HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA

REVIEW OF 2019

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Cover photo:
Sudanese soldiers stand guard on armoured military vehicles as demonstrators continue their rally against the regime near the army headquarters in the Sudanese capital Khartoum on April 11, 2019. - The Sudanese army is planning to make "an important announcement", state media said today, after months of protests demanding the resignation of longtime leader President Omar al-Bashir. Thousands of Khartoum residents chanted "the regime has fallen" as they flooded the area around army headquarters where protesters have held an unprecedented sit-in now in its sixth day. © AFP/Getty Images

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REGIONAL OVERVIEW

As the deadline closed in for regional political commitments to "Silencing the Guns" by 2020, intractable armed conflicts continued, and new forms of violence by non-state actors led to widespread killings, torture, abductions, sexual violence and mass displacements, including crimes under international law, in several sub-Saharan African countries.

Protracted conflicts in the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan and South Sudan continued to simmer, with indiscriminate and targeted attacks on civilians. Armed groups in Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere committed abuses, including killings and abductions, which caused mass displacements. State security forces often replied with serious human rights violations such as extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances and torture.

These conflicts and insecurity – together with new forms of communal violence that emerged in countries like Ethiopia – were brutal reminders that Africa is a long way from breaking its deadly cycle of armed conflicts and violence.

Often what have been silenced are not the guns – but justice and accountability for crimes and other serious human rights violations. From Nigeria to South Sudan, countless victims of serious crimes and abuses did not see justice and reparations.

The year was also marked by widespread repression of dissent – including crackdowns on peaceful protests, and attacks on media, human rights defenders and political opponents. In over 20 countries, people were denied their right to peaceful protest, including through unlawful bans, use of excessive force, harassment and arbitrary arrests.

In two thirds of the countries monitored, governments heavily restricted freedom of expression – with some particularly clamping down on journalists, bloggers, civil society groups, and political opponents, including in the context of elections.

These violations unfolded in a context of failures to protect and fulfil economic, social and cultural rights. Forced evictions without compensation continued in countries including Eswatini, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Large-scale commercial

Malian army soldiers patrol the area next to the river of Djenne in central Mali on February 28, 2020. - A week earlier Mali's Prime Minister announced the dismantling of the security checkpoints organized by the traditional militia hunters Dan Na Ambassagou from Dogon country. © MICHELE CATTANI/AFP via Getty Images

land acquisitions impacted livelihoods of thousands in Angola. Access to health care and education – already dire across the continent – was further exacerbated by conflicts in some counties including Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Mali.

Yet across Africa, ordinary people, activists and human rights defenders took to the streets. From Khartoum to Harare and from Kinshasa to Conakry, peaceful protesters braved bullets and beatings to defend the rights that their leaders would not. And sometimes, the consequences were game changing – major transformations in political systems and opening space for profound institutional reforms, such as in Sudan and Ethiopia.

ARMED CONFLICT AND VIOLENCE

Africa is still home to some of the world's most intractable conflicts, and armed conflicts were ongoing including in CAR, DRC, Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. In these and countries like in Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia and Mozambique, attacks by armed groups and communal violence led to deaths, displacements and injuries. Responses by state security forces were marked by widespread human rights violations and crimes under international law.

INDISCRIMINATE AND TARGETED ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS

In Darfur, Sudanese government forces and allied militias carried out unlawful killings, sexual violence, systematic looting, and forced displacements. The destruction of at least 45 villages in Jebel Marra continued into February, and by May over 10,000 people had been forced to flee.

In South Sudan, civilians were killed in sporadic clashes between government and armed forces. Parties to the conflict obstructed humanitarian access, increasing numbers of children were recruited as child soldiers, and conflict-related sexual violence was pervasive – including rape, gang rape and sexual mutilation.

In Somalia, escalating and indiscriminate use of drones and manned aircraft by the US military's Africa Command (US AFRICOM) to carry out attacks continued to cause civilian deaths and causalities. A record of over 60 airstrikes resulted in at least three civilian deaths, bringing the number of civilians killed by such attacks to at least 17 in the last two years.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS, COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND UNLAWFUL STATE RESPONSES

Armed groups continued their brutal attacks, perpetuating a catalogue of abuses and crimes in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR, DRC, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere. Some attacks constituted serious abuses of international humanitarian laws. Often, the response of security forces and their allies also involved serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights laws.

In Somalia, the UN recorded over 1,150 civilian casualties by mid-November. Al-Shabaab was responsible for most of these targeted attacks – including a truck bombing in December, which killed nearly 100 people in Mogadishu. Military operations against Al-Shabaab by Somali and allied forces also resulted in dozens of civilian deaths and injuries, often due to indiscriminate attacks.

In Cameroon's north-west and south-west regions, Anglophone armed separatist groups continued to commit abuses including killings, mutilations and abductions. The military responded disproportionately, committing extrajudicial executions and burning homes.

Security deteriorated significantly in the centre of Mali, with widespread killings of civilians by armed groups and self-proclaimed 'self-defence groups'. In response, Malian security forces committed multiple violations including extrajudicial executions and torture.

In Ethiopia, the response of security forces to a surge in communal violence that killed hundreds often involved excessive use of force. For example, in January the Ethiopian Defence Forces

Two people walk among the burning rubbles in the Koudoukou market, in the PK5 district in Bangui on December 26, 2019, after clashes erupted between traders and armed groups. © FLORENT VERGNES / AFP

killed at least nine people, including three children, during operations to contain ethnic violence in the Amhara Region. The army promised an investigation, but its findings had not been made public by the year's end.

FAILURE TO PROTECT CIVILIANS FROM ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Many states as well as international peacekeepers also failed in their obligation to protect civilians from war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed by armed groups – including killings, torture, abductions and mass displacements.

In eastern DRC, local police and nearby UN peacekeepers stayed in their camps while armed groups killed at least 70 civilians in Beni during November.

In Nigeria, security forces failed to protect civilians in the northeast as Boko Haram carried out over 30 attacks resulting in at least 378 civilian deaths and the displacement of thousands of people. Residents of some attacked towns and villages reported that Nigerian security forces had withdrawn their protection shortly before the attacks.

In Cameroon's Far north region, civilians protested against the lack of state protection and their feeling of abandonment amidst Boko Haram's surge in attacks during which at least 275 people were killed and others mutilated or kidnapped.

IMPUNITY

A major reason for the persistent cycle of armed conflicts and violence in so many countries was the continuing failure to properly investigate and hold perpetrators to account for gross violations and abuses, including crimes under international law. Despite limited progress in some countries, concrete steps to provide justice to victims were generally lacking.

In South Sudan, perpetrators of serious violations committed during the armed conflict continued to enjoy impunity, and the government continued to block the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan – an African Union-led judicial mechanism intended to address the legacy of violence and provide justice to the conflict's victims.

In Sudan, the perpetrators of over 16 years of serious violations in Darfur – including war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide – were still not brought to justice.

As in previous years, there were no genuine steps taken by Nigeria's government to deliver justice to countless victims of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the northeast by Boko Haram and its own security forces.

Mali's president promulgated a 'national reconciliation' law that the UN Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali said could "prevent many victims of serious violations from exercising their rights to fair and equitable justice, to obtain reparation and to know the truth about the violations committed in the past". Despite numerous violations and abuses committed since 2012, there have been few trials and fewer convictions.

There was also widespread impunity surrounding abuses committed by non-state actors, as well as violations by state actors – including crackdowns on protesters, torture and other attacks on human rights defenders, civil society activists, minorities, refugees and migrants.

In Sudan, despite sustained and brutal attacks by the security forces against peaceful protesters – in which 177 people were killed, and hundreds more injured – only one case was brought for trial. In October, Sudan's new transitional government set up an independent committee to investigate the most serious violations carried out in Khartoum on 3 June. However, although the committee was expected to publish its report and findings within three months, the deadline was extended.

In Ethiopia, the government has yet to conduct thorough and impartial investigations into abuses by non-state actors and security forces – including the killing of protesters and numerous allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in prisons.

Limited signs of progress included CAR's ordinary courts examining some cases of abuses by armed groups, while the Special Criminal Court (SCC) received 27 complaints and started investigations. However, the SCC has yet to issue any arrest warrant or start trials. Additionally, the February peace agreement between the government and 14 armed groups led to the appointment of alleged perpetrators within the new government, and impunity persisted.

There was a similarly mixed picture in DRC. Military courts heard some rape cases committed in the context of conflict but failed to bring to account most high-ranking civilian officials and military officers suspected of committing or sponsoring crimes under international law. Several politicians and senior officers suspected of violations were retained in or were appointed to senior positions in state institutions.

INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT

There were developments at the International Criminal Court (ICC) regarding CAR, Côte d'Ivoire, DRC and Mali, but little progress on situations in Guinea, Nigeria and Sudan.

The year started with the Trial Chamber's acquittal of former Côte d'Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo and his former aide Charles Blé Goudé from all charges of crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Côte d'Ivoire in 2010 and 2011. The Prosecutor appealed that decision.

In December, a report from the ICC's Office of the Prosecutor confirmed again that the Nigerian government was failing to take meaningful steps to deliver justice for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Boko Haram and its own security forces during the conflict

in northeast Nigeria. However, the Office of the Prosecutor did not determine whether to open an investigation, close to 10 years after opening a preliminary examination. It nonetheless gave indication that this determination will be made in 2020.

In Sudan, former head of state Omar al-Bashir was removed from power in April, but the authorities failed to surrender him and three other suspects to the ICC under arrest warrants for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur.

There was progress in proceedings regarding CAR. In January, Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, leader of an anti-balaka militia group, was transferred to the ICC for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in 2013 and 2014. In February, the case was joined to another against Alfred Yekatom, also head of an anti-balaka armed group. In December, charges against them were partly confirmed and the case was sent to trial.

In September, the ICC confirmed the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud, former chief of Islamic police in the Malian city of Timbuktu.

In November, the ICC sentenced Bosco Ntaganda, former military chief of staff of a militia group operating in eastern DRC, to 30 years' imprisonment. In July, he had been found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

CRACKDOWN ON PROTEST

In over 20 countries, people were denied their right to peaceful protest – including through unlawful bans, use of excessive force, harassment and arbitrary arrests.

Use of excessive force and other abuses to disperse peaceful protests resulted in deaths, injuries and unlawful arrests in several countries.

In Sudan, thousands of peaceful protesters brought an end to decades of repression under President Omar al-Bashir in April and revived hopes for respect for human rights. But this came at a terrible price. At least 177 people were killed and hundreds more injured when security forces used live ammunition, tear gas, beatings and arbitrary arrests to break up mass peaceful protests in Khartoum and elsewhere.

Zimbabwean security forces unleashed a violent crackdown against people protesting fuel price hikes in January – shooting dead at least 15, wounding 78 more and arbitrarily arresting over 1,000.

Guinea's security forces continued to fuel violence during demonstrations by resorting to excessive use for force. At least 17 people died (including at

Angolan police severely beating an unarmed peaceful protestor on October 15 in Luanda. © LUSA

least 11 people in October and three in November) during demonstrations against a constitutional revision that could allow President Alpha Condé to run for a third term.

Between April and June in Benin, security forces killed at least four protesters and bystanders.

In Angola, police and security forces violently broke up protests calling for the independence of the Cabinda province in January and December and made scores of arbitrary arrests. In Chad, 13 protesters were beaten and arrested in April during a peaceful protest against shortages of butane gas. DRC's police used excessive force to disperse at least 35 peaceful demonstrations – injuring at least 90 people and arbitrarily arresting scores. In South Sudan, protesters in Juba were prevented from participating in a peaceful demonstration in May after the government deployed the military, conducted house-to-house searches, and threatened protesters.

Elsewhere, governments used administrative and other measures to impose unlawful restrictions and bans on peaceful protests. For much of the year, Nigerian police authorities banned peaceful assembly in several states and restricted access to a popular rallying point for most protests in the capital city of Abuja.

In Senegal, restrictive legislation on the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly was used, including a 2011 decree banning assemblies in the centre of Dakar. In Tanzania and Togo, amendments to existing laws ushered in more wide-ranging restrictions on freedom of association and peaceful assembly. In Guinea, the authorities banned over 20 protests on vague, overly broad grounds.

Crackdowns on protests were particularly common before, during and after elections. In January, Cameroonian authorities violently disrupted peaceful protests against the 2018 re-election of President Paul Biya and arbitrarily arrested nearly 300 protesters, including the leader of the opposition Movement for the Renaissance of Cameroon. In the run-up to April parliamentary elections in Benin, authorities introduced a blanket ban on demonstrations and arrested scores of opposition activists.

In the days following Mauritania's June presidential elections, political activists were arbitrarily arrested, and demonstrations by opposition groups contesting the election results were banned. In Guinea, over 60 members of the pro-democracy movement National Front for the Defence of the Constitution suffered arbitrary arrests. In Mozambique's October elections, 18 election monitors were arrested and placed in extended incommunicado detention.

ATTACKS ON HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS

Widespread repression of dissent also manifested itself through attacks on human rights defenders, activists and civil society organizations.

In Equatorial Guinea, harassment, intimidation and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and activists continued. Alfredo Okenve, vice-president of the Centre for Development Studies and Initiatives (CEID) – one of the country's few independent human rights NGOs – was arrested, and the CEID's authorization was revoked by decree.

In Zimbabwe, at least 22 human rights defenders, activists, civil society and opposition leaders were charged by police for their suspected roles in organizing peaceful fuel price protests in January, while others fled the country. Those arrested included local pastor and activist Evan Mawarire, as well as Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) Secretary General Japhet Moyo and ZCTU President Peter Mutasa.

Burundi's authorities continued to crack down on human rights defenders, activists and civil society organizations. The government suspended civil society organization PARCEM, and a court upheld the conviction and 32-year prison sentence against human rights defender Germain Rukuki.
After a sham trial in June, a South Sudanese court handed prison sentences to six men, including academic and activist Peter Biar Ajak.

In Mauritania, anti-slavery activist Ahmedou Ould Wediaa was arbitrarily arrested during a police raid at his home following his criticism of the authorities' response to election-related protests. In Nigeria, journalists and/or human rights defenders Omoyele Sowore, Olawale Bakare and Agba Jalingo were arbitrary arrested and detained on politically motivated charges.

In a positive development, authorities in DRC announced in March that over 700 hundred people had been released from prison, and all unofficial detention centres operated by the National Intelligence Agency had been closed, on the president's orders. Those freed included several prisoners of conscience and others held in prolonged arbitrary detention.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND SHRINKING POLITICAL SPACE

EMERGING REGRESSIVE LAWS

Some governments moved to introduce new laws to restrict the activities of human rights defenders, journalists and opponents.

Côte d'Ivoire in June adopted a new Criminal Code that threatened to further undermine the right to freedom of expression. It included crimes of offending the head of state and "publishing data which may undermine public order".

In the same month, Burkina Faso amended its Criminal Code by introducing overly broad offences that could be used to restrict access to information and clamp down on human rights defenders, activists, journalists and bloggers.

Guinea in July adopted the Prevention

and Repression of Terrorism law that contains overly broad provisions that could be used to criminalize the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression.

In December, the Nigerian National Assembly began considering two bills that would severely restrict the right to freedom of expression online, including one proposing the death penalty for 'hate speech'. These bills would give the authorities arbitrary powers to shut down internet access, limit social media access and make criticizing the government punishable by up to three years in prison.

MEDIA FREEDOM

In at least 25 countries – more than two thirds of those monitored – media freedom was curtailed and journalists faced criminalization.

The situation in Somalia was particularly severe. Journalists were routinely beaten, threatened and subjected to arbitrary arrests by security forces in south central Somalia and in Puntland. Armed group Al-Shabaab killed two journalists and targeted others with violence, intimidation and threats. Journalists also had their Facebook accounts closed, media outlets were bribed to self-censor, and at least eight journalists fled into exile due to threats against their lives.

In 17 other countries, journalists were arbitrarily arrested and detained. In Nigeria, Amnesty International documented 19 cases of assault, arbitrary arrests, and detention of journalists, with many facing trumped-up charges. In South Sudan, at least 16 media workers were detained, and journalists harassed, including two female journalists who were assaulted during a meeting addressed by President Salva Kiir.

Mozambican journalist Amade Abubacar was arrested and held for months in pre-trial detention. In Tanzania, investigative journalist Erick Kabendera and two other journalists were arbitrarily arrested on fabricated charges. Four journalists and their driver were arrested in Burundi as they travelled to investigate reports of clashes between an armed group and state security forces.

In Sierra Leone, public officials continued to use the Public Order Act to silence journalists, activists and others.

Government media closures and suspensions were also common. In January, the DRC government shut down several media outlets in an attempt to stop the publication of unofficial election results and to stem widespread protests over allegations of massive election fraud. In May, the Uganda Communications Commission ordered the suspension of staff at 13 independent radio and TV stations following their coverage of the arbitrary arrest of musician and opposition politician Bobi Wine. Media outlets were also closed down in Ghana, Togo, Tanzania and Zambia.

With independent news and opposition opinion increasingly forced to migrate online, so too did government restrictions. Internet shutdowns were ordered in Zimbabwe during the January fuel protests, and in Benin, DRC and Mauritania during and after elections. In July, Chad's president announced he had asked the relevant internet service providers to lift restrictions on social media networks. The authorities had previously denied being the cause of the blockages implemented since 2018.

Mourners stand beside the grave of slain Ghanaian investigative journalist Ahmed Husein Suale during his funeral in Accra, on January 18, 2019. - The 34-year-old reporter was gunned down as he returned to his home in the Madina area of the capital, Accra, in the night of January 16, in a killing that sparked outrage. Husein was part of an investigative team that lifted the lid on graft in the sport last year, which led to the sanction of a string of top officials, coaches and referees. © RUTH MCDOWALL/AFP via Getty Images

REFUGEES, MIGRANTS AND DISPLACED PEOPLE

Protracted conflicts – along with recurring humanitarian crises and persistent human rights violations – forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee their homes in search of protection.

In Somalia, over 300,000 people were internally displaced because of conflict, droughts and floods, and barriers to accessing humanitarian aid. Other internal displacements included 700,000 people in Cameroon's north-west and south-west regions due to insecurity and more than 270,000 in the Far north due to Boko Haram attacks. There were similar patterns of internal displacements elsewhere: 600,000 in CAR; over half a million in Burkina Faso; more than 222,000 in Chad; and more than 200,000 in Mali.

Refugees and migrants fleeing to neighbouring countries sometimes faced abuses, violations and forced repatriation.

Rwanda hosted around 150,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily from Burundi and DRC. By the year's end, no one had been brought to justice for three incidents in 2018 in which Rwandan security forces opened fire on protesting refugees – causing the deaths of at least 11 Congolese refugees and scores of injuries.

Tanzania's government continued to pressure over 160,000 Burundian refugees and asylum-seekers into returning to Burundi, despite that country's ongoing serious violations against real or perceived opposition supporters, including returning refugees. Pressure increased in August when the government signed a bilateral agreement with Burundi to return refugees "whether voluntarily or not".

South Africa's failing asylum management system left hundreds of thousands of applicants without proper documentation. There was a 96% rejection rate of asylum applications and a backlog of an estimated 190,000 appeals and reviews. Xenophobic violence in August and September resulted in the killing of at least 12 people, comprised of locals and foreigners, partly driven by years of impunity for past attacks.

DISCRIMINATION AND MARGINALIZATION

Discrimination, marginalization and violence against women and girls – often arising from cultural traditions and institutionalized by unjust laws – continued in several countries.

Women and girls were subjected to rape and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence in many countries, including Burundi, Cameroon, CAR, DRC, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, South Africa, South Sudan and Sudan.

Some limited progress was made in Sierra Leone with passage of a new law providing that all sexual-offence cases would now proceed directly to the High Court.

Pregnant girls continued to be excluded from schools, including in Equatorial Guinea, Sierra Leone and Tanzania. There was a glimmer of hope when a December ruling by the Economic Community of West African States' (ECOWAS) Court of Justice rejected Sierra Leone's 2015 ban on pregnant girls from sitting exams and attending mainstream school as amounting to discrimination.

There were some advances to protect women and girls from discrimination. In November, Sudan's transitional government repealed restrictive public order laws governing women's presence in public spaces. Ghana introduced an Affirmative Action Bill seeking a 50% representation of women in public positions of power; however, despite strong advocacy from local women's rights groups, this had not passed into law by the year's end.

PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

Superstitions about the magical powers of people with albinism continued to fuel attacks on them. In Malawi, a 60-year-old man was mutilated and murdered in front of his 9-year-old son in January. A 14-year-old boy was abducted in February and remained missing.

In July, the Parliamentary Forum of the Southern African Development Community adopted a motion condemning attacks, abductions, killings and discrimination against people with albinism across the region.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people faced discrimination, prosecution, harassment and violence including in Angola, Eswatini, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Uganda.

In Nigeria, there were widespread arrests of gay, lesbian and bisexual people, and in December, 47 men went on trial in Lagos charged with public displays of affection with members of the same sex.

In Senegal, at least 11 people were arrested on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Nine of them were sentenced to between six months and five years' imprisonment. In Uganda, police arrested 16 LGBTI activists in October and subjected them to forced anal examinations. In Tanzania, six health centres working to support the rights of LGBTI people were closed down after some were accused of "promoting unethical acts".

Positively, the Angolan parliament adopted a new penal code decriminalizing same-sex relationships, and Botswana's High Court handed down a groundbreaking judgement decriminalizing same-sex relations between consenting adults.

LIVELIHOOD, EDUCATION AND HEALTH CARE

Many governments failed to protect and fulfil the rights to health care, education

and an adequate standard of living, including housing.

LIVELIHOODS UNDER THREAT

In Angola, large-scale diversion of land for commercial cattle ranching ¬took place without consultation or compensation for traditional pastoralists. This meant their cattle went hungry and pastoralist communities were faced with food insecurity and hunger.

In southern DRC, an accident that killed 43 artisanal miners and the deployment of the army to two massive copper and cobalt mines exposed DRC's weak mining regulations and poor human rights protections. In CAR, a parliamentary report revealed a mining company's responsibility involving pollution of a local river.

FORCED EVICTIONS

In countries including Eswatini, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe, the right to adequate housing was violated by forced evictions. Thousands of people were evicted without due process, compensation or other remedy. For example, over the year the Nigerian government evicted more than 20 communities in Lagos state.

In Eswatini, hundreds of people remained at risk of forced evictions. In a meeting with Amnesty International in May, the government pledged to introduce a moratorium on all evictions but had not announced it by the year's end.

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

The right to health care was under extreme threat in countries including Burundi, DRC, Madagascar and Zimbabwe. In DRC, at least 1,680 people died of Ebola, 5,000 of measles and 260 of cholera. In Burundi, over 3,100 people died of malaria. Cameroon's armed conflict led to the destruction of several health care facilities.

In South Africa, there were widespread reports of shortages in contraceptives and antiretroviral medicines as well as understaffing in support centres for rape survivors.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Access to education in countries affected by armed conflicts was particularly problematic. In Mali, 920 schools were closed by June after attacks on teachers and facilities. In Cameroon's conflict-ridden north-west and south-west, by December just 17% of schools were functional and just 29% of teachers were able to work, according to the UN. In Burkina Faso, attacks by armed groups caused the closure of 2,087 schools affecting more than 300,000 students and 9,000 teachers.

On the positive side, the DRC government introduced free primary education – a right enshrined in the Constitution – benefitting millions of children. However, progress was hindered by poor planning and infrastructure, and insufficient funding.

REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES

Compliance with decisions of regional bodies remained low, and these bodies were repeatedly frustrated by member states' lack of co-operation or attempts to undermine the regional bodies' independence and autonomy.

A handful of countries submitted state party reports to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC) – but only after years of delay. Most member states receiving requests for urgent appeals and provisional measures did not respond even though these requests concerned cases presenting a danger of irreparable harm.

Only a few member states accepted requests from the regional bodies to conduct country visits, but none facilitated an actual undertaking of these visits in 2019, and not a single country issued a standing invitation to the ACHPR or ACERWC.

In August, Zimbabwe's president promised the country would ratify the African Court Protocol, but this had not been done by the year's end. Tanzania withdrew the right of individuals and NGOs to directly file cases against it at the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, in a cynical attempt to evade accountability.

Despite facing many challenges, the ACHPR and ACERWC registered relatively impressive records in developing new human rights standards and norms, including the ACHPR General Comment No. 5 on the Right to Movement.

LOOKING AHEAD

Africa faces numerous human rights challenges. Protecting civilians in armed conflict, freeing human rights defenders and activists from repression, opening up political space for dialogue, tackling discrimination and violence against women and minorities, and safeguarding vulnerable people's economic, social and cultural rights are just some of them.

But if 2019 taught us anything, it is that accountability and justice are at the heart of any meaningful solutions as is the power and resilience of people to bring about positive and meaningful human rights changes.

The African Union has declared 2020 the year of "Silencing the Guns" but the goal of ridding Africa of conflict is still a long way off. This can only be reached by ending the widespread culture of impunity and ensuring justice and reparations for the victims of gross human rights violations and abuses.

Traditional cattle breeders serving water to their cattle in the Gambos municipality, Huila province, Angola. © Amnesty International

ANGOLA

Republic of Angola
Head of state and government: **João Lourenço**

Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly continued to be undermined, despite the initial signs of progress. Land disputes due to largescale acquisition for private use continued to undermine the right to food and water in rural parts of the country. Failure to fulfill the right to water in both rural and urban areas remained as significant as ever. Extrajudicial killings in the diamond fields of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul continued with impunity. The rights of LGBTI people remained at risk in practice despite legislative improvements.

BACKGROUND

The beginning of João Lourenço's presidency was buoyed by a palpable air of hope and optimism about the prospects for human rights protection in the country. Under his administration Angola saw some positive developments, including several peaceful protests held without repression, the acquittal of two journalists charged with defaming a public figure, and the Supreme Court's reversal of wrongful sentencing by a provincial court. However, challenges remained. The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly remained under threat. Public and private security forces engaged in extrajudicial killings of suspected illegal diamond miners in the provinces of Lunda Norte and Lunda Sul. While LGBTI rights enjoyed better protections in the legislation, in practice people in consensual same-sex relations continue to face discrimination.

The increase in the oil price on the international market has not made a dent on the ongoing economic crisis that continued to sustain popular discontent with the ruling party, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), particularly among youth. The current economic crisis continued to inform the government's development model which emphasizes large-scale land acquisition for private investment, putting livelihoods and the right to food at risk in rural communities.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The police and security forces continued to carry out arbitrary arrests and detentions. Many of the cases of arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and other ill-treatment were against peaceful demonstrators, but security forces also targeted individuals who were not involved in the demonstrations.

Between 28 January and 1 March, the security forces arbitrarily arrested 62 people, including activists from the Independence Movement of Cabinda (*Movimento Independista de Cabinda* – MIC) and their family members and colleagues.[1] Their arrest and detention were in connection with their involvement in a peaceful protest held on 1 February to mark the 134th anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of Simulambuco.[2] On 27 February, the Cabinda High Court ruled that 51 detainees should remain in detention while 13 others were released provisionally as their arrest at their homes without a warrant had been illegal. On 1 March, activists and family members of the 51 remaining detainees gathered to protest their continued detention. The police arrived and assaulted the protesters with kicks and punches. The police arrested 11 people without a warrant and released them hours later without charges. Seven of those arrested were hospitalized due to the police beatings.

On 12 September, the police violently repressed a peaceful demonstration and detained 23 protestors during President Lourenco's visit in the city of Luena, Moxico province. This was despite the fact that the protestors informed Luena authorities about the planned march on 12 September in terms of the law. The demonstrators wanted to send a message to the president about allegations of corruption, bad government and youth unemployment in the province.

On 2 July, seven young people were arrested and detained after protesting lack of water in the city of Lobito, Benguela province. They were subsequently convicted of disobedience of the public order authorities. The court fined them 76,000 Kwanzas (about US$206) each as a condition of be set free.

LAND DISPUTES AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD

In rural areas the large-scale acquisition of land for private commercial interests continued with complete disregard for human rights, and without consultation, compensation, and environmental and social impact assessment as national laws require. As a result, and in violation of its national, regional and international obligations, Angola continued to fail to protect communities from land acquisitions that resulted in their inability to produce food for subsistence. This growing trend aggravated food insecurity in rural areas.

In the Gambos municipality, Huila province, traditional pastoralists struggled to survive after the government diverted without due process 67% of their communal grazing land for commercial cattle ranching. This change eroded their economic, social and cultural resilience, most notably food security. With most of their customary grazing land now inaccessible, the pastoralists saw their cattle going hungry, which in turn affected the production of dairy products on which the pastoralists depend for their daily consumption. Faced with hunger and starvation, they resorted to consuming wild leaves which caused them sickness and had a particularly negative impact on the health of children and older persons.

THE RIGHT TO WATER

The *Constitution of the Republic of Angola* and the *Water Law* declares that, as a natural resource, water is a public good, the right to which is "inalienable and imprescriptible".[3] However, contrary to both this provision and Angola's international human rights obligations, access to drinking water – in terms of availability, quality and accessibility – remained precarious in both urban and rural areas for large numbers of people. In rural areas, the development of agribusiness, mining, and oil and gas projects directly hampered access to safe drinking water.[4] The diversion of water courses and obstructing access to water bodies including rivers, lakes, and springs , by fencing off areas, cut many people's access to water.[5] In Lunda Norte, the mining industry has diverted Kwango River away from various communities in Kwango, Xamutemba, and Kapenda Kamulemba municipalities.[6] Commercial farmers have been allowed to fence off access to rivers, lakes and fountains in Curoca (Cunene), Savate (Kwangar municipality in Kwando Kubango) and Luangundo (Kwando Kubango).[7] Where natural water sources were still accessible, they were subject to pollution. For example, oil spills in Cabinda and Zaire provinces contaminated water sources, denying communities their rights to water and livelihoods.[8]

In urban areas, the availability, quality and accessibility of water remained precarious for large segments of the population. Drinking water was mainly both unavailable and of low quality.[9] In April, the Angolan Public Water Supplier (EPAL) said it was only able to supply on average 500,000 cubic meters of water per day in Luanda, where the real need is over 1 million cubic meters per day for a population of over 6 million people. In Luanda province, the real need is 1.2 million cubic meters of water per day, but EPAL's capacity was only 516,582 cubic meters per day.[10] In addition, water supply was discriminatory with priority given to affluent neighborhoods, whereas those on the peripheries received their water from mobile vendors at extraordinarily higher prices.[11]

EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS IN THE LUNDAS

Government and private security forces continued to conduct extrajudicial killings of those suspected of illegal diamond mining. Kwango, Lukapa and Lusage were the most affected with more than 40 people killed by the military in July and August 2019.[12] In August, 36 people were killed in Kalonda. Although

the traditional authorities asked the Angolan government to intervene to stem the killings, no action had been taken by year's end.[13]

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX (LGBTI) PEOPLE

In January, the Angolan parliament adopted a new penal code which decriminalises same-sex relationships. Despite this, LBGTI people continued to face discrimination, intimidation and harassment by both non-state actors and state actors. The authorities failed to protect LBGTI people against homophobic violence and to hold the perpetrators accountable. The justice system has poor infrastructure and lacks adequately trained and qualified personnel, which resulted in cases taking a long time to finalize.[14]

Authorities have still not arrested anyone in connection with the attack, on 10 July 2018, against Arquivo de Identidade Angolano's shelter for LGBTI people in need of protection, better known as *No Cúbico,* in Luanda. The shelter was invaded by three men armed with knives, fire guns and a hand hoe.[15] Five women were sleeping in the bedroom when the break in happened. They heard the men shouting "Where are they? We are going to kill you!". The women barricaded the door to prevent the men from breaking into their room. After an hour and a half, the men decided to leave, fearing that the police were arriving. Instead of investigating the case to identify the aggressors, the police officers questioned the women and used derogatory terms to describe their shelter, calling it a "prostitution house" because single women lived there.

