

# 2022/2023

# THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN WEST AFRICA



## THE STATUS OF WEST AFRICA HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT – 2022/2023

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## ACRONYM

ACERWC	African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children
ACHPR	African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
AU/CIEFFA	African Union/International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa
AUABC	AU Advisory Board on Corruption
AUCIL	African Union Commission on International Law
CAT	Committee against Torture
CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CED	Committee on Enforced Disappearances
CEDAW	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
CESCR	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
CIDO	Citizens and Diaspora Directorate
CMW	Committee on Migrant Workers
CPED	International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance
CRC	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CRPD	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ECOSOCC	Economic, Social, and Cultural Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
FAW	Fund for African Women
HRC	Human Rights Committee
ICC	Rome Statute on International Criminal Courts
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICERD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ICMW	International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
PAP	Pan-African Parliament
PAWO	African Women's Organization are three of these organizations
SPT	Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture
STC	Specialized Technical Committees
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UN DESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UN	United Nations
WGDD	Directorate of Women, Gender, and Development

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This West Africa Human Rights report documents the human rights situation in the region in year 2022 and 2023, building on the findings of the 2021 report. Despite some progress, West Africa continues to face significant challenges in prioritizing human rights.

The report assesses the implementation of human rights treaties, revealing a degeneration in protecting international, continental, and regional human rights instruments. It also explores the role of Global Human Rights Institutions, highlighting the limited impact of West African nationals in these organizations on the region's human rights situation.

*Some key findings include* weak implementation of human rights treaties, with some countries lacking representation in human rights bodies, limited adoption and ratification of UN protocols, including the International Convention on Migrant Workers and optional protocols for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, high level of human rights vulnerability, linked to insecurity, insurgencies, and coup d'états, resulting in increased gender-based violence, violence against children, and attacks on journalists and human rights defenders, and state actors and persons of responsibility are often involved in perpetrating violence and human rights abuses.

*Key recommendations include* strengthening human rights institutions and mechanisms, improving compliance with human rights legal frameworks, addressing democratic challenges, corruption, and insecurity, enhancing protection of vulnerable groups, and increasing technical capacity and political will to ratify and implement human rights treaties.

This report provides a crucial resource for governments, civil society organizations, and international partners working to promote and protect human rights in West Africa.

Cabo Verde stood out as an inspiring model due to its remarkable human rights record. The country's commitment to protecting its citizen's rights and freedoms is enshrined in its modern constitution. By emulating these practices, other nations can foster a culture of respect, transparency, and accountability, ultimately enhancing the lives of their citizens.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The West Africa region has made significant strides in promoting and protecting human rights in recent years. However, the region still faces numerous challenges that threaten the fragile gains made. The 2022-2023 West Africa human rights report provides a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in the region, highlighting both the progress made and the challenges that remain.

This report is the latest in a series of annual reports that aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the human rights situation in West Africa. It builds on the findings of previous reports, while also providing new insights and analysis.

The report is divided into twelve chapters, each focusing on a specific aspect of human rights in West Africa. Chapter two explores the human rights framework in West Africa, encompassing the 15 ECOWAS countries with diverse linguistic and legal systems. It reviews international, regional, and national human rights mechanisms, including key treaties such as the ICCPR and CEDAW, as well as regional instruments like the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The chapter highlights the role of institutions such as the African Union, ECOWAS, and national human rights commissions, evaluating their functions, treaty ratification statuses, and alignment with global norms. It also examines the integration of human rights provisions into constitutions, the accreditation of national human rights bodies, and the ongoing challenges in ratifying core treaties. The chapter underscores the importance of these frameworks in addressing rights-based issues, despite varying levels of implementation and political instability in the region.

Chapter three examines the institutions shaping human rights-friendly environments at international, continental, regional, and national levels. At the international level, key organizations include the United Nations, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the International Court of Justice (ICJ), with a focus on the UN Human Rights Council, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the regional role of UN offices such as OHCHR-WARO and UNOWAS. At the continental level, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights are highlighted, alongside mechanisms like the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM). Regional efforts are spearheaded by ECOWAS through its Commission and Court, while national structures such as Human Rights Commissions and Ombudsman Offices ensure local accountability. The chapter underscores the interconnectedness of these bodies in fostering a cohesive human rights framework while noting gaps in participation, such as Guinea Bissau and Togo's non-membership in the ICC.

The next chapter analyzes the human rights legal framework in West Africa, focusing on the ratification, domestication, and compliance with international treaties, including those of the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, and related judicial bodies. It highlights the dualist and monist approaches to incorporating treaties into national laws and evaluates the region's performance from previous years through 2022–2023. The decline in compliance with optional protocols is attributed to political shifts, domestic priorities, capacity constraints, assertions of sovereignty, and limited awareness of treaty obligations. These factors underline the challenges



faced by West African states in aligning national practices with international human rights standards.

The fifth chapter explores human rights thematic areas in West Africa, focusing on electoral governance, the right to health, and environmental concerns. It examines the fragile state of democracy, emphasizing the challenges posed by coup attempts, escalating insecurity, and economic stagnation. Coup plotters in affected countries attribute instability to rising insurgencies, weak governance, corruption, and the presence of foreign forces, which they claim exacerbate sovereignty issues. Persistent insurgencies, including actions by groups like Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram, and Islamic State affiliates, have devastated socio-economic foundations, displaced populations, and fueled humanitarian crises. Public discontent is evident in demonstrations and support for alternative security measures, as seen in the embrace of groups like Wagner. The chapter underscores the interplay of governance, security, and external influences in shaping the region's complex human rights landscape.

Chapter Six reviewed the elections that took place within the region in the years under review as well as the coup plots that threatened the existence of democratic rule and good governance. Chapter seven presented the political crises in Mali and issues that centered on unconstitutional change of government and its human rights implications. Chapter eight looked at the environmental road map in the region with the Paris agreement as a landmark framework for assessing the national determined contributions for each country. Emerging issues of deforestation, climate change, pollution etc were topical in this section. Chapter nine considered corruption using an established perception index by Transparency International. Despite slight improvements observed, Liberia and Nigeria remained the highest ranked countries. Subsequent chapters analyzed the human rights insecurity index, ranking, and narratives of cases within the region and efforts to improve their ratings.

The report also includes country-specific chapters, providing an in-depth analysis of the human rights situation in each West African country. The human rights matrix and ranking provide a valuable tool for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement.

This report is intended for a wide range of audiences, including governments, civil society organizations, international partners, and human rights defenders. It aims to provide a comprehensive and accurate picture of the human rights situation in West Africa, and to inform efforts to promote and protect human rights in the region.

The report is based on a combination of desk research, field research, and consultations with stakeholders. The research team consulted a wide range of sources, including international and regional human rights instruments, national laws and policies, and reports from civil society organizations and international partners.

The report's findings are based on a rigorous analysis of the data collected, and are intended to provide an accurate and nuanced picture of the human rights situation in West Africa.

The report is divided into twelve chapters, each focusing on a specific aspect of human rights in West Africa. The chapters are organized into three parts: Part One provides an overview of the

human rights framework in West Africa, Part Two examines thematic focus areas, and Part Three provides country-specific analysis and recommendations.

The objectives of this report are to:

- Provide a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in West Africa, highlighting both progress made and challenges that remain.
- Examine the human rights framework in West Africa, including international and regional instruments, national laws and policies, and institutional mechanisms.
- Analyze the status of ratification of international human rights instruments and implementation of recommendations from human rights mechanisms.
- Explore thematic focus areas, including coup plots, corruption, insecurity, and environmental degradation.
- Provide country-specific analysis and recommendations for each West African country.
- Offer tailored recommendations for governments, civil society organizations, and international partners to promote and protect human rights in West Africa.

The report covers the 15 countries of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS): Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

The report focuses on the period between January 2022 and December 2023, but also draws on relevant information from previous years to provide context and analysis.

While this report strives to provide a comprehensive analysis of the human rights situation in West Africa, it is not without limitations. The report's findings are based on available data and information, which may not always be comprehensive or up-to-date. Additionally, the report's analysis is limited to the thematic focus areas and countries selected for in-depth examination.

This report provides a critical examination of the human rights situation in West Africa, highlighting both progress made and challenges that remain. It is intended to inform efforts to promote and protect human rights in the region and to provide a valuable resource for governments, civil society organizations, and international partners.

## CHAPTER TWO: HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK IN WEST AFRICA

The West African human rights framework was investigated in this chapter; this group consists of 15 countries with a majority of English and French speakers. The chapter emphasized the numerous human rights frameworks in West Africa, which include the United Nations Human Rights Mechanism the African Union the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and new specific national legislation enacted.

In the 2020 and 2021 reports, the chapter's opening portion defined terminologies like human rights and treaties. It also evaluated the process of states implementing a treaty, particularly the ratification, accession, and succession processes of state parties; and the integration of treaties into national legal frameworks established by the country's dualist or monist legal position.

The second section described all international treaties from regional, continental and global scope. It gives updates on ratified international, especially the UN treaties and other accessory tools as well as regional treaties including the African charter and the ECOWAS, summarized some of the rights covered by these treaties, and briefly examined the International Criminal Court and other UN human rights-related bodies in terms of functionality.

The binding treaties identified as accountable treaties are the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW), International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED) and Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

The soft treaties include the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Actions, United Nations Millennium Declaration, Durban Declaration and Programme of Actions, The Nelson Mandela Rule etc. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020). The treaties-based bodies which provide human rights protection include committees such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR), Human Rights

Committee (HRC), Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), Committee against Torture (CAT), Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW), Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT), Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), and Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED). (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

The Charter-Based Bodies are the Human Rights Council, Universal Periodic Review, Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and Human Rights Council Complaint Procedure. Other UN Bodies are the General Assembly, the 3rd Committee of the General Assembly, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) and The United Nations Office of West Africa and Sahel. There is also the Rome Statute on International Criminal Courts (ICC). Most West African countries are members of the International Criminal Court, except Guinea Bissau and Togo. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

The African Union's human rights documents, such as the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children, were discussed in the third chapter. It also explains the African Court's responsibilities. STCs on Justice and Legal Affairs, Agriculture, Rural Development, Water and Environment, Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment, and Migration, Refugees, and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are among the African Union's Specialized Technical Committees (STCs). (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

The OAU General Secretariat was superseded by the African Commission, which was constituted under Article 5 of the AU Constitutive Act (Organs of the AU). The Directorate of Women, Gender, and Development (WGDD), the Citizens and Diaspora Directorate (CIDO), which has two divisions (the Civil Society Division and the Diaspora Division), the, which has two committees (the Committee on Gender, Family, Youth, and People with Disabilities and the Committee on Justice and Human Rights), and the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council (ECOSOCC). (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), also known as the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACERWC) are among the Judicial, Human Rights, and Legal Organs and Bodies. The African

Union has Specialised and Technical Agencies, Treaty Bodies and Other Institutions. The African Union/International Centre for Girls' and Women's Education in Africa (AU/CIEFFA), the Fund for African Women (FAW), and the Pan African Women's Organization are three of these organizations (PAWO). (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

The fourth portion focused on the ECOWAS treaties' human rights provisions as well as the role of the ECOWAS Court. ECOWAS has Community Institutions like the COMMUNITY COURT OF JUSTICE - PROTOCOL A/P.I/7/91 and the ECOWAS Parliament. The ECOWAS parliament also has a human rights-related standing committee, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, as well as the Committee on Social Affairs, Gender and Women Empowerment. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

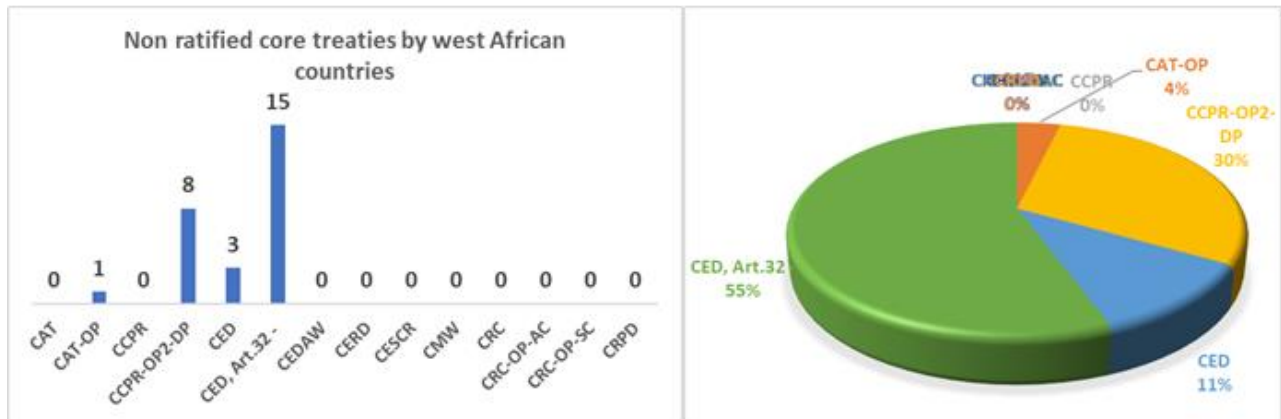
The human rights portions of countries' constitutions, as well as Human Rights Commissions and their functions, were examined in the fifth section. The UDHR was mentioned in the constitutions of 10 nations in West Africa, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Senegal, and Togo. In keeping with their 'dualist' legal posture, all French and Portuguese-speaking countries incorporated the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights into their constitutions. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

In accordance with the Paris Principles, the status of human rights commissions in West Africa was assessed by level of accreditation. Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo are classified as 'A' countries. (ohchr, 2023)

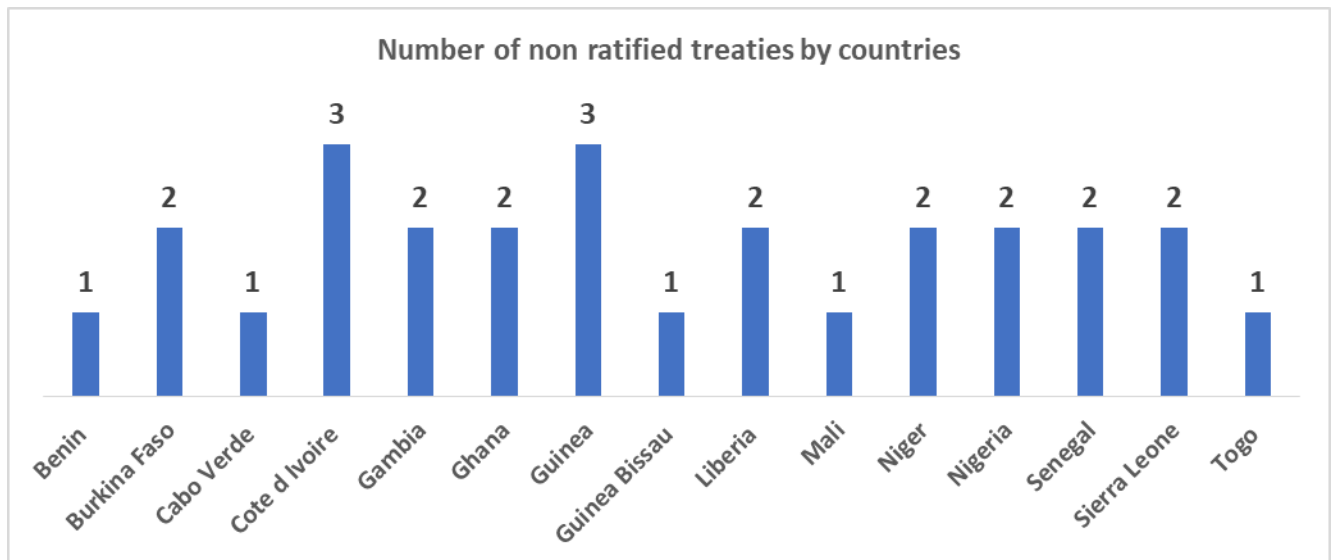
Niger has been suspended and given a No Status due to the sudden and dramatic change in the internal political order with a break in the constitutional or democratic order and declaration of a state of emergency. (ohchr, 2023)

As of the time of drafting this report, no new UN core treaties was ratified.

*Non-ratified core treaties:*



*Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance CED, Art. 32 has not been ratified by none of the West African countries. Only four (4) out fifteen (15) have ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty CCPR-OP2-DP. (TheUnitedNation, 2023)*



*Each west african county has at least one non ratified treaties. The Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance CED, Art. 32 which was not ratified.*

## New treaties and institutional development

As for the UN treaties, no new treaties have been enacted during the last two years. However, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights ACHPR and the African court cover all the West African countries up to date. (ACHPR, 2023) No major development took place within the years 2022-2023. From the previous year, most African countries lag in updating their reporting status



(ACHPR, 2023) which prevents the institution from evaluating the compliance to the charter since the monitoring of the execution of the concluding observations becomes tedious.

Other development steps with continental scope were recorded during the past two years. In 2022, the union published the 2022 annual elections report titled **“Democracy at Work”** with the main objective of documenting all happenings around elections following the missions in the various AU members and analysis done by the Short Terms Observers (STOs) in eight states including the Gambia, Somalia, Congo, Senegal, Angola, Kenya, Sao Tome and Principe, Lesotho, Equatorial Guinea and Tunisia (for AUEOM). (AfricaUnion, 2022)

In 2023, the AU had the seventh annual African-United States conference held in New York during which so many development issues were discussed. The leaders of the two organisations showed great concern about the current international crisis and the associated risks regarding the common goals of the institutions.

The UN secretary general and the AU chairperson reviewed the progress of the joint framework for enhancing peace and security through a strong partnership, the joint framework for the implementation of the 2063 and 2030 agenda for sustainable development was also discussed and a new AU-UN framework was signed on human rights. (AfricanUnion, The Joint Communiqué from the Seventh Annual African Union-United Nations Conference held in New York on November 28, 2023, 2023)

The conference took a drive on the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government with a focus on West and Central Africa (Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger and Sudan) where peace and stability cost the lives of citizens (AfricanUnion, The Joint Communiqué from the Seventh Annual African Union-United Nations Conference held in New York on November 28, 2023, 2023). It was concluded that a strong collaborative effort is needed to restore and promote inclusive political transition through appropriate governance, development, security and humanitarian response in related countries and the concern regional institution including the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD) should be determined to meet expectations (AfricanUnion, The Joint Communiqué from the Seventh Annual African Union-United Nations Conference held in New York on November 28, 2023, 2023).

The AU person further highlighted the socio-economic deteriorating situation due to the sequel left by the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated by global food, energy and financial crises, and the ongoing climate emergency and conflict-prone countries are the most vulnerable (AfricanUnion, The Joint Communiqué from the Seventh Annual African Union-United Nations Conference held in New York on November 28, 2023, 2023).

As far as human rights are concerned, leaders of both institutions find it necessary to restore the consensus envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the uncountable opportunities attached to the Human Rights 75 initiatives as it will contribute to the strengthening and development of human rights foundations, revitalize the spirit and vitality that previously led to the creation of the UDHR and the global human rights framework (AfricanUnion, The Joint Communiqué from the Seventh Annual African Union-United Nations Conference held in New York on November 28, 2023, 2023).

With the theme **“The African Union has a more than full plate when it comes to peace and security issues”** clear state the deteriorating security aspect in Africa especially in the West Africa region (InternationalCrisisGroup, 2023).

In its flagship agenda 2063 which was endorsed during the 2023 summit focused on ending conflict on the continent which has for half a century been a consistent source of socio-economic turmoil, democratic disorder and uncountable human rights violations. The summit was an opportunity for heads of state and the AU as a whole to reconsider its role in achieving this crucial goal (InternationalCrisisGroup, 2023).

The Crisis Group has identified the following eight non-exhaustive list of priorities that merit AU attention over the course of the past years, especially 2023:

1. Bolstering the AU’s institutional capacity;
2. Steering diplomacy in CAR;
3. Pitching in to rescue Chad’s drifting transition;
4. Calming inter-state tensions and supporting the DRC’s elections;
5. Nurturing Ethiopia’s fragile peace agreement;
6. Ending the impasse over Ethiopia’s Nile dam;
7. Helping the UN chart a way out of Libya’s political deadlock;
8. Making Sudan’s Phase II negotiations a success (InternationalCrisisGroup, 2023).

The AU is more concerned and should review it priority in Sudan and the Sahel for example who respectively suffer from a long military deployment seems not to be the solution and the latter from an insurgence for over two decades despite the intervention of the West, especially France and the US. The AU should think of better strategies for a sustainable political settlement as to restore peace and security (InternationalCrisisGroup, 2023).

The AU representative and the ECOWAS' should consider putting strategies in place to curb the incessant insurgency in the Sahel. It should be a priority to address the issue as it contributes to so many socio-economic and even more political implications and puts democracy and its long-time effort in jeopardy. Unconstitutional rule in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso was partly a result of the uncontrolled insurgency. Resources and efforts had been spent for decades and to the extent, that international support came in from France and the US who were unable to salvage the situation. The question remains to know if the international body together with the ECOWAS and the AU are not capable of addressing this particular issue or if they are working hand in hand to exacerbate and maintain dominance over poor countries using the veto right.

### **ECOWAS new treaties, ratification status and new development undertaken**

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as the AU has no new treaty promulgated and the 15 member countries remain consistent in their engagement made clear on the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria to promote economic integration across the region despite some compliance challenges (HURIDAC, 2021) recorded a few years ago.

The ECOWAS court as its mandate doesn't change continues with the implementation of the set-out protocol A/P1/7/91 of 6 July 1991 and the supplementary protocols A/SP.1/01/05 of 19 January 2005, A/SP.2/06/06 of 14 June 2006, C/REG.2/06/06 of 13 June 2006 and the Regulation of 3 June 2002 to ensure the observance of law and the principles of equity among all members (ECOWAS, The Community Court of Justice, 2023).

### **ECOWAS issues of global concern:**

The most concerned development the ECOWAS should attend to is the instability in the Sahel due to persisting insurgence and the worrisome resurgence of undemocratic rule in the region especially in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and the Niger Republic, in addition to this, the institution should consider the compliance issues (HURIDAC, 2021) which persist from 2021 as Guinea and

Cote d'Ivoire was recalcitrant in upholding the concluding observation from the ECOWAS court over important human rights issues

## The ICC

The membership of the International Criminal Court doesn't change in the year 2022-2023, as a result of the 9<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting, four resolutions were stipulated and they mainly focus on the running of the institution as well as a few recommendations and decisions. (See table below)

Resolution	Date	Meeting	Title
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Res.1</b>	09.12.2022	9th plenary meeting	<b>Resolution of the Assembly of States Parties on the proposed programme budget for 2023, the Working Capital Fund for 2023, the scale of assessment for the apportionment of expenses of the International Criminal Court, financing appropriations for 2023 and the Contingency Fund</b>
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Res.2</b>	09.12.2022	9th plenary meeting	<b>Strengthening the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties</b>
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Res.3</b>	09.12.2022	9th plenary meeting	<b>Resolution on Cooperation</b>
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Res.4</b>	09.12.2022	9th plenary meeting	<b>Review of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute system</b>
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Res.5</b>	09.12.2022	9th plenary meeting	<b>Amendment to the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the International Criminal Court</b>

Recommendation	Date	Meeting	Title
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Rec.1</b>	09.12.2022	9th plenary meeting	<b>Recommendations on the election of the Registrar</b>

Decision	Date	Meeting	Title
<b>ICC-ASP/21/Dec.1</b>	09.12.2022	8th plenary meeting	<b>Decision on Committee on Budget and Finance</b>

(InternationalCriminalCourt, Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, ICC -2022/2023 - Twenty-first Session - Resolutions, 2023)

## **National legal framework by country**

### **Benin**

Benin has no laws enacted, but the report of the evaluation of the Universal Periodic Review UPR was done earlier in January 2023 in which Amnesty International evaluated the implementation of previous recommendations given in the previous report. He went further with the assessment of the human rights framework with the focus on the adoption of new laws detrimental to civil and political rights, and encouraging impunity. The institution ended its assessment by given set of recommendation to Benin which if implemented would have contributed to the improvement of human rights. (INTERNATIONAL, 2023)

These are a few recommendations for action by the state under review and after review, Amnesty International calls on the government of Benin to:

### **Human rights framework**

- Implement previously supported recommendations to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which establishes a communication procedure, the Convention on the non-applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity and the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization.
- Make the declaration under article 34.6 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, which allows NGOs and individuals to have direct access to the Court.

- Implement the previously supported recommendation to undertake the necessary steps to ensure that the National Human Rights Commission operates in accordance with the Paris Principles, particularly in terms of its financial independence and with sufficient human and material resources to enable it to effectively exercise its mandate (INTERNATIONAL, 2023).

Among the recommendations given, here are recommendations that have not been attended to.

- ✚ Speed up the ratification process of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which establishes a communication procedure (Burundi); Source of position: A/HRC/37/10 - Para. 118
- ✚ Ratify the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) of the International Labour Organization (Guatemala); Source of position: A/HRC/37/10 - Para. 118
- ✚ Strengthen efforts to prevent and combat arbitrary detentions, extrajudicial executions and excessive use of force by the security forces (Italy); Source of position: A/HRC/37/10 - Para. 11 (INTERNATIONAL, 2023).

## **Burkina Faso**

Burkina Faso battling with the long-term effects of insurgency, enacted an emergency law to silence peaceful dissent and punish its critics according to Human Rights Watch. The government security operations were made official on the 4 and 5 of November 2023 in the presence of journalists, and civil society activists.

According to the Junta, the conscription was to recapture territories lost to an Islamist armed group that roughly controlled the country. The plan seeks to create a “legal framework for all actions” to be taken against insurgents and gives the president extensive powers to combat the insurgency, including requisitioning people and goods and restraining civil liberties (HumanRightsWatch, Burkina Faso: Emergency Law Targets Dissidents, 2023).

The evaluation of the Universal Periodic Review UPR done earlier in January 2023 in which Amnesty International evaluated the implementation of previous recommendations given in the previous report seems not to be attended to in its entirety.

Here are a few recommendations yet to be implemented:



Ratify the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty

Finalize and adopt the new constitution to further safeguard the human rights of its people (Botswana); Source of position: A/HRC/39/4 - Para. 125

Finalize and adopt the draft law revising Act No. 010-2009, as a follow-up to the recommendations in paragraphs 135.44, 135.54 and 135.61 of the report of the Working Group on its second review cycle (Haiti); Source of position: A/HRC/39/4/Add.1 (AmnestyInternational, SUBMISSION TO THE 44TH SESSION OF THE UPR, BURKINA FASO: , 2023).

### **Cabo Verde**

In 2023, Cape Verde was inclined to improve on the country's digital rights as the country enacted the right to own a virtual asset. The new legislation enabled individuals to exchange services, invest and transfer funds and even trade. This law determined the application to entities intending to carry out activities with virtual assets in Cape Verde's national territory of the legally applicable duties and obligations to prevent and repress the crimes of money laundering and terrorism and its financing (LEXOLOGY, 2023).

### **Cote d'Ivoire**

Cote d'Ivoire announced the implementation of the new environmental code on the use of plastic bags. "Any importer of plastic products is responsible for the end-of-life of these products. These will in turn obviously lead to decrees regulating the waste sector which includes plastic waste," Jean-Luc Assi said.

According to UNICEF, the country produces over 288 tonnes of waste each day and NGOs suggest extending the presentation of the new legislation not only to manufacturers but to customers as well. (AfricaNews, Côte d'Ivoire unveils new environmental code to fight plastic pollution, 2023)

Other legislation was put on point, an Act seeking the authorization of Parliament for the ratification of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 176 concerning Safety and Health in Mines, adopted on 22 June 1995 in Geneva, Switzerland. An Act seeking the authorization of Parliament for the ratification of International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 122 on Employment Policy, adopted on July 9, 1964 in Geneva, Switzerland.

A law amending Law No. 2020-624 of 14 August 2020 instituting the Urban Planning and Urban Land Domain Code as well as a communication relating to the introduction of the customary right of use certificate in the management of urban land in Côte d'Ivoire. An Act for the Management of Wildlife (Ivory-Justice, 2023) *(translated from French)*

## **Gambia**

Politicians, religious leaders and women massively raised against female genital mutilation which led to the ban of the practice later in 2022 even though the UN passed a resolution in 2012 to stop it due to its critical health repercussions on girls and women who are victims (TheGuadian, 2023). The Gambian government during its ordinary session of the 2022 legislation in December introduced the Bill entitled ***the Labour Bill, 2022***. (Placeholder3) (NationalAssembly, 2023)

## **Ghana**

The Ghanaian government amended legislation on taxes introduced in 2022 and most of these laws affected taxation of individuals and businesses. The tax law review covers most departments, its applicable individual as well as motor vehicles benefits are quantified and also the realisation of assets and liability taxes can be accounted for many other aspects were covered as mentioned earlier like the Ghana Revenue Authority, revise the treatment of foreign exchanges loses and introduce a growth stability levy applicable to entity. (BuildingaBetterWorkingWorld, 2023)

## **Guinea**

Alseney Sall, a human rights activist reported that the national front for the defence of the constitution was dissolved by the Guinean government action he considered to be a setback to the democratic upliftment. From the human rights perspective, the dissolution of this body is a violation of several basic rights of Guineans including freedom of expression, association, peaceful assembly, and democratic participation as well as international human rights law including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (HumanRightsWatch, Guinea: Government Dissolves Opposition Coalition, 2022)

On the 4<sup>th</sup> April of 2023, the Guinean government signed the convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters which place the country at the 47<sup>th</sup> position reported the United Nations.

Referred to as the Aarhus Convention, aim at protecting the right of everyone to enjoy an adequate environment for health and well-being and allows citizens to contribute to environmental discussions (AfricaNews, Guinea-Bissau joins UN agreement on environment and human rights, 2023).

### **Guinea Bissau**

To fight climate change, Guinea Bissau demarcated itself to the first non-pan-European country to be covered by the Convention's instruments to fight climate change and promote its biodiversity by allowing the public to participate in the decision-making process and to have access to justice when their environmental rights are violated under the supervision of United Nations Economic Commission for Europe.

With so many consequential socio-economic attributes to the current climate situation in the country notably flooding and increased salinization of coastal areas, which affects agriculture and can lead to shortages of drinking water, among other adverse effects exacerbated by the prevention for protesting to cut down on construction in the protected areas (AfricaNews, Guinea-Bissau joins UN agreement on environment and human rights, 2023).

The United Nations urged the government of Guinea Bissau to at all cost protect the rule of the law and enhance the status of the judiciary as an independent arm of the government as the country crossed a serious crisis especially the supreme court which attempted to transfer the civilian-military to court, the harassment of lawyers, judges and prosecutors is prevalent given a prevision of an unstable government (ReliefWeb, 2023).

### **Liberia**

About two hundred (200) acts were passed and fifty (50) bills were signed covering all aspects of national functioning under president Weah's administration which was considered the first in the history of Liberia as reported by the former president himself.

Among them are:

- The Land Rights Act is an instrument that protects customary land as well as women's rights to land.

- Local Government Act has established a system of governance consistent with local appointed and elected officials and grants them authority and resources to enable them to cater directly to the care and needs of the citizens in their respective areas.
- The Revenue Sharing Law in 2022 to enable revenue sharing between central and local governments in the country.
- the Power Theft Law, the Domestic Violence Act, and the Kamara A. Kamara Press Freedom Act, (TheNewDawn, 2023)

President George Manneh Weah signed into law the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act of 2023, commonly called the Drug Law before his departure which signified President Weah's commitment to fighting illegal drugs and substance abuse, a menace that has plagued society, endangering and robbing thousands of Liberian youths of a better future (FrontPageAfrica, 2023)

The Liberian government took a bold step in preventing statelessness by amending its national law to grant women and men equal rights to confer nationality to their children and went further to remove the gender-discriminatory provision which prevented children from acquiring the nationality of their mother.

Liberia became the third country to yield a good outcome out of the 2024 statelessness campaign through the reform of its legislation to promote equal rights for men and women (UNHCR, 2022)

## **Mali**

The Malian government assured the citizens of the reinstatement of the civilian government after the revision of the constitution and passed a new electoral law even though the success of voting was challenged by so many external factors such as fear of jihadist attacks (Jurist, 2023) (Reuters, 2022).

## **Niger**

The republic of Niger adopted in 2022 the national human rights defenders law being the fourth human rights related law on the continent after Côte d'Ivoire (2014), Burkina Faso (2017) and Mali (2018) (Focus, 2022)

## **Nigeria**

The Nigerian government and many others took a step to curb climate change by enacting the Electricity Act, 2023 (“the Act”) which was signed into law on the 9<sup>th</sup> of June, 2023 and described as an Act to integrate renewable energy into Nigeria’s energy mix and attract investments (TheNigeriaLawyers, 2023)

### **Senegal**

According to Amnesty International, the right to freedom of expression is hindered in Senegal as so many protests have been recorded to the effect surrounding related issues such as repeated bans on demonstrations and the deaths of people. Amnesty International urged the Senegalese government to guarantee the right to peaceful assembly as the constitution and international provisions stipulate (AmnestyInternational, Senegal: Prohibitions, violence, arbitrary arrests: the right to protest is under threat, 2022)

### **Sierra Leone**

According to the newly passed law, all investor in the mining sector and large agricultural business establishments have to resort to the local communities' consent before getting access to their land and other resources. The new law give them right to understudy any project and decide whether the project will be implemented or not (TheNewYorkTimes, 2022).

### **Togo**

The Togolese government updated their environmental protection legal framework after a thorough review of the 2008 law so as to equip the country with an updated legal framework following the government 2025 road map for sustainable development and strengthening citizens’ resilience. To align with international commitments, especially in climate in general, key considerations were taken into consideration such as the circular economy, the green economy, the blue economy, carbon credit, and green mobility (TOGOFIRST, 2023)

### **Conclusion:**

From the analysis of the UN treaty ratification, two core treaties and two optional observations are ignore by so many West African countries. The Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED, Art. 32) has not been ratified by any West African country. Only four (4) out of fifteen (15) have

ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty (CCPR-OP2-DP). Each West African country has at least one non-ratified treaties with Guinea and Ivory Coast having three (3) non ratified treaties each including the (CED, Art. 32).

The AU and ECOWAS have more than expected on their plate and the most pressing issue for the AU is the insurgency in Sahel which was thoroughly discussed during the last summit. The ECOWAS is for the past two years confronted with recurrent unconstitutional rules which have no tangible solutions as there is a record of four (4) countries under military rule who automatically defy with the regional agreement and thus limit the democratic scope in the region.

The West African region enacted new laws and bills with the highest emphasis on climate change and environmental protection. About five (5) including Sierra Leone, Togo and Nigeria have new laws on climate change and the environment prioritizing the rights of people.

Human rights defenders were not left out as The Republic of Niger adopted the national human rights defenders law, a step to enhance upholding human rights virtue in the culture despite the political crisis.



## CHAPTER THREE: EXPLORING GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS IN THE REGION

### 3.1. HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

The success of any human rights-friendly environment is determined by a variety of international, continental, regional, and national organizations. On the international level, these institutions include the United Nations, the International Criminal Court (ICC), and the International Court of Justice (ICJ); on the continental level, the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and The African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Court); on the regional level, the ECOWAS Commission and ECOWAS Court; and on the national level, the National Human Rights Commission and the Office of the Ombudsman.

The United Nations, an intergovernmental organization that maintains worldwide peace and security, develops cordial ties among nations, achieves international collaboration, and serves as a centre for harmonizing nations' acts, is one of the international institutions studied. The missions of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) were examined. Other international institutions mentioned include the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' West Africa Regional Office (OHCHR-WARO), the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS), the International Court of Justice, and the International Criminal Court's Office of the Prosecutor (OTP). Guinea Bissau and Togo, both in West Africa, are not State Parties. Three West African countries, Gambia, Cote d'Ivoire, and Ghana were voted to the Bureau of Assembly in 2017. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

At the continental level, institutions such as the African Union, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) were discussed. The African Union's legal document, the AU Constituent Act, was studied. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020). The African Union's main decision-making organs were scrutinized. The African Union Commission, the Executive Council, the Permanent Representatives Committee (PRC), Specialized Technical Committees (STCs), the Peace and Security Council, and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government are among them.

Through the Pan-African Parliament and the Economic, Social, and Cultural Council, the African Union supports citizen and civil society engagement (ECOSOCC). The African Commission on

Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Union Commission on International Law (AUCIL), the African Union Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC), and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children are among the bodies that deal with judicial and legal matters as well as human rights issues. The African Union is also aiming to develop continental financial organizations (The African Central Bank, The African Investment Bank, and the African Monetary Fund). (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020).

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), AU Commission on International Law (AUCIL), AU Advisory Board on Corruption (AUABC), and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACERWC) are among the AU's Judicial, Human Rights, and Legal Organs that support good governance and respect for human rights on the continent. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020).

Institutions such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Economic Community of West African States Court of Justice were investigated at the regional level. The Court ensures that the terms of the Revised Treaty and all other subsidiary legal documents enacted by the Community are interpreted and used in accordance with the law and equity principles. The court's jurisdiction includes Advisory Jurisdiction, Advisory and Arbitral. The National Human Rights Commission of each West African country and the Office of the Ombudsman in each West African country are among the National Institutions. At the time the report was written, Guinea Bissau lacked an Ombudsman. (HURIDAC/ ACDHRS, 2020)

### 3.2. ROLE OF WEST AFRICAN CITIZENS IN GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS BODIES

*The West African region is highly represented in global institutions, from the treaty body and UN special rapporteur to the African commission and various committees and the African court on human and people's rights, the ECOWAS parliament, the court and its commission and committee; sixty four (64) representation have been recorded. Some countries have only less representation and countries like Guinea and Liberia have no representative in these global institutions.*

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#### 3.2.1. THE AFRICAN UNION (AU) BODY MEMBERSHIP

With the aim to promote unity and solidarity of the Africa states, the African Union is a body of 55 states of which the fifteen West African countries are members. From the OAU, Organisation of African Unity to the African Union AU in 2002, its main objective is to free the continent from colonisation and apartheid, coordinate and intensify cooperation for development, safeguard sovereignty and territorial integrity of member states and also promote international cooperation (**AfricanUnion**).

This section highlights the various commissioners representing West Africa at the AU body. They include:

<i>No</i>	<i>Body Governed</i>	<i>Names of commissioners</i>  <i>Year 2022</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Names of commissioners</i>  <i>Year 2023</i>	<i>Country</i>
	(African Union (AU) Commission)	<b>Moussa Faki Mahamat</b>	<i>Chad</i>	<b>H.E. Azali Assoumani</b>	<i>Comoros</i>
<b>1</b>	<i>Political affairs, peace and security</i>	<b>H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye</b>	<i>Nigeria</i>	<b>H.E. Amb. Bankole Adeoye</b>	<i>Nigeria</i>
<b>2</b>	Health, humanitarian affairs and social development (HHS)	<b>H.E. Amb. Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA</b>	Burkina Faso	<b>H.E. Amb. Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA</b>	Burkina Faso
<b>3</b>	<i>Citizens and diaspora directorate (CIDO)</i>	<b>H.E Minata Samate Cessouma</b>	<i>Burkina Faso</i>	<b>H.E. Amb. Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA</b>	Burkina Faso

(AfricanUnion, The Assembly, 2023)

### 3.2.2. LIST OF WEST AFRICAN REPRESENTATIVES IN THE VARIOUS GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

<b>The ECOWAS Court Of Justice Judges (ECOWASCourtJudges, 2021)</b>	<b>ECOWAS Parliament (ECOWASParliament)</b>	<b>The African Court Judges (AfricanCourt)</b>	<b>The Heads of ECOWAS Parliament Committees</b>
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			<b>(ECOWASParliament)</b>
<b>Hon. Justice Edward Amoako Asante</b>  <b>Ghana</b>  <b>President</b>	Side Mohamed Tunis  <i>Sierra Leone</i>  <b>Speaker</b>	Lady Justice Stellan Isibhakhomen Ankam  <i>Nigeria</i>	<b>Committee On Legal Affairs And Human Rights</b>  Cherno Maju Bah  <i>Sierra Leone</i>
<b>Hon. Justice Gberi-Bè Ouattara</b>  <b>Côte d'Ivoire</b>  <b>Vice-President</b>	Ahmed Idris Wase  <b>First Deputy Speaker</b>  <i>Nigeria</i>	Justice Scko Modibo  <i>Mali</i>	<b>Committee On Agriculture, Environment And Natural Resources.</b>  Moussa Badiaga  <i>Mali</i>
<b>Honorable Justice Dupe Atoki</b>  <b>Nigeria</b>  <b>Member</b>	Sani Malam Chaibou Boucary  <b>Second Deputy Speaker</b>  <i>Niger</i>	Justice Dennis Dominic Adjei  <i>Ghana</i>	<b>Committee On Education, Science And Culture</b>  Assine Aime  <i>Senegal</i>
<b>Honourable Sengu Mohammed Koroma</b>  <b>Sierra Leone</b>  <b>Member</b>	Sani Malam Chaibou Boucary  <b>Third Deputy Speaker</b>  <i>Togo</i>		<b>Committee On Macro-Economic Policy And Economic Research</b>  Barrow Kebbah K  <i>The Gambia</i>
<b>Honourable Justice Claudio Monteiro Goncalves</b>  <b>Cape Verde</b>  <b>Member</b>	Adja Satu Camara Pinto  <b>Fourth Deputy Speaker</b>  <i>Burkina Faso</i>		<b>Committee On Infrastructure</b>  Traore Coulibaly Ajaratou  <i>Cote d'Ivoire</i>
			<b>Committee On Industry And Private Sector</b>  Alpha Souleyman Bah  <i>Guinea</i>

			<b>Committee On Health</b>  Perriara Dias Orlando <i>Cape Verde</i>
			<b>Committee On Administration, Finance And Budget</b>  Ali Ndume Mohamed <i>Nigeria</i>
			<b>Committee On Energy And Mines</b>  Bakar Fougou <i>Niger</i>
			<b>Committee On Political Affairs, Peace, Security And African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM)</b>  Edwin Melvin Snowe Jr <i>Liberia</i>
			<b>Committee On Public Accounts</b>  Bida Nouhoume Youssoufou Abdouramani  <i>Benin</i>
			<b>Committee On Telecommunications And Information Technology</b>  IKPEAZU LYNDA CHUBA  <i>Nigeria</i>
			<b>Committee On Social Affairs, Gender And Women Empowerment</b>

			Sakande Benao Kaboubie Reine Bertille <i>Burkina Fasso</i>
			<b>Committee On Trade,            Customs And Free            Movement</b>  Kwasi Ameyawcheremeh  <i>Ghana</i>

### 3.3 WEST AFRICAN REPRESENTATION IN GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS

#### THE UNITED NATIONS

##### 1. UN Treaty Body

*These West African nationals oversee the implementation of each of the nine core UN treaties of the in the region.*

Countries	Committee	Name	Tenure
<b>Benin</b>	Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	Mr. Raymond G. Zounmatoun	31/12/2025
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Ms. Franceline Toe Bouda	31/12/2022
	Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	Ms. Myriam Pouss	31/12/2023
<b>Cote' D'Ivoire</b>	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	Mr. Diaby Bakari Sidiki	19/01/2026
<b>Gambia</b>			
<b>Ghana</b>	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Ms. Hilary Gbedemah	31/12/2024
	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Ms. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame	31/12/2026
<b>Niger</b>	Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Ms. Aissatu Alassane Sidikou	28/02/2027
	Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	Mr. Mamane Oumaria	31/12/2025
<b>Nigeria</b>	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)	Mr. Peters Sunday Omologbe Emuze	31/12/2022
	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Mr. Danlami Umaru Basharu	31/12/2022



<b>Senegal</b>	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	Mr. GUISSSE Ibrahima (Rapporteur)	19/01/2024
	Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	Ms. Fatima Diallo	31/12/2025
	Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED)	Mr. Matar Diop	30/06/2023
	*Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT)	Mr. Hameth Saloum Diakhate	31/12/2022
<b>Togo</b>	Human Rights Committee (HRC)	Ms. Kobauyah Tchamdja Kpatcha	31/12/2024
	Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Ms. Suzanne Aho	28/02/2027
	*Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT)	Mr. Gnambi Garba Kodjo	31/12/2022

## 2. Special rapporteur

*They are experts who report on development and challenges encountered in the implementation of a specific human rights issue in any of the West African countries.*

Country	Name	Title	Appointed Date
<b>Nigeria</b>	Mr. Damilola OLAWUYI	Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises	01/06/2022
<b>Guinea Bissau</b>	Mr. Fortuné Gaetan ZONGO	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi	01/03/2022

### a. International courts

They represent the region in the global, continental and regional legal framework. Attend to crime of international scope according to the various status that bind the member states.

