions.

3:45 pm - 5:15 pm - Parallel Session 3

Room A: Narratives, Media, and Public Discourse

George Ezekiel Aberi

Constructing the Global Crisis: Intertextuality, Human Rights, and NGO Framing of Witchcraft Accusations in Kenyan Media

This study examines how non-governmental organisations construct witchcraft accusations as a global human rights crisis through intertextual framing in Kenyan media. The aim is to analyse how NGO discourse draws on international human rights texts, local cultural narratives, and media reporting to shape meanings of urgency, responsibility, and response. The study asks: How do NGOs frame witchcraft

accusations in Kenyan media as a human rights crisis? What intertextual resources -- including policy texts, religious references, and cultural narratives -- are mobilised? How are agency, blame, and urgency discursively constructed? Guided by Critical Discourse Analysis, intertextuality theory, and framing theory. Data: purposively sampled NGO reports, press releases, and media texts from Kenyan newspapers and digital platforms, 2020-2025. Findings expected to show that NGOs strategically blend global human rights discourse with local cultural and religious references to legitimise intervention and construct urgency. Key terms: Witchcraft accusations, Human rights discourse, Intertextuality, NGO framing, Crisis communication, Kenyan media, CDA

Sudesh Ghoderao

Refined Overview: Insights into Addressing Witchcraft Beliefs and Spirit Possession in India

Eliminating deep-seated beliefs in witchcraft is not an instantaneous feat; rather, it is an extensive journey moving from open dialogue toward systemic social change. Effectively dismantling these superstitions requires a foundation of empathy and understanding rather than hostility or judgment. These issues are often symptoms of broader geographical and socio-political instability. Furthermore, affected communities frequently lack access to fundamental resources such as quality healthcare, education, and stable jobs. To truly accelerate the eradication of these harmful beliefs, a unified effort from social institutions and the media is essential. The severity of this issue is illustrated by the tragic 2003 case of Kelibai Patale in the Nandurbar District of Maharashtra. Despite Maharashtra's reputation as a progressive state, she was brutally murdered by an individual named Vansingh, who accused her of being a Dakin (witch). Such violence is unfortunately common in tribal regions. In response, the Maharashtra Andhshraddha Nirmoolan Samiti (MANS) launched a multi-tiered campaign aimed at educating the public and demanding more proactive intervention from government authorities. Key conclusions: (1) A Multi-Dimensional Challenge: Witchcraft must be formally acknowledged as a complex social issue with roots in religion, culture, politics, and education. (2) Empowerment of Victims: Women targeted by these accusations have begun to reclaim their voices, finding the courage to share their experiences and seek legal justice through police reports. (3) Breaking the Silence: Open communication has replaced the previous culture of silence and taboo surrounding these topics.

Room B: Practical Responses, Prevention, and Protection I

Bomai Witne

Indigenous responses to sorcery accusation related violence through culturally relevant kapor and peacebuilding in Papua New Guinea

This discussion offers a perspective on decolonizing criminology of sorcery accusation related violence (SARV) and response through Indigenous peacebuilding in the context of the Yuri people of Papua New Guinea (PNG). SARV is a particular form of violence that is attributed to a belief that some people possess supernatural powers to harm or kill other people. Yuri is a name of a tribe in the highlands region of PNG who are responding to SARV. Decolonizing criminology of SARV is an attempt to unpack the complex causes of SARV and the multiple responses. This discussion focuses on Indigenous peacebuilding as a response to SARV. Peacebuilding in this discussion was informed by kapor, a local form of telling story or conversation that brought people together to talk, listen and map different stages and actors of peace. The conversation process valued tribal Elders and the abilities of everyone to contribute to the objectives of peace to end a complex crime such as SARV. The success of Indigenous

peacebuilding lies in the ability of the local community to sustain it through socioeconomic livelihood and cultural activities. While Yuri model of peacebuilding is based on one tribal experience and had its own challenges, it can advance scholarship on addressing crime in Indigenous societies. Indigenous peacebuilding involved men and women of Yuri from different walks of life who contributed time, knowledge, experience and resources in different capacities. These actions highlighted the importance of relational and community approaches to crime prevention alongside the government's justice system.

Bawa Abdulai Yakubu

Gushegu as an Example of Strategy in Implementation of UN Resolution 47/8

Gushegu Municipality in the Northern Region of Ghana offers examples of effective approaches in responding to harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft. This presentation examines how accused women are demonstrating their agency through self-governing and are offered a sense of belonging through the efforts of traditional leaders, the people of Gushegu, the Catholic Church, and RuWYEDA. Research shows that witchcraft accusation is the main cause of human rights abuses -- including torturing, lynching, killing, assault, sexual harassment, banishment, and flight from home villages. The existence of "witches" camps as refuges is the first visible sign of a violent manifestation of belief in witchcraft. RuWYEDA, together with its collaborators, aims at attaining UN Resolution 47/8 by working to minimize witchcraft in Northern Ghana and to close down witches-camps when given necessary support. RuWYEDA and its partners promote empowerment of women through vocational training, education for children, health support, food and clothing, sensitizations on Peace Building and Conflict Management, and support for re-integration. The authors show that "witches" camps can serve as safe havens when not oppressed by new governing authorities.

Mary Sibande

The Engagement of Faith-based Organizations, Law Enforcers, the Clergy and Community Leaders in Preventing Witchcraft Accusations and Harmful Practices in Malawi

Witchcraft accusations continue to constitute a critical driver of human rights violations, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where vulnerable groups such as women, children, and the elderly are extremely affected. This paper presents findings from a stakeholder exhibition and workshop convened by University of Livingstonia, Malawi, in March 2025. Situated within the framework of United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8, the study explored how non-state actors contributed to prevention of violence/harmful practices and ritual attacks associated with witchcraft accusations and promoted human rights in local communities. Drawing on qualitative insights from presentations, multi-stakeholder discussions, and participant reflections, the paper adopts a case study approach to analyse roles of churches, traditional leaders, law enforcement agencies, and academic institutions. The findings reveal that while cultural beliefs, poverty, and limited access to education continue to sustain witchcraft accusations, coordinated stakeholder engagement offers a viable pathway in the control of these accusations. Faith-based actors emerge as both influential drivers of belief systems and critical agents for change, while traditional leaders and law enforcers play key roles in community sensitization and legal enforcement. The paper highlights opportunities inherent in stakeholder collaboration, including legitimacy strengths, cultural authority, and law enforcement capacity. It argues that effective implementation of Resolution 47/8 requires context-sensitive, multi-sectoral strategies that integrate local knowledge systems with human rights frameworks. By documenting a grounded, participatory initiative, this paper contributes empirical insights into how stakeholder engagement can inform

broader policy, advocacy and research efforts to eliminating harmful practices linked to witchcraft accusations.

Room C: Policing, Evidence, and State Adjudication

Leo Igwe

UN Resolution and Policing Witchcraft Accusations in Africa: A Case Study from Nigeria

The 2021 UN Resolution on the elimination of harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks (HPAWRA) enjoins member states to take measures to end these violations. It urges countries to combat abuses such as attacks, killings, and torture of accused persons. States should ensure accountability and effective protection of all persons. It is, however, doubtful whether states in Africa, given the situation of policing, can combat these violations and effectively protect those targeted for witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks. Using data from a non-governmental organisation, the Advocacy for Alleged Witches in Nigeria, this paper shows how the police process cases of witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks. Although the law criminalizes witchcraft accusations, police intervention and protection are not guaranteed. Accused persons or their relatives must lodge a complaint with the police before the police will intervene. Before the police can act on these complaints, the petitioners must pay them or provide incentives. The paper argues for a mixed modernity because the outcome of the accusation process depends on accused persons' ability or lack thereof in mobilizing the police and other state actors. It suggests that the UN Resolution will be of no effect if this policing situation does not change; if the police are not reformed and transformed into a diligent and proactive force in fighting and preventing crimes linked to witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks.

