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## 2020 JURIST OF THE YEAR AWARD (JOYA) CITATION

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The award was introduced in 1993, primarily to commemorate the International Human Rights Day that is celebrated every **10<sup>th</sup> December**. It acknowledges and honors the contributions of an exceptional Jurist who has worked selflessly and courageously towards the promotion and protection of human rights, justice, the rule of law, and good governance in Kenya in tandem with the vision and mission of ICJ Kenya.

The 2020 Jurist of the year has been praised by her peers, colleagues, partners, friends, ICJ Kenya fraternity. Our Jurist footprints have also been recognized locally, regionally, and internationally for promoting access to justice initiatives and dedication to upholding justice and the rule of law.

Born in 1969, our Jurist attended Nairobi Primary School for the Certificate of Primary Education (CPE) before joining Kangaru High School. Three years after completing high school, she enrolled for her Kenya Certificate of Advanced Education (KCAE) at Kiambu High School, focusing on History, literature, and Christian Religious Education.

Our Jurist was admitted to the University of Nairobi to study law. While at the university, our Jurist would later become the Secretary-General of the Kenya Law Students Society (KLSS). It was while a student leader that our Jurist flame and passion for defending human rights became evident. Our Jurist fearlessly defended fellow students against unlawful harassment and detention by the police over various issues, including protests. This eventually led our Jurist to enroll in different courses that touched on human rights. Our Jurist signed up as a volunteer advocate with human rights organisations such as Kituo cha Sheria, the Federation of Women Laws Kenya (FIDA Kenya), and a member of ICJ Kenya to advance and raise awareness on human rights amongst, poor, vulnerable, and marginalized.

Our Jurist was admitted to the bar in 1996. Because of dedication, commitment, and genuine passion for human rights, our Jurists won a Chevening Scholarship to pursue a Masters in Law on International Human Rights Law from the University of Nottingham, UK. After that, our Jurist continued to work tirelessly in defending human rights for a cumulative 25 years. Our Jurist's work focused on penal reforms, the security sector, and judicial reforms.

Our Jurist has served in various capacities with different organisations and has stayed true and committed to the course. At one time, our Jurist served as a Programme Officer with Release

Political Prisoners (RPP) pressure group and people against torture; a protection and eligibility officer with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) serving in Kenya and Ghana; the Chief Executive Director of Legal Resources Foundation Trust (LRF); a Programme Manager, Lake Victoria Rights Programme at Diakonia Sweden; and most recently a Commissioner with the Kenya National Commission for Human Rights (KNCHR).

While at the Legal Resources Foundation, our Jurist was actively engaged in building paralegals' capacity and subsequently developed several curriculums for paralegal training. Our Jurist engaged with the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, focusing on paralegals' role and the security sector reforms in Kenya through the Paralegal Support Network (PASUNE). Through all this, what remained consistent was our Jurist's passion and desire for advancing the rights of the vulnerable and marginalized in society.

It was this consistency that propelled her appointment to the position of Commissioner of the KNCHR in 2014. At the KNCHR, our Jurist provided oversight in legal redress, investigations, complaints departments, and the Western Regional Office. Our Jurists represented KNCHR in the boards of the Independent Policing Oversight Authority (IPOA), National Council on the Administration of Justice, the National Legal Aid Service (NLAS), and the National Coordinating Mechanism (NCM), making useful contributions in the advancement of the administration of justice, sector coordination and accountability for police actions.

Our Jurist's extensive experience and concern for the vulnerable and the marginalised manifested at the Commission, especially those in conflict with the law or needing care and protection. Our Jurist took the lead in advancing the rights of violent extremism victims and persons in penal institutions. Our Jurist insights informed the KNCHR submissions on alternative reports in respect to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention on Civil Political Rights (ICCPR) and Convention Against Torture (CAT), and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Our Jurist has used the various platforms to advance legal and policy reforms; our Jurist footprints are etched in the Constitution of Kenya 2010, specific sections on rights of an arrested person, dignity, and use of intermediaries. Our Jurist played a crucial role in developing the National Legal Aid and Awareness Policy 2012, National Legal Aid Service Act 2017, Small Claims Court Act 2015, Bail and Bond Policy, Prevention from Torture Act 2017, and the National Coroners Act 2017.

Nationally, our Jurist is explicitly recognized in the advancement of penal, policing, and judicial reforms, focusing on legal aid, refugees, paralegal approach, and intersex. Our Jurist was recently appointed as the Chairperson of the Intersex Persons Implementation Committee (IPICC) under the Attorney General's Office. In 2017, our Jurist was gazetted as a co-opted member of the Task-Force on Policy, Legal, Institutional and Administrative Reforms Regarding Intersex Persons in 2017.

In the Taskforce, our Jurist spearheaded numerous policy, legislative and administrative changes towards ensuring recognition, non-discrimination, and putting a stop to stigma, torture, and

inhuman treatment towards intersex children and adults. Our Jurist lobbying and advocacy efforts crystallised when Intersex persons were included in the 2019 national census for the first time in our country's history!

Regionally, our Jurist is known for her work in access to justice in prisons within the East African Community (EAC and Great Lakes), having been a member of the National Human Rights Institutions and Policing Working Groups. She assisted and prepared intersex persons in their dialogue with the African Human Rights Commission and has had various speaking engagements in workshops.

Internationally our Jurist was instrumental in the efforts that led to drafting the UN Guidelines and Principles on Access to Legal Aid in Criminal Justice Systems.

Beyond academic and professional achievements, our Jurist enjoys history, photography, swimming, music, badminton, and basketball.

Our Jurist passion for human rights is exemplified in her warm personality and as a fierce defender of the vulnerable and marginalised in our society.

In sum, our Jurist is deeply admired in the sector and is viewed as a mentor and inspiration to many young women in the profession for her commitment, fearlessness, and impartiality. Our Jurist espouses authenticity and consistency as a human rights defender! Her immense contribution to the promotion and protection of the vulnerable and marginalised rights in Kenya and the African region cannot be overstated.

On behalf of the ICJ Kenya JOYA Committee, we are proud to declare **Mrs. Jedidah Wakonyo Waruhiu the 2020 Jurist of the Year!**

Please accept our heartfelt congratulations!

**Read by:**

George Morara,  
Beverline Ongaro