Courts	Countries	Name	Unit	Title	Tenure
<b>International Criminal Court</b>	<i>Benin</i>	Judge Reine Alapini-Gansou	Pre-Trial Division	President of the Pre-Trial Division	11 March 2018 - 10 March 2027
	<i>Sierra Leone</i>	Judge Miatta Maria Samba	Trial Division		11 March 2021 - 10 March 2030
<b>African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights</b>	<i>Nigeria</i>	Lady Justice Stella Isibhakhomen Anukam	Judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	-	July 2018 for a term of six years

	<i>Mali</i>	Justice Sacko Modibo	judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights		February 2021, for a six-year term
	<i>Ghana</i>	Justice Dennis Dominic Adjei	Judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights		July 2022 for a term of six years
<b>ECOWAS Community Court of Justice</b>	<i>Ghana</i>	Hon. Justice Edward Amoako Asante	-	President	
	<i>Côte d'Ivoire</i>	<b>Hon. Justice Gberi-bè Ouattara</b>		Vice-President	
	<i>Nigeria</i>	<b>Honorable Justice Dupe Atoki</b>		Member	
	<i>Sierra Leone</i>	<b>Honorable Sengu Mohammed Koroma</b>		Member	
	<i>Cape Verde</i>	<b>Honorable Justice Claudio Monteiro Goncalves</b>		Member	

## AFRICAN UNION

### 1. African Union Advisory Board on Corruption

They contribute in strategizing on how the union can tackle corruption in the region by adopting new measures put by the institution.

Country	Vice Chairperson	Members
<b>Senegal</b>	Senator Ndiaye Dilactate	
<b>Sierra Leone</b>		Francis Ben Kaifala

*West Africa is represented by Sierra Leone and Senegal.*

### 2. AU Commission on International Law

The representative are charged with the responsibility to carryout research and give recommendations on how countries should be govern by international law.

Countries	Member
<b>Gambia</b>	Naceesay SALLA-WADDA

<b>Ghana</b>	<i>Kathleen Quartey AYENSU</i>
<b>Senegal</b>	<i>Boniface Obinna OKERE,</i>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<i>Boniface Obinna OKERE,</i>

### **3. African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child**

Coordinate the implementation of resolution to protect and promote the welfare of children across the region.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Tenure</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<i>Hon. Aver Gavar</i>	<i>July 2015 to July 2020 Second term starts from 2021</i>
<b>Niger</b>	<i>Hon. Sidikou Aissatou Alassane Moulaye</i>	<i>June 2018 - June 2023</i>
<b>Burkina Fasso</b>	<i>Hon. Theophane Marie Xavier Nikyema,</i>	<i>March 2021 to March 2026</i>

*The region is represented by Nigeria, Niger and Burkina Faso in this committee*

### **4. African Union Commission**

These representative are in charge of the day to day activities of the commission

<b>Country</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>position</b>
<b>Nigeria</b>	<i>Amb. Bankole Adeoye</i>	<i>Political Affairs, Peace and Security (PAPS)</i>
<b>Burkina Faso</b>	<i>Amb. Minata SAMATE CESSOUMA</i>	<i>Health, Humanitarian Affairs &amp; Social Development (HHS)</i>

*The AU commission is represented by Nigeria an Burkina Faso*

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## **ECOWAS**

<b>Country</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Title</b>
<b>Gambia</b>	Dr. Omar Alieu Touray	President
<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>	Mrs. Massandjé TOURE-LITSE	Commissioner Economic Affairs & Agriculture
<b>Togo</b>	Damtien L. TCHINTCHIBIDJA	Vice President
<b>Ghana</b>	Amb. Abdel-Fatau Musah	Commissioner Political Affairs, Peace & Security
<b>Niger</b>	Mr. Sediko DOUKA	Commissioner Infrastructure, Energy & Digitalization

	Prof. Nazifi Abdullahi DARMA	Commissioner Internal Affairs
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### 1. ECOWAS COMMISSION

*This is the administrative body of the community.*

*Five countries represent the region in the ECOWAS Commission, they four (4) serve as commissioners and the one serve as vice president of the commission.*

#### 1. ECOWAS Parliament

Country	Name	Title
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	Sidie Mohamed Tunis	Speaker
	Memounatou IBRAHIMA	Third Deputy Speaker
<b>Nigeria</b>	Ahmed Idris Wase	First Deputy Speaker
<b>Niger</b>	Sani Malam Chaibou Boucary	Second Deputy Speaker
<b>Guinea Bissau</b>	Adja Satu Camara Pinto	Fourth Deputy Speaker

*The Regional parliament is represented by Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Niger and Guinea Bissau*

### 2. ECOWAS Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

They monitor West African countries to uphold community's rules and principles

Country	Name	Position In Committee
<b>Sierra Leone</b>	Bah Chernor Maju	President
<b>Ivory Coast</b>	Abel Gbakayoro Djohore	Vice President
<b>Cabo Verde</b>	Gonçalves Filomena Mendes	First Rapporteur
<b>Gambia</b>	Jallow Samba	Second Rapporteur
<b>Togo</b>	Senou SOKLINGBE	Member
<b>Ghana</b>	Emmanuel Kwasi BEDZRAH	Member
<b>Nigeria</b>	Emmanuel Oke-Jev	Member
<b>Benin</b>	Hyppolite Nougbonnon Hazoume	Member
<b>Togo</b>	Koffi Tsolenyanu	Member committee Clerk

*The committee is represented by seven countries.*

### 3.4. WEST AFRICAN REPRESENTATION IN GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS INSTITUTIONS COUNTRY BY COUNTRY



#### BENIN REPUBLIC:

In the global representation, Benin republic has only three nationals in these institutions, they includes:

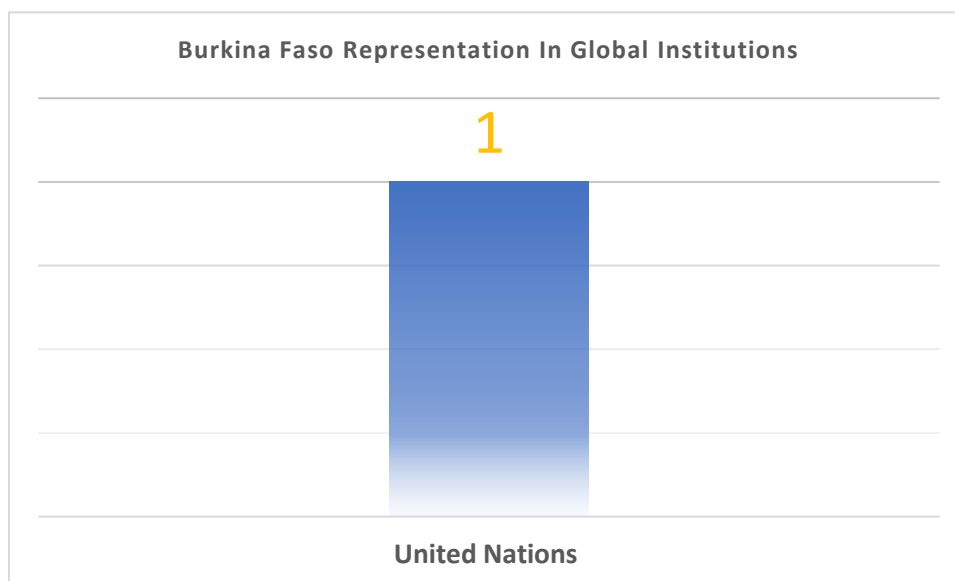
Institutions	UN treaty	ICC	ECOWAS Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights
Names of representatives	Mr. Raymond G. Zounmatoun	Judge Reine Alapini-Gansou	Hyppolite Nougboignon Hazoume
Tenure	31/12/2025	11 March 2018 - 10 March 2027	
Title	Member of Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	President of the Pre-Trial Division: 10/04/2019	Member



#### BURKINA FASO:

The country is represented in the UN treaty body and in the UN special rapporteur membership.

Institutions	UN Special rapporteur
Names of representatives	Mr. Fortuné Gaetan ZONGO
Tenure	01/03/2022 till date
Title	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi

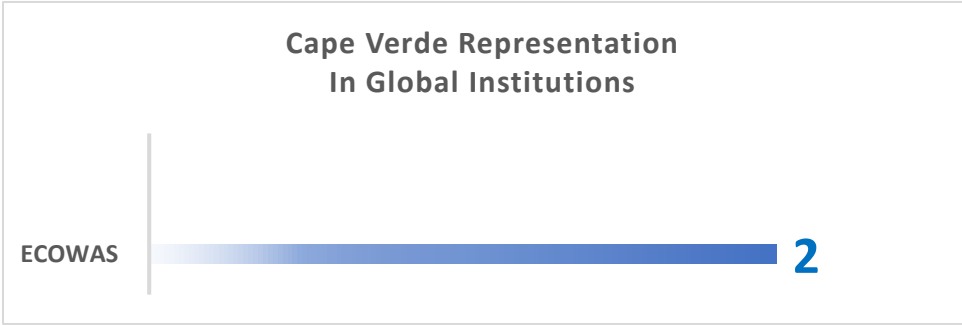


### CAPE VERDE:

*Cape Verde has its Nationals serving as representative in the ECOWAS Court of Justice and the ECOWAS Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights.*

Institutions	ECOWAS Community Court of Justice	ECOWAS Committee on
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		<b>Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>
<b>Names of representatives</b>	Mr. Raymond G. Zounmatoun	Gonçalves Filomena Mendes
<b>Tenure</b>	31.12.2025	Ongoing
<b>Title</b>	Member	First Rapporteur



COTE D’IVOIRE:

*Ivory Coast is represented in the UN treaty body, in the ECOWAS Commission, its Court and in its committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>UN treaty</b>	<b>ECOWAS COMMISSION</b>	<b>ECOWAS Community Court of Justice</b>	<b>Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>

<b>Names of representatives</b>	Mr. Diaby Bakari Sidiki	Mrs. Massandjé TOURE-LITSE	Hon. Justice Gberi-bè Ouattara	Abel Gbakayoro Djohore
<b>Title</b>	Member of Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	Commissioner Economic Affairs & Agriculture	Vice-President	Vice President



### **GAMBIA:**

Five of Gambia Nationals are Special Rapporteur. One in the ACHPR, one in the ECOWAS Court of Justice, one in Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, one in the AU commission on international law and finally one in the AU commission on International law.

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights</b>	<b>ECOWAS Community Court of Justice</b>	<b>Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>	<b>AU Commission on International Law</b>
<b>Names of representatives</b>	Ms. Mama Fatima SINGHATEH	Honourable Commissioner Janet Ramatoulie Sallah-Njie	Hon. Justice Gberi-bè Ouattara	Jallow Samba	Naceesay SALLA-WADDA
<b>Tenure</b>	01/03/2020	05/11/2021	-	-	



<b>Title</b>	Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material	Chairperson of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of Peoples Living with HIV and Those at Risk, Vulnerable to and Affected by HIV  Vice-Chairperson of the Resolutions Committee.	Vice-President	Second Rapporteur	Member
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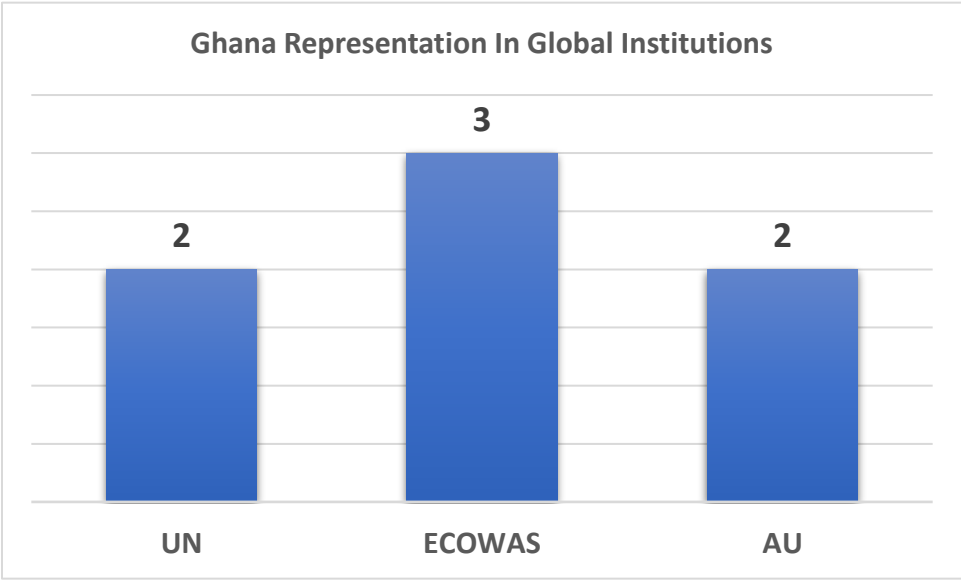


## **GHANA:**

Ghana is being represented in six institution, two in ECOWAS, two in the UN treaty body, represented in the African Union and another in the African Union commission on International Law.

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights</b>	<b>ECOWAS COMMISSION</b>	<b>ECOWAS Community Court of Justice</b>	<b>Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>AU Commission on International Law</b>
<b>Names of representatives</b>	Justice Dennis Dominic Adjei	Amb. Abdel-Fatau Musah	Hon. Justice Edward Amoako Asante	Emmanuel Kwasi BEDZRAH	Ms. Hilary Gbedemah	Ms. Gertrude Oforiwa Fefoame	Kathleen Quartey AYENSU
<b>Tenure</b>	July 2022 for a term of six years	-	-	-	31/12/2024	31/12/2026	

<b>Title</b>	Judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	Commissioner Political Affairs, Peace & Security	President	Member	Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)	Member
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**GUINEA:**

Guinea has no representative in global institutions

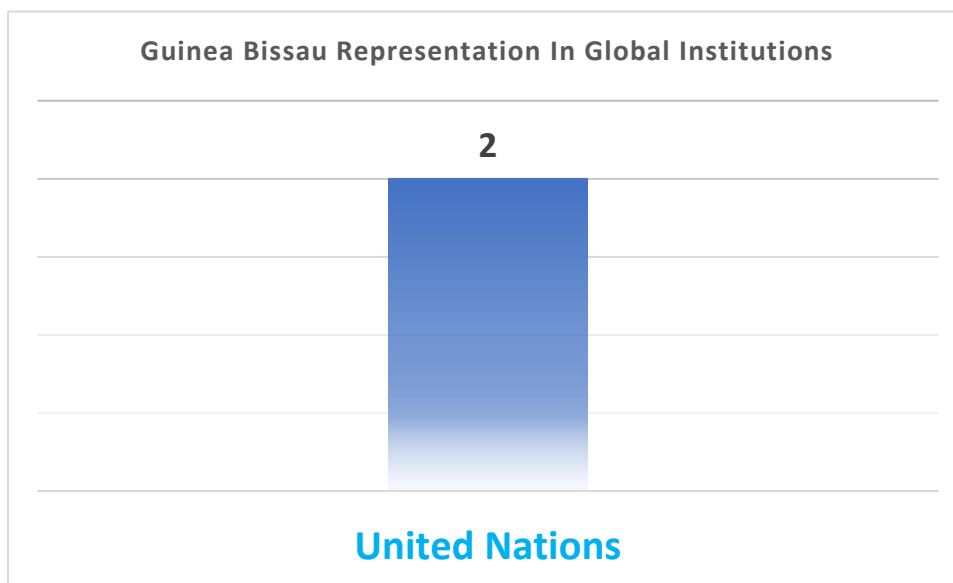


**GUINEA BISSAU:**

*The country is represented in the ECOWAS parliament and also as UN Special rapporteur.*

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>UN treaty</b>	<b>UN Special rapporteur</b>
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<b>Names of representatives</b>	Ms Aua BALDÉ	Adja Satu Camara Pinto
<b>Tenure</b>	01/09/2020	
<b>Title</b>	Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances	Fourth Deputy Speaker



#### **LIBERIA:**

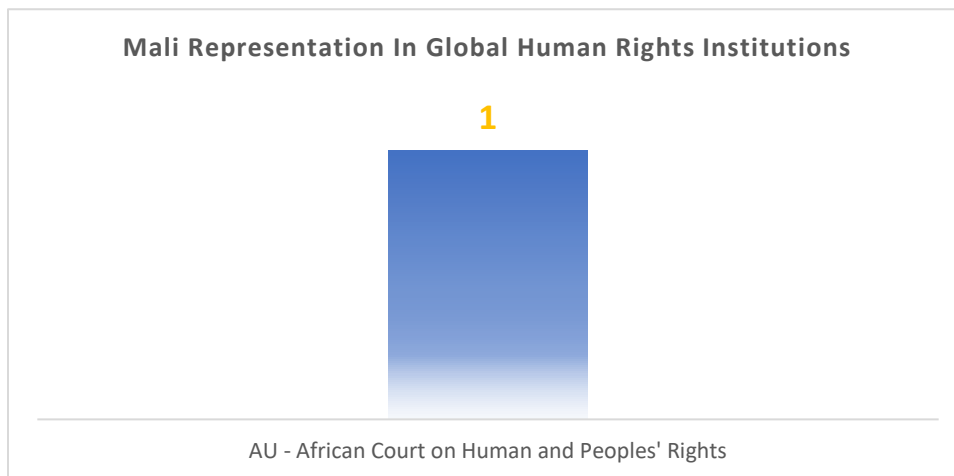
Liberia as well as Guinea has no representative in global institutions



#### **MALI:**

Mali is only represented in African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights</b>
<b>Names of representatives</b>	Justice Sacko Modibo
<b>Tenure</b>	February 2021, for a six-year term
<b>Title</b>	Judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights



### **NIGER:**

Niger has five representations in Global institutions, two in the ECOWAS COMMISSION and the in the UN Treaty body, one in the ECOWAS Parliament.

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>ECOWAS COMMISSION</b>	<b>ECOWAS COMMISSION</b>	<b>ECOWAS Parliament</b>
<b>Names of representatives</b>	Ms. Aissatu Alassane Sidikou	Mr. Mamane Oumaria	Mr. Sediko DOUKA	Prof. Nazifi Abdullahi DARMA	Sani Malam Chaibou Boucary
<b>Tenure</b>	28/02/2027	31/12/2025	-	-	-
<b>Title</b>	Member of Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	Commissioner Infrastructure, Energy & Digitalization	Commissioner Internal Affairs	Second Deputy Speaker



## **NIGERIA:**

Nigeria is well represented as a West African nation fighting for the interest of the region in global institutions. One in the ECOWAS parliament, one in the African court and one in committee on legal Affairs and human rights, three special rapporteurs, two serving in the treaty body and one representative in the ECOWAS parliament, one in the ECOWAS court of Justice and finally one in AU commission on International Law.

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>ECOW AS Parliam ent</b>	<b>Commit tee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>	<b>African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>Treaty Bodies</b>	<b>Treaty Bodies</b>	<b>ECOW AS Parliam ent</b>	<b>ECOWA S Commun ity Court of Justice</b>	<b>AU Commissi on on Internatio nal Law,</b>
<b>Names of representati ves</b>	Ahmed Idris Wa se	Emmanu el Oke- Jev	Lady Justice Stella Isibhakho men Anukam	Mr. Damilola OLAWUYI	Mr. Obiora C. OKAFOR	Mr. Chris KWAJA	Mr. Peters Sunday Omolog be Emuze	Mr. Danlami Umaru Basharu	Ahmed Idris Wa se	Honorabl e Justice Dupe Atoki	Boniface Obinna OKERE,

<b>Tenure</b>	-	-	July 2018 for a term of six years	01/06/2022	01/06/2017	01/03/2018	31/12/20 22	31/12/20 22	-		
<b>Title</b>	First Deputy Speaker	Member	Judge of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights	Member of Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enter prises	Independent Expert on human rights and internati onal solidarity)	Working Group on the use of mercenarie s as a means of violating human rights and impeding the exercise of the right of peoples to self- determination	Committ ee on Economi c, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR )	Committ ee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilit ies (CRPD)	First Deputy Speaker	Vice- President	Member

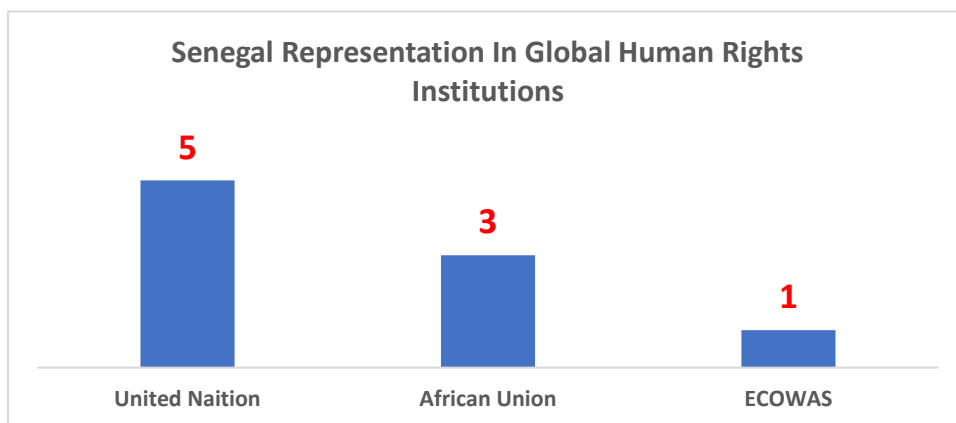


## SENEGAL:

Senegal has seven representatives in the global institutions, from the ECOWAS commission to the African commission on Human and Peoples Rights, on special rapporteur, three representatives in the treaty body, one in the AU advisory board of Corruption and one the AU commission on International Law

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>Treaty body</b>	<b>ECOWAS COMMISSI ON</b>	<b>African Commission on Human and Peoples Rights</b>	<b>Special Rapport eur</b>	<b>African Union Advisory Board on Corrupti on</b>	<b>AU Commissi on on Internatio nal Law</b>	
<b>Names of representat ives</b>	Ms Fatima Diallo	Mr GUISSE Ibrahima (Rapporteur)	Mr Matar Diop	Mr Hameth Saloum Diakhate	Prof. Fatou Sow Sarr	Honourable Commissione r Idrissa Sow,	Mr Alioune TINE	Seynabou Ndiaye Diakhate	Cheik h Tidian e  THIA M	
<b>Tenure</b>	31/12/20 25	19/01/2024	30/06/2023	31/12/2022	-	05/11/2021	01/03/2018			

Title	Member of Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)	Member of Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)	Member of Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED)	Member of *Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT)	Commissioner Human Development & Social Affairs	Vice-Chairperson of the Working Group on Specific Issues Related to the Work of the Commission and also Member of the Working Group on Older Persons and People with Disabilities in Africa; Member of the Working Group on Communications; and Member of the Resolutions	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali	Vice Chairperson	Member
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## **SIERRA LEONE:**

Sierra Leone has seven nationals in the global institutions, two representation in the ECOWAS parliament, one in the ECOWAS community court of Justice, one in the committee on Legal

Affairs and Human Rights, one representation in the International Criminal Court, one UN rapporteur and one in the AU Commission on International Law

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>ECOWAS Parliament</b>	<b>ECOWAS Parliament</b>	<b>ECOWAS Community Court of Justice</b>	<b>Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>	<b>International Criminal Court</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>African Union Advisory Board on Corruption</b>
<b>Names of representatives</b>	Sidie Mohamed Tunis	Memounatou IBRAHIMA	Honourable Sengu Mohammed Koroma	Bah Chernor Maju	Judge Miatta Maria Samba	Ms. Isha DYFAN	Francis Ben Kaifala,
<b>Tenure</b>	-	-	-	-	11 March 2021 - 10 March 2030	01/03/2020	
<b>Title</b>	Speaker)	Third Deputy Speaker)	Member	President	Member of the Trial Division	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia	Member



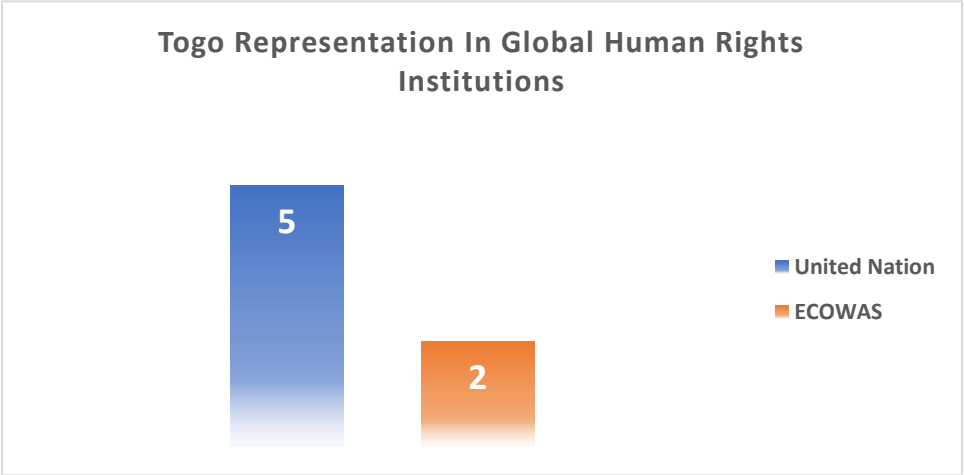
## **TOGO:**

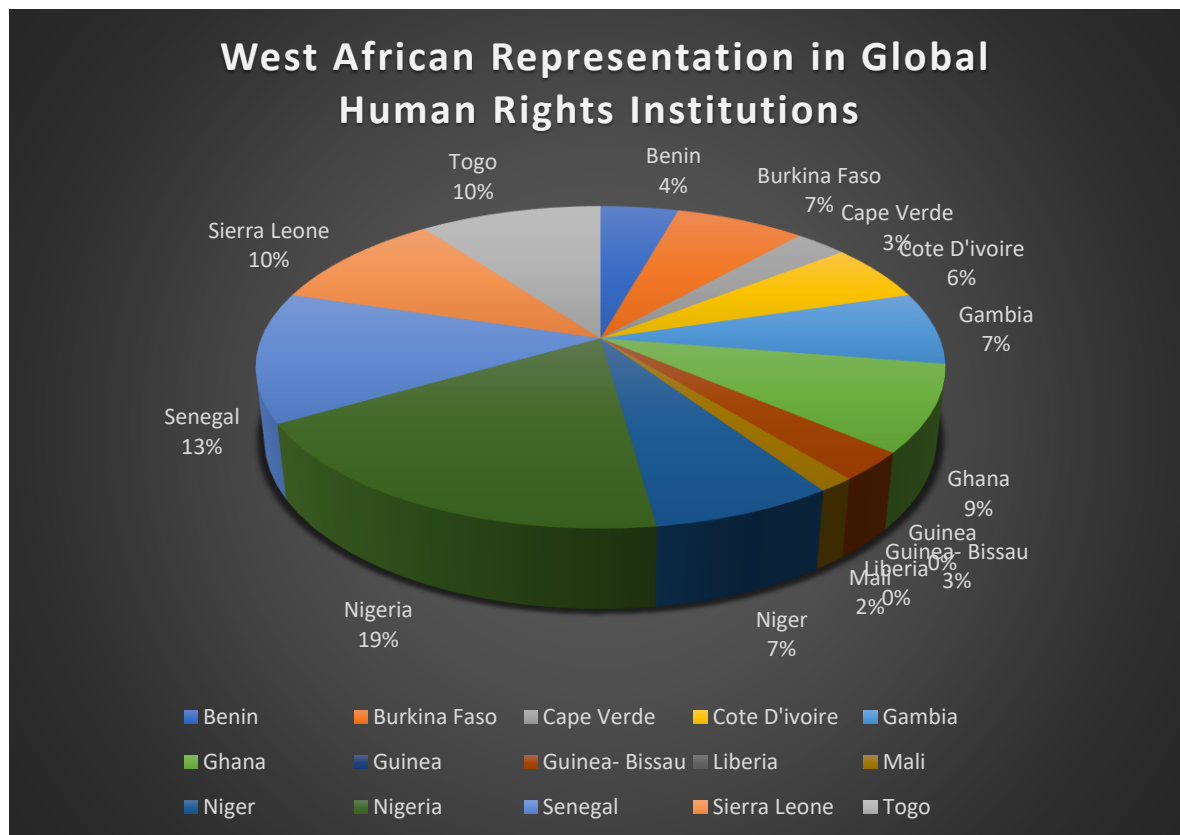
The country has seven of its nationals in global institutions, three in the UN treaty body, two special rapporteurs, one representative at the ECOWAS commission and one in the committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights.

<b>Institutions</b>	<b>UN treaty</b>	<b>UN treaty</b>	<b>UN treaty</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>Special Rapporteur</b>	<b>ECOWAS COMMISSION</b>	<b>Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights</b>



<b>Names of representatives</b>	Ms. Kobauyah Tchamdja Kpatcha	Ms. Suzanne Aho	Mr. Gnambi Garba Kodjo	Mr. Nyaletsossi Clément VOULE	Mr. Yao AGBETS E	Damtien L. TCHINTCHIBI DJA	Senou SOKLING BE
<b>Tenure</b>	31/12/2024	28/02/2027	31/12/2022	01/03/2018	01/09/2019	-	-
<b>Title</b>	Member of the Human Rights Committee (HRC)	Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	Member of the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (SPT)	Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association	Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Central African Republic	Vice President	Member





*Cape Verde (in the ECOWAS Community court of justice and the committee on legal affairs and Human rights), Guinea Bissau (one in UN treaty body and one special rapporteur) and Mali (the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights) has the least representative with respectively 3%, 3% and 2% of representation while Guinea and Liberia has no representative in the global institutions.*

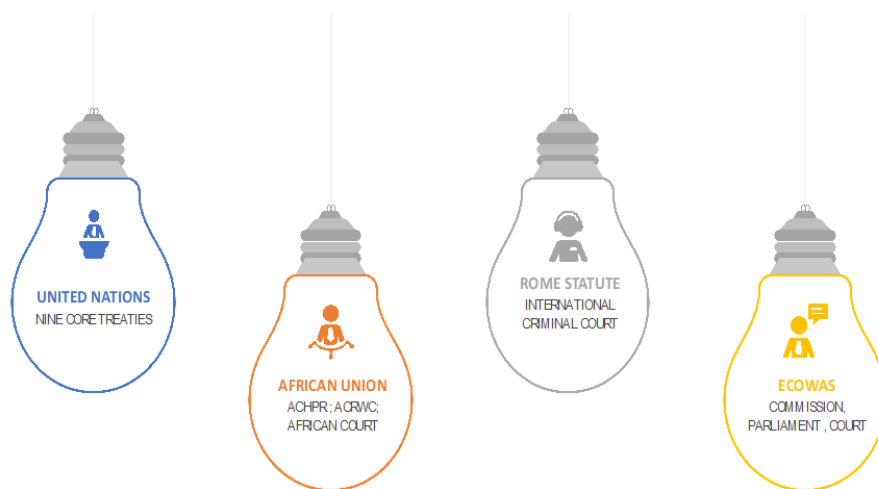
## CONCLUSION:

Representation in global Human Rights Institutions is a great step and opportunity to promote human rights in the region and especially in the various countries represented. The presence of human rights representatives gives the country an added advantage to promote human rights in this countries, raise awareness about human rights and help implementation of human rights provisions, this countries should strive to establish a positive correlation between their countries and compliance to human rights.

## CHAPTER FOUR: HUMAN RIGHTS LEGAL FRAMEWORK: STATUS OF RATIFICATION

The human rights legal framework, in the perspective of international treaties, focuses on the commitment of states to ratify and domesticate treaties base on their legal system (dualist/monolist). Treaty implementation is governed by international laws in which treaties are incorporated into national legislation and uphold to comply with international standard, vis-à-vis human rights. Either by signatory, ratification or by accession/succession.

This chapter therefore examine West Africa's status vis-à-vis international law, especially the ratification and compliance to international human rights treaties ratification including the United Nations (UN), then the African Union (AU), the African court, the International Criminal Court, the Commission of Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS, the ECOWAS Court, and the ECOWAS Parliament in comparison to the past years to the year 2022-2023.



The instance of West African countries in maintaining their status and compliance vis a vis to international treaties has become dynamic over the past three years.

Over the years, records of lack of compliance to concluding observations in countries like Guinea and withdrawal of Cote d'Ivoire from the African court have become worrisome and the ratification of UN core treaties ratification level remains the same but the accessory instrument ratification level has dropped in the last two years.

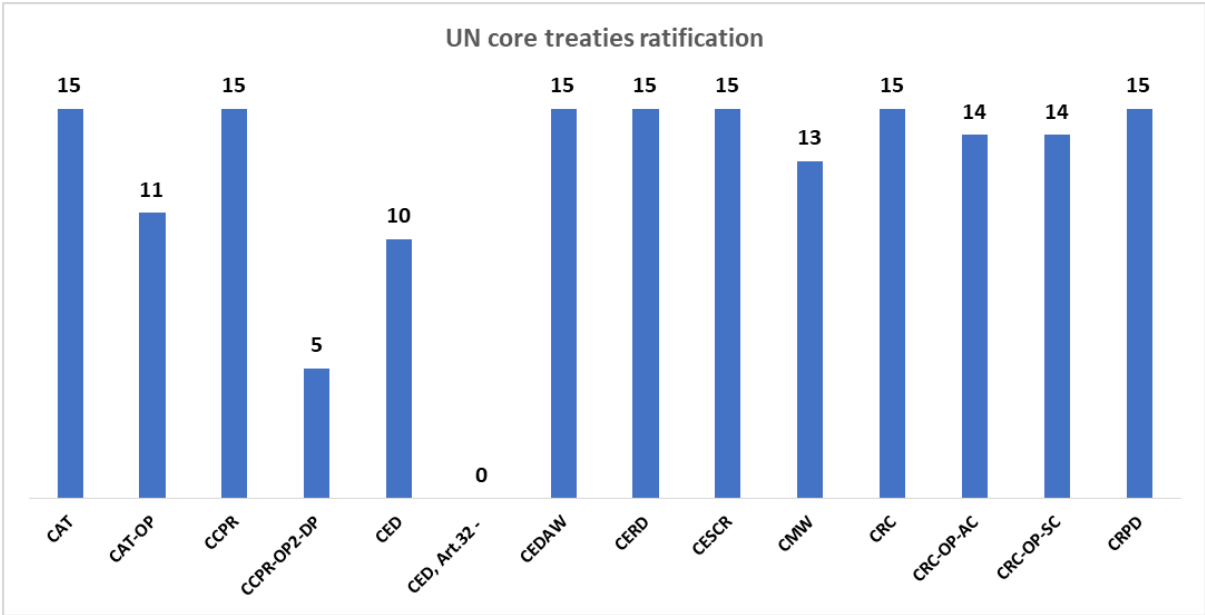
### 4.1. UNITED NATIONS (UN) RATIFICATION STATUS

This section focus on the level of UN treaty ratification by West African countries, the core treaties and the optional protocol, the individual complaint procedures, and the concluding observations on West African states and the concluding observations for the past two years.

4.1.1. THE UN CORE TREATIES:

In his fight to regulate international human rights law globally using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR, 1948) as a foundation, the UN set human rights framework to support fundamental principles which enhance the existence and well-being of all citizens around the world. The principles and rights, therefore, become legal obligations of the States that choose to be bound by them. The framework also establishes legal and other mechanisms to hold governments accountable in the event they violate human rights (HURIDAC/ACDHRS, 2021).

International treaties are important tools for holding governments accountable for the respect, protection, and realization of the rights of individuals in their country and the following instruments have been signed, ratified and domesticated based on the legal system of each country in West Africa. (UNHRTreatybody, 2023)

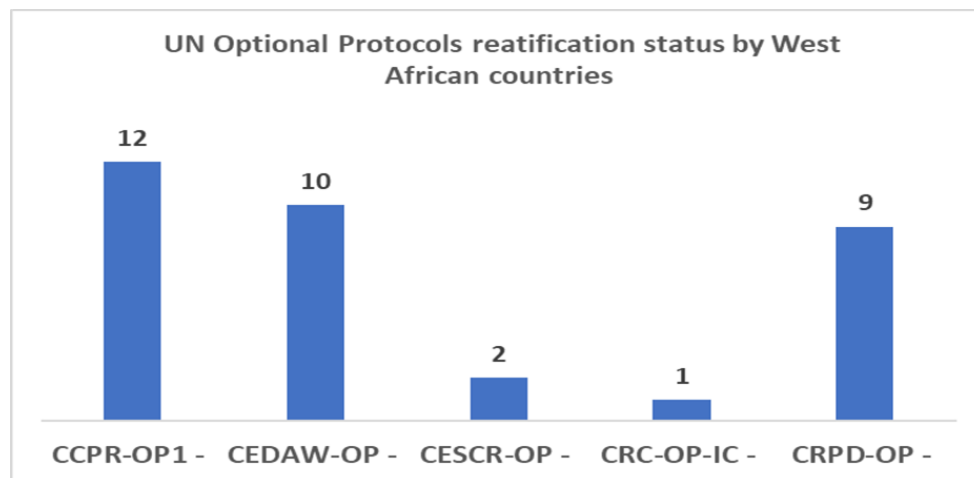


Seven of fifteen West African countries has ratified al the UN core Treaties. CED, Art.32 – the Interstate communication procedure under the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance has not been ratified by any country. Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty has been ratified by only five countries which are Cape Verde, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mali and Togo.

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#### 4.1.2. THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS:

As for the optional protocols, the first optional protocol CCPR-OP1 for the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR) is ratified by thirteen (13), Guinea, Liberia and Niger are not complying lately. CEDAW-OP for The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in contrast to 2021 which was ratified by all the fifteen (15) countries, Sierra Leone, Togo, Liberia, Guinea and Gambia back off from the protocol. . Some of the treaties are yet to be ratified by the all the West African countries, Optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is ratified by only Cape Verde and Niger and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is ratified by only Benin (UNHRTreatybody, 2023).



The drop in compliance with the optional protocols can be attributed to various reasons. One possible explanation is political and ideological shifts, where changes in government or political leadership lead to a re-evaluation of international commitments, resulting in a withdrawal from or non-compliance with certain agreements. Another reason is domestic political considerations, where countries prioritize domestic political interests over international obligations, leading to a decrease in compliance. Capacity and resource constraints also play a role, as countries may face challenges in implementing and complying with international agreements due to limited resources, capacity, or institutional weaknesses. Additionally, countries may assert their sovereignty and prioritize national interests over international commitments, leading to a decrease in compliance. Finally, a lack of awareness or understanding may also contribute to non-compliance, as countries

may not fully comprehend the implications of ratifying international agreements or may not be aware of their obligations.

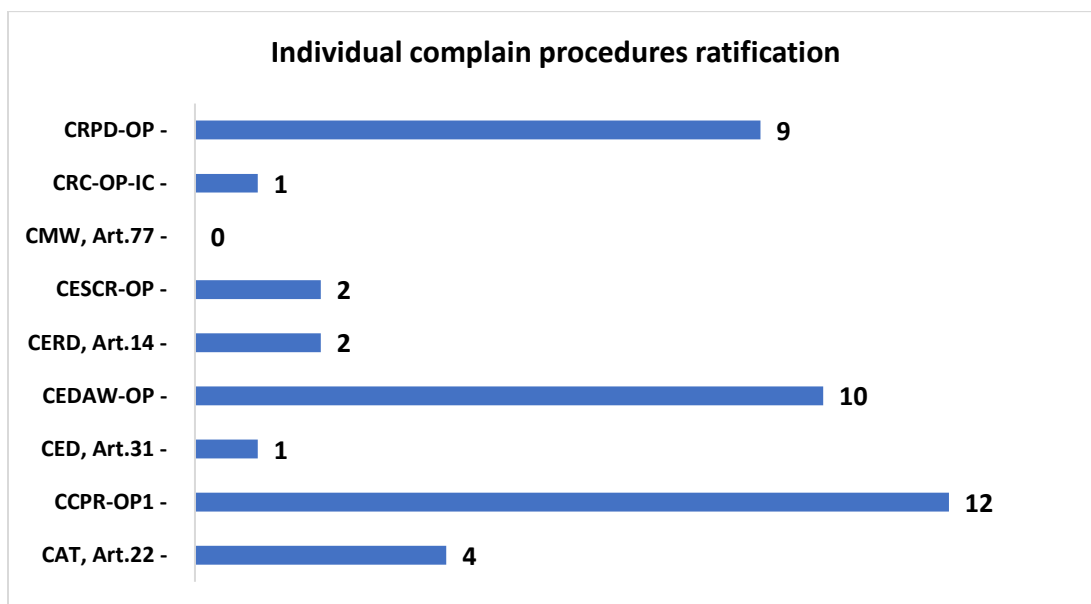
In the specific cases mentioned, Guinea, Liberia, and Niger may have faced challenges in implementing the CCPR-OP1 protocol, leading to non-compliance. Similarly, Sierra Leone, Togo, Liberia, Guinea, and Gambia may have reassessed their commitment to CEDAW-OP due to domestic political considerations or ideological shifts.

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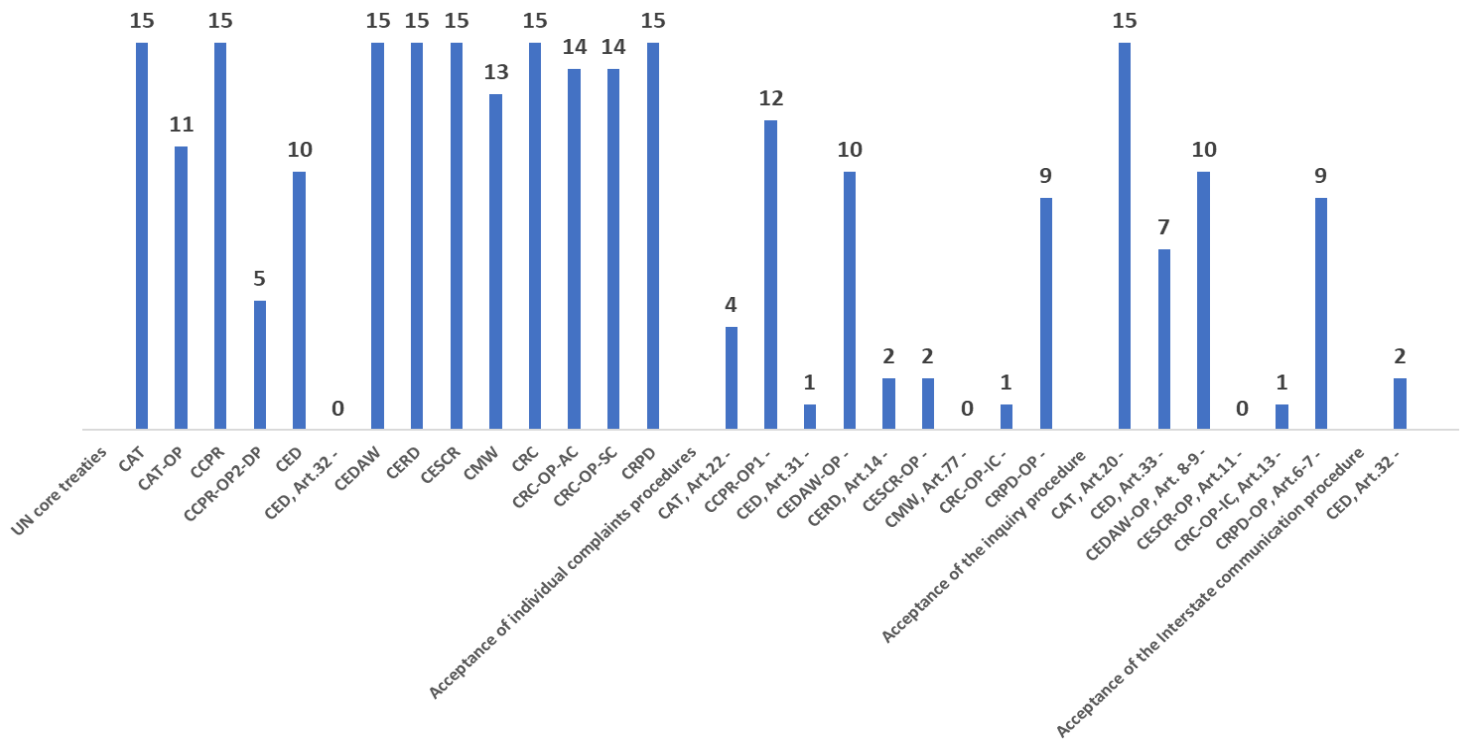
#### 4.1.3. THE INDIVIDUAL COMPLAINT PROCEDURES:

Some treaties give individuals or citizens from a member state of a treaty, who are victims of violation of international human rights treaties, the right to make complaints before the United Nations.

