

## **Lawyers Profiles**

### **1. Augusto Mário da Silva – Guinea-Bissau**

With over 15 years of experience, Augusto Mário da Silva combines practical knowledge across diverse fields with extensive legal expertise. He holds a Law degree from the Faculty of Law in Bissau and a postgraduate qualification in Human Rights from the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo, Brazil. He is also a member of the Guinean league for human rights, Liga Guineense dos Direitos Humanos, where he served as President for eight years (2015-2023). During his tenure, he became a prominent advocate for human rights in Guinea-Bissau, leading efforts to denounce various human rights violations at regional, sub-regional, and international levels, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and the ECOWAS Court of Justice. One significant case he submitted in 2017 involved social activist Sana Canté, who faced violent repression for exercising fundamental rights.

In addition to his advocacy work, Augusto facilitated mediation and reconciliation sessions between conflicting parties. He was equally actively involved with the Guinea-Bissau's press union, Sindicato dos Jornalistas e Técnicos da Comunicação Social (SINJOTECS), participating in initiatives to promote press freedom, which has been severely restricted by political authorities. He played a key role in establishing the Network of Human Rights Defenders in Guinea-Bissau and currently serves as a legal consultant for various public and private entities.

### **2. Moussa Sarr - Senegal**

Moussa Sarr is a lawyer with over two decades of experience, currently serving as the managing partner of SYSS AVOCATS. After specialising in business law for more than ten years, he transitioned to pro bono work in 2013, advocating for human rights and freedoms for those affected by the “authoritarian” practices of the previous Senegalese regime.

In his capacity as human rights advocates, Moussa has represented several prominent activists including, Honourable Member of Parliament Guy Marius Sagna and Abdou Karim Gueye, known as Xrum Khaq. He has also defended all journalists detained during the political and judicial turmoil from March 2021 to February 2024, namely Pape Ale Niang from Dakar Matin, Babacar Touré from Kewoulo, Pape Sane and Pape Ndiaye from Walf Fadjri, as well as independent journalist Maty Sarr Niang. Furthermore, he provided legal defence for opposition leader Bassirou Diomaye Faye, who is now the President of Senegal, along with five ministers from the current government.

### **3. Sarnyenneh M. Dickson - Liberia**

Sarnyenneh M. Dickson is a Liberian lawyer and a graduate of the University of Liberia, where he studied Economics and Law. He has also obtained various professional diplomas

and certificates from institutions across Africa and Europe. Over the course of eighteen years of work, his experience covers governance, integrity building, anti-corruption, access to information and justice, extractive industries governance, media development and regulation strengthening, including practice of law with legal defence to indigents.

Amongst other achievements, he worked with the team of lawyers and civil society actors that drafted the *Whistleblower Protection Bill* and key sections of the *Code of Conduct for Public Officials and Employees*. He is a member of the *Consortium of Lawyers* supporting media reform laws that drafted the *Community Radio Bill* and the *Independent Media Commission Bill*, which are currently under consideration by the National Legislature. In senior management roles in the past, he led program and research work in civil society and at Liberia EITI, served the Carter Center's Rule of Law Program and provided consultancy services to other INGOs in Liberia. Mr. Dickson is a member of the Liberian National Bar Association and secretary to one of its local bars.

#### **4. Thérèse DONU - Togo**

Thérèse Donu Agbonegbán has been a member of the Togolese Bar since March 2012. She graduated from the University of Limoges in France and holds a certificate in International Law and Business Transactions from Justus Liebig Universität in Giessen, Germany. After twelve years of experience in a law firm, where she served first as an Associate and later as a Partner, she decided to establish a modern law firm that embraces new technologies while providing a personalised service and high-level multidisciplinary expertise to meet the needs of both local and international clients.

Her firm specialises in OHADA business law, banking law, debt recovery, environmental law, and international trade law. In recognition of her expertise, she was appointed in October 2021 as an expert representing Togo on the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). In addition to her business law practice, Donu is dedicated to human rights law and has significant experience in criminal defence. She is a two-time winner of the International Bridge to Justice (IBJ) Justice Makers Prize for her project "Justice pour tous," through which she has organised the defence and release of over two hundred prisoners.

