

# OVERVIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN THE EAST AND HORN OF AFRICA

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# REPORT SUBMITTED AHEAD OF THE 81st ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS

# BANJUL, THE GAMBIA, OCTOBER 2024 DefendDefenders' Bi-Annual Report to the ACHPR

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## **Executive summary**

DefendDefenders (the East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project) welcomes the opportunity offered by the 81st ordinary session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (hereafter "the Commission") to highlight the most pressing human rights issues in the East and Horn of Africa sub-region for the period 14 May to October 2024. Additionally, DefendDefenders welcomes the Commission's review of Eritrea and Uganda's state reports pursuant to Article 62 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which imposes on states the obligation to report every two years on the legislative and other measures taken with a view to giving effect to the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed by the Charter.

This submission focuses on issues pertaining to civic space, in particular citizens' enjoyment of their rights to freedoms of opinion and expression, peaceful assembly, and association, as well as on the situation of human rights defenders (HRDs).

During the reporting period, the sub-region faced significant human rights challenges resulting from severe restrictions on civic space and conflicts. Ongoing conflicts in Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, and Somalia exacerbated human rights abuses and widespread political instability. Eritrea and Djibouti maintained closed civic spaces by imposing limitations on fundamental freedoms. Authorities in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania harassed HRDs and journalists, using excessive police force during protests, resulting in deaths and injuries. These countries also imposed significant internet restrictions that impacted the right to freedom of expression. In Burundi, an increase in kidnappings, enforced disappearances, and attacks on journalists was reported. Rwanda's authorities continued to restrict freedom of expression, harass and detain journalists and opposition members.

# Burundi

During the reporting period, Burundi's human rights situation continued to deteriorate. There were reports of increased kidnappings, enforced disappearances, attacks on journalists and HRDs, restrictions on the right to freedom of expression, and harrassment of the opposition and dissenting voices. Independent media outlets like Iwacu faced legal harassment and were targeted with violence from unknown assailants, who stoned their offices for several hours. While authorities released journalist Floriane Irangabiye following a presidential pardon, journalist Sandra Muhoza remained in arbitrary detention. The alleged perpetrators of these violations are government officials, members of the security services, in particular the police and the National Intelligence Service (SNR), and members of the youth league of the CNDD-FDD party, known as the *Imbonerakure*.

# **Djibouti**

Djibouti continues to impose significant restrictions on civic space, as evidenced by its ranking of 161 out of 180 countries in the 2024 Reporters Without Borders (RSF) Press Freedom Index. The ranking reflects a challenging environment for journalists, operating within the country.

#### **Eritrea**

Eritrea remains the most closed state in the sub-region. The country ranked 180 out of 180 countries in the 2024 RSF Press Freedom Index, highlighting its restrictive environments. On 11 July 2024, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on Eritrea, extending the Special Rapporteur's mandate. This decision aims to address severe restrictions on freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly in Eritrea, a positive step towards increased international scrutiny and support for human rights in Eritrea.

# **Ethiopia**

The human rights situation in Ethiopia remains dire, with millions of citizens denied justice amid ongoing fighting and widespread abuses. In Oromia, the conflict between government forces and the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) has led to extrajudicial killings, arbitrary detentions, and severe displacement, particularly in Western Oromia, where civilians face restricted access to essential services like healthcare and education. Despite these widespread violations, there is no significant progress towards accountability, particularly in the Amhara region, where the latest armed conflict has continued for a year with ongoing human rights abuses. Although the state of emergency officially ended in June 2023, the Ethiopian government has made no substantial progress in ensuring accountability for widespread violations. The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) has documented atrocities, including civilian deaths from airstrikes and attacks by armed groups in regions such as Oromia, Sidama, and Southern Ethiopia. The Ethiopian government has intensified its crackdown on civic space, consistently banned demonstrations and assemblies. At least ten journalists and civil society members have been forced to flee due to detentions, which has become a common practice against HRDs, with around 200 journalists arrested since 2019.

## Kenya

During the reporting period, President Ruto announced the commencement of the Public Benefit Organisations Act, 2013 which provides a comprehensive and transparent framework for the registration and regulation of civil society groups, replacing an older more restrictive legislation. However, serious human rights violations were reported in the same period, including excessive use of force by police. In June 2024, police violently dispersed protests on a proposed Tax Bill using tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, and live ammunition, resulting in at least 21 deaths and 336 injuries. Over 300 protesters, including HRDs and journalists, were arrested and arbitrarily detained. Additionally, protestors were forcefully disappeared creating fear and uncertainty among citizens. Extrajudicial killings remain a serious issue, with numerous dismembered bodies found. Femicide rates also surged.

#### Rwanda

During this period, Rwanda conducted its presidential and parliamentary elections on 15 July 2024 in a restrictive environment. The country re-elected President Paul Kagame with over 99% of the votes. Authorities barred opposition figures from participating, including Diane Rwigara of the People Salvation Movement. The political opposition continues to face severe restrictions to their right to freedom of association, along with

threats, arbitrary detention, prosecution on trumped-up charges, killings, and enforced disappearances. Independent civil society and the media also face attacks, intimidation, harassment, and reprisals for their work.

# Somalia (together with Somaliland)

Somalia faces a dire humanitarian crisis worsened by climate change, inter-clan fighting, persistent human rights abuses, and ongoing conflict. Al Shabaab, an extremist group, continues to control large swathes of territory and commit severe human rights violations, including frequent attacks on civilians. Gender-based violence (GBV) has surged, affecting displaced women and girls with increased rates of femicide. Journalists face constant threats from both state and non-state actors, encounter harassment, arrests, and attacks.

#### South Sudan

Over the past six months, the country continued to grapple with a severe humanitarian crisis characterized by extreme food insecurity, economic decline, ongoing conflict, disease outbreaks, repercussions of the Sudan conflict and severe restrictions to civic space. As of 5 September 2024, flooding has affected over 710,000 people across 30 of 78 counties. Threats against HRDs and journalists have intensified. On 3 July 2024, Parliament passed a bill that retained Sections 54 and 55 of the National Security Service Act. The Bill grants the National Security Service (NSS) broad powers to arrest and detain individuals without a warrant. This development raises fears of arbitrary arrests and repression of opposition and independent voices. South Sudan now ranks 136 in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, which reflects ongoing intimidation and censorship. On 16 September 2024, the Transitional Government of National Unity postponed the elections by 24 months. This decision prompted criticism and led the government to crack down on dissenting voices.

#### Sudan

The armed conflict continues, with both parties, namely the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and Rapid Support Forces (RSF), committing grave violations, some of which amount to crimes under international law. In September 2024, the UN Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) for Sudan reported that it had "reasonable grounds to believe" that both the SAF and RSF have committed war crimes, and that the RSF committed crimes against humanity, in the form of ethnic-based atrocities against the Massalit and non-Arab civilians in Darfur. Over the past six months, Sudan continued to face a severe humanitarian crisis with over 10.8 million people displaced. Food insecurity affects over 25.6 million people, with more than five million facing starvation. Health facilities are largely non-functional, exacerbating the spread of diseases like cholera and malaria with more than 144 medical facilities closed. Both parties have blocked humanitarian aid, which prevented essential supplies from reaching those in need, worsening the crisis and left millions, especially children and women, without food, medical care, and other necessities. Reports highlight severe violations against children, including killings, recruitment and use in combat, and conflict related sexual violence. Women and children, who make up over half of the displaced population, are particularly vulnerable, suffering from malnutrition, lack of access to necessities and disease.

#### **Tanzania**

Ahead of Tanzania's 2024 local government and 2025 general elections, the government has intensified its crackdown on civic space. Authorities arrested Chama cha Demokrasia na Maendeleo (CHADEMA) party members, including opposition leader Tundu Lissu, and detained 375 supporters, obstructing their activities. The forced relocation of over 82,000 Maasai from the Ngorongoro conservation area continues, with severe restrictions on their movement and access to essential services. Despite Tanzania's significant leap in the World Press Freedom Index, rising to 97 from 143 in 2023 and leading East Africa, the operating environment for HRDs remains challenging. Journalists and activists continue to face intimidation and arrests for exposing sensitive information. The right to freedom of expression is affected, with live metrics showing restrictions on X (formerly Twitter) by main internet providers.

#### **Uganda**

During the reporting period, Uganda witnessed severe human rights violations, contraction in civic space and a crackdown on dissent, with environmental defenders, political activists, and media professionals persistently targeted. Authorities responded to protests with excessive force, including the use of tear gas, resulting in many injuries and arrests. Protestors and critics against corruption and the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project faced violence and numerous arrests. Authorities intimidated opposition leaders, and journalists faced heightened repression, with several arrests. On 16 July 2024, the president signed into law the NGO Act 2024, dissolving the NGO Bureau and reverting its functions to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which could have an impact on the operations of civil society.

#### **Recommendations**

- Urge all states parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to protect HRDs, by strictly adhering to the provisions of the Charter and other international and regional instruments to which they are parties, as well as the United Nations Declaration on HRDs.
- Call on governments to end the excessive use of force, including tear gas, bullets, and arrests, during peaceful protests and ensure law enforcement officers adhere to international standards on the use of force and firearms, to ensure the safety and rights of demonstrators.
- Urge all countries to strengthen monitoring and accountability mechanisms to address human rights violations, foster a culture where perpetrators are held accountable for their actions especially in election processes.
- Urge all governments to cease the intimidation and harassment of opposition figures, allow them to freely express their views and participate in political processes without fear of reprisal.
- Call on the Ethiopian government to end all restrictions on civil society organisations, including surveillance, harassment and to ensure these organisations can operate freely.
- Call on the Ethiopian government to implement targeted measures against technology-facilitated gender-based violence affecting women HRDs through

- establishing support networks, providing legal aid, and enforcing strict penalties for online abuse.
- Urge the governments of Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya, and the authorities in Sudan to immediately restore unrestricted internet and social media access, end censorship and harassment of journalists and media personnel, and uphold freedom of expression.
- Call on all countries to protect freedom of expression, end the arrests and intimidation of journalists and HRDs, enact laws that guarantee their rights to report and advocate freely to ensure transparency and accountability.
- Call on the government of Tanzania to respect the rights of indigenous populations in Ngorongoro, end the forced relocation of Maasai communities and restore their access to essential services and cultural sites.
- Call on all parties to the conflict in Sudan to grant immediate and unhindered access to humanitarian aid across the country, especially in conflict-affected areas, to address the urgent needs of millions facing hunger and impending famine.
- Call on the Joint Fact-Finding Mission into the human rights situation in Sudan established as per ACHPR Resolution 590 to ensure the complementarity of its efforts with those of other actors, in particular the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Fact-Finding Mission established by the UN Human Rights Council, and other appropriate regional and international entities.
- Call on the government of Eritrea and Djibouti to provide a safe and enabling environment for civil society to flourish and protect the rights of all individuals to freely express their opinions.

# BURUNDI General situation

Burundi's human rights situation continued to deteriorate.<sup>1</sup> It is marked by increased kidnappings, enforced disappearances, attacks on journalists, and repression of opposition and dissenting voices. Between 1 June and 1 July 2024, for instance, ACAT recorded a total of 61 assassinations, 24 kidnappings, 26 arbitrary arrests, 22 attacks on physical integrity, and nine cases of torture.<sup>2</sup> Journalist Sandra Muhoza remains in arbitrary detention. The latter is facing a possible life sentence. <sup>3</sup> In August 2024, ACAT documented 17 assassination cases, 6 enforced disappearances, 9 arbitrary arrests, one torture case, and one instance of voluntary assault.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> ACAT Burundi, "monitoring report on human rights violations and abuses recorded for july 2024," 31 july 2024, <a href="https://www-acatburundi-org.translate.goog/rapport-de-monitoring-des-violations-et-atteintes-aux-droits-humains-recense-pour-juillet-2024/">https://www-acatburundi-org.translate.goog/rapport-de-monitoring-des-violations-et-atteintes-aux-droits-humains-recense-pour-juillet-2024/</a>? x tr sl=fr& x tr tl=en& x tr pto=sc, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Acat-Burundi, "monitoring report on human rights violations and abuses recorded for july 2024," July 2024, <a href="https://www-acatburundi-org.translate.goog/? x tr sl=fr& x tr tl=en& x tr hl=en& x tr pto=sc">https://www-acatburundi-org.translate.goog/? x tr sl=fr& x tr tl=en& x tr hl=en& x tr pto=sc</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> RSF, "Woman journalist held in Burundi facing possible life sentence," 25 April 2024, <a href="https://rsf.org/en/woman-journalist-held-burundi-facing-possible-life-sentence">https://rsf.org/en/woman-journalist-held-burundi-facing-possible-life-sentence</a>, accessed on <sup>4</sup> ACAT Burundi, <a href="https://www.acatburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Rapport-de-monitoring-des-violations-et-atteintes-aux-droits-humains-recense-par-ACAT-Burundi-pour-Aout-2024.pdf">https://www.acatburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/Rapport-de-monitoring-des-violations-et-atteintes-aux-droits-humains-recense-par-ACAT-Burundi-pour-Aout-2024.pdf</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

#### Freedom of association

On 20 May 2024, Amos, the head of the National Intelligence Service (SNR) in Giharo, Rutana province, tortured Melchiade Kabura, an opposition National Congress for Liberty (CNL) party youth leader, for refusing to join the ruling National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party.<sup>5</sup> Witnesses reported that Amos detained Kabura overnight in the local police dungeon. On 21 May 2024, Amos removed him from the cell and tortured him for nearly three hours, violently beating him while his head was down, and legs raised against the wall.