1. Amnesty International, Angola: Sixty-two activists, protesters arbitrarily held, 12 February 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr12/9804/2019/en/
2. The Portuguese Crown and the Cabinda native authorities signed the Treaty of Simulambuco establishing Cabinda as a Protectorate of the Portuguese Crown.
3. Lei de Aguas, nº 6/02, de 21 de Junho, article 5.2: "O direito do Estado relativo às águas, enquanto recurso natural, é inalienável e imprescritível"; Constitution of the Republic of Angola, article 95.
4. Amnesty International, Angola: Land, Basic Rights and Freedoms, 1 March 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr12/0185/2019/en/.
5. Ibid
6. Ibid
7. Ibid
8. Ibid
9. Fernando Paulo Faria, Water policy in Angola: Some notes on water supplies in Luanda and Benguela, Mulemba: Revista Angolana de Ciencias Sociais 6 (11) (2016), p. 57-83
10. Folha 8, A falta de agua mostra o mau estado deste estado, 2 April 2019, https://jornalf8.net/2019/a-falta-de-agua-mostra-o-mau-estado-deste-estado/.
11. Angop, Angola: Expert warns of drinking water quality, 20 Sep 2016, http://www.angop.ao/angola/en_us/noticias/sociedade/2016/8/38/Angola-Expert-warns-drinking-water-quality,4526a43e-9c02-4215-aa28-6549f8d6fe79.html. In March 2019. Amnesty International also interviewed civil society representatives from all over the country in Luanda. The problem of water supply in Angola is widely known and acknowledged.
12. VOA, Autoridades tradicionais denunciam mortes nas Lundas, 26 August, https://www.voaportugues.com/a/5057499.html.
13. VOA, Autoridades tradicionais denunciam mortes nas Lundas, 26 August, https://www.voaportugues.com/a/5057499.html.
14. Wilson A. Adão, A crise no sistema judicial em Angola, Club-K, 04 October 2019, https://club-k.net/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37736:a-crise-no-sistema-judicial-em-angola-wilson-a-adao&catid=17&Itemid=1067&lang=pt.
15. Arquivo de Identidade Angolano, Um relato sobre Lesbofobia em Luanda, 15 August 2018, https://www.aia-ao.org/single-post/2018/08/15/UM-RELATO-SOBRE-LESBOFOBIA-EM-LUANDA

Amnesty International members and volunteers gather in Cotonou to ask for justice for Prudence Amoussou, a mother of 7 who died from a gunshot wound sustained during the demonstrations that followed controversial legislative elections in Benin in May 2019. © Amnesty International

BENIN

Republic of Benin
Head of state and government: **Patrice Talon**

National authorities undermined freedoms of expression and peaceful assembly in the context of the legislative elections. Security forces used excessive force against protesters with complete impunity. Some demonstrators or bystanders were killed, while many others were arbitrarily arrested and detained.

BACKGROUND

The exclusion of opposition groups from the parliamentary elections held on 28 April fueled political tensions and protests across the country. Opposition groups were barred from running because the National Autonomous Electoral Commission (Commission électorale nationale autonome, CENA) invalidated their candidacies on 5 March for noncompliance with the 2018 electoral code. CENA's decision was upheld by the Constitutional Court on 13 March.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

BAN OF DEMONSTRATIONS

Local authorities introduced a blanket ban on demonstrations during the pre-electoral period, including in the city of Parakou and in the departments of Collines and Zou.

MASS ARRESTS OF DEMONSTRATORS

Scores of political activists, including political opposition members, were arrested in the context of the legislative elections. Among them, Joseph Aïmasse, a member of the Union's Confederation of Workers in Benin (Confédération syndicale des travailleurs du Bénin) was arrested on 28 March and sentenced in April to two months in prison for having called for an unauthorized protest. Yibatou Sani Glélé, a member of the opposition Democratic Renewal Party (Parti du renouveau démocratique, PRD) and then a member of the National Assembly, was arrested along with another member of her party on 23 April at a rally with women at the Ouando market in Porto-Novo. These people were peacefully demonstrating against the exclusion of the PRD from the legislative elections. The two were charged with organizing and inciting an unauthorized protest. They were released the same evening and summoned to court.

On 28 May, a judge decided to maintain in pre-trial detention 60 people charged with violence and assault, participation in an armed gathering, and direct incitement to an armed crowd. They were detained without trial for several months and all released on 8 November after the adoption of an amnesty law.

On 22 June, former president Boni Yayi

fled the country after his house has been surrounded by soldiers for over 50 days.

INTERNET SHUTDOWN

On polling day of the parliamentary elections, Internet access was shut down across the country.

ARRESTS OF JOURNALISTS

Journalists have been arrested and convicted of criminal offences for exercising their human rights including the right to freedom of expression and information.

Casimir Kpedjo, editor of the newspaper Nouvelle Économie, was arrested on 18 April following a complaint filed by the legal representative of the state because he had declared on Facebook that the country's debt was close to 725 million US dollars (about 400 billion CFA francs) and that this went against the 2019 finance law. He was charged with publishing "false information". Released on bail on 23 April, his trial was postponed many times and then scheduled for February 2020.

On June 19, the High Authority of Audiovisual and Communication (Haute autorité de l'audiovisuel et de la communication, HAAC) notified Emmanuelle Sodji, journalist for France 24, that she was banned from working in Benin. This decision followed reports she made on the security situation in the north. As of November, she couldn't get her accreditation. In December, radio station Soleil FM, owned by opposition political figure Sébastien Adjavon, has had to suspend broadcasting, the HAAC considering it couldn't validate the application to renew its license.

Ignace Sossou, a journalist on the news website Bénin Web TV, was prosecuted for publishing false information in connection with two articles on tax evasion in Benin. He was convicted on 12 August for defamation and received a one month suspended prison sentence and a fine of 500,000 CFA francs (about 850 US dollars). His lawyers appealed the judgement. Ignace Sossou was sentenced to 18 months in prison and 300 euros fined for "harassment via electronic means" by a court in Benin on December 24. He posted tweets quoting Public Prosecutor during the 'Verifox Conference'', on 18 December, hosted by the French media development agency, CFI.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Security forces used tear gas and batons to disperse peaceful protests organized by opposition parties. The military forces were also deployed on some of the demonstration sites.

On 26 February in Kilibo, in Ouesse commune, one person died in clashes between protesters and members of the security forces. Between April and June, at least four protesters or bystanders were killed by firearms. Kandissounon Djayane, a 19-year-old apprentice welder, died on 2 May in the northern city of Kandi, a day after he was shot in the abdomen. The same day, 37-year-old Prudence Amoussou, a mother of seven, died after being shot during a demonstration. Her family was denied access to her body. Three months later, the authorities ordered the family to recover the body, kept at the morgue, and issued a declaration of death mentioning the cause of death as "due to illness".

IMPUNITY

The human rights violations and abuses by the security forces against protesters before and after the legislative elections went unpunished. On 24 October, the judge assigned to investigate unlawful killings perpetrated during the demonstrations dismissed the case arguing that he did not have sufficient information on the alleged perpetrators. The families of victims were not notified of the decision.

On 31 October, the National Assembly passed an amnesty law for all criminal offences committed from February to June related to the legislative elections process. Promulgated on 7 November, this law effectively shields the members of the security forces suspected of being responsible for human rights violations and abuses, including the killing of protesters, from prosecution.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Two French tourists were abducted on 1 May and their guard was killed while they were on safari near the border of northern Benin and southern Burkina Faso. The tourists and two other hostages were freed 10 days later by French forces in Burkina Faso.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

The UN Committee against Torture, in its concluding observations of June on the report of Benin, recommended that authorities amend the Criminal Code to bring the definition of the offence of torture fully in line with the UN Convention against Torture. The Committee recommended that the authorities conduct thorough and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. The Committee also encouraged the authorities "to carry out impartial and thorough investigations into all allegations of excessive use of force, and to develop clear guidelines on the use of force and weapons, incorporating the principles of lawfulness, necessity and proportionality and the precautionary principle".

An activist holds up a rainbow flag to celebrate inside Botswana High Court in Gaborone on June 11, 2019. - Botswana's Court ruled on June 11 in favour of decriminalising homosexuality, handing down a landmark verdict greeted with joy by gay rights campaigners. © TSHEKISO TEBALO/AFP via Getty Images

BOTSWANA

Republic of Botswana
Head of state and government: **Mokgweetsi Masisi**

Freedom of expression remained restricted. The government appealed against a groundbreaking High Court ruling decriminalizing consensual same sex relationships. Unemployment remained high at 17.7%, and with a Gini coefficient of 0.52, Botswana's income inequality is one of the highest in the world.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

In May, the Committee on the Rights of the Child considered Botswana's second and third periodic reports. While recognizing efforts by the government, among other things the Committee expressed concerns that some groups of children suffered from discriminatory attitudes in accessing basic services, and that there was limited access to health care for children living in remote areas and children without identity documents.

MEDIA FREEDOM

Journalists continued to be at risk of physical abuse, threats and lawsuits.

On 17 July, agents from Directorate of Security Services (DIS) raided the home of Mmegi journalist Tsaone Basimanebotlhe and confiscated computers and her mobile phone. The agents reportedly informed Basimanebotlhe that they were investigating her in connection with the ongoing case involving former spy chief Isaac Kgosi in which it is alleged that Kgosi shared pictures of DIS agents with the Mmegi publication. The Botswana Editors Forum (EFB) and The Freedom of Expression Committee (FEC) condemned the raid as harassment and intimidation.

There remained no law on access to information, despite demands from journalists. The 2008 Media Practitioners Act (MPA) continued to restrict journalists' work, access to information and media freedom. National organisations such as the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) have denounced a 'raft of laws that the government of Botswana can tap into to impede free flow of information or use to punish 'errant' journalists in the event that information deemed 'protected' by these laws was published'[1] , including the National Security Act, the Sediment Act, the Protected Areas Act and the Cybercrimes and Computer Related Act 2007.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX (LGBTI) PEOPLE

On 11 June, the Botswana High Court

handed down a ground Breaking judgment decriminalising same-sex

relations between consenting adults.[2] The Gaborone High Court found that sections 164(a), 164(c) and 167 of the Botswana Penal Code, which criminalized 'Unnatural Offences' and 'Indecent practices', were unconstitutional.

The provisions criminalized sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex and created a climate in which people could be discriminated against, harassed or subjected to violence with impunity because of their real or perceived sexual orientation.

The court found that these laws were discriminatory, violated the rights to privacy, liberty and dignity, and served no public interest.

In July, the Attorney General, on behalf of the government, filed an appeal on several grounds, including that the High Court had overstepped its boundaries by overruling a 2003 Appeal Court decision that the circumstances and time for decriminalization had not yet arrived.

DEATH PENALTY

On 2 December, Botswana executed 44-year-old man, Mooketsi Kgosibodiba, by hanging. Botswana is the only country in the Southern Africa Development Community that has retained the death penalty in law and in practice. In 2018, Botswana executed two people for murder: Joseph Tselayarona in February, and Uyapo Poloko in May.[3]

Despite having accepted recommendations to take active steps to ensure that public consultations on the abolition of the death penalty are held and renew the work to hold a national discussion on the death penalty, under the UN Universal Periodic Review that took place in January 2018, no such debates were organized in 2019.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

In July the Court of Appeal declared a group of Namibian refugees at the Dukwi refugee camp "illegal immigrants." The refugees had fled to Botswana in 1999, after violent clashes with Namibian government forces broke out over the disputed Caprivi Strip. Out of some 3,000 initial refugees, 709 had remained in Botswana. Their leader continued to assert that it was not safe for them to return as they belonged to a party banned by Namibia. Botswana began the repatriation on 17 September, starting with a group of 94 refugees who were transported to Namibia.

1. http://misa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/STID2017_Botswana.pdf
2. Letsweletse Motsidiemang v Attorney General, MAHGB-00591-16 (2019) Also see, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2019/06/botswana-decriminalisation-of-consensual-same-sex-relations-should-inspire-other-african-countries/
3. https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/ACT5098702019ENGLISH.PDF

A girl looks at the window of her classroom in Pissila on January 27, 2020. - Barsalogho is a small town in northern Burkina Faso that hosts 10,000 displaced persons and refugees fleeing the resulting attacks by armed groups and inter-community violence. © OLYMPIA DE MAISMONT / AFP

BURKINA FASO

Republic of Burkina Faso
Head of state: **Roch Marc Christian Kaboré**
Head of government: **Christophe Dabiré** (replaced Paul Kaba Thieba in January)

Armed groups and security forces committed abuses and human rights violations. New legislation adopted in the context of security concerns restricted freedom of expression. The trial regarding the 2015 attempted coup ended. Progress was made on protecting women's sexual and reproductive rights.

BACKGROUND

The insecurity in northern Burkina Faso spread eastward and led to a spike in human rights violations and abuses. A state of emergency was in force in six of Burkina Faso's 13 regions. The number of people killed in the first half of the year exceeded four times the total for 2018.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Armed groups such as Ansarul Islam, the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims, and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara allegedly conducted most of the attacks against the population, including state representatives and traditional chiefs. The Koglweogo and other similar self-defense groups committed human rights abuses.

Fifty individuals were killed and 66 more went missing in a raid led by an armed group on the village of Yirgou in Sanmatenga province on 1-2 January, according to the government. El Hadj Boureima Nadbanka, a Koglweogo leader in Namentenga province, was arrested on 23 December as part of the investigation into these killings. Also, in Sanmatenga, at least 29 people were killed on 8 September when gunmen attacked a food convoy on the Barsalogho-Guendbila road.

Deadly attacks occurred in Soum (Sahel region), a province bordering Mali. On 9 June, at least 19 people were killed during raids on a market and an artisanal gold mine in Arbinda. On 26-27 October, gunmen killed at least 15 people in an attack on the village of Pobé-Mengao. Thirty-five individuals, including 31 women, and seven members of security and defense forces were killed on 24 December during an attack in Arbinda.

Mining sites were targeted. On 6 November, 37 workers of the Boungou gold mine were killed when their bus convoy was ambushed by an armed group. On 16 January, a Canadian mining executive was abducted in Tiabongou and later killed.

Religious representatives and sites were also attacked. On 31 March, an armed group attacked the town of Arbinda and killed a local religious leader and six members of his family. This attack spurred intercommunal clashes in Arbinda and neighboring villages, causing the deaths of at least 60 people. Also, in Soum province, six congregants were killed on 29 April in an attack on the Protestant church in Silgadji. On 12May, six congregants including the

priest were killed in the Catholic church in Dablo (Sanmatenga province). A day after, four people were killed during a Catholic procession in Zimtenga (Bam province). On 11 October, gunmen killed 16 civilians in an attack on the Grand Mosque of Salmossi (Oudalan province). Fourteen congregants were killed on 1 December when an armed group attacked a Protestant church in Hantoukoura (Komondjari province).

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

On 5 February, the government announced the ''neutralization'' of 146 "terrorists" in the northern provinces of Yatenga and Loroum. According to local civil society organization the MBDHP, some of these killings may qualify as extrajudicial executions.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

By November, over half a million Burkinabè were internally displaced, according to government and UN data. Oudalan, Bam, Soum and Sanmatenga provinces, where 53% of the country's total violent events occurred in 2019, hosted 76% of internally displaced people according to the UNHCR.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

General Gilbert Diendéré and General Djibril Bassolé were sentenced respectively to 20 years and 10 years in prison, for their roles in the attempted coup against the transitional government in September 2015. Diendéré and 23 others are awaiting trial for their role in the killing of former President Thomas Sankara in 1987. He is charged for "assault, assassination and possession of a dead body".

Former President Blaise Compaoré remained in exile. He is charged with "willful assault, complicity in assault, assassination and complicity in assassination" after 33 people were killed and 88 were injured during mass protests on 29 October 2014. Thirty-two former ministers are also charged with complicity in homicide and willful assault. The trial of Compaoré and the ministers has been suspended by the High Court of Justice since June 2017, to revise the statutes of the High Court, after the Constitutional Court judged its Articles 21 and 33 unconstitutional. The statutes of the High Court have been revised but the trial has not resumed.

On 4 June, a French Court ordered the extradition of François Compaoré, the former president's brother, to Burkina Faso, which had issued an international arrest warrant in 2017 as part of its investigation into the 1998 murder of journalist Norbert Zongo.

According to UN Committee against Torture, 202 people currently detained were charged with terrorism but have not been tried yet.

DETENTION

Overcrowding remains a major issue in detention centers, with a rate of occupation at 180% nationwide (and 372% in Bobo-Dioulasso), along with the high rate of pre-trial detention (38%). Eleven people died on 15 July while in custody at the national police anti-drug unit in Ouagadougou. As a result, nine police officers were indicted for manslaughter and failure to assist a person in danger. Courts continued using the "order to hold available" which allows them to detain people without charge, in violation of international fair trial standards.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Burkina Faso amended its Criminal Code in June by adopting a new law no.044-2019/AN.

The law contains overly broad offences which could be used to clampdown on human rights defenders, journalists, and bloggers, and restrict access to information. Article 312-11 criminalizes any acts that may "demoralize" security forces, while other articles restrict access to or dissemination of information relating to military operations or weapons, in order to protect public order or the integrity of the military operations.

On 8 February, Adama "Damiss" Ouedraogo, editor of the newspaper "Le Dossier" was summoned by the High Authority for Communications after the journal shared on social media a voice audio disputing the government's narrative about the "neutralization of 146 terrorists" in the communes of Kain, Bomboro and Banh and qualifying the deaths as "extrajudicial killings".

On 12 November, web activist Naïm Touré was arbitrarily arrested by the police, due to "publications on social media", officially. He was released without having been charged a few days later.

On 26 December, activist Kémi Seba received a two-month suspended sentence and was fined XOF200,000 (EUR300) for "public insults" and "contempt towards the president and foreign heads of state" after a public conference in Ouagadougou.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In June, the government agreed to provide free family planning services, including contraceptives and medical consultations. This decision aimed to remove barriers that women and girls face in accessing sexual and reproductive health information, goods and services.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

The right to education was undermined by the security situation in the country. Armed groups attacked schools and teachers, denying thousands of students access to education. The attacks led to the closure of 2,087 schools affecting 303,090 students and 9,264 teachers, as of 19 December, according to the Ministry of Education, Literacy and the Promotion of National Languages.

Four journalists of the Burundi's independent media Iwacu Press Group:(L to R) Agnes Ndirubusa, Christine Kamikazi, Egide Harerimana, Terence Mpozenzi, and the driver Adolphe Masabarakiza appear at the High Court in Bubanza, western Burundi, on December 30, 2019 for complicity in endangering the internal security of the state. The Burundian prosecution demanded 15 years in prison against four journalists and their driver arrested on October 22, 2019, while covering the incursion of Burundian rebels from the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). © TCHANDROU NITANGA/AFP via Getty Images

BURUNDI

Republic of Burundi
Head of state and government: **Pierre Nkurunziza**

Serious human rights violations and abuses persisted, with politically motivated attacks on opponents in the run-up to the 2020 elections. There were severe restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and association. Media workers, political opponents and human rights defenders were among those particularly targeted. Members of the Imbonerakure (the ruling party's youth wing) were suspected to be the main perpetrators of violations and abuses, as well as the National Intelligence Service (SNR) and police. Discriminatory measures were imposed on women and girls, who were also subjected to sexual violence mainly by state actors. The humanitarian situation remained dire and millions who faced food insecurity were in need of humanitarian assistance.

BACKGROUND

In the 2018 referendum, Burundians voted to adopt a new Constitution which included the creation of a prime ministerial role and changed the rules on presidential term limits. Under the new Constitution, presidential terms increased from five to seven years, and presidents were limited to two consecutive terms in office, rather than two terms in total, allowing individuals to rerun at a later date. The President said he would not run for another term in the 2020 elections.

There were isolated armed attacks in border areas during 2018 and 2019. In May 2018, at least 26 people, including children, were killed in an attack, believed to be carried out by rebels based in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), on Ruhagarika village in Cibitoke. In October 2019, an armed opposition group clashed with security forces in Bubanza province.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The authorities continued to crack down on the work of human rights defenders and civil society organizations including by subjecting them to prosecution and lengthy prison terms.

Nestor Nibitanga, a former regional observer for the Association for the Protection of Human Rights and Detained Persons (APRODH) remained in Murembwe prison in Rumonge serving a five-year prison sentence passed to him by the Mukaza tribunal in Bujumbura in August 2018 for "threatening state security". The court found him guilty of compiling reports for APRODH after the government closed the organization. However, Nestor Nibitanga stated that a report found on a USB disk at the time of his arrest was not prepared for APRODH, but for a human rights network he was working with and which the government recognized.

Emmanuel Nshimirimana, Aimé Constant Gatore and Marius Nizigiyimana, members of PARCEM, a civil society

organization, were finally released from Mpimba prison in Bujumbura in March after the Ntahangwa Court of Appeal overturned their convictions on appeal in December 2018. They had been arrested in 2017 while organizing a human rights workshop and, in March 2018, were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for "threatening state security". In June 2019, the government suspended the organization accusing it of having deviated from its objectives and "tarnishing the image of Burundi" and its leaders with the aim of disturbing "peace and public order".

In July, the Ntahangwa Court of Appeal upheld the conviction against Germain Rukuki, a former employee of the banned human rights organization ACAT-Burundi (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture). He was found guilty of "threatening state security" and sentenced to 32 years in prison in 2018, in connection with his human rights work. Evidence presented against him included his email correspondence with ACAT-Burundi staff, sent before the organization was suspended.

In September, the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi (mandated to investigate human rights violations and abuses committed since April 2015) published new information about human rights defender Marie Claudette Kwizera who was forcibly disappeared in 2015. The information suggested she had been taken to the SNR offices soon after her disappearance before being moved to another location several days later where she was extrajudicially executed.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Severe restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and access to information continued. Media workers were targeted and frequently prevented from carrying out their work. Many journalists remained in exile while those working inside the country faced serious restrictions which impeded their ability to report on human rights violations and abuses and security-related issues.

Seven secondary school children were arrested on the order of the local prosecutor in March in Kirundo province, accused of defacing a photo of the President in their textbooks. Three of them were charged with" insulting the head of state". They were all released after a few days in detention and five of them were expelled from school.

In March, the National Communication Council (CNC) withdrew the BBC's licence to operate. It also extended an existing suspension against Voice of America (VOA) "until further notice". VOA and the BBC's permission to broadcast was initially suspended in 2018, a few days before the referendum. Under the suspension, journalists inside the country were forbidden from sharing information with the BBC or VOA that they could broadcast.

Iwacu Press Group journalists, Agnès Ndirubusa, Christine Kamikazi, Egide Harerimana and Térence Mpozenzi, and their driver Adolphe Masabarakiza, were arrested by police when they travelled to Bubanza province on 22 October to investigate reports of an armed attack. On 31 October they were charged with "complicity in threatening state security". Adolphe Masabarakiza was provisionally released on 20 November, but the others remained in Bubanza prison. A private joke sent by one of them over WhatsApp to another journalist – that they were "going to support the rebels" – was presented by the prosecution as evidence during their trial in December. In response, the defence presented another satirical message sent by the same journalist, saying that they were going "to deal with these people who want to disturb the peace and the elections." The prosecution requested a 15-year prison sentence.

Also, in October, the CNC issued a new media code of conduct for the election period. The code forbade the use of survey data as a source of information and prevented journalists and broadcasters from publishing election results other than those published by the Independent National Electoral Commission or its subsidiaries.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Opposition members and perceived government opponents continued to face attacks by the authorities and ruling party members. Members of the National Congress for Freedom (CNL) were particularly targeted. Members of the Imbonerakure, the ruling party's youth wing, killed, arbitrarily arrested and attacked dozens of CNL members, and destroyed local party offices throughout the country.

Following the temporary suspension of almost all international NGOs in September 2018, several organizations closed their operations rather than provide data on the ethnic identities of their national staff. In October 2018, the Interior Minister told NGO representatives that only NGOs running hospitals and schools would be exempt from the suspension initially announced by the National Security Council, and that organizations would need to demonstrate that they conformed with the 2017 Law on Foreign NGOs.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Burundian refugees and asylum-seekers faced increasing pressure to return to Burundi, particularly in Tanzania which hosted half of the more than 300,000 people displaced from Burundi, along with Rwanda, the DRC and Uganda. In August, the Burundian and Tanzanian governments signed a bilateral agreement, without the participation of UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, to increase returns of refugees from Tanzania to Burundi "whether voluntarily or not". While UNHCR continued to provide financial and logistical support for returns to Burundi, the agency maintained that conditions in Burundi were not yet conducive to promoting returns.

IMPUNITY

Four Imbonerakure members were convicted in October for killing an opposition member in Muyinga province

and were given life sentences. However, most politically motivated crimes, committed by the Imbonerakure, continued to go unpunished.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights closed its office in Burundi in February after operating for over 20 years. The government suspended co-operation with the office in 2016 and in December 2018 ordered its closure.

The government continued to refuse access to the country for members of the UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi. It threatened them with prosecution in 2018 after the Commission published a report, in September of that year, which criticized the government.
The African Union continued to deploy human rights monitors in Burundi but did not publish any findings.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The UN Commission of Inquiry on Burundi documented numerous cases of sexual violence. They found that the majority of sexual violence cases reported to them between 2018 and 2019 were committed in rural areas, marking a change from 2015/2016 trends. The Commission found that most of the attacks were committed by state actors, or with their direct or tacit consent, and that the Imbonerakure used rape, and in particular gang rape, to intimidate or punish victims for their perceived political views.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Discriminatory restrictions were imposed on women and girls' right to freedom of movement. In May, the local administrator of Musongati commune, Rutana province, imposed a 7PM curfew, after which women were not allowed to enter markets or bars unless accompanied by their husbands.

RIGHTS TO HEALTH AND FOOD

The humanitarian situation remained dire. The World Health Organization reported that there were more than 8.5 million cases of malaria from which 3,170 people died during the year. Over 1.7 million people faced food insecurity out of a population of approximately 11 million. Despite these economic challenges, which pre-date the current crisis, the government collected 'voluntary' contributions towards the 2020 elections and put heavy restrictions on international organizations, including those providing humanitarian assistance.

A destroyed car and buildings in a small town on the main highway on May 11,2019 near Buea. These towns were attacked by the military as suspected armed militants or protestors were known to live. © Giles Clarke/UNOCHA

CAMEROON

Republic of Cameroon
Head of state: **Paul Biya**
Head of government: **Joseph Dion Ngute** (replaced Philémon Yang in January)

Armed groups and security forces continued to commit human rights abuses and violations in the context of the Anglophone crisis and the fight against Boko Haram in the Far North. The number of internally displaced people rose and hundreds of thousands of children were prevented from going to school. The authorities repressed dissent.

BACKGROUND

Cameroon faced three major crisis which caused numerous violations and abuses of human rights. In the English-speaking regions of North-West and South-West, separatists armed groups, who emerged after the repression of peaceful protests against allegations of discrimination in 2016, and security forces, continued to commit serious human rights violations and abuses. From 30 September to 4 October, the authorities organized a "major national dialogue", which aimed at addressing the root causes of the crisis and finding solutions to peace and reconciliation. In the Far North region, civilians were victims of a surge in attacks by armed groups related to Boko Haram. In Yaoundé and other main cities, peaceful protests held by political activists to contest alleged irregularities in the 2018 electoral process that led to the reelection of President Biya for a 7th term, were severely repressed.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS

Separatist armed groups continued to kill security forces and to commit serious abuses against the population. They were responsible for unlawful killings, often involving mutilations. They targeted civil servants, ordinary people who failed to respect "ghost town" and instructions to close schools and relatives of members of defense and security forces. In September, a video was posted on social media showing hooded men beheading a woman who worked as a wardress at the Bamenda Central Prison. They were also responsible for numerous abductions of students, journalists and humanitarian workers. In February, the president of the Cameroon Association of English Speaking Journalists was abducted by separatist fighters in the city of Bamenda after he criticized their call for families not to send their children to school. In September, a local radio in Buea (South-West) was attacked and the radio presenter, Mary Namondo, was abducted. In October, armed groups also abducted ten workers of two UN implementing partners in Tubah subdivision, all were later released.

FAR NORTH REGION

Positive developments in recent years have been called into question by a surge in attacks by armed groups related to Boko Haram in the Far North region. Between January and November, 275 people were killed during attacks,

according to data collected by Amnesty International. Out of the total number, 225 were civilians. The canton of Tourou, which includes 16 villages, suffered at least sixteen incursions during which six people were killed and several people kidnapped. In Mayo-Tsanaga and Mayo-Sava, attacks most often took the form of deadly raids involving killings, abductions, mutilations and lootings. Members of vigilance committees and the elderly or people living with disabilities, were often among the victims. These abuses may constitute war crimes.

VIOLATIONS BY SECURITY FORCES

The military committed extrajudicial executions and house destructions during their operations in North-West and South-West, as reported by the UN and international and local NGOs.

On 31 October, the president of the United States of America terminated the designation of Cameroon as a beneficiary under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), considering that Cameroon failed to address concerns regarding persistent human rights violations being committed by security forces. Traditional authorities accused the Rapid Intervention Battalion (BIR) of having forcefully entered the Royal Palace in Bafut (North-West), wounding people and looting the place on 24 September. According to the UN, burning of houses predominantly associated with Cameroon military represented 35.5% of the 1,790 protection incidents registered in October.

JUSTICE

On 20 August, self-proclaimed president of "Ambazonia" Julius Ayuk Tabe and nine of his followers were sentenced by a Yaoundé military court to life imprisonment on charges of terrorism and secession. They had previously been arrested in Nigeria and sent back to Cameroon on 26 January 2018. A ruling by the Federal High Court of Abuja (Nigeria) stated in March 2019 that these expulsions were illegal and unconstitutional.
On 3 October, an official statement from president Paul Biya informed that he ordered the discontinuance of proceedings pending before military tribunals against 333 persons arrested and detained in the context of the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions.

The Yaoundé military court decided in December that the trial of seven soldiers caught on video carrying out the killings of two women and two children in Far North Cameroon would be hold in close doors. Their arrest came on after Amnesty International experts analyzed the video in July 2018 and shown evidence strongly suggesting the extrajudicial executions were perpetrated by Cameroonian soldiers.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Cameroonian authorities blatantly violated the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, in particular to stop and violently disrupt any protest against the reelection of President Paul Biya.

In January, nearly 300 protesters were arbitrarily arrested during peaceful demonstrations, among whom the opposition leader Maurice Kamto, head of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement (Mouvement pour la Renaissance du Cameroun, MRC), who claimed victory at the presidential election of October 2018. In February, Maurice Kamto and other members of the MRC were charged by a military court for hostility against the homeland, incitement to insurrection, offense against the president of the republic, destruction of public buildings and goods.

On 1 and 8 June, more than 200 people who were demonstrating in different cities, like in Douala, to protest alleged electoral irregularities, were arbitrarily arrested.

On 4 October, an official press release informed that Paul Biya ordered the discontinuance of proceedings pending before military tribunals against some officials and militants of political parties, in particular of the MRC. On 5 October, Maurice Kamto and 102 other persons were released.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment against detainees were reported. At least 59 supporters of the MRC - including six women - were subjected to severe beatings during their questioning at the Secrétariat d'Etat à la défense (SED). Before releasing them, security forces beat them with sticks and forced them into humiliating positions. The 59 opposition members were arrested on 1 June 2019 during a planned peaceful protest in the capital Yaoundé. They were brought to the SED for questioning about the protest, tortured and arbitrarily detained by security forces, who also warned them against participating in another protest scheduled a week later.

