# August 2023



An international, collaborative and safe network for strenghtening and promoting human rights



by Avocats Sans Frontières

# Overview





# **About this report**

**Justice ExPEERience** is celebrating its 2nd anniversary. This is an opportunity for us to look back on these two wonderful years, the projects that have marked them and the prospects for the future.

This report covers the activities carried out by the Justice ExPEERience network between **July 2021 and July 2023**.

Justice ExPEERience is both a network and a platform, developed by **Avocats Sans Frontières** (ASF) since 2020.

We would like to take the opportunity of publishing this report to thank all those who have contributed and continue to contribute every day to the existence of Justice ExPEERience, in particular the ASF teams and all the members of the network, as well as all the donors who have supported the project, in particular the Direction Générale Coopération au Développement et Aide Humanitaire (DGD), but also Wallonie-Bruxelles International, the Dutch Embassy in the DRC, the European Union (EU) and the US Department of State (NEA)..















# **O**lo Introduction

# What is Justice ExPEERience?

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**Justice ExPEERience** is at once an international network, a collaborative platform and a community, bringing together a range of actors (lawyers, members of NGOs and civil society, researchers, activists, etc.) mobilized on a daily basis to defend human rights and promote access to justice and the rule of law around the world.

Developed in 2021 by Avocats Sans Frontières, Justice ExPEERience aims to deploy **a network dedicated to collaboration and knowledge sharing**, while guaranteeing compliance with high standards in terms of **ethics**, **security and personal data protection**.

### An international social network dedicated to opening knowledge and sharing experience to advance the fight for human rights and access to justice worldwide.

A secure, multilingual, online platform on which members collaborate through news feeds and shared libraries in public or private collaborative spaces.

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**Coalitions, communities of practice and networks** active in promoting human rights through joint advocacy, monitoring, strategic litigation, etc.



# A brief history: from the idea to Justice ExPEERience

For several years now, Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) has been seeking to rethink its modes of action, collaboration and partnership to make them more **horizontal**, **international** and **collaborative**, based on three main findings:

Work in the field of justice and human rights is often solitary and exhausting: it is therefore necessary to base one's practice on **collective work**, **knowledge sharing** and **the opening of skills**.;

2 Development and international cooperation projects are too often developed with a North-South logic and without the active participation of local actors: it is important to **decolonize** this approach and to base it on **horizontal links of collaboration**;

3 Learning relationships are too often vertical, from teacher to learner, and not very effective: we need to rethink them, building on **learning by doing** and transmission, via **peer learning**.

Based on these observations, but also on the need to rethink its actions to facilitate **transnational exchanges and remote collaboration** – following in particular the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences on international mobility – ASF wanted to develop online knowledge sharing and horizontal remote collaboration, initially through existing tools (Whatsapp, Slack, Google Drive...). While the use of such tools can effectively bring together people working thousands of kilometers apart, ASF's teams have identified that they are not entirely satisfactory. On the one hand, they present definite **security flaws**; on the other, they do not enable communities of practice to be consolidated, as they do not integrate communication functionalities and those dedicated to **collaborative working**.

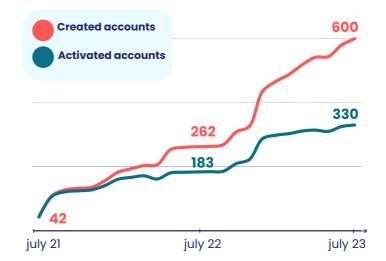
ASF therefore wished to equip itself with a digital platform integrating its needs for network dynamization, knowledge management, intuitive communication and deployment of collective projects within a common vision. This is how the idea of **Justice ExPEERience** was born, with the ambition of creating **a digital**, **ethical and secure environment for transnational collaboration and peer-to-peer learning** in the field of human rights. Today, this platform is the concrete support for the network, and the virtual place where exchanges take place, peer learning dynamics unfold, working groups are formed and collaborations unfold.

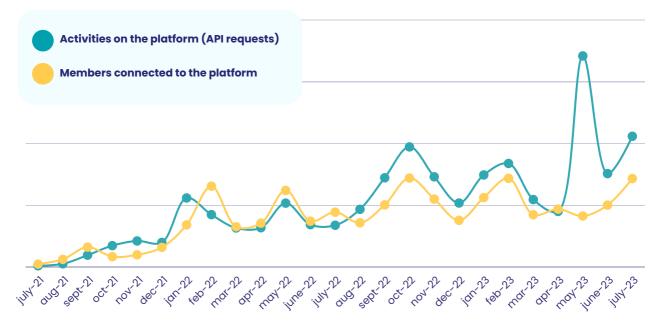


# OP An expanding international network

First and foremost, Justice ExPEERience is an **international network** of over 600 members (activists, jurists, researchers, members of civil society, etc.) working on 5 continents to promote human rights and access to justice. Not only are they invited to share their knowledge, experience and expertise, but they are also encouraged to work together, in coalitions or communities of practice, on concrete projects involving the monitoring of human rights violations, strategic litigation or advocacy actions.