#### **5. Gloria Mabeiam Ballason - Nigeria**

Gloria Mabeiam Ballason is a distinguished lawyer and the Principal Partner at MIVE LEGALS (Ballason Chambers). She also serves as the Chief Executive Officer of House of Justice and is the Proprietor of HOJRADIOTV. Renowned for her expertise in Digital Rights Protection, she successfully filed a landmark case in Nigeria: *Audu Adamu Maikori vs. The Inspector General of Police & 5 Others*. In this case, the court held the respondents, including the government, liable for damages amounting to N40,000,000 (approximately \$205,000), a ruling that was upheld on appeal.

Gloria has represented high-profile clients facing persecution for their civic dissent, including Professor Chidi Odinkalu, the former Chairman of Nigeria's Human Rights Commission, who was tried for his televised criticism of a governor's impunity. She also defended Steven Kefas, a citizen journalist who was arrested and jailed for his social media posts. Additionally, Gloria's advocacy work led to the shutdown of her radio programme by the government. In 2021, she was the Keynote Speaker at the 8th Digital Rights Conference, where she addressed journalists and civil society actors across Africa on strategies to combat governmental crackdowns on media and dissent. With over a decade of experience as a weekly law columnist in national newspapers, Gloria is also a sought-after speaker and public analyst, having lectured at both Kaduna State University and the Nigeria Defence Academy.

## **6. Mojirayo Oluwatoyin Ogunlana - Nigeria**

Mojirayo Oluwatoyin Ogunlana is a prominent digital rights lawyer focused on establishing legal protections for a free and open internet while promoting human rights across West Africa. With over 12 years of experience, she has dedicated the past eight years to advocating for journalists' rights, primarily on a pro bono basis, in courts across Nigeria and the West African regional ECOWAS Court. Her significant contributions include the landmark case of *Amnesty International, Togo & 7 Others v. The Republic of Togo*, which addressed an internet shutdown and earned her the 2022 Columbia University Global Freedom of Expression Prize for a Significant Legal Ruling. Mojirayo has also successfully litigated several other high-profile cases, such as the 222-day Twitter ban in Nigeria and efforts related to the ENDSARS protests, which sought justice for victims of police brutality.

Beyond her work in digital rights, Mojirayo is committed to gender rights. She has represented various organisations in cases involving sexual and gender-based violence, including the *W.A.V.E vs. Sierra Leone* case at the ECOWAS Court. As the Principal Partner of M.O.N. Legal in Abuja and the founder of the DiGiCiViC Initiative, she is dedicated to fostering a vibrant civic space. Additionally, Mojirayo serves as co-chair of the Legal and Digital Rights Working Group, enhancing her influence in the fight for human rights and freedom of expression. Her ongoing efforts include challenging government accountability for attacks on journalists and addressing internet shutdowns in Senegal, further demonstrating her commitment to safeguarding fundamental rights in the region.

## **7. Paul Kamara – Sierra Leone**

Paul Kamara is a human rights activist, journalist, press freedom advocate, and lawyer dedicated to championing the rights of the underprivileged. He currently lectures in Media Law and Ethics at the University of Makeni, where he also teaches in the Mass Communication department. His work includes writing articles focused on press freedom, as well as serving as a consultant on Media Law for the Sierra Leone Association of

Journalists (SLAJ). Paul is committed to advancing human rights and media advocacy through education and activism.

## **8. Salifou Béavogui - Guinea**

Salifou Béavogui, a barrister at the Guinea Bar, is widely known as the “Advocate for Hard Causes” or the “Advocate of the Common People.” For more than 26 years, he has earned a reputation as a tireless champion of human rights, consistently advocating for journalists, civil society activists, trade unionists, bloggers, artists, politicians and military personnel. Throughout his distinguished career, Béavogui has taken on numerous landmark cases, with a particular focus on human rights violations. He has also played a key role in defending high-profile cases in Guinea, such as the trial following the attack on former President Alpha Condé’s residence and the proceedings regarding the tragic events September 28, 2009.