On 28 May 2024, members of the ruling CNDD-FDD party's youth league, the *Imbonerakure*, and policemen forcibly entered the home of CNL activist Claudine Nshimirimana and abducted her.<sup>6</sup> They searched the house but found no incriminating evidence and briefly detained Claudine before losing track of her. The following morning, her husband was also abducted after receiving a call from an *Imbonerakure* member. He was released on 29 May 2024, while Claudine was released on 30 May 2024.

# Freedom of opinion and expression

On 22 May 2024, a police officer assaulted and threatened a reporter from leading media group Iwacu, Jean-Noël Manirakiza, at a restaurant in Gitega.<sup>7</sup> The officer slapped Manirakiza and warned him, "We are following closely, and we know everything you write." The officer then instructed his colleagues to confiscate Manirakiza's bag, containing a laptop, camera, recorder, press card, power bank, notebooks, and pens. The following day, the authorities returned the bag.

On 5 June 2024, uniformed police officers in Bujumbura attempted to detain Pascal Ntakirutimana, another Iwacu journalist. They tried to force him into a truck, but Ntakirutimana managed to escape, although he lost his phone during the struggle.<sup>8</sup>

On 6 June 2024, the CNC accused Iwacu Press Group of professional shortcomings in its political reporting. The CNC's letter pointed to imbalances and questioned the credibility of sources. These accusations followed Ntakirutimana's 24 May report on the ruling party's actions undermining democracy, a 21 May opinion piece on poor economic performance, and Kaburahe's 12 May critic of officials exploiting religion to make false promises. In a similar incident, unknown assailants stoned the offices of Iwacu newspaper for several hours. Iwacu continues to be one of Burundi's few remaining

https://cpj.org/2024/06/burundi-regulator-warns-iwacu-press-group-after-police-assault-2-of-outlets-journalists/, accessed on 18 September 2024.

8 Ibid

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> SOS-Torture "SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 441," 26 May 2024, https://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Weekly-report-n%C2%B0-441-1.pdf, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> SOS-Torture, "SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 442," <a href="https://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Weekly-report-n%C2%B0-442-3.pdf">https://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Weekly-report-n%C2%B0-442-3.pdf</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024. 
<sup>7</sup> CPJ, "Burundi regulator warns Iwacu press group after police assault two journalists," June 2024,

independent media outlets.<sup>9</sup> This is part of a pattern of severe threats against Iwacu in recent months and journalist Sandra Muhoza remains in arbitrary detention.<sup>10</sup>

On 1 July 2024, Jean Prime Ndikubwayo, the local police commissioner in Gitega, arrested Gérard Nibigira, a correspondent for Radio-Télévision Isanganiro, for photographing officers handling fuel distribution queues. Police detained Nibigira for three hours and confiscated his phone without providing a valid reason before releasing him.

On 13 July 2024, police, following orders from Bweru local administrator Diane Nibitanga, arbitrarily arrested Pantaléon Ntakarutimana, a correspondent for Jimbere magazine and Indundi Culture radio, for allegedly spreading false and unbalanced information about a road accident.<sup>12</sup> On 15 July 2024, he was released.

On 14 August 2024, authorities released Burundian journalist Floriane Irangabiye from Bubanza Prison following a presidential pardon by President Évariste Ndayishimiye. Irangabiye had served nearly two years of a 10-year sentence after she was arrested on 30 August 2022 and convicted in January 2023 for allegedly undermining Burundi's national integrity. This conviction stemmed from her critical commentary on the Burundian government while working with Radio Igicaniro, an online outlet based in Rwanda that she co-founded.

## Djibouti

#### General situation

The case for Kadar Abdi Ibrahim, a human rights defender and journalist from Djibouti, remains concerning. His situation is not mentioned in this year's UN Secretary-General's report, yet it remains unresolved. After participating in Universal Periodic Review (UPR) pre-sessions in April 2018, Djiboutian authorities confiscated his passport without due process and continue hold him hostage in his country for six years. How the process are continued in this passport without due process and continue hold him hostage in his country for six years.

# Freedom of expression

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Amnesty International, "End intimidation of media as 2025 elections approach," 4 July 2024

<sup>&</sup>quot;<a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr16/8250/2024/en/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr16/8250/2024/en/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

10 Ifex, "Disturbing threats against the bastion of Burundian independent press," 26 June 2024, <a href="https://ifex.org/disturbing-threats-against-the-bastion-of-burundian-independent-press/">https://ifex.org/disturbing-threats-against-the-bastion-of-burundian-independent-press/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> SOS Torture, "SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 447," 6 July 2024, https://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Weekly-report-n%C2%B0-447-1.pdf, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> SOS Torture, "SOS-TORTURE BURUNDI REPORT NO. 449," 21 July 2024, https://sostortureburundi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Weekly-report-n%C2%B0-449-1.pdf, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> CPJ, "Burundian journalist Floriane Irangabiye released after two years in prison," 16 August 2024, <a href="https://cpj.org/2024/08/burundian-journalist-floriane-irangabiye-released-after-two-years-in-prison/">https://cpj.org/2024/08/burundian-journalist-floriane-irangabiye-released-after-two-years-in-prison/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> DefendDefenders "oral statements at HRC57," 26 September 2024, <a href="https://defenddefenders.org/oral-statements-hrc57/">https://defenddefenders.org/oral-statements-hrc57/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> FDHI, "Reprisals against human rights defender Kadar Abdi Ibrahim upon his return from an advocacy mission in Geneva," 18 April 2018, <a href="https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/djibouti-reprisals-against-human-rights-defender-kadar-abdi-ibrahim">https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/djibouti-reprisals-against-human-rights-defender-kadar-abdi-ibrahim</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

In the 2024 World Press Freedom Index, Reporters Without Borders ranked Djibouti 143 out of 180 countries, a significant drop from its 2023 ranking of 121. <sup>16</sup> This decline indicates worse conditions for press freedom in the country, with increased government control and restrictions on media independence.

#### **Eritrea**

#### **General situation**

On 28 May 2024, DefendDefenders and a group of NGOs urged the UN Human Rights Council to adopt a resolution extending the Special Rapporteur's mandate.<sup>17</sup> They called on the Council to explicitly condemn the grave violations committed by Eritrean authorities amid widespread impunity. On 11 July 2024, the Human Rights Council adopted a beefed-up resolution on Eritrea, which extends the Special Rapporteur's mandate, in line with NGO asks.<sup>18</sup>

# Freedom of expression

In May 2024, Reporters Without Borders in its World Press Freedom Index, ranked Eritrea 180 out of 180 countries<sup>19</sup> a significant drop compared to its previous ranking of 174 in 2023 This highlights the critical state of media freedom in the country

# **Ethiopia**

#### **General situation**

Ethiopia continued to grapple with conflict in the Amhara region with intensified clashes between government forces and rebel factions resulting in significant civilian displacement and numerous humanitarian challenges. Authorities tightened their grip on civil society through increased surveillance, arbitrary arrests, and harassment of activists and organisations critical of the government. Human rights organisations faced substantial interference and intimidation. The shrinking space in Ethiopia remains deeply concerning, with reports of journalists being arrested and increased restrictions on media freedom.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> RSF, "Press index," May 2024, <a href="https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024">https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> DefendDefenders, "Extend UN Rapporteur mandate through a substantive resolution," 28 May 2024, <a href="https://defenddefenders.org/eritrea-extend-sr-mandate-substantive-resolution/">https://defenddefenders.org/eritrea-extend-sr-mandate-substantive-resolution/</a>, accsessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> DefendDefenders, "Eritrea and the Human Rights Council: six years of membership, six years of scrutiny,"11 July 2024, <a href="https://defenddefenders.org/eritrea-6-years-membership-6-years-scrutiny/">https://defenddefenders.org/eritrea-6-years-membership-6-years-scrutiny/</a>, accsessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> RSF, "Press index," May 2024, <a href="https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024">https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 17 May 2024, the U.S. Ambassador in Addis Ababa delivered a speech titled "Policy Speech on Human Rights and Dialogue" where he urged the Ethiopian government to adopt peaceful resolutions for political issues, release key political figures, and stop detaining and harassing critics. He called on the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the Fano militia to join national dialogue and transitional justice processes. He emphasised a nationwide ceasefire to ensure humanitarian access and promote peace. In response, the Ethiopian Ministry criticised his speech, described it as containing "ill-advised, uninformed" assertions and "unsolicited advice" on Ethiopia's governance.<sup>21</sup>

On 29 May 2024, the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) highlighted grave human rights concerns.<sup>22</sup> In its latest report, EHRC documented human rights violations and abuses occurring outside and in relation to armed conflicts in several of the country's regions.<sup>23</sup> EHRC recorded extrajudicial killings, physical injuries, property destruction, arbitrary detentions, enforced disappearances, and internal displacement through its monitoring and investigations. Additionally, the report detailed civilian deaths from airstrikes and armed group attacks in regions including Oromia, Sidama, and Southern Ethiopia.

In May 2024, the Ethiopia Human Rights Defenders Center released its first periodic assessment of HRDs in Ethiopia 2024.<sup>24</sup> The report revealed that HRDs face numerous challenges, including smear campaigns, intimidation, death threats, derogatory remarks, and online assaults. Additionally, HRDs are often detained for extended periods without family access.

On 31 May 2024, Ethiopia's Council of Ministers endorsed a draft bill to allow formerly outlawed organisations, like the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), to re-register as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> All Africa," Ethiopia Slams U.S. Ambassador's Recent Remarks As 'Ill-Advised' and 'Uninformed', 17 May 2024, <a href="https://allafrica.com/stories/202405170320.html">https://allafrica.com/stories/202405170320.html</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Addis Standard, "EHRC sounds alarm on human rights violations: from forced disappearances to extrajudicial killings," 29 May 2024, <a href="https://addisstandard.com/ehrc-sounds-alarm-on-human-rights-violations-from-forced-disappearances-to-extrajudicial-killings/">https://addisstandard.com/ehrc-sounds-alarm-on-human-rights-violations-from-forced-disappearances-to-extrajudicial-killings/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The seriousness and threats of human rights violations in different areas of Ethiopia in the context of conflict, 28 May

<sup>%</sup>E1%8A%A0%E1%8A%AB%E1%89%A3%E1%89%A2%E1%8B%8E%E1%89%BD-

<sup>%</sup>E1%89%A0%E1%8C%8D%E1%8C%AD%E1%89%B5/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR1Yk\_g1U9\_PF4iaPo-

LykU536aDqUq iDtp KyBkJ2I5b5uR9E7wjZv5HYI aem AbWWXE333NWvdTLMToYB6U69JVaYx4mOSU WALefKo74EMjiN3jUFihCyHwztQC58gVohj7iUYPSgtnWC5lwmoRZ1, accessed on 18 September 2024. <sup>24</sup> EHRDC "The 1st Periodic Assessment of 2024 on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Ethiopia" 9 August 2024, <a href="https://ethdefenders.org/the-1st-periodic-assessment-of-2024-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-defenders-in-ethiopia/">https://ethdefenders.org/the-1st-periodic-assessment-of-2024-on-the-situation-of-human-rights-defenders-in-ethiopia/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

political parties, pending approval by the House of Peoples' Representatives.<sup>25</sup> The amendment addresses gaps in the 2019 Electoral Proclamation which barred groups involved in armed violence against the government from gaining legal party status. In January 2021, Ethiopian officials declined the TPLF's request for registration as a political party, citing the group's involvement in years of conflict with the Ethiopian government, including its central role in the Tigray War.<sup>26</sup>

On 14 June 2024, the United Nations reported that Ethiopia experienced an escalated human rights crisis in 2023.<sup>27</sup> The report documented 594 violations which affected 8,253 victims. State forces, including the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) and police, committed 70% of these violations. Non-state armed groups caused 22.3% of the incidents, with the Eritrean Defense Forces involved in 25 cases in Tigray. Government clashes with the Fano militia resulted in 740 civilian deaths in Amhara. In Oromia, conflicts with the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and inter-ethnic violence led to 366 civilian deaths, including 46 women. In a similar incident, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, urged Ethiopian authorities to take concrete measures to stop ongoing human rights violations and abuses that threaten reconciliation and peace in the country.<sup>28</sup> He called for immediate steps to protect civilians, prevent further violations, and ensure thorough investigations to hold perpetrators accountable.

