



DEFENDDEFENDERS

East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project

Overview of the Human Rights Situation in the East and Horn of Africa April – October 2019

Report submitted to the 65th Ordinary Session of the
African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
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DEFENDDEFENDERS
(THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS PROJECT)

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Introduction & Executive Summary

DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) welcomes the opportunity offered by the 65th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) to highlight some of the human rights issues in the East and Horn of Africa sub-region for the period of October 2018 to April 2019. This submission was prepared with the assistance of reports and information sent to DefendDefenders, the secretariat of the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (EHAHRD-Net), by our members and partners throughout the sub-region.

Over the past six months governments in the sub-region have sought to restrict legitimate expressions of civilian dissent like peaceful demonstrations, the free expression of human rights defenders (HRDs) and media, as well as targeted civil society organisations (CSOs) through various strategies of harassment and repression.

Less than a year ahead of **Burundi's** contentious 2020 election, the UN Commission of Inquiry highlighted a climate of fear and intimidation in the country, with state agents and *Imbonerakure* militias committing serious human rights violations against civilians, along with several limitations on freedom of expression and association.

Djibouti and **Eritrea** continue to be ruled by two of the most repressive governments in the sub-region, with little to no independent HRDs operating freely in the country. Despite a welcome thawing of diplomatic relations in the Horn of Africa, civil society activists, journalists and other HRDs continue to suffer attacks from state security forces, leading to arrests, arbitrary detentions and torture.

Despite progressive human rights developments in **Ethiopia**, the country faces increased uncertainty with rising ethnic tensions, security breakdowns and a highly publicised regional coup attempt only a year after a new Prime Minister promised radical reforms in a country beset by years of demonstrations and frustrations.

Tanzania continued to aggressively crack down on civic spaces and target the country's opposition politicians and few remaining independent media outlets, especially those critical of the state as preparations begin for elections in 2020. Restrictions on opposition politicians have also increased in **Uganda**, with critics increasingly stifled as the government concurrently grapples with allegations of torture against suspects of high profile extra-judicial killings.

South Sudan's government and rebel leaders agreed to form a new transitional government as per a peace agreement signed in December 2018, but observers remain only cautiously optimistic amid sporadic violations of the ceasefire and continued human rights abuses throughout the country with little chance of real accountability through a mandated Hybrid Court which has failed to materialise.

Extrajudicial killings by police and the forced eviction of indigenous communities remain common and critically unaddressed in **Kenya**, while a High Court decision to retain colonial-era legislation criminalising same-sex relations in May was a major blow to human rights activists.

While considerable progress in establishing conditions for the enjoyment of human rights has been made in **Somalia/Somaliland**, major challenges remain including terror attacks, insecurity, human rights violations, poverty, and inter-clan conflicts which prevent the proper flourishing of human rights organisations.

Despite the government touting of its Universal Period Review record, the space for dissent in **Rwanda** remains critically low, with continued accusations of harassment and murder of political opponents levelled against the state, both at home and abroad.

After months of protests led to the ouster of **Sudan's** longtime dictator, the military and a civilian council agreed on a transition period with the ultimate aim of full civilian rule. However, serious questions remain regarding accountability for crimes committed during the previous regime and the massacre of more than 100 civilians during the demonstrations.

Recommendations

In light of the updates and trends observed in this report, DefendDefenders makes the following recommendations for action by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights:

- Call on member states to adhere to their commitments to protect, respect and fulfil the fundamental human rights and freedoms guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights;
- Call on member states to adopt specific legislative measures to recognise the status of HRDs, accord them the necessary protection, and provide a conducive working environment as per resolution 376 (LX) 2017 adopted during the 60th ordinary session in Niamey, Niger;
- Call on member states to cease the harassment of HRDs including those working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues, and recognise that the rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights are universal;
- Call on member states to cease the harassment of HRDs including those working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues, and recognise that the rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights are universal;
- Undertake a fact-finding mission to Tanzania to investigate and document human rights violations;
- Support the Government of South Sudan to immediately establish and operationalise the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, the commission for truth, reconciliation, and healing, and the compensation and reparation authority; to ensure transparent accountability for crimes committed during the conflict;
- Call on States to abide by the Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly adopted by the Commission during its 60th Ordinary Session, ensuring that they fulfil their obligations under the African Charter by fully protecting these rights;

- Encourage member States who have not done so to deposit the declaration under article 34(6) of the protocol of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights to allow individuals and NGOs to directly submit their cases to the court; and
- Urge the Government of Sudan to ensure that the National Investigative Committee conducts its work in an open, transparent and impartial manner with a view of ensuring justice and accountability for victims of the 3 June massacre, and commit to support the Committee in the course of its work.

Burundi

General Situation

Less than a year ahead of Burundi's presidential, parliamentary, and local elections in 2020, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (CoI) concluded in its report, released on 4 September, the existence of a climate of fear and intimidation of all persons who do not show their support to the ruling party, CNDD-FDD.¹ Members of the party's youth league, the *Imbonerakure*, agents of the National Intelligence Service, police, and local authorities continue to commit serious human rights violations against citizens.²

Freedom of Association

In mid-April 2019, an audio recording surfaced of an alleged senior police officer delivering a message to the government's political opponents: "If you want to disrupt security, I'll finish with you there, and if you're with your wife and children, you'll go together."³ The threats were aimed at Burundi's new opposition party members, the *Congrès National pour la Liberté* (National Congress for Freedom, CNL). According to the party's spokesperson, more than 130 members of the fledgling opposition CNL were arrested and tortured between March and April 2019.⁴ Despite their party being approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs in February 2019, members continue to be harassed by *Imbonerakure* militias for allegedly holding unauthorised meetings.⁵

In early April 2019, the Belgian NGO 11.11.11 decided to close its local office in Bujumbura, stating that applying the government's controversial ethnic hiring quotas contradicted their core values given the history of ethnic tension in the country.⁶

On 10 May 2019, president of the Burundian branch of the Adventist Church, Pastor Lamec Barishinga, was arrested along with Pastor Lambert Ntiguma. Earlier in May, 21 members of the church were arrested when Barishinga refused to give up his post to his predecessor Pastor Joseph Ndikubwayo, who has the support of

¹ United Nations Human Rights Council, "Report of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi," 4 September 2019, <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/42/49>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

² United Nations Human Rights Council, "Oral briefing of the Commission of Inquiry on Burundi," 17 September 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=25005&LangID=E>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³ Human Rights Watch, "Burundi: Rampant Abuses Against Opposition," 12 June 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/12/burundi-rampant-abuses-against-opposition>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

⁴ Iwacu, "Environ « 130 militants » du parti CNL arrêtés dans un mois," 19 April 2019, <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/environ-130-militants-du-parti-cnl-arretes-dans-un-mois/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

⁵ RFI, "Burundi: multiplication des arrestations de militants du CNL depuis son agrément," 4 April 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190402-burundi-imbonerakure-arrestations-militants-cnl-agathon-rwasa>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

⁶ Burundi Daily, "L'ONG belge 11.11.11 refuse de se plier au fichage ethnique de ses employés et ferme son bureau à Bujumbura," 12 April 2019, <https://www.burundidaily.net/single-post/2019/04/12/L'ONG-belge-111111-refuse-de-se-plier-au-fichage-ethnique-de-ses-employés-et-ferme-son-bureau-à-Bujumbura>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

the Minister of the Interior. Over the past year, the Burundian government has harassed and abused the Adventist church by imprisoning and intimidating its leaders and members.⁷

On 16 May 2019, Burundi's Supreme Court ordered the seizure of assets belonging to politicians, human rights defenders (HRDs), journalists in exile, and military officers jailed in Burundi. This is seen as a tactic to scare those who are opposed to a fourth term of President Pierre Nkurunziza.⁸

Burundi suspended the country's last independent civil rights group, PARCEM (Word and Action for Awakening Consciences and the Evolution of Mentalities) accusing the organisation of "disturbing peace and public order." PARCEM's activities "are suspended" indefinitely, according to a document signed by the Ministry of Interior, on 3 June 2019.⁹

On 17 July 2019, the Burundian Court of Appeal of Ntahangwa deliberated on the case of HRD Germain Rukuki, confirming his sentence of 32 years in prison. The deliberation took place in a public hearing without Germain and his defence being notified. On 22 July, six days after the decision was issued, they were finally informed. 44 international and local NGOs have strongly condemned the conviction against Germain Rukuki upheld on appeal and have called for his immediate and unconditional release.¹⁰

Two opposition party members were killed on 11 July 2019, while in police custody. According to civil society groups and independent media, the two men were killed by a police officer in front of a crowd in Gihanga commune, Bubanza province. Police denied this version and accused the two men of having belonged to a group of "bandits" who threatened the region for months and killed police officers.¹¹

In August 2019, the government called on opposition members in exile to return to Burundi and take part in 2020 general elections. Vice-President Gaston Sindimwo made this announcement after members of the CNARED, an alliance of opposition leaders in exile, expressed their intention to return.¹²

⁷ Jeune Afrique, "Burundi : l'Église adventiste se dit victime de harcèlement et d'arrestations arbitraires," 15 May 2019, <https://www.jeuneafrique.com/774986/societe/burundi-leglise-adventiste-se-dit-victime-de-harcelement-et-darrestations-arbitraires/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

⁸ RFI, "Burundi: la justice ordonne la saisie de biens d'opposants," 17 May 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190517-burundi-justice-ordonne-saisie-biens-opposants>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

⁹ The East African, "Burundi suspends last independent civil rights group," 18 June 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Burundi-suspends-last-independent-civil-rights-group/4552908-5162006-6tn3p8z/index.html>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹⁰ International Service for Human Rights, "Burundi | NGOs condemn 32 years prison sentence for Germain Rukuki," 26 July 2019, <https://www.ishr.ch/news/burundi-ngos-condemn-32-years-prison-sentence-germain-rukuki>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹¹ RFI, "Burundi: zones d'ombre autour de la mort de deux opposants," 17 July 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190717-burundi-zones-ombre-autour-mort-deux-opposants-police-legitime-defense>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹² The Citizen, "Burundi welcomes opposition exiles for next year's election," 18 August 2019, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/africa/3302426-5239858-60xsmvz/index.html>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

Opposition party CNL said more than 20 of its offices across the country have been vandalised between March and August 2019 and allege that perpetrators went unpunished or were arrested and later freed without charges.¹³

Freedom of Expression

On 5 April 2019, a defamation suit filed by President Nkurunziza against Belgian lawyer Bernard Maingain, Burundian writer David Gakunzi, and France 3 TV channel in connection to a report on Burundi that aired in 2016, was rejected by a Paris Criminal Court.¹⁴

In July 2019, the BBC closed its office and operations in Burundi until further notice, after efforts to resolve issues with the authorities failed.¹⁵ In March 2019, the government banned BBC transmissions and anyone in the country from providing information to the BBC, after accusing it of airing a documentary damaging the country's reputation.¹⁶

Dozens of protesters demonstrated in Bujumbura on 8 June 2019 against "Western media" blamed for giving a platform to the political opposition. Radio France Internationale (RFI), TV5 Monde, and Le Monde were specifically targeted.¹⁷ These outlets conducted an interview with Marguerite Barankitse, a human rights activist living abroad and opposed to the Burundian regime. In a press release issued on 3 June 2019, the *Conseil national de la communication* (CNC) accused Radio RFI of airing unbalanced information in the interview with Barankitse, as she testified to the human rights violations committed in Burundi and denounced the weak reactions from African States and the international community. The CNC then indicated that it will carefully analyse the professional misconduct committed by RFI and promised to impose sanctions against it.¹⁸

On 3 July 2019, Eric Nshimirimana, head of the ruling party youth league accused of atrocities, was appointed by President Nkurunziza to lead its state-run broadcaster, in a move decried by opposition

¹³ BNN Bloomberg, "Burundi Opposition Warns of Rising Violence Ahead of 2020 Vote," 22 August 2019, <https://www.bnnbloomberg.ca/burundi-opposition-warns-of-rising-violence-ahead-of-2020-vote-1.1305185>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique, "Burundi : Pierre Nkurunziza débouté de sa plainte pour diffamation contre Bernard Maingain et David Gakunzi," 5 April 2019, <http://www.rfi.fr/afrique/20190517-burundi-justice-ordonne-saisie-biens-opposants>, Accessed 26 September.