RIGHTS TO HEALTH AND EDUCATION

The crisis in North-West and South-West led to the destruction of healthcare facilities, impacting the ability of people to access health care. On 30 October, during fights between military men and armed groups, the Integrated Health Facility in Tole (South-West) was burnt down. In December, health actors recorded three attacks on healthcare facilities in Ekondo-Titi (South-West), Idenau (South-West) and BuaBua (North-West). As of December, 17 % of schools were functional and 29% of teachers were able to work, according to the UN.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

As of 31 December 2019, around 700,000 people were internally displaced in North-West and South-West regions. In the Far North region, the number of displaced people (more than 270,000) increased in all departments due to the upsurge in attacks on inhabitants by armed groups related to Boko Haram. In the second half of the year, around 50 localities were still deserted.

Two people walk among the burning rubbles in the Koudoukou market, in the PK5 district in Bangui on December 26, 2019, after clashes erupted between traders and armed groups. © FLORENT VERGNES / AFP

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Central African Republic
Head of state: **Barham Ahmed Salih**
Head of government: **Adil Abdul Mahdi**

Various armed groups committed serious human rights abuses including unlawful killings, sexual violence and illegal taxation. Armed groups continued to profit from the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Impunity persisted despite important efforts made at the national and international levels. Authorities infringed freedom of assembly.

BACKGROUND

On 6 February 2019, the government and 14 armed groups signed a political agreement for peace and reconciliation (peace agreement) with the aim of ending a conflict that is plunging the population into great insecurity. In accordance with the peace agreement, an inclusive government was set up on 03 March, including leaders of armed groups. Crimes and serious human rights abuses nevertheless continued to be committed by various armed groups, including the ex-Seleka and the anti-balaka, against civilians and about 80% of the territory is still under control of armed groups.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Various armed groups, including those who are signatories of the peace agreement, continued to commit serious abuses against civilians, including unlawful killings, sexual violence and illegal taxation.

Between February and October, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) recorded about 600 cases of violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, affecting at least 1000 individuals. Amongst the most serious security incidents, elements of the armed group Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation (3R), killed at least 40 people on 21 May in several villages (Lemouna, Koundjiki and Bohong) in Ouham Pendé province. More than 30 people were killed on 25 December, as clashes erupted in PK5 neighborhood

of Bangui between armed elements and traders.

The UN continued to report many cases of sexual violence in vast majority committed by elements of armed groups. The Central African Republic remained one of the most dangerous countries for the humanitarian personnel. In the October report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council, the UN recorded between January and August, 188 attacks against humanitarian staff, offices or goods. In the same period three humanitarian personnel were killed.

IMPUNITY

Significant efforts were made at national and international levels to address chronic impunity for suspected perpetrators of serious human rights violations and abuses in successive conflicts since 2003.

Although the Central African justice system lacks means and capacity, the ordinary courts of Bangui and Bouar held criminal sessions and looked into cases of human rights abuses committed by armed groups. Thus, Colonel Abdoulaye Alkali-Said, a prominent member of the Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique – (MPC), Seleka armed group, was sentenced on 23 September during a criminal session in Bangui to six years in prison for criminal conspiracy; the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity were dismissed for lack of evidence. However, there are some serious concerns over due process and fairness of these proceedings.

The Special Criminal Court (SCC) made noticeable steps towards its operationalization. In a statement of June, the SCC declared it received 27 complaints; opened preliminary inquiries into 4 'incidents'; and received 3 cases transferred by the ordinary courts and which are under analysis by the investigating chambers. In August, the case concerning the 21 May killings was also transferred to the SCC. The SCC, established by law in June 2015 and officially inaugurated in October 2018, is a "hybrid" jurisdiction, with both national and international judges and staff and with an initial mandate of 5 years to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law.

Cases related to the situation in the Central African Republic were also brought before the International Criminal Court (ICC). On 23 January, Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, leader of an anti-balaka faction, was transferred to the ICC for alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in 2013 and 2014. The case was joined on 20 February to the one against Alfred Yekatom, also head of an anti-balaka armed group, charged with war crimes and crimes against humanity. On 11 December, the ICC issued a decision partly confirming the charges against Ngaïssona and Yekatom. Seized in 2014 by the government, the ICC is competent to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law allegedly committed since 2012 in the Central African Republic, in complementarity and coordination with the SCC.

In addition, in accordance with the peace agreement, a presidential decree of 8 February created an inclusive commission composed of representatives of the armed groups that signed the peace agreement and national authorities; the commission has to propose recommendations for the future Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission (TJRRC). The inclusive commission held its inaugural session on 28 May. On 20 June, national consultations were launched to design the new law establishing the TJRRC.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

Humanitarian access remained extremely difficult due to insecurity. As of 31 October, about 600 000 persons were internally displaced.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

On 10 April, the Groupe de Travail de la Société Civile (GTSC) called for a demonstration on 15 April to protest against the appointment of representatives of armed groups in the government. On the eve of the protest, which ultimately did not take place, GTSC spokesperson Paul Crescent Beninga was arrested for allegedly threatening state security. He was released on 21 April.

In May, a few days after the serious human rights abuses committed by members of the 3R armed group in localities of Lemouna, Koundjiki and Bohong (Ouham Pendé province), the Front Uni pour la Défense de la Nation (United Front for the Defense of the Nation), a coalition of opposition political figures and civil society organizations' representatives called for demonstrations on 15, 22 and 29 June to denounce the inclusion of representatives of armed groups in the government and the lack of results of this measure for peace and security. The Ministry of Interior issued a statement outlining the risk of the presence of terrorists during the gatherings and thus banned the demonstrations. Nevertheless, about 100 people demonstrated on 15 June and were dispersed by security forces.

ILLEGAL EXPLOITATION OF RESOURCES

The export of rough diamonds from important part of the territory was still suspended, according to the Kimberley Process. Yet armed groups continued to profit from the illegal exploitation of natural resources. Clashes between armed groups continued for mine control.

On 13 July, a parliamentary report denounced Chinese mining companies' responsibility in an ecological disaster and pollution of the Ouham River in the region of Bozoum, north-west of Bangui. It recommended a judicial investigation into possible fraudulent implications of politicians and senior officials in obtaining business licenses.

In the Ouaddai, a transhumance zone and strategic province of Chad on the border with Sudan, populated by various ethnic groups, the violence has taken a community turn that divides as much as it worries. © AMAURY HAUCHARD/AFP via Getty Images

CHAD

Republic of Chad
Head of state and government: **Idriss Déby Itno**

Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were repressed, and the justice system was used to crack down on dissent. Several cases of excessive use of force by defense and security forces were reported. Detention conditions remained deplorable.

BACKGROUND

Armed forces continued to fight Boko Haram around the Lake Chad region. Deadly clashes occurred between farmers and pastoralists in the provinces of Ouaddaï and Sila. Parliamentary elections were postponed to 2020 after having been shelved since 2015 for alleged security and financial reasons.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Several cases of excessive use of force by defense and security forces were reported.
Defense and security forces opened fire on a group of women, wounding 10 of them, during a protest on 23 February in Abéché. They were students protesting against the decision to remove the head of a school complex in disobedience of an earlier court ruling.

On 12 September, police in N'Djamena shot a man in the leg, on the pretext that he had walked in a restricted area.
Also, in N'Djamena, Bonheur Mateyan Manaye was riding a motorcycle on 4 November when he was shot by the police escort of the Speaker of the National Assembly. He later died of his injuries.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Peaceful demonstrations were regularly banned or repressed by the authorities. In N'Djamena, 13 protesters from the organization Collectif Tchadien Contre la Vie Chère were beaten and arrested on 25 April during a peaceful protest against the shortage of butane gas. The demonstration had been banned by a decree of the Minister of Security. In March, a previous demonstration organized by the same organization had also been banned.

On 1 June in N'Djamena, a press conference to present the new opposition party Les Transformateurs was banned by the authorities. Police then fired tear gas at the party's parade in town.
On 18 November, victims and families of victims of former President Hissène Habré protested to demand payment of their compensation ordered by the Court of Appeal of N'Djamena on 25 March 2015 but not yet implemented. The peaceful demonstration they organized in the capital was repressed by security forces, who used tear gas.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression continued to be violated and abused.
In July, President Déby announced that he had asked the relevant services to lift the restrictions to social networks on the internet. The authorities had previously denied being the cause of the blockages implemented since March 2018.
The publishing director of the newspaper Salam Info was sentenced on 23 September to three years in prison by a N'Djamena court, for "defamation", "malicious and false accusation" and "electronic criminal association" for its coverage of the sexual assault charges brought against former Health Minister.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Two deaths were reported as a result of torture in police custody. On 25 May, a man taken to the police station in the 7th arrondissement of N'Djamena on theft charges died after being tortured. On 8 May, Richard Mbaiguedem died after torture in a police station in the Chadian capital.

Meanwhile, on 18 May, one policeman and two subordinates arrested on 22 December 2018 for torturing a man to death and broadcasting the video of his torture on social networks were sentenced to 10 years in prison.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

Defense and security forces committed arbitrary arrests and detention in the framework of the state of emergency declared in the provinces of Ouaddaï and Sila in August, Chadian NGOs reported. On 5 November, the indictment division of the Court of Appeal of N'Djamena released 88 detainees from Amsinene prison, some of whom had been held for more than nine years without a court order.

Mahamat Nour Ibédou, the Secretary General of the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights (Convention tchadienne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme), was detained on 5 December. He initially faced a complaint for defamation - before being told that he would face a criminal case, the nature of which was not specified to him. He was released after the investigating judge dismissed the case.

DETENTION

Places of detention continued to be overcrowded and conditions remained unhygienic. In October, a mutiny erupted in a prison in Abéché, during which at least two detainees were killed and several wounded. In June, an inmate was killed while attempting to escape from Bol prison. In both cases, the detainees protested the conditions of detention and the slow pace of judicial proceedings.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

There was an upsurge in armed attacks by Boko Haram against civilians and the military in province du Lac. At the end of March, 23 soldiers were killed in an attack on an Army base. A national television reporter and four soldiers died on 25 May when their vehicle hit a landmine and exploded. In June, at least 11 soldiers were killed in an attack in the Ngouboua area.

On 14 August, a suicide bomber killed six people by blowing herself up in the courtyard of a traditional chief in Tatafiromou, in the Kaiga-Kindjiria sub-prefecture. In September, four civilians and three soldiers were killed in two separate attacks in Kaiga-Kindjiria and Medikouta. On 29 October, a doctor, a nurse and their driver were kidnapped in the Tchoukouliya area. In December, Boko Haram militants killed 14 Chadian civilians and wounded five others in an overnight attack on a fishermen's camp in the northeastern part of Lake Chad. Four soldiers were killed on 2 December between Ngouboua and Baga Sola. As of November, more than 222,000 people were displaced in the province du Lac, representing a 24% rise compared to the previous counting by the UN.

LAND DISPUTES

The provinces of Ouaddaï and Sila experienced violence, aggravated by the use of weapons of war, between farmers and pastoralists. As a result of clashes, some 100 people were killed between May and June, Chadian NGOs reported, and at least 50 in August, according to the authorities. The latter declared a state of emergency in these two provinces on 20 August, and the National Assembly renewed it in September for a period of four months.

Forced evictions affect thousands of people who were not informed their homes were going to be destroyed. In some cases, the evictions follow land disputes. People are not offered alternative accommodation, prompting hundreds to sleep in the street. © Amnesty International

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire
Head of state: **Alassane Dramane Ouattara**
Head of government: **Amadou Gon Coulibaly**

Authorities restricted the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly as political tensions rose ahead of the 2020 presidential election. Security forces used excessive force with impunity against peaceful protesters. Political activists, journalists and human rights defenders were arbitrarily arrested and detained. New laws imposed sweeping restrictions on human rights, including women's rights.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions were rising ahead of the 2020 presidential election, including among former allies incumbent President Alassane Ouattara, former President Henri Konan Bédié and former Prime Minister Guillaume Soro.
On 23 December, as Guillaume Soro was returning to Abidjan to start his campaign for the 2020 presidential election after several months outside the country, prosecutors issued a statement announcing an arrest warrant against him. He was charged with attempts to undermine the authority of the state and territorial integrity. In a separate case he was also charged for misappropriation of public funds, concealment of misappropriated public funds and money laundering. As of December, he had not returned to Côte d'Ivoire.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

In May, under the UN Universal Periodic Review, Côte d'Ivoire received recommendations on torture, prison conditions, impunity, and the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Côte d'Ivoire explicitly rejected recommendations aiming to protect LGBTI individuals against violence and to decriminalize libel and insults against the head of state.

The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in July expressed concerns about impunity, the lack of a definition of rape and other forms of sexual violence in the Criminal Code and the failure to adopt a comprehensive law covering all forms of gender-based violence. Meanwhile, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) spotlighted the prevalence of female genital mutilation and child marriage, as well as the issue of "children in street situations".

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The National Human Rights Council became operational in April when its executive bureau was established. However, concerns remained about the Council's ability to exercise its mandate in full independence. For example, the nomination process of its members is not set out in law, members may be revoked and face criminal charges if they breach secrecy rules, while other revocation criteria remain unclear.
On 26 June, Cote d'Ivoire adopted a new Criminal Code which decriminalized loitering and criminalized slavery, torture, rape and domestic violence. However, some definitions fell short of international standards, particularly for torture, rape and domestic violence. It removed the explicit reference to same-sex relations being aggravated circumstances for the offence of public indecency, but referred to undefined "unnatural acts", "offending one's good morals or the moral sensitivity." The Code retained provisions which violate human rights, including the crimes of offending the head of state, publishing

false news, abortion and adultery. It also created additional overly broad offences which may further undermine the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, such as "uttering offensive" online and "publishing data which may undermine public order".

The marriage law passed on 26 June sets the minimum marriage age to 18 and allows either spouse to manage common property. However, it cites "physical incapacity to consummate the marriage" and "the impossibility to procreate" as grounds for nullification. It requires women to wait 300 days after their marriage has been dissolved before they can remarry.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists, human rights defenders, activists and opposition members continued to face arbitrary arrests, detention and deportations for expressing dissent.

Between 23 and 31 December, at least 17 relatives and supporters of Guillaume Soro were arrested and detained. 13 of them, including five parliamentarians, were charged with 'publishing false news, undermining public order and the authority of the state', following a press conference they held on the rerouting of the flight of Guillaume Soro. The brother of Guillaume Soro, Rigobert Soro, was subjected to enforced disappearance for 12 days before being brought to the Prosecutor's office.

Nathalie Yamb, a member of the opposition party Lider, was deported to Switzerland on 2 December for having participated in "activities undermining national interest". She was detained for 10 hours, did not have adequate access to a lawyer, was not handed the expulsion order and could not collect her papers and medication. She is Swiss and Cameroonian.

Journalist Konan Yao Hubert was arrested by officers of the gendarmerie on 4 August, the day after a march he organized. It was a protest in the village of N'da-kouassikro (Djékanou prefecture) against the opening of a gold-mining site. The gendarmes refused to show him a warrant and tried to handcuff him. He reportedly injured a gendarme as he resisted arrest. He was charged with "incitement and disturbance of public order" and "assault and battery of gendarmes on duty". As of December, he remained in detention in Bouaké.

Five members of the Coalition of the Indignants of Côte d'Ivoire (Coalition des Indignés de Côte d'Ivoire) and one journalist were arrested on 23 July in front of the Independent Election Commission headquarters ahead of a protest. They were questioned without a lawyer and released the next day without charge.

On 1 July, activist Valentin Kouassi was arrested by the police and detained at an unknown location without access to his lawyers following a rally he organized on 23 June in the southern town of Adzopé. He was charged with public disorder, released under judicial supervision, and prohibited from participating in meetings and from expressing his political views in public or on social media.

On 18 February, academic Joël Dadé and Professor Johnson Kouassi, leader of the National Coordination of Lecturers-Researchers and Researchers (Coordination nationale des enseignants chercheurs et chercheurs, CNEC), were arrested in connection with a December 2018 strike at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University. They were charged with disrupting public order, violence and insults. Their cases were dismissed and they were released on 4 March.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Peaceful demonstrations were dispersed with the use of excessive force by security forces. On 4 October, security forces killed one person and injured several others when they opened fire on protesters in Djébonoua against the arrest of an opposition politician.

DETENTION

Prisons in Côte d'Ivoire remained severely overcrowded and conditions are inhumane, leading to a high number of deaths in custody. As of January 2020, some 21,326 people were detained across 34 prisons in Côte d'Ivoire, with a combined capacity of only 8,639. Over 31% were in pre-trial detention. At the MACA, which has capacity for 1,500 prisoners, 7,782 people were detained, 66% of which were in pretrial detention.

The authorities continued to refuse to grant Amnesty International unfettered access to detention centers, despite multiple requests.

IMPUNITY

Impunity prevailed for the human rights violations and abuses committed during and after the 2010 election by supporters of former President Laurent Gbagbo and President Ouattara.

On 15 January, the International Criminal Court acquitted and ordered the release of Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé after the judges found that the Office of the Prosecutor had not presented sufficient evidence to prove its case beyond reasonable doubt. The prosecution appealed the acquittals in September.

In December, Blé Goudé was sentenced in absentia to 20 years in prison by an Abidjan court on murder, rape and torture charges. Other investigations and judicial proceedings at the national level were delayed due to the 2018 Presidential ordinance granting amnesty for crimes committed during the 2010-2011 election crisis.

On 4 April, human rights organizations petitioned the Supreme Court to strike down the amnesty ordinance.

Democratic Republic of the Congo's outgoing President Joseph Kabila (L) drapes newly inaugurated President Felix on January 24, 2019 with the presidential scarf as he is officially handed over the instruments of power at the Presidency in Kinshasa. - Opposition leader Felix Tshisekedi was sworn in on January 24, 2019 as president of Democratic Republic of Congo, marking the country's first-ever peaceful handover of power after chaotic and bitterly-disputed elections. Tshisekedi took the oath of office before receiving the national flag and a copy of the constitution from outgoing president Joseph Kabila, stepping aside after 18 years at the helm of sub-Saharan Africa's biggest country. © TONY KARUMBA/AFP via Getty Images

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Democratic Republic of Congo
Head of state: **Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo** (replaced Joseph Kabila Kabange in January 2019)
Head of government: **Sylvestre Ilunga Ilunkamba** (replaced Bruno Tshibala Nzenzhe in September 2019)

Hundreds of prisoners of conscience and other detainees were released, and some exiled activists were allowed to return to the country. However, the authorities continued to restrict the right to freedoms of expression, association and assembly. The armed conflict continued, resulting in more than 2000 civilian deaths and at least 1 million were forcibly displaced. While some steps were taken to bring perpetrators to justice for conflict-related human rights abuses, the authorities failed to hold to account the most senior officials associated with crimes under international law, and impunity remained widespread. Most of the population was denied basic rights like health, while some progress was made when the government introduced free primary education for all.

BACKGROUND

In December 2018, long-delayed presidential, legislative and provincial elections took place. The Electoral Commission withdrew the voting rights of over 1 million people in eastern and western areas, on security grounds as well as for health reasons connected to the Ebola epidemic. The decision, which cancelled presidential elections and postponed legislative and provincial elections in those areas, sparked anger among the affected communities, and intensified the tensions already surrounding the elections.

On 10 January, the Independent National Electoral Commission released the presidential provisional election results and declared Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo the new president. On 15 January, leaked data obtained from the

Electoral Commission's servers and tallies suggested that an opposition candidate, Martin Fayulu Madidi, received the most votes. In response, the South African Development Community (SADC) and the African Union convened a high-level meeting on the crisis following which regional heads of state and government concluded that there were "serious doubts" as to the validity of the provisional results and urged the authorities to delay the final results, a request which was rejected. On 20 January, the Constitutional Court rejected Martin Fayulu Madidi's request for a recount, confirming Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo as the winner.

The Common Front for the Congo (FCC), former President Kabila's coalition, won the majority of parliamentary seats at the national and provincial levels, retaining control of the National Assembly, the Senate, and provincial assemblies and governments in 25 of the 26 provinces. President Tshisekedi's government which was inaugurated in September was led by the FCC whose members made up a majority, a fact which could limit the new President's ability to carry out crucial reforms, including in relation to the justice system. Violent clashes between supporters of the FCC and the Course for Change, the President's coalition, continued against a backdrop of disputes over power sharing.

ARMED CONFLICT

By December, more than 1,500 civilians had been killed, thousands injured, and at least 1 million forcibly displaced as a result of violence in the western province of Mai-Ndombe and the eastern provinces of Ituri, North Kivu and South Kivu. Dozens of local and foreign armed groups as well as the Congolese security forces, continued to carry out serious human rights abuses, with impunity. Widespread human rights abuses carried out by armed groups exposed the failure of the security forces – themselves responsible for major human rights violations – and the UN peacekeepers, to effectively ensure the protection of civilians and to restore peace.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

While the authorities took some steps to bring perpetrators to justice for conflict-related human rights abuses, they failed to bring to account most of the high-ranking civilian and military officers suspected of committing or sponsoring such crimes, crimes which had resulted in over 3,000 deaths and 2 million people internally displaced between August 2016 and December 2017 in the Kasaï region alone. Furthermore, several politicians and senior officers suspected of serious human rights abuses retained, or were given, privileged positions in state institutions, including the army and police.

In September, the President told French journalists, who had asked for his position on past human rights abuses, that he had "no time to rummage in the past". There was no progress on the prosecutions in connection with the December 2018 communal violence between the Banunu and Batende communities in Yumbi, Mai-Ndombe province in the west, in which over 600 civilians were killed over two days in orchestrated violence that, according to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, could have amounted to crimes against humanity.

In June, the military prosecution issued an arrest warrant against Guidon Shimiray Mwisa the leader of the militia, Nduma Defense of Congo-Rénové (NDC-R), for crimes under international law including murder, mass rape, and recruitment of children, committed by him or his militia. However, according to the UN Group of Experts, the NDC-R continued to carry out human rights abuses in North Kivu province, with the collaboration of high-ranking Congolese army officers.[1] The authorities failed to take adequate steps to enforce the arrest warrant and bring Guidon Shimiray Mwisa to justice.

The military court trial of Ntabo Ntaberi Sheka, leader of a faction of the Nduma Defence of Congo, in which he was accused of serious human rights abuses in North Kivu province, came to a standstill in mid-2019 as the court continually postponed the trial without valid reason. His militia was believed to be responsible for crimes including the rape of at least 387 women, men and children during 2010.

During the year, local and international human rights groups repeatedly called on the government to hold Gédéon Kyungu Mutamba to account for crimes against humanity for which he had been convicted by a military court in Lubumbashi, (a city in the south-east), in 2009. He continued to enjoy freedom in a state-sponsored villa in Lubumbashi, having surrendered to the authorities in October 2016, after he escaped from prison in 2011. Military courts heard a number of conflict related sexual violence cases. In November, for example, militia leader Frédéric Masudi Alimasi, (also known as Koko di Koko) received a life sentence in Bukavu, a city in the east, for killings, enforced disappearances, torture and rape. In the same month, a soldier was sentenced in Bas-Uélé province to 20 years' imprisonment for raping two children aged three and four years.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

In July, the ICC found Bosco Ntaganda guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the eastern Ituri province during 2002-2003 and, in November, sentenced him to 30 years' imprisonment.

In September, the Congolese army

announced that it had killed Sylvestre Mudacumura, the military leader of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Sylvestre Mudacumura was wanted by the ICC which issued a warrant for his arrest in 2012 for war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by the FDLR in the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In January, the government completely shut down the internet and banned several media outlets for 20 days, in an attempt to stop the publication of unofficial election results and to stem widespread protests over allegations of massive election fraud.

In March, the authorities announced that over 700 hundred people had been released from prison and that all illegal detention centres operated by the National Intelligence Agency had been closed on orders from the President. Those freed included prisoners of conscience and others who had been held in prolonged arbitrary detention. The authorities allowed several exiled political and civil society activists, as well as foreign journalists and human rights defenders who had been made unwelcome for several years, to return to the DRC and carry out their activities.
However, civil authorities and the police continued to ban and violently repress peaceful assemblies and demonstrations with impunity. Authorities imposed the requirement to obtain prior authorization for demonstrations, in breach of the Constitution.

Throughout the year, at least 35 peaceful demonstrations were dispersed by the police who used excessive force against protesters, injuring at least 90 and arbitrarily arresting scores. In June, at least one protester died from a bullet wound in Goma in the eastern DRC after security forces fired at peaceful demonstrators. In July, the Kinshasa governor banned a demonstration to protest against a former justice minister being selected as a candidate for the Senate president. When the demonstration went ahead, the police used excessive force against the protesters. In August, police officers used violence to prevent a pro-Union for Democracy and Social Progress party rally which was held to denounce government corruption and promote good governance.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

According to the World Health Organization, at least 1,680 people died from Ebola, 5,000 from measles, and 260 from cholera epidemics. Measles and cholera infected 310,000 and 12,000 people respectively. Consistent efforts made by the authorities and the international community to address the situation were jeopardized by poor funding, security and logistical challenges, the continuing armed conflicts and communal violence.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In September, the government introduced free primary education, a right enshrined in the Constitution, which could have benefited millions of children. However, the progress was hindered by poor planning and infrastructure, and insufficient funding for primary schools. Teachers' unions accused the government of implementing the policy to the detriment of their own lives and without their cooperation as school attendance increased significantly. Teachers' strikes led to the closure of hundreds of schools for several weeks after the beginning of the September term.

DETENTION

Prison conditions remained dire. At least 120 prison inmates died from starvation, a lack of access to clean water and proper healthcare, including 45 at the Central Prison of Bukavu between January and October. While prisons were severely overcrowded and underfunded, little or no effort was made to improve conditions. Over 300 detainees escaped from prisons in Kongo-Central, Kasaï-Central, Ituri and Tshuapa provinces.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Indigenous Twa who were evicted from their land without free, prior and informed consent when the Kahuzi Biega National Park in the eastern DRC was established in 1975, were in dialogue with park authorities to resolve their grievances. However, repeated promises to provide alternative land, jobs and public services, and to release Twa held in prison for returning to the park, were not been met, and many Twa returned to their lands in the park in protest.

1. See for example: UN, S/2019/469, 7 July 2019, para. 58: "Consistent with previously reported practices (S/2018/1133, paras. 63–68), the Group observed FARDC collaborating with NDC-R in new areas under the latter's control in Masisi territory. The Group also witnessed FARDC tolerating the free movement of NDC-R elements and the use of FARDC uniforms by NDC-R cadres in areas under FARDC control (see annex 17). The Group was not aware of any FARDC operations against NDC-R during the period under review." Full report available at https://undocs.org/en/S/2019/469.

An Equatorial Guinea national holds a placard during the protest. Hundreds of people gathered at Callao square in Madrid to mark the International Human Rights Day.
© John Milner/SOPA Images/LightRocket via Getty Images

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Republic of Equatorial Guinea
Head of state and government: **Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo**

Harassment, intimidation and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and activists continued. The judiciary continued to show a total lack of independence from the government while corruption and its impact on human rights continued to be serious concerns. Despite various public commitments by the authorities, the death penalty was not abolished.

BACKGROUND

In the year that Equatorial Guinea was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and was reviewed by the UN Human Rights Council during its 33rd Universal Periodic Review (UPR) session, President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo in August commemorated 40 years in power.

The country's economic crisis, notably caused by corruption, led the authorities to seek international investment. They held international events on natural resources such as oil, in April, and gas, in November. They requested a loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Harassment, intimidation and arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, activists and members of the opposition continued. The rights to freedom of expression and association were steadily strangled.

Human rights defender and political activist Joaquín Elo Ayeto was arrested on 25 February at his house in Malabo. He was accused of having information on a plot to kill the president and was subjected to torture while at Central Police Station after his arrest which resulted in physical injuries. He was also threatened with death by police at the station. During his detention at Black

Beach prison, Ayeto's health seriously deteriorated. At the end of a judicial proceeding full of irregularities, he was tried on 21 November for defamation and threats against the President.

Alfredo Okenve, vice-president of the Centre for Development Studies and Initiatives (CEID), was arrested on 15 March after having been banned from receiving a Franco-German Prize for Human Rights for his work. Fearing arrest, Okenve went to Malabo Airport in an attempt to leave the country. At the airport, he was arrested by eight security agents, handcuffed, put on a military plane and flown to his home town of Bata. Once they arrived, he was instructed to stay at home, and not to leave the city.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The authorities continued to violate and abuse the rights to freedom of association. On 5 July, the Minister of the Interior and Local Corporations revoked by a decree the authorization granted to the CEID which the authorities accused of undertaking political activities. CEID, one of the few NGOs that denounce human rights violations and abuses in the country, appealed the government's decision. No decision has been taken on the case by the end of the year.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

On 22 March, a "macro trial" started at the Bata Provincial Court. About 130 defendants were charged with treason, crimes against the head of state, rebellion, possession and storage of weapons and ammunition, terrorism, and the financing of terrorism. On 31 May, 112 of them were convicted and sentenced to periods ranging from three to 97 years, with 25 defendants receiving sentences of more than 70 years.

According to the international observers who attended and monitored the trial, the process was flawed with serious procedural irregularities. The prosecution offered little to no evidence to support its case against most defendants. In some cases, they presented confessions which had been obtained under torture, which included beatings and electric shocks. There also were important disparities between the court's treatment of the prosecution and defense which contravened the principle of equality of arms. Most of defendants were held incommunicado for almost a year. They were not informed of the charges against them and were denied access to their lawyers.

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

National Security Ministry released a media statement on 23 January accusing 16 people of money laundering and financing terrorism and the proliferation of arms trafficking in Central Africa. The list of people included William Bourdon, the lawyer who founded the French anti-corruption legal advocacy group Sherpa, in apparent retaliation for his involvement in lawsuits in France including against the president's eldest son accused of money laundering.

On 21 October, the IMF announced that an agreement had been reached with Equatorial Guinea for an Extended Fund Facility. The IMF has agreed a program worth around $283 million notably to improve governance and address corruption. There have been several corruption investigations including in the United States, Spain, France, Switzerland, South Africa on how hundreds of millions of (US) dollars of public funds were allegedly stolen and stashed abroad. Meanwhile, government spending on health, education, and water infrastructure over the past years has been inadequate to ensure the human rights of people in the country.

DEATH PENALTY

On 15 April, president Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo announced in Praia, Cape Verde, that he would soon submit to the country's Parliament a bill to abolish the death penalty, as required by the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. In the UN Universal Periodic Review outcome, adopted on 20 September, Equatorial Guinea continued to express its commitment to abolish the death penalty. Despite these public commitments, the death penalty has not yet been abolished in Equatorial Guinea.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

On 20 September, the Human Rights Council adopted Equatorial Guinea's UPR outcome. Equatorial Guinea accepted 202 recommendations made by other states but rejected 19 key human rights recommendations. Notably, the country disregarded recommendations for the protection of human rights defenders, rejecting recommendations to guarantee their safety, secure their work environment and to approve and implement laws to acknowledge and protect them. The government also rejected recommendations to investigate threats and reprisals against human rights defenders.

Two recommendations calling for the suspension of the 18 July 2016 Ministerial Order Number 1 from the Minister of Education and Science banning pregnant girls from attending school were also rejected. Calling for the development of good habits and to fight against negative attitudes, such as vandalism or sexual promiscuity, the article IV of the law categorically forbids the access of pregnant girls to any classroom in the country.

ELABERED, ERITREA - AUGUST 18: Young eritreans back from Sawa Military Training Academy, Semien-Keih-Bahri, Elabered, Eritrea on August 18, 2019 in Elabered, Eritrea. © Eric Lafforgue/Art in All of Us/Corbis via Getty Images

ERITREA

State of Eritrea
Head of state and government: **Isaias Afwerki**

The use of and indefinite military conscription, amounting to forced labour, continued despite an agreement to end the protracted border dispute with Ethiopia, a dispute the government had used to justify prolonged national military service. Thousands were prevented from travelling abroad without government permission, or due to repeated border closures. Eritreans fleeing the country were subjected to serious human rights violations in transit. Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances continued. Security forces restricted the right to freedom of expression inside the country, and government supporters attacked and threatened human rights defenders in the diaspora.

