THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS

APRIL 2026

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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This report documents key human rights developments at a national and regional level during 2025, as well as presenting a global analysis of ongoing critical human rights challenges. It includes entries on countries or territories whose human rights situation Amnesty International has monitored during 2025.

The absence of a particular country or territory does not imply that no human rights violations of concern to Amnesty International took place there during the year. Nor is the length of a country entry any basis for a comparison of the extent and depth of Amnesty International's concerns there. This report does not cover extensively the use of the death penalty as Amnesty International issues a separate annual global report on death sentences and executions.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AI
Artificial intelligence

ASEAN
Association of Southeast Asian Nations

AU
African Union

CEDAW
United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

CEDAW Committee
United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

CERD
United Nations International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

CERD Committee
United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

COP30
The 30th Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

DRC
The Democratic Republic of the Congo

ECOWAS
Economic Community of West African States

Escazú Agreement
Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean

EU
European Union

European Committee for the Prevention of Torture
European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

European Convention on Human Rights
(European) Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

GDP
Gross Domestic Product

ICC
International Criminal Court

ICCPR
United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

ICESCR
United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

ICRC
International Committee of the Red Cross

ILO
International Labour Organization

INGO
International non-governmental organization

International Convention Against Enforced Disappearance
United Nations International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance

Istanbul Convention
Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

LGBTI
Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex

Ljubljana – The Hague Convention
Ljubljana–The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of the Crime of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and Other International Crimes

MP
Member of parliament

NATO
North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NDC
Nationally determined contribution

NGO
Non-governmental organization

OAS
Organization of American States

OCHA
United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OHCHR, the UN human rights office
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

OSCE
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe

UK
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

UN
United Nations

UN Convention against Torture
United Nations Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

UN Refugee Convention
United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

UN Special Rapporteur on climate change
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in the Context of Climate Change

UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions

UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights

UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of the Right to Freedom of Opinion and Expression

UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders

UN Special Rapporteur on racism
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

UN Special Rapporteur on torture
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

UN Special Rapporteur on truth, justice and reparation
United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Promotion of Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence

UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls
United Nations Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences

UNDP
United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF
United Nations Children's Fund

UPR
United Nations Universal Periodic Review

US
United States (adjective)

USA
United States of America

USAID
United States Agency for International Development

WHO
World Health Organization

PREFACE

Throughout 2025, voracious predators stalked through our global commons, hulking hunters plundering unjust trophies. Political leaders like Trump, Putin and Netanyahu, among many others, carried out their conquests for economic and political domination through destruction, suppression and violence on a massive scale.

As Amnesty International has long warned, a global environment where primitive ferocity could flourish has been long in the making. But in 2025, accelerants were recklessly poured over dry kindling, as sharp U-turns were taken away from the international order that had been imagined out of the ashes of the Holocaust and the utter destruction of world wars, and constructed slowly and painfully, albeit insufficiently, over these past 80 years.

Yet rather than confront the predators, in 2025 most governments opted for appeasement, including most European states. Some sought even to imitate the predator. Others ducked for cover under their shadow. A mere handful chose to stand up to them.

One firebreak after another was breached: through complicity in, or silence about, the commissions of genocide and crimes against humanity; and through imposition of crippling sanctions against those working to deliver justice. That's how 2025 will be remembered: for its bullies and predators; for the pouring of the politics of appeasement onto burning betrayals of international obligations; for self-defeatism; for states playing with a fire that threatens now to burn us all and scorch the future too, for generations to come.

NOT AN ILLUSION

Some might suggest that by 2025 there was little left to undermine, the now failing global system delivering little other than greater power to the already powerful Western world. Some claim 2025 simply laid bare a pleasant illusion.

Those narratives distort the history of the post-World War II order. They erase the masterful work of generations of diplomats and civil society activists the world over, who, often against the wishes of far more powerful actors, helped imagine, shape and advocate for that rule-based order, and never gave up demanding that the order live up to its stated purpose.

The 1948 adoptions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Genocide Convention, and the many other normative instruments debated and adopted over the subsequent 80 years, are no illusion. They are tangible manifestations of a post-world war order founded on a multilateral system of equal states, rooted in universal human rights, and dedicated to non-recurrence of atrocities.

We all know that the system's promise remains unfulfilled, **but it is not for the promise-breaker to declare that promise a fantasy.**

Moreover, that system was never just in the hands of the powerful. At its very inception, smaller nations outmanoeuvred the large. It was they who ensured that the Universal Declaration promised human rights for all people universally, without distinction, and equally

between men and women. In the years thereafter, waves of anti-colonial struggles and emancipatory movements took nourishment and additional legitimacy in those very affirmations, often against the wishes of Europe. It was the newest states of Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia, who, along with civil society the world over, led the development of the Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, the Convention on the Right of the Child, and the Convention for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, against the will of the United States of America.

Under the influence of international human rights instruments, these past 80 years have seen deep transformations of our world for the better. The direction of travel has bent towards greater justice, towards addressing power imbalances between states, towards recognition and protection of the rights of racialized and Indigenous peoples, of women, of LGBTI persons, and by enshrining in domestic laws universal commitments on substantive equality, sexual and reproductive rights, and labour rights, to name but a few.

Make no mistake: reports of the death of the international rule-based order are greatly exaggerated. But the death notices are issued not because the system is ineffective, inefficient or too slow, but because it is not serving the interests of the politically and economically powerful and their appeasers. They now wish us to believe it was all but a chimera, a pleasant fiction that has outlived its purpose.

This must be resisted by defending normative guardrails, disrupting the worst attacks against the 1948 rule-based order and transforming it for greater fulfilment and reach of its promises.

That resistance does not mean papering over the raging double standards that have dogged its implementation or discounting its ineffectiveness or paralysis. Nor does it mean ignoring the multiple violations of its universal promise, with millions denied its protections – including the Palestinian victims of Israel genocide, apartheid and occupation; Afghan women whose country has become an open-air prison; or Iranian protesters who, early in 2026 were subjected to perhaps the largest mass-killing in Iran's recent history.

Nor does resisting Donald Trump or Vladamir Putin's attacks on the rule-based order mean accepting China's vision. That is no alternative, for China too has consistently rejected universal human rights, and monitoring of compliance with global conventions. The Chinese search for hegemony may take a different form and be delivered with different tools, but it has the same outcome: inequity and repression.

A NEW ORDER IN THE MAKING?

What alternative to the imperfect global experiment initiated in 1948 is on offer? The undermining of international law, attacks against the International Criminal Court (ICC), withdrawal from international conventions, abandonment of UN agencies. Having paralysed the UN Security Council through unconscionable abuse of their veto powers, the predators now assert that peace and security mechanisms don't work and seek to replace them with self-serving alternatives.

The predatory world order discards racial and gender justice, mocks women's rights, declares civil society a common enemy and rejects

international solidarity. It directs an unprecedented hike in military investments, enables unlawful arms transfers and imposes sweeping cuts to international aid budget, risking millions of avoidable deaths and decimating thousands of organizations working for human rights, sexual and reproductive rights or press freedom.

This predatory alternative world order silences dissent and suppresses protests, deploys dehumanizing rhetoric, and facilitates hate crimes and the weaponization of the law. It is predicated not on respect for our common humanity, but on trade supremacy and technological hegemony.

At the beginning of 2026, the vision for that new order was expounded by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio as a Western alliance of Christian people led by the US, rooted unapologetically and proudly in a common heritage, romantically described throughout the speech. But the words cannot hide the facts: this is a history too of domination, colonialism, slavery and genocide.

In that "new" but all too familiar system, the predators and their appeasers rebuke, deter and persecute those seeking equality within and between states. Atonement for past injustices is mocked. War, not diplomacy, rules: Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza continues in spite of the so-called ceasefire; Russia's crimes against humanity in Ukraine escalate; the USA engages in extraterritorial extrajudicial killings and unlawful attacks on Venezuela and Iran, and threats to take over Greenland; multiple crimes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Sudan remain unchecked; and people in the Middle East are plunged again into a chaos that threatens to engulf more and more countries.

That is a vision for naked hegemony, for a world without a moral compass.

A TURNAROUND IN 2026?

Few states have found the courage to speak up against the roaring of cannons over diplomacy. Some joined the Hague Group, a bloc of states committed to "coordinated legal and diplomatic measures" in defence of international law and solidarity with the people of Palestine. Others contributed to South Africa's genocide case against Israel. Canada called on the Middle Powers to come together and invest in collective resilience. A few, such as Spain, consistently denounced the dismantling of normative guardrails.

In early 2026, some European states appeared to take fuller measure of the risks, refusing to join the US and Israeli attacks on Iran and committing to protect strategic sovereignty, but along with the European Union fell short of reasserting the primacy of international law and universal rights.

DETERMINATION TO STAND UP FOR GLOBAL NORMS

A fear of retaliation for speaking out against the powerful is palpable the world over. But there was also much evidence throughout 2025 of governments continuing to lay down the brickwork of the allegedly "illusory" international rule-based order and of widespread civil society determination to stand up for and enhance global norms.

The Council of Europe established the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The ICC issued arrest warrants against two Taliban leaders for the crime against humanity of gender-based persecution, and unsealed warrants against Libyan nationals accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. A hybrid criminal court in the Central African Republic convicted six former members of an armed group for war crimes and crimes against humanity. The UN Human Rights Council established an independent investigative mechanism for Afghanistan. Rodrigo Duterte, former president of the Philippines, was handed over to the ICC under a warrant for the crime against humanity of murder. In the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, 156 states voted for negotiations on an international instrument on autonomous weapons systems. In July, the EU extended the scope of goods covered by its pioneering Anti-Torture Regulation. Significant progress was made in 2025 towards a binding UN tax convention. At COP30, civil society and trade union pressure helped adoption of a Just Transition Mechanism for the protection of workers and communities as countries shift to clean energy and a climate-resilient future. The International Court of Justice and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued advisory opinions affirming state human rights obligations to respond to climate damage. Colombia and the Netherlands agreed to co-host the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in April 2026. Countrywide strikes and actions by dockworkers mounted in France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Sweden disrupted arms shipment routes to Israel. The governments of Belgium, Bolivia, Canada, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Slovenia, South Africa and Spain committed in 2025 to modify or halt arms trade with Israel. Women gained expanded abortion rights in Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Norway, Luxemburg, and Malawi. In Nepal, a youth-led uprising against corruption toppled the government.

Resist, we did. Resist, we must. And resist, we will.

This is not just another "challenging period". It is **the** challenging moment, threatening to destroy all that was built up over the last 80 years. We the people will rise to this historical moment. We will have the ambition these times demand, and the courage to also change with them. We must do so as politicians and diplomats; as activists and consumers; as workers and producers; as an electorate and as investors; as persons of faith and people with the courage of our convictions. Together, we must build strong multi-stakeholder coalitions and encourage states to do the same.

Today "still we rise" means focusing on what must be **defended** as a matter of priority and at all costs, not only for the sake of our human rights but those of future generations too. In our resistance, we must also clearly identify what must be disrupted as a matter of absolute priority, among the tsunami of laws, policies, and practices unleashed by predatory State and non-State actors. Resistance also means getting clear about what must be transformed. Given the unprecedented pace and amount of change underway, we will have to turn once again to the power of our imagination and the daring of our creativity. We must

imagine a transformed and transformative human rights vision for **the world that we are becoming,** not merely defend human rights in terms of the world we once were. Together, we must then lead that transformation into existence, with all our creativity, determination and resilience.

History is not just something that is done *to* us. It is also ours to make. And for the sake of humanity, it's time to make human rights history.

Agnès Callamard
Secretary General
April 2026

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS

GLOBAL ANALYSIS AND REGIONAL OVERVIEWS

GLOBAL ANALYSIS

Amnesty International documented widespread violations by governments and other actors, failures of accountability and systemic injustices in 2025, alongside limited areas of progress. Many of these patterns have continued into 2026, as the international rules-based order faces sustained attack.

Crimes under international law have been committed extensively. They include Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, Russia's crimes against humanity in Ukraine and war crimes and other crimes under international law in Myanmar, Sudan and other conflicts. Irresponsible arms transfers have continued to fuel atrocities, although activism and legal pressure have led some states to restrict or ban arms exports to Israel. The United States of America (USA) and Russia undermined international accountability mechanisms, particularly the International Criminal Court (ICC), in 2025, while several other states announced their withdrawal from the Rome Statute. Nonetheless, the ICC and other mechanisms secured notable arrests and convictions and new investigative bodies, including a special tribunal on the crime of aggression against Ukraine, were created.

Authoritarian practices have intensified worldwide. The governments of Afghanistan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Kenya, the United Kingdom (UK), the USA and Venezuela, among other countries, violently repressed protests, criminalized dissent through counterterrorism and security laws or used enforced disappearances, executions and abusive policing tactics in 2025. Torture and ill-treatment, including through electric shock weapons, remained widespread, although momentum grew for a United Nations (UN) Torture-Free Trade Treaty.

Discrimination has been a central theme. Refugees and migrants have faced mass deportations and racially discriminatory policies, while people displaced across international borders in the context of climate change have remained largely unprotected. Racial injustice linked to colonialism and extractive industries have persisted, alongside calls for reparations. Gender-based violence and restrictions on women's rights were pervasive. While there were legal advances in a few countries to expand abortion rights and prohibit child marriage in 2025, existing barriers to access abortion and post-abortion care remained in place. Meanwhile, the onslaught of attacks on a range of rights of LGBTI people, especially transgender people, increased across the world.

Governments have failed to phase out fossil fuels, while climate finance and adaptation support have fallen far short of what is needed. Debt, aid cuts and unfair global economic structures have undermined economic and social rights. Corporate abuses, including environmental harm, labour rights abuses and the use of lawsuits, continued in 2025, while a landmark new European Union (EU) corporate due diligence regulation was watered down.

Finally, governments have used technology to enable and strengthen authoritarian practices. Governments, facilitated by corporate actors, have deployed unlawful surveillance to restrict the right to freedom of expression or repress protests. While human rights harms associated with social media platforms and the rising number of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools were increasingly understood in 2025, regulation lagged behind.

CRIMES UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW

GENOCIDE, CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY AND WAR CRIMES

Israel committed genocide, as well as multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity, against Palestinians in Gaza; the genocide continued beyond a ceasefire with Hamas on 9 October 2025. Its system of apartheid against all Palestinians also took a heavy toll, particularly in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through high-intensity military operations and a sharp increase in state-backed settler violence. Mass protests against Israel's

genocide spread around the world. A wide range of organizations, international bodies and states acknowledged that Israel was committing genocide. Nevertheless, in general, the world's most powerful governments failed to take meaningful action to stop the genocide or to bring an end to Israel's unlawful occupation and apartheid.

Russia committed crimes against humanity and war crimes, including through its widespread practice of enforced disappearances, torture and reported drone targeting of Ukrainian civilians. It intensified aerial attacks targeting critical civilian infrastructure in Ukraine. Reports of Russian forces extrajudicially executing Ukrainian prisoners of war mounted. In the territories it occupied, Russia also took measures to suppress non-Russian identities. Outside of armed conflict, Venezuela's widespread practice of enforced disappearances, arbitrary detentions and torture against dissidents and others similarly amounted to crimes against humanity.

Parties to conflicts in numerous other countries committed acts that amounted to war crimes. Government forces, allied militias and opposing armed groups were responsible for killing thousands of civilians in total. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), several armed groups unlawfully killed hundreds of civilians; one also attacked hospitals and abducted patients and caregivers. In Myanmar, the military used motorized paragliders to drop explosive munitions on villages and other sites, killing dozens of civilians, including children; it also blocked aid to resistance-held areas. In Sudan, the Sudanese Armed Forces and their allies killed dozens of civilians in reprisal for their suspected collaboration with the opposing Rapid Support Forces, which also carried out unlawful killings of civilians, including mass killings during attacks on North Darfur. Reports of unlawful attacks and killings by government forces and armed groups continued in other long-standing conflicts in Africa, including in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. In Syria, government-affiliated militias perpetrated a wave of mass killings of hundreds of civilians, including sectarian-based killings.

The UN and other bodies recorded thousands of cases of conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence in countries including CAR, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. In Sudan, the Rapid Support Forces used sexual violence in a widespread and systematic manner to humiliate, punish and displace women; the Sudanese Armed Forces also committed sexual violence, including rape, against women and men.

Governments should take meaningful action to stop genocide and collaborate in UN and other forums to address and prevent all crimes under international law.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS AND PRODUCTION

Risking complicity, states continued to carry out and facilitate irresponsible arms transfers, including to actors implicated in the commission of crimes under international law. The USA led the provision of massive military support to Israel. The United Arab Emirates provided arms, including advanced Chinese weaponry and armoured personnel carriers, to Sudan's Rapid Support Forces, which the group used in Darfur.

Pressure on states and arms companies has increased and has had some effect. In the years prior to 2025, Belgium, Canada, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, among other states, had taken some measures to reduce arms supplies to Israel, although they often limited their actions to refusing to authorize new arms export licences while still supplying weapons under old licences; 2025 saw further progress. In Belgium, a court ruled that the Flanders region halt all trans-shipment of arms to Israel, following a ban on arms exports there from its Wallonia region. In Germany, the government announced it would not authorize new export licences to Israel for arms that could be used in Gaza although it subsequently lifted the suspension of arms exports to Israel. In Slovenia, although there have been implementation issues, the government announced it would ban all arms trade with Israel, including transit and imports. In Spain, a comprehensive arms embargo to Israel was enshrined into law. The Hague

Group, a bloc of states committed to "coordinated legal and diplomatic measures" in defence of international law and solidarity with the people of Palestine, comprising Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Malaysia, Namibia, Senegal and South Africa, committed to halting all arms trade with Israel. Global activism against the flow of arms to Israel grew; countrywide strikes in Italy and actions by dockworkers in France, Greece, Italy, Morocco, Spain and Sweden, for instance, aimed to disrupt arms shipment routes to Israel.

However, some states withdrew, or signalled their intention to withdraw, from their commitments relating to banned weapons in 2025. Lithuania withdrew from the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the first state to do so since its adoption in 2008. Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland notified the UN of their intention to withdraw from the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction (the Ottawa Treaty), citing threats from Russia. Officials in Finland and Poland said that their countries would resume domestic production of anti-personnel mines. Ukraine communicated to the UN its intention to suspend the operation of the Ottawa Treaty, against the provisions of the convention itself. Nevertheless, most states recognized the humanitarian, legal and ethical concerns relating to AI and autonomy in weapons systems. In the First Committee of the UN General Assembly, 156 states voted in favour of a resolution calling for work to be completed on elements needed for an international instrument on autonomous weapons systems with a view to future negotiations.

States and companies should stop all irresponsible arms transfers, including all transfers to Israel.[1] States should recommit to the Convention on Cluster Munitions and the Ottawa Treaty and negotiate a treaty prohibiting certain autonomous weapon systems and strictly controlling the use of systems that can be used lawfully.

IMPUNITY

Some states, including Russia and the USA, attacked or undermined international accountability mechanisms in 2025. Most damagingly, the USA issued sanctions against prosecutors and judges of the ICC, as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territory and multiple Palestinian human rights organizations, with an intention to impede the ICC's work and to shield Israeli and US nationals from accountability. Russian domestic courts issued arrest warrants against ICC officials. Other states did essentially nothing to protect these individuals and organizations, or the ICC itself. The EU chose not to activate its blocking statute, a legal instrument to counteract the extraterritorial application of foreign laws that affect EU entities, in response. ICC member states Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their intention to withdraw from the Rome Statute, while Hungary went a step further and submitted a formal notification of its withdrawal in 2026. Several ICC member states, including Hungary, Italy and Tajikistan failed to implement ICC arrest warrants.

Nevertheless, international mechanisms continued important work towards accountability. The ICC issued arrest warrants against two Taliban leaders for the crime against humanity of gender-based persecution against women, girls and LGBTI people since their return to power in Afghanistan in 2021, as well as unsealing warrants against Libyan nationals accused of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The former president of the Philippines was surrendered to the ICC following the implementation of its arrest warrant against him for the crime against humanity of murder, in relation to killings in the "war on drugs". In December, the ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber confirmed 39 charges brought by the Office of the Prosecutor against Joseph Kony, founder and leader of the Lord's Resistance Army in Uganda. In the same month, Germany surrendered to the ICC Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri, a senior member of a powerful Libyan militia who was the subject of an arrest warrant for crimes against humanity and war crimes, in relation to abuses at the notorious Mitiga prison in Libya's capital, Tripoli. The ICC convicted a leader of the Janjaweed militia for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in 2003-2004 during brutal attacks in Darfur, Sudan. The Special Criminal Court, a

hybrid court in CAR, convicted six former members of an armed group for war crimes and crimes against humanity, in relation to the killing of dozens and the displacement of hundreds of others during an attack by the group in 2020.

Meanwhile, new mechanisms were established. The Council of Europe established the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine with the aim of investigating and prosecuting senior government and military leaders from Russia and other states who were responsible for this crime in Ukraine. While the ICC has issued arrest warrants for six Russian officials, including Vladimir Putin, for war crimes and crimes against humanity, it lacks jurisdiction to prosecute the crime of aggression in Ukraine. The UN Human Rights Council established an independent investigative mechanism for Afghanistan.

Governments should support and protect the ICC, including by activating or enacting blocking statutes to protect ICC officials and others involved in ICC-related work from threats and sanctions. They should ensure that ICC arrest warrants are enforced against state officials without claims of immunity from prosecution for their crimes.[2]

PUNITIVE AND AUTHORITARIAN PRACTICES

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

Around the world, state officials and other powerful actors relied on a range of authoritarian practices to silence civil society and evade accountability. Many states used unlawful force to repress protests expressing political and socio-economic grievances in 2025. In Tanzania, a crackdown on participants in post-election protests resulted in the death of hundreds of people. In Nepal, the repression of youth-led protests against corruption and a social media ban left 76 people dead, including protesters and police officers. In Iran, during protests that began on 28 December in the capital, Tehran, and quickly spread nationwide, security forces unlawfully used rifles and shotguns loaded with metal pellets against protesters, leading to killings and injuries. Deaths of protesters resulting from the unlawful use of force were also documented in countries including Angola, Cameroon, Ecuador, Indonesia, Kenya, Madagascar, Pakistan, Peru and Türkiye. Police relied, in some countries, on inadequately regulated forms of weaponry, such as long-range acoustic devices in Serbia, and, in many countries, on the reckless deployment of tear gas.

Some states, including Afghanistan, Belarus, Burkina Faso, China, Cuba, Mali, Myanmar, Nicaragua, North Korea, Pakistan, Russia, Uganda and Venezuela, employed enforced disappearances against human rights defenders, activists, journalists and others as a tool to instil fear. Other states, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, pursued the death penalty as a tool to both instil fear and give a false impression of security and strong government.[3]

Some governments abused counterterrorism and national security laws in 2025 to punish opponents, human rights defenders and other activists for dissent, including peaceful acts of civil disobedience. In Egypt, authorities referred thousands of people to trial on terrorism-related offences, many of whom were targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. In India and the Chinese administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau, authorities used national security and counterterrorism laws expansively to detain human rights defenders and activists. In Venezuela, at least 806 people continued to be arbitrarily detained, many of them forcibly disappeared as the government maintained its policy of repression against any real or perceived dissent. In Tunisia, authorities subjected political opponents to politically motivated mass trials and punitive sentences of up to 45 years' imprisonment under counterterrorism or cybercrime laws. In the UK, authorities proscribed Palestine Action, a direct-action network opposing the UK's involvement in Israel's military operations, based on vague counterterrorism laws; more than 2,000 people were arrested across the UK simply for peacefully opposing the ban. They also prosecuted 16 activists from Just Stop Oil, an environmental activist coalition, for participating in various acts of civil disobedience aimed at

halting the expansion of fossil fuel extraction, leading to prison sentences ranging from five months to five years. In the USA, authorities targeted foreign students expressing support for Palestinians for arrest and deportation and arrested those protesting against a crackdown by Immigration and Customs Enforcement on undocumented migrants.

Governments should stop cracking down on and criminalizing dissent, including peaceful acts of civil disobedience. They should ensure accountability for all violations committed in the context of protests and guarantee effective remedies to victims.

ABUSIVE LAW ENFORCEMENT

Many states were guilty of flouting international human rights law in law enforcement situations during 2025. Some resorted to state-sponsored killings. In September, the US military began bombing boats and openly committing extrajudicial executions in Latin America, the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean based on allegations that the targets were "narco-terrorists" smuggling drugs. In October, civil and military police in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, conducted an anti-drug operation in *favelas* that left more than 120 people dead, most of them Black and living in poverty, with multiple reports of extrajudicial executions. International safeguards and restrictions on the use of the death penalty have also been frequently flouted in the name of security amid increases in executions for drug-related offences.

Across the world, law enforcement agencies also employed techniques that amounted to torture or other ill-treatment. Some used direct contact electric shock weapons, including stun guns and electric shock batons, on the street, at borders, in migrant and refugee detention centres, mental health institutions, police stations, prisons and other places of detention. These inherently abusive devices, which deliver painful shocks at the press of a button, have been used against protesters, students, political opponents, women and girls (including pregnant women), children and human rights defenders, among others. Survivors have suffered burns, numbness, miscarriage, urinary dysfunction, insomnia, exhaustion and profound psychological trauma. States and companies continued to manufacture, promote and sell such equipment. There has also been widespread abuse of projectile electric shock weapons, which can have a legitimate role in law enforcement, but which have often been used in acts of torture and other ill-treatment, underlining the need for strict, human rights-based trade controls on standard law enforcement equipment.[4]

Encouragingly, however, pressure for a UN Torture-Free Trade Treaty grew in 2025. In June, the four UN anti-torture mechanisms used a call for more responsible and accountable policing of protests to back proposals to develop the treaty. Similarly, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a decision encouraging its 46 member states to support the development of an international legally binding instrument on torture-free trade. In July, the EU extended the scope of goods covered by its pioneering Anti-Torture Regulation, strengthening its region-wide measures preventing the transfer of law enforcement equipment to those who would use it for torture and other ill-treatment worldwide.[5]

Governments should stop state-sponsored killings, including those carried out in the name of security. They should redouble efforts to prohibit inherently abusive law enforcement equipment and impose human rights-based trade controls on standard law equipment by supporting the negotiation of a UN Torture-Free Trade Treaty.

DISCRIMINATION

VIOLATIONS OF REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Governments across the world have engaged in authoritarian practices in the context of asylum and migration. Some have authorized unlawful measures or circumvented legislative processes to institute harmful migration policies. In 2025, the USA and European states including Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Poland, as well as other countries, adopted or enforced

extreme measures to carry out deportations and other types of return and prevent irregular arrivals of refugees and migrants, in violation of their human rights obligations. Iran and Pakistan forced the return of or deported more than 1.8 million and 990,000 Afghans respectively, despite ongoing Taliban abuses. Between December 2024 and February 2025, the Ethiopian authorities forcibly returned more than 600 Eritreans to Eritrea, where the government regarded their asylum claims as evidence of treason.

Governments often portray their migration policies and asylum systems as neutral tools to assert state sovereignty, pursue national security and economic interest or avoid excessive burden on public resources. However, the legacies of colonialism and slavery continue to shape systems, laws, policies and practices that discriminate, directly or indirectly, against racialized people around the world. In 2025, Amnesty International denounced systematic practices of structural racism in relation to the asylum and migration policies of several countries, including Canada, the Dominican Republic, France, Libya, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and the USA, as well as, more generally, European countries in the Schengen area.[6] In some cases, governments used digital technologies to reinforce border regimes that discriminate based on race, ethnicity or national origin.[7] Gender-based discrimination sometimes compounded the concerns; in the Dominican Republic, pregnant and breastfeeding Haitian women were deported directly from hospitals.

Governments across the world have generally failed to protect those who are displaced across international borders in the context of climate change. Almost none issued visas dedicated to allowing people to safely migrate from areas particularly affected by climate change. Instead, they force people to navigate existing procedures and pathways that are often discriminatory and restrictive. People most affected include racialized and poor communities, women and other marginalized groups. Older people, people with disabilities and people with medical conditions are often left behind, since they are unable to meet visa requirements, as evidenced in the case of people leaving the Pacific islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Governments should abolish or reform systems of tied visas and precarious residence permits that are discriminatory and exploitative, prevent digital technologies from reinforcing discriminatory border enforcement practices and establish legal frameworks to protect persons displaced in the context of climate change.[8]

RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Across regions, governments have used racist and discriminatory rhetoric when engaging in authoritarian practices in the context of asylum and migration, as well as the repression of dissent and law enforcement. Many countries also reported a rise in hate crimes. In an effort to address the root causes of racial discrimination, affected communities across the world have been campaigning for reparations for historical injustices inherited from colonialism and slavery and their contemporary impact. In 2025, designated by the African Union as the Year for Reparations, the pioneering festival Wakati Wetu convened hundreds of participants – artists, musicians, policymakers, philanthropists, activists and cultural educators – to examine the enduring legacy of the slave trade and colonialism and advance a discourse of reparatory justice. Meanwhile, with 2025 also marking the bicentenary of France's imposition of the "independence debt", which compelled Haiti to compensate the former colonial power for the loss of profits from enslaved labour, activists and organizations from Haiti and its diaspora urged France to provide reparations and otherwise confront its colonial past in the country.

In 2025, the governments of Bolivia, Canada and Ecuador, among other countries, expanded extractive projects in Indigenous Peoples' territories without consulting them in procedures that met international standards on free, prior and informed consent. Indigenous Peoples, often dependent for their cultures and livelihoods on ecosystems, have used legal and political channels to campaign for reparations for the harms of such land expropriation, as well

as of colonization and extermination. In one notable case in 2025, the Avá Guaraní Paranaense Indigenous People achieved – after more than 40 years of struggle – some redress for the dispossession and flooding of their land. The company created by the Brazilian and Paraguayan governments to construct and operate the hydroelectric dam that caused the harms was judicially ordered to finance the purchase of 3,000 hectares of land for affected communities.

Governments of states that engaged in or profited from historical injustices such as colonialism, the slave trade and slavery should implement appropriate reparatory justice measures. The measures should not only provide redress for the injustices, but also dismantle contemporary structures and systems of racial discrimination and inequality.

GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

Women and girls across the world experienced gender-based violence, as well as barriers to protection, justice and remedy, that were sometimes compounded by discrimination on other grounds, including migration status, caste, work, class or religion. In Afghanistan, Taliban decrees banned women from education, work and free movement and fuelled gender-based violence and child marriage. In Nepal, instances of gender-based violence against Dalit women were not investigated. In Syria, Alawite families reporting the abduction of women and girls by unidentified armed men were dismissed. In the Americas, women and girls continued to face alarming levels of violence, including femicides; in Argentina, despite one femicide being recorded approximately every 35 hours, the government eliminated 13 key gender-based violence prevention and response programmes. In Georgia, misogynistic and sexist rhetoric from senior officials was accompanied by gendered abuse against women protesters, including threats of sexual assault and degrading full strip searches. In positive developments, new laws in Bolivia and Burkina Faso prohibited child marriage for girls, as well as boys.

In 2025, as in previous years, there were advances in a few countries to expand abortion rights. In Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Norway, parliaments passed legislation to improve access to abortion and Luxemburg enshrined abortion as a guaranteed freedom in its constitution. In Malawi, the High Court affirmed the right of girls who had survived sexual violence to seek an abortion. However, in the Dominican Republic, a new law imposed a total ban on abortion. In many other countries across the world, existing barriers to access abortion and post-abortion care remained in place.

The onslaught of attacks on a range of rights of LGBTI people, especially transgender people, increased across the world, often fuelled by various anti-gender actors. In Burkina Faso, a new law criminalized consensual same-sex sexual relations. In Hungary and Slovakia, the national parliaments passed amendments to the constitution that would lead to the recognition of only two genders (male and female) and entrench discrimination against same-sex couples. In Canada, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico and the USA, restrictive laws or policies on the rights of transgender people were implemented. In China, a number of online platforms, websites and discussion portals complied with state censorship directives, silencing individual and group discussions about the rights of LGBTI people, as well as women. People in many states across the Middle East and North Africa were arrested and prosecuted for their sexual orientation or gender identity, and some received harsh sentences for consensual same-sex sexual relations. However, court rulings in Japan and Mexico advanced the legal recognition of transgender people.

Governments must end discrimination based on gender and sexuality and implement legal and policy reforms to grant equal and full rights to all women, girls and LGBTI people, including their sexual and reproductive rights. They must ensure all victims and survivors of gender-based violence can access protection, justice and remedy in a timely and effective manner.

ECONOMIC AND CLIMATE INJUSTICE

FAILURE TO TACKLE CLIMATE CRISIS

Food insecurity, forced displacement and destruction of homes and livelihoods caused by disasters made more likely and more intense by climate change, such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, heatwaves and wildfires, have accelerated in countries at all levels of income. As usual it has been those who contributed the least to climate change who have often borne the brunt.

The UN Environment Programme reported in November 2025 that the world is on track to reach roughly 3 degrees Celsius of warming above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century, assuming that countries fulfil the policies they have in place, an increasingly unlikely outcome. For the last few years, governments have done too little to phase out fossil fuels or tackle other key drivers of climate change. In 2025, several governments, including Brazil and Canada, went further, taking significant steps to boost their fossil fuel production and exports, often with taxpayer-funded subsidies. The USA coerced EU members into committing to fossil fuel imports and usage. Only about a third of the parties to the Paris Agreement submitted the required climate action plans (nationally determined contributions) by the 2025 deadline.

In addition to driving climate change, fossil fuels pose significant health risks to the at least 2 billion people living within 5km of more than 18,000 operating fossil fuel infrastructure sites distributed across 170 countries around the world. Of these, more than 520 million are estimated to be children. At least 463 million people are living within 1km of the sites, exposing them to much higher environmental and health risks.[9]

Leaders at the climate change conference in Brazil in November 2025, COP30, failed to build on or even to reaffirm the commitment to "transition away" from fossil fuels agreed upon at COP28. They also failed to deliver scaled-up grants-based finance that lower-income countries need for adaptation.[10] Climate finance provision is an obligation for high-income countries to help lower-income countries adapt to devastating current and future impacts of climate change for which they are not responsible. Needs are estimated to be at least USD 300 billion per year, which governments could fund through fair taxation and the redirection of significant fossil fuel subsidies.[11]

Against this backdrop, it was important that advisory opinions from two international courts – the International Court of Justice and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights – affirmed state obligations to protect human beings and the ecosystems on which they rely from climate damage, including the obligation to phase out fossil fuels. In addition, at COP30, the governments of Colombia and the Netherlands announced they would co-host the First International Conference on Transitioning Away from Fossil Fuels in April 2026.

Governments should commit to a fast, fair and funded fossil fuel phase-out and a just transition, including by endorsing the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and by joining the multilateral effort led by the governments of Colombia and the Netherlands.

VIOLATIONS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Long-standing economic crises and global conflict have overlain these accelerating climate harms and have been worsened by the unjust global economic governance system centred on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, which is no longer fit for purpose, and avoidable decisions by high-income states to defund the realization of economic, social and cultural rights through massive aid cuts.

Inflation has continued to increase the cost of paying debt interest, such that many low- and middle-income countries have suffered from unsustainable debt levels and have been unable to invest in the realization of economic and social rights, including the rights to health, education and social security. Unfair tax systems and the failure to rein in aggressive tax

avoidance and evasion by corporate actors and by wealthy individuals have further deprived governments of much needed revenues for the realization of economic and social rights.

Chaotic and abrupt cuts to international development assistance by the USA resulted in the disruption or closure of health programmes and interruptions in access to life-saving medicines in many low-income countries, leading to particular harm for marginalized groups.[12] These cuts, which are part of a broader trend of aid cuts by high-income countries, including European ones, merely increased the already existing gap of nearly USD 25 billion between the funds required for UN appeals and the funds received. People in urgent need of humanitarian aid – estimated at nearly 300 million, many living in conflict zones – have been particularly badly hit by the shortfall, according to analysis issued in May 2025 by the International Rescue Committee; nearly half the population of each of Haiti, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen suffered from severe hunger, while many others experienced malnutrition.

This is all against a backdrop of lack of sufficient progress on the Sustainable Development Goals, with less than five years to go to meet the 2030 targets. According to a report issued in July 2025 by the UN Secretary-General, just over a third (35%) of targets are on course or advancing moderately, while nearly half (48%) are stagnating. Only 31% are making marginal gains and 17% show no progress at all. Even more troubling, 18% of targets have regressed, falling below their 2015 baseline levels.

The ongoing negotiations for a binding UN tax convention provide an opportunity for states to redress inequities in the global tax system by agreeing on principles that would prevent tax abuse, tax polluters and provide adequate revenue for financing all human rights. Significant progress was made in 2025 to agree the terms of reference, which include the need for the final treaty to align with states' existing human rights obligations. A similar process and mechanism on debt is urgently needed.

Governments should commit at least 0.7% of gross national income to international aid without discrimination, if in a position to do so; address the debt crisis through timely debt relief for all countries in and at risk of debt distress; and support the UN Framework Convention on International Tax Cooperation.

CORPORATE ABUSES

Corporate actors are continuing to fuel and profit from the world's crises. These include conflicts in Gaza, Sudan and Myanmar, the global climate crisis and the destruction of critical habitats, as well as countless incidents where companies abuse the rights of workers and people affected by their operations. States are failing to protect the victims of corporate human rights abuses, with the USA even rolling back regulations and gutting key agencies.

The USA has pushed for the expansion of the fossil fuel industry, while hostility to multilateralism, bellicose rhetoric by key world leaders and economic competition with China have fed a security-driven race for minerals, which are important for the transition to renewable energy and for various military uses. This race is expanding the intensive extraction of natural resources, with companies ignoring human rights to maximize their profits. The ensuing costs, including forced evictions, labour rights abuses and pollution of water, soil and air that harms health and agriculture, have been high.

The introduction by the EU of the Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, a landmark regulation requiring large corporations to respect new rules on human rights, environmental impacts and climate, provided cause for hope; companies in many other countries around the globe would also have to comply with the rules to trade with the EU. The regulation had popular support; polling commissioned by Amnesty International and Global Witness in 2025 found that around three quarters of more than 10,000 respondents in 10 European countries back the directive.[13] The directive also inspired other states, including Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand, to consider introducing similar rules. However, after

lobbying from multinational corporations and other states, including the USA, the European Parliament voted in November 2025 to severely limit its scope.[14]

In addition, the proliferation of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) has had a chilling effect on civil society efforts to fight environmental degradation and other wrongdoing by powerful companies. One such lawsuit led to a US court ordering Greenpeace to pay USD 660 million to the fossil fuel company Energy Transfer, posing an existential threat to the international NGO. The court upheld the company's claims against Greenpeace for opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline, which transports crude oil from North Dakota to Illinois, and found Greenpeace liable for defamation, trespassing and nuisance, among other charges. The company has also attempted to prevent Greenpeace from pursuing proceedings in the Netherlands, where both domestic and EU legal frameworks robustly protect against the use of SLAPPs by corporate entities.[15]

Governments should introduce tough new rules to prevent companies from abusing human rights and hold to account those which do, also ensuring effective remedy for victims.

TECHNOLOGY AND HUMAN RIGHTS HARMS

UNLAWFUL SURVEILLANCE AND DIGITAL REPRESSION

Governments used technology to enable and strengthen authoritarian practices. New investigations in 2025 revealed the scope of deployment of surveillance and censorship tools. Amnesty International uncovered the sale of a commercialized version of China's Great Firewall, the system of internet censorship and filtering used by the Chinese government to control what information people in China can access online, to the Pakistani government and the US government's deployment of surveillance tools against student and migrant protesters. Authorities in some countries, including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Tanzania and South Sudan, imposed restrictions on internet access to restrict the right to freedom of expression, mostly in the context of protests. In Kenya, authorities systematically deployed technology-facilitated repression tactics, including online intimidation, threats, incitement to hatred and unlawful surveillance, as part of a coordinated and sustained campaign to suppress youth-led protests.

Corporate actors have facilitated these practices. Evidence of attacks using highly invasive spyware from companies such as Intellexa, NSO and Paragon continued to emerge, demonstrating the continuing danger posed by the unregulated market for advanced spyware.