¹⁵ The Star, "BBC shuts office in Burundi after talks with government fail," 16 July 2019, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/africa/2019-07-16-bbc-shuts-office-in-burundi-after-talks-with-government-fail/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹⁶ CIVICUS Monitor, "Youth militias target fledgling opposition parties," 9 March 2019, <https://monitor.civicus.org/newsfeed/2019/09/03/Youth-militias-target-fledgling-opposition-parties/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹⁷ BBC, "Manifestation contre les "médias occidentaux" au Burundi," 8 June 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/afrique/region-48568133>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

¹⁸ Iwacu, "CNC to impose sanction against RFI for exclusive interview with Marguerite Barankitse," 4 June 2019, <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/englishnews/cnc-to-impose-sanction-against-rfi-for-exclusive-interview-with-marguerite-barankitse/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

parties and civil society organisations (CSOs) as a blow to freedom of the press and to victims of abuse perpetrated by the *Imbonerakure*.¹⁹

On 22 July 2019, on the third anniversary of the disappearance of Jean Bigirimana, an investigative reporter for the independent news website Iwacu, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) urged the government to carry out DNA tests on two bodies that were found shortly after his disappearance.²⁰

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

On 18 April 2019, police fired a shot that hit Jervais Ndayajemwo while trying to arrest Audace Ikoriza who was prosecuted for organising illegal night meetings. Later, police arrested Ikoriza's father and a woman in the same area whose husband is also suspected of holding illegal meetings.²¹

A violent clash between government and opposition youth supporters left two dead on 21 April 2019. Imbonerakure militias tied to the ruling CNDD-FDD party attacked several youths from the opposition CNL and Sahwanya Foredebu parties in Butihinda commune in Muyinga province.²²

At least one person was killed, and 10 others wounded after fighting occurred between members of the ruling CNDD-FDD party and those of the CNL opposition party in Mubimbi commune on the nights of 25 and 27 August.²³

Djibouti

Freedom of Association

In September 2019, the Djiboutian government released 19 Eritrean Prisoners of War (POWs) who were detained in Djibouti for 11 years - they will be resettled in Canada. Captured during the Djiboutian-Eritrean border conflict in 2008, the 19 Eritreans were detained in the Negad detention centre in Djibouti. The Eritrean regime did not acknowledge that Djibouti had any Eritrean POWs in custody, even though their presence there had been repeatedly brought to the notice of the Eritrean authorities by the International Committee of the Red Cross.²⁴

¹⁹ BBC, "Burundi's Imbonerakure leader named head of RTNB," 14 July 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48980959>, Accessed September 2019.

²⁰ Reporters Without Borders, "Three years after Burundian journalist's disappearance, RSF calls for DNA tests," 23 July 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/news/three-years-after-burundian-journalists-disappearance-rsf-calls-dna-tests>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²¹ Iwacu, "Man wounded by bullet fired by police in Rumonge," 19 April 2019, <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/englishnews/man-wounded-by-bullet-fired-by-police-in-rumonge/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²² Iwacu, "Clashes between youths in Butihinda," 29 April 2019, <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/englishnews/youth-clashes-in-butihinda/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²³ Iwacu, "Growing political tensions in Mubimbi commune," 29 August 2019, <https://www.iwacu-burundi.org/englishnews/growing-political-tensions-in-mubimbi-commune/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²⁴ Human Rights Concern Eritrea, "19 Eritrean Prisoners of War Released by Djiboutian Government are Resettled in Canada," September 2019, <https://hrc-eritrea.org/19-eritrean-prisoners-of-war-released-by-djiboutian-government-are-resettled-in-canada/>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

Freedom of Expression

According to the *Ligue Djiboutienne des Droits Humains*, human rights defender Degmo Ali Abdi was arrested by security forces on 8 July 2019. Degmo's online activism often focuses on high-level corruption and the misappropriation of public funds in Djibouti.²⁵ The country remains one of the most repressive for freedom of expression in the sub-region and ranked 173 out of 180 countries in Reporters Without Borders' 2019 World Press Freedom Index.²⁶

Eritrea

General Situation

In late May 2019, Eritrea was removed from the US terror blacklist, along with the removal of targeted travel bans and asset freezes against individuals in the government. Eritrea was added to the list of countries the US considers as "not fully co-operating" with anti-terrorism efforts in May 2017, after allegations that the government funded the Al-Shabaab militant group in Somalia.²⁷

On 11 June 2019, the Committee to Protect Journalists alongside 29 other civil society organisations sent a letter to the UN Human Rights Council urging them to continue to scrutinise the dire human rights situation in Eritrea. The letter highlighted the urgency to adopt a resolution for Eritrea at the 41st UN Human Rights Council in June-July 2019.²⁸

9 July marked the one-year anniversary of the historic peace deal that ended more than 20 years of latent conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia. Yet, despite positive promise, little has changed and the country remains bogged down by isolationism and high rates of illegal emigration in the face of indefinite national military service tantamount to slavery.²⁹ On 2 July, UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, Daniela Kravetz, reported that human rights had not improved and expressed regret that the peace deal failed to bring widespread abuses and violations to an end.³⁰ On 4 July, the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) voted to extend Kravetz's mandate for another year, and called on the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to present an oral update on Eritrea in March 2020. No African country on the HRC voted for the mandate renewal - eight countries abstained while

²⁵ Ligue Djiboutienne des Droits Humains, "ABUS !!!," 11 July 2019, <http://www.iddh.net/abus-5/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²⁶ RSF, "2019 World Press Freedom Index," <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²⁷ The East African, "Eritrea welcomes removal from US terror blacklist," 29 May 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/africa/Eritrea-welcomes-removal-from-US-terror-blacklist/4552902-5136890-48808f/index.html>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²⁸ DefendDefenders, "Ensure continued scrutiny of the human rights situation in Eritrea," 11 June 2019, <https://www.defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/HRC41-Civil-society-letter-regarding-ERITREA.pdf>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

²⁹ Human Rights Watch, "One Year After Peace Deal, Little Has Changed in Eritrea," 9 July 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/09/one-year-after-peace-deal-little-has-changed-eritrea>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³⁰ Al Jazeera, "UN expert: No rights improvements in Eritrea after peace deal," 2 July 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/expert-rights-improvements-eritrea-peace-deal-190702143604128.html>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

Eritrea and four others actively voted against it.³¹ No Special Rapporteur has been allowed to visit the country since the mandate began in 2012.

A damning report issued by Human Rights Watch in August 2019 found that many Eritreans have spent their entire working lives at the service of the government in either a military or civilian capacity, which has had visible and lasting impact on the rights, freedom, and lives of Eritreans.³²

Freedom of Association

Security forces continue to carry out raids in private homes where devotees of unrecognised religions, especially Pentecostal Christians, meet for community prayer. It was reported that as many as 30 believers were detained in early June 2019 in the capital Asmara. The Eritrean authorities continue to demand full control of all the Church-run organisations and initiatives in the country, such as private schools, medical clinics, and orphanages.³³

In mid-June 2019, the Eritrean government dismantled 22 Catholic health centres and clinics allegedly in response to the church's criticism of President Isaias Afwerki's rule. Catholic nuns were allegedly evicted from the hospitals and stopped from taking any equipment with them. Eritrean Catholic bishops had expressed the need for political reforms in the country, which does not have a constitution and has never held a national election³⁴

In early September 2019, seven secondary schools run by religious groups were seized by the government, who said that the seizures are in line with regulations they introduced in 1995, which restrict the activities of religious institutions.³⁵

Freedom of Expression

Eritrea has continued to suppress public opinion, ensuring that the only standing media outlet is state-owned. The Eritrean government has not shown any progress with regard to press freedom since it shut down the independent press and arrested journalists in September 2001, hence the country's 2019

³¹ Africa News, "UN renews Eritrea human rights monitoring: African reps abstain, vote against," 12 July 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/07/12/un-renews-eritrea-human-rights-monitoring-african-reps-abstain-vote-against/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³² Human Rights Watch, "They Are Making Us into Slaves, Not Educating Us," 8 August 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/08/they-are-making-us-slaves-not-educating-us/how-indefinite-conscription-restricts>, Accessed 26 September.

³³ FaithWire, "30 Christians Detained as Brutal Authoritarian Crackdown Continues in Eritrea," 5 June 2019, <https://www.faithwire.com/2019/06/05/30-christians-detained-as-brutal-authoritarian-crackdown-continues-in-eritrea/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³⁴ Human Rights Concern Eritrea, "The Impact of Recently Closed Clinics and Health Centers Administered by Catholic Churches on the Public and Healthcare System of Eritrea," <https://hrc-eritrea.org/the-impact-of-recently-closed-clinics-and-health-centers-administered-by-catholic-churches-on-the-public-and-healthcare-system-of-eritrea/> Accessed 1 October 2019.

³⁵ Africa News, "Eritrea gov't's latest seizures - schools run by religious bodies," 3 September 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/09/03/eritrea-govt-s-latest-seizures-schools-run-by-religious-bodies/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

World Press Freedom Index rank of 178 out of 180 - making it the most restricted country concerning press freedom in all of Africa.³⁶

On the 18th anniversary of their arrest in September 2019, Amnesty International called for the immediate release of 28 Eritrean prisoners who have never been charged or heard of since. The 11 politicians and 17 journalists were arrested in an infamous 2001 crackdown after criticising President Isaias Afwerki, who has governed since Eritrea became an independent country in 1993.³⁷ The politicians were arrested for writing an open letter to the president asking him to respect the constitution, which was ratified in 1997 but never implemented - and hold elections.³⁸

Ethiopia

General Situation

April 2019 marked one year since Abiy Ahmed came into office as the Prime Minister of Ethiopia, enacting overdue reform for the country, such as lifting the contentious State of Emergency, ordering the release of thousands of prisoners, allowing dissidents to return home, and unblocking hundreds of websites and TV channels. The reform has also allowed the re-entry of international organisations into the country exuding the potential for a long-term commitment to human rights ahead of a promised 2020 election. Despite the progressive developments, the country faces an increased uncertainty with rising ethnic tensions and security breakdown, especially in the beleaguered Somali region and among the Sidama people in the south.³⁹

On 7 May 2019, DefendDefenders launched a new report, “Turning the Page: Rebuilding Civil Society in Ethiopia,” examining the challenges faced by Ethiopian HRDs amid the ongoing reform process. This report aims to make concrete recommendations for rebuilding a robust and inclusive civil society ahead of elections planned for 2020. Despite some positive developments, serious gaps remain, and rights-based organisations in Ethiopia currently lack the capacity to keep pace with these developments. This report outlines several avenues donors and international organisations can use to help effectively rebuild civil society in Ethiopia, such as capacity-building activities, and areas of focus like psychosocial support.⁴⁰

³⁶ RSF, “2019 World Press Freedom Index,” <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³⁷ Amnesty International, “Eritrea: 28 prisoners of conscience detained 18 years ago must be immediately and unconditionally released,” 17 September 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/eritrea-28-prisoners-of-conscience-detained-18-years-ago-must-be-immediately-and-unconditionally-released/>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³⁸ Human Rights Watch, “Eritrea Should End 18 Years of Darkness,” 18 September 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/18/eritrea-should-end-18-years-darkness>, Accessed 26 September 2019.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch, “Ethiopia: Growing Uncertainty Marks Abiy’s First Year in Power,” 2 April 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/02/ethiopia-growing-uncertainty-marks-abiy-first-year-power>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴⁰ DefendDefenders, “Turning the Page: Rebuilding Civil Society in Ethiopia,” May 2019, https://www.defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Ethiopia_FINAL-REPORT.pdf, Accessed 27 September 2019.

