

**81st Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
Statement Item 3: Statement on the Human Rights Situation in Africa
Observer Status No. 359**

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

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

Nowhere is this stark reality more evident than in **Sudan**, where the ongoing crisis tragically goes unnoticed. Sudanese asylum seekers face exorbitant visa costs in neighbouring countries like Ethiopia merely to escape the violence—not to seek better lives, but to survive.

Nations like **Egypt, which once opened its doors, have now introduced visa restrictions** that send a harrowing message: **African lives are expendable**. The crisis in **Sudan**, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burkina Faso remains largely ignored. We urgently demand an immediate response to this humanitarian crisis and reaffirm our need to protect those fleeing violence.

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

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

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

Uganda faces the dual challenge of climate change and its disproportionate impact on women and children. There are pressing appeals for stronger legal protections for women's land rights and a human rights-based approach to carbon trade regulations to combat food insecurity.

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

Since July 25, 2021, **Tunisia's** democratic institutions have faced significant erosion, resulting in a troubling decline in human rights. Key concerns include irregularities in the presidential election process due to the absence of an independent judiciary, which undermines electoral credibility.

Additionally, political prisoners, including opposition leaders and journalists, are subjected to unfair trials and prolonged detention based on vague charges.

Finally, **Tunisia's** treatment of migrants from sub-Saharan Africa raises human rights concerns, including arbitrary detention and discrimination. As we see now, 3 HRDs who have worked on migrant issues have been in detention for the past six months on charges of aiding sub-Saharan migrants.

We call on the immediate release of our comrades!

Hon. Chairperson,

In Burkina Faso, civilians are trapped in a cycle of violence between armed groups and military forces, leading to instability and displacement. The decision to withdraw from ECOWAS raises concerns over accountability and human rights protection in the region. There is an urgent need for holistic solutions that prioritise the protection of civilians and empower youth and women during these challenging times.

We call on the African Commission, in collaboration with the African Union Peace and Security Council, to monitor the current situation of systematic human rights violations, which could constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity, and request the African Commission, within the framework of the Addis Ababa Roadmap, to set up a special mechanism on Burkina Faso in collaboration with the United Nations Human Rights Council,

Honourable Chairperson,

We stand at a critical juncture. The promises of freedom, justice, and dignity—cherished by our forefathers—are under siege. We must unite in defence of Africa’s human rights. We cannot overlook the reality that freedom of assembly is being crushed by state violence, freedom of expression suffocated by censorship, and digital rights weaponised against those fighting for justice.

We appreciate the Zimbabwean government's willingness to engage with civil society regarding the Private Voluntary Organisations Bill. However, we urge the President of Zimbabwe to consider the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights Guidelines on Freedom of Association and Assembly, adopted in Niamey in 2014, and the concerns and recommendations made by civil society organisations. Any law or regulation should create an enabling environment for civic engagement and not restrict civic space.

Thank you