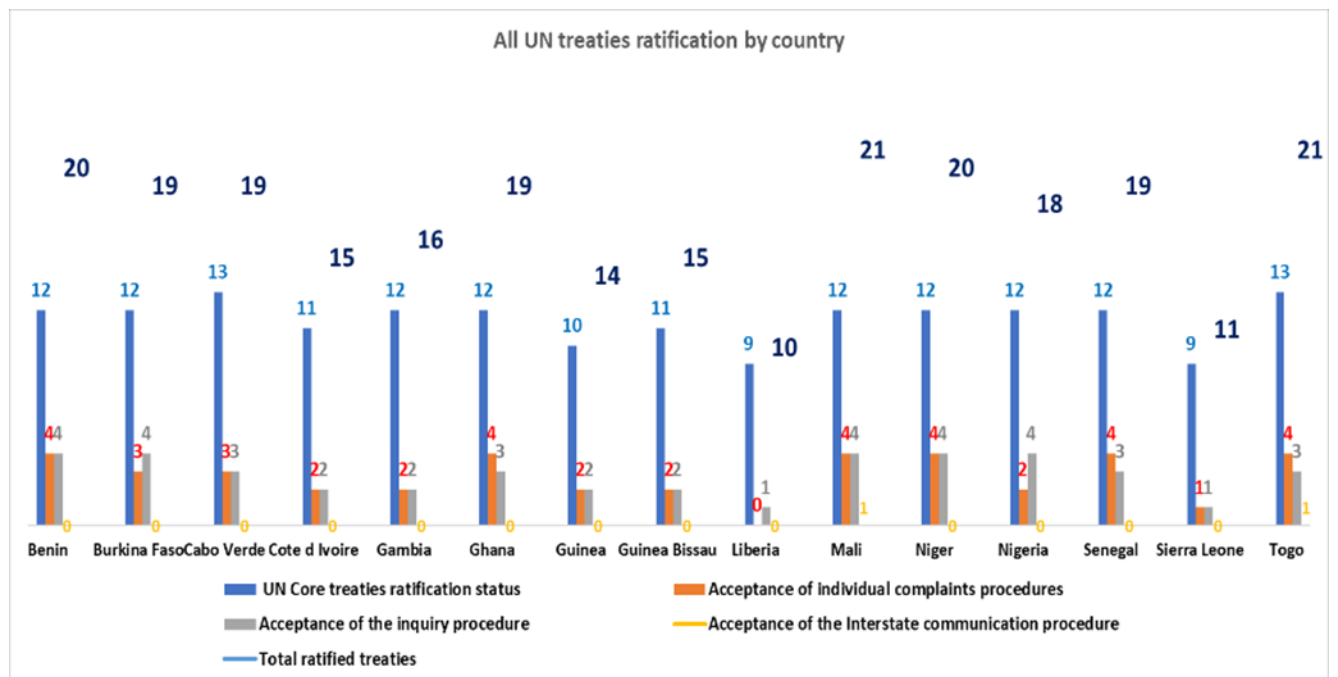
The following graph shows the level of ratification of various provisions by West African countries enabling citizens to file their complaints in case of abuse of their rights.



*In West Africa, only Cape Verde has ratified the optional protocol to the convention on the right of the child CRC-OP-IC and the CED, Art.31 – the convention on Enforced Disappearance is ratified only by Mali. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members is yet to be ratified by all and Nigeria, Guinea Bissau and Liberia are yet to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UNhumanrighttreatybody)*



The ratification of UN core treaties remain unchanged, only seven (7) have ratified all the UN core treaties. The average ratification of individual complaint procedures is 2 while the interstate communication procedure has been ratified by only two counties, Mali and Togo, currently leading the table.



*The total ratification level has dropped from 23 treaties ratified to 21. Benin ratified 23 UN treaties in 2021 with a score of 23, it has dropped to 20 ratifications while Mali and Togo take the lead with 21 ratifications each. Liberia with a 12 treaties ratification score performed the least. Liberia had the least ratification in 2021 with 12 treaties ratified and still maintain his position with a decline, 10 ratifications is recorded for the year 2023.*

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#### 4.1.4. UN CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

The concluding observations are resolutions based on the issues detected in various states' reports and discussions during the dialogue in the country's sessions. They gave guidance on compliance with the related treaties and their implementation in the state. In both 2022 and 2023, the concluding observations focus on upholding the right of older persons in Nigeria, concerns were raised about the initial report of Togo as well as on the combined twenty-second to twenty-fifth periodic reports of the Republic of Niger.

The independent expert, Claudia Mahler emphasized upholding the rights of older person and standardize the human right perspective in general in Nigeria. In her analysis, she pointed out that criminal justice; immigration-related detention; and care settings were prevalent were risks that could affect older people and concluded with recommendations to the relevant stakeholders (UnitedNationHRCONIGERIA, A/HRC/54/26/Add.1: Visit to Nigeria - Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler, 2023).

Mahler's recommendation emphasized the need to address the impact of climate change-induced disasters on older persons in Nigeria, from preparedness to response, to ensure their safety and well-being. Specifically, she suggested implementing affordable and adequate housing facilities for older persons to mitigate the effects of climate-related disasters and enhance their overall safety and security. (UnitedNationHRCONIGERIA, A/HRC/51/27: Older persons deprived of liberty - Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahle, 2022).

Togo and Niger were urged to consider timing in their reporting procedures.

Other countries' observation was submitted years ago (most observation were submitted in 2019-2021) and I strongly recommend that the institution look into submitting observation for other countries as well as it help in the development monitoring process.

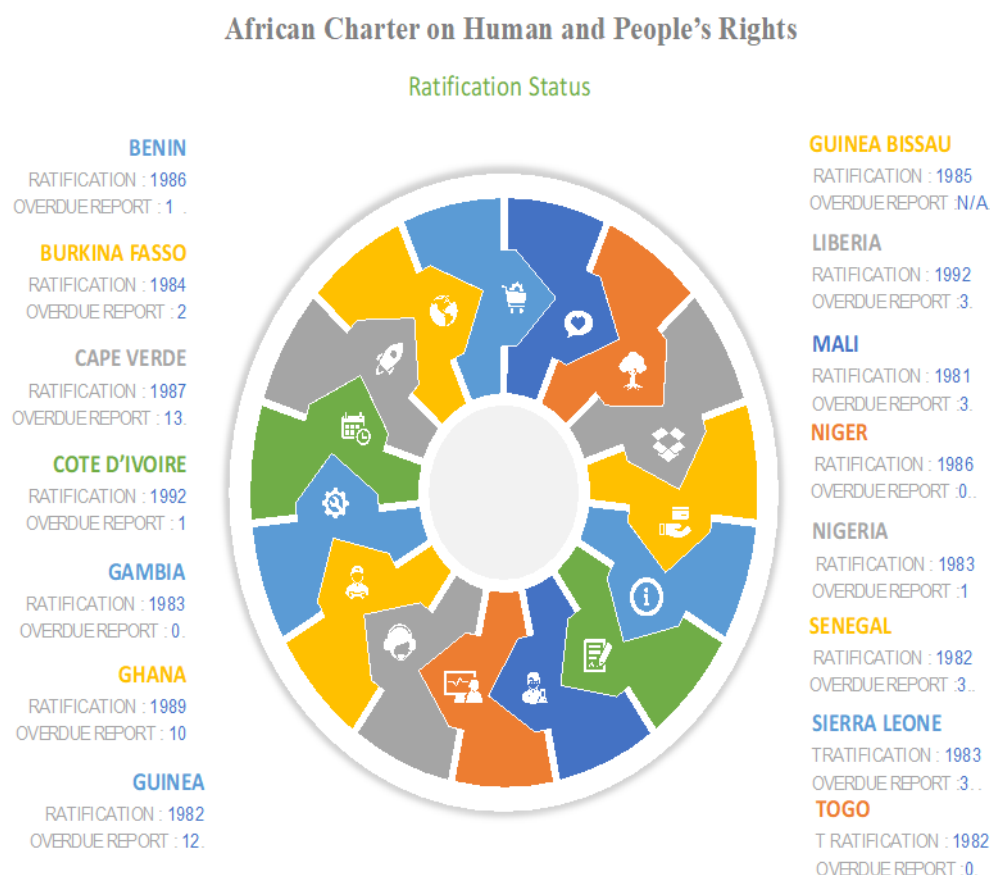
#### **2022-2023 concluding observations**



<i>No</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>Concluding observation</i>
<i>1</i>	<i>Nigeria</i>	<i>24 July 2023</i>	<i>A/HRC/54/26/Add.1: concluding observations on the enjoyment of human rights by older person in Nigeria (UnitedNationHRCONIGERIA, A/HRC/54/26/Add.1: Visit to Nigeria - Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler, 2023)</i>
		<i>19 July 2022</i>	<i>A/77/239: Older persons and the right to adequate housing - Note by the Secretary-General (UnitedNationHRCONIGERIA, A/77/239: Older persons and the right to adequate housing - Note by the Secretary-General, 2022)</i>
		<i>13 September 2022</i>	<i>A/HRC/51/27: Older persons deprived of liberty - Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahler (UnitedNationHRCONIGERIA, A/HRC/51/27: Older persons deprived of liberty - Report of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons, Claudia Mahle, 2022)</i>
		<i>25 July 2023</i>	<i>A/78/226: Human rights of older persons in the context of climate change-induced disasters (UnitedNationHRCONIGERIA, A/78/226: Human rights of older persons in the context of climate change-induced disasters, 2023)</i>
<i>2</i>	<i>Togo</i>	<i>11 April 2023</i>	<i>CRPD/C/TGO/CO/1: Concluding observations on the initial report of Togo (UnitedNationHRCOTOGO, 2023)</i>
<i>3</i>	<i>Niger</i>	<i>24 May 2023</i>	<i>CERD/C/NER/CO/22-25: Concluding observations on the combined twenty-second to twenty-fifth periodic reports of the Niger (UnitedNationHRCNIGER, 2023)</i>

This section provides an update on the ratification status of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights among West African States from 2022-2023. We will delve into the African Charter's reporting status, concluding observations, and the ratification status of the African Court, as well as its notable cases in the West African region. Adopted by the African Union in 1981, the African Charter on Human and People's Rights has been ratified by 15 West African countries, as outlined in the table below:

This section aims to offer a comprehensive overview of the progress made by West African States in implementing the African Charter, highlighting areas of strength and weakness, and shedding light on the region's human rights landscape. (ACHPR, African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, 2021)



#### 4.2.1. THE AFRICAN CHARTER ON RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD

This is a regional human rights treaty adopted in July 1990 and came into force in November 1999.

It sets out the rights and principles for the status of children and all parties should be bound by all 48 Article of the charter for accountability purposes. According to article 5 of the charter, which talk about child survival and development, every child across the West African region has the right

to life and this shall be protected by national legislation (AfricanUnion, The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), 2023).

All fifteen countries have signed and ratified the African Charter on human rights welfare of the child with high concern about the reporting status. (RIGHTS, 2023) According to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, the concluding observations on special protection measures emphasize the need for states to take comprehensive measures to safeguard the well-being of children. This includes ensuring protection from all forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation, strengthening legislation and enforcement mechanisms to prevent child marriage, trafficking, and labor, and guaranteeing access to education, healthcare, and social services for all children, particularly vulnerable groups. Additionally, states are urged to develop policies and programs to address the root causes of child poverty, homelessness, and destitution, and to ensure the participation of children in decision-making processes that affect their lives and futures. Furthermore, adequate resources and support should be provided for families and caregivers to ensure proper care and protection, and child protection systems, including reporting mechanisms, should be established and strengthened to prevent and respond to cases of child abuse and neglect.

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#### 4.2.2. AFRICAN CHARTER'S REPORTING STATUS

Following section 62 of the African Charter and article 26 of the protocol of the African charter on the rights of women (Maputo Protocol), parties to the charter are required to submit a report every two years to ensure that each state meets its obligations under the treaty and also remind governments of their accountability to the commitments they have made within the charter (TheAfricanCommission, 2021).

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#### 4.2.3. AFRICAN COURT

The **African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights** is a continental court established by African countries to ensure the protection of **human and people's rights** in Africa. It complements and reinforces the functions of the African Commission on **Human and Peoples' Rights**. Being established in November 2008, thirty (33) countries have ratified the protocol in Africa and eleven West African countries are members (AfricanCommissiononHumanandPeoples'Rights, 2021)

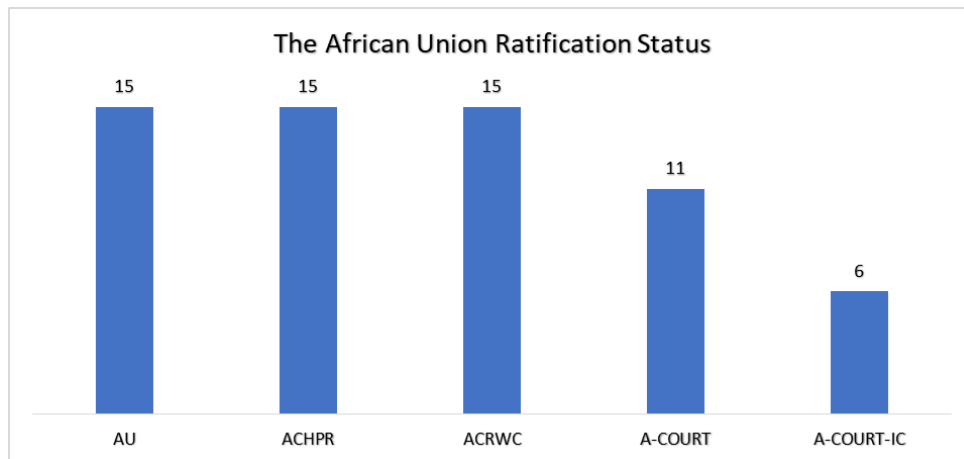
Human rights cases applications at the African Court in 2021. There are recorded file applications for year 2022 and 2023.

No	Country	cases	Application date	Status/Narrative
1	<b>Republic of Benin</b>	Landry Angelo Adalakoun & Others v. <b>Republic of Benin</b> (AFCHPRCases, Applications and sittings, 2021)	App. 012/2021	<p><b>Status-</b>Ruling of 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021</p> <p><b>Decisions-</b> Dismissed the request for Provisional measures</p> <p><b>Narrative-</b>Landry Angelo Adalakoun, Romaric Jesukpego Zinsou and Fifamin Miguele Houeto (hereinafter, the "Applicants") are nationals of Benin, residing in Cotonou. They allege human rights violations owing to the shutdown of the internet on the day of legislative elections on 28 April 2019 (LANDRYANGELOADELAKOUNANDOT HERS, 2021)</p>
2	<b>Cote d'Ivoire</b>	App. Kouadio Kobena Fory v. <b>Republic of Cote d'Ivoire</b> (AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)	034/2017	<p><b>Status-</b> Pending</p> <p><b>Narrative-</b> From the Application before the Court, it emerges that following the declaration of the provisional results of the 6 March 2021 parliamentary election, the Applicants, who were candidates in the said election, brought an action before the Constitutional Council seeking to invalidate the provisional results in Electoral District No. 053, Yamoussoukro Commune 2. The Applicants contended that the election in the said electoral district was marred by material irregularities and violations of electoral laws during voting and collation of results and the compilation of collation sheets (AFCHPRComplainfomIvoryCoast, 2021)</p>

3	Mali	Application - Souleymane Camara v. <b>Republic of Mali</b> (AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)	014/2021	<p>No information available for this case</p> <p><a href="#">African Court Cases   Details of a case (African-court.org)</a></p>
4	Republic of Benin	Application - Lehady Vinagnon Soglo v. <b>Republic of Benin</b> (AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)	011/2021	<p>From the application before the court, Sogle alleges the denial of Mayorship of Cotonou. As a result of elections.</p> <p>Soglo won the elections in August 215 and was denied the position by the consultation and coordination council of the Coastal department on July 28 2017. To his surprise, a suspension order was prepared by the Minister of decentralisation to notify him of the current situation despite all the evidences that prove his eligibility for the mayorship position (AFCHPRComplainformBenin, 2021).</p>
5	Cote d'Ivoire	Application - Kouadio Kobena Fory v. <b>Republic of Cote d'Ivoire</b> (AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)	004/2021	<p>No information available for this case</p> <p><a href="#">African Court Cases   Details of a case (african-court.org)</a></p>
	Republic of Benin	Application - XYZ v. <b>Republic of Benin</b>	003/2021	<p><b>Status-</b> Ruling (Given provisional measures)</p> <p><b>Narrative-</b>On September 18 January 2021, the Applicant filed with the Court, an Application dated 16 January 2021, for alleged violation of his rights by the Respondent State through the holding of the presidential election, by the maintaining of Law No. 2019-40 of 7 November 2019, by revising the Constitution</p>

				(hereinafter referred to as the "Revised Constitution") and all subsequent laws, especially Law No. 2019-43 of 15 November 2019, establishing the Electoral Code (hereinafter referred to as the "Electoral Code") for the presidential election of 11 April 2021 (AFCHPRCasesfromBenin, 2021)
6	Benin	Application - Sébastien Germain Marie Aïkoué Ajavon v. <b>Republic of Benin</b> (AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)	002/2021	<p><b>Status-</b> Ruling (Given provisional measures)</p> <p><b>Narrative:</b> Mr Sébastien Germain Marie Aïkoué Ajavon, (hereinafter referred to as "the Applicant") is a Beninese citizen and businessman, residing in Paris, France, as a political refugee. In his complaint, Ajavon seeks justice for the violation of the rights to defence and of equality, and he also mentioned the principle of fairness during the tax reassessment proceedings initiated against the companies being ignored. Comptoir Mondial de Négoce (COMON) SA, JLR SA Unipersonnelle and the real estate civil company l'Elite", of which he is a shareholder. (AFCHPRCasesfromBenin, 2021).</p>
7	Republic of Mali	Application - Yaya Koné v. <b>Republic of Mali</b> (AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)	001/2021 (from Dec. 2020)	<p>Classified case</p> <p><a href="#">African Court Cases   Home (African-court.org)</a></p>
8	Ghana	Application - Marizu Godwill v. <b>Republic of Ghana</b>	048/2020	<p><b>Status:</b></p> <p><b>Narrative:</b> Mr Marizu Godwill (hereinafter referred to as "the Applicant"), a Nigerian businessman who alleges the violation of the Charter concerning policy decisions and</p>

		(AFCHPRCases, All cases, 2021)		legislations targeting African businesses in Ghana. Using as a claim the xenophobic attack against most African students in countries that are supposed to promote the concept of unity, and the demolition of the Nigerian embassy in Ghana, Godwill, therefore, claims the violation of Articles 12(5), 23(1) and 27(1), 28, 29(8) of the Charter (AFCHPRCasesfromGhana, 2021).
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*The AU, the ACHPR, and ACRWC have been ratified by all fifteen West African countries. The African court has been ratified by eleven countries including **Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Niger, Senegal, and Togo** from West Africa. In contrast to Liberia, Cape Verde, Guinea and Sierra Leone are yet to be part of the African court, Six (6) West African countries have deposited the declaration protocol to allow their citizen to approach the court directly, and these six (6) countries are: Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, and Niger. However, Benin and Cote d'Ivoire have withdrawn their declaration in 2020 to allow their citizens to approach the court (ACHPR, Welcome to the African Court, n.d.).*

#### 4.3. THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC) RATIFICATION STATUS

The International Criminal Court as its name indicates is concerned about the investigation, trials and charges of the gravest of international community crimes such as genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes of aggression. Being governed by international law called the **Rome Statute of International Criminal Court** (InternationalCriminalCourt, Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, 2021).

This section of the report will examine new resolutions of the court and cases from West African state parties before the court.

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#### 4.3.1. NEW RESOLUTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

From the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the International Criminal Court held at the World Forum The Hague in the Netherlands on the 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 2022. The Assembly elected further five members of the Board of Directors of the Trust Fund of Victims for a term of three years: Mr Sheikh Mohammed Belal (Bangladesh), Mr Kevin Kelly (Ireland), Mr Andres Parmas (Estonia), Ms Minerva Josefina Tarávez Mirabal (Dominican Republic), and Mr Ibrahim Sorie Yillah (Sierra Leone). The Assembly also adopted five resolutions by consensus:

- The programme budget for 2022, cooperation,
- The Review of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute system,
- The outcome of the work of the Study Group on Governance on recommendations of the Group of Independent Experts, and
- Strengthening the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties.
- The Assembly adopted the 2022 programme budget of the Court totalling €154,855,000 and a staffing level of 976 (InternationalCriminalCourt, Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, 2021).

***The 2021 ICC resolutions (the ninetieth session)*** (InternationalCriminalCourt, Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, 2021)

No	Resolution	Title
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1	ICC-ASP/20/Res.1	Resolution of the Assembly of States Parties on the proposed programme budget for 2022, the Working Capital Fund for 2022, the scale of assessment for the apportionment of expenses of the International Criminal Court, financing appropriations for 2022 and the Contingency Fund
2	ICC-ASP/20/Res.2	Resolution on Cooperation
3	ICC-ASP/20/Res.3	Review of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute system
4	ICC-ASP/20/Res.4	Review of the International Criminal Court and the Rome Statute System. The outcome of the work of the Study Group on Governance on recommendations of the Group of Independent Experts
5	ICC-ASP/20/Res.5	Strengthening the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties

**The latest resolutions from the ICC in 2022 and 2023 are as follows (Twenty-second Session - Resolutions):** (Court, Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute, 2024)

No	Resolution	Title
1	ICC-ASP/21/Res.1	Resolution of the Assembly of States Parties on the proposed programme budget for 2023, the Working Capital Fund for 2023, the scale of assessment for the apportionment of expenses of the International Criminal Court, financing appropriations for 2023 and the Contingency Fund
2	ICC-ASP/22/Res.1	Resolution on amendments to the Rules of Procedure and Evidence of the International Criminal Court
3	ICC-ASP/22/Res.2	Amendment to article 39 of the Rome Statute
4	ICC-ASP/22/Res.3	Strengthening the International Criminal Court and the Assembly of States Parties
5	ICC-ASP/22/Res.4	Resolution of the Assembly of States Parties on the proposed programme budget for 2024, the Working Capital Fund for 2024, the scale of assessment for the apportionment of expenses of the International Criminal Court, financing appropriations for 2024 and the Contingency Fund

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#### 4.3.2. WEST AFRICAN CASES AT THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT IN 2022 - 2023

There are a few cases before the ICC. However, there was a record of a trial against Mr Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman who was handed over to the ICC on Jun 9, 2020, suspected of 31 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Darfur between 2003 and 2004. The trial in this case opened before Trial Chamber I on April 5, 2022, and is currently ongoing. (Court, 31 Cases, 2023)

Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz Ag Mohamed Ag Mahmoud is from Mali. He is accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity for his involvement in the destruction of Timbuktu's fabled shrines and unleashing a reign of terror in Mali's volatile north. He was surrendered to the International Criminal Court on March 31, 2018, and is currently in the Court's custody. (Court, 31 Cases, 2023)

Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi: He was sentenced to 9 years in prison for his involvement in the destruction of Timbuktu's fabled shrines, which took place between June 30 and July 11, 2012. The sites attacked were dedicated to religion and historic monuments, and were not military objectives. (Court, 31 Cases, 2023)

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#### 4.3.3. STATE PARTIES TO THE ICC

Togo and guinea Bissau are not part of the ICC. (Court, African States, 2023)

#### 4.4. THE ECOWAS

This section will focus on the ECOWAS treaty and ratification status, the ECOWAS Commission, the ECOWAS court and the ECOWAS parliament.

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##### 4.4.1. THE ECOWAS TREATY AND RATIFICATION STATUS:

With the main focus on the collective self-sufficiency of its member states and the promotion of economic integration, the Economic Communities of West African State is a regional organisation that gathers the fifteen heads of state and government of West Africa. All the West African countries are members of the treaty (**the Treaty of Lagos**) which was signed on 28 May 1975 in Lagos, Nigeria by all the states except Cape Verde which later joined the community in 1977. The community is bound by the 1975 treaty which was revised in 1993 (ECOWAS, Treaty, 2015)

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##### 4.4.2. THE ECOWAS COMMISSION

From the ECOWAS secretariat in 2007 to the ECOWAS commission currently, this institution is in charge of the implementation of the mission and objectives of the community. Governed by President H.E. Omar Alieu Touray, and vice president and five commissioners preoccupied with providing leadership to achieve the vision of the institution, also focus on the implementation of various strategies to enhance cohesion between member states. (ECOWAS, 2024).

**The achievement of the institution during 2022-2023**

The ECOWAS Commission has made significant strides in various areas from 2022 to 2023. One notable achievement is the progress made in the area of identity management. The Commission drafted a bill aimed at standardizing the identification of persons across member states, which is expected to be voted into law. This initiative aims to enhance security, facilitate economic integration, and improve the overall well-being of citizens. Additionally, the Commission has made significant progress in enrolling vulnerable persons, such as refugees and internally displaced persons, into national identity databases.

Another key achievement is the issuance of unique identification numbers to persons enrolled in some member states. This milestone marks a significant step towards the harmonization of identity management systems across the region. The Commission has also received approval from the World Bank for its 2022 End-of-year Project Reports, demonstrating the effectiveness of its projects and programs. Furthermore, the World Bank has also approved the Commission's 2023 Annual Work Plan, paving the way for the implementation of new initiatives and projects aimed at promoting economic integration, peace, and security in the region.

Overall, the ECOWAS Commission has made significant progress in various areas, including identity management, project implementation, and strategic planning. These achievements demonstrate the Commission's commitment to promoting economic integration, peace, and security in the West African region. (Commission, 2023)

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#### 4.4.3. THE ECOWAS PARLIAMENT.

Established in 1993 based pursuant the articles 6 and 13 of the revised treaty and signed in Abuja on August 6, 1994; the ECOWAS parliament is an ECOWAS institution in charge of the forum for dialogue, consultation and consensus for representatives of the people. (ECOWASParliament, Historical Background, 2020).

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#### 4.4.4. COMMITTEES OF THE PARLIAMENT

The parliament is formed of fourteen (14) standing committees, composed of at most ten (10) members governed by a chairperson, a vice, and the first and second Rapporteur (ECOWASParliament, The Committees, 2020).

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## COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AFFAIRS AND HUMAN RIGHTS

*This committee is charged with the responsibility to:*

- Recognition and observation of Community rules and principles;
- Recognition, promotion and protection of human and people's rights;
- Harmonisation of the judicial and legal systems of Member States;
- Measure to combat all forms of discrimination based on gender, race ethnic origin, religious beliefs, disability or age;
- Measures to prevent racism, ethnicity and xenophobia;
- Parliamentary rules and verification of powers;
- Elaboration and implementation of the treaty and other Community Acts;
- Preparation of a draft common electoral law.
- Monitoring the implementation of international agreements and conventions on human and child rights
- Development of appropriate measures for the protection of the child and other vulnerable groups.
- Administrative and financial management of the Community Court of Justice, ECOWAS (ECOWASParliament, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, 2020)

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### 4.4.5. THE ECOWAS COURT OF JUSTICE

Mandated to ensure the respect of all legal instruments adopted by the community and also maintain the principles of equity, the court was established under the provision of articles 6 and 15 the revised Lagos treaty. It is composed of five independent judges appointed by the authority of heads of state of government for one year under the supervision of the judicial council (ECOWASCourt, The Community Court of Justice, 2024).

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### ECOWAS COURT OF JUSTICE CASES:

The following are known cases from West Africa before the ECOWAS Court of Justice between 2022 and 2023: (Justice, 2024)

Mohamed Morlu v. Republic of Sierra Leone (2024)

Mrs. Dorothy Etim v. President of Commission (2024)

Jean Edoh v. Togo (2024)

Barry Abdoulaye Sadio & 3 Autres c. République de Guinée (2024)

Mohamed Bazoum et 2 Autres v. Niger (2023)

Maître Moussa Traoré c. Côte d'Ivoire (2023)

Souleymane Bah c. Republique de Guinee (2023)

Ousmane Sonko v. Republic of Senegal (2023)

Hadidjatou Mani Koraou v. Republic of Niger (2008)

Patrick Eholor v. Federal Republic of Nigeria (2023)

Adou Kouame & 14 Autres c. Etat de Cote d'Ivoire (2023)

Republique de Guinee c. Ibrahima Kassus Dioubate et K. Energie-SA (2023)

Association des Blogueurs de Guinee (ABLOGUI) 7 3 Ors v. State of Guinea (2023)

Chief Sunday Adeyemo (AKA Sunday Igboho) c. Republique du Benin (2023)

Adam Latif et 14 Autres c. Republique Togolaise (2023)

True Whig Party v Republic of Liberia (2023)

Isaac Olamikan & Anor v Federal Republic of Nigeria (2023)

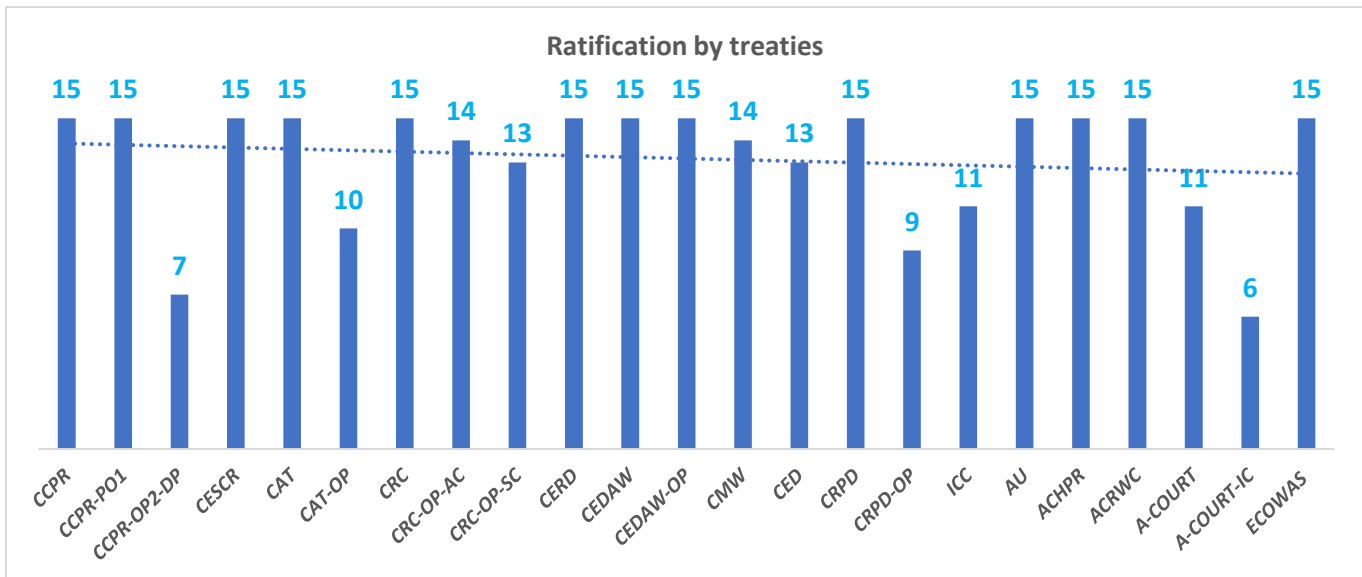
Kpatcha Gnassingbe & 6 Ors v. Rép Togolaise (2022)

Chief Ebriman Manneh v. Republic of The Gambia (2022)

Amnesty International Togo & 7 Ors v Togo (2022)

MS. ROSE BREIVOGEL & ANOR. v. FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA (2022)

*All treaties ratification updated:*



*Liberia has signed the optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on the involvement of children in armed conflict CRC-PO-AC on the 22 September 2004 but is yet to ratify it. The CRPD=OP, ART. 6-7 is not ratified by all West African countries. They include: Benin, Cote d'Ivoire, Cape Verde, Liberia, Senegal and Sierra Leone. (UNTreatybody).*

*The last treaty signed is the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance CEC, Liberia and Cape Verde are yet to ratify the treaty (UNTreatybody).*

## Ratification table updated

SNo	Countries	CCPR	CCPR-PO1	CCPR-OP2-DP	CESCR	CAT	CAT-OP	CRC	CRC-OP-AC	CRC-OP-SC	CERD	CEDAW	CEDAW-OP	CMW	CED	CRPD	CRPD-OP	ICC	AU	ACHPR	ACRWC	A-COURT	A-COURT-IC	ECOWAS	
1	Benin	1992	1992	2002	1992	1992	2006	1990	2005	2005	2001	1992	2019	2018	2017	2012	2012	2002	2001	1986	1986	2014	withdraw	1993	
2	Burkina Faso	1999	1999		1999	1999	2010	1990	2007	2006	1974	1987	2005	2003	2009	2009	2009	2004	2001	1984	1984	1008		1998	1993
3	Cabo Verde	1993	2000	2000	1993	1992	2016	1992	2002	2002	1979	1980	2011	1997		2011		2011	2000	1987	1987			1993	
4	Ivory Coast	1992	1007		1992	1995		1991	2012	2011	1073	1995	2012			2014		2013	2001	1992	2004	2003	withdraw	1993	
5	Gambia	1979	1993	2018	1978	2018		1990	2019	2010	1978	1993		2018	2018	2015		2002	2001	1983	1983	1999		2020	1993
6	Ghana	2000	2000		2000	2000	2016	1990	2014		1966	1966	2011	2000		2012	2012	1999	2001	1999	2005	2004		2001	1993
7	Guinea	1978	1976		1978	1999		1990	2016	2011	1977	1982		2000		2008	2008	2003	2002	1982	1999			1993	
8	Guinea-Bissau	2010	2013	2013	1992	2013		1990	2014	2010	2010	1985	2009	2018		2014	2018		2001	1985	1985	2018		2018	1993
9	Liberia	2004		2005	2004	2004	2004	1993			1976	1984				2012		2004	2001	1992	1992			1993	
10	Mali	1974	2001		1974	1999	2005	1990	2002	2002	1974	1985	2000	2003	2009	2008	2008	2000	2000	1981	1981	2000		2000	1993
11	Niger	1966	1966		1966	1993	2014	1990	2012	2004	1967	1999	2004	2009	2015	2008	2008	2002	2001	1983	1983	2004		2004	1993
12	Nigeria	1993			1993	2001	2009	1991	2012	2010	1967	1985	2004	2009	2009	2010	2010	2001	2001	1983	1983	2004		2014	1993
13	Senegal	1978	1978		1978	1966	2006	1990	2004	2003	1978	1965	2000	1999	2008	2010		1999	2000	1982	1982	1998			1993
14	Sierra Leone	1996	1996		1996	2001		1990	2002	2001	1967	1988				2010		2000	2001	1983	1983				1993
15	Togo	1984	1988	2016	1984	1987	2010	1990	2005	2004	1972	1983		2020	2014	2011	2011		2000	1982	1982	2003			1993

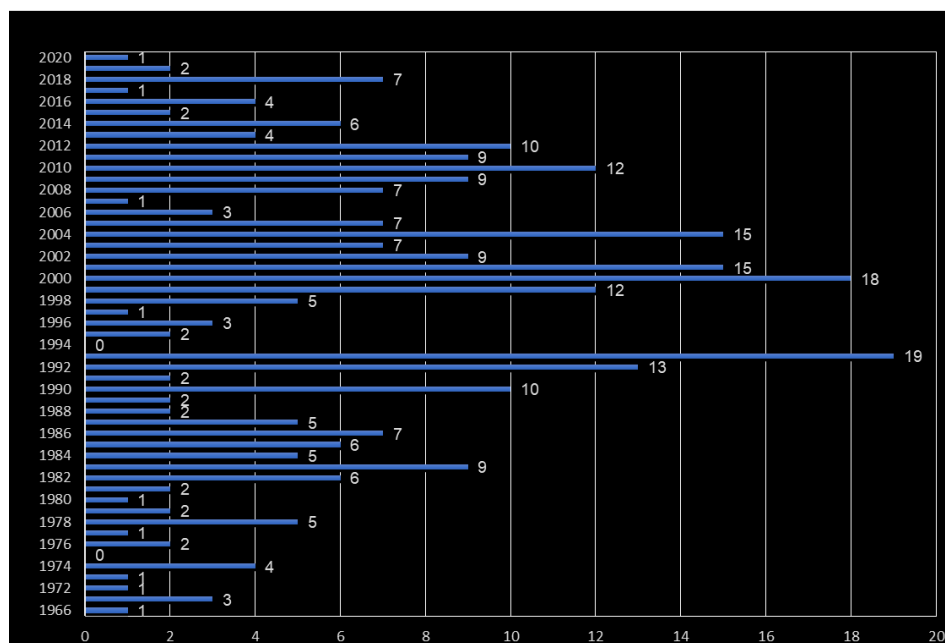
### Legend:

**Black colour**-Treaties not ratified up to date

**Mauve colour**-Optional protocols not accepted up to date

**Grey colour**-Treaties signed but not yet ratified (retrieved from UN treaties bodies, African court, ECOWAS and the ICC)

**Ratification timeline:** No treaty was ratified in 2022 and 2023.



#### 4.5 CONCLUSION.

International treaties are the climax of a negotiation process undertaken by the Member States of a regional or universal international organization, to define acceptable standards for all, particularly about multilateral treaties. When a treaty is signed and ratified by a state, it is legally bound by the provisions of the convention. The state legislation should be compatible with the provision and determines measures to be taken to best facilitate its implementation.

West African countries face challenges to the adoption of this convention, the lack of political will, lack of the necessary bureaucratic coordination as well as issues of technical capacity such as difficulties in drafting the legal conditions for implementation and trained personnel capable of resolving ratification issues are barriers that prevent or delay the ratification process.

Member States must ratify all the Charters and Conventions in the various areas within the framework of the AU taking into consideration the domestic political Interrelationships that interplay between the executive authorities and national legislatures, especially in the areas of peace and Security, free and honest elections, Human Rights Protection, protection of displaced persons and refugees, protection of vulnerable groups, environment, economy, trade, international arbitration, health, fight against poverty, fight against epidemics and consequently, the failure to sign and/or ratify significant Human rights treaties potentially undermines the political credibility and standing of the country.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: EXPLORING HUMAN RIGHTS THEMATIC FOCUS AREA CASES:**

This Chapter will examine different cases on Human Rights Thematic Focus Areas. Segmented into sections, they will respectively discuss the rights to electoral governance, and the right to health as enumerated in international agreements and finally throw light on issues of Environmental.

### **5.1 DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS:**

According to Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), democratic rights include the right to vote in elections, the right to access and participate in public services, the right to justice, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, and freedom of association, as well as the right "to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections to international standards, and the equal representation and participation of women." (United Nations, 2023)

### **5.2 CHALLENGES FACING DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS:**

In 2022 and 2023, West Africa faced numerous challenges to democratic rights, including military coups and attempted coups in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea, which undermined democratic institutions and the rule of law. Additionally, restrictions on civil liberties, such as freedom of assembly and expression, were prevalent in several countries, with governments using laws and regulations to stifle dissent and silence opposition voices. Electoral irregularities and violence marred elections in some countries, while corruption and impunity remained significant obstacles to democratic governance. (KujengaAmani, 2022) Furthermore, terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa continued to wreak havoc in the region, destabilizing communities and disrupting democratic processes. Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in healthcare systems and highlighted the need for more robust social protection policies, which democratic governments struggled to address effectively. These challenges threatened the consolidation of democracy and the protection of human rights in West Africa. (ChathamHouse, 2023)

Some characteristics of the region's democratic state that:

- i. Military coups and attempted coups in countries like Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea
- ii. Restrictions on civil liberties, such as freedom of assembly and expression
- iii. Electoral irregularities and violence marred elections in some countries
- iv. Corruption and impunity remained significant obstacles to democratic governance
- v. Terrorist groups like Boko Haram and ISIS-West Africa continued to wreak havoc in the region, destabilizing communities and disrupting democratic processes
- vi. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in healthcare systems and highlighted the need for more robust social protection policies, which democratic governments struggled to address effectively

### **5.3 RIGHT TO VOTE:**

#### **5.3.1. THE CONCEPT OF THE RIGHT TO VOTE AND ALL THE INHERENT HUMAN RIGHTS SCOPE:**

According HURIDAC and ACDHRS in their 2020 human right report, Democracy partly depends on the people's ability to fully exercise their fundamental rights to participate freely in the management of the political affairs of their respective countries.

The right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, including the right to vote and to stand for election, is at the core of democratic governments based on the will of the people. Genuine elections are thus a necessary and fundamental component of an environment that protects and promotes human rights. The right to vote and be elected in genuine, periodic elections is intrinsically linked to several other human rights, the enjoyment of which is crucial to a meaningful electoral process. (HURIDAC/ACDHRS, 2020)

Despite the recent achievements in democratization, elections in some West African States remain a recurrent source of human rights violations, causing deep social instability, and leading to numerous post-election crises.

As we can recall, the federal republic of Nigeria recorded about 150 case of extrajudicial killing during it February 25 election while the republic of Sierra Leone accounted for about 6 cases of

death. So many injuries and destruction of property were as well recorded during the two election in West Africa which definitely alter the nature of human right and democracy.

The various coup might have tangible reasons to be undertaken but they exacerbate the existing socio-economic crisis in the Sahel, especially in Niger and Burkina Faso. Foreign aid are almost all cut off which at some point represent one fourth of the country's economy, international diplomacy disrupted, food and medical assistance disrupted as the country's seek help from neighbouring countries.

Political instability eat up development foundation in those countries, the level of internal threat due division in the army and the administration is alarming, the external insecurity factors, notably the insurgency if not curb, will continue to worsen the situation as citizen's wellbeing won't be restore.

During the Sierra Leone 2023 elections, the nature of elections management didn't inspire trust to the citizens of Sierra Leone as the outcome of crucial activities lead to criticism and protest that accounted for about two protest, lives and properties were wasted.

From the human rights perspective, extrajudicial killing were prevalent during the first and last period of the elections in Sierra Leone. Police and soldiers accounted for the lives of 8 civilians, two during protest and the six others when dispersing main opposition APC militants during celebration as partial result were announced. (Huridac, 2023)

Throughout Nigeria's general elections, a total of 371 human rights violations and abuses (HRVAs) were reported, including 33 incidents of property destruction. Of the 235 people who were unlawfully killed, 144 lost their lives during the presidential elections. Among those victims, 85 were vigilantes from Katsina state, eight were politicians, two were soldiers or civilians, over 15 were officials from the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) and 60 casualties of armed conflict (CAC). In addition, 103 injuries were recorded as a result of insurgents, terrorists, and political thugs. Furthermore, 33 properties, including seven vehicles, election materials, and other valuable items, were damaged or destroyed, amounting to millions of Naira in losses. (Huridac, 2023)

The respect and promotion of human rights are the indicators of democratic success during the elections, and these alarming events put the respect of human rights during the electoral process in jeopardy. To stop frequent complaints of impunity and to advance freedom and fairness during these elections, the administration and relevant institutions, notably the national electoral institutions as they nominated according to country, security force, should be proactive in dealing with electoral issues and concentrate on the accountability aspect of each incident.

The rights of freedom of expression and access to information must be protected, all insecurity-related factors must be under control to prevent violence and intimidation from taking hold, and a system must already be in place to bring those responsible for acts of violence, or other incidents, that could jeopardize the upcoming elections to justice

#### **5.4 RIGHT TO HEALTH:**

The right to health is the economic, social, and cultural right to a universal minimum standard of health to which all individuals are entitled. According to The World Health Organization, the right to health is a complete state of physical, mental, and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity to which States should ensure freedoms and entitlements. The former includes the right to control one's health and body, including sexual and reproductive freedom, and the freedom from interference such as torture, non-consensual medical treatment, and experimentation. (Huridac, 2021)

West Africa's health sector has seen a decline in progress against maternal and infant mortality, according to the Atlas of African Health Statistics 2022. The report states that the region will need an 86% reduction in maternal mortality rates from 2017 to reach the 2030 Sustainable Development Goal target. Additionally, the region's infant mortality rate stands at 72 per 1000 live births, with an expected 54 deaths per 1000 live births by 2030, far above the target. The report also notes that the region has a shortage of health workers, with a ratio of 1.55 health workers per 1000 people, below the WHO threshold. Furthermore, 65% of births are attended by skilled health personnel, the lowest globally and far off the 2030 target of 90%. (ReliefWeb, 2022)

According to international law, the right to health entails access to essential medicines that are available, of good quality, and accessible. In essence, nations are obligated to take all necessary measures to ensure citizens' basic right to health. Regrettably, the West African region presents a

concerning scenario, where statistics reveal a dire situation. Despite progress made in some areas, the region still grapples with significant challenges, including high infant and maternal mortality rates, inadequate health workforce, and limited access to quality healthcare services. The availability and quality of essential medicines remain a significant concern, with many countries in the region struggling to provide basic healthcare to their citizens, thereby compromising their fundamental right to health. (OHCHR, 2023)

## **5.5 THE MATRIX BETWEEN ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN RIGHTS:**

The right to life refers to the core existence of human beings; a threatened or terminated human life cannot enjoy other rights. Therefore, this report uses the term 'Environmental Human Rights' which can be understood as the restoration and maintenance of an environment that is safe for human life and health.

Africa is generally confronted with deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, wetland degradation, and insect infestation with long time negative impacts and the Implications of Neglecting the Environmental weigh on our food system, health and on all the factors that ensure our wellbeing.

According to the World Economic Forum, 60% of infectious diseases originate from animals, 70% of emerging infectious diseases originate from wildlife, Deforestation increases the rates of malaria since deforested land is the ideal habitat for mosquitoes,

### **Livelihoods are threatened**

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) by Yale ranking which considers indicators such as air quality, drinking water and sanitation, and pollution emissions showed that millions of people live without access to basic water and sanitation services. It shows the positive correlation between environmental health and ecosystem vitality with Sub-Saharan Africa lagging indicating that common factors such as weak governance and poverty are hindering success. In year 2022, Nigeria, come out near the bottom of the rankings. The low EPI scores indicate the need for greater attention to the spectrum of sustainability requirements, with a high-priority focus on critical issues such as air and water quality, biodiversity, and climate change. (EnvironmentalPerformanceIndex, 2022)

The constitution of any entity or country should provide a powerful tool for protecting the rights of its members or citizens. The right to a satisfactory, healthy, or clean environment as well as procedural rights necessary to implement and enforce the substantive rights granted are enshrined in over 100 constitutions from all parts of the world. In South Africa, section 24 of the Bill of Rights states that everyone has the right:

To an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; and to have the environment protected, for the benefit of present and future generations, through reasonable legislative measures that:

Prevent pollution and ecological degradation; Promote conservation; and Secure ecologically sustainable development and use of natural resources while promoting justifiable economic and social development.