On 2 July 2019, Daniel Bekele was appointed as the new head of the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission. Daniel is a seasoned lawyer, human rights advocate, former Senior Advisor at Amnesty International, and the Africa Director at Human Rights Watch in New York. His appointment follows several human rights defenders being appointed to positions of power.⁴¹

In mid-August 2019, the Ethiopian government launched a five-year national roadmap to end child marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).⁴² The advancement of women's rights remains an issue due to rigid social norms that often prevent their active participation in public life despite some positive developments in the country recently. Women also often lack access to justice, especially in cases of FGM and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).⁴³

On 6 September, Maekelawi, the infamous police station in the heart of Addis Ababa, was opened for the first time to the public and former inmates. For years, Maekelawi had been synonymous with abuse and repression, and will likely be repurposed as a museum.⁴⁴

On 11 October 2019, Prime Minister Abiy was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to "achieve peace and international cooperation," in relation to the 2018 peace deal with Eritrea that ended a 20-year military stalemate following their 1998-2000 border war.⁴⁵

Reoccurrence of Ethnic Violence

In May 2019, the Geneva-based International Displacement Monitoring Centre reported that an estimated 3.2 million Ethiopians had been displaced fleeing conflict and drought by April 2019. In addition to 900,000 refugees from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea, this makes Ethiopia host of the most internally displaced people in the world. About three million people have been displaced by ethnic clashes since Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed came to power in April 2018.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Africa News, "Ethiopia appoints top rights advocate as head of human rights body," 2 July 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/07/02/ethiopia-appoints-top-rights-advocate-as-head-of-human-rights-body/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴² UNICEF, "Ethiopia launches a five-year, US\$ 94 million plan to end child marriage and FGM," 15 August 2019, <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/ethiopia-launches-five-year-us-94-million-plan-end-child-marriage-and-fgm>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴³ DefendDefenders, "Turning the Page: Rebuilding Civil Society in Ethiopia," May 2019, https://defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Ethiopia_FINAL-REPORT.pdf#page=25, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Gates Open on Ethiopia's Infamous Maekelawi Jail," 6 September 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/06/gates-open-ethiopias-infamous-maekelawi-jail>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴⁵ BBC, "Nobel Peace Prize: Ethiopia PM Abiy Ahmed wins," 11 October 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-50013273>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

⁴⁶ Reuters, "Displaced families suffering subhuman conditions in Ethiopia: Egeland," 20 June 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-displaced/displaced-families-suffering-subhuman-conditions-in-ethiopia-egeland-idUSKCN1TL220>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

On 3 May 2019, the Ethiopian army was deployed to quell an outbreak of deadly ethnic clashes in the country's north. The incidents between people belonging to the Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions is said to have claimed the lives of over 200 according to local media and activists.⁴⁷

On 5 June, one student was killed and about 20 injured at Aksum University in Tigray. Ethnic-based violence has become a recurring problem at university campuses across the country, which reflects overall ethnic tension in the country.⁴⁸

On 22 June, President of the Amhara Region, Ambachew Mekonnen and his advisor, Ezez Wassie, were killed in an attempted coup led by Amhara's security chief Asaminew Tsige.⁴⁹ Hours later, the chief of staff of the national security forces Seare Mekonnen was killed in his home by his bodyguard in Addis Ababa. Asaminew Tsige who was in hiding since the staged coup attempt was shot dead on 24 June.⁵⁰ The army intelligence general states that the staged coup was meant to create chaos and division within the military. The two generals killed in Addis Ababa were part of the Tigrayan ethnic group. These assassinations renewed fears of political unrest.

The International Crisis Group warned that instability could worsen in Ethiopia if the southern Sidama ethnic group carries out a threat to unilaterally declare a new semi-autonomous region, warning that others may do the same.⁵¹ The Sidama, who make up about five percent of Ethiopia's population, say they will declare their own region under the country's ethnically-federated system of government unless they are granted a referendum. On 20 July, at least 17 people were killed in clashes between Ethiopian security forces and Sidama independence activists.⁵²

Freedom of Association

⁴⁷ Africa News, "Ethiopia deploys army to curb new deadly ethnic clashes," 3 May 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/05/03/ethiopia-deploys-army-to-curb-new-deadly-ethnic-clashes/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴⁸ Borkena, "Aksum University violence, in Tigray region, claimed life," 5 June 2019, <https://borkena.com/2019/06/05/aksum-university-violence-in-tigray-regionclaimed-life/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁴⁹ Al Jazeera, "Ethiopia's Amhara state chief killed amid regional coup attempt," 23 June 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/ethiopia-army-chief-staff-shot-regional-coup-attempt-190623051059851.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁵⁰ Al Jazeera, "Ethiopia security forces kill alleged coup leader," 24 June 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/ethiopia-security-forces-kill-alleged-coup-leader-190624120729421.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁵¹ International Crisis Group, "Time for Ethiopia to Bargain with Sidama over Statehood," 4 July 2019, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/ethiopia/b146-time-ethiopia-bargain-sidama-over-statehood>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁵² Al Jazeera "Ethiopia: At least 17 killed in violence over Sidama autonomy," 20 July 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/ethiopia-17-killed-violence-sidama-autonomy-190720170914800.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

On 24 August 2019, Ethiopia's parliament passed a new election law ahead of elections scheduled for May 2020.⁵³ One of the amendments raised the minimum number of signatures to register a national party to 10,000, up from 1,500. Regional parties will need 4,000 signatures, up from 750. But opposition parties said the changes make it more difficult for them and have threatened to boycott the election.⁵⁴

Freedom of Expression

On 7 June, police in Addis Ababa prevented journalist and former Amnesty International Prisoner of Conscience, Eskinder Nega, from holding a press conference to announce plans for his new TV station, *Senai*. Police officers blocked the entrance to the Hilton Hotel, turning away journalists and other attendees. Eskinder was released in February 2018 after serving seven years of an 18-year sentence for simply doing his job. Since his release, Eskinder has been publishing the weekly *Ethiopia* newspaper, leading discussions on issues such as democracy, ethnic nationalism, and the administration of Addis Ababa.⁵⁵

Between 11 June and 18 June Ethiopia's only Internet provider, Ethio Telecom, cut Internet access and disabled text messaging without explanation. On 18 June Ethio Telecom apologised in a tweet for the Internet service interruption but gave no explanation for the situation. On 22 June Ethiopia experienced another Internet blackout and likewise Ethio Telecom apologised in a tweet for the service interruptions without explanation. Previously, the Ethiopian government cut Internet access in 2017 and in early 2018 during periods of major protests and political unrest.⁵⁶

On the evening of 18 July 2019, security personnel in Hawassa, the capital of Ethiopia's Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR), arrested two managers, Getahun Deguye and Tariku Lemma, and two board members, Belay Belguda and Girma Chuluke, from the Sidama Media Network (SMN). Earlier that day, security personnel had gone to the SMN offices in Hawassa, where they took the office keys and ordered the journalists to disperse. Journalists were allowed back to the office on 23 July but did not fully resume work until 25 July because they were still concerned for their safety.⁵⁷

Mesganaw Getachew, a reporter for the privately owned *Ethiopia* weekly, was arrested on 9 August 2019 after recording an interview outside a court in Addis Ababa, shortly after he interviewed a lawyer,

⁵³ The Africa Report, "Ethiopia passes new laws ahead of 2020 elections," 29 August 2019, <https://www.theafricareport.com/16693/ethiopia-passes-new-laws-ahead-of-2020-elections/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁵⁴ Reuters, "Ethiopian opposition parties threaten election boycott," <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-ethiopia-politics/ethiopian-opposition-parties-threaten-election-boycott-idUSKCN1VO1ZE>, 3 September 2019.

⁵⁵ Amnesty International, "Ethiopia: Stop harassing Eskinder Nega for his opinions," 7 June 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/ethiopia-stop-harassing-eskinder-nega-for-his-opinions/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁵⁶ CPJ, "In era of reform, Ethiopia still reverts to old tactics to censor press," 9 July 2019, <https://cpj.org/blog/2019/07/ethiopia-coup-internet-censored-blocked-jailed-journalists.php>, Accessed 27 September.

⁵⁷ CPJ, "Authorities arrest Sidama Media Network workers in southern Ethiopia amid unrest," 9 August 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/08/authorities-arrest-sidama-media-network-workers-in.php>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

Henok Aklilu, outside the Arada First Instance court in Addis Ababa. He is now facing allegations of contravening Ethiopia's Anti-Terrorism Proclamation.⁵⁸

In September 2019, creators of a popular political satire in Ethiopia ended the television show's three-year run on state affiliated Fana TV after attempts were made to put pressure on them to change the content. The 30-minute show, called *Min Litazez*, often took on current political events and poked fun at senior figures.⁵⁹

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

On 4 June 2019, Orthodox religious leaders in Ethiopia called on the government to block a US gay travel company from touring the country's ancient sites, notably the holy city of Lalibela. The itinerary of the group sparked controversy in Ethiopia, where draconian laws punish consensual same-sex acts with up to 15 years in prison.⁶⁰ LGBT HRDs attempting to organise amid the reform process face significant obstacles from both the government and society at large, and are often marginalised even with the human rights movement itself.⁶¹

Kenya

General Situation

On 2 July Human Rights Watch released an article detailing police violence against men and boys in low income areas of Kenya. Extrajudicial killings reflect the unlawful use of excessive force on behalf of police throughout the country. Since August 2018, police have killed 21 men and boys who were allegedly criminals.⁶² According to Human Rights Watch, Kenya has consistently failed to honour its international human rights obligations, exemplified by extrajudicial killings, as well as threats, intimidation, and harassment of citizens on behalf of security forces.⁶³

In July 2019 DefendDefenders and the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders – Kenya, among other civil society organisations, submitted shadow reports for Kenya's third Universal Periodic Review.

⁵⁸ CPJ, "Ethiopian authorities arrest journalist Mesganaw Getachew after he films outside court," 20 August 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/08/ethiopian-authorities-arrest-journalist-mesganaw-g.php>, Accessed 8 October 2019.

⁵⁹ Al Jazeera, "Behailu Wase: Ethiopia's Cafe Society," 10 September 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/my-ethiopia/2019/09/behailu-wase-ethiopia-cafe-society-190910081830224.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶⁰ Africa News, "Ethiopian churches oppose gay travel company's tour plans," 4 June 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/06/04/ethiopian-churches-oppose-gay-travel-company-s-tour-plans/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶¹ DefendDefenders, "Turning the Page: Rebuilding Civil Society in Ethiopia," May 2019, https://www.defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Ethiopia_FINAL-REPORT.pdf#page=27, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶² Human Rights Watch, "Kenya: Nairobi Police Executing Suspects," 2 July 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/02/kenya-nairobi-police-executing-suspects>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶³ Human Rights Watch, "Kenya Fails to Honor Human Rights Promises to UN," 25 July 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/25/kenya-fails-honor-human-rights-promises-un>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

The reports list a litany of longstanding human rights concerns, including extrajudicial killings, the forced eviction of indigenous communities, and attacks on press freedom during election cycles.⁶⁴

Freedom of Association

On May 24, Kenya's High Court decided to uphold criminal sanctions on same sex relations. This decision was made despite testimonies from LGBT+ Kenyans describing the ways in which the criminalisation dismisses them as equally deserving of human rights. The #Repeal162 campaign, aimed to repeal colonial-era sections of the criminal code, was spearheaded by Kenyan LGBT+ human rights defenders and lawyers.⁶⁵

In June 2019, the Refugee Coalition of East Africa stepped in to help a group of LGBT+ refugees in Nairobi by giving them housing and accommodation. The group, which consists of 76 refugees coming from Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda, left Kakuma refugee camp after homophobic attacks against them by camp residents. Following this, in April, the group rented rooms in Nairobi's Kangemi suburb where they faced the same homophobic violence once residents heard about their sexual orientation and were subsequently evicted by their landlord.⁶⁶

On 20 June 2019, the UN's refugee agency reports that a group of 47 LGBT+ refugees have arrived back at a camp in north western Kenya. The refugees were bussed there by authorities from Nairobi. The UNHCR states that it will make provisions for the refugees with specific vulnerabilities.⁶⁷

In August 2019, authorities announced plans to evict another 60,000 people from the Mau Forest, even though they have not adequately investigated abuses by security officials during similar evictions in July 2018.⁶⁸ According to watchdog groups, at least nine people have died, including two children, in the eviction process since 2018.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ DefendDefenders, "Kenya: DefendDefenders submits joint report to the 35th Session of the UPR Working Group," 18 July 2019, <https://defenddefenders.org/kenya-defenddefenders-submits-joint-report-to-the-35th-session-of-the-upr-working-group/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶⁵ The Nation, "In a Painful Setback, Kenya's High Court Upholds Antigay Laws," 28 May 2019, <https://www.thenation.com/article/kenya-same-sex-marriage-lgbt-rights/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶⁶ Reuters, "Scores of LGBT+ refugees in Kenya slum face homophobic attacks, eviction," 12 June 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-kenya-lgbt-refugees/scores-of-lgbt-refugees-in-kenya-slum-face-homophobic-attacks-eviction-idUSKCN1TC2WY>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶⁷ UNHRC, "UNHCR Statement on the relocation of 74 refugees to Kakuma camp," 20 June 2019, <https://www.unhcr.org/ke/15714-unhcr-statement-on-the-relocation-of-74-refugees-to-kakuma-camp.html>, 27 September 2019.