Carolina Becker

Epistemological Limits of the Brazilian Refugee System: Witchcraft Persecution Claims and Country of Origin Information as State Technologies of Classification

This essay examines the epistemological limits of the Brazilian refugee system through the analysis of claims motivated by violence related to witchcraft persecution. Drawing on the author's experience in the preparation of Country of Origin Information (COI) within the framework of UNHCR, the text problematizes the role of these documents as ethnographic artifacts and state technologies of classification that produce regimes of intelligibility regarding who can -- or cannot -- be recognized as a refugee. The paper presents an ethnography of COI reports issued by international agencies and state departments, used by eligibility officers in Brazil to formulate justifications for rejection of asylum claims. In dialogue with Mariza Peirano (2014) and Adriana Vianna (2014), it argues that COI reports and technical opinions do not merely describe national contexts, but perform the reality that will inform decisions by the National Committee for Refugees, hierarchizing narratives and evaluating lives according to situated moral and epistemological criteria. Engaging with Lila Abu-Lughod (2018), the essay shows how spiritual persecutions tend to be treated as essentialized or irrational cultural expressions, detached from their historical and political contexts, and thus rendered scarcely intelligible within the legal field. Based on a case study, the essay demonstrates how accounts of violence related to witchcraft are often delegitimized for failing to conform to the empirical parameters of Western rationalism. Drawing on Avtar Brah (2006), this exclusion is interpreted as a process of differentiation that transforms epistemological differences into legal insufficiencies, producing inequalities in access to

international protection. The text concludes by advocating for epistemological pluralism capable of reducing epistemic violence in refugee status determination processes.

Keith Silika

From Belief to Evidence: Policing Witchcraft-Related Harm through Investigative Frameworks and Decision-Support Tools under UN Resolution 47/8

The implementation of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 presents significant challenges for frontline law enforcement, particularly in contexts where accusations of witchcraft and ritual practices intersect with serious criminal harm. While the Resolution emphasises State responsibility, policing remains an under-examined but critical stakeholder in translating human rights principles into operational practice. This paper explores how policing can move from belief-driven narratives to evidence-based investigations in cases involving witchcraft accusations and ritual-related harm. Drawing on professional policing experience, research in forensic investigation, and applied teaching in police studies, the paper introduces a structured investigative framework designed to assist officers in identifying risk, assessing harm, and distinguishing cultural belief from criminal intent. The framework is supported by the development of a prototype decision-support tool (SPIRIT), which aims to guide frontline practitioners through complex safeguarding and investigative decisions. Rather than replacing professional judgement, the tool provides structured prompts that enhance consistency, reduce bias, and improve multi-agency responses. Using case-based examples, including ritual-related violence and financially motivated 'occult' crimes, the paper highlights key operational challenges such as evidential ambiguity, cultural sensitivity, and investigative inconsistency. It argues that structured policing approaches – supported by practical tools – can strengthen stakeholder coordination, improve victim safeguarding, and support State compliance with Resolution 47/8.

Day 2: Wednesday 11 November 2026

9:30 am - 11:00 am - Parallel Session 4

Room A: Faith, Contestation, and Religious Authority II

Cletus Suhfree

Manufacturing Witchcraft, Mockery of Human Rights and Harvesting Cash: Deconstructing the Political Myth Behind Nigeria's Mega-Churches

UN Resolution 47/8 mandates that states condemn and eliminate harmful practices related to accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks, requiring legal and protective measures for victims. This paper provides a thorough analysis of how Nigeria's Pentecostal mega-church industry creates a complex political economy of fear. It shows how these churches use Christian teachings to support severe and ongoing human rights abuses. The paper argues that these institutions have established a model of spiritual extortion, where the intentional spread of witchcraft fears is not just a fringe belief but the main driver for accumulating wealth, exercising social control, and engaging in political dealings. The study breaks down a key political myth maintained by this system: that Nigeria's deep social and structural problems, including state failure, economic instability, public health issues, and family breakdown, are mostly due to demonic forces rather than political corruption and the failure of institutions. By redefining personal and national misfortune as witchcraft, church leaders distract

attention from the government, taking on the exclusive role of guardians of spiritual safety. The paper uses an interdisciplinary approach that combines Critical Political Economy, Feminist Political Theology, and Foucauldian analysis. It begins by looking at the commodification of deliverance, where mass media and crusades sell existential fear in exchange for mandatory tithes, expensive consultations, and blessed objects. Next, it explores how accusations of witchcraft serve as a way to control society and politics, targeting critics and vulnerable people — especially children, elderly women, and widows — to strengthen pastoral power and silence opposition. The research method includes critical discourse analysis of sermons and media content, ethnographic case studies, and examination of church finances, supported by court records and UN submissions. The article concludes that this industry represents a systematic violation of human rights, directly breaching UN Resolution 47/8, and calls for legal accountability, the dismantling of its financial system, and addressing Nigeria's deeper governance issues.

Peter N. Mose

Standing in the Way of the Implementation of the UN Resolution 47/8: An Examination of the Role of Religious and Cultural Beliefs among the Gusii of western Kenya

The Gusii, with a population of 2.2 million, are a Bantu ethnic group that lives in western Kenya near Lake Victoria. They are mainly an agricultural community with a rich cultural and religious heritage. They hold a strong belief that witches exist, cause misfortune, and live among them; this belief is supported by community oral narratives and by how Christian religious teachers teach the subject of witchcraft. The Gusii are the only community in the country who frequently accuse individuals among them of practising witchcraft and have lynched scores of them (Ogembo, 2006; Omare, 2015), with the latest incidents reported in 2021. Through autoethnography and Critical Discourse Analysis of community Christian teachings and oral narratives, the researcher demonstrates that the attitudes of Christian religious teachers and specific aspects of cultural heritage continue to stand in the way of progress towards achieving the objectives of UN Resolution 47/8. The paper recommends extensive engagement with Christian religious and civic leaders to change attitudes and perceptions on the broad subject of witchcraft.

Joseph Bekeh Undie

The Juxtaposition of Catholicism with Neo-Protestantism in the Fight Against Witchcraft Accusations in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria

This study explores the Juxtaposition of roles of catholicism with the neo-Protestantism in the fight against witchcraft accusations in Obudu Local Government Area, Cross River State, Nigeria, as one of the stakeholders' responses to UN resolutions 47/8. The study is to explore and analyse how these accusations may or may not, sometimes, emanate from superstitious beliefs, mythology, suspicion, and paranoia, yet its operation manifest in concrete or quasi-concrete evidence. The study utilises a qualitative research method, reviewing literature from primary and secondary sources, including scholarly journal articles, documented witchcraft expositions, and textbooks, complemented with oral interviews on the operation of witchcraft, its manifestations, and the role of churches and faith leaders in curbing or escalating this witchcraft accusations. The study will determine whether these accusations are justifiable or not, or are based on superstitious beliefs, mythology, suspicion, and paranoia, and if no, what are the manifested concrete evidence or quasi-concrete evidence? What are the roles of catholic church and protestant churches on this? Localising the exploration within this area will give a

direction and next line of action to be recommended for the government authorities, captains of faith-based organisations, traditional rulers, and other relevant stakeholders in order to minimise the prevalence of these human right violations including killings, mutilation, burning, trafficking, torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and social stigmatization.

Room B: Children, Youth, and Faith-Based Engagement II

Nathan Chiroma

The Role of Theologically Trained Children and Youth Workers in Mitigating Witchcraft Allegations in Northern Nigeria

This paper will examine the critical role of theological education for children and youth workers in curbing witchcraft accusations in Northern Nigeria, situating the discussion within ongoing stakeholder responses to harmful practices addressed by UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8. Witchcraft accusations in this region disproportionately affect children and vulnerable youth, often leading to stigmatization, abuse, abandonment, and, in extreme cases, death. While legal and policy interventions are necessary, this paper argues that sustainable transformation must engage faith actors, particularly those shaping young minds and community beliefs at the grassroots level. Drawing from practical theology and contextual ministry frameworks, the study explores how poorly formed theological narratives, especially those rooted in fear, spiritual insecurity, and misinterpretation of Scripture, contribute to the perpetuation of accusations. It proposes that equipping children and youth workers with sound biblical hermeneutics, child theology, and pastoral care skills can significantly disrupt these harmful patterns. Through case reflections and ministry-based observations, the paper will highlight how theologically informed practitioners can reshape belief systems, challenge harmful doctrines, and cultivate alternative narratives centered on dignity, protection, and the imago Dei.