On 18 June, human rights groups urged Ethiopian authorities to stop their crackdown on civic space and respect the rights of political opponents, journalists, and activists.<sup>29</sup> They highlighted the use of physical and digital surveillance, verbal harassment, intimidation, and threats. The groups called on regional and international partners to pressure Ethiopian authorities to uphold human rights obligations and ensure the safety of defenders and journalists. Ethiopian security forces have intensified their harassment of human rights organisations, with staff being followed and threatened to cease their reporting and advocacy efforts.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Addis Standard, "Council of Ministers endorses draft bill to reintegrate outlawed political parties including TPLF." 31 May 2024, <a href="https://addisstandard.com/council-of-ministers-endorsed-a-proclamation-aimed-at-reintegrating-formerly-outlawed-political-groups-including-tplf/">https://addisstandard.com/council-of-ministers-endorsed-a-proclamation-aimed-at-reintegrating-formerly-outlawed-political-groups-including-tplf/</a> accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Addis Standard, "Election Board declines to restore TPLF's legal registration as political party," 13 May 2023, <a href="https://addisstandard.com/news-election-board-declines-to-restore-tplfs-legal-registration-as-political-party/">https://addisstandard.com/news-election-board-declines-to-restore-tplfs-legal-registration-as-political-party/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Addis Standard, "UN report exposes Ethiopia's escalating human rights crisis; state forces responsible for 70% of violations in 2023," 12 June 2024, <a href="https://addisstandard.com/un-report-exposes-ethiopias-escalating-human-rights-crisis-state-forces-responsible-for-70-of-violations-in-2023/">https://addisstandard.com/un-report-exposes-ethiopias-escalating-human-rights-crisis-state-forces-responsible-for-70-of-violations-in-2023/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Addis Standard, "UN report exposes Ethiopia's escalating human rights crisis; state forces responsible for 70% of violations in 2023," 14 June 2024, <a href="https://addisstandard.com/un-report-exposes-ethiopias-escalating-human-rights-crisis-state-forces-responsible-for-70-of-violations-in-2023/">https://addisstandard.com/un-report-exposes-ethiopias-escalating-human-rights-crisis-state-forces-responsible-for-70-of-violations-in-2023/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> OMCT, 19 June 2024, "Joint call to halt crackdown against human rights groups" <a href="https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/ethiopia-joint-call-to-halt-crackdown-against-human-rights-groups">https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/ethiopia-joint-call-to-halt-crackdown-against-human-rights-groups</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

In June 2024, the EHRC released its annual human rights situational report.<sup>30</sup> The report highlights the rise in human rights violations against civilians in armed conflicts. During the reporting period, government forces unlawfully and arbitrarily killed civilians, conducted extrajudicial killings, and carried out indiscriminate and targeted attacks. Armed groups abducted people for ransom. The report cites issues like the lack of water, sanitation, and basic services, denial of visitation rights, inadequate food, sleeping and medical care, and widespread harassment and abuse. Due to the conflict and the state of emergency, authorities continued to target HRDs, arbitrarily detained media personnel, civil society members, and political party members.

Gender-based violence continues to rise in Ethiopia. On 25 June 2024, civil society groups condemned the violence, kidnappings, and killings targeting women and expressed concern over the lack of transparency and accountability.<sup>31</sup> They reported that Mekelle City Police recorded 12 women murdered, 80 raped, 10 kidnapped, and 178 faced attempted murder over the past eleven months.

#### Freedom of association

On 9 September 2024, the Ethiopian government released seven senior members of the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) who had been detained since 2020 for what rights groups described as "purely political" reasons.<sup>32</sup> Abdi Regassa, Dawit Abdeta, Lammi Begna, Michael Boran, Kenessa Ayana, Gaada Oljira, and Gaada Gebissa were detained without charges.<sup>33</sup> They faced repeated rights violations, including forced disappearances and inhumane detention conditions. Despite multiple court orders for their release, authorities ignored them.

#### Freedom of peaceful assembly

On 3 September 2024, security forces opened fire on protesters in Gondar city, killed two and injured two others. The protesters had gathered in response to the murder of Nolawit, a child abducted on 28 August 2024. Kidnappers initially demanded one million birr, later reducing it to 300,000 birr after negotiations. Despite her parents paying 200,000 birr, the kidnappers killed Nolawit and abandoned her body in a yard.<sup>34</sup>

#### Freedom of opinion and expression

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, "Annual Ethiopia Human Rights Situation Report June 2023 - June 2024." 18 July 2024, <a href="https://ehrc.org/download/executive-summary-annual-ethiopia-human-rights-situation-report-june-2023-june-2024/">https://ehrc.org/download/executive-summary-annual-ethiopia-human-rights-situation-report-june-2023-june-2024/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup>Addis Standard, 9 July 2024, "Civil Society groups demand action on gender-based violence in Tigray, blame gov't.," <a href="https://addisstandard.com/civil-society-groups-demand-action-on-gender-based-violence-in-tigray-blame-govt/">https://addisstandard.com/civil-society-groups-demand-action-on-gender-based-violence-in-tigray-blame-govt/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch, 9 September 2024, "Ethiopia Frees Seven Long-Held Opposition Politicians" <a href="https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/09/ethiopia-frees-seven-long-held-opposition-politicians">https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/09/09/ethiopia-frees-seven-long-held-opposition-politicians</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Voice of America, "Ethiopia releases opposition politicians from prison," 6 September 2024, https://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopia-releases-opposition-politicians-from-prison-/7773637.html, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Addis Standard, "Kidnapping, murder of two-year-old sparks deadly protests in Gondar; two reported dead," 3 September 2024, <a href="https://addisstandard.com/kidnapping-murder-of-two-year-old-sparks-deadly-protests-in-gondar-two-reported-dead/">https://addisstandard.com/kidnapping-murder-of-two-year-old-sparks-deadly-protests-in-gondar-two-reported-dead/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 30 May 2024, Ethio-251, an Ethiopian YouTube-based channel, reported that the Abiy Ahmed government had consistently targeted them with threats because they support the Amhara resistance, publish war-related reporting, expose government crimes, and sympathise with Fano, whom the group referred to as the "defenders of the Amhara people." Over the past six months, authorities have forced the channel to shut down 46 times and issued threats. Reuters, an international media agency, claimed that the Oromia Regional Government had formed a secret committee, "Koree Nageenyaa," responsible for extrajudicial killings and unlawful arrests of the Amhara opposition and diaspora figures.<sup>36</sup>

In May, Reporters Without Borders' Freedom Index ranked Ethiopia 141 out of 180 countries, a significant drop from 130 in the 2023 index.<sup>37</sup>

On 5 June 2024, Ethiopian authorities released three journalists Belay Manaye, Bekalu Alamirew, and Tewodros Zerfu who were arrested for seven and ten months respectively for covering the Amhara conflict under a state of emergency law.<sup>38</sup> Five journalists, Genet Asmamaw, Meskerem Abera, Dawit Begashaw, Abay Zewdu, and Gobeze Sisay remain arrested.<sup>39</sup>

On 15 June 2024, authorities arrested journalist Muhyadin Abdullahi for a Facebook post criticizing Harari State President Ordin Bedri's water supply plans.<sup>40</sup> On 17 June 2024, the Harari Supreme Court ordered his release on a 10,000-birr bail. Despite these orders and his wife's payment of the bail, police refused to release him, claiming they had not received the court order.<sup>41</sup>

#### Kenya

#### **General situation**

<sup>35</sup> Twitter, "Genocide Prevention In Ethiopia, 30 May 2024,

 $<sup>\</sup>frac{https://twitter.com/GPEthiopia/status/1796615636690371074}{accessed on 18 September 2024.}$  36 Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> RSF, "Index RSF," https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> RSF, "RSF relieved by the release of three Ethiopian journalists detained for several months," <a href="https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia-rsf-relieved-release-three-ethiopian-journalists-detained-several-months#:~:text=Three%20journalists%20detained%20for%20their,a%20state%20of%20emergency%20law, April 2024, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> RSF, "RSF relieved by the release of three Ethiopian journalists detained for several months," https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia-rsf-relieved-release-three-ethiopian-journalists-detained-several-months#:∼:text=Three%20journalists%20detained%20for%20theira%20state%20of%20emergency%2 Olaw, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>41</sup> RSF, "RSF relieved by the release of three Ethiopian journalists detained for several months," https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia-rsf-relieved-release-three-ethiopian-journalists-detained-several-months#:~:text=Three%20journalists%20detained%20for%20their,a%20state%20of%20emergency%20law, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 21 May 2024, President William Ruto announced the commencement of the 2013 Public Benefit Organisations Act, addressing longstanding pressure to implement the law.<sup>42</sup> This decision, unveiled during a UN global civil societies conference in Nairobi on 10 May, aims to streamline the registration and governance of NGOs in Kenya, replacing an older, more restrictive legislation. Civil society players complemented the new law and welcomed its progressive nature.<sup>43</sup> Human rights campaigners highlighted that it addresses previous challenges and fosters a better operational environment for NGOs by streamlining registration and regulation, making it transparent, predictable, and free from political interference.

Femicide remains a significant issue in Kenya. Investigative media house Africa Uncensored estimates that 500 women were killed in Kenya between 2017 and 2024. Femicide Count, a Kenyan organization, documented 152 femicide cases in 2023, based on media reports. The troubling trend highlights the increasing and persistent cases of femicide affecting both public and private spheres. On 15 June 2024, Kenyan police officer Samson Kipchirchir Kipruto fatally shot Magistrate Monica Kivuti at Nairobi's Makadara Law Courts after she canceled his wife's bail.<sup>44</sup> Prior to this, the policeman's wife had requested release on bail after pleading guilty to obtaining Ksh2.9 million (\$22,700) by false pretenses. Kivuti canceled the bail when the wife absconded and failed to comply with the conditions set during her bail hearing. Other officers shot and killed Kipruto during the attack and injured three officers.

In June 2024, the authorities introduced a proposed Tax Bill intended to address its mounting public debt through substantial tax hikes, which proposed a 16% VAT on essentials like bread, taxes on vehicles, vegetable oil, and mobile money transfers. Concerns over this bill, highlight that it threatens socio-economic equality. One of the Bill's most troubling aspects was its provision to remove Section 51 of the Data Protection Act, granting the Kenya Revenue Authority unrestricted access to financial records, which raised alarms about government overreach and privacy violations. The bill sparked widespread unrest and triggered numerous protests across the country.

On 27 June 2024, amid ongoing protests and criticism, President Ruto announced in a television address that he would not sign the Finance Bill into law, citing Kenya's strong opposition to the Bill, however protestors continued to raise their concerns over bad governance and corruption.<sup>45</sup> On 11 July 2024, President Ruto dismissed nearly his entire cabinet, including the Attorney General, following violent protests and widespread

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> The Star, "Ruto's hand forced in passing new NGO law - lobbies," 21 May 2024,

https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2024-05-21-rutos-hand-forced-in-passing-new-ngo-law-lobbies/, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> KHRC, "Commencement and implementation of the 2013 PBO Act." <a href="https://khrc.or.ke/press-release/commencement-and-implementation-of-the-public-benefits-organizations-act-of-2013/">https://khrc.or.ke/press-release/commencement-and-implementation-of-the-public-benefits-organizations-act-of-2013/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>44</sup> The Star, "Policeman shoots and injures magistrate in Kenyan court."

<sup>31</sup> June 2024, <a href="https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/policeman-shoots-and-injures-magistrate-in-kenyan-court-4657076">https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/policeman-shoots-and-injures-magistrate-in-kenyan-court-4657076</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> BBC, "Kenya's president withdraws tax plan after deadly protest," 27 June 2024, https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c3gg30gm0x2o, accessed on 18 September 2024.

demands for accountability.<sup>46</sup> He cited "reflection, listening to Kenyans, and a holistic appraisal of my cabinet's performance" as reasons for the dismissals.

Extrajudicial killing continues to be a pressing issue in Kenya. Recently, it is used as a tool to instill fear among protestors as many individuals are abducted and killed. In the recent protests, many dismembered bodies with signs of brutal killings were recorded, and no one is held accountable for these atrocities. As of 28 June, reports documented over 23 deaths, 34 enforced disappearances, and 164 arrests since 18 June, including those subsequently released, with nearly 67 individuals suffering injuries.<sup>47</sup>

On 13 July 2024, the Police Reforms Working Group Kenya (PRWG-K) discovered six dismembered bodies at Nairobi's Kware dumpsite near Mukuru Kwa Njenga slums. <sup>48</sup> The bodies, wrapped in sacks and polythene bags tied with ligatures, were found in a quarry pit opposite Kware police station with signs of brutal killings. This grim discovery follows a surge in disappearances linked to protests on the Finance Bill 2024, raising urgent calls for a thorough investigation into these killings.

#### Freedom of association

On 15 July 2024, state officials accused civil society organisations of financing youth protests and launched investigations into 16 local civil society groups for "receiving funding to support unlawful behavior and unruly protests".<sup>49</sup> The head of the Public Benefit Regulatory Authority claimed most of these civil society organisations operate illegally due to improper registration. The regulator requested the Directorate of Criminal Investigations to probe the matter.<sup>50</sup>

In August 2024, masked police officers unlawfully arrested MUHURI board member Khelef Khalifa and his family in Mida near Malindi, despite a recent court ruling outlawing the use of masks by police to obscure their identity.<sup>51</sup> High Court Judge Bahati Mwamuye directed that police officers at protests must wear uniforms with name tags and not hide their identities. Khalifa challenged the officers for hiding their faces when they stopped his car. The Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) condemned the arrest, stating it

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> The Guardian, "Kenyan president sacks cabinet after weeks of deadly protests,"

<sup>11</sup> July 2024, <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/11/kenya-president-william-ruto-sacks-cabinet-after-weeks-of-deadly-protests">https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jul/11/kenya-president-william-ruto-sacks-cabinet-after-weeks-of-deadly-protests</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> MOCT, "Kenya: enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings must stop now," 28 June 2024, <a href="https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/kenya-enforced-disappearances-and-extrajudicial-killings-must-stop-now">https://www.omct.org/en/resources/statements/kenya-enforced-disappearances-and-extrajudicial-killings-must-stop-now</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Kenya Human Rights Commission, 29 July 2024, <a href="https://khrc.or.ke/">https://khrc.or.ke/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> RSF, "RSF relieved by the release of three Ethiopian journalists detained for several months," https://rsf.org/en/ethiopia-rsf-relieved-release-three-ethiopian-journalists-detained-several-months#:~:text=Three%20journalists%20detained%20for%20their,a%20state%20of%20emergency%20law, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> RSF, "Kenya investigates 16 civil society groups over alleged protest funding,"

<sup>26</sup> July 2024, <a href="https://www.theafricareport.com/356550/kenya-investigates-16-civil-society-groups-over-alleged-protest-funding/">https://www.theafricareport.com/356550/kenya-investigates-16-civil-society-groups-over-alleged-protest-funding/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Capital FM,17 August 2024, "The Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) have condemned the unlawful detainment of Muslims for Human Right (MUHURI) Board member Khelef Khalifa at Malindi Police Station," <a href="https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2024/08/khrc-condemns-arrest-of-muhuris-khelef-khalifa/">https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2024/08/khrc-condemns-arrest-of-muhuris-khelef-khalifa/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

threatened Khalifa's and his family's lives and demanded their immediate release. Khalifa was later released unconditionally.