⁶⁸ Human Rights Watch, "Kenya: Abusive Evictions in Mau Forest," 20 September 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/20/kenya-abusive-evictions-mau-forest>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁶⁹ Voice of America, "Kenya Forest Dwellers Say Government Evictions Leave Several Dead, Injured," 21 September 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/kenya-forest-dwellers-say-government-evictions-leave-several-dead-injured>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

Kenyan activist Esther Mwikali, who championed land rights in Muthini village, was found dead on 27 August 2019, two days after she disappeared. Human rights groups demand investigation and accountability for her murder.⁷⁰

Freedom of Expression

On 3 May, World Press Freedom Day, Kenya news consumers, rights activists, media trainers, and practitioners highlighted soft censorship as the latest means used by entities to whip the media into compliance. Kenyans noted how commercial interests, partisanship, social media and political ownership of news outlets are the greatest threat to media freedom in Kenya.⁷¹ Following World Press Freedom Day, Reporters Without Borders released the 2019 World Press Freedom Index and reported that Kenya had declined in ranking from 96 to 100 out of 180, yet still remains a haven for journalist compared to other East African nations.⁷²

On 17 June, Blogger Robert Alai was charged with treason for publishing photos of police officers killed in an explosion by al-Shabab militants in May. He is also charged with prejudicing investigations by posting information on his Twitter account. Alai faces a life sentence if found guilty. On 2 July, Alai was released from prison on cash bail.⁷³

On 26 June Kenyan MP Charles Njagua Kanyi was arrested and later released on bail after he was charged with incitement to violence following alleged xenophobic remarks. On 24 June a video of Kanyi appearing to threaten foreign traders was widely shared causing controversy. Concerned about the incident's impact on the threat to regional trade, breakdown of law and order and diplomacy in Nairobi, the government of Kenya arrested the MP on a charge of incitement to violence.⁷⁴

On 4 July Dennis Itumbi was arraigned in connection to a fake letter claiming a plot to assassinate Deputy President William Ruto. Itumbi is alleged to have posted the letter in a WhatsApp group and is being charged with publishing alarming information. Itumbi was arrested on 3 July and the prosecution requested his detention for two weeks while investigations continue.⁷⁵

⁷⁰ HRD Memorial, "Esther Mwikali Wambua," August 2019, <https://hrdmemorial.org/hrdrecord/esther-mwikali-wambua/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷¹ The Star, "Press freedom reels under new forms of censorship," 3 May 2019, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/big-read/2019-05-03-press-freedom-reels-under-new-forms-of-censorship/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷² Voice of America, "Kenya Drops in Press Freedom Index, But Remains Haven for Journalists," 3 May 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/kenya-drops-press-freedom-index-remains-haven-journalists>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷³ Daily Nation, "Blogger Robert Alai charged with treachery over attack photos," 2 July 2019, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Alai-faces-life-sentence-after-treachery-charge/1056-5179578-yeqb78/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷⁴ The East African, "Kenyan MP Njagua charged with incitement, freed on \$5,000 cash bail," 3 July 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Kenyan-legislator-freed-on-bail-over-xenophobic-utterances/4552908-5181472-yugdcrz/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷⁵ Daily Nation, "Dennis Itumbi arraigned over fake DP Ruto murder plot letter," 4 July 2019, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Dennis-Itumbi-arraigned-over-fake-DP-Ruto-murder-plot-letter/1056-5182452-5bhx0kz/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

For the first time, Kenya's national census included a third gender - intersex - to the list of possible responses, in a move applauded by advocates. In an attempt to be more inclusive, the census also includes new tribal categories for indigenous peoples who in previous decades were either not counted at all or lumped together with larger tribes that they have long accused of stealing their land and threatening their ways of life.⁷⁶

The Kenya Film Classification Board chief executive Ezekiel Mutua proposed banning two Kenyan songs from playing in public places because of sexual innuendos contained in the lyrics. Mutua said that the two songs, Wamlambezi by Sailors and Tetema by Rayvany and Diamond Platnumz, should only be played in night clubs and bars and not in public spaces where children may be present.⁷⁷

On 13 September 2019, a High Court in Nairobi ruled that Rastafarianism is a religion and its followers have the right to expression in their dress. The ruling stems from a case in which a young woman was banned from Olympic High School for refusing to cut her dreadlocks, which her parents argued were a form of constitutionally protected religious expression.⁷⁸

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Human rights activist Boniface Mwangi was arrested on 6 May 2019 for allegedly plotting a revolution. Chief Inspector of Police George Muchiri said in a statement that he had reason to believe that Mwangi had information on the alleged organisation of a revolution that is likely to cause civil unrest and breach of peace. Mwangi's arrest came just five days after he led peaceful demonstrators to Uhuru Park as part of the "Beyond Zero Corruption" campaign where they clashed with police.⁷⁹

On 16 May 2019, the United Nations urged LGBT+ refugees in Kenya to show "calm and restraint" after protests demanding better treatment turned violent, with police firing tear gas and arresting more than 20 demonstrators. More than 23 LGBT+ refugees have been arrested and are facing charges such as illegal assembly, creating a disturbance and assaulting police officers.⁸⁰

Human rights activists in Kenya held a vigil for Sudan on 19 June 2019 as a statement of solidarity. Police disrupted the vigil throwing tear gas into the crowd, labelling the association of activists as unlawful.

⁷⁶ Washington Post, "A new census in Kenya is counting people never counted before," 29 August 2019, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/kenya-census-intersex-and-indigenous-people/2019/08/28/fbeca98e-c529-11e9-8bf7-cde2d9e09055_story.html, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷⁷ Daily Nation, "Ezekiel Mutua now wants 'Wamlambezi' banned in public places," 27 August 2019, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Ezekiel-Mutua-wants-Wamlambezi-banned/1056-5251062-m0kjhzmz/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷⁸ The Star, "Rastafarianism is a religion, High Court rules," 13 September 2019, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2019-09-13-rastafarianism-is-a-religion-high-court-rules/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁷⁹ Daily Nation, "Boniface Mwangi accused of plotting a 'revolution'," 6 May 2019, <https://www.nation.co.ke/news/Activist-Boniface-Mwangi-arrested-at-his-home/1056-5102574-oj06k7/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁸⁰ Reuters, "U.N. urges calm after protests by LGBT+ refugees in Kenya turn violent," 16 May 2019, <https://af.reuters.com/article/commoditiesNews/idAFL4N22S203>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

Activists attending the vigil said they were there to show solidarity with the suffering of fellow Africans in Sudan.⁸¹

On 26 June 2019, Kenyan environmental activists were victorious in court following a series of peaceful protests led by environmental groups rallying against the establishment of a coal mine in Lamu Kenya. Groups such as Save Lamu and Lamu Youth Alliance, have been key leaders in demonstrating against the mine and faced constant harassment from state authorities starting in 2018. The final verdict conceded that the mine failed to abide by environmental protection laws.⁸²

Rwanda

General Situation

On 21 June, the Ministry of Justice announced that the Rwandan government has so far achieved over 80 percent of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) recommendations on human rights which were adopted in 2015. Held after every four years, the UPR assesses state performance on human rights, including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of all UN member states. Rwanda is up for the next review in 2020 and, according to the Ministry of Justice, 42 out of the 50 recommendations have been implemented thus far.⁸³

During a 26 June 2019 interview with France 24 and the European Union's development commissioner, President Paul Kagame dismissed allegations against Rwanda's human rights record in regard to an European Union report, calling the report "ridiculous" and "rubbish."⁸⁴

Freedom of Association

In September 2019, South Africa's National Prosecution Authority issued arrest warrants for two Rwandans accused of murdering Rwandan critic Colonel Patrick Karegeya, who was found dead in his hotel room in Johannesburg in 2014. From 1994 to 2004, Karegeya was the head of Rwanda's external intelligence services, but he fell out with the government and was imprisoned twice before fleeing to South Africa in 2007 where he founded the exiled opposition party the Rwanda National Congress (RNC). President Kagame has long denied any involvement in the murder.⁸⁵

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch, "Kenyan Police Disrupt Sudan Solidarity Protests," 20 June 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/20/kenyan-police-disrupt-sudan-solidarity-protests>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁸² Human Rights Watch, "Tribunal Stops Kenya's Coal Plant Plans," 1 July 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/01/tribunal-stops-kenyas-coal-plant-plans>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁸³ The New Times, "Rwanda 'has achieved 80% of UN human rights recommendations'," 24 June 2019, <https://www.newtimes.co.rw/news/rwanda-has-achieved-80-un-human-rights-recommendations>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch, "No Space for Criticism of Rwanda," 27 June 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/06/27/no-space-criticism-rwanda>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Rwandans Charged With Murder of Exiled Critic," <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/13/rwandans-charged-murder-exiled-critic>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

On a welcome note, in July 2019 Rwanda voted to extend the mandate of the United Nations LGBT+ rights watchdog for another three years at the UN Human Rights Council, one of only three African states to do so. The UN Human Rights Council in 2016 approved a resolution that created the LGBT+ rights watchdog position.⁸⁶

Eugène Ndereyimana, an opposition member with the unregistered *Forces démocratiques unifiées* (FDU)-Inkingi party was reported missing by his colleagues on 15 July 2019 after he failed to arrive for a meeting in Nyagatare, in Rwanda's Eastern Province – he has yet to resurface and is presumed dead.⁸⁷

On 23 September 2019, Sylidio Dusabumuremyi, the national coordinator of the opposition FDU-Inkingi party, was stabbed to death at his workplace, a canteen at a health centre in southern Rwanda, by two unidentified attackers who arrived by motorbike. Two men have since been arrested in connection to the murder.⁸⁸ Party leader Victoire Ingabire decried the murder as an attempt to intimidate opposition politicians.⁸⁹

Freedom of Expression

In April 2019, the Supreme Court in Rwanda rejected a challenge to the law created in 2018 which maintains that it is a crime to insult the president. This means that anyone who insults President Kagame will face between five and seven years in prison. It has been argued that this law is unconstitutional as it undermines freedom of expression. However, the court ruled that the law will remain.⁹⁰

In August 2019, Australia's national broadcaster reported that a network of alleged Rwandan spies is working to suppress dissident refugees living in Australia.⁹¹ Enforced disappearances of government critics remains common in Rwanda, often without investigation or accountability.⁹²

⁸⁶ Washington Blade, "UN Human Rights Council renews LGBTI rights watchdog's mandate," 12 July 2019, <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2019/07/12/un-human-rights-council-renews-lgbti-rights-watchdogs-mandate/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁸⁷ Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: Disappearances Require Credible Investigations," 15 August 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/15/rwanda-disappearances-require-credible-investigations>, Accessed 10 October 2019.