Our interaction with the environment impacts our physical well-being and enhance our vulnerability to disease and overall quality of life. We can take into consideration these key factors related to the environment that mostly affect our health. (HURIDAC, 2021)

The main related environmental and health issues in West African remain as the Chemical safety, Air pollution, Climate change and natural disasters, Diseases caused by microbes, Lack of access to healthcare, Infrastructure issues and Poor water quality Global warming.

## **CONCLUSION**

Human rights are inherent to all human beings, and our existence depends on a thriving planet. Without a healthy Earth, human life cannot be sustained, and the concept of human rights becomes meaningless. Although the African Union and its member states have provisions in their charters and constitutions to protect a healthy environment, these laws are often undermined by conflicting provisions and lack effective implementation and enforcement.

To guarantee the right to a safe environment from a human rights perspective, African states must urgently review and strengthen their laws to encompass all environmental human rights. They must also address sub-provisions that weaken enforcement, bolster institutions and agencies responsible for enforcing environmental laws and treaties, and establish incentives for countries that meet environmental targets.

Moreover, West African states must prioritize investing in the health sector to ensure the right to health. Without access to essential medicines, Africans remain vulnerable to malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS, which continue to ravage the continent. Experts agree that Africa's solution to improving access to medicine lies in boosting local production, developing supportive policies and infrastructure, and training and retaining medical professionals.

## **5.6 ISSUES OF CONCERN IN NIGER AND BURKINA FASO**

### **DEMOCRACY**

Despite the democratic efforts of the country, an attempt of coup d'état and destabilizing incident was recorded in the country which left a big division that led to this current situation the country is facing. According to the coup plotters, the rising insecurity and a lack of economic growth under the democratic government were unprecedented. The presence of foreign forces which impede the state of sovereignty of the nation; and the weakness of regional bodies.

The factors highlighted above, including the presence of foreign forces, particularly from the US and France, have contributed to the fragility of the country, according to the coup plotters. Despite their long-term presence, the state of insurgency in the country has only worsened, with Al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates, as well as Boko Haram, operating in the country and leaving citizens in a state of constant fear and insecurity. The situation has been characterized by escalating violence and terrorist attacks, widespread human rights abuses, displacement and humanitarian crises, political instability and governance challenges, and economic stagnation and corruption. The coup plotters argue that the foreign forces, which were initially deployed to combat terrorism and stabilize the region, have instead contributed to the problem, perpetuating a cycle of violence and instability. This has led to a deepening sense of mistrust and resentment among the population, creating an environment in which extremist groups can thrive. As a result, the country remains mired in conflict and instability, with no clear end in sight. (the conversation, 2023)

The impact of these insurgents are demolishing the socio-economic foundation of the country despite the presence of one of the most powerful army in the country's territories for about decades now. The coup was applauded by many Nigeriens as they celebrated waving Russian flag, showing appreciation to the Wagner group for better fighting the insurgent. (the conversation, 2023)

Ethnicity and the origin of Bazoum posited a lot of doubt since he belongs to the Arab minorities despite his 56% of vote which had a lot of impact in ethnic military composition as the underlying factor was the main criteria for appointment in the military. (the conversation, 2023)

Foreign investment in the country's mining sector, especially France was questioned as well as foreign military troops base in the country undermined the sovereignty of the country as France added on its troops driven from Mali to the existing number. The US opened a drone base in the country despite the disagreement of the citizens. (the conversation, 2023)

One of the most important aspects is the weakness of the regional institution, ECOWAS to take up the responsibility to fight the root cause of military takeover in the West African region taken as reference Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso. A record of seven successful coups were recorded in the region and the ECOWAS always attacks the symptoms of its incapacibilities using crises exacerbating prone measures instead of dealing with the root cause. (the conversation, 2023)

To fight this recurrent crisis despite the presence of the Western military, no option was left for Niger than to resort to support from Russia and other neighbouring countries like Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso who plan to join their military to restore security and the well-being of their citizens.

The ecosystem of neighbouring countries of Niger signals an eventual coup since Mali, concerning the long-time crisis, ended up with a coup as a resort to stability in the country. Burkina as well as Mali suffered insurgencies despite the fruitless French-led-peace keeping triggered the discontent of citizens expressed in recurrent protest and urged the military junta to take over at the end coup. President Bazoum strongly believes in the democratic process to restore hope while other countries suffered from the same situation but rather find another route totally prohibited by democratic principle to salvage the situation. Bazoum always boasted of his government performance in upholding democratic principles and was appraised by his western allies, especially the United States while the nation looked at him as a puppet, smoothening ground for the very interest of the west.

Opinions vary on the coup in Niger, while the western world attributes a negative connotation to the coup, the Russian Wagner mercenary group leader retorted on telegram that Niger has actually gained his independence from the colonizers.



Cameron Hudson express his disappointment by confirming the switch of Niger from the West camp to Russia whom he considered as opportunist but supported Mali to free himself from over two decades of insurgency, where France with the support of the United States spent 20 decades and couldn't. ( Ishaan Tharoor, 2023)

This triggers to the mind of citizens and most of African countries that the France-led-peace keeping was a project of extortion since the country is among the gold owners in the world with no gold mining in his country. Forty percent of energy and electricity in France is kept through the importation of uranium from Niger, bought by then from the impoverished country at 0.8 USD and eventually sold at the world market at 240 USD, making a profit of about 99.9% while Niger suffers from absolute darkness and lack of basic social welfare opportunities. ( Ishaan Tharoor, 2023)

Russia seems to be a resort to insurgency issues in the West African region. As an unexpected result was achieved in Mali, the Wagner group was able to restore a level of stability and restore for once the theory of security in Niger in less than one year while President Bazoum spent a considerable amount of resources but worsen the situation. Light is at the end of the tunnel even though disputes emerged within the military apparatus. ( Ishaan Tharoor, 2023)

According to Rahmane Iddrisa, a Nigerien political scientist, security management is highly politicized just to protect power over the life and welfare of the citizens and some set of military personnel think this issue of insecurity is beyond the control of the civilians and should be controlled by military body as was done in Mali and Burkina Faso earlier on. ( Ishaan Tharoor, 2023)

## **COUP D'ETAT**

The coup in Niger, raises questions about the future of democratic leadership in the West African country. Despite the appraisal of the democratic nature of the elections, the few years of president Bazoum surprise was disrupted by a subtle access of power by junta. The coup was acclaimed by the population for key reasons, one is due to the weakness of the government in ensuring security which fragilize the stake of president Bazoum, and the appreciation directed to the military for the struggle in the fight against the jihadist. The trauma of insecurity is duelling in the mind of the people for over two decades now, this situation fragilize development process in all its form and

create doubt in the ruling government. The efficiency of the government is jeopardized since public services, security and justice is not guaranteed for citizens and the subsequent coup was a source of hope to restore basic needs for the subject even though part of the citizens, France and the United States were not in support. (Scott Simon, 2023).

The aftermath of the coup is multifaceted with the main focus on security and human welfare as well as long lasting consequences. The democratic shock was the immediate disruption of democratic processes and the frustrated efforts to reinstate constitutional rule. Other connected human rights had been as well alienated as the freedom of speech was impaired through the disruption of media censorship, and the civil liberty disconnection. (Mohammed Saaida, 2023)

The socio-economic and security impacts are huge as the country previously face the paroxysm of poverty and serious insecurity threat due the existence of extremist in the country which nurture the feelings for absolute change of leadership strategies with a high concern on accountability. (Mohammed Saaida, 2023) The expectation from democratic rule or government is a political inclusivity free from any form of inequalities. The inherent rights of citizens and life changing opportunities should be equally enjoyed disclaiming any form of discrimination that could eventually threaten national cohesion and security. (Mohammed Saaida, 2023)

In contrast to these expectations, since the independence of Niger republic in 1960, the country was misfortune to face so many political instability due to the alternance of both military and civilian rule and this exacerbate existing socio-economic precarious conditions. The aftermath of the unconstitutional take over by the junta cost to the country a bridge of important diplomatic relationship and a grave tension between the country and its colonial master.

While the African union evaluated the coup as back slide democracy and wasted effort to it achievement, the European Union withdrew all financial assistance to the country. The French people finally suspended all development program and threaten to invade the country together with the ECOWAS if constitutional order is not returned as the commercial; and financial transaction between Niger and other member state even though few supported by few countries during the democratic crisis. (ALJAZEERA, 2023)

Even though the country reopened its borders with neighbouring countries which was mainly alongside the desert areas to restore trade and commerce, the impact of the regional restrictions

was weighing on him as power supply for about 70% from Nigeria was cut off. (ALJAZEERA, 2023)

Notwithstanding all these exacerbating situation, the junta voice out his feeling about the reaction of the ECOWAS, he treated the institution of being inhuman and throw the responsibility on his citizens to stand firm to defend their nation. (ALJAZEERA, 2023)

In response to the fragile diplomatic relationship with the West, the junta stood firm and also retaliated to France's reaction. The military cooperation agreements with France were cancelled, and Niger also suspended broadcasts of French state-funded international news outlets France 24 and RFI, drawing condemnation from the French foreign ministry.

ECOWAS plan an invasion in Niger to restore constitutional order with the support of armies of countries like Senegal and Ivory Coast. In response to this, Mali Guinea and Burkina Faso also propose their military support to Niger to counter ECOWAS' decision to invade Niger. The country eventually turned to Russia through the Wagner group leader for his support to stand the pressure of the crisis after many attempts to negotiate by ECOWAS and AU failed. (ALJAZEERA, 2023)

An internal movement to restore Bazoum to power was initiated, exacerbating pressure on the junta leaders. Rhissa Ag Boula, former rebel leader and politician in Niger directed his council and Resistance movement to reinstate Bazoum. Most of the detained terrorists were out to destabilize the junta and France was allegedly accused as they ban the country's air. (ALJAZEERA, 2023)

After a lot of attempts to dialogue for a peaceful resolution of the crisis in Niger, the country finally gave a chance to the Community to exercise its power as a regional institution. After a lengthy tete-a-tete with the delegation headed by former Nigerian leader Abdulsalami Abubakar and Bazoum, the junta proposed three (3) transitions of power and strictly insinuate that the military invasion of the country was not a way out. (ALJAZEERA, 2023)

The state of democracy with no doubt has been impaired in Niger and West Africa in general as key development sectors are inhibited and increase the risk of political resilience defiance which will eventually disrupt crucial inclusive growth, especially democracy and the efforts of upholding human rights in Niger and the region at large. On the other hand, regional institutions responsible

for upholding democracy are to be proactive since coups have recurrent for the past two decades. They seem to be protective of western supremacy which some countries yearn to cut off.

## **BURKINA FASO**

### ***COUP D'ETAT***

A break out of coup resurge in the West Africa region after so many efforts to uphold democracy. Guinea, on one early morning in 2021, the junta proclaimed their selves to be the new strong men of the country. A year later, the same dust was raised in Burkina Faso while the young Ibrahima Traore, around he his thirty four (34) overthrew the Roch Kabore. The cause of the sudden resurgence of coup d'états in the West Africa region could mean that the region set a precedent of alternation of power between civilian political party and majority of countries upheld the democratic principles with so many flaws.

Citizens complain of intense socio-economic crisis in one hand, and on the other hand the insecurity level raised exponentially leaving people with fear. The rate of poverty was unprecedented and the neighbouring countries living the same conditions were overwhelmed with internally displace people from highly insecure countries due insurgents activities as more than 1,000 schools close and 1.5 million people flee their homes to escape the violence, some left with no choice but to beg for money or food on the streets of the capital, 630,000 people were even more are on the brink of starvation. (BBCNews, 2022). Democratically elected presidents usually twist Constitutions to serve their autocratic ambitions or if not abuse myself protect the interest of the west who proffer democratic framework but fail repress leaders deviating from the framework. (BBCNews, 2022)

After a long period of uncontrolled insurgent activities under the supervision of the West, notably France and the United Nations. The country was subjected to a highest level of insecurity, poverty, internal displace, brief a general development crisis crippling the country economically, politically and socially. The jihadist activities were fairly tackle since soldiers were sent too lightly armed, underpaid or even under-fed, to sustain the struggle against militant groups. The resentment became unbearable when the jihadist attack the Inata gendarmerie in the north of the country leaving 53 of the 120 troops dead even though according to president Kabore, efforts were not manage to set up effective strategy regain political stability. (BBCNews, 2022)

There were so many political backslide that led to the coup. From the state of insecurity state of the country to the level social-economic crisis, food insecurity to the mass displacement and more over the injustice and lack of accountability for the death of innocent lives lost during jihadist attack after so many promise by the Damiba's administration to restore security, justice and easy the socio-economic crisis impact on citizens, but rather unfortunate things got worse and crisis got high. (Aljazeera, 2022)

Damiba and his administration was criticized to be working hand in hand to exacerbate armed group activities in the Sahel, especially in Burkina Faso and this gradually created resentment in France former colonies and began to seek help from Moscow, Russia as Mali, after his he (Assimi Goita) took over, resort to the group Wagner to support him in restoring the long lost security in his country. (Aljazeera, 2022)

As far as the human right aspect is concerned, both pro-government militias and many attack from the insurgent lead to violation thus deteriorating the status of human right in the country in 2022. Anti-government protest protests and two military coup, hundreds of attack on civilians military almost all the region of the country, the exacerbated the existing socio-economic crisis leading to the displacement of about two (2) million people. (HumanRightWatch, 2022)

The rule of law and justice were weak as most of the alleged killings were not accounted for. The African Union, the ECOWAS, the European Union and United Nations were reluctant to denounce or go further with investigations into allegations of abuse by military and pro-government militias. Freedom of expression eroded as social media post on the issue were considered inciting and thus were condemned. (HumanRightWatch, 2022)

The security and governance deficit lead to the coup in Burkina Fasso in 2022. After his election in 2015, President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was expected to alleviate security and socio-economic crisis that crippled the country. In contrast to those expectations, things went from bad to worst.

Corruption, laxity and nepotism, insecurity (In 2021 alone, Burkina Faso recorded some 1 337 crisis-related violent incidents, with 2 294 casualties and displaced more than 1.6 million), food insecurity, displacement human rights violation and abuse notably, extrajudicial killing, the freedom of speech eroded triggered the attention of citizens and brought to mind that the leadership

of president Kabore protect the interest of the west who need at all cost a destabilizing situation in any of their colonies to continue endless extortion of our resources and continue to exhibit through propaganda and malicious activities portraying a sense of democracy in the country and the region in general. (ORNELLA MODERAN AND FAHIRAMAN RODRIGUE KONÉ, 2022)

The coup had impacted the country. The coup leader should ensure the thorough application of human rights and the restitution of democratic rule with the main focus on a better treatment of prisoners, respect the freedom of speech and that of the media as well as the rights of human rights defenders. (HumanRightWatch, 2022) The impact of the 2022 coup in Burkina Faso lean on the human right perspective, critically analysing metamorphoses of human right from the era of democratic rule to the unconstitutional state.

The country has for a long time suffered from the security and the worst socio-economic crisis ever. Unprecedented human rights violation and the total deterioration of human welfare which directly affect the most important right of any individual which is the right to life. Lives were lost, hunger and poverty deepened, insurgent activities intensify and so many socio-economic crisis under the constitutional rule of president Damiba. (HumanRightWatch, 2022)

The 2022 coup in Burkina Faso might be a backslide democracy but could be a source of hope for Burkinabe's citizens if the governance approach eventually use could restore a long time desired atmosphere of peace thus kick off the wanted development. As a reference to Mali, which as well for two decades suffered for an insurgency that crippled the country despite the intervention of France and the United Nations. Mali applied a an open strategy, resorting to the group of Wagner of Russia to curb with Islamic occupation of his terrorist who succeeded in two (2) years to restore Kidal to the Malians.

The impact of this coup will main focus on exacerbating the existing crisis including a global food crisis, an economic crisis, growing natural resource scarcity, and worsening climatic disasters and the most worrying is the country is enclaved in the most dangerous Sahel region as the work of humanitarian is impeded due to inaccessibility by road. (Brockenbrough, 2022)

## **5.7 ELECTIONS IN WEST AFRICA IN 2022-2023**

Election is the process through which citizens choose their leader by expressing their choice using an ideally free and fair ballot system. One of the pillars of the principle of democracy is the expression “the power of the people, for the people and by the people” and its deterioration manifests in the violation of the right to vote.

This section will therefore examine elections in West Africa in 2022-2023 - the outcome of elections and their effect on human rights especially the right to vote.

***Table showing elections in different West African countries in 2022-2023.***

No	Country	Elections type	Date
1	Nigeria	Presidential	February 25 2023
2	Nigeria	Gubernatorial	March 11 2023
3	Sierra Leone	Presidential and parliamentary	June 2024
4	Liberia	Presidential	October 10 2023
5	Senegal	Local elections	January 23 2022

## **NIGERIA**

Nigeria’s presidential elections took place on the 25 February 2023 with President Bola Ahmed Tinubu declared the winner. President Tinubu of (APC) who received 8 794 726 of citizens’ vote, with nearest rival Atiku Abubakar (PDP) with 6 984 520. The country maintain democratic rule for over a decade now even though they face some challenges. (Huridac, 2023)

## **SIERRA LEONE**

Sierra Leone’s presidential elections took place on the 24 Jun 2023 with the incumbent president, Rt Juliu Madaa Bio of the All Sierra Leone People’s Party (SLPP) declared the winner with a margin of 56.17% while the leader of the All People Congress scored 41.16% of votes and the rest of vote was distributed among the other parties. So many challenges were recorded as the result

were contested by the opposition in reference to the registration data that he previously claimed to be manipulated by the incumbent. (Huridac, 2023)

## **LIBERIA**

Liberia's presidential elections took place on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 2023 and ended up with a run-up which was concluded that President Boakai Joseph N of the (UP) was the choice of the majority of Liberians with a score of 50.64%, receiving 814,481 of votes against the incumbent president, Weah George Manneh with 49.36% of margin, he received 793,914 votes. The inclination of the incumbent and losing president George Weah to hand over power and portrays democratic maturity and a selfless attitude in letting the voice of the people prevail. (Reuters, 2023)

## **Conclusion**

The years 2022 and 2023 have been pivotal for West Africa, marked by a series of coups and elections that have significantly impacted the region's political landscape. The coups in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea have led to a rise in political instability, human rights violations, and a decline in democratic governance. These events have not only undermined the region's democratic progress but also exacerbated existing social, economic, and security challenges.

On the other hand, the elections held in Ghana, Nigeria, and Senegal have showcased the region's commitment to democratic principles and the will of the people. However, the electoral processes have also been marred by controversy, violence, and irregularities, highlighting the need for electoral reforms and improved governance.

The impact of these events has been far-reaching, with consequences for regional and global security, economic development, and human rights. The coups have created a power vacuum, allowing extremist groups to exploit the situation and further destabilize the region. The elections, while a step towards democracy, have also exposed the deep-seated challenges that need to be addressed to ensure sustainable peace and development in West Africa.

In conclusion, the coups and elections in West Africa in 2022 and 2023 have highlighted the region's struggles with democratic consolidation, political stability, and human rights. While there have been positive developments, the challenges persist, and it is essential for regional and global



stakeholders to work together to support West Africa's democratic trajectory and address the underlying issues driving instability and conflict.

## CHAPTER SIX: ECOWAS UNION AT RISK OF COUP PLOTTERS

The West African region has faced a surge in coup attempts and political instability in recent years, with 2022 and 2023 being particularly challenging for the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 2022, there were three successful coups in West Africa, Burkina Faso - January 2022 and September 2022, Guinea-Bissau - February 2022 (attempted) and in 2023, there was one successful coup in West Africa, Niger - July 2023.

In 2022, Burkina Faso experienced two military coups, in January and September, which led to the ousting of President Roch Marc Christian Kaboré and the installation of a military government. Similarly, Guinea-Bissau faced a failed coup attempt in February 2022, while Mali and Niger continued to grapple with political tensions and security challenges.

In 2023, the region witnessed further instability, with Nigeria facing a wave of violent attacks and kidnappings ahead of its general elections. Sierra Leone and Liberia also experienced political tensions and protests, while Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana navigated political crises and security concerns. The situation in Mali and Burkina Faso remained volatile, with jihadist groups and military forces engaging in clashes. ECOWAS has been working to address these challenges, imposing sanctions on coup leaders and engaging in diplomatic efforts to resolve political crises. However, the region's stability remains fragile, and ECOWAS faces an uphill task in maintaining peace and security in the face of these ongoing threats.

Despite these challenges, ECOWAS has made efforts to strengthen its response mechanisms and address the root causes of political instability. The regional bloc has enhanced its early warning system, deployed peacekeeping forces to affected countries, and facilitated dialogue and mediation efforts to resolve political crises. ECOWAS has also emphasized the need for democratic governance, economic development, and social inclusion to address the underlying drivers of instability. As the region continues to navigate these challenges, ECOWAS' effectiveness in responding to coup plots and promoting regional stability will be crucial in shaping the future of West Africa.

Burkina Faso followed the trend of collapsing governments, experiencing two military coups in 2022. This was followed by the overthrow of democratically elected President Mohamed Bazoum in Niger on July 26, 2023, by the presidential guard. A few weeks later, a coup occurred in Gabon. Since last year, The Gambia and Guinea-Bissau have both experienced failed coup attempts. While not all of these instances have been universally supported by civilians, many have enjoyed significant popular backing. This raises questions about whether Africans are growing disillusioned with civilian-led governments, despite their democratic credentials. Is the continent on the brink of more coups? Furthermore, what role are external actors playing in these developments, including former colonial powers like France, Russian mercenaries, and regional organizations like ECOWAS? (Aljazeera, 2023)

## **6.1 The Aftermath: Looking at Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger**

The coup in Niger represents a new chapter in the unfolding tragedies in West Africa democracy, posing serious questions on the fate of democracy in the Sahel as neighboring countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Chad have experienced military takeovers in recent times. The coup also imposes a fresh burden on the prospect of peace and stability in the Sahel as the country has served as a buffer zone in the fight against insurgency and terrorism. The coup opens a new chapter in the struggle for interest in the region as the new leaders in Niger could align with anti-western interests as it has been the case in Mali and Burkina Faso. This could compel Western allies and other development partners to withdraw their support from Niger, a situation likely to complicate peace, welfare and stability of citizens. (TheCable, 2023)

As these issues continue to unfold, there are concerns for a greater regional implication and consequence to the effort to address insecurity in the subregion as well as the desire to entrench democratic governance. Some of these concerns include the potentiality of Niger Republic terminating its cooperation with the intergovernmental G-5 Sahel body and joint force (established in 2014); Niger Republic withdrawing from the Multi-National Joint Task Force (MNJTF) as a collective force combating militant groups. There are also concerns over the possibility of Niger Republic withdrawing from the Accra Initiative (2017) which is mechanism aimed at promoting and enhancing security cooperation focusing on localised cross-border dynamics in response to growing insecurity linked to violent extremism (and climate shocks) in the region). These scenarios could further jeopardise the fight against terrorism and insurgencies in the sub-region. It is envisaged that as the isolation strategy by ECOWAS, the African Union (AU), and the international community forces Niger, Guinea, Mali, and Burkina Faso to coalesce further, there might be no speedy transition toward democracy. If divisions continue among countries in West Africa, there are fears the countries could be distracted from their common goal of tackling insecurity. (TRTAFRIKA, 2023)

### **6.1.1 The Legal Implications of Coups in West Africa**

The West African region has experienced a surge in coup attempts and successful coups in recent years, with 2022 and 2023 being particularly tumultuous. It has negative impact on national and international law. Incidences of coup d'état within the West African subregion have again brought a new dimension to the question of democratic stability on the African continent. The legal conceptual basis for coup d'états stems from the espousals of the positivist school of thought led by Hans Kelsen which posits that successful coups are lawful. They contend that the legitimacy of coup d'états is a political and moral issue that has to be resolved through the political processes of society where they occur and that the validity of a successful coup d'état is a legal question that belongs to the province of legal theory. They characterised the efficacy and legitimacy of coup d'états from the adoption of the propositions that the efficacy of coup bestows validity on them by the deployment and consideration of other validating and extenuating doctrines such as the

doctrines of necessity, implied mandate, and public policy exceptions and such others by coup plotters.

In 2022, Mali's military tribunal sentenced former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta to 12 months in prison for failing to appear before the court. This sentence was widely criticized by human rights groups, who argued that the military tribunal lacked jurisdiction over civilian cases. In another instance, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice ruled that the detention of former President Alpha Condé in Guinea was unlawful and ordered his immediate release. (ABC News, 2023) In 2023, the Nigerien Court of Appeal validated the coup that ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, sparking widespread condemnation from the international community. The court's decision was seen as a blow to democratic governance in the region. Meanwhile, in Burkina Faso, the military tribunal sentenced a group of soldiers to life imprisonment for their involvement in a failed coup attempt in 2022. The trial was criticized for its lack of transparency and fair trial guarantees. These examples illustrate the legal implications of coups and political instability in West Africa, highlighting the need for stronger democratic institutions and respect for human rights. (fpri, 2023)

#### ***6.1.2 Constitutional Crisis***

Coups inherently violate a country's constitution, often leading to a constitutional crisis. In Burkina Faso, the January 2022 coup led to the suspension of the constitution, while the September 2022 coup resulted in the adoption of a new transitional constitution. Similarly, the 2023 coup in Niger led to the suspension of the constitution. These actions raise questions about the rule of law, democratic governance, and the protection of human rights.

#### ***6.1.3 International Law***

Coups also have implications under international law. The African Union (AU) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) have condemned coups in the region, imposing sanctions on coup leaders and calling for a return to constitutional order. The AU's African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance and ECOWAS's Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance provide a legal framework for addressing coups and promoting democratic governance.

#### ***6.1.4 Human Rights***

Coups often result in human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests, torture, and enforced disappearances. The 2022 coup in Burkina Faso led to reports of human rights violations, including excessive force against protesters. The 2023 coup in Niger has also raised concerns about human rights abuses. International human rights law, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, imposes obligations on states to respect and protect human rights.

#### ***6.1.5 Accountability***

Holding coup leaders accountable for their actions is crucial. The International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction over crimes committed in states that are party to the Rome Statute, including

war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. National courts also have a role to play in prosecuting coup leaders for crimes committed during their rule.

Coups in West Africa have significant legal implications, both nationally and internationally. They violate constitutional and international law, lead to human rights abuses, and undermine democratic governance. Addressing these implications requires a concerted effort by regional and international organizations, as well as national governments, to promote democratic governance, respect for human rights, and accountability for coup leaders.

## 6.2 JUDICIAL IMPLICATIONS OF COUPS IN WEST AFRICA

The wave of coups in West Africa in 2022 and 2023 has significant judicial implications and perspectives. Despite regular elections, democracy in West Africa lacks essential components like an independent judiciary, civil liberties, informed engagement, and respect for the rule of law. This democratic deficit creates an environment conducive to coups. The influence of foreign powers in these coups is also a concern, reminiscent of the Cold War era when global powers competed for influence on the continent.

The lack of trust in democratic institutions is another critical factor. The public is skeptical of the ability of democratic institutions to safeguard their rights and freedoms. This mistrust is exacerbated by the perceived soft approach of regional bodies like ECOWAS and the African Union in addressing coups. These organizations have been accused of not doing enough to prevent coups and promote democratic values. The coup culture is deeply ingrained in some countries, with each successful coup encouraging would-be plotters and normalizing the use of military force to achieve political objectives.

The international community's response to coups in West Africa has also been criticized for being inadequate. The lack of a united and decisive response has emboldened coup plotters and undermined efforts to promote democracy in the region. From a judicial perspective, coups violate national and international law, including the African Charter on Democracy, Elections, and Governance and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Holding coup leaders accountable for their actions is essential, and national and international courts have a critical role to play in this regard. Ultimately, addressing the judicial implications of coups in West Africa requires a concerted effort to strengthen democratic institutions, promote the rule of law, and ensure accountability for those who violate it.

The judicial implications of coups in West Africa have been far-reaching. In Burkina Faso, the military coup in January 2022 led to the suspension of the constitution and the establishment of a military tribunal to try civilians. Similarly, Mali experienced two military coups in 2020 and 2021, resulting in the trial of former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta and other government officials before a military court. (TheConversation, 2022)

In Guinea, the military coup in September 2021 led to the arrest and detention of President Alpha Condé, who was later released but remained under house arrest. The military junta in Guinea has proposed elections in 2025, but the timeline has been criticized by ECOWAS and other regional bodies. In Burkina Faso, the military junta has agreed to elections in July 2024, but the political situation remains unstable. (fpri, 2023)

The judicial implications of these coups have also had a regional impact. The ECOWAS Court of Justice has received cases related to the coups in Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso, and has issued rulings on the legality of the military tribunals established in these countries. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights has also received complaints related to human rights abuses committed during the coups. The international community has condemned the coups and called for a return to democratic rule in the region. (UnitedNations, 2023)

### 6.3 SOCIO-ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVES AND IMPLICATIONS OF COUP IN WEST AFRICA

While the legal foundations of coups, as proposed by Hans Kelsen, may have influenced the acceptance of such actions in Africa, there have been research studies that highlight other underlying socioeconomic factors contributing to successful coup d'états. The Africa Union's Peace and Security Council, in a 2014 report summarily stated that unconstitutional changes of government through coups in Africa often arise and are successful in socio-political contexts characterized by governance deficiencies, rampant corruption, greed, and selfishness. (TheGuardian, 2023)

Above all, poverty has been identified as a significant precursor to coup attempts. Countries that are economically poorer and have less stable democracies have historically been more susceptible to coups. In fact, according to a report, out of the 54 countries on the African continent, 45 have experienced at least one coup attempt since 1950. It further indicated that countries with higher levels of poverty and less stable democratic systems have been more prone to such takeovers. The report further highlighted a significant correlation between the high poverty index in many African countries and the prevalence of coup d'états in the region. It revealed that out of all successful coups worldwide since 1950, 214 of them took place in Africa, with 106 of them being successful. This represents the highest number compared to other continents.

In Mali, the 2020 coup led to economic sanctions from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU), resulting in a significant decline in economic activity (BBC, 2022). Similarly, in Burkina Faso, the January 2022 coup led to a decline in investor confidence, resulting in a slowdown in economic growth (afdb, 2023). In Guinea, the September 2021 coup led to a decline in mining production, resulting in a significant loss of revenue for the government. (MiningTechnology, 2024) The coup in Niger in July 2023 has also had significant socio-economic implications, with the country's economy expected to contract by 1.5% in 2023 (TheRepublic, 2023).

These socio-economic implications have had a significant impact on the people of West Africa, with many experiencing increased poverty, unemployment, and food insecurity. According to the United Nations, the number of people facing food insecurity in West Africa has increased by 30% since 2020. (OxfamInternational, 2022)

To avert coups, Africa as a continent must address these underlying issues and work towards strengthening governance, combating corruption, and promoting a culture that deepens democratic ethos and the rule of law. By doing so, we can discourage the occurrence of coups and create a more stable and prosperous future for the continent. Other foreign research and reports have identified several socioeconomic contexts that contribute to successful coup d'états in Africa and these include the mismanagement of diversity, mismanagement of economic opportunities, marginalisation of groups, and human rights abuse, amongst several other factors including especially the manipulation of the constitution. (TheGuardian, 2023)

## **6.4 Constitution and Zero Tolerance:**

West Africa has witnessed a surge in coups and political instability in recent years, with 2022 and 2023 being particularly tumultuous. The region's commitment to democracy and human rights has been put to the test, with the concept of "zero tolerance" for unconstitutional changes in government gaining traction. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has been at the forefront of promoting democracy and stability in the region. In 2022, ECOWAS imposed sanctions on Mali, Guinea, and Burkina Faso following military coups in these countries. The regional body's zero-tolerance stance was reaffirmed in 2023, with the suspension of Niger and Gabon from ECOWAS following coups in those countries. The zero-tolerance approach has significant implications for West Africa. On the one hand, it sends a strong message that unconstitutional changes in government will not be tolerated. This can help deter future coups and promote democratic governance. On the other hand, the approach can also have unintended consequences, such as exacerbating political tensions and undermining economic development. The constitutional implications of the zero-tolerance approach are also significant.

In Mali, for example, the military junta's refusal to restore civilian rule led to a constitutional crisis, with the junta adopting a new constitution in 2022. Similarly, in Guinea, the military junta's failure to hold elections as promised has raised concerns about the country's democratic future. The zero-tolerance approach to unconstitutional changes in government has significant implications for West Africa. While it promotes democracy and stability, it also requires careful consideration of the potential consequences. As the region continues to grapple with political instability, it is essential to strike a balance between promoting democracy and respecting the sovereignty of member states.

## 6.5 ECOWAS' ZERO TOLERANCE FOR UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT

In a bid to forestall Unconstitutional Change of Government (UCG) in West Africa, the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice has taken some far-reaching measures to curb this unfortunate development in the sub-region. The Court's 2023 International Conference on Zero Tolerance for UCG in West Africa, which just ended in Banjul, the Gambian capital, adopted perhaps the most strident recommendations, including the criminalisation of UCG and the creation of a special task force to intervene in cases of UCG in Member States.

The four-day meeting also called for the strengthening of “the apolitical nature of the Armed Forces to guard against UCG,” and utilising “early warning tools and existing Protocols to recalibrate the regional peace and security architecture.” These desperate measures are predicated on the three military coups that toppled democratic governments in Guinea in September 2021, Mali in 2021 and Burkina Faso in January 2022 plus an attempted coup in Guinea Bissau in February 2022.

According to the Conference Communiqué participants, mostly jurists, lawyers and academics, called for definition of the term “unconstitutional change” in the ECOWAS instruments and what constitutes a violation of convergence principles clearly spelt out. It also called on “Member States to stem tenure elongation, eliminate all pseudo-democratic laws, and criminalise UCG at the national level with national courts having jurisdiction.” It recommended effective sanctions against perpetrators of UCG, including coup plotters and their supporters, with the amendment of the ECOWAS Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Governance to “ensure that sanctions do not affect the fundamental human rights of ordinary citizens.”

The Communiqué urged a “review of the efficiency of sanctions” and creation of an implementation guideline, while calling for respect of term limits and an end to constitutional manipulations by incumbents to extend their mandates. It further called for a stop to tenure extension by political leaders, while the Protocol of the Community Court of Justice should be modified to allow for judicial intervention in election matters. It also recommended the strengthening of the means of settling electoral disputes at the national level through the enactment of laws and setting up of mechanisms for independent adjudication of electoral disputes.

The Conference called for an increase in the number of judges of the ECOWAS Court of Justice in line with International best practices and the amendment of the “Protocols on the Court to enable access to individual citizens in respect of violations of community laws/obligations including activating sanctions proceedings against member States.”

ECOWAS should “muster the political will to hold member States accountable to their treaty obligations,” the Communiqué said. It further called for the guarantee of the independence of the judiciary and the strengthening of the capacity of courts to render justice and also recommended



that the root causes of political conflicts should be addressed to ensure political stability, peace, and progress, as well as cultivation and strengthening of a democratic culture for economic growth.

ECOWAS should “combat corruption in public life as it undermines public confidence in state institutions and creates conditions for instability,” the Communiqué noted. It also called for measures against misinformation and disinformation, particularly the negative impact of social media and the involvement of the youth. ECOWAS should ensure strict adherence by member States to the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and “effective implementation of regional Treaty and Protocols to make compliance thereof a condition for retaining the membership of the sub-regional bloc,” the Communiqué urged.

Furthermore, ECOWAS should strengthen the competences and enforcement capacities of the ECOWAS Court of Justice as well as focus on the fight against poverty and the promotion of social dialogue. It urged that National Electoral Institutions should be supported with structured training of stakeholders such as political parties, Civil Society, academia, and the media, on community principles and values. According to the Communiqué, ECOWAS should “utilise proactive preventive diplomacy, mediation and results oriented conflict management strategies driven by consistency, neutrality and inclusivity to deal with management and resolution of conflict.”

It called for the creation of a functional mediation, conciliation, and arbitration committee for settling disputes in ECOWAS countries, and with a standard Community legal framework for member States to fulfil their treaty obligations. ECOWAS member States should ensure strict adherence to the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the Communiqué recommended, and called “a deliberate effort to discourage the teeming youths from being dangerously radicalised by Terrorists, Separatist Militias, Bandits, Kidnappers, and Ethno-religious fundamentalists within the West African sub-region.”

This landmark conference in Banjul marked a significant milestone in the quest for consolidated democracy and human rights in West Africa. As the region continues to navigate the challenges of political instability, the outcomes of this conference will undoubtedly shape the trajectory of ECOWAS' zero-tolerance policy and its impact on the region's democratic future. (ECOWAS, 2023)

#### *6.5.1 Lessons and Implications of the Zero Tolerance Policy*

The Zero Tolerance policy for unconstitutional changes in government in West Africa has yielded several lessons. Firstly, the policy has had a deterrent effect, discouraging military coups and unconstitutional changes in government in some countries. However, the economic sanctions imposed on countries that violate the policy have had unintended consequences on civilian populations, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach.

The policy's success depends on political will and leadership in upholding democratic principles. Contextual considerations are also crucial, as each country's situation is unique. The policy has

contributed to the consolidation of democracy in some West African countries, strengthening democratic institutions and the rule of law. Additionally, it has promoted respect for human rights and the rule of law, fostering regional cooperation and solidarity in promoting democratic governance.

Despite these achievements, the policy faces challenges. It struggles to address the root causes of political instability, and balancing economic sanctions with humanitarian considerations remains a difficult task. Nevertheless, the Zero Tolerance policy remains a significant step forward in promoting democratic governance and respect for human rights in West Africa. Its implementation must be nuanced and context-specific to address the region's complex political landscape. By learning from its lessons and implications, West Africa can continue to consolidate democracy and ensure a brighter future for its citizens.

Fearing contagion in a region notorious for military takeovers, ECOWAS imposed tough trade and economic sanctions against Mali, but lesser punishments against Guinea and Burkina Faso. All three countries are under pressure by ECOWAS to return swiftly to civilian rule by 2024 for Mali and Burkina and a year later for Guinea. Juntas seized power in Mali and Burkina Faso amid anger at the military over the toll from a jihadi insurgency that has claimed thousands of lives and forced millions from their homes. The coup in Guinea had different causes, being rooted in public anger against then President Alpha Conde over a lurch toward authoritarianism. The Pan-African bloc needed to look at new strategies to counter the backsliding of democracy. Sanctions imposed on member states following unconstitutional changes of government, do not seem to produce the expected results. It seems necessary to reconsider the system of resistance to the unconstitutional changes in order to make it more effective. (voa, 2023)

## **Conclusion**

The coups in West Africa in 2022 and 2023 have had far-reaching legal, judicial, and socio-economic implications for the region. Legally, the coups have led to a violation of constitutional orders, undermining the rule of law and democratic governance. The military takeovers have also led to the suspension of judicial institutions, compromising the independence of the judiciary and the protection of human rights.

Judicially, the coups have resulted in the dismissal of judges, the closure of courts, and the suppression of legal proceedings. This has led to a climate of impunity, where perpetrators of human rights violations and other crimes are not held accountable. The judicial implications have also extended to the region, with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) imposing sanctions on the affected countries.

Socio-economically, the coups have had devastating consequences for the people of West Africa. The political instability has led to economic downturns, food shortages, and increased poverty. The displacement of people, human rights violations, and the breakdown of social services have

further exacerbated the socio-economic challenges. The coups have also undermined the region's development progress, compromising the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

In conclusion, the coups in West Africa in 2022 and 2023 have had profound legal, judicial, and socio-economic implications for the region. The violations of constitutional orders, judicial independence, and human rights have compromised the rule of law and democratic governance. The socio-economic consequences have been severe, with the people of West Africa bearing the brunt of political instability, economic downturns, and human rights violations. It is essential for regional and global stakeholders to work together to address the root causes of the coups and support the people of West Africa in their quest for democratic governance, human rights, and socio-economic development.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: LOCAL VIOLATIONS, GLOBAL INTEREST

Human rights in West Africa have been under intense scrutiny over the past few years, with several significant issues attracting global attention. The period of 2022-2023 was particularly notable for a range of human rights abuses, including political repression, conflict-related atrocities, and widespread violence against civilians. This chapter delves into some of the most prominent human rights concerns in the region during this period.

In West Africa, human rights issues remained a pressing concern in 2022 and 2023. In Nigeria, specifically, several violations were reported in 2023. These included sanctions against the media, with criminal charges filed against journalists for alleged defamation. Excessive force was used by defense and security forces, including during protests, and torture was reported during police interrogation. Forced evictions, enforced disappearances, and sexual and gender-based violence were also among the human rights abuses documented. Furthermore, individuals faced charges under the Same-Sex Marriage Prohibition Act, and resettled internally displaced people lacked access to basic amenities like food.

In 2022, West Africa faced a range of challenges that had significant human rights implications. A cost-of-living crisis gripped the region, with rising inflation rates in countries like Nigeria and Ghana. The return of stolen artefacts by former colonial powers, such as the return of bronzes to Benin, marked a significant development in the fight for cultural restitution. However, the region was also hit by devastating floods in countries like Nigeria, Ghana, and Senegal, affecting millions of people. Political instability plagued the region, with coups and attempted coups in countries like Burkina Faso, Mali, and Guinea-Bissau. The expansion of armed groups linked to ISIS and al-Qaeda led to violence in countries like Burkina Faso and Nigeria, while private armies like Wagner operated in countries like Mali. Finally, women's rights issues remained a concern, with Sierra Leone considering the decriminalization of abortion.

### **7.1 Unconstitutional Change of Government**

Unconstitutional changes of government (UCGs) continue to cast a long shadow over Africa's political landscape. Since 2020, at least eleven countries have experienced coups, severely disrupting established political systems and creating complex transitional periods. While UCGs are never a justifiable solution, understanding the underlying factors that contribute to them is crucial. In Mali and Guinea, for instance, leaders attempted to cling to power by extending their presidencies beyond legal limits. In Gabon, long-standing rule by a single family fuelled public discontent and a sense of exclusion. Chad's situation involved a dynastic power transfer following the death of the president, a situation further complicated by the country's role in regional security. (PremiumTimes, 2024)

Many African nations have failed to fulfill their commitments to good governance, democracy, and fundamental human rights. This widespread lack of accountability creates a breeding ground for coups. When citizens feel their voices are unheard and leaders operate with impunity,

frustration and disillusionment can lead to a breakdown of trust in established institutions, making coups a seemingly attractive, albeit ultimately destructive, option.

In an attempt to address this pressing issue, discussions focused on several key areas. Improving governance practices across the continent was a major theme, with an emphasis on strengthening institutions and upholding the rule of law. The conference also examined the strengths and limitations of existing frameworks aimed at preventing UCGs. Exploring ways to strengthen these frameworks and ensure their consistent application is essential to deterring future coups.

The conference also highlighted the challenges faced by regional organizations like ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) in managing UCGs. The perceived misuse of sanctions by ECOWAS in response to coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger led these countries to consider leaving the bloc altogether. This highlights the need for regional organizations to adopt a more nuanced approach, balancing the need for accountability with fostering regional cooperation and stability.

The conference revealed shortcomings in current frameworks for preventing UCGs and supporting transitions to stable democracies. A re-evaluation of these frameworks is necessary to address the underlying issues that fuel instability and prevent a return to violence. This could involve strengthening early warning systems to identify potential triggers for coups and developing more robust support mechanisms for countries undergoing transitions.

Furthermore, building long-term stability requires a focus on structural changes that go beyond simply holding post-coup elections. This includes establishing strong and independent institutions, promoting free and fair elections, and fostering a culture of dialogue and inclusivity. By addressing the root causes of discontent, African nations can create a more resilient political landscape where coups become a relic of the past.

Organizations like ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States) have an opportunity to learn from regional blocs like ECOWAS, which has established frameworks for managing UCGs. However, the effectiveness of these frameworks hinges on a genuine commitment to implementing their principles. Without strong political will and a focus on accountability, even the best-designed frameworks will remain ineffective.

Addressing UCGs requires a multi-faceted approach. Strengthening institutions, upholding democratic values, and fostering good governance are crucial steps towards creating a more stable and prosperous Africa. By working together, African nations, regional organizations, and the international community can build a brighter future where coups are replaced by peaceful transitions and democratic consolidation.

## **7.2 Political Repression, Crackdowns and Political Crisis**

### **Guinea**

The military coup in September 2021, which overthrew President Alpha Condé, led to a series of human rights abuses. Throughout 2022 and 2023, the ruling junta faced accusations of political repression, including the detention of opposition figures, suppression of protests, and restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly. (ProtectDefenders, 2022). In 2022, Guinea's government, led by President Alpha Condé, cracked down on opposition parties and civil society organizations. Security forces violently suppressed protests, resulting in numerous injuries and fatalities. The government also arrested opposition leaders and activists, sparking global concern about the erosion of democratic freedoms. (Accord, 2022)

### **Mali**

Political instability continued to plague Mali following the coups in 2020 and 2021. The transitional government was accused of restricting political freedoms, with reports of harassment and detention of journalists and opposition members. The ongoing conflict in the north also saw numerous human rights abuses committed by both state and non-state actors. (HumanRightsWatch, 2023)

Mali faced a political crisis in 2022, following a military coup that ousted President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta. The coup leaders, led by Colonel Assimi Goïta, suspended the constitution and imposed a curfew. The international community condemned the coup, and the African Union suspended Mali's membership. The crisis led to human rights concerns, including arbitrary arrests and restrictions on freedom of speech and assembly. (Accord, 2022)

The encompassing parts of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, remained a hotspot for violence and human rights violations. Islamist militant groups and government forces were both implicated in committing atrocities. Civilians bore the brunt of the conflict, facing mass displacement, extrajudicial killings, and other forms of violence. The United Nations and various human rights organizations repeatedly called for greater protection of civilians and accountability for perpetrators.

