Bayreuth International Graduate School of African Studies

**BIGSAS Colloquium in the Knowledge Lab of the
Africa Multiple Cluster of Excellence**

**Thursday, 14ᵗʰ of July 2022, 4–6 pm / presented in S58 (RWI) &
online via Zoom**

03:50 pm	**Opening** of the **virtual conference room**
04:00 – 04:05 pm	**Opening address** by the **Dean of BIGSAS, Prof. Dr. Andrea Behrends**
04:10 – 04:40 pm	**Catheline Bosibori Nyabwengi** *A History of women fighters in Kenya; 1952-2019* Introduced by Prof. Dr. Jana Hönke / Dr. Peter Wafula Wekesa Discussant: Dr. Cassandra Mark-Thiesen
04:45 – 05:20 pm	**Isabelle Zundel** *Claiming the rights of sexual minorities through the African human rights system – Analysis of normative and procedural frameworks* Introduced by Prof. Dr. Thoko Kaime Discussant: Nelson Otieno
05:25 – 06:00 pm	**Shirin Assa** *Intersectionality and Politics of Belonging in "Ostrich" by Leila Aboulela* Introduced by Prof. Dr. Mastoureh Fathi Discussant: Dr. Serawit B. Debele

Participation in Person:

  The Colloquium will take place in the Seminar Room S58 (RW I Building) on the campus.

Participation via Zoom:

 https://uni-bayreuth.zoom.us/j/68396130569?pwd=K250OG9IS3F3OXVrdUFBL2UzUlFSZz09

Meeting ID: 683 9613 0569 / Passcode: 897688

Catheline Bosibori Nyabwengi – A history of women fighters in Kenya; 1952-2019

(this presentation will be held in English)

Women's insurgency has always been laden with passivity, coercion, or victim narrative. Why this is the case has not received much scholarly attention. This study is a historical documentation of fighters in Kenya between 1952 and 2019. The study explored the stories of women fighters, their typologies, why and how they joined violent groups, how they fought, and their experiences in war. Three objectives guided the study: (1) To interrogate the link in women, gender, and violence (2) examine the place of women in evolving violence in Kenya. (3) To analyze continuity and change of women's involvement in violence in Kenya. The study participants were drawn from four major counties: Nairobi, Garissa, Nyeri, and Mombasa. The study was guided by the tenets of the gender schema theory, which focuses on the dynamism in the gender identities from one generation, place, and time to another. A qualitative research approach was employed, and a historical research design was utilized. The study targeted women fighters and ex-fighters in mau Mau Mau, Mungiki, Jeshi la Embakasi, Gaza, and Alshabaab. Security personnel such as KDF, former flying squad, Kenya police, and prison officers were also targeted. Men fighters, people who know women fighters, county administrators, and academia were also targeted. The Sample size consisted of 98 participants selected through purposive and snowballing sampling techniques. Interviews (physical and virtual) were used in oral data collection. Focus group discussions were also used. Archival sources were also consulted. Secondary data emanated from books, journal articles, theses and dissertations, policy briefs, and other internet sources. Data was analyzed thematically and presented in narrations backed by direct quotations from the participants and other secondary sources. The findings established that the relationship in gender, women, and violence is based on gender stereotypes. These stereotypes are grounded on the public-private dichotomy, which only recognizes male warriors and peaceful or victimized women. Women's fighting motives have evolved from group ideologies to more personal reasons. It was also revealed that women fighters are essential in the success of the violent group in Kenya. However, their leadership place is marked marred by gender conflicts between masculinity and femininity and limited by patriarchy. As political, social, and economic developments take shape in the country, women's fighting front and strategies keep changing. Additionally, their numbers are expanding from one epoch to another. Finally, the findings revealed several aspects that render women passive victims or coerced actors in violence. These include the grievances of violent groups, the violent activities of violent groups such as FGM, the masculinity element accorded to weapons used in violent groups, and the few women fighters. The study recommends increasing the number of women security officers in Kenya to take care of suspected women fighters and to frisk into details women at security checkpoints. It also recommends re-socialization and rewriting the history of violence that is gender-sensitive, cognitive, and inclusive. Finally, the study recommends that in the fight against violence and terrorism, there is a need to recognize that women can be both the oppressed and the oppressors.

Isabelle Zundel - Claiming the rights of sexual minorities through the African human rights system – Analysis of normative and procedural frameworks
(this presentation will be held in English)

Sexual minorities regularly experience violence, oppression and hate crimes in different parts of Africa. However, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights gives an important promise to the African people. The promise is that "every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind […]" (Art. 2). This also includes sexual minorities. In my thesis I claim the fulfilment and realisation of this promise from the African human rights system for the protection of the rights of sexual minorities. After all, these powerful and fetching words are meant to be more than just lip service. They are meant to govern and accompany the people of Africa in a flexible and protective but also comprehensive manner.