Carolyn Gent

The Heart of the Matter: An Effective Faith-Based Intervention Approach to Witchcraft Accusations Against Children

Communalife developed "the Heart of the Matter" in response to child witch accusations, drawing upon in-depth focus group research performed in multiple locations, consultation with anthropologists, theologians, and lawyers, and targeted piloting with immediate evaluation and intermediate and longer-term impact analysis. The resource is a contextualised faith-based approach using skilfully crafted participative materials delivered as an interactive workshop: seven modules over five days. This level of engagement enables individuals and communities to examine and realign their own beliefs, attitudes, and practices -- and particularly how they perceive and treat children -- in light of their professed Christian values. The workshop is delivered on a peer-to-peer basis to church and community leaders by local facilitators who have been mentored and equipped to deliver them effectively. Core learning messages are then passed on to communities and wider networks. Although focused on challenging and stopping witch accusations against children, much material is easily adapted for contexts where accusations are made against other vulnerable community members such as the elderly or widows. All resources are available online free of charge. The presentation will also address the process employed in developing such an intervention -- the research basis, efficacy measurement, and lessons for others working in this field.

Odoh Nathaniel John

Faith, Law, and Child Protection: The Role of Faith-Based Organisations in Combating Witchcraft-Related Human Rights Abuses Against Children in Akwa Ibom State.

Accusations of witchcraft against children remain a serious human rights problem in parts of Nigeria, particularly in Akwa Ibom State. Children accused of practicing witchcraft often face abuse such as physical violence, abandonment, social rejection, and psychological trauma. These accusations are commonly influenced by cultural beliefs, poverty, family conflicts, and certain religious interpretations. Although the Nigerian government and international organisations have introduced legal frameworks to protect children, cases of witchcraft-related abuse still occur in many communities. This study examines the role of faith-based organisations in combating human rights abuses against children accused of witchcraft in Akwa Ibom State. The aim is to assess how these organisations contribute to protecting affected children and promoting awareness of child rights within local communities. While previous studies have addressed witchcraft accusations and child abuse in Nigeria, limited attention has been given to the practical role of religious institutions in preventing these abuses and supporting victims. The study adopts a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews with religious leaders, community members, child protection advocates, and representatives of faith-based organisations. The findings show that faith-based organisations play an important role in raising awareness about child rights, challenging harmful beliefs, and supporting affected children. However, some religious teachings may unintentionally reinforce witchcraft accusations. The study concludes that stronger collaboration between government, civil society, and faith-based organisations is essential to effectively address this problem.

Room C: Comparative Drivers of Violence and Vulnerability

Ali Moloney

Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence: Current Trends in Papua New Guinea

Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence (SARV) has been reported in Papua New Guinea (PNG) for decades, mainly concentrated in specific provinces or recognised hot-spots. However, recent evidence indicates a concerning increase in both the frequency and geographic spread of SARV across the country. This rise is accompanied by escalating severity of violence, including torture, complex injuries, and profound psychological trauma, placing additional strain on an already under-resourced and fragmented healthcare system. Legal accountability remains limited, with fewer than 14 convictions annually. In many areas, law enforcement agencies are significantly outnumbered by alleged perpetrators, undermining the enforcement of existing laws. Reports from several provinces suggest SARV-related incidents are occurring daily. The dehumanisation of accused individuals has intensified the brutality of attacks, with acts frequently recorded and shared through social media, further perpetuating harm and normalising violence. Survivors often experience forced displacement and relocation to unfamiliar provinces where they lack social and family support. This displacement increases vulnerability to re-accusation, ongoing marginalisation, and barriers to re-integration. Access to essential health services, including wound care, psychological support, and sexual and reproductive healthcare remain critically limited. This abstract explores the changing patterns of SARV in PNG, emphasising the links between violence, health, legal system capacity, and human rights.

Peter Gutwa Oino

Droughts, Deaths, and Blame: Climate Stress, Moral Economies, and Stakeholder Responses to Witchcraft Accusations in Western Kenya

Drawing on ethnographic field encounters in Western Kenya, the sudden death of a child following a failed harvest is not only mourned — it is explained, contested, and often attributed to an elderly widow accused of witchcraft. This paper interrogates the resurgence of witchcraft accusations in Western Kenya through the lens of climate stress, moral economies, and social vulnerability, while directly engaging the concerns of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8. Moving beyond reductive cultural explanations, it argues that accusations emerge as socially mediated responses to ecological uncertainty, where environmental stress translates into moral judgment and collective blame. Drawing on Human Ecology and Sustainable Livelihoods frameworks, the study situates these dynamics within broader transformations driven by climate variability, agrarian precarity, and weakening kinship safety nets. Focusing on Kisii, Homa Bay, and Migori counties, the paper is based on ongoing qualitative fieldwork (2024–2026), including in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and narrative accounts with community members, elders, faith leaders, and local administrators. It critically evaluates how different stakeholders interpret, mediate, and sometimes contest the principles of Resolution 47/8 in practice, revealing both protective interventions and unintended reinforcements of stigma. The paper proposes context-sensitive pathways for action, including climate-informed protection strategies and community-based mediation mechanisms to prevent violence linked to witchcraft accusations.

Scholastica Atata

Witchcraft Accusation and Social Class Dynamics in Nigeria

The reality of witchcraft accusation cuts across social class in Nigeria. Witchcraft accusation prevails in different spheres and people in the society, ranging from the aging and young children, rich and poor, rural to urban areas and the artisans to elites. In Nigeria the witchcraft accusation demonstrates the dynamics of social class on who is labelled and who is not labelled a witch and their access to justice. This study explains the social class dynamics and the effect on witchcraft accusation of individuals in southwest Nigeria. Thirty interviews were conducted with purposively selected victims who are accused and/or labelled witches in Osogbo in Osun State, the Southwestern part of Nigeria, using qualitative methods of data collection. The methods include key informant interviews (KIIs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs). The IDIs and KIIs were conducted with aging people from age 60 and above (ten men and ten women), and ten children from age two–twelve years. The data collected were analysed using ethnographic content analysis. Findings of this study show that individuals are accused/labelled witchcraft based on their social class, especially the poor, vulnerable (children and aging), and women in most rural areas in Nigeria. This study argues that, despite the constitutional stipulation on human rights and protection, individuals are mostly accused of witchcraft in rural areas and they do not have access to social justice (police intervention or court); rather they experience jungle justice and sometimes intervention/protection from community members.

11:30 am - 1:00 pm - Parallel Session 5

Room A: Stakeholder Governance, Reform, and Community Protection

Ibrahim Babangida Lawal

Faith, Authority and Protection: Nigerian Stakeholder Pathways for Implementing UN Resolution 47/8 - An Evidence-Based Approach

This paper investigates how non-state actors in Nigeria operationalise UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 to secure practical protection for individuals and communities affected by witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks. While the Resolution is directed at States, prevention, mediation, and norm formation often occur within arenas shaped by civil society organisations, faith institutions, and traditional authorities. The study combines documentary analysis, practitioner evidence, and a structured online survey administered across Nigerian stakeholder groups, including community members, religious actors, and frontline responders, designed to produce statistically interpretable data on prevalence narratives, risk markers, reporting behaviour, and confidence in institutional remedies. Quantitative outputs are triangulated with qualitative accounts from existing programmes. Analysis focuses on three connected domains: prevention of accusations, response to violence, and long-term transformation of harmful beliefs. It evaluates how churches and mosques mobilise theology to counter stigma; how NGOs document violations and maintain referral systems; and how traditional leadership arbitrates legitimacy, proof, and reconciliation. Particular attention is paid to constraints on cooperation with State authorities, including insecurity, patronage dynamics, legal pluralism, and deficits in justice delivery. Lessons drawn from Nigerian initiatives targeting child protection and gender-based violence provide comparative insight into coalition design, data governance, and accountability. By distinguishing demonstrable progress from symbolic adherence, the paper formulates actionable recommendations to strengthen State-society collaboration while protecting freedom of religion or belief, advancing Resolution 47/8 from commitment to measurable protection outcomes.

Edward Ngubo Moracha

Negotiating Culture and Human Rights: Reforming Gusii Traditional Governance to Address Witchcraft Accusations and Violence in Kisii County, Kenya

This study examines how Gusii traditional governance systems can be ethically reformed to reduce witchcraft accusations and associated violence while safeguarding mental health, psychosocial well-being, and community legitimacy. Evidence from Kisii County indicates persistent beliefs in witchcraft, accompanied by fear and stigma, particularly affecting older adults and undermining social relationships and psychological stability. However, existing research has largely overlooked how indigenous governance structures can be reshaped to align with human rights standards and ethical counselling practices. Insights from studies in Ghana and Sierra Leone further reveal that individuals accused of witchcraft often experience profound emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, trauma, and social isolation, highlighting tensions between human rights frameworks and local cultural interpretations of spirituality, justice, and personhood. The study explores how Gusii elders, religious leaders, and local state actors currently respond to witchcraft accusations, the ethical dilemmas that arise at the intersection of culture and rights, and potential governance reforms that are both culturally legitimate and protective of affected individuals and their families. The research is grounded in human rights principles, virtue and care ethics, ecological systems theory, and multicultural counselling perspectives. Using a qualitative case study approach, data will be collected through interviews, focus groups, and observations. Anticipated findings point to significant psychological harm alongside opportunities for culturally grounded, non-violent mediation and improved psychosocial support systems.