Governments should impose an immediate ban on the use or transfer of highly invasive spyware, and impose a moratorium on the use or transfer of all spyware until such time as a system of safeguards is in place that is capable of protecting against human rights abuses in practice.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND HUMAN RIGHTS HARMS

The explosion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools, easily accessible to the public, has continued at an unbridled pace, 2025 seeing the release of numerous new models from Big Tech companies, such as Google, Meta and Microsoft, and major AI players, such as Anthropic and OpenAI. Creating and operating the vast physical infrastructure necessary to achieve industry and investor goals on AI, including the building of data centres, has led to increasing exploitation of natural resources, such as minerals for hardware and water for cooling, and of energy. The human rights impacts have included environmental degradation around data centres and the erosion of labour rights. In response, local activism to combat the rampant construction of data centres has surged in countries including Brazil, Ireland, Mexico and the USA. Similarly, workers in the technology sector, from company headquarters in the USA's Silicon Valley to hubs for outsourced content moderation, data labelling and other support work in Africa and elsewhere, have increasingly organized to campaign for safer working conditions.

Regulation of AI remains inadequate. New governance instruments issued in 2025, such as India's AI Governance Guidelines, were non-binding or very broad. The EU moved to simplify its corporate accountability and technology-related regulation. It was presented as part of a broader move towards cutting "red tape" and increasing "competitiveness". However, these moves aim to weaken existing legislative safeguards, such as the EU AI Act, which is designed to ensure that AI systems used in the EU are safe, transparent, non-discriminatory and respect fundamental rights, and could affect numerous other EU regulatory safeguards.

Governments have continued to invest in digital public infrastructure projects. In 2025, the UK announced a new digital ID system, while the EU has been developing an EU Digital Identity Wallet. This follows a multi-year trend of governments rolling out major digital ID systems, such as Aadhaar in India. These have either accompanied or laid the groundwork for the use of AI in social protection, which has driven inequality. The integration of AI systems into functions like policing, migration and the military has exacerbated human rights violations, particularly for racialized communities.

Governments should enact binding, enforceable and human rights-based regulation to govern AI systems, including a ban on the development and deployment of AI systems that are incompatible with international human rights law.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND HUMAN RIGHTS HARMS

There has been increasing public understanding of the intersection of the harms of social media and other social issues. Amnesty International contributed to this by analysing the recommender system of social media platform X, taking the example of racist riots in the UK in 2024 following an attack in Southport, England which resulted in the death of three young children.[16] False claims alleging the perpetrator of the attack was a Muslim immigrant or asylum seeker gained significant traction online. As X became a hotspot for racist, Islamophobic and xenophobic rhetoric, offline violence erupted, with mobs targeting mosques, refugee shelters and Asian, Black and Muslim communities. Meanwhile, X and Meta, which operates Facebook and Instagram, have significantly cut trust and safety staff – those responsible for keeping the platforms safe, trustworthy and free from harmful behaviour – and rolled back fact-checking programmes.

Many states considered how best to protect children online. Australia issued a new law in 2025 to prohibit children under 16 from using social media, while Malaysia announced plans for a similar blanket ban. While these measures demonstrated commitment to addressing harmful platforms, they restricted young people's right to express themselves and access information online, while failing to address the underlying root issue, namely that social media platforms expose all users to harms through their relentless pursuit of user engagement and exploitation of people's personal data. Amnesty International highlighted in 2025 how easily children and young people expressing an interest in mental health could be drawn into "rabbit holes" of depressive and suicidal content on TikTok.[17]

More organizations and activists have challenged the large companies that operate social media platforms. In one case against Meta in Kenya that raises significant legal questions regarding Facebook's algorithmic practices, a significant preliminary victory was registered in 2025. The Kenyan High Court affirmed its jurisdiction to determine constitutional rights violations in the face of a challenge from Meta. The case had been brought by two Ethiopians and the Kenyan Katiba Institute, who allege that Facebook promoted dangerous online content during the armed conflict in Ethiopia in 2020-2022, and has been supported by Amnesty International.[18] The ruling signifies an important step toward ensuring that marginalized communities can access justice regardless of their geographic location and challenges the prevailing notion that countries outside the USA and Europe exist merely as markets for extracting profit.

Social media companies should overhaul their business models to prevent human rights harms and address those impacts when they occur. States should put in place stronger regulation to protect all users and robustly enforce existing regulations.

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AFRICA REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Major armed conflicts in the region continued largely unabated, while diplomatic efforts to end them failed to stop associated violations, protect civilians or hold perpetrators to account. External actors continued to fuel the conflicts, including by supplying ammunition and weapons to the parties involved.

The AU's 2014 goal to "eliminate hunger and food insecurity by 2025" was unrealized. Fragile health systems in the region came under further strain due to US government aid cuts, resulting in essential health services being reduced, suspended or cancelled.

Governments treated protests as a threat, violently dispersing, unduly restricting or banning them. Repression escalated in the context of elections, with military-led regimes clamping down on critical voices in the name of national security.

Millions of people continued to be displaced by conflict and climate-induced disasters, with Sudan remaining the scene of the largest and fastest-growing displacement crisis worldwide.

Governments and the international community failed to protect people in the region from droughts and floods exacerbated by climate change.

Societal norms and anti-rights actors continued to fuel discrimination and gender-based violence against women and girls. Meanwhile, governments weaponized legal systems to target and discriminate against LGBTI people.

Authorities undermined efforts to combat impunity and to ensure accountability, jeopardizing access to justice and effective remedies for victims and survivors of the most serious crimes.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

The conflict in Sudan continued to escalate, with the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) recapturing the capital, Khartoum, and Gezira state from the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) during January and February. As they regained control, the SAF and their allies targeted civilians with reprisal attacks. In Gezira state, they targeted members of the Kanabi community, accusing them of collaborating with the RSF. They killed civilians, burned homes and looted property and livestock. In October, the RSF seized control of El Fasher, North Darfur, following an 18-month siege of the city. After the takeover, RSF fighters carried out mass civilian killings, subjected women and girls to rape and other sexual violence and took hostages for ransom. The RSF also escalated attacks in the Kordofan region, including against the town of Bara in North Kordofan, where they carried out summary killings. Meanwhile, external actors continued to fuel the conflict, supplying weapons to parties to the conflict. The United Arab Emirates provided advanced Chinese weaponry to the RSF, which the group used in Darfur.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the conflict in the east intensified in January and February when the March 23 Movement (M23), a Rwandan-backed armed group, captured the cities of Goma and Bukavu in North and South-Kivu provinces, respectively. It unlawfully killed civilians, and subjected detainees to torture and other ill-treatment, and inhumane conditions. Its fighters attacked hospitals in Goma and abducted patients and caregivers and, in some cases, Congolese soldiers hiding in the hospitals. Between 28 January and 9 April, M23 killed more than 200 people in Goma. It also killed at least 319 others between 9 and 21 July in Rutshuru territory. Armed groups operating in Ituri province were also brutal; the Cooperative for the Development for Congo/Union of Revolutionaries for the Defence of Congolese People killed more than 150 people in January and February. Between July and August, the Allied Democratic Forces (a Ugandan armed group) killed more than 250 civilians in Ituri and in Lubero, North Kivu.

Reports of unlawful attacks and killings by government forces and armed groups continued in other long-standing conflicts in the region, including in Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic (CAR), Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. In Burkina Faso, the military and its allied militia, the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland, killed at least 58 civilians in and around Solenzo, a town in the Bankui region, between 10 and 11 March. Video footage of the massacre was widely circulated on social media. In Mali, the military, in some cases aided by members of the Wagner group (a Russian private military group), were implicated in multiple cases of summary executions of civilians. In April, dozens of men were executed by gunshot and their bodies dumped near the Kwala military camp in the Koulikoro region. In May, soldiers cut the throats of between 23 and 27 men whose bodies were buried in mass graves. Meanwhile, Mali's humanitarian situation worsened as armed groups imposed blockades on several towns and cities, including the capital Bamako. In February, around 34 civilians were killed in an attack by the Islamic State in the Sahel on a civilian convoy that was being escorted by Malian security forces near Kobé village, close to the city of Gao. Mozambique's conflict between government forces and the armed group Al-Shabaab in Cabo Delgado province spread in November to Nampula province. It resulted in scores of civilian deaths, mainly in Cabo Delgado.

Parties to armed conflicts must protect civilians by ending targeted and indiscriminate attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.

CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Incidents of conflict-related sexual violence continued at an alarming rate, including in CAR, the DRC, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. In CAR, where the practice remained widespread and under-reported, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic logged 295 cases in a nine-month period, for which members of the Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation armed group were the main alleged perpetrators, followed by government forces. In eastern DRC, incidents of sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, were staggeringly high. According to the UN, between January and September there were more than 81,000 rapes, an increase of 31.5% compared with the same period in 2024. Documented violations in eastern DRC included gang rape against women by M23, the Congolese army and Wazalendo (a coalition of armed groups, some backed by the Congolese army). In Sudan, the RSF used sexual violence in a widespread and systematic manner to humiliate, punish, assert control, inflict fear and displace women and their communities, including in Khartoum and in towns and villages in the states of Gezira, and north and south Darfur. The UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (FFM) reported that the SAF also committed sexual violence, including rape, sexual harassment and sexualized torture against women and men, particularly during detention in the White Nile, Blue Nile, Khartoum and Northern states.

Parties to armed conflicts must issue clear orders to their members or forces, prohibiting acts of sexual and gender-based violence; they must ensure support for protection, care, treatment, and pyscho-social support mechanisms for survivors in areas under their control.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

RIGHT TO FOOD

Climate, economic and conflict-related shocks exacerbated the region's hunger crisis. As of July, more than 307 million people, more than 20% of the region's population, were affected by hunger. In several countries, food shortages were exacerbated by aid cuts, including those by the US government. In Madagascar, US government aid cuts compounded the hunger crisis caused by severe climate change-related droughts. Around 8,000 children in the Grand Sud

region were admitted to specialist health centres in February with severe acute malnutrition. In Malawi, where poor harvests contributed to food insecurity, malnutrition rates rose sharply from 4.4 to 7.1%.

People in countries wracked by conflict faced particularly dire conditions, with at least 50% of the populations of South Sudan and Sudan experiencing acute food insecurity. In South Sudan, an estimated 28,000 people experienced catastrophic hunger. In Sudan, famine conditions were confirmed in various areas, and millions were at risk of starvation. In Mali, food security was undermined by blockades imposed by armed groups on several towns and cities, including Gossi, Léré, Diafarabé, Kayes and Nioro du Sahel.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

Millions of children across the region were denied access to education due to conflict and insecurity. In Cameroon's North-west and South-west regions, 14,829 schools were closed, disrupting the education of more than 3 million children and increasing the risk of recruitment of children into non-state armed groups. In Chad, UNICEF reported that 849,000 children were out of school in the eastern region as of 31 March. In Mali, 2,036 schools were non-functional, affecting 618,000 children. In South Sudan, more than 70% of children were out of school, according to UNICEF.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Due to the US government aid cuts, the provision of essential health services for HIV, malaria, tuberculosis, and sexual and reproductive health was interrupted or scaled down in countries, including Cameroon, CAR, Ghana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, South Sudan and Zambia. In CAR, the UN Population Fund said in May that the cuts jeopardized sexual and reproductive health services for nearly 70,000 women and girls, amid high levels of reported rape, child marriage and female genital mutilation. In Lesotho, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa and Zambia, the cuts terminated funding for tuberculosis and HIV services, resulting in the closure of clinics and staff retrenchments. In Lesotho alone, around 1,500 health workers employed through donor-supported programmes reportedly lost their jobs.

FORCED EVICTIONS

Governments continued to carry out forced evictions, leaving many people homeless and destitute. In Ethiopia, thousands of people were forcibly evicted in 60 cities, including the capital, Addis Ababa, under the Corridor Development project, described by authorities as an urban development project to "[improve] infrastructure, housing and public spaces". Authorities harassed residents who challenged their eviction and intimidated people covering the issue for media outlets. In Nigeria, at least four people were killed in February during a violent forced eviction carried out by Kano state government at Rimin Auzinawa, in Ungogo local government authority. In March, more than 10,000 people were rendered homeless when the Lagos state government carried out a violent forced eviction of the Ilaje-Otumara community.

Governments must ensure access to economic and social rights, including swift action to prevent hunger, and identify and address the causes of food insecurity; endorse and implement the Safe Schools Declaration, and double their efforts to ensure children's access to education in conflict zones. They should allocate at least 15% of national budgets to the public health sector in line with the Abuja Declaration and ensure that policies do not impede access to the right to health. They should end and prohibit forced evictions, and adopt moratoriums on mass evictions, pending adequate legal and procedural safeguards to ensure compliance with international human rights laws and standards.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Many lives were lost when security forces repressed protests with unlawful, including lethal, force. In Tanzania, a deadly crackdown on post-election protesters resulted in hundreds of deaths between late October and early November. In Kenya, at least 19 people were killed on 25 June when the police used unlawful force against youth-led protests marking the anniversary of protests that had resulted in at least 60 deaths in 2024. At least 38 others were killed on 7 July during nationwide protests marking the 35th anniversary of the Saba Saba Day pro-democracy demonstrations. In Cameroon, at least 48 people were killed in October during protests contesting the president's re-election to an eighth term, according to a Reuters report citing UN sources. In Madagascar, at least 22 people were killed in September and October during protests against poor governance. In Togo, civil society organizations reported the deaths of seven people following the violent repression of protests in the capital, Lome, in late June.

In other countries, including Angola, Botswana, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Eswatini and Niger, authorities unduly restricted, prohibited or imposed blanket bans on protests or gatherings, especially those organized by the opposition or government critics. People who still dared to protest were beaten or arbitrarily detained. In Côte d'Ivoire, more than 1,600 opposition supporters were arrested during protests in October that had been unlawfully banned by the authorities. Even demonstrations demanding workers' rights were treated as a threat, be they medical workers in Ethiopia or those attending a National Union of State Suppliers sit-in in Côte d'Ivoire. Protesters also faced criminal charges solely for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly. For example, more than 500 protesters in Kenya were charged with various offences, including under anti-terrorism legislation.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The right to freedom of expression remained under threat across the region as government critics faced arrest, arbitrary detention and judicial harassment. In Angola, António Frederico Gonçalves was arbitrarily detained for more than five months without charge in connection with an online video he allegedly posted calling on Angolans to show unity with Ibrahim Traoré, Burkina Faso's interim president. In Guinea, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe several individuals were imprisoned for "insulting the president".

In Kenya, Albert Ojwang died in police custody in suspicious circumstances following his arrest in connection to an online post calling for government accountability. In Mali, former prime minister Moussa Mara was sentenced to one year's imprisonment for a post on X in which he said he would "fight by all means" for the rights of those imprisoned for expressing their opinions. In Lesotho, social media activist Tšolo Thakeli was charged with sedition for posting a video criticizing the government's economic record, a charge that had a chilling effect on other activists and social media users. In Tanzania, the prosecution of opposition leader Tundu Lissu for treason, simply for urging his supporters to boycott the 29 October general elections, represented the broader crackdown on dissenting voices in the country.

There was no let-up in the harassment of journalists who were arbitrarily arrested and detained in many countries, including Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, CAR, Ethiopia, Niger, Nigeria, Mozambique, Somalia, Uganda and Zimbabwe. In Burkina Faso authorities went even further, using targeted conscription to silence journalists and other dissenting voices. In Ethiopia, many journalists were taken into custody by masked men and held incommunicado. In Uganda security forces attacked tens of journalists covering parliamentary elections in Kawempe in the capital, Kampala.

Throughout the region, it was common for authorities to sanction independent media outlets, including in Benin, Burkina Faso, Eritrea, Guinea, Kenya, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Togo

and Uganda. Local and international outlets were targeted, ranging from the 48-hour suspension of Vida and Encontro radio stations in Mozambique to the suspension of Le Patriote newspaper in Benin for around five months. In Kenya, regulators issued a directive ordering radio and television stations to cease live broadcasts of the 25 June protests, claiming they would violate the Constitution. In Nigeria, regulators banned the broadcasting of singer Eedris Abdulkareem's song, "Tell Your Papa", for being critical of the government. In Uganda, journalists from NTV Uganda and the Daily Monitor newspaper were banned from covering the presidency and parliamentary proceedings in March and October, respectively.

Restrictions on internet access were also frequently imposed. In South Sudan, authorities issued an order to internet service providers to block social media platforms for between 30 and 90 days. In Togo, access to social media platforms, particularly Facebook and TikTok, was disrupted between the end of June and September. In Tanzania, the internet was frequently blocked to silence dissenting voices, including in the aftermath of the October elections.

Elsewhere, including in CAR, Kenya and Sierra Leone, governments passed laws that threatened to further curtail the right to freedom of expression.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Clampdowns on the right to freedom of association intensified in several countries. In Burkina Faso, Cameroon, CAR and Niger, NGOs, trades unions and other associations were suspended, dissolved or prohibited from carrying out their activities. In Burkina Faso, the International NGO Safety Organisation was suspended for three months. Eight of its staff members were charged with treason and espionage simply for exercising their right to freedom of association. In Cameroon, authorities arbitrarily suspended the activities of the Central African Human Rights Defenders Network and charged its board president and executive director with various offences including "financing terrorism".

Political organizing was stifled in several countries. In Guinea, three main opposition parties were suspended for three months, while in Mali all political parties were dissolved. In Uganda, security forces cordoned-off and raided the opposition National Unity Party premises in Kampala on four occasions between February and June. Elsewhere, including in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia and Zimbabwe, governments adopted or proposed new laws that raised concerns about further restrictions on the right to freedom of association.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Enforced disappearances remained endemic in the region. In countries including Burkina Faso, Burundi, the DRC, Guinea, Kenya, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Tanzania and Uganda, the practice was widespread. There was a growing trend towards enforced disappearances that were transnational in nature, especially in East Africa. In March, Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai was abducted in Nairobi, Kenya, by masked men in an unmarked vehicle. She was held for several hours during which her abductors choked and intimidated her. She was later dumped in an isolated spot. In May, Ugandan human rights defender Agather Atuhaire and Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi were arbitrarily arrested by security officers in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, where they had arrived to observe Tundu Lissu's trial. They were held incommunicado in undisclosed locations and tortured for four days, before being forcibly deported to their respective countries. On 1 October, armed masked men in military uniform abducted Kenyan human rights activists Bob Njagi and Nicholas Oyoo in Kampala, Uganda, after they attended opposition leader Robert Kyagulanyi's election campaign rally. Their whereabouts remained undisclosed until 8 November when Uganda's President Museveni confirmed they had been arrested by security forces for being "experts in riots". They were freed on the day of the president's announcement and handed over to Kenyan authorities.

Governments must ensure law enforcement complies with international human rights law and standards, including on the use of force; end all forms of harassment against those

exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. They must refrain from shutting down or interrupting the internet, digital platforms or telecommunication services; ensure respect for media freedom, including by allowing media outlets to operate independently. They must end the use of enforced disappearances, and immediately disclose the fate and/or whereabouts of the disappeared; and create a safe and enabling environment for human rights defenders, civil society and opposition members to function.

RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

The rights of internally displaced people, refugees and migrants continued to be violated across the region. Between December 2024 and February 2025, more than 600 Eritreans who had sought refuge in Ethiopia were forcibly returned to Eritrea, where the government regarded their asylum claims as evidence of treason. In February, M23 closed several internally displaced people's camps near Goma in the DRC, further displacing tens of thousands of people. In April, the RSF attacked Zamzam camp for internally displaced people in North Darfur, Sudan, reportedly killing between 300 and 1,500 people, most of them women and children. Also in April, several Cameroonians were expelled from Equatorial Guinea without prior notification to the Cameroonian embassy. In South Africa, xenophobic vigilante group Operation Dudula harassed migrants and denied them entry to hospitals and health clinics, leading to the death in July of a one-year-old baby in Johannesburg.

In several countries, dire living conditions in camps for internally displaced people and refugees were worsened by the US government aid cuts. Meanwhile, Eswatini, Equatorial Guinea, Rwanda, South Sudan and Uganda, among others, considered or entered bilateral arrangements with the US to accept third-country nationals deported from the USA. Under such arrangements Eswatini and South Sudan received 15 and eight third-country nationals, respectively, most of whom remained arbitrarily detained at the end of the year. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) expressed concern at the lack of transparency surrounding the bilateral arrangements and the lack of adequate protections for deportees in receiving countries.

Governments must protect refugees and migrants from refoulement and mass expulsions; disclose the whereabouts and legal status of third-party nationals received under bilateral arrangements with the USA, guarantee their rights, and ensure that any return is voluntary and rights-compliant.

DISCRIMINATION AND MARGINALIZATION

Gender-based violence, including femicide, persisted across the region. An Afrobarometer survey in January showed that 41% of people in Eswatini identified gender-based violence as the most important women's rights issue in the country. In Kenya, 129 femicide cases were reported between January and March. The government established a working group to coordinate responses to such crimes, although its visibility and impact remained unclear. In Côte d'Ivoire, South Africa, Zambia and elsewhere hundreds of women held protests to demand urgent action to address violence against women and girls. In South Africa, where the protest in November coincided with the G20 Summit in Johannesburg, the government declared gender-based violence levels a national disaster.

Positive responses recorded elsewhere included Burkina Faso's new Code of Persons and Families that harmonized the legal age of marriage at 18 for both men and women, and strengthened recognition of customary and religious marriages. In Chad, a new law on the

prevention of violence against women and girls was adopted. In Sierra Leone, a new child rights law prohibiting early and forced child marriage took effect. The AU Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls was adopted in February, creating a continental legal framework, although sections of civil society were critical of its apparent weak provisions.

Governments continued to weaponize legal systems to target and discriminate against LGBTI people. In Burkina Faso, the new Code of Persons and Families criminalized consensual same-sex sexual relations. In Ghana, lawmakers reintroduced a bill further criminalizing LGBTI people. In South Africa the killing of Muhsin Hendricks, the first openly gay imam and an LGBTI human rights defender, while on his way to officiate two marriages, exemplified the dangers faced by LGBTI people in the country. Zambia's Constitutional Court dismissed a petition seeking to have Sections 155(a)(c) of the Penal Code, which criminalizes same-sex sexual relations, declared unconstitutional on grounds of discrimination on the basis of sex.

Governments must combat all forms of discrimination and gender-based violence against women and girls and LGBTI people, including addressing root causes, and increasing efforts to eliminate harmful practices. They must repeal anti-LGBTI legislation and refrain from efforts to criminalize same-sex sexual relations.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Governments and the international community failed to protect people in the region from droughts and floods exacerbated by climate change. In Somalia, droughts undermined the rights to food and water and contributed to internal and cross-border displacement. The government's efforts to budget for climate adaptation were undermined by inadequate climate financing from high-income and high-emitting countries. In Madagascar, where many continued to be displaced by severe droughts, government climate strategies lacked effective assessments to ascertain the needs of displaced populations. Severe drought also continued to affect large parts of Namibia, adversely affecting crop production and rural livelihoods. Despite these enduring impacts, Namibian authorities ended the drought relief programme for approximately 1.4 million people. In South Africa, some areas of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern and Western Cape provinces experienced extreme flooding, resulting in loss of lives and destruction of homes, especially in informal settlements. In a positive step, Togo's president enacted a law to better regulate the effects of climate change.

Elsewhere, environmental degradation continued rapidly. In Congo, the government approved the escalation of oil exploration activities within Conkouati-Douli National Park, ignoring warnings from NGOs that the approval endangered critical habitats and threatened the livelihoods of thousands of park residents. In Zambia, 176 residents of Chambishi town in the Copperbelt province sued mining company Sino-Metals Leach Ltd after the February collapse of its tailings dam, alleging it released toxic waste into the Mwambashi and Kafue rivers, although its Chinese parent company stated the claim is "clearly unfounded". According to the lawsuit, approximately 300,000 households that made their living from fishing were affected, while the government identified only 449 affected households.

Governments must take immediate measures to protect their populations from the impacts of climate change and strengthen their preparedness for extreme weather events, including by seeking international assistance and climate finance from higher income countries, especially those most responsible for climate change, and by refraining from building new fossil fuel infrastructure.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Victims and survivors of gross human rights violations and crimes under international law continued to be denied the right to truth, justice and reparation. In the DRC, victims of the six-

day war in Kisangani in June 2000 were still waiting for justice. In Eswatini, there was no progress in the investigation into the January 2023 killing of human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko.

Justice and accountability efforts were often undermined by authorities. In March, former Guinean head of state Moussa Dadis Camara, convicted of crimes against humanity in 2024, received a presidential pardon, jeopardizing access to justice for victims of the 2009 Conakry stadium massacre. In September, Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger announced their intention to withdraw from the ICC. Meanwhile, the process to establish the AU-backed Hybrid Court for South Sudan remained stalled.

A few positive developments were recorded. In June, the Special Criminal Court in CAR convicted six former members of the Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic armed group for crimes against humanity and war crimes. However, four of them were tried in their absence. In July, the ICC sentenced former Anti-Balaka leaders Alfred Yékatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona to 15 and 12 years' imprisonment, respectively, for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in 2013 and 2014 in CAR. In September, in connection with Sudan, the FFM published its second report. This was followed in October by the publication of the first report of the ACHPR's Joint Fact-Finding Mission on the Situation in Sudan. Also in October, the ICC convicted Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as "Ali Kushayb", a principal leader of the Janjaweed militia, of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur between August 2003 and March 2004. In the same month the ACHPR found the DRC accountable for widespread acts of sexual violence, including rape, committed in 2011 by members of government forces against more than 50 women in Fizi territory, South Kivu.

Governments must strengthen efforts to fight impunity by undertaking prompt, thorough, independent, impartial, effective and transparent investigations into crimes under international law and other serious or grave human rights violations and abuses, bringing suspected perpetrators to justice and ensuring victims' access to an effective remedy.

AMERICAS REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Governments in the Americas region increased efforts to stifle dissent. Protests were repressed and protesters criminalized. There were attacks against journalists and measures were taken to censor the media.

Human rights defenders continued to face harassment, attacks and criminalization. The authorities obstructed the functioning of their organizations, including through arbitrary controls over funding.

Unlawful use of force by the authorities resulted in human rights violations

Arbitrary detention and unfair trials continued, demonstrating that states' use of punitive power was not subject to adequate controls and often served political interests.

People deprived of their liberty endured inhumane detention conditions. There were reports of torture and other ill-treatment, particularly in the context of political repression.

Enforced disappearances persisted throughout the region, with governments failing to take preventive measures and thus allowing impunity to prevail.

Impunity for human rights violations and crimes under international law also continued, although some positive results were achieved in cases dating back many years.

The lack of state guarantees regarding economic and social rights particularly affected marginalized groups. People faced difficulties accessing essential public services such as education, healthcare and clean water.

The 30th UN Climate Change Conference (COP30) in Brazil yielded limited results and failed to renew the commitment to phase out fossil fuels. States did not adopt sufficient measures to address the climate crisis.

Gender-based violence persisted, including femicide / feminicide and sexual violence; impunity prevailed. Access to abortion was hindered by law and in practice, and reproductive health services were not adequately guaranteed.

States also failed to guarantee Indigenous Peoples' rights to their territories, lands and resources and did not put in place truly free, prior and informed consultation and consent processes in issues affecting them.

LGBTI people continued to suffer violence and discrimination without receiving protection from governments. Transgender people were particularly vulnerable and several countries passed laws and policies undermining their rights.

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were exposed to alarming levels of violence and discrimination in a context of growing racist and xenophobic rhetoric across the region. Many faced barriers to accessing their rights.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Civic space deteriorated across the region as a result of the violation of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

During the year, there were undue restrictions on protests in Argentina, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay, Puerto Rico, the USA and Venezuela. On several occasions, the authorities used unlawful force to disperse peaceful demonstrations or to repress those participating in them. Impunity for similar events in previous years continued in 2025. During and after the protests, participants were subjected to arbitrary detention and criminal investigations, highlighting state use of punitive power to curb freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

In several countries in the region, the trend of reforming or creating laws to unduly limit the right to freedom of association continued. Legislation adopted in Ecuador, El Salvador, Paraguay, Peru and Venezuela generated concern due to the resulting negative effects on the

existence and functioning of civil society organizations, including media outlets. For example, the Law on the Creation of the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation was amended to establish arbitrary and disproportionate controls on organizations.

Cases of harassment, censorship and attacks against media professionals were recorded in Argentina, Brazil, Cuba, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, the USA and Venezuela. The attacks endangered the lives and personal integrity of journalists, with murders of journalists being documented in Colombia, Ecuador, Honduras, Mexico and Peru. At the same time, criminalization and judicial harassment of journalists continued. In Argentina, President Javier Milei sued at least eight journalists for defamation and insults; in Guatemala, a judge ordered that journalist Jose Rubén Zamora be returned to prison, although the proceedings against him were riddled with irregularities.

Unlawful digital surveillance and other forms of interference in communications and private life intensified. In Argentina, the Ministry of National Security empowered the federal police to monitor individuals on social media without a warrant. Mexico approved a legal reform that established the creation of an identity document including biometric data, which posed a risk to privacy.

States must repeal laws and practices that obstruct the exercise of the right to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and allow civil society participation in public affairs.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders faced criminalization, harassment, attacks and killings in almost all countries in the region.

Environmental and land defenders were at particular risk of criminalization and violence. In Bolivia, 12 people protecting the Tariquía National Flora and Fauna Reserve were charged; in Canada, three Indigenous persons were sentenced to community service for defending Wet'suwet'en territory; in Chile, human rights defender María Ignacia González disappeared; and in Peru, environmental defenders Hipólito Quispe Huamán Conde and Isai Shuk Shawit were killed. In Colombia, violence against human rights defenders in 2025 was expected to exceed the two preceding years.

Some countries saw continued attempts to undermine the ability of human rights organizations to function properly. For example, in El Salvador, the Foreign Agents Law imposed a 30% tax on international funding received by organizations and granted powers to the executive to apply fines or cancel legal entity status. In Nicaragua, the Ministry of the Interior issued regulations in March that, in practice, facilitated the arbitrary cancellation of organizations' legal status and increased the risk that they would have to cease their activities.

Human rights defenders and organizations experienced harassment. For example, in the Dominican Republic, those working on issues related to racial justice, gender and migration reported acts of digital harassment and disclosure of personal data. Furthermore, in Paraguay, a parliamentary commission took legal action against five organizations to access sensitive information on their activities and the use of funding received.

States must ensure that human rights defenders can carry out their work without obstacles or fear of reprisal.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Authorities in the region used excessive and unnecessary force, resulting in human rights violations in operations that particularly affected protesters and people suffering multiple discrimination.

In Brazil, a police operation in Rio de Janeiro, which contravened international standards applicable to police, mobilized thousands of civil and military agents and killed more than 120 people.

Police in the USA shot and killed 1,143 people in 2025, disproportionately affecting the Black population. In June, local law enforcement unlawfully used less lethal weapons to suppress peaceful protests near a federal building where immigrants were being held in the city of Los Angeles, injuring six people. During drug trafficking control operations in the Caribbean and the Pacific, the USA killed at least 123 people in what appeared to be extrajudicial executions.

In Honduras, civil society organizations reported human rights violations perpetrated by security forces during the state of emergency, in particular arbitrary detention, excessive use of force and torture and other ill-treatment.

In Peru, the police used unnecessary and disproportionate force during protests, killing protester Eduardo Mauricio Ruiz Sanz, who died from a gunshot wound, and injuring dozens of people.

States must ensure that the use of force complies with international human rights law and standards, in particular with regard to the principle of non-discrimination.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Several countries in the region carried out arbitrary detentions for political reasons, mainly of individuals deemed to be in opposition to the government, who were generally subjected to trial without due process guarantees.

In Cuba, arbitrary detention was used to repress those considered dissidents. In January, at least 211 political prisoners were released, but the authorities imposed arbitrary restrictions on their rights and some had their parole revoked in retaliation for continuing their political activism and defence of human rights.

In El Salvador, arbitrary detentions continued; by the end of the year, more than 90,000 people were being held without sufficient evidence. The Legislative Assembly disproportionately extended the duration of pretrial detention and opened the possibility of mass trials without individual determination of criminal responsibility.

Politically motivated arbitrary detention continued in Nicaragua, with local organizations documenting at least 60 cases during the year.

In Venezuela, new politically motivated arbitrary detentions were recorded and, at year's end, at least 806 people remained in detention for political reasons, according to social organizations. Those charged were assigned public defenders who did not represent them effectively, were denied knowledge of the charges against them, and were tried in courts that lacked independence.

In Bolivia, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, the USA and Venezuela, undermining of judicial independence intensified.

Authorities must stop using the judiciary to target dissenting voices and take all necessary measures to prevent arbitrary detention and guarantee the right to a fair trial.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

People deprived of their liberty endured inhumane conditions of detention and overcrowding was a structural and recurring problem.

In Bolivia, the Ombudsperson's Office warned of extreme prison overcrowding, with more than 33,000 people imprisoned in a system with capacity for approximately 16,000. In Ecuador and El Salvador, those deprived of their liberty continued to suffer overcrowding and a lack of adequate food and healthcare, as well as violent deaths. In Haiti, the juvenile detention

system was overcrowded and children were housed with adults in at least one detention centre. In Uruguay, deteriorating and unsanitary detention conditions persisted, including overcrowding.

People deprived of their liberty and those defending their rights reported acts of torture in detention in several countries, including Chile, Cuba, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, the USA and Venezuela.

In El Salvador, torture and other ill-treatment in prisons continued in the form of beatings, sexual humiliation, sleep deprivation and collective punishment, among other practices. In addition, the number of deaths in state custody since the start of the state of emergency reached 470.

In Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela, people perceived to be opponents of the government were at particular risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Nicaragua repealed Article 36 of its Constitution, which expressly prohibited torture.

States must guarantee the rights and dignity of people deprived of their liberty.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Enforced disappearances continued throughout the region and remained unpunished. These were clearly linked to the repression of dissent in some countries, while in others they were the result of the implementation of security policies.

In Cuba, enforced disappearances were a repressive strategy used against defenders, activists, artists and journalists. In Nicaragua, several people detained for political reasons were in a situation of enforced disappearance due to the concealment of their whereabouts and denial of visits. In Venezuela, the practice of enforced disappearance continued, often beginning with arbitrary detention by state agents, followed by a lack of information, a refusal to acknowledge the detention and, crucially, the deliberate concealment of the fate and whereabouts of the detained person.

In Ecuador, the Attorney General's Office opened investigations into the possible enforced disappearance of 43 people following security operations carried out by the armed forces in 2024. In El Salvador, a group of immigrants and asylum seekers illegally expelled from the USA and transferred to the Terrorism Confinement Centre (CECOT) in March were subjected to enforced disappearance.

In Colombia, the International Committee of the Red Cross documented 136 new disappearances in relation to armed conflict between January and May, including 26 children or adolescents.

In light of the crisis of disappearances in Mexico, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances activated Article 34 of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance for the first time, to determine whether disappearances in the country were systematic or widespread.

States must completely abolish the practice of enforced disappearance and take all necessary measures to prevent disappearances committed by non-state actors.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Rulings were issued in cases of serious human rights violations. In Chile, three members of the *Carabineros* (police force) were convicted for the attack on Moisés Ordenes while he was peacefully demonstrating in 2019. In Colombia, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace issued its first sentences for war crimes and crimes against humanity. In Mexico, a civilian court sentenced four military officers for the extrajudicial execution of five young people in 2023. In Uruguay, 15 convictions were handed down against members of the military and the police for

acts constituting crimes against humanity committed during the civil-military regime of the 1970s and 1980s.

In Argentina, the trial in their absences of 10 people accused of the 1994 attack against the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association centre was authorized. In Guatemala, a suspect who had been on the run for years was arrested and put on trial for his possible role in the murder of Archbishop Juan José Gerardi in 1998. In Honduras, a court decided that three men accused of the murder of environmentalist Juan López in 2024 should stand trial.

There were also setbacks and reversals in other cases. In Bolivia, the proceedings against police and military officers in the context of several massacres that occurred in 2019 were declared null and void. In Chile, the Public Prosecutor's Office decided not to proceed with 1,509 cases related to human rights violations committed during the social uprising of 2019. In Colombia, jurisdictional disputes between the ordinary and military criminal justice systems continued in investigations related to possible human rights violations or crimes under international law committed by military and police officers. In Guatemala, a court decision contravened international human rights standards by granting house arrest to a military officer convicted of serious human rights violations in the Molina Theissen case. In Peru, a law granted amnesty to all members of the armed forces, the national police and self-defence committees investigated, prosecuted, tried and convicted in relation to acts constituting serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, committed between 1980 and 2000.

The Venezuela investigation before the International Criminal Court (ICC) made little progress and the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC decided to close its offices in Caracas in December.

States must guarantee truth, justice and reparation for human rights violations and crimes under international law and bring those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice, with all due process guarantees.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

States in the region did not guarantee economic and social rights, with marginalized groups particularly affected.

The right to health was not guaranteed for all people. Sudden cuts to US foreign aid at the beginning of the year had a negative impact on access to health services in Guatemala and Haiti. Cuban authorities acknowledged in July that only 30% of required essential medicines were available. In Paraguay, the health system crisis continued due to lack of public investment, which was under the minimum 6% of GDP recommended by WHO. In Uruguay, access to mental health services was inadequate and suicide rates were concerning.

The right to education was affected by budget cuts and violence. In El Salvador, student enrolments in public education decreased by 25,000 in the first months of the year. In Haiti, violence hindered access to education.

In Argentina, the minimum pension failed to cover basic needs and more than 3 million older people were living in poverty.

Obstacles to accessing essential public services persisted. In Cuba, the electricity supply was in a state of constant crisis during the year, with frequent massive blackouts affecting millions of people. In Guatemala, access to clean water and decent sanitation was profoundly unequal. In Haiti, the humanitarian crisis continued, affecting access to food, healthcare and drinking water, among other rights. Water and electricity outages persisted in Venezuela, as did protests related to basic services.

States must ensure that everyone has equal access to economic and social rights, without discrimination.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

COP30, held in November in Brazil, was limited in scope and did not reaffirm a commitment to transition away from fossil fuels. Similarly, no firm commitment was reached for high-income countries to increase the subsidy-based financing that low-income countries needed for adaptation.

Even before COP30, states in the region had failed to take sufficient action to address the climate crisis, which continued to have an impact on human rights throughout the year. The authorities of some countries, such as Argentina and the USA, persisted in their denial of the climate crisis.

Argentina's climate objectives and policies remained insufficient. Canada provided subsidies, funding, and tax breaks for petrochemical and fossil-fuel projects. Ecuador continued to allow gas flaring in the Amazon, despite a 2021 ruling ordering the removal of flares. In the USA, an executive order declared "energy dominance" as a national emergency and aimed to reactivate the coal mining industry, despite its environmental impacts. Honduras lagged behind in the development and adoption of measures for climate change adaptation.

In Bolivia, climate change exacerbated deforestation, wildfires and disruptions to rainfall patterns, intensifying water scarcity and affecting the right to water and food security. In Brazil, water and rainfall scarcity, landslides, storms, floods, heatwaves and droughts disproportionately affected vulnerable populations, in particular Black, Indigenous and low-income communities. Paraguay faced increasing risks due to climate change, including droughts, floods and rising temperatures.

Authorities must address, prevent and mitigate the human rights impacts of the climate crisis by taking action at local and regional levels.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In Chile, a new regulation on abortion was approved to ensure timely care. In Mexico, four states adopted legislation decriminalizing abortion. Despite these concrete advances, barriers to abortion access persisted in law and in practice in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Peru, Puerto Rico, the USA and Venezuela.

In the USA, the federal government reversed policies that helped expand and protect access to reproductive care, and reduced funding for specialized facilities and programmes. In Puerto Rico, a law was passed requiring written consent from a parent or legal guardian for girls under the age of 16 to access abortion services. In the Dominican Republic, a new Penal Code was approved establishing a total ban on abortion. Abortion continued to be criminalized in all circumstances in El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras and Nicaragua.

Pregnancies among girls and adolescents continued without the governments adopting measures to address the issue. In Argentina, an official plan that had successfully reduced adolescent pregnancy rates by 49% over the four preceding years was dismantled. In Peru, 992 girls were forced to carry their pregnancies to term.

Authorities must guarantee access to safe abortion and other sexual and reproductive rights.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women and girls continued to face alarming levels of violence, including femicide and feminicide, with cases recorded in Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Honduras, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico and Uruguay. In several countries, statistics on this type of crime were inadequate and unreliable.

In Cuba, feminicide was still not considered a distinct crime. In Puerto Rico, the Court of Appeals ruled that an article of the Penal Code on feminicide was unconstitutional on the grounds that it violated due process and the presumption of innocence.

Cases of other forms of violence against girls and women, including sexual violence, were recorded in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, Peru, the USA and Uruguay, among other countries. In the Dominican Republic, the new Penal Code contained a regressive classification of the crime of intimate partner sexual violence that did not meet international standards.

During the year there were some advances, such as the entry into force in Bolivia of Law 1639, which prohibited early and child marriage under the age of 18, or the enactment in Colombia, in January, of a law that established the possibility of divorce based on the will of either spouse.