BACKGROUND

The governments of Eritrea and Ethiopia resumed diplomatic and commercial relations in July 2018 when they signed a Joint Declaration of Peace and Friendship to end the protracted border dispute which opened hopes for an improvement in the human rights situation. However, there was no change in the Eritrean human rights situation.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Thousands of Eritreans continued to flee the country primarily to avoid the imposition of an indefinite military national service programme, and the general human rights situation and sought asylum in other countries. They faced serious human rights abuses while in transit; many were subjected to detention, abduction, sexual abuse, torture and other ill-treatment in transit countries on their way to Europe, particularly in Libya. In Addition to Eritrean asylum seekers, 1300 Somali refugees in Eritrea crossed the border to Ethiopia after the Eritrean government closed the Umkulu refugee camp.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The right to leave the country remained restricted, and people were prevented from travelling abroad without obtaining permission from the government.
The 2018 peace agreement with Ethiopia led to the opening of the Humera, Zalambesa, and Bure border crossings between the two countries, allowing for the free movement of people during the last quarter of 2018. The period witnessed an exponential increase in the number of Eritreans crossing the border

and seeking asylum in Ethiopia. However, this came to an abrupt end after Eritrea closed the border crossing points in January 2019.

FORCED LABOUR AND SLAVERY

Conscripts to the mandatory national service programme were forced to serve for indefinite periods which extended far beyond 18 months, the maximum length of national service sanctioned by legislation, despite hopes that the Eritrean/Ethiopian rapprochement might put an end to the indefinite terms of national service. The government continued to conscript students in their final year of high school and made no commitments to release them from national service after they had served 18 months. Thousands remained in open-ended conscription, sometimes for as long as 10 years or more.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearances continued, for which security forces were not held accountable. Hundreds of prisoners of conscience and other prisoners, including journalists, former politicians and practitioners of unauthorized religions, continued to be arbitrarily detained without charge or access to lawyers or family members, many of whom had been held for nearly two decades. The whereabouts and fate of 11 politicians and 17 journalists, arrested and detained 18 years ago, for criticizing the President's rule, remained unknown.

Berhane Abrehe, a former finance minister, who was arrested by security forces in the capital, Asmara, in September 2018, had not been seen until April 2019 according to his son. He was arrested just days after he published a book called Eritrea My Country which criticized the government and called on Eritreans to use peaceful means to bring about democracy. After his arrest, the authorities refused to disclose information as to his whereabouts or fate. There is no publicly available information if he had not been charged with any offence by the end of the year.

In November, security agents rounded up and arrested more than 20 people in the Mendefera and Adi Quala areas in the Southern Zone. The reasons for their arrest and their current whereabouts remained unknown at the end of the year.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to restrict the right to freedom of expression, and particularly sought to undermine the independence of the media. Since 2006, private media had been shut down and independent journalists had been in detention. According to the Committee to Protect Journalists, Eritrea remained one of the 10 most censored countries in the world.

There was routine and widespread use of harassment, attacks and threats by the government, and its supporters, against human rights defenders in the diaspora, with the apparent support of the People's Front for Democracy and Justice, the ruling party.

Abandoned building in Madonsa in Manzini region of Eswatini. Photo taken in April 2018. © Amnesty International

ESWATINI

Kingdom of Eswatini
Head of state: **King Mswati III**
Head of government: **Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini** (replaced Barnabas Sibusiso Dlamini in October 2018)

In moratorium on all evictions in a meeting with Amnesty International, but there was no public announcement of this. There have been positive legal developments on provision of compensation to victims of forced evictions by both private and public actors. Eswatini authorities rejected an application to register a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex people organization. A man was arrested on charges of terrorism and sedition. The Sexual Offences Domestic Violence Act was passed in July 2018. The King changed the country's name to the Kingdom of Eswatini in April 2018.

RIGHT TO HOUSING AND FORCED EVICTIONS

There were positive legal developments, with the High Court ordering that the government pay compensation to one family that was forcibly evicted from Nokwane. The Supreme Court of Appeal upheld a ruling by the High Court that ordered a private company to compensate a family that was forcibly evicted from Title-Deed Land in the Malkerns. Both judgements set positive precedents for compensation in forced evictions cases.

On 26 February 2019, the High Court of Eswatini ordered the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology to pay compensation for damages that two sisters Thoko and Lomgcibelo Dlamini suffered as a result of their eviction from ancestral homes in Nokwane. Their homes were demolished following the forced eviction.

On 9 May 2019, the Supreme Court of Appeal upheld a ruling by the High Court of 14 July 2017 that the forced eviction of Sagila Dlamini's family was unlawful and that he was entitled to compensation from the private company.

The Eswatini authorities had not yet drafted legislation that explicitly prohibits forced evictions in all circumstances and sets out safeguards that must be strictly followed before any eviction is carried out. The Eswatini authorities had not yet finalized the land policy and bill

in line with international human rights obligations arising from the right to adequate housing.

A community of at least seven homesteads, affecting 75 people, including 29 children, were at risk of imminent eviction from Sigombeni in the Manzini region by a private party. On 27 March 2018 the Central Farm Dwellers Tribunal ruled that the community should vacate portion 1 of Farm 246 in the Manzini region. The community subsequently approached the farm owner with a proposal to buy the portion of land on which their homes are built, but were unable to raise the required funds of ZAR1-million. In 2018, the affected community lodged an appeal with the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy (MNRE), seeking government's intervention as they allege that they were allocated land in Sigombeni by lawful traditional authorities. The affected families told Amnesty International that there were at least 17 graves on their land. The government, however, claimed that the residents occupied the farm, which is privately owned, after it was acquired by a private party and that there was no proof of a farm dwellers agreement between the farm owner and residents. The residents lacked any formal proof of security of tenure and were vulnerable to forced evictions.

In Madonsa in the Manzini region, approximately 58 families – over 200 people – remained at risk of forced eviction by a parastatal authority. On 7 August a trial date to consider a case was due to be set, but this was postponed. In order to avert the eviction, the Commission on Human Rights was supporting the residents' request to include a third party who has an intention to purchase the farm on behalf of the residents in negotiations for the sale.

In Mbondzela, Gege, in the Shiselweni region, approximately 45 homesteads, including at least 38 children, faced eviction from Title-deed Land. The residents had appealed to the Minister of Natural Resources and Energy (MNRE), who referred the matter back to the Central Farm Dwellers Tribunal for reconsideration. The residents allege that there are at least 17 graves on the disputed land.

In Vuvulane in the Lubombo region at least 16 farming families remained at risk of eviction. While the Prime Minister pledged in a meeting with Amnesty International on 16 May 2019 to put in place a moratorium on all evictions until adequate legal and procedural safeguards are implemented, however, there has been no public declaration of a moratorium.

The Farm Dwellers Control Amendment Bill, aimed to regulate relations between farm dwellers and farm owners, was due to be introduced to parliament.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE (LGBTI)

In September the authorities rejected an application for registration of an LGBTI association created earlier in 2019. The Eswatini Registrar of Companies denied the registration of the LGBTI association, which intended to be named the Eswatini Sexual and Gender Minorities, on the basis that the Constitution does not recognize same-sex marriage.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

On 21 January Goodwill Sibaya claimed to be a member of the People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO), the Communist Party of Swaziland and the Economic Freedom Guerrillas. On this basis the Director of Public Prosecutions charged Sibaya with contravening Section 19(1) of the 2018 Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA)[1] and Section 3(1)(A) of the 1938 Sedition and Subversive Activities Act (SSA)[2].

On 24 May, pursuant to a search warrant, police searched Sibaya's property and found in his possession documents alleging that the King was responsible for human rights violations including land-grabbing in the Kamkhweli and Macetjeni regions, and corruption involving the King's ownership of a sovereign wealth fund named Tibiyo Taka Ngwane ('Wealth of the Nation'). In September 2016, the High Court had ruled that sections of the 1938 Sedition and Subversive Activities Act (SSA) and the 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA) were invalid as they infringed on constitutionally protected rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Although the government appealed against the High Court's decision, the appeal has yet to be heard.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Parliament passed the Sexual Offences Domestic Violence Act in July 2018, nine years after the draft legislation was introduced in 2009. According to the Swaziland Action Group Against Abuse (SWAGAA) annual statistics, there were 1818 cases of gender-based violence reported to them in 2019. This is an increase from 1686 recorded in 2018. In January, 185 cases of abuse including sexual and physical assault were recorded. The highest number of cases recorded were those of verbal abuse (934 cases), followed by sexual abuse (230 cases), which is more prevalent among females aged 10 - 18, compared to other demographic groups.

1. According to Section 19(1) of the STA: "a person who is a member of professes to be a member of a terrorist group commits an offense and shall on conviction be liable for imprisonment for a term not exceeding ten years."

2. According to Section 3(1)(a) of the SSA: 3(1)(a): "A "seditious intention" is an intention to bring into hatred or contempt or to excite disaffection against the person of His Majesty the King, His Heirs or successors, or the Government of Swaziland as by law established;"

A man holds the Ethiopian newspaper 'The Reporter', depicting the portraits of killed Ambachew Mekonen (L), President of the Ahmara Region, and of Gen. Seare Mekonnen, Chief of Staff of the Ethiopian National Forces, in Addis Ababa, on June 24, 2019. The security chief of Ethiopia's northern Amhara state, suspected of being behind a coup bid in the region and of possible links to the assassination of the army chief, has been shot dead, state media reported on June 24, 2019. © EDUARDO SOTERAS/AFP via Getty Images

ETHIOPIA

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
Head of state:: **Sahlework Zewde**
Head of government: **Abiy Ahmed Ali**

As part of its reform programme, in February, the government overturned the civil society legislation which had curtailed the right to freedoms of association and expression and tabled a new draft law before Parliament to replace draconian anti-terror legislation. At the same time, numerous journalists and other critics of the government continued to face arbitrary arrest, illegal prolonged detention and unfair trials. Hundreds of people were killed in a surge of communal violence, and the army unlawfully killed at least nine protesters, including children.

BACKGROUND

Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali won the 2019 Nobel Prize for Peace for domestic reforms, including the release of thousands of oppositions political party leaders and members, lifting the ban on previously outlawed opposition political parties, and for his role in the peace deal that ended the border stalemate with neighboring Eritrea (see Eritrea entry). Since taking office in April 2018, his government released dozens of arbitrarily detained journalists and bloggers.

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

Amnesty International has documented a surge in ethnic violence that resulted in thousands of killings across the country, where the security forces failed their duty to protect. Instead, the security forces, particularly the members of the regional police and local administration militia had active roles by siding with their ethnic groups involved in the communal violence.

On 10 and 11 January, in Metema town, the North Gondar Zone of Amhara Region, around 60 people were killed in coordinated attacks against members of the Qimant, an ethnic minority people who had campaigned for autonomy

within the Amhara Regional State. The attacks were carried out by an Amhara community vigilante group and regional government security forces. In September, at least 30 people, were killed in a communal violence in Gondar city and in areas surrounding the city including Fenter, Weleqa, and Azezo. In September, in the predominantly Qimant districts of Chilga and Arbaba, at least 30 people died in skirmishes between armed members of the Qimant community and the regional security forces. Between 28 September and 15 October, reprisal attacks on Qimant people and their businesses in Gondar city and surrounding towns resulted in at least 405 deaths.

In April, members of the ethnic Gumuz group killed 21 Amhara residents in the Benishangul Region. In May, armed people in the Awi Zone of neighbouring Amhara Region killed at least 100 ethnic Gumuz and Shinasha residents. In July, the violent dispersal by federal security forces of a meeting in Hawassa City, held by Sidama activists and elders, triggered ethnic attacks against residents in multiple towns throughout the Sidama Zone. At least 50 people were killed by communal violence, and also as a result of the use of excessive force by security forces who responded to the unrest. By the end of the year, the government had not conducted full investigations into the killings.

In October, at least 74 people were killed in towns in Oromia and Harari Regional States due to communal violence that erupted during protests against a government decision to withdraw protection from an Oromo political activist.

In November and December, at least 12 students were killed during ethnic clashes in universities in Amhara and Oromia. The killing of an Oromo student in Weldia University, Weldia town in Amhara, triggered a series of revenge killings including in Dire Dawa, Dembi Dolo and Gondar universities. Around 35,000 students left university campuses to avoid the violence and returned to their homes. In December, an unidentified armed group abducted around 20 Amhara students as they were leaving Dembi Dolo University to return home.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

In January, members of the Ethiopian Defense Forces unlawfully killed at least nine protesters, including three children, in the towns of Genda-Wuha and Kokit, in the Amhara Region. The army was escorting a convoy of vehicles, ostensibly carrying construction machinery, but which protesters believed was being used to traffic weapons and ammunition. When the townspeople blocked the road that traversed the two towns, in order to search the vehicles, the army shot at them. Witnesses told Amnesty International that the protesters did not use any violence means during the standoff during the blockade. Although, in January the army's Deputy Chief of Staff promised to investigate the incident, no findings had been made public by the end of the year and no prosecutions were initiated. In October, the security forces killed at least 12 protesters in Ambo and Adama towns during protests against a government decision to withdraw protection from an Oromo political activist.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Despite notable progress since the 2018 political reforms, there were numerous arbitrary arrests, particularly of journalists and writers who criticized the government. In August, the Federal Police arrested eight people in the capital, Addis Ababa, for facilitating the publication and distribution of a book called The Hijacked Revolution which had been published under an alias. The police questioned them about the author's identity and released some of them weeks later but detained the publisher until the end of November when he was released after the police dropped the terrorism charges. In September, the police arrested five journalist who worked for Segele Qerro Bilisuma, an Oromiffa online media outlet. They were charged under provisions of the repressive Anti-Terrorism Proclamation 2009 (ATP), and detained at Addis Ababa Police Commission for over two months before being released unconditionally.

Following the spate of communal violence, the government tabled a draft law before Parliament in November, which would outlaw speech that advocates violence, and the spread of "disinformation." The draft contained broad and vaguely-worded provisions that undermine freedom of expression. Tigray Regional State security forces, including the regional police and the local administration militia, targeted perceived or actual supporters of the Wolkait Amhara Identity Committee after it petitioned the Tigray Regional State and the federal government for Wolkait district to become part of Amhara Regional State. Victims and other witnesses said that those targeted were subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention, torture and other ill-treatment on the basis of their Amhara identity, for speaking Amharic, or listening to Amharic music.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Hundreds of political opposition members, journalists and others who were critical of the government faced unfair trials on charges brought under the ATP law. The trials were marked by illegal and prolonged pre-trial detention, unreasonable delays and persistent complaints of torture and other ill-treatment.

In June, the Legal Advisory Committee, tasked with leading legal reforms, tabled draft terrorism legislation before Parliament which was expected to replace the ATP during 2020. In February, the police arrested Colonel Gemechu Ayana, a prominent Oromo Liberation Front member, and detained him on terrorism charges for eight months, in violation of ATP provisions which allow for a maximum four months' pre-trial detention period. In December,

the authorities dropped the charges and released him.

Following the assassinations in June of the Amhara Regional State president and the Chief of Army in Addis Ababa, hundreds of people were arbitrarily arrested. Among those targeted were leaders of the Amhara Nationalist Movement (a political party), government officials, journalists, opposition political party leaders and members of the Addis Ababa Care Taker Committee which promotes administrative autonomy for residents of Addis Ababa. For four months, at least 10 suspects remained in pre-trial detention under terrorism charges, before their trial that commenced in November. Police also arrested a journalist when he attended the pre-trial hearings and charged him with terrorism crimes together with the suspects.

In July, dozens of Sidama activists, were arrested on suspicion of instigating the communal violence in Sidama Zone in July. They included employees and leaders of the Sidama Media Network. They were held in detention until the end of the year without being charged in a prison in Halaba town, over 100 km from their families.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March, Parliament adopted the Civil Society Proclamation No 1113/19, replacing the Charities and Societies Proclamation No 621/09. The new law eased restrictions which had hindered the ability of groups to secure foreign funding; to carry out human rights-related work and activities; and had put obstacles in the way of foreigners or non-residents who wished to engage in the monitoring and promotion of human rights, conflict resolution or anti-corruption activities.

Mourners stand beside the grave of slain Ghanaian investigative journalist Ahmed Husein Suale during his funeral in Accra, on January 18, 2019. - The 34-year-old reporter was gunned down as he returned to his home in the Madina area of the capital, Accra, in the night of January 16, in a killing that sparked outrage. Husein was part of an investigative team that lifted the lid on graft in the sport last year, which led to the sanction of a string of top officials, coaches and referees. © RUTH MCDOWALL/AFP via Getty Images

GHANA

Republic of Ghana
Head of state and government: **Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo**

The Right to Information law increasing accountability was adopted. The President commuted death sentences into life imprisonment, but courts continued to hand down death sentences, and prison conditions remained deplorable. Attacks against journalists were reported; one journalist was killed and others were arbitrarily arrested. Women and girls continued to suffer discrimination and violence. LGBTI people continued to face discrimination in law and practice.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 26 March, the Parliament of Ghana passed into law a bill allowing citizens access to information from all public and some private institutions in Ghana. The new Right to Information law, which took effect in 2020, is expected to increase government transparency and accountability and help combat corruption.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

An increase in attacks against journalists in 2019 caused Ghana to lose its status as the best-ranked African country in Reporters Without Borders' World Press Freedom Index.

In January, investigative journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale was shot and killed by unidentified men on motorbikes. Suale's work exposing corruption had incited calls to violence against him from ruling party parliamentarian Kennedy Agyapong. In television interviews, Agyapong had revealed Suale's identity as well as information on the neighborhood in which Suale lived.

In June, the Bureau of National Investigations (BNI) arrested, detained, and allegedly tortured two journalists employed by the online news portal ModernGhana. The BNI claimed that the journalists had committed cybercrimes. Their arrests came after the publication of a ModernGhana article critical of

Ghana's National Security Minister.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

An Affirmative Action bill was not passed into law despite advocacy activities led by local NGOs promoting women's rights. Women continued to be under-represented in public and political life and at risk of gender-based violence. In October, a BBC News documentary exposing sexual harassment at the University of Ghana led to the suspension of two professors and sparked a nationwide discussion about sexual harassment in the workplace and schools.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

LGBTI people continued to face discrimination and violence. Consensual same-sex relations between men remained a criminal offence. There was an increase in hate speech against LGBTI people from religious and political leaders and from the media. Plans to introduce comprehensive sex education in schools in 2020 were met with public outrage, largely due to widespread fear that the new curriculum would teach children about homosexuality. In October, the US-based World Congress of Families sponsored a regional conference in Accra advocating for increased criminalization of LGBTI people. Several Ghanaian politicians spoke at the conference, which framed LGBTI inclusion as "anti-African", and called for "tougher laws" against the already vulnerable group.

DETENTION

Prisons continued to be severely overcrowded. Prison Administration statistics as of September showed that 15,463 people (1.2% female) were being detained across 44 prisons with a combined capacity of only 9,945, and that 12.2% of detainees were held in pre-trial detention. The feeding allowance per person did not increase despite concerns about the quality and quantity of prison food. Extreme inadequacies in medical care and sanitation persisted in violation of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

DEATH PENALTY

No executions have been carried out in Ghana since 1993. Twelve people had their death sentence commuted to life imprisonment and one person was pardoned. Still, Ghana continued to sentence people to death. Eight people were sentenced because the death penalty remained mandatory for certain crimes. The government made no effort to abolish the death penalty.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

After enduring many years of forced evictions and substandard living conditions, the residents of Agbogbloshie and Old Fadama districts in Accra were assured by Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia in September of the government's plan to end evictions in those areas, which largely comprise informal settlements and provide residents with access to essential services like schools, health centres, toilets, water, roads and drainage systems. The housing policy passed in 2015 remained unimplemented.

People carry coffins during the funeral after the repression of street protests that resulted in at least 11 deaths in Conakry, on November 4, 2019. Crowds of protesters marched through the Guinean capital of Conakry on October 24, 2019 to protest a constitutional revision that could allow President Alpha Condé to run for a third term.
© CELLOU BINANI/AFP via Getty Images

GUINEA

Republic of Guinea
Head of state: **Alpha Condé**
Head of government: **Ibrahima Kassory Fofana**

Security forces used excessive force to disperse pro-democracy protesters. Journalists, human rights defenders and others expressing dissent were arbitrarily arrested. Prisons remained overcrowded and impunity was widespread.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions continued to rise ahead of the 2020 presidential election. President Alpha Condé launched a constitutional review process, fueling concerns from opposition and civil society groups that he may run for a third term.

The legislative elections which were due in December 2018 were rescheduled for 2020 after several delays.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Guinea adopted laws which undermined the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The National Assembly in June passed a law on the use of arms by the gendarmerie. It cites several justifications for the use of force – including to defend positions gendarmes occupy – without making clear that firearms can only be used when there is an imminent threat of death or serious injury and if other means remain ineffective or without any promise of achieving the intended result.
Adopted in July, the Law on the Prevention and Repression of Terrorism contains vague and overly broad provisions, including on the apology of terrorism and contesting the commission of an act of terrorism, which could be used to criminalize the legitimate exercise of the right to freedom of expression. It authorizes the Minister of Security and the Minister of Territorial Administration to temporarily shut down places of worship where "the statements made, theories spread, or activities held incite acts of terrorism or justify such acts" without judicial oversight.
The 2019 Civil Code legalized polygamy, despite concerns raised by civil society groups and UN institutions.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY AND EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

The authorities banned over 20 protests organized by opposition groups, pro-democracy movements and human rights organizations on vague and overly broad grounds. On several occasions, the authorities referred to a 2018 directive by the Minister of Territorial Administration banning all protests. In July, Guinean human rights groups asked the Supreme Court to strike down the directive, but the complaint was dismissed on procedural grounds. The security forces continued to fuel violence during demonstrations by resorting to excessive use for force. At least 17 people died during demonstrations against a constitutional revision that could allow President Alpha Condé to run for a third term.

On 31 May, student Amadou Boukariou Baldé was beaten to death by gendarmes who dispersed a demonstration at the University of Labé. His relatives filed a complaint to the Prosecutor's office, but their case was dismissed.
At least 11 people were killed by live ammunition on 14-15 October in Conakry. Among those killed were Boubacar Diallo, 14, and Mamadou Lamarana, 17. At least one other protester and one gendarme died in protests in the town of Mamou.
On 4 November, at least three people died during a funeral procession for the protesters killed in October. Amnesty International authenticated footage which showed police and gendarmerie officers firing teargas canisters around the mosque and cemetery where the funeral was held, stealing a motorbike and using slingshots against protesters.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists and over more than 60 members of the pro-democracy movement National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (Front National pour la Défense de la Constitution, FNDC) were subjected to arbitrary arrests.
On 26 March, Lansana Camara, the general administrator of conakrylive.info, was arrested after he published an article accusing government officials of corruption. He was charged with defamation and released on bail on 2 April.

On 4 May, police arrested seven FNDC members who organized a protest in Kindia, western Guinea. They were wearing T-shirts with the slogan "Don't touch my Constitution." On 7 May, they were sentenced to three months in prison and fined 500,000 Guinean francs (50 euros) each. They were released on appeal on 13 May.

Aboubacar Algassimou Diallo, a radio presenter, and Souleymane Diallo, the general administrator of the satirical newspaper Le Lynx, were summoned at the Judicial Police Directorate on 19 and 20 August, respectively. They were accused among other charges of undermining public order and public security by sharing data. The charges were dropped in September.
Eight FNDC leaders were arrested on 12 October as they were preparing for a protest. On 22 October, the Tribunal of Dixinn found Abdourahamane Sano, Alpha Soumah (alias Bill de Sam), Ibrahima Diallo, Bailo Barry and Sékou Koundouno guilty of "direct incitement to an unarmed gathering". Sano was sentenced to a year in prison and the others to six months. They were released on bail on 28 November pending their appeal.

Five FNDC members in Kindia, including the local FNDC co-ordinator Alseny Farinta Camara, were arrested on 14 November and charged with participation in an unauthorized gathering. They were released on 19 December. Two were acquitted and three were sentenced to four months in prison, with three months suspended. They have appealed.
Journalists were also subjected to violence. Radio presenter Mohamed Mara was beaten by policemen in Conakry on 16 November. He had received threats on social media from a supporter of the ruling party days before.

DETENTION

Prisons in Guinea are severely overcrowded, and conditions are inhumane. At least eight people died in detention in 2019. According to the Prison Administration, as of October, some 4,375 people were detained across 33 prisons with a combined capacity of only 2,552. Fifty-four percent of detainees were awaiting trial. At the Conakry Central Prison, which has capacity for 500 prisoners, 1,468 people were detained, 68% in pre-trial detention.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

The Criminal Code retains the criminalization of same-sex conduct characterized as "unnatural acts" which creates a climate of fear and has been used to harass LGBTI people. At least two people, including a 14-year-old boy, were arrested in Kankan, eastern Guinea, on 18 August, on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation and charged under the indecency provisions of the criminal code which include "unnatural acts". In October, the charges against the boy were dropped and he was released.

IMPUNITY

There was limited progress in a couple of cases of human rights violations, but by in large impunity remained the rule.
In February, a police captain was convicted of killing a man during a demonstration in 2016. He was sentenced to 10 years in prison and ordered to pay 50,000,000 Guinean francs (4,864 euros) in damages to the victim's family for assault and battery causing unintentional death. His superior officers were not brought to justice.
Also, in February, an Anti-Crime Brigade captain in Kipé, a neighborhood of Conakry, was sentenced to six years in prison for torturing a man in police custody in March 2016. At least 10 other

gendarmerie and police officers were suspended over the incident but were not brought to justice.

In the case of the 2009 Conakry stadium massacre, the Minister of Justice pledged in November that the trial would start by June 2020, but said it would require the creation of a special court and training for the judges. Earlier, the Supreme Court dismissed all the appeals following the end of the investigation, including the appeals of the victims against the dismissal of the charges against Mathurin Bangoura and Bienvenue Lamah. Over 150 protesters were killed and 100 women subjected to sexual violence in September 2009.

LESOTHO

Kingdom of Lesotho
Head of state: **King Letsie III**
Head of government: **Thomas Motsoahae Thabane**

Human rights violations and impunity continued unabated. Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment continued. The right to freedom of expression remained severely restricted. There were unlawful killings.

BACKGROUND

Lesotho was ranked among Low Human Development countries by the 2019 United Nations Human Development Programme report, at 164, with women accounting for the highest number of people who live in poverty[1]. In July, political parties agreed to constitutional, governance, security and media reforms to ease tensions that continued to mount. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa brokered the agreement. Ramaphosa appointed retired South African Deputy Chief Justice Dikgang Moseneke to mediate the process that led to the agreement. Ramaphosa was appointed by the Southern Africa Development Community to facilitate dialog between the parties.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment continued against the police, but investigations remained inadequate.

On 16 July 2019, Kabelo Ratea appeared before the Maseru Magistrate's Court after he was ordered to do so by the Hamatela Police, on charges of robbery. He was taken to the Hamatela police station, where he was allegedly tortured until he soiled himself and police forced him to eat his feces. He was then released. On 1 August police told him to come back to court and the prosecutor informed the magistrate that the charges against Ratea were withdrawn. On 5 August, Ratea appeared before the Maseru Magistrates Court after he was ordered to do so by the Hamatela Police. Ratea was then remanded in custody without summons. He launched an urgent application for relief. On 11 September 2019, the High Court of Lesotho granted the relief application and ordered the release of Ratea.

Poshoane Moloi died on 27 December 2018, after being allegedly tortured by members of the Lesotho Mounted Police Services (LMPS). Around 4am on 27 December 2018, approximately 70 uniformed police officers raided two villages, Lilhloahloeng, and Ha-Shishila Kao in the Lesotho Highlands region. The police officers were heavily armed with firearms, chisels and sticks. Their faces were covered with balaclava masks and they broke into houses. The reason for the raid is unclear, but it happened two days after an altercation in a bar between an off-duty police officer and a villager. It also occurred in the context of ongoing community-led protests for the mine to provide infrastructure, including roads and electricity, to the mining-affected community[2]. The LMPS spokesperson confirmed on 20 February 2019 in a telephone conversation with Amnesty International that the National Police Commissioner had opened an investigation following the death of Moloi and that it is ongoing. The Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Law and Public safety, met with the LMPS and visited Kao village on a fact-finding mission, following the death of Moloi, and was due to present a report on allegations of torture to Parliament.

On 27 December 2018, police allegedly rounded up approximately 45 men and transported them to the Mabunyaneng river running through the Kao village, where they made all of them lie down on their stomachs, kicked them and ordered them to roll on the stones on the riverbank. The police officers also assaulted the men with gun butts, sticks, chisels, wires and stones from the time they were rounded up from their homes, until they reached the riverside.

On 8 February 2018, one villager, Terene Pitae was killed by police during protests by the community against the Kao mine's failure to deliver on promises to compensate villagers for losing their homes. The LMPS spokesperson confirmed that the National Police Commissioner had launched an investigation into the death of Pitae in 2018 in a telephone conversation with Amnesty International on 20 February 2019, and that the Director of Public Prosecutions had referred the matter of Pitae's death to the Butha-Buthe magistrate's court.

IMPUNITY

In July, judges from the South African Development Community (SADC) began hearing the trial of people accused of killing Lieutenant-General Maaparankoe Mahao, who died in 2015 allegedly at the hands of members of the Lesotho Defence Force (LDF) who claimed he had resisted arrest while leading a mutiny. The trial had been postponed from February after 16 of the accused appealed first to the High Court and then to the Court of Appeal, asking for the involvement of the SADC judges to be declared unconstitutional. Both appeals were unsuccessful. A SADC Commission of Inquiry set up in 2015 found no evidence that Lieutenant-General Mahao had planned a mutiny, concluded that he had been deliberately killed and recommended a criminal investigation. The trial had not concluded by year's end.

1. https://www.ls.undp.org/content/lesotho/en/home/library/Human-Development-Report-2019.html

2. Amnesty International (AI), Southern Africa Human Rights Defenders Network (SAHRDN) and Transformation Resource Centre (TRC) Public Statement AI INDEX: AFR 33/9896/2019 22 February 2019 Lesotho: Authorities must ensure an independent investigation into torture allegations and death: https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/AFR3398962019ENGLISH.pdf

Male inmates detained in the Antalaha central prison, Madagascar, are assembled in the main courtyard, in October 2019. As with many prisons in Madagascar, the overcrowding is extreme. As of October 2019, Antalaha's central prison was ten times overcapacity, with a majority of male inmates who had not yet been tried. © Amnesty International

MADAGASCAR

Republic of Madagascar
Head of state: **Andry Rajoelina**
Head of government: **Christian Ntsay**

People living in poverty faced multiple barriers to accessing their economic, social and cultural rights, and remained at risk. Prison conditions continued to be inhumane, overcrowding worsened and the excessive use of pre-trial detention persisted. In the second half of the year, the government committed to addressing the pre-trial detention crisis.

BACKGROUND

On 19 January, Andry Rajoelina was sworn in as President, taking over from Hery Rajaonarimampianina following an election. On 27 May, a parliamentary election took place to elect the 151 members of the National Assembly, characterized by low voter turnout (31%). The majority of the seats (84 out of 151) went to the presidential coalition party, Isika Rehetra miaraka amin'I Andry Rajoelina (IRD,) as confirmed by the results pronounced by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI). In August, the newly-elected National Assembly held its first session.