Nyasha Chikowero

A People Unjustly Displaced? Traditional Authorities and the Persistence of Witchcraft Accusations in Southwestern Zimbabwe

In January 2026, an elderly Zimbabwean woman went viral on social media after being forcibly evicted from her house by her own children, accusing her of practising witchcraft. This incident represents a serious human rights violation in the post-independence era. In this paper, I examine how traditional authorities address forced displacements associated with witchcraft accusations in rural Zimbabwe. In a society where witchcraft beliefs are deep-rooted, and African Traditional Religion (ATR) is highly embraced, some members, consumed by fear and the relentless pursuit of answers for their social and economic problems, often attribute their misfortunes to spiritual attacks by a relative or a jealous neighbour. This violence, as the evidence suggests, occurs within families and the wider community, prompting mob justice with the accused getting banished from their original homelands. Traditional authorities continue to face the intricate challenge of balancing their mandate of upholding African culture, which permits witchcraft accusations and the punishment of alleged witches, with current witchcraft legislation, built on the Rhodesian Witchcraft Suppression Act of 1899, to condemn any form of violence associated with the belief in witchcraft. This paper scrutinises how these authorities protect community members from unjust accusations, forced displacements, and misogynistic punishments. Approaching this subject from a historical perspective, I demonstrate how historical injustices continue to influence contemporary dispute resolution efforts by traditional leaders. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews and an analysis of primary documents, including newspaper archives and traditional court records.

Room B: Practical Responses, Prevention, and Protection II

Robert Rachami Gutwa

Engaging Faith Actors to Address Witchcraft Accusations and Violence in Kisii, Kenya

In many communities across Kisii, the church is more than a place of worship -- it is a place of guidance, trust, and refuge. This study seeks to understand how churches, faith-based organizations (FBOs), and religious leaders can use this trusted position to prevent witchcraft accusations, respond to violence, and help reshape harmful beliefs. Witchcraft accusations in Kisii, often directed at elderly and vulnerable individuals especially women, continue to cause fear, stigma, displacement, and even loss of life. Despite their influence, faith actors are not fully or systematically engaged in addressing witchcraft-related violence. The study explores how to strengthen the role of faith actors in preventing accusations, protecting vulnerable individuals, and promoting dignity, compassion, and peaceful coexistence. Guided by Social Norms Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, using mixed-methods (interviews, FGDs, surveys). Expected findings: increased awareness, reduced stigma, and stronger faith-led community responses prioritising protection and healing.

Milan Ivic

Aid projects addressing accusations of witchcraft: protection, education and human dignity

Accusations of witchcraft lead to the most serious human rights violations worldwide, affecting particularly vulnerable groups above all. missio not only documents this violence but also supports specific aid projects for those affected in several countries. The work of missio and its partners demonstrates how church-based aid organisations operating globally can combat the effects of

accusations of witchcraft through various projects combining immediate protection with long-term prevention: emergency rescue, safe havens, medical and psychological support, educational and awareness-raising work, community outreach, and material aid for women, children and families. Using specific country examples from Ghana, Benin, Niger and Papua New Guinea, the report illustrates how varied the causes and consequences of witchcraft accusations are and which responses can be effective on the ground. These include care and reintegration of women in "witch camps", protection and schooling of affected children, awareness-raising campaigns with village and religious leaders, and documentation of cases to strengthen international advocacy.

Edith Akiror

Building a Church-Led Coalition for SARV Prevention in the Papua New Guinea Highlands

Sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV) in Papua New Guinea is sustained by shared belief structures that authorise violence as a legitimate response to misfortune. Effective prevention therefore requires reaching communities through the institutions they already trust -- yet no single institution can achieve this at scale. This paper examines the process by which UNFPA, the Melanesian Institute and twelve church partner organisations across six Highlands provinces built a multi-stakeholder coalition to deliver two complementary SARV prevention programmes: the Community Curriculum, a facilitated adult formation programme, and Peter and Grace Make a Difference, a school-based programme for Grades 5-8. The paper focuses on the coalition architecture itself as a case study in stakeholder response to UN Resolution 47/8. It traces how an ecumenical partnership model -- in which churches nominate their own coordinators and facilitators while the Melanesian Institute provides training, materials, and fiduciary oversight -- enabled denominational competitors to become operational partners. It examines the tensions navigated along the way: between church autonomy and programme fidelity, between community ownership and donor accountability, and between faith-based leadership and secular human rights framing. Drawing on evidence from the 2025 Community Curriculum trial in Enga, the Simbu Province rollout, and the 2026 Highlands-wide scale-up, the paper argues that coalition design -- who holds what role, who controls resources, and how trust is structured -- is as critical to SARV prevention as curriculum content. It concludes with practical lessons for replication in other contexts where harmful practices are sustained by deeply held beliefs and dispersed institutional authority.

Anton Lutz

The Big Ah-ha! Forging Philological and Etymological Tools to End Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea

Responses to sorcery accusation-related violence (SARV) in Papua New Guinea typically follow one of two paths. Faith-based actors affirm the reality of dangerous forces but urge compassion over violence. Human rights actors will not challenge belief and focus on protecting those accused. Both leave untouched a deeper driver: the word *sanguma* itself, and the false authority it derives from its presence in the Tok Pisin Bible. This paper traces the philological chain by which the Hebrew word *kashaph* -- referring to ritual specialists serving foreign gods -- became Greek *pharmakeus*, Latin *maleficos*, English witch, and finally Tok Pisin *sanguma*. At each stage, translators did their best. But by the time *sanguma* entered the Tok Pisin Bible, it carried meanings the original authors never intended and lent scriptural authority to ideas -- and a specific word -- that had absorbed disparate beliefs into a single lethal category. The paper presents an intervention built on this research. *Wokman Bilong God Mas Sanap Strong* is a 50-lesson Christian peacebuilding resource developed with the Melanesian Institute that

guides pastors to understand this translation chain. Workshops with church leaders across PNG denominations have produced a consistent response: when pastors see that sanguma entered their Bibles through historical translation decisions, not divine mandate, they are liberated to protect others in new ways. This approach does not ask anyone to doubt Scripture, but rather to read it more faithfully, opening a path to narrative transformation and community protection.

Room C: Gendered Harm, Health, and Psychosocial Response

Mapenzi Thérèse Mema

Heal the psychosocial trauma to prevent individuals and community violence related to witchcraft accusation and Sexual and gender-based violence

Since three dedicate DRC in general and its Eastern part in particular have more people accused of witchcraft. The reason of witchcraft accusations varies according to the context but generally they are reinforced because of the weak state and the proliferation of churches. The victims are mainly women, old people and children who experience serious human rights violations and reduced to silent. The UN human right council adopted the Resolution 47/8 on the elimination of harmful practices related to accusation of witchcraft and rituals attacks. But many victims in many countries still suffer. In many DRC communities, witchcraft accusations do not occur in isolation, but they are deeply connected to cultural and historical violence, poverty and unaddressed psychological wounds. Individuals and community trauma experience influence perceptions, relationship and social dynamics. And in addition to cases of Witchcraft accusations, people also suffer from army groups conflicts. Many researches state that people who live in a context of war where other human rights violations are observed, stay traumatized and very often are ready to revenge because of experienced violence and this situation can increase more conflict especially when victims do not have access to psychosocial program. This paper therefore draws on professional experience as a Psycho social assistant, peacebuilding actor and women's right defender working with DRC affected communities. It will address and explore the link between unresolved trauma, social violence and witchcraft accusation particularly in contexts affected by armed conflict and Sexual and gender-based violence. This paper argues that responses to accusations of witchcraft must go beyond legal and policy framework but should include holistic approaches with a focus on psychosocial approaches. This can result into community healing and social cohesion. Robert, J et al. (2007) affirm that the psycho social care programs are more efficient when the perceptions, the appreciations and point of views/propulsions of the victims and survivors are collected and integrating into the conception, planification, implementation and follow up of program and projects. Finally, the paper reflects the role of stakeholders in responding to this issue and contributing to the implementation of the 47/8 resolution.