# Freedom of peaceful assembly

On 18 June over 300 citizens, including HRDs and journalists, were arrested during peaceful protests. Security forces used excessive force, deploying tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, and even live ammunition, infringing on constitutional rights. By 20 June, demonstrations spread across 19 counties, resulting in 105 arrests and over 200 injuries in Nairobi alone.<sup>52</sup> Protesters faced soft tissue damage, tear gas inhalation, and more severe injuries from rubber bullets and police batons. Tragically, Rex Kanyike Masai was reportedly killed by an officer in plain clothes during these protests, highlighting severe breaches of human rights, including the right to life and peaceful assembly.<sup>53</sup>

On 25 June, peaceful protests took place in over 35 counties. Protests in Nairobi, Nakuru and a few other counties turned violent despite government assurances to protect the right to assemble. Human rights observers reported multiple incidents of violations, including attacks on medical personnel, lawyers, and journalists, as well as the targeting of safe spaces like churches and medical emergency centers.<sup>54</sup> Police officers were observed shooting at the Holy Basilica medical emergency center and obstructing the evacuation and treatment of the injured. The deployment of plain-clothed police officers in unidentified vehicles further exacerbated the situation, violating principles of accountability. Reports from the Kenya National Human Rights Commission documented 21 fatalities, most caused by live bullets, and 336 injuries among protesters and police officers.<sup>55</sup> Abductions and arbitrary arrests, including those of doctors and lawyers, were reported, with some victims taken from their homes in the early hours and held in unofficial detention centers.<sup>56</sup> For instance, on 24 June 2024, Frank Githiaka, alias Franje, was reportedly abducted by plain-clothed officers from his office at Beast Athletic Offices. On 25 June 2024, at 2 a.m Gabriel Oguda, a staff member in the Office of the leader of the Minority Party, was allegedly abducted from his home by individuals in police uniform, he was released after two days. Kasamuel McOure was similarly abducted and found on 27 June 2024. Many others who were allegedly abducted were released without charges. Among them are Shadrack Kiprono, Kevin Monari, Zadock Nyamari Monari, Andrew Mwangi, John Frank Ngemi, Avugwi Chagusia, Chebet Kirui (Nakuru), Brian Navi Ngula, Harriet Nyongesa, Chebet Kirui and Ernest Nyerere. The night of 25 June saw police

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> Reuters, "One person killed, over 200 injured in Kenya anti-tax demonstrations,"

<sup>21</sup> June 2024, <a href="https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/over-200-injured-100-arrested-kenya-tax-protests-rights-groups-2024-06-21/">https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/over-200-injured-100-arrested-kenya-tax-protests-rights-groups-2024-06-21/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> The star, "Finance Bill protests: One killed along Moi Avenue," 21 June 2024, <a href="https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2024-06-21-finance-bill-protests-one-killed-along-moi-avenue/">https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2024-06-21-finance-bill-protests-one-killed-along-moi-avenue/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>54</sup> X, "Defenders Coalition," 1 July 2024,

https://twitter.com/DefendersKE/status/1807711810193088550, accessed on

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> X, "KNCHR," 26 June 2024, <a href="https://twitter.com/HakiKNCHR/status/1805986565363261469">https://twitter.com/HakiKNCHR/status/1805986565363261469</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> KHRC, "Ruto regime must end repression of peaceful protestors," 24 June 2024, https://khrc.or.ke/press-release/finance-bill-2024-ruto-regime-must-end-repression-of-peaceful-protesters/, accessed on 18 September 2024.

officers allegedly involved in indiscriminate shootings in residential areas like Githurai and Juja, resulting in unverified reports of civilian deaths from stray bullets.

On 2 July 2024, police arrested 187 protestors, including minors, during the #RejectFinanceBill2024 protests. Although the court freed them on bond on 3 July, police still held them in custody at various Nairobi stations without food. Reports allege that police demanded bribes for their release.<sup>57</sup>

On 16 July 2024, police in Kenya fired tear gas and water cannons to disperse antigovernment protests in Nairobi where demonstrators accused officers of inciting violence.<sup>58</sup> Protests erupted in at least 23 counties and resulted in injuries, including a journalist shot by police.<sup>59</sup> In Kitengela, a Reuters reporter witnessed a protester's body with a head wound.

On 23 July 2024, Kisumu police arrested HRD Ogutu Boniface during a protest on poor governance and transferred him to Vihiga Police Station, where four officers tortured him and recorded the abuse on their phones. They punched, strangled, and pierced his finger, struck his head and nose, causing bleeding and soft tissue injuries. The officers demanded Ogutu reveal his phone password and stop mobilizing protests. On July 24, the court ordered Ogutu be taken to the hospital before entering any plea.

On 25 July 2024, authorities arrested several individuals, including human rights activist Boniface Mwangi, while they led a protest demanding justice for recent victims in the finance bill protests. Caroline Nduku Mutisya, the mother of Ericson Mutisya, who was killed by police, and two relatives of Evans Kiratu, who died from a tear gas canister, were also detained. Similarly, famous protestor, Shadrack Kiprono known as Shad Khalif, was arrested and later transferred to JKIA Police Station, where he was released on 26 July 2024. On 3 September 2024, Mwangi, Albert Wambugu, Robert Otieno, Pablo Chacha, and Erot Franco appeared at Milimani Law Courts. The Court rejected the prosecution's request for an additional two weeks to conclude investigations and released them unconditionally.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> X "Defenders Coalition," 4 July 2024,

https://twitter.com/DefendersKE/status/1808843985860923780, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> Aljazeera, "Police use tear gas as crowds call for Ruto to quit,"

<sup>16</sup> July 2024, <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/7/16/kenya-protests-live-coverage">https://www.aljazeera.com/news/liveblog/2024/7/16/kenya-protests-live-coverage</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> KNHRC, "KNHCR Alleges Fabricated Charges & Police Monitoring of Activists,"

<sup>29</sup> July 2024, <a href="https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/103230-knhcr-alleges-fabricated-charges-police-monitoring-rights-activists">https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/103230-knhcr-alleges-fabricated-charges-police-monitoring-rights-activists</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>61</sup> NTV, "Police arrest Boniface Mwangi, Hussein Khalid, Shadrack Khalif and others," 25 june 2024, <a href="https://ntvkenya.co.ke/news/police-arrest-boniface-mwangi-hussein-khalid-shadrack-khalif-and-others/">https://ntvkenya.co.ke/news/police-arrest-boniface-mwangi-hussein-khalid-shadrack-khalif-and-others/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid

<sup>63</sup> Citizen, "Court frees Boniface Mwangi, 4 others in unlawful assembly case,"

<sup>3</sup> September 2024, <a href="https://www.citizen.digital/news/court-frees-boniface-mwangi-4-others-in-unlawful-assembly-case-n348846">https://www.citizen.digital/news/court-frees-boniface-mwangi-4-others-in-unlawful-assembly-case-n348846</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> Aljazeera, "Police fire tear gas at protesters as new Kenya cabinet is sworn in," 8 August 2024, <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/8/8/photos-police-fire-tear-gas-at-protesters-as-new-kenya-cabinet-is-sworn-in">https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2024/8/8/photos-police-fire-tear-gas-at-protesters-as-new-kenya-cabinet-is-sworn-in</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 8 August 2024, police in Nairobi fired tear gas at protesters demanding President William Ruto's resignation as a new cabinet was sworn in.<sup>65</sup> Businesses closed, public transport stopped, and police set up roadblocks.

On 14 August 2024, the High Court in Nairobi directed all police officers to wear nametags and uniforms when dealing with protesters.<sup>66</sup> High Court Judge Bahati Mwamuye issued this ruling in response to a suit filed by Florence Wairimu on 31 July. The judge mandated that plainclothes officers must not conceal their identities.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, he emphasized that the national police service must ensure that the identification, registration, or markings of any vehicles used during protests are visible. This ruling came after allegations that the national police service allowed officers to wear face masks while enforcing arrests during the anti-Finance Bill 2024 protests.<sup>68</sup> Several videos had emerged showing plain clothed individuals, believed to be police officers, forcefully abducting protesters.<sup>69</sup>

# Freedom of opinion and expression

On 25 June 2024, reports recorded at least a dozen cases of journalists attacked during the protests. Among those arrested were Associated Press journalists Joe Muhia and Iddi Ali Juma, Justus Mwangi Macharia of Standard Group, columnist Gabriel Oguda, and journalists Sammy Kimatu and Taifa Leo from the Nation Media Group. They arrested and assaulted Justus Mwangi Macharia of Standard Group and threw Sammy Kimatu and Taifa Leo of the Nation Media Group out of a moving vehicle. Police abducted columnist Gabriel Oguda and held him in Kajiado police station. They also injured AFP photojournalist Collins Olunga and damaged KBC videographer John Omido's equipment. Protestors attacked Citizen TV's Ben Kirui and caused injuries. The state of the protestors attacked Citizen TV's Ben Kirui and caused injuries.

In a similar incident, authorities continued to threaten and target mass media houses. Reports indicate that KTN faced shutdown threats. Authorities disrupted internet access, restricted social media platforms such as X (formerly known as Twitter) as many citizens reported being unable to access these platforms without using a VPN.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Kenyans, "High Court Directs Police Officers to Wear Nametags During Protests,"

<sup>14</sup> August 2024, <a href="https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/103590-high-court-directs-police-officers-wear-nametags-protest">https://www.kenyans.co.ke/news/103590-high-court-directs-police-officers-wear-nametags-protest</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> Ihid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> International Press Institute, "Attacks on journalists covering protests must stop, 27 June 2024, ipi.media, <a href="https://ipi.media/kenya-attacks-on-journalists-covering-protests-must-stop/">https://ipi.media/kenya-attacks-on-journalists-covering-protests-must-stop/</a> accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, "CPJ calls on Kenyan authorities to respect press freedom amid ongoing protests," 25 June 2024, <a href="https://cpj.org/2024/06/cpj-calls-on-kenyan-authorities-to-respect-press-freedom-amid-ongoing-protests/">https://cpj.org/2024/06/cpj-calls-on-kenyan-authorities-to-respect-press-freedom-amid-ongoing-protests/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> X (Formerly Twitter), Net blocks, 25 June

<sup>2024,</sup> https://twitter.com/netblocks/status/1805598808035774970, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 8 July 2024, a Kenyan court ruled that authorities violated Pakistani journalist Arshad Sharif's right to life, declaring his 2022 death arbitrary and unconstitutional.<sup>73</sup> Police shot Sharif on 23 October 2022, near Nairobi, claiming it was a case of mistaken identity. His wife, Javeria Siddique, sued the government, believing he was targeted for his journalism. The court awarded Sharif's family 10 million Kenyan shillings in damages but suspended payment for 30 days to allow for an appeal.

#### **Rwanda**

#### General situation

On 15 July 2024, Rwanda conducted its presidential and parliamentary elections in a restrictive environment.<sup>74</sup> The country re-elected President Paul Kagame with over 99% of the votes. Political opposition continues to face severe restrictions to their right to freedom of association, along with threats, arbitrary detention, prosecution on trumpedup charges, killings, and enforced disappearances. Independent civil society and the media also face attacks, intimidation, harassment, and reprisals for their work. Authorities barred opposition figures from participating, including Diane Rwigara of the People Salvation Movement.<sup>75</sup>

#### Freedom of association

On 13 May 2024, Rwandan authorities denied entry to Human Rights Watch researcher Clementine De Montjoye, citing undisclosed "immigration reasons." The authorities asserted that Human Rights Watch consistently fabricates reports and distorts the reality of Rwanda. Prior to this, De Montjoye, seeking to investigate human rights, had notified and requested meetings with Rwandan officials. This action raises suspicions of Rwanda evading independent scrutiny ahead of the UK's asylum seeker transfers.

