

PRESS STATEMENT

ISLA

EXPERT ADVISORY MEETING ON Women in the Criminal Justice System

ISLA'S OFFICES – 15TH FLOOR MARBLE TOWERS, 208-211 RAHIMA MOOSA STREET, JHB

On Thursday and Friday, 20 and 21 June 2019, the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa (ISLA) will host an Expert Advisory Meeting on women in the criminal justice system.

ISLA is a Pan African feminist organisation that uses the rule of law in African domestic and regional courts to advance women's human rights and sexual rights. ISLA's work is based on the belief that strategic litigation is an immensely powerful tool for social change because it helps to reframe the understanding of people's entitlements before the law and it challenges existing legal discourse.

The Violence Against Women (VAW) thematic area focuses on using the courts to challenge discriminatory laws and practice that have adverse effects on women's human rights. The majority of work done under the thematic area so far has focused on: Trafficking, developing the due diligence principle and intersectionality (specifically violence against Migrant women, violence against LBT women and violence against women with disabilities). ISLA would like to extend its work to include the rights of women in the criminal justice system, particularly women who have assaulted or killed their abusive partners.

To this end, ISLA is seeking expert advice and guidance as it embarks on a process of developing a strategic litigation strategy for litigating both domestically and regionally. In developing the strategy, there are several possible issues that ISLA could focus on.

The meeting on 20 and 21 June will focus on:

- getting clarity on the kinds of cases that ISLA should be supporting in its work;
- Opportunities and barriers to defending women in the criminal justice system. Particularly –
 - Available defences and the potential for intervention
 - Use of expert evidence
 - Minimum sentencing
 - Legislative and judicial attitudes
 - Cultural and socio-political contexts on the continent
 - Finding “The perfect client”
 - strategies that can be adopted by individuals and institutions working with and for women in the criminal justice system (amicus interventions, interested parties establishing a pool of experts who can provide expert evidence).
 - The Ways in which ISLA can address the additional needs of women in the criminal justice system.

The Expert Advisory Meeting is a closed meeting, but those interested can follow ISLA on Facebook [insert account name] and/or Twitter [insert Twitter handle] for live updates #ISLACohabit2019