States must take effective measures to end gender-based violence and ensure that women and girls enjoy their rights without discrimination.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Indigenous Peoples continued to suffer discrimination and violence, as well as the effects of the climate crisis, with states failing to respect their rights. In Bolivia, Canada and Ecuador, among other countries, the expansion of extractive projects in Indigenous lands continued without proper consultation procedures that complied with international standards on free, prior and informed consent.

The Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled against Ecuador for violating the right to collective property of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon by authorizing mining projects in their territory.

In Canada, several bills threatened Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination, including by expediting approvals for major infrastructure projects.

In Brazil, leaders and members of Indigenous communities were killed in cases relating to land reclamation and conflicts. The Avá Guaraní Paranaense People were still awaiting restitution, both in Brazil and in Paraguay, of their ancestral territory, from which they had been displaced for the construction of the Itaipú Binacional hydroelectric plant.

In Colombia, Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities continued to suffer disproportionately from multiple and massive forced displacements, confinement and restrictions on human mobility.

In Venezuela, Yekuana Indigenous communities reported conflict situations arising in their territory in Amazonas State due to illegal extractive activities.

States must respect and protect Indigenous Peoples' tenure, ownership and control over their lands and resources.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI people were subjected to crimes throughout the region and stigmatizing rhetoric against them intensified, in particular against the transgender population. According to local organizations, at least 29 LGBTI persons had been murdered in Guatemala and 35 in Honduras by the end of the year, while in Mexico at least 17 trans-feminicides were recorded. In most countries, governments did not provide reliable data on such crimes. Canada, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico and the USA implemented laws or policies that restricted transgender people's rights.

Violence and discrimination disproportionately affected those suffering multiple forms of discrimination. In Brazil cases of racist violence against Black LGBTI people were recorded. In the USA, laws restricting health services for young transgender persons were passed. In

Paraguay, two transgender migrants were denied the issuance of documents consistent with their gender identity.

The authorities failed to take adequate measures to address these forms of violence. In some states, services providing care to victims were weakened or dismantled. For example, the US federal government shut down an option for LGBTI youth on the national suicide prevention hotline.

States must recognize the rights of LGBTI people, in particular transgender people, and adopt measures to protect them from all forms of discrimination and violence.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers suffered alarming levels of violence and discrimination in the region. Their situation was made more complex by the policies and rhetoric of various countries, particularly the USA, affecting migration flows in the continent. Authorities in Colombia, Costa Rica and Panama noted that the northward irregular migration flow had decreased significantly, while the southward flow had increased.

Authorities in several countries spread stigmatizing, hostile and discriminatory rhetoric. In Chile and the USA, racist and xenophobic narratives intensified in the context of electoral processes.

Also in the USA, a racist and anti-immigrant agenda was promoted. Masked agents detained people regardless of their immigration status and armoured vehicles patrolled the streets and targeted areas near schools, religious centres, hospitals and other areas that had previously been protected from immigration enforcement actions.

In the Dominican Republic, racial profiling, arbitrary detention, excessive use of force and cruel and inhuman treatment persisted during migration control operations and in immigration detention centres, as did collective expulsions contrary to international law. In addition, the implementation of a healthcare protocol in hospitals meant that those lacking the required documentation were subject to expulsion and deportation after receiving treatment, which mainly affected Haitian nationals and people of Haitian descent.

States failed to guarantee migrants and refugees adequate and non-discriminatory enjoyment of their rights and, in many cases, sought to restrict them further. In Canada, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program continued to tie migrants to their employer, despite widespread abuse and an inherent risk of labour exploitation and discrimination, in addition to other restrictions that made the situation of migrants even more precarious. In Chile, Congress continued discussion of several bills that proposed criminalization of refugees and migrants. Colombia and Mexico continued to lack an efficient asylum system.

States must combat racism and xenophobia, protect refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and guarantee all their rights.

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Across the region, repression, inequality and impunity converged, driven by authoritarian practices, systemic discrimination and an entrenched lack of accountability. Authorities increasingly imposed excessive restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, embedding control through legislation, policing and digital surveillance. These measures were mutually reinforcing, shrinking civic space and eroding fundamental freedoms. States normalized suppression of dissent through deadly crackdowns in Nepal and Indonesia, the use of counterterrorism laws in India, a wave of arbitrary detentions ahead of Myanmar's military-imposed vote in December, and arrests of activists in Hong Kong.

Internationally, there were victories for accountability efforts, including the arrest and transfer to the ICC of Rodrigo Duterte, former president of the Philippines, and ICC warrants for two Taliban leaders for crimes against humanity of gender persecution. Otherwise, impunity remained entrenched, with no additional progress on ICC arrest warrants for officials responsible for international crimes against Rohingya people and no meaningful state action to address crimes against humanity in Xinjiang, China. Domestic accountability mechanisms were further dismantled in Afghanistan and remained largely ineffective to address war-time abuses in Sri Lanka.

States expanded cross-border repression. Thailand deported Uyghurs to China and extradited Montagnard defenders to Viet Nam despite risks of rights violations. Malaysia worked with Thai authorities to target a journalist, while Hong Kong and China used laws to pursue activists abroad, harassing families and friends still in Hong Kong.

Discrimination amplified harm for marginalized and vulnerable groups. Rohingya people faced forced labour in Myanmar and were disproportionately affected by humanitarian aid cuts for refugee camps in Bangladesh. Religious minorities were targeted systemically in Afghanistan, mainland China and Pakistan, while Indigenous Peoples in Australia and Indonesia continued to endure land dispossession. Dalits throughout South Asia were confined to hazardous work.

Gender-based violence persisted across the region, and technology-facilitated abuse made headlines in South Korea, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Human trafficking and forced labour surged in Southeast Asia, with scamming compounds in hotspots like Cambodia and Myanmar enslaving and torturing people.

The climate crisis, vulnerability to other disasters and economic fragility intensified rights deprivation. In Afghanistan, millions were reliant on aid amid deportations from Iran and Pakistan and earthquakes, while floods in Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam caused deaths and widespread displacement, devastated crops and deepened poverty. Climate change and disasters in Bangladesh, Kiribati, Pakistan and Tuvalu continued to displace communities, reinforcing structural inequalities. North Korea's chronic shortages of basic necessities and Sri Lanka's austerity-driven welfare cuts highlighted how economic policies compounded vulnerability.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Governments across the region continued to enforce restrictive laws and practices that curtailed the right to freedom of expression, alongside censorship, surveillance and reprisals against human rights defenders, journalists, activists and academics. Several countries introduced or retained laws granting sweeping powers to control online content and silence dissent. The government of Fiji rejected UN calls to reform restrictive public order laws. Myanmar's Cybersecurity Law criminalized dissent with vague provisions, and the Election Law

imposed harsh penalties, including life imprisonment and even the death penalty, for election violence. In Nepal, a Social Media Bill was tabled to enable the executive to order content removal and data access without judicial oversight, criminalizing "fake information" and trolling. Amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act by Pakistani authorities expanded powers for censorship and criminalization of online expression. In Sri Lanka, authorities continued using the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act. In India, the Maharashtra Special Public Security Act was enacted to criminalize dissent. Authorities in Malaysia continued to use broad laws such as the Communications and Multimedia Act to restrict freedom of expression; Criminal Code amendments tightening civic space were introduced in Mongolia; Cambodian authorities used citizenship revocation to punish critics; and in the Maldives a punitive media bill was proposed, granting sweeping powers over journalists. In Viet Nam, the Cyber Security Law was amended, allowing police to request internet users' internet protocol (IP) addresses and requiring providers to take down content within 24 hours, while a draft Press Law was proposed requiring journalists to disclose their sources, raising concerns about privacy and online surveillance.

Governments increasingly targeted digital spaces to silence dissent. Authorities in Singapore used the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act to issue multiple orders against activists, media outlets and opposition figures. Chinese and Hong Kong authorities expanded national security laws to target an even broader range of peaceful activities. In Hong Kong, law-makers expanded national security laws into education, curbing freedom of expression, while courts upheld laws criminalizing calls to abstain from voting. In Nepal, authorities blocked Telegram and 26 other social media platforms, while in Pakistan, YouTube channels and social media accounts critical of the government were banned. Authorities in India ordered X and Instagram to block thousands of accounts, restricted satire, and banned 25 books in Jammu and Kashmir. The North Korean authorities maintained near-total control, jamming broadcasts, inspecting homes, and imposing severe penalties – including execution – for distributing foreign media.

Reprisals for exercising free expression were widespread. In Afghanistan, the Taliban arrested journalists, shut down Radio Nasim, and banned books authored by women and poetry critical of their policies from universities, as well as cutting access to the internet. In China, journalist Zhang Zhan received a second prison term, and in Hong Kong, pro-democracy figure Joshua Wong faced a new charge under national security laws.

In India, harassment of journalists was escalated through police records and arrests, alongside the cancellation of Overseas Citizen of India status for academic Nitasha Kaul.

In Cambodia, journalists and activists faced arrests and long sentences. Malaysia collaborated with Thai authorities to arrest a writer, and in Mongolia police raided an independent media outlet. In Thailand, an academic faced charges for work on civil-military relations. In Viet Nam, a land rights activist was sentenced to 21 years for "opposing the government".

Governments must repeal or amend repressive laws, ensure effective judicial oversight of content regulation, and protect journalists and activists from harassment and violence.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The right to freedom of peaceful assembly remained under severe strain, with governments resorting to repression, preventive detentions and restrictive legal frameworks. Violent crackdowns on protests occurred throughout the year. In Afghanistan, Taliban forces killed at least 10 and wounded 40 during poppy eradication protests in Badakhshan. In Indonesia, there were mass arrests and 4,000 detained, 900 assaulted, and at least 10 killed during nationwide demonstrations. Nepal's youth-led "Gen-Z" protests against corruption and a social media ban left 76 dead, including protesters and police. Pakistani authorities used internet

shutdowns and lethal force against protesters in Balochistan and Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir. Malaysian authorities used heavy policing and arrests to quell dissent. In the Philippines, hundreds of mostly young people were arrested in anti-corruption protests. In Hong Kong, authorities blocked gatherings and arrested would-be demonstrators; Pride events were cancelled. The Viet Pride parade in Ho Chi Minh City was cancelled for the first time in 13 years, while other pride events in Viet Nam faced censorship or cancellation following harassment by local authorities.

Detentions, denial of permissions and legal actions were common across the region. Indian authorities detained Jamia students, opposition leaders including Rahul Gandhi, and sanitation workers after denying rally permissions. In the Maldives, women were arrested for peaceful protests outside embassies. South Korean courts sentenced disability rights activists for participating in peaceful protests. Authorities in India and Singapore continued to invoke restrictive laws to declare assemblies unlawful.

Restrictive frameworks deepened control over the rights to peaceful assembly and association. Authorities in Taiwan enforced arbitrary restrictions in sensitive zones and in Hong Kong new "prohibited" zones were established, limiting not just protest but any unauthorized presence. Heavy policing, harassment, arrests and investigations persisted in Malaysia, despite proposed reforms to the Peaceful Assembly Act. In South Korea, however, courts eased restrictions on assemblies. Controls on civic and political organizations also intensified. Sri Lanka continued to mandate NGO registration with the defence ministry, tightening oversight of civil society. In Bangladesh, the Awami League was banned under anti-terror laws, severely undermining the rights to political association and participation.

Governments must stop repression, release those detained for peaceful assemblies, repeal or amend restrictive or repressive laws, and guarantee safe, accessible spaces for protests in line with international standards.

DISCRIMINATION

Discrimination persisted in multiple forms – religious, ethnic, descent-based, disability-related, and against Indigenous Peoples – often reinforced by state policies, systemic inequalities and social hostility.

State-sponsored religious discrimination remained widespread. In Afghanistan, Taliban authorities targeted Shia minorities, forcing Ismailis to convert to Sunni Islam, restricting Shia-Hazara rituals, and discriminating in humanitarian aid delivery. Hazara families were also forcibly evicted and faced employment discrimination. In Pakistan, violence and restrictions by private and state actors against Ahmadis escalated, while accountability for the 2023 attack on Christians by private actors remained elusive. In India, discriminatory laws criminalized inter-faith marriages, while hate crimes against Muslims and Kashmiris by private and state actors were documented. In Indonesia, intolerance toward Ahmadiyah and Christian communities continued, with worship restrictions and attacks on prayer houses. The Chinese government interfered in Tibetan Buddhist affairs and detained Christian leaders, while in Fiji Hindu temples were vandalized.

Ethnic discrimination persisted in several countries. In Japan, xenophobic rhetoric was evident during election campaigns, while in South Korea there were anti-Chinese rallies. In Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, the Arakan Army forced internally displaced Rohingya people into labour with reported ill-treatment of those who refused.

Discrimination against Indigenous Peoples was severe and systemic. In China, Uyghurs and Tibetans continued to face systematic discrimination, including restrictions on cultural, linguistic and religious expression. In Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples faced worsening inequality, high incarceration rates and deaths in custody. In India, environmental protections were weakened, heightening displacement risks for Indigenous

communities. In Indonesia, large-scale projects and nickel mining devastated Indigenous lands, prompting protests and criminalization of activists. The CERD Committee warned the Japanese government about the impact of constructing a US military base in Okinawa, while Indigenous leaders protested against Japanese financing of harmful projects abroad. The Malaysian government considered possible amendments to expand Orang Asli rights, and there were violent clashes over heritage land and a lack of transparency in a development project in Nepal. Bangladeshi authorities continued to detain more than 62 of the 100 Indigenous Bawm People arrested in 2024, amid reports of deaths in custody. The New Zealand parliament passed laws undermining Māori customary rights. In Taiwan, Indigenous Pingpu communities obtained limited protections for cultural rights, but remained concerned about inadequate legal recognition, and systemic discrimination in education continued. Thailand advanced projects threatening Indigenous livelihoods and passed a bill failing to recognize Indigenous status.

Descent-based discrimination continued to affect marginalized communities. In India, caste census plans stalled, leaving structural inequities unaddressed. In Nepal, Dalit communities continued to face entrenched social exclusion and barriers to justice. In Pakistan, entrenched caste and religion-based discrimination continued to confine sanitation workers – mostly Dalit Christians – to hazardous, insecure jobs without legal protection.

Disability-based discrimination remained pervasive. In North Korea, people with disabilities faced systemic exclusion from education, healthcare and employment, with reports of forced institutionalization. Taiwan still lacked a comprehensive anti-discrimination act, leaving protections fragmented and weak. In Japan, while a law compensating victims of forced sterilization marked progress, systemic barriers and limited awareness continued to hinder justice.

Governments must protect Indigenous lands, refrain from engaging in discriminatory speech, counter stereotypes, adopt and enforce effective anti-discrimination laws, and guarantee equal access to education, employment and accountability of justice systems.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Economic, social and cultural rights remained under severe strain from economic crises, climate shocks and discriminatory policies. Food insecurity was acute. In Afghanistan, 22.9 million people relied on aid amid returns, mostly from Iran and Pakistan, following deportations, earthquakes and funding cuts; 90% of children lived in food poverty and 4 million were malnourished. People in North Korea faced chronic food shortages despite weather conditions conducive to growth, as fertilizer scarcity and climate shocks undermined output, while state distribution failures deepened rural hardship. In Pakistan, 44.7% of people lived below the poverty line, IMF constraints reduced social spending, and flooding made more likely by human-induced climate change destroyed major crops. Sri Lanka's poverty levels stayed above pre-crisis figures despite welfare payments.

Health systems remained fragile. In Afghanistan, rural access to healthcare was limited and Taliban restrictions delayed women's rescue during earthquakes. In North Korea, hospitals were critically under-resourced, lacking basic medicines and equipment. UNICEF immunized 2 million children, although monitoring remained severely restricted.

Education rights eroded, as Taliban bans excluded 78% of Afghan girls and women from schooling and work. North Korean schools lacked heating and textbooks; in Myanmar learners faced severe disruptions after aid freezes; and China's bilingual education policies in Tibet threatened minority language rights.

Housing and land insecurity persisted, with authorities in Cambodia halting forced evictions at the Angkor UNESCO World Heritage site after a global outcry but offering no remedy to displaced families. In Mongolia, rural and urban communities affected by development

projects lacked mechanisms to address flawed consultations and the undervaluation of property and assets. In India, eviction drives in Assam displaced about 3,800 households, disproportionately affecting Muslims.

Labour rights abuses and violations also remained widespread, disproportionately affecting communities that faced marginalization and discrimination. In Pakistan, sanitation workers from lower castes faced systemic discrimination. Sri Lanka's Malaiyaha Tamils remained marginalized, while garment workers endured trade union repression and gender-based violence. In Bangladesh, there was unrest in the garment sector and arrests of union leaders. Workers in the Philippines faced unsafe conditions during disasters, and in Hong Kong migrant domestic workers were denied stronger protections.

Governments must guarantee food, health, housing, education, and labour rights by ending forced evictions, tackling poverty, enhancing social protection, protecting workers, and ensuring equal access to essential services without discrimination.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS, TORTURE, ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Authorities continued to use security laws and discriminatory practices to suppress dissent, disproportionately targeting activists, minorities and political opponents. Arbitrary arrests and detentions were widespread. In Afghanistan, the Taliban detained people for minor infractions such as hairstyles or playing music, enforced harsh decrees through "morality inspectors", and continued to target former officials, journalists, human rights defenders and critics through arbitrary detention, enforced forced disappearances and torture. More than 100 cases of extrajudicial killings were documented. In Myanmar, there were systematic post-coup detentions, and deaths in custody linked to denial of healthcare and injuries from abusive interrogations. In North Korea, arbitrary detention remained central to regime control, targeting those accused of political offences without allowing fair trials. National security laws in Hong Kong and Macau were used expansively to suppress political expression and arrest activists.

In Pakistan, amendments to anti-terror laws allowed detention without charge for three months, while journalists and Baloch activists faced arrests. In India, misuse of counterterrorism laws to detain human rights defenders and Muslim activists continued, with prolonged pretrial detention.

Torture and other ill-treatment persisted despite legal prohibitions. In Afghanistan, detainees faced electric shocks, waterboarding, tooth and nail extraction, and sexual abuse. Authorities in Myanmar employed beatings, electrocution, sexual assault and "de-nailing" during interrogations. In North Korea, beatings, sleep deprivation and forced labour were used to extract "confessions", with political prison camps imposing harsh punishments and inadequate food. In Viet Nam, activists endured solitary confinement, shackling and denial of healthcare, with suspicious deaths in custody. In India, police torture led to the death of a 25-year-old in Jammu and Kashmir. In Sri Lanka, there were at least 13 documented cases of custodial deaths and allegations of torture. Courts in Thailand delivered the first convictions under the anti-torture law for the killing of a conscript, marking a rare accountability step.

Enforced disappearances remained a tool of repression. In North Korea, families were denied information about detainees, amounting to enforced disappearance. In China, authorities continued to use "Residential Surveillance at Designated Locations", a form of secret detention amounting to enforced disappearance, particularly against human rights defenders and lawyers. A Malaysian court confirmed state involvement in past disappearances. In Myanmar, there were patterns of disappearances and deaths following torture. In Pakistan, 125 new cases of enforced disappearance were recorded in early 2025. In Bangladesh, the government-appointed Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances stated that 1,772

complaints were registered for the 2009-2024 period, with 67% linked to state agencies. These practices entrenched impunity and discrimination against vulnerable groups.

Governments must end arbitrary arrests, torture and enforced disappearances, protect the rights of those in detention, and ensure accountability and safeguards against abuse.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Governments intensified restrictive migration policies, further undermining refugee protections and migrants' rights, exposing vulnerable groups to discrimination and abuse. Mass deportations and refoulement persisted despite international obligations. Pakistan escalated its "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan", returning more than 990,000 Afghans. Iran returned 1.8 million Afghans, while Germany, Tajikistan and Türkiye continued to forcibly return Afghans despite Taliban abuses. Women and girls faced systemic rights deprivation upon return to Afghanistan, and dissenters risked arrest and torture. Throughout the year, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh feared being forcibly returned to Myanmar by militants to fight in the conflict. In India, hostility deepened as authorities forcibly deported Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh – along with 300 Muslims suspected to be foreign nationals – while new laws reclassified asylum seekers as irregular migrants, eroding the principle of non-refoulement. Malaysian authorities detained Rohingya refugees and pushed back boats carrying others. Meanwhile, Japan launched its "Zero Plan" to halve the number of overstaying foreigners via fast-tracked deportations, drawing criticism for endangering asylum seekers. The government of Thailand forcibly returned 40 Uyghurs to China despite torture risks.

Arbitrary and indefinite detention also persisted across the region. Malaysian authorities held more than 20,000 people in immigration facilities, including more than 2,000 children. The Australian government maintained "offshore processing" of asylum seekers, with 90 people still awaiting processing on Nauru and more than 30 in Papua New Guinea after 11 years, while new laws stripped asylum seekers of procedural rights. In Sri Lanka, 116 Rohingya refugees, including children, were detained in military facilities without UNHCR access. In Japan and Taiwan, governments continued to permit indefinite immigration detention under opaque systems, criticized for poor conditions and lack of legal safeguards. Conditions in Bangladesh worsened dramatically. Cox's Bazar – the world's largest refugee camp accommodating more than 1 million Rohingya – faced severe aid cuts and 150,000 new arrivals, risking the collapse of essential services given limited donor pledges despite urgent UN appeals.

Human trafficking and forced labour surged across the region. In Cambodia, over 50 scamming compounds trafficked foreign nationals for use in online fraud, with crackdowns lacking transparency. Myanmar remained a trafficking hotspot, with scam compounds detaining 100,000 people and armed groups using forced labour and recruitment. Despite sanctions on perpetrators, abuses persisted.

Governments must end refoulement, arbitrary detention, and trafficking, ensure safe asylum procedures, release those held unlawfully, and guarantee protection and dignity for refugees and migrants in line with international standards.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Climate change deepened social inequalities. In Bangladesh, extreme weather exacerbated gender and caste-based discrimination, trapping sanitation workers in cycles of vulnerability. Rising seas in Tuvalu and Kiribati continued to force displacement, threatening the rights to housing, health and cultural identity. In Pakistan, catastrophic floods killed more than 1,000 and displaced millions, while heatwaves reached 49°C, exposing gaps in disaster response. People in India, Indonesia, Nepal and Sri Lanka also faced deadly floods and landslides due to cyclones, disproportionately affecting rural communities with limited access to relief, raising

questions about climate-related disaster preparedness. According to official data, in October and November, the Indian capital, New Delhi, ranked as the world's most polluted city.

The implementation of fossil fuel expansion policies and energy transition projects continued to violate Indigenous rights. Indonesian authorities arrested 27 Indigenous activists opposing nickel mining in East Halmahera, highlighting risks to customary lands. The government of Japan promoted liquefied natural gas projects overseas, including deals with the USA and Canada, drawing criticism for harming Indigenous Gwich'in and Wet'suwet'en Nations. In Australia, the dismissal of the Torres Strait Islanders' climate case undermined efforts to secure justice for communities facing existential threats.

Weak governance perpetuated vulnerability. The Maldives launched an ambitious climate plan but omitted strong human rights safeguards and blocked climate litigation, undermining cultural and livelihood rights. Lawmakers in Malaysia delayed a climate bill to prioritize industry consultations, while the South Korean government retained insufficient emission targets and failed to outline a just transition. In China, tight restrictions on public participation in environmental decision-making were maintained, limiting accountability.

Discriminatory migration policies compounded climate injustice. The New Zealand government failed to provide adequate pathways for climate-displaced Pacific Peoples, reinforcing inequalities, leaving families separated, violating children's rights, and increasing the vulnerability of migrants.

Governments must uphold climate justice, end fossil fuel expansion, protect Indigenous and marginalized communities, ensure rights-based climate policies, and guarantee safe migration pathways for those displaced by climate impacts.

DEATH PENALTY

The death penalty remained entrenched in the majority of countries in the region and was frequently used in violation of international human rights law and standards.

Two countries carried out their first executions after a hiatus. In Japan, the hanging of Takahiro Shiraishi – the first execution in three years – was condemned for secrecy, undermining abolition efforts. In Taiwan, Huang Lin-kai was executed in January, in the first death penalty execution since 2020, despite pending appeals and concerns about the state of his mental health.

In Afghanistan, the Taliban carried out public executions. Reports indicated that the North Korean government continued executions for acts that were not internationally recognizable offences, such as sharing foreign media content, and offences far below the "most serious crimes" threshold set out under international law and standards, with public executions used as a tool of control.

Chinese authorities continued to use the death penalty to sentence individuals charged with bribery, fraud and trafficking crimes; at least one case of mass sentencing raised concerns about violations of the right to a fair trial. In Bangladesh, among other death sentences, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and other government officials were sentenced to hang by a special tribunal in their absence following the 2024 protest crackdown. The Maldives government expanded the scope of the death penalty to include drug offences, removed the possibility of commuting such sentences through clemency and barred plea agreements in these cases.

Drug-related executions continued unabated in Singapore, where, among others, Malaysian national Pannir Selvam was executed despite international outcry. Positive reforms emerged in Viet Nam, with the death penalty abolished for eight crimes, including drug transportation. However, a lack of due process in capital proceedings and secrecy surrounding the use of the death penalty continued to raise concerns. In Malaysia, the government announced a study on the death penalty and its abolition, following the 2023 repeal of the mandatory death penalty.

Overall, these developments reflected stark contrasts: incremental reforms in some states, alongside entrenched practices marked by secrecy, discrimination and political instrumentalization in some others.

Governments retaining the death penalty must take urgent steps to abolish it and, in the meantime, establish an official moratorium on executions.

IMPUNITY AND THE RIGHT TO JUSTICE, TRUTH AND REPARATION

Systemic weaknesses in legal and oversight institutions continued to obstruct justice for victims of grave human rights violations. In Afghanistan, the Taliban dismantled judicial structures and enforced discriminatory sharia law, leaving fair trials nearly impossible. Oversight bodies such as the national human rights institution remained defunct. In Nepal, appointments to transitional justice commissions were criticized as opaque and politically influenced, prompting victims' groups to boycott. In Sri Lanka, there were persistent obstacles, including the Attorney General's perceived lack of independence and flawed exhumation processes for mass graves that remained insufficiently investigated despite recent discoveries. Bangladesh prosecutors secured the first charges against military officers for enforced disappearances, although concerns over due process persisted, including in the trial against Sheikh Hasina that resulted in a death sentence.

International accountability efforts advanced in some cases. The ICC issued arrest warrants for Taliban leaders for gender-based persecution, and the UN created an investigative mechanism for Afghanistan. The former president of the Philippines, Rodrigo Duterte, was arrested and transferred to the ICC for the crime against humanity of murder, marking a historic step.

Truth-seeking and reparations remained inadequate. Sri Lanka announced a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and expanded the Office on Missing Persons, yet progress was slow. Meanwhile, drug-related killings and harassment of activists in the Philippines and surveillance of Tamil communities in Sri Lanka underscored ongoing impunity.

Governments must strengthen efforts to fight impunity by undertaking prompt, independent, impartial and effective investigations into crimes under international law and other serious human rights abuses, bringing suspected perpetrators to justice in fair trials, and ensuring effective remedy for victims.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Gender and sexual rights faced systemic setbacks across the region. In Afghanistan, Taliban decrees banned women from education, work and free movement, enforced *mahram* (male chaperone) rules, and fuelled gender-based violence and child marriage. In Bangladesh, there were mass protests against reforms for equal inheritance and marital rape criminalization. In Fiji, Nepal and Pakistan, surging violence against women was reported, including – in Nepal and Pakistan – coerced settlements in legal cases against perpetrators. Harmful practices like c*hhaupadi* – a custom forcing menstruating women into isolation, often in unsafe huts – persisted in Nepal. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence – such as online harassment, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, and deepfake sexual content – persisted in South Korea, despite legal reforms. Institutional progress was uneven: the Sri Lankan government announced the setting up of the first Women's Commission, while abortion reform stalled in South Korea.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI people's rights faced hostility: in Japan, courts advanced marriage equality unevenly; in Pakistan, there were recorded killings of transgender people; state pressure caused the cancellation of the Pride parade in Viet Nam; mainland China tightened censorship of LGBTI-related content; and lawmakers in Hong Kong failed to enact partnership laws that would have provided some legal recognition and protections for same-sex couples.

Governments must end discrimination based on gender and sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression, enforce effective protections, and guarantee substantive equality in law, policy and daily life.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Civilians faced grave risks from unlawful attacks. In Afghanistan, suicide bombings, armed groups' explosive ordnance, and cross-border shelling by Pakistan killed and injured civilians. In Myanmar, aerial strikes surged, targeting schools and villages; "paramotor" attacks killed dozens, including children; and aid was blocked to resistance-held areas. In the Cambodia-Thailand conflict, border clashes damaged hospitals, homes and pagodas, with indiscriminate attacks reported on both sides. Displacement and humanitarian crises worsened as misinformation fuelled tensions and ceasefire violations continued.

Governments must stop unlawful attacks, protect civilians, allow humanitarian aid and uphold international humanitarian law.

EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA REGIONAL OVERVIEW

EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

The region remained at the forefront of a global erosion of respect for universal human rights and international justice frameworks. Russia continued to lead this trend, pursuing its aggression against Ukraine and committing other crimes under international law there, including via indiscriminate attacks on civilians and targeting critical infrastructure. Civilians bore the brunt of suffering.

Against this backdrop, human rights became increasingly transactional. Belarus secured US sanctions relief through prisoner releases, and the pursuit of rare minerals and energy resources trumped concern over human lives in Ukraine and beyond. The first EU-Central Asia summit was held in the context of an ongoing failure across Central Asia to uphold international human rights commitments. Despite Azerbaijan's paltry human rights record, the EU and other international actors deepened energy cooperation with the country as an alternative to Russian oil and gas.

Civil society faced unrelenting pressure. Growing numbers of activists, journalists and organizations were branded "terrorists", "extremists", "foreign agents" or "undesirable" and forced into exile or closure. A climate of fear and shrinking international support for human rights, marked by an unprecedented US foreign aid withdrawal, decimated civil society organizations and significantly reduced human rights reporting.

Other dramatic descents in respect for human rights included Kyrgyzstan's attempt to reintroduce the death penalty despite constitutional and international prohibitions. Georgia plunged head-on into authoritarian practices, with systemic crackdowns on dissent.

Freedom of religion and belief, the rule of law and the rights of refugees and migrants were no exception to a general deterioration of human rights, as all saw a decline across the region. Torture and other ill-treatment remained endemic. Gender-based violence persisted. Fossil fuel production and consumption expanded, underscoring governments' disregard for climate obligations.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Russia's four-year aggression against Ukraine continued relentlessly, and its aerial attacks targeting critical civilian infrastructure intensified. Its widespread practice of enforced disappearances, torture, and reported drone targeting of civilians amounted to crimes against humanity. Russia attacked energy infrastructure almost daily during the winter months, leaving millions without heating and electricity in sub-zero temperatures. Ukrainian strikes on Russian energy facilities caused power blackouts. A number of attacks by Ukraine on targets inside Russia resulted in casualties and damaged civilian infrastructure.

In the territories it occupied, Russian authorities conducted systematic enforced disappearance and torture of civilians. Russia also took measures to erase Ukrainian identity, including via its compulsory school curriculum. In a manifest violation of the laws of war, it pressed ahead with legislation to deprive residents of the territories it unlawfully annexed in 2022 of their property and other rights if they refused to take up Russian citizenship.

Armenia and Azerbaijan made no progress towards accountability for alleged past violations during the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh.

All allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity should be subject to impartial and independent investigations, including through the principle of universal jurisdiction.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The right to freedom of expression was increasingly embattled across the region, with critical voices consistently branded as "extremists", "traitors" and "foreign agents", forced into exile, imprisoned under politically motivated charges and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment and travel bans.

In Azerbaijan, more than 300 critics were in prison under spurious charges, dozens faced travel bans and remaining independent media organizations closed down. In Georgia, independent media outlets faced a full palette of repression including smear campaigns, fines and criminal probes.

Belarus's "List of persons involved in extremist activities" grew to at least 6,127, and organizations connected in any way to those on the list were banned.

Kyrgyzstan designated prominent independent media organizations as "extremist", meaning that any promotion or sharing of their materials could lead to prosecution. Moldova continued to de-license pro-Russian television channels without judicial oversight.

In Russia, those opposing the war against Ukraine or expressing other dissenting views suffered severe penalties, including long prison terms. Censorship permeated public life, leading to the banning of music, books and films by authors labelled "foreign agents" or "terrorists and extremists".

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The right to peaceful assembly was further repressed, with those trying to exercise it prosecuted, imprisoned and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

Open protest remained stifled and consequently sparse in most countries in the region. In Belarus, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, rallies were virtually absent and peaceful protesters faced severe punishment. Belarusian authorities sought penalties against people who participated in protests abroad.

Georgian authorities struck back at the continuous daily demonstrations taking place since late 2024 by criminalizing peaceful acts such as wearing masks or standing on sidewalks. Demonstrators faced unlawful force including police beatings, tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon reportedly laced with toxic chemicals. Activists, journalists and opposition supporters were systematically targeted with searches, arrests and prison sentences solely for exercising their human rights.

In Russia, where protest had been rigorously suppressed, small rallies about locally relevant issues nonetheless continued. Ukraine saw mass anti-corruption protests proceed undeterred despite martial law restrictions.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Governments further constrained and endangered the operational environment for civil society through repressive legislation, criminalizing public participation and imposing draconian financial restrictions. Severe cuts to foreign assistance compounded the situation, forcing scores of NGOs to close or dramatically reduce activities.

Azerbaijan reopened a 2014 case aimed at NGOs, conducted raids and targeted trade unions and grassroots groups. Belarus criminalized participation in forcibly closed, suspended and unregistered NGOs. Georgia adopted "foreign agent"-style legislation and froze the bank accounts of seven NGOs, claiming that they had engaged in "sabotage" by providing medical supplies and other support to protesters in 2024.

Kazakhstan's president accused "[supposed] human rights organizations, bloggers and journalists" of being sponsored from abroad to seek out negative undercurrents and blame the authorities. Russia continued its weaponization of "foreign agent" and "undesirable organizations" legislation to choke civil society, stigmatizing and jailing civic activists. Ninety-

five more organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, were designated as "undesirable".

Governments must repeal laws and end practices that hinder the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and stop using pretexts to crush dissent and stifle discussion of their human rights records.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Fair trials became increasingly rare as justice systems were instrumentalized to persecute dissent. The number of individuals convicted in their absence, including for purported "terrorism" and "extremism", increased.

Azerbaijan jailed scores of journalists and activists on spurious charges and following unfair trials, with nearly 30 media workers in prison or extended pretrial detention by year's end. Belarus's ranks of prisoners sentenced on politically motivated charges grew despite some early releases in exchange for sanctions relief.

Arbitrary detention and imprisonment of protesters, journalists and opposition figures following unfair trials was commonplace in Georgia within efforts to suppress dissent. Trumped-up charges against leading independent journalists, including from media outlets Kloop and Temirov Live, dealt a severe blow to Kyrgyzstan's independent media. Dissenting voices were jailed in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

Russia's judiciary continued to deliver harsh sentences under politically motivated charges, often manifestly absurd. Tajikistan handed lengthy prison terms to opposition politicians and former officials in closed trials, and an appeal from 12 international human rights organizations to release human rights lawyer Buzurghmehr Yorov, arbitrarily imprisoned since 2015, remained without official response.

Authorities must guarantee rights to a fair trial and refrain from abusing the justice system to persecute dissent.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment throughout the region remained endemic. Impunity for such crimes also remained widespread and investigations into police violence were rare and ineffective.

Numerous reports of extrajudicial executions and torture of Ukrainian prisoners of war by Russian forces emerged. In Russian prisons, abuse included frequent placement in punishment cells, and also denial of healthcare and contact with the outside world.

In Azerbaijan, torture and other ill-treatment in detention was routine, involving solitary confinement and denial of medical care, violence, punitive transfers and prolonged shackling. At least two victims of politically motivated prosecution reportedly died in custody in Belarus, and at least seven in Tajikistan, including five Pamiri activists.

In Georgia, masked officers routinely beat detainees during arrests and in detention. Kazakhstan failed to address numerous torture allegations post the 2022 mass protests, while Kyrgyzstan dismantled its torture prevention body amid UN warnings against such a move.

Concerns about torture and other ill-treatment persisted in Uzbekistan. Isolation and incommunicado detention remained common in Belarus and Turkmenistan, often amounting to enforced disappearance.

Governments must act urgently to end torture and other ill-treatment, bringing all those suspected of criminal responsibility to justice in fair trials.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

There was a continuing decline in respect for, and often an outright attack on, LGBTI people's rights. Comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation was absent across the region, while the official narrative of LGBTI people's rights contravening "traditional values" gathered strength.

In a positive development, Ukraine saw a first court recognition of a same-sex couple as a "de facto family" while popular support for equal rights for LGBTI people appeared to be steadily growing.

In Moldova, the de facto authorities in Russian-occupied Transnistria enacted anti-LGBTI "propaganda" provisions and Kazakhstan adopted similar legislation. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan maintained criminalization of same-sex sexual relations between men.

Governments should repeal laws, policies and practices that discriminate against LGBTI people, including by decriminalizing consensual same-sex sexual relations and removing legal obstacles to same-sex marriage.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence remained widespread. In Georgia, ongoing misogynistic and sexist rhetoric from senior officials was accompanied by gendered abuse against women protesters, including threats of sexual assault and degrading full strip searches. Russia's parliament failed to consider domestic violence legislation despite public backing for this. In Tajikistan domestic violence cases rose 15% compared to the previous year.

Governments must urgently combat all forms of gender-based violence and address their root causes.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Repressive tactics deployed to constrain freedom of religion and belief were reported across the region, including restrictive registration requirements and abuse of anti-extremism legislation against religious minorities.

Belarus pursued opaque re-registration of religious organizations and bans on unregistered religious activity, and clergy not aligned with the authorities faced ongoing persecution. Kyrgyzstan enacted a restrictive law curtailing unregistered religious activity, banned certain religious clothing and outlawed an Adventist church as "extremist". Russia continued arbitrary prosecution and imprisonment of Jehovah's Witnesses and targeted other religious communities. Ukraine's latest measures intended to disband the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, which it accused of affiliation with Russia, drew UN experts' criticism for "equating religious affiliation with threats to national security".

Governments must take effective measures to implement legal and policy reforms to fully protect, promote and guarantee freedom of religion or belief without discrimination or persecution.

RIGHTS OF REFUGEES, MIGRANTS AND INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE

Millions of people continued to experience forced displacement, particularly in Ukraine. Armenia struggled to provide housing and livelihoods for more than 100,000 people displaced from Nagorno-Karabakh. Belarus continued to force refugees and migrants across EU borders, reportedly subjecting them to physical violence. Russia introduced mandatory language tests and legal entry proof for migrant children's school enrolment, excluding most. Tajikistani authorities moved to expel Afghan refugees from the country.

Governments must ensure all those fleeing persecution and human rights violations have access to safety and international protection, and that no one is returned to a real risk of serious human rights abuses.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Russia's war fuelled severe environmental damage at home and abroad, with its aggression against Ukraine continuing to exact a huge environmental toll and its military strikes threatening nuclear safety. The repression of civil society in both Russia and Belarus forced independent climate activists into exile.

Climate change pledges failed or were further weakened as countries increased their reliance on, and extraction of, fossil fuels. Kazakhstan expanded coal dependence and appeared to be reneging on commitments to a green transition. Its president publicly attacked the environmental agenda and stated that climate change "appeared to be a massive fraud". Moldova's climate ambitions faced funding barriers. Uzbekistan declared a "green economy" year but severe air pollution levels persisted, as in Belarus and elsewhere.

Water remained a sparse resource for many, particularly in Central Asia. Access to clean water was a grave challenge in Tajikistan, where according to official data 85% of the population, including virtually everyone in rural areas, had no sewage systems. In Turkmenistan water mismanagement undermined food security. In Ukraine's Russian-occupied Donetsk region the de facto authorities were unable to address the water crisis.

High-emitting countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia must take the lead in climate mitigation, including by stopping the expansion of fossil fuel production. Governments must take immediate measures to protect individuals and communities against the risks and impacts of climate change.

WESTERN, CENTRAL AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

The gap between many governments' public commitments to uphold international law and their actions was stark; some outright refused to cooperate with the ICC. Several states continued to transfer arms to Israel. The vast majority of governments resorted to punishing solidarity with Palestinians through criminalization of dissent and unlawful force, rather than meeting their legal obligations to stop Israel's genocide in the occupied Gaza Strip. Some states intensified their attacks on the international legal order, including on the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. At both the national and regional level, states led attempts to hollow out protections of the regional human rights treaties. Several states deliberately pursued measures to externalize their responsibilities to manage migration.