Therefore, I investigate the question on how to utilize the normative and procedural frameworks of the African human rights system best actively in order to protect and strengthen the rights of sexual minorities. The negotiation of spaces of sexual minorities in Africa is a very topical issue that is regularly and globally discussed in the scientific community. There have been legal and socio-legal publications which however have been fallen short in terms of regionally owned and grounded analysis. The few times in which the role of the African human rights system in strengthening the rights of sexual minorities has been discussed, this has focused on warnings against the direct involvement of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, depicting this central pillar of the African human rights system as a problematic forum which could engender backlash instead of highlighting possible paths. However, other possibilities of the normative and procedural frameworks, which offer prospects, are routinely neglected. The dissertation will therefore engage in detail with the opportunities given by the system in place to build legal and political pathways towards the actual promotion and protection of the rights of sexual minorities.

I structure this analysis through the legal and philosophical conception of claiming. In the context of human rights and more precisely my thesis, I have therefore identified four different understandings of claiming which are relevant to my analysis and go beyond the mere walk to court or any other institution to ensure the protection and enjoyment of one's rights. For example, the concept identifies claiming as fundamental aspect of human dignity and human rights. On an individual level, claiming allows everyone to choose in everyday life who one wants to be. For example, every individual is free to choose their religion or sexual partner without any direct or indirect external influence, be it from state actors, the employer or within the domestic environment. Thus, the concept of claiming is fundamental for the identification of one's own personhood and relates to the essence of being human. Consequently, any restriction to the ability of claiming one's rights leads to the restriction of one's human dignity. Conversely, the ability to claim is a fundamental part of one's human dignity.

The combination of different concepts and methods, which require on the lived reality of sexual minorities and their communities, enables the analysis to go beyond the mere dogmatics of law and allows the possibility for more creative solutions based on the normative standards. Thus, my thesis will be grounded on library-based dogmatic legal analysis methods which will be enlarged and combined with socio-legal methods as well as comparative law methods. This composition of methods shall enable a socio-legal analysis which reflects the character of the thesis.

Shirin Assa - Intersectionality and Politics of Belonging in "Ostrich" by Leila Aboulela

(this presentation will be held in English)

Within a full spectrum of historical, ethnic, religious, and gender*sexual identities in Sudan, the heteronormative Muslim Arab identity is singled out and centralized as the hegemonic national identity of Sudan. Interestingly, this politicized belonging is both a national and a colonial project heavily invested in gender and heteronormative practices, which predates Sudan's independence. Therefore, being, remaining, or becoming Muslim Arab Sudanese tabs into various facets of belonging. Moreover, such an identity is not necessarily bound to its geopolitical territory, and transnationality can add layers of complexity. With the UK as the leading colonial power in Sudan and one of the main destinations for Sudanese migrants, especially after the 1986 military coup, Muslim Arab Sudanese people negotiate their belonging anew in the UK and, as such, are ascribed to multiple, shifting, and contradictory political projects of belonging.

"Ostrich" (1999) is a short story by Leila Aboulela that offers a holographic picture of how (un)belonging is multiple and interlocking with local and global discourses of power. The story of "Ostrich" is noteworthy in offering subtle observations of complex matters of belonging from the perspective of those who negotiate (un)belonging as they cross borders and while borders cross over them. Here the question arises: how does "Ostrich" depict the intersectional implications of these multiple, shifting, and contradictory political projects of belongings for Muslim Arab Sudanese in the UK?

In examining this question, I invoke Nira Yuval-Davis' analytical framework of belonging, which differentiates between (1) "social locations;" (2) "individuals' identifications and emotional attachments to various collectivities and groupings," and (3) "ethical and political value systems with which people judge their own and others' belonging/s." My analysis starts by discerning facets of belonging in "Ostrich" before scrutinizing the national and transnational political projects of Muslim Arab Sudanese belonging in intersectional ways. I analyze the poetics of belonging in "Ostrich" to show in the light of Yuval-Davis' insight how Muslim Arab Sudanese belonging is pertinent to the Sudanese and British political projects of belonging.

In short, I argue how "Ostrich" portrays an intersectional and transnational relation of power to show the multiplicity, mutation, continuation, and contradiction of projects of belonging. This presentation discloses how various and "oppositional" political projects of belonging are in tune with global discourses of power, i.e., white supremacy and heteropatriarchy.