# Somalia/Somali land

#### **General situation**

77 Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Committee to Protect Journalists, "Kenya court rules police unlawfully killed Pakistani journalist Arshad Sharif," 8 July 2024, <a href="https://cpj.org/2024/07/kenya-court-rules-police-unlawfully-killed-pakistani-journalist-arshad-sharif/">https://cpj.org/2024/07/kenya-court-rules-police-unlawfully-killed-pakistani-journalist-arshad-sharif/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Aljazeera, "Rwanda's Kagame wins fourth presidential term," <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/16/rwandas-kagame-on-track-for-fourth-presidential-term">https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/16/rwandas-kagame-on-track-for-fourth-presidential-term</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Nile post, "Diane Rwigara again barred from Rwanda's presidential election,"

<sup>6</sup> June 2024, <a href="https://nilepost.co.ug/rwanda/202632/diane-rwigara-again-barred-from-rwandas-presidential-election">https://nilepost.co.ug/rwanda/202632/diane-rwigara-again-barred-from-rwandas-presidential-election</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> The Guardian, "Rwanda denies entry to senior human rights researcher," <a href="https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/19/rwanda-denies-entry-to-senior-human-rights-researcher">https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/may/19/rwanda-denies-entry-to-senior-human-rights-researcher</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 23 May 2024, James Swan began his role as the Acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Somalia. On 24 June 2024, he addressed the Security Council on Somalia's situation.<sup>78</sup> He emphasized Somalia's progress, including the adoption of constitutional reforms, preparations for elections, and ongoing efforts against Al-Shabaab. Swan also discussed the importance of collaborative planning and international support amidst persistent humanitarian challenges and climate-related impacts in the region.

On 26 May 2024, the Somali government requested the U.N. Security Council to terminate the U.N. political mission in Somalia, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) when its mandate expires in October 2024.<sup>79</sup> Former Foreign Minister Ahmed Isse Awad criticized the decision, stating that UNSOM's role in governance, peacebuilding, security reforms, and democracy remains vital.

On 12 July 2024, U.S. Ambassador Richard H. Riley visited Hargeisa, in the self-governing region of Somaliland, for crucial talks with President Muse Bihi Abdi and other leaders. The visit highlighted the U.S. commitment to supporting prosperity and democratic governance in Somalia and Somaliland. Riley highlighted the importance of a free press and active civil society, while addressing regional tensions, including the withdrawal of ATMIS forces and disputes between Ethiopia and Somalia. He emphasized the U.S. role in fostering regional stability and upholding democratic processes. President Bihi expressed appreciation for the visit.<sup>80</sup>

On 18 August 2024, a group of organisations urged Somalia's government to withdraw the Official Information Bill (OIB). The organisations state that it threatens the right to information and noted that the Bill, which the Council of Ministers approved in March 2024 and is now awaiting Federal Parliament endorsement, contravenes international standards and Somalia's Provisional Constitution. They criticized the Bill's broad exemptions, which allow the government to classify information as confidential or related to national security without adequate oversight. The organisations demand a thorough review involving all relevant stakeholders.<sup>81</sup>

On 19 August 2024, during World Humanitarian Day, UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia, George Conway, called for the protection of civilians and humanitarian workers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>78</sup> Horn Observer, "Statement by Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General James Swan to the Security Council on the situation in Somalia," 25 June 2024,

https://hornobserver.com/articles/2813/Statement-by-Acting-Special-Representative-of-the-Secretary-General-James-Swan-to-the-Security-Council-on-the-situation-in-Somalia, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>79</sup> VOA, "Somalia calls for termination of UN political mission," 9 May 2024, https://www.voanews.com/a/somalia-calls-for-termination-of-un-political-mission/7604835.html, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>80</sup> Horn Observer, "U.S. Ambassador Richard Riley's Crucial Visit to Somaliland Amid Escalating Regional Tension," 12 July 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2840/US-Ambassador-Richard-Rileys-Crucial-Visit-to-Somaliland-Amid-Escalating-Regional-Tension">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2840/US-Ambassador-Richard-Rileys-Crucial-Visit-to-Somaliland-Amid-Escalating-Regional-Tension</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>81</sup> AllAfrica, "Somalia's official information bill draws international criticism," 9 August 2024, <a href="https://allafrica.com/stories/202408190020.html">https://allafrica.com/stories/202408190020.html</a>, accessed on 28 September 2024.

in conflict zones.<sup>82</sup> Emphasizing the theme #ActForHumanity, he highlighted the challenges faced by aid workers, particularly in Somalia, where millions suffer due to climate shocks, conflicts, and disease.<sup>83</sup> Despite reduced numbers, 6.9 million people still need assistance, including 3.8 million internally displaced. Conway urged all parties to uphold international laws protecting civilians and humanitarian workers, as aid workers continue to face violence and operational challenges in Somalia.

On 29 August 2024, Somali Prime Minister Hamza Abdi Barre appointed General Bashir Mohamed Jama as Minister of Family and Human Rights, which sparked outrage due to his controversial past.<sup>84</sup> As a former police officer and spy chief, General Goobe is alleged to have overseen the rape of women prisoners at Mogadishu Central Prison. Human rights activists condemned the appointment as a setback for women's rights in Somalia, a disregard of justice and an undermining of women's representation in leadership roles.

In August 2024, Somalia witnessed a series of protests against illegal taxation and extortion by government officials and private companies.<sup>85</sup> Businesses in key commercial areas of Mogadishu, including Bakaro Market, Hamarweyne, Suuq Bacaad, and Madina, shut down in protest.<sup>86</sup> This action followed a statement from the Mogadishu business community expressing frustration over the government's failure to address their grievances. The protests revealed a disturbing trend of targeting journalists with violence.<sup>87</sup>

#### Freedom of association

On 3 September 2024, Somaliland's intelligence officers detained opposition MP Mohamed Abib at the airport in Hargeisa as he returned from Dubai and then moved him to an undisclosed location. This detention follows the Attorney General's August request to lift Abib's parliamentary immunity to pursue criminal charges related to his meetings with Somali and Djiboutian officials and his critical statements on Somaliland's conflict in Las Anod.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Horn Observer, "Shock as Somali General Who Oversaw Women Prisoners Raped Appointed as the New Minister of Human Rights," 20 July 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2871/Shock-as-Somali-General-Who-Oversaw-Women-Prisoners-Raped-Appointed-as-the-New-Minister-of-Human-Rights">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2871/Shock-as-Somali-General-Who-Oversaw-Women-Prisoners-Raped-Appointed-as-the-New-Minister-of-Human-Rights, accessed on 28 September 2024.</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>82</sup> Horn Observer, "On World Humanitarian Day, UN Tells Parties in Somalia to Respect Civilians and Aid Workers," 19 August 2024,

https://hornobserver.com/articles/2914/On-World-Humanitarian-Day-UN-Tells-Parties-in-Somalia-to-Respect-Civilians-and-Aid-Workers, accessed on 28 September 2024.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>85</sup> Horn Observer, "Mogadishu Businesses Shut Down in Major Strike Against Illegal Taxation and Extortion," 18 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2909/Mogadishu-Businesses-Shut-Down-in-Major-Strike-Against-Illegal-Taxation-and-Extortion">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2909/Mogadishu-Businesses-Shut-Down-in-Major-Strike-Against-Illegal-Taxation-and-Extortion</a>, accessed on 28 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>86</sup> Horn Observer, "Mogadishu Businesses Shut Down in Major Strike Against Illegal Taxation and Extortion," 18 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2909/Mogadishu-Businesses-Shut-Down-in-Major-Strike-Against-Illegal-Taxation-and-Extortion">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2909/Mogadishu-Businesses-Shut-Down-in-Major-Strike-Against-Illegal-Taxation-and-Extortion</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>87</sup> Horn Observer, Wave of violence and intimidation targeted journalists covering Mogadishu protests, 20 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2915/Somalia-Wave-of-violence-and-intimidation-targeted-journalists-covering-Mogadishu-protests">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2915/Somalia-Wave-of-violence-and-intimidation-targeted-journalists-covering-Mogadishu-protests</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>88</sup> Horn Observer, "Somaliland Arrests Opposition MP Mohamed Abib After Return from UAE Trip," 3 September 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2941/Somaliland-Arrests-Opposition-MP-Mohamed-Abib-After-Return-from-UAE-Trip">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2941/Somaliland-Arrests-Opposition-MP-Mohamed-Abib-After-Return-from-UAE-Trip</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

#### Freedom of opinion and expression

On 12 May 2024, SSC-Khaatumo Lasanod police detained Abdirisaq Abdirahman Mohamud Duale, a reporter for Kobciye Media, after he published an interview where a member of SSC-Khaatumo forces threatened retaliation against prisoners held by Somaliland authorities, particularly those in Lasanod prison.<sup>89</sup> On 19 May 2024, authorities released him without charge after eight days of detention.<sup>90</sup>

On 6 June 2024, the Somali Ministry of Information introduced new restrictions on independent reporting at a "conference on disinformation and incitement" in Mogadishu.<sup>91</sup> Mayor Yusuf Hussein Jimale and religious leaders pushed for strict censorship, citing social media's role in spreading "immorality." Minister Daud Aweys announced plans for new social media guidelines.

On 6 July 2024, Somalia's Ministry of Information, led by Deputy Minister Abdirahman Yusuf Al-Adaala, blocked senior journalist Abdulkadir Isse Ali from posting his report on a military court hearing involving NISA members accused of killing a 14-year-old boy in April. The Ministry restricted Abdulkadir's access to government media platforms, including the SNTV Facebook page, and posted only edited video clips without his narrative. Despite this censorship, Abdulkadir shared his full report on his personal Facebook page, where he also accused Ministry officials of exploiting Somalia's Independence Day celebrations for financial gain. Two other state media journalists, speaking anonymously, revealed that editors at SNTV and Radio Mogadishu were ordered not to broadcast any of Abdulkadir's news reports.

On 6 July 2024, Puntland police arrested journalist Said Abdullahi Kulmiye, who reports for online portal Kasmaal Media and Universal TV in Galkayo, after he reported on police and gunmen extorting money, in the form of "extra" taxes, from transporters at check points outside Galkayo.<sup>93</sup> The police detained him at the local station after summoning him but later ordered his release without charges.

<sup>91</sup> Horn Observer, "Mogadishu Mayor Announces "Immorality Police" to Curb Social Media Influencers as Government Stifles Freedoms," 6 June 2024,

https://hornobserver.com/articles/2781/Mogadishu-Mayor-Announces-Immorality-Police-to-Curb-Social-Media-Influencers-as-Government-Stifles-Freedoms, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>89</sup> SJS, "SJS Somalia urges authorities in Mogadishu, Lasanod, Hargeisa and Burao to respect press freedom and end arbitrary detentions" 26 May 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2762/SJS-Somalia-urges-authorities-in-Mogadishu-Lasanod-Hargeisa-and-Burao-to-respect-press-freedom-and-end-arbitrary-detentions">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2762/SJS-Somalia-urges-authorities-in-Mogadishu-Lasanod-Hargeisa-and-Burao-to-respect-press-freedom-and-end-arbitrary-detentions</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>92</sup> Horn Observer, "Senior journalist's reporting blocked amid rising intimidation and censorship on state-media journalists in Somalia," 7 July 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2832/Senior-journalists-reporting-blocked-amid-rising-intimidation-and-censorship-on-state-media-journalists-in-Somalia">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2832/Senior-journalists-reporting-blocked-amid-rising-intimidation-and-censorship-on-state-media-journalists-in-Somalia</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>93</sup> Horn Observer, "SJS calls on Jubbaland to investigate the shooting incident involving journalists in Dhobley, urges Puntland to halt pressing criminal charges against a journalist in Garowe," 18 July 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2858/SOMALIA-SJS-calls-on-Jubbaland-to-investigate-the-shooting-incident-involving-journalists-in-Dhobley-urges-Puntland-to-halt-pressing-criminal-charges-against-a-journalist-in-Garowe, accessed on 18 September 2024.

On 16 July 2024, Puntland's Ministries of Finance and Planning, respectively, threatened criminal charges against freelance journalist Mohamed Salah. They accused him of spreading "false and misleading information" about a suspension of registration of NGOs in Puntland. Prior to this, Salah had released a report and criticizing President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's involvement in trade of a stimulant plant (khat). The ministries announced plans to pursue charges under the Somali Penal Code and Puntland Media Law and to file a case with the Ministry of Information.<sup>94</sup>

On 22 July 2024, Mogadishu police detained Alinur Salad, a journalist and founder of Dawan Media, at Waberi Police Station. The Banadir Regional Police charged him with "immorality, false reporting, and insulting the armed forces" and announced an investigation on him before bringing him to court. Prior to this, Alinur wrote a report that linked the use of khat by Somali security forces to their increased vulnerability to Al-Shabaab attacks. The report, aired on Dawan TV and Alinur's Facebook page, criticized President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's involvement in the khat trade and questioned his commitment to building a national army. Dawan Media reported that threats followed their critical coverage of the government. Despite President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's promise to drop the charges, on 27 July 2024, Alinur Salad was released on bail with conditions that stop him from traveling or speaking to the media, which affect his journalistic work.

On 28 July 2024, police obstructed Somali Cable TV journalist Suleyman Ahmed Rage while he covered the eviction of Internally Displaced Persons in Mogadishu's Bondhere district.<sup>97</sup> Police confiscated his phone, deleted footage, and threatened him if he continued filming.