Peter Mintir Amadu

Examining the Mental Health and Psychosocial Needs of Women Alleged as Witches in Northern Ghana: A Mixed-Methods Study

This study examines the mental health and psychosocial needs of women alleged as witches residing in camps in Northern Ghana, a highly marginalized population affected by stigma, displacement, and human rights violations. Rooted in socio-cultural beliefs and gender inequalities, witchcraft accusations disproportionately impact older women, exposing them to trauma, isolation, and deprivation. Despite increasing advocacy, empirical evidence on their mental health status remains limited, necessitating

mixed-methods research to inform culturally appropriate MHPSS interventions and policy responses. A mixed-methods design was employed to assess the prevalence of mental health concerns among alleged witches in Northern Ghana. A total of 500 women were included through census sampling from four camps. Standardized tools, including the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K10), DASS-21, and IES-R, were used alongside interviews and focus group discussions to explore lived experiences. Quantitative findings revealed high psychological burden: 72% depression, 65% anxiety, 68% stress, 81% distress, and 89% PTSD. Qualitative results showed traumatic displacement, social isolation, lack of basic needs, stigma, limited support, and spiritual disconnection. Many women reported being forcibly removed from their communities, deprived of basic needs, and excluded from social and religious life, leading to hopelessness and suicidal ideation. The study highlights critical gaps in mental health data and services. TOLECGH's trauma-informed care model, integrating advocacy, psychotherapy, counselling, and reintegration, shows promise, underscoring the need for integrated MHPSS, policy reform, and community education. Co-authors: Rejoice Enyonam Hoedoafia and Divine Davor.

Rodgers Shijenje Lukano

Intersections of Gender, Poverty and Theology in Stakeholder Responses to Witchcraft Accusations Globally

This paper explores the intersections of gender, poverty, and theology in shaping stakeholder responses to witchcraft accusations, situating the discussion within the human rights framework of UN Resolution 48/8. Witchcraft accusations continue to produce severe human rights violations globally, disproportionately targeting women, the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities in socioeconomically marginalized contexts. The paper argues that systematic theology -- especially doctrines of imago Dei, justice, and human dignity -- provides a critical framework for addressing the structural and moral dimensions of witchcraft accusations. A theologically informed, intersectional approach can strengthen stakeholder responses by bridging human rights commitments with local belief systems. Adopts a qualitative, interdisciplinary approach combining systematic theological reflection with case study analysis from Africa and Asia. Draws on liberation theology and public theology. Recommends contextual theological training for religious leaders and incorporation of intersectional analysis in implementing UN Resolution 48/8. Keywords: Witchcraft accusations; Human rights; Systematic theology; Gender and poverty; UN Resolution 48/8

Ali Moloney

The Prevalence, Impact and Systemic Challenges of Traumatic Fistulas in Papua New Guinea Arising from Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence

The adoption of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 (2021) marked a key international commitment to eliminating harmful practices associated with accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks. In PNG, SARV constitutes one of the most severe contemporary manifestations of such practices, resulting in extreme forms of gender-based violence with profound and enduring health consequences. Among the most overlooked is traumatic genital fistula, a preventable condition caused by violent sexual injury. Drawing on emerging field-based evidence, this project examines traumatic fistula among SARV survivors in PNG as a public health emergency and a human rights concern. In several provinces, more than 60% of women who survive SARV-related sexual violence present with traumatic fistula -- levels exceeding published global estimates. Yet access to timely diagnosis, surgical repair, infection prevention, and long-term care remains severely constrained, resulting in preventable

morbidity and mortality including death from sepsis. The paper argues for stronger recognition of health systems as front-line sites of response, improved coordination between State and non-State stakeholders, and survivor-centred, culturally safe models of care.

2:00 pm - 3:30 pm - Parallel Session 6

Room A: Belief, Interpretation, and Social Drivers

Neelesh Kumar Singh

Belief Explains Accusation, Power Explains Violence: Rethinking Stakeholder Responses to Witchcraft Accusations under UN Resolution 47/8

UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8 recognises witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks as serious human rights violations. Yet institutional responses continue to frame these incidents largely as problems of belief, superstition, or lack of awareness, shaping when and how intervention takes place. Drawing on fieldwork and survivor data from Jharkhand, along with research on gender norms and institutional access, this paper argues that such explanations are insufficient to explain the persistence of violence. While policy and academic discussions often focus on belief systems or cultural meanings, this focus does not adequately explain how accusations translate into violence in the present. In many cases, accusations begin with rumours, suspicion, or conflict around illness, land, or relationships and move through stages of isolation, humiliation, and social exclusion. These stages are rarely treated as requiring intervention and are instead seen as internal to the family or village. By the time violence becomes visible, often as public assault or killing, it already carries social sanction, and accountability becomes unlikely. The paper proposes a distinction: belief explains accusation, but power explains violence, and institutional responses shape whether violence is prevented or allowed to unfold. When witch-hunting is treated mainly as an awareness issue, attention shifts away from accountability and delays intervention. The paper argues for early legal recognition of accusation as risk, proactive protection of those targeted, and responses that recognise witch-hunting as collective, gendered violence embedded in local governance systems.

George Ezekiel Aberi

Discursive Struggles over Truth: Evidentiality and Argumentation in Witchcraft Accusation Narratives in Kenyan Media

This study examines how Kenyan media constructs witchcraft accusations as a global crisis through discursive struggles over truth, focusing on evidentiality and argumentation in news narratives. Three research questions: How do Kenyan media texts construct evidential authority in witchcraft accusation stories? What argumentation strategies are used to justify or challenge claims of witchcraft? How do these discourses reflect broader social, cultural, and human rights concerns? Guided by Critical Discourse Analysis, argumentation theory, and theories of evidentiality, with attention to transitivity and modality as analytical tools. Data: purposively sampled articles, editorials, and digital media posts from major Kenyan news outlets, 2015-2025. Findings expected to show that media texts construct competing narratives of truth, often privileging certain voices while marginalizing others. Key terms: witchcraft accusations; evidentiality; argumentation; Kenyan media; CDA; transitivity; truth construction.

Ali Moloney

Sorcery Accusation-Related Violence in Papua New Guinea -- Both Sides of the Story

SARV continues to be a persistent and growing issue in PNG, with daily reports of accusations and violence in several provinces. Although sorcery beliefs are deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual traditions, the current extreme violence -- such as torture, rape, and severe physical and psychological abuse -- marks a significant departure from historical ways these beliefs were expressed. This presentation draws on firsthand accounts from both survivors of SARV and individuals involved in perpetrating violence. These narratives, collected through direct, ethically guided conversations, provide rare and vital insights into the lived experiences of SARV from various perspectives. Survivor accounts highlight lasting physical, psychological, and social effects such as stigma, displacement, and continued vulnerability. Perpetrator stories offer insight into the supposed justifications for violence, showing how dehumanisation facilitates increasing harm. These perspectives reveal the intricate relationship between cultural beliefs, fear, community interactions, and systemic constraints within health and legal frameworks. Permission to share these narratives has been obtained with stringent confidentiality measures.

Room B: Regional Collaboration Roundtable

Room C: International Online Panel Hosted from the United States

Josh Hutchinson and Sarah Jack

The Unbroken Thread: Demonological Continuity and Contemporary Witchcraft Persecution

Early modern European demonological treatises, from the *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486) through the witch trial manuals of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are more than artifacts of bygone beliefs. This presentation demonstrates how the structural witch hunting logic encoded in those texts remains operative in belief systems and is demonstrated in contemporary witchcraft-related violence, not necessarily through direct transmission of texts, but through convergences of fear. Drawing on a close reading of demonological literature alongside current case documentation, the presentation reveals recurring patterns in the nature of accusations and the demonization of the accused. The March 2026 mob killing of Eneless Hellen Kamutumbe in Zambia, following an accusation of magical genital theft, is one recent example. The presentation also considers how textual transmission from culture to culture is still occurring and reinforcing ancient beliefs about witchcraft, including the inclusion of the word *Sanguma* in the Tok Pisin Bible of Papua New Guinea. Identifying similarities rooted in demonological theologies across time and cultural contexts shows the common nature of witchcraft belief and accusation, even in Western culture after formal witch trials ended. The presentation concludes with a conversation about what these patterns are teaching us.