⁸⁸ Amnesty International, "Rwanda: Ensure justice for opposition politician stabbed to death," 24 September 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/rwanda-ensure-justice-for-opposition-politician-stabbed-to-death/>, Accessed 10 October 2019.

⁸⁹ The Guardian, "Rwanda opposition leader says ally's killing was act of intimidation," 25 September 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/sep/25/rwanda-opposition-leader-victoire-ingabire-ally-killing-act-intimidation>, Accessed 10 October 2019.

⁹⁰ MSN, "Rwanda Supreme Court affirms it's illegal to insult President," 25 April 2019, <https://www.msn.com/en-xi/news/other/rwanda-supreme-court-affirms-it-e2-80-99s-illegal-to-insult-president/ar-BBWhw50>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹¹ ABC, "Spies in our suburbs," 24 August 2019, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-25/spies-in-our-suburbs-alleged-spy-web-silencing-rwandan-refugees/11317704>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹² DW, "Rwanda's disappearing opposition," 5 August 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/rwandas-disappearing-opposition/a-49887045>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

In August 2019, human rights organisations called for investigations into the disappearance of Rwandan journalist Constantin Tuyishimire, who was reported missing on 16 July.⁹³

In September 2019, Burundian musician Jean Pierre Nimbona, popularly known as Kidum, was banned from playing at the Kigali Jazz Fusion festival. Kidum is one of Burundi's biggest music stars and has performed in Rwanda for the past 16 years. Kidum was a leading peace activist during Burundi's civil war between 1993 and 2003 and used his songs to call for reconciliation.⁹⁴

Somalia/Somaliland

General Situation

On 1 May 2019, the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and several civil society organisations resolved to work together to stabilise the country which has been facing security challenges for the past three decades.⁹⁵ The AMISOM said it reached an agreement with civil society representatives to enact programs to empower citizens to actively participate in the affairs of the country. This discussion provided a resolution on 2 May when AMISOM launched a training program on human rights for Somali security forces to enhance their compliance with international human rights law.⁹⁶ The AU mission has intensified training programs on human rights to prepare Somali security forces to assume the country's security responsibility in accordance with the dictates of the Somalia Transition Plan and UN Security Council resolution 2431 of 2018.⁹⁷

On 4 September, six United Nations Security Council members blocked a bid by Kenya to impose additional counterterrorism sanctions on the Islamist armed group Al Shabab in Somalia, which would have jeopardised the delivery of humanitarian aid at a time when 2.2 million Somalis face severe hunger.⁹⁸ Weeks prior, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United

⁹³ Human Rights Watch, "Rwanda: Disappearances Require Credible Investigations," 15 August 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/08/15/rwanda-disappearances-require-credible-investigations>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹⁴ The Star, "Burundi musician Kidum 'confused by Rwanda ban'," 16 September 2019, <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/africa/2019-09-16-burundi-musician-kidum-confused-by-rwanda-ban/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹⁵ AMISOM, "AMISOM and civil society organizations agree to work together in stabilizing Somalia," 1 May 2019, <http://amisom-au.org/2019/05/amisom-and-civil-society-organizations-agree-to-work-together-in-stabilizing-somalia/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹⁶ AMISOM, "AMISOM launches training on human rights protection for Somali security officers," 1 May 2019, <http://amisom-au.org/2019/05/amisom-launches-training-on-human-rights-protection-for-somali-security-officers/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹⁷ Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, "Resolution 2431 (Somalia) S/RES/2431," 30 July 2018, <http://www.globalr2p.org/resources/1310>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch, "A Small Victory for Somalis at the UN" 4 September 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/04/small-victory-somalis-un>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia highlighted to the Security Council that inclusive elections and more effective counterterrorism were critical in stabilising the country.⁹⁹

On 16 September, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, Bahame Tom Nyanduga, gave an oral update at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva ahead of his upcoming report. In the update, Nyanduga noted considerable progress in establishing conditions for the enjoyment of human rights in Somalia despite challenges including terror attacks, insecurity, human rights violations, poverty and inter-clan conflicts. He urged the international community to support the country and proposed a set of recommendations for lasting peace and reconciliation.¹⁰⁰

Freedom of Association

On 14 June, a revenge attack just outside Galkayo targeted the Rahanweyn clan, several of whose members are suspected of being Al Shabab fighters. Witnesses told local media that the victims were rounded up from the streets and from their homes and shot dead on the outskirts of Galkayo.¹⁰¹

Mayor of Mogadishu Abdirahman Omar Osman was killed near his offices by Al Shabab militants along with six other state officials on 24 July. The attack took place just hours after special envoy to the United Nations, James Swan, met with the mayor. Al Shabab took credit for the attack and claimed it was intended for Swan.¹⁰²

Jubaland security minister, Abdirashid Hassan Abdinur, also known as Abdirashid Janan, was arrested at Mogadishu airport on Saturday 31 August. He is suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law and other serious human rights violations, including obstructing humanitarian assistance. Amnesty International applauded the arrest and called for justice for victims.¹⁰³

Freedom of Expression

⁹⁹ United Nations, "Inclusive Elections, Combating Terrorism Critical to Stabilizing Somalia, Speakers Underline in Security Council," 21 August 2019, <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13925.doc.htm>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰⁰ United Nations Human Rights Council, "Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia," 16 September 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_42_62_AEV.pdf, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰¹ Al Jazeera, "Somalia: Several killed in al-Shabab attacks in Mogadishu," 15 June 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/somalia-killed-al-shabab-attacks-mogadishu-190615165754730.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰² Al Jazeera, "Mogadishu Mayor Omar Osman dies in hospital after suicide attack," 1 August 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/mogadishu-mayor-omar-osman-dies-hospital-suicide-attack-190801134839540.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰³ Amnesty International, "Somalia: Arrest of Jubaland security minister must yield justice for victims," 2 September 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/09/somalia-arrest-of-jubaland-security-minister-must-yield-justice-for-victims/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

On 3 May 2019, Somali journalists joined their colleagues across the globe in marking the World Press Freedom Day by calling on the country's lawmakers to approve the current media law to help guide and legitimise their operations.¹⁰⁴

On 13 May, in Las Anod, Somaliland, television reporter Abdirahman Keyse Mohamed was injured during arrest and jailed without formal charge. Police arrested Mohamed following interviews he conducted with citizens regarding the arrest of a member of parliament; he was detained on accusations that he was spreading anti-national propaganda, false news, and for denying police orders to not record interviews. Police fired shots at the ground, resulting in debris hitting Mohamed in the leg. On 15 May, a Las Anod court ordered Mohamed to be detained in Las Anod prison for seven more days without charge following a request from local authorities.¹⁰⁵

On 28 May, the National Union of Somali Journalists condemned the arbitrary detention of Abdimalik Muse Oldon, a journalist active in online platforms and who often reports on political and social issues in Somaliland, who was arrested on 17 April 2019.¹⁰⁶

Somalia summoned the ambassador of Kenya to Somalia and handed him a protest note over a "offensive tweet" by Kenya's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The tweet, from 27 June 2019, posted on Kenya's official Ministry of Foreign Affairs account, showed a photo of a senior Kenyan official holding a meeting with a minister from the self-declared republic of Somaliland. The tweet indirectly referred to Somaliland as a country. The subject to the self-declared republic's status in the international community, and at home, remains contentious.¹⁰⁷ In July, Somalia cut diplomatic ties with Guinea after the west African nation hosted the President of the breakaway republic.¹⁰⁸ In mid-September, Somaliland announced tough conditions for future dialogue with Somalia on bilateral relations after the last talks collapsed in Turkey in 2015, including demands that Mogadishu recognise Somaliland as an independent country, and that international intergovernmental organisations and institutions use the name, map, emblem and flag of Somaliland in their project documents.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁴ XinhuaNet, "Somali journalists urge parliament to approve media law," 3 May 2019, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2019-05/03/c_138031671.htm, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰⁵ CPJ, "Somaliland journalist injured during arrest, jailed without charge," 17 May 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/05/somaliland-journalist-arrested-injured-jailed-with.php>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰⁶ AllAfrica, "Somalia: Continued Detention of Journalist Abdimalik Muse Oldon in Somaliland Unacceptable-Nusoj," <https://allafrica.com/stories/201905280729.html>, 28 May 2019.

¹⁰⁷ Daily Nation, "Somalia lodges protest after Kenya calls Somaliland a country," 2 July 2019, <https://mobile.nation.co.ke/news/africa/Somalia-protests-Kenya-Somaliland-tweet/3126394-5179468-6nbb8qz/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰⁸ Africa News, "Somalia cuts diplomatic ties with Guinea," 5 July 2019, <https://www.africanews.com/2019/07/05/somalia-cuts-diplomatic-ties-with-guinea/>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹⁰⁹ The East African, "Somaliland sets tough rules on Somalia talks," 16 September 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Somaliland-sets-tough-rules-on-Somalia-talks/4552908-5273806-gdhe9qz/index.html>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

On 13 July 2019, 43-year-old Somali-Canadian journalist and writer Hodan Nalayeh was killed during a 14-hour hotel siege carried out by Al Shabab in Kismayo. Her husband Farid Jama Suleiman was also killed in the attack along with 26 others.¹¹⁰

On 30 July 2019, police in Somaliland arrested four journalists from privately owned Eryal TV and released all but one several hours later. They had been covering a student protest.¹¹¹

On September 5 2019, police in Somaliland summoned Mohamed Osman Mireh, the owner of Horyaal 24 TV and questioned him about a program recently aired regarding women's consumption of the stimulant khat, which, while legal in Somaliland remains a taboo subject. The following day, police raided the Horyaal 24 TV headquarters in Hargeisa, ordered its staff off the premises, and on 7 September the following day arrested Mohamed.¹¹²

On 10 September 2019, police in Somaliland arrested Abdikani Abdullahi Ahmed, also known as Asporo, the chief editor of privately-owned political news website HadhwanaagNews, and on the following day arrested Abdirisak Gooth Nur, the outlet's general director. The arrests were preceded by a Hargeisa court ruling on 3 September that ordered Internet providers to block the website throughout Somaliland following the outlet's August 18 publication of an opinion article that leveled corruption allegations against the governor of Somaliland's central bank.¹¹³

South Sudan

General Situation

On 20 April, South Sudan denied claims that its security services abducted and murdered two prominent critics exiled in Kenya. Information Minister Michael Makuei said that any investigation on the execution of Dong Samuel Luak and Agrey Izbon Idri should start in Kenya where they were kidnapped. Two weeks later, on 6 May, sources indicated that the men's bodies were dumped in Achwa River in Nimule, a notorious site for bodies allegedly executed by state agents.¹¹⁴ Civil society organisations have urged regional organs like the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to conduct a thorough

¹¹⁰ The Guardian, "Somali forces brace for new attacks after hotel assault leaves dozens dead," 13 September 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jul/13/suicide-attack-on-hotel-kills-at-least-seven-in-somalia>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹¹¹ CPJ, "Somaliland police arrest Eryal TV journalists filming corruption story," 14 August 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/08/somaliland-police-arrest-eryal-tv-journalists-film.php>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹¹² CPJ, "Somaliland police raid Horyaal 24 TV offices, arrest owner Mohamed Osman Mireh," 9 September 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/09/somaliland-police-raid-horyaal-24-tv-offices-arres.php>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹¹³ CPJ, "Somaliland authorities block HadhwanaagNews website, arrest 2 employees," 18 September 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/09/somaliland-authorities-block-hadhwanaagnews-websit.php>, Accessed 27 September 2019.