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

In November, Madagascar was examined under the UN Universal Periodic Review process for the third time[1]. Madagascar received 203 recommendations, including on torture and degrading conditions in prisons, decriminalization of abortion, and protection of human rights defenders. Madagascar accepted 163, took 29 recommendations under further consideration and rejected 11.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Access to economic, social and cultural rights remained precarious[2]. Infant mortality remained high, as did the rate of children under five suffering from stunted growth. Access to education was low, with one child out of five aged 6 to 10 and one child out of three aged 11 to 14 remaining out of school. Half the population continued to lack access to clean water, and 20% lacked adequate sanitation.[3]

In August, the new government backtracked on a commitment made by the previous government to adopt a new Education Development Plan, which aimed at facilitating access to school for children living in rural areas. Several NGOs working in the education sector protested this decision.

DETENTION

Prisons remained extremely overcrowded, with the total number of detainees increasing, and conditions still inhumane. As of June, the prison population had reached more than 28,000 people, 56% of whom were in pre-trial detention. This number is up from 23,759 detainees in December 2018, when the rate of pre-trial detention was at 53.21%.

In May, the Minister of Justice informed Amnesty International[4] that he had approved a new, more nutritious diet for detainees, as opposed to their existing diet of mainly cassava (manioc), often served only once a day. By December 2019, however, this new diet had not yet been implemented in all prisons across the country.

In October, following a press statement by the President emphasizing the need for fair trials, the Ministers' Council moved to organize mobile court hearings in all regions of Madagascar, and to increase the use of alternatives to detention for minor offences. Later that month, President Rajoelina visited the capital city's prison, and publicly denounced the conditions of detention, overcrowding and excessive use of pre-trial detention, including for cases of petty and minor offences. He announced a presidential pardon of detainees held for minor offences, and committed to accelerating trials throughout the country.

POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES

Acts of torture and other ill-treatment perpetrated by the police and the military forces remained a common occurrence, particularly in the context of the government's fight against alleged cattle rustlers. Security forces often raided and looted villages, burned down houses, and tortured or killed villagers during searches for suspected cattle rustlers. In January, Amnesty International documented harrowing images of eight men in Betroka, Southern Madagascar, whose bodies were bullet-riddled after they were shot by police during a raid – they were accused of trying to steal from a shop.[5]

The government has failed to ensure justice and redress, and to hold suspected perpetrators to account. There is still no accountability for the victims from the 2017 revenge attacks by policemen in Antsakabary, who burnt down 500 houses, leading to the death of an elderly woman.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly continued to be violated. In April, investigative journalist Fernand Avimana, popularly known as Fernand Cello, was acquitted, nearly two years after his arrest on charges related to his work and fabricated accusations that he had stolen a cheque book[6]. He had previously accused a mining company and an alleged government ally of running an illegal sapphire mine in Ilakaka, South-West Madagascar.

In April, members of a community opposed to a mineral sands project, Base Resources in South-West Madagascar, marched against plans to start mining. The local community, mainly consisting of farming and fishing families, have opposed the mining of ilmenite, zircon and rutile for seven years. On 2 May, authorities arrested 30 community members, accusing them of vandalising the company's property during a demonstration. Twenty-one were released, but nine people from Benetse, Ampototse and Tsiafanoke were charged with burning and vandalizing the Base Resources exploitation campsite, and sent to pre-trial detention in Fianarantsoa prison on 9 May. On 13 June, the Fianarantsoa court acquitted them on charges of material destruction and arson and found them guilty of unarmed gathering without permission. They were released from prison and given six-month suspended prison sentences.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Abortion remained prohibited in all circumstances. An estimated 16% of maternal deaths were due to unsafe abortions – according to a Marie Stopes representative, three women died every day from a 'spontaneous or provoked abortion'.[7]

1. Human Rights Council adopts Universal Periodic Review outcome on Madagascar (X/X/2019)
2. https://mics.unicef.org/surveys
3. Enquête nationale sur la situation socio-démographique des ménages (MICS) : les indicateurs restent faibles pour Madagascar, https://www.unicef.org/madagascar/communiqués-de-presse/enquête-nationale-sur-la-situation-socio-démographique-des-ménages-mics-les
4. Madagascar's new diet for detainees is a step in the right direction, Amnesty International Public statement, 12 June 2019, AFR 35/0519/2019
5. Madagascar: Gruesome killing of suspected cattle thieves must be investigated, Amnesty International Press release, 1 February 2019
6. Malagasy journalist acquitted nearly two years after his arrest, 17 April 2019, AFR 35/0218/2019
7. Madagascar: les femmes et l'avortement illegal, https://fr.africanews.com/2019/09/01/madagascar-les-femmes-et-l-avortement-illegal/

Malawi Defence Force soldiers control protester in Lilongwe on January 16, 2020, during a protest to denounce alleged attempts to bribe judges overseeing a legal challenge to the re-election last year of the country's President. - People took to the streets after the country's chief justice charged that the five judges presiding over the case had been offered kickbacks. The complaint, which was filed to the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on January 13, prompted a call for demonstrations in Malawi's three main cities.
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MALAWI

Republic of Malawi
Head of state and government: **Arthur Peter Mutharika**

Discrimination against people with albinism continued, while threats to freedom of association and peaceful assembly heightened. There were increased attacks on Human Rights Defenders.

BACKGROUND

2019 was an election year for Malawi. There were incidences of protests in Malawi around elections, and the government used the law to silence civil society leaders and organisers of peaceful demonstrations. Some civil society leaders were threatened with death and their property was destroyed by ruling party activists. Persons with albinism continued to live in fear as ritual killers murdered at least one person with albinism.

DISCRIMINATION - PEOPLE WITH ALBINISM

Persons with albinism continued to be targeted for their body parts: in many of the cases persons with albinism have been killed for ritual purposes and a superstitious belief that their body parts would bring luck in business and politics. In January, 60-year-old Yassin Kwenda Phiri was murdered in his house in Nkhata Bay while his 9-year-old son George watched helplessly. Two men cut off his father's arms with a knife and removed his intestines with their bare hands. Goodson Fanizo, 14, was abducted in February. Although six suspects were picked up by police, neither the child nor his body had been found by year's end.

On a positive note, the High Court prosecuted and convicted five people on charges of murder of persons with albinism. All five people were sentenced to death. While Amnesty International welcomed the convictions, it remains opposed to the use of the death penalty as a form of punishment, even for serious offences. People with albinism also continued to face challenges accessing healthcare services in district hospitals.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Following the May general elections, opposition parties and civil society organizations were unhappy with the outcome, alleging electoral fraud. The Human Rights Defenders Coalition

(HRDC) organized protests against alleged mismanagement of elections by the Malawi Electoral Commission. The state responded by deploying members of the police service and the military and applying for court injunctions to stop protests.

In August, the High Court dismissed the government's request for an injunction against protests to demand the resignation of elections commission chair, Jane Ansah. The Supreme Court also rejected the injunction request. Judge Chikopa concluded that the right to demonstrate in the Malawi constitution was unconditional and the state could not impose blanket bans or use the courts to ban the protests.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders and activists remained under threat as the country prepared for its May general elections. HRDC activists who organized and led demonstrations against alleged electoral fraud after the May elections were attacked by ruling party youth cadres, intimidated, and targeted for prosecution by the authorities. Timothy Mtambo, Chairperson of the Human Rights Defenders Coalition and Executive Director of the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR), increasingly received death threats through text messages and was attacked by unknown people. In October, at around 11pm unknown gunmen fired six shots at Mtambo's vehicle as he drove home from a meeting in Lilongwe.

On 25 September, unknown youths hacked human rights activist Billy Mayaya and several other activists in Blantyre.[1] Mayaya sustained serious injuries to his head. Instead of protecting activists from attacks, police tear-gassed demonstrators.

In July, Gift Trapence and Reverend MacDonald Sembereka were charged with embezzlement of funds and operating unregistered NGOs. They were both discharged by the courts. The two human rights defenders have been targeted to silence them and stop them from organising further demonstrations.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS/DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Excessive use of force, unlawful killings and torture persisted with impunity. In February, Buleya Lule was arrested in Lilongwe on charges of abducting a child with albinism and appeared in court in February, jointly charged with five other people. Bulela Lule later died in a police cell.[2] The post-mortem report released on 12 April revealed that Bulela had been electrocuted and sustained injuries to his head, buttocks and stomach.

In September, one of the post-election protesters, Justin Phiri, died in custody of infected wounds that were not treated. He had been severely assaulted by soldiers and the police did not take him to a hospital.

1. https://www.nyasatimes.com/dpp-cadets-hack-activist-mayaya-in-arsenal-jersey-abducts-anti-ansah-protesters/
2. https://africanlii.org/article/20190509/malawi-police-will-be-investigated-suspects-torture-death

Malian army soldiers patrol the area next to the river of Djenne in central Mali on February 28, 2020. - A week earlier Mali's Prime Minister announced the dismantling of the security checkpoints organized by the traditional militia hunters Dan Na Ambassagou from Dogon country. © MICHELE CATTANI/AFP via Getty Images

MALI

Republic of Mali
Head of state: **Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta**
Head of government: **Boubou Cissé**
(replaced Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga in April)

Security deteriorated significantly in the center of the country, including through intercommunal violence. Armed groups and security forces continued to commit abuses and human rights violations. Impunity for the most serious crimes persisted. The security situation severely restricted the right to education. Ban on peaceful assemblies was maintained in central Bamako.

BACKGROUND

Populations continued to be victims of human rights abuses notably with a multiplication of large-scale killings of civilians committed by armed groups and self-proclaimed 'self-defense groups', in the Mopti region. Cases of extrajudicial executions and torture by military forces were also reported by the UN. As of the end of the year, more than 200 000 persons were internally displaced, according to the UN (they were 120 000 in January of the same year).

INTERNATIONAL SCRUTINY

In December, the 'UN Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali stated: "The security situation in Mali has now reached a critical level, with a limited presence of state institutions in some areas, unprecedented incidents of violence across communal lines, and increasingly deadly terror attacks against the security forces as well as civilians."

Also, the mandate of the UN International Commission of Inquiry for Mali established on 19 January 2018 was extended to 19 June 2020. Its mission is to investigate allegations of abuses and violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law committed between 1 January 2012 and its date of creation.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Armed groups continued to perpetrate attacks against civilians, with at least, according to UN figures, 450 civilians killed during the year, including over 150 children in the first six months. According to the UN, during the first semester, at least 250 civilians were killed in the Mopti region. Between 1 October and 30 December, 200 civilians were killed, 96 injured, and 90 abducted. In that period, more than 85 per cent of deadly attacks against civilians took place in Mopti Region.

According to the UN, in the Mopti region, thirty-seven people were killed in the village of Koulogon-Peul on 1 January 2019.

On March 23, at least 150 people, including men, women and children, were killed during a raid on Ogossagou. Thirty-five people (Dogon community), including 22 children under 12 years old, were killed during an attack on Sobane Da on 9 June. Eight days later, at least 38 people were killed during a raid on two villages (Gangafani and Yoro) in the Koro district, according to the government. On November 13, Malian soldiers discovered 20 bodies in the village of Peh, including some that had been thrown into wells.
Armed groups also targeted traditional and religious leaders and griots. Consistent media news reported that on 17 April the chief of Pissa, a village in the cercle of Bankass was killed by unidentified gunmen. On 22 June the chief of Hombori, Nouhoum Bah Maiga, was killed by unidentified gunmen, and on 19 July, a famous griot, Modi Djignandé, known also as "Niappa" was killed in Dialloubé by armed gunmen.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

The Malian defense and security forces also committed human rights violations. The UN documented 17 cases of extrajudicial executions by the Malian Defense and Security Forces in several areas, such as Intahaka (Gao region) and Mondoro (Mopti region). They were also responsible for at least 4 acts of torture and ill-treatment.

JUSTICE SYSTEM FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

On 24 July, President Keïta promulgated a "national reconciliation" law, which notably exempt from prosecution persons who have committed or were complicit in the commission of crimes in the context of the "crisis which started in 2012", except for war crimes, crimes against humanity, rape and imprescriptible crimes. The UN Independent Expert on the human rights situation in Mali called for a revision of this law, which could "prevent many victims of serious violations from exercising their rights to fair and equitable justice, to obtain reparation and to know the truth about the violations committed in the past". On the same day, President Keïta also promulgated a law extending the jurisdiction of the Specialized Judicial Unit to Combat Terrorism and Transnational Organized Crime to war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.
Despite the numerous human rights violations and abuses committed since 2012, few trials and fewer convictions have taken place. Proceedings that opened in 2014 and 2015 against elements of armed groups for sexual violence are still at the investigation stage. The trial of General Amadou Haya Sanogo and others has still not resumed after it was suspended in December 2016. General Sanogo has been charged in relation to the abduction and extrajudicial execution of 21 soldiers.

INTERNATIONAL JUSTICE

On 30 September, the International Criminal Court confirmed the charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including torture, rape, forced marriage and sexual slavery, against Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud. "Al Hassan", member of Ansar Eddine and de facto chief of Islamic police in Timbuktu at the time of the alleged commission of the crimes, is the second person prosecuted before the ICC regarding the Malian situation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

A demonstration called by religious leaders was held in Bamako on 5 April despite its prohibition by the government. A blanket ban on protests in central Bamako had been enacted following the November 2015 attack against the Radisson Blu Hotel. The ban was renewed on October for another year.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Since the beginning of the conflict, 1,051 schools were de facto closed (by October 2019) due to insecurity and threats which led teachers to leave, affecting 315,300 children. Schools and teachers continued to be targeted by armed groups. In October, local media reported the attack against several schools in the Timbuktu region by armed groups. End of October, the government announced that five teachers were abducted on 25 October in Korientzé (Mopti area) and released few days later.

Campaign poster asking for the release of Mauritanian blogger. © Amnesty International

MAURITANIA

Islamic Republic of Mauritania
Head of state: **Mohamed Ould Ghazouani** (replaced Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz in August)
Head of government: **Ismaïl Ould Bedda Ould Cheikh Sidiya** (replaced Mohamed Salem Ould Béchir in August)

The Mauritanian authorities continued to restrict human rights. Human rights defenders, journalists, bloggers and political activists were subjected to intimidation, harassment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, with a peak around the presidential elections in June. Internet was shut down. Police forces used excessive force against peaceful protesters. Slavery and discriminatory practices persisted with impunity.

BACKGROUND

The Minister of Interior and Decentralisation issued on 6 March a decree dissolving 76 political parties, as they failed to meet the benchmark of 1% of the votes cast over the last two municipal elections or because they did not participate to the municipal elections for the second time. The presidential election took place on 22 June.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

The Mauritanian authorities continued to silence dissenting voices.

Cheikh Ould Jiddou and Abderrahmane Weddady, bloggers whose Facebook posts criticized alleged government corruption, were arrested on 22 March, charged with malicious accusation, and detained at the central prison of Nouakchott. They were released on bail on 3 June and a judge dropped all the charges against them on 29 July.

On 23 June, the day after the presidential election, internet access was blocked after the ruling party's candidate, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani, declared victory. While demonstrations were repressed, the blockage of internet prevented journalists, human rights defenders, activists and opposition members from freely accessing and exchanging information. Internet connection was restored on 3 July.

In the days following the presidential ballot, several journalists, opposition figures and civil society activists were arbitrary arrested. These include: Samba Thiam, the leader of the Progressist forces for change (Forces progressistes pour le changement) arrested on 24 June and released on 3 July; Cheikhna Mohamed Lemine Cheikh, campaign manager of the Coalition Sawab/ Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement (Coalition Sawab/ Initiative de resurgence du Mouvement Abolitionniste) in Ksar, arrested on June 24 and released on 2 July; Yahya Sy, of the human rights group COVISSIM, arrested on July 3 and released 6 days later without charge; Moussa Seydi Camara, journalist, was arrested on 26 June, accused of questioning election results and released on 3 July; Ahmedou Ould Wediaa, anti-slavery activist, journalist and member of the opposition party (Tawassoul), arrested on 3 July, following statements against the mass arrests of foreign nationals blamed by the authorities for the election-related protests. He was released on 15 July.

Also, 10 activists of the Initiative for the Resurgence of the Abolitionist Movement were arrested in late June. Four of them were sentenced to 3 months in prison. They were all released in November.

The authorities also banned the demonstrations scheduled to take place on 27 June by opposition groups to contest the results of the 22 June presidential election.

In October, police forces used excessive force to disperse peaceful protests organized by students against a 2018 decision of the government limiting university enrollments. Dozens of students were wounded. The limitation was lifted on 6 November. Demonstrations organized during the year by a group of victims of alleged property scams were frequently violently dispersed by security forces.

The blogger and prisoner of conscience, Mohamed Mkhaïtir, arrested in 2014 for having published a blog that denounced discrimination in the name of religion, was released on 29 July after more than five years in arbitrary detention. He should have been freed in November 2017 following an appeal court ruling, but the authorities detained him at an undisclosed location until his release. He had limited access to his family and no access to his lawyers.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The Mauritanian authorities continued to violate the right to freedom of association.

An Amnesty International delegation was barred access to the country upon arrival at the Nouakchott–Oumtounsy International Airport on 17 March 2019.

On 3 April, four policemen informed the leadership of the association Hand in Hand (Main dans la Main) that they had to close their premises in Nouakchott. The association which promotes the values of fraternity, justice and diversity was created in 2006 and received a formal authorization to operate in Mauritania.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

On 16 March, a member of the Mauritanian contingent of the Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel killed a civilian in Nbeiket el Ahouach, near the border with Mali. The Mauritanian authorities opened an investigation.

SLAVERY AND DISCRIMINATION

Slavery and discriminatory practices persisted with impunity.

Academics, NGOs and human rights defenders continued to express concerns about the persistence of slavery in Mauritania. In its concluding observations on the report of Mauritania adopted in August 2019, the UN Human Rights Committee expressed its concerns regarding the persistence of situations of slavery and the difficulties that victims of slavery encounter in filing complaints in order to enforce their rights. As of 1 January 2019, the United States terminated its trade agreement with Mauritania due to forced labor practices and reprisals against anti-slavery activists.

On 22 November, the Special Court of Nema, close to the Malian border, convicted three individuals for slavery and sentenced respectively to a five-year suspended sentence, ten years imprisonment and fifteen years imprisonment. They appealed the decisions and remain free.

The Human Rights Committee also expressed concerns about the continued marginalization of "the Haratin and black African communities (…), particularly in terms of access to education, employment, housing, health care, social services, land and natural resources". It raised concerns about legal provisions discriminating against women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex people. Article 308 of the Criminal Code criminalizes "unnatural acts" and carries the death penalty.

IMPUNITY

On 28 November, the Mauritanians celebrated the Independence Day but also commemorated the 30th anniversary of the 'passif humanitaire', a three-year period that began in 1989 during which black African were victims of torture, arbitrary detention, extra-judicial executions and mass expulsion. Impunity for the perpetrators of these serious human rights violations and abuses still prevailed as the authorities did not repeal the law 1993 law granting amnesty for alleged perpetrators.

A trail of destruction after the insurgents attacked a village in Cabo Delgado province, northern Mozambique. © Hizidine Achá

MOZAMBIQUE

Republic of Mozambique
Head of state: **Filipe Nyusi**

Various interrelated trends drove political instability. Armed groups carried out attacks against civilians, and security forces were alleged to have committed serious human rights violations and abuses in their response to the violence. The crackdown on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association continued.

BACKGROUND

The FRELIMO-led government and the main opposition party, RENAMO, reached a peace deal aimed at disarming RENAMO's forces and integrating them into the national security apparatus. However, one faction of RENAMO refused to recognise the deal and began launching armed attacks.

Cyclones Idai and Kenneth ravaged parts of central and northern Mozambique in March and April respectively, killing some 600 people, causing over US$2 billion damage to infrastructure, homes, livestock, food and water sources and the livelihoods of over 2 million people. The government response was inadequate, and disturbing allegations also emerged that women survivors were forced to trade sex for food aid.

IMPUNITY – THE CONFLICT IN CABO DELGADO

Cabo Delgado province continued to experience armed attacks by individuals believed to be members of an extremist group, popularly known as "Al-Shabaab". The attackers invaded villages, set houses on fire, hacked villagers to death with machetes and looted their food. Although the government increased its military presence in the region, its response was inadequate. Civilians suspected of being extremists and journalists reporting on the attacks were subjected to intimidation, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and even summary executions.

On 23 January, a South African businessman Andre Hanekom died in mysterious circumstances under police custody after being shot in the arm and stomach. He had been abducted by four masked men armed with AK'47 rifles in Palma district on 1 August 2018. A series of events between security forces, justice and health services culminated in his death. The Mozambican authorities have not conducted any investigations into the torture allegations and his death.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

Authorities continued to crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. There was an escalation in repression and a clampdown on civil society, journalists, human rights defenders and activists ahead of the elections held in October.

The government restricted media freedom including by stopping the media from reporting the current political and social conditions in Cabo Delgado. Journalists

and researchers were harassed, intimidated, arrested and detained for reporting on the conflict in Cabo Delgado. After the arrest of Amade Abubacar and Germano Adriano in January, the governor of Cabo Delgado threatened journalists during a press conference in Pemba that there was much more happening in the province than human rights abuses and, warned them of dire consequences if they continued to report about these abuses.

On 5 February, the police used excessive force against 100 demonstrators who were peacefully protesting the Administrative Court's decision to bar Manuel de Araújo from running for a second term as mayor of Quelimane city. The police arrested 15 protesters and one journalist, Nhama Matabicho, who was covering the protest, confiscated his equipment, and beat him severely prompting hospitalization.[1]

On 18 January, Fátima Mimbire, a woman human rights defender and former Centre for Public Integrity (CIP) researcher, received intimidating messages and death threats on social media.[2] The attacks began when CIP launched a campaign denouncing the move by government to repay the afore-mentioned US$2 billion loans. CIP was distributing T-shirts to the public with the message "I won't pay for hidden debts". From 21 to 24 January, the PRM surrounded CIP's office in Maputo and ordered people to remove the T-shirts, which they then confiscated. They also ordered CIP to stop distributing the T-shirts. Further, FRELIMO militants have been advocating violence against Fátima on social media, and to this effect, on 3 May 2019, Alice Tomás, FRELIMO member of parliament, agitated on Facebook for Fatima "to be raped by 10 strong and energetic men to teach her a lesson."

THE RIGHTS OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Amnesty International received worrying reports of arbitrary arrests and attempts to deport refugees by the security forces. On 17 January, the police and immigration officers arrested 11 refugees and five asylum-seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Ethiopia. The police and immigration officers arrived at the Maratane Camp in the evening.[3] On arrival, these officers beat, hand-cuffed and arrested the refugees and asylum seekers without a warrant. On the same evening, the PRM transferred them from Nampula to the Third Police Station in Pemba, Cabo Delgado. The refugees and asylum seekers were not informed of reasons for their detention.[4]

Amnesty International also notes with concern that on 23 January, the Government deported seven men from the group. They were not notified of a deportation order, nor were they permitted to challenge the legality of their deportation. When they arrived in Kinshasa, DRC, the immigration officials denied them entry as they did not have any travel documents and they were sent back to Mozambique. On 26 January, the refugees and asylum seekers arrived in Pemba and were immediately transferred to the Third Police Station where they were still held at the end of the year.[5]

1. VOA Português, Quelimane: Polícia trava marcha em apoio a Manuel de Araújo e agride jornalista, 5 February 2019. Available at: https://www.voaportugues.com/a/quelimane-pol%C3%ADcia-trava-marcha-em-apoio-a-manuel-de-ara%C3%BAjo-e-agride-jornalista/4773927.html.
2. Amnesty International, Mozambique: Woman human rights defender facing threats online: Fátima Mimbire, 29 January 2019. Available: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr41/9744/2019/en/.
3. Amnesty International phone interviews, 30 May 2019.
4. Amnesty International (13 June 2019) Mozambique: Refugees, Asylum Seekers Held Arbitrarily – AFR 41/0465/2019. Available at: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr41/0465/2019/en/.
5. Ibid.

Protesters hold a placard in front of Lagos State House of Assembly during a protest on the Hate Speech bill and Social Media bill, on November 27, 2019. The proposed bill has sparked controversy as they represent an alarming escalation in the authorities' attempts to censor and punish social media users for freely expressing their opinions.
© Olukayode Jaiyeola/NurPhoto via Getty Images

NIGERIA

Federal Republic of Nigeria
Head of state and government: **Muhammadu Buhari**

Attacks by Boko Haram continued and resulted in hundreds of deaths, occasioned by security forces' failure to protect civilians. The Nigeria Army, Police and State Security Service continued to torture and ill-treat detainees. Communal violence continued in some parts of the country. Freedoms of assembly, association and expression were all under attack as the country witnessed an increasing shrinking civic space. The government also disobeyed several court orders.

ARMED CONFLICT

Boko Haram continued to carry out attacks, abductions and killings of civilians in the Northeast. The armed group carried out at least 31 attacks that resulted in at least 378 civilian deaths. The group also killed at least 16 abducted civilians.

One of the deadliest attacks was in January when the armed group attacked Rann, killing at least 60 people and displacing more than 9,000 people. Withdrawal of security forces shortly before the attack contributed to massive exodus of civilians from Rann.
At least 30 people lost their lives in July when suicide bombers attacked a football viewing center in Mandarari.
A female nurse and 5 male aid workers, all staff of Action Against Hunger were abducted on 18 July by Boko Haram. On 25 September one of the male aid workers was killed by the armed group who claimed the government had deceived them following months of secret negotiations. The remaining 4 male aid workers were killed on 13 December while the female nurse remains in captivity. 11 captives abducted along Damaturu – Maiduguri highway in November were also killed on Christmas day.

Nigerian authorities continue to detain dozens of children alongside adults in connection with Boko Haram crisis. On 29 April, Amnesty International's research confirmed that at least 68 boys were held without charge in Maiduguri Prisons. 25 detained children were released by the Nigerian Army in October and an additional 86 were released in November.

COMMUNAL VIOLENCE

At least 96 people were killed in violent clashes between members of farmers' and herders' communities. Not less than 570 people lost their lives in 5 states in Northwest Nigeria. Again, at least 20 people were killed on 8 March during a communal clash between the Igburra Mozum and Bassa Kwomu communities in Kogi State.

IMPUNITY

Little progress was made in securing accountability for human rights violations and abuses committed by security forces, Boko Haram and other suspected perpetrators involved in the herders and farmers' clashes. No one was brought to justice for the killing of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) protestors in different states.

In September, Agnes Callamard, United Nations Special Rapporteur for Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, at the end of her visit to Nigeria, noted that the absence of accountability functionality in Nigeria is contributing to human rights violations and crisis in the country.
In its December preliminary report, the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) of the International Criminal Court (ICC) included two more crimes related to attacks by Boko Haram against humanitarian personnel and recruitment and use of children by the Nigerian security forces. The OTP also confirmed that a final decision whether to carry out a full investigation will be made in 2020, should Nigerian authorities fail to demonstrate tangible steps to fulfil their obligations under the Rome Statute.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Security forces banned lawful assembly in some states, including Lagos and Rivers, and in some cases, they violently disrupted peaceful protests, such as the IMN protests in Abuja.
The Unity Fountain, which serves as the rallying point for most protests in the capital city was heavily guarded by the police throughout year. On 17 July, the Nigeria Police made an announcement restricting all protests in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) to the Unity Fountain. In October, the Federal Capital Territory Administration closed the Unity Fountain for three months for rehabilitation and construction of a fence. In July, the Police Command in Plateau state placed a total ban on any form of public procession in the state.
On 5 August, several protesters including journalists were arrested and detained across Nigeria by security officials for participating in the #RevolutionNow protest.

On 12 November, officials of State Security Service beat up one journalist and fired teargas and live ammunition to disperse activists during a protest to demand for the release of prisoners of conscience Olawale Bakare and Omoyele Sowore. The Executive Director of Enough is Enough Nigeria, Yemi Adamolekun was also attacked during the protest.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Ibrahim El-Zakzaky, leader of the IMN and his wife Zeenah Ibrahim remained in detention despite a Federal High Court ordering their release in 2016. IMN members have held regular peaceful processions in Abuja since January 2019 calling for the release of their leader and his wife.

At least 2 IMN protesters were killed and more than 60 arrested on 9 July, when their peaceful protest turned violent after security officials fired live ammunition at the protestors at the National Assembly Complex. Most of those arrested continued to be held incommunicado in detention facilities in the Federal Capital Territory and in Kaduna and Niger States.

On 22 July, 11 protestors, a Deputy Commissioner of Police and a reporter for Channels Television were killed when police opened fire on IMN protestors during their procession in Abuja. Scores were injured and many arrested when officials from the Nigeria Police violently disrupted the protest, which was largely peaceful.

On 27 July, a High Court in Abuja proscribed the activities of IMN in any part of Nigeria. The court declared that "no person or groups of persons should henceforth associate with the Shiites for any reasons."

Security forces have arbitrarily arrested at least 200 and killed at least 10 members and supporters of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) at different times during the year.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The right to freedom of expression remained increasingly restricted. Journalists, bloggers and media activists who asked federal and state authorities probing questions were variously charged with cybercrime and terrorism under the Cybercrime Act of 2015 and Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act of 2013. Amnesty International documented 19 cases of assault, arbitrary arrests, and detention of journalists.

On 20 May, men suspected to be officials of the State Security Service re-arrested journalist Jones Abiri while he was in the company of friends at his office premises in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State. He was released on 25 October after 5 months in prison. He continues to face charges of terrorism and cybercrime, among others. Jones had earlier spent 2 years in detention without trial.

On 4 June, officials of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) of the Nigeria Police assaulted Kofi Bartels, a broadcast journalist with Nigeria Info 92.3 FM radio station based in Port-Harcourt, South-South Nigeria. He was then arrested, detained and tortured for attempting to film policemen beating up a teenager in the city of Port-Harcourt.

On 16 September, officials of the Akwa Ibom State Environmental Protection and Waste Management Agency assaulted Mary Ekere, a journalist with The Post Newspaper in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State, South Nigeria, for filming their brutality against street traders in the city with her mobile phone.

On 1 March, police arrested and detained Obinna Don Norman, journalist and the owner of The Realm News for his publications on allegations of corruption in Abia state. He faces charges of cyberstalking under the Cybercrimes Act.

On 6 January, armed security forces

invaded the office of Daily Trust Newspapers in Nigeria's capital city Abuja, carting away computers, laptops and mobile phones. On the same day, two of their offices in Maiduguri and Lagos were also invaded by security forces.

In November, Nigeria's National Assembly considered two draft legislations: Protection from Internet Falsehood and Manipulation and other Related Offences Bill 2019 and the Bill to establish a National Commission for the Prohibition of Hate Speech. If passed into law, the bills will give authorities arbitrary powers to shut down the internet, make criticizing the government or hate speech punishable with penalties of up to a life sentence and a maximum of death penalty.

On 24 December, Nigerian authorities released Omoyele Sowore, prisoner of conscience and publisher of online news website Sahara Reporters on bail. Amnesty International had earlier named Sowore, Agba Jalingo and Olawale Bakare (aka Mandate) prisoners of conscience and demanded that Nigerian authorities release them immediately and unconditionally and drop all charges against them. While Sowore and Bakare have been released, Agba Jalingo, a journalist and publisher of Cross River Watch newspaper remained in detention. He was arrested on 22 August and faces charges of terrorism, disturbance of public peace and conspiracy to commit terrorism. He was initially arrested for his writing and social media posts on alleged corruption in Cross River state.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Despite the passage of the Violence Against Persons Prohibition (VAPP) Act, violence against women remains prevalent in Nigeria. The VAPP Act, a law which criminalizes acts that are harmful to and discriminatory against women, is applicable in Abuja and has been domesticated in less than 10 states across Nigeria, by the end of the year.

