

section on 'massive human rights tragedies' discusses the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, the Special Court for Sierra Leone, the Rwandan *gacaca* courts and the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

In conclusion, *International human rights in context* is an interesting and quite comprehensive book which raises many of the pertinent issues in today's human rights discourse. It offers a good starting point for anyone who wants an overview of any of the many issues covered in the book.

C Maina Peter (ed) *The protectors. Human rights commissions and accountability in East Africa*

Fountain Publishers, Kampala (2008) 432 pages

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The campaign for the diversification of the processes available for the realisation of human rights is particularly significant in the African context, where respect for the rule of law is still in its infancy. Strategically situated between the state and the citizenry, national human rights institutions established along the parameters set by the Paris Principles are invaluable institutions to support and supplement courts and quasi-judicial institutions in the search for a better realisation of human rights in African states. Linking their recognition of the potential of national human rights institutions and the growing move towards a political federation in East Africa, the Kituo Cha Katiba¹ convened two workshops, in 2004 and 2006 respectively, for national human rights institutions in East Africa. This collection of essays is the product of these workshops.

Boasting of contributions from 14 authors and edited by Chris Maina Peter, a professor of law at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, the book is divided into four parts and contains 15 chapters. Part one is made up of chapters 1 to 6 and essentially covers the first workshop, which centred around economic, social and cultural rights within the constitutions of some of the member states of the East African Community (EAC). Part two begins with chapter 7 and ends with chapter

¹ Also known as the East African Centre for Constitutional Development, Kituo Cha Katiba is a Uganda-based regional non-governmental organisation established in 1997 to promote constitution making and good governance.

12. The essays in part two compare national bills of rights in the constitutions of East African states with a draft bill of rights for East Africa commissioned by the Kitou Cha Katiba. The essays report on the activities of national human rights commissions in the East African region. Part three covers chapters 13 to 15, dealing with the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) as a human rights court. It also concludes the essays with recommendations on how to improve the work of the national human rights institutions in the region. Part four is a compilation of annexures.

Although focused on East Africa as a region, the book begins with a well-written chapter by Pierre de Vos on the challenges of implementing economic, social and cultural rights in Africa. With an emphasis upon the South African experience, he discusses the role of the national human rights institutions. De Vos suggests a greater role for these institutions in the enforcement of economic, social and cultural rights. Thereafter, the actual experience of national human rights institutions in the realisation of this group of rights is outlined. While the essays in this section are mostly shallow in thought and academic content, one essay offers an interesting analysis of the concept of empowerment, its links to the realisation of rights in the Tanzanian context, and the role of national human rights institutions in the empowerment of citizens. This part of the book also reiterates the challenge of enforcing rights relegated to non-justiciable sections of national constitutions.

In dealing with a draft bill of rights for East Africa, some of the essays in part two offer an overview of the bills of rights in the Constitutions of Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda.² Efforts at comparison with the draft bill of rights give the first contact with the latter bill. Generally, this collection of essays presents the reader with some information on the activities of national human rights institutions in the East African region. The overview on the EACJ is basically an insider's view, since both contributors are from that institution.

An important observation about the book relates to its title. Contrary to the expectations raised by the title, namely, that the book will deal with the national human rights institutions and how they have addressed the question of accountability in East Africa, most of the chapters in the book attempt to compare the draft bill of rights for East Africa with the bills of rights of national constitutions. Consequently, the work of these institutions is presented only in passing, while the contributors discussing national human rights institutions attempt to show the challenges their institutions have had with promoting the national bill of rights. As well, part one of the book fails to critically assess the work of national institutions. In linking national human rights institutions to the protection of economic, social and cultural

² Burundi is also a member of the EAC, having acceded to the treaty at the same time with Rwanda in 2006. However, while Zanzibar is included in the discourse, Burundi is not.

rights, some contributions fail to properly address salient issues relating to these institutions.

Another concern is that the book repeats some of its content. By including summaries of the papers presented at the workshop, parts one and two each includes a chapter which reproduces the other chapters in those parts of the book. This increases the size of the book unnecessarily.

Considering that the book relates mostly to a draft bill of rights proposed for the EAC, a regional economic community with no actual human rights competence, it is not clear why the book does not engage with doctrinal and theoretical issues around the exercise of human rights in that framework. Throughout the book there seems to be an assumption that the EACJ is a human rights court and that national human rights commissions need to find their role within the work of the EACJ. Related to this, there is a sense that the EACJ is equated to the European Court of Human Rights which has a clear human rights mandate. Similarly, the book fails to address theoretical issues relating to the draft bill of rights, especially in view of the fact that the draft bill was not commissioned by the EAC or any of its organs.

Despite its shortcomings, the historical overview of national human rights institutions in the region, the discussion of national bills of rights, the identification of challenges faced by these institutions and the recommendations made to enhance the work of various national human rights institutions represented make the book relevant for anyone interested in the work of these institutions. The book's recommendation of greater roles for national human rights institutions in the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights is useful in prompting interest in this regard. The annexure is also an important collation of the national bills of rights of member states of the EAC.

D Ngaruri Kenney & P Schrag *Asylum denied: A refugee's struggle for safety in America*

University of California Press, Berkeley (2008) 352 pages

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Asylum denied: A refugee's struggle for safety in America tells the story of David Ngaruri Kenney, a Kenyan tea farmer who led a boycott by tea farmers during the administration of President Daniel arap Moi. He was