Although some states improved access to abortion, in others, barriers remained and abortion rights defenders faced persecution and criminalization. Discrimination and violence against LGBTI people intensified as a result of well-resourced campaigns by anti-rights and anti-gender actors and governments. Millions of people remained or fell into poverty; in some cases, governments introduced retrogressive measures likely to increase homelessness or impede access to health and other essential services. Thousands of people lost social security benefits through inherently discriminatory decision-making tools. Reports of hate crimes against racialized people, Roma and individuals perceived to be Muslim or Jewish increased. Disasters exacerbated by climate change wreaked havoc, particularly in southern European states. While some states were proactive in taking action to prevent climate change, others fell short of their obligations. Human rights defenders faced harassment and imprisonment.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

Several states continued to transfer arms to Israel despite calls by UN experts for the immediate cessation of such transfers. Germany reinstated the possibility of arms transfers, France continued to license war material exports, the Czech Republic and the UK continued to export arms and Serbia even increased such transfers. Many states, including Ireland, Portugal and Slovenia, failed to prevent arms transfers to Israel from transiting through their airspace or ports.

Governments should halt weapons transfers to countries where there is a substantial risk of them being used to commit or facilitate serious human rights abuses.

IMPUNITY

In a direct assault on the ICC, Hungary and Poland openly refused to implement its arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant. Italy failed to comply with its obligations to surrender to the ICC Osama Elmasry Njeem, a member of a Libyan militia accused of serious human rights violations.

In Türkiye, victims of human rights violations, including alleged torture and other ill-treatment by law enforcement officials of peaceful protesters, continued to face a culture of impunity.

Governments must take all steps available to them to fight impunity by bringing suspected perpetrators to account, including by implementing arrest warrants issued by international courts.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Troubling crackdowns continued, including unlawful surveillance, criminalization of peaceful activity and various forms of intimidation, in an effort to stifle civil society.

Foreign agent laws and similar legislation, whether proposed or actually adopted, posed a threat to civil society in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) continued to exert a chilling effect on media freedom and dissent across the region, including in Croatia and Poland. In Serbia, UN special rapporteurs expressed concern at what appeared to be "a systematic campaign" aimed at discrediting human rights defenders, election observers and journalists.

Governments continued to impose unlawful restrictions on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, sanctioning protected speech and acts of civil disobedience. Some states instrumentalized already overly broad terrorism provisions to sanction and stigmatize people expressing dissent, particularly those protesting against government inaction on climate decline and Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip. For example, the UK government's proscription of the direct-action protest group Palestine Action as a "terrorist group" in July prompted a widespread campaign of peaceful civil disobedience. By year's end the UK authorities had conducted at least 2,700 arrests following a series of large-scale peaceful demonstrations . A judicial review of the proscription was before the courts at the close of the year.

Governments must repeal laws and end practices that hinder the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and stop using pretexts to stifle dissent

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The overall drive by many countries in Europe to construct a second-tier system of diminished human rights protections for refugees and migrants gained momentum both at national and European institutional level, rooted in a Europe riven with xenophobia and racism, particularly anti-Black, anti-Muslim and anti-Arab racism. In this context, key long established principles of international law – including non-refoulement, the universality of human rights, the prohibition of torture and the right to a private life – were specifically targeted throughout the year through threats of treaty withdrawal and proposals or rhetoric aimed at diluting states' obligations. These efforts were evident at the EU level, where member states downgraded asylum rules and negotiated punitive deportation measures, while at the Council of Europe 27 member states called for watered down protections for migrants under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Such efforts also played out at the domestic level. In the UK, legal changes and rhetoric by high level politicians were aimed at undermining and scapegoating the ECHR. In Austria and Germany, authorities conducted forced deportations to Syria, despite the country not being safe for forced returns, while a larger coalition of countries sought to start forced returns to Afghanistan. Greece detained hundreds of people following an unlawful temporary suspension of the right to seek asylum. Although many were released when the measure

expired, many others harmed by the provisions remained detained and in substandard conditions at year's end. Poland similarly and unlawfully suspended the right to seek asylum at the border with Belarus. The Swiss Federal Council identified areas of Ukraine considered safe for return, limiting access to temporary protection for new applicants, even although no region in Ukraine was safe from Russian attacks.

In an effort to restrict access to protection in Europe for people fleeing persecution or seeking a better life, and to enable their forcible removal despite potential risks to their rights, lives and safety, several states deliberately pursued measures to externalize their responsibilities to manage migration.

Some states attempted to establish return and detention cooperation deals with other countries, where violations against people seeking to reach Europe – often Black, Muslim, and other racialized people – would be harder to scrutinize. Italy spearheaded such harmful and regressive initiatives, expanding the use of its migration detention centres in Albania despite legal challenges.

Several governments continued to scapegoat migrants and refugees for broader economic woes, deploying dangerous and harmful rhetoric. In countries such as Greece, Italy and Malta, authorities deliberately increased the risks of sea and land crossings, including by delaying rescue operations and impeding or criminalizing humanitarian rescuers and workers.

Governments must protect the rights of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants, giving full effect to internationally protected rights and ending arbitrary detentions.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The leaders of Denmark and Greenland issued a joint apology to thousands of Inuit women who had had intrauterine devices implanted without their consent between 1966 and the 1990s. Civil society organizations welcomed the move while also demanding financial compensation for the Inuit women.

Denmark, the Faroe Islands, Norway and the UK passed legislation to improve access to abortion. Luxemburg enshrined abortion as a guaranteed freedom in its Constitution and the European Parliament voted in favour of a solidarity mechanism to improve safe abortion care across the EU. However, multiple obstacles to impede and obstruct access to abortion care continued across the region, including its criminalization. A number of states including Croatia, Italy, Portugal and Spain failed to guarantee access to services amid high rates of conscience-based refusals to provide abortions, putting rights and health at risk.

Governments have an obligation to guarantee sexual and reproductive rights for all without discrimination, including timely and barrier-free access to safe abortion.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Millions of people remained or fell into poverty as governments failed to mitigate the harmful consequences of the rising cost of living. The UK and Finland were among several countries that adopted retrogressive measures likely to increase homelessness or impede access to health and other essential services for people already at heightened risk, such as racialized people including refugees and migrants or those in chronic ill health.

Several governments, including the UK and Serbia, either introduced or continued to use inherently discriminatory algorithms and technologies to make decisions on social security and other safety net support. As a result, thousands of people – disproportionately those who were racialized, foreign nationals, single mothers and Roma – lost their welfare benefits.

Governments must take immediate action to assign adequate resources to ensure that everybody can enjoy their economic and social rights free from discrimination. They should eliminate inherently discriminatory algorithm decision-making in determining eligibility for social security benefits, and ensure universal and comprehensive social protection.

DISCRIMINATION

Well-resourced and increasingly active anti-rights and anti-gender networks promoted harmful narratives and roll-back of sexual and reproductive rights and the rights of women and LGBTI people, particularly transgender individuals. Slovakia amended its Constitution to further erode the rights of LGBTI people, while Turkish authorities proposed legal amendments that could criminalize LGBTI people and those advocating for their rights. Hungary and Türkiye banned LGBTI assemblies.

Segregation of Roma children in Czech and Slovak schools persisted, although in November, the Czech Republic introduced new measures aimed at desegregation and preventing the placement of Roma children in special schools solely due to social disadvantage. The Slovenian government rushed through emergency security legislation expanding executive and police powers, increasing surveillance and imposing punitive restrictions on social benefits, disproportionately affecting Roma communities.

Across the region, there was a worrying rise in reports of physical and verbal attacks against racialized people, Roma people, LGBTI people and those perceived to be Muslim or Jewish. Numerous attacks on places of worship were reported. In the UK, two worshippers were killed during an attack on a synagogue and 27 mosques were targeted between July and October – a period which coincided with campaigns associated with anti-rights groups and protests outside premises suspected to be housing asylum seekers. A rise in attacks against LGBTI people was noted in Austria, Croatia, Germany, Poland and Serbia.

Discrimination persisted against Muslim women and girls in sports and education. In France, a bill to ban religious clothing from all sports competitions was pending discussion, while the Austrian parliament passed a law that banned hijabs in schools for girls under 14. Portugal's parliament began discussing a ban on face coverings which could limit freedoms for some Muslim women.

Governments must respect, protect, promote and guarantee people's right to live free from discrimination and violence, including through effective measures to implement legal and policy reforms.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Climate change continued to wreak harm across the region. It worsened heatwaves, wildfires, and floods in countries including Greece, Portugal and Spain, resulting in record-breaking numbers of deaths and damage to land and property.

European states varied in their actions towards preventing climate change. A few governments led with strong climate mitigation policies while others fell troublingly short of international emissions targets. The transition towards renewable energies and "greener" technologies was not always consistent with human rights. I, Finland, Norway and Sweden, failure to ensure safeguards and meaningful consultations before initiating land use projects threatened to significantly affect Indigenous Sámi livelihoods and culture. The EU's Critical Raw Materials Act enabled an intensification of mining on traditional Sámi lands, further threatening their rights.

Governments must protect individuals and communities from the risks and impacts of climate change and extreme weather conditions, including by upholding international targets to stem climate decline.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders, especially women human rights defenders and those defending the rights of refugees and migrants compelled to use unsafe routes to reach Europe, were particularly targeted throughout the year. In Poland, activist Justyna Wydrzyńska faced a retrial for helping a pregnant woman to access abortion pills. In Greece, 24 humanitarian workers

who had assisted refugees and migrants were standing trial on charges carrying up to 20 years' imprisonment.

Türkiye intensified baseless investigations, prosecutions and convictions of human rights defenders, and continued to defy binding rulings by the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights to release prisoners of conscience.

Governments should protect human rights defenders and enable their crucial role, rather than stigmatizing and criminalizing their activities

MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA REGIONAL OVERVIEW

Armed conflicts, increasing use of authoritarian practices, economic, social and climate crises and Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the Occupied Gaza Strip were devastating for millions of people across the region in 2025, particularly marginalized communities.

Israel committed multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity, including genocide, against Palestinians in Gaza. The genocide continued beyond the 9 October ceasefire. Israel destroyed or severely damaged virtually all of Gaza's housing, historical buildings and civilian infrastructure, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to physically destroy Palestinians in Gaza. This included the continuation and tightening of its 18-year-long unlawful blockade, used to systematically deny Palestinians access to humanitarian aid and other essential supplies and services and engineer a humanitarian catastrophe. The vast majority of the 2 million Palestinians in Gaza were unlawfully displaced, starved and deprived of adequate healthcare and shelter.

Israel also launched military attacks on Iran, Lebanon, Qatar, Syria, and Yemen, some of which killed or injured civilians. In southern Lebanon, Israel extensively destroyed civilian property. Israel's system of apartheid against all Palestinians took a heavy toll, particularly in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem, through high-intensity military operations and a sharp increase in state-backed settler violence.

Mass protests against Israel's genocide spread around the world. A wide range of organizations, international bodies and states acknowledged that Israel was committing genocide. Nevertheless, the world's governments failed to take meaningful action to stop the genocide or to bring an end to Israel's unlawful occupation.

Across the region, governments and non-state armed groups repressed dissent, with governments increasingly utilizing authoritarian practices. Authorities detained, tortured and unjustly prosecuted critics and opponents, punishing them with harsh sentences, including capital punishment. Among those frequently targeted were journalists, dissidents, human rights defenders, women's rights activists and trade unionists.

In Syria, the fall of the Assad government in late 2024 created an opening for civic space and transitional justice processes. Significant challenges remained, including ensuring justice for sectarian-based killings and creating an enabling environment that allows civil society to flourish.

Discrimination continued to blight the lives of millions of people across the region on the basis of gender, race, nationality, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, and class. Several countries ramped up human rights abuses against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

Despite increasingly catastrophic consequences of the climate crisis, the region's major fossil fuel-producing states maintained or increased production levels.

GENOCIDE

Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip continued throughout 2025 with the continued denial of access to adequate humanitarian assistance amid the ongoing forced displacement of nearly the entire population, devastating military bombardment and extensive destruction of civilian property and infrastructure.

In March, Israel unilaterally ended a truce agreed on 19 January and immediately escalated intensive military attacks on Gaza. A ceasefire agreed in October triggered the release of all 20

living hostages held by Palestinian armed groups and nearly 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees held by Israel. However, Israel's military attacks continued, killing a further 415 Palestinians between the ceasefire and the end of the year.

During 2025, Israel killed 26,791 Palestinians in Gaza and injured 64,065, of whom 60% were children, women and older people. Israel's continued to attack overcrowded civilian places, including cafes, busy markets, and schools sheltering those forcibly displaced due to its military operations.

A particularly deadly day was 18 March, when a series of Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip killed at least 414 Palestinians, including 174 children. On 23 March, Israeli forces attacked marked humanitarian vehicles, including five ambulances, killing 15 aid workers, including Red Crescent paramedics. On 30 June, in an indiscriminate attack, the Israeli military struck the popular al-Baqa cafe, killing 32 people, mostly civilians.

Mass displacement caused by Israeli orders or destruction of whole neighbourhoods caused great physical and mental harm. In May, without imperative military necessity, Israel wantonly destroyed the southern town of Khuza'a, home to 11,000 Palestinians. On 5 September, Israel launched a campaign to demolish high-rise residential and commercial buildings across Gaza City, flattening at least 16 tower blocks in 10 days, and destroying makeshift camps in their vicinity, resulting in the further displacement of thousands of families.

Israel's genocide encompassed the deliberate orchestration of a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. By mid-August, more than half a million Palestinians in Gaza faced famine, the highest level of catastrophic starvation; a further 1.4 million were at the second or third critical levels. OCHA reported that, in July alone, there were almost 13,000 new hospital admissions for children with acute malnutrition. For the third consecutive year, Israel prohibited all medical evacuations from Gaza into the West Bank and Israel, despite court petitions, and severely restricted medical evacuations abroad, causing preventable deaths.

Between 2 March and 19 May, Israel imposed a total siege on Gaza. The temporary relaxation after 19 May still did not allow in some critical supplies, including fuel and cooking gas. On 9 March, Israeli authorities cut the electricity supply to the last desalination plant in Gaza. Without fuel, electricity generators could not power hospital equipment. Additionally, between late May and August, at least 859 Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces and its security contractors while desperately seeking aid from the militarized aid-distribution scheme run by the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation.

Israel caused extensive destruction to Palestinian cultural, religious, medical and educational facilities. The Israeli army destroyed all Gaza's universities and colleges, hundreds of mosques and three churches. Most schools were turned into shelters for displaced people, and subsequently came under attack from Israeli air strikes and unmanned demolition "robots". Israeli forces destroyed women's healthcare and reproductive health facilities, and blocked aid for reproductive healthcare.

At the end of 2025, Israeli forces continued to be fully deployed in more than 58% of the Gaza Strip. Amnesty International warned that it was a "dangerous illusion that life in Gaza is returning to normal" after the October ceasefire, and that "the world must not be fooled. Israel's genocide is not over".

Israel must end its genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, including by respecting its legal obligations to allow unimpeded access to aid, fully lifting its illegal blockade and removing its illegal military presence as indicated by the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinions.

APARTHEID

Israel continued to impose an apartheid system of oppression and domination against all Palestinians whose rights it controlled. Israel's laws, policies and practices left Palestinians

fragmented geographically and politically, frequently impoverished, and in a constant state of fear and insecurity. In 2025, OCHA counted 849 roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank, obstructing Palestinians' movement between Palestinian villages and towns, and delaying access for emergency services.

Israeli authorities continued to demolish buildings, permanently displacing Palestinians, with OCHA recording the highest annual figures for both demolitions and displacement since 2009. Eighty-six new illegal outposts were established and 54 new illegal settlements approved, in addition to some 371 already in existence, according to Yesh Din, an Israeli anti-occupation organization.

Israel's military and government officials increasingly allowed or encouraged settlers to attack and terrorize Palestinians with impunity, with soldiers sometimes joining the gratuitous violence and protecting settlers. Such attacks expelled some 220 families from 19 villages in the West Bank, according to Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem. Jinba and Shi'b al-Butum in the South Hebron Hills were repeatedly targeted. OCHA recorded more than 1,600 violent settler attacks in the first 10 months of 2025.

Throughout the year, the Israeli military conducted high-intensity attacks, including aerial strikes, in the north of the West Bank, resulting in killings, extensive destruction of homes and infrastructure and the displacement of tens of thousands of Palestinians, particularly those already living in refugee camps. In late November, footage showed Israeli soldiers in Jenin summarily executing two Palestinian men who could be seen surrendering.

Prominent members of the Israeli government continued to praise and glorify violence against Palestinians, including arbitrary arrests and torture and other ill-treatment of those in Israeli detention, including rape and sexual violence, and denial of basic rights including food and healthcare. At least 98 Palestinians died in Israeli custody between October 2023 and November 2025, according to Physicians for Human Rights-Israel.

In Bedouin villages in the Negev/Naqab in southern Israel, Israeli authorities demolished some 5,000 homes in order to expand Jewish communities. Israeli police demolished more than 60 homes and structures in the Bedouin Palestinian village of Al-Sir evicting some 1,500 residents. In November, the Supreme Court approved the eviction of more than 500 residents of the unrecognized Palestinian Bedouin village of Ras Jrabah.

Amnesty International is calling on states, the international community and companies to step up their pressure on Israel to abide by its international obligations to dismantle its system of apartheid against all Palestinians whose rights it controls and put an end to its unlawful occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

In addition to its military operations in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, Israel launched attacks on Iran, Lebanon, Qatar, Syria and Yemen, some of which killed or injured civilians.

On 13 June, Israel began a 12-day offensive against Iran, damaging civilian infrastructure and killing more than 1,100 people, including 45 children. On 23 June, Israeli forces targeted Evin prison in the capital, Tehran, killing at least 80 civilians and causing extensive damage to the prison complex. The attack constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law requiring investigation as a war crime. Iran launched retaliatory missiles and drones at Israel, unlawfully using cluster munitions and killing at least 29 people, including children.

On 9 September, Israeli air strikes on a residential complex in Qatar's capital, Doha, where ceasefire negotiations were taking place, killed six people.

Despite a ceasefire agreed in November 2024 between Israel and the armed group Hezbollah, Israel continued to regularly carry out military attacks and cause extensive destruction in Lebanon. Between November 2024 and September 2025, OHCHR, the UN human rights office, confirmed 103 civilians killed in Lebanon since the ceasefire.

Amnesty International research showed how the Israeli military extensively destroyed or damaged more than 10,000 civilian structures as well as agricultural land in southern Lebanon between October 2024 and January 2025, both before and after the ceasefire took effect.

On 18 March, the Huthi armed group in Yemen resumed its missile and drone attacks on Israel. Between May and September, Israel carried out strikes on major infrastructure in northern Yemen, reportedly killing and injuring hundreds of civilians.

In Yemen, ongoing conflicts continued to exacerbate devastating economic and humanitarian crises. Amnesty International documented a US air strike, which should be investigated as a war crime, on a migrant detention centre in Sa'ada, north-western Yemen, that killed and injured dozens of African migrants being detained by the Huthi de facto authorities.

Serious bouts of fighting flared up sporadically in Syria during 2025. On 6 March, armed groups affiliated with the former government attacked security and military sites in the predominantly Alawite coastal governorates. In response, the government, backed by militias, launched a counter-offensive, leading to massacres in which around 1,400 people, mainly civilians, were killed, including sectarian-based killings of members of the Alawite community by pro-government forces.

In July, clashes between Druze and Bedouin fighters erupted in the south of Syria. After the government intervened in Suwayda governorate, Amnesty International documented government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executing 46 Druze men and women over a two-day period in July. Israel also carried out strikes in Suwayda during the same period and Amnesty International received credible reports of violations committed by other groups involved in the fighting. This included the abduction of a humanitarian worker by Druze armed groups. In Libya, armed clashes erupted in Tripoli on 12 May between rival militias in populated residential areas and involved the use of large-calibre weapons, including anti-aircraft guns, in an improper and imprecise way. A Tripoli-based NGO reported that 53 civilians had died in the clashes.

All parties to armed conflicts must respect international humanitarian law, in particular by ending direct attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks. Foreign governments must stop transfers of weapons where there is an overriding risk of their use to commit or facilitate genocide and other serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Several states in the region increasingly resorted to authoritarian practices during 2025, clamping down on a wide range of human rights and extending their crackdown on dissent, including online.

In Tunisia, authorities deepened their suppression of dissent, including by targeting human rights organizations and defenders and NGO staff. Government opponents were handed punitive sentences after politically motivated mass trials under counterterrorism or cybercrime laws. In November, a Tunis appeal court confirmed sentences of up to 45 years' imprisonment against opposition politicians across the political spectrum, human rights defenders and activists in the notorious "Conspiracy Case", after a flawed trial. Decree Law 54 was used to silence dissenting journalists, social media users, lawyers, artists and activists. In Egypt, the authorities continued to stifle independent civil society associations and the media and punish criticism of the government. Security forces arbitrarily detained journalists, researchers and dissidents, and subjected them to enforced disappearance, incommunicado detention, and torture and other ill-treatment.

Widespread and severe repression of dissent continued in Gulf states. Saudi Arabia severely restricted the rights to freedom of expression and association, with government critics and

human rights defenders facing long prison terms, grossly unfair trials, arbitrary travel bans and increased use of capital punishment. Neighbouring Oman introduced a new citizenship law enabling authorities to revoke citizenship of people who "offend" Oman or the Sultan, or belong to a group, party or organization that embraces principles that "harm the interests" of Oman. Press freedom was also further restricted.

In Iraq, authorities used vague legal provisions criminalizing "indecent content" and "public morality" violations to target critics, activists and independent media. In May, the Jordanian Media Commission blocked 12 local and foreign media websites for "spreading media poison and attacking Jordan and its national symbols". According to the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms, 12 journalists were detained by the Palestinian police for periods ranging from a few hours to two weeks during which they were interrogated about their work.

Across the region, authorities suppressed peaceful protests by banning or forcibly dispersing them.

In Algeria, police arbitrarily arrested peaceful protesters in January and February during strikes and demonstrations for workers' rights. During protests that began on 28 December in Tehran and quickly spread nationwide, security forces unlawfully used rifles, shotguns loaded with metal pellets, tear gas and beatings to disperse largely peaceful protesters calling for the fall of the Islamic Republic system, leading to killings and horrific injuries. In Palestine, Hamas-run security services arbitrarily detained and tortured protesters who organized peaceful demonstrations in Beit Lahia in March and April.

Governments must respect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, including by ensuring that journalists, human rights defenders and activists can enjoy these rights without prosecution or harassment, and by releasing those detained for exercising these rights.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Unfair trials and other human rights violations marred criminal justice systems across the region. In Egypt and Libya, despite some long-overdue releases, thousands of people remained arbitrarily detained without legal basis or following unfair trials amid ongoing enforced disappearances, torture and other ill-treatment, and incommunicado detention. In Iran, the judiciary lacked independence and was complicit in enforced disappearances and torture.

In Tunisia, the judiciary lacked independence and courts issued heavy sentences after unfair mass trials. In February, the Tunis Court of First Instance ruled that upcoming "terrorism" trials would proceed with defendants attending remotely from prison. Lawyers representing members of political opposition groups and victims of violations were targeted with criminal investigations under bogus charges such as "spreading false information".

In the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, prominent journalist Sherwan Sherwani received a new prison sentence of four-and-a-half years on spurious charges in August, days before his scheduled release. His reconviction was part of a documented pattern of the judiciary extending the detention of journalists, activists and critics through successive charges.

Authorities in Egypt continued to refer journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders and others held in prolonged pretrial detention to trials before special terrorism circuits of criminal courts in connection with terrorism-related charges, many of which were solely based on the exercise of human rights. Such courts systematically flouted fair trial standards.

In Jordan, thousands of individuals remained in administrative detention after local governors deemed them "a danger to the people". They were held without charge or access to a judicial body to challenge the legality of their detention.

Judicial authorities in Algeria repeatedly violated the right to a fair trial including by unnecessarily placing individuals in pretrial detention, bringing defendants to court without

informing their lawyers, and subjecting defendants to expedited court hearings.

Trials in Iran were systematically unfair, rendering detentions and executions arbitrary. The new Espionage Law further eroded fair trial rights.

Authorities must guarantee fair trial rights, respect the independence of the judiciary and refrain from abusing the justice system to persecute dissent.

DEATH PENALTY

Most states in the region imposed death sentences in 2025.

Iran carried out its highest number of executions for decades. The escalation was driven by increased use of the death penalty as a tool of political repression, and lethal anti-narcotics policies. Mass executions sparked peaceful prison sit-ins and hunger strikes. "Adultery" remained punishable by stoning to death. Ethnic minorities continued to be disproportionately subjected to the death penalty.

Saudi Arabia executed hundreds of people for a wide range of crimes, including drug- and "terrorism"-related offences. Most of those executed for drug-related offences were foreign nationals, who faced additional hurdles to receiving a fair trial. Shia people comprised a very significant proportion of those executed for "terrorism". Many executions were for *ta'zir* (discretionary) offences, where no specific penalty is mandated in law. In a startling development, Saudi Arabia executed at least two young men for crimes committed when they were children.

Executions were also carried out in Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates. Algeria and Kuwait broadened their scope of capital punishment to cover drug-related offences.

Governments must immediately establish an official moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Severe economic and social crises affected people across a region impacted by conflicts, financial stresses and climate change and without a universal social protection system. The communities hit the hardest were already under-served, living under conditions that undermined their economic and social rights including health, water, housing and an adequate standard of living. Those protesting for their socio-economic rights frequently faced repression.

The millions of people living in poverty in Egypt faced new hardships. In August, Egyptian authorities legislated to end long-standing rental contracts and decreed other measures that threatened the affordability of homes for low-income people. Garment workers who went on strike in January were arrested and subsequently sacked.

The governments of several countries, including the Gulf states, failed to protect low-paid migrant workers from extreme labour exploitation and other abuses, and denied them the right to form independent trades unions.

The US government's abrupt and irresponsible termination of foreign assistance early in the year put at risk the health and human rights of millions of people in the region who depended on humanitarian aid. In Yemen, aid workers described to Amnesty International how the USA's decision to cut aid funding led to the shutdown of life-saving assistance and protection services, including malnutrition treatment to children, pregnant and breastfeeding mothers, safe shelters for survivors of gender-based violence, and healthcare to children suffering from cholera and other illnesses.

Governments must uphold people's economic and social rights, including by establishing universal social protection systems that enable everyone, including marginalized groups, to access an adequate standard of living, including food, water and housing, as well as

essential services such as healthcare and education. Governments must also respect the rights of workers to join and form independent trades unions and to strike, and should extend labour law protections to all migrant workers.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The region continued to suffer the harmful, often life-threatening consequences of climate change, including extreme weather events and water scarcity, and environmental mismanagement. Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Syria were among the countries facing severe water crises, undermining the rights to water, health and an adequate standard of living, and disproportionately affecting rural communities, refugees and low-income households.

Authorities in Iran failed to address the country's environmental degradation, which disproportionately affected marginalized communities. The crisis was marked by the loss of ecosystems; groundwater depletion; water pollution; deforestation; land subsidence; declining water reserves and soil health; and air pollution, which contributed to thousands of deaths.

Meanwhile, governments in the region's oil- and gas-rich states failed to take adequate steps to stop climate change, mitigate its impacts or provide adequate support to those most affected. Bahrain expanded its oil and gas production; Kuwait remained among the world's highest per capita emitters of greenhouse gases; Qatar was still one of the world's leading exporters of liquefied natural gas; and Saudi Arabia remained in the world's top 10 carbon emitters per capita.

Israel's destruction in Gaza released toxic materials into water systems causing permanent pollution.

Governments must urgently take steps to mitigate the climate crisis, including by curbing carbon emissions and ending the extraction and use of fossil fuels.

RIGHTS OF INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE, REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

The devastating political, humanitarian and economic crises in 2025 increased the number of people leaving their homes in search of safety, with many facing human rights violations in the process. Millions were or became internally displaced in Iraq, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Syria and Yemen. In several countries, state and/or non-state actors routinely violated the rights of displaced people. Security forces, militias, and armed groups and other non-state actors across Libya continued to commit widespread and systematic human rights violations and abuses against refugees and migrants with impunity. During the year, EU-backed coastguards in western Libya, and the Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF)-affiliated Libyan Special Naval Forces and Tarik Ben Zeyad armed groups in eastern Libya, intercepted more than 25,000 people and forcibly returned them to Libya – an increase from the previous year.

The more than 1 million internally displaced people in Iraq continued to endure worsening conditions amid prolonged displacement, with many struggling to access vital services including healthcare, water and housing. Living conditions also deteriorated in camps for displaced people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.

More than 1.8 million Afghans, including unaccompanied and separated children, were unlawfully expelled or forced to return to Afghanistan. The mass expulsion campaign involved violent home raids, stop-and-searches and arbitrary arrests. Afghans who remained in Iran faced widespread violence and discrimination.

In Tunisia, migration and asylum policies were characterized by widespread human rights violations, predominantly affecting Black refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Public comments by parliamentary and governmental figures exacerbated racist violence against

Black migrants. Officials routinely carried out life-threatening collective and unlawful expulsions to Libya and Algeria, often after reckless sea interceptions or racially targeted arrests and frequently accompanied by torture and other ill-treatment, including dehumanizing sexual violence. The government's continued suspension of access to asylum aggravated violations against asylum seekers and refugees.

From April onwards, Algerian security forces increased mass arrests and collective expulsions of Black and racialized migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Hundreds of refugees and migrants were arbitrarily arrested in Libya upon their forcible and collective expulsions by Tunisian and Algerian authorities. They and thousands of other refugees and migrants in Libya were detained indefinitely in cruel and inhuman conditions and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

Authorities must end unlawful detentions and deportations of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, respect the principles of non-refoulement and non-discrimination and facilitate the voluntary and safe return of the internally displaced to their homes.

DISCRIMINATION

WOMEN AND GIRLS

Women and girls continued to face discrimination in law and practice, including in relation to the rights to freedom of movement, expression, bodily autonomy, and in inheritance, divorce, political office and employment opportunities. Entrenched gender-based violence, including femicide, remained common, with authorities systematically failing to address impunity for these crimes.

Iraq's parliament granted a religious sect increased authority over family law, including marriage and divorce, deepening sectarian divisions and heightening risks to women's rights. It also failed to criminalize domestic violence or repeal problematic and discriminatory articles of the Penal Code, such as those mitigating so-called "honour-based killings" and corporal punishment. Domestic violence and other forms of gender-based violence remained pervasive.

Authorities in Iran continued to treat women and girls as second-class citizens, denying equal rights in marriage, divorce, child nationality and custody, employment, inheritance and political office. The legal marriage age for girls remained 13. Widespread resistance to compulsory veiling forced authorities to end the violent mass public arrests seen in previous years and pause implementation of a new veiling law. Nevertheless, authorities continued to use existing laws and regulations to enforce compulsory veiling in workplaces, universities and other public sector institutions, leaving women and girls who resisted at constant risk of harassment, assault, arbitrary arrest, fines and expulsion from employment and education.

LGBTI PEOPLE

People in many states across the region continued to be arrested and prosecuted for their sexual orientation or gender identity, and some received harsh sentences for consensual same-sex sexual relations.

Yemen's criminal code criminalized consensual same-sex sexual relations and anal sex, with penalties including imprisonment and death by stoning. In Algeria and Morocco, authorities continued to prosecute adults for consensual same-sex sexual relations; in Tunisia, such prosecutions increased.

ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

Across the region, members of national, ethnic and religious communities and minorities faced entrenched discrimination in law and practice, including in relation to their rights to worship and to live free from persecution and other serious human rights abuses.

In Iran, ethnic minorities continued to face discrimination in access to education, employment, adequate housing and political office, as well as other human rights violations. Iran's religious minorities faced arbitrary detention, unjust prosecution and torture and other ill-treatment for professing or practising their faith.

In Libya, between August and October the Subul al-Salam Battalion, an armed group under LAAF command, and the LAAF-affiliated police committed unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances against members of the Tebu community in Kufra district, based on their ethnic origin.

Governments must end discrimination based on race, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. They must implement legal and policy reforms to grant equal rights for all without discrimination and to protect, promote and guarantee the rights to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS

A-Z COUNTRY ENTRIES

AFGHANISTAN

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

The Taliban intensified their systematic, widespread attacks on women's and girls' rights. The Taliban discriminated against ethno-religious groups, including forcing followers of Ismaili (Shia) to convert to Sunni Islam. The Taliban stifled independent media and all criticism of its policies, including through arbitrary arrest and detention of journalists and former government employees. Detainees and critics were subjected to extrajudicial execution and torture and other ill-treatment; protests were systematically suppressed. Access to a fair trial remained essentially impossible. The ICC issued arrest warrants for the Taliban leader and the Chief Justice. Afghanistan faced economic instability and a deepening humanitarian crisis. Lack of funding jeopardized essential healthcare services provided by WHO. Discrimination restricted access to humanitarian assistance for marginalized ethnic and religious groups. Forced evictions disproportionately impacted women and girls, particularly Hazaras.

BACKGROUND

The Taliban remained the country's de facto authorities following the collapse of the former government in August 2021. UN Security Council sanctions against the Taliban continued, with many Taliban leaders facing travel bans.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women and girls were deprived of almost all their fundamental rights, with women from Hazara and religious minorities facing intersectional discrimination.[1] Taliban decrees and policies targeting women and girls intensified, preventing them from: accessing education beyond the age of 12 years; working with UN agencies, NGOs and state institutions; and enjoying the rights to freedom of movement, expression and political participation. In June, according to media, the Taliban intimidated and threatened women who worked for UN agencies and their families in the capital city Kabul. In September, Taliban security forces prevented Afghan women working for UN agencies and UN contractors from entering UN compounds.

The Taliban requirement that women must be accompanied by a *mahram* (male chaperone) when travelling curtailed women's access to working in the healthcare system or seeking medical assistance. The Taliban instructed private businesses and health clinics not to serve women without a *mahram*, according to the UN. The Taliban's draconian "Law of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" further curtailed women's already severely limited access to economic opportunities, according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

In March, UNAMA reported that the Taliban had prevented women from attending prayers in mosques during Ramadan in Badghis and Herat provinces. In July, the Taliban arrested dozens of women in Kabul for violating its restrictive dress code. In November, the Taliban imposed a new restriction in Herat province requiring all female patients, caretakers, visitors and staff members to wear a burqa – a garment that fully covers the face and body – to access healthcare facilities.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Women and girls faced increasing levels of gender-based violence at home and in public. The UN reported a 40% increase in the risk of violence against women and girls under the Taliban and that 14.2 million women needed protection and assistance. Women and girls experiencing gender-based violence remained reliant on the Taliban's draconian policies and practices or traditional dispute resolution; the Taliban had entirely dismantled the institutional framework of support, including courts and prosecution units.

Forced, early and child marriage increased. The Taliban endorsed and

engaged in forced marriage, despite introducing a decree banning it.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Taliban decrees, policies and practices discriminated against ethno-religious minorities. According to UNAMA, the Taliban forced at least 50 men from the Ismaila (Shia) community to convert to Sunni Islam in Badakhshan province in January. Those who refused were subjected to physical assault, coercion and death threats. Rawadari, a local human rights organization, reported that the Taliban had forced at least 203 people to convert to Sunni Islam. The Taliban also forced Ismaila communities to send their children to Sunni religious education.

Rawadari and media reported that the Taliban in Bamiyan, Ghazni, Ghor, Herat, Kabul and Nimruz provinces had imposed restrictions on Shia-Hazaras conducting their religious rituals, specifically during the month of Muharram. In Badghis and Ghazni provinces, Shia people were forced to break their fast and pray according to the Taliban's announcement of Eid.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The Taliban continued to attack and oppress independent and critical media, persistently targeting journalists criticizing the Taliban's draconian policies. According to the National Union of Journalists, in July, the Taliban arrested seven journalists on charges including "moral corruption" and "espionage".

In July, UNAMA reported that in at least half of the country's provinces the Taliban had banned photos or any images of living beings from being taken or televised. In August, the Taliban arrested three staff members of local radio station, Radio Nasim; the station ceased operations in Daikundi and Bamiyan provinces after 13 years of broadcasting. In late November, a local media outlet reported that the radio station in Bamiyan had been reactivated after being off the air more than three months.

The Taliban further restricted freedom of expression and the right to education by banning from universities books authored by women and the teaching of subjects incompatible with the Taliban interpretation of sharia (Islamic law). The Taliban also banned poetry critical of its policies, decisions and practices, as well as romantic poetry. People who criticized the Taliban publicly, including through social media, were subjected to arbitrary arrests and imprisonment.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

The Taliban arbitrarily arrested and detained people who criticized its draconian rules, including journalists and human rights activists. Taliban "morality inspectors" also arbitrarily arrested and detained people for non-compliance with the "vice and virtue decree", including for hair length and style, failing to attend congregational prayer, playing music, or taking photos.

The media and UN reported cases of dissenters, including former government employees, being forcibly returned to Afghanistan and subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention. As of March, UNAMA had recorded at least 23 arbitrary arrests and detentions of former government employees. The Taliban also forcibly disappeared former government employees and those accused of collaborating with its opponents.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

According to Rawadari, 251 people – including protesters, influential figures and employees of the former government – were extrajudicially executed, mysteriously killed, or wounded by the Taliban and unknown actors during the first half of the year. Between April and June, seven former government employees were reportedly unlawfully killed.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Detainees were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Local and international human rights organizations HRD+, Rawadari, World Organization Against Torture and others highlighted the Taliban's use of torture, including "tooth and nail extraction", "electric shock", "water boarding" and "threat to kill victims' relatives". The Taliban reportedly

sexually assaulted and abused both women and men detainees. UNAMA documented five cases of torture and ill-treatment of former government employees between January and March. The reports highlighted that detainees belonging to ethno-religious minorities, specifically Hazaras and Shia, had been subjected to additional harassment, including verbal insults and denial of religious practices.

The Taliban imposed corporal punishment, which amounted to torture and other ill-treatment, on charges such as "adultery", "drinking alcohol", "homosexuality" and "pederasty". These punishments were carried out in addition to prison terms. UNAMA reported at least 231 individuals being corporally punished between April and June.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Peaceful assembly critical or independent of the Taliban remained stifled. The Taliban reportedly killed at least 10 protesters and wounded more than 40 others in Argo, Jurm and Khash districts of Badakhshan province, during protests triggered by the Taliban's poppy eradication programme. UNAMA additionally reported the arrests of at least 48 Uzbek men and children who protested against the arrests of their community members over an altercation with local Pashtuns in Dawlat Abad district, Faryab province, in June.

Fearing arbitrary arrest and imprisonment, protests against Taliban draconian policies and practices shifted to online platforms.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

With all previously existing legislation and legal institutions having been demolished by the Taliban, access to a fair trial became nearly impossible. The Taliban's narrow interpretation of Sharia law continued to dominate in place of former legislation, irrespective of religious diversity, the rights of women and girls, and international obligations. Oversight institutions such as the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission, parliament and provincial councils remained dismantled.

To tackle ongoing and past impunity, in a landmark decision in October, the UN Human Rights Council established an independent investigative mechanism for Afghanistan to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of past and ongoing crimes under international law and human rights violations and abuses.[2]

In July, the ICC issued arrest warrants against the Taliban leader and the Chief Justice on the charge of crime against humanity "persecution on gender grounds".[3] Afghan women and human rights activists described the ongoing attacks by the Taliban against women's and girls' rights as "gender apartheid". Amnesty advocated for the recognition of gender apartheid as a crime under international law.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Afghanistan continued to face economic instability and a deepening humanitarian crisis, with 22.9 million people – nearly half the population – dependent on assistance. The humanitarian crisis was exacerbated by disasters such as earthquakes, unprecedented mass forced returns from Iran and Pakistan, and the impact of the climate crisis. In August, thousands of families were affected by the earthquake in the east of the country, which resulted in 1,992 deaths and 3,631 wounded.

The humanitarian crisis was aggravated by the USA, Afghanistan's largest donor, cutting aid funding, and other countries scaling back assistance globally. Afghanistan remained largely disconnected from the global economy due to the Taliban's return to power and the freezing of its foreign assets.

Although the World Bank reported signs of gradual economic recovery, the Taliban exacerbated the humanitarian crisis, particularly for women. Due to restrictive Taliban polices, including bans on women working with NGOs and UN agencies, access to humanitarian assistance for women became increasingly difficult.