In 2019, there were reports of unlawful arrests, physical abuse, sexual violence, verbal abuse and financial extortion of over 100 women in the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) by the Nigeria Police and agents of the FCT Joint Task Team (Department of Development Control, Abuja Environmental Protection Board (AEPB) and the Social Development Secretariat). These unlawful arrests of women on suspicion of being sex workers were carried out on streets, bars, restaurants, nightclubs and other relaxation centers. A mobile court convicted many of these women in unfair trials and some of them were sentenced to prison or fined for 'wandering', an offence which has been abolished throughout the country. These women were denied access to legal representation. Following these reports of violence against women and campaigns by various CSOs, including Amnesty International, the National Human Rights Commission inaugurated a Special Investigative Panel on Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) in Nigeria. The panel's mandate includes reviewing extant laws and regulations, hearing complaints, investigating alleged violations, making recommendations on remedies for victims and ensuring accountability for violations of women's rights. The panel started its sittings in November. On 26 November, the Federal government established the national sex offender register in Abuja by virtue of Section 1(4) the VAPP Act.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Violence against children persists, despite the enactment of the Child Rights Act (CRA). Since the passage of the CRA in 2003, just over 20 states out of the 36 states in Nigeria have domesticated the Act. Most Northern states are yet to domesticate the CRA. Children with disabilities continue to face discrimination and multiple barriers, despite Nigeria's legally binding obligation on the right to education. Amnesty International Nigeria has documented some cases of children who face discrimination and abuse due to their disability. 7-year old Imran Kanun Muhammad allegedly suffered sexual violence and inhuman treatment at the School for the Deaf, Kuje, Federal Capital Territory (FCT). This case which is currently in court, is being monitored by Amnesty International Nigeria. In July, there were allegations of sexual abuse of female students in the School for the Blind, FCT, which led to the suspension of two teachers by the Federal Capital Territory Administration. Also, in July, the dilapidated state of the Kwara State School for Special Needs in Ilorin was uncovered by the Governor and he made commitments to improve the conditions in the school.
In April 2019, an Amnesty International investigation exposed allegation of sexual violence against children by security agents and inmates at Maiduguri Maximum Security Prison.

RIGHT TO HOUSING AND FORCED EVICTIONS

Some state authorities have continued to forcibly evict residents. People's homes and businesses have been demolished by state authorities without genuine consultations, adequate notice nor access to remedies. In 2019, the Nigerian government evicted over twenty communities in Lagos State, including Abagbo, Abule Elepa, Abule Glass, Ajakoji, Akaraba, Bobukoji, Ebute Oko, Fashola, Idi Mango, Ilaje, Inangbe / Ilado, Kopiamy, Ogunfemi, Oko-Kate, Okun Alfa, Okun Babakati, Second Badagry, Okun Gbogba, Okun Ilase, Okun Kobena, Sankin, Sapo Okun, and Tokunbo, among others. Many other communities in Lagos live under perpetual threats of forced evictions. Nigerian authorities cited concerns around pipeline vandalization and other crimes as justification for violating people's right to housing.

Three years after the Otodo-Gbame forced evictions, most of the evictees remain homeless and are living in abject poverty. Despite the Lagos High Court judgment of 21 June 2017 which held that evictions without resettlement are unconstitutional and the order restraining the government from undertaking further forced evictions in Lagos, evictions have continued unabated. The remedies

granted by the court ordering the Lagos state government to consult with affected residents and evictees with a view to resettling them within the state have been ignored by the government. Instead, the Lagos state authorities lodged an appeal which remains pending at the Court of Appeal.

In September, Leilani Farha -the United Nations Special Rapporteur (UNSR) on the Right to Adequate Housing visited Nigeria. The UNSR declared the housing conditions in Nigeria as an urgent human rights crisis. Among other recommendations, she called on the Nigerian authorities to take urgent measures to decriminalize homelessness and declare a nationwide moratorium on forced evictions.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remain pervasive within the Nigerian criminal justice system. The Nigeria Police especially the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the military and the State Security Service (SSS) continue to subject detainees to torture and other ill-treatment.

In March, a high court in Anambra state ordered the Nigeria Police to pay compensation to Ugochukwu Oraefo for unlawful detention and torture. The police have neither paid the victim nor ensured that the police officers responsible are brought to justice.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

Amnesty International received credible reports that security agencies, including officials from the police and the SSS carried out arbitrary detentions and kept detainees incommunicado.

The security agencies are yet to account for about 600 members of the IMN whose whereabouts remained unknown since December 2015 when at least 60 IMN members were killed in Kaduna state.

Abubakar Idris, social media personality better known as Abu Hanifa Dadiyata, remain missing after he was abducted by armed men in his Barnawa, Kaduna state residence on 2 August.

DETENTION

Nigerian prisons remain overcrowded. About seventy per cent of inmates are awaiting trial. Some of the inmates have been awaiting trial for as long as 5 years. On 14 August, President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Nigerian Correctional Service Bill into law, which he said was aimed at addressing fundamental lapses in the Prisons Act.
On 2 December, five inmates were killed, and seven others injured after being electrocuted at the Ikoyi Correctional Facility in Lagos. The prison authorities said they were investigating the incident but did not release any report on the investigation by the end of the year.

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Nigerian authorities continue to disobey court orders and undermine the rule of law. After sustained pressure from local and international bodies, Omoyele Sowore and Sambo Dasuki, two high profile political prisoners were released on 24 December after the government initially refused to obey several court rulings granting them bail. The Attorney General and Minister for Justice, Abubakar Malami later announced that they were released on compassionate grounds.

DEATH PENALTY

Courts continued to impose death sentences. Although no execution was recorded, there are still more than 2,000 people on death row.
In some states, legislative steps were taken to expand the scope of the death penalty. In March, Rivers state amended its laws to prescribe the death penalty for kidnapping and cultism by adopting the Rivers State Secret Cult and Similar Activities (Prohibition) (Amendment) Law No.6 of 2019 and the Rivers State Kidnap (Prohibition) (Amendment) No.2 Law No.7 of 2019.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

LGBTI organizations reported widespread arrests of gays, lesbians and bisexuals by security agents. Gay men were also targeted by mobs and individuals for blackmail and extortions.
In December, 47 men were tried in Lagos for public displays of affection with members of the same sex. They were part of 57 men arrested in a Lagos hotel in August 2018. They were publicly humiliated and accused of being homosexuals.

Nigeria is yet to repeal the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act 2013, which prohibits same sex relationship with penalties of up to 14 years imprisonment.

Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo carry their belongings as they walk near the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) offices in Kiziba refugee camp in Karongi District, Rwanda February 21, 2018. © REUTERS/Jean Bizimana

RWANDA

Republic of Rwanda
Head of state: **Paul Kagame**
Head of government: **Edouard Ngirente**

Political opponents faced severe restrictions on the right to freedom of association and some disappeared or were killed. Those expressing opinions deemed to be critical of the ruling party, the government and its policies, faced prosecution and lengthy prison sentences. Rwanda continued to host around 150,000 refugees, primarily from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). President Paul Kagame pardoned 52 women jailed for having, or assisting with, abortions. The right to abortion remained restricted. Efforts to bring to justice those suspected to be responsible for the 1994 genocide continued.

BACKGROUND

Frank Habineza, the Democratic Green Party of Rwanda's leader and a former presidential candidate, became the party's first MP in the 2018 parliamentary elections. Major legislative reforms in 2018 included the adoption of a revised Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and counter-terrorism legislation.

Senatorial elections were held in September 2019.

Tensions with neighbouring Uganda continued throughout 2019 despite an agreement in August aimed at improving relations.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The right to freedom of association for political opponents remained limited. Senior members of FDU-Inkingi (the United Democratic Forces party) were killed or disappeared in suspicious circumstances. Others faced harassment and intimidation at the hands of the authorities in attempts to stifle their right to freedom of association. Victoire Ingabire, the party's former president, who was released from prison in 2018 and given a presidential pardon, was repeatedly summoned by the Rwanda Investigation Bureau (RIB). Subsequently, she left FDU-Inkingi and formed a new political party in November 2019.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The whereabouts of Boniface Twagirimana, FDU-Inkingi's vice-president, remained unknown, despite the RIB's confirmation that they were

investigating his disappearance. In October 2018, the Rwanda Correctional Services said that he had escaped from the maximum security Mpanga International Prison shortly after his transfer there. He was accused of forming an irregular armed group and threatening state security, along with eight other party members, but was the only one to be transferred. RIB said that they were investigating and his whereabouts were yet to be established. The circumstances of his alleged escape suggested that he was forcibly disappeared.[1] Eugène Ndereyimana, another party member, disappeared in July while travelling to a meeting in Nyagatare in Eastern Province. His colleagues reported him missing when he failed to arrive.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

Anselme Mutuyimana, Victoire Ingabire's assistant, was found dead in March in suspicious circumstances, while Syldio Dusabumuremyi, FDU-Inkingi's national coordinator, was stabbed to death by unidentified men in September. The following day, RIB announced that they had arrested two people as part of their investigation of Syldio Dusabumuremyi's murder.[2]

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Rwanda hosted around 150,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily from Burundi, the DRC, as well as others who had been evacuated from Libya, most of whom were from Eritrea, and others from Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan. In September, Rwanda, UNHCR and the African Union signed a memorandum of understanding stating that the transfers would be voluntary, and that those transferred to Rwanda would be given options of resettlement into a third country, return to country of origin, return to a country of where first asylum had been granted, or remaining in Rwanda, subject to agreement with the authorities.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

By the end of the year, no one had been brought to justice for three incidents in 2018 where security forces used excessive force against protesting refugees resulting, in two incidents in one day, in the deaths of at least 11 Congolese refugees and scores of injuries when police opened fire on protests in Karongi town and Kiziba refugee camp, both in Western Province. The Rwanda National Police reported that seven police officers were also wounded. A few months later, further police operations in Kiziba resulted in clashes in which at least one refugee died from his injuries. An investigation by the National Commission for Human Rights, published in February 2019, found that the police were in line with the Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials. The Commission failed to make recommendations to law enforcement officers to review or improve their practices in policing assemblies to avoid injuries or killings. Between 2018 and 2019, more than 60 refugees were charged for participating in and organizing "illegal demonstrations", "spreading false information with intent to cause a hostile international opinion of the government", "violence against public authorities" and other similar charges. Court hearings in a case against members of the Kiziba camp refugee leadership were ongoing at the end of the year.[3]

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Those expressing opinions deemed to be critical of the ruling party, the government and its policies, faced harassment, intimidation, prosecution and lengthy prison sentences.

A refugee from Kiziba camp remained in prison serving a 15-year-sentence given to him in 2018 on charges including "spreading false information or harmful propaganda with intent to cause a hostile international opinion against the government", and "causing an uprising or unrest among the population". The grounds for his conviction included sharing information with international media and human rights groups.

In December 2018, the High Court acquitted government critic Diane Rwigara and her mother Adeline Rwigara on charges including inciting insurrection and forging documents. The court ruled that social media messages between Adeline Rwigara and her friends and family were private conversations and were not proof of inciting insurrection.

The following April, the Supreme Court ruled that criminalizing individuals for the "humiliation of national leaders and persons in charge of public service" and "public defamation of religious rituals" violated the right to freedom of expression. However, the Court upheld legal provisions which criminalized the use of "insults or defamation against the President" on grounds that "insulting the president harms public order". President Kagame responded that the latter provision should be considered a civil rather than criminal offence.

In December, the Court of Appeal upheld convictions against Colonel Tom Byabagamba and retired Brigadier General Frank Rusagara, two former high-ranking military officials, for the peaceful expression of their opinions. They were originally convicted in 2016 and sentenced to 21 and 20 years' imprisonment respectively for "inciting insurrection" and "tarnishing the image of the government". In the December decision, their sentences were reduced to 15 years on a technicality.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

In some cases, authorities failed to follow legal procedures when arresting and detaining suspects. Jackie Umuhoza, the daughter of exiled Pastor Deo Nyirigira, was arrested in the capital, Kigali, on 27 November. The RIB said that she was under investigation for treason and espionage (offences included in the ordinary Penal Code). Under normal circumstances, she should have been held for only five days after her arrest

before being brought before a judge. After public scrutiny of the case, the RIB stated that she was being held in accordance with the counter-terrorism law that allows for up to 90 days' detention without charge, and which requires that detention must be approved by a prosecutor every 15 days. However, the RIB spokesperson declined to confirm whether a prosecutor had reviewed her detention at that time.[4]

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In April, the President pardoned 367 people convicted for abortion, complicity in abortion and infanticide. In October, he pardoned 52 others jailed on abortion or infanticide charges. This followed substantial revisions to the Penal Code in 2018 which included removing the requirement of a court order to obtain a legal abortion in cases of rape, incest or forced marriage. However, in cases where continuing the pregnancy would pose a risk to the health of the pregnant person or the foetus, authorization from two doctors was still required. Moreover, self-induced abortion remained a criminal offence, as well as performing an abortion in all other circumstances.

CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

Efforts to bring to justice those responsible for the 1994 genocide continued.

In January, Vincent Murekezi was transferred, in a prisoner exchange, from Malawi to Kigali. He had been convicted of fraud in Malawi for which he completed his sentence in October, but remained in detention in Rwanda, serving a life sentence handed down in absentia by a gacaca court on genocide charges. (Gacaca courts were community-based courts that operated between 2005 and 2012 and drew on traditional local conflict-resolution mechanisms to address the genocide, however they did not provide all the necessary guarantees so as to ensure the proceedings were fair.) The Ministry of Justice confirmed that he was eligible to apply for a retrial or for bail but would meanwhile remain in custody.

In April, the French President appointed a nine-member commission to review archival documents relating to the genocide and to evaluate the role France played in Rwanda between 1990 and 1994. The members were given two years to produce a report based on access to all official documents relating to Rwanda in the 1990-1994 period, including confidential presidential, diplomatic, military and intelligence archives.

In December, a Belgian court sentenced Fabien Neretse to 25 years in prison for his role in the genocide. He was convicted of multiple murders and attempted murders, which amounted to war crimes, and the crime of genocide.

1. Amnesty International, 'Rwanda: Opposition politician found dead', 18 March 2019, (Index: AFR 47/0063/2019)
2. Amnesty International, 'Rwanda: Ensure justice for opposition politician stabbed to death', 24 September 2019
3. Amnesty International, 'Rwanda: Investigate killings of refugees,' 22 February 2019 (Index: AFR 47/9866/2019)
4. Amnesty International, 'Rwanda: Pastor's daughter arbitrarily detained: Jackie Umuhoza,' 20 December 2019, (Index: AFR 47/1600/2019)

Demonstrators gather asking for an investigation after a possible corruption case was discovered by a BBC investigation, on June 21, 2019 in Dakar, Senegal. © Xaume Olleros/Getty Images

SENEGAL

Republic of Senegal
Head of state and government: **Macky Sall**

Authorities continued their crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Impunity persisted for cases of excessive use of force by police against protesters. Conditions of detentions remained harsh and deaths in custody continued to be reported.

BACKGROUND

President Macky Sall was re-elected in March to a second term. During campaign rallies, two people were killed and many others, including journalists, were injured in violent clashes between supporters of opposing candidates. Khalifa Sall, a former Mayor of Dakar, and Karim Wade, the son of former President Abdoulaye Wade, were excluded from running in the 2019 presidential election. Khalifa Sall, who in 2018 was sentenced to five years in prison for fraud of public funds, was released on 29 September following a presidential pardon. Two of his co-defendants were also released.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

In December, the National Assembly unanimously passed a bill toughening sentences for rape and child sex abuse. However, definitions did not comply with international standards and could be used to target teenagers under the age of 16 who engage in consensual sexual relations.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to unduly restrict the right to freedom of expression by prosecuting and detaining people who express dissent.

On 25 February, Abdou Karim Gueye, a rapper and activist was arrested after publishing a live video on social media which encouraged people to join him in a peaceful protest following the unofficial announcement of the presidential election results. He was charged with "calling for an unauthorized protest without weapons" and "insults by means of press". On 4 March, he received a one-month suspended prison sentence and was fined XOF 50,000 (EUR 76). In the aftermath of the presidential election, at least 17 opposition supporters were arrested for "public disorder and provocation of revolt".

On 16 July, activist Guy Marius Sagna

was arrested and questioned over his Facebook posts about the lack of adequate medical facilities in Senegal and for a publication on Facebook about French military presence in Africa. On 5 August, he was charged with "false alert of terrorism" and detained at Rebeuss prison in Dakar. He was released on bail on 16 August.

Adama Gaye, a journalist, was arrested on 29 July after publishing Facebook posts which criticized President Sall. He was charged with "offending the Head of State" and "acting to compromise public security'' before being released on bail on 20 September.

On 22 November, Oudy Diallo, an environmentalist, was arrested and detained at Kedougou prison after publishing a Facebook post in which he denounced the quotas of lands allocated to administrative authorities. He was given a two-month suspended sentence and released on 2 December.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Restrictive legislation on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly remained in place. The 2011 decree banning assemblies in city centre areas of Dakar still provided for a blanket ban on peaceful demonstrations. The Supreme Court rejected Amnesty International appeal against the decree.
On 14 June, authorities banned a demonstration in Dakar organized by opposition parties and civil society organizations in protest against alleged corruption practices implicating the Guediawaye Mayor, who is the President's brother, relating to oil and gas extraction projects in the country. At least 20 protesters were arrested.

Guy Marius Sagna, Prof. Babacar Diop and seven other activists were arrested on 29 November at a peaceful protest. They were charged with "participation in an unauthorized gathering". Sagna, out on bail from his July arrest over Facebook posts, was charged with "provocation of gathering" and "rebellion". On 20 December, Prof. Diop and four others were released on bail.

DETENTION AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Insanitary conditions and overcrowding continued in prisons. According to government statistics released in September, Senegal's 37 prisons held 11,547 people despite a capacity of 4,224.

Pre-trial detainee Louis Dieng died on 20 February at the Mbour prison reportedly from an asthma attack. He was sharing his cell with 87 inmates.

On 2 May, detainee Serigne Fallou Ka, 24-year-old, died at the Diourbel correction center. Three police officers and a security officer in Mbacké were arrested and charged with "assault and battery resulting in unintentional homicide"

On 29 August, detainees Babacar Mané and Cheikh Ndiaye died from electrocution at Rebeuss Prison after a fan malfunctioned, according to a statement from the Minister of Justice.

INTERNAL ARMED CONFLICT

Twenty-five people remained in custody after 14 people were killed on 7 January 2018 in the forest of Boffa-Bayotte, in Casamance, Southern Senegal. Sixteen of them were detained in Dakar, far from their families and a permit from a judge in Ziguinchor was required for visits. They were transferred to Ziguinchor, southern Senegal, on 26 December. One detainee died in custody.

Abdou Elinkine Diatta, the leader of the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC), was shot dead on 27 October. Three other people were wounded, one fatally. Authorities announced the opening of an investigation.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Senegal reiterated before the UN Committee against Torture that it would not decriminalize "unnatural acts". At least 11 individuals were arrested on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. Nine of them sentenced to between six months and five years in prison.

Human rights defenders working on LGBTI rights were victims of smear campaigns and death threats. Several defenders had to flee the country in fear for their safety.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Despite having strong domestic laws banning child abuse, Senegal failed to establish a coordinated system of care for children forced into begging to protect them from exploitation and abuse.
On 6 April, a 12-year boy died allegedly due to a beating. His Qur'anic schoolteacher was arrested.
On 23 November, five boys were found enchained in a Qur'anic school. Six suspects, including their parents and a teacher, were arrested. They were released on 4 December after receiving two-year suspended sentences for endangering life, "violence and assault" and "complicity".

School girls in from the Manonkoh community get ready to resume class after a short recess. © Astrid Chitou/ Amnesty International

SIERRA LEONE

Republic of Sierra Leone
Head of state and government: **Julius Maada Bio**

Freedom of expression continued to be restricted by the use of sections of the Public Order Act on defamation and sedition. Violations of the rights of human rights defenders were reported. Police used excessive force and committed other human rights violations. Discrimination against women and LGBTI people persisted.

BACKGROUND

The High Court, on 31 May, cancelled the election of 10 members of Parliament from the opposition All Peoples Congress (APC) for breaches of the electoral law during the March 2018 legislative polls. Following this decision, violence erupted between police and supporters of the APC at the party's headquarters in Freetown. On 25 August, the National Electoral Commission cancelled the results of the 24 August by-election in Constituency 110, located southeast of Freetown, because of violence at some polling stations.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Public officials continued to use Part V of the Public Order Act (POA), which deals with defamatory and seditious libel, to silence journalists, activists and other people who criticize them.

A proposed amendment to repeal Part V was approved by the Cabinet, and Parliament made recommendations to be further discussed in 2020. However, civil society organizations expressed concerns about other draconian provisions that could remain in the POA and which restrict the rights to freedom of expression.

At a conference in February, national and international NGOs expressed concerns about the Development Cooperation Framework – the regulations for NGOs - approved by the Cabinet in December 2018. The document required all NGOs to register with the Sierra Leone Association of Non-Governmental Organizations (SLANGO) and stipulated that 70% of all donor funds to an NGO must be directed to targeted beneficiaries and 30% towards administrative costs. In response to concerns expressed by civil society organizations, the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development removed the mandatory registration with SLANGO and expressed its willingness to continue discussions with NGOs in 2020.

POLICE AND SECURITY FORCES

There were growing concerns about public order management by the Sierra Leone police. Notably, on 21 January 2019, two people were shot dead during clashes between members of local

communities and security forces in the Sahn Malen Chiefdom in Pujehun District. On 31 May, police forces caused serious injuries when they used excessive force, including the use of tear gas, to disperse a protest on APC premises denouncing the nullification of some 2018 legislative results. In December, an investigation was launched into the rape of a minor, allegedly by a police officer in Kenema, eastern Sierra Leone.

On 26 April, the authorities committed to legal reforms to give more power and independence to the Independent Police Complaints Board, responsible for receiving individual complaints and making recommendations regarding police abuses.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Sexual violence continued to be a major concern. According to statistics from the Rainbo Initiative, 2,264 sexual assault cases have been reported to its centers from January to July, an increase number when compared to 2018 in which 2,900 cases were reported nationwide for the whole year. On 19 February, President Bio declared "a State of Public Emergency over rape and sexual violence". The announcement came amid growing outrage following a series of cases involving minors, including a 5 years old girl. Parliament on 19 June revoked the measure but on 19 September passed the Sexual Offences Amendment Bill into law. This new legislation provides that all sexual offence cases will proceed to the High Court for trial without having to be heard in a Magistrate's Court to determine the sufficiency of evidence. The law also prescribes life imprisonment as a maximum penalty for perpetrators of rape of a child.
The Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education issued a statement on October 15, clarifying that pregnant girls can now sit exams but still cannot attend school. On 12 December, the ECOWAS Court rejected the 2015 government ban on pregnant girls from sitting exams and attending mainstream school. The Court found that this policy amounted to discrimination against pregnant school girls and breached regional and international human rights law.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

Same-sex conduct continued to be criminalized according to Section 61 of the Offences Against the Person Act, with a penalty of up to life imprisonment. LGBTI people continued to suffer discrimination and stigmatization within communities and at health centres.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Violations of the rights of land-rights defenders continued to be reported. On 21 January 2019, two people were shot dead during clashes that erupted between members of local communities and security forces deployed to protect the palm oil plantations of the agribusiness Socfin Group in the Sahn Malen Chiefdom in Pujehun District. After the clashes, security forces raided in villages looting properties. Nineteen members of Malen Affected Land Owners and Users Association (MALOA) were arrested and charged with alleged destruction of Socfin Group properties and attack on the police. As of 31 December, their cases were still pending.

LEGAL, CONSTITUTIONAL OR INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Human rights NGOs repeatedly asked authorities to reopen the discussion on the Constitutional Review Committee's 2017 recommendations to align the Constitution to international human rights norms.

The streets are seen through the windshield of an armored personnel carrier (APC) during a routine AMISOM patrol in the recently reclaimed town of Qoryooley, Lower Shabelle, Somalia, April 29, 2014. © Private

SOMALIA

Federal Republic of Somalia
Head of state: **Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed (Farmajo)**
Head of government: **Hassan Ali Khayre**

The ongoing conflict had a devastating impact on the civilian population and over 1000 were killed and injured. The authorities cracked down on critics, including journalists, and opposition members stifling their rights to freedom of expression and assembly, in some cases using excessive force resulting in deaths. Al-Shabaab also severely restricted journalists' ability to work. Sexual violence against women and girls remained widespread. Conflict, drought and floods displaced more than 300,000 people. Over 2.6 million displaced people remained at risk of exploitation and abuse. Impunity for human rights violations was widespread.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions intensified throughout 2018 and 2019. The Somali federal and regional authorities, along with their international partners, focused on fighting Al-Shabaab and on managing elections including the South West regional presidential elections in late 2018, Puntland parliamentary and presidential elections in early 2019 and Jubaland parliamentary and presidential elections in August 2019. The elections were marred by political infighting and allegations of rigging, and authorities muzzled freedom of expression and assembly, in some instances using excessive force which resulted in civilian casualties.

ARMED CONFLICT

All parties to the conflict violated international human rights and humanitarian law. The UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) recorded a total of 1,154 civilian casualties by mid-November 67% of which were attributed to indiscriminate and targeted attacks, mainly by the armed group Al-Shabaab. Al-Shabaab regularly targeted civilians and civilian infrastructure, launching indiscriminate attacks, and carrying out summary killings of those it perceived to be linked to the government, as well as journalists and other civilians. The group claimed responsibility for a series of attacks including a truck bombing in December which killed nearly 100 people and wounded 78 others at the ex-control junction in the capital, Mogadishu. Military operations against Al-Shabaab

resulted in dozens of civilian deaths and injuries often as a consequence of indiscriminate attacks by Somali and allied forces including the US military and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM).

Other civilians were killed when caught in crossfire during interclan violence which continued in parts of the country.
US AFRICOM (the US military's Africa Command, responsible for military operations including those fighting regional conflicts) continued to use drones and manned aircraft to carry out at least 63 attacks, some of which resulted in civilian casualties. At least three farmers were killed in an airstrike that hit their vehicle near the hamlet of Abdow Dibile, in Lower Shabelle, in March. Since late 2017, the US drone attacks had killed at least 17 civilians and injured eight others.

On 5 April, following several reports about civilian casualties resulting from US airstrikes, including an Amnesty International report, AFRICOM admitted that it had killed two civilians in Somalia in 2018 and said it would conduct a review of its air attacks since 2017. By the end of the year, it had not provided an update about the review's status or any findings.

AMISOM did not provide any information as to the status or outcome of an investigation it launched into the apparent unlawful killings of four unarmed men by its forces in Mogadishu in November 2018.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists were beaten, harassed, threatened, subjected to arbitrary arrests and intimidation by the authorities, including the police, military and other government officials throughout south central Somalia and in Puntland. Al-Shabaab members also targeted journalists with violence, intimidation and threats. In July, two journalists were killed in an al-Shabaab attack in Kismayo.

Authorities restricted access to information and used new techniques to suppress media freedom including by bribing media outlets to self-censor and harassing journalists and other critics both online and offline. In June, the Facebook accounts of 10 journalists were permanently disabled without them being given prior warning by the platform.
At least eight journalists fled Somalia between late 2018 and the end of 2019 following threats against their lives and remained in exile.

According to the Committee to Protect Journalists' Global Impunity Index, published in October, Somalia had, for the fifth consecutive year, the poorest record for prosecuting individuals suspected of murdering journalists. At least eight journalists were killed in south central Somalia and Puntland since 2017, two of them in 2019. With the exception of two cases including one in which a police officer was convicted in absentia for killing a journalist in Mogadishu in 2018, no one was held accountable for the other killings. The police officer remains at large.

In January, the authorities expelled the UN Special Representative to Somalia after he raised concerns about the killing, by security forces, of protestors in Baidoa following the South West regional state's presidential elections. After his expulsion, the UN suspended its monthly human rights reports on the country.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN SOMALILAND

Censorship, harassment and prosecution of government critics increased in Somaliland. Authorities raided and shut down at least three media houses, and arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted individuals perceived to be critical of government policies, including poets, journalists and opposition politicians. The Human Rights Centre, a local organization, said that 88 people, including 26 journalists, were arrested for cases related to their exercise of the right to freedom of expression and opinion.

Senior opposition politicians, including Wadani Party members Khadar Hussein Abdi (the Secretary General), Barkhad Jama Batun (the spokesperson) and Mohamed Sidiq Dhame (the youth wing leader), were arbitrarily arrested for criticizing government policies. They were later released but Mohamed Sidiq Dhame faced trumped-up charges and prosecution.

In April, Abdimalik Muse Oldon, a freelance journalist, was arrested outside his home in Burao for criticizing President Muse Bihi Abdi on Facebook. He was charged with "spreading anti-national propaganda" and "disseminating false news" and, in July, sentenced to three-and-a-half years in prison where he remained at the end of the year.
Although Somaliland's 2001 Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression, including press freedom, the authorities continued to prosecute people under the 1964 Penal Code which contains several overly broad and vaguely worded provisions that can be used to unduly restrict the right to freedom of expression.

GENDER-RELATED VIOLENCE

Sexual violence against women and girls was widespread in south central Somalia, and in Puntland. The UN documented over 100 incidents of sexual violence against girls. Attacks often went unreported due to a climate of impunity, as well as the stigma and fear associated with the crime which prevented many survivors from speaking out.
Aisha Ilyas Adan, aged 12 years, was gang raped and killed in February in North Galkayo, Puntland. After a huge public outcry, several suspects were arrested and prosecuted. In February 2020, two men were executed by Puntland firing squad in Bosaso town for their alleged involvement in Aisha's rape and subsequent killing.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

Conflict coupled with recurrent droughts and floods, and barriers to accessing

humanitarian aid, resulted in the internal displacement of over 300,000 people. More than 2.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs) remained at risk of exploitation and abuse including sexual violence and forced evictions. Women and children in IDP camps were particularly vulnerable to abuse, marginalization and exclusion.
In November, the President ratified the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Africa, also known as the Kampala Convention.

A man stands behind a fence in a camp where displaced people who fled the anti-immigrant violence took refugee on April 19, 2015 in the village of Primrose, 15 kms east of Johannesburg. The government stepped up on April 19 its response to unrest in Johannesburg and the eastern coastal city of Durban, with Home Minister Malusi Gigaba resolving to end "all acts that seek to plunge our country into anarchy". © MARCO LONGARI/AFP/Getty Images

SOUTH AFRICA

Republic of South Africa
Head of state and government: **Matamela Cyril Ramaphosa**

The Commission of Inquiry into Allegations of State Capture continued to hear testimonies regarding allegations of "state capture" under former president Jacob Zuma's government after he was removed from office in February 2018 by the ruling African National Congress (ANC). Profound inequalities remain in the country, further undermining economic, social and cultural rights, including health services with shortage of medicines like ARVs for people living with HIV/AIDS. Drought, exacerbated by climate change, continued to threaten the right to livelihoods for millions, as food prices, driven by fuel increases, continued to rise throughout the year.

BACKGROUND

The ANC won the election on 8 May. Deadly systematic xenophobic violence continued against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, partly driven by years of impunity for past xenophobic crimes. The violence in August and September resulted in the killing of at least 12 people, both locals and foreigners, and looting of shops belonging to locals and foreign nationals, as well as burning and destruction of their property. The Commission of Inquiry into State Capture continued to hear testimonies from witnesses regarding allegations of "state capture" during former president Jacob Zuma's government. The commission continues to hear chilling testimonies about alleged corruption in government processes to benefit a few individuals perceived to be connected to Zuma.

Police brutality continued, resulting in the death in police custody of a man after he was arrested by the Johannesburg Metro Police Department for allegedly skipping a red traffic light.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

Police watchdog, the Independent Police Investigative Directorate (IPID) recorded

393 cases of deaths as a result of police action and 214 cases of deaths in police custody in its 2018/19 annual report. 124 cases of rape by police officers were also reported as well as 270 cases of torture.[1]

In February, the NGO Social Justice Coalition laid a formal complaint with IPID. The complaint was laid after its general secretary, Axolile Notywala, was allegedly assaulted at the hands of the police.[2] Notywala was taken into custody during a peaceful protest outside the Civic Centre in Cape Town. He alleged that he was ill-treated during the arrest, including being slapped five times and kept in handcuffs for two hours before he was charged with interfering with the police's work and inciting protesters. The case was later withdrawn after the police failed to produce the case docket.

