**Burundi**

Burundi witnessed persistent human rights violations in the reporting period. Fundamental freedoms, including freedom of opinion and expression, association and peaceful assembly continue to be curtailed. While the government has introduced reforms to abolish prison sentences for journalists facing ethics complaints, concerns persisted regarding the release of incarcerated journalists.

- 1 prison sentence upheld for a journalist.
- 1 activist attacked.
- 6 activists arrested.

Prison sentences abolished.

**Kenya**

Kenya's civic space remains relatively open in the subregion, however, it continues to grapple with corruption, and human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and torture. Security forces routinely violate the right to freedom of assembly by using excessive force to suppress protests, resulting in numerous deaths and injuries, arbitrary arrests, and detentions. Additionally, freedom of expression continues to be stifled as journalists investigating corruption and governance issues face threats and arbitrary arrests.

- Several protests dispersed.
- Several activists and protesters arrested.

**Ethiopia**

Ethiopia's human rights situation worsened with escalating violence and conflict in Oromia, Amhara, and Tigray. The International Commission of Human Rights Experts on Ethiopia (ICHREE) reported widespread atrocities across Tigray, Amhara, and Afar regions, revealing systematic abuses including attacks against civilians, ethnic cleansing, sexual violence, and arbitrary arrests. In February 2024, the Ethiopian government extended the state of emergency in Amhara, giving the government broad powers that increase the risk of arbitrary detention.

- 1 blogger strangled.
- 6 journalists assaulted.
- 1 verbally insulted.
- 1 arrested.

**Rwanda**

In the past six months, Rwanda witnessed a concerning trend of political repression and human rights violations perpetrated by the ruling Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) and its proxies. As the country approaches its 2024 general elections, the space for political opposition remains tightly closed, both within and outside the ruling party. The government targeted and harassed activists, journalists, and other critics. The RPF government employed various measures, including criticism during public gatherings, to suppress perceived opponents and dissenting voices.

- 2 media workers targeted.
- 1 journalist deported.
- 1 journalist killed.

**Somalia/Somaliland**

Somalia grapples with a humanitarian crisis due to climate change, widespread human rights violations, and ongoing conflicts. Al Shabab continues to control territory and to commit grave human rights abuses with several attacks against civilians in this period. Furthermore, GBV surged, disproportionately impacting displaced women and girls. Civic space remains under intense pressure in Somalia, one of the most dangerous places to be a journalist. Journalists are constantly targeted, harassed, arrested, and attacked by both the state and non-state actors. In October 2023, the United Nations HRC extended the mandate of the Independent Expert on Somalia's human rights situation, emphasizing grave violations and abuses.

- 1 journalist released.
- 1 media worker died in suicide bombing.
- 1 media worker summoned.
- 6 media workers detained.

**South Sudan**

South Sudan faces a complex human rights crisis marked by a significant increase in violations across various fronts. The ongoing one year conflict has claimed over 12,190 lives and displaced millions, leaving 25 million reliant on humanitarian aid. Nearly 18 million individuals experience severe food insecurity, worsened by humanitarian workers facing obstacles in reaching those in need. The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) continue to block aid deliveries through vital crossing points, impose restrictions on transporting aid supplies, and ban civil society groups, allaying collaboration with the Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

- 7 activists detained.
- 2 HRD disappeared.
TANZANIA

During the reporting period, the Tanzanian government suppressed dissenting voices. Authorities restricted access to information by imposing bans on VPN without permitting to regulate access to content deemed "illegal." Journalists, notably women journalists, endured targeted abuse and harassment, fostering a climate of fear and self-censorship. Additionally, unknown gunmen attempted to assassinate Tanzanian politician Christopher Ole Sanoka, a Member of Parliament for Simanjiro, by shooting at his car with bullets. Despite vocal opposition and widespread protests, the government neglected to address the relentless forced relocation of the Maasai communities. Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) faced repression, particularly concerning their opposition to the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project. Furthermore, reprisals against HRDs persisted, and EHRDs faced repression, particularly concerning their opposition to the East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project. Further more, reprisals against HRDs persisted, and EHRDs faced repression, particularly concerning their opposition to the East Africa