In Nigeria, the Boko Haram insurgency and clashes between herders and farmers in the Middle Belt continued to result in significant human rights violations. These conflicts led to thousands of deaths and displacements. The Nigerian government was criticized for its inadequate response and alleged abuses by security forces, including unlawful killings and torture. (ACAPS, 2023). Burkina Faso has faced increasing violence since 2022, with jihadist groups launching attacks on civilians and military targets. The government's response has been criticized for its heavy-handed approach, resulting in human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and torture. The crisis has displaced thousands, with many seeking refuge in neighboring countries. (Accord, 2022)

The international community responded to these human rights issues with a mix of condemnation, sanctions, and aid. Organizations such as the United Nations, African Union, and various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) played crucial roles in documenting abuses, providing humanitarian aid, and advocating for the protection of human rights. Several countries and international bodies imposed sanctions on individuals and entities responsible for human rights abuses. Diplomatic efforts were also made to encourage political reforms and conflict resolution. Numerous international organizations provided humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflicts and human rights violations. This aid included food, shelter, medical care, and support for displaced persons. Global awareness campaigns highlighted the plight of victims and pressured governments to take action. Social media and international news outlets played significant roles in bringing attention to these issues.

## **Conclusion**

The unconstitutional change of government, political crisis, and subsequent crackdown and repression have had a devastating impact on the people of West Africa. The region has witnessed a surge in gender-based violence, child trafficking, and exploitation of child rights, perpetuating a cycle of violence and abuse. The political instability and repression have created an environment conducive to human rights violations, with women and children bearing the brunt of the crisis. Gender-based violence has increased, with reports of sexual assault, rape, and other forms of violence against women and girls. The unconstitutional change of government and political crisis have undermined the rule of law, democratic governance, and human rights in West Africa. The region's future prosperity and stability depend on addressing these challenges and ensuring that the rights of all individuals, particularly women and children, are protected and respected.

It is imperative that regional and global stakeholders work together to support West Africa in transitioning towards a more stable, democratic, and rights-respecting region. This requires a concerted effort to address the root causes of the crisis, promote human rights and the rule of law, and ensure that perpetrators of human rights violations are held accountable. Only through collective action can we hope to mitigate the devastating impact of the crisis and build a brighter future for the people of West Africa.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: ENVIRONMENTAL ROAD MAP IN WEST AFRICA

West Africa, a region brimming with biodiversity, vibrant cultures, and immense potential, also faces significant environmental challenges. Recognizing this, nations within the region are collaborating to create a sustainable future through a comprehensive Environmental Road Map. This chapter explores the key components of this roadmap, highlighting national contributions, environmental hurdles, international support, and crucial recommendations for a healthier West Africa.

### 8.1 National Determined Contributions for Each Country

The Paris Agreement, a landmark international agreement on climate change, requires each nation to submit a Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) outlining its plans for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change (UNFCCC, 2015).

**Burkina Faso:** Aims for a 33% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 compared to a business-as-usual scenario, focusing on renewable energy, deforestation reduction, and climate-smart agriculture (UNCC, 2022).

**Ghana:** Targets a 15% unconditional and a 41% conditional reduction in emissions by 2030, emphasizing sustainable forest management, improved energy efficiency, and climate-resilient infrastructure (UNCC, 2021).

**Nigeria:** Aims to achieve a 20% unconditional and a 45% conditional reduction in emissions by 2030, prioritizing renewable energy development, waste management, and climate-resilient agriculture practices (UNCC, 2022).

**Senegal:** Pledges to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40.7% by 2030 compared to a business-as-usual scenario, with a focus on renewable energy, improved land-use practices, and climate-resilient infrastructure (UNFCCC, 2021).

These NDCs showcase the diverse, yet concerted efforts of West African countries towards a greener future (AfDB, 2019).

### 8.2 Environmental Challenges

Despite their efforts, West Africa faces a multitude of environmental challenges that require urgent attention:

**Deforestation:** The rapid depletion of forest cover due to logging, agriculture, and fuelwood collection poses a significant threat to biodiversity and disrupts essential ecosystem services (WorldBank, 2024).

**Land Degradation:** Unsustainable agricultural practices, overgrazing, and climate change contribute to land degradation, reducing agricultural productivity and exacerbating food insecurity (UNCCD, 2022).



**Water Scarcity:** Uneven water distribution, increasing droughts, and poor water management threaten water security for domestic, agricultural, and industrial uses (UNEP, 2021).

**Climate Change:** The region is experiencing rising temperatures, more extreme weather events, and sea level rise, impacting coastal communities, agriculture, and overall vulnerability (IPCC, 2022).

**Pollution:** Untreated wastewater, plastic pollution, and air pollution from vehicles and industrial activities contaminate water supplies, degrade environmental quality, and adversely affect human health (UN Environment Programme, 2023).

These interconnected challenges demand a comprehensive and collaborative approach from West African nations and the international community.

### **8.3 Amount of Investment by the United Nations in Each West African Country**

The Abidjan-based West Africa Sub Regional Office was established in 2015 to strengthen UN Environment Programme's strategic presence in the regions, in response to the Rio+20 mandate related to strengthening and upgrading UNEP as the global environmental authority. The Office serves to further UNEP engagement with Member States in order to enhance the provision of coherent support in advancing their national environmental agenda, particularly in integrating the three pillars of sustainable development- social, economy and environment - in the context of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and related Goals (UNEP, 2024).

The sub-regional Office covers a block of sixteen countries that have cultural and geopolitical ties and shared common economic interests under the Economic Community of West African States either as members or observer. These include Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Senegal and Togo. The UNEP West Africa Office collaborates closely with other United Nations agencies as well as key partners in West Africa including the African Development Bank, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU), the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the civil society.

Core functions:

*Political Engagement:* Provides representation and closely engages in policy dialogue through sharing of quality information, analysis and recommendations on sub-regional priorities and policy developments to inform decision-making processes

*Programmatic delivery and coordination platform:* Supports the coordinated and coherent delivery of UN Environment Programme's work in West Africa and the development of strategies to

facilitate regional policy dialogue and enhance programmatic cooperation on key development issues/challenges in West Africa

*Leveraging strategic and programmatic partnerships:* Builds and enhances partnerships to multiply the impact of UN Environment Programme interventions, ensuring that national governments, civil society, environmental and economic groupings, regional and sub-regional development banks and the private sector have better access to UN Environment Programme expertise

*Mobilizing resources:* Supports regional resource mobilization from donors and partners in West Africa for the implementation of UN Environment Programme of Work in the region including the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals

*Communication and Outreach:* Enhances awareness of environmental issues and promotes the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and contributes to enhancing UN Environment profile and visibility in West Africa

*Delivering as One UN:* Ensures UNEP's participation and contributions to national and sub-regional UN coordination mechanisms and platforms (UN Country Teams, UN Development Groups etc).

Furthermore, the United Nations (UN) recognizes the critical role West Africa plays in achieving global environmental goals.

The Green Climate Fund (GCF): Provides financial support to developing countries for climate change mitigation and adaptation projects. As of June 2023, GCF has approved \$1.4 billion for West African projects, focusing on renewable energy, climate-smart agriculture, and resilient infrastructure (Green Climate Fund, 2023).

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP): Supports West African countries in implementing environmental policies, building capacity for sustainable resource management, and promoting regional cooperation on environmental issues. Specific funding amounts are allocated to individual projects based on needs and proposals (UN Environment Programme, 2023).

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Assists West African nations in integrating climate change considerations into development planning, promoting climate-resilient livelihoods, and enhancing disaster preparedness and management capabilities.

## **8.4 Intervention Areas**

Supporting Implementation of the NDCs in the Waste Sector in Côte d'Ivoire and Senegal: waste is a critical source of emissions and is prioritised in multiple NDCs across Africa. Through this project, we are supporting two countries – Senegal and Cote d'Ivoire, to develop tools and strategies that catalyse increased investments in implementing waste NDC priorities in a manner that simultaneously mitigate against dangerous emissions from waste, while also unlocking

priority socioeconomic benefits. Through this work, countries have been supported to strengthen policy framework to reduce GHGs and Short-Lived Climate Pollutants (SLCPs) in the municipal solid waste sector.

NDCs Action Project: providing technical support to Ghana to translate their NDC commitments into actionable implementation strategies capable of attracting implementation investments. This is to ensure that country NDCs can attract market driven investment by diverse groups that constitute African economies - including the youth, informal sector actors as well as formal corporations and drive implementation while also generating empirical data to feedback to relevant policy implementation programmes and ensure prioritisation of incentives on areas proven to work (UNEP, 2024).

National Adaptation Plans (NAPS) readiness project: countries (Eswatini, Nigeria, Mauritania, Zimbabwe, Lesotho etc) are being supported to put in place structures and plans of action for dynamic adaptation planning that takes into account the dynamic nature of adaptation needs in context of their national development priorities, vulnerabilities and NDCs implementation prioritization. This planning establishes an adaptation baseline. It then narrows down priority areas, then works with the countries in formulating the relevant policy, institutional frameworks, partnerships, technological and technical capacity needs that will need to be in place to ensure most effective national adaptation planning and implementation investment in the long run.

UNEP is a long-standing partner of the Pan-African Action Agenda and supports it by promoting, implementing, and communicating ecosystem restoration activities across the continent. We are involved in The Restoration Initiative, the Great Green Wall Initiative and we are one of the founding partners of the African Forest Landscape Restoration Initiative (AFR100).

## **8.5 Recommendations**

To effectively address West Africa's environmental challenges and achieve sustainable development, the following recommendations are crucial:

- i. Strengthening NDC implementation: Increased resources and technical assistance from developed nations are vital to support West African countries in implementing their NDCs effectively.
- ii. Investing in renewable energy: Transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy sources like solar and wind power is essential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and fostering climate-resilient economies.
- iii. Promoting sustainable land management: Practices like reforestation, soil conservation techniques, and agroforestry can help to restore degraded lands and improve agricultural productivity.
- iv. Enhancing water management: Investing in water infrastructure, promoting water conservation practices, and improving wastewater treatment are crucial for ensuring water security for future generations.

- v. Enhancing climate adaptation: Building resilient infrastructure, developing early warning systems, and promoting climate-smart agriculture are essential for adapting to the effects of climate change.
- vi. Fostering regional cooperation: Collaboration between West African countries on environmental issues, sharing best practices, and jointly addressing transboundary challenges like deforestation are critical for achieving sustainable development.
- vii. Empowering local communities: Involving local communities in environmental decision-making and empowering them with the knowledge and resources to manage their resources sustainably is essential for long-term success.

By implementing these recommendations and strengthening the collaboration between West African nations, the international community, and local communities, the region can take significant strides towards a greener and more sustainable future.

## **Conclusion**

The environmental road map in West Africa is a critical framework for addressing the region's pressing environmental challenges. The roadmap outlines a comprehensive approach to environmental sustainability, prioritizing climate change mitigation, biodiversity conservation, and pollution reduction.

Implementing the roadmap requires a collaborative effort from governments, civil society, and international partners. West African countries must strengthen their environmental policies, invest in renewable energy, and promote sustainable land use practices.

The roadmap's success depends on addressing the region's environmental vulnerabilities, such as deforestation, desertification, and water scarcity. By prioritizing environmental sustainability, West Africa can reduce its reliance on fossil fuels, protect its natural resources, and promote eco-tourism.

The environmental road map in West Africa is a vital step towards achieving sustainable development and ensuring a healthy environment for future generations. Its implementation will require political will, financial resources, and collective action. By working together, West Africa can become a model for environmental sustainability and contribute to global efforts to address the climate crisis.

Ultimately, the environmental road map in West Africa offers a vision for a sustainable future, where economic growth is balanced with environmental stewardship and social justice. Its successful implementation will depend on the region's ability to come together and address the pressing environmental challenges facing West Africa today.

## CHAPTER NINE: CORRUPTION IN WEST AFRICA

West Africa, a region rich in cultural diversity and natural resources, has been grappling with pervasive corruption and escalating insecurity, significantly impacting human rights. The years 2022 and 2023 were particularly challenging, as corruption and violence undermined governance, economic stability, and the well-being of millions.

Corruption in West Africa has been a major impediment to development and human rights. It manifests in various forms, including bribery, embezzlement, and nepotism, eroding public trust in institutions and diverting resources meant for public services. In Nigeria, the largest economy in the region, high-profile corruption cases involving public officials and the mismanagement of public funds were rampant. In 2022, the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) intensified efforts to combat corruption, but significant challenges remained. Corruption in the security sector also undermined efforts to combat insurgency, leading to inadequate protection for civilians and human rights abuses by security forces. Ghana, despite being touted as a stable democracy, continued to struggle with corruption, particularly in the procurement and public services sectors. The Office of the Special Prosecutor, established to tackle corruption, faced numerous challenges, including political interference and limited resources. Corruption hindered access to basic services like healthcare and education, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable populations. Both Guinea and Mali, already dealing with political instability, saw corruption further erode governance structures. In Guinea, the military junta that seized power in 2021 struggled to implement anti-corruption measures. Mali, plagued by ongoing conflict, saw corruption in the allocation of international aid and military spending, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.

**Table Showing the West African Corruption Perception Index 2021 to 2023**

Ranking in Africa	Country	CPI in 2021	CPI in 2022	CPI in 2023
1	Cabo Verde	58	60	64
2	Senegal	43	43	43
3	Ghana	43	43	43

4	Benin	42	43	43
5	Burkina Faso	42	42	41
6	Cote d'Ivoire	36	37	40
7	The Gambia	37	34	37
8	Sierra Leone	34	34	35
9	Niger	31	32	32
10	Togo	30	30	31
11	Mali	29	28	28
12	Guinea	25	25	26
13	Liberia	29	26	25
14	Nigeria	24	24	25

The CPI uses a scale from 0 to 100. 100 is very clean and 0 is highly corrupt.

(TransparencyInternational, 2023)

The CPI score for year 2022 and 2023 portends that West Africa faces persistent challenges due to underfunding, corruption, and illicit financial flows, which divert resources away from public services. This perpetuates social and economic issues, disproportionately affecting vulnerable populations, such as the poor, people with disabilities, women, and children. Despite adopting the African Union Convention on Prevention and Combatting Corruption, impunity and limited access to justice and information remain significant obstacles to the rule of law in the region. Therefore, anti-corruption efforts are essential at all levels and from multiple stakeholders within the justice system.

Cabo Verde still maintains its status as the least corrupt country in the region, with significant progress in anti-corruption efforts. Senegal, Ghana and Benin maintain same status as in previous two years. Burkina Faso dropped a point as Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. However, Liberia and Nigeria are respectively the highest corrupt countries in the region even though there is a slight level of improvement in their statuses. (TransparencyInternational, 2023)

Transparency International's 2023 Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) paints a concerning picture. The average regional score for Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes West Africa, stands at a mere 33 out of 100, with 44 out of 49 African countries scoring below the midpoint.

#### Specific Areas of Concern:

1. Land Corruption: Land grabs by powerful individuals and international investors disproportionately affect poor communities, particularly women, who often lack proper documentation.
2. Bribery: Extracting bribes for basic services is prevalent, hindering economic activity and discouraging foreign investment.
3. Public Procurement: Lack of transparency in government contracting opens doors for corrupt practices, diverting public funds away from essential services.

#### Impact of Corruption:

1. Poverty and Inequality: Corruption diverts resources away from vital services like education and healthcare, disproportionately impacting the most vulnerable (World Bank).
2. Underdevelopment: Corruption discourages investment and stifles economic growth, hindering development efforts (Transparency International).
3. Instability and Violence: Public frustration with corruption can fuel social unrest and violence (Premium Times Nigeria).

#### Efforts to Combat Corruption:

1. Anti-Corruption Initiatives: Several West African countries have implemented anti-corruption strategies, including establishing public registers of company ownership.
2. Civil Society: Activist groups and journalists play a crucial role in exposing corruption, although they often face intimidation and harassment.

#### Challenges:

1. Weak Institutions: Inadequate law enforcement and a lack of independent judiciaries hinder effective prosecution of corruption cases.
2. Impunity: Powerful individuals involved in corruption often enjoy impunity, discouraging public trust in anti-corruption efforts.
3. Public Perception: Ordinary citizens across West Africa report a high risk of retaliation for speaking up against corruption, hindering efforts to hold perpetrators accountable.

#### **Conclusion:**

Combating corruption in West Africa requires a multi-pronged approach. Strengthening institutions, fostering a culture of transparency, and protecting whistleblowers are critical steps. Continued international cooperation and support are also crucial to address this complex and deeply entrenched challenge.

## CHAPTER TEN: HUMAN RIGHTS INSECURITY INDEX

This section employs a qualitative analysis and expert judgment to examine five significant security concerns in each country, categorizing them into physical security (crime, cybersecurity, terrorism, and kidnapping) and human security (governance). While some issues may overlap, the focus of this section is on the impact of insecurity on human rights, rather than analyzing crime itself. By highlighting the threats that insecurity poses to human rights, this section recognizes the importance of a safe and secure environment in promoting, protecting, and effectively implementing human rights principles.

Insecurity in West Africa, driven by terrorism, armed conflicts, and criminal activities, has had severe repercussions for human rights. Civilians, particularly in conflict zones, faced threats to their lives, displacement, and various forms of violence. The Sahel region, including parts of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, remained a hotspot for terrorist activities and ethnic violence. Islamist militant groups like Boko Haram, Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) continued to launch attacks on civilians, government forces, and foreign troops. These attacks led to mass displacements, human rights abuses, and humanitarian crises. In Nigeria, in addition to the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast, increasing violence from bandits in the northwest and separatist movements in the southeast led to kidnappings for ransom, attacks on villages, and clashes between herders and farmers, resulting in significant civilian casualties and displacement. The Nigerian government's response was often marked by human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and torture by security forces. Burkina Faso saw a dramatic rise in violence from jihadist groups, leading to one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in the world. The government, struggling to maintain control, was accused of human rights abuses, including arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial executions, further alienating the civilian population. Guinea-Bissau, known as a hub for drug trafficking, faced significant challenges from organized crime. The intertwining of criminal networks with political elites hindered efforts to combat trafficking and led to increased violence and instability, adversely affecting human rights and the rule of law.

**Table Showing Indicator for Country Risk Level**



Risk Level	Description
Critical	
Level 1	A broad spectrum of criminal activity in the country with some areas having increased risk
Level 2	Countries with security concerns due to increased crime and terrorism
Level 3	Caution is advised due to arbitrary enforcement of local laws
Level 4	Travel is not advised to the country due to terrorism, crime, and kidnapping
High	
Level 1	Some areas have increased risks Crimes of opportunity do occur
Level 2	Increased caution to such countries is advised due to a wide spectrum of criminal activity
Level 3	Travel to such countries should be reconsidered due to crime, elections, and civil unrest
Level 4	There is the presence of violent crimes and civil unrest
Low	
Level 1	Lowest advisory level for safety and security risk
Level 2	Exercise normal precautions
Level 3	Some measure of safety is suggested and travellers should exercise normal safety precautions
Level 4	Exercise normal precautions. Some measure of risk exists

The following table presents the risk levels and their corresponding descriptions, which form the basis of our country risk assessments. These assessments categorize countries as critical, high, or low risk.

The subsequent table groups West African countries into insecurity clusters, evaluated based on the severity of human rights consequences. Our methodology identifies specific risk indicators and assigns scores to each level of insecurity within each risk category. A comprehensive insecurity score, tailored to human rights impacts, is provided for each country.

Notably, incidents resulting in loss of life, murder, or unlawful killing, which violate the right to life, are considered the most severe in our assessment. While the severity may vary across security clusters, these incidents are prioritized in our evaluation.

**Table: Summary of the country risk levels for West Africa in 2022 and 2023.**

Country	2022 Risk Level	2023 Risk Level
Cabo Verde	Low - Level 1	Low - Level 1
Senegal	Low - Level 2	Low - Level 2

Country	2022 Risk Level	2023 Risk Level
Ghana	High - Level 2	High - Level 2
Benin	Low - Level 2	Low - Level 2
Burkina Faso	Critical - Level 4	Critical - Level 4
Cote d'Ivoire	High - Level 3	High - Level 3
The Gambia	High - Level 2	High - Level 2
Sierra Leone	High - Level 3	High - Level 3
Niger	Critical - Level 4	Critical - Level 4
Togo	High - Level 3	High - Level 3
Mali	Critical - Level 4	Critical - Level 4
Guinea	High - Level 3	High - Level 3
Liberia	High - Level 2	High - Level 2
Nigeria	Critical - Level 4	Critical - Level 4

West Africa's country risk levels for 2022 and 2023 indicate a mixed security landscape. Four countries - Burkina Faso, Niger, Mali, and Nigeria - maintained a critical risk level in both years, signaling severe security concerns. The majority of countries, including Ghana, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Liberia, and Togo, fell under the high-risk category, with some experiencing fluctuations in risk levels between 2022 and 2023. In contrast, Cabo Verde, Senegal, and Benin consistently maintained a low risk level in both years, indicating a relatively stable security environment.

### **Cabo Verde**

Violent crime, such as burglary, armed robbery, and assault exists in some parts of the country. Cabo Verde's crime landscape in 2022 and 2023 was marked by efforts to combat human trafficking. According to the 2022 Trafficking in Persons Report, the government demonstrated significant efforts to meet minimum standards for eliminating trafficking, but still fell short (State, 2022). Prosecution efforts increased, while protection efforts were mixed, hindered by weak case management and data collection. Prevention efforts remained steady. Human trafficking remained

a concern, with victims exploited both domestically and abroad, primarily from Cabo Verde and other countries. While progress was made, continued attention is needed to address this complex issue.

Cabo Verde demonstrated a strong security profile in 2022 and 2023, with low levels of terrorism and kidnapping, and a moderate level of crime. The country's governance was assessed as good, with a stable political environment. However, cybersecurity threats were identified as a moderate concern. Overall, Cabo Verde's security situation appears stable, making it an attractive destination for investment and tourism.

## **Senegal**

### *Terrorism*

While Senegal hasn't faced major terrorist attacks, the regional threat persists. The government passed broad counterterrorism laws in 2022, criticized by Human Rights Watch (HRW) for potentially infringing on free speech due to overly broad language and harsh penalties (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

### *Crime and Governance*

Senegal grapples with petty theft and violent crime. While some reports suggest a decline, concerns remain about arbitrary arrests and excessive force by security forces (US Department of State, 2023). The questionable independence of the judiciary further complicates matters (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

A significant human rights concern is the government's crackdown on dissent. HRW reports arbitrary arrests of opposition figures and activists, along with restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly (Human Rights Watch, 2023). This raises questions about democratic space, particularly during the lead-up to the 2024 elections.

### *Cybersecurity*

Senegal, like many nations, faces growing cybersecurity threats. While specific data on attacks is limited, the lack of robust cybersecurity infrastructure creates vulnerabilities. This, coupled with limited legal frameworks around data privacy, presents a challenge for the future.

Senegal's human rights record remains a work in progress. Balancing security concerns with democratic freedoms requires a nuanced approach. Addressing concerns about arbitrary detention, press freedom, and the independence of the judiciary will be crucial. Additionally, investing in robust cybersecurity measures and data privacy regulations is vital in the digital age.

## **Ghana**

### *Terrorism*

Ghana has not been a primary target for terrorist organizations. However, the spillover threat from the Sahel region necessitates vigilance. This has led to increased security measures, but concerns exist regarding potential infringements on civil liberties.

### Crime

Crime, particularly petty theft and robbery, remains a concern in Ghana. While the government implements measures to curb crime, reports of police brutality and arbitrary arrests raise human rights questions. Ensuring fair trials and strengthening police accountability are crucial.

### Governance

Corruption continues to be a challenge in Ghana, despite government efforts. Lack of transparency and accountability can erode public trust in institutions. Strengthening anti-corruption measures and fostering a culture of integrity are essential for good governance (Transparency International, 2023).

### Cybersecurity

Ghana has seen a rise in internet penetration, but cybersecurity threats are also growing. The country lacks a robust legal framework around data privacy, raising concerns about online surveillance and freedom of expression (CIPESA, 2023).

Ghana's human rights record necessitates continuous improvement. Striking a balance between security and democratic freedoms requires a multifaceted approach. Addressing police brutality, strengthening judicial independence, and fostering a culture of transparency are crucial steps. Additionally, investing in robust cybersecurity measures and data privacy regulations is vital for navigating the digital age.

## **Benin**

### Terrorism

The threat of terrorism has escalated in recent years. Armed groups in the north have carried out deadly attacks, targeting both civilians and security forces. While the government implements counter-terrorism measures, striking a balance between security and human rights remains a challenge.

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping for ransom has emerged as a serious concern, particularly in northern Benin. HRW reported on the kidnapping of a French priest in February 2023, highlighting the growing vulnerability of civilians. Authorities need to effectively address this issue while upholding due process.

### Crime

Crime, particularly petty theft, remains a problem in Benin. However, reports from the US Department of State point to excessive use of force and arbitrary arrests by law enforcement. Overcrowded prisons with poor sanitation and inadequate healthcare further raise human rights concerns (US Department of State, 2023). Bandits, criminal organizations, and terrorist groups are active in Benin, particularly in areas of Benin bordering Burkina Faso and Niger. Attacks in these areas occur with little or no warning, and could target shops, markets, hotels, places of worship, restaurants, bars, schools, government installations, transportation hubs, and other places where crowds gather. Violent attacks are far more likely in the northern areas of Benin than in the southern and coastal areas. Crimes such as robbery and assault occur in Benin. These crimes often happen at night and in isolated locations. Crime occurs more frequently in urban areas and crowded markets (U.S Department of State, 2023).

### Governance

Democratic backsliding is a worrying trend in Benin. The government has been criticized for restricting freedom of expression through the 2018 Digital Code and targeting opposition figures. These actions raise concerns about shrinking democratic space, particularly ahead of upcoming elections.

### Cybersecurity

Benin is increasingly vulnerable to cyberattacks due to its growing reliance on technology and lack of robust cybersecurity infrastructure. Coupled with limited data privacy regulations, this raises concerns about government surveillance and potential misuse of personal information.

Benin faces a complex challenge in addressing security concerns while upholding human rights. Independent investigations into allegations of abuse by security forces and reforms to strengthen the judiciary are crucial. Investing in cybersecurity measures and developing data privacy regulations are equally important. Ultimately, fostering open dialogue and upholding democratic principles are essential for a stable and rights-respecting Benin.

## **Burkina Faso**

### Terrorism

Burkina Faso has struggled with terrorism, particularly in the northern and eastern regions. According to the Global Terrorism Index (2022), the country recorded 236 terrorist attacks in 2022, resulting in 617 deaths and 455 injuries (Vision of Humanity, 2022). The attacks were primarily attributed to extremist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping has become a growing concern in Burkina Faso. In 2022, there were 247 reported cases of kidnapping, with 105 victims still being held captive (Global Initiative, 2023). The

majority of these cases were attributed to terrorist groups seeking ransom or using kidnapping as a tactic to spread fear and instability.

### Crime

Crime rates have also increased in Burkina Faso, particularly in urban areas. There was an increase in reported crimes, including armed robbery, burglary, and assault. The rise in crime is largely attributed to economic instability, poverty, and the lack of effective law enforcement.

The surge in crime, terrorism, and kidnapping in Burkina Faso can be attributed to various factors, including: Political instability and weak governance, economic instability and poverty, ineffective law enforcement and security agencies, proliferation of extremist groups.

The consequences of these issues are far-reaching, resulting in: Human rights violations, Displacement of populations, Economic losses and Psychological trauma.

## **Cote D'Ivoire**

### Crime

Crime continues to be a major public security concern in Côte d'Ivoire. Violent crime, such as carjacking, robbery, and home invasion, is common in some areas. Local police often lack resources to respond to serious crimes.

### Terrorism

Violent extremist activity occurs in Burkina Faso and Mali near the border with Côte d'Ivoire. Terrorism concerns in the northern region remain due to its proximity to these countries. Piracy with armed robbery and kidnapping for ransom are significant threats to ships operating near Côte d'Ivoire. The main terrorist threat to Côte d'Ivoire is from a group called Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM). JNIM is linked to al-Qa'ida. JNIM mostly operates in the Sahel region, including Burkina Faso and Mali. The threat from JNIM has in the past reached northern Côte d'Ivoire, near the border with Burkina Faso. Attacks have happened in the Savanes and Zanzan Districts, including Comoé National Park. These attacks have mainly targeted Ivoirian security forces, but civilians have also been targeted. In 2021, Al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) carried out 17 small-scale attacks that killed approximately 20 people. After these attacks, the Côte d'Ivoire government increased security in northern Côte d'Ivoire. Since 2021, there have been no attacks.

## **The Gambia**

The Gambia has made significant progress in consolidating its democracy and improving its security situation in 2022 and 2023. However, the country still faces challenges related to terrorism, kidnapping, crime, governance, and cybersecurity.

### Terrorism

The Gambia has been identified as a country at risk of terrorism, particularly due to its proximity to countries in the Sahel region that are affected by terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). However, there have been no reported terrorist attacks in The Gambia in 2022 and 2023.

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping for ransom has been a concern in The Gambia, particularly in the coastal areas popular with tourists. However, according to the National Crime Agency (2022), there has been a significant decrease in reported kidnapping cases in 2022 and 2023.

### Crime

Crime rates have been on the rise in The Gambia as a slow economy fuels a growing number of thefts, pickpocketing incidents and burglaries. Police prioritize protecting tourist areas but foreign travelers are frequently targeted by criminals due to perceptions of relative wealth and perceived vulnerability. The potential for conflict following the refusal of long-time leader, Yahya Jammeh, to step-down has largely subsided after his departure into exile and the continued presence of regional security force backing the new government of President Adama Barrow. Demonstrations are held with some frequency in The Gambia over a range of local and national political, economic, environmental and social issues. Whilst the majority of these gatherings remain peaceful, political demonstrations have been increasing since 2017 amid less aggressive responses from security forces. (Crisis24, 2023)

### Governance

The Gambia has made significant progress in consolidating its democracy since the departure of former President Yahya Jammeh. The current government has implemented several reforms aimed at improving governance, including the establishment of the National Human Rights Commission and the Truth, Reconciliation, and Reparations Commission.

### Cybersecurity

The Gambia has identified cybersecurity as a key area of concern, particularly in the financial sector. The government has established the National Cybersecurity Agency to coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to cyber threats.

## **Sierra Leone**

### Terrorism

Sierra Leone has been identified as a country at risk of terrorism, particularly due to its proximity to countries in the Sahel region that are affected by terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam

wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). However, there have been no reported terrorist attacks in Sierra Leone in 2022 and 2023.

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping for ransom has been a concern in Sierra Leone, particularly in the eastern regions [2]. According to the National Police Force (2022), there has been a significant decrease in reported kidnapping cases in 2022 and 2023.

### Crime

Crime rates in Sierra Leone have remained relatively high, particularly in urban areas such as Freetown. Petty crimes such as theft and burglary have been reported, as well as more serious crimes such as armed robbery and assault.

### Governance

Sierra Leone has made significant progress in consolidating its democracy since the end of the civil war in 2002. The current government has implemented several reforms aimed at improving governance, including the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

### Cybersecurity

Sierra Leone has identified cybersecurity as a key area of concern, particularly in the financial sector. The government has established the National Cybersecurity Agency to coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to cyber threats. There were reported cases of cyber incidents in 2022, related to online fraud and network intrusions.

## **Niger**

### Terrorism

Niger Republic has experienced several terrorist attacks in 2022 and 2023, particularly in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), there were 35 reported terrorist attacks in 2022, resulting in 71 deaths and 137 injuries. (U.S Department of State, 2022)

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping for ransom has been a concern in Niger Republic, particularly in the southern regions.

### Crime

Crime rates in Niger Republic have remained relatively high, particularly in urban areas such as Niamey. Petty crimes such as theft and burglary have been reported, as well as more serious crimes such as armed robbery and assault.



### Governance

Niger Republic has faced governance challenges, including corruption and political instability. The country has implemented several reforms aimed at improving governance, including the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

### Cybersecurity

Niger Republic has identified cybersecurity as a key area of concern, particularly in the financial sector. The government has established the National Cybersecurity Agency to coordinate efforts to prevent and respond to cyber threats.

## **Togo**

### Terrorism

Togo has been identified as a country at risk of terrorism, particularly due to its proximity to countries in the Sahel region that are affected by terrorist groups such as Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), there have been no reported terrorist attacks in Togo in 2022 and 2023. (U.S Department of State, 2023)

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping for ransom has been a concern in Togo, particularly in the northern regions. Extremist groups have carried out attacks, including kidnapping, in the northern border region of Togo, the adjacent areas of Burkina Faso, and Benin.

### Crime

Crime rates in Togo have remained relatively low, particularly in urban areas such as Lomé. Petty crimes such as theft and burglary have been reported, as well as more serious crimes such as armed robbery and assault. According to the Togo Police Force, there was a 5% decrease from 2021.

### Governance

Togo has made significant progress in consolidating its democracy since the end of the Gnassingbé regime in 2020. The current government has implemented several reforms aimed at improving governance, including the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

### Cybersecurity

Togo has identified cybersecurity as a key area of concern, particularly in the financial sector.

## **Mali**

### Terrorism

Terrorist and armed groups continue plotting kidnappings and attacks in Mali. They may attack with little or no warning, targeting night clubs, hotels, restaurants, places of worship, international diplomatic missions, and other locations frequented by foreigners. Attacks may target Malian government offices and infrastructure, in addition to locations frequented by Westerners.

### Kidnapping and Crime

Violent crime, such as kidnapping and armed robbery, is common in Mali. Violent crime is a particular concern during local holidays and seasonal events in Bamako, its suburbs, and Mali's southern regions. Roadblocks and random police checkpoints are commonplace throughout the country, especially at night. (U.S Department of State, 2023)

### Governance

Mali has faced governance challenges, including corruption and political instability. The country has implemented several reforms aimed at improving governance, including the establishment of the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the Human Rights Commission.

### Cybersecurity

Mali has identified cybersecurity as a key area of concern, particularly in the financial sector.

## **Guinea**

### Terrorism

Guinea has not been a primary target for terrorist organizations in recent years. However, the country's proximity to volatile regions in the Sahel, coupled with political instability, makes it susceptible to spillover violence. There were no major terrorist incidents reported in Guinea in 2022 or 2023.

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a concern in Guinea, particularly for children. There are documented several cases of child abduction, often linked to trafficking for forced labor or begging. Kidnapping for ransom also occurs, targeting wealthy individuals or foreigners.

### Crime

Guinea struggles with various criminal activities, including petty theft, armed robbery, and drug trafficking. Limited police presence and weak judicial systems contribute to the prevalence of crime. Guinea has a high crime rate, with violent crime being a particular concern.

### Governance

Guinea has a history of political instability and military coups. In September 2021, the military overthrew the government of Alpha Conde. The military junta, led by Colonel Mamady Doumbouya, has promised a transition to civilian rule, but a timetable has not been set. This lack of clear political direction raises concerns about Guinea's stability and governance.

### Cybersecurity

Guinea's cybersecurity infrastructure is underdeveloped, making it vulnerable to cyberattacks. Guinea has low levels of internet freedom, with the government engaging in surveillance and censorship. This lack of digital security creates an environment where cybercriminals can operate more freely.

While Guinea has not experienced major terrorist incidents in recent years, the country faces challenges related to kidnapping, crime, governance, and cybersecurity. Addressing these issues will be crucial for ensuring stability and security in Guinea.

## **Liberia**

### Terrorism

Liberia is not considered a major terrorism hotspot. However, the country's history of civil war and ongoing social and economic issues raise concerns about potential vulnerabilities. There are no major terrorism incidents in 2022 or 2023. However, Liberia remains vigilant, especially regarding the recruitment of citizens by extremist groups in the neighboring Sahel region.

### Kidnapping

While not as widespread as petty theft, kidnapping is a security concern in Liberia, particularly for children. There are challenges due to kidnappings targeting humanitarian staff in remote areas.

### Crime

Petty theft, armed robbery, and drug trafficking are prevalent in Liberia, often linked to poverty and unemployment. Weak law enforcement and an overburdened judicial system are contributing factors to the high crime rate.

### Governance

Despite Liberia's democratic elections in 2017, concerns linger regarding corruption and government effectiveness. The 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices mentions issues of impunity within security forces and a lack of transparency in governance.

### Cybersecurity

Liberia's cybersecurity infrastructure is in its early stages of development, leaving it susceptible to cyberattacks. The country lacks the resources and expertise to adequately address these threats.

While no major cyberattacks were reported in 2022 or 2023, Liberia's growing reliance on digital technologies necessitates improved cybersecurity measures.

Liberia has made strides towards stability since its civil war. However, the country continues to grapple with crime, weak governance, and an underdeveloped cybersecurity infrastructure. Addressing these challenges will be crucial for Liberia's continued development and security.

## **Nigeria**

### Crime

Violent crime – such as armed robbery, assault, carjacking, kidnapping, hostage taking, roadside banditry, and rape – is common throughout the country. Kidnappings for ransom occur frequently, often targeting dual national citizens who have returned to Nigeria for a visit, as well as U.S. citizens with perceived wealth. Kidnapping gangs have also stopped victims on interstate roads.

### Terrorism

Terrorists continue plotting and carrying out attacks in Nigeria. Terrorists may attack with little or no warning, targeting shopping centers, malls, markets, hotels, places of worship, restaurants, bars, schools, government installations, transportation hubs, and other places where crowds gather. Terrorists are known to work with local gangs to expand their reach.

There is civil unrest and armed gangs in parts of Southern Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta and Southeast regions. Armed criminality and gangs, including kidnapping and assaults on Nigerian security services is also pervasive in this region.

Violence can flare up between communities of farmers and herders in rural areas.

### Kidnapping

Kidnapping for ransom is a significant threat across Nigeria. Both criminal gangs and extremist groups engage in this practice, targeting wealthy individuals, children, and travelers

### Governance

The 2023 general elections were a tense period, with concerns about violence and manipulation. Corruption and a lack of transparency within the government remain issues.

### Cybersecurity

Nigeria's cybersecurity infrastructure is inadequate, leaving it vulnerable to cyberattacks. Cybercriminals often target individuals and businesses for financial gain.

## INSECURITY SITUATION FOR EACH WEST AFRICAN COUNTRY

In the challenging security landscape of West Africa, countries face various threats that impact their stability and prosperity. To provide a comprehensive assessment of these security concerns, the following West African countries were evaluated and ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the highest, across five key security dimensions: terrorism, kidnapping, crime, governance, and cybersecurity. The countries assessed include Cabo Verde, Senegal, Ghana, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Sierra Leone, Niger, Togo, Mali, Guinea, Liberia, and Nigeria. This ranking provides a snapshot of the security situation in each country for the years 2022 and 2023, highlighting areas of concern and areas of improvement.

**Table: Insecurity ranking in West Africa**

Country	Terrorism	Kidnapping	Crime	Governance	Cyber-security	Insecurity Score
Cabo Verde	2	1	2	8	6	19
Senegal	3	2	3	7	5	20
Ghana	2	2	4	6	7	21
Benin	2	3	5	5	4	19
Burkina Faso	9	8	8	3	2	30
Cote d'Ivoire	4	5	6	6	4	25
The Gambia	2	1	2	7	5	17
Sierra Leone	2	2	3	5	4	16
Niger	8	7	7	4	3	29
Togo	3	4	5	5	4	21
Mali	9	8	8	3	2	30
Guinea	4	5	6	4	3	22
Liberia	2	2	3	5	4	16
Nigeria	8	9	9	3	2	31

When assessing security risks in West Africa, several factors come into play. Terrorism, for instance, is a severe security threat that can result in large-scale loss of life and damage to property, earning it the highest score on the ranking table.

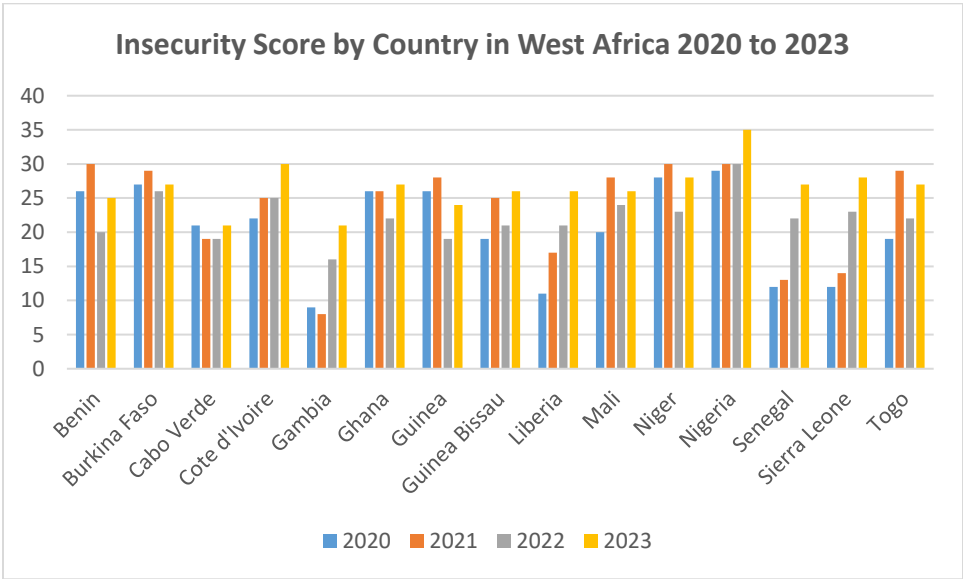
Kidnapping, another significant concern, involves the unlawful restraint of individuals, potentially leading to torture, unlawful killing, and deprivation of freedom of movement. Such incidents attract a high score on the ranking table.

Crime, in this context, encompasses violent attacks, intimidation, harassment, and property loss, resulting in injuries and, in some cases, loss of life. These incidents are assigned a medium score on the ranking table.

Governance, or the lack thereof, can also contribute to insecurity, particularly when it leads to poverty, economic and social rights deprivation, and vulnerability to security risks. Such incidents are assigned a low score on the ranking table.

Cybersecurity, meanwhile, is assessed based on its impact on privacy, income, technology, confidentiality, and infrastructure, with incidents of cyber insecurity attracting the lowest score on the ranking table.

The Terrorism Index for West African countries evaluates the direct and indirect effects of terrorism on lives and property, considering factors like injuries, property damage, and psychological aftermath. The scores assigned to each country are determined by the level of assessment of the insecurity cluster relevant to each nation.



A high score in Terrorism, Kidnapping, and Crime indicates a higher incidence of these issues.

A high score in Governance and Cybersecurity indicates better performance in these areas.

Liberia and Sierra Leone were the most secure country in 2021 with a slight decrease and increase in its score over the previous year respectively. Nigeria recorded the highest score and ranks as the most insecure country while Burkina Faso and Mali has the second highest insecurity score.

## **CONCLUSION**

The period of 2022-2023 highlighted the severe impact of insecurity on human rights in West Africa. The issues of insecurity have had profound implications for human rights across West Africa. Insecurity directly undermined the right to life and security, with thousands of civilians killed or displaced due to violence. Women and children were particularly vulnerable, facing heightened risks of gender-based violence and exploitation.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including strengthening governance, enhancing accountability, and ensuring the protection of civilians. International support and regional cooperation are crucial in tackling these issues and promoting a more secure and just environment for all citizens of West Africa. The path to peace and stability remains fraught with challenges, but a concerted effort can pave the way for a future where human rights are respected and upheld.

## CHAPTER ELEVEN: HUMAN RIGHTS MATRIX AND RANKING

This chapter is an exploration of the various data analysis on human rights cases and ranking. It is divided into three sections.

The first section is the narrative of human rights cases that section starts with the definition of terms and an explanation of methodology, highlighting the limitation of the research.

The second part of the section will highlight human rights cases in the West African region grouped into five categories; Unlawful killings, Extra-judicial Execution, Torture and injuries, arbitrary arrest, sexual and gender base violence and other violation.

The last section highlights the contribution of West African countries in upholding international principles of human rights through the ratification of various treaties. Their status are exhibited in chart showing the level of participation of each country to the enhancement of human rights in the region.

### **Definition of terms:**

- a) **Unlawful killing** is subdivided into Extra -judicial Execution and other forms of killing.
- b) **Torture/Injuries**; torture is the infliction of injuries perpetrated by government officials or members of the security forces. It perpetrated by non-state actors is injuries.
- c) **Arbitrary arrest**: This is unlawful arrest by security forces and relates to kidnapping
- d) **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence**: These are gender-specific violations committed against women
- e) **Others**: include other violations and abuses not grouped above.

### **Data Base and Methodology**

#### **The Database**

This report based its analysis on the database compilation. The scope of the report is January – December 2022-2023, hence relevant cases in 2022-2023 from the fifteen countries in West Africa were compiled. The database for the project summarizes verifiable and validated data. Our database may be different from a country database or another organisation database. Our data sets use the minimalist data approach, it does not nullify another database from another outlet, but the



data matrix in this report is based on our database. We will aspire to update our database as more data are available and validated.