In August, the UN estimated that over 78% of Afghan women were out of

education, employment or training. In June, UNICEF reported that 90% of children were living in food poverty, with half of them experiencing severe food poverty. Around 4 million children under the age of five and pregnant and lactating women were suffering from acute malnutrition.

Access to healthcare remained limited, particularly in rural areas, because the country's health sector remained fragile and dependent on international assistance. During earthquake rescue operations, women victims and survivors were denied immediate support because of discriminatory Taliban policies.

DISCRIMINATION

Bayat, Hazara, Ismaili (Shia) and Tajik communities were discriminated against in the delivery of humanitarian assistance, including in Badakhshan, Ghazni, Ghor and Nimruz provinces, due to pressure to focus assistance on Taliban-designated areas. NGOs reported discrimination in employment against marginalized ethnic groups and religious minorities. Media reported inequality and favouritism involving Taliban judicial and non-judicial authorities.

In July, the Taliban forcibly evicted Hazara families from Rashak village in Panjab district, Bamiyan province, after a Taliban court decided a land dispute in favour of nomadic communities who were ethnically Pashtun. Initially, the Hazara residents were given 15 days to leave the village. When they resisted, the Taliban raided the village and forcibly evicted them, leaving them with no alternative accommodation or compensation.

Also in July, the Taliban forcibly evicted hundreds of households in Dawlatyar district, Ghor province, over a long-standing land dispute between two tribes. According to media, the evictions were politically motivated because many of those affected supported the former government; no alternative accommodation or compensation were offered.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Despite ongoing, widespread human rights violations and abuses by the Taliban, and the deepening humanitarian crisis, several countries forcibly returned Afghans, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement. Germany and Austria started deporting Afghans back to danger. Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan and Türkiye returned Afghan refugees and asylum seekers in mass expulsions. Iran and Pakistan returned 2.8 million people up to December.[4] On their return, the women and girls were deprived of almost all their rights, while dissenters and former government employees remained at serious risk of reprisal attacks and human rights violations by the Taliban.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Civilians were killed and wounded in suicide attacks and explosions attributed to groups opposing the Taliban, unknown actors and remnants of unexploded ordnances from previous conflicts, according to UN and Afghan human rights organizations. Cross-border attacks between the Taliban and Pakistan, and air strikes by the Pakistani army, caused many more civilian casualties.

1. *Afghanistan: Submission to the UN Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 91st session, 16 June-July 2025*, 21 May ↑
2. "Afghanistan: Open letter on Afghanistan to the permanent representatives of member and observer states of the United Nations Human Rights Council", 28 August ↑
3. "Afghanistan: ICC Prosecutor's application for arrest warrants against Taliban leaders is an important step towards justice for Afghan women, girls and LGBTQI persons", 24 January ↑
4. "Afghanistan: Forced returns to Taliban rule must end as latest figures reveal millions unlawfully deported in 2025", 16 December ↑

ALGERIA

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Authorities continued to curtail exercise of the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. They used arbitrary arrests, unfair trials based on unfounded terrorism and other charges, and

travel bans to punish peaceful dissidents. Authorities hindered the activities of trade unions and political parties and obstructed peaceful gatherings. Authorities adopted a new Code of Criminal Procedure that undermined the right to a fair trial and introduced legal amendments allowing the death penalty for drug-related offences. Algeria lifted a reservation on CEDAW and announced measures to protect women survivors of violence. Authorities carried out a record number of collective expulsions of Black migrants to Niger. Limited progress was made to reduce gas flaring.

BACKGROUND

On 9 March, elections were held to renew 58 out of the 174 members of the Council of the Nation – parliament's upper house. As per the Constitution, two-thirds of seats were elected by local assemblies; the rest being nominated by the president.

Multiple extreme weather events – including heavy rain, a landslide and wildfires – resulted in at least 46 fatalities.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In January, parliament reviewed a draft law on associations. It was awaiting government approval before being put to a parliamentary vote. The draft maintained a repressive legal framework with a cumbersome authorization system for registering associations and placed undue restrictions on their activities, funding and foreign cooperation. It gave executive authorities overly broad powers over the registration, suspension and dissolution of associations on vague grounds.

Authorities continued to target trade union members. Five union leaders and members faced unjust prosecutions and another was summoned on 8 April and questioned about his union activities. In July, police arbitrarily arrested a union leader after he announced a railway workers' strike, in relation to which he was later sentenced to two years in prison. On 29 October, a court arbitrarily sentenced independent union leader Ali Mammeri to 15 years in prison for his union work and peaceful activism.[1]

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities continued to unduly restrict peaceful assemblies and maintained an unlawful regime that required prior authorization for public gatherings.

In January and February, students, teachers and doctors carried out successive protests and strikes against inadequate school programmes, low salaries and deteriorating working conditions in the context of a rising cost of living. Police arbitrarily arrested peaceful protesters, including at least two union members. On 17 February the government declared a strike organized by teachers' unions to be unlawful.

On 8 May, during a peaceful sit-in in the capital, Algiers, police arrested six people who were calling for a boycott of two companies for their alleged support to Israel.

On 4 August the Ministry of the Interior refused to authorize a march in support of Palestine organized by political parties.

On 2 October, police arrested at least 20 protesters who attempted to hold a sit-in in Algiers in support of the pro-Palestine Global Sumud Flotilla.

Local authorities refused to authorize the holding of a political meeting in Algiers of the Rally for Culture and Democracy on 24 May and their party summer camp on 9-11 October in the eastern region of Bejaia. They provided no lawful or proportionate grounds for such restrictions.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Authorities continued to repress dissenting voices and journalism using over-broad legal provisions, including unfounded terrorism charges, to arbitrarily arrest, detain and convict activists, social media users and journalists.

Following the launch of the Manich Radi ("I am not satisfied") online movement in December 2024, which denounced restrictions on human rights and difficult socio-economic conditions, authorities responded with a wave of arrests. By April, authorities had arrested and convicted at least 23 activists and journalists for their social media posts.[2]

On 5 January, authorities placed journalist Abdelwakil Blamm in pretrial detention on terrorism-related charges based on his private communications with peaceful activists in which he exchanged information on the political situation in Algeria.

On 27 March, authorities sentenced French-Algerian writer Boualem Sansal to five years in prison on charges including "undermining national unity", based on his public opinions, writings and digital communications in which he criticized the Algerian authorities and commented on the French colonization of Algeria. On 12 November, President Abdelmajid Tebboune granted him a pardon, and he was allowed to leave Algeria.

On 26 June, authorities convicted 20 individuals to sentences ranging from two years to life imprisonment for a statement issued on behalf of the dissolved party Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), after 21 months in pretrial detention for 18 of them. They were sentenced for "exploiting the wounds of the national tragedy to endanger state institutions" and "undermining national unity" – vaguely worded charges that unduly restrict the right to freedom of expression.

On 29 June, authorities sentenced French sports journalist Christophe Gleizes to seven years in prison on charges including "glorifying terrorism", in relation to his journalism work.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Authorities maintained arbitrary travel bans on activists, lawyers, trade unionists and journalists.

On 30 July, border police arbitrarily prevented French-Algerian national Nassera Dutour, president of the Collective of Families of the Disappeared in Algeria, from entering Algeria and forcibly returned her to France, where she resides.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

Judicial authorities repeatedly violated the right to a fair trial, including by placing individuals in pretrial detention without necessity; bringing defendants to court without informing their lawyers; and subjecting defendants to expedited court hearings that did not allow sufficient time to prepare a legal defence.

For instance, on 20 January, in an expedited trial held four days after his arrest, authorities sentenced activist and poet Mohamed Tadjadit to five years in prison for his social media publications and private communications.[3] On 22 May an appeals court reduced his sentence to one year.

On 8 July the authorities adopted a new Code of Criminal Procedure which contained a range of provisions undermining the right to a fair trial and due process guarantees. These included provisions allowing for expedited trial proceedings that do not provide time for adequate defence; giving prosecutors discretionary powers to place people in pretrial detention without judicial review; giving authorities extended discretionary power to seize private goods without judicial order; allowing prosecutors to place people under travel bans without the possibility of judicial review; and normalizing the use of online judicial proceedings without justification or consent.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In August, Algeria lifted its reservation on Article 15(4) of CEDAW relating to freedom of movement and residence.

On 9 February, President Abdelmajid Tebboune instructed the government to establish concrete legal mechanisms to protect women and girl survivors of violence. The government announced measures including the establishment of a hotline and an interactive online platform; the development of a legal guide for women; and trainings for relevant professionals. Women's rights organizations welcomed the announcement while calling for concrete and sustained actions.

However, official statistics on gender-based violence remained unavailable. The activist group Féminicides Algérie recorded 37 femicides as of November.

On 19 July the authorities adopted legislation extending maternity leave for women workers from 98 to 150 days. However, according to women's rights

organizations, authorities continued to deprive women working in the public or private sectors of maternity leave if they missed workdays during their pregnancy, citing Article 32 of Executive Decree 84-27.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The authorities maintained Penal Code provisions that criminalized consensual same-sex sexual relations between adults, punishable by up to two years in prison and a fine.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

From April onwards, Algerian security forces stepped up their mass arrests and collective expulsions of Black and racialized migrants, while media outlets increasingly shared racist content. According to Niger authorities, between January and May, Algeria summarily and collectively expelled at least 21,948 migrants to Niger.

On 2 May the National Independent Audiovisual Regulatory Authority, whose members were nominated by the president, announced the suspension of the Echorouk News TV channel for 10 days due to the publication on its Facebook page of a racist and discriminatory term against Black migrants.

Sahrawi refugees in Tindouf

Sahrawi refugees continued to suffer from a marked deterioration in living conditions due to an increase in food prices and the reduction in international humanitarian assistance, despite some efforts by the Algerian government to compensate for the shortage. In July the World Food Programme highlighted an unprecedented spike in acute malnutrition, with one in three Sahrawi refugee children having stunted growth.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Authorities continued to arbitrarily deny registration to the Protestant Church of Algeria. All 47 Protestant churches in Algeria remained closed either due to a court order or fear of arbitrary prosecutions against their members.

DEATH PENALTY

On 1 July, authorities adopted amendments to Law 04-18 relating to the Prevention and Suppression of the Illicit Use and Trafficking of Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances. The amendments for the first time introduced the death penalty as a sanction for several drug-related offences. No executions had been carried out since 1993.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Algeria made limited progress to reduce gas flaring, a practice that releases greenhouse gas emissions and can harm the health of surrounding communities through the emission of potentially carcinogenic gases and environmental pollutants. The World Bank reported a 4% decrease in flaring volume compared to the previous year, maintaining Algeria as the world's sixth most gas flaring nation.

On 27 February the government launched the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency to improve national capacity for data collection in relation to climate change.

1. "Algeria: Authorities must quash outrageous 15-year sentence against unionist Ali Mammeri", 31 October ↑
2. "Algeria: Authorities step up crackdown on peaceful dissent in the face of new expressions of discontent", 24 April ↑
3. "Algeria: Activist and poet faces five years in prison: Mohamed Tadjadit", 14 April ↑

ANDORRA

Principality of Andorra

A total ban on abortion remained in place. Measures to address gender-based violence, including collection of data, were insufficient. The health of transgender people was at risk. Access to affordable housing remained concerning.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A total ban on abortion persisted, violating human rights, including the right to safe abortion care. A cross-border journalistic

investigation published in 2025 revealed that an average of 131 women living in Andorra travel to Spain to have an abortion every year.

In April, during an address to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the prime minister announced that the government was preparing a proposal to decriminalize abortion by 2027. Under this proposal, however, abortion services would remain unavailable in Andorra and women, girls and people who can become pregnant would continue to be compelled to travel abroad to access the care they need and are entitled to.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In November, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) called on Andorra to improve the collection of data on all forms of violence against women, including the nature of the relationship between victim and perpetrator, the type of violence inflicted, and the number of judicial decisions issued. The experts called on the authorities to fully involve women's rights associations in policies to prevent and combat violence against women.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In February, the government announced the publication of long-awaited protocols for the implementation of gender-affirming care, as established in the 2022 health decree. At the end of the year, the protocols remained unavailable, jeopardizing the health and wellbeing of transgender people.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

In March, the parliament passed a bill aimed at protecting the right to housing. Although welcomed, the law lacked concrete targets to increase social housing stock. This was despite the fact that access to affordable housing was highlighted as the main public concern in a survey published in July.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Defamation laws remained in force, including the criminalization of criticism of the authorities and Andorran institutions, breaching international human rights law.

ANGOLA

Republic of Angola

Trade unionists, opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders and activists were subjected to arbitrary arrest and detention, and in some cases denied access to legal representation. Security forces used unlawful force, severely undermining the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. The right to freedom of expression, including press freedom, was violated. There was no apparent investigation into the killing of a man by Rapid Intervention Police officers.

BACKGROUND

Many Angolans, particularly youth, faced poverty and hunger due to low wages and high unemployment. Such hardship was compounded on 4 July when the government increased fuel prices and public transport fares doubled. Civil society activists called for protests against the increases to begin on 12 July, while taxi driver associations called for three days of strike action between 28 and 30 July. Violent clashes erupted during protests, and there were reports of acts of vandalism and looting in the capital, Luanda. Over 30 people died, more than 200 were injured and some 1,214 people were arrested.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Trade unionists, opposition members, journalists, human rights defenders and civil society activists were arbitrarily arrested and detained.

During a peaceful demonstration on 16 February in the city of Ndalatando, the National Police of Angola (PNA) arrested parliamentarians Francisco Fernandes Falua and João Quipipa Dias of the opposition National Union for Total Independence of Angola party, along with several other

protesters. António Domingos, a journalist covering the protests, was also arrested. The protesters demanded an investigation into multiple murders of women in Cuanza Norte province. According to Diário Independente newspaper, no investigations had been carried out into the killings of some 16 women between February 2024 and January 2025. Days before their arrest, the parliamentarians met the governor of Cuanza Norte and the public prosecutor to demand investigations with a view to bringing suspected perpetrators to justice. All the detainees were released without charge hours later.

On 4 May, António Frederico Gonçalves was arrested at his home in Luanda by the Service for Criminal Investigation (SIC). He remained in detention without being charged or brought before a judge and was denied access to a lawyer and family members. He was held in connection with allegations that he had created and posted on social media a video calling on Angolans to show unity with Ibrahim Traoré, Burkina Faso's interim president. In the video, he claimed that the government supported a plan by the US administration to kill President Traoré and he called for the US embassy in Luanda to be attacked and burned. António Frederico Gonçalves was released on 11 October under conditions requiring him to appear before the prosecutor each week. He was also prohibited from leaving Luanda province.

On 28 July, André Miranda, a political activist and human rights defender, was arrested by SIC officers while filming the first day of the three-day strike action protest in Luanda (see above, Background). He was taken to the 19th Police Station in Mayanga and transferred on 7 September to the Comarca de Viana prison, where he awaited trial on charges of vandalism and criminal association.

Also on 28 July, suspected SIC members shot activist Serrote José de Oliveira in the leg while he was livestreaming the strike action protest. They arrested him and held him incommunicado until 1 August when he was presented before a court in Luanda but not charged. On 6 August he was taken without his lawyers being notified to the Comarca Central District of Luanda prison, where he spent several hours before being returned to SIC custody. He was later transferred to Calomboloca prison in Ícolo e Bengo province, where he remained at the end of the year. He was denied access to medical treatment despite his injury and deteriorating health.

Following the protests, on 31 July SIC arrested and detained Rodrigo Luciano Catimba, the vice-president of the National Association of Taxi Drivers of Angola, and on 8 August Francisco Paciente, its president. On 11 August, SIC arrested four men – Francisco Eduardo, president of the Association of Taxi Drivers of Angola; Rafael Ginga Inácio, president of the Cooperative of Community Taxi Drivers of Angola; António Alexandre Freitas, president of the Cooperative of Motorcyle Taxi Drivers of Angola; and Pedro Fernandes, president of the Cooperative 2 PN. On 13 August Leonardo Lopes, president of the Association of Taxi Drivers and Minibus Operators of Angola, was also arrested. Five of the men remained in detention at the end of the year on allegations of incitement to violence, terrorism, criminal association and vandalism. Pedro Fernandes was released on 20 August on the basis of insufficient evidence.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 29 March the PNA, armed with guns and batons, used unnecessary and excessive force to suppress a peaceful protest against gender-based violence organized by the United We Are Stronger movement in Luanda. At least 10 men and women were arbitrarily arrested on grounds that the protest was unauthorized. Police forced protesters to remove T-shirts bearing slogans condemning gender-based violence and confiscated their mobile phones. Among those arrested were some of the organizers – Leonela Massocolo, Marisa Sofá, Marcela Mateus and Sávio Gonga. They were released and their mobiles returned at around 5pm the same day following their lawyers' intervention.

On 15 April, the PNA banned a peaceful protest organized by farmers and motorcycle taxi drivers against the decision of the Uíge provincial government to ban motorcycle taxis and buses from the Uíge-Quitexe route, among other routes. The provincial government claimed the ban was to prevent the occurrence of frequent accidents on this route. Despite the ban, the protesters went ahead, and dozens were reportedly injured when the PNA fired rubber bullets and tear gas.

On 26 April, the PNA arrested around 162 people from a student protest in Luanda, which had been organized by leaders of the Angolan Students Movement (MEA) and demanded improvements in public education, particularly the recruitment of better-qualified teachers. Among them were at least four journalists covering the event, about 150 students and eight MEA leaders. Most were released the same day without charge. The MEA leaders, including Joaquim Lutambi, vice-president; Jones Sebastião Damião, Luanda provincial secretary; Simão Formiga, Ícolo e Bengo provincial secretary; and Nsimba Matamba, national secretary for primary education, were held until 28 April when the Court of Luanda acquitted them of disobedience charges because of insufficient evidence.

Security forces met the July protests against fuel price increases (see above) with excessive force and arrests. Police used tear gas, dogs and batons to break up the protest on 12 July. At least 17 protesters were arrested, including Osvaldo Caholo, a human rights defender. One of them suffered from the effects of tear gas. On 19 July, nine protesters were injured by security forces; 17 others were arrested and accused of incitement to rebellion. All but one of them were released without charge the same day.

Security forces arrested at least 10 activists and a lawyer ahead of protests planned for 11 November against unemployment and poverty. On the day, security forces surrounded the Santa Ana cemetery in Luanda where the protest was to begin. Eighteen activists were arrested, 16 of whom were released without charge hours later, while two – Sebastião Neto and Armando Alberto – remained in detention.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

On 17 May, the Rapid Intervention Police killed Pedro Sebastião Mukengo while officers were trying to disperse a crowd of people who had gathered for a street party in Luanda's B Street, Vila Flor neighbourhood. Officers arriving at the scene fired tear gas, generating panic among the party-goers. When the crowd did not disperse, they used live ammunition, shooting Pedro Sebastião Mukengo who died at the scene. A post-mortem confirmed he died from a gunshot wound, countering the authorities' statement that he was stabbed. No information was made available to indicate that his killing was being investigated.

AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand

Indigenous Peoples' rights remained under attack. Legislative proposals threatened to significantly limit freedom of expression, assembly and association. Parliament launched an inquiry into online harm to young people. Government policies were insufficient to meet emissions targets. Immigration policies did not adequately address the needs of communities displaced by climate change in the Pacific, and housing rights worsened.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Serious attacks on Māori rights continued. In October, the government passed the Marine and Coastal Area (Takutai Moana) (Customary Marine Title) Amendment Act 2025, raising the bar much higher for Māori to have their customary rights to the foreshore and seabed acknowledged. "Customary Marine Titles" recognize the relationship between Māori communities and parts of the common marine and coastal

area. They provide certain rights, including decision-making about the use of marine resources in that area. These changes raised serious concerns about the erosion of Māori land and customary rights and that seabed mining and extraction projects would increase.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Proposals were introduced that could significantly restrict the right to peaceful assembly. In February, the Independent Police Conduct Authority released a report recommending new legislation that would increase police powers over public demonstrations. This could result in demonstration organizers facing thousands of New Zealand dollars in costs, limit the ability to hold spontaneous protests and introduce new protest-specific offences.

The Ministry of Justice explored proposals to widen the scope of the Terrorism Suppression Act, which could significantly limit rights to freedom of association and expression.

The government made concerning use of "urgency procedures" to bypass standard law-making steps to push through legislation in parliament, including bills significantly impacting human rights.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

Independent online safety organization Netsafe documented an increase in complaints meeting the threshold of harmful digital communication. In June, parliament launched an inquiry into the harm experienced online by young New Zealanders and how to address that harm. Aotearoa New Zealand's laws failed to adequately hold companies to account for online harm.[1]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In July, the Climate Change Commission warned that current policies were insufficient to deliver the reductions to emissions that the government had committed to. In September, the government reopened nationwide applications for oil and gas exploration for the first time since a 2018 ban, introducing a new "open market" permit process.

In October, the government announced a major weakening of its 2050 target to reduce biogenic methane emissions. It also stated that it would reduce the number of companies required to report on climate-related risks and impact.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Aotearoa New Zealand's immigration policy framework failed to meet the needs of Pacific Peoples affected by climate change. Instead, it offered limited and arbitrary migration pathways that discriminated against people with disabilities and medical conditions, separated families and disregarded children's rights.[2]

RIGHT TO HOUSING

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development reported that data and observations from around the country indicated that the number of people living without shelter had increased since the 2023 Census estimate.

1. *Submission on the Inquiry into the Harm Young New Zealanders Encounter Online*, 30 July ↑
2. *Pacific: "Navigating Injustice": Climate Displacement from the Pacific Islands of Tuvalu and Kiribati to Aotearoa New Zealand*, 8 October ↑

ARGENTINA

Republic of Argentina

Barriers to abortion increased alarmingly. High rates of femicide and gender-based violence persisted and support services for women suffering violence were cut. Journalists experienced violence amidst shrinking civic space. Violent repression by the authorities continued in response to protests. Severe austerity measures particularly affected older people and persons with disabilities. Climate action was "critically insufficient".

BACKGROUND

Argentina remained immersed in an economic and social crisis. According to the National Institute of Statistics and Census, in June 31.6% of the population was living in poverty, and in September unemployment stood at 6.6%.

The government withdrew the country's candidacy to the UN Human Rights Council for the 2026-2028 term.

Congress had failed to appoint a head of the National Ombudsperson's Office since 2009. The Supreme Court was still comprised exclusively of men with two vacancies unfilled at the end of the year.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

According to official data published in 2025, in 2023 five girls and adolescents aged under 20 gave birth in Argentina every hour.

In March, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights denounced the government's dismantling of the National Plan for the Prevention of Unintended Pregnancies in Adolescents. Having successfully reduced adolescent pregnancy rates by 49% over the four preceding years, the plan's budget was cut by 86% in real terms (accounting for inflation) in 2024 compared to 2023, and over 30% of available resources were not spent.

The purchase and distribution by the state of essential supplies to guarantee access to abortion had been interrupted since December 2023. In addition, distribution to provinces of contraceptives, including emergency hormonal contraceptives, and pregnancy tests had decreased by 81%. In 2025, Amnesty International received at least four times as many reports of barriers to abortion as in 2024, potentially reflecting an increase in barriers to access.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According to the National Ombudsperson's Office, a femicide was recorded every 35 hours in the first half of the year. Despite the persistence of gender-based violence, 13 key programmes to combat such crimes were dismantled in May, including those providing immediate support to women in extreme cases of violence.

In March, the Brazilian justice system ratified the six-year prison sentence imposed on actor Juan Darthés for sexual violence against Argentinian actress Thelma Fardín when she was 16 years old. The court held that all sexual intercourse without consent constituted rape or abuse.

On 11 June, the Court of Criminal Cassation of the province of Buenos Aires upheld the conviction of Luis Alberto Ramos for "aggravated homicide motivated by hatred of gender identity" of transgender man Tehuel de la Torre. He was 21 years old when last seen on 11 March 2021.

In July, the criminal trial took place for the arson attack against four lesbian women in 2024, three of whom died. In her indictment, the prosecutor alleged prejudice against the sexual orientation and gender of the victims.

According to the National Observatory on LGBT Hate Crimes, such crimes increased by 70% in the first half of 2025 compared to the same period in 2024. In his speech to the World Economic Forum in January, President Javier Milei associated homosexuality with paedophilia.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In May, nine UN mandate holders warned of the deterioration of freedoms and civic space in Argentina since December 2023.

By the end of the year, President Milei had sued at least eight journalists for defamation and insults. Since the start of his tenure in 2023, more than 60 media professionals had faced harassment and violence by the president and other senior officials in the media and on social media.

In August, a prosecutor opened an investigation into the president and three public officials for, among others, threats and acts of public intimidation against journalist Julia Mengolini, who had suffered digital harassment with the use of images altered by AI.

Unlawful surveillance

Through Decree 383/2025 and without input from Congress, the Ministry of National

Security empowered the federal police to monitor individuals on social media, access state databases, conduct searches and detain individuals for identification purposes for up to 10 hours, all without a warrant.

Executive Order (DNU) 941/2025, which was not debated in Congress, changed the intelligence system and concentrated more power in the State Intelligence Secretariat. It expanded its ability to access and cross-reference citizens' personal data and operate without judicial oversight, and allowed intelligence agents to detain individuals without a warrant. This change increased the risk of unlawful surveillance and discretionary use of information, and endangered rights such as personal liberty, privacy, freedom of expression and freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Restrictions on and repression of peaceful protests, including through the unlawful use of force, continued to increase after the entry into force of Resolution 943/2023 of the Ministry of National Security. From December 2024 to November 2025, there were at least 1,341 cases of individuals allegedly injured by state agents, of whom 155 were older persons and 184 worked in the media. At least two had been hit by rubber bullets in the head and face.

On 12 March, photojournalist Pablo Grillo was seriously injured when he was hit on the head by a tear gas canister unlawfully fired by a National Gendarmerie officer. The incident happened during a march in support of pensioners. Jonathan Navarro lost his left eye when shot with a kinetic impact weapon by a Naval Prefecture officer during the same march.

IMPUNITY

Congress approved a law incorporating trial in absentia into the Penal Code. The federal justice system authorized its application against 10 people accused of undertaking the 18 July 1994 attack on the community centre of the Argentine Israeli Mutual Association.

Argentina still had not ratified The Ljubljana-Hague Convention, which it signed in 2023.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In September, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warned that austerity measures were mainly affecting older people and people with disabilities.

The minimum pension in 2025 failed to cover basic needs, with more than three million older people living in poverty. For the second time, the president vetoed laws aimed at increasing the purchasing power of pensions and allowing those without the necessary 30 years of contributions to access a pension. This move undermined the economic and social rights of the older population.

The budget allocated to universities in 2025 was 6% lower in real terms than 2024, with an accumulated 29% drop since 2023. In October, Congress rejected President Milei's veto of the law approving increased funding for universities and an update of teachers' salaries to partially restore purchasing power. However, the executive confirmed that it would not apply the law, thereby exacerbating the budget cuts imposed on universities.

Argentina's fiscal policy continued to favour a regressive tax structure, with cuts in areas such as health, education and social security, and increased tax exemptions for large companies. The loss of tax revenue due to tax benefits that exempted some sectors from paying certain taxes represented about 4% of GDP.

The structural weight of public debt servicing remained constant even at a time of severe fiscal adjustments: in 2025, debt interest payments almost matched the national budget allocated to health, education and culture.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The government's denial of climate change continued to generate concern. The Climate Action Tracker rated Argentina's climate policies and objectives as "critically insufficient" and incompatible with limiting

the increase in global average temperatures to 1.5°C, as established by the Paris Agreement.

Subsidies to fossil fuel companies were 93 times higher than the funding allocated to the promotion of energy efficiency and renewable energies.

ARMENIA

Republic of Armenia

Displaced persons from Nagorno-Karabakh continued to face challenges in accessing housing and employment. Lawsuits against rights defenders and journalists curtailed free expression. Concerns persisted regarding lack of accountability for police use of unlawful force, due to inadequate penalties and oversight mechanisms. A new law expanding mass facial recognition surveillance breached privacy rights. Safeguards aimed at protecting detainees were strengthened, although concerns persisted over poor conditions in prison. The European Court of Human Rights condemned failures to protect LGBTI activists and anti-discrimination legislation remained stalled.

BACKGROUND

In January, the government signed a strategic partnership agreement with the USA. In March, parliament adopted the Law on Launching the Accession Process of the Republic of Armenia to the European Union, to pursue EU membership. In August, the presidents of Armenia and Azerbaijan signed a US-brokered joint declaration aimed at ending hostilities, addressing territorial disputes and establishing a trade corridor through southern Armenia to Azerbaijan's exclave of Nakhichevan. Armenia's shift toward a pro-western foreign policy and its efforts to reduce traditional ties with Russia were politically divisive, fueling disinformation campaigns and hate speech across the country. In June, authorities claimed to have foiled a coup, arresting an influential Russia-linked businessman.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Economic and social challenges persisted, exacerbated by the forced displacement of more than 100,000 ethnic Armenians from Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region to Armenia in 2023. Access by these refugees to long-term housing, employment and economic opportunities remained challenging.

The abrupt closure of USAID operations as part of a broader freeze on US foreign aid reduced the funding of many NGOs in Armenia, including those seeking to provide social and economic support to vulnerable groups.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The international media watchdog Reporters Without Borders improved Armenia's ranking in its annual press freedom report. However, media polarization, a lack of editorial independence from the state and the safety of journalists remained concerns, amid growing disinformation and hate speech.

Government and corporate actors were reported to have initiated new strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) targeting journalists and human rights defenders, including campaigners for women's and environmental rights. Furthermore, the growing use of lawsuits targeting media and human rights defenders continued to have a chilling effect. Between April and June, 29 cases were filed against journalists and outlets for "insult" or defamation.

On 2 May, a court in the capital, Yerevan, acquitted Imnemnimi podcast co-hosts Narek Samsonyan and Vazgen Saghatelyan, who had spent two months in pretrial detention on charges linked to their public criticism of Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan in a 2024 podcast. They were re-arrested on 13 November, again on charges of hooliganism, for a later podcast critical of the parliamentary speaker.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Police reform, including the introduction in 2024 of a new law to improve policing of assemblies, failed to alleviate concerns regarding the use of excessive force during demonstrations and a lack of police accountability. This was particularly the case regarding human rights violations during anti-government protests in May and June 2024. Despite ample evidence of the unlawful use of force by police, subsequent criminal proceedings were only brought against demonstrators – 16 in total – rather than any police officers.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

In August, parliament passed amendments allowing the police to access live feed from surveillance cameras fitted in public spaces, including transport hubs and public buildings, and to integrate facial recognition into these feeds. The amendments raised concerns about the law having a chilling effect and resulting in violations of the rights to privacy, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom from discrimination.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In April, parliament amended the Law on the Treatment of Arrestees and Detainees to strengthen the safeguards intended to protect detainees, including the mandatory medical documentation of injuries under the Istanbul Protocol.

In June, the UN Committee Against Torture published its concluding observations on Armenia's fifth periodic report. It welcomed reforms such as the broader definition of torture and the abolition of the statute of limitation for this crime. However, the committee raised serious concerns about low penalties for torture, limited access to compensation for survivors and the lack of independence of investigative bodies. It also raised concerns about the high rate of pretrial detention, overcrowding and poor prison conditions.

DISCRIMINATION

The absence of comprehensive legislation prohibiting discrimination on a wide number of protected grounds continued to be a subject of concern. On 7 January, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in favour of LGBTI people's rights defenders who had been subjected to homophobic and transphobic hate speech. In the case of *Minasyan & Others v. Armenia*,the court found that Armenia had violated the right to private and family life and the prohibition of discrimination, highlighting persistent state failures to protect LGBTI individuals from hate speech and discrimination.

A draft law on equality and anti-discrimination remained pending in parliament, without including sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds.

AUSTRALIA

Commonwealth of Australia

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continued to face discrimination, with children as young as 10 still subject to imprisonment. New laws enabled people seeking asylum to be deported to Nauru. Authorities applied anti-protest laws to restrict peaceful assembly and freedom of expression. The government continued to approve fossil fuel projects, further entrenching Australia's role as a major fossil fuel producer.

BACKGROUND

The Labor Party won a second-term majority government in federal elections in May.

On 14 December, 15 people were killed in an attack on a Hannukah celebration at Bondi beach, Sydney. In the aftermath, state and federal governments committed to address antisemitism and racism and further regulate gun ownership laws.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continued to face inequality. Only four of 19 national "Closing the Gap" targets were on track, while outcomes worsened for adult

incarceration, children in care, suicide and childhood development.

Thirty-four Indigenous people, most of them men, died in custody in 2025, while recommendations from the 1991 Royal Commission remained unimplemented.[1] A coroner's inquiry into Kumanjayi Walker's 2019 death in police custody found systemic racism in the Northern Territory police.[2] Indigenous women continued to experience disproportionate levels of domestic and family violence.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Indigenous children were 23 times more likely to be under youth justice supervision and 27 times more likely to be in detention, despite making up only 5.7% of the population aged 10 to 17 years.

The Northern Territory amended the Youth Justice Act to reinstate the use of "spit hoods" in youth detention and remove the principle of detention as a last resort.

State governments in Victoria and Queensland expanded "Adult Crime, Adult Time" laws, exposing children to harsher prison terms, including life sentences and raising concerns of increased Indigenous incarceration.[3]

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Unlawful refugee policies continued, including indefinite detention in Australia and "offshore processing" of asylum applications in Nauru, where over 90 people remained, many with serious health conditions. Although processing in Papua New Guinea formally ended, fewer than 30 men remained stranded there after 11 years, barred from entering Australia and suffering severe mental and physical ill-health without adequate healthcare.

New legislation circumvented a High Court decision by stripping asylum seekers of due process.[4] The law forced their cooperation with deportation, retrospectively validating unlawful visa decisions. The government signed a new 30-year AUD 2.5 billion deal with Nauru, enabling the deportation of hundreds of affected people, and potentially thousands more. By November, three people had been deported under the agreement.

Temporary Pacific workers on the Pacific-Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme were exploited and treated unfairly.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The government continued to approve fossil-fuel projects, including extending the life of the country's largest offshore gas project to 2070. It failed to meet Paris Agreement obligations to support lower-income countries with climate change, address loss and damage, and protect people domestically. Its 2030 emissions target remained far below that needed to limit warming to 1.5°C. Climate groups deemed the new 2035 NDC – 62-70% emissions reduction from 2005 levels – insufficient.

Despite dismissing the "Australian Climate Case", the Federal Court acknowledged that the Torres Strait Islands environment, people and culture were being "ravaged by human-induced climate change" and that climate change posed "an existential threat to humanity".

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities conflated peaceful protest with violent acts of hate. The New South Wales (NSW) state government passed laws allowing a ban on protests for up to three months following the Bondi beach attack. Anti-protest laws targeted people demonstrating against the genocide in Gaza. Following a reported surge in antisemitic violence, the federal parliament passed the Hate Crimes Act, imposing mandatory minimum sentences. NSW police seriously injured a woman at a Gaza demonstration.

Universities also curtailed freedoms. Thirty-nine adopted a definition of antisemitism based on the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition, despite concerns raised by academics and civil society groups that it was incompatible with standards on freedom of expression and could stifle freedom of speech and assembly on campuses. The University of Melbourne banned indoor demonstrations, surveilled Wi-Fi users and

disciplined students for peaceful pro-Palestine actions. In December, the Victoria state government banned protesters from using attachment devices such as glue, rope and locks, and restricted protests around places of worship.

In December, children under 16 were banned from keeping or opening accounts on certain social media sites.

1. "Australia: Amnesty Australia condemns police brutality causing the death of 24 year old Aboriginal man", 29 May ↑
2. "Australia: Statement on coroner's findings regarding Kumanjayi Walker's 'avoidable' death in custody", 9 July ↑
3. "Australia: Queensland government's 'Adult Crime, Adult Time' laws a violation of children's rights", 21 May ↑
4. "Australia: The Anti-Fairness Bill: Removing fundamental rights for up to 80,000 people", 4 September ↑

AUSTRIA

Republic of Austria

The cost of living remained among the highest in the EU. Gender-based violence persisted and access to abortion was limited. Freedom of assembly and expression were at risk, including by restrictions on Palestinian solidarity slogans. Austria failed to guarantee guardianship for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and suspended family reunification. Anti-discrimination law remained inadequate and police were still not required to wear individual identification badges.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The number of individuals at risk of poverty and social exclusion remained high, affecting 16.9% of the population. Those most at risk included single-parent households, individuals with disabilities, refugees and migrants.

The cost of living remained among the highest in the EU. While the government presented measures in September to regulate the rental market, it failed to implement a national housing strategy.

In September, the government announced plans to introduce additional accessibility criteria for social assistance that would negatively affect refugees.[1]

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In 2025, 15 cases of suspected femicides were reported. In November, the government presented a national action plan to address gender-based violence, involving civil society organizations in its development.

Abortion was not fully decriminalized and was excluded from health insurance cover. Access to affordable safe abortion care remained limited in several federal states.

In December, the parliament passed a law that banned the wearing of a hijab for girls aged under 14 years in schools, which was discriminatory and violated their rights including freedom of religion and expression.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

In April, a German climate activist had her residence permit revoked due to accusations of "serious threats to public order or security". The decision had been appealed but no final decision was made by year's end.

In July, parliament passed a law allowing police to use spyware on encrypted communications. In August, the minister of interior presented plans to substantially expand video surveillance in public places, despite concerns from civil society about harmful implications for freedom of peaceful assembly.

Authorities continued to apply the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, leading to a chilling effect on freedom of expression. Police continued to fine Palestinian solidarity protesters for chanting "from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free", leading to a blanket prohibition of this slogan violating freedom of expression. A ministerial decree remained in force stipulating that the slogan justified an initial suspicion of "condoning terrorist crimes" pursuant to criminal law. In April, a court

declared the dispersal of an assembly due to this same chant to be unlawful.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Austria failed to adopt a federal provision to guarantee legal guardianship for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, despite government commitments and respective provisions deriving from the Common European Asylum System reform.

In July the government suspended family reunification for six months, and in December continued the suspension until at least July 2026, thus effectively eliminating the only safe pathway to Austria for people seeking protection.[2]

In July, the Ministry of Interior carried out the first deportation of a man to Syria, who reportedly disappeared afterwards. The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances subsequently sent a letter to the Austrian government questioning the deported man's whereabouts. Austria continued deportations to Syria.[3]

In October, the Ministry of Interior carried out the first deportation to Afghanistan since the Taliban took power.[4]

DISCRIMINATION

Austria failed to ensure human-rights compliant anti-discrimination legislation at federal and regional levels. In March, criminal investigators reported a wave of hate crimes against LGBTI people. The number of anti-Muslim and antisemitic hate crimes remained high.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Police were still not required to wear identification badges, impeding accountability.[5] Regulations regarding body-worn cameras were inconsistent.

In October, a commission of inquiry declared the police operation at a protest camp at the Peršmanhof memorial unlawful and disproportionate.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Austria was yet to pass a climate protection act. Experts criticized a leaked draft act as inadequate because it did not include Austria's target to achieve net zero by 2040.

1. "Austria: Government threatens to further undermine social assistance", 15 September (German only) ↑
2. "Austria: Planned restrictions on family reunification violate human rights", 10 April (German only) ↑
3. "Austria: Amnesty International continues to warn against deportations to Syria", 25 September (German only) ↑
4. "Dangerous breach: Austria hands people over to the Taliban for the first time", 21 October (German only) ↑
5. "Austria: One year of the police misconduct investigation unit: A good start, but independence must be ensured", 20 January (German only) ↑

AZERBAIJAN

Republic of Azerbaijan

The government continued to suppress all forms of dissent, with hundreds remaining imprisoned on spurious and politically motivated charges. Independent NGOs and grassroots groups faced severe restrictions. Peaceful protests were suppressed. Torture and other ill-treatment, and impunity for the perpetrators, remained widespread. Women and LGBTI people continued to face discrimination, gender-based violence and state harassment.

BACKGROUND

Azerbaijan continued deepening relations with the USA and the EU despite its deteriorating human rights record. The US-brokered Armenia-Azerbaijan peace agreement was signed in August and aimed to end the long-running conflict over the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The government continued to suppress all kinds of dissent. More than 300 individuals, including human rights defenders, journalists, academics and opposition figures, remained imprisoned on spurious and politically motivated charges.[1]

Amendments introduced to the 2022 Law on Media expanded compulsory registration for all outlets and granted the Media Development Agency the power to arbitrarily block websites, remove content or shut down non-compliant foreign media offices. These provisions also criminalized the dissemination of "false information" on vague grounds, imposed arbitrary regulatory burdens on news agencies and prohibited publication of any print media not included in the Media Registry.