On 18 August, Tshegofatso Selahle died in police custody in Johannesburg from injuries sustained from alleged beatings. On 17 August, Selahle was arrested by the Johannesburg Metro Police Department (JMPD) after he allegedly skipped a red traffic light in Johannesburg. Police claimed that he was violent and that he resisted arrest.[3]

In August, IPID[4] confirmed the death of a 46-year-old Nigerian national allegedly at the hands of members of the South African Police Service in King William's Town in the Eastern Cape. IPID reported that police were conducting drug raids and that the deceased died during an interview with the police. By year's end IPID was continuing with its investigation into the matter.

GENDER-RELATED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence continued to soar in the country, including the killing of University of Cape Town student Uyinene Mrwetyana in late August. Mrwetyana was allegedly killed by a 42-year-old male post office worker at the Clareinch branch in Cape Town. The suspect lured her into the post office building after working hours under the pretence of helping her to collect a parcel. The man was arrested after he confessed to the murder and faced charges of rape, murder and defeating the ends of justice.[5] He was convicted and sentenced to life for murder, two life sentences on both counts of rape, and five years for defeating the ends of justice on 15 November.[6] The prosecutor in charge of the case told the court that Mrwetyana was raped and bludgeoned to death with a scale inside the post office.

A number of killings and disappearances of women in various parts of the country were reported in the media after Mrwetyana's killing, demonstrating the scale of the problem in the country.

The national Commission for Gender Equality (CGE), an independent constitutional institution, expressed concern in September at the impunity for perpetrators of Gender Based Violence (GBV) and femicide, citing a "general lack of decisive action by the state"[7] and "long delays in prosecuting GBV cases".

The CGE called for the prioritization of such crimes within South Africa's criminal justice system,[8] and greater support for survivors of rape and GBV. However, civil society groups reported understaffing of Thuthuzela Care Centres,[9] which are designated sites of medical, forensic, legal and counselling support for rape survivors, due to the failure of the government to fund the centres after the loss of international financial assistance.[10] Members of Parliament reported shortages or stock-outs of rape kits at multiple police stations.[11]

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Women and girls faced continued challenges in accessing sexual and reproductive health services and information. Amnesty International visited communities in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga where women reported stock-outs and shortages of contraception and antiretroviral medicines between November 2018 and February 2019.[12] Women were still being denied access to safe, legal abortion as the government made slow progress on increasing the number of public health facilities providing the service, and has failed to provide information related to abortion on the Department of Health website.[13] Women reported to Amnesty International that they still faced long distances and transport costs to access an abortion at public hospitals, resulting in delays and the risk of being denied an abortion when the procedure is delayed beyond the gestational limits under the law

The shortage of emergency medical transport (ambulances) remains a national crisis. Community members in Mpumalanga and Kwazulu-Natal continued to report having to pay for private transport in emergencies.[14] The country continued to make progress in reducing maternal mortality rates,[15] but data released in 2019 indicated progress was too slow to meet the targets under the UN Sustainable Development Goals

In early 2019, the national and Gauteng health departments issued directives requiring foreign nationals to pay in full for healthcare at public facilities.[16] Fees for public health services are means tested in South Africa, but key services, including primary health care, maternal health care, abortion and emergency treatment should be freely available for all. The right to health, including reproductive health, is protected under Section 27 of the Constitution. While the directives were later withdrawn,[17] the confusion increased barriers to accessing health services. In August it was reported that a woman suffered a still-birth at a public hospital in Mamelodi, Pretoria, after hospital staff refused to help her

deliver her baby, allegedly because she was Zimbabwean.[18]

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists continued to face threats, harassment and intimidation from certain politicians and unofficial actors when trying to report on certain political issues and corruption.

In July, the South African National Editors Forum and some journalists filed a complaint with the Equality Court against the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader, Julius Malema, accusing him of hate speech. The complaint followed attacks they believed were an attempt to harass and intimidate journalists and stop them from reporting critically about the party and its leaders.[19] The court action followed instances where Malema identified journalists by their names at public political gatherings and on social media and told his supporters to "deal with them". On 24 October, the court ruled against SANEF partly saying that unpopular, offensive or controversial views do not necessarily constitute hate speech. On 5 March, Malema shared journalist Karima Brown's personal cellular phone number on his Twitter account, making her vulnerable to receiving abusive messages and threatening telephone calls from his supporters.

The court heard how Malema specifically targeted journalists in general for their critical reporting about the party in the run-up to the 8 May election. The South Gauteng High Court later ruled in favour of Brown.[20]

On 12 September Malema announced a ban on independent investigative journalism entity amaBhungane and the Daily Maverick's investigative arm, Scorpio, from attending the EFF's political events.[21] Malema told his supporters during the party's memorial service for late former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe in Soweto that the two online newspapers should be treated "as enemies".[22] The two media entities are known to have reported critically about Malema's and other EFF leadership's financial affairs, including how they allegedly benefited through generous cash injections from the executives of the now collapsed, allegedly looted Venda Building Society (VBS) Mutual Bank.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Deadly systematic xenophobic violence continued against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, partly driven by years of impunity for past attacks and failures in the criminal justice system that have left this vulnerable group exposed and unprotected.[23] The violence in August and September was one of the longest since 2008 and resulted in the killing of 12 people, both locals and foreigners, and looting of shops mainly belonging to foreign nationals, as well as burning and destruction of their properties.

The violence was sparked by locals blaming foreign nationals for illegal drug dealing and stealing their economic opportunities such as jobs and business opportunities.

Businesses belonging to Nigerians and other foreign nationals were targeted in two cities, Johannesburg and Pretoria, with stock and possessions worth millions burnt to ashes. The violence escalated dramatically during the first week of September following confrontations between locals and foreigners, marked by horrific attacks and killings.

The government has largely failed to address past xenophobic violent outbreaks across the country, instead often continuing to scapegoat foreign nationals by claiming they are responsible for high levels of crime, putting a strain on government services and operating illegal businesses.

BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Seven years after the mining strike that resulted in the fatal shooting of 34 men at Lonmin's Marikana mine on 16 August 2012 by the South Africa Police Service, victims and their families who were directly affected by the tragedy were still waiting for justice and reparations, including adequate compensation.[24] More than 70 others sustained serious injuries after the shooting, and some have since lost their jobs through permanent disability.

RIGHT TO WATER

Villagers in and around Giyani, in Limpopo province continued to suffer from lack of access to water owing to the collapsed water infrastructure after the government tender that was meant to supply 55 villages with water came to a halt[25]. Despite more than US$148-million having been paid to contractors, LTE Consulting, Khato Civils and South Zambezi, by the government, the crucial water supply was yet to be delivered at year's end.[26]

The Special Investigating Unit subsequently issued summons to the three companies, seeking a refund of the money they received from the state.[27]

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Kerbino Agok Wol (L), a businessman, and Peter Biar Ajak, the Senior Advisor on South Sudan and Fragile States for the London School of Economics' International Growth Centre, sit in the dock inside the courtroom in Juba, South Sudan June 11, 2019. © REUTERS/Samir Bol

SOUTH SUDAN

Republic of South Sudan
Head of state and government: **Salva Kiir Mayardit**

Perpetrators of serious human rights violations, committed during the armed conflict, continued to enjoy impunity. Despite a ceasefire and peace agreement, civilians were killed in sporadic clashes between government forces and armed groups. Parties to the conflict obstructed humanitarian access and at least three aid workers were killed in crossfire. Millions of people faced food insecurity and there was a severe lack of medical care. Children were forcibly recruited as child soldiers and conflict-related sexual violence was pervasive. Security agencies arbitrarily arrested and detained perceived government opponents and critics, including journalists, and freedoms of expression and assembly were severely restricted. After two years of denial by government actors, a UN Panel concluded in 2019 that it was "highly probable" two outspoken critics of the government were abducted in Kenya and extrajudicially executed in South Sudan in 2017. There were 11 state executions. Violence against women and girls remained widespread.

BACKGROUND

After a decades-long armed conflict that ended in 2005, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011, only to plunge back into a brutal conflict in December 2013. A peace agreement was signed in 2015 and, after it collapsed in 2016, a comprehensive ceasefire in December 2017, and a revitalized peace agreement in September 2018 were signed. The parties failed to form the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) envisioned in the peace agreement twice in 2019. The conflict resulted in thousands of civilian deaths, countless people physically disabled,

the internal displacement of hundreds of thousands, and the largest refugee crisis in Africa with over 2 million people seeking refuge elsewhere. A famine was also declared in parts of South Sudan in 2017. The years of conflict left countless people physically disabled and caused a devastating mental health crisis.

ARMED CONFLICT

Government forces and armed groups clashed sporadically despite the peace agreement in place, mainly in the south. While displaced people began to return home, the sporadic clashes, the threat of renewed violence in some areas - often related to border and land disputes - and the occupation of their homes and properties, made voluntary returns unsafe for many.

All parties to the conflict continued to perpetrate serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including indiscriminate attacks, recruitment and use of children and acts of sexual violence. In October, three aid workers were killed when, according to OCHA, they were caught in crossfire during clashes that broke out between armed groups.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN CONFLICT

The conflict had a particularly devastating effect on children. The UN country task force on monitoring and reporting on children in armed conflict documented 194 incidents of grave violations committed against children by armed groups and state security agents, including the recruitment and use of children in combat and supportive roles as porters, cooks, and spies, killings and maimings, rapes and other forms of sexual violence, and abduction. It also recorded 13 incidents where schools were taken over for military purposes, as well as five attacks on schools.

Despite the release of at least 150 children from armed groups and the army throughout the year, armed groups and government forces abducted children and recruited child soldiers in a bid to boost numbers prior to the cantonment process that aimed to gather all government and opposition soldiers in separate and designated sites.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN CONFLICT

Acts of sexual violence were carried out by all parties to the conflict, including as a tactic to target members of another ethnic group. Although, typically, cases were massively under-reported, the UN Mission in South Sudan, verified 93 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence against women, men, girls and boys between December 2018 and November 2019, including gang rape, rape and attempted rape, sexual mutilation, and forced nudity. Women and girls were disproportionately affected. Perpetrators included community-based militias, combatants awaiting the cantonment process, and other armed groups and government security forces.

In March, the army launched an action plan to address conflict-related sexual violence. The plan had been agreed in the 2014 Joint Communiqué between the government and the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, and provided for, among other things, stronger coordination between military and civilian justice systems and vetting to exclude perpetrators of sexual violence from serving in the army. In June, Riek Machar, leader of the main armed opposition group, endorsed a similar action plan.

IMPUNITY

There were no credible investigations into crimes under international law, or prosecutions of those suspected of criminal responsibility for human rights violations or abuses, nor had there been since the conflict began in 2013. Amnesty International conducted interviews with 47 individuals linked to the justice sector and published a report in October exposing that the national justice systems are characterized by a severe lack of independence, and the government has no political will to hold perpetrators to account.

The government also continued to block the establishment of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, provided for in the 2015 and 2018 peace agreements, to address the legacy of past violence and provide justice, truth and reparations to victims of the 2013 conflict.[1]

ARBITRARY DETENTIONS AND TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The National Security Service (NSS) and the Military Intelligence Directorate (MID) arbitrarily arrested perceived government opponents and critics, including journalists and members of civil society, and arbitrarily detained them for prolonged periods in harsh conditions, without charge or prospect of trial. Detainees were denied the right to have their detention reviewed by a court and were often subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

Detention conditions in facilities run by the NSS in Juba, the capital, were harsh. Cells were overcrowded, and detainees were denied adequate food, water and medical care. Some were held incommunicado. In June, a special tribunal in Juba sentenced six men to between two and 13 years' imprisonment following a grossly unfair trial.[2] They were convicted for their alleged roles in an uprising in the NSS headquarters detention centre in Juba in October 2018. One of them, Peter Biar Ajak, an academic and activist, was convicted for

promoting public violence and disturbing the peace, while another, Kerbino Agok Wol, a businessman, was found guilty of various crimes against the state. Peter Biar Ajak and Kerbino Agok Wol had been arbitrarily arrested by the NSS in July 2018 and April 2018 respectively. After their convictions, they were transferred from the NSS detention centre to Juba Central Prison where they remained; their appeals against their convictions were still pending at the end of the year.

MID officials also carried out arbitrary arrests, including of at least four youths in August, who were subsequently arbitrarily detained for criticizing the ex-governor of the former Lakes State.

DEATH PENALTY

The authorities executed 11 people during the year. Seven men were executed in February alone, in Juba Central Prison and Wau Central Prison, three of whom were from the same family.[3] The family of the three men were not given advance warning of the executions. In September, a young man was hanged in Wau Central Prison for murder. He had been convicted and sentenced to death by the High Court in former Lakes State while still a child aged 17 years.

At the end of the year, Magai Matiop Ngong remained on death row in Juba Central Prison, pending an appeal against his conviction. He was sentenced to death in 2017 when he was 15-years-old following a trial without legal representation. He was found guilty of murdering his cousin whose death he claimed was an accident.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

In April, the UN Panel of Experts on South Sudan issued a report[4] which concluded that it was "highly probable" that two outspoken critics of the government, Dong Samuel Luak, a human rights lawyer, and Aggrey Ezbon Idri, a political opposition member, were extrajudicially executed by NSS agents while being held in a facility on the President's farm in Luri on the outskirts of Juba on 30 January 2017. The Panel said the men were kidnapped by NSS agents in Nairobi, Kenya around one week before their deaths and flown to South Sudan where they were detained in the NSS headquarters at Jebel in Juba and then moved to a facility on the President's farm.

South Sudan and Kenya's governments consistently denied their involvement. The South Sudanese authorities failed to independently and effectively investigate the apparent extrajudicial executions. In July, human rights lawyers sued the Kenyan and South Sudanese government at the East Africa Court of Justice for the enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killings of the two men. In December, the US government-imposed sanctions against five people it believed were responsible.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities continued to restrict the right to freedom of expression, targeting media workers as well as human rights defenders and other critics and subjecting them to harassment, arbitrary arrests, and prolonged detention.[5] Journalists and media workers were detained during the year. Media organizations were suspended and foreign correspondents, seen as critical of the government or its allies, had their accreditation revoked. The NSS made widespread use of informants to infiltrate and inform on individuals perceived as critics of the government. This led to self-censorship and an environment in which people could not work or speak freely.

The Ministry of Information, Broadcasting, Telecommunications, and Postal Services continued to block online media websites Radio Tamazuj and the Sudan Tribune as well as blog sites Nyamilepedia and Paanluel Wel. The authorities suspended the Al-Watan newspaper[6] for operating without a licence, two months after the Media Authority and the NSS warned the paper to stop reporting on anti-government protests. The NSS continued to censor print media.

The right to peaceful assembly was violated. In May, protesters in Juba were prevented from participating in a peaceful demonstration after the government deployed the military onto the streets, made house-to-house searches and otherwise threatened protesters. The demonstration was led by the Red Card Movement (RCM), a South Sudanese diaspora-led group which calls for a free, fair and open society in South Sudan, and a peaceful change of government.[7] Soon after the RCM emerged and announced plans for peaceful demonstrations, suspected members were targeted with arbitrary restrictions, arrest, harassment and intimidation. RCM protests took place in Australia, the US, Ethiopia, Kenya and Sudan. Protesters in Kenya and Ethiopia said they were targeted by NSS agents and threatened with abduction.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls remained prevalent. Women's rights organisations continued to report cases of families that forced their daughters into marriage for dowries, including girls under the age of 18, a practice which often had a detrimental effect on their sexual health. In April, a 20-year-old woman was killed for refusing to marry a man chosen by her family.[8]

In August, the Chief Justice announced that plans were underway to establish a

special court for gender-based violence which would include domestic violence cases.

LACK OF HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Parties to the conflict obstructed the access of ceasefire monitors, UN staff and humanitarian personnel to affected areas.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported that at least 7.1 million people in 2019 were in need of humanitarian assistance and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification estimated that as many as 6.9 million could face severe food insecurity.

The dire humanitarian situation was exacerbated by catastrophic floods that started in July and destroyed the lives and livelihoods of nearly one million people, including 490,000 children according to UNICEF, preventing them from accessing food, clean water and essential services.

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4. South Sudan: Investigate apparent 2017 killing of activists (News story, April 2019)
5. Amnesty International urges South Sudan to rein in the National Security Service and respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly (AFR 65/1050/2019)
6. South Sudan: Journalists at risk ahead of unity government (News story, November 2019)
7. South Sudan: "We are at risk and on the run" - Security agents track down peaceful protesters (AFR 65/0692/2019)
8. South Sudan: Provide justice for girl killed for refusing to marry (News story, April 2019

A woman flashes the v fo victory sign as Sudanese protesters demonstrate in Khartoum on July 25, 2019. - Sudanese protest leaders and their rebel partners have ended their differences over a power-sharing deal signed with the country's military rulers, vowing to work jointly for peace, a leading protest group said on July 25. © ASHRAF SHAZLY/ AFP via Getty Images

SUDAN

Republic of Sudan
Head of state: **Abdel Fattah al-Burhan** (replaced Omar Hassan Ahmed al-Bashir in 12 April 2019
Head of government: **Abdalla Hamdok**

The year was marked by a deepening economic crisis, excessive use of force and unlawful killings by Sudanese security forces against peaceful protesters which resulted in at least 177 people killed and thousands injured. Security forces used live ammunition against demonstrators, beat them on the streets and in hospitals and arbitrarily detained thousands who faced torture and other ill-treatment in detention. These violations mainly remain under investigation. Government forces and allied militias continued to carry out war crimes and other serious human rights abuses in Darfur with full impunity.

BACKGROUND

Political unrest which, in December 2018, brought Sudanese people to the streets to express their anger over the rising cost of living and erosion of political freedoms, quickly gathered momentum. The protests led to a military coup in April which overthrew the National Congress Party (NCP) government, and President al-Bashir and other senior party leaders were arrested. On 17 August 2019, after lengthy negotiations between the military and a coalition of opposition groups, the Constitutional Declaration was signed. It contained a new Bill of Rights strengthening the protection of human rights. On 21 August, the Transitional Military Council (TMC) was dissolved and a new Sovereign Council and Prime Minister were appointed. A new cabinet was formed in September.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE AND UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

The year was marked by sustained and brutal attacks by security forces against peaceful protesters, following mass street protests which began in December 2018 in response to the economic and political crisis, and the systematic violation of a

wide range of human rights. By April, when President al-Bashir was deposed, the use of excessive and lethal force had left 77 civilians dead and hundreds injured. In the period up to April, National Intelligence Security Service officers committed unlawful killings, mainly as a result of live ammunition used to disperse protesters. Hundreds of demonstrators were also beaten, arbitrarily arrested and detained, and faced torture and other ill-treatment, to suppress their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly. In Khartoum, the capital, and elsewhere, the security forces frequently attacked residential areas and entered houses and hospitals. In one incident on 9 January, officers entered a hospital and fired live bullets and tear gas, searching for people being treated for gunshot wounds sustained during protests earlier in the day in Omdurman, on the outskirts of Khartoum. The security officers opened fire in the hospital courtyard and marched into the emergency and medical sections of the Omdurman Hospital, beating patients and doctors. At least three people had been killed in the demonstration that day as a result of gunfire, while eight people were hospitalized with gunshot wounds in the head, chest, stomach and legs

On 24 February, security forces fired live ammunition and tear gas at protesters in Khartoum state, injuring at least three people. Another group of officers forced their way into the University of Medical Sciences and Technology campus in Khartoum where students were peacefully protesting. They fired tear gas into classrooms, beat up students and arrested dozens of them.

Security forces continued to use excessive force against protestors following President al-Bashir's deposal in April. In June, over 100 protesters were killed in a three-day period in attacks led by the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a special military force allied to the former government.[1] In a particularly brutal event, on 3 June, the RSF and other security forces attacked a peaceful sit-in in Khartoum state.[2] They arrived at the protest in vehicles without number plates, carrying hundreds of heavily armed soldiers, and fired live bullets and tear gas, beat protesters and set their tents alight and committed horrific acts of sexual violence. At least 100 were killed, while 700 needed medical attention. The wounded were pursued in nearby hospitals. The security forces tried to hide their crimes, dumping dead bodies weighed down with bricks in the River Nile.[3]

LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Since December 2018, only one case relating to human rights violations by security forces against protesters, was brought to trial while other cases remained under investigation. In October, the Prime Minister of the transitional government formed a national, independent investigation Commission which it said would conduct transparent and thorough investigations into human rights violations carried out on 3 June.

The Commission was expected to publish its reports and findings within three months. However, the deadline was extended beyond the three months period. Meanwhile, about 40 security force officers were brought to trial for the death of Ahmed El-khair, a 40-year-old teacher who died as result of torture in detention on 1 February. On 30 December 2019, a court in Khartoum sentenced 29 security officers to death for the killing of Ahmed El-khair.

Violations perpetrated in the conflict in Darfur remained unpunished. No investigation has been initiated into war crimes and other serious human rights violations committed in the year or during the previous regime. Sudanese authorities also continued to refuse to surrender suspects under arrest warrant for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Darfur to the International Criminal Court.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

During the first four months of the year, the authorities severely restricted the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. On 22 February, the Government imposed a national state of emergency which led, three days later to five presidential decrees that gave sweeping powers to security forces and which restricted the rights to liberty, security of person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and association. [4]This was followed by the deployment of large numbers of security forces, including the army, on the streets.

Thousands who were arrested for participating in peaceful protests in early 2019, many of whom had been tortured or otherwise ill-treated in detention, were released in April after the removal of President al-Bashir's government. At the end of the year, at least 23 senior National Congress Party members remained in detention after being arrested in April. They had not been charged with a recognizable criminal offence.

In June, the Sudanese Professionals Association, which organized protests, issued warnings of an expected attack by security forces to stop a sit-in outside the military headquarters in Khartoum. Protesters had camped there since 6 April. On 3 June, RSF and other security forces attacked the protesters with firearms and tear gas. Hundreds were arrested, and while many were released an unknown number remain missing. Later, the TMC issued a statement claiming the sit-in was infiltrated by "uncontrollable elements" and had therefore become a hotspot for crime and a threat to the protesters. On the same day, the TMC wrote to diplomatic missions asking them to stay away from the protest site.
Between 3 June and 9 July, the government blocked internet access in a calculated effort to crush any dissent and prevent human rights activists from reporting on the attacks against protesters.

ARMED CONFLICT

DARFUR

Despite a reduction in violence in some parts of Darfur, the conflict continued in the Jebel Marra area where the Sudan Liberation Army-Abdul Wahid (SLA-AW) fought the Sudanese Army

and the RSF. Government forces and allied militias continued to carry out war crimes and other serious human rights abuses including killings, sexual violence, systematic looting and forced displacement.

New satellite evidence and testimonies which emerged during the year confirmed that government forces, including the RSF and associated militias, damaged or destroyed at least 45 villages in Jebel Marra between July 2018 and February 2019. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that 6,000 new internally displaced people (IDPs) arrived in Otash IDP camp during the same period, bringing the total number of IDPs from East Jebel Marra in Otash camp to an estimated 10,300 by 26 May. According to OCHA, approximately 2 million people were displaced by violence throughout Darfur, many of whom remained as refugees in neighboring Chad.

South Kordofan and Blue Nile
The ceasefire between the government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North (SPLM/A-N) in South Kordofan and Blue Nile continued to hold. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network said that the humanitarian situation in SPLM/A-N-controlled areas had reached crisis point in terms of food insecurity, exacerbated by the poor micro-economic conditions in all of Sudan, affecting 1.2 million people living in the area since 2011. By end of 2019 the government agreed to allow humanitarian assistance to SPLM-N controlled areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

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2. Sudan: International community should impose sanctions on transitional authorities (News story, June 2019)
3. Sudan: Soaring violence calls for urgent international response (News story, June 2019)
4. Sudan: State of emergency intensifies brutal government crackdown on protests (News story, February 2019

Digital activist Maxence Melo gestures prior to appearing in court for his bail hearing in Dar es Salaam on December 19, 2016. Melo who had been held in custody since December 13, for refusing to reveal user data from his whistleblowing website, Jamii Forums, was granted bail on December 19. The website said earlier that police were attempting to discover the identities of Jamii Forums' contributors and users, under a recently-passed cyber crimes law, but that their efforts had been thwarted. © DANIEL HAYDUK/AFP via Getty Images

TANZANIA

United Republic of Tanzania
Head of state and government: **John Magufuli**

The authorities severely restricted the rights to freedom of expression and association, and targeted journalists, human rights defenders and political opposition members. Repressive legislation with broad provisions gave authorities sweeping powers to silence critics and stop media outlets, NGOs and political parties from operating. Authorities arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted government critics on trumped-up charges, and security forces were implicated in abductions and enforced disappearances. Burundian refugees and asylum seekers were subjected to government pressure to return to Burundi where they were at risk of serious human rights violations. LGBTI people were subjected to violence, legal harassment and discrimination.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

In January, ahead of the October 2020 general elections, the government amended the Political Parties Act to give the Registrar of Political Parties powers to deregister political parties on vague grounds such as "contravening the Act", demand unreasonable information from them, and suspend members of political parties. The new provisions required organizations and individuals to get approval from the Registrar before participating in civic education courses, effectively denying them access to information.

The government refused to implement several East African Court of Justice rulings, including a judgement in March (Reference No 2 of 2017, Media Council of Tanzania & 2 others v the Attorney General of the United Republic of Tanzania) which directed them to amend Media Services Act provisions and bring them in line with the Treaty for the Establishment of the East African Community.

In June, an omnibus law was passed, overriding the NGO Act and giving the Registrar of NGOs sweeping powers and wide discretion to investigate, evaluate and ban NGOs from operating, based on vaguely worded provisions.

The fear of bans and prosecution deterred journalists and others from exercising their right to freedom of expression. In February, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority suspended The Citizen newspaper for one week claiming it had violated the Bank of Tanzania's reporting standards by reporting on inflation. Suspended media outlets were often banned from reporting even after their suspensions had expired. Bans against MwanaHalisi and Mawio newspapers remained in force after the authorities suspended them in September and June 2017 respectively. The ban was enforced despite the two media outlets reapplying for a licence and appealing to the Minister of Information, Culture and Sports to be allowed to resume publishing.
The authorities continued to crackdown on dissent, targeting journalists, and arresting and prosecuting more than 20 people in connection with offline and online content, in an attempt to prevent individuals from reporting on human rights violations or other criticism directed against them, as well as to punish such acts. (see below).

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

The authorities continued to arrest and prosecute government critics on trumped-up charges. Amnesty International documented cases of five journalists and two HRDs arrested. The implementation of repressive laws particularly affected the poor and marginalized by imposing unreasonably costly bail and bond conditions and using provisions that allowed courts to unreasonably deny bail or bond or to subject defendants to unnecessary and repeated court appearances.

In April, the Immigration Department at Julius Nyerere International Airport in Dar es Salaam detained and deported Wairagala Wakabi, director of the Collaboration on International ICT Policy in East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), back to Uganda on grounds he was a "prohibited immigrant". He had travelled to attend a human rights event.

In July, Erick Kabendera, an investigative journalist who has previously written for the Economist Intelligence Unit and other international media outlets about governance issues in Tanzania. was abducted by unidentified men who drove him to an undisclosed location where he was held for more than 24 hours before the police admitted they had detained him. Since his arrest, the court postponed his trial more than 12 times and refused bail each time. He was denied medical care in detention. He remained in Segerea Prison, Dar es Salaam at the end of the year, facing prosecution on charges of money laundering and involvement in organized crime.

Joseph Gandye, a broadcaster at Watetezi TV, and another journalist at Gilly Bonny Online TV, were arrested in Dar es Salaam on 22 and 24 August respectively. They were accused of covering an opposition party meeting and reporting inaccurate information. Joseph Gandye's arrest came soon after he broadcast a programme about police torturing detainees. Both men were released on bail after three days on charges of publishing false information. At the time of publication of this report they were still awaiting trial.

ABDUCTIONS

Security forces were implicated in abductions and enforced disappearances. Government critic, Mdude Nyagali was abducted by armed men in May as he left work, hours after he called the President a "hypocrite" on Twitter. Five days later his body was found dumped in a bush. Tito Elia Magoti was abducted on 20 December according to members of his family. Tanzania police later claimed they arrested him for his involvement in organized crime and possession of a computer programme designed for committing an offence, including money laundering. He appeared before the Resident Magistrate's Court of Dar es Salaam The offences he is charged with are unbailable. His family had access to him.

In July, the Foreign Affairs Minister told the BBC that journalist Azory Gwanda was dead without specifying the circumstances of his death, whether he had been murdered, or whether the government would investigate and bring alleged perpetrators to justice. He had disappeared from his home near Kibiti, Rufiji district in 2017, in suspicious circumstances, after he wrote about the murders of local government officials and police officers by unknown assailants. There has been no investigation either into the enforced disappearance of Ben Saanane, a supporter of the opposition Party for Democracy and Progress. Before his disappearance in 2016, he posted a message on social media questioning the validity of the President's academic credentials.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders were attacked, threatened, unlawfully arrested, banned from travel, and found themselves victims of smear campaigns to discredit them or their work. The High Court in Dar es Salaam in September suspended Fatma Karume, a human rights lawyer, from practicing law after she challenged the Attorney General's appointment. The court ordered the suspension, pending a disciplinary process before the Advocates Disciplinary Committee.

Human rights defenders who campaigned, mainly in rural areas, for accountability from the government and corporations for environmental damage and human rights violations related to extractive industries, were harassed, threatened, arrested and detained by the police. They were accused of espionage and inciting communities and people against investors. They were also arrested for participating in peaceful protests while some lawyers who sought to represent them were arrested, detained for prolonged periods without bail and often not brought before a judge to review their detention.

In November, the government passed legislation to withdraw individuals and NGOs' possibility to file human rights cases before the African Court on Human

and Peoples' Rights. This was done in a context in which Tanzania's criminal justice system has repeatedly been found violating international standards of fairness by the regional court, thus preventing other cases from being brought in cases where similar cases would arise.

REFUGEES AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

Government officials increasingly pressured refugees and asylum-seekers into returning to Burundi, where they risked human rights violations, restricting their freedom of movement, living conditions s and economic opportunities. The President and other senior government officials repeatedly, and publicly, told them to return. Many returnees in Burundi said the difficult humanitarian conditions in Tanzania was one reason for leaving.

In August the government signed a bilateral agreement with Burundi to return refugees "whether voluntarily or not". While UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, provided financial and logistical support for the returns programme, it maintained that conditions in Burundi were not yet conducive to promoting returns (see Burundi entry). Around 80,000 Burundians have been returned under the returns programme since 2017, while over 160,000 remained in Tanzania at the end of the year.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE (LGBTI)

Authorities subjected men perceived to be gay to forced anal examinations to obtain evidence of same-sex sexual relations and prosecute them in criminal cases. In April, the Registrar of NGOs announced that the government had cancelled the registration of six health organizations which worked on the rights of LGBTI people. including the Community Health Services and Advocacy, which along with two other organizations, was accused of "promoting unethical acts."

LGBTI people faced violence and harassment from the police and were discriminated against in government health centres. Consequently, many avoided clinics, preferring to stay underground which further undermined their right to health.

In September, the Deputy Home Affairs Minister called for the arrest of anyone "promoting" homosexuality. There were no further details on what he meant by "promoting".