In 2022, Justice ExPEERience truly became an international network. With an official public launch at the "Lawyering for Change" conference in November 2022, the network saw its record number of registrations and was able to expand considerably.







# The Lawyering for Change Conference

The *Lawyering for Change conference*, organized in October 2022 by Avocats Sans Frontières, brought together over 200 people in Brussels for two days of plenary sessions and workshops dedicated to **contemporary issues in the fight for human rights and access to justice**. These exchange sessions covered the following topics : the legal



empowerment as a lever for citizen participation, the fight against violence against women, the rights of migrants in the Mediterranean, post-colonial injustices, the prison impasse, transitional justice, advocacy as a lever for change, the governance of natural resources, the shrinking of civic space, and the place of digital technology in the fight for human rights.

The conference was an intense moment of exchange, knowledge sharing, networking and even the launch of collaborative projects. After a first year of testing and daily use of the platform by ASF teams and partners, the conference was **the ideal moment to officially launch the platform and the Justice ExPEERience network**, and to give conference participants and speakers the opportunity to continue the exchanges and collaborations begun at the conference.

Following the Lawyering for Change conference, all the reports, summaries and video replays were published on the platform, discussion forums dedicated to the issues addressed at the conference were created and animated, and 109 new members joined Justice ExPEERience.





Initially, the majority of Justice ExPEERience members came from the teams of Avocats Sans Frontières (ASF) and its partners. They were therefore mainly active in countries where ASF teams operate: DRC (130), Tunisia (119), Belgium (84), Uganda (25), Niger (15), Morocco (13), CAR (13).

Nevertheless, thanks to the growing number of members from outside ASF from autumn 2022 onwards, **the Justice ExPEERience community now spans all continents**, with members working in **52 different countries**.



# Justice ExPEERience at the RightsCon

Justice ExPEERience was presented during a *Tech demo* at the 2023 edition of the global summit on human rights in the digital age - the RightsCon, organised this year

in Costa Rica by Access Now. Not only did it provide a showcase for Justice ExPEERience, but the summit was also an opportunity to reflect on issues relating to ethics, accessibility and the digital divide, issues on which we are constantly seeking to improve the experience of network members.





2021-2023 Report



# • A collaborative platform for knowledge sharing

<u>Justice ExPEERience</u> is an **open-source** online platform based on Tracim software from the French company Algoo. To guarantee the **security** of its members and their data, as well as the **confidentiality** of information shared on Justice ExPEERience, the platform benefits from **sovereign hosting**, directly on ASF servers in Europe. This ensures that data does not pass through the servers of major digital companies – especially GAFAMs.



To promote the creation of a transnational network and meet the needs of as many players as possible, Justice ExPEERience is a **multilingual platform**: its interface is currently available in German, English, Arabic, French and Portuguese; and an instant translation tool enables posted content and news to be translated. In 2022, the platform was also developed as a **mobile application**, downloadable and usable on smartphones, to make it more accessible in all contexts..

On Justice ExPEERience, all members can share information, news and interact as on a **social network**, on various human rights issues; but they can also share documentation and collaborate directly online, securely, in a **shared library**.

Various collaborative spaces are available on the platform: it hosts **280 collaborative spaces**, including 28 public spaces dedicated to the exchange and sharing of information between all network members on thematic issues (access to justice; gender justice and women's rights; transitional justice; detention; post-colonial justice; business & human rights; migration, etc.) or geographical areas (Euromed, Sahel, East Africa, etc.).

Members of Justice ExPEERience are invited to collaborate not only on these sharing spaces, which are open to the whole network, but also on **confidential private spaces** that are strictly dedicated to a collective research, monitoring, strategic litigation or advocacy project, etc..





