



**Special Issue – For Consideration under the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (JSAS)**

**Legal History and Social Transformation in Malawi: Critical Perspectives at 60 Years of Independence**

## CALL FOR ABSTRACT RATIONALE

Malawi's legal history is marked by moments of rupture and continuity that have profoundly shaped social transformation. From the imposition of English law in 1891, through the independence settlement of 1964 and the authoritarian constitutional order of 1966, to the adoption of a democratic constitution in 1994, law has promised much but often delivered unevenly.

This special issue, which the editors plan to publish in the *Journal of Southern African Studies* (JSAS), adopts a critical socio-legal lens on Malawi's legal history at 60 years of independence. By combining "internal" legal perspectives with "external" socio-political approaches, the collection aims to recover the multiple, contested, and lived experiences of law, while situating Malawi within broader Southern African trajectories of legal pluralism, authoritarianism, democratization, and struggles for justice.

Dr Cyprian Kambili, socio-legal scholar specialising law, economy, and governance, and Dr. Gift Kayira, a historian of colonial and postcolonial Malawi, have agreed to form an editorial team to guide the process and shape the content of the special issue. The papers will be fully peer reviewed and will aim to attain the highest academic standard.

Broad themes abstracts might address include the following:

Colonial legacies: English law, customary law, and recognition politics; Law and authoritarianism: Banda's dictatorship and its legacies; Economic governance: environment and law; property rights, land tenure, and development policy; Political pluralism: the 1994 Constitution, human rights and social change, and liberal democracy; Gender, family, and customary law: continuities and contestations; Courts, activism, and social movements: resistance and reform; and Comparative perspectives: Malawi within wider Southern African legal debates.

## SUBMISSION DETAILS AND TIMELINE

As a first step, abstracts of no more than 250 words are invited to be submitted to Dr. Cyprian Kambili at [ckambili@unima.ac.mw](mailto:ckambili@unima.ac.mw), with a copy to Dr. Gift Kayira at [gkayira@unima.ac.mw](mailto:gkayira@unima.ac.mw), by November 15, 2025. These will be reviewed by the editorial team, which will work with the authors of accepted abstracts to develop the full paper.

The proposed schedule for the preparation of the Special Issue is as follows:

- 15 November 2025: Abstract submission deadline.
- 31 December 2025: Feedback provided on submitted abstracts.
- 31 May 2026: Deadline for submission of full papers.
- 31 July 2026: Review reports provided to authors.
- 30 August 2026: Deadline for authors to submit reworked papers.
- February 2027: Publication month.