¹¹⁴ The East African, "South Sudan activists' bodies dumped in river: state agents," 6 May 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/South-Sudan-activists--bodies-dumped-in-river--state-agents-/4552908-5102816-ighdbhz/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

investigation to ensure a safe environment for HRDs to continue their work.¹¹⁵ The governments of South Sudan and Kenya are being sued by Hope for Humanity Africa and the Pan African Lawyers Union for the alleged abduction and murders.¹¹⁶

Efforts to ensure justice for victims of widespread atrocities committed during South Sudan's civil war hit a low point on 27 April when news that the government hired US-based lobbyists with the purpose of stopping the creation of the Hybrid Court of South Sudan meant to prosecute atrocity crimes committed during the civil war. The Hybrid Court is an integral part of the Revitalised Peace Agreement signed in December.¹¹⁷

On 30 May, UN Security Council members received an open letter from regional and international CSOs calling for renewal of sanctions and the arms embargo on the country. Sanctions and the arms embargo were removed by the US in December 2018.¹¹⁸

In June 2019, the ratification by South Sudan's legislative assembly of two international covenants requiring states to protect and respect the human rights of their people has been welcomed by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan. On the first week of June, 165 members of the South Sudan Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA) voted unanimously to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) as well as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and their respective First Optional Protocols without reservations.¹¹⁹

On 21 July, representatives at the 6th human rights forum in Juba expressed concerns over the deteriorating human rights situation in the country. The shrinking civic space for civil society organizations to operate was addressed as being the result of suppressive measures taken by the state to silence criticisms. Additionally, a report released by Amnesty International on 18 July stated a government crackdown involving crimes against humanity was being waged on the population in order to stifle potential civil unrest influenced by neighbouring Sudan.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ DefendDefenders, "It is time for accountability for the enforced disappearance of Samuel Dong and Aggrey Idri," May 2019, <https://defenddefenders.org/blog/it-is-time-for-accountability-for-the-enforced-disappearance-of-samuel-dong-and-aggrey-idri/>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹¹⁶ Radio Tamajuz, "South Sudan and Kenya sued over killing of two activists," 2 August 2019, <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/south-sudan-and-kenya-sued-over-killing-of-two-activists>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan's Cynical Bid to Block War Crimes Court," 30 April 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/30/south-sudans-cynical-bid-block-war-crimes-court>, Accessed 30 October 2019.

¹¹⁸ Reliefweb, "May 30 UN Security Council vote on South Sudan: UN Security Council members receive open letter from international and regional CSOs calling for renewal of sanctions and the arms embargo in South Sudan," 29 May 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/may-30-un-security-council-vote-south-sudan-un-security-council-members-receive>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹¹⁹ Reliefweb, "UNMISS welcomes ratification of international human rights covenants in South Sudan," 7 June 2019, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unmiss-welcomes-ratification-international-human-rights-covenants-south-sudan>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²⁰ The East African, "South Sudan on the spot over violation of human rights," 21 July 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/South-Sudan-violation-of-human-rights/4552908-5204956-07f8tg/index.html>, 1 October 2019.

After a meeting in Juba on 11 September, President Salva Kiir and former rebel leader Riek Machar agreed to form a transitional government, with the new administration set to be in place by mid-November. The government says it lacks the funds for a key part of the December's revitalised peace agreement involving the integration of former rebels into the national army. Observers remain cautiously optimistic of success this time, in a country which remains on the edge with sporadic violations of the ceasefire reported.¹²¹

The UN Human Rights Commission in South Sudan gave an address to the Human Rights Council in September, in which it highlighted that a peace deal and a ceasefire signed last year have stopped most of the fighting. However, it also raised the continuing issue of sexual violence in the country, as well as announced it had identified 66 individuals it believes bear command or superior responsibility under international criminal law for serious crimes related to the conflict in South Sudan. It also warned that South Sudan risks being plunged back into full-scale conflict if hardliners can sabotage 2018's peace agreement. The UN expert suggested that one percent of the country's annual oil revenues be placed in a reparations and compensation fund "instead of being diverted for personal benefit by political elites as has been reported."¹²²

A September 2019 report on the South Sudan conflict has called for investigations into alleged links between its government officials and foreign companies who are accused of profiting from the war. The research by The Sentry names individuals and businesses - including foreign oil companies - which it says have plundered the resources of the country. It also calls on international regulatory authorities to trace and monitor the private financial transactions of top South Sudan state officials.¹²³

On 6 September, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Legal Action Worldwide called attention to a missing case file apparently blocking appeals in the sexual assault case stemming from the July 11, 2016 attack on the Terrain hotel in Juba. The case file has not been seen since it was sent to President Salva Kiir in 2018. One year after 10 soldiers were convicted for the sexual assault and rape of at least five aid workers and the murder of a journalist during the attack, the Supreme Court is unable to move forward with appeals by the victims and those convicted because of the missing file. On 3 September, foreign victims of the hotel attack rejected the financial compensation awarded last year.¹²⁴

Freedom of Association

¹²¹ Reuters, "South Sudan parties agree to form interim government by November 12," 11 September 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southsudan-politics-government/south-sudan-parties-agree-to-form-interim-government-by-november-12-idUSKCN1VW1HO>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²² OHCHR, "Statement of the Chairperson and Members of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan, at the 42nd Human Rights Council session," 16 September 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NewsDetail.aspx?NewsID=24992&LangID=E>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²³ The Sentry, "The Taking of South Sudan," September 2019, <https://thesentry.org/reports/taking-south-sudan/>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²⁴ Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan: Missing File Blocks Justice for Rapes, Murder," 6 September 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/09/06/south-sudan-missing-file-blocks-justice-rapes-murder>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

On 17 May 2019, Freedom House reported that in desperate situations, measures which target NGOs that augment government services have systematically curtailed people's freedoms and democracy in the country. The report proposes that restrictions on NGOs in South Sudan have significantly weakened the capacity of organised civil society and citizens to hold the governments accountable and protect human rights, resulting in bad governance and poor quality of life for ordinary citizens.¹²⁵

7 June 2019 marked the official launch of the South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network (SSHRDN) in Juba. HRDs in South Sudan continue to face threats, intimidation, kidnappings, and torture, combined with an extreme volatile political situation. The SSHRDN connects HRDs across the country and works closely with regional organisations to help them mitigate these risks, as well as provide a platform for civil society activists to share information and best practices.¹²⁶

Freedom of Expression

On 11 July, the community empowerment for progress organization (CEPO) released a statement calling for the government to respect media freedoms in the country and lift bans on platforms such as Radio Tamazuj and Sudan Tribune.¹²⁷

On 17 July 2019, editor-in-chief of Al Watan newspaper Micheal Christopher was arrested at Juba airport by national security agents, forcing him off a flight and confiscating his passport. Christopher was reported to have been targeted as a result of an article he wrote and published in Al Watan in support of the political protests taking place in Sudan.¹²⁸

On 23 July 2019, Minister of Information Michael Makuei announced that President Kiir will no longer allow the national anthem to be sung in his absence. Makuei claimed that different institutions had been using the song recklessly and that the appropriate context is for the song to be sung for or in admiration of President Kiir.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ The East African, "EA govts using punitive laws to rein in civil society, gravely hurting democracy," 19 May 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Freedom-suffers-as-African-strongmen-target-NGOs/4552908-5121450-euaqhp/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²⁶ Twitter, @MemoryBandera, 7 June 2019, <https://twitter.com/MemoryBandera/status/1137092447694151680>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²⁷ Sudan Tribune, "Civil society body urges lifting of media restrictions in S. Sudan," 12 July 2019, <https://www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article67767>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²⁸ Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan: Free Detained Editor," 19 July 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/07/19/south-sudan-free-detained-editor>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹²⁹ Al Jazeera, "South Sudan's Kiir bans singing of anthem in his absence," 23 July 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/south-sudan-kiir-bans-singing-anthem-absence-190723061932070.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

On 4 August 2019, John Agok, the former manager of Yirol Community Radio was released following nearly three weeks in prison. Agok was arrested from the airport on 10 July for allegedly making defamatory remarks against the governor of Eastern Lakes state on social media.¹³⁰

Sudan

General Situation

In December 2018, a spike in the price of basic commodities including bread and oil lead to the outbreak of protests in several major Sudanese cities against the ruling regime. The protests eventually grew into a country-wide movement encapsulating the frustrations of ethnically marginalised Sudanese, and longtime President Omar Al Bashir was removed from power on 11 April 2019 following mass calls for his removal.¹³¹

On 17 August 2019, Sudan's main opposition coalition and the ruling military council formally signed a final power-sharing deal, paving the way for a transition to a civilian-led government. Under the agreement, a military leader would head the 11-member council for the first 21 months, followed by a civilian leader for the next 18. It would also establish a cabinet appointed by the activists and a legislative body.¹³²

Freedom of Association

The Seema Centre for Training and Protection of Women and Children's Rights announced that its office in Khartoum was raided by unknown individuals in the early hours of 23 July 2019. According to Seema, the back door was broken, and the contents of the office ransacked, but initial inspection suggests nothing was stolen. There are indications that the raid and break-in had were aimed at obtaining papers and documents concerning the nature of work at the centre.¹³³

Freedom of Expression

¹³⁰ Radio Tamajuz, "Eastern Lakes authorities release detained journalist," 4 August 2019, <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/eastern-lakes-authorities-release-detained-journalist>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹³¹ BBC, "Omar al-Bashir: Sudan's ousted president," 16 August 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-16010445>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹³² Al Jazeera, "Sudan protest leaders, military sign transitional government deal," 17 August 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/sudan-protest-leaders-military-sign-transitional-government-deal-190817122225172.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹³³ AllAfrica, "Sudan: Women and Children's Rights NGO's Khartoum Office Ransacked," <https://allafrica.com/stories/201907260282.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

In August 2019, the Sudan authorities allowed Aljazeera to re-open their offices in Khartoum after it was forced to close on 31 May 2019.¹³⁴ In May, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) abruptly closed down the offices of Aljazeera news channel in Khartoum, withdrew their license without justification and banned their journalists from carrying out any reporting on Sudan with immediate effect. The offices were shut down a few days before the violent crackdown of the sit-in protest on 3 June 2019.¹³⁵

Journalist Sadig Al Rizaigi, chairperson of the Sudanese Journalist Union and editor-in chief of *Al-Sayha* newspaper was detained for five days from 24-29 July 2019. The reasons for his detention are unknown however it is reported that his detention occurred during the period the TMC was arresting a number of officials and political leaders from the ousted former President Omar al-Bashir's government. Al Rizaigi is a member to the former ruling National Congress Party.¹³⁶

Telecom companies restored the internet on 10 July 2019 after a National Court ruled in favour of a lawsuit filed by a group of lawyers challenging the Internet shutdown as a violation of a constitutional right. On 3 June, after the crackdown in Khartoum, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) shut down internet services in the country on grounds of national security.¹³⁷

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

On 3 June 2019, Rapid Support Forces (RSF) – or “Janjaweed,” a paramilitary force under the authority of General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, known as “Hemedti,” who also serves as deputy head of the TMC, attacked peaceful demonstrators at a sit-in in Khartoum. More than one hundred civilians were reported killed, and hundreds more injured. Protesters were also beaten and arbitrarily detained, subjected to rape, and other forms of intimidation and humiliation. The attacks occurred in the early morning, with soldiers opening fire on protesters then chasing them into buildings. Forces attacked or prevented care in at least three hospitals with reports of doctors being assaulted.¹³⁸ Attacking forces