UGANDA

Uganda grappled with significant human rights challenges. HRDs, civil society actors, and media personnel suffered assaults, violence, and intimidation. Critics covering sensitive topics, opposition figures, and protesters faced government intimidation tactics, including surveillance, harassment, and threats aimed at silencing dissenting voices and discouraging public demonstrations. Minority groups and HRDs addressing these issues persistently faced unjust and arbitrary limitations. Furthermore, the government continued to crackdown on anti-fossil fuel activists and environmental defenders. Authorities detained journalists and curtailed freedom of expression.

DJIBOUTI AND ERITREA

Djibouti and Eritrea remain the most closed states in the sub-region, both ranking amongst the world’s worst violators of press freedom. The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) continues to rank Eritrea as one of the worst jailers of journalists globally. The rights to free expression, association and peaceful assembly continue to be severely restricted, making it virtually impossible for independent human rights organisations or individual HRDs to operate in the country.

In Numbers

11 students opposing EACOP tried.

77% women journalists experience violence

9 women journalists face sexual harassment

27% women journalists endure targeted abuse and harassment

77% VPN ban implemented.

In Numbers

One opposition member arrested.

9 PAPs summoned.

14 journalists arrested.

1 HRD received death threats.

1 EACOP activist stabbed.

1 SMUG petition rejected.

In Numbers

16 journalists remain imprisoned.

Eritrea ranked the worst jailer of journalists on the African continent.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Urges all member States to ensure the protection of HRDs, notably by observing the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the provisions and spirit of the United Nations Declaration on HRDs.
- Strengthens monitoring and accountability mechanisms across all countries to address human rights violations, ensuring a culture of respect for human rights where perpetrators are held accountable for their actions.
- Calls for open civic space in all countries, opposing censorship, violence against journalists, and activists, and any restrictions on civil society participation.
- Calls for unrestricted access to independent media, regional, and international human rights organizations across all countries for effective monitoring and documentation of human rights abuses.
- Calls for an end to harassment and violence against journalists, dissenting voices, and activists across all countries, ensuring respect for freedom of expression and assembly.
- Encourages the Djiboutian government in dialogue to encourage legislative reforms aligning with international human rights standards, emphasizing the importance of fostering an enabling environment for civil society and safeguarding fundamental freedoms for all citizens.
- Calls for the renewal of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burundi to ensure continued oversight and reporting.
- Urges concerted pressure on the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania to end initiatives towards forced repatriation of refugees and instead promote a policy of free and voluntary repatriation.
- Calls on Rwanda to establish an independent electoral monitoring mechanism to guarantee free, fair, and inclusive elections.
- Calls on Sudanese authorities to facilitate the entry of humanitarian aid organizations and agencies, ensuring unhindered access to conflict-affected areas and populations in need.
- Calls on the Ethiopian government to immediately end communications blackouts in affected zones, uphold freedom of expression, and ensure transparency in accordance with international human rights standards.
- Urges the Tanzanian government to cease the arrest and harassment of journalists and lift bans on virtual private networks in order to uphold freedom of expression and media freedom.
- Urges the Kenyan government to enact or strengthen legal and institutional reforms, including appropriate legislative and administrative measures, to tackle discrimination against women, as well as discrimination and violence targeting minority groups and women.
- Urges states to review and amend any unconstitutional clauses in regulations concerning the freedom of assembly and police use of force, ensuring that force is restricted to being a last resort and is only employed in fully justified circumstances.
- Urges the Tanzanian government to cease the arrest and harassment of journalists and lift bans on virtual private networks in order to uphold freedom of expression and media freedom.
- Urges all member States to ensure the protection of HRDs, notably by observing the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the provisions and spirit of the United Nations Declaration on HRDs.