### Justice ExPEERience in numbers:



Data from July 2023

### Algoo, Justice ExPEERience's service provider and developer

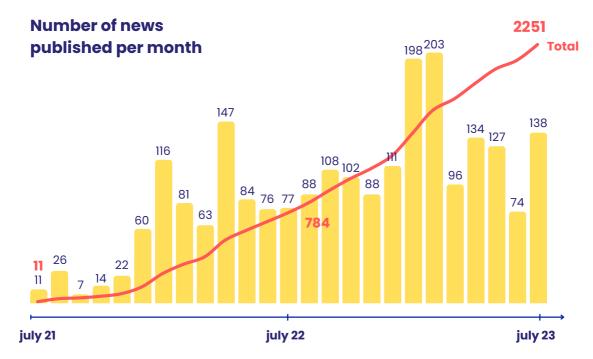
For the development of the platform dedicated to hosting the network, ASF teams chose to turn to the French company **Algoo**, which is committed to **open and secure technologies**. Algoo has now been ASF's partner for the development and maintenance of this platform for three years. The Justice ExPEERience platform was developed on the basis of the team communication and open-source collaboration software Tracim, from Algoo (open source code). Free software and open-source



development make it an ethical and scalable (evolving) platform. In addition, the Justice ExPEERience platform is hosted on our own sovereign servers, to guarantee data security and protection..



Since the launch of Justice ExPEERience, the exchanges taking place on the platform's collaborative spaces have become increasingly interesting and dynamic, with an average of **120 news items published each month** over the past year. These range from the day-to-day sharing of news on the public spaces dedicated to geographical issues (Euromed, Sahel, African Union, etc.) or thematic issues (transitional justice, detention, business & human rights, migration, etc.), to collaborative work on the confidential spaces dedicated to research, monitoring, strategic litigation and advocacy projects, etc.





# A constantly evolving platform, with a mobile application

Over the past two years, we have also – thanks to the collaboration of Algoo's development teams – addressed the many challenges inherent in setting up an ethical and secure international platform, in order to improve not only the **user experience**, but also the **accessibility** and **speed** of the platform. To this end, several languages, including **Arabic**, have been integrated into the interface, and Justice ExPEERience has been deployed as a **mobile version** that can be downloaded to all smartphones..



# **O** Community, communities

On the different spaces of the platform, network members can work together in **coalitions** or **communities of practice**, maintaining the desired level of openness or confidentiality of their work.

In 2022, Justice ExPEERience saw the development of several communities of practice, made up of researchers, activists, lawyers and civil society players implementing projects in different countries. Through Justice ExPEERience, they deploy and coordinate joint actions to **monitor** human rights violations, **strategic litigation** and **advocacy** at local, regional and international levels. In the confidential spaces dedicated to them, the communities of practice have a **shared and collaborative library**, which the members add to, in order to encourage the horizontal dissemination of expertise and peer-to-peer learning.

This sharing of expertise and information also takes place in thematic areas open to all members, making Justice ExPEERience in itself an international, multi-sector community of practice. To energise the network and nurture exchanges between its members, Justice ExPEERience offers its members a monthly webinar, the <u>ExPEERience</u> <u>Talks</u>, during which a network member presents research, a project, a tool or an analysis relating to the promotion of human rights and access to justice.

### Sustice ExPEERience communities of practice

On Justice ExPEERience, many communities of practice have developed. They are based on **peer learning**, **the sharing of resources and knowledge**, and **ongoing collaboration**. Bringing together people from different backgrounds in communities of practice is designed both to encourage horizontal capacity building (peer learning) and to develop joint initiatives and concrete actions (litigation, advocacy, etc.). Such collaboration is based on an immediate interest in acting in favour of a common objective and on mutual trust between the members of the group. One indicator of how well a community of practice is working is the ability to mobilise the group to respond to its members' questions and move the collective project forward over the long term.



### A community of practice on detention in the DRC

For the past 3 years, a community of practice, particularly active on Justice ExPEERience, has been working on the development of **strategic litigation in the field of detention in the DRC**.

This working group brings together a dozen lawyers from various provinces of the DRC who, after drawing up an alarming report on the violation of the rights of incarcerated persons, decided, with the support of ASF and specialized lawyers, to launch a liability procedure against the Congolese state concerning prison overcrowding, inhuman and degrading detention conditions, and the abusive use of arbitrary detention beyond the limits of the law. s, to launch a liability procedure against the Congolese state concerning prison overcrowding, inhumane and degrading detention conditions, and the abusive use of arbitrary detention beyond the legal time limits, accompanied by an advocacy campaign aimed at the media and local and national authorities.





Through their collaborative work, sometimes faceto-face and especially remotely, first on Slack and then on Justice ExPEERience, members of the community of practice were able to benefit from capacity building in strategic litigation, then identify cases that could constitute this litigation and collectively develop the legal means to defend these cases.

In September 2020, emblematic cases were brought to trial on the same day in 6 provinces of the DRC. Today, the lawyers continue to collaborate remotely, on Justice ExPEERience, to advance the litigation strategy. At the beginning of June 2023, they met in Kinshasa in a working group to prepare the appeal arguments for the cases that had been judged.