¹³⁴ Aljazeera, “Sudan authorities allow reopening of Al Jazeera's Khartoum office,” 16 August 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/08/sudan-authorities-reopening-al-jazeera-khartoum-office-190816184800403.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹³⁵ Aljazeera, “Sudan army says protest site a threat, closes Al Jazeera office,” 31 May 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/sudan-army-protest-site-threat-closes-al-jazeera-office-190530234405647.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹³⁶ CPJ, “Sudan detains Sadiq al-Rizaigi, Al-Sayha editor-in-chief and journalists' union head, for 5 days,” 6 August 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/08/sudan-detains-sadiq-al-rizaigi-al-sayha-editor-in-philip>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹³⁷ Voice of America, “Sudan's Mobile Internet Restored After Power Sharing Deal,” 10 July 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/sudans-mobile-internet-restored-after-power-sharing-deal>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹³⁸ Physicians for Human Rights, “With Sudan Power-Sharing Plan, PHR Urges Renewed Focus on Accountability, Independent Investigation and Long-Term International Monitoring,” 5 July 2019, <https://phr.org/news/with-sudan-power-sharing-plan-phr-urges-renewed-focus-on-accountability-independent-investigation-and-long-term-international-monitoring/>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

burned down the sit-in tents and looted goods. Reports also indicate that RSF carried out similar attacks on peaceful protesters in Darfur and other parts of the country.¹³⁹

On 29 August 2019, about five people, including three minors, were killed when the RSF fired live ammunition at a peaceful protest. More than 500 students in El-Obeid, North Kordofan state, had gathered to protest the shortage of fuel and bread in the state and rising costs of public transportation. At least 62 other people were injured during the violent dispersal of the protests.¹⁴⁰

On 12 September 2019, thousands of Sudanese demonstrators in Khartoum came out to demand for the appointment of a new head of the judiciary and a new public prosecutor. The demonstrators demanded for accountability for those killed during the protests.¹⁴¹

Tanzania

General Situation

In May 2019, in response to the letter sent by 38 CSOs calling for the HRC to raise concern over the human rights situation in the country, the government stated that the situation is not as bad as it is being portrayed by CSOs. They further said that they would file their own report on the human rights situation in the country at the HRC.¹⁴²

Freedom of Association

On 23 April 2019, human rights groups called on the Tanzanian authorities to adopt and implement a National Albinism Protection Plan, to ensure that the rights of persons with albinism, an extremely marginalised group in the country, are adequately protected.¹⁴³

On 25 April 2019, Tanzanian authorities deported Ugandan human rights activist Dr. Wairagala Wakabi, the Executive Director of the Uganda-based Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA). According to the statement by CIPESA, the authorities detained Wakabi at the airport upon arrival claiming that they were interrogating him to determine whether he could be

¹³⁹ DefendDefenders, "Sudan: Ensuring a credible response by the UN Human Rights Council at its 42nd session," 2 September 2019, https://defenddefenders.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/HRC42-Sudan-joint-NGO-letter_FINAL.pdf, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁴⁰ ACJPS, "North Kordofan: Urgent call to investigate the killing of six peaceful protesters including 3 minors in El Obeid," 2 August 2019, <http://www.acjps.org/north-kordofan-urgent-call-to-investigate-the-killing-of-six-peaceful-protesters-including-3-minors-in-el-obeid/>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁴¹ Reuters, "Thousands demand justice for slain protesters in Sudan," 12 September 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-sudan-politics-protesters/thousands-demand-justice-for-slain-protesters-in-sudan-idUSKCN1VX20B>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁴² AllAfrica, "Tanzania to File Own Report On Rights Situation At UN," 19 May 2019, <https://allafrica.com/stories/201905200322.html>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁴³ Human Rights Watch, "Tanzania Should Move Ahead With an Albinism Protection Plan," 23 April 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/23/tanzania-should-move-ahead-albinism-protection-plan>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

granted entry into Tanzania, only to deport him back to Uganda. A case has since been filed in the East African Court of Justice.¹⁴⁴

On 28 April 2019, Maneno Mbunda, an advocate with the Tanzania National Park Authority, was abducted in Arusha by unknown people and went missing for seven days. After human rights groups and the Tanganyika Law Society inquired on his whereabouts, authorities issued a press statement declaring that he was in police custody.¹⁴⁵

On 6 May 2019 Mdude Nyagali, an opposition party activist and HRD was abducted in Mbeya and found four days later tortured and brutalised.¹⁴⁶

In May 2019, a Tanzanian court repealed a law that gives presidential appointees, (the District Executive Directors) powers to become returning officers on behalf of the Electoral Agency during Election - a decision opposed by national human rights activists, who argued that returning officers were likely to favour their appointing authority during polls.¹⁴⁷ Despite the repealed provisions, which the government has appealed, President Magufuli on 1 October 2019 appointed Dr. Wilson Mahera Charles who was a District Executive Director in Arusha to be the National Electoral Commission Director, in a move critics decried as unconstitutional and biased and in favour of the ruling party in the 2020 General Elections. The President has also promoted 10 officials to be District Executive Directors in several regions in Tanzania.¹⁴⁸

On 27 June 2019, Parliament passed the Written Laws (Miscellaneous Amendments No. 3 of 2019) into law, which amends eight laws including the Non-Governmental Organisations Act and largely restricts their right to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. The law was made public on 19 June and debated under a certificate of urgency, which did not allow for meaningful participation of civil society in the process.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁴ CIPESA, "CIPESA Executive Director Detained At Tanzania Airport – UPDATE," 25 April 2019, <https://cipesa.org/2019/04/cipesa-executive-director-detained-at-tanzania-airport/>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁴⁵ The Citizen, "Puzzle as DPP holds 'missing lawyer'," 5 May 2019, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/-Puzzle-as-DPP-holds--missing-lawyer-/1840340-5101042-95f1wrz/index.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁴⁶ The Citizen, "Chadema activist narrates ordeal after his abduction," 10 May 2019, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/Chadema-activist-narrates-ordeal-after-his-abduction/1840340-5108668-1gibe6/index.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁴⁷ The East African, "Tanzanian court annuls presidential appointees' role in elections," 10 May 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Tanzanian-court-bars-presidential-appointees-in-poll-role/4552908-5110006-uly57z/index.html>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁴⁸ The Citizen, "Tanzania opposition queries President Magufuli's appointee to the electoral commission," 2 October 2019, <https://www.thecitizen.co.tz/news/Opposition-queries-JPM-s-NEC-appointee/1840340-5295310-2s3tt8z/index.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁴⁹ Amnesty International, "Tanzania: Discard new law restricting human rights," 21 June 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/tanzania-authorities-rushing-to-pass-bill-to-further-repress-human-rights/>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

On 17 August 2019, 40 African civil society campaigners attending the summit of the Southern African Development Community in Dar es Salaam were intimidated, questioned and warned by authorities over a security incident that never existed.¹⁵⁰

Freedom of Expression

April 2019 marked more than 500 days since prominent journalist and HRD Azory Gwanda went missing under suspicious circumstances. The Committee to Protect Journalists and Human Rights Watch, among other groups, raised concerns to his disappearance and called on the government to ensure proper investigation into the case. The #WhereIsAzory campaign continues on social media.¹⁵¹

On 29 July 2019, Tanzanian police arrested freelance journalist Erick Kabendera from his home and did not allow him to contact his lawyer for an extended period. Security forces said that Kabendera was being investigated over his citizenship status (among other crimes), a common tactic used against journalists, HRDs, and political opponents in Tanzania, he later was charged with Economic and Organised Crime, Tax Evasion and Money Laundering.¹⁵² In early October, a Tanzanian court postponed his hearing for a sixth time as he appeared limping in court having been denied media attention.¹⁵³ On 10 September, a Joint Letter of Appeal was sent to President Magufuli by the ACHPR Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Access to Information in Africa regarding the arrest of Journalist Erick Kabendera.¹⁵⁴

On 8 August 2019, journalist Bollen Ngetti was arrested for publishing false information contrary to section 16 of the Cybercrimes Act.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁰ Voice of America, "Civil Society Workers Run Afoul of Tanzania Security Officials in Sign of Increasing Clampdown," 19 August 2019, <https://www.voanews.com/africa/civil-society-workers-run-afoul-tanzania-security-officials-sign-increasing-clampdown>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁵¹ Human Rights Watch, "Tanzanian Journalist's Disappearance Remains Unsolved," 8 April 2019, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2019/04/08/tanzanian-journalists-disappearance-remains-unsolved>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁵² CPJ, "Unidentified men take Erick Kabendera from Tanzanian home," 29 July 2019, <https://cpj.org/2019/07/tanzania-erick-kabendera-police-abducted.php>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁵³ Amnesty International, "Tanzania: detained journalist Erick Kabendera facing 'targeted harassment' as case delayed again," 1 October 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/press-releases/tanzania-detained-journalist-erick-kabendera-facing-targeted-harassment-case-delayed>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁵⁴ ACHPR, "Press Statement on the Joint Letter of Appeal issued on the Human Rights Situation in the United Republic of Tanzania," 10 September 2019, <https://www.achpr.org/pressrelease/detail?id=435>, Accessed 2 October 2019.

¹⁵⁵ THRDC, "BOLLEN NGETTI IS NOT AT STAKISHARI POLICE STATION," 9 August 2019, <https://thrdc.or.tz/arrested-arrested-investigative-journalist-bollen-ngetti-is-not-at-stakishari-police-station/>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

On 22 August 2019, journalist Joseph Gandye was arrested. Gandye, who is a journalist for Watetezi Online TV, established by the Tanzanian Human Rights Defenders Coalition (THRDC), was accused of publishing false Information about alleged police abuse.¹⁵⁶

On 24 August 2019, Haruna Mapunda, a journalist from Gillybon Online TV was arrested while reporting on an opposition political party opening a new office. The police arrested him and others for conducting a demonstration without permission.¹⁵⁷

On 7 September 2019, a journalist Sebastian Immanuel Atilio was arrested in Mufindi Region for publishing false information contrary to section 16 of the Cybercrimes Act. The District Commissioner, Jamhuri William, ordered his arrest. He was detained for more than 3 days without bail.¹⁵⁸

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

On 26 September 2019, a court blocked two Chadema opposition politicians from travelling abroad until they are cleared of sedition charges. Vincent Mashinji, Chadema's secretary-general, and MP Esther Matiko are facing charges, along with seven others including Chadema's leader, for participating in a protest in February 2018 during which a 22-year-old student was killed by a stray bullet fired by police.¹⁵⁹

Uganda

General Situation

In May 2019, the German government withheld USD \$106 million in aid funds pledged to Uganda for refugee resettlement. In February, the United Kingdom also halted funding to Uganda following a 2018 United Nations investigation which found that large amounts of money were wrongfully removed from accounts. Uganda's Minister of State for Relief, Disaster Preparedness and Refugees, Musa Echweru, stated that there will be a thorough investigation to prosecute those responsible.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ The East African, "Tanzania journalist arrested over 'false information'," 23 August 2019 <https://cpj.org/x/799f>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁵⁷ THRDC, "JOURNALIST HARUNA MAPUNDA AND ACT-WAZALENDO LEADERS HAVE BEEN GRANTED BAIL," 26 August 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/THRDCOALITION/posts/journalist-haruna-mapunda-and-act-wazalendo-leaders-have-been-granted-bailfinal/1312987882189613/>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁵⁸ The East African, "Tanzania journalist arrested over 'fake news'," 23 August 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Tanzania-journalist-arrested-over-fake-news/4552908-5246120-wsl45dz/index.html>, Accessed 11 October 2019.