In August 2024, the Somali government began prosecution of Abdalle Ahmed Mumin, Secretary-General of the Somali Journalists Syndicate (SJS), amid ongoing severe restrictions since 2022.98 The Banadir Regional Court in Mogadishu heard Mumin's case with his lawyers, media representatives, and several Somali Federal Parliament members present. Mumin's defense condemned the charges as politically motivated, arguing that

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>94</sup> Horn Observer, "SJS calls on Jubbaland to investigate the shooting incident involving journalists in Dhobley, urges Puntland to halt pressing criminal charges against a journalist in Garowe," 18 July 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2858/SOMALIA-SJS-calls-on-Jubbaland-to-investigate-the-shooting-incident-involving-journalists-in-Dhobley-urges-Puntland-to-halt-pressing-criminal-charges-against-a-journalist-in-Garowe, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> Horn Observer, "Somali president should order the immediate and unconditional freedom of Journalist Alinur Salad detained in Mogadishu," 22 July 2024,

https://hornobserver.com/articles/2866/SJS-Somali-president-should-order-the-immediate-and-unconditional-freedom-of-Journalist-Alinur-Salad-detained-in-Mogadishu, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>96</sup> Horn Observer, "A week after his release on bail, journalist Alinur Salad is unable to conduct journalism, President Hassan has not fulfilled his promise to drop the case," 4 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2885/Somalia-A-week-after-his-release-on-bail-journalist-Alinur-Salad-is-unable-to-conduct-journalism-President-Hassan-has-not-fulfilled-his-promise-to-drop-the-case, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>97</sup> Horn Observer, "SJS raises alarm over increasing police violence against journalists covering Mogadishu protests," 17 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2903/SJS-raises-alarm-over-increasing-police-violence-against-journalists-covering-Mogadishu-protests">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2903/SJS-raises-alarm-over-increasing-police-violence-against-journalists-covering-Mogadishu-protests</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>98</sup> CIVICUS, "Journalists continue to be targeted systematically,"17 January 2024,

https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/journalists-continue-to-be-targeted-systematically/, accessed on 18 September 2024.

journalism is not a crime. The prosecutor alleged Mumin's reporting on government human rights violations aimed to undermine the state.

On 10 August 2024, Mogadishu police blocked local journalists from reporting on a forced eviction affecting public lands at Bakaro market.<sup>99</sup> Police spokesman Abdifatah Adan Hassan permitted only cameramen and denied access to reporters. The journalists boycotted police coverage.

On 14 August 2024, Mogadishu police assaulted and briefly detained Radio Danan journalists Abdullahi Ali Mohamud and Idiris Abdi Hassan while they reported on street protests staged by tuk-tuk taxi drivers against increased taxes and extortion. The police confiscated their phones and camera and deleted footage, before releasing them. In a similar incident, Cosob TV journalists reported that armed police officers seized their camera equipment while covering the protest at KM4 Junction.

On 18 August 2024, Somali police at Mogadishu's Hawlwadaag station briefly detained seven journalists covering a business strike at Bakaro market after initially telling them they would attend a press conference. <sup>102</sup> Three of the detained journalists were confined in the commander's office for two hours before being released and were warned to avoid reporting on the strike. <sup>103</sup> In a similar incident, police detained reporter Farhan Baraale, and briefly held Voice of America (VOA) reporter Abdukadir Mohamed Abdulle and cameraman Ayuub Mohamed while they were conducting interviews at Bakaro market following business closures. The officers confiscated their equipment and phones. However, the items were later returned, and all three were released without charges. <sup>104</sup>

On 19 August 2024, police detained Mustaqbal media journalists Abdirizak Abdullahi Aden and Abdirahman Abdukadir Mohamed at the Hawlwadaag police station while they were reporting on a street protest by the business community at Bakaro market. The officers confiscated their equipment, but both journalists were released later that day without facing any charges. <sup>105</sup>

On 19 August 2024, police harassed and threatened two female reporters, Nimo Muhidin of Somali Cable TV and Safa Osman, a freelancer for Dalsan TV, while they were recording at Bakaro market. The market was closed due to a protest by business owners on its second day. Nimo reported that a police officer pointed his pistol at her head and forced her to leave. Safa said that another officer threatened to beat her if she did not vacate the area. In a similar incident, police expelled Abdirahman Nur Mohamed of Himilo TV and his cameraman from Bakaro market as they attempted to cover the protest against the closure of the largest market in the Somali capital, which was shut down due to "new taxes

<sup>99</sup> Ibid

<sup>100</sup> Ibid

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>102</sup> Horn Observer, "Wave of violence and intimidation targeted journalists covering Mogadishu protests," 20 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2915/Somalia-Wave-of-violence-and-intimidation-targeted-journalists-covering-Mogadishu-protests">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2915/Somalia-Wave-of-violence-and-intimidation-targeted-journalists-covering-Mogadishu-protests</a>, accessed on 28 September 2024.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> Ibid

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

and fees."<sup>107</sup> Later, on a police officer identified as Isaq Mohamed Isse interfered with their work, questioned the journalist, and accused him of "incitement" regarding the protests.

On 27 August 2024, police aggressively disbanded protesters in Mogadishu who were demonstrating against government extortion.<sup>108</sup> Among those injured is BTN TV reporter Hibo Mohamoud. Officers targeted her and chased her until a police 4WD vehicle struck her Bajaj taxi and caused severe leg injuries. According to video footage, police drove into crowds and hit demonstrators. Hibo required hospitalization and surgery for a deep wound between her knee and ankle. The police have not responded to requests for clarification.

#### South Sudan

#### **General situation**

In May 2024, the UN Security Council extended sanctions on South Sudan until 31 May  $2024.^{109}$  These include targeted sanctions such as asset freezes and travel bans, along with an arms embargo. The mandate of the Panel of Experts was also extended until 1 July  $2025.^{110}$ 

On 3 July 2024, South Sudan's parliament passed a bill that failed to remove two sections, namely sections 54 and 55, from the National Security Service (NSS) Act. These two sections, alongside Section 57 of the newly passed bill, grant the NSS broad powers to arrest (even without a warrant) and detain those who commit vaguely worded "crimes against the state." This development further raises fears of arbitrary arrests and repression of opposition and independent voices ahead of the country's first-ever national elections. Civil society groups have called on South Sudan to align the NSS Act provisions with international human rights standards.

On 4 August 2024, the Association for Media Development in South Sudan (AMDISS) and the Union of Journalists in South Sudan (UJOSS) began developing an election guide to ensure professional and ethical media coverage for the elections. The guide, which is still awaiting validation, will provide guidelines for protecting journalists before, during,

<sup>108</sup> Horn Observer, three Bajaj Drivers and Female Journalist Injured Amid Mogadishu Protests," 16 August 2024, <a href="https://hornobserver.com/articles/2902/Three-Bajaj-Drivers-and-Female-Journalist-Injured-Amid-Mogadishu-Protests">https://hornobserver.com/articles/2902/Three-Bajaj-Drivers-and-Female-Journalist-Injured-Amid-Mogadishu-Protests</a>, accessed on 28 September 2024.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>109</sup> United Nations, "Security Council Extends Sanctions on South Sudan for One Year, Adopting Resolution 2683 (2023) by 10 Votes in Favour, with 5 Abstentions." 30 May 2024, <a href="https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15297.doc.htmm">https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15297.doc.htmm</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>110</sup> United Nations, "Security Council Extends Sanctions Regime on South Sudan for One Year, Adopting Resolution 2731 (2024) by Vote of 9 in Favour, 6 Abstentions | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," 30 May 2024, <a href="https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15711.doc.htm">https://press.un.org/en/2024/sc15711.doc.htm</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>111</sup> Amnesty International, "President should send draconian National Security Service Bill back to parliament for review," 11 July 2024, <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/8317/2024/en/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr65/8317/2024/en/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>112</sup> Radio Tamjuz, "South Sudan journalists prepare guide for election coverage,"

<sup>4</sup> August 2024, <a href="https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/south-sudan-journalists-prepare-guide-for-election-coverage">https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/south-sudan-journalists-prepare-guide-for-election-coverage</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

and after the elections. AMDISS Director Irene Ayaa stated that while the media cannot decide whether the elections will take place, it must be prepared. The guide emphasizes impartiality, independence from political parties, and prohibits accepting bribes.

# Freedom of opinion and expression

In May 2024, Reporters Without Borders ranked South Sudan 136 out of 180 countries in its annual World Press Freedom Index. This marks a decline from its 118 position in 2023. The drop reflects worse conditions for press freedom, where journalists face increased threats, intimidation, and censorship.

In July 2024, security officers arrested civil society members during South Sudan's national parliament session on the NSS amendment Bill.<sup>114</sup> They also forced a journalist to delete photos taken during the debate and locked another journalist in a media gallery room. Security officers intimidated civil society members and journalists and prevented some from observing the parliamentary debate.

On 27 June 2024, a combined force of CID and NSS officers in Bor, Jonglei State, arrested Abraham Aleu Anyieth, an SSBC photographer, without a warrant.<sup>115</sup> His detention is believed to be linked to his involvement in ongoing peaceful protests on the high cost of living and delayed salaries.

On 6 August 2024, authorities arrested Sisto Germano Ohide, a journalist for Singaita FM Radio Station, for his coverage of a broken Catholic Church statue at Our Lady of Holy Rosary Church. Initially taken into custody in Kapoeta town, Eastern Equatoria State, he was released shortly after for malaria treatment. On 7 August 2024, police rearrested Ohide and transferred him to Torit Central Police Station, where he remains detained without charge. Ohide believes his arrest is linked to his 26 July report on the dispute between a local Catholic diocese and a woman accused of breaking the statue.

On 9 September 2024, police in Juba arrested journalist George Ruot following a defamation suit filed by the Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS). Ruot, a vocal critic of UJOSS leadership, accused them of corruption and mismanagement, which UJOSS denies. UJOSS President Patrick Oyet said they pursued legal action after failing to resolve

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>113</sup> RSF, "RSF index," 2024, <a href="https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024">https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>114</sup> "South Sudan in Focus: Jonglei state security crackdown on activists backing protests," 2 July 2024, Voice of America. <a href="https://www.voaafrica.com/a/7659910.html">https://www.voaafrica.com/a/7659910.html</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>115</sup> Radio Tamjuz, "SSBC photographer arrested amid Bor protests as security crackdown intensifies," 27 June 2024, <a href="https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/ssbc-photographer-arrested-amid-bor-protests-as-security-crackdown-intensifies">https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/ssbc-photographer-arrested-amid-bor-protests-as-security-crackdown-intensifies</a>, 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>116</sup> CPJ, "South Sudan police detain journalist Sisto Germano Ohide without chargem" 8 August 2024, <a href="https://cpj.org/2024/08/south-sudan-police-detain-journalist-sisto-germano-ohide-without-charge/">https://cpj.org/2024/08/south-sudan-police-detain-journalist-sisto-germano-ohide-without-charge/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> Radio Tamujuz, "South Sudanese journalist jailed for defamation,"

 $<sup>9 \</sup> September \ 2024, \\ \underline{https://www.radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/south-sudanese-journalist-jailed-for-defamation}, \ accessed on 18 \ September \ 2024.$ 

the issues amicably and reported that Ruot had contacted UJOSS donors to halt their funding. Ruot was later released on bail.<sup>120</sup>

#### Sudan

#### **General situation**

Sudan saw a surge in violence, particularly in North Darfur, marked by increased air strikes and Rapid Support Forces (RSF)-perpetrated violations such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), attacks on journalists and restrictions on civic space which have worsened the humanitarian crisis. As of 26 June 2024, over 40,000 deaths and 5,000 injuries were recorded according to Sudan Doctors' Union. The violence has prompted more than 13,000 civilians to flee, due to incidents of killings, rape, and looting.

On 16 May 2024, UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator Clementine Nkweta-Salami warned of worsening famine, disease, and conflict in Sudan. She criticized the international community for its slow response and highlighted the crisis in El Fasher, where clashes and blocked aid have worsened conditions. The coordinator urged immediate action to address the hunger crisis affecting 18 million people, the impending famine and emphasized the need for unrestricted humanitarian access and additional funding.

On 14 June 2024, UN Secretary-General António Guterres urged the global community to enhance efforts to protect and support refugees in his message for World Refugee Day, observed on 20 June. 122 He highlighted that conflict, climate chaos, and upheaval have displaced over 120 million people worldwide, including 43.5 million refugees. Guterres emphasized the need for global solidarity, equal opportunities, and support for host countries, primarily low- and middle-income nations, to integrate refugees. He called for reaffirming the world's responsibility to uphold refugee rights, ensure asylum, and resolve conflicts to enable refugees to return home.