In February, the BBC Azerbaijani Service suspended its operations after authorities blocked its licensing process; in October, the authorities declared that its affiliate had been working illegally. TURAN news agency, one of the last independent outlets, also closed in February.

The authorities imposed travel bans to restrict journalistic activities; at least 40 civil society actors and journalists were placed under such restrictions without prior notification.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Journalists reporting on corruption or human rights violations were especially targeted and subjected to spurious charges of smuggling, money laundering, tax evasion and "illegal entrepreneurship". Nearly 30 journalists remained in prison or under extended pretrial detention.[2]

In June, Abzas Media journalists Ulvi Hasanli, Sevinc Vagifgizi, Nargiz Absalamova, Elnara Gasimova and Mahammad Kekalov, as well as journalists Farid Mehralizadaand Hafiz Babali, were sentenced to up to nine years' imprisonment on charges including currency smuggling and forgery following unfair trials.

Between December 2024 and May 2025, journalists Ramin Deko, Aynur Gambarova, Khayala Aghayeva, Natig Javadli, Aysel Umudova, Fatima Movlamli, Nurlan Gahramanli, Shamshad Agha, and Ulviyya Guliyeva were arrested on currency-smuggling charges as part of a criminal case opened against the independent media outlet Meydan TV. Their pretrial detention was repeatedly extended.

Toplum TV journalists Farid Ismayilov, Mushfig Jabarov and Alasgar Mammadli, and Ahmad Mammadli of Yoldash Media, also remained in prison on similar trumped-up charges with their trials pending at year's end.

Researchers and academics were also targeted. Igbal Abilov was sentenced to 18 years and Bahruz Samadov to 15 years following fabricated treason charges.

Opposition figure Azer Gasimli, arrested in December 2024, and Azerbaijan Popular Front Party (APFP) leader Ali Karimli, detained along with several party members in November, remained in custody at year's end on questionable charges of bribery and treason, respectively.

Akif Gurbanov and Ruslan Izzatli of the political platform Third Republic and three staff members of the Institute of Democratic Initiatives – Ali Zeynalov, Ramil Babayev and Ilkin Amrahov – remained in pretrial detention at the end of the year on dubious currency-smuggling charges, with their trials pending.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Independent NGOs and civil society activists continued to face severe restrictions, harassment and unwarranted prosecution.

In February, prosecutors reopened a 2014 criminal investigation targeting civil society groups. This was followed in March by coordinated raids during which police detained several civil society representatives including Bashir Suleymanli, Mammad Mammadzade, Asaf Ahmadov and Ahmad Mammadzade, together with social worker Zamin Zeki. Courts ordered their continued pretrial detention on fabricated financial and abuse-of-office charges, while repeatedly rejecting motions for release despite serious health concerns.

NGO representatives Mehriban Rahimli, Hafiz Hasanov, Galib Bayramov and Nargiz Mukhtarova were placed under police supervision as part of the same investigation, with their hearings ongoing at year's end. At least 50 civil society figures were questioned as witnesses or suspects, reinforcing a climate of fear and self-censorship.

Anar Mammadli, head of the Election Monitoring and Democratic Studies Center, remained in pretrial detention on spurious smuggling charges; these were expanded in April to include alleged tax evasion, forgery and unregistered economic activity. Civil society activist and co-defendant Anar Abdulla was remanded in custody in August after authorities claimed he had breached bail conditions.

Independent unions and grassroots groups were also targeted. The Confederation of Workers' Desk Trade Unions faced renewed pressure after its chair, Afiyaddin Mammadov, received a custodial sentence of eight years' imprisonment on spurious charges and several members were detained. The Young Veterans Public Union was effectively dismantled after its head, Haji Valiyev, was arrested on hooliganism charges, ill-treated in custody and held in extended pretrial detention. The group shut down in May.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Freedom of peaceful assembly remained severely and unduly restricted and the authorities continued to imprison those taking part in peaceful protests. Demonstrations linked to workers' rights, political dissent and religious practices were banned, and participants and organizers were harassed. In July, couriers planning a demonstration over wage cuts were summoned for questioning and pressured to remove social media posts.

Opposition party members were regularly prevented from assembling. In September, police blocked APFP leader Ali Karimli, National Council of Democratic Forces chair Jamil Hasanli and others from attending a public event, and several APFP activists were later arrested on unsubstantiated drug or hooliganism charges.

Restrictions were also imposed on religious gatherings. On 6 July, Shia communities were prevented from observing Ashura on the correct date, and several mosques were barred from holding ceremonies.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Azerbaijani authorities failed to ensure accountability and protection for people affected by the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In October, the European Court of Human Rights ordered Azerbaijan to provide information on the detention and health conditions of 23 Armenian prisoners, of whom eight were former de facto officials in Nagorno-Karabakh.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread with reports of beatings, threats, sexual violence, forced confessions and denial of medical care in detention. The authorities failed to carry out effective, independent investigations into any such allegations, thereby ensuring impunity for the perpetrators.

In June, the Muslim Unity Movement reported that one of its members, Elgiz Mammadov, had sustained injuries consistent with torture, allegedly to extract a video confession. In August, seven women detained while distributing religious offerings said they were beaten, threatened with sexual violence and denied lawyers.

Ill-treatment in detention remained systemic. Women journalists from Abzas Media and defendants in the Toplum TV case reported experiencing violence, punitive transfers and prolonged shackling during court hearings. Union activists Elvin Mustafayev and Afiyaddin Mammadov and war veteran Haji Valiyev were repeatedly placed in prolonged solitary confinement.

Denial of medical care was common, and the health of many of those arrested on spurious charges continued to deteriorate. Activist Mohyaddin Orujov received only painkillers despite a kidney illness.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION AND VIOLENCE

Women and LGBTI people continued to face discrimination, including gender-based violence and state harassment, with authorities failing to prevent, investigate or punish rights abuses.

On 8 March, LGBTI activist Rauf Heydarov was sentenced to 30 days' administrative detention after a solo protest in the capital, Baku.

On 4 November, LGBTI youth Yasin Ibadov, also known as Rüzgar, was fatally stabbed in Baku, reportedly by a family member, following prior threats linked to their sexual orientation. Witnesses reported a delayed police and medical response.

1. *Azerbaijan: No Sign of Hope for the Human Rights Situation in Azerbaijan: Systemic and Serious Breaches of Human Rights Must be Strongly Condemned*, 23 January ↑
2. *Azerbaijan: From Newsroom to Cell. Persecution of Independent Journalists*, 22 July ↑

BAHRAIN

Kingdom of Bahrain

The government continued to suppress the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, including through arbitrary detention and prosecutions. The government failed to commute the death sentences of more than two dozen people who remained on death row. Despite its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Bahrain expanded its oil and gas production.

BACKGROUND

Bahrain released 839 prisoners in two royal pardons on 27 March and 5 June. However, the pardons excluded prisoners detained for political reasons, of whom an estimated 322 remained arbitrarily detained, including prominent human rights defenders Abdulhadi Al-Khawaja and Abduljalil Al-Singace.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

At least 132 individuals including 35 children were arrested or interrogated for expression-related charges, according to the Bahrain Centre for Human Rights.

On 28 February, police summoned human rights defender Ali Al-Hajee for investigation over social media posts that exposed human rights abuses against people detained for political reasons in Bahrain. He was interrogated without the presence of his lawyer and was arbitrarily detained for 11 days pending investigation. He was charged with "spreading false news using social media" and released on 10 March. Ali Al-Hajee had already served a 10-year prison sentence for his involvement in peaceful protests in Bahrain and had been released in June 2023.

The authorities continued to severely restrict freedom of association, including through the 2018 "civil and political isolation laws" which explicitly ban opposition party members from fully participating in political and civil life, including by barring them from running for elections or taking leadership positions in civil society organizations.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The authorities continued to restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly by arresting and prosecuting peaceful demonstrators.

Authorities continued to arbitrarily detain 10 leaders of mass anti-government protests that took place in 2011, including prisoners of conscience.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

Authorities maintained their confiscation of the writings of human rights defender Abduljalil Al-Singace, imprisoned since 2011 for exercising his rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. In response, he continued his solid-food hunger strike, begun on 8 July 2021, which significantly weakened his health. Throughout his hunger strike, he had been denied adequate medical care, according to the Bahrain Institute for Rights and Democracy.

At least 26 individuals remained on death row and at risk of imminent execution, 11 of whom were convicted in previous years following manifestly unfair trials that relied solely or primarily on "confessions" allegedly extracted under torture.[1]

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Bahrain advanced 12 places in the 2025 Global Gender Gap Report but still ranked 104th out of 148 countries. Women continued to face discrimination under the Unified 2017 Family Law. In addition, the 1963 Citizenship Act prohibited women from passing on their nationality to their children if the father is not a Bahraini national.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Despite the country's 2024 commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2035 and to achieve net zero by 2060, Bahrain expanded its oil and gas production, including through a new drilling agreement for gas exploration and the expansion of capacity at Sitra oil refinery.

1. "Bahrain: Joint letter on human rights situation to member and observer states of the United Nations Human Rights Council", 12 May ↑

BANGLADESH

People's Republic of Bangladesh

Freedom of expression, association and assembly remained unnecessarily restricted under the interim government. Individuals, including human rights defenders, were subjected to arbitrary arrests and harassment for exercising their right to freedom of expression. The interim government's ban on the Awami League political party brought into question their commitment to upholding freedom of association. The Cyber Security Act of 2023 continued to be used until it was replaced by the Cyber Security Ordinance in 2025. Bangladesh's International Crimes Tribunal sentenced former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and former home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal to death, after convicting them in their absence, of crimes against humanity for their roles in using unlawful force against protesters in 2024. The interim government proposed a draft ordinance on enforced disappearances and extended the mandate of the national commission appointed to investigate cases. For the first time, former military officers were arrested on charges of enforced disappearance. Proposed reforms aimed at protecting women's rights faced pushback from Islamist groups. The humanitarian crisis for Rohingya refugees deepened due to cutbacks in humanitarian funding, despite Cox's Bazar sheltering new arrivals from Rakhine State. At least 59 members of the Indigenous Bawm community remained in detention on baseless terrorism charges. Negotiations continued between the interim government and labour rights and trade union leaders over the urgent need to reform labour laws and improve wages and working conditions. Workers protested against low wages, harassment and anti-union repression. The climate crisis entrenched gender and caste-based inequalities.

BACKGROUND

An interim government took office in August 2024, following the ousting of Sheikh Hasina's Awami League administration, comprising advisers led by Muhammad Yunus. Over the course of the year, it established 11 reform commissions and announced general elections to appoint a new government, scheduled for February 2026. In February, a National Consensus Commission was set up to facilitate agreement among political parties on key reforms. To commemorate the one-year anniversary of the protests, the interim government announced the "July National Charter", outlining its reform aspirations.

After facing allegations of serious human rights violations during the 2024 protests, police reportedly became relatively inactive in addressing crime, leading to a breakdown of law and order for much of the year.

At the invitation of the interim government, the UN human rights office, OHCHR, conducted an independent fact-finding inquiry into alleged human rights violations and abuses committed during the protests between 1 July and 15 August 2024. In July,

OHCHR signed a three-year Memorandum of Understanding with the government to establish an office in the country to support the protection and promotion of human rights. On 17 July, Bangladesh acceded to the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Incidents of harassment, violence and arrests targeting individuals exercising their right to freedom of expression – including human rights defenders, journalists, authors, bloggers and poets – continued throughout the year.[1] The Cyber Security Act of 2023, a law used by the former government against critics in a manner that contravened the right to freedom of expression, continued to be utilized by the interim government to deter activism. The Act was repealed and replaced by the Cyber Security Ordinance, which took effect in May, intended to apply until its formal approval and adoption into law by a future parliament.[2] The ordinance carried undefined, broad provisions such as "obscene video" and "sexual harassment", while "cyber terrorism" was defined vaguely, all provisions that could be abused.

In May, the interim government banned all activities of the Awami League political party, using an amendment to the Anti-Terrorism Act, pending trials of its leaders linked to the deaths of protesters in 2024. Subsequently, the Election Commission also suspended the party's registration.

In August, the High Court dismissed a case filed in 2018 under the Information and Communication Technology Act against activist photographer and Amnesty International prisoner of conscience Shahidul Alam.

In December, journalist Anis Alamgir was arrested under the Anti-Terrorism Act following a complaint alleging that he and four others had used their social media accounts and other media platforms to support the Awami League.

On 18 December, following the killing of Sharif Osman Hadi, a prominent leader of the July Uprising, violent protests erupted. The offices of two media outlets, The Daily Star and Prothom Alo, were attacked and set alight, the editor of the New Age newspaper was harassed, and Chhayanaut, a cultural institution, was attacked.

Oppressive restrictions continued to be imposed on the right to unionize, including excessive requirements required for union registration, State interference in union activities and arbitrary or unduly controlling registration process.[3]

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

After forming a commission to investigate enforced disappearances and signing the International Convention Against Enforced Disappearance in 2024, the interim government sought to give effect to the Convention through a new ordinance. The draft ordinance was initially criticized for not aligning with international human rights standards, including around the death penalty. Additionally, it was faulted for its provisions limiting command responsibility, and for its lack of recognition of the continuing nature of the crime of enforced disappearance. Some of these concerns were rectified in later drafts, and the ordinance was approved by the government in December. The adoption of the ordinance into law was left to a future legislature.

The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances conducted a four-day technical visit in June, during which they met with government stakeholders and victims of enforced disappearances. The Working Group issued technical advice on the urgent need to establish a victim and witness protection system and strengthen the national Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances, and expressed its deep concern about continued widespread impunity for enforced disappearances.

Also in June, the national Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances submitted its second interim report to Chief Adviser Yunus. The Commission reported that it had received 1,837 complaints regarding enforced disappearances. As a result, after an initial review, 1,772 active cases were entered into the Commission's

database. Among these, 1,427 victims were reported to have been found alive, while 345 individuals remained missing. Based on the number of complaints in their database, the Commission found 67% of enforced disappearances were linked to state agencies such as the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB). They also noted a "widespread and systematic culture of torture". The Commission's mandate was extended until the end of the year.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In February, the UN released the findings of its fact-finding investigation. The inquiry found reasonable grounds to believe that the former government and its security and intelligence apparatus, together with violent elements associated with the Awami League political party, systematically engaged in serious human rights violations. These included hundreds of extrajudicial killings, other use of force violations resulting in serious injuries to thousands of protesters, extensive arbitrary arrests and detention, and torture and other forms of ill-treatment. Verified leaked audio suggested former prime minister Sheikh Hasina authorized security forces to use lethal weapons against protesters.

In July, the domestic International Crimes Tribunal (ICT) sentenced the former prime minister to six months in prison for contempt of court, after the release of an audio recording in which she declared that she had a "licence to kill" 227 people since there were 227 murder cases against her. The sentence was issued in her absence, as she had fled to India in 2024 amid protests. The ICT also issued arrest warrants in October for several former military officers in connection with alleged enforced disappearances that occurred during the tenure of the former prime minister. This was the first time formal charges were brought for enforced disappearances.

In November, the ICT sentenced former prime minister Hasina, former home affairs minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal, and former inspector general of police Chowdhury Abdullah al-Mamun on counts of crimes against humanity relating to the 2024 protest crackdown. Hasina and Asaduzzaman were sentenced to death in their absence while Chowdhury, who turned into a state witness, was sentenced to five years in prison after he pleaded guilty.

The scope and operations of the ICT, established by Sheikh Hasina's government in 2009, continued to raise concerns regarding due process rights. NGOs urged the interim government to declare a moratorium on the death penalty and ensure the ICT had the legal framework, resources and independence needed to conduct impartial prosecutions in accordance with international standards for all alleged perpetrators, regardless of their institutional or political affiliations.

The rights of victims to justice and reparations were further undermined by the absence of an effective national human rights mechanism to support their claims for redress.[4] The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) remained vacant following the resignation of all its commissioners at once in November 2024. In September, the government invited public comments on a draft National Human Rights Commission Ordinance 2025, intended to replace the National Human Rights Commission Act of 2009. When the new draft NHRC ordinance was unveiled, the UN and NGOs emphasized the need for a strengthened and independent NHRC, compliant with international standards such as the Paris Principles. In November, the Advisory Council approved the NHRC ordinance. However, Transparency International reported that in December the ordinance was amended to permit "bureaucratic control".

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In May, thousands of Islamist protesters led by Hefazat-e-Islam, a coalition of Islamic advocacy groups, gathered in the capital, Dhaka, to protest against the reforms proposed by the Women's Affairs Reform Commission. The Commission had made numerous recommendations, including

recognizing equal inheritance rights for women, increasing women's political participation, criminalizing marital rape, and protecting the rights of sex workers. The protesters deemed these proposals to be "anti-Islamic".

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Cuts in USAID funding severely affected the Rohingya people in Bangladesh. A UN report highlighted that only 35% of the funding needs for the Rohingya in Bangladesh were being met, and that there was a 17% cut to the programmes run by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency. Food insecurity, overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions, and limited access to education and healthcare were all worsened by the aid cuts, while insecurity and protection issues were exacerbated. The UN Secretary-General visited the camps at Cox's Bazar in March.

With the situation in Rakhine State in Myanmar deteriorating due to escalation of the armed conflict between the Arakan army and the Myanmar military, an increase in Rohingya arrivals further strained an already precarious humanitarian crisis. The UN estimated that 150,000 new arrivals entered Bangladesh between January 2024 and July 2025. Rohingya people seeking refuge by crossing the border into Bangladesh were reportedly turned away by the Border Guard after a period of detention, raising concerns around violations of the principle of non-refoulement. In September, a UN high-level conference on the situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar was held, where the USA and the UK announced that they would provide USD 96 million in further assistance to support the refugee camps in Bangladesh.[5]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

At least 59 Indigenous Bawm people continued to be detained without trial after their arrest in April 2024 under the pretext of being part of, or supporters of, the military group Kuki-Chin National Front. Throughout the year, reports emerged about deaths in custody and the denial of necessary medical care to detainees.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Unrest in the garment industry persisted as workers protested against low wages, harassment and anti-union repression.[6] Extensive discussions and negotiations continued between the interim government and union leaders regarding the urgent need to reform labour laws and improve wages and working conditions. In November, the interim government promulgated the Bangladesh Labour Act (Amendment) Ordinance, 2025.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The climate crisis intensified barriers to the realization of the rights to water and sanitation for Dalit sanitation workers in Khulna and Satkhira, trapping them in a cycle of vulnerability.[7] Dalit women, who face compounded discrimination based on caste, gender and occupation, were among the most affected, yet least visible, in climate and water, sanitation and hygiene policy responses by the government.

1. "Bangladesh: Interim government should protect freedom of expression and opinion", 21 March ↑
2. "Bangladesh: Interim government's actions inconsistent with July Declaration", 12 August ↑
3. *South Asia: Stitched Up: Denial of Freedom of Association for Garment Workers in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*, 27 November ↑
4. "Bangladesh: National Human Rights Commission must not be forgotten amid reform agenda", 27 May ↑
5. *UN Member States Must Step-Up Efforts to Protect and Meet the Urgent Humanitarian Needs of the Rohingyas at the High-Level Conference*, 26 September ↑
6. *South Asia: Stitched Up: Denial of Freedom of Association for Garment Workers in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka*, 27 November ↑
7. *Bangladesh: Left Behind in the Storm: Dalit Women Sanitation Workers and the Fight for Water and Dignity*, 16 October ↑

BELARUS

Republic of Belarus

The rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association remained severely

curtailed. The government sought to repress religious minorities via a compulsory, opaque registration process. The justice system was abused to suppress dissent. Torture and other ill-treatment were endemic and impunity prevailed. Refugees and migrants suffered abuses at the hands of the authorities. Environmental commitments remained weak or non-existent.

BACKGROUND

In January, incumbent President Aliaksandr Lukashenka won re-election in a climate of total fear and repression.[1] Belarus retained close political, economic and military links with Russia, hosting its troops and joint military exercises. Significant economic disruption occurred when Poland and Lithuania closed their borders with Belarus for several weeks, citing security concerns and the smuggling of cigarettes from Belarus by balloons. Ongoing emigration, including in response to reprisals following disputed elections in 2020, deepened workforce shortages. Authorities continued pursuing the return of émigrés by denying them consular services abroad. Belarus's sense of international isolation eased after diplomatic overtures by the USA, including the lifting of some sanctions, widely believed to be in exchange for prisoner releases (see below).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression remained severely restricted. The authorities continued to label online, printed and broadcast material that challenged them as "extremist" and arbitrarily added some 100 individuals monthly to the "List of persons involved in extremist activities". As of December, this list contained 6,127 people. Those listed faced financial restrictions and were banned from public sector employment for up to five years. Organizations that published, spread or created the "extremist" content, or were connected to individuals on the list, were banned. Any connection to them or involvement in their activites was an offence.

As of December, 28 media workers were in prison for their professional activity.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Exercising the right to freedom of peaceful assembly remained effectively criminalized, and led to severe reprisals.[2] According to the NGO Human Rights Center Viasna, the authorities stepped up their efforts to identify and prosecute participants in the peaceful protests of 2020 as the statute of limitations for the charge used was expiring. Around 200 people were under criminal investigation in the capital Minsk alone, facing prison terms and fines.

Authorities reported that they were bringing charges for supporting extremist activity against over 200 Belarusian protesters who had taken part in protests abroad on 25 March, celebrated as Freedom Day by pro-democracy activists.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The government assault on freedom of association continued. Participation in forcibly closed, suspended or unregistered NGOs and political or religious organizations remained criminalized, punishable by fines and imprisonment.

As of December, 99 civil society organizations, including independent NGOs and trade unions, had been closed or opted to self-dissolve during the year, due to severe legislative restrictions, interference by the authorities and financial constraints.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Persecution of religious organizations and clergy who were not aligned with the authorities continued.

In July, any religious organizations that had not undergone compulsory re-registration within the previous 12-month period became subject to court-ordered closure. The opaque nature of the registration process, and the ban on participating in unregistered organizations, led to great uncertainty and it was unclear whether any court hearings had been scheduled or completed by year's end. As of 5 December, no official list of registered organizations had been published, though the registering body's website – likely outdated – listed 3,592 religious organizations.

On 1 April, the Supreme Court rejected Catholic priest Henryk Okolotovich's appeal against his 11-year jail term on treason charges. Both his trial and his appeal were closed. Henryk Okolotovich was quoted in the media as saying that he had been accused of spying for Poland and the Vatican. He was subsequently released on 20 November following an intervention by the Vatican.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

The authorities continued to abuse the justice system to silence and punish dissent and opposition. Hundreds of individuals, including human rights defenders, other activists, media workers and lawyers, continued to serve long prison sentences imposed following unfair, politically motivated trials. Over 170 victims of politically motivated imprisonment were released early, between June and December, as part of a US-negotiated deal. Among them were Nobel Prize winner Ales Bialiatski, political opposition leaders Maryia Kalesnikava and Viktar Babaryka, and several other high-profile prisoners, some having been long held incommunicado. However, more individuals continued to be arbitrarily prosecuted and imprisoned.

In September, the UN expressed concerns over an increasing number of trials held in the absence of the accused. Individuals concerned learned of their prosecution by chance, were unaware of the charges and grounds for their conviction and were deprived of a legal defence.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment in custody, including sexual violence, remained endemic, with perpetrators enjoying impunity. Individuals convicted on politically motivated charges endured harsher treatment in prison colonies. They were denied contact with the outside world, frequently put in punishment cells for extended periods and refused adequate healthcare.

According to Human Rights Center Viasna, prisoners were subjected to forced labour, under the threat of punishment and in degrading conditions.

At least two victims of politically motivated persecution, Valiantsin Shtermer and Andrei Padniabenny, died while in detention, bringing the post-2020 total to nine deaths.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Throughout the year, there was no outside contact with and no direct information about several imprisoned high-profile activists, journalists and politicians. Mikalai Statkevich, whose whereabouts had been unknown for two and a half years prior to his release in September, was forcibly disappeared immediately after his refusal to be deported.[3]

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Belarus's authorities continued their practice of forcing refugees and migrants across its border with the EU. According to a joint study by Oxfam and its Polish partner Egala, people pushed back to Belarus were subjected to physical violence and deprived of water, food, shelter and medical care. Cases of sexual abuse were reported.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Belarus remained non-compliant with the WHO's Air Quality Guidelines, and air pollution exceeded the relevant standards threefold. Other environmental commitments, and the monitoring of their implementation, remained weak or non-existent. This was particularly evident amid a severe crackdown on environmental NGOs and the forcible exile of independent climate activists. The restrictions on public participation in environmental decision-making and the erosion of other environmental rights as part of broader human rights violations were outlined in NGO submissions to Belarus's UPR.

1. "Belarus: Authorities hold presidential election in climate of total fear and repression", 24 January ↑
2. "Belarus: No end in sight for the human rights crisis", 24 January ↑

3. "Belarus: Released prisoner Mikalai Statkevich forcibly disappeared after refusing to be exiled", 15 September ↑

BELGIUM

Kingdom of Belgium

A draft bill threatened freedom of expression and association. Asylum seekers were left homeless and Afghan nationals were denied protection. Prisons conditions remained dire. Arms transfers to Israel were halted. Fossil fuel subsidies continued.

BACKGROUND

In February, a new federal government took office and announced that it would pursue "the strictest migration policy ever".

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In July, the Council of Ministers approved a preliminary draft bill giving the government powers to disband and prohibit "radical" or "extremist" organizations, undermining freedom of association and expression. In November, parliamentarians submitted a draft law aimed at allowing judges to impose a temporary general prohibition on participation in public assemblies, as a complementary penalty for people convicted of protest-related criminal offences. Such a provision would undermine freedom of peaceful assembly.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Authorities continued to leave thousands of asylum seekers – mostly single and male – homeless and destitute by denying them access to reception facilities. In August, parliament adopted a new law excluding certain groups from accessing reception facilities, which meant that even some families with children were forced to sleep on the streets.

Despite the severity of the human rights crisis in Afghanistan, the Office of the Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons continued to deny international protection to the majority of Afghan asylum seekers. Between January and November, only 43.5% of those applying were granted protection.

RIGHTS AT WORK

In January, the Belgian Official Gazette published an appeal by organizations advocating for the annulment of the law on sex work under employment contract. The law contained specific provisions protecting sex workers' employment rights including the need for employers to engage with sex workers' trade unions and organizations.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Political parties continued to block a parliamentary vote on proposed improvements to abortion access that would bring the law into compliance with the 2022 WHO Abortion Care Guidelines. Amnesty International and Médecins du Monde Belgium raised concerns about access to abortion care for specific groups, including people experiencing homelessness and people without legal status. Despite the legal entitlement to healthcare services, welfare services continued to delay or deny care, compelling some people to seek abortion care abroad.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

Overcrowding in dilapidated prisons continued, with insufficient access for people deprived of their liberty to basic services, including healthcare and sanitary facilities. In July, parliament approved the Emergency Law, temporarily introducing measures to reduce overcrowding. However, by year's end, these measures had not resolved the problem.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In January, the Council of State suspended three licences for the export of arms to the United Arab Emirates. In July, the Brussels Court of First Instance ordered the Flemish government to prohibit any further transit of military equipment to Israel. In September, the government supported the extension of the arms export and transit ban on military

goods to Israel and advocated a European embargo on arms and dual-use goods when the end user is military.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In December, the National Society of Belgian Railways awarded a contract to purchase hundreds of new train carriages to Construcciones y Auxiliar de Ferrocarriles (CAF) and placed an initial order worth EUR 1.7 billion. In September, OHCHR, the UN human rights office, named CAF in its updated database of companies involved in unlawful Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In June, the government reported that in 2022 the state spent more than EUR 17.8 billion in fossil fuels subsidies.

RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

In August, the USA transferred Tunisian footballer Nizar Trabelsi back to Belgium after his unlawful extradition to the USA in 2013. He was held in immigration detention and Belgium's Immigration Office immediately ordered him to return to Tunisia, but the Council for Alien Law Litigation suspended this decision. Following court orders, the authorities released Trabelsi in October.

BENIN

Republic of Benin

Rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly continued to be restricted. A surge of deadly attacks by armed groups led to the internal displacement of growing numbers of people, most of whom struggled to access their economic and social rights. The UN expressed concern about widespread use of pretrial detention under counterterrorism laws as well as the poor conditions and treatment of detainees in prison facilities. Some victims of forced evictions were still awaiting adequate compensation.

BACKGROUND

Incumbent President Patrice Talon publicly reaffirmed his commitment not to seek a third term in office in 2026.

The country faced security threats in the northern region. Between January and October, Beninese army forces were targeted by armed groups, including al-Qaida affiliate Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM), which killed at least 82 soldiers.

Following a failed coup attempt on 7 December, at least 50 people were placed in pretrial detention.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Provisions in the Digital Code criminalizing "false news" and "harassment by electronic means" continued to be used to hamper the right to freedom of expression.[1] Benin dropped from 89th to 92nd place in the World Press Freedom Index by Reporters Without Borders.

In January, the newspaper Le Patriote and its website were suspended by the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) after the publication of an editorial pointing out "the government's ineffective strategy" during an attack on a military position in the border zone between Burkina Faso and Niger. The suspension was lifted in May.

From 12 March to 20 May, the news website Bénin Web TV was suspended and the press card of its managing director withdrawn. The HAAC accused the media outlet of publishing inaccurate information in two articles concerning the HAAC and its president.

On 5 June, Julien Kandé Kansou, a member of the Democrats party, was arrested and charged with "harassment by electronic means" as well as "spreading false news" after he predicted an "electoral revolution" in 2026 and criticized the authorities.

Journalist Comlan Hugues Sossoukpè, a Beninese national known as a government critic, was arrested on 10 July in Abidjan,

Cote d'Ivoire. He was transferred to Benin, where he was charged by the Court for the Repression of Economic Offences and Terrorism with "incitement to rebellion", "incitement to hatred and violence", "harassment by electronic means", and "apology for terrorism". One of his collaborators, the journalist Ali Moumouni was arrested six days later and faced the same charges.

On 15 July, Cosme Hounsa, journalist and editor-in-chief of the newspaper La Boussole, was arrested by agents of the National Center for Digital Investigations (CNIN) on charges of harassment by electronic means. He was released two days later, but the charges remained pending. Before Cosme Hounsa's arrest, La Boussole had published several articles commenting on a legal case between the then Minister of Energy, Water and Mines and his predecessor.

On 9 October, Olivier Allochémé, journalist and editor-in-chief of the newspaper L'Événement Précis, was arrested following comments made on his Facebook page about the head of state.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In March, the opposition Democrats party filed complaints against police officers and local elected officials following bans on demonstrations and violent dispersal of protests in various cities.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

A new surge of attacks by armed groups in the north of the country was a key factor triggering a more than twofold increase in the number of people internally displaced. The International Organization for Migration estimated that, as of July 2025, the figure had increased by 118 % compared to 2024, to 27,294 people. Most internally displaced people lost their sources of income and lived in dire conditions with limited access to economic and social rights, such as the rights to food, water, health and housing.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In January, following a review of Benin's periodic report, the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families published concluding observations noting that, despite some progress made in measures to protect migrants' rights, challenges remained. The committee determined that certain provisions of legislation passed in 1986 governing the legal status of foreigners were inconsistent with the international migrant workers convention. It pointed in particular to provisions relating to the deprivation of liberty and expulsion of people in an "irregular situation".

During the committee's review, the government acknowledged difficulties in providing essential services to refugees and asylum seekers in the country. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees estimated in November that these numbered some 30,540 people, of whom 70% were women.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

In January, reporting on his 2024 visit, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism noted that, since 2019, hundreds of individuals had been arrested in connection with terrorism-related offences. Many had been detained without being formally charged. The Special Rapporteur also expressed concern about conditions of detention, highlighting overcrowding, poor sanitation and inadequate access to healthcare.

FORCED EVICTIONS

In February, the National Land and State Property Agency issued a public call for people still awaiting adequate compensation following forced evictions to make themselves known so that their cases could be followed up. Thousands of families living in coastal tourism development areas who had been forcibly evicted were potentially eligible. In a single district – Fiyégnon 1 in Cotonou – households representing more than 3,000 people had been evicted without compensation since 2021.

1. "Benin: Wave of attacks on press freedom highlights urgent need to reform Digital Code", 2 May ↑

BOLIVIA

Plurinational State of Bolivia

Environmental defenders faced attacks, persecution and criminalization. Deforestation, wildfires and mining generated pollution and endangered human rights, especially for Indigenous Peoples. Detainees suffered overcrowding and insecurity. There was a risk of impunity in connection with massacres. Feminicides and infanticides were recorded.

BACKGROUND

In October, Rodrigo Paz was elected president. Pre-election violence killed eight people, including four police officers.

In December, former president Luis Arce was arrested as a result of a corruption investigation.

The country experienced a severe economic crisis, with the highest year-on-year inflation since 2008. Food and commodity prices rose sharply.

At Bolivia's fourth UPR, the government rejected recommendations on regulations that restricted civic space.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Authorities continued to fail to protect human rights defenders, as they continued to face threats, persecution and attacks. The attacks were particularly aimed at Indigenous Peoples and peasant communities defending territory, land and the environment from the negative effects of mining and hydrocarbon-related activities.

The criminalization of environmental protection intensified. Twelve people protecting the Tariquia National Flora and Fauna Reserve were charged. According to the Ombudsperson's Office, they were also subjected to legal intimidation, harassment and threats.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Climate change exacerbated deforestation, wildfires and changes in rainfall patterns, intensifying water scarcity and affecting ecosystems, food security and the right to water.

Civil society organizations reported that extractive activities polluted the water and violated human rights. A study carried out by the Bolivian Documentation and Information Centre, in collaboration with other institutions, revealed that Indigenous women from the Amazon region suffered from high levels of mercury due to the consumption of fish contaminated by mining. Nine out of 10 people studied exceeded safe levels and three out of four were at cardiovascular risk.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Extractive projects continued to expand in Indigenous peoples' territories without consultation or through processes that did not meet the requirements of free, prior and informed consent.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

The Ombudsperson's Office warned of extreme prison overcrowding with more than 33,000 people imprisoned in a system that had a capacity for approximately 16,000. Poor health, substandard food and unsafe conditions were also reported and 15 violent deaths had been registered in prisons as of September.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

Concerns regarding judicial independence persisted. The Public Prosecutor's Office charged a network of judges, lawyers and public officials with corruption, lobbying and organized crime, alleging they had attempted to replace a member of the judiciary. Four of them, including a former minister, had been arrested by the end of the year.

IMPUNITY

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights warned of the risk that the 2019 Senkata and the Sacaba massacres would go unpunished.

Regarding the serious human rights violations committed in the context of these massacres, the proceedings brought against accused police and military officers were declared null and void in September. Bolivia had still not signed or ratified the Ljubljana-Hague Convention.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

The Attorney General's Office documented 81 feminicides and 29 infanticides. In September, Law 1639 came into force, prohibiting early and child marriage under the age of 18. This practice had continued to expose girls to violence, early pregnancy and dropping out of school.

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Human rights defenders, civil society activists and independent journalists in Republika Srpska faced an extremely hostile environment. Roma and "non-constituent" Peoples continued to experience discrimination. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted laws recognizing femicide and strengthening penalties for perpetrators of domestic violence. Legal protection for victims remained inconsistent across the country. Genocide denial and glorification of convicted war criminals persisted.

BACKGROUND

Bosnia and Herzegovina (BH) continued to experience political instability.

In February, Republika Srpska (RS) authorities passed laws preventing state-level institutions, including police and judiciary, from operating in RS territory. The Court of BH temporarily suspended certain laws and ruled that others were unconstitutional.

In August, the Court of BH sentenced the President of RS, Milorad Dodik, to one year of imprisonment and a six-year ban on holding public office for defying decisions issued by the UN High Representative in BH. His mandate was officially terminated in August and extraordinary presidential elections were held in RS in November.

The RS National Assembly (RSNA) rejected the court ruling and called for a referendum to ask RS citizens if they accepted the ruling and termination of Milorad Dodik's mandate. The EU said a referendum on court decisions ran "counter to the rule of law". The authorities decided to postpone the referendum to 2026.

In September, the BH Council of Ministers finally adopted the EU Reform Agenda 2024-2027, thereby preventing another major cut to funds from the EU's Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Human rights defenders, civil society activists and independent journalists, particularly in RS, were frequently subjected to verbal threats, online and offline abuse, and aggressive and sustained smear campaigns, including by senior public officials.

In March, the RSNA adopted the Law on Special Registry and Publicity of the Work of NGOs, which required non-profit organizations to enrol in a special registry, subjected them to increased legal oversight, and potentially classified them as "agents of foreign influence". The RSNA also adopted changes to the RS Criminal Code, introducing a new criminal offence of "disrespecting or failing to implement decisions of institutions and bodies" of RS, which civil society groups said presented a major threat to freedom of expression. In May, the Constitutional Court of BH struck down both laws as unconstitutional. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders called the measures a part of a "deliberate policy" to delegitimize criticism of the ruling party and "further demonize and undermine civil society".

In August, journalist Nataša Miljanović Zubac was arrested and briefly detained on charges of "disclosing secret information" over social media posts alleging corruption

and crime among members of the police and judiciary. The Court of BH, however, ruled that there were no grounds for suspicion that Nataša Miljanović Zubac had committed the offence.

DISCRIMINATION

In March, the RSNA adopted amendments to the RS Criminal Code removing the term "gender identity" as a protected characteristic from articles criminalizing hate crimes and hate speech. Civil society groups warned that the amendments would erode existing legal protections.

In September, a Council of Europe delegation visited BH to discuss the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments, which found the power-sharing arrangements in the country discriminatory. People who did not identify as one of the country's "constituent peoples", namely Bosniak, Croat or Serb, continued to be denied adequate political representation.

In April, the authorities and civil society groups started a consultation on the Action Plan on Social Inclusion of Roma 2026-2030, but no concrete progress was made before the end of the year.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In March, the Federation of BH parliament adopted the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence and Violence against Women aimed at strengthening prevention, introducing more robust protection measures and improving support for victims of violence. Women's rights organizations welcomed the adoption but warned that comprehensive implementation required additional education and training of law enforcement officials.

In June, following months of campaigning by women's rights organizations, the Federation of BH parliament amended the Criminal Code to formally recognize femicide as a distinct crime and introduce harsher penalties for perpetrators.

Despite noted progress, legal protection and access to rights remained inconsistent for victims living in different parts of the country.

There was a notable increase in online violence targeting women. The Council of Europe called on the authorities to step up efforts to reform the legal and institutional framework to combat digital violence.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

While BH marked the 30th anniversary of the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, politicians in RS continued to publicly deny genocide and war crimes and glorify convicted war criminals.[1]

In May, the Court of BH sentenced Vojin Pavlović, head of an RS-based NGO, to two and a half years' imprisonment for inciting hatred by denying the Srebrenica genocide and glorifying convicted war criminals. This was the first conviction for genocide denial since the UN High Representative imposed the genocide denial legislation in 2021.

More than 7,500 people remained missing as a result of the Bosnian war of 1992-1995.

1. "Bosnia and Herzegovina:30th anniversary of Srebrenica massacre 'a painful reminder from history'", 10 July ↑

BOTSWANA

Republic of Botswana

Severe shortages of essential medicines led to a public health emergency. New laws threatened to expand the authorities' power to regulate online services and usage. The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were restricted. Gender-based violence remained widespread, while marital rape was not outlawed. Botswana retained the death penalty.

BACKGROUND

Following the October 2024 elections, the Umbrella for Democratic Change party formed its government with Duma Boko as president, ending decades of one-party rule under the Botswana Democratic Party.

Authorities relocated asylum seekers, whose applications had been refused, from a

detention facility in the city of Francistown to Dukwi refugee camp, where access to work and services was limited.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

In August, President Boko declared a national public health emergency after the medical supply chain collapsed, leaving public hospitals and clinics with severe shortages of essential drugs, including for cancer, diabetes, tuberculosis, and sexual, reproductive and mental health conditions. The crisis followed months of significant arrears in the government's unpaid bills to private suppliers, and broader fiscal pressure linked to a downturn in the diamond sector. Non-urgent surgeries were postponed, and the government announced BWP 250 million (around USD 18 million) emergency funding for procurement, deploying the military to support distribution, although the shortages continued.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In August, parliament enacted the Digital Services Act 2025 and the Cybersecurity Act 2025. Both laws centralized executive control over the digital sector without providing provisions to ensure robust and independent safeguards to protect the rights to privacy and freedom of expression.