### The ExPEERience Talks, the network's monthly event

ExPEERience Talks are monthly webinars organized to promote the dissemination of expertise and knowledge sharing, on topics proposed by network members. Since 2022, the network has organized 10 ExPEERience Talks, on a wide variety of topics, corresponding to the exchange themes on the platform, with constantly increasing participation: :

**Trajectories of Tunisian migrants repatriated from Italy - A plea for the right to mobility** - Arnaud Dandoy (ASF) and Martina Costa (ASF)

**Civil society empowerment for better governance of natural resources in Uganda** -Faridah Kyomuhangi and Sharon Joy Lucima (ASF)

**Penal practices in the CAR, reflections of a justice system in crisis** - Gilles Durdu (Inanga)

**Governance of natural resources in the DRC: case study in Haut Uele** – Jhonny Lobho Amula and Grazia Scocca (ASF)

(In)execution and impact of decisions of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights - Benjamin Kagina (Université de Laval) and Arnaud Dandoy (ASF)

**Representations and judicial treatment of the offence of Charlatanism and Witchcraft in CAR** - Julien Moriceau (Inanga), Saint-Cyr Modompte and Victor Odent (ASF)

**Protecting the rights of pre-trial detainees through access to justice in Uganda** - Rashid Bunya (ASF) and Lucie Benaiteau (ASF)

Authoritarian drift in Tunisia: diagnosis and power mapping - Lamine Benghazi (ASF) and Mahdi Elleuch (Legal Agenda)

Using digital to support victims and promote justice: the Back-Up project of We are NOT Weapons of War - Céline Bardet (We are NOT weapons of war)

**Corporate accountability and human rights: the case of the textile sector in Tunisia** - Nadia Ben Halim (consultant) and Zeineb Mrouki (ASF).

# The ExPEERience Letter

To share, capitalize on, create and disseminate the network's new research, activities and events, a monthly newsletter – The ExPEERience Letter – is sent to all network members, in French and English, with news, events, a press review and, occasionally, exclusive articles on specific topical issues (transitional justice in Ethiopia, coup d'état in Niger, etc.).



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The Justice ExPEERience teams have no intention of stopping there, and have set their sights on further development in 2024: attracting new members, enriching the creation of links and the sharing of expertise through its platform as well as its Talks and newsletter, developing new collaborations – particularly transnational ones – opening up to partnerships with external players, and evolving the platform and its tools to best meet the needs of its members.

# • Developments and improvements

Many developments and improvements are still underway – thanks to close collaboration with Algoo's development teams – The current priority is to improve the **speed** and **responsiveness** of the Justice ExPEERience interface, in order to make it always easier to use, even in unstable contexts or when the internet connection is weaker. Future developments are also planned to improve the experience of all users, notably by improving the **ergonomics** of the platform, **notifications** from Justice ExPEERience, as well as the **process of integration** and help for new users.

Very soon, Justice ExPEERience will be integrated into a more comprehensive **website**, which will allow not only to connect and navigate the platform, but also to make publicly visible the achievements of communities of practice, through regular publications, but also an interactive online map.

# The ExPEERience map project

ASF has launched a call for tenders to develop an interactive map to visualize human rights violations in different countries. Indeed, through their research and monitoring activities, Justice ExPEERience communities collect a wealth of data on human rights violations in many countries; and the aim of this tool would be to make this data visible and accessible to as many people as possible, so that it can then be used for dissemination and advocacy activities. This is part of a wider vision to make Justice ExPEERience a network for the promotion of human rights whose members can not only coordinate, collect, share and document human rights violations, but also have a tool to make this data accessible in order to inform, raise awareness and create advocacy on these crucial issues.





# Expansion and partnerships

Over the next few years, Justice ExPEERience is also seeking to open up more widely in order to truly achieve its goal of **breaking down barriers** to knowledge, while maintaining high standards in terms of ethics and security.

A second objective is also to insert Justice ExPEERience into an already rich fabric of coalitions and networks in the field of human rights, without seeking to replace but on the contrary by providing new tools and supports to already **existing collaborations or links**. Thus, just as it is possible to join Justice ExPEERience as an individual member of the network, it is also possible to develop **partnerships** with already existing organizations or coalitions that wish to join Justice ExPEERience to benefit from the links with the rest of the network, but also from the digital features and tools offered by the platform.

To continue to develop and improve the platform, the Justice ExPEERience teams are also looking for new **supports** and **partnerships**.

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### A project and a platform led by Avocats Sans Frontières



