

81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Statement Item 3: Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Africa

Observer Status No. 359

Honourable Chairperson,
Honourable Commissioners,
Distinguished State Delegates,
All protocols observed,

Our forefathers envisioned a continent where human dignity, freedom, and justice would reign supreme. Yet today, state parties and apparatus have seized this opportunity to perpetrate egregious violations against their citizens in contradiction with the African Charter. In addition, some States have refused to cooperate and implement the recommendations of this August house.

Nowhere is this stark reality more evident than in **Sudan**, where the ongoing crisis tragically goes unnoticed. Sudanese asylum seekers face exorbitant visa costs in neighbouring countries like Ethiopia merely to escape the violence—not to seek better lives, but to survive. Nations like **Egypt, which once opened its doors, have now introduced visa restrictions that send a harrowing message: African lives are expendable.** The crisis in Sudan, **the Democratic Republic of Congo** and **Burkina Faso** remains largely ignored. ***We urgently demand an immediate response to this humanitarian crisis and reaffirm our need to protect those fleeing violence.***

The current human rights landscape in several African nations paints a troubling picture. In **Kenya**, the right to peaceful assembly is facing systematic erosion, with authorities employing digital surveillance to target dissenters both online and offline. This crackdown not only stifles democratic voices but also jeopardises the freedom and safety of those who speak out.

In Ethiopia,

Authorities are increasingly employing legal frameworks, such as criminal law, anti-terrorism measures, hate speech and disinformation legislation, and administrative regulations, to suppress and undermine the work of human rights defenders (HRDs). Frequent states of emergency, ongoing armed conflicts, and the risks associated with conducting human rights reporting and investigations in conflict settings have made HRDs' work extremely perilous. Since April 2024, **19 HRDs** have been detained, including journalists, members of civil society organisations (CSOs), and artist HRDs. Additionally, over **12 HRDs** have been forced into **exile** due to repeated arbitrary detentions, torture, death threats, and intimidation. Feminist and online activists face life-threatening dangers and various forms of intimidation yet receive no protection from the government.

Similarly, in **Nigeria**, citizens expressing grievances are confronted with arrests and treason charges, casting a shadow over the nation's commitment to liberty. This trend raises alarm about Nigeria's potential shift toward a closed society, demanding accountability from its leaders.

Uganda faces the dual challenge of climate change and its disproportionate impact on women and children. There are pressing appeals for stronger legal protections for women's land rights.

In **Algeria**, despite constitutional protections, the freedom of expression and peaceful assembly is increasingly suppressed. Activists and journalists encounter arbitrary detention and harassment under vague anti-terrorism laws. Urging the government to uphold these freedoms is essential for a healthy civil society.

Since July 25, 2021, **Tunisia's** democratic institutions have eroded, leading to significant human rights declines. Key issues include irregularities in the presidential election process due to a lack of an independent judiciary, which undermines credibility. Political prisoners, including opposition leaders and journalists, face unfair trials and prolonged detention on vague charges. Additionally, the treatment of sub-Saharan migrants raises serious concerns, with reports of arbitrary detention and discrimination....

Currently, **three human rights defenders** involved with migrant issues have been detained for six months on charges of aiding migrants. ***We demand their immediate release!***

Honourable Chairperson,

In **Burkina Faso**, the political instability from two military coups has led to a security crisis and a democratic deficit, restricting civic space. This includes manipulating the judicial system, targeting judicial professionals, and challenging democratic freedoms. This resulted in increased arrests, abductions, and the forced conscription of human rights defenders, journalists, political opponents and even judges and prosecutors. Civilians are caught in ongoing violence between armed groups and military forces, leading to instability and displacement. The withdrawal from ECOWAS raises concerns about accountability and human rights in the region. ***There is an urgent need for solutions that prioritize civilian protection and end atrocities.***

We urge the African Commission, alongside the African Union Peace and Security Council, to monitor systematic human rights violations that may amount to war crimes. We request the establishment of a special mechanism on Burkina Faso, in collaboration with the United Nations Human Rights Council, under the Addis Ababa Roadmap.

Honourable Chairperson,

The promises of freedom, justice, and dignity—cherished by our forefathers—are under siege. We cannot overlook the reality that freedom of assembly is being crushed by state-sponsored violence, freedom of expression suffocated by censorship, and digital rights weaponised against those fighting for justice.

We deplore the brutal murder of Elvinon Bernado António Dias in Mozambique. Some of our comrades protested in this hall in his memory to denounce such a barbaric act that claimed his life alongside Paulo Guambe of PODOS political party. Such a hideous act reminds us of the killing of our dear brother **Thulani Maseko** in **Swaziland** with total impunity. To date, we have no hope for justice.

We call on the Commission to remind Mozambique of its obligations under the African Charter and desist from extrajudicial killings.

Finally, Honorable Chairperson,

The Commission should urge the President of Zimbabwe to consider the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly, adopted in Niamey in 2014, the concerns and recommendations made by civil society organisations on the Private Voluntary Organisations Bill.

Any law or regulation should create an enabling environment for civic engagement and not restrict civic space.

Thank you