Botswana was ranked 81st out of 180 countries surveyed by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) in its 2025 World Press Freedom Index. RSF said that, while there were fewer cases of serious abuses against journalists, many obstacles hindered their work.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 8 August the police refused to allow a march by organizations affiliated with the Student Power Botswana movement to proceed in the capital, Gaborone. The students wanted to deliver a petition to the Ministry of Higher Education, demanding an increase in their monthly allowances in line with rising living costs. Police claimed the march would clash with another event. A week later, another attempt to deliver the petition was arbitrarily blocked.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

UN agencies described the high incidence of gender-based violence as a national emergency. Meanwhile, authorities failed to ensure effective protection for women and girls, including the absence of legislation which criminalized marital rape.

DEATH PENALTY

Botswana retained the death penalty. For the fourth consecutive year, there were no executions although several men remained on death row. Local NGOs called publicly for an official moratorium on executions with a view to total abolition.

BRAZIL

Federative Republic of Brazil

Poverty levels decreased significantly, mainly due to income-transfer policies, but structural inequalities persisted and access to human rights was compromised. Vulnerable populations, especially Black and low-income people, were disproportionately affected by extreme weather events. The approval of a new environmental law and other legislation exacerbated regressions in environmental policies and the territorial rights of Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities. Violence against human rights defenders intensified, in particular for environmental, Indigenous and *Quilombola* defenders. Police violence persisted, disproportionately affecting the Black population. Violence against LGBTI people and gender-based violence, particularly feminicides of Black women, continued to be of serious concern. Difficulties in accessing justice, particularly in cases of police violence, continued to undermine state accountability.

BACKGROUND

Former president Jair Bolsonaro was sentenced to 27 years and three months in prison for an attempted coup, while

coordinated campaigns on social media showed increased support for authoritarianism. In November, after the Supreme Federal Court ruled that the sentence was final, Bolsonaro began serving his prison term, initially under a closed regime at the headquarters of the Federal Police in the capital, Brasília. In this context, the National Congress became a source of tension, with legislative police officers expelling journalists and assaulting lawmakers during parliamentary proceedings on 9 December. However, some legislative initiatives aimed at reducing the former president's sentence and re-examining his responsibility for the events in question moved forward, despite intense social mobilization in defence of the conviction.

Misogynist, racist and transphobic attacks were directed at women, Indigenous Peoples and transgender parliamentarians in the National Congress. This demonstrated the fragility of institutional mechanisms in the face of political violence based on gender, race or sexual orientation.

COP30, held in Belém, put the city at the centre of the global climate agenda and afforded high visibility to social actions advocating for climate justice, a just energy transition and reparations for environmental racism. The intensity of these demands contrasted starkly with the scant progress towards a just transition achieved by formal negotiations. Although the contribution of Afro-descendant populations to climate action and solutions for a just transition was recognized for the first time, the conference failed to secure a sufficient increase in funding for loss and damage, and to make clear commitments to end the use of fossil fuels.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Poverty and inequality in Brazil reduced to the lowest levels in 30 years through the consolidation of distributive policies and income-transfer programmes. Despite this, significant budgetary restrictions on policies and ministries responsible for social affairs particularly affected residents in marginal neighbourhoods or in communities peripheral urban areas.

Profound inequalities persisted in access to, retention in, and quality of, education. According to data from the Continuous National Household Sample Survey published in September, in 2024 only 50% of Afro-descendant adults had completed compulsory basic education, compared with 63.4% of white adults. A UNICEF analysis published in January revealed that at least 1.17 million Brazilian children had their schooling disrupted by extreme weather events in that same year. In addition, the Brazilian Public Security Forum reported that disruptions to education due to episodes of extreme violence – shootings, threats of attacks and police operations – had increased by around 245% between 2021 and 2023.

Access to safe drinking water remained a key challenge in several regions of the country. According to an Instituto Trata Brasil report that covered access to treated water and sanitation, the greatest needs were concentrated in the northern and north-eastern regions, where coverage of water-related services was significantly lower than in southern and south-eastern regions.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Environmental monitoring mechanisms were put in place and conservation policies implemented in some regions, reflecting the state's efforts to address the climate crisis. One of the main measures was the approval of the National Civil Protection and Defence Plan to counter extreme weather events.

According to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE), deforestation rates in the Amazon decreased again in 2025 and were among the lowest of the historical data series. In the Cerrado, rates also decreased for a second consecutive year. Nevertheless, deforestation continued to be prevalent in both biomes. Other ecosystems, such as Caatinga and its transition zones, continued to be under intense pressure. Serious environmental crimes and fierce and devastating wildfires were recorded, reflecting the persistence of livelihoods based on the

spread of agricultural lands and environmental degradation. According to INPE and other specialized organizations, deforestation rates and the high number of wildfire outbreaks continued to threaten ecosystems critical for global climate regulation.

Climate change-related disasters disproportionately affected peripheral and vulnerable populations in all regions of the country, exacerbating existing social inequalities and fuelling recurrent forms of environmental racism, particularly against Black, Indigenous and low-income communities. Water and rainfall scarcity, landslides, storms, flooding, heatwaves and drought were all recorded. Assessments by the National Centre for Monitoring and Early Warning of Natural Disasters (CEMADEN) published during the year indicated an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme events related to heavy rains and prolonged drought, with 3,620 disaster alerts and around 1,690 incidents in 2024. The World Meteorological Organization warned that global warming was intensifying extreme events around the world, while CEMADEN stated that Brazil had already entered an "age of extremes", with an increasing risk of human, economic and social loss concentrated in historically marginalized territories.

One year after the floods in Rio Grande do Sul, the largest hydrological disaster in the state's history, fewer than one in four of the actions included in the Rio Grande Plan, the state programme for reconstruction, adaptation and climate resilience created in 2024, had been completed. Policies prioritized the reconstruction of infrastructure, leaving vulnerable populations exposed to new extreme weather events.

Approval of the General Environmental Licensing Law (Law 15.190/2025) intensified threats to human rights, in particular the right to a healthy environment, by making licensing more flexible, exempting from licensing or simplifying procedures for potentially polluting projects, and reducing safeguards for Indigenous Peoples and traditional communities. Congress rejected 52 of the 63 presidential vetoes to the law, thereby increasing the grounds for licence exemptions, reducing deadlines for project assessments, and limiting social participation and involvement of local protection agencies.

President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva issued instructions in December for the drafting of a national roadmap to transition towards a phase-out of fossil fuels, but the government continued to authorize new projects in crucial ecosystems. At the same time, projects that facilitated mining on Indigenous lands were processed and the drilling of an exploratory oil well was authorized in the Foz do Amazonas basin, in an area known as the Equatorial Margin. Authorization to drill at the river mouth, together with the history of social and environmental damage caused by oil exploitation in Guanabara Bay (Rio de Janeiro state), reinforced the persistence of an extractive model based on fossil fuel use. This was contrary to a just energy transition focused on human rights and contributed to the creation of "sacrifice zones" in exploited territories.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

During COP30, the federal government concluded the final stage of the process for officially recognizing or ratifying four Indigenous territories and issued 10 ordinances for the demarcation of new lands. A total of 20 demarcation processes were advanced.

Land invasions and acts of violence related to land conflicts and armed attacks continued in areas of rapid agribusiness expansion, particularly affecting the communities of Guaraní Kaiowá (Mato Grosso do Sul state), Avá Guaraní Paranaense (Paraná state) and Pataxó and Pataxó Hã-hã-hãe (Bahia state). Invasions, illegal land grabbing and illegal mining activity were also recorded on already demarcated Indigenous lands, especially in the Amazon region (Yanomami, Kayapó, Munduruku and Sararé territories).

Threats and attacks against leaders increased significantly. Cases of extreme violence included the murder and decapitation of Everton Lopes Rodrigues, a

young Avá Guaraní Paranaense in the municipality of Guaira (Paraná state), and the murder of the Guaraní Kaiowá leader Vicente Fernandes Vilhalva during an attack by armed individuals on the recovered territory of Pyelito Kue, in the municipality of Iguatemi (Mato Grosso do Sul state). These events occurred in the context of ongoing violence resulting from the demarcation of territories in the states of Paraná, Mato Grosso do Sul and Bahia, among other regions, with threats, night attacks, arson and persecution of community leaders.

In March, the federal government, the company Itaipú Binacional and the Avá Guaraní Paranaense People reached an agreement establishing reparation measures and the allocation of resources for the acquisition of land. This followed decades of human rights violations associated with the construction of a hydroelectric plant. Months later, the Brazilian state and the company issued a long-overdue apology for the violence committed. Despite this symbolic and material progress, Indigenous communities continued to denounce the inadequacy of the measures in the face of increased territorial losses and continuing invasions, threats and pressure on their lands across the country.

Quilombolas

There was partial legal recognition of the rights of *Quilombola* communities, with judicial decisions reaffirming the state's obligation to advance processes of identification, demarcation and titling of their lands. In March, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights condemned Brazil for violating the territorial rights of 171 *Quilombola* communities in the municipality of Alcântara (Maranhão state) and ordered the titling of approximately 78,000 hectares of land, as well as other collective reparation measures.

Despite this, *Quilombola* communities faced increased physical, symbolic and structural violence. The absence of effective demarcation and territorial protection policies perpetuated historical vulnerability and a lack of restorative justice. Threats against *Quilombola* leaders increased, often in relation to agrarian conflicts and attempts at illegal land grabbing.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The new National Plan for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders was approved, reinforcing the state's obligation to adopt comprehensive physical, psycho-social and legal protection measures for individuals and communities at risk.

Nevertheless, attacks, threats and serious violence persisted against human rights defenders, particularly environmental defenders, *Quilombolas* and Indigenous and community leaders in contexts of territorial conflict. Killings, attacks, death threats and cases of criminalization were recorded. In November, Antônia Ferreira dos Santos and Marly Viana Barroso, aged 53 and 71 respectively, environmental defenders and collectors of Babassu coconut, were killed in the municipality of Novo Repartimento (Pará state) in a context of territorial disputes and defence of the traditional way of life.

In November, Brazil's Chamber of Deputies approved the Escazú Agreement, but at year's end it remained unratified due to delays in the Senate.

Human rights organizations accused the Pará state government of misusing the Programme for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders to carry out surveillance on Indigenous and community leaders, including members of parliament.

Legal proceedings relating to high-profile cases of violence against defenders, such as the murders of Marielle Franco, Anderson Gomes, Maria Bernadete Pacífico (known as Mother Bernadete), Bruno Pereira and Dom Phillips, reached different investigative and judicial stages without a final ruling. In the case of Marielle Franco and Anderson Gomes, the process against the alleged instigators reached its final phase and the trial in the First Chamber of the Supreme Federal Court was scheduled for February 2026, almost eight years after the crime was committed. In the case of Mother Bernadete, the Court of Justice in Bahia also scheduled a hearing for those accused for February

2026 in the Jury Court, two years after the murder was committed.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Police violence continued to characterize public security policy. According to the Brazilian Public Security Yearbook and organizations such as the Democracy under Threat (DX) Institute, in 2024 the police killed an average of 17 people per day, totalling more than 6,200 deaths over the year. Thus Brazil maintained its position as one of the top-ranking countries worldwide in terms of death rates from police violence.

The Brazilian Public Security Yearbook published in July indicated that the Black population continued to represent the majority of victims of police killings in absolute terms. In 2024, approximately 82% of those killed in police operations were Black, despite this demographic constituting only 55.5% of the total population.

At the institutional level, a number of legal decisions relating to the protection of the essential constitutional values against acts of public power – such as actions for breach of fundamental precept 635 (known as "ADPF das Favelas") and 709 – reinforced the state's responsibility for violence committed by security agents and for the protection of vulnerable population groups. However, those decisions were not implemented. In January, an operation carried out in the neighbourhoods of Alemão and Penha, in Rio de Janeiro, left dozens dead and disrupted daily life in these *favelas*, with reports of extrajudicial executions and ambulance access being hindered. In the city of São Paulo, deaths at the hands of on-duty military police increased in 2025 to 672 victims, with a steeper increase in the second half of the year following the adoption by police of a new model of body camera with a narrower field of view.

In May, a military police operation in the Pantanal neighbourhood of the city of Macapá (Amapá state) resulted in the deaths of seven young people returning from a football match, including a 14-year-old boy, when the vehicle they were travelling in was repeatedly shot at.

In October, Operation Containment in the Penha and Alemão *favelas* carried out by 2,500 civil and military agents resulted in the deaths of 121 people, including four police officers. Considered the deadliest operation in the history of Rio de Janeiro state, there were reports of extrajudicial executions, house raids, violation of crime scene preservation protocols and disproportionate use of force in a densely populated area.

Some progress was made in terms of state responsibility through convictions in a number of high-profile cases of police violence. In the city of Fortaleza, eight military police officers were sentenced to long prison terms for homicide, attempted homicide and torture committed in 2015 against residents of a number of peripheral urban neighbourhoods, in what became known as the Curio Massacre. Several agents were acquitted in a separate trial. In the case of João Pedro Matos Pinto, a 14-year-old Black boy killed inside his Rio de Janeiro home during a police operation in 2020, a judicial decision determined that the agents involved should be tried for qualified homicide before a popular jury, following their acquittal by a court in 2024. In the case of Johnatha de Oliveira Lima, a young Black man killed during a police operation in a Rio de Janeiro *favela*, a series of court decisions allowed the reopening of investigations. However, these examples remained exceptional: around 98% of investigations into police officers were dismissed, with fewer than 2% of deaths at the hands of the police going to trial.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Progress was made in increasing visibility of LGBTI issues and in legal decisions extending recognition of LGBTI rights, with rulings by higher courts reinforcing equality in matters of filiation (family recognition), parental leave and registration of non-binary gender identities. At the same time, violence against the LGBTI population increased, with the Bahia Gay Group Observatory recording 291 violent deaths of LGBTI people in 2024 (an increase of approximately 9% compared with 2023). Furthermore, the National Association of Transvestites and Transexuals

registered more than 100 murders of transgender people in the same year, meaning that Brazil remained one of the deadliest countries in the world for this population group. Investigation and accountability continued to be low in the face of hate crimes based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

The creation of institutional protection and accountability mechanisms for gender-based violence progressed, including a gradual increase in the number of specialized police stations, the expansion of care networks and the running of awareness campaigns, which indicated a measure of official acknowledgement of the issue's severity. Feminicides nevertheless reached a record level, with at least 1,470 cases in 2025 or four women killed per day, a slight increase compared with 2024. In a context of persistent racial inequality, Black women remained over-represented among the victims and several successive high-profile cases prompted mass protests and calls for a stronger response from the authorities.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The National Congress moved forward with initiatives to restrict access to legal abortion. The processing of draft bill 1904/2024, which sought to equate abortion after 22 weeks of pregnancy to the crime of simple homicide, even in cases of rape, generated massive protests by feminist and human rights organizations. The bill had still not become law at year's end.

IMPUNITY

Despite some specific progress on accountability, reports by the UN Special Rapporteur on truth, justice and reparation pointed to the persistence of structural impunity and major barriers in access to justice, especially in cases of extrajudicial executions, torture and enforced disappearances.

Some transitional justice mechanisms continued to face legislative delays and political resistance, including attempts to restrict historical memory policies and revise the Amnesty Law, putting the collective right to truth, justice and reparation at risk.

Access to justice continued to be profoundly unequal. Data from the National Council of Justice showed that Black people and vulnerable groups continued to be over-represented among the prison population and under-represented in terms of access to adequate legal defence. This was despite initiatives such as the application of protocols for judging with a racial and human rights perspective.

BULGARIA

Republic of Bulgaria

Vexatious lawsuits, political pressure and precarious working conditions threatened media freedom. Civil society faced a hostile environment with further attempts to introduce the so-called Foreign Agents Bill and other repressive legislation. Organizations reported at least 24 cases of femicide. Three Egyptian children died after being refused rescue assistance near the border. Roma and LGBTI people continued to experience widespread discrimination. Systemic failures emerged in care for people with disabilities and older people.

BACKGROUND

Bulgaria continued to experience water shortages, forest fires and inadequate infrastructure, resulting in casualties and severe property damage. Mass anti-corruption protests in December led to the resignation of the government.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In July, the Supreme Court of Cassation found news outlet Mediapool and investigative journalist Boris Mitov guilty of defaming a judge and ordered them to pay BGN 43,000 (EUR 20,000) in damages and legal fees over articles published in 2018. Reporters Without Borders called this a "clear case of strategic lawsuit against public

participation (SLAPP) aimed at silencing journalists".

In September, NGO Media Freedom Rapid Response and others warned that a combination of political and economic interference, threats, vexatious lawsuits and precarious working conditions threatened independent journalism.

In October, members of the ruling coalition introduced draft legislation proposing prison sentences and fines for journalists who disseminated information about an individual's "personal life" without consent. It also allowed for the use of wiretapping and surveillance – normally reserved for serious crimes – for investigating these new offences. Following strong public criticism, the proposal was withdrawn.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Civil society organizations faced a hostile environment and frequent smear campaigns.[1] In February, the pro-Russia party Revival submitted the so-called Foreign Agents Bill for the fifth time in two years. The bill would prohibit foreign-funded organizations from carrying out activities in educational and public institutions.

New parliamentary initiatives sought to establish a commission to investigate individuals and organizations receiving assistance from the foundations of George and Alexander Soros, stating that they created conditions for overt and covert influence over public, political and economic processes in the country.

The proposals were rejected by parliament, but civil society groups warned that these initiatives continued to threaten freedom of association and civic participation.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence persisted and there was no progress on establishing a centralized database to record such cases. In November, the Council of Ministers decided to establish the Coordination Mechanism for Assistance and Support to Victims of Domestic Violence.

In August, a court in the city of Plovdiv released on bail a man who had been on trial since 2023 for a knife attack against his 18-year-old girlfriend, which left her with severe injuries. In October, the case was resumed behind closed doors.

Women's rights organizations reported at least 24 femicides in the context of domestic violence. The Ministry of Interior confirmed a steady upward trend in reported cases.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The ombudsperson and UNICEF Bulgaria reported cases of violence including beatings and sexual abuse of children in boarding schools, highlighting inadequate oversight by authorities. The findings exposed deep flaws in child protection systems and lack of accountability for perpetrators. Despite repeated recommendations, the government failed to adopt effective monitoring or rehabilitation measures.

DISCRIMINATION

Roma continued to face discrimination in all spheres of life, including housing, education, employment and health. In April, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights raised concerns over forced evictions of Roma families in the capital Sofia, which left families sleeping in tents for months without an adequate alternative.[2]

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In February, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance said that Bulgaria had not taken steps to combat discrimination against LGBTI people, including developing a national strategy to address intolerance towards the community. Draft amendments to the Child Protection Act, proposing a ban on accessing and disseminating information relating to gender identity and expression, were still pending adoption in December. Civil society groups warned that the proposal further marginalized LGBTI youth and educators, and the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights recalled that the European Court of Human Rights had previously found such legislation "harmful and incompatible with the notions of equality, pluralism and tolerance".

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In February, the ombudsperson warned that the reduced funding and capacity of social services threatened to leave people with disabilities without essential care at home.

In April, the Stara Zagora District Court found that a woman with pyscho-social disabilities had been subjected to forced psychiatric institutionalization and other measures violating her dignity and autonomy, and awarded her BGN 15,000 (EUR 7,000) in damages. Civil society groups welcomed the "landmark" ruling.

CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In June, authorities discovered two private homes for older people in Stara Zagora operating illegally and where people were found restrained, sedated and kept in inhumane conditions. Media reports dubbed them "houses of horrors", prompting investigations into systemic failures of the social care and inspection systems. The ombudsperson called for reforms and better monitoring of private facilities for older people, criticizing severe neglect and exploitation of older people.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In January, three children of Egyptian nationality died after being denied rescue assistance near the Turkish border. The case reignited scrutiny of alleged pushbacks and the lack of accountability of border police. Human rights groups called for independent investigations and compliance with EU asylum law.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

In February, the European Committee of Social Rights found that Bulgaria's Covid-19 vaccination plan in 2020, which deprioritized older and chronically ill people, violated the rights to health and to be free from discrimination under the European Social Charter.

RIGHT TO WATER

In August, several regions were affected by water shortages, leaving residents with less than three hours of running water per day. Environmental organizations expressed serious concerns regarding the weak enforcement of EU environmental standards and lack of transparency in risk management policies.

1. *Bulgaria: Erosion of Civil Liberties and Freedom of Expression,* 9 May ↑
2. "Bulgaria: Sugar factory – timeline of an injustice", 27 June (Bulgarian only) ↑

BURKINA FASO

Burkina Faso

Human rights violations and abuses against civilians continued during the armed conflict. Military authorities continued their crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, association and press freedom, through the arrest of journalists, the suspension of media, enforced disappearances and suspensions of NGOs.

BACKGROUND

Armed conflict continued to affect many parts of the country and significantly impacted the economy, including cotton production, leading to internal displacement. In April, military authorities announced they had foiled another coup attempt. In July, the government introduced a new administrative map for the country, which involved renaming and redistributing provinces. In August, the UN resident coordinator was expelled. In September, the state joined Mali and Niger to announce their joint decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute of the ICC. In October, the Independent National Electoral Commission was dissolved.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

The ruling authorities were in a non-international armed conflict with the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM) and the Islamic State-Sahel Province (IS-Sahel) since 2016. In January, GSIM

attacked the town of Sebba in Yagha province, unlawfully targeting civilians. According to local media, seven civilians, including four children, died in the attacks.

In May, members of GSIM attacked Djibo, the capital of the newly formed Soum region in the north and took control of the military base located there. According to humanitarian and local sources, they killed approximately 100 soldiers. Members of the armed group then entered several neighbourhoods and unlawfully killed at least 26 civilians, according to Human Rights Watch.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

During the armed conflict, the military and its auxiliary forces, including the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDP), committed violations of international humanitarian law. According to local sources, media reports and human rights organizations, between 10 and 11 March, the military and the VDPs unlawfully killed at least 58 unarmed civilians in and around Solenzo, a town in the Bankui region (formerly Boucle du Mouhoun). In videos widely shared on social media, armed individuals (believed to be VDP members) could be heard insulting the victims, accusing them of being terrorists, using ethnic slurs against them, and seen firing at unarmed people, including children and older people.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The government continued its crackdown on freedom of expression, while also warning about the spread of hate speech on social media.

On 1 September, lawyer and human rights defender Ini Benjamine Esther Doli was arrested at her home in the capital, Ouagadougou, after returning from a trip abroad. In December, she was tried by the Ouagadougou High Court for contempt towards the head of state and demoralizing the national army in social media posts critical of the regime. She was sentenced to one year in detention and a fine of XOF 1 million (EUR 1,525).

Journalists

On 24 March, Guezouma Sanogo and Boukari Ouoba, two executive members of the Association of Journalists of Burkina Faso (AJB), were arrested by intelligence service agents and taken to an undisclosed location. The next day, another journalist, Luc Pagbelguem, was taken to an undisclosed location by "two agents of the National Security Council", according to a statement issued by his employer, the BF1 TV channel. These unlawful detentions occurred following the AJB's congress on 21 March. During the congress, Guezouma Sanogo and Boukari Ouoba – who were re-elected as president and secretary general respectively – condemned the military's "total stranglehold" on the country's public media outlets. Luc Pagbelguem filmed this statement, which was subsequently broadcast by BF1 TV. Several days later, images of the three men in military fatigues were shared on social media. They were released in July.

In August, the Higher Communications Council suspended Radio Omega's broadcasting licence for three months, following a post on their Facebook page on 30 July that criticized the government as a "junta".

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Several activists were forcibly disappeared during the year. On 15 March, Idrissa Barry, national secretary of the political movement *Servir et Non se Servir* (SENS) (To Serve and Not Serve Yourself), was arrested by individuals claiming to be police. This occurred during a meeting with officials at the town hall in the Saaba district of Ouagadougou. He was taken away in an unmarked vehicle. Four days before his arrest, Idrissa Barry and SENS had released a statement condemning the "murderous killings" of unarmed civilians in Solenzo in the Bankui region, by the government and its local auxiliaries. His fate and whereabouts remained unknown at the end of the year.

Five other SENS board members were arrested in late March but later released.

In April, Miphal Ousmane Lankoandé, executive secretary of *Le Balai Citoyen* (The Civic Broom), a grassroots political movement, was arrested while returning from a trip to Benin. He had been attending a training course on activism hosted by the Foundation for the Innovation of Democracy. At the end of the year, his fate and whereabouts were still unknown.

In April, Idrissa Badini, an activist and member of the association Let's Save Djibo – a group of residents advocating for humanitarian and government support for the city at the front line of the conflict – was abducted in Ouagadougou by security service members and taken to an undisclosed location. In October, four magistrates, including Jean-Jacques Ouedraogo, former attorney general at the Ouagadougou Court of Appeal, and Arnaud Sempebré, a lawyer, were arrested and taken to an undisclosed destination by armed men suspected to be members of the intelligence services.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Throughout the year, the government further severely restricted the right to freedom of association through legislation and repressive measures. In June, the authorities suspended two international NGOs: Sant'Egidio, a lay Catholic association; and Diakonia, a development and humanitarian law organization. Both were suspended for "three months renewable" for "collection of personal data on Burkinabe territory and its storage abroad without prior authorization". During the same period, three other NGOs were also suspended for three months for failing to comply with procedural requirements regarding their work in Burkina Faso.

In July, the International NGO Safety Organisation (INSO), an association supporting NGOs in conflict-affected countries, was also suspended for three months, renewable, on the same charges. In October, eight INSO staff members were charged with treason and espionage for allegedly engaging in the systematic collection of "information relating to the country's security, political and administrative activities", purportedly in violation of legislation. In July, the Transitional Legislative Assembly adopted a new law to regulate associations and NGOs, with the expressed motivation of preventing terrorism financing and money laundering. However, there were concerns that this law could be used to exert greater control over NGOs and their activities. In November, the government issued a decree requiring approved NGOs and associations to open their bank accounts exclusively with the Treasury Deposit Bank.

No progress was made to lift the suspensions that had been imposed on political parties after the 2022 coup.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In September, the government adopted a new Code of Persons and the Family, which strengthened the recognition of customary and religious marriages through official registration. It enshrined new guarantees for women, children and the family unit: The law harmonized the legal age of marriage at 18 for both men and women, and reduced inequalities in inheritance by allowing parents to inherit from their children.

Women and girls continued to face barriers in accessing justice and essential healthcare services.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The same Code of Persons and the Family criminalized consensual same-sex relations between adults, discriminating against LGBTI+ individuals and violating their right to equality before the law.[1] It established these offences as punishable by a prison sentence of two to five years, with fines ranging from XOF 2 million (EUR 3,000) to XOF 10 million (EUR 15,000).

1. "Burkina Faso: Criminalization of consensual same-sex relations between adults an alarming setback undermining progressive provisions of the new Persons and Family Code", 2 September ↑

BURUNDI

Republic of Burundi

More than 70% of the population lived below the poverty line. Security forces subjected perceived critics to arbitrary arrest and detention, and enforced disappearance. Reports of torture and other ill-treatment continued while perpetrators enjoyed impunity for past and recent abuses. Prison conditions remained dire. Peaceful dissent continued to be repressed and independent journalism threatened. Media workers were subjected to persistent harassment, intimidation and legal obstacles. Rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were severely restricted, particularly around the election period. While women's representation in parliament increased, girls and women were not adequately protected from widespread gender-based violence.

BACKGROUND

The year marked one decade since the 2015 political crisis, when peaceful demonstrations against the late President Pierre Nkurunziza's decision to seek a third term were met with brutal repression by security forces. The June 2025 legislative and local elections were marked by restrictions on opposition parties. The ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy-Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party won all National Assembly and Senate seats. During the election period, key state institutions, including the judiciary and the electoral commission, remained subject to significant influence from the CNDD-FDD.

Burundi's military operations in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) raised human rights concerns. Insecurity in the DRC resulted in the arrival of large numbers of refugees to Burundi, increasing pressure on already limited humanitarian resources and host communities.

Relations with Rwanda remained tense. Burundi accused Rwanda of planning attacks on its territory.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

According to the World Bank more than 70% of the population lived below the poverty line, with limited access to essential services and employment opportunities.

A protracted fuel shortage placed additional strain on economic and social systems, disrupting transport and healthcare services, and food supply chains. Shortages resulted in significant increases in the price of basic goods and services, further increasing the cost of living.

In March the government integrated malaria vaccination into its routine immunization programme. This was a significant public health initiative given that malaria was a leading cause of morbidity and mortality, with an estimated 3.7 million cases in 2021, resulting in 5,957 deaths. However, limitations in health infrastructure and logistical capacity continued to impede comprehensive vaccination.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Human rights organizations accused the National Intelligence Service (SNR) and police forces of arbitrarily arresting and detaining individuals viewed as government critics, more than 20 of whom were forcibly disappeared according to the NGO Forum for Awareness and Development.

In August, men believed to be SNR officers arrested YouTuber and government critic Dieudonné Niyukuri, along with Fabrice Ribwurumutima (a Rwandan national), Eloi Nkurunziza and Venant Ndikumana. Authorities did not disclose their fate and whereabouts or provide any reasons for the arrests, despite repeated requests for information from civil society and family members.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Local human rights organizations received reports of the use by security forces of torture and other ill-treatment. The lack of

investigations into such allegations perpetuated a climate of fear and impunity.

According to NGO SOS Torture/Burundi, in March the Regional Police Commissioner for the Northern Region beat Septime Ndikuriyo, a motorcycle taxi driver, until he lost consciousness. Witnesses told the NGO that the officer intercepted Septime Ndikuriyo in Rusuguti, a commune in Ngozi province, and accused him of overtaking his vehicle. Septime Ndikuriyo was taken to Ngozi Regional Hospital where he was admitted to the intensive care unit. The officer was not subjected to disciplinary or legal action or even investigated for the alleged attack.

Between May and June, the UN Committee against Torture issued key decisions on the cases of five complainants who said they had been subjected to grave violations under the UN Convention against Torture between 2014 and 2016. In each case, the Committee found Burundi responsible for torture or cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment committed by police or intelligence officers.

The findings illustrated the entrenched patterns of torture, denial of torture, impunity, and the lack of commitment to justice and accountability. For many years, the Committee had highlighted structural flaws in Burundi's justice system, including the absence of an independent complaints mechanism, the use of arbitrary detention, denial of access to legal and medical assistance, and a judiciary that lacked independence.

Burundi did not provide a meaningful response to the Committee's findings.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

Prisons were overcrowded and conditions remained harsh with inadequate food, sanitation and medical care provided. The NGO Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture in Burundi said the prison population was 400% above capacity. Civil society organizations documented cases of detainees being held beyond their sentences.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Press freedom remained severely restricted, with journalists and media organizations subjected to persistent harassment, intimidation and legal obstacles.

In March the National Communication Council suspended Yaga Burundi, a youth-focused online media platform. The suspension was lifted more than two weeks later following a public outcry.

In April, journalists Willy Kwizera of Radio Bonesha FM and Masudi Mugiraneza of Radio Scolaire Nderagakura were arrested, detained and interrogated for their coverage of a demonstration, before being released without charge hours later.

Journalist Sandra Muhoza remained in prison at the end of the year. Arrested in March 2024 for a message she posted on WhatsApp, she was convicted and sentenced by a court in Bujumbura province in December 2024 to 21 months in prison for undermining the integrity of national territory and inciting ethnic hatred. In May 2025 her appeal against the conviction went before the appeal court in Bujumbura, which said it lacked jurisdiction to hear the case because her alleged offence took place in another province, namely Ngozi. This decision effectively nullified her original conviction and sentence. In September she was transferred to a prison in Ngozi and in October her case went before the Ngozi Court of Appeal, which was expected to decide within 48 hours whether she should be provisionally released. No such decision was made public by the end of the year.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Significant barriers were imposed on access to official information for independent media outlets and journalists. Reports of journalists being denied access to parliamentary sessions from August onwards included two Iwacu newspaper journalists who were refused entry in September because they "were not on the list". According to Iwacu, some journalists were removed from WhatsApp groups that had served as official communication channels between the National Assembly and the press. Meanwhile,

live broadcasts of key parliamentary sessions were taken off air. The Constitution stipulates that National Assembly and Senate sessions are public except under exceptional circumstances.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities imposed restrictions on the rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly. They banned or disqualified opposition parties from participating in political activities and electoral processes ahead of the elections.

In January, the Constitutional Court upheld a lower court's decision to invalidate the composition of the Burundi Bwa Bose (Burundi for All) coalition of opposition parties. The ruling effectively excluded members of the opposition National Congress for Liberty party who remained loyal to their former leader Agathon Rwasa from standing in the elections. Agathon Rwasa was replaced in March 2024 with a leader believed to be close to the ruling party.

Opposition party members and supporters, and activists, were harassed, intimidated and physically attacked, often by members of the Imbonerakure, the ruling party's youth wing, and other government-aligned groups.

From March onwards, several Burundi Bwa Bose coalition meetings were banned across the country. In May supporters of the coalition reported that alleged Imbonerakure members seized their motorcycle in the capital, Gitega, following a march.

In November President Ndayishimiye publicly insulted Faustin Ndikumana, the president of Words and Action for the Awakening of Conscience and the Evolution of Mindsets, a human rights NGO and one of the few remaining independent organizations still operating in Burundi. President Ndayishimiye claimed Faustin Ndikumana was "possessed by demons" and mocked him for being unmarried.

Bans and suspensions, imposed in 2016 against most independent human rights organizations in the aftermath of the 2015 crisis, remained in place, as did criminal proceedings against some human rights defenders. Organizations affected included the Association for the Protection of the Human Rights and Detained Persons, Ligue Iteka and the Burundian Union of Journalists. Most independent human rights defenders and activists remained in exile, with their organizations operating from abroad. Such measures undermined the ability to monitor human rights violations and support victims effectively.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women's representation in the 2025-2030 legislature increased significantly following the elections, with 39% and 46% of seats held by women in the National Assembly and the Senate, respectively. This was a respective increase of 4% and 5% compared to the 2020-2025 legislature.

However, women and girls continued to experience widespread gender-based violence, including domestic and sexual abuse. As of 18 December, the Movement of Women and Girls for Peace and Security in Burundi had recorded 84 cases of sexual violence, 41 cases of physical violence and 105 killings, which included killings and sexual abuse against children. Levels of violence were exacerbated by weak enforcement of existing laws and persistent impunity for perpetrators.

While the contraceptive injection was authorized, access to sexual and reproductive healthcare and rights remained limited. This was particularly so in rural areas, due to poor health infrastructure and prevailing social taboos.

CAMBODIA

Kingdom of Cambodia

Human rights violations continued unabated. Slavery, forced labour, human trafficking and torture flourished in scamming compounds across the country, with the full knowledge of authorities who failed to shut many of them down. Repression of freedom of expression continued, as demonstrated by the alleged

assassination abroad of a political critic. Journalists, civil society leaders and government critics continued to face unfounded and politically motivated criminal charges. Thousands of families living at the Angkor UNESCO World Heritage site faced ongoing threats of forced eviction, while those already evicted were denied remedy and left in inadequate housing, struggling with debt and unemployment.

BACKGROUND

The Cambodian People's Party (CPP) continued to rule Cambodia, which remained a one-party state backed by the military and with tight control over the judiciary. Cambodia and Thailand engaged in military conflict along their shared border, resulting in civilian deaths on both sides.

FORCED LABOUR AND TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Slavery, human trafficking, forced labour, child labour, deprivation of liberty and torture and other ill-treatment were recorded in more than 50 compounds across the country where online scamming or gambling was occurring.[1] At these sites, victims of human trafficking, including children, were subjected to threats of violence and torture, forced to work and confined inside compounds.

People were brought from around the world, forced to cross borders by boats and traverse rivers and jungles, so that traffickers could sell them into compounds where they were then confined and exploited. Torture and other ill-treatment were used to discipline and control people within the compounds. Several compounds used "dark rooms" to punish people who had contacted the authorities or failed to meet work targets. Victims also suffered unlawful deprivation of liberty, imprisoned in guarded buildings designed to prevent their escape, with restricted contact with the outside world. Many victims were bought and sold, and enslaved while inside the compounds.

In July, the prime minister launched a nationwide crackdown on scamming compounds, reportedly freeing more than 3,000 victims in raids across the country. However, these attempts to stop online scamming appeared to be performative: less than 20% of the identified scamming compounds were investigated and in some instances trapped victims were not released. There appeared to be minimal efforts to properly identify or assist victims of trafficking and investigate or prosecute those responsible for human rights abuses.

The drastic cuts to USAID funding devastated the anti-human trafficking sector, leaving it without resources during the country's worst human trafficking crisis to date.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Civil society

In April, the Supreme Court denied bail to five Mother Nature Cambodia activists who were imprisoned in 2024, along with other members, for advocating for environmental rights. The imprisoned activists were given lengthy sentences and were transferred to different prisons, an additional act of cruelty intended to separate them from each other and their families.

Group trials began in September for 37 individuals who had been arbitrarily arrested and held in pretrial detention for allegedly protesting against the establishment of a regional development zone more than a year earlier. The development zone was later abandoned because of pressure from the protests, yet the individuals remained in detention.

In August, the Kandal Provincial Court charged Chheng Sreyrath, a well-known online vendor, with "inciting discrimination" and "demoralizing the army". In October, a tour guide from the city of Siem Reap was charged with conspiracy to commit treason by overthrowing the government after he posted a video of the revolution in Nepal.

Journalists

Journalists continued to bear the brunt of the government's relentless attack on freedom of expression. In January, two journalists from government-aligned media outlets were

arrested after attempting to expose a scamming compound. (This continued the trend from 2024 when award-winning journalist Mech Dara, known for investigating scamming compounds, was arrested in retaliation for exposing the industry.)

The government closely monitored media coverage of the Cambodian-Thai border conflict and arrested a journalist for livestreaming at the border. In August, the government revoked the media licence of news outlet Sara NCC Daily, supposedly for "false information which threatened national security".

Politicians

In January, Lim Kimya, a former opposition politician and government critic, was murdered in Bangkok in what was believed to be a political assassination ordered from Cambodia.[2] The transnational killing of a Cambodian politician in Thailand alarmed government critics living there. In October, Ekkalak Paenoi was found guilty of the murder of Lim Kimya, in a trial held in Thailand. His alleged accomplices, identified in videos as Cambodian individuals with ties to Cambodian officials, remained at large.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In July, the government published its updated NDC, setting a conditional economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of up to 55% by 2035.

Large-scale carbon-offset projects in forests proceeded without genuine free, prior and informed consent. Indigenous Peoples faced forced evictions, crop destruction and criminalization of traditional livelihoods because the projects excluded them from their ancestral lands.

The authorities encouraged companies to conduct sand dredging along the Mekong River. This threatened ecosystems by rapidly lowering river beds and destabilizing riverbanks, intensifying salinity intrusion and degradation of spaces vital for fisheries and agriculture.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF NATIONALITY

In August, an amendment to the Constitution enabled revocation of citizenship for people convicted of treason or collusion with foreign powers. The measures were an attempt to intimidate and silence critics following mass arrests and the earlier alleged assassination of Lim Kimya, raising concerns of further violations of international human rights law.[3]

Ethnically Vietnamese people living in Cambodia continued to face the risk of becoming stateless. The authorities continued to withdraw or refuse to issue identity, residence and naturalization documents, leaving people without the means to prove their Cambodian nationality. In many cases these people's circumstances were akin to statelessness. Removal of citizenship or identity papers appeared to be part of an arbitrary and often ethnically motivated policy.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

Forced evictions at the Angkor temple complex remained halted since 2023, due to pressure from civil society. Many families who had been forcibly evicted from the site continued to face debt and lacked access to adequate housing or any form of relief or remedy. Following a monitoring mission to the Angkor relocation sites, UNESCO's World Heritage Centre found that the government-led evictions – which Amnesty International found were illegal under international human rights law – complied with local law.

Thousands of families across the country remained indebted to predatory micro-finance institutions that forced them into poverty, food insecurity and child labour, and having to sell their home and land.

INDISCRIMINATE ATTACKS

In May, clashes broke out along the Cambodia-Thai border, in an escalation of a long-standing territorial dispute. Evidence suggested that both Cambodia and Thailand may have carried out indiscriminate attacks harming civilian infrastructure.[4] By December, over 40 people had been killed, with both sides suffering civilian casualties and damage to civilian objects, including a

health centre, a pagoda and civilian homes in Cambodia. Scamming compounds were targeted by Thai authorities, endangering victims of human trafficking.

A second ceasefire was agreed on 27 December. Thousands of Cambodian families did not return or were unable to return to their homes, in some cases because of the Thai military presence in Cambodia. Further humanitarian concerns arose as scores of migrants returned to Cambodia from Thailand, and thousands of Cambodians remained internally displaced without access to adequate shelter, food and water.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women's representation declined after the 2023 elections, falling to 13% in parliament, despite making up 42% of the civil service. Women remained at risk of gender-based violence and discrimination in employment.