From 4 July to 11 July 2024, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights expert Radhouane Nouicer visited Port Sudan and warned of a catastrophic human rights situation. Nouicer described the scale of violations as "appalling" and criticized Sudanese authorities for failing to protect civilians, allow unhindered humanitarian access, and ensure accountability. He called for an end to hostilities, urged authorities to avoid indiscriminate attacks, speed up humanitarian aid, and cease arbitrary detentions against

 $<sup>^{120}</sup>$  Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>121</sup> Dabanga Radio, 'Time is running out, We need action now' – UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan," 10 July 2024, <a href="https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/time-is-running-out-we-need-action-now-un-resident-and-humanitarian-coordinator-for-sudan">https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/time-is-running-out-we-need-action-now-un-resident-and-humanitarian-coordinator-for-sudan</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024

 <sup>122</sup> UN, "Step Up Efforts to Protect, Support Refugees on Every Step of Their Journey', Urges Secretary-General in Message for World Day | Meetings Coverage and Press Releases," 14 June 2024, <a href="https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22274.doc.htm">https://press.un.org/en/2024/sgsm22274.doc.htm</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024
 123 Dabanga Radio "Sudan's dire human rights situation: UN expert raises alarm," 14 July 2024,

 $<sup>\</sup>frac{https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudans-dire-human-rights-situation-un-expert-raises-alarm, accessed on 18 September 2024.$ 

<sup>124</sup> Ibid

civil society actors. He reported severe living conditions for displaced communities, inadequate access to essential services and called for an end to hostilities.<sup>125</sup>

On 8 July 2024, reports revealed a surge in SGBV, including rape, against women in Sennar and Singa, 126 the capital of Sennar state. 127 The Sudanese Missing People Committee reported that since the RSF seized Singa, 1,029 people, 128 including 91 children, have gone missing. 129

On 16 August 2024, ACLED recorded over 7,230 political violence events and 20,000 fatalities in Sudan since the SAF and RSF conflict began on 15 April 2023. Between 6 July and 16 August 2024, ACLED noted 420 political violence events and 1,195 fatalities, with Khartoum and North Darfur being the most affected. Despite RSF offensives, SAF maintained control of El Fasher. The conflict resulted in 188 civilian deaths and displaced 429 households, pushing parts of North Darfur, especially Zamzam IDP camp, into famine, affecting 500,000 people. Ongoing clashes since mid-April displaced an additional 150,000 people. 130

On 6 September 2024, the UN Fact-Finding Mission on Sudan released a report highlighting severe and widespread human rights violations and international crimes committed by Sudan's warring parties, including the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF). The report documents large-scale violations such as indiscriminate attacks on civilians, schools, hospitals, and essential infrastructure, alongside targeted violence, including rape, torture, and arbitrary detention. It specifically highlights that the RSF and its allied militias' violations may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity, and ethnic persecution, particularly against the Masalit community in West Darfur. The report calls for the deployment of an independent force to protect civilians, an expanded arms embargo, full cooperation with the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the establishment of an additional international judicial mechanism to ensure accountability and support transitional justice in Sudan.<sup>131</sup>

# Freedom of expression

Since 15 April 2023, the conflict in Sudan has severely impacted freedom of expression. Reports highlight severe impacts of the conflict on the media sector. ASF elements have

<sup>125</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>126</sup> Dabanga Radio "Singa battle leaves hundreds unaccounted for," 12 July 2024, https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-war-singa-battle-leaves-hundreds-unaccounted-for, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>127</sup> Dabanga Radio "Gender-based violence surge in Sudan's Sennar. Dabanga Radio TV Online," 8 July 2024, <a href="https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/siha-reports-sgbv-surge-in-sennar-and-singa">https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/siha-reports-sgbv-surge-in-sennar-and-singa</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

<sup>129</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>130</sup> ACLED, "Drone warfare reaches deeper into Sudan as peace talks stall," 23 August 2024, <a href="https://acleddata.com/2024/08/23/drone-warfare-reaches-deeper-into-sudan-as-peace-talks-stall-august-2024/">https://acleddata.com/2024/08/23/drone-warfare-reaches-deeper-into-sudan-as-peace-talks-stall-august-2024/</a> accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>131</sup> OHCHR," UN Fact-Finding Mission outlines extensive human rights violations, international crimes, urges protection of civilians," <a href="https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/sudan-un-fact-finding-mission-outlines-extensive-human-rights-violations">https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/09/sudan-un-fact-finding-mission-outlines-extensive-human-rights-violations</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>132</sup> Ipi media, "Two journalists killed by paramilitary forces," 7 June 2024, <a href="https://ipi.media/sudan-two-journalists-killed-by-paramilitary-forces/">https://ipi.media/sudan-two-journalists-killed-by-paramilitary-forces/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

committed over 393 documented violations against journalists,  $^{133}$  media outlets, and destroyed 90% of media infrastructure.  $^{134}$ 

On 4 June 2024, RSF forces, raided the home of journalist Muawiya Abdel Razek in Khartoum, killed him and three of his siblings. <sup>135</sup> In a similar incident, the RSF forces assassinated journalist Makawi Mohamed Ahmed the following day. <sup>136</sup>

On 13 June 2024, RSF members assassinated journalist Muawiya Abdel Razzaq and three of his family members at night in their home in the Al-Droshab suburb, north of Khartoum.<sup>137</sup>

On 24 July 2024, RSF members arrested Mr. Alfatih Ali from Krari emergency room in Nyala, South Darfur, and detained him at a former National security building. They accused him of embezzling 100,000 Sudanese Pounds (about \$37,000 USD) allocated by the Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) for aid and suspected him of laundering money for the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SLM-MM) to support the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF). 139

On 8 July 2024, security authorities in Omdurman detained Saleh Mohamed Abdallah, editor-in-chief of El Dawahi online newspaper, interrogated and threatened him for hours before they released him. Abdallah reported that security officers approached him at a café, questioned him, and took him to a building on El Sawra Street. They checked through his phone and accused him of collaborating with political groups. Despite his denial, they warned him of severe consequences if found again.

On 25 August 2024, an armed group kidnapped journalist Alaa El-Din Abu Harba from his home in east Khartoum.<sup>141</sup> The group initially demanded a ransom of 1 million Sudanese pounds (\$365) but now seeks an additional billion pounds.<sup>142</sup>

#### **Tanzania**

#### **General situation**

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>133</sup> Sudan Tribune, "RSF assassinates journalist and family members in Khartoum suburb," 6 June 2024, <a href="https://sudantribune.com/article286619/">https://sudantribune.com/article286619/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>135</sup> Ipi media, "Two journalists killed by paramilitary forces," 7 June 2024, <a href="https://ipi.media/sudan-two-journalists-killed-by-paramilitary-forces/">https://ipi.media/sudan-two-journalists-killed-by-paramilitary-forces/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>137</sup> SudanTribune, "RSF assassinates journalist and family members in Khartoum suburb," 6 June 2024, <a href="https://sudantribune.com/article286619/">https://sudantribune.com/article286619/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>138</sup> ACJPS, "A humanitarian arbitrarily arrested and detained by RSF in Nyala," 31 August 2024, https://www.acjps.org/publications/south-darfur-a-humanitarian-arbitrarily-arrested-and-detained-by-rsf-in-nyala, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>140</sup> Dabanga Radio, "Sudan journalist 'threatened' by security forces in Omdurman," 8 July 2024, <a href="https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-journalist-threatened-by-security-forces-in-omdurman">https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudan-journalist-threatened-by-security-forces-in-omdurman</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>141</sup> SudanTribune, "Sudan journalists union says armed group kidnaps reporter, demands ransom," 26 August 2024, <a href="https://sudantribune.com/article289984/">https://sudantribune.com/article289984/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid

As Tanzania approaches its 2024 local government elections and 2025 general elections, the government continues to restrict freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Authorities frequently arrest and target opposition figures, and social media interruptions persist. Journalists critical of sensitive issues, such as government misconduct, face arrests. Additionally, the Maasai community continues to face challenges and pressures from the government.

#### Freedom of association

On 31 July 2024, reports exposed Tanzania's forced relocation of over 82,000 Indigenous Massai from the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA) to Msomera village, 600 kilometers away. Since 2021, authorities have cut essential services, restricted access to cultural sites and grazing areas, and banned crop cultivation, pressuring the Massai to leave the area under the guise of conservation. Authorities have restricted movement in and out of the NCA, demanded multiple forms of identification, and imposed costly fees on those without proper documents. They have blocked access to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and rangers have harassed and attacked residents, with 13 beatings documented between September 2022 and July 2023. Authorities have intimidated and threatened Massai residents and human rights defenders who oppose the relocation.

On 11 August 2023, Tanzanian police arrested prominent figures of the main opposition party, CHADEMA, including one of its leaders, former presidential candidate Tundu Lissu, over a hundred youth supporters, and five journalists. The police announced a ban, citing concerns that a planned event aimed to "breach the peace" and "cause violence" due to a statement from a CHADEMA youth coordinator referencing recent youth-led protests in neighbouring Kenya. Police also detained 107 CHADEMA members in Iringa. CHADEMA Chairman Freeman Mbowe and John Pambalu, the National Leader of the CHADEMA party's youth wing, Baraza la Vijana Cha Chadema (BAVICHA), were arrested at Songwe Airport while arriving from Dar es Salaam to inquire about the detained members. The whereabouts of many arrested individuals remain unknown, and authorities restrict access to information about the detainees and their charges for Chadema's lawyers. As of 13 August 2024, Tanzanian police have arbitrarily arrested 375 members and supporters of the CHADEMA. Later, senior opposition leaders were

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>143</sup> Amnesty International, "Tanzania: End mass arrests and arbitrary detentions of political opposition,"

 $<sup>12 \</sup> August \ 2024, \\ \underline{https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/, accessed on 18 \ September \ 2024.$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>144</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Tanzania: Indigenous Maasai Being Forcibly Relocated,"

<sup>31</sup> July 2024, <a href="https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/31/tanzania-indigenous-maasai-being-forcibly-relocated">https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/07/31/tanzania-indigenous-maasai-being-forcibly-relocated</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>146</sup> Amnesty International, "End mass arrests and arbitrary detentions of political opposition,"

<sup>25</sup> August 2024, <a href="https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/">https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/08/tanzania-end-mass-arrests-and-arbitrary-detentions-of-political-opposition/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>147</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Tanzanian Arrests Bad Omen for Upcoming Elections," 13 August 2024, <a href="https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/13/tanzanian-arrests-bad-omen-upcoming-elections">https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/13/tanzanian-arrests-bad-omen-upcoming-elections</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid

released on bail after several hours of detention. Tundu Lissu and others were released on bail on 13 August 2024.  $^{149}$ 

On 7 September 2024, unknown assailants abducted Ali Mohamed Kibao, a senior member of CHADEMA from a bus traveling from Dar-es-Salaam to Tanga. Authorities found Kibao's body the following day, with evidence of severe beating and acid burns. The Tanzanian police have launched an inquiry into the case. This incident highlights ongoing abductions and violence against opposition members and follows August's mass arrests of Chadema supporters.

# Freedom of opinion and expression

In May 2024, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranked Tanzania 97 in its annual World Press Freedom Index, a significant leap from 143 in 2023. RSF highlighted that Tanzania now leads East Africa in press freedom. Contrarily, attacks against journalists persist amid increasing attacks on the right to freedom of expression and access to information.

On 13 June 2024, police arrested journalist Dinna Maningo at her Tarime home for "publishing classified intelligence". They confiscated her equipment and forced her to retract her statement. Maningo had reported sexual misconduct allegations against Regional Governor Dr. Yahya Nawanda. After her arrest, authorities detained two more journalists under unclear circumstances. On 20 June 2024, authorities released Dinna Maningo along with her colleagues Samweli Mwanga and Constantine Mathias. 153

On 30 August 2024, Tanzania's Internet Service Providers (ISPs), including Airtel, Vodacom, Halotel, Tigo, and TTCL, blocked access to X (formerly Twitter), preventing users nationwide from accessing the platform. These ISPs also restrict the Image Content Delivery Network (CDN), Mobile API, and Photo/Video Upload. The government ordered this action "to curb communications about a prison break, following police alerts

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>149</sup> France 24, "Leaders of Tanzania's main opposition party released,"

<sup>13</sup> August 2024, <a href="https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20240813-tanzania-opposition-denounces-arrests-of-its-leaders-in-mass-round-up">https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20240813-tanzania-opposition-denounces-arrests-of-its-leaders-in-mass-round-up</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>150</sup> Aljazeera, "Slain Tanzanian opposition figure beaten, doused with acid," 9 September 2024, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/9/9/slain-tanzanian-opposition-figure-beaten-doused-with-acid-party, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>151</sup> RSF, "RSF index," 3 May 2024, <a href="https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024">https://rsf.org/en/index/score-saf?year=2024</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>152</sup> The Coalition of Women In Journalism, "Tanzania: Dinna Maningo Jailed Over Exposé on Regional Governor's Alleged Sexual Assault," 13 June 2024, <a href="https://www.womeninjournalism.org/threats-all/tanzania-dinna-maningo-jailed-over-expos-on-regional-governors-alleged-sexual-assault, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>153</sup> The Chanzo, "Journalist Dinna Maningo released on bail after eight days; two other journalists also freed," 21 June 2024, <a href="https://thechanzo.com/2024/06/21/the-chanzo-morning-briefing-tanzania-news-june-212024/m">https://thechanzo.com/2024/06/21/the-chanzo-morning-briefing-tanzania-news-june-212024/m</a> accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>154</sup> Tech point, "Tanzania reportedly blocks access to X amid political tension,"

 $<sup>30 \</sup> August \ 2024, \\ \underline{https://techpoint.africa/2024/08/30/tanzania-reportedly-blocks-x/}, accessed on \ 18 \ September \ 2024.$ 

about opposition parties planning to raid stations holding political prisoners, and to address concerns over homosexuality and exposure to pornographic content." The situation remains unchanged as X platform continues to be blocked.

#### Uganda

#### **General situation**

In May 2024, the US State Department announced sanctions against five Ugandan public officials, including Speaker of Parliament Anita Among and a former Deputy Chief of Defence Forces. The statement cited Speaker Among's sanction for her significant involvement in corruption associated with her role in Uganda's Parliament.

Uganda continues to face corruption, which undermines socio-economic development, public trust, and obstructs efforts to establish a transparent society. Despite ongoing anti-corruption initiatives, this issue persists and directly impacts government offices, private businesses, and critical sectors such as healthcare, education, infrastructure, and law enforcement. Critics and individuals critical of corruption face threats and intimidation.