### **Methodology**

This report is written from desk stop research data, consultation of partners on the ground. Information are double check to confirm their authenticity and we rely on the minimalist approach since we lack of fund to get to the field ourselves. There might be more violations that we couldn't get access to.

The cases focus on the above categories; however, they are indicative cases and not all the cases in each country were considered. The limitation of our data mining includes the lack of field visits due to the pandemic situation. Access to data is also a limitation especially as it relates to sexual violence. HURIDAC and ACDHS were able to leverage quality research and focal point in each country that help with the case research and documentation. We have multiple sources of data.

The statistics in this report are based on our database and not the national database of the member countries. There may be a need for follow-up work on field missions to get the required data as needs to be reflected on the national database. The indicative is to give a pattern of human rights cases in the countries to make an informed judgement, there is still a need to move the indicative data to solid data through field visits and engagement with state actors.

The data matrix will analyse the indicative data noting the perpetrators of violations or abuses. A broad analysis of the violations and abuses from the region will be done and followed by specific countries to summarise cases. Quantitative values are either known or unknown, when unknown we use appropriation value, for example, *Groups – 2 minimum value e.g., Policemen torture, we use 2 as value for policemen. For several victims, we use 2 minimum and for hundreds or thousands of victims, we use 100 and 1000 respectively.*

### **West Africa Summary of cases by Categories and countries**

In West Africa, most of the countries have recorded killing in many forms, from the insurgence that causes ravage in the Sahel to various political instability that leads to protests wasting the lives of vulnerable citizens. The level of criminality increases due to violence, poverty and the high level of corruption in these countries. Below are the records of killings in West African countries.

This chapter also presents findings on the human rights violations (unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and injuries, sexual and gender based violence, and others) in West Africa in year 2022 and 2023. It is important to note that our report's scope limitations may not capture all instances of non-compliance or violations occurring outside our designated focus area.

### ***Benin Republic***

In 2022, Benin Republic witnessed a disturbing surge in human rights abuses, undermining the country's stability and security. Documentation reveals a staggering 26 cases of unlawful killings, 12 incidents of torture and injuries, and 2 cases of internal conflict and attempted destruction of properties.

These alarming figures underscored the escalating violence and impunity that have gripped the nation, particularly in its northern regions. The unlawful killings, often perpetrated by extremist groups and state actors, have left families shattered and communities traumatized. The use of torture and infliction of injuries have further exacerbated the suffering, while internal conflicts have fuelled tensions between herders and farmers, threatening to destabilize the social fabric.

### ***Unlawful Killings***

Unlawful killing refers to the intentional or reckless deprivation of human life by state actors or other individuals, contrary to international human rights law and national legislation. This includes extrajudicial executions, arbitrary or summary killings, and deaths resulting from excessive use of force, torture, or other forms of ill-treatment (HURIDAC/ACPHR, 2020).

### ***Incidents in 2022 and 2023.***

According to documented cases, there were 26 reported incidents of unlawful killings in Benin Republic in 2022 and no documented record in 2023.

Eight gunmen, believed to operate from Burkina Faso and Niger borders, were killed in an incident that highlighted the country's vulnerability to cross-border extremism (VOANews, 2022). The threat was further underscored by a rebel attack that claimed the lives of two police officers and injured one (Aljazeera, 2022).

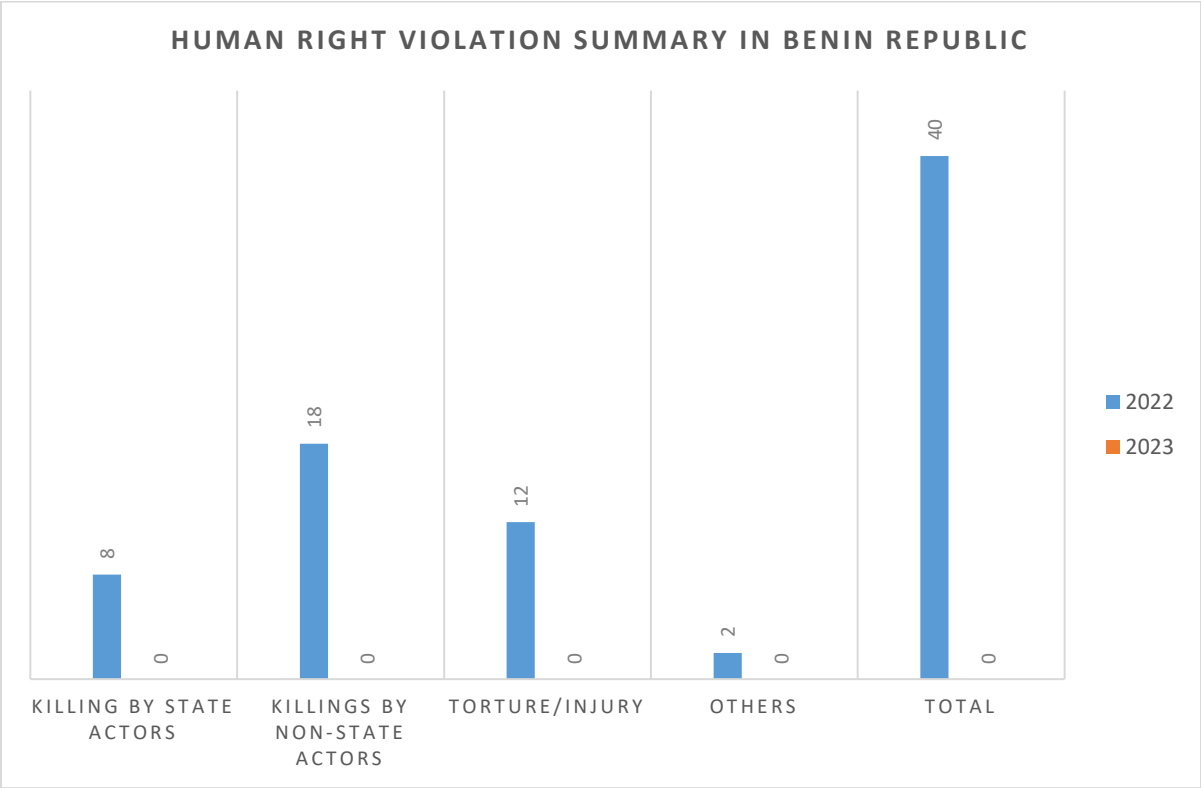
The violence also extended to the military, with five soldiers killed in an explosive device attack (Aljazeera, 2022).

Tensions between communities were also evident, as clashes between youth and the Eulania community resulted in the death of a boy and injuries to another child (DW, 2022).

In one of the deadliest incidents, a militant attack left 10 soldiers dead and 10 others injured (Reuters, 2022).

These incidents demonstrate the complexity of the security challenges facing the Benin Republic, with threats emanating from both within and outside its borders.

In 2023, there were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Benin during the year (State, 2023). The country faced human rights concerns, including unlawful killings, restricted free speech, and arbitrary detention (International, 2023).



**Burkina Faso:**

In 2022 and 2023, Burkina Faso recorded so many human rights abuses, putting the country's stability and security in peril. Various sources showed 1240 cases of unlawful killings in 2022 and 2035 in 2023, 399 incidents of torture and injuries in 2022 and 302 in 2023. 3 cases of gender and sexual base violence were recorded in 2022.

On November 26, militants from the al-Qaeda affiliated Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) carried out a large-scale attack in Djibo, northern Burkina Faso. The attack saw militants target military bases, homes, and set fire to three displacement camps. At least 40 civilians were killed and another 42 were injured (CounterExtremismProject, 2023).

A total of 1612 human rights violation were documented in 2022 of which 3 sexual and gender base violence and 102 killing by state actors were recorded.

### ***Unlawful Killings***

According to witnesses from various sources including interviews by human right watch and other international organizations on the ground, twenty eight (28) men were killed by Al-Qaeda linked Jama'at Nasr al-Islamwal Muslimin in Buroh village, in the north or the country (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). 24 people killed and 17 injured during a strike when the victims were attending a funeral of one of theirs in one of the village in the north of the country (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). On November 18, Burkinabe military drone hit a crowded market at the border in Mali, close to the town of boukessi wasting the lives of 7 people and five (5) others were injured (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). Military drone launched another strike in a private compound, causing the death of 25 people, one boy and the rest were all men in Dabéré, a neighbourhood of Bidi village, Nord region, on September 21 (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). On November 26, militants from the al-Qaeda affiliated Jamaat Nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) carried out a large-scale attack in Djibo, northern Burkina Faso. The attack saw militants target military bases, homes, and set fire to three displacement camps. At least 40 civilians were killed and another 42 were injured (CounterExtremismProject, 2023).

According to the Africa Centre, in the period between January 2022 and August 2023, the number of civilians killed by the military or volunteer militias has more than tripled. A reported 762 civilians were killed by the military and troops from the Volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP) (CounterExtremismProject, 2023). In the province of Soum, precisely in Arbinda, about 30

people in total were killed within three (3) days after a series of attack of Al-Qaeda armed Islamists (Reuters, More than 30 people killed in Burkina Faso armed attacks, 2022). In another incidents in northern Burkina Faso, at least 15 people, including 13 military police officers, were killed in Namentenga province on Sunday (Reuters, More than 30 people killed in Burkina Faso armed attacks, 2022). The province of Kossi witness a deadly attack by armed men accounting for the lives of 22 civilians in the northwest of Burkina Faso (Aljazeera, 2022). Between Saturday and Sunday night, armed men said to be connected to al-Qaeda and ISIL attacked the Seytenga community during which 50 people lost their lives. Institutions like United Nation and the European Union condemned the attack as the method was an extreme atrocity cause to citizens, as the attackers killed anybody they met on the way before and after the attack (Aljazeera, 2022).

In the same locality was recorded a deadly encounter between the police and the rebels, accounted for 40 lives of rebels and eleven 11 police men (Aljazeera, 2022). On May 25, Islamist fighters allegedly killed 50 civilians trying to flee an armed Islamist blockade of Madjoari village in eastern Burkina Faso, and on June 22, killed 86 people during an attack on Seytenga village, near the Niger border, in the year's worst atrocity (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). Other lethal attacks by Islamist armed groups included the January 5 attack on Ankouna village that killed 14; the January 15 attack on Namsiguia killing nine (9); the June 26 attack on a baptism ceremony in Sandiaga killing eight (8); the July 3 and 4 attacks on Bourasso killing 22; and the August 18 attack in Kossi province, near the Mali border killing 22. Attacks in March, April, and August on artisanal gold mining sites and a convoy of miners killed 48 (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). Dozens of people were killed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs), allegedly planted by Islamist armed groups, including 35 people who died when their convoy, escorted by the security forces, hit an IED on September 5 near Djibo (HumanRightsWatch, 2022).

On November 23, soldiers allegedly executed 18 men near Djigoue, close to the border with Côte d'Ivoire. Six of 15 men arrested on February 21 by soldiers in Todiamé, Nord region, were forcibly disappeared. In August, over 50 men allegedly detained by members of the security forces in and around Tougouri commune, Centre-Nord region, were found dead, most along local roads (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). On February 17, eight men were found dead after being detained by VDP militia in Fada N'Gourma (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). An islamist Al-Qaeda commander killed a lady and two other lady around 60 who recognise after a long period, in an incident of

attack, the commander killed her husband and caused remarkable pain to those women and their families (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). Villagers from Ankouna said armed Islamists killed 14 civilians during an attack on January 5, including five men executed in one house and at least two children. They also reported armed Islamists killing nine civilians during a January 15 attack on Namsiguia by jihadists (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). Two other herders were killed like this the same day reported a habitant of Dablo. (HumanRightsWatch, 2022).

Security sources described two attacks on artisanal gold mining sites. On March 10, armed Islamists attacked Tondobi village in Seytenga commune, killing 10 people. On March 12 they attacked the Baliata artisanal mine near Dori, killing 11. A family member said that on March 18, armed Islamists abducted 50-year-old Hama Hamidou, a local official who managed cattle, took him out of a taxi traveling between Dori and Seytenga, and executed him (HumanRightsWatch, 2022).

On February 28, a powerful explosion killed more than 30 traders at an animal market in the town of Béléhéde, Sahel region, which was largely controlled by an armed Islamist group. People were running, blood and pieces of human beings were everywhere. Around 30 died on the spot, and a few more later (HumanRightsWatch, 2022).

A coalition of civil society organizations have reported that at least 80 men – all civilians – were killed during government military operations April 10 and 11 in villages in and around Oursi and Tin-Akoff communes, Sahel region (HumanRightsWatch, 2022) Unknown assailants killed 44 people in two attacks in northern Burkina Faso overnight on Thursday in the villages of Kourakou and Tondobi (Reuteurs, 2023). According to a 46-year-old resident, Islamist fighters killed 12 men in Dassa on January 26, allegedly in retaliation for militia recruitment in the area. On January 26, gunmen attacked Doh, a village about four kilometers from Dassa, allegedly killing twelve men and injuring two (2) (HuamnRightsWatch, 2023).

A 43-year-old fisherman reported that his brother had been killed by shots to his temple and thighs. He identified the other 11 victims, all men, mostly farmers and shop owners (HuamnRightsWatch, 2023). Dressed in sand-colored clothes and turbans, these gunmen attacked Dassa again on February 9, killing two men (HuamnRightsWatch, 2023).

In January, about 40 gunmen on motorcycles and wearing military fatigues and turbans entered the village of Dofinega, about 16 kilometers from Pissila, and killed 17 men, said a woman who lost 3 of her brothers in the attack (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). 130 civilians were killed by uniformed men in Karma village on April 20th, 2023 (Reliefweb, 2023)

Between 5 and 8 November 2023, several sources revealed that a large number of civilians, mainly children, women and elderly people about 70 in total, were killed in the village of Zaongo, Namentenga province, Centre-North region, in unclarified circumstances (Theguardian, 2023). According to the UN high commissioner for human rights, At least 150 civilians may have been killed and many more injured in an attack allegedly perpetrated by Burkina Faso's security forces (Theguardian, 2023).

At least 50 civilians, all men lost their lives in armed assailants attacked civilians from Tambarga and Madjoari, trying to flee the sieges and reach Nadiagou, a commune in the Pama department, in Singou On 25 May 2023 (AmnestyInternational, 2023). The Burkinabè military accompanied by the volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDPs), an auxiliary unit formed in 2020, attacked the town of Holdé, under the influence of Ansaroul Islam on 9 November 2022, directly attacked civilians, killing at least 49 persons, most of them being women and children as a witness reported to Amnesty International during an interview (AmnestyInternational, 2023). Burkina Faso armed forces executed at least 9 men and killed 18 others in 3 incidents since February 2023 in Séno province (HumanRightsWatch, 2023).

During a patrol in the town of Dori, Soldiers pulled up ten (10) men who were beaten and six of them executed later on. Human Rights Watch spoke to four people, including a woman who witnessed the beatings, a man who survived the attack, and two relatives of the victims (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). On February 15, scores of Burkinabè soldiers accompanied by militia in a counterinsurgency operation arrested 16 men in Ekeou village and then headed to Goulgountou, a nearby village, and arrested 2 more men. The bodies of at least nine of people were found on May 26 near the VDP base in Falagountou. The detainees were sixteen (16) in numbers, they were arrested by soldiers and militia in a counterinsurgency operation in Ekeou village (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). A road side bomb (IED) explosion wasted the lives of 15 Burkinabes soldiers while in a military convoy along the Bourzanga-Dijibo highway in the

Namsiguia province on August 9, 2022 (Reliefweb, 2022). Five soldiers were killed in a large-scale attack in the central north region and the Burkinabe army claimed to kill nearly 30 militants in May 21 2022 (Reuters, 2022).

In mid May 2022, Militants kill approximately 25 people, including 13 VDP volunteers, in two attacks in the Sahel region (France24, 2022). A displacement centre was also under siege by the jihadist in Sena province which accounted for 8 lives in the mid of September 2023 (Thedefensepost, 2023). Yatanga province was not an exception of these multiple insurgent violence, the province's security force was victim of an ambush which accounted for the live of 53 of them, 17 soldiers and 36 militia troops (Aljazeera, 2023). The town of Gnagna in the eastern area of the country, suspected jihadists set an ambush that was successful and killed 15 of the VDP (Thedefensepost, 2023). Jihadist fought the VDP again in Noaka accounting for 33 death on the side of the VDP (Thedefensepost, 2023).

Kie village, in the West of the country, at the border of Mali was ambushed by jihadist and caused the death of 12 civilians, and a separate attack left 20 other people dead in the Western area of the country (North-afr byicaJournal, 2023). During two attacks in Bintu, 16 VDP and 4 other civilians were killed during the first attack and the second one accounted for about 4 people in the same month of April 2023 (Thedefensepost, 2023). Two village, Kourakou and tondobi lost 31 and 13 respectively during an ambush from jihadists on April 9 2023 (ThedefensePost, 2023). Jihadist also attack partiaga in the east of burkina killing 5 people in February 2023 (AfricaNews, 2023). Jihadists attacked a mosque in Goulgountou and accounted for the lives 9 people in early January 2023 (Thedefensepost, 2023).

Ten (10) people lost their lives when an explosive in Bougui during the last day of December 2022 (Thedefensepost, 2022). The gunfire in Nouna accounted for the live of 28 civilians which was allegedly attribute the VDP (France24, 2023). On August 5, 4 soldiers were killed and nine other civilian from the Volontaire pour la Defense (VDP) de la Paix during an ambush in Bam, in the northern of Burkina Faso (Reuters, 2022). 100 civilians were killed by armed men in Seytenga district in Northern Burkina Faso at the border with Niger (Reuters, 2022). In early July, unknown assailants killed 22 in an ambush in Kossi and many others were wounded (Reuters, 2022). The military police post in Seytenga in Seno province was under attack which accounted for the death of 11 gendarmes and 4 other military police were killed sometime in June (Reuters, Attackers kill



11 military police in Burkina Faso, 2022). 50 people were as well killed by gun men in Madjoari town in Kompienga province (Reuters, 2022).

The karma industry was raided by assailants who killed one of the mine employee and a soldier. The Seno province recorded the death of 11 people in two of its villages in May 2022 and 14 people previously reported missing were found dead (Reuters, 2022). Militant fighters killed 8 people on their way to fetch water in the province of Soum, in Arbinda. The same province witnessed the shooting of three (3) civilians and four (4) VDP members adding to the number of deaths in the province (France24, 2022). Four (4) men known to be militants were killed by Islamists in an assault on an informal gold mine in Oudalan province in the second week of March 2022 (Reuters, 2022). On May 26, a herder from Ekeou discovered 17 bodies near the VDP base in Falagountou. He informed the relatives of those arrested in Ekeou on February 15 (HumanRightsWatch, 2023).

### ***Torture and Injuries***

During a military drone strike, scores of injuries were recorded at the market place in August 2023 reported Human Rights Watch. The same incident was reported by RTB, so many people died and 17 injuries were clearly recorded in the neighbourhood of Bindi. Witnesses related to the strike as a terrible mistake (Reliefweb, 2023). 24 people killed and 17 injured during a strike when the victims were attending a funeral of one of theirs in one of the villages in the north of the country (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). A French convoy collided with an explosive device at Ouahigouya airport leaving 4 injured on the 18<sup>th</sup> of January (Reuters, 2022). The gendarmerie unit, a security corps in Burkina Faso lost 13 men and 8 others were injured in an ambush close to Taparko town in March 2022. Two other people died when the bus hit a landmine in the same town (VOANews, 2022). March 2022, in a complex attack, as it was described, 11 soldiers lost their lives and eight (8) others injured when the vehicle hit an explosive device (News24, 2022). Gunmen killed 13 soldiers and wounded 8 in an ambush set amid a military campaign to control Islamist extremists in Pama, Madjoari and Foutouri (VoiceofAmericaNews, 2022). Armed men attacked a gold mine killing about 20 civilians and 20 others wounded including women and children in Koungdiguin on March 30 2022 (News24, 2022).

In early April, a dozen of soldiers were killed and 20 more were wounded as a result of groups linked to Al-Qaeda and ISIS tried to control the area, launched an attack on the military base in

Sanmatenga province (Aljazeera, 2022). Two simultaneous attack on the military detachment accounted for the lives of 9 soldiers, and previously, the early morning assault in Gaskinde and Pobe-Mengo accounted for 30 injuries in the last week of April (Reuters, 2022). Mandjori town witness an attack from unidentified militants killing 11 soldiers and wounding 20 others, not ignoring an aerial reinforcement that killed 15 gun men on May diers and 28 injuries during an attack orchestrated by jimn militants on the convoy in Gaskinde later in September 2022 (BBCNews, 2022). Ambush in Bouroum district in the north accounted for the live of 11 people, including 8 civilians and 3 soldiers in the mid of October 2022 (VoiceOfAmericaNews, 2022)

The military base in the city of Djibo was victim of an ambush in which 10 Burkinabe soldiers were lost and 50 others injured in the last week of October 2022 (VoiceofAmericaNews, 2022). Jihadists were suspected in the attack in Boala, the center north of Burkina Faso in which 12 people lost their live and unaccountable number of people injured in early December 2022 (Thedefensepost, 2022). Another attacks by jihadists on civilian forces in Rakoegtengo, in the north of the country accounted for 7 people and injured 10 others and 11 were later killed respectively (Aljazeera, 2023).

In another ambush perpetuated by jihadists in the province of Oundalan, 51 were killed and an unspecified number of injuries occurred around February 2023 and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) claims responsibility for the attack (Reuters, 2023). VDP, the civilian militia were ambushed by jihadist on the 23 of March 2023 and the incident accounted for the lives of 14 people and uncountable number of injuries (France24, 2023). 32 VDP and 10 soldiers were killed by jihadists in an ambush while 33 others injures in Ouahigouya, in the north of the country in April 14 2023 (Thedefensepost, 2023). A violent confrontation between extremists and Burkinabe soldiers in the Ouagarou town accounted for the lives of 33 people and 12 wounded (Foxnews, 2023). In the Boucle du Mouhoun Region, the Western area of the country, an ambush accounted for the lives of 33 vegetable farmers and 3 others were wounded (VoiceofAmericanNews, 2023).

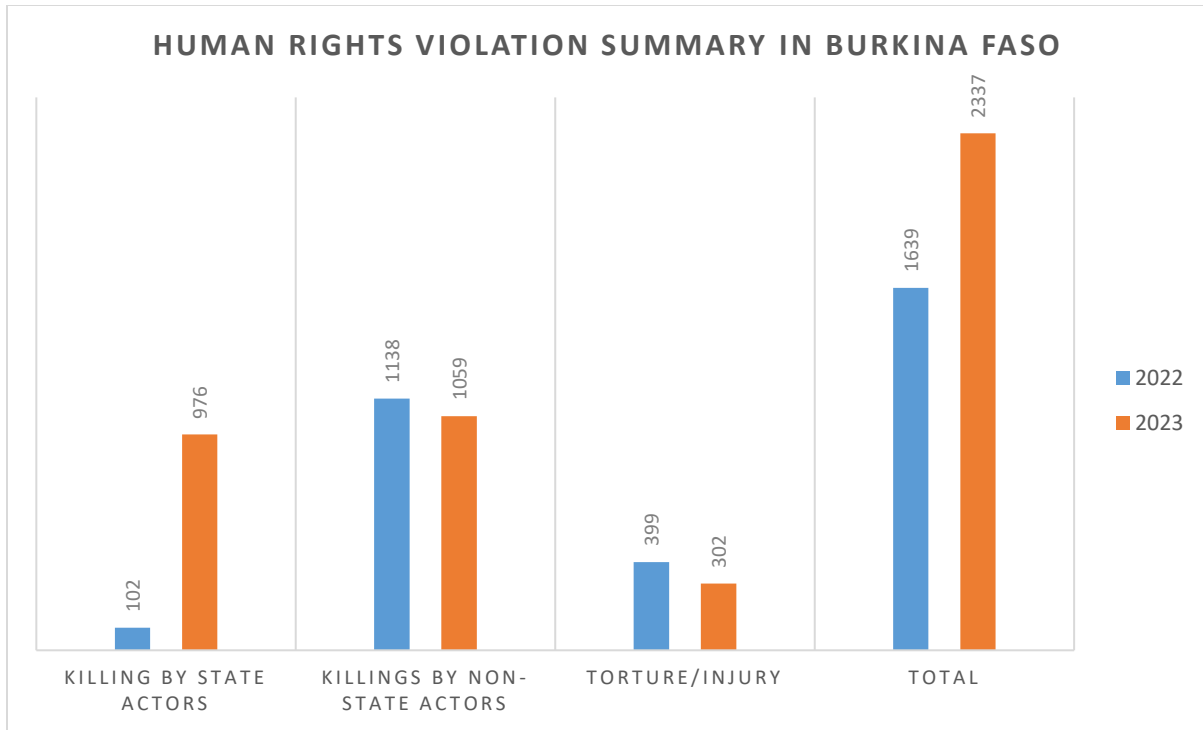
VDP were once again ambushed by jihadist in the central of Burkina, precisely in Swenga accounting for the death of 14 VDP, 4 soldiers and 5 other soldiers injured around early June 2023 (France24, 2023). Ambushes multiplies as soldiers in the Noaka region, in the north of the country got trapped by jihadist which accounted for the lives of soldiers, especially the VDP, this incident wasted the lives of 12 VDP and injured so many of them (VoiceofAmericaNews, 2023). 20 other

people were killed and dozens wounded in an attack carried by jihadists in the centre-east, at the Togolese border on August 7 2023 (Barrons, 2023). Koulponsgo and Sirasso witness jihadists attacks which killed at least 16 people and 2 other were injured in September 21 2023 (Thedefensepost, 2023). Zongo village was attacked by unidentified assailants in the northern part of the country in November 5 of the same year wasted the lives of 70 people so many people were injured (Thedefensepost, 2023).

The INIM, in another attacks in Djibo ambushing military bases, homes and displacement camps accounted for 40 people and 42 others injuries were recorded on November 26 2023 (Reuters, 2023). On November 18, another drone strike swept the market of Boulkessi, close to Mali border accounting for at least five (5) injuries (Reliefweb, 2023). In an attack on a military camp in Djibo, the northern part of Burkina Faso, about 40 civilians were killed and 42 people were injured. Armed men attack a military and police unit in Gomboro area, in the northwest of the country, accounting for the injury of 11 soldiers in January 2022 (CounterExtremismProject, 2022)

As soldier victims increase, another ambush accounted for the death of 7 soldiers and 4 civilians volunteers in the town of Sole. The second attack killed 5 other troops at Ouanobe and nine (9) people were injured in both incidents occurred in early May 2022 (CounterExtremismProject, 2022)

In another attack against a VDP-escort who accompanied civilian convoy in Kompienga, 17 people were killed and wounding almost a dozen (AfricaNews, 2022). Two injuries recorded during overnight raid on police and gendarmes at their post in Faraman in May 15 2022 (France24, 2022). At least 35 civilians were killed and 37 injured when an IED detonated on an escorted supply convoy heading to Ouagadougou in Soum province (Reliefweb, 2022). When traveling from Djibo to Ouagadougou, four civilians were killed when a tricycle hit an IED in early July 2022 (Reliefweb, 2022). On 12 August 2022, two soldiers were killed and one injured when their vehicle hit an IED in the Sahel, between Dori and Sebba (Reliefweb, 2022).



### **Cabo Verde**

Cabo Verde serves as a shining example for West African countries to follow, boasting an impressive human rights record. The country has demonstrated a strong commitment to upholding human rights, with no significant abuses reported in 2022 and 2023 (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cabo Verde, 2023). The government has implemented effective mechanisms to identify and punish officials who engage in corruption, or human rights violations, ensuring accountability and transparency.

The country's law enforcement system is also noteworthy, with the National Police and Judicial Police working efficiently to maintain order and investigate major crimes. While isolated instances of security force misconduct were reported, the government took concrete steps to address these incidents.

### **Cote d'Ivoire**

Côte d'Ivoire witnessed a relatively calm period in terms of human rights violations between 2022 and 2023, with a total of 10 incidents recorded. These incidents included 2 unlawful killings, 2 injuries, and 6 arbitrary arrests. Unfortunately, state actors were responsible for two unlawful killings, highlighting the need for accountability within the government.

### ***Unlawful killings***

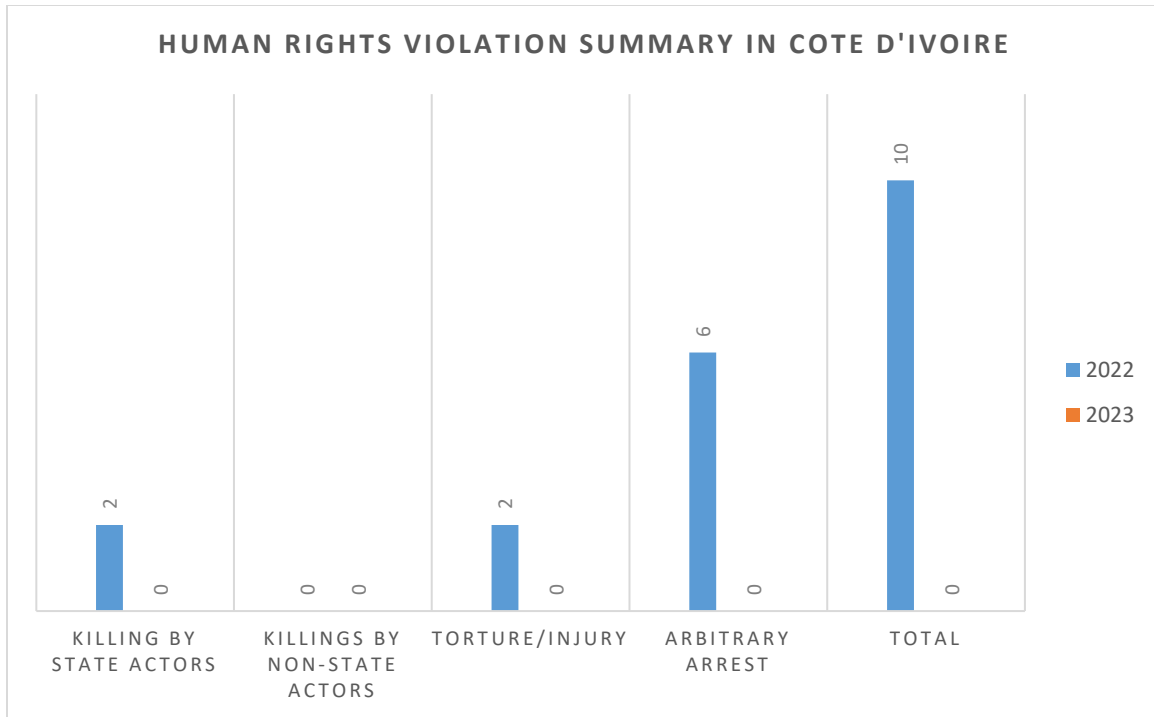
One notable case of unlawful killing involved an artisanal miner who was mistaken for a terrorist collaborator and tortured to death by police during interrogation. Another incident resulted in the death of a man trying to clear a mining site, who was apprehended and knocked down by law enforcement agents.

### ***Arbitrary Arrest***

Arbitrary arrests were the most common human rights violation in Côte d'Ivoire during this period. In September 2022, six supporters of opposition candidate Michel Gbagbo were arrested, tried, and convicted to six months in prison for "public disorder" and other charges. Local human rights groups claimed the arrests were arbitrary and politically motivated.

The government has taken some steps to prosecute alleged abuses perpetrated by members of the security services.

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation despite the presence of human right violations in Cote d'Ivoire in year 2023. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Côte d'Ivoire, 2023). In other cases of death, more than 30 people lost their lives due to floods between April and July (International, Côte D'ivoire 2023, 2023).



## ***The Gambia***

The Gambia faced significant human rights challenges in 2022, particularly in the health sector and regarding sexual and gender-based violence.

In 2022, the country experienced a devastating incident where 60 children from 19 families died after ingesting contaminated cough syrup purchased from an Indian pharmaceutical company. This tragedy highlighted the vulnerability of the country's health sector and its inability to protect its citizens.

### ***Unlawful killings***

Unlawful killings were recorded in 2022, specifically the case of the 60 children who died due to the contaminated medication. This incident constitutes an intentional or reckless deprivation of human life, contrary to international human rights law and national legislation.

### ***Torture and injuries***

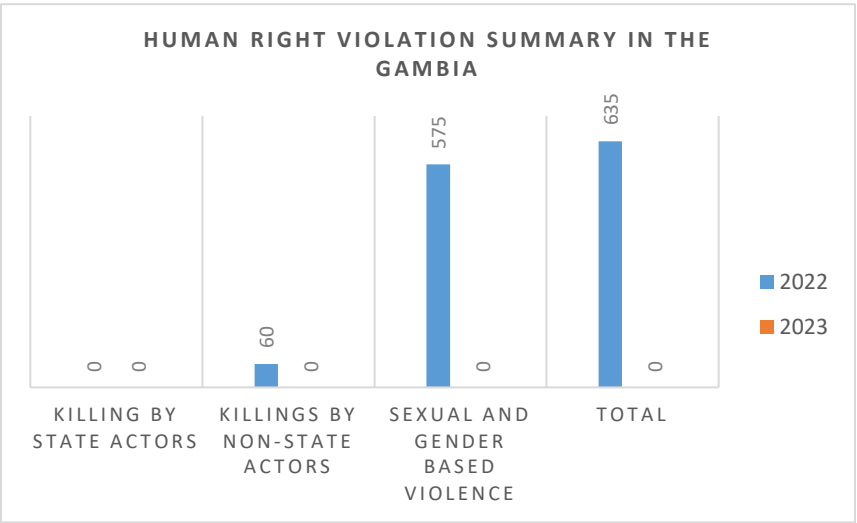
Regarding torture and injuries, no data was available as of the research period.

### ***Sexual and gender base violence***

However, sexual and gender-based violence remained prevalent in 2023. According to the UNFPA country representative and the National Gender Management Information System, 575 registered cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2023. This translates to an estimated one in four women experiencing sexual or physical violence in their lifetime. The reported cases were distributed across regions:

- Upper River Region: 53 cases
- Central River Region: 45 cases
- West Coast Region: 265 cases
- Greater Banjul Area: 145 cases

These cases included rape, sexual assault, sex trafficking, intimate partner violence, and physical assault though not significant to change the human rights landscape. (Thepoint, 2023).



**Ghana**

Ghana recorded 239 incidents of human rights violations in 2022 and 2023, with a significant increase in unlawful killings and injuries. The highest violation in 2022 was the 212 injuries documented and 17 in 2023, with notable cases including the death of Albert Donkor, a robbery suspect killed by police, and Victor Kwadwo Owusu, a student killed during a protest. 4 sexual and gender base violence was recorded.

***Torture and injuries***

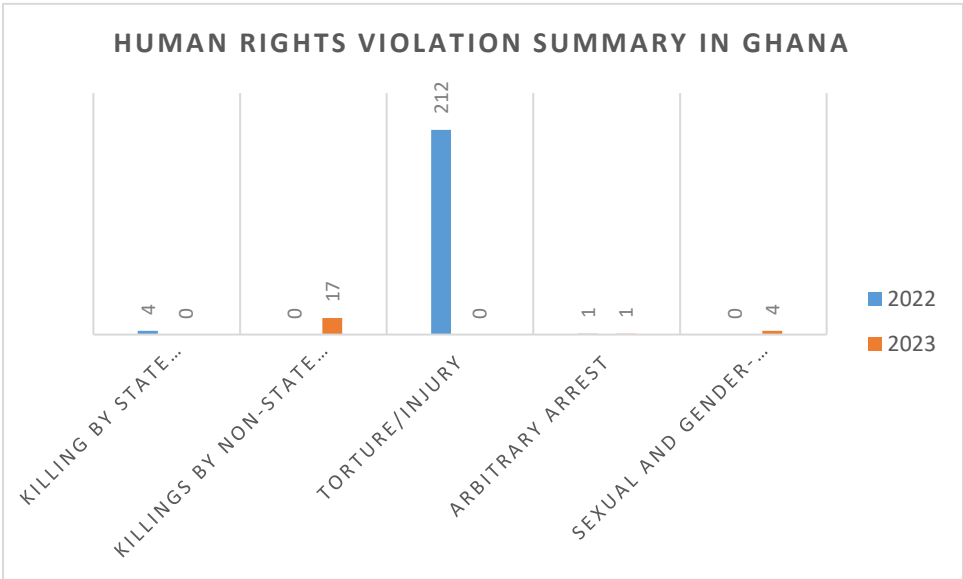
The country also witnessed excessive use of force by police officers, resulting in injuries and deaths. For instance, in February 2022, a group of plain-clothes security officers assaulted a radio presenter, damaging his eardrum, when he refused to surrender his phone.

Additionally, during a protest in Nkoranza, Bono East Region, the police fired shots, killing a bystander and injuring five protesters.

Regarding torture and other ill-treatment, social activist Oliver Barker-Vormawor was charged with treason after threatening to stage a coup if parliament passed the electronic levy bill. He alleged that during his arrest and two-month detention, he was beaten for over three hours by security officials and occasionally held in solitary confinement.

***Sexual and gender base violence***

Sexual and gender-based violence cases were also reported, including the murder of Abigail Asare by her boyfriend and the killing of 17-year-old Sarah Adadzoa by her boyfriend.



**GUINEA**

One of few countries living democratic backslide, guinea often experience protest against the junta



which lead to human right violations in the main cities of the country. A total of 153 incidents of human rights violation were documented during the two years. 20 unlawful killing perpetrated by state actors were recorded, 9 in 2022 and 11 in 2023. 22 injuries in 2022 and 92 in 2023 and this data clearly show the exacerbation of violence in the country year after year since the junta took over.

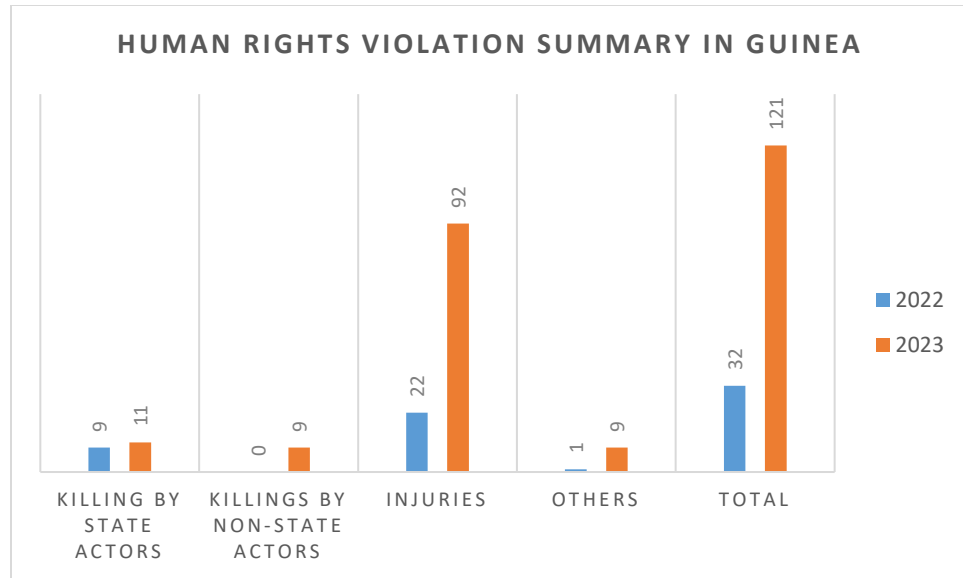
Guinea has experienced significant democratic backsliding, with frequent protests against the junta leading to human rights violations in major cities. Between 2022 and 2023, there were 153 documented incidents of human rights violations, including:

### ***Unlawful Killings:***

20 incidents, with 9 in 2022 and 11 in 2023, resulting in the deaths of individuals such as Abdoulaye Diallo, 28, and Ibrahima Balde, 19. Five deaths were reported by the FNDC, on July 28, 2022. Ibrahima Balde, 19, and Oumar Barry, 17, were allegedly shot and killed by security forces during an FNDC-organized protest on August 17, 2022. Four people were shot dead and many injured during an anti-government protest in Conakry, with an unidentified individual killed in Koloma by security forces. A Guinean citizen died after being hit by a bullet in Hamdallaye during a protest for democracy restoration. Two citizens, 18 and 16 years old, lost their lives and many others sustained injuries from stray bullets during peaceful demonstrations for the coup's two-year anniversary. Seven people were shot dead and 32 wounded in anti-government demonstrations in May 2023.

### ***Torture and Injuries:***

22 incidents in 2022 and 92 in 2023, with reports of security forces firing at protesters, resulting in injuries and deaths. In February 2023, two people were shot during an anti-government protest, with more than 40 injuries recorded over three days [Reuters, 2023]. In May 2023, 32 were wounded in anti-government demonstrations in Conakry and other cities [ForeignPolicy, 2023]. Many others sustained injuries from stray bullets during peaceful demonstrations called by the "Forces Vives" committee [Reuters, 2023].



## **GUINEA BISSAU**

The total number of human rights violations and abuses in Guinea Bissau is 40 with 13 unlawful killings, 2 injuries, and 25 arbitrary arrests.

### ***Unlawful Killings***

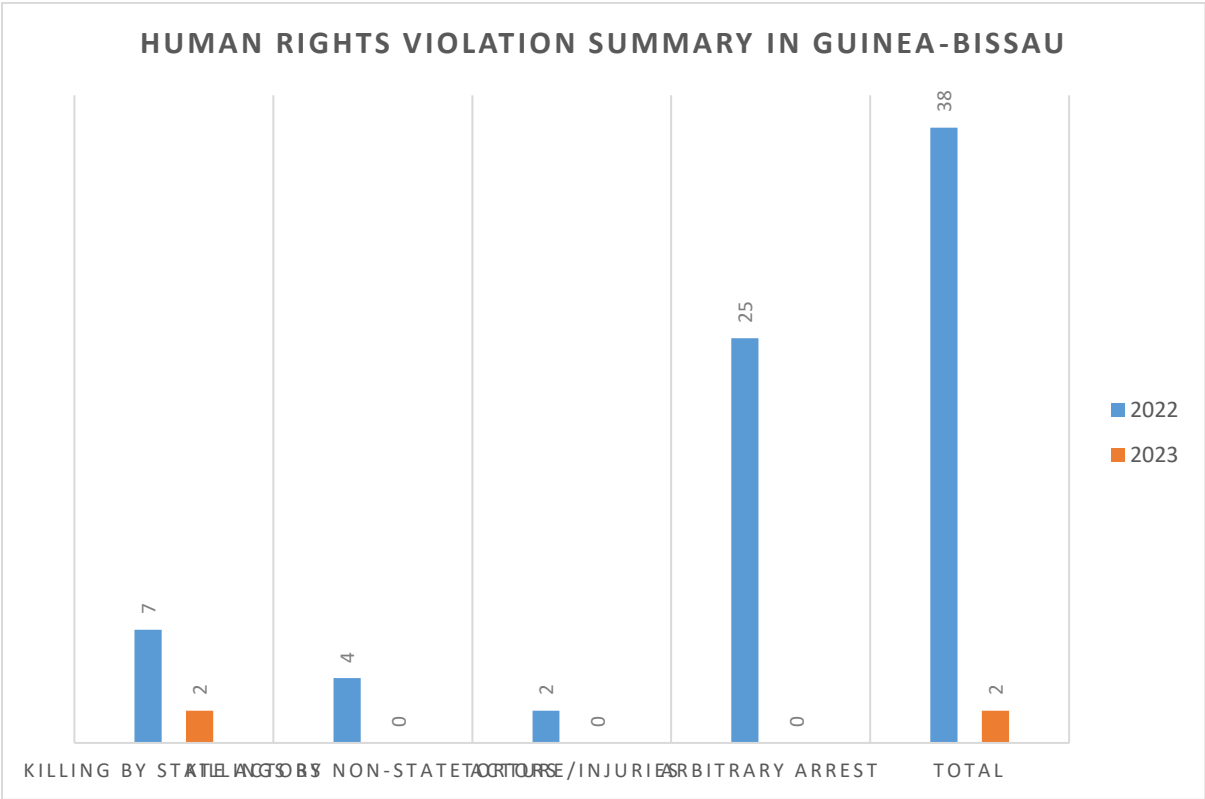
In February 2022, President Embalo survived a failed overthrow attempt while attending the COP28 in Dubai, resulting in the loss of 11 lives, including military and paramilitary personnel, and four civilians [Africanews, 2022]. Heavily armed men attacked the Palacio do Boverno while the president was leading a cabinet meeting [Africanews, 2022]. Two people died during an attempted coup in December 2022 [Lemonde, 2023].

### ***Torture and Injuries***

Two cases resulted in severe injuries requiring hospitalization, yet none of the perpetrators were punished [StateGov, 2023].

### ***Arbitrary Arrests***

The Guinea-Bissau Human Rights League (GBHRL) reported incidents of arbitrary arrest and torture, with approximately 25 individuals subjected to physical abuse while detained [StateGov, 2023].



**LIBERIA**

Liberia recorded in total 39 incidents of human rights violation and abuses. 8 cases of unlawful killing, 35 cases of injury recorded, 5 cases of arbitrary arrests, and 4 cases of gender base violence as well. Many other cases of sexual and gender base violence were reported by the ministry of gender, children and social protection but with less details.