Renowned for his staunch commitment to press freedom, Béavogui has represented many Guinean journalists entangled in legal disputes. His unmatched expertise and unwavering dedication have solidified his position as a highly respected figure in Guinea’s judicial circles, earning him widespread admiration from both his peers and the broader public.

## **9. Neneh M.C Cham – The Gambia**

Ms Neneh M.C. Cham is a seasoned legal practitioner with nearly two and a half decades of active engagement in The Gambia’s legal landscape. Since her enrolment as a Barrister and Solicitor of the Supreme Court of The Gambia, she has been a dedicated advocate for human rights, particularly championing the rights of women, children, and other vulnerable groups. Neneh has played a key role in landmark legal battles across various areas, including Constitutional, Human Rights, and Women’s Rights cases, appearing before all courts in the country. She has defended journalists facing criminal charges during periods when press freedom was under severe threat in The Gambia. Some prominent cases include *Inspector General of Police v Nanama Keita* (2011), *Inspector General of Police v Lasana Jobarteh* (2017 – Appeal), and *The State v Ebrima Sawaneh & 6 Others* (2009), covering offences such as Giving False Information to a Public Servant, Broadcasting without a Licence, and Sedition.

In addition to her courtroom work, Neneh was elected President of the Gambia Bar Association in December 2023. She also chairs the Board of the National Agency for Legal Aid (NALA) and serves as a member of the General Legal Council. A former President of the Female Lawyers Association Gambia (FLAG), she is fluent in French and several local languages. Neneh’s dedication, expertise, and compassionate approach have earned her immense respect in the legal fraternity, making her a beacon of hope for those seeking justice and equality.

## **10. Dogbemin Kone – Cote d’Ivoire**

Dr. Dogbemin Koné G., PhD, is a distinguished lawyer at the Bar of Côte d'Ivoire, known for his staunch advocacy for public freedoms and human rights. He is an active member of the Public Law Laboratory at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, under the leadership of Professor Abraham Gadji. As a lecturer and trainer at the law schools, École de la Magistrature and École du Barreau, he specialises in civil, commercial, administrative, and fiscal procedures. A defender of human rights and a promoter of press freedom, Dr. Koné also teaches fair trial procedures and public liberties, often addressing issues related to the legal, ethical, and media responsibilities.

As an expert in media law reforms in Côte d'Ivoire, Dr. Koné has played a pivotal role in defending journalists and media actors in both civil and criminal courts. He serves on the board of directors of the press union, Observatoire de la Liberté de la Presse, de l'Éthique et de la Déontologie (OLPED) and acts as a special adviser to former President of the Francophone Press, Dr. Alfred Dan Moussa. The author of *The New Ivorian Press Law: Progress or Setback*, published by L'Harmattan in 2011, Dr. Koné is a prominent figure in media freedoms both in Côte d'Ivoire and internationally, participating in the International Union of Lawyers (UIA) and contributing to the World Justice Project.

## **11. Houssou Brice - Benin**

Houssou Brice has been a practising lawyer at the Bar of Benin since 2013, where he has represented numerous journalists in court. In addition, he serves as a consultant trainer in media and communications law. Currently pursuing a PhD in private law at the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Abomey-Calavi, he also teaches private law and communications law at several private universities in Benin. As a former president of the Union of Young Lawyers of Benin (UJAB), he has demonstrated a strong commitment to the profession and to the training of young solicitors.

Prior to his legal career, Houssou worked as a journalist from 1996 to 2013, during which he held leadership positions, including president of the Union of Media Professionals of Benin from 2007 to 2013 and a member of the Executive Committee of the International Federation of Journalists. His expertise includes various studies and training programmes on the operation of media in Benin. Through his ongoing commitment, Mr. Houssou has contributed to improving the economic, financial, legal, and legislative environment for media in Benin.