Togolese nationals gathered in Lagos to protest against President Faure Gnassingbe's ploy to run for a fourth term, after he took over from his father, Gnassingbe Eyadema, who ruled for 33 years. © Olukayode Jaiyeola/NurPhoto via Getty Images

TOGO

Togolese Republic
Head of state: **Faure Gnassingbé**
Head of government: **Komi Sélom Klassou**

The authorities continued to crackdown on peaceful dissent, particularly against members of the opposition Pan-African National Party ahead of the 2020 presidential election. Togo adopted several laws curtailing the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests and detentions, torture and other ill-treatment, and impunity for human rights violations and abuses persisted.

BACKGROUND

On 30 June, Togo held its first local elections in 27 years. The Union for the Republic (Union pour la République, UNIR), the party of President Faure Gnassingbé, won a majority of the seats. The opposition Pan-African National Party (Parti National Panafricain, PNP) boycotted the elections.

LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

On 8 May, the National Assembly adopted a law revising the Constitution to prohibit the death penalty and life imprisonment. It allows incumbent President Faure Gnassingbé, in office since 2005, to run for an additional two terms of five years each, including the 2020 election. It shields former presidents from arrest, detention, and prosecution for actions taken while in office.

On 12 August, the National Assembly adopted two laws raising major human rights concerns.
The homeland security law detailed measures applicable during "threats or grave breaches of public order", particularly "terrorist attacks", "social unrest" or "manoeuvres to destabilize public opinion." The law allows the Minister of Territorial Administration and, in some cases, local authorities to order house arrests, identity controls and interpellations of up to 24 hours, expulsions of foreign nationals, bans on assemblies, suspensions of associations, and closures of establishments including places of worship, hotels and "other meeting places". The law allows the Minister of Territorial Administration wide discretion to censor online content and shut down the Internet.
Revisions to the law on assemblies stated that organizers of meetings and assemblies in private settings must inform local authorities in advance. It provides for a ban on assemblies in certain locations and at certain times.

The law allows local authorities to cap the number of assemblies per week in their area and to ban protests at the last minute.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The authorities continued to ban or impose itinerary changes to peaceful demonstrations organized by human rights groups and opposition groups. Security forces, including the military, dispersed peaceful protests using excessive and lethal force.

The PNP organized nationwide protests scheduled for 13 April to call for constitutional reforms. These protests were banned by the Ministry of Territorial Administration, except in Lomé, Afagnan and Sokodé, on the grounds that they would "undermine public order". They were dispersed by security forces using tear gas and batons. Dozens of protesters and bystanders were injured. At least one man died during demonstrations in the northern town of Bafilo. There have been conflicting accounts on the circumstances of the death: some blamed security forces but the Minister of Security and Civilian Protection accused other demonstrators. Despite multiple requests, the death certificate and autopsy report were not shared with his family.

At least 30 people were arrested during the 13 April protests and 19 were sentenced to 24 months imprisonment, with suspended sentences ranging from 12 to 24 months, for aggravated public disorder.
Following the protests, at least three PNP leaders were also arrested, including the PNP treasurer Sébabé Guéffé Nouridine, the permanent secretary Kéziré Azizou and the special advisor Ouro-Djikpa Tchatikpi. Nouridine and Azizou were accused of rebellion, assault, and not respecting the ban and restrictions on protests' itineraries. On 7 May, they were sentenced to 24 months in prison, with suspended sentences of 12 to 24 months, respectively. Tchatikpi was released on bail on 10 August.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to curtail the right to freedom of expression.
On 19 January, the Criminal Court of Lomé sentenced activist Folly Satchivi of the movement Under No Circumstances (En aucun cas) to 36 months in prison, with 12 months suspended, for "rebellion", "apology of crimes and offences" and "aggravated public disorder". He had been arrested on 22 August 2018 while he was about to hold a press conference on the crackdown on protests. On 10 October, the Court of Appeal reduced his sentence to 28 months in prison, with six months suspended. He was released on 16 October following a presidential pardon.

On 25 March, the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (Haute Autorité de l'Audiovisuel et de la Communication, HAAC) withdrew the licence of the newspaper La Nouvelle on the grounds that it published "unverified information", incited ethnic and religious hatred, abused the privacy of citizens, as well as uttered slanders and insults. Assiba Johnson, President of the Group of Young Africans for Democracy and Development (Regroupement des jeunes africains pour la démocratie et le développement, REJADD) was released on 5 April after serving his sentence. He had been arrested on 4 April 2018 and later sentenced to 18 months in prison, with a six-month suspended sentence, for spreading false news and insulting public officials following the publication of a report on the repression of protests in 2017-2018.

On 15 October, pro-democracy activists from Turn the Page Niger (Tournons la page Niger, TLP Niger) and TLP Côte d'Ivoire) were denied access to Togo.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENTS

In July, the Committee against Torture reviewed Togo and expressed concerns about allegations of torture particularly in police and gendarme custody and in the jails of the Central Criminal Investigation. The Committee found that prison conditions amounted to ill-treatment in the majority of institutions, and cited overcrowding (occupancy rate at 182%) and lengthy pre-trial detention (62% of detainees were awaiting trial).

IMPUNITY

The authorities continued to fail to take steps to identify those suspected of responsibility for human rights violations and abuses, including the deaths of nearly 500 people during the violence surrounding the 2005 presidential election. Of the 72 complaints filed by victims' families in Atakpamé, Amlamé and Lomé courts, none are known to have been fully investigated.
No one has been brought to justice for the shooting and deaths of Rachad Maman, 14, and Joseph Zoumeke, 13, during separate protests in 2017. Their families filed complaints, but there has been no progress in the proceedings.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Following her visit to Togo in May, the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery expressed concerns about children in forced labour, domestic servitude and other forms of contemporary slavery and recommended that existing laws criminalizing these practices are enforced, alongside strengthened prevention measures.

A man outside his ruined home in Apaa, Norther Uganda, 25 January 2017. © Tessa Laing

UGANDA

Republic of Uganda
Head of state and government: **Yoweri Kaguta Museveni**

The government continued to target political dissidents subjecting them to intimidation, harassment and arbitrary arrest and detention. Restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly of political opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders and students. Violations of the right to housing, and the use of forced evictions were prevalent in many districts. Killings, violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity was widespread. A minister threatened to re-introduce the "homosexuality bill" which would impose the death penalty in some cases of same-sex sexual activity.

RIGHT TO HOUSING AND FORCED EVICTIONS

In January, the High Court in Kampala, the capital, found that the government's failure to enact a comprehensive legal framework and procedures to protect those facing eviction was a breach of the rights to life, dignity, and property under the Ugandan Constitution. Between January and April, Uganda Wildlife Authority (UWA) rangers carried out forced evictions of communities in the northern Apaa area. They burned homes, looted property and attacked community members. Hundreds of people were left homeless and many more were still at risk of forced eviction. The attacks took place despite the presence of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) who were deployed to the area in February, to protect the communities.

Hundreds of Indigenous Benet peoples living in villages next to Mount Elgon National Park in the east, who were evicted from their ancestral land on numerous occasions between 1983 and 2008, claimed that they were continuously subjected to torture, including rape, as well as arbitrary arrests and killings by UWA officers after being left vulnerable because of the forced evictions and delayed compensation or

resettlement. They were also denied other human rights including rights to food, housing, education, access to health, work, and to personal security because of UWA preventing them from accessing resources in the forest and the lack of compensation and resettlement.
Further forced evictions took place in other areas including the Hoima and Mubende districts in the Western and Central regions respectively.

FREEDOMS OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In May, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC) (a government body) issued a decision which ordered the suspension of news editors, producers and heads of programming in 13 independent radio and TV stations, on accusations of "incitement" and "misrepresentation of information". The suspensions came after stations covered a story about the arbitrary arrest of Bobi Wine, a musician and opposition politician, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi. He was arrested on 29 April and detained for three days when he was travelling to the Criminal Investigation Directorate (CID), where he had been summoned over accusations that he organized anti-government street protests in Kampala in 2018, against steps to tax social media use.

The UCC ordered media outlets that covered Bobi Wine's arrest to submit to its office the live recordings as well as news bulletins within three days. Five days before the arrest, the police had placed Bobi Wine under house arrest, preventing him from holding a concert on grounds that it would be a risk to public safety under the 2013 Public Order Management Act. In August, authorities charged him with "intent to alarm, annoy or ridicule the President" in connection with an event in August 2018 when opposition members allegedly stoned the President's convoy during political campaigns for a parliamentary seat by-election in Arua municipality in the northern region of Uganda. The High Court had not ruled on the case by the end of the year.

The authorities continued to use the Computer Misuse Act 2011 to harass, intimidate and stifle government critics. In August, Stella Nyanzi, a feminist academic who had been arrested and held since November 2018 in Luzira prison, was sentenced to 18 months in prison on charges under the Act, after being convicted of cyber harassment for criticizing the President on Facebook. Prior to her detention in 2018, she had faced repeated harassment, arbitrary arrests and detention.
Between October and November, security forces, including the police and the UPDF, cracked down on Makerere University students in Kampala for protesting an "illogical" increase in state school fees. They used excessive force to disperse the students, and journalists covering the protests, arresting and detaining more than 30 who were held for days without charge.

In October, the Inspector General of Police, cancelled a concert organized by Bobi Wine, which was to take place in Kampala, on grounds that the police were unable to provide adequate security at the concert because they were assigned to the national Independence Day celebrations.

In December, police prevented Kizza Besigye, leader of the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC), the main opposition party, from leading an anti-corruption march which coincided with a presidential event. The police arrested him and prevented the FDC from holding a press conference in Kampala. He was released without charge the same day.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTION

Dozens of people, including opposition leaders and supporters, activists, journalists and students reported that they were arbitrarily detained during peaceful protests or for criticizing the government. Many were subjected to prolonged detention without charge.
On 9 January, Stella Nyanzi told a High Court judge that she suffered a miscarriage in jail. She had been on remand at Luzira Prison.

Several FDC supporters were arrested on 4 November and released without charge several hours later. In one incident, in Kampala, the police used a water cannon to force Kizza Besigye from his car before arresting him for defying police orders after he had failed to obey a summons to report to police at the Mandela National Stadium; and for failure to comply with the Public Order Management Act.
Several journalists were arrested the same day, for attending a protest in Kampala against unfair treatment of the press by security forces, particularly in connection with the Makerere University incident (see above). They were released a few hours later.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Community organizations and human rights defenders who confronted extractive industries or opposed mining activities that damaged the environment or violated human rights, increasingly faced restrictions on their right to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression. The government intimidated them including by threatening them with closure of their organizations. Human rights defenders in regions like Albertine, on the Western region said they continued to suffer harassment, intimidation and arbitrary arrest at the hands of the authorities.

In April, police officers assaulted Nana Namata Annette (also known as Nana Mwafrika Mbarikiwa) after she went to the Naguru police headquarters to protest the use of excessive force by police officers to disperse FDC rallies. She was hospitalized because of the assault and, in July, she told journalists that she had a hysterectomy due to excessive bleeding during childbirth, caused by injuries sustained during the attack.

Women human rights defenders faced harassment and arrest for their work to defend vulnerable groups, like children and women, against land grabs by local authorities. In October, Nana Namata Annette was arrested at a peaceful

protest that she organized in Kampala against police brutality and human rights violations and abuses.

In December, Jelousy Mugisha was arbitrarily detained by immigration officers at Entebbe Airport and interrogated before being released without charge more than nine hours later. He was returning from Paris where he had testified in a case at the First Instance Court (Tribunal de Grande Instance) against French oil company, Total, for undermining human rights and causing environmental damage resulting from its operations in Uganda. He was questioned about his involvement in the hearing.

RIGHTS OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND INTERSEX PEOPLE (LGBTI)

In May, police acting on orders from the Minister of Ethics and Integrity raided and stopped an event organized by NGOs, Chapter Four Uganda and Sexual Minorities Uganda, to commemorate the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia.

Between July and October four LGBTI people were killed in the wake of heightened anti-LGBTI sentiments being expressed by political leaders. Those killed included Brian Wassa, a gay paralegal who died on 5 October of a brain hemorrhage as a result of head injuries from an attack by unknown assailants the previous day at his home in Jinja town in the Eastern region. Uganda investigative authorities have not publicly commented on the killing. A transwoman from Gomba district, and a gay man from Kayunga district (both in the Central region) were also killed in attacks by unidentified assailants.

In October, the police arrested 16 LGBTI activists and subjected them to forced anal examinations after the Ethics and Integrity Minister announced plans to introduce the death penalty for consensual same-sex sexual activity which is already punishable by life imprisonment.

In November, the police charged 67 out of 125 people, arrested at a bar popular with LGBTI people, with “common nuisance”, punishable by imprisonment of up to one year. Their court case was ongoing at the end of the year, and they were required to report to the police each week for their bail conditions to be reviewed.

Students of the Zambia's University hold banners and chant slogans as they march towards the South African Embassy in Lusaka on September 4, 2019 during a demonstration to protest against the xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals in the Rainbow Nation. © SALIM DAWOOD/AFP via Getty Images

ZAMBIA

Republic of Zambia
Head of state and government: **Edgar Lungu**

The authorities continued suppressing the right to freedom of expression and media freedom through arbitrary regulation, intimidation, harassment, violence and use of oppressive laws. Independent radio and TV stations had their licenses suspended for their perceived critical reporting on political issues. Opposition political party activists and critics were arrested and faced prosecution on various charges, including criminal defamation of the president. Food security deteriorated, and the external debt rose significantly.

BACKGROUND

On 21 June 2019, Parliament released a controversial Constitutional Amendment Bill for public comment, raising fears of excessive executive powers that would undermine the judiciary. There was heightened tension between supporters of the Patriotic Front (PF) and opposition political parties' supporters, particularly during by-elections in various parts of the country. The right to freedom of peaceful assembly and equal protection of the law was violated during by-elections. The police continued to apply the public order act selectively, targeting opposition party activists.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The right to freedom of expression and media freedom continued to be curtailed through use of oppressive legislation and arbitrary regulation. The authorities increased the use of criminal defamation laws to silence critics of President Lungu or the judiciary.

Rainbow Newspaper editor, Derrick Sinjela, continued serving an 18-month jail sentence imposed by the Supreme Court on 9 December 2018 after being convicted on contempt of court charges. The usual penalty for this offence is a jail sentence of not more than six months or the option to pay a fine. Derrick Sinjela had published an article in his newspaper, written by an activist and alleging corruption in the judiciary on the Supreme Court decision in the case of Savenda Management Services v Stanbic Bank Zambia Limited. The summons stated that Sinjela published an article titled "Zambian Supreme Court Verdict in the *Savenda vs Stanbic Bank* is 'Questionable'", which utterances were deemed contemptuous. He was

convicted on charges of publishing an article alleging that the judges had received bribes to overturn an earlier High Court ruling which was in favour of Savenda Management Services. On his 63rd birthday on 11 November, President Lungu pardoned and released Sinjela.

In August, President of the deregistered National Democratic Congress (NDC) party Chishimba Kambwili was arrested for criminal defamation of President Lungu after the release of a video in which he allegedly implied that the head of state was a dog.[1] In the video that went viral on social media, Kambwili had said, "Some dogs from Chawama do not get tired of travelling." Chawama is a township in the capital, Lusaka, where Lungu previously lived and served as a member of parliament. In recent times, Lungu has been traveling abroad including to India and Japan. The arrest came two days after the state Registrar of Societies cancelled the registration of Kambwili's NDC, saying its constitution was flawed.

The leader of the New Labour Party, Fresher Siwale, was facing charges of defamation of the president, and his trial started in October after a Lusaka magistrate dismissed an application to stay proceedings on 9 October in which his lawyers challenged the constitutionality of criminal defamation in the High Court. In this matter, Siwale is alleged to have, on 22 April 2018, with intent to bring the name of President Edgar Lungu into ridicule, published defamatory matter in which he said the Zambian President was not the actual Edgar Chagwa Lungu, but Jonathan Mutawale. Siwale is also accused of having called for the arrest of President Lungu for having three National Registration Cards.
On 4 March, Zambia's broadcasting regulator, the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), ordered a one-month suspension of Prime TV channel, which has been critical of the government, just days after the governing Patriotic Front (PF) party accused the station of bias and unprofessionalism.[2] The IBA cited imbalanced coverage, opinionated news, material likely to incite violence and use of derogatory language, especially during the Sesheke parliamentary by-elections held in February. Prime TV has in the past openly criticised the government of President Edgar Lungu. Prime TV, which employs more than 60 journalists and support staff, is one of the two largest privately-owned stations, along with MUVI-TV. The latter's license was also suspended in 2016 after the presidential elections. Also on 4 March the authorities imposed a two-month suspension on the Eastern Province-based Valley FM Radio for alleged unprofessional conduct.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

The police and ruling PF party cadres continued to disrupt peaceful assemblies and the right to freedom of association especially during election campaign periods and demonstrations. In many cases, the suppression of assemblies and freedom of association resulted in arbitrary arrests, damage to property, physical injuries and, at times, deaths. Those suspected to be responsible for suppressing peaceful assemblies had not been brought to justice by year's end.

The period between 10 January and 12 February witnessed intensive political campaigning in the Sesheke parliamentary by-election and local government by-elections in seven wards in Lundazi. Katete and Isoka districts. The opposition United Party for National Development (UPND) leader Hakainde Hichilema claimed there was an attempt by the police to assassinate him after they fired live ammunition at him and his supporters in Sesheke.[3] There was a heavy presence of armed police and PF cadres in Sesheke. Violence ensued as the UPND leader instructed his UPND activists to defend themselves if attacked. After the violent altercation between the two political parties, some people's homes had been damaged and many sustained injuries. Suspected perpetrators were never brought to justice, but four police officers were summarily retired from the Zambia police service after beating up PF cadres who were beating UPND supporters in Sesheke.[4]

The Kaoma district council chairperson by-elections held on 10 October were also marred by violent clashes between UPND and PF supporters, which resulted in damage to property and the death of a UPND youth cadre, Lawrence Banda. According to the UPND, Banda was shot twice in the head by a known PF youth cadre on 6 October.[5] In a related incident UPND cadre, Chola Simwamba, was arrested for firing warning shots in the air after he had been attacked by a PF youth cadre on 5 October. The government stated that it regrets the killing of the UPND cadre, and in a statement on 7 October, President Lungu condemned the violence and killing of Lawrence Banda and directed the Inspector General of Police to take control of proceedings in Kaoma.[6] On 9 October, armed police blocked opposition leader Hichilema from campaigning in Kaoma and Mangango. To ensure impunity does not become entrenched, the Zambian police must investigate the murder of Lawrence Banda and bring to justice to those suspected to be responsible for the unlawful killing.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Food security worsened in western and southern Zambia due to a decline in crop production following rainfall deficits. According to official figures from SADC about 2,3 million people were at risk of food and livelihood insecurity, with children affected by malnutrition and stunted growth.[7] The severe droughts between 2015 and 2019 constrained the production of hydroelectricity and reduced crop yields. Zambia's external debt of over US10-billion exacerbated its inability to provide social services like education, and to support agricultural production.[8]

1. https://www.lusakatimes.com/2019/08/28/chishimba-kambwili-arrested-for-defamation-of-president-lungu/
2. https://ewn.co.za/2019/03/04/zambia-suspends-pro-opposition-tv-news-channel
3. https://www.lusakatimes.com/2019/02/08/hh-says-police-tried-to-kill-him/
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8. https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2019/dec/11/china-steps-in-as-zambia-runs-out-of-loan-options.

Anti-riot police in Zimbabwe block the road as they watch a crowd gathered to hear an address by leader of the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) Alliance, Nelson Chamisa, at Morgan Tsvangirai House the party headquarters, in Harare, on November 20, 2019. - Nelson Chamisa was due to address party supporters in his Hope of the Nation Address (HONA). The public address was blocked by riot police who beat up several people as they dispersed MDC supporters and other curious onlookers.
© JEKESAI NJIKIZANA/AFP via Getty Images

ZIMBABWE

Republic of Zimbabwe
Head of State and President: **Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa**

Human rights defenders, activists and civil society groups continued to hold the government to account through protests in the streets and via social media. Many people joined and participated in demonstrations to protest price increases of basic commodities such as fuel and the erosion of incomes. The authorities continued to use overly broad law to crackdown on dissenting voices. Civil society space continued to shrink as the authorities continued to suppress, persecute activists and curtail peaceful protests. State security agents continued to use excessive force in dispersing protests and assemblies. The authorities continued with forced evictions despite constitutional provisions prohibiting the practice.

BACKGROUND

An estimated 8 million people were facing starvation in Zimbabwe and 2 million had no access to clean drinking water. The health delivery system has almost collapsed with many hospitals facing shortages of medical personnel, essential medicines and equipment. A devastating cyclone resulted in loss of life and housing in the eastern parts of Zimbabwe. Despite progressive provisions in the 2013 constitution on citizenship, many people still consider themselves stateless in Zimbabwe.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to restrict the right to freedom of expression. In January, the government instructed internet service providers to shut down the internet, ostensibly to curtail sharing of information and reporting during the public protests against fuel and food price increases.[1] The authorities arrested five people on charges of undermining the authority or insulting President Mnangagwa. Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) Councillor, Brian Kembo was arrested in Bindura in June for saying the president had failed to manage the economy.

Despite many promises, the authorities failed to license any community radio stations and the country still had only one television station with a broadcasting license since its independence in 1980, resulting in lack of media plurality and diversity.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

Authorities routinely suppressed the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, using lethal and excessive force to disperse peaceful

demonstrations. The police, army and intelligence operatives arbitrarily arrested several protesters, to silence and intimidate anyone suspected of participating, assisting protesters or organising demonstrations. The authorities continued to use the oppressive and overly broad Public Order and Security Act to suppress any planned demonstrations.

In January, Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) President Peter Mutasa called on people to protest against increase in fuel prices by 130 percent, and in response the authorities deployed police officers, soldiers and other state security agents in many parts of the country. Between 14-16 January, security agents opened fire on protesters in Harare and Chitungwiza. More security agents were deployed after 16 January in residential areas including in Bulawayo, Harare, Epworth, Dzivarasekwa, Mbare, Gweru, Pumula, and Mabvuku.[2] The police also threatened and arrested journalists, medical doctors and lawyers monitoring the protests or assisting protestors. Security agents used teargas, baton sticks, water cannons and live ammunition to disperse protesters. The crackdown on protestors included torture and other ill-treatment and mass arrests. By the end of February, over 600 people had been arrested in connection with the January protests.[3]

In August, the police used the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) to ban protests planned in various cities organised by the opposition MDC in protest at what they called government's mismanagement of the economy. The police issued prohibition orders to ban planned protests in Harare, Bulawayo, Mutare, Gweru and Masvingo, which were confirmed by the courts. In Harare, protesters who had defiantly convened on 16 August for demonstrations were beaten up and dispersed by the police. The opposition MDC's organising secretary Amos Chibaya was arrested and is facing prosecution on charges of failing to stop the banned August protests in Harare.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

During the year at least 22 people were charged with subverting a constitutional government under section 22 of the Criminal Law (Codification and Reform) (Criminal Code) Act. They included human rights defenders, activists, civil society leaders, trade unionists and opposition party activists who had called for protest, supported such calls through social media, or were presumed to have participated in or planned protests. In May, for example, seven people were arrested on this charge upon arrival at Robert Mugabe International Airport after attending a workshop on transitional justice and peacebuilding in the Maldives.

ABDUCTIONS AND TORTURE

Throughout the year over 40 people were abducted by unknown armed men with masks, tortured and later released or charged with various criminal charges to silence them. These include the president and secretary general of the Amalgamated Rural Teachers Union of Zimbabwe (ARTUZ), Obert Masaraure and Robson Chere; Zimbabwe Hospitals Doctors Association acting president, Dr. Peter Magombeyi; Bustop TV comedian, Samantha 'Gonyeti' Kureya; pro-democracy and human rights activist, Tatenda Mombeyarara. Obert Masaraure was abducted from his home by a group of armed men and tortured on 5 June. In August comedian, Gonyeti, was abducted by masked men from her home, beaten up and later dumped. On 14 August human rights activist Tatenda Mombeyarara was abducted by armed men, beaten up and later dumped. In Harare, 14 juveniles ranging from 14-18 years old, who had been arrested between 14 and 15 January, told their lawyer they were tortured at the police station in Chitungwiza. According to their lawyer they could not walk on the first day of their court apperance as batons had been forced down their throats and anuses.[4]

In September Dr. Peter Magombeyi was abducted from his home by unknown men, tortured and later dumped. Magombeyi, a government employee, had organized a series of protests to demand better salaries for government doctors. Prior to his abduction, he had received a text message from a local mobile number threating him with disappearance.

IMPUNITY

Authorities' failure to ensure access to justice and redress continued to be a key driver of human rights violations and abuses. The authorities failed to arrest, prosecute and hold accountable suspected perpetrators of abductions, torture and unlawful killings. In August 2018 the authorities deployed members of the military who shot and killed 6 people in Harare, Epworth and Chitungwiza. The victims of excessive use of force by the police and members of the military were either part of the protests or were caught up in the clashes between police and protesters. In January, at least 16 people were killed after the authorities again deployed members of the military to disperse protests.[5] Despite calls by civil society and some foreign embassies and recommendations by the Kgalema Motlanthe commission of inquiry to arrest and prosecute suspected perpetrators, the authorities have claimed that there is a "third force" responsible for these grave human rights violations. The Motlanthe commission of inquiry was established by President Mnangagwa to investigate violations during the August 2018 post-election violence. The recommendations to arrest and prosecute perpetrators alleged to have killed and injured protestors are yet to be implemented.

ECONOMIC SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In a year when austerity measures and natural disasters pushed many into poverty and financial insecurity, economic social and cultural rights suffered.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

The decay of Zimbabwe's economy was perhaps best reflected by its collapsing

public health care system. Patients at state hospitals faced shortages of essential medicines, and when available, high costs of medicines and ambulance services. Besides shortages of medicine, Harare Central Hospital had inadequate equipment such as ventilators and anaesthetic machines or obsolete equipment and a critical shortage of nursing staff. The maternity ward at the second largest referral hospital Harare Central, did not have adequate beds, anaesthetic machines and ventilators.[6] At the Harare Central Hospital Maternal unit, lack of sufficient equipment and staff had a serious impact on obstetric services and neo-natal health.[7] The poor conditions of service have compounded the health crisis with junior doctors being paid salaries as low as US$80 per month. This has led to over three strikes and demonstrations by medical personnel in 2019. A strike by junior doctors which started in September went on for more than 60 days.

RIGHT TO FOOD

In the midst of an economic crisis and natural disasters whose impact was exacerbated by climate change, the UN World Food Program stated that over five million people, at least a third of Zimbabwe's population were in dire need of food aid and were facing starvation. Zimbabwe needs 2,2 million tonnes of grain annually to feed its people, but only produced 760,000 tonnes in the 2018/19 farming season. In September the Agriculture Minister, Perence Shiri revealed at a cabinet meeting that the country was facing a 1,2 million tonne grain deficit in 2019. The crop failures forced government to import grains which led to unaffordable price hikes of staple food items. The authorities did not put in place adequate measures to mitigate the food crisis. By year's end people living in Chimanimani and Chipinge districts affected by Cyclone Idai were still facing food shortages due to poor logistical planning and allegations of abuse in the distribution of handouts.

RIGHT TO WATER

Many residents in Harare had limited access to clean water and Bulawayo residents experienced water shut offs, as the local government authorities in Bulawayo and Harare failed to supply water to residential homes, repair or replace leaking pipes and treat dirty water. In September the Bulawayo city council introduced 48-hour water shedding per week, increasing to 72 hours in October as it struggled to supply clean drinking water to residential areas. Those who could afford it, drilled boreholes to access clean drinking water, assisted by local councils to avert the incidence of diseases like cholera.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

Despite constitutional provisions proscribing arbitrary demolition of houses, the authorities continued to forcibly evict people without providing adequate alternative housing, leaving many families homeless, landless and driven deeper into poverty. Since September, 116 people settled at Haydon Farm in Harare were facing eviction after two former Local Government Ministers occupied their land and started to develop it for commercial residential units. The residents were allowed to settle at the farm by the Zvimba Rural District Council in 2000 at the height of the land reform program. The eviction has been challenged in the Supreme Court which has reserved judgment. Should the courts sanction their eviction in the absence of international human rights safeguards including the provision of alternative housing, the eviction will constitute a forced eviction and therefore a human rights violation.[8]

In August, 58 families were left homeless in Manicaland province's Chipinge district after the local authority demolished their homes without providing alternative accommodation.[9] High ranking government officers, local authorities and the Ministry of Lands, Agriculture, Water, Climate and Rural Resettlement have since January served eviction notices against thousands of families alleged to have occupied various farms in Masvingo, Midlands, Manicaland and Matabeleland provinces. In March, the people of Chipinge and Chimanimani in the eastern province of Manicaland faced death and devastation as Cyclone Idai caused heavy winds, heavy rains and flash floods. This resulted in the deaths of at least 344 people, the destruction of 4000 households, shops and schools and affected the livelihoods of over 270,000 people.

DEPRIVATION OF NATIONALITY

Despite provisions in the 2013 constitution allowing dual citizenship for any person born in Zimbabwe, hundreds of people originally from Malawi, Mozambique and Zambia remained stateless or at risk of being stateless in Zimbabwe. The Citizenship Act which in 2001 was amended to deprive persons with dual citizenship of their right to Zimbabwean nationality if they failed to renounce their foreign citizenship within six months from January 2002 led to hundreds being rendered stateless. Due to several barriers, including hostile attitudes of registry officers, excessive discretion in the citizenship office and cumbersome administrative requirements, stateless people continued to face challenges in acquiring Zimbabwean nationality. In order to address the issue of statelessness, the authorities embarked on a nationwide program to document those who lack birth certificates and IDs and may thus face challenges in proving their nationality. Most of the stateless people were located on mines and farms in Mashonaland and Manicaland provinces and descendants of victims of Gukurahundi.[10]

1. Amnesty International Report, Zimbabwe: 'Open for Business', Closed for Dissent, 8 February 2019. Available: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr46/9824/2019/en/

2. Ibid.

3. Ibid.

4. Interview with Amnesty International.

5. Interview with Amnesty International.

6. Amnesty International interview with Harare Central health practitioner

7. Amnesty International Interview with the Harare Central health practitioner Maternity Ward.

8. Amnesty International Interview with lawyer representing victims.

9. Amnesty International Interviews with partner NGO Vemuganga who are assisting the victims of forced evictions.

10. The early rains that washes away the chaff before the spring rains. This term was used to denote the massacre of thousands of Ndebele speaking people in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces between 1982-1986.

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL IS A GLOBAL MOVEMENT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS. WHEN INJUSTICE HAPPENS TO ONE PERSON, IT MATTERS TO US ALL.

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HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA

REVIEW OF 2019

This report documents the state of human rights in the countries sub-Saharan Africa during 2019. It is composed of a regional overview and 34 country entries, subdivided by key human rights themes.

In 2019 protracted conflicts in the Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and South Sudan continued to simmer, with indiscriminate and targeted attacks on civilians. Armed groups in Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and elsewhere committed abuses, including killings and abductions, which caused mass displacements. New forms of communal violence emerged in countries like Ethiopia.

From Nigeria to South Sudan, countless victims of serious crimes and abuses did not see justice and reparations. In over 20 countries, people were denied their right to peaceful protest, including through unlawful bans, use of excessive force, harassment and arbitrary arrests.

In two thirds of the countries monitored, governments heavily restricted freedom of expression – with some particularly clamping down on journalists, bloggers, civil society groups, and political opponents, including in the context of elections.

Forced evictions without compensation continued in countries including Eswatini, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Large-scale commercial land acquisitions impacted livelihoods of thousands in Angola. Access to health care and education – already dire across the continent – was further exacerbated by conflicts in some counties including Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Mali.

Yet from Khartoum to Harare and from Kinshasa to Conakry, peaceful protesters braved bullets and beatings to defend the rights that their leaders would not, leading to major transformations in political systems and opening space for profound institutional reforms, such as in Sudan and Ethiopia.

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