

# Editorial

This issue of the *Journal* appears against the background of xenophobic violence in South Africa. Previously a symbol of transcending race and racism, South Africa's reputation has now become seriously tainted. The recent wave of violent xenophobia is a contradiction of the ideals of pan-Africanism. It illustrates that African integration has been dominated by politicians and bureaucrats, with meaningful involvement and inclusion of ordinary Africans seriously lacking. These recent events demonstrate how far-fetched and premature discussions about a federal 'United States of Africa' are. Increasingly, it is acknowledged that the project of African integration needs to focus on more modest goals, such as the consolidation of existing regional economic communities and the full functionality of all AU institutions.

One of these institutions, vested with great expectations, is the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. However, following the entry into force of the Protocol establishing the Court, on 25 January 2004, these expectations have remained unfulfilled. After some delay, the AU Assembly elected the 11 judges constituting the Court. Inaugurated on 2 July 2006, the judges serve for six, four or two-year terms, as determined by the drawing of lots. The two-year terms of four judges (Judges Somba, from Burkina Faso; Akuffo, from Ghana; Ngoepe, from South Africa; and Kanyiehamba, from Uganda) are therefore coming to an end in July 2008.

In those two years, the accomplishment of the Court has been limited. While progress has been made towards establishing the seat of the Court in Arusha, Tanzania, the Court's Rules of Procedure remain a work in progress. No doubt, the lack of such a regulatory framework accounts for the fact that no cases have so far been submitted to the Court. Perhaps it is now time for lawyers, civil society organisations and affected individuals to submit appropriate cases to the Court, so as to force the Court out of its lethargy.

The terms of four members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights of the Child also came to an end in July 2008. Still, this Committee has not examined any state report and has not dealt with communications pending before it.

Contributions in this issue of the *Journal* cover a wide range of themes, including topical issues such as South Africa's vote in the UN Security Council on Myanmar and the recent and upcoming decisions on life imprisonment in Uganda. While some articles focus on specific countries (Nigeria, Eritrea, Rwanda), others have a broader continental focus.

Contributions for 'articles' and 'recent developments' are subjected to peer review. The editors convey their thanks to the following independent reviewers, who so generously assisted in ensuring the quality of the *Journal*: Abiola Ayinla, Solomon Benetar, Danwood Chirwa, Solomon Dersso, Unity Dow, John Dugard, Ockert Dupper, Solomon Ebobrah, Zerisenay Habtezion, Kithure Kindiki, George Mukundi, Godfrey Musila, Tarisai Mutangi, Michelle Olivier, Oladejo Olowu, Albie Sachs, Ann Skelton, Julia Sloth-Nielsen, Karen Stefiszyn, Samuel Tindifa, Johan van der Vyver, Dirk van Zyl Smith and Stella Vettori.