***Unlawful Killings***

8 cases, such as the police killing of Rufus Fongbeh, an unarmed civilian, in Kakata, Margibi County, and LNP officer James Togba shooting and killing Orlando Broh in Monrovia [State, 2022].

### ***Torture and Injuries***

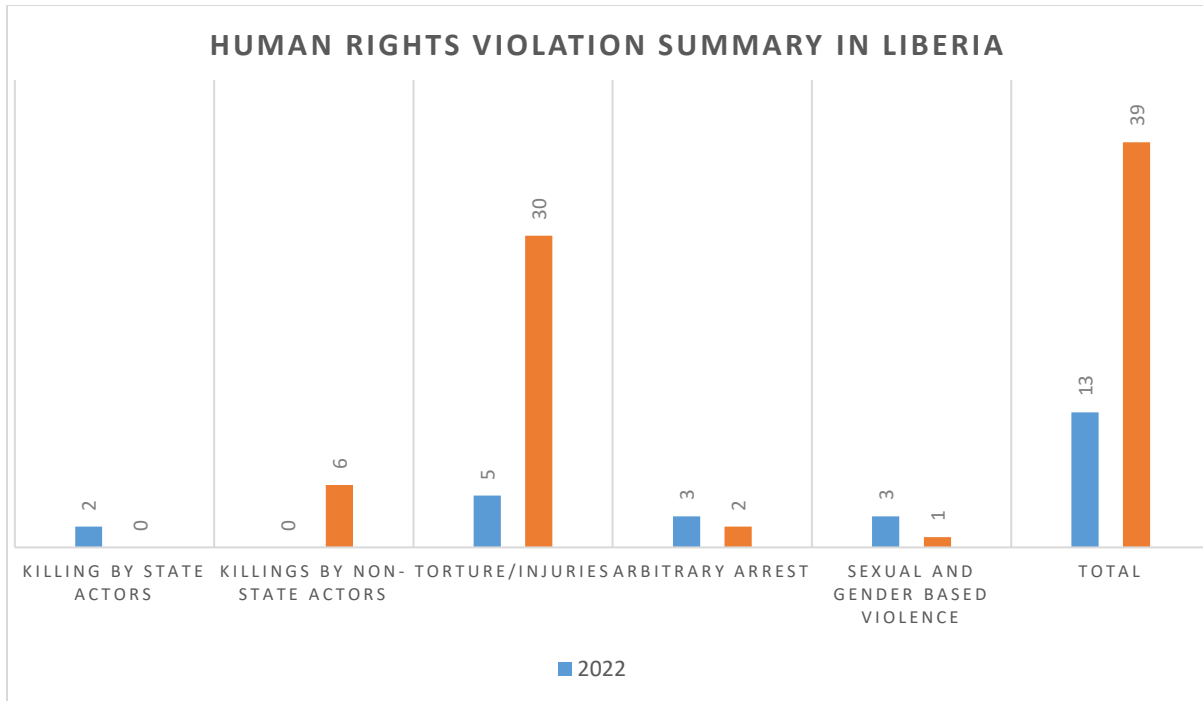
Reports of government authorities physically abusing peaceful civilians, including persons in custody or seeking protection [State, 2022]. 35 cases, including the beating of a criminal suspect by a Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency officer and the injury of approximately 27 persons during a vehicle ramming incident in Monrovia [State, 2022][State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 2023].

### ***Arbitrary Arrests***

5 cases, such as the detention of opposition political figure Isaac Vah Tukpah, Jr. by immigration officials at the border with Sierra Leone [State, 2022].

### ***Sexual and Gender-Based Violence***

4 cases, including the rape of a three-year-old child by her 17-year-old neighbor and the sexual assault of a 16-year-old girl by the Commander of the Liberia Drug Enforcement Agency Maryland Detachment [State, 2022][State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Liberia, 2023]. Allegations against Deputy Police Commissioner Joshua During and Harper City Solicitor Thomas Togba Kun [State, 2022].



## **MALI**

Mali reported a total of 1,744 human rights incidents, including 704 unlawful killings, 310 injuries, 42 arbitrary arrests, 558 cases of sexual and gender-based violence, and 130 other violations and abuses. Mali has experienced severe human rights violations and abuses, particularly due to intense insurgent activities.

### ***Unlawful Killings***

42 Malian soldiers killed and 22 injured in Tessit, Gao Region (DW, 2022), 132 civilians massacred in Diallassagou and neighboring villages, Mopti Region (DW, 2022), 35 bodies discovered near Diabaly, Segou Region (Reliefweb, 2022), 300 civilians executed by Malian armed forces and foreign soldiers in central Mali (HumanRightswatch, 2022) while ISGS fighters killed hundreds of civilians from the Daoussahak ethnic group in Gao and Menaka regions (HumanRightsWatch, 2022)

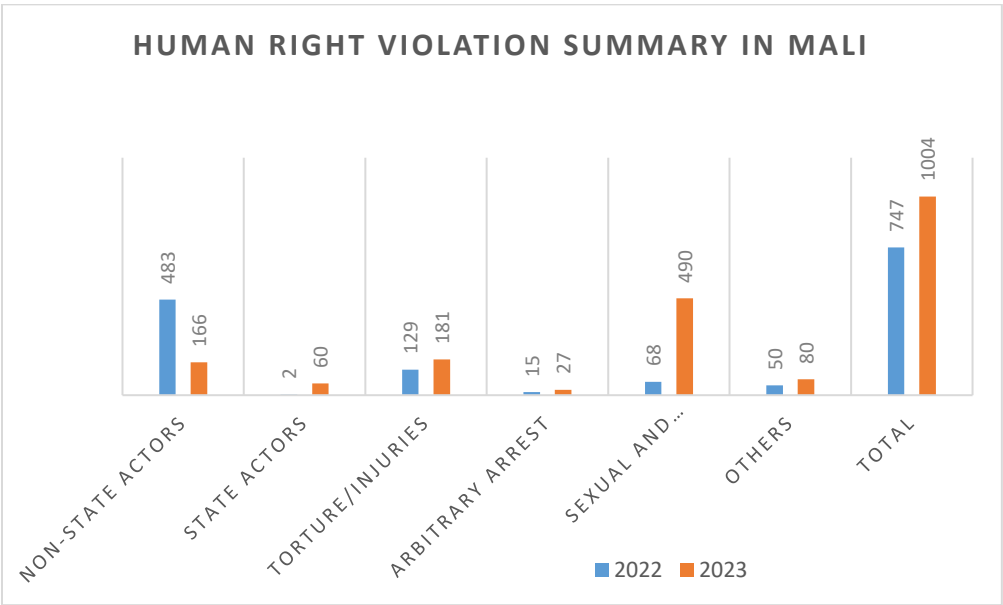
In related abuses by State Security Forces, 20 civilians killed in Ouenkoro village, Mopti Region (HumanRightsWatch, 2023), 18 people, mostly children and 4 women, killed in Trabakoro village, Nara Region (HumanRightsWatch, 2023), 17 people, including a boy, arrested and later found dead in Timbuktu Region (HumanRightsWatch, 2023)

***Torture and Injuries***

39 incidents resulting in 86 injuries in the first quarter of 2023 (UnitedNationPeacekeeping, 2023), 4 Jordanian UN peacekeepers injured, (UnitedNations, 2022), and 8 'blue helmets' seriously injured during departure from Kidal Region (UNNews, 2023)

***Sexual and Gender-Based Violence***

There were 470 incidents of sexual violence recorded by the UN between January and March (Amnesty, 2023) and 58 women and girls victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence (France24, 2023).



Niger Republic recorded 287 incidents, including 111 killings by non-state actors, 24 injuries, 150 arbitrary arrests, and 2 cases of sexual and gender-based violence between 2022-2023.

### ***Unlawful killings***

An attack on a vehicle in western Niger, killing 18 civilians (Aljazeera, 2022). There were separate attacks killing 7 border police and 4 National Guard members (Reuters, 2022), ISIS killing 29 Nigeriens near the Mali border (DW, 2023), armed groups attacked Nigerien forces in Tillabéri, killing 17 soldiers (International Crisis Group) and intercommunal violence in Tillabéri, resulting in 40 civilian fatalities (protectingeducation, 2022)

### ***Torture and Injuries***

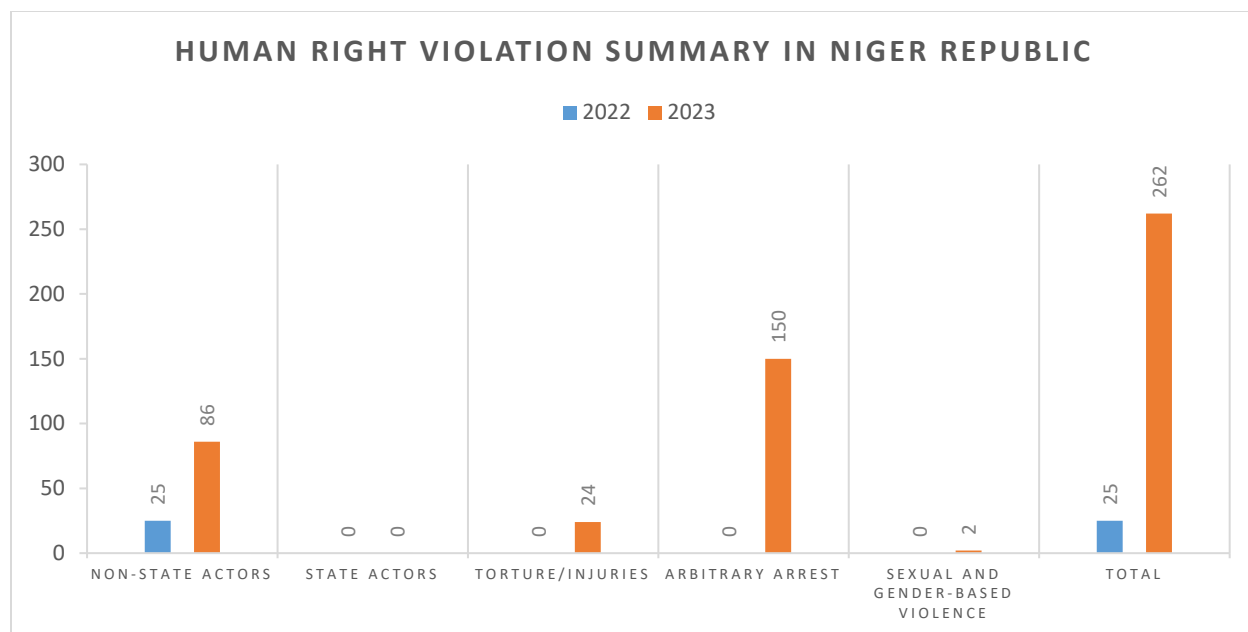
24 injured in Tillabéri region (protectingeducation, 2022)

### ***Arbitrary Arrest***

In July the United Nations reported security forces arbitrarily detained ethnic Peuhls and held them longer than the maximum 30 days prescribed by law. In Tillabéri, security forces carried out counterterrorism operations and arbitrarily arrested 150 persons, holding them as presumed terrorists. (State, Niger, 2023)

### **Sexual and gender base violence**

On October 27, 2023, in connection with the incident detailed violence perpetrated against women, members of an armed group perpetrated sexual violence against two female teachers at Bankata school in Makalondi commune, Torodi region (protectingeducation, 2022)



## **NIGERIA**

In 2022, the country documented as total incidents over 5000 human rights violations and abuses with 2350 unlawful killings, 2817 injuries were recorded, 46 cases of gender base violence, 51+ arbitrary arrests, and more than 351 other violations documented.

Nigeria as for the past years has been one of the country recording the highest incidents of human rights violation and these unfortunate incidents are related to the insurgency that has for a long time been disturbing the region's development. An important number of incident was accounted as a result of religious conflicts. Other violation are as well rampant as a great number of involvement of state actors in perpetrating terror in the country. Sexual and gender base violence is still recurrent in the country.

### ***Unlawful Killings***

On April 5, a police officer in Delta State killed a man for reportedly for refusing to pay a 100 naira (\$0.16) bribe at a checkpoint. The officer claimed the shooting was accidental. The officer was dismissed from the police force and faced prosecution for alleged murder. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023). Two villages in Nigeria, Damri, Kalahe and Sabon Garin mourned the loss of 48 people during an attack by unidentified assailants



and Damri recorded the highest death, about 32 were recorded (Aljazeera, 2022). Deborah Samuel, a female student was murdered in Nigeria, precisely Sokoto state. She was accused of blasphemy in her WhatsApp audio insulting the prophet Mohamed which ignited a religious tension in the area (HumanRightsWatch, 2022). According to SB Morgan Intelligence, a geological research organisation 39 Catholic priests were killed by gunmen, while 30 others were abducted. Early this year, the Parish Priest of St Peter and Paul Catholic Church, Kafin-koro, Minna, Niger State, Father Isaac Achi, was killed by unknown bandits (Businessday, 2023).

On the 4th of February, 2022, Sofia Kehinde were allegedly killed by four men for ritual purpose. The men in their early 20's were apprehended and charge with murder (Dailytrust, 2022). Religious motivated persecution accounted for the lives of about 896 Nigerian civilians, most of the victims were killed because they follow Jesus. As an example, ISWAP launched an attack in which at least 20 people were killed and/or injured mid-April at the market in Iware, Taraba State, because it was 'a gathering of infidel Christians'. A week earlier, Fulani militants attacked 10 communities in Plateau State, killing more than 150 people (Opendoors, 2022). According to hospital and media reports, a Catholic church was attacked by gunmen in Lagos on June 5 during mass on Sunday, killing at least 50 people (by estimation of the witness, Funmilayo Ibukun Odunlami, police spokesperson for Ondo state) including women and children (Reuters, 2022). April 6 to 10 was the deadliest week in 2022 as armed non state actors killed 215 people in various attacks. Plateau state recorded 142 death, Ebonyi 26 and Benue 23 (Premiumtimes, 2022)

Local government in Nigeria experienced violence during the preparatory period of the 2023 elections the rate of communal violence increase alongside. On 28 November 2022, the leader of labour party in Kaduna state (Kaura) was hit to death by gun men (SaharaReporters, 2023). Olumo Abolaji from the All People Congress (APC) was kidnapped and later killed in the same year in Kwara state. (SaharaReporters, 2023). On the fourth day of January, David Uche the chairman of the Young Progressives Party (YPP) in Ibeme Ward, in the Isiala Mbano area of Imo State, was killed by gunmen and four other men was killed when gunmen attacked the domicile of Ikenga Ugochinyere (WithinNigeria, 2023). Three police (3) officers were killed in Abakaliki during the last week of January and two (2) soldiers from Enugu lost their lives on that same day as a result of communal violence. While gunmen claim the lives of two men in Imo, herders killed twelve

(12) people in KwaNare and one more person died as result of election violence in Misau, Bauchi. On last day of January, the Benue state police lost one (1) of their man as a result an attack lead by herders in Guwer (WithinNigeria, 2023)

Another police officer was killed by gun men during an attack on a police station and 44 people died in south Anambra on the first and second respectively and these victims were more composed of vigilantes and one judge from Oguta court. (WithinNigeria, 2023). The following day, a record of 52 death hit the news. Killing and abduction held the head line. Two were killed and abducted three in Biase in cross River. Another two were killed in Kaduna and three other security forces lost their lives in Njikoka. 40 vigilantes were killed by bandits and 15 women abducted in Kankara and seven other abductees were executed in Bali, Taraba. (WithinNigeria, 2023). Three (3) security officers were killed in an ambush laid by unidentified gunmen. The security officers are patronising with Governor Ifeanyi Okowa, the vice president candidate of the PDP. One (1) person was killed during a violent confrontation of the supporters of PDP and APC in a campaign rally in Jigawa State. (VOAAfrica, 2023)

Idahosa Festus 33 years old was shot by political thugs who break into Oheghe community of Edo state. (EvelynUsman, 2023). On 11 June in Plateau State, a gunman shot dead at least 21 people. On 9 June, gunmen killed 25 people in Katako Village, before killing another 13 individuals in Kuserki town on 10 June (Amnesty, 2023). In May 2023, at least 100 people were killed in various communities of Benue State. Between 15-17 May, over 100 people were killed in the Mangu region of Plateau state (Amnesty, 2023). In southern Kaduna, over 100 people were killed by gunmen between December 2022 and April 2023 (Amnesty, 2023). A military airstrike accounted for the lives of 39 civilians and 6 other injured on January 24 of the year 2023 as Justice is still delayed for the victims because the military deny the accountability of the incident (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). Oyegwu Anasala, 39 were shot to death for protesting extortion in Edo State. He was left bleeding till death after being shot (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). Benjamin Best, usually called Killaboi, openly confessed to killing Augusta Osedion, his girlfriend last on October 2022 (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). The Federal University Oye-Ekiti (FUOYE) reported death of Deborah Atanda, a 200-level nursing student, was found dead and buried on the school premises in September 2022 (HumanRightsWatch, 2023)

Okoligwe Damian Chinemere, a 400-level engineering student at the University of Port Harcourt (UNIPORT), killed his girlfriend Justina Otuene Nkang, who was a 300-level student of Biological Chemistry at the school. Her dead body was found mutilated in her boyfriend's house a few days after she was declared missing (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). A female corps member went jogging in Kaduna State when some phone snatchers hacked her to death in October (FAMUYIWA, 2023). Boko haram continue to increase the death toll, At least 40 people were killed in Yobe State in October in various villagers and set off a landmine in Gurokayeya village (Reuters, 2023). Suspected Boko Haram insurgents killed an officer during an attack on a customs office in Geidam town, Geidam LGA of Yobe State in the same October month (MohammedBabangida, 2023). Ussa LGA of Taraba State recorded the death of 20 people in an attack by gunmen in November (MagajiHunkuyi, 2023)

On July 2, three soldiers were reported to have opened fire on community neighborhood watch guards as the guards responded to reports of a bandit attack in Enugu State. Two guards were killed while the military accused the guards of being bandits themselves. The National Assembly stood up an ad hoc committee to investigate the incident. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023). In the South West region, the Western Nigeria Security Network, known as Amotekun, operated in the states of Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. In May, the People's Democratic Party accused Amotekun of killing two individuals that month in Ondo State, including one child. Courts disbanded another security group, Ebubeagu Security Network, over its human rights abuses. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023)

On June 26, Angela Uzoma-Iwuchukwu, the director of Avocats Sans Frontieres, said at a public event commemorating international day in support of victims of torture that her office handled 1,200 cases involving victims of torture. She further stated some security agencies used torture to extract confessions. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023). In June, the inspector general of police disbanded a police unit following an incident in Edo State in which members of that unit ran over a handcuffed man. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023). Military operations against ISIS-WA, Boko Haram, and criminal bandit targets resulted in civilian deaths. On January 24, a government air strike reportedly targeting bandits in Kwatiri, a rural community on the border of Benue and Nasarawa states,

reportedly killed approximately 39 civilians, most of whom were said to be herders who had gathered to retrieve their cattle that had been confiscated by the Benue Livestock Guards. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023)

On December 3, army drones attacked a religious gathering in Tudun Biri village in Kaduna State that was marking the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, killing at least 85 individuals and possibly as many as 120. The army admitted responsibility for the airstrike, whose apparent targets were criminal bandits, and issued an apology. President Tinubu ordered an investigation into the airstrike. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023). There were numerous reports of deliberate killings or deaths resulting from attacks by violent extremists. In October suspected Boko Haram militants shot at villagers and set off a land mine in Yobe State, killing at least 40 individuals. On December 23 and 24, unknown gunmen attacked 17 villages in Plateau State and killed at least 150 individuals. Local leaders blamed herders for the attack. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023)

On April 3, police shot and killed Osun State Polytechnic student Afolabi Abiola during a raid at a friend's apartment in Iree. There were no reports of investigations or prosecutions regarding Abiola's killing. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022). In early April, according to reports, members of the Ogun State Special Weapons Tactics unit killed a commercial motorbike operator named Abiodun Oladele while in police custody. Oladele was part of a protest following the death of a motorcyclist rammed by a Nigerian Customs Service vehicle during a car chase. According to Oladele's elder brother, other suspects released on bail told him they witnessed Oladele being abused by police. There were no reports of investigations or prosecutions regarding Oladele's death. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022). In June, terrorists reportedly connected to the Islamic State in West Africa (IS-WA) attacked a church in Ondo State and killed 40 persons, including children. Security forces arrested four suspects in August. There were no updates on their prosecution. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022)

Criminal gangs also killed numerous persons during the year, including eight persons during an attack on a train in March. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022).

According to nongovernmental organization (NGO) Amnesty International in August, the whereabouts of at least 50 suspected Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) supporters arrested in 2020 in Rivers State remained unknown. NGO Human Rights Watch stated one person last seen at the Lekki Toll Gate protests in 2020 remained missing. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022). On March 28, terrorist and criminal groups known as “bandits” attacked a Kaduna-bound passenger train from Abuja. The attackers used improvised explosive devices to blow up a section of the tracks and force the train to stop. The attackers kidnapped dozens of passengers (according to official accounts, 72 persons, although media reported up to 150 passengers may have been taken). On October 5, the military announced all remaining hostages had been released. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022)

Military operations against ISIS-WA, Boko Haram, and criminal bandit targets resulted in civilian deaths. On February 18, the air force reportedly killed 12 civilians, including at least four children, during an airstrike targeting bandit leaders on the border with the neighboring country of Niger. Although the air force launched an investigation into the strike, the results and follow-up measures were not made public. On April 13, the air force reportedly killed at least six children in a strike in Niger State. The air force and the Niger state government denied civilians were killed. (State, 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2022)

### **Torture and injuries**

A military airstrike accounted for six (6) injuries on January 24 of the year 2023 (HumanRightsWatch, 2023). The month of January and February recorded 62 and 82 cases of injuries respectively (JoshuaOnonose, 2022). The month of March was recorded 209 injuries from various incident and April recorded 358 injuries (JoshuaOnonose, 2022)

315 people sustained injuries in May and 160 in Jun and In July, 308 people were injured (JoshuaOnonose, 2022). A police officer killed two and injured three in Katsina in an open fire in response to a call at a wedding party (StateGovernment, 2023). A man refusing to pay a bribe of N100 were shot dead by a police officer In Delta State at a checkpoint (StateGovernment, 2023). Two guard and four other injured when soldiers open fire on community neighbourhood as the

watch guards respond to bandit attack in Enugu state (StateGovernment, 2023). Four watch guards were injured in the same incident by military (StateGovernment, 2023).

### **Sexual and gender base violence**

Nuwel Ajagu, 40, allegedly defiled the teenage daughter of his brother in the Ikorodu area of Lagos, Southwest Nigeria (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). Akinsoji, a female resident in Ibadan was allegedly reped by Yusuf Adesola 19, and Folarin Samsudeen 19 as well (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). A mother of three known as Busay Adewuni die from domestic violence perpetrated by her husband in Lagos stated (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022)

Ajoke, 49 was assaulted by her friend husband in her house in Ifo government Area of Ogun state Oluwabamise Ayanwola was missing sometimes around Feb. 22, 2022 and was found dead by the police in her private cut out (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). Oluwabamise Ayanwola was missing sometimes around Feb. 22, 2022 and was found dead by the police in her private cut out (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). 45-year-old father, Akinyemi Akinrotoye, allegedly sexually abuse his 12-year-old daughter every night in Ondo state (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). A teenage maid in the Air force Barrack was allegedly abused sexually by one of the officer whose name is withheld An Air Force officer and is currently facing charges (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022)

A teacher in Ikorodu state area of Lagos raped his 15 years old student of Government Technical College in a hotel and threaten to kill her if she revealed what happened (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). Alimosho area subjected her 11 years old niece to sexual abuse who later died of complication in the southwest of Lagos (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). A 22 years old woman was raped by Uoshua JTorile while the woman was drunk in Lagos state (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). The rape of a 17-year-old girl by her 28-year-old step-brother, Tolulope Akinyemi, in Ondo state was reported by Vanguard (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022)

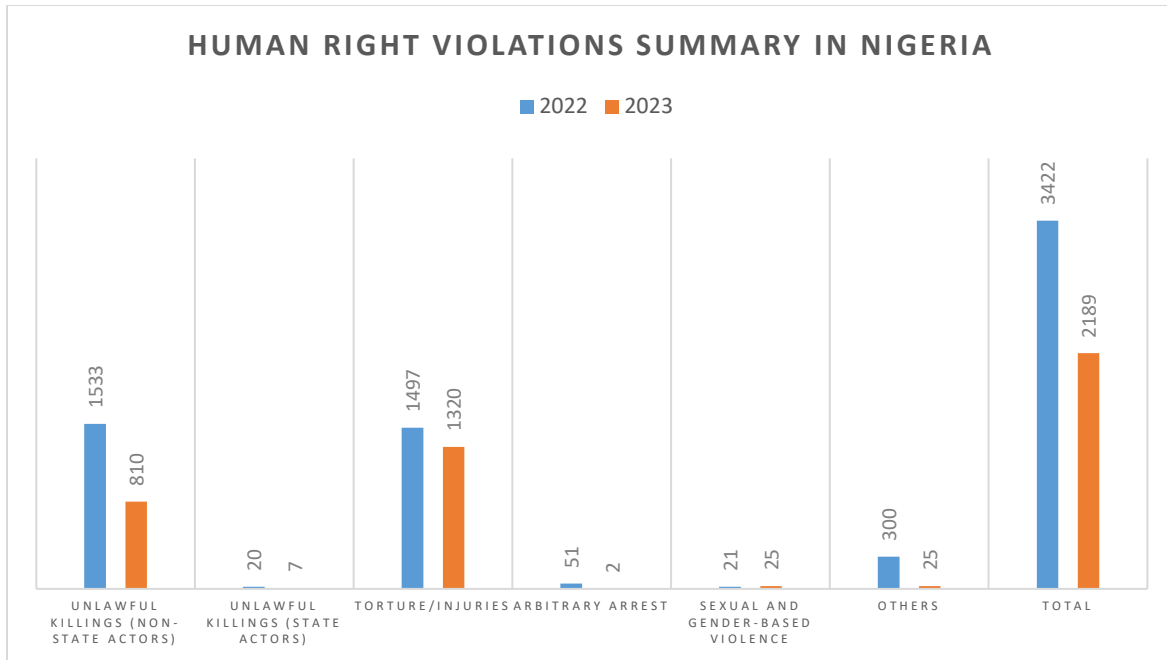
A man in Plateau state, North-central Nigeria was reported to have remove the guts of his 23-yr-old wife, and fled with her phone, so she can't call for help (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). A 15-year-old girl was raped during a robbery in Kubwa town of Abuja, Nigeria's capital (SeunAdeuyi, 2022) and The Federal Capital Territory Police Command also arrested Patrick Odey, for the rape of a 21-year-old sales girl whom he jumped from 1 to 4 am in one of the apartment in the garden in

Orozo in the Angwansarki area of Abuja where she worked and he later took the victim to his house where he continue his promiscuous venture (SolomonOdeyini, 2022)

An unidentified iNGO official allegedly raped Aisha Umar, a female Internally Displaced Person (IDP) in Borno State who eventually died from the trauma in the north of Nigeria (NdahiMaramaandMaiduguri, 2022). A 61 year old Peter Ezeala and Elochukwu Igwilo, and 27 others were arrested in Anambra for allegedly defiling four minors in Umudim (AzeezatAdedigba, 2022). There were numerous killings reported similar to the following examples. In January, police in Katsina opened fire after responding to a call at a wedding party, killing two and injuring three. On April 5, a police officer in Delta State killed a man for reportedly for refusing to pay a 100 naira (\$0.16) bribe at a checkpoint. The officer claimed the shooting was accidental. The officer was dismissed from the police force and faced prosecution for alleged murder. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023)

### ***Arbitrary Arrests***

On June 10, the DSS detained suspended Central Bank Governor Godwin Emefiele “for investigative reasons.” On July 25, the Federal High Court in Lagos granted Emefiele bail and ordered he be held at the Ikoyi Correctional Centre until the bail was made. However, the DSS immediately attempted to arrest Emefiele again, and a fight reportedly broke out between DSS agents and Nigerian Correctional Service officers as each group tried to take Emefiele into custody. Emefiele was released on bail on November 8. Emefiele was later charged with corruption. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023). In 2022, an appeal court in Abuja dropped all charges against Kanu and ordered his release, which the federal government appealed. On December 15, the Supreme Court overturned the appeals court ruling and stated Kanu faced terrorism charges, even though Nigeria’s secret police had violated Kanu’s rights during his arrest and extradition. (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Nigeria, 2023)



## SENEGAL

Senegal, known for upholding democratic values and protecting human rights, reported 556 human rights violations between 2022 and 2023. This includes one incident of unlawful killing by non-state actors in 2022, and 15 more in 2023.

### *Unlawful Killings*

During the Ziguinchor Protest, 16 people lost their lives, including Idrissa Goudiaby, 43, during a violent protest in the south of the country following the sentencing of opposition leader Ousmane Sonko [CNN, 2023]. The Touba Incident involved a 10-year-old Talibé who died from injuries sustained after being beaten by his Quranic teacher for not learning his lesson [Amnesty International, 2022].

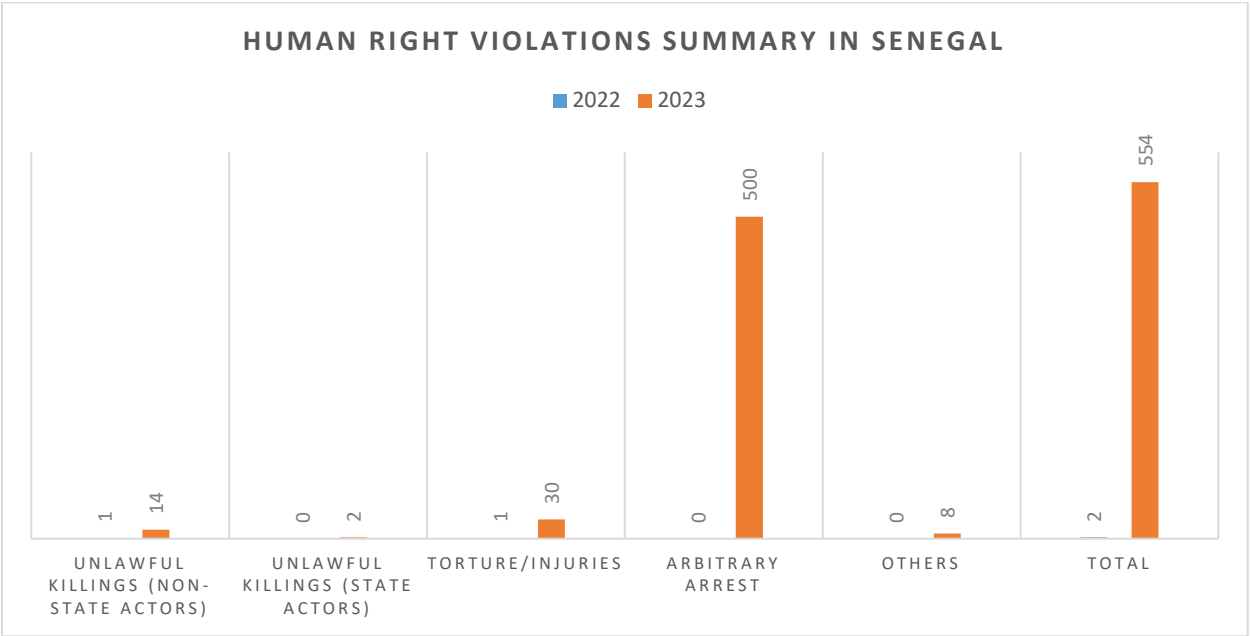
### *Torture and Injuries*

There were numerous reported injuries during the protest [Human Rights Watch, 2023]. 30 people were confirmed injured during protests against the state [Aljazeera, 2023].

### *Arbitrary Arrests*



Approximately 500 people were arrested during civil unrest of June 1-2, which involved rioting, looting, and attacks on security forces and infrastructure [State, SENEGAL 2023 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT, 2023].



**SIERRA LEONE**

Sierra Leone faced significant challenges in 2022 and 2023, with 42 reported incidents, including 16 unlawful killings and 24 injuries. The country struggled with socio-economic issues, leading to protests that claimed around 20 lives. Tensions between the two main parties during the 2023 general elections resulted in over 15 deaths, prompting international intervention to investigate allegations and propose solutions.

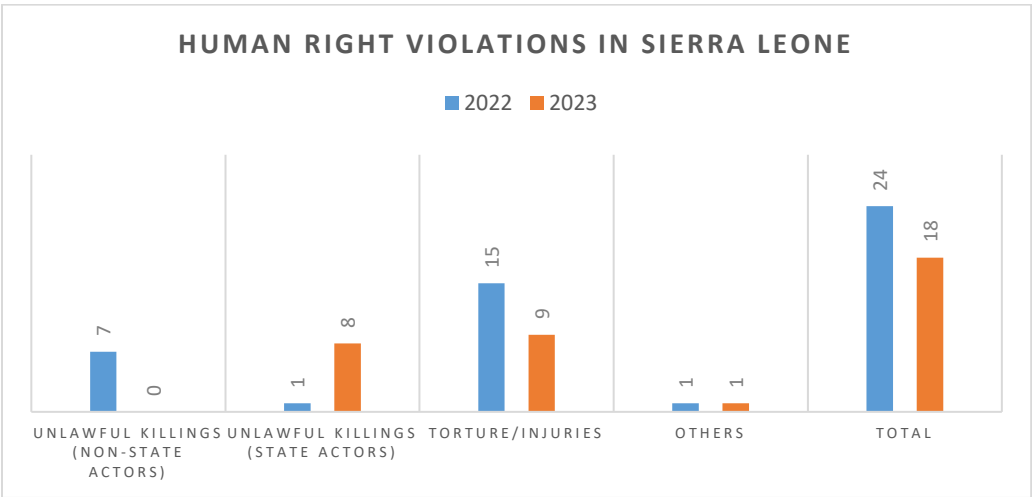
***Unlawful Killings***

On August 10 Protest, Samson, a 36-year-old father and husband, was shot and killed during the protest [Amnesty International, 2022]. Seven Police Officers killed as uperintendent Osman Fofanah, Sergeant Tommy Munda, Constable Abu Bakarr Turay, Sergeant Desmond Hanciles, Constable Charles E.K. Smart, and Sergeant Ibrahim Jalloh lost their lives during and after the August 10 protest [Amnesty International, 2022]. At the APC Party Office, Haja Mahawa

Dumbuya and a man identified as White Boy were shot dead during the military's interruption of a press conference [Cocorioko, 2023] while four All People's Congress party supporters were shot dead by police after election results were released during the Masiaka Town incident [SaharaReporters, 2023]

***Torture and Injuries***

11 people were injured, including a 16-year-old girl shot in the pelvic area and a man injured near his left eye during the August 10, 2022 Protest [Amnesty International, 2023]. Eight injuries were reported, including civilians, police officers, and private security personnel during an attempted coup [Aljazeera, 2023]



**TOGO**

Togo reported a total of 152 human rights violations and abuses, including 103 unlawful killings, 13 injuries, one arbitrary arrest, and 35 other violations, reflecting a concerning human rights situation in the country.

***Unlawful Killings***

Togo has faced multiple instances of unlawful killings, particularly in the northern regions. In one incident, eight soldiers were killed and 13 others wounded in Kpinkankandi locality, with perpetrators linked to ISIL and al-Qaeda. Additionally, 15 assailants were killed during the same

incident. Unidentified armed men also carried out overnight raids in northern Togo, killing at least 12 civilians.

A blast in Margba village resulted in the deaths of seven children, with most victims between 14 and 18 years old. Furthermore, 31 civilians were killed in attacks on Tola and Gningou localities in the Kpendjal Prefecture.

### ***Torture and Injuries***

In Margba, a blast injured two people, mostly teenagers aged 14-18, as reported by a medical source at Dapaong's regional hospital [Aljazeera, 2022]. Additionally, 13 others wounded in an attack in Kpinkankandi locality, Kpendjal prefecture, perpetrated by groups linked to ISIL and al-Qaeda [Aljazeera, 2022].

### ***Arbitrary Arrest***

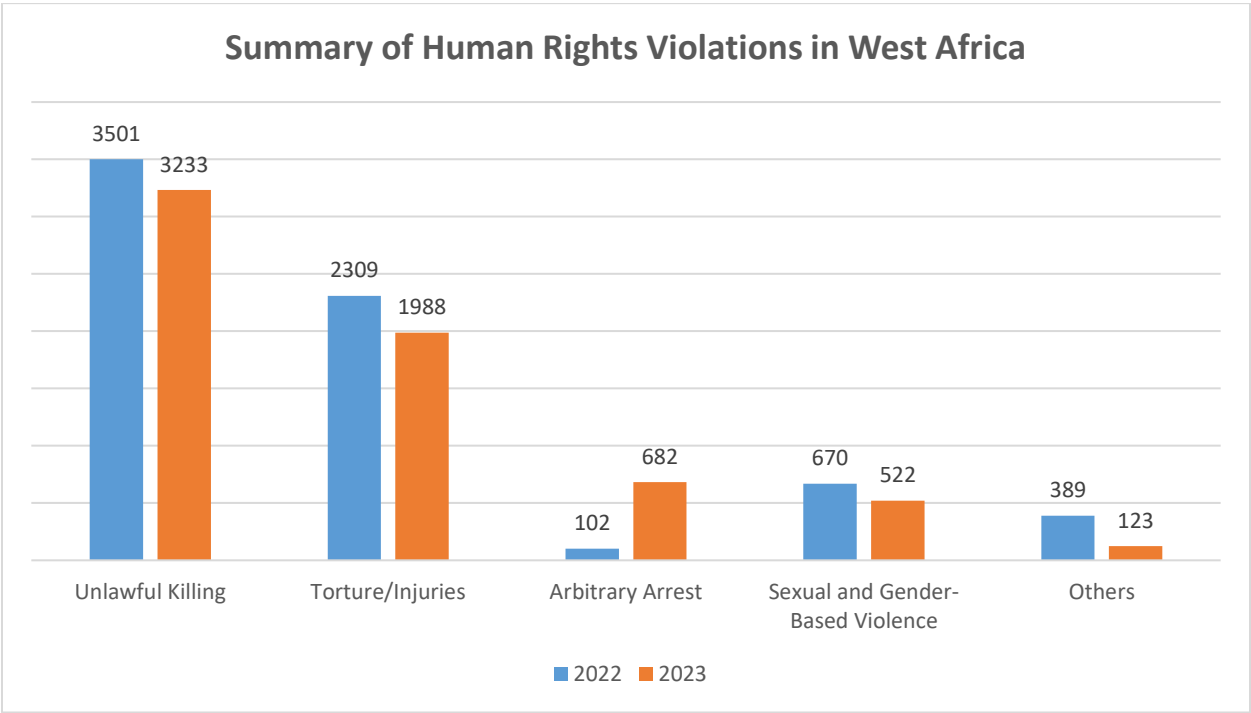
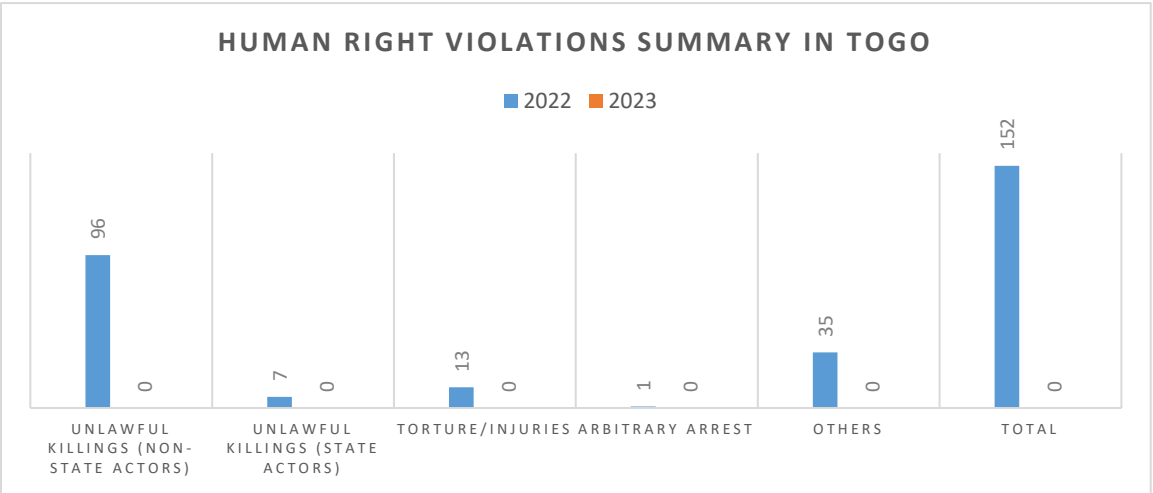
Djagoundi Rakeya, for instance, was arrested in July 2022 for circulating audio messages about displaced populations, but was later released on June 7 after a presidential pardon.

However, there have been other incidents of arbitrary arrests and detention. The ECOWAS Court of Justice ordered the immediate release of 10 people who had been held without trial since 2019 on charges of breaching state security. Additionally, the court ordered the state to pay reparations to Agbogbo Kossi Edem for the violation of his human rights after he was arrested and beaten by security agents while participating in a demonstration <sup>1</sup>.

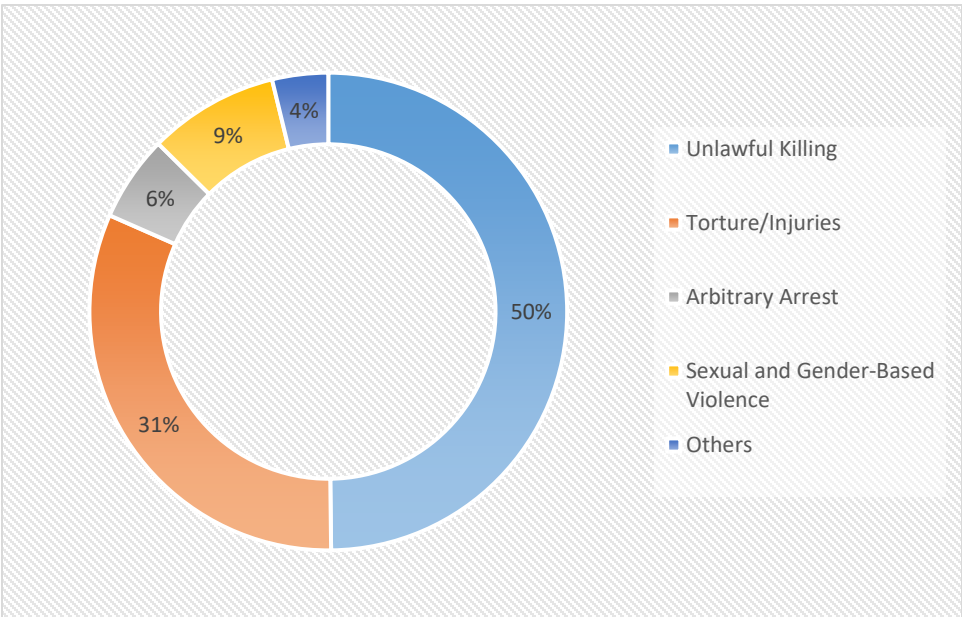
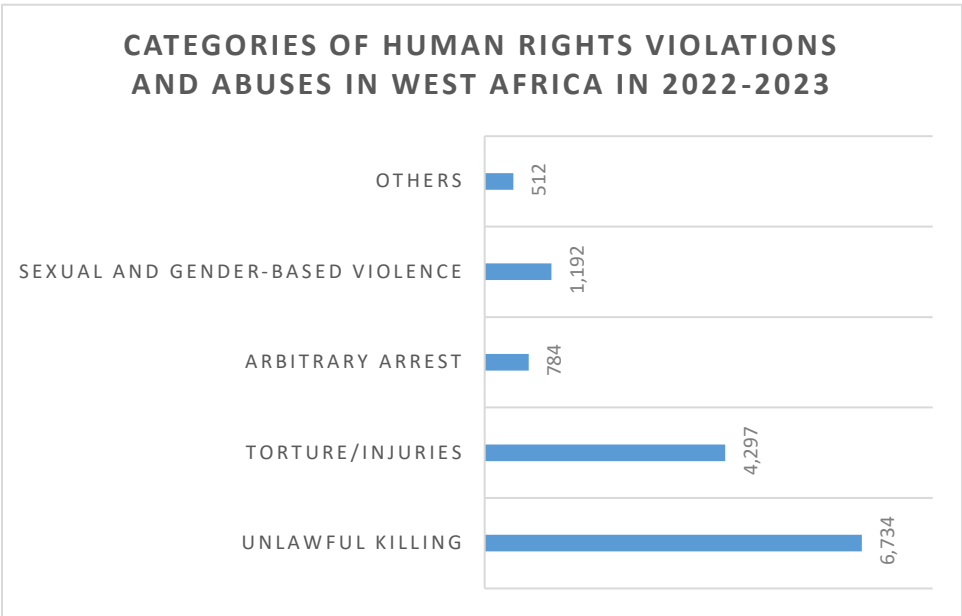
In February 2022, two journalists were detained for 18 days after the Minister of Town Planning accused them of "defamation" and "incitement to revolt". In March 2022, Ferdinand Ayité, a journalist, was sentenced to three years in prison and a fine for "contempt of authorities" and "propagation of falsehoods" and in September 2022, the editor of Tampa Express was summoned for interrogation about his sources for an article on allegations of corruption in public service exams.

