

Item 4: human rights situation in Africa

73th session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Observer Status No 359

Honorable Chairperson,

Honorable Commissioners,

State Delegates represented

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of **DefendDefenders and AfricanDefenders**, we join the rest of the African community to celebrate the 35 years of growth and milestone achievements of the African Commission. For this reason, we have supported **27 human rights defenders** from across the continent to join this celebration and engage with the Commission.

Honourable Chairperson,

This celebration takes place as, in contrast, we continue to record spike of violence, repression, against human rights defenders and armed conflicts that obstruct the achievement of justice and accountability.

Despite impressive efforts to strengthen the Commission's framework for the past 35 years, it is disturbing to see the lack of political will by states to implement the Commission's recommendations and totally disregard their obligations under the African Charter. We remember vividly in a few example,

Egypt ignored a call by this august house to suspend the execution of 26 detainees and Eritrea ignored the ruling of the Commission calling for the release and compensation of the journalists arrested in September 2001 that remain detained incommunicado.

Just a day before the opening of this session, in Chad, protests were met with bloody repression. The government reported at least "fifty deaths and more than 300 injured." The Commission should call for a prompt, impartial, and effective investigation into the loss of life.

Additionally, they have been ignored conflicts in Cameroon, Nigeria and Central Africa Republic that the Commission should monitor and take action on.

Honorable Chairperson,

By end of 2021, the UNHCR reported that the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region **hosted 4.9 million refugees and asylum seekers, as well as 12 million internally displaced people.**

This demonstrates the complexity of the region due to political instability, drought, flooding, food shortages, insecurity, and localized violence and conflicts.

Regrettably, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia remain the biggest epicentres of conflicts on the continent. We call on the Commission to condemn ongoing violations and abuses, governments' repression and obstruction to justice and the transitional justice process in Sudan and South Sudan.

Honorable Chairperson,

While reflecting on climate changes and the protection of the environment, we deplore some direct threats by African governments against HRDs working on issues of climate justice.

In this regard we hope the COP 27 that will take place on our continent, specifically in Egypt, may build on successes and pave the way for future ambition to effectively tackle the global challenge on climate change.

However, we would like to emphasize that there is no climate justice without an open civic space.

We therefore, urge the **Egyptian authorities** to immediately lift restrictions imposed on numerous NGOs, release of unjustly detained human rights defenders as well as ensure that activists attending COP27 are not obstructed by prohibitive administrative processes or other undue restrictions of their rights.

Honourable Chairperson,

The recrudescence of Coup d'Etat in Africa has contributed to weakening the democratic order and the rule of law, through escalation of conflicts, climate shocks, chronic vulnerabilities marred by endemic poverty.

Chad, Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Sudan are still under the de facto authority of unelected military juntas, while Tunisia is on its way back to the era of dictatorship, threatening to eliminate gains of the Revolution.

Swaziland [Eswatini] and Zimbabwe continue to repress, suppress human rights defenders, and curtails fundamental freedoms with impunity.

On a more positive note, this year have been unprecedented, specifically with the successful holding of elections in Angola, Somalia and Kenya. Despite the tensions during the pre-

elections period that has led to violence and enforced disappearance in some context, the elections in these countries have been fairly accepted by all parties.

Finally Honorable Chairperson,

We call on Member States to adhere to their commitments to protect, promote, respect, and fulfil the fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the African Charter and as preached in the African Union Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

I Thank you for your attention.