

## RACHEL IRURA



### Introduction

Rachel Irura is Kenyan but holds Dutch Nationality. She has a Master of Laws (LLM) Degree in Human Rights and Democratization in Africa from the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South Africa. She undertook her undergraduate studies at the National University of Lesotho, Roma, Lesotho and holds a Bachelor of Laws (LLB) and Bachelor of Arts Degree in Law (B A Law) from that institution. During the course of her undergraduate and post graduate studies she authored two dissertations, on "Trafficking in Women and Children: Ghana a Case Study", and "The Legal Ramifications of the Use of Child Soldiers in Situations of Conflict in Africa." Rachel is an advocate of the High Court of Lesotho. Rachel is fluent in written and spoken English, Basic Dutch and has a working knowledge of French.

### Work Experience

Rachel is the Head of the Witness Support and Protection Unit (WISP) and the Head of the Kigali Field Office of the United Nations Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals ("Mechanism") from February 2020 to the present date. In this role, Rachel ensures the continuous protection and support for all the victims and witnesses who testified before the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) and the Mechanism. This entails a commitment to ensuring the security of victims and witnesses through the use a number of protective measures. Such protective measures include non-disclosure of the identity of the witnesses, closed court sessions, and other appropriate measures to facilitate the testimony of vulnerable victims and witnesses, such as the use of one-way close circuit television during testimony.

Since she took up this position, Rachel has overseen and provided direct management and supervision for the Witness Support and Protection Unit (WISP), both at the Kigali Field Office, in Rwanda and the seat of the Mechanism in Arusha, Tanzania. This has been particularly crucial in a period where due to COVID-19 movement restrictions, a lot of staff had to work remotely. Maintaining a positive morale as well as a work and life balance during this period has been critical to ensure that WISP stayed and delivered despite the prevailing circumstances of the pandemic.

The arrest of Felicien Kabuga in May 2020 meant that the focus of judicial activity is expected to increase at the seat of the Mechanism in Arusha, Tanzania. Due to her experience in court

management and as the Head of WISP, Rachel is changing duty stations and will be based in Arusha, Tanzania from April 2021.

In her most recent prior position, Rachel worked as a Legal Officer (Courtroom Coordinator) for the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) in the Court Management Services Section (CMSS) of the Registry in the Hague, the Netherlands, from June 2011 to February 2020. In this position she supervised at least six staff members (courtroom and transcription teams). Prior to this position she was the only Court Officer for the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Hague Sub-Office, the Netherlands in the trial of the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor for four and a half years, from February 2007 to June 2011. As a Court Officer, she often had to provide psychosocial support to witnesses who were victims of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) as well as amputees when they would break down during their testimony before the court.

Rachel commenced her legal career as an intern in September 2003 at the Gender Centre and Human Rights Documentation Centre in Accra, Ghana where she created a database to enhance the protection of women's rights in Ghana. She was also actively involved in women's rights advocacy. She had an opportunity to intern at Equality Now, an international women's rights organization based in Nairobi Kenya. Thereafter she worked in Johannesburg, South Africa from January to December 2004 for CIVICUS, an umbrella body of civil society organization's advocating for an end of the repression of the civic rights of association in order to put an end to civic repression.

Rachel has extensive field experience as she previously worked as a human rights officer (UNV) for the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) from July 2006 to December 2006 prior to commencing a career in international justice. She was posted to one of the most difficult duty stations in the mission, Fishtown, at the border of Ivory Coast and Liberia. As a United Nations volunteer, she remembers with gratitude that the Human Rights and Protection Section (HPRS) was able to save the life of a woman who was suffering from obstructed labour due to her direct intervention in a medical evacuation. Prior to this position, she worked in Freetown, Sierra Leone as a Legal Assistant (Contractor) in the Office of the Principal Defender in the Special Court for Sierra Leone, in Freetown, Sierra Leone from January 2005 to May 2006.

#### **Attendance at International Conferences**

Rachel was the Chair for a Webinar hosted by the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria, South African on the theme; "The impact of UN Agencies on the Protection of human rights during the

COVID-19 Pandemic in Africa.” The forum was held on 8 June 2020 and included panellists such as Dr. Patrick Eba, Country Director, UNAIDS, Central African Republic; Ms. Meskerem Techane, Chair Person UN Working Group of Experts on Discrimination against Women and Mr. Kene Esom, Policy Specialist, Human Rights, Law and Gender, United Nations Development Programme.

On several occasions, Rachel has participated as a Judge at the International Criminal Court (ICC) Moot Court Competition 2015 organized by Leiden University and the Grotius Centre, with the final rounds hosted by the International Criminal Court. The competition welcomed 55 teams from 38 countries (300+ students), and over 150 professionals attended the oral rounds in The Hague as a Judge. She has subsequently participated as a Judge in ICC Moot Court competition in 2017 and 2018.

Rachel has had the singular privilege of being invited to participate as a Judge in the Sixth Nelson Mandela World Human Rights Moot Competition organized jointly by the Centre for Human Rights, University of Pretoria and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights held in Geneva, Switzerland. She had the opportunity to share the podium with noted professionals in the field of human rights and humanitarian including; Justice Dikgang Moseneke, Deputy Chief Justice of South Africa, Professor Robert Roth, former Presiding Judge of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) and now Director of the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and Jane Connors, Director of the Research and Development Division of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights amongst others.

Rachel has attended a number of national and international conferences in the area of human rights and international criminal justice. She has been invited to several panels at the Movies that Matter Festival in the Netherlands, such as on Liberia, centred on the dictatorship of the former President of Liberia, Charles Taylor. The film was titled “Pray the Devil Back to Hell”. At this forum she shared the panel with the present Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), Ms. Fatou Bensouda amongst others. She also participated in a panel on Kenya’s Post Election Violence where she shared a panel with Judge Julia Sebutinde, a former Judge at the Special Court for Sierra Leone’s Trial Chamber in the Charles Taylor trial, now the first African woman Judge at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). She has also been a panellist in conferences such as one organised by Africa Legal Aid on “Kenya and the International Criminal Court (ICC)”.