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# Contents

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## 03 EDITORIAL

---

## 04 FEATURE

Language as a Social Determinant of Access to Justice

---

## 09 FEATURE

Access to Justice through Diversion of Child Offenders: Reflections on Emerging Case Law

---

## 18 FEATURE

Advancing Children's Quality of Life through Housing and Justice: Grassroots Organisations in Collaborative Conversation

---

## 24 FEATURE

The Value of Paralegals in Kenya's Justice Chain

---

## 30 EVENT

Webinar: Constitutional Resilience and the COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa (13 August 2020)

---

## 33 EVENT

Webinar: Our Voices Matter – The Impact of the Lockdown on Gender-Based Violence (7 September 2020)

# Editorial

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Welcome to the first issue of *ESR Review of 2021*, which is part of an ongoing special series on access to justice. At the time of this writing, the world bears witness to brutal attacks by the Nigerian government on #EndSARS protesters over the past three weeks. The Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), a police unit, was established in 1992 to combat rampant armed robberies and crime, but since its inception, it has abused its power by harassing, extorting and murdering the people of Nigeria.

Human rights activists have long condemned these actions, and earlier this month, on 6 October 2020, the country's youth reiterated the call for justice by staging nationwide protests against police brutality and demanding change from the government.

Though SARS was 'disbanded' on 11 October, grave human rights abuses continued. On 20 October, the Nigerian government, through its security forces, instated a 24-hour curfew to suppress protests and instructed the army to enforce the order. This led to security forces firing live ammunition at peaceful protesters gathered at the Lekki Toll Gate, killing at least 12 people and injuring many more.

These actions were condemned by the international human rights community. Likewise, we at the Dullah Omar Institute, an organisation committed to entrenching constitutionalism throughout Africa, submitted an official request for emergency intervention to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

There is still much to be done, however, and the fight is not over. The #EndSARS movement requires global traction in the form of education, protests and amplification of the voices of the Nigerian people. Samuel Otigba, a member of #EndSARS, told CNN he was stopped and harassed by a SARS officer for not giving the officer a bribe, stating that the officer said to him, 'You know if I shoot you, nothing will happen. The most anyone will do is cry [injustice] on Twitter.'

It is imperative that access to justice is achieved. The Nigerian people are demanding the release of all arrested protesters, justice for the victims and families of those subjected to police brutality, and an end to impunity on the African continent.

As the fifth issue in our series on access to justice, this edition of *ESR Review* presents several feature articles on the theme. The first explores the role of language as an element of justice, while the second investigates children in conflict with the law. The third feature discusses children's rights amid precarious human settlements in urban neighbourhoods, and another examines paralegals as anchors of the justice system.

The Events section provides highlights of webinar events hosted by the Socio-Economic Rights Project (SERP) of the Dullah Omar Institute.

We hope you find this issue stimulating and useful in the fight for the realisation of SDG 16 in Africa and beyond. We wish to thank the anonymous peer reviewers and our guest authors for their insightful contributions.

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*Paula Knipe*  
**Guest Editor**