Marissa Brinkley

Translating Invisible Harm: How Asylum Adjudicators Assess Claims of Witchcraft and Spiritual Persecution

In July 2021, the United Nations Human Rights Council adopted Resolution 47/8, recognizing accusations of witchcraft and ritual attacks as drivers of serious human rights violations. While the Resolution is directed at States, its implementation depends in part on how state actors interpret and respond to claims involving such harms in practice. This paper examines how asylum adjudicators in Canada assess claims grounded in witchcraft-related persecution. Witchcraft-related claims present a particular

challenge within refugee law, as they involve forms of harm that are experienced as real and life-threatening by claimants, but are articulated through belief systems that do not align with Western legal assumptions about evidence, causation, and plausibility. Drawing on qualitative analysis of Canadian Federal Court judicial review decisions, supplemented by a small number of semi-structured interviews with expert witnesses, this paper treats asylum adjudication as a socio-legal site where narratives are assessed, credibility is constructed, and culturally specific forms of harm are translated into legal categories. It argues that credibility assessments and evidentiary reasoning operate as key mechanisms through which witchcraft-related claims are translated, reframed, or constrained. This analysis highlights potential implications for refugee protection frameworks and broader international efforts to operationalize human rights responses to witchcraft-related violence. By situating asylum adjudicators within the broader landscape of stakeholders engaged in responding to harmful practices, this paper contributes to discussions on the implementation of Resolution 47/8, highlighting how legal interpretation shapes the recognition of harm and the limits of protection.

Speaker Bios

This section lists the speaker biographies for presenters included in the revised draft conference program.

Plenary

Ms Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond

Ms. Muluka-Anne Miti-Drummond started her mandate as Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with Albinism in August 2021.

Ms. Miti-Drummond has worked in the area of human rights for almost 20 years. She holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB), an LLM in international law, and a Master of Science (MSc) in development management. Until the end of January 2020, Muluka worked as the Deputy Director and Senior Programme Lawyer for International Advocacy at the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI). She has previously worked as the Regional Advocacy Director at the Southern Africa Litigation Centre (SALC); the Researcher for Portuguese and Spanish-Speaking African Countries at Amnesty International; a consultant for the International Organisation for Migration (IOM); and as a legal expert at the Universidade Catolica de Mocambique.

Most recently, she has worked as a senior international human rights consultant, including on legal matters for the outgoing Independent Expert on the enjoyment of human rights by persons with albinism, [Ms. Ikponwosa Ero](#). Ms. Miti-Drummond has written reports and studies on the protection of human rights of persons with albinism, including a manual for national human rights institutions working on the rights of persons with albinism on behalf of Amnesty International and a report on international and regional standards for the protection and promotion of human rights of persons with albinism on behalf of the International Bar Association.

She holds a Bachelor of Laws from the University of Venda, South Africa, a Master's degree in international law from the University of Pretoria, and a Master's degree in international development from the Open University, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In addition to English, she speaks Portuguese and some Spanish.

Peguy Ndonko

Peguy Ndonko est anthropologue, titulaire d'un Doctorat (Ph.D) obtenu a l'Universite d'Aix-Marseille en France. Il est actuellement enseignant permanent a l'Universite de Bamenda (Nord-Ouest Cameroun) au departement de Communication et des Etudes de Developpement. Il a publie une vingtaine d'articles dans les revues nationales et internationales et auteur de 4 ouvrages publies. Il prepare actuellement son passage au grade de Professeur et travaille sur 4 ouvrages dans des domaines divers. Il est consultant des organismes internationaux depuis une dizaine d'annee.

Nendimma Dogo Gonet

Dr. Nendimma Dogo Gonet is a senior officer with the Nigerian Correctional Service, currently serving in the Planning, Research, and Statistics Department at the National Headquarters, Abuja. He obtained his PhD from the University of Jos, Department of History and International Studies. His research interests span historiography, internal security, criminal justice systems, and paramilitary institutions. Dr. Gonet has published extensively in reputable local and international peer-reviewed journals. He is also the author of several scholarly works, including: *Ngas People: History, Traditions and Worldviews*; *Rudiments of Kingship in Yil-Ngas*; *Ngas Traditional Marriage*; *Ngas Land: Continuity and Change*.

Hezekiah Obwoye

Dr. Hezekiah Obwoye is a Kenyan scholar specializing in religion, culture, and society, with a strong focus on interfaith dialogue, peacebuilding, and African indigenous knowledge systems. His research engages critical themes such as feminist theology, religious disengagement, environmental ethics, and the dynamics of doctrine and practice within African Christian movements. He has contributed to academic and policy discussions on heritage, governance, and conflict transformation in East Africa. Dr. Obwoye is also actively involved in developing innovative institutional frameworks that promote interreligious cooperation, cultural heritage preservation, and sustainable peace across the African continent.

Daniel Rotich Kandagor

Lileni Mangani

Lileni Mangani is a researcher, advocate, and community development practitioner with extensive experience in human rights, child protection, and faith-based engagement. Holding a degree in Primary Education from Malawi, he has worked with churches, faith-based organizations, and civil society groups across the Central Region to address harmful traditional practices, including witchcraft accusations and related violence. He has facilitated interfaith dialogues, designed training curricula for religious leaders, and contributed to policy advocacy efforts aimed at protecting vulnerable populations. His work centers on harnessing the moral authority of faith communities to promote dignity, justice, and social transformation at the grassroots level.

Brian Aggrey Theu

Rev Dr. Brian Aggrey Theu is a Lecturer and Campus Registrar at the University of Livingstonia, Ekwendeni Campus, Mzuzu, Malawi, and an ordained minister of the CCAP Synod of Livingstonia. Contact: +265 999 327 560; briantheu@yahoo.com; briantheu73@gmail.com.

Agbo Mathew Oga

Agbo Mathew Oga, PhD, is a lecturer with the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies and the current Head of Department. He specializes in social history and has published over 30 articles in peer-reviewed journals. He has attended workshops and conferences both locally and internationally. He is a recipient of an Institutional-Based Research Grant for research on drug abuse in selected local government areas in Gombe State.

Carolyn Gent

Carolyn Gent is a key figure at Communalife (formerly the Stop Child Witch Accusations Coalition), which was formed to call and equip the local church to respond to child witch accusations and resulting harm. Communalife has more than 12 years of experience working with local collaborators in sub-Saharan African nations using a faith-based, research-informed, contextualised approach called "the Heart of the Matter".

Retta Getachew

Retta Getachew is a Programme Manager for Child Development and Protection at African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), an independent, not-for-profit, pan-African organisation committed to advancing children's rights and wellbeing across Africa. He coordinated ACPF's 2022 multi-country study (Uncovering Our Hidden Shame: Addressing Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks), which examines witchcraft accusations and ritual attacks against children and the need to strengthen child protection systems across Africa in the context of UN Human Rights Council Resolution 47/8. With extensive experience in child protection policy research, multi-stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based advocacy, Retta supports African governments, civil society, and regional bodies in strengthening responses to violence against children. This paper is presented on behalf of ACPF.

Achileus Dzevernuy Tardzenyuy

Achileus Dzevernuy Tardzenyuy is a human rights advocate and doctoral researcher specialising in reparation litigation before human rights bodies in Africa. He currently serves with the Africa Albinism Network as Human Rights Officer where he prepares and submits high quality shadow reports to the UN and AU Human rights mechanisms, draft public statements condemning violation of the rights of persons with Albinism. He previously served as the first Human Rights Fellow at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, contributing to jurisprudence analysis, electoral justice, and reparation fact sheet. His work focuses on access to justice for marginalised populations.

Ibrahim Babangida Lawal

Ibrahim Babangida Lawal is a Nigerian statistician and community development practitioner with extensive experience in research, data analysis, and social outreach. He has collaborated with NGOs, faith-based organizations and community leaders to address social issues including education, poverty and human rights advocacy. As CEO of All You Want Multi-Concepts he combines entrepreneurship in livestock and aquaculture with mentorship programs for youth. He has served as a teacher, imam, and coordinator of community initiatives, leveraging research and engagement to inform policy and interventions. He holds a BSc in Statistics from the University of Abuja and is pursuing an MSc in Statistics.