¹⁵⁹ The East African, "Tanzania court 'blocks opposition politicians' trips'," 26 September 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Tanzania-court-blocks-opposition-politicians-trips/4552908-5288058-5qf727/index.html>, Accessed 2 October 2019

¹⁶⁰ DW, "Germany withholds aid money from Uganda," 24 May 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-withholds-aid-money-from-uganda/a-48862574>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

On 6 May 2019 Ugandan HRD and environmental activist William Leslie Amunzuru was awarded the European Union Human Rights Defender Award for his work as founder of Friends of Zoka, a community-based organisation which aims to end illegal logging activities in the Zoka Forest in Northern Uganda. On 4 March, as part of his campaign, Amunzuru, along with 12 fellow conservationists, lead a 470-kilometre trek from Kampala to the Zoka Forest to highlight the vegetation loss to logging activities and advocate for increased environmental protections and the rehabilitation of forest lands.¹⁶¹

On 5 July, Ugandan police reported increased incidences of corruption while carrying out criminal investigations into government officials following a training retreat which sought to address challenges facing police and criminal investigators in the country. Officers agreed that the rate of unsolved and abandoned investigations into crimes committed by government officials is a significant cause of concern.¹⁶² Uganda ranked 149 out of 180 countries in Transparency International's 2018 Corruption Perception Index.¹⁶³

Civil society organisations in Uganda have filed a case against the governments of Uganda and Rwanda over border restrictions between the two countries. The case against the two governments has been lodged at the East African Court of Justice, arguing that border closures contravene the treaty establishing the East African Community and the regional Community Market Protocol, moreover, plunging border towns and women traders into poverty. Cases at the court can take years to be heard but activists hope the publicity can pressure leaders to resolve the stand-off.¹⁶⁴

In August 2019, Parliament passed a law abolishing the mandatory death penalty for certain crimes, amending four different laws that had earlier prescribed capital punishment, including the Anti-Terrorism Act. If approved by President Yoweri Museveni, the amendments will restrict the death penalty to the most serious of crimes, and only at the judge's discretion.¹⁶⁵

In mid-September, the former inspector general of police Gen. Kale Kayihura and his immediate family members had their U.S. assets frozen amid accusations of serious human rights violations. According to a statement by the US Department of Treasury, Kayihura is accused of being the leader of a police force that has engaged in, or whose members have engaged in, serious human rights abuse against Ugandan

¹⁶¹ Delegation of the European Union to Uganda, "Shortlist for 2019 EU Human Rights Defender Award Announced," 16 April 2019, https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/uganda/61107/shortlist-2019-eu-human-rights-defender-award-announced_en, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁶² Daily Monitor, "High rate of loss of political cases worries police detectives," 8 July 2019, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/High-rate-of-loss-of-political-cases-worries-police-detectives/688334-5187664-i5q6so/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁶³ Transparency International, "CORRUPTION PERCEPTIONS INDEX 2018," <https://www.transparency.org/cpi2018>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁶⁴ The East African, "Rwanda, Uganda sued in regional court over trade spat," 2 July 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Rwanda-Uganda-sued-in-east-africa-court-over-trade-spat/4552908-5180186-dy4180/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁶⁵ The East African, "Uganda abolishes mandatory death penalty," 21 August 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/Uganda-abolishes-mandatory-death-penalty/4552908-5243370-rfierez/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

citizens, as well as for his involvement in corruption.¹⁶⁶ Opposition leaders and rights activists welcomed the decision.¹⁶⁷

Freedom of Association

On 29 April 2019, Kyadondo East MP Robert Kyagulanyi, popularly known as Bobi Wine, was arrested near Mulago roundabout in Kampala as he headed to the police Criminal Investigation Department (CID) headquarters to report to criminal summons. Chaotic scenes of firing of bullets and teargas to violently disperse the crowd that interrupted traffic were all captured on camera.¹⁶⁸

In September 2019, LGBT+ rights activists in Uganda joined health rights defenders and people living with HIV to demand an end to the country's HIV criminal laws such as the 2014 HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Act. At the centre of contention are clauses in the HIV Act that allow mandatory testing and disclosure of people's HIV status and that criminalise intentional spread of HIV, which they argue adds to stigma and discrimination.¹⁶⁹

Freedom of Expression

On 18 April 2019, journalists working with Mubende FM Radio were blocked by the Resident District Commissioner (RDC) of Mubende district and police from hosting Dr. Kizza Besigye, the former Forum for Democratic Change (FDC) presidential candidate on a live talk show. A few minutes into the talk show, police officers descended on the station and pulled Besigye out of the studio.¹⁷⁰

Fred Waninda, the acting Commercial Court Registrar in charge of planning, performance, and development allegedly assaulted Smart 24 journalist Hannington Kisakye in late April for recording him exiting a court where he testified on a land grabbing case.¹⁷¹ A cell phone video appears to show the alleged assault.¹⁷²

¹⁶⁶ The East African, "US sanctions Uganda's ex-police chief Kayihura for rights abuses," 13 September 2019, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/ea/US-sanctions-Uganda-s-ex-police-chief-kayihura/4552908-5272182-n2smwnz/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁶⁷ Daily Monitor, "Besigye, rights activists praise US ban on Kayihura," 16 September 2019, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/Besigye-rights-activists-praise-US-ban-Kayihura/688334-5275614-format-xhtml-5o0jv8z/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁶⁸ The Observer, "Bobi Wine charged, remanded to Luzira prison," 29 April 2019, <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/60553-bobi-wine-charged-over-2018-social-media-tax-demo>, Accessed 10 October 2019.

¹⁶⁹ 76 Crimes, "Uganda activists seek repeal of laws that abuse HIV+ people," 16 September 2019, <https://76crimes.com/2019/09/16/uganda-activists-seek-repeal-of-laws-that-abuse-hiv-people/>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁷⁰ Daily Monitor, "Police, RDC switch off radio station in attempt to stop Besigye talk show," 18 April 2019, <https://mobile.monitor.co.ug/News/Police-storm-Mubende-radio-station-pull-Besigye-live-show/2466686-5077708-format-xhtml-gcf48v/index.html>, Accessed 10 October 2019.

¹⁷¹ The Observer, "Court registrar faces suit over assaulting journalist," 26 April 2019, <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/60531-court-registrar-faces-suit-over-assaulting-journalist>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁷² Twitter, @observerug, 26 April 2019, https://twitter.com/observerug/status/1121745221396652032?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed

On 1 May 2019, the Uganda Communications Commission issued a letter to 13 media houses (7 radio stations and 6 television stations) directing them to suspend 39 media workers – Producers, Head of News, and Head of Programmes who were in charge of broadcasts on 29 April 2019. The media houses in question are Akaboozi FM, BBS TV, Beat FM, Bukedde TV, Capital FM, CBS FM, Kingdom TV, NBS TV, NTV Uganda, Pearl FM, Salt TV, Sapianta FM, and Simba FM.¹⁷³

Visual artist Collin Sekajugo received the third annual Human Rights Award at the Human Rights Convention on 11 May 2019 in Kampala. Sekajugo was recognised for his brave creative work that has captured contemporary human rights concerns and illustrates the need for social change.¹⁷⁴

The Northern Uganda Media Club (NUMEC) has stated that Choice FM journalist Geoffrey Okot was punched in the neck by Aruu County MP Odongo Otto during a football match in June 2019. Journalist Willy Ochwoo claimed that Otto began hitting Okot in the back and neck. Okot has since filed a police report at Gulu central police station but has yet to release an official statement.¹⁷⁵

On 12 July 2019, journalist and political rights commentator Joseph Kabuleeta was arrested on allegations of offensive communication against the president, allegedly in connection to a social media rant in which he suggested that President Museveni was attempting to create a family political dynasty.¹⁷⁶

Bukedde Television journalist Godfrey Katongole was admitted to hospital in critical condition on 15 July after allegedly being assaulted by a mob, including other journalists, while covering a demonstration by women activists. In the process, Katongole lost his video camera, phones and bag.¹⁷⁷

A Ugandan student currently studying in the United States has petitioned Uganda's High Court over President Yoweri Museveni's decision to block him from viewing his updates on Twitter, arguing that it amounts to an infringement on his constitutionally protected freedoms. Hillary Innocent Taylor Seguya says the president blocked him on 30 July 2019 and argues this has infringed on his freedom of thought, conscience, and belief guaranteed under Article 29 of Uganda's constitution. Seguya has also requested

https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1499956/court-registrar-faces-suit-over-assaulting-journalist, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁷³ UCC, "UCC letter to media houses," 1 May 2019, <https://uccinfo.blog/2019/05/01/suspended-repeated-breach-of-minimum-broadcasting-standards/>, Accessed 10 October 2019.

¹⁷⁴ New Vision, "Artist Collin Sekajugo is recipient of 2019 Human Rights Award," 8 May 2019, https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1499956/artist-collin-sekajugo-recipient-2019-human-rights-award, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁷⁵ PM Daily, "Journalists take on MP Odongo Otto for assaulting their own," 19 June 2019, <http://www.pmdaily.com/news/2019/06/journalists-take-on-mp-odongo-otto-for-assaulting-their-own.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁷⁶ New Vision, "Pastor Kabuleeta arrested," 12 July 2019, https://www.newvision.co.ug/new_vision/news/1503423/pastor-kabuleeta-arrested, 10 October 2019.

¹⁷⁷ HRNJ-Uganda, "Vision Group Journalist attacked on the line of duty admitted in critical condition," 16 July 2019, <https://hrnjuganda.org/?p=5404>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

a permanent injunction that would stop two other high-ranking officials from blocking him on social media: government spokesperson Ofwono Opondo and senior police officer Asan Kasingye.¹⁷⁸

In August 2019, the Ugandan government denied damning allegations in a Wall Street Journal investigation that alleged technicians from the Chinese tech Giant Huawei were embedded with national cybersecurity forces to help intercept cell phone data to spy on political opponents.¹⁷⁹

On 18 September, a Ugandan Court dismissed a criminal libel and offensive communication case against Drone Media journalist Pidson Kareire. The charges related to an article which claimed that Middle East Consultants Limited, a group that arranges controversial domestic labour opportunities for Africans in the Middle East, was extorting money from job seekers. Two managers of the labour export firm in question have been accused of human trafficking.¹⁸⁰

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

On 24 April 2019, HRD Annette Nana Namata was allegedly assaulted by a mob of police officers at the Naguru Police headquarters in Kampala where she planned to protest against police brutality and political bias. As a result of the assault, her uterus was removed in hospital to prevent bleeding - she has since announced plans to sue the officers responsible.¹⁸¹

On 17 May 2019, 10 police officers raided an International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) event at the offices of Chapter Four Uganda, an organisation which promotes the civil and political rights of marginalised and sexual minorities. The officers who demanded the cancellation of the event and locked office doors to ensure nobody could enter, stated that they were working under the authority of Minister of State for Ethics & Integrity Simon Lokodo, who has previously sent police to disrupt the proceedings of 6 other LGBT+ events. Attendees relocated remaining guests to the home of Ugandan LGBT+ activist Claire Byarugaba where they continued with their program and celebrations for the day.¹⁸²

On 27 June 2019, the National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda held a press conference condemning the abuses experienced by human rights defenders in the country. The conference

¹⁷⁸ The Observer, "Student sues Museveni, Opondo for blocking him on Twitter," 27 August 2019, <https://observer.ug/news/headlines/61774-student-sues-museveni-opondo-for-blocking-him-on-twitter>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Wall Street Journal, "Huawei Technicians Helped African Governments Spy on Political Opponents," 15 August 2019, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/huawei-technicians-helped-african-governments-spy-on-political-opponents-11565793017>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁸⁰ HRNJ- Uganda, "Court dismisses libel and offensive communication cases against Drone Media journalist," 18 September 2019, <https://hrnjuganda.org/?p=5537>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁸¹ Daily Monitor, "Woman loses uterus after police assault," 3 July 2019, <https://www.monitor.co.ug/News/National/CSection-Namata-uterus-after-police-assault-Bobi-Wine/688334-5180660-lgseho/index.html>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

¹⁸² Sexual Minorities Uganda, "LGBTIQ Community In Uganda Pulls of Commemoration of IDAHOBIT 2019 Despite Uganda Police Intimidation Tactics," 22 May 2019, <https://sexualminoritiesuganda.com/lgbtiq-community-in-uganda-pulls-of-commemoration-of-idahobit-2019-despite-uganda-police-intimidation-tactics/>, Accessed 1 October 2019.

commented on issues such as increased surveillance and the stifling of press freedoms and restrictions to freedom of expression often on HRDs. The panel also discussed attacks on HRDs fighting for LGBT+ rights, as well as HRDs working on land rights in communities with extractive industries.¹⁸³

¹⁸³ National Coalition of Human Rights Defenders in Uganda, “Uganda: A clarion call to ensure the protection of Human Rights Defenders,” 27 June 2019, <https://www.hrdcoalition.ug/news/uganda-clarion-call-ensure-protection-human-rights-defenders>, Accessed 1 October 2019.