

## ch, the editor

*Magnus Killander\**

Christof wanted to make knowledge about human rights more widespread. He detested that the African regional human rights system was often overlooked, or misrepresented, in books about international human rights law.<sup>1</sup> However, Christof's main approach to deal with this ignorance and make materials more accessible was publications. Thus, in 1996 he published with Dutch publisher Kluwer Law International (later Martinus Nijhoff) an edited volume of mainly primary materials entitled *Human rights law in Africa 1996*. The volume had three parts: 1. United Nations human rights treaties in Africa; 2. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights; and 3. Human rights provisions of the constitutions of African states. Christof envisioned *Human rights law in Africa* as a yearly publication and in 1998 published volume 2, *Human rights law in Africa 1997*. Volume 3, *Human rights law in Africa 1998*, followed in 2001, and volume 4, *Human rights law in Africa 1999*, in 2002. The aim of *Human rights law in Africa* was 'to contribute towards the development of an indigenous and effective African human rights jurisprudence; and a situation where the promises made by the law are given greater practical application'.<sup>2</sup> *Human rights law in Africa* included both primary materials, which were also made available on the Centre's website, and commentary by scholars.

Recognising that a yearly publication would not work, Christof decided to bring most of the materials collected in the yearly *Human rights law in Africa series* into a massive two volume publication, *Human rights law in Africa* published in 2004, with a picture of a lighthouse painted by Nelson Mandela on the covers. One volume focused on primary sources and commentary on human rights work of the United Nations and the Organization of African Unity/African Union and other intergovernmental organisations in relation to Africa and one volume on constitutional human rights provisions of African states, including commentary. Published in A4 format in hard copy, the two thick volumes came in at considerable weight and cost. Hard copies of the two volume *Human rights law in Africa* can still be bought from the publisher Martinus Nijhoff for 500 euro.<sup>3</sup> With most primary materials available on the internet, the relevance of big reference works like this may be less today than they once were. However, not everything is on

the internet and for anyone interested in the preparatory works of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, *Human rights law in Africa 1999*, is the easiest way to find them.

The two-volume *Human rights law in Africa* was the first publication that I started to work on when I came to the Centre for Human Rights as an intern in November 2002. A few years later Christof had the idea that it would be useful to have a more concise book for teaching purposes which led to the first edition of the *Compendium of key human rights documents of the African Union*, which we edited together. In the *Compendium* we brought together primary documents, some in extracts, including from decisions of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights which we had started to publish in the *African Human Rights Law Reports (AHRLR)*, another of Christof's initiatives which appeared in its first edition in 2004. In addition to decisions of the African Commission (and later decisions of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights), the *AHRLR* included selected judgments from domestic courts in Africa. Christof recognized the language barriers of the continent, so *AHRLR* also appeared in a French edition and the *Compendium* was published in French, Portuguese and Arabic editions. The last edition of the *Compendium* in English appeared in 2016 and we were busy considering what to put in and leave out in a new edition when Christof passed away.

In 2001 the first issue of the *African Human Rights Law Journal (AHRLJ)* was published with Christof and Frans Viljoen, who would later replace Christof as director of the Centre for Human Rights, as editors. Frans was the editor-in-chief, a role he has retained to date. The two brains behind what the Centre for Human Rights is today made a formidable editorial team. Eventually, Christof realised that as long as you have the right people in place to do the job you don't necessarily need to be hands on yourself. With so many ideas about everything that could and should be done and so little time in a day, Christof left the editing of *AHRLJ* in the capable hands of Frans and his team and became the chair of the *AHRLJ* advisory board.

In 2005 it was time to unveil another of Christof's initiatives. Pretoria University Law Press (PULP) was the first university press in South Africa dedicated to legal publishing. The first publication was *Socio-economic rights in South Africa* edited by Christof and Danie Brand, then a senior lecturer in the Department of Public Law of the University of Pretoria and a research associate of the Centre for Human Rights, who is now the Director of the Free State Centre for Human Rights. Among early publications of PULP were compilations like the *Compendium of key human rights documents of the African Union* and *Human rights, peace and justice in Africa: A reader* which Christof compiled (with

Karen Stefiszyn as co-editor) in his role as academic coordinator of the Africa programme of the University for Peace (UPEACE), one of his many academic roles around the globe. PULP's mission is to make legal research related to Africa more accessible which means all publications are freely accessible online. While some of his early edited works could realistically only be purchased by libraries, as indicated by the price for *Human rights law in Africa*, Christof took an increased interest in open access publication. Publication of *AHRLJ* was taken over by PULP from JUTA, a commercial South African publisher, in 2013, with JUTA agreeing that all the issues it had published would also be freely accessible on the journal's website.

Christof's scholarship will remain relevant for generations of students and scholars engaging with a wide area of topic related to human rights law. Equally important Christof created platforms for other scholars to make their voice heard and especially for the voice of Africa to be heard in the international exchange of ideas.

Christof always ended an email with 'rgds, ch', 'tx, ch' or 'best, ch'. I learnt much from this scholarly giant, not least as an editor. tx ch for all you did for me and for so many others.

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1 C Heyns and M Killander 'Africa in international human rights textbooks' (2007) 15 *African Journal of International and Comparative Law* 130.

2 C Heyns *Human rights law in Africa* 1998 (2001) vii.

3 <https://brill.com/view/title/17685> (accessed 17 December 2021).