Peter N. Mose

Dr. Peter N. Mose holds a Ph.D in African Languages from Rhodes University in South Africa and works as a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Languages, Linguistics, and Literature at Kisii University in Kenya. His specialization is in language literacies, multilingualism, and language policies. His current

research interest is on Critical Discourse Analyses where he uses critical narrative approaches to unearth underlying attitudes and perceptions on various social issues and trends both online and among actual communities. Other research interests are in critical literacies, language and culture, and decoloniality.

Hope Herbert Nkhoma

Hope Herbert Nkhoma is a visionary academic leader, consultant, and student support specialist with over a decade of experience in higher education administration and research. As Head of Department in Social Sciences at Malawi Assemblies of God University, Hope has advanced student success, institutional excellence, and staff development. He is the founder of Community Network Action, an organization dedicated to grassroots empowerment and social transformation. A dedicated researcher, Hope integrates methodological rigor with transformative themes such as gender, empowerment, and health.

Anderson Simfukwe

Samson Sibande

Phoebe Faith Chifungo

Phoebe Faith Chifungo is a senior lecturer, gender specialist, a methodical and hardworking lady with a great passion in research and writing. She has a wide professional experience in lecturing and gender advocacy. She is currently serving as the senior lecturer, gender coordinator, and vice chairperson of post graduate committee at the University of Livingstonia, Malawi where she also served as the dean of academics. She holds a PhD, Masters, and Post Graduate Diploma, all obtained from Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

Govind Kelkar

Govind Kelkar is Executive Director and Professor, International Alliance to End Witch Hunts, Gurgaon, India. He also holds visiting and honorary research appointments in India and abroad and is a Lead Author for the 7th Global Environment Outlook, United Nations Environmental Programme.

Pachalo Mnkondya

Pachalo Mnkondya is a final-year Bachelor of Social Science in Development Studies student at the University of Livingstonia, Malawi. His academic interests centre on human rights, rural development, and social justice, with particular focus on vulnerable groups such as the elderly. He has gained field experience through his internship with the Centre for Research and Development Initiative (CERADI), where he participated in community-based programmes on women and youth empowerment. His current research examines the effects of witchcraft accusations on elderly welfare in rural Malawi, with a case study of Traditional Authority Dzole in Dowa District.

George Ezekiel Aberi

George Ezekiel Aberi is an interdisciplinary researcher and lecturer at Kisii University. PhD in Applied Linguistics, Victoria University of Wellington. Research focuses on Critical Discourse Analysis, sociolinguistics, policy interpretation, leadership communication, and gender equity. See also IDs 25 and 26.

Charlotte Baker

Charlotte Baker is Professor of French and Critical Disability Studies in the School of Global Affairs at Lancaster University. Charlotte's research focuses on disability and stigma in sub-Saharan Africa, with a particular interest in the genetic condition albinism. She collaborated with the former UN Independent Expert on Albinism, the Witchcraft and Human Rights Information Network and other partners to secure Resolution 47/8 calling for action on harmful practices resulting from witchcraft-related beliefs at the UN Human Rights Council in July 2021. She is a member of the UK National Police Chief's Council (NPCC) Working Group on Witchcraft, Spirit Possession and Ritual Abuse, and Co-Director of the International Network Against Accusations of Witchcraft and Ritual Attacks (INAWARA) with Professor Miranda Forsyth.

Sudesh Ghoderao

Dr Sudesh Bhaskar Ghoderao is a Professor and dedicated social reformer at RNC Arts, JDB Commerce and NSC Science College, Nashik Road, Nashik, India. He holds leadership roles as Secretary for the National and International Coordination of MANS (Maharashtra Andhshraddha Nirmoolan Samiti) and as General Secretary for the Federation of Indian Rationalist Associations (FIRA). His doctoral research specialised in deconstructing "miracles" by demonstrating the chemical reactions behind them, a method he uses to foster scientific curiosity and combat superstition.

Bomai Witne

Dr Bomai Witne holds a Doctor of Philosophy from the Queensland University of Technology in Brisbane, Australia. Bomai's thesis explores the complexity of sorcery-related violence through the lens of peace-building and Indigenous Knowledge. The findings revealed that locally appropriate peace building offered insights into the experiences, motivations, and challenges of sorcery-related violence and sustainable responses. Witne is a Senior Lecturer at the University of Goroka and supports community and church-based education and advocacy programs against all forms of violence consistent with cultural, Christian and Human Rights values.

Bawa Abdulai Yakubu

Bawa Abdulai Yakubu is Executive Director of RuWYEDA, a non-profit NGO in Northern Ghana promoting and protecting the human rights of rural poor women and children, particularly persons accused of witchcraft. MA in Conflict, Peace and Security (KAIPTC); BA in Business Administration HRM (Valley View University). Phanuel Myers Agudu: Catholic Priest (ordained 2009), former Director of TICCS (Tamale Institute of Cross Cultural Studies), Director of SVD Ghana Projects. MA in Social and Cultural

Anthropology (KU Leuven, 2017). PhD student, Millar Institute, Ghana. Monica Maria Tetzlaff: Associate Professor of History, Indiana University of South Bend. PhD, University of Pennsylvania. Fulbright Scholar at University of Ghana, Institute of African Studies (2014-15).

Mary Sibande

Mary Sibande is Director of Research at University of Livingstonia. She is a Commonwealth Professional Fellow in Science and Technology and visiting researcher at Lancaster University. Mary is a Community Health and Development Scientist, a qualitative researcher and a PhD student in Environmental Sciences at Mzuzu University. She has implemented research initiatives in Malawi such as women researchers' and Early Career Researchers workshops, and organised the first exhibition on Witchcraft Accusations in Malawi: The Role of the Clergy and Stakeholders. She is currently involved in Higher Education and Science Policy review in Malawi. She has co-organised local and international workshops and conferences.

Leo Igwe

Leo Igwe holds an MA in philosophy from the University of Calabar in Nigeria and a doctoral degree in religious studies from the University of Bayreuth in Germany. He was a postdoctoral research fellow at the Department for the Study of Religions at the University of Cape Town (2021/2022), with research interests in witchcraft and atheism/nonreligion in Ghana, Kenya, and Nigeria. He directs the Advocacy for Alleged Witches, Critical Thinking Social Empowerment Foundation, and Humanist Enabling Life Project, and serves on the board of Humanists International.

Keith Silika

Dr Keith K. Silika is a Lecturer in Police Studies at the University of Salford and a former police officer and PCSO with Greater Manchester Police and the Zimbabwe Republic Police. He holds a PhD in Forensic Archaeology, specialising in the investigation of clandestine burials and human rights violations. His work spans policing, safeguarding, and the investigation of ritual and belief-related harm. Dr Silika has experience in crime scene investigation, intelligence gathering, and the application of artificial intelligence in policing. He is a member of the International Network Against Harmful Practices and develops practical frameworks and tools to support frontline investigators.

Juliet C. Sigauke

Dr Juliet C. Sigauke is from the University of the Free State in South Africa. In her submission email she noted that her PhD thesis examined law, media, witchcraft accusations, and socio-religious responses in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

Cletus Suhfree

CS Suhfree is a senior research analyst, author, and political commentator based in Johannesburg. He consults on African governance, facilitates workshops, and writes for outlets including TM-School and the University of Johannesburg. His expertise spans legal pluralism, dispute resolution, and West, Central and Southern African policy, informed by fieldwork in Malawi and regional analysis. He holds an

MA in Development Studies (Cum Laude) and an MA in Politics and International Relations, and is a PhD Candidate.

Peter Gutwa Oino

Dr. Peter Gutwa Oino is a sociologist and anthropologist and former Dean of the School of Arts and Social Sciences at Kisii University, Kenya. His research focuses on the intersections of climate change, health, and social inequality, particularly among vulnerable and marginalized populations in East Africa. He has led interdisciplinary studies on youth resilience, mental health, and sustainable livelihoods, with a strong interest in how cultural systems shape community responses to environmental and social change. His work bridges research, policy, and practice by advancing context-sensitive, human rights-based approaches to development in Africa.

Joseph Bekeh Undie

Dr Joseph Bekeh Undie is a Lecturer at the University of Calabar, born in Obudu, Cross River State, Nigeria. He studied at the Federal College of Education, Obudu, before proceeding to the University of Calabar where he earned degrees through to PhD level in Curriculum and Teaching / Social Studies Education. He belongs to professional bodies including SOCEAN, SOSAN, and NPSA. His interests include development studies, culture, environment, and civics, and he is currently working on the effects of cross-border activities on border communities in Cross River State.