In July 2024, Uganda experienced anti-corruption protests inspired by youth-led demonstrations in Kenya. Protesters demanded the resignation of Speaker Anita Among, a reduction in salaries of members of parliament (MPs), and an end to corruption and misuse of public funds. The government responded with violence and used force to suppress dissent. Prior to the start of the protests, President Museveni threatened protesters and warned that they were "playing with fire." <sup>158</sup>

On 16 July 2024, the President signed into law the NGO Act 2024, following the dissolution of the NGO Bureau in April 2024 and the reversion of its functions to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. This amendment mainstreams the Bureau as a department under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, as part of the government's policy to rationalize various entities. The new law replaces the NGO Board with a Bureau, returning the mandate of overseeing NGO operations to the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

#### Freedom of association

In June 2024, 30 activists were arrested for opposing the EACOP, a major infrastructure project aimed at transporting crude oil from Uganda's oil fields near Lake Albert to the

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

<sup>156</sup> The EastAfrican, "US imposes entry ban on Uganda Speaker, army chief, ministers,"

<sup>30</sup> May 2024, <a href="https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/us-imposes-entry-ban-on-uganda-speaker-army-chief-ministers-4641462">https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/us-imposes-entry-ban-on-uganda-speaker-army-chief-ministers-4641462</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>157</sup> Nile post, "Uganda's Ongoing Battle Against Corruption," 19 March 2024, <a href="https://nilepost.co.ug/special-reports/192428/uganda's-ongoing-battle-against-corruption:-challenges,-progress,-and-the-path-forward, accessed on 18 September 2024.">https://nilepost.co.ug/special-reports/192428/uganda's-ongoing-battle-against-corruption:-challenges,-progress,-and-the-path-forward, accessed on 18 September 2024.</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>158</sup> CNN, "Uganda's President Museveni warns citizens they are 'playing with fire' over planned protests," 22 July 2024, <a href="https://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/22/africa/uganda-anti-corruption-protest-intl/index.html">https://edition.cnn.com/2024/07/22/africa/uganda-anti-corruption-protest-intl/index.html</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

Tanzanian port of Tanga for export.<sup>159</sup> Between 27 May and 5 June, 11 environmental HRDs, including Adriko Sostein, Julius Tumwiine, and Ezama Chirilo, were arbitrarily arrested and detained while advocating against oil development projects. On 1 June, the Resident District Commissioner summoned these defenders. He issued intimidating remarks, pressured them to write a letter of apology in which they renounced activism, and subsequently arrested them on 2 June.

On 4 June 2024, plainclothes military officers arrested Stephen Kwikiriza, an environmental defender who documents human rights impacts of the Kingfisher project one of Uganda's key oil and gas projects and the EACOP. On 10 June 2024, authorities released him from detention in poor condition after he endured severe beatings, mistreatment, and abuse throughout the week.

In June 2024, police for unknown reasons arrested Mr. Adriko Sostein, an environmental HRD, for one day before releasing him on bond. In a similar incident, police also harassed Mr. Julius Tumwiine and Mr. Ezama Chirilo, both HRDs, and surrounded Tumwiine's house while he was away. Ezama voluntarily reported to the police and secured police bond. Prior to this, the Resident District Commissioner summoned the three defenders after they held a peaceful protest and delivered a petition to Daqing Oil Construction, demanding respect for local communities' human rights and an end to oil extraction activities. 164

On 22 July 2024, Ugandan security forces surrounded the National Unity Platform (NUP) headquarters and blocked access to the offices near Kampala ahead of the anti-corruption protests. NUP leader Robert Kyagulanyi, also known as Bobi Wine, reported that security forces violently arrested several opposition leaders and detained others. 166

On 22 August 2024, eight victims of police brutality sued the Ugandan government and ten police officers for human rights violations, citing illegal arrests and detentions. These victims are among the 192 HRDs including youth, students, civil society groups,

<sup>159</sup> Monitor, "30 arrested at Chinese Embassy," 26 June 2024,

https://www.monitor.co.ug/uganda/news/national/anti-eacop-30-arrested-at-chinese-embassy-4670378, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>160</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Environmental Defender Detained,"

<sup>7</sup> June 2024, <a href="https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/06/07/uganda-environmental-defender-detained">https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/06/07/uganda-environmental-defender-detained</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>161</sup> Aljazeera, "Detained Uganda anti-pipeline activist released.," 10 June 2024,

https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/6/10/detained-uganda-anti-pipeline-activist-released, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>162</sup> FIDH, "Alarming crackdown on environment and human rights defenders" 7 June 2024, <a href="https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/uganda-alarming-crackdown-on-environment-and-human-rights-defenders">https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/uganda-alarming-crackdown-on-environment-and-human-rights-defenders</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>165</sup> Aljazeera, 22 July 2024, <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/22/security-forces-lock-down-ugandan-oppositions-hq-ahead-of">https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/22/security-forces-lock-down-ugandan-oppositions-hq-ahead-of</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>166</sup> Aljazeera, "Security forces lock down Ugandan opposition's HQ ahead of protest," 22 July 2024, <a href="https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/22/security-forces-lock-down-ugandan-oppositions-hq-ahead-of">https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/22/security-forces-lock-down-ugandan-oppositions-hq-ahead-of</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>167</sup> Nile post, "Activists sue governmentt over human rights violations,"

 $<sup>17 \</sup> July\ 2024, \\ \underline{https://nilepost.co.ug/news/207823/activists-sue-govt-over-human-rights-violations}, \\ accessed on\ 18 \ September\ 2024.$ 

and oil-affected communities who have faced ongoing violations while campaigning for human and environmental rights. The victims seek a court declaration of these abuses and a permanent order to prevent further police and government interference in their activities.

On 3 September 2024, a statement revealed that since May 2024, authorities have arrested at least 81 environmental rights defenders and activists protesting large-scale oil projects in Uganda. In August 2024 alone, police arbitrarily arrested and detained 72 HRDs and local community members during protests in opposition to these projects. The repression has intensified as projects like the EACOP, Kingfisher, and Tilenga, led by TotalEnergies and CNOOC, advance in the region. In Inc.

In September 2024, police hit NUP leader Robert Kyagulanyi with a tear-gas canister while he visited his lawyers in Bulindo, Kampala. Despite reports from officers that Kyagulanyi stumbled while getting into his vehicle, X-ray results later showed tear-gas canister fragments in his leg. Police had attempted to block the opposition leader from marching down a road, which led to an altercation where Kyagulanyi was injured.<sup>171</sup>

# Freedom of peaceful assembly

On 27 May 2024, authorities arrested seven Ugandans while attempting to deliver a petition outlining the adverse effects of the oil project, including land loss, environmental degradation, and violations of human and community rights.<sup>172</sup>

On 17 July 2024, police injured four journalists with teargas canisters while dispersing a protest on National Environmental Authority (NEMA) evictions. <sup>173</sup> Joseph Balikuddembe from 89.2 CBS FM, Tonny Ngambo from 88.8 CBS FM, Ali Mubiru from Pearl FM, and Victoria Bagaya from NBS TV sustained serious injuries. The police intervened to stop a meeting organised by local leaders, including MPs and the Kampala Lord Mayor, who sought to inform residents about their rights regarding NEMA's evictions.

On 23 July 2024, police in Kampala detained at least 45 anti-corruption protesters. The police charged them with "common nuisance," alleging that their actions were likely to breach the peace. Among those arrested was NTV and KFM Radio presenter Faiza

<sup>169</sup> FIDH, "Crackdown on activists protesting against large-scale oil projects," 3 September 2024, <a href="https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/uganda/uganda-crackdown-on-activists-protesting-against-large-scale-oil">https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/uganda/uganda-crackdown-on-activists-protesting-against-large-scale-oil</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>170</sup> FIDH, "Companies must take action to respect rights of communities at risk in East Africa's oil frontier," 10 September 2024, <a href="https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/uganda/companies-must-take-action-to-respect-rights-of-communities-at-risk">https://www.fidh.org/en/region/Africa/uganda/companies-must-take-action-to-respect-rights-of-communities-at-risk</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>171</sup> BBC, "Uganda's Bobi Wine recovering from police assault – party,"

<sup>4</sup> September 2024, <a href="https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1epyzlngn0o">https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c1epyzlngn0o</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024. 

172Twitter, "Genocide Prevention In Ethiopia," 30 May 2024,

https://twitter.com/GPEthiopia/status/1796615636690371074, accessed on 18 September 2024. 173 HRNJ, Press Freedom report 2022,

 $<sup>\</sup>frac{https://hrnjuganda.org/?p=9991\#:\sim:text=The\%20injured\%20journalists\%20are\%20Joseph, Gardens\%200n\%20July\%2017\%2C\%202024, accessed on 18 September 2024.$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>174</sup> NTV, "Protesters demonstrating against corruption bailed, 29 July 2024,

Salima, also known as Faiza Fabz, who was sent to Luzira prison for participating in the "march to Parliament" protests. On 25 July 2024, 42 protesters appeared in court, faced with charges of "common nuisance." All pleaded not guilty and were instructed to return to court between 30 July and 6 August. On 29 July 2024, the Chief Magistrate's Court granted cash bail of UGX 100,000 to each of 10 suspects arrested during the protests, with a return date set for 29 August 2024, for the hearing of their case. On 30 July 2024, trial magistrate Rita Kadisa Neumbe granted bail to four additional protesters Thomas Kanzira, Faiza Salima, Bernard Olupot, and Hamala Edgar. The court now charges the five, including Aljab Musinguzi, with public nuisance after they dismissed the idle and disorderly count.

On 5 August 2024, Ugandan police arrested 14 opposition officials and supporters, including two lawmakers, during a protest in Kampala against Kenya's deportation of 36 Ugandan members of the opposition Forum for Democratic Change (FDC).<sup>177</sup> The FDC members had traveled to Kenya for training but faced deportation and were charged with terrorism-related offenses upon their return to Uganda. The arrested protesters in Kampala received charges of "unlawful assembly" and "public nuisance." Four of the arrested individuals were released on bail, while the remaining protesters remained in custody, with a scheduled court appearance set for 7 August 2024.<sup>178</sup>

# Freedom of opinion and expression

On 12 May 2024, three men armed with sticks and machetes assaulted freelance reporter Kyarisiima while she covered a public meeting on a land dispute. The attackers demanded her bag, which contained her laptop and 500,000 shillings (US\$132), slapped her, and struck her arm with a stick. Kyarisiima said she felt pain but did not sustain injuries that required medical attention.

On 22 May 2024, private bodyguards of opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi Ssentamu assaulted\_three journalists during their coverage of a businessman's funeral in Lwengo. They slapped, punched, and pushed Radio Simba reporter Margret Kayondo to the ground. Next Media Services reporter Zainab Namusaazi was punched, and

https://www.ntv.co.ug/ug/news/national/protesters-demonstrating-against-corruption-bailed-4706384, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>176</sup> Nile post, "Four more anti-graft protesters granted bail." 30 July 2024,

https://www.nilepost.co.ug/news/209673/four-more-anti-graft-protesters-granted-bail, accessed on 18 September 2024.

https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-charges-opposition-lawmakers-supporters-over-protest-2024-08-05/, accessed on 18 September 2024.

 $\underline{https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-charges-opposition-lawmakers-supporters-over-protest-2024-08-05/, accessed on 18 September 2024.}$ 

14 May 2024, <a href="https://cpj.org/2024/05/ugandan-journalist-juliet-kyarisiima-beaten-and-robbed-while-covering-land-dispute/">https://cpj.org/2024/05/ugandan-journalist-juliet-kyarisiima-beaten-and-robbed-while-covering-land-dispute/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

 $22\ May\ 2024,\ \underline{https://cpj.org/2024/05/ugandan-opposition-leaders-bodyguards-assault-harass-three-\underline{journalists}\text{/,}\ accessed\ on\ 18\ September\ 2024.$ 

<sup>175</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Reuters, "Uganda charges opposition lawmakers, supporters over protest," 5 August 2024,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>178</sup> Reuters, "Uganda charges opposition lawmakers, supporters over protest," 5 August 2024,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>179</sup> CPJ, "Ugandan journalist Juliet Kyarisiima beaten and robbed while covering land dispute,"

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>180</sup> CPJ, "Ugandan opposition leader's bodyguards assault, harass three journalists,"

bodyguard Achileo Kivumbi broke her camera. Security head Edward Ssebuwufu seized Nation Media Group reporter Gertrude Mutyaba's camera but later returned it.

On 18 June 2024, Ugandan authorities arrested GrapeVine journalists Dickson Mubiru and Alirabaki Sengooba and charged them with publishing information without a broadcasting license, a regulation intended for radio and television. The authorities linked their arrest to investigative reports on a judicial conflict and an article exposing parliamentary corruption. On 20 June 2024, the Buganda Road Chief Magistrates Court charged them with publishing information without a broadcasting license. On 9 July 2024, the court granted both journalists a 1 million shillings cash bail and released them. 182

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>181</sup> CPJ "Authorities detain 2 Ugandan journalists on charges of publishing without license," 27 June 2024, <a href="https://cpj.org/2024/06/authorities-detain-2-ugandan-journalists-on-charges-of-publishing-without-license/">https://cpj.org/2024/06/authorities-detain-2-ugandan-journalists-on-charges-of-publishing-without-license/</a>, accessed on 18 September 2024.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>182</sup> Nile post, "Journalists released on bail after nearly a month in jail," 11 July 2024, https://nilepost.co.ug/justice-law-and-order/207174/journalists-released-on-bail-after-nearly-a-month-in-jail, accessed on 18 September 2024