Year 2023 did not record any significant changes to cause a change in the human rights situation in Togo. There were cases of arbitrary arrest or detention, unlawful killings, including extrajudicial

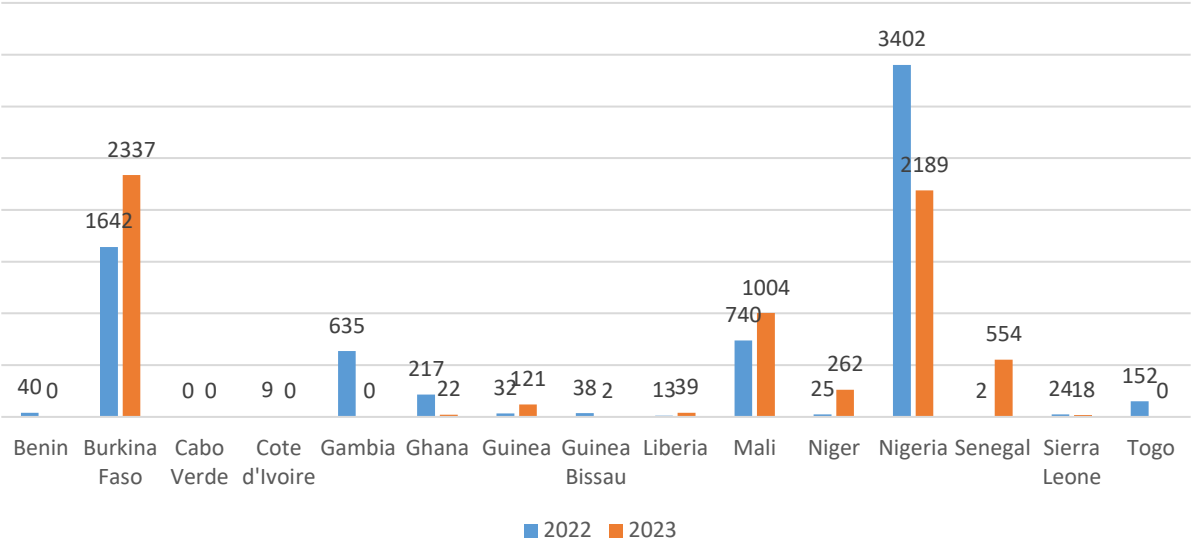
killings; torture by government or on behalf of government (State, 2023 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Togo, n.d.).



TOTAL INCIDENTS OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES IN WEST AFRICA IN 2022-2023



Summary of Human Rights Violations by Country



## CHAPTER TWELVE: HUMAN RIGHTS RANKING

### 12.1 HUMAN RIGHTS CASES NARRATIVES:

#### 12.1.1 HUMAN RIGHTS RANKING

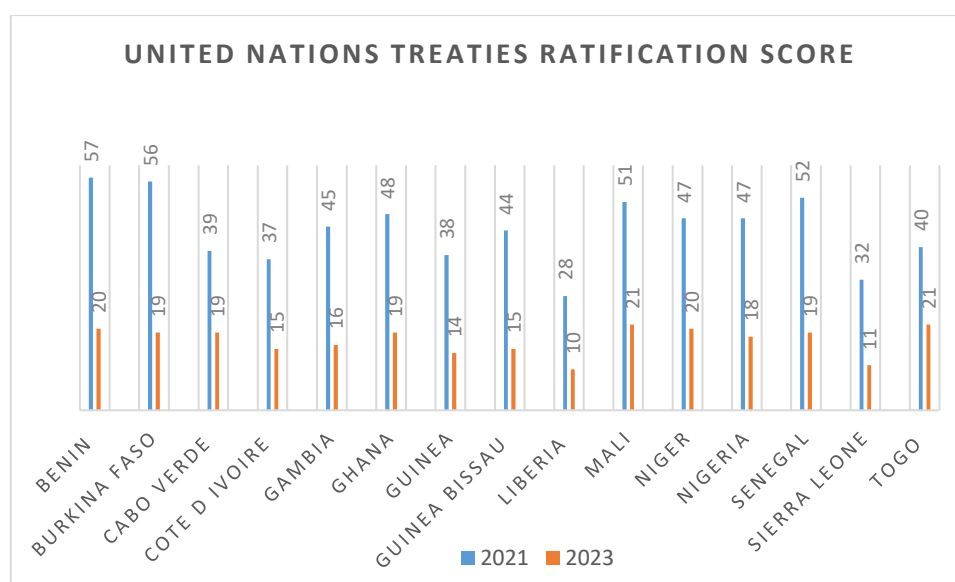
This section provides an overview of the level of signatories and ratification of various treaties by each West African country, including regional, continental, and international agreements. The countries are classified based on the highest number of treaties ratified, using a system that ranges from UN treaties to the African Court, ECOWAS treaties to various courts. Additionally, this section highlights which countries have established national human rights commissions and adhere to the Paris Principles.

##### 12.1.1.2 METHODOLOGY:

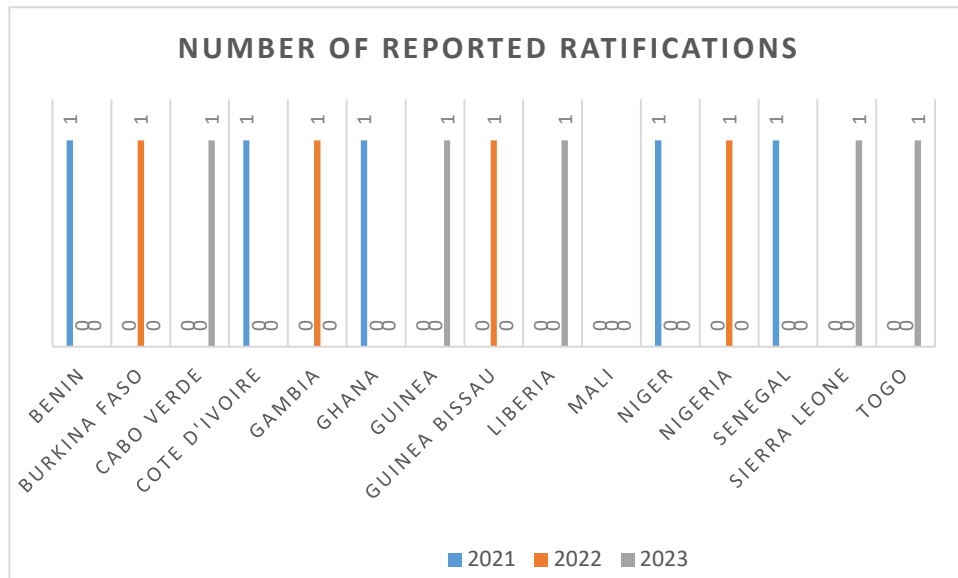
The methodology employed for this ranking assigns scores to West African countries based on the number of treaties signed and ratified, as per the criteria established by HURIDAC/ACPHR (2020). Countries in the region are categorized as either Monolist or Dualist nations.

For each of the 14 core treaties signed, a score of one point is allocated. Ratified treaties merit two points, while Dualist countries that have ratified the core treaties receive three points. Furthermore, acceptance of individual complaints procedures, inquiry procedures, and Interstate communication procedures garners two points. Non-acceptance is awarded one point, and a complete lack of response to these procedures results in zero points (HURIDAC/ACPHR, 2020). 2023 data is an updated version of 2022 data.

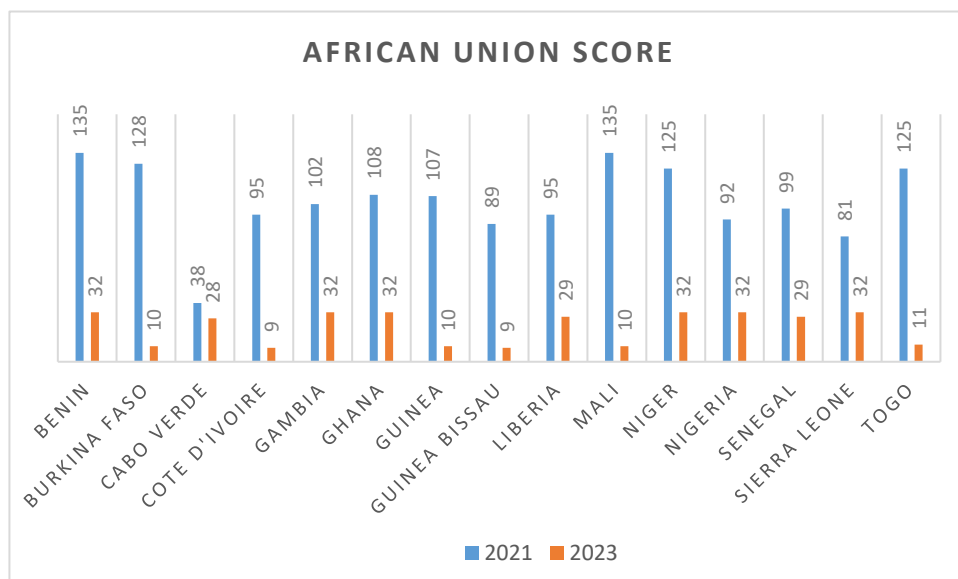
##### 12.1.1.3 The United Nations Score



*For the UN treaty, Togo score the highest, followed by Benin. Liberia has the least score and has no Interstate communication procedure and individual complaints procedures accepted. (UnitedNationhumantreatiesbody, 2023).*



Cabo Verde, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Togo reported obligations in year 2023. *Data may not be exhaustive, as some countries may not have reported their ratifications to the African Union. The number of ratified treaties may not be the only measure of a country's commitment to African Union objectives.* (AfricanUnion, 2023)



*The Gambia, Ghana, Niger, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone with 32, Senegal with 29 and Cabo Verde with 28 are the countries with the highest ratified African Union treaties contrary to Guinea Bissau with only 9, ignoring most of the African Union treaties in 2023.* (AfricanUnion, 2023)



## **12.2 WHY A SUDDEN DECLINE IN HUMAN RIGHTS SCORE IN 2022 AND 2023**

The sudden decline in human rights scores in 2022 and 2023 in West Africa can be attributed to several factors. One major reason is the rise in political instability and coups in the region. In the past two years, several countries in West Africa have experienced political unrest, including military takeovers and violent protests. This has led to a decline in democratic governance and the rule of law, resulting in a deterioration of human rights.

Another factor contributing to the decline in human rights scores is the introduction of restrictive legislation and policies by governments in the region. For instance, some countries have enacted laws that limit freedom of speech, assembly, and association, leading to a shrinking civic space. Additionally, there has been an increase in repression of political opponents, activists, and journalists, resulting in a decline in human rights scores.

Furthermore, the economic crisis and social unrest in the region have also contributed to the decline in human rights scores. The economic downturn has led to increased poverty, inequality, and unemployment, which have in turn fueled social unrest and protests. Governments have responded to these protests with force, leading to human rights violations and a decline in human rights scores. Lastly, the global trend of authoritarianism and nationalism has also had an impact on human rights in West Africa. Some governments in the region have become increasingly authoritarian, cracking down on dissent and opposition. This has led to a decline in human rights scores and a worsening human rights situation in the region.

Overall, the sudden decline in human rights scores in 2022 and 2023 in West Africa is a result of a combination of political, economic, and social factors. It is essential for governments in the region to address these underlying issues and take steps to improve their human rights records.

## **CONCLUSION**

The United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU) have played significant roles in promoting peace, security, and development in West Africa through various treaties and initiatives. However, the impact of these efforts has been uneven, with some countries in the region experiencing more benefits than others.

Mali, for instance, has been a loser in this regard. Despite the UN's peacekeeping efforts, the country remains a fragile state, struggling with political instability, terrorism, and human rights abuses. Guinea-Bissau is another country that has faced significant challenges, including chronic political instability, corruption, and drug trafficking, which have undermined efforts to establish a stable and prosperous state. Sierra Leone, although it has made progress in rebuilding after the civil war, still faces significant

development challenges, including poverty and corruption.

On the other hand, some countries in the region have been gainers. Ghana, for example, has consistently been a stable democracy, benefiting from UN and AU efforts to promote peace and security in the region. Senegal has also maintained stability and democracy, with the AU and UN supporting its development and regional integration efforts. Cabo Verde, an island nation, has made significant progress in economic development and democratic consolidation, with the support of international partners.

Several treaties have been instrumental in promoting peace, security, and development in West Africa. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Treaty, for instance, aims to promote regional economic integration and cooperation. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights focuses on promoting and protecting human rights in Africa. The UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) seeks to regulate wildlife trade and protect endangered species. These treaties have contributed to the region's progress, although more needs to be done to address the ongoing challenges.

### 12.1.1.5 AFRICAN COMMISSION SCORE

The African Charter on Human and People's Rights entered into force on October 21, 1986, with most West African countries adopting it within one to two years. However, despite the varying ratification timelines for each West African member state, many countries have fallen behind in their reporting obligations. As discussed in previous chapters, some countries have failed to submit their reports, which are supposed to be submitted every two years, resulting in a significant delay of five to ten years or more. (The African Commission, 2023).

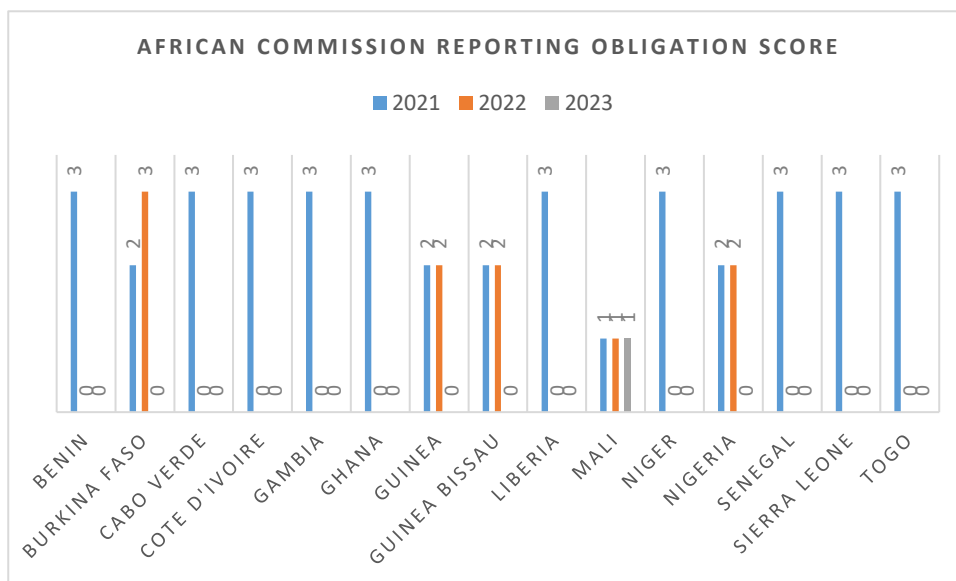
The table below shows West African countries with reporting obligations to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR):

Country	Initial Report	Periodic Report	2021	2022	2023
Benin	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-
Burkina Faso	Submitted	Overdue	-	Submitted 2022	-
Cabo Verde	Submitted	Submitted 2019	-	-	-
Cote d'Ivoire	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-
Gambia	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-
Ghana	Submitted	Submitted 2019	-	-	-
Guinea	Submitted	Overdue	-	-	-
Guinea Bissau	Submitted	Overdue	-	-	-
Liberia	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-
Mali	Submitted	Suspended	-	-	-
Niger	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-
Nigeria	Submitted	Overdue	-	-	-
Senegal	Submitted	Submitted 2019	-	-	-
Sierra Leone	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-
Togo	Submitted	Submitted 2020	-	-	-

*Note: "Yes (Periodic Report)" indicates the country had a reporting obligation in 2022 to submit a periodic report to the ACHPR. "Yes (Initial Report)" indicates the country had a reporting obligation in 2022 to submit an initial report to the ACHPR. "No" indicates the country did not have a reporting obligation to the ACHPR in 2022.*

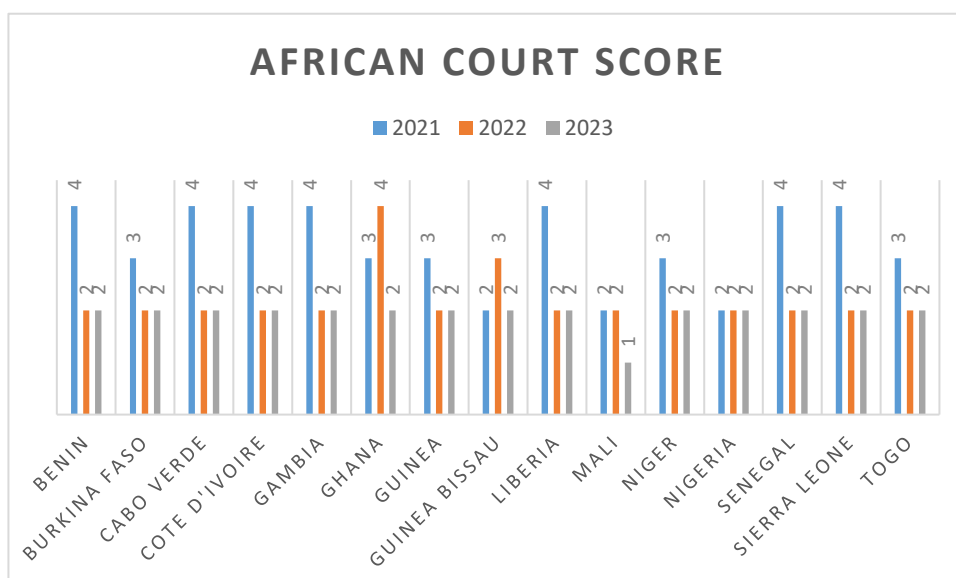
The chart below gives the exact figure of the overdue reports and those submitted by each West African country. "Submitted report" indicates that the country submitted its periodic report to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. "Overdue" indicates that the country has not submitted its periodic report and is overdue. "Suspended" indicates that the country's membership was suspended due

to political instability or other reasons, and therefore has no reporting obligations.



#### 12.1.1.6 AFRICAN COURT SCORE

Regarding the protocol to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, countries are scored as follows; signing the protocol is a point, ratifying it is two points and acceptance of individual access is three points. (HURIDAC/ACPHR, 2020). "Signed" indicates that the country signed the protocol but has not yet ratified it (3 points). "Ratified" indicates that the country has both signed and ratified the protocol (4 points). "-" indicates no change in status (2 points). "Suspended" indicates that the country's membership was suspended due to political instability or other reasons (1 point).

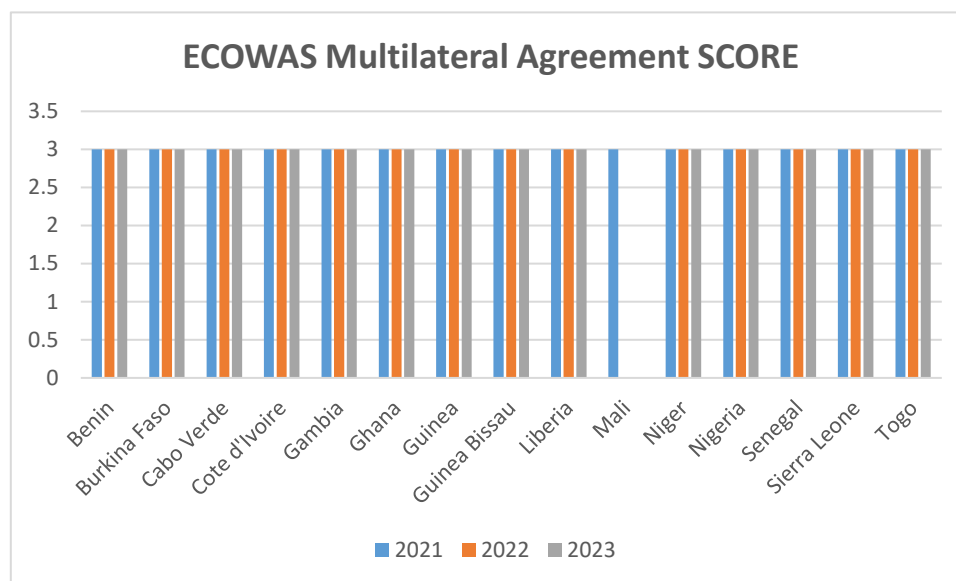


The 34 States which have ratified the Protocol are: Algeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Comoros, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Kenya, Libya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Mauritania,

Mauritius, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda, Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, South Africa, Senegal, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia.

To date, only eight (8) of the thirty-four (34) State Parties to the Protocol have deposited the declaration recognizing the competence of the Court to receive cases directly from NGOs and individuals. The eight States are: Burkina Faso, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Malawi, Niger and Tunisia. (AfricanCourt, 2023)

### 12.1.1.7 ECOWAS SCORE



From the analysis, each member state has signed the multilateral agreement that makes up the Economic Community of West African States. Ratification has earned each state three points score. (HURIDAC/ACPHR, 2023) "Already a signatory" indicates that the country signed the ECOWAS multilateral agreement before 2021. "-" indicates no change in status. "Suspended" indicates that the country's membership was suspended due to political instability or other reasons.

All 15 countries were already signatories to the ECOWAS multilateral agreement before 2021, and no new countries signed the agreement in 2021, 2022, or 2023.

Country	2021	2022	2023
Benin	Already a signatory	-	-
Burkina Faso	Already a signatory	-	-
Cabo Verde	Already a signatory	-	-
Cote d'Ivoire	Already a signatory	-	-
Gambia	Already a signatory	-	-
Ghana	Already a signatory	-	-
Guinea	Already a signatory	-	-
Guinea Bissau	Already a signatory	-	-
Liberia	Already a signatory	-	-
Mali	Already a signatory	Suspended	Suspended
Niger	Already a signatory	-	-
Nigeria	Already a signatory	-	-
Senegal	Already a signatory	-	-
Sierra Leone	Already a signatory	-	-
Togo	Already a signatory	-	-

### 12.1.1.8 NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

The United Nations Human Rights Regional Office for West Africa, based in Dakar, Senegal, continues to play a crucial role in promoting and protecting human rights in the region. The office focuses on countries where the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) has no presence, including Benin, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, and Togo, in addition to Senegal. (UnitedNationsHumanRights, 2023)

As of 2022, the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions, guided by the Paris Principles, has evaluated the status of human rights commissions in West Africa. Guinea Bissau's human rights commission is not recognized by this global rating, indicating a lack of full compliance. However, the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions acknowledges Guinea Bissau's commission as valid, albeit with an uncertain status. Therefore, we allocate the lowest status point (C-status, 2 points) to Guinea Bissau. (HURIDAC/ACPHR, 2023)

The UN Human Rights Regional Office for West Africa has strengthened its engagement with national human rights institutions in the region. Benin, Cape Verde, and Togo have made progress in establishing or strengthening their national human rights commissions. Cote d'Ivoire and Ghana have faced challenges in ensuring the independence and effectiveness of their human rights commissions.

The OHCHR is striving to ensure the independence and effectiveness of national human rights commissions remains a significant challenge in West Africa and strengthening regional cooperation and capacity-building initiatives can enhance the promotion and protection of human rights in the region.

All 15 countries in West Africa have established a national human rights institution to address human rights concerns. However, only 5 of these countries have institutions that fully comply with the international standards outlined in the Paris Principles. The chart below, sourced from the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, illustrates the compliance status of national human rights institutions in West Africa (Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, 2023).

*Score (5) represents countries with full compliance (including the Paris principles) and score (2) is showing the existence of National Global Human Rights Institutions in those countries. The A status according to GANHRI is represented by 3, the B status by 2, C status by 1, and the unverified Status by 0.*

GANHRI Status of West African Countries (2022-2023)			
Country	2021	2022	2023
Benin	A Status	B Status	B Status
Burkina Faso	B Status	C Status	C Status
Cabo Verde	A Status	A Status	A Status
Cote d'Ivoire	A Status	B Status	B Status
Gambia	B Status	C Status	C Status

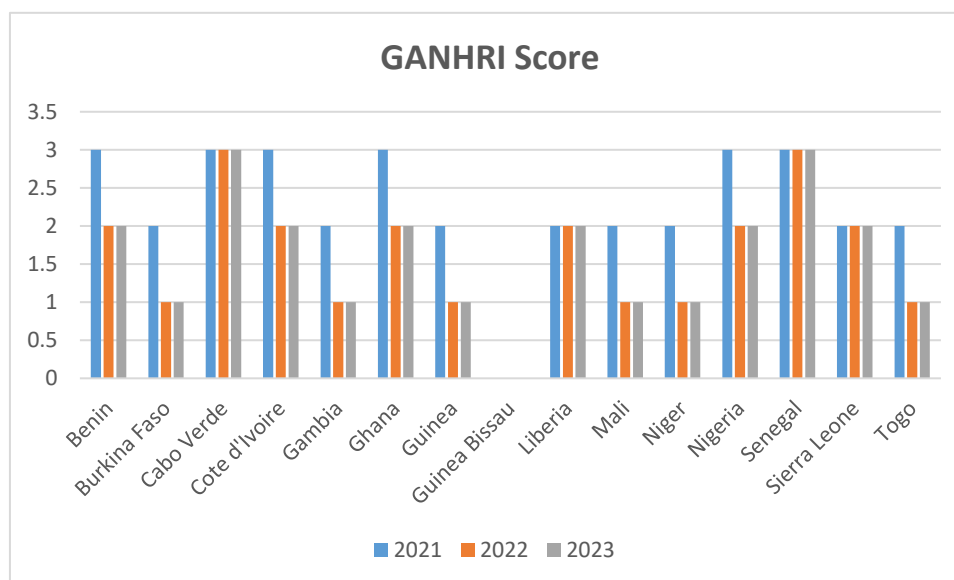
Ghana	A Status	B Status	B Status
Guinea	B Status	C Status	C Status
Guinea Bissau	No Accreditation	Non-Existence	Non-Existence
Liberia	B Status	B Status	B Status
Mali	B Status	C Status	C Status
Niger	B Status	C Status	C Status
Nigeria	A Status	B Status	B Status
Senegal	A Status	A Status	A Status
Sierra Leone	B Status	B Status	B Status
Togo	B Status	C Status	C Status

*Note:*

A Status: Accredited with the highest level of independence and compliance with international standards.

B Status: Accredited but with some concerns regarding independence or compliance with international standards.

No Accreditation: Not accredited due to significant concerns regarding independence or compliance with international standards.





### ***12.1.1.9 NATIONAL CONSTITUTION SCORE***

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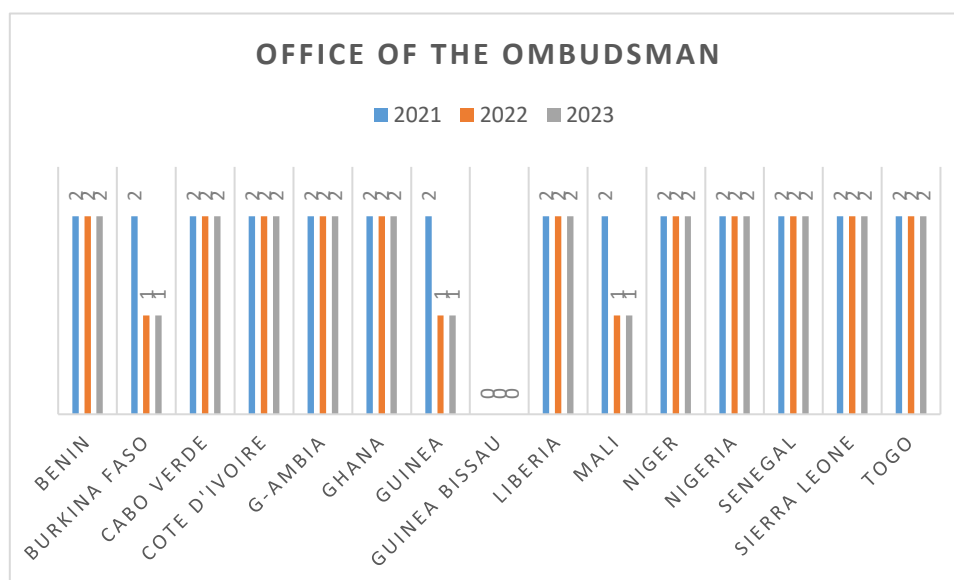
As no amendment was done to the constitution in West Africa, the 2022/2023 constitution is replicated which indicates the level at which these countries endorse basic human rights. (Huridac/ACPHR, 2023). No reference - no point, Simple reference to Human Rights - 1 point, Contain UDHR - 2 points.

<b>West African Countries' Constitutional Amendments (2022-2023)</b>			
<b>Country</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>
Benin	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned
Burkina Faso	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Cabo Verde	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned
Cote d'Ivoire	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Gambia	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Ghana	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned
Guinea	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Guinea Bissau	No reference	No reference	No reference
Liberia	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned
Mali	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Niger	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Nigeria	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights
Senegal	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned
Sierra Leone	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned	UDHR explicitly mentioned
Togo	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights	Simple reference to human rights



#### 12.4.1.10. OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN SCORE

To promote good governance and quality leadership, all the West African countries have an office of the Ombudsman except Guinea Bissau. This, however, doesn't in any way mean it is non-existent. (HURIDAC/ACPHR, 2023). A score of 2 signifies operational, 1 signifies suspended and 0 signifies non-existent.



Country	Ombudsman Office	2021	2022	2023
Benin	Established 2011	Operational	Operational	Operational
Burkina Faso	Established 2015	Operational	Suspended	Suspended
Cabo Verde	Established 2015	Operational	Operational	Operational
Cote d'Ivoire	Established 2015	Operational	Operational	Operational
Gambia	Established 2017	Operational	Operational	Operational
Ghana	Established 1993	Operational	Operational	Operational
Guinea	Established 2011	Operational	Suspended	Suspended
Guinea Bissau	Not Established	-	-	-
Liberia	Established 2018	Operational	Operational	Operational
Mali	Established 2015	Operational	Suspended	Suspended
Niger	Established 2015	Operational	Operational	Operational
Nigeria	Established 2004	Operational	Operational	Operational
Senegal	Established 2013	Operational	Operational	Operational
Sierra Leone	Established 2014	Operational	Operational	Operational
Togo	Established 2015	Operational	Operational	Operational

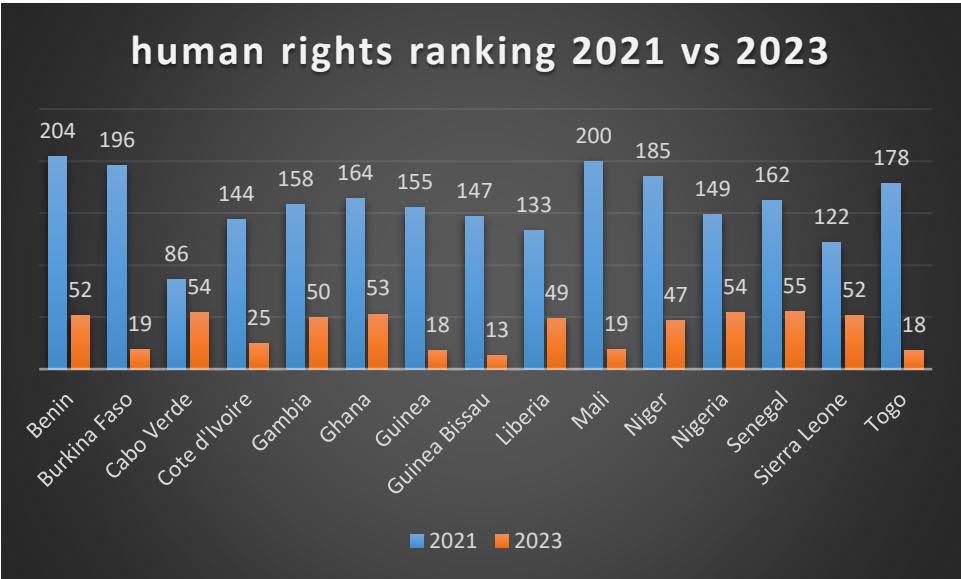
Note:

"Operational" means the Ombudsman office was functioning in that year.

"Suspended" means the Ombudsman office was not functioning in that year due to political instability or other reasons.

"-" means no Ombudsman office was established in that country.

12.1.1.11 Human Rights Score 2022/2023



*Senegal with 55 are the most human rights friendly country in West Africa and Guinea Bissau scores the lowest human rights performance. Nigeria, Cabo Verde, and Ghana closely follows depicting improvements in human rights compliance.*

12.5. CONCLUSION

The human rights ranking in this report reveals that even the top-performing countries in West Africa have experienced a decline in their human rights status in 2022 and 2023, compared to previous years. This decline is attributed to a degeneration in the protection of international, continental, and regional human rights instruments. To address this, it is essential to standardize all aspects of basic human rights in action, aligning with ratified instruments. The report urges low-scoring countries to intensify their efforts and upgrade their human rights standards by leveraging international instruments, particularly in 2023. Meanwhile, high-achieving countries should maintain their standards and continue to prioritize human rights promotion and protection. The implementation phase of this project aims to support ECOWAS member states in enhancing their human rights ranking and promoting a culture of human rights respect and protection in the region.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### 13.1 THEMATIC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WEST AFRICAN COUNTRIES

- Ratify and domesticate all relevant treaties, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Protocol on the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights, to ensure alignment with regional and international human rights standards.
- Establish and maintain independent human rights institutions, such as national human rights commissions, to investigate and address human rights violations in West Africa.
- Strengthen national laws and policies to align with international human rights standards and address regional specificities, such as the rights of women, children, and marginalized communities.
- Provide training and capacity-building programs for law enforcement officials, judges, and other stakeholders on human rights and the rule of law, with a focus on West African contexts and challenges.

#### State and Non-State Actors

- Establish and maintain independent human rights institutions, such as national human rights commissions, to investigate and address human rights violations in West Africa.
- Allow non-state actors, including civil society organizations and community groups, to operate independently without interference or intimidation, and strengthen partnerships with state actors to promote human rights and the rule of law.
- Ensure that state actors, including law enforcement officials, are held accountable for human rights violations, and promote transparency and accountability in government.
- Strengthen regional mechanisms for preventing and responding to human rights violations, such as the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

#### International Partners

- Provide technical assistance and capacity-building programs for West African countries to strengthen their human rights systems and compliance with international treaties, with a focus on regional specificities and challenges.
- Support the establishment and operation of independent human rights institutions in West Africa, and engage in dialogue and advocacy with West African governments to promote human rights and the rule of law.
- Provide funding and resources to support human rights initiatives and programs in West Africa, and strengthen regional cooperation and coordination on human rights issues.

#### West African States

- Prioritize the promotion and protection of human rights, including the rights of women, children, and marginalized communities, and address regional specificities and challenges.

- Strengthen national laws and policies to align with international human rights standards, and establish and maintain independent human rights institutions to investigate and address human rights violations.
- Ensure that state actors, including law enforcement officials, are held accountable for human rights violations, and promote transparency and accountability in government.
- Strengthen regional mechanisms for preventing and responding to human rights violations, such as the ECOWAS Court of Justice.

### **Civil Society Organizations**

- Strengthen advocacy and lobbying efforts to promote human rights and the rule of law in West Africa, and establish partnerships with state actors, including national human rights institutions, to promote human rights.
- Conduct research and monitoring to document human rights violations and advocate for redress, with a focus on regional specificities and challenges.
- Provide training and capacity-building programs for community groups and individuals on human rights and advocacy, and strengthen regional cooperation and coordination on human rights issues.

### **Democratic Rights**

- Ensure free and fair elections, and strengthen independent electoral commissions to promote transparency and accountability in the electoral process.
- Protect freedom of speech and assembly, and promote a vibrant and diverse media landscape to foster public debate and discourse.
- Strengthen independent media and journalism, and promote access to information to hold governments accountable.
- Promote transparency and accountability in government, and ensure that state actors are held accountable for human rights violations.

### **Right to Vote**

- Ensure universal suffrage and equal access to voting, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or socio-economic status.
- Prevent voter suppression and intimidation, and promote voter education and awareness to enhance participation in the electoral process.
- Strengthen independent electoral commissions to promote transparency and accountability in the electoral process.
- Promote the representation and participation of marginalized communities in the electoral process.

### **Right to Health**

- Ensure access to quality healthcare for all, regardless of socio-economic status or geographic location.

- Strengthen health systems and infrastructure, and promote health education and awareness to address regional health challenges.
- Address health disparities and inequities, and promote the representation and participation of marginalized communities in health decision-making processes.
- Promote traditional medicine and practices, and integrate them into national healthcare systems.

## **Environment and Human Rights**

- Protect environmental rights and promote sustainability, and address environmental challenges and impacts in West Africa.
- Promote environmental justice and accountability, and strengthen environmental laws and policies to address regional environmental challenges.
- Support environmental education and awareness, and promote community-led environmental initiatives.
- Address the impacts of climate change on human rights in West Africa, and promote climate justice and resilience.

## **Coup in West Africa**

- Condemn and prevent military coups, and promote democratic governance and stability in West Africa.
- Strengthen regional mechanisms for preventing and responding to coups, such as the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
- Support democratic institutions and processes, and promote transparency and accountability in government.
- Address the root causes of coups, including political instability, corruption, and economic mismanagement.

## **Constitution and Zero Tolerance**

- Promote constitutionalism and rule of law, and ensure zero tolerance for human rights violations in West Africa.
- Strengthen independent judiciaries and justice systems, and promote accountability for human rights abuses.
- Support constitutional reforms and reviews, and promote public participation and engagement in constitutional processes.
- Ensure that state actors, including law enforcement officials, are held accountable for human rights violations.

## **Unconstitutional Change of Government**

- Prevent and condemn unconstitutional changes of government, and promote democratic governance and stability in West Africa.

- Strengthen regional mechanisms for preventing and responding to unconstitutional changes of government, such as the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.
- Support democratic institutions and processes, and promote transparency and accountability in government.
- Address the root causes of unconstitutional changes of government, including political instability, corruption, and economic mismanagement.

### **Political Repression, Crackdowns, and Political Crisis**

- Prevent and condemn political repression and crackdowns, and promote democratic governance and stability in West Africa.
- Strengthen independent media and journalism, and promote access to information to hold governments accountable.
- Support democratic institutions and processes, and promote transparency and accountability in government.
- Address the root causes of political repression and crackdowns, including political instability, corruption, and economic mismanagement.

### **Gender-Based Violence**

- Prevent and condemn gender-based violence, and promote gender equality and empowerment in West Africa.
- Strengthen laws and policies against gender-based violence, and promote accountability for perpetrators.
- Support survivors of gender-based violence, and promote access to justice and reparations.
- Address the root causes of gender-based violence, including patriarchy, discrimination, and inequality.

### **Child Rights and Exploitation**

- Protect children from exploitation and abuse, and promote child rights and well-being in West Africa.
- Strengthen laws and policies against child exploitation, and promote accountability for perpetrators.
- Support survivors of child exploitation, and promote access to justice and reparations.
- Address the root causes of child exploitation, including poverty, inequality, and lack of access to education.

### **Environmental Road Map**

- Promote environmental sustainability and protection, and address environmental challenges and impacts in West Africa.
- Strengthen environmental laws and policies, and promote accountability for environmental degradation.



- Support community-led environmental initiatives, and promote access to environmental education and awareness.
- Address the impacts of climate change on environmental rights in West Africa, and promote climate justice and resilience.

### **Corruption**

- Prevent and condemn corruption, and promote transparency and accountability in government and public life in West Africa.
- Strengthen anti-corruption laws and policies, and promote accountability for corrupt practices.
- Support independent anti-corruption agencies and mechanisms, and promote access to information and whistle-blower protection.
- Address the root causes of corruption, including weak institutions, lack of transparency, and unequal power dynamics.

### **Insecurity**

- Address insecurity and promote peace and stability in West Africa, and address the root causes of insecurity, including political instability, inequality, and lack of access to education and employment.
- Strengthen regional mechanisms for preventing and responding to insecurity, such as the ECOWAS Peace and Security Framework.
- Support community-led peacebuilding initiatives, and promote access to justice and accountability for human rights abuses.
- Promote human rights and the rule of law in security operations, and address the impacts of insecurity on human rights in West Africa.

## **13.2 INSTITUTIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **ECOWAS Court of Justice**

- Strengthen the jurisdiction and mandate of the ECOWAS Court of Justice to address human rights violations in West Africa.
- Increase the accessibility and affordability of the court for individuals and communities.
- Enhance the court's capacity to handle complex human rights cases and provide effective remedies.

### **National Human Rights Commissions**

- Establish and strengthen independent national human rights commissions in West African countries.
- Ensure that these commissions have the mandate, resources, and capacity to investigate and address human rights violations.

- Promote the independence and impartiality of these commissions.

### **Regional Human Rights Mechanisms**

- Strengthen regional human rights mechanisms, such as the West African Human Rights Mechanism.
- Enhance the capacity of these mechanisms to promote and protect human rights in West Africa.
- Increase the engagement and participation of civil society organizations and communities in these mechanisms.

### **International Human Rights Bodies**

- Strengthen the engagement and cooperation between West African countries and international human rights bodies, such as the UN Human Rights Council and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.
- Increase the capacity of West African countries to implement international human rights standards and recommendations.
- Promote the universal ratification and implementation of international human rights treaties in West Africa.

### **Civil Society Organizations**

- Strengthen the capacity and engagement of civil society organizations in promoting and protecting human rights in West Africa.
- Increase the participation and representation of marginalized communities and groups in human rights advocacy and decision-making processes.
- Enhance the collaboration and coordination between civil society organizations and human rights bodies in West Africa.

### **National Human Rights Institutions**

- Establish and strengthen independent national human rights institutions in West African countries.
- Ensure that these institutions have the mandate, resources, and capacity to investigate and address human rights violations.
- Promote the independence and impartiality of these institutions.

### **Regional Economic Communities**

- Strengthen the engagement and cooperation between regional economic communities, such as ECOWAS and the African Union, and human rights bodies in West Africa.
- Increase the capacity of these communities to promote and protect human rights in West Africa.
- Promote the integration of human rights into regional economic policies and programs.

### **13.3 COUNTRY-SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Nigeria**

- Address the persistent human rights violations in the North East region, particularly in relation to the Boko Haram insurgency.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Address the issue of police brutality and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Promote freedom of expression and the media, and address the issue of hate speech.

#### **Ghana**

- Address the issue of vigilantism and mob justice, and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthen the National Human Rights Commission and ensure that it has the resources and capacity to effectively investigate and address human rights violations.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

#### **Senegal**

- Address the issue of police brutality and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote freedom of expression and the media, and address the issue of hate speech.
- Address the issue of migration and its impact on human rights.

#### **Guinea**

- Address the issue of political violence and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

#### **Sierra Leone**

- Address the issue of corruption and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.

- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## **Liberia**

- Address the issue of corruption and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## **Côte d'Ivoire**

- Address the issue of political violence and ensure that perpetrators are held accountable.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## **Mali**

- Address the issue of terrorism and ensure that human rights are respected in counter-terrorism operations.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## **Burkina Faso**

- Address the issue of terrorism and ensure that human rights are respected in counter-terrorism operations.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## **Benin**

- Address the issue of political repression and ensure that human rights are respected in political processes.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

### **Cape Verde**

- Address the issue of migration and ensure that human rights are respected in migration policies and practices.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

### **Gambia**

- Address the issue of political repression and ensure that human rights are respected in political processes.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

### **Guinea-Bissau**

- Address the issue of political instability and ensure that human rights are respected in political processes.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

### **Niger**

- Address the issue of terrorism and ensure that human rights are respected in counter-terrorism operations.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.

- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## **Togo**

- Address the issue of political repression and ensure that human rights are respected in political processes.
- Strengthen the judiciary and ensure independence and impartiality in the administration of justice.
- Promote the rights of marginalized communities, particularly women and persons with disabilities.
- Address the issue of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights.

## CONCLUSION

The 2022-2023 West Africa human rights report provides a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the human rights situation in the region. The report's twelve chapters meticulously examine various aspects of human rights, including the legal framework, global institutions, thematic focus areas, and country-specific issues.

The findings of the report are sobering, revealing a region grappling with numerous challenges. The rise of coup plots, corruption, insecurity, and environmental degradation threatens the fragile human rights gains made in recent years. The implications of these challenges are far-reaching, with devastating consequences for the region's stability, development, and human well-being.

Despite these challenges, the report also highlights pockets of progress and resilience. Countries like Cabo Verde, Senegal, and Ghana demonstrate commitment to human rights, while civil society organizations and international partners continue to advocate for human rights promotion and protection.

The human rights matrix and ranking provide a valuable tool for tracking progress and identifying areas for improvement. The report's recommendations, tailored to each country and thematic area, offer a roadmap for addressing the region's human rights challenges.

In conclusion, the 2022-2023 West Africa human rights report serves as a clarion call to action for governments, civil society, and international partners. It underscores the need for sustained efforts to promote and protect human rights, address the root causes of human rights violations, and foster a culture of respect, dignity, and justice in West Africa. By working together, we can ensure that the region makes progress towards achieving its human rights goals and creating a brighter future for all its citizens.