Nathan Chiroma

Nathan Chiroma is the principal and professor of practical theology at Africa College of Theology in Kigali, Rwanda. Have more than 30 years of teaching theology and leading institutions in different African countries. Have published extensively in the areas of children and youth ministry, contextual theological education, and mentoring and leadership development.

Odoh Nathaniel John

Odoh Nathaniel John is a lecturer with the Department of History and Diplomatic Studies, Federal University of Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria. His research focuses on the intersection of religion, governance, and human rights in contemporary African societies. His research interests include child protection, faith-based organisations, and the role of religious institutions in addressing social challenges within local communities. He has engaged in studies that examine how cultural beliefs, religious practices, and legal frameworks interact in shaping responses to vulnerable populations, particularly children. His current research explores witchcraft-related accusations against children in Nigeria and the role of faith-based organisations in promoting human rights awareness and community-based protection mechanisms.

Ali Moloney

Ali Moloney is a nurse academic and researcher whose work focuses on strengthening health systems across Papua New Guinea and the Pacific region. Her research centres on sorcery accusation-related violence, gender-based violence, and the health system impacts of extreme and structural violence. She

works collaboratively with Pacific partners to generate context-specific evidence that informs culturally safe, trauma-informed service delivery and policy reform.

Anton Lutz

Anton Lutz is a peacebuilder who has lived and worked in Papua New Guinea for four decades. His work focuses on equipping PNG church and community leaders to address and prevent SARV through education, theological reflection and community engagement. He has written and contributed to a number of educational resources on SARV. He holds a degree in theology from Valparaiso University and is a 2025 Rotary Peace Fellow.

Carolina Becker

Carolina Becker Pecanha is a Social Scientist graduated from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Brazil, and has been working in refugee and migration issues since 2014. She is currently a Master's student in Social Anthropology at UFSC. She has worked with UNHCR in Brazil and Mexico, developing experience in international refugee protection, socioeconomic inclusion, gender-sensitive approaches, migration policies, cash-based interventions, and emergency response. Since 2020 she has served as Head of Field Office for IOM in Santa Catarina, Brazil.

Michelle St.Ange-Ebrahim

PhD candidate at Griffith University, Australia. Research focuses on superstition laws, witchcraft-related harm, and state power in Kenya and Seychelles through a socio-legal and Foucauldian lens. Has completed three chapters of her PhD on this subject, with one published as a literature review in the Journal of Comparative Law in Africa (2025, vol 12, iss 2). Previously served as State Counsel at the Attorney-General's Chambers in Seychelles.

Josh Hutchinson

Josh Hutchinson descends from people accused of witchcraft and people who accused others of witchcraft. He is the co-host of three history podcasts with Sarah Jack: The Thing About Witch Hunts, The Thing About the Salem Witch Trials, and Salem Witch Trials Daily. He is also a co-founder of the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project, the team lead of the Massachusetts Witch-Hunt Justice Project, and a co-founder of End Witch Hunts, America's only nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the continuation of violence related to witchcraft accusations.

Sarah Jack

Sarah Jack (endwitchhunts.org) is a documented descendant of victims of witch trials held in Salem, Boston, and Hartford, including Rebecca Nurse, Mary Easty, Mary Hale, and Winifred Benham. She co-hosts three history podcasts with Josh Hutchinson: The Thing About Witch Hunts, The Thing About the Salem Witch Trials, and Salem Witch Trials Daily. She co-founded the Connecticut Witch Trial Exoneration Project, and is the Founding Executive Director of End Witch Hunts, a nonprofit bridging witchcraft accusation history and its living consequences.

Marissa Brinkley

Marissa Brinkley is a human rights and peacebuilding professional specializing in gender justice, refugee law, and witchcraft-related persecution. She holds an MA in Conflict Resolution and Mediation from Tel Aviv University and is completing an MSc in Law and Society at Leiden University, where her thesis examines credibility assessment and cultural translation in Canadian asylum adjudication of witchcraft-related claims. She currently interns with the International Network Against Witchcraft Accusations and Ritual Attacks (INAWARA), supporting stakeholder engagement and communications. Her previous experience includes programme implementation at Search for Common Ground and human rights work at The Justice Desk in Cape Town.

Robert Rachami Gutwa

Robert Rachami Gutwa is a community development practitioner and Accredited Mediator with the Judiciary of Kenya, based in Kisii, Kenya. He has worked as a VCT Counsellor (Itierio Nursing Home; Merlin International), Hospital Administrator with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Kenya, and serves as Director of Grace Community Centre. Life member of Abagusii Community Development Council. Fluent in English, Kiswahili, and Ekegusii. Expertise in mediation, conflict resolution, counselling, and community engagement.

Milan Ivic

Milan Ivic holds a Bachelor's in Cultural Studies (Social Sciences) and a Master's in European Studies (Politics). Working for missio-Aachen in Berlin since 2020. Previously research assistant in the Berlin House of Representatives and the German Bundestag. Represents missio in the political sphere in Berlin, networking with politicians and NGOs to raise political awareness of human rights issues including modern slavery, religious freedom, and consequences of accusations of witchcraft.

Edith Akiror

Edith Akiror is a Technical Specialist with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Papua New Guinea. She oversees the Community Curriculum and Peter and Grace initiatives being rolled out across the PNG Highlands in partnership with the Melanesian Institute. A demographer by training with peer-reviewed publications on reproductive health and population dynamics, Edith previously served with UNFPA Uganda.

Mapenzi Therese Mema

Bio not provided in the conference tracker.

Peter Mintir Amadu

Peter Mintir Amadu is a Lecturer, researcher, and Clinical Health Psychologist with over a decade of experience in mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) provision to vulnerable populations. He is a leading advocate for integrating mental health into public health and community systems in Ghana. As a key figure at Total Life Enhancement Centre Ghana (TOLECGH), he supports youth, women, and marginalized populations through evidence-based interventions. His work focuses on bridging gaps in

mental health service delivery, advancing research, and promoting trauma-informed care. Peter is committed to transforming the MHPSS landscape in Ghana through innovation, capacity building, and impact-driven programming.

Rodgers Shijenje Lukano

Pastor Rodgers Shijenje Lukano is a PhD candidate with a Master of Theology in Systematic Theology and a Bachelor of Divinity. He serves as a Minister of the Gospel with Christ Is the Answer Ministries and is a Counseling Psychologist, Certified Professional Mediator (CPM), Accredited Mediator, and Trainer of Trainers.

Miranda Forsyth

Miranda Forsyth is based at the School of Regulation and Global Governance (RegNet) at The Australian National University. Her research focuses on legal pluralism, justice, and responses to sorcery accusation-related violence in Papua New Guinea and the Pacific.

Neelesh Kumar Singh

Neelesh Kumar Singh is the Founder and Executive Director of EquiVoice Alliance Foundation, working on gender justice and prevention of gender-based violence, including witch-hunting, in Jharkhand. With over two decades of experience across government, civil society, and development programmes, he has worked extensively on gender, social inclusion, and institutional systems through roles with NRLM (National Rural Livelihood Mission). He led initiatives such as the Garima Project, addressing witch-hunting and developed state-level systems for responding to GBV. His current work combines field engagement, research, and programme design to examine how violence unfolds in everyday contexts and how institutional responses shape accountability.

Scholastica Atata

Scholastica Ngozi Atata holds a PhD in Sociology from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. She is a lecturer at the Institute of Communication and General Studies, Peace and Development Studies Unit, Federal University of Agriculture Abeokuta, Nigeria, where she teaches Sociology, Social Change, Sociology of Correction, Social Problems and Culture. She is a member of the Nigerian Anthropological and Sociological Association, the International Sociological Association, and a recipient of the Next Generation Social Sciences in Africa Fellowship from the Social Science Research Council. Dr Atata has published papers in reputable journals and book chapters. She is a budding scholar.

Edward Ngubo Moracha

Dr. Edward Ngubo Moracha is a counseling psychologist, educator, and researcher with extensive experience in university teaching, student mentorship, and community engagement. Currently Chair of the Psychology Department at Kisii University and a Lecturer, he specializes in child, adolescent, and family counseling, with strong expertise in mental health, behavioral issues, and human rights advocacy. He holds a PhD in Counseling Psychology and has contributed to research and publications on substance

abuse and behavioral disorders. Dr. Moracha has facilitated numerous trainings, workshops, and counseling programs, and is actively involved in community service and psychosocial interventions.

Nyasha Chikowero

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