## **12. Samson Lardy Anyenini - Ghana**

Samson Lardy Anyenini is a journalist and legal practitioner, holding a Master of Laws in Alternative Dispute Resolution with a focus on International Commercial and Investment Arbitration. A strong advocate for press freedom and anti-corruption, he was a major crusader for the passage of the Right to Information Law and serves on a Committee of the RTI Commission's Governing Board. Samson has defended several journalists in legal cases and mediations, including Emmanuel Ajarfor, editor of ModernGhana.com, and Manasseh Azure Awuni, one of Ghana's leading investigative journalists. He has also

represented the Media Foundation for West Africa (MFWA) in various legal cases, furthering his dedication to media rights and freedom of expression.

Beyond his advocacy, Samson has consulted for and delivered special papers for professional institutions such as the Judicial Service of Ghana, Ghana Integrity Initiative, and UNESCO. He has been invited as a guest lecturer at law faculties both in Ghana and abroad, including GIMPA, UPSA, and Smith College (Northampton, MA). As a journalist, he has about twenty years of experience, including serving as News Editor at Ghana's Multimedia Group and as a BBC Correspondent. He currently hosts the flagship weekend current affairs/news analysis programme NewsFile on Joynews TV/Radio, where his expertise and in-depth analysis shape public debate and discourse.

### **13. Martin Kpebu, Esq**

Mr Kpebu, is a lawyer. He specialises in court litigation (criminal and civil) and corporate law. He is a rights activist as well who succeeded in arguing for the Supreme Court of Ghana to strike down two laws that infringed the human rights of accused persons (defendants) and sureties in three (3) ground breaking decisions. He also successfully argued for the Supreme Court to interpret another law to engender fair trials (introduction of criminal disclosures). Mr Kpebu is a permanent panellist on Tv3's 'The Key Points' a socio-political and economic programme.

### **14. Zakaria Tanko Musah**

Zakaria Tanko Musah is a Managing Partner at Trent Legal Amansie Chambers, a British trained Barrister-at-Law with over 10 years of practice in Ghana. He is well versed in all facets of corporate and commercial practice, land acquisition, criminal practice, etc. Throughout his years as a legal practitioner, he has successfully advised and represented both local and international clients working in Ghana. He advises a range of International and Ghanaian clients including CSOs/NGOs, multinationals and smaller businesses and individuals, including vulnerable persons.

He is a member of the Ghana Bar, the Bar of England and Wales and the International Bar Association. Tanko's Alma mater includes The Honourable Society of the Middle Temple, UK, Manchester Metropolitan University, Ghana School of Law, Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST), Ghana among others. He is an Academic, lecturing in Media Law and Ethics, a Communications Specialist, a Journalist and a Community Relations Specialist. He has a proven track record of progressive, responsible, and professional delivery in these various roles. He is a highly respected authority on media law and press freedom issues.

### **15. Koffi Sylvain Attoh Mensah**

Koffi Sylvain Attoh Mensah is a distinguished Franco-Togolese lawyer who was admitted to the bar in 1994 in Lomé. His exceptional legal education, initiated at the University of Benin (now the University of Lomé) and furthered in France, has been complemented by advanced training in Canada, the United States, and Europe, focusing on human rights, governance, and sustainable development. Beginning his career as a human rights

consultant at the Togolese Ministry of Social Affairs in 1991, he later joined the prominent firm Aquereburu & Associates before establishing his own practice, the Attoh-Mensah law firm, in 2002. His expertise spans diverse fields, including sports law, intellectual property, and press law, which he explored alongside doctoral studies in France.

Deeply committed to defending fundamental rights, Attoh Mensah has undertaken missions with Lawyers Without Borders and represented cases related to the Rwandan genocide before international courts. A counsel listed with the International Criminal Court for over a decade, he also serves as an arbitrator with the Court of Arbitration for Sport. As a renowned educator of international litigation in Lomé, he is an active member of the Pan-African Lawyers Union and a consultant to institutions such as the World Bank. A tireless advocate for press freedom and democratic governance, Master Attoh Mensah continues to play a pivotal role in advancing human rights across Africa.