1. Cambodia: *"I Was Someone Else's Property": Slavery, Human Trafficking and Torture in Cambodia's Scamming Compounds*, 26 June ↑
2. "Cambodia/Thailand: Alarming killing of politician amid crackdown on Cambodian opposition", 8 January ↑
3. "Cambodia: Revocation of citizenship would be heinous violation of international law", 11 July ↑
4. "Cambodia/Thailand: Both sides must prevent further risk to civilians from renewed hostilities", 8 December ↑

CAMEROON

Republic of Cameroon

The rights to freedom of association and peaceful assembly were threatened in the context of presidential elections. Security forces used excessive force against demonstrators, killing at least 48 people. Political activists continued to face arbitrary arrests and detentions. The trial of 17 people for the murder of journalist Martinez Zogo resumed. In the Far North region, Boko Haram continued unlawful killings, while in the North-west and South-west regions, populations continued to suffer abuses by separatist groups. Access to health and education was threatened by insecurity and US foreign aid cuts. The use of mercury in gold mining violated people's human rights.

BACKGROUND

Violent clashes between government forces and armed separatist groups continued in the Anglophone regions. This, as well as clashes between farmers and herders in the North-west region, internally displaced nearly 1 million people.

In August, the Trump administration terminated the Temporary Protected Status for Cameroon, putting more than 5,000 Cameroonian asylum seekers in the USA at risk of deportation.

Official statistics estimated the inflation rate at 4.1% at the end of June. While it had decreased since 2024, it remained above the tolerance threshold for most households.

Paul Biya, who had been president for 43 years, was declared the winner of the presidential election in October.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In January, lawyer Alice Nkom, president of the board of directors of the Central African Human Rights Defenders Network (REDHAC), was summoned by the Wouri department prefect and the national gendarmerie for "investigation".[1] Prior to this, in December 2024, authorities had suspended the activities of REDHAC and three other civil society organizations. In January Alice Nkom and Maximilienne Ngo Mbe, REDHAC's director, were charged with several offences, including "breaking seals" (placed by authorities on the doors of REDHAC's offices), "rebellion", "failure to appear in court" and "financing terrorism". Their trial started in April but was adjourned several times.

The government banned several political gatherings and activities, and arrested opposition supporters ahead of the presidential elections. In September, OHCHR, the UN human rights office, warned against increasing restrictions on the activities of opposition political parties.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Eleven of 500 people arbitrarily arrested in 2020 for participating in peaceful protests organized by the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC) party remained in detention.

In April Abdu Karim Ali, a peace activist detained since 2022, was sentenced to life in prison.[2] He had been arrested for denouncing torture committed and broadcast online by the leader of a pro-government militia in the South-west region.

In August, more than 50 people, including supporters of MRC leader Maurice Kamto, were arrested in the capital, Yaoundé. They had gathered outside the Constitutional Council, where appeals concerning the validation of presidential candidacies were being heard. They were released weeks later but were facing charges of disturbing public order, unlawful assembly, rebellion and incitement to revolt.

OCHA's monthly reports regularly highlighted the use of arbitrary arrests against populations of the North-west and South-west regions in the context of clashes between government forces and armed separatist groups (see below).

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

In March, Cameroon Bar Association members declared a national protest and a three-day nationwide strike, in response to videos on social media showing police "inflicting violence and other degrading and inhumane acts" against at least two lawyers and other citizens.

In October, protests contesting the president's re-election broke out in several cities. Peaceful protests turned violent as security forces used excessive and unnecessary force to disperse demonstrators, killing at least 48 people, according to a Reuters report citing UN sources that also said that three gendarmes died in protests in Douala. Hundreds of protesters were arrested, including opposition leaders, activists and supporters of opposition political parties. OHCHR urged authorities "to ensure prompt, impartial and effective investigations into all cases of election-related violence, including the use of unnecessary or disproportionate force, and to bring those responsible to justice."

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In September the trial resumed concerning the 2023 abduction and murder of radio journalist Martinez Zogo in Yaoundé. He was killed while making programmes denouncing corruption. The trial was ongoing at the end of the year.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Far North region

In February suspected members of Boko Haram carried out multiple attacks against communities in Kolofata district on the border with Nigeria. Media reports said they abducted residents, including children, looted homes, stole and killed livestock and set a village on fire, leaving at least three people dead. In September, Boko Haram claimed an attack in the Mayo-Moskota department, which left five dead and 11 injured, according to a local newspaper.

Repeated Boko Haram attacks caused disruption to healthcare provision in these areas where, according to the UN Population Fund, patients and health workers feared for their safety.

North-west and South-west regions

Separatists claimed several attacks in the Anglophone North-west and South-west regions. The UN said that populations continued to be victims of targeted killings, frequent hostage-taking, the imposition of illegal taxes, roadblocks, extortions, movement restrictions and the use of improvised explosive devices, including in public spaces and along major roads.

OCHA reported numerous attacks in June by armed separatist groups against teachers, students and their parents to prevent them from taking or facilitating exams.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

US President Trump's foreign aid cuts in January adversely affected access to

essential health services, particularly in regions affected by insecurity or by armed conflict in the Far North. The US President's Malaria Initiative (PMI) had until January funded 50% of all community health workers in the Far North, nearly half of whom, according to Reuters in October, were no longer working due to the cut in PMI funding.

According to UNICEF, in the North-west and South-west regions 14,829 schools were closed in 2025, in comparison with 14,364 in 2024, disrupting the education of more than 3 million children and increasing the risk of recruitment of children into non-state armed groups. Only 41% of children had access to pre-school education, particularly affecting children who lived in rural areas.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In May UN experts urged the government to take measures to address environmental and human rights abuses linked to mercury use in gold mining, including by state-owned enterprises. They said its use seriously undermined the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment free of toxic substances, the right to safe drinking water and the right to life, among other human rights.

1. "Cameroon: Authorities must stop harassment of human rights defender Alice Nkom and attacks on civil society organizations", 9 January ↑
2. "Cameroon: Deplorable life sentence handed to peace activist an 'affront to justice'", 15 May ↑

CANADA

Canada

Systemic racism and discrimination persisted against Black and racialized people. Migrants' and refugees' rights were violated through restrictive laws and returns under the Safe Third Country Agreement. Two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (2SLGBTQQIA+) people faced discrimination and violence. New laws threatened Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination. Canada continued to fund fossil fuel projects.

DISCRIMINATION

Black people faced discrimination in the criminal legal system, were over-represented and were unjustifiably assessed as having low reintegration potential for release, despite having a lower reoffending rate. In February and March, respectively, Canada released a Black Justice Strategy Implementation Plan and an Indigenous Justice Strategy to address systemic discrimination, anti-Black racism and over-representation of Black people and Indigenous Peoples in the criminal justice system, including as crime victims. The Indigenous Justice Strategy implementation plan remained under development. Incarceration rates of Indigenous Peoples – particularly women – remained disproportionately high. The Quebec government continued to deny the existence of systemic racism in the province.

In July, the Supreme Court upheld restrictive sex work laws. The continued criminalization of sex work and associated activities exposed sex workers to abuse, violence, deportation raids and other harms. A constitutional challenge led by sex workers was pending before the Ontario Court of Appeal.

The Canadian Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms' "notwithstanding clause", which prevents courts from striking down laws that violate the Charter's provisions, was increasingly threatened or used in legislation targeting transgender people, religious minorities and homeless people.

The Quebec government tabled a bill prohibiting staff and volunteers at all schools and state-run day-care centres from wearing religious symbols, and pre-emptively invoked both provincial and federal notwithstanding clauses to override constitutional concerns.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Canada continued to return refugees to face rights violations in the USA under the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA), which bars

most people entering Canada via the USA from seeking refugee protection. A court challenge argued that Canada's implementation of the STCA unconstitutionally violated refugees' rights and ignored a 2023 Supreme Court ruling by allowing at-risk refugees to be returned to danger in the USA. Other constitutional challenges to the agreement were ongoing.

In June, Canada introduced Bill C-2, which would undermine asylum seekers' right to fair assessment of their claim for protection, enable the government to cancel immigration documents without due process, and expand police powers to obtain personal information without a warrant. In October, the government introduced Bill C-12 to fast-track troubling aspects of Bill C-2.

In July, the government began using a federal prison for immigration detention; it stopped using provincial prisons in September.[1]

The Gaza Temporary Resident Visa Special Measures for Extended Family Program was closed in March. Concerns persisted about processing delays, complexity of the application, and other barriers to evacuation. Despite receiving 5,000 applications, fewer than 1,000 Palestinians had entered Canada. Many struggled to access essential support such as healthcare (which was still denied in Quebec), housing, education, and mental health services.

Despite widespread abuses and inherent risk of labour exploitation and discrimination against racialized migrant workers under the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, authorities failed to abolish closed work permits tying migrant workers to their employers. The government introduced restrictions to lower the number of migrant workers and shorten visa durations, rendering their status even more precarious.

Canada continued to deny essential healthcare to people with irregular immigration status, contrary to a decision by the UN Human Rights Committee. A legal challenge to this denial was ongoing.

The Quebec government continued its legal battle (heard before the Supreme Court in May) to strip refugee claimants of access to subsidized childcare services.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Bill C-63 (the Online Harms Act) did not pass into law after parliament's dissolution in January. The bill criminalized harmful conduct but relied heavily on law enforcement without alternative remedies. The federal government planned to review the proposed legislation. Meanwhile, technology-facilitated gender-based violence against Black, Indigenous and other racialized women and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people continued to rise.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Violence against 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, particularly transgender youth, persisted. Alberta continued to restrict participation in sports, the use of chosen names and pronouns, and access to gender-affirming healthcare, although a temporary injunction protected access. In the province of Saskatchewan, laws continued to limit students' use of their chosen names and pronouns at school. In Ontario, protests opposing gender-affirming care were met with counter-protests defending transgender rights.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

New bills threatened Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination by accelerating approvals for major infrastructure projects. In June, the federal government passed Bill C-5 to streamline national projects. In May, British Columbia passed Bills 14 and 15 to fast-track infrastructure projects, and Ontario passed Bill 5 giving it powers to approve resource projects deemed critical to its economy. Civil society and Indigenous organizations opposed these acts.

In February, a British Columbia court found that the police had violated the human rights of three Indigenous land defenders during their arrests in 2021. In October, the same land defenders were sentenced to community service for opposing the Coastal GasLink pipeline on Wet'suwet'en territory.

Canada concluded negotiations on a free-trade agreement with Ecuador without the free, prior and informed consent of affected Indigenous Peoples.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Legislation proposed new hate crime offences and protest exclusion zones around sites such as medical facilities, places of worship, schools, and cultural and sports facilities. These bills and bylaws risked criminalizing freedom of expression and peaceful assembly with excessive penalties, imposed stigmatizing labels, and reduced police oversight. Concerns remained that these initiatives primarily targeted pro-Palestinian protesters.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

The pause on authorization of new export permits for transfers of military goods to Israel continued, although no official "notice to exporters" was issued. Some 30 export permits remained suspended, and at least 180 export permits remained active. Exports of military goods to Israel via the USA continued.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Canada lost more than 8.9 million hectares to forest fires. Severe air quality warnings were issued to millions of people from wildfire smoke. By August, wildfire carbon emissions in Canada had reached 180 million tonnes. Two people died due to fires and nearly 50,000 were evacuated.

Despite devastating impacts of climate change, Canada provided billions for fossil fuels and petrochemicals projects via direct finance, subsidies, tax breaks and other financial and regulatory supports. Canada committed funding for carbon capture technology, despite minimal impact on emissions. In July, Canada's first large-scale liquefied natural gas (LNG) export facility began operations; five more LNG projects were under development.

A Quebec court convicted climate activists for protesting against inaction on climate change.

1. "Human rights win: Immigration detention ends in provincial jails across Canada", 19 September †

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Central African Republic

Government forces, their allies and armed groups carried out unlawful attacks and killings. Conflict-related gender-based violence remained widespread while support services shrank. Progress in fighting impunity was undermined by failures to execute arrest warrants. The right to freedom of expression was restricted. A UN committee called for stronger safeguards against enforced disappearance. Prisons remained severely overcrowded.

BACKGROUND

Peace efforts persisted through intermittent dialogue with armed groups. By 31 May, around 446,722 people were internally displaced.

President Faustin-Archange Touadéra ran for a third term in the December elections.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Government forces and their allies

The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) reported that on 21 January members of the Wagner Ti Azandé (WTA) militia surrounded a camp housing Fulani community members, near the town of Mboki in Haut-Mbomou prefecture. They separated the men from the women and children, and the next day they shot at the men, and then at the women and children, killing at least 12 people, including six children. Several WTA members, including leaders, were arrested for the killings.

In April government forces and allied units reportedly arrested and tortured civilians, and burned around 20 houses during operations

against the Anti-Balaka armed group in and around Yadé in Ouham-Pendé prefecture.

Armed groups

According to the UN secretary-general's June report, armed groups committed widespread abuses nationwide. Between 14 February and 9 March, near Bozoum in Ouham-Pendé prefecture, clashes involving transhumant herders, suspected members of the Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) armed group and local self-defence groups, killed at least 20 civilians and displaced about 10,000.

Between 25 and 28 February, 3R attacks in Lim-Pendé prefecture, along the Nzoro-Bocaranga-Bohong axis, left 13 civilians dead and hundreds of homes burned. Meanwhile, Anti-Balaka and 3R members located around mining sites and transhumant corridors subjected civilians to killings, abduction and extortion.

Between 27 March and 6 May in the towns of Mboki, Obo and Zémio in Haut-Mbomou prefecture, suspected Azande Ani Kpi Gbé members targeted civilians of the Fulani community, killing two women and two children and abducting one person. On 28 March they ambushed a MINUSCA patrol near Tabane village, killing a Kenyan peacekeeper.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In May, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) said that US government aid cuts jeopardized sexual and reproductive health services for nearly 70,000 women and girls, amid high levels of reported rape, child marriage and female genital mutilation.

Gender-based violence

The UN reported that conflict-related gender-based violence remained widespread and under-reported. Between 2 February and 1 October, MINUSCA logged 295 conflict-related sexual violence incidents, for which 3R members were the main alleged perpetrators, followed by government forces.

Reports of sexual violence, trafficking and forced marriage increased in Korsi refugee camp in Birao. Less than one third of survivors received medical or psycho-social care within 72 hours. The cuts forced the closure of two UNFPA-supported survivors' clinics.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In February, Armel Sayo, former leader of the Revolution and Justice armed group, was charged with rebellion, war crimes and crimes against humanity linked to the activities of the Military Coalition for the Salvation of the People and Recovery, an armed group that he established in 2024. He awaited trial and, according to MINUSCA in July, was detained in an undisclosed location.

In June, the Special Criminal Court convicted six former members of the Popular Front for the Renaissance of the Central African Republic armed group for crimes against humanity and war crimes. Four of them were tried in their absence, highlighting a persistent failure to implement arrest warrants.

In July, ICC judges sentenced former Anti-Balaka leaders Alfred Yékatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona to 15 and 12 years' imprisonment, respectively, after convicting them for multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in 2013 and 2014.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

According to Reporters Without Borders, editor Ulrich Landry Nguéma Ngokpélé was arrested on 8 May and transferred to Ngaragba prison on 14 May for an article he published about the alleged return to the country of exiled former president, François Bozizé. Charges against him included inciting hatred against the government and dissemination of information intending to disturb public order. He faced up to 15 years' imprisonment. In August he was provisionally released. In May the National Assembly adopted a revised press and communication law. The communication minister said the law would modernize, regulate and protect the industry. Media workers denounced the law as an attempt to muzzle the press,

reintroduce undue criminal penalties, and broaden liability up the editorial chain to editors-in-chief and publishers.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances reviewed the Central African Republic's first periodic report in March. It recommended that the government make enforced disappearance an autonomous offence in line with the International Convention Against Enforced Disappearance; introduce independent monitoring of all detention facilities; and ensure prompt and impartial investigations, protection of complainants and witnesses, and full rights to truth, justice and reparation for victims.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

According to the UN secretary-general's June report, access to medical care, food and water remained limited in prisons due to staffing and resource shortages. Overcrowding worsened and according to UN monitoring, Ngaragba Central Prison was operating at 329% over capacity, with more than 65% of its inmates in pretrial detention. In response, a November presidential decree aimed to reduce some prisoners' sentences.

CHAD

Republic of Chad

Inter-communal violence led to many killings, including a massacre of herders in Mandakao. The violence displaced thousands and revealed serious gaps in systems for violence prevention, protection of lives and access to justice. Authorities curtailed civic space by warning journalists against "parallel investigations" into the Mandakao killings, and by dissolving or banning civil society organizations. Education needs remained acute, with 849,000 children out of school in eastern Chad. Authorities adopted a law on the prevention of violence against women and girls, but high prevalence and under-reporting of gender-based violence continued.

BACKGROUND

On 8 January, heavy gunfire broke out near the presidential compound in the capital N'Djamena. The assault, which ultimately failed, left around 20 dead. On 30 January, the last French military base was formally handed over to national authorities, marking the complete withdrawal of foreign troops.

At the end of May, UNHCR counted over 2 million people in situations of forced displacement nationwide. On 3 June, UNHCR warned that the number of Sudanese refugees in Chad had more than tripled since April 2023, surpassing 1.2 million. UNHCR reported 1,330,950 Sudanese refugees in Chad as of 31 December. The data analysis organization ACAPS estimated that 7 million people in Chad required humanitarian assistance in 2025.

In eastern Chad, violence and mass displacement overwhelmed health services, and deepened food insecurity and poverty.

RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

On 14 and 15 May, tensions between farmers and herders over access to grazing land in the village of Mandakao, Logone Occidental erupted into violence, which ultimately resulted in a massacre of 47 men, women and children from herding communities.

On 17 June, inter-communal clashes in Ouaddaï region in the east of the country left at least 20 dead and 16 wounded. Days later, an attack by herders in Oregomel, Mayo-Kebbi Ouest, a region in the south-west close to Logone Occidental, killed 18 and injured 17.

OCHA reported that, in total, inter-communal violence during May and June resulted in over 80 deaths as well as the displacement of an estimated 12,500 people across Logone Occidental and Mayo-Kebbi Ouest. OCHA highlighted gaps in systems to ensure violence prevention, the protection of lives and access to justice. While a pastoral

code to regulate access to land and water resources remained under consideration, this had not been adopted by the end of the year. Meanwhile, other mechanisms for managing tensions, such as local mixed committees, remained fragile.[1]

Following the Mandakao killings, the authorities deployed security forces, dispatched a government delegation and opened a judicial inquiry. On 16 May, former prime minister and opposition leader Succès Masra was arrested in connection with the case. On 9 August, he was convicted of "disseminating racist and xenophobic messages" and of "complicity in murder", receiving a 20-year prison sentence pending appeal. His lawyers argued that the statements cited against him were made years earlier and had no connection to the case. In the same trial, 65 co-defendants each received 20-year prison terms.

Following the Oregomel attack, the government reported that around 20 suspects had been arrested and announced the reinforcement of security measures pending prosecutions.

Impunity persisted after several cases of deadly clashes between herders and farmers that had occurred in 2023 and 2024.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

On 14 June, the public prosecutor in N'Djamena warned that journalists and civil society actors travelling to Mandakao to investigate the killings of herders could face prosecution for conducting "parallel investigations" liable to disrupt the official inquiry. National outlets and press freedom groups condemned what they saw as an attempt to deter independent reporting on the killings. On 25 June, the media regulator, the High Authority for Media and Broadcasting, issued a general caution about "media excesses" during crises. On 27 August, Reporters Without Borders reported surveillance, intimidation and self-censorship among journalists following these warnings, and urged the authorities to allow independent investigations.

On 26 June, the minister of territorial administration dissolved the Youth Association for Community Mobilization and Rural Development and the National Youth Coordination for Peace and Development in Chad. He also prohibited the activities of *Le Temps* ("The Time") citizens' movement as well as the political section of the opposition and civil society coalition *Wakit Tama* ("The Time Has Come"). The minister cited considerations of public order and non-compliance with the legal framework.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

UNICEF reported that, as of 31 March, 849,000 children were out of school in eastern Chad, of whom some 600,000 were living in host communities and 249,000 were among registered refugees and returnees. It noted a pre-existing shortfall of about 2,900 classrooms in Ouaddaï, Sila and Wadi Fira. In April, UNICEF warned of an 85% funding shortfall for the eastern Chad education response, highlighting persistent barriers to the right to education for children affected by the refugee and displacement crisis.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

On 10 July, the CEDAW committee welcomed Chad's adoption of a new law on the prevention of violence against women and girls and urged its effective implementation. The committee expressed concerns over the ongoing high incidence of gender-based violence, including sexual and domestic violence, as well as its under-reporting. It found that "low prosecution and conviction rates" continued, with lenient sentences for perpetrators who did receive convictions. The stigmatization of survivors continued, with the use of traditional, community-based mediation often facilitating impunity for perpetrators and undermining the rights of women and girls.

The committee called upon the authorities to ensure access to affordable, inclusive or, if necessary, "free legal aid and forensic evidence" for victims of gender-based violence. It called for action to provide victim support services and protection, including adequate and accessible shelters, medical

treatment, psycho-social counselling and economic support. It urged the government to continue to build the capacity of judges, prosecutors, police and other law enforcement agencies in gender-sensitive approaches to the investigation and prosecution of crimes.

1. *Chad: Live off the Land and Die for it*, 20 November ↑

CHILE

Republic of Chile

Impunity continued for human rights violations committed during the 2019 social uprising. Much-demanded police reform remained unimplemented. Migration policy continued to lack a human rights perspective. Violence persisted against children, adolescents, women and human rights defenders. The state of emergency continued in the south of the country, with more than 60 extensions.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In March, the Public Prosecutor's Office decided not to proceed with 1,509 cases relating to human rights violations committed during the 2019 social uprising. Less than 2% of the cases that continued led to a conviction. In others, the statute of limitations was close to expiry or had already expired by the end of the year. Pending cases included the trial against senior commanders of the *Carabineros* (police force).

In May, the National Network of Survivors of the Social Uprising withdrew from talks with the government. The organization denounced shortcomings in the drafting of a comprehensive reparations law and the creation of a permanent classification commission for victims of human rights violations.

In August, three members of the *Carabineros* were convicted of "unlawful coercion", "obstruction of the investigation" and "falsification of a public document" for the attack on Moisés Órdenes in 2019 while he was demonstrating peacefully. The sentence was criticized by various sectors as too lenient.[1]

David Gómez, a victim and survivor of institutional violence, committed suicide in September. Since the social protests of 2019, at least six individuals who were victims of human rights violations had committed suicide.

In October, complaints were made regarding persistent shortcomings in access to and quality of care provided to users of the Support and Care Plan for Survivors of Ocular Trauma. They included lack of transparency and accountability and poor coordination between services.

The national search plan for victims of enforced disappearance during the military regime of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) made progress but faced serious challenges. Relatives' associations demanded, among other things, that truth and reparation measures be prioritized and that no decisions be made in haste or in a way that would violate trust.

Since 2022, 29 memorial sites had been declared throughout the country, representing 41% of total sites declared since the end of Pinochet's military regime. Funding issues nevertheless persisted in 2025 and in September the executive submitted a bill to ensure the sites' permanent operation.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

No progress was made towards much-demanded reform of the *Carabineros*.[2]

The purchase and use of less-lethal weapons continued to lack adequate regulation. A severe lack of transparency persisted regarding the weapons that could be used and the processes for their acquisition, control and evaluation. Mass purchases were made without transparent procedures, including the purchase of more than 10,000 "BolaWrap" remote restraining devices. Implementation of the government's pilot plan for the use of electric stun guns was also pending.

The bill on the use of force continued through the legislative process, despite being questioned for its lack of regulatory precision, failure to adopt a comprehensive human rights perspective, and insufficient protection for vulnerable groups.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The country continued to lack a migration policy with a human rights perspective. During the second half of the year, rhetoric hostile to migrants and refugees intensified in the context of the presidential campaign, while Congress continued to debate bills proposing the criminalization of these individuals. Of particular concern was a proposal to restrict access to social benefits for people with irregular migratory status.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The Specialized Protection Service for Children and Adolescents (Better Childhood) faced operational challenges, mainly associated with overcrowding, waiting lists and a lack of specialized residential care centres.

Several cases of child exploitation were registered during the year, including of migrant and refugee children. In January, the government announced that it had set up the Presidential Commission for Truth, Justice, Reparation and Guarantees of Non-Repetition in December 2024, as recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child six years earlier.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A new abortion regulation was approved in May to prevent forced transfers of people between healthcare providers and ensure timely care.

Also in May, the government introduced a bill in Congress proposing the legalization of abortion in all cases up to 14 weeks of pregnancy.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Violence against women and girls continued to generate concern, with 444 actual, attempted or thwarted femicides being reported. In addition, the police registered 118,234 complaints for domestic violence and 18,776 for sexual offences during the year; 79% of the victims were women. A total of 14,734 crimes against life or physical integrity were committed against girls, of which 41% were crimes of rape or sexual abuse, and 3,644 cases of domestic violence.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

The prison system continued to face a serious structural crisis. This was marked by extreme overcrowding, which increased to 143% in several prisons; a lack of preparedness to address organized crime; numerous escapes; and various administrative errors. There were also reports of abuse, acts of torture, and gross negligence against persons deprived of their liberty, according to the Committee for the Prevention of Torture.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In April and May, two Indigenous people were arrested in the context of a pattern of criminalization and arbitrary detention targeting the Mapuche-Huilliche people defending their territory against the Los Lagos hydropower project.

A *gendarmería* (prison police) report classifying the prison population was criticized for containing a number of criminalizing and discriminatory statements regarding an imprisoned Mapuche leader.

The ongoing state of emergency in the Macrozona Sur directorate reached 1,505 days, as a result of more than 64 extensions approved since May 2022. This constitutional exception perpetuated restrictions on human rights, including freedom of assembly and movement, with no meaningful evaluation of the effectiveness or proportionality of the measures imposed, in a region with a large Indigenous population.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Lack of protection for human rights defenders persisted. Significant events included lack of progress in the investigation into the disappearance of human rights defender Julia Chuñil in 2024; the

disappearance of human rights defender María Ignacia González in June; death threats against Huilliche leader Miguel Raín; harassment of *machi* (ancestral spiritual authority) Miriam Mariñan by a forestry company; and a police raid of the home of *machi* Millaray Huichalaf in connection with an investigation into an existing conflict with a hydroelectric power plant.

RIGHT TO WATER

Chile continued to experience high levels of water stress, according to the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas, and faced a crisis associated with a prolonged decrease in rainfall and water scarcity in river basins.

1. "Chile: Sentence against police officers for beating Moisés Ordenes is incomplete justice", 9 September (Spanish only) ↑
2. "Chile: Amnesty International sends open letter to President Gabriel Boric warning of problems in the operation of the Consultative Unit for the Reform of the Carabineros and the serious consequences of an irresponsible use of tasers" 31 March (Spanish only) ↑

CHINA

People's Republic of China

Chinese authorities intensified control over information and public discourse, and continued to suppress dissent and peaceful assembly. Participants in religious activities were persecuted through surveillance, raids and security laws. Human rights defenders, writers, artists and other civil society actors continued to be detained and prosecuted under vague national security provisions; censorship and online surveillance of these groups persisted. Authorities suppressed activism aimed at achieving gender equality and imposed restrictions on freedom of expression by women and LGBTI people, particularly in digital spaces. China continued to use the death penalty. Renewable energy capacity increased significantly, but fossil fuel consumption also continued to rise. Ethnic groups including Uyghurs and Tibetans remained under strict political and cultural control. In the Hong Kong and Macao Special Administrative Regions, national legislation further eroded human rights.

BACKGROUND

Nine military leaders were removed from their posts, nominally as part of President and Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Secretary Xi Jinping's "anti-corruption" agenda. In September, Xi Jinping launched the Global Governance Initiative, the most recent in a suite of development and cooperation plans underpinning his claims to be a leader in "genuine multilateralism". Chinese businesses, often with close ties to the government, were involved in sustaining conflict globally, including in Myanmar and Sudan, and in facilitating violations by other states, such as Pakistan.

Several incidents indicated growing transnational repression by Chinese authorities, including surveillance, censorship, harassment, legal actions and exerting leverage over other states to forcibly return people to China. These incidents targeted human rights defenders, activists, artists, and the Uyghur and Tibetan diaspora.[1] There were also reports of researchers or advocates in other countries facing funding cuts linked to their work and spurious defamation charges from Chinese companies for publishing material critical of their business practices.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

The authorities intensified control over information, public discourse and freedom of association through new regulations, censorship and intimidation.

On 5 February, the National Radio and Television Administration introduced a new licensing system for all online micro dramas (short-form scripted videos), requiring prior approval before publication. The measure extended to content on major social media platforms including WeChat, Douyin and RedNote. On 8 February, the Cyberspace Administration of China, together with 11

other agencies including the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of State Security, issued the Internet Military Information Dissemination Management Measures, prohibiting the online production or sharing of any undisclosed information about national defence or the armed forces.

Journalists and media outlets continued to face censorship. In June, news outlet Caixin and weekly newspaper Southern Weekly published investigative reports about an alleged death in police custody; both reports were swiftly deleted from official websites and social media platforms.

On 22 September, the Cyberspace Administration of China launched a two-month nationwide campaign targeting content on social media and short-video platforms that "incited hostility" or "spread pessimism". Platforms were warned to delete such material and any other material deemed to discredit public institutions. In another example of tightened control, after the death of actor Yu Menglong, his fans' posts of expressions of grief and criticism of online censorship were quickly removed from social media.

Workers and their advocates remained unable to exercise freedom of association. On 10 February, the ILO's 2025 annual report raised concerns about the continued prohibition of independent trade unions and other restrictions on freedom of association in China.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities continued to restrict peaceful assembly through use of force by police and online censorship.

During April and May, workers in several provinces, including Sichuan, Shaanxi, Hunan and Hebei, staged protests demanding payment of overdue wages. Labour rights monitors documented removal of related online posts and harassment of organizers, reflecting the authorities' intolerance of collective action.

In August, reportedly more than 1,000 people gathered outside government offices in Jiangyou, Sichuan province, after video footage of a school bullying incident went viral. Police used batons and electric prods to disperse protesters; verified videos showed officers dragging and beating participants. Online discussion of the incident was swiftly censored, and residents reported being warned not to speak to foreign media.

That same month, a projection protest in the city of Chongqing displayed anti-government slogans for nearly an hour before police intervened. Videos of the projection were quickly deleted from social media platforms.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Authorities intensified control over religious activities through surveillance, raids and prosecutions under anti-"cult" and security provisions. On 5 March, the Ethnic and Religious Affairs Department forcibly took over a church in the city of Huainan, Anhui province. Pastor Zhao Hongliang was sentenced to one year and one month in prison. On 10 March, police in Anhui province detained two Christians on suspicion of "organizing and using a cult to undermine law enforcement".

Throughout the year, practitioners of Falun Gong, a spiritual practice banned in China, continued to face imprisonment, including an 80-year-old woman in Beijing sentenced to five years in March.

In October, authorities launched a nationwide operation against the unofficial Zion Church network, detaining nearly 30 pastors and members in at least seven cities, including Beijing and Shanghai. At least 18 individuals remained in criminal detention at the end of the year. The campaign reflected continued efforts to eliminate unregistered religious activity and enforce state control over belief and worship.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Authorities continued to target human rights defenders, lawyers and activists under vague national security and public order provisions. Such measures were routinely used to suppress legal advocacy and activism, with prolonged pretrial detention, closed proceedings and restricted access to legal counsel.[2] Authorities continued to use

"residential surveillance at a designated location", a form of secret detention amounting to enforced disappearance, particularly against human rights defenders, rights lawyers and individuals investigated for national security offences.

Human rights lawyers and their families faced ongoing attacks. Activist Xu Yan was released from prison in early January after completing her one-year-and-nine-month sentence for "inciting subversion". The appeal by her husband, human rights lawyer Yu Wensheng, against his sentence for the same offence was rejected on 6 January.[3] Lawyer Lu Siwei was sentenced to 11 months in prison in April for "illegally crossing national borders". After his release in August, he continued to face restrictions on overseas travel. On 30 July, after more than three years in pretrial detention, lawyer Xie Yang was tried behind closed doors on charges of "inciting subversion of state power".

Labour and social rights defenders remained under tight surveillance. On 18 March, labour rights advocate Wang Jianbing was released after completing a three-and-a-half-year sentence. However, he was subjected to "deprivation of political rights" – an ambiguous, so-called supplemental sentence that violated international standards – and remained under surveillance. In April, vaccine safety campaigner He Fangmei's appeal against her criminal sentence was dismissed.

Writers, journalists and artists continued to face criminal prosecution for exercising their right to freedom of expression and their human rights work. On 6 January, film director Chen Pinlin was convicted under the ill-defined crime of "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and sentenced to three and a half years in prison. On 19 September, journalist Zhang Zhan was tried, convicted and sentenced to a second four-year prison term for her human rights work.[4] Prominent artist Gao Zhen, detained since August 2024 on charges of "slandering China's heroes and martyrs", remained in detention at year's end, awaiting trial.

Students and younger people were also targeted. On 31 July, 22-year-old student Zhang Yadi (Tara) was taken into custody by state security officials in Yunnan province after returning from university studies in France. She was reportedly being held on suspicion of "inciting separatism" for her peaceful volunteer work overseas. On 28 December, Uyghur university student Kamile Wayit was released from prison after completing her three-year imprisonment for purportedly "promoting extremism" by sharing social media posts.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Authorities continued to suppress feminist activism and online discussion of gender equality. In August and September, the accounts of a number of feminist and women's rights activists were permanently removed from the social media platform Weibo for "inciting gender antagonism". State-linked media reported that the closures targeted content discussing sexual harassment and discrimination.

In October, Beijing hosted the Global Leaders' Meeting on Women to mark the 30th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, where officials promoted what they called "historic achievements" in gender equality and women's participation. Independent feminist voices were excluded from the event.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In January, cancellations of shows by renowned performer and transgender woman Jin Xing raised concerns around tighter government control over public performances by LGBTI performers. Police in several provinces detained or questioned female authors of "boys' love" (*danmei*) fiction for publishing homoerotic stories online. Media outlets and monitors reported that at least 30 writers were fined or placed under administrative detention as part of a campaign in June.

In September, the mainland release of the film *Together* was halted by its distributors after social media users discovered that a same-sex wedding scene had been digitally altered using AI to appear heterosexual. The

decision drew widespread criticism on social media before related posts were censored.

That same month, the Cyberspace Administration of China ordered the lifestyle and social media app RedNote to "rectify" alleged failings to manage posts about LGBTI topics and women choosing to remain single. The regulator said such content "distorted values" and undermined "online civility".

Online platforms, including Douyin, Bilibili and RedNote, continued to remove LGBTI-related groups and discussions under broad prohibitions of being "vulgar" or having "unhealthy" content, reflecting ongoing suppression of queer expression in digital spaces. In November, authorities ordered the removal of two popular gay dating apps from online platforms.

DEATH PENALTY

China continued to impose death sentences and carry out executions for a wide range of offences, including several that did not meet the threshold of the "most serious crimes" under international human rights law and standards. Official data on death sentences and executions remained classified as a state secret, making it very difficult to assess the government's claim that the death penalty was being applied "prudently".

Despite the state's restrictions over information on the death penalty, the authorities continued to publicize selected cases in the media as a deterrent. In January, the Guizhou Provincial Higher People's Court confirmed the execution of Yu Huaying, convicted of child trafficking, a case widely publicized in state media as evidence of "zero tolerance" for trafficking of women and children. On 29 September, the Intermediate People's Court in the city of Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, sentenced to death 11 members of a family for offences including "telecommunications fraud", "running an illegal gambling operation", "drug trafficking" and "intentional homicide" connected to cross-border scam operations in Myanmar. Authorities continued to use the death penalty for cases of corruption, executing a former financial executive in December for large-scale bribery.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

China remained the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases, despite unprecedented growth in renewable energy. Between January and May, solar and wind capacity increased by 198 and 46 gigawatts respectively. Coal consumption continued to rise.

In May, national carbon emissions declined year-on-year for the first time outside the pandemic period, a change attributed by analysts to a structural shift, rapid expansion of renewables and nuclear energy displacing coal. Reports also continued to highlight risks of forced labour in the solar-panel supply chain, raising questions about the sustainability of the transition to renewable energy.

Environmental protection was framed within the government's policy of building an "ecological civilization" and the 14th Five-Year Plan, which reaffirmed pledges to peak carbon emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. However, the Climate Action Tracker rated China's 2060 "carbon neutrality" target as "poor", noting the lack of a comprehensive long-term strategy and uncertainty over whether the target covers only CO_2 or all greenhouse gases. Participation in environmental decision making and transparency over major infrastructure projects remained tightly restricted.

ETHNIC AUTONOMOUS REGIONS

The government maintained strict political and cultural control over ethnic populations, continuing ideological campaigns that promoted "ethnic unity" and "national identity". Policies continued to suppress space for expression of cultural and religious distinctiveness, particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Uyghur region) and the Tibet Autonomous Region (Tibet), as well as in other autonomous areas.

On 8 September, authorities released a draft Ethnic Unity Law requiring a comprehensive ideological education to "forge a strong sense of the Chinese national community". It established extensive mechanisms to supervise and report on

"unity promotion" at all administrative levels. The same month, proposed revisions to the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language appeared to place greater emphasis on the nationwide use of Mandarin Chinese, particularly in "ethnic minority, rural and marginalized regions". This reinforced state-led linguistic homogenization and narrowed the space for cultural diversity.

XINJIANG UYGHUR AUTONOMOUS REGION

Uyghurs continued to face severe restrictions of their rights, including freedom of movement. Official policies reportedly discouraged Uyghurs from travelling overseas, while compelling Uyghurs abroad to choose between seeing family in China and exercising their right to freedom of expression.

In March, June and September, OHCHR, the UN human rights office, reiterated concerns regarding ongoing violations in Xinjiang. It urged China to implement its recommendations from 2022, including ending arbitrary detention, clarifying the fate and whereabouts of those held, and ensuring accountability. The government rejected these calls and took no steps towards accountability or an independent follow-up mechanism.

In September, UN experts sent an official communication to the authorities raising concerns over the reported enforced disappearance of Uyghur academic Rahile Dawut and the arbitrary detention of artist Yaxia'er Xiaohelaiti. The UN experts stated that these cases reflected broad systematic repression of Uyghurs' cultural and academic expression.

TIBET

In March, the State Council Information Office released a white paper, *Human Rights in Xizang in the New Era,* which explicitly promoted "bilingual education" with Mandarin as the main medium of instruction. The paper promoted schooling as a means of "strengthening national unity", including via political education. During a rare visit to Tibet in August, President Xi emphasized "unity and development" and presided over the start of construction of a controversial dam linked to forced displacement and harmful environmental impacts on local communities.

Authorities continued to interfere in Tibetan Buddhist religious affairs. In July, following the Dalai Lama's announcement of plans for his eventual succession, Chinese state officials and media asserted that any reincarnation process must proceed "in accordance with Chinese law" and under the authority of the Communist Party.[5]

HONG KONG SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

On 26 November, a fire at the Wang Fuk Court housing complex in Tai Po district killed 168 people, making it Hong Kong's third deadliest fire on record. Authorities swiftly suppressed calls for accountability, arresting at least four individuals and hampering or intimidating efforts to report publicly on the incident and the government's response.[6]

LGBTI people's rights

Lack of legal recognition persisted for same-sex marriage and partnerships. Following a 2023 ruling by the highest court, which required the government to establish a framework for legal recognition of same-sex partnerships by October 2025, the government proposed a Registration of Same-Sex Partnerships Bill, granting narrow rights tied to partnerships registered overseas. The legislature rejected it in September.[7]

Freedom of expression

Authorities continued to weaponize and expand the scope of the National Security Law (NSL) and related laws to criminalize the exercising of the right to freedom of expression. Among cases prosecuted under national security-related legislation between July 2020 and June 2025, 85% of those involved the legitimate right to freedom of expression which should not have been criminalized; bail was denied in 89% of cases; and the average duration of pretrial detention was 11 months.[8]

In April, the father and brother of exiled activist Anna Kwok were arrested by the

national security police. Her father was later charged under the 2024 Safeguarding National Security Ordinance (SNSO) for "directly or indirectly" dealing with the finances of an absconder. The case was widely seen as retaliation for Anna Kwok's critical speech and activism abroad.

In May, the Hong Kong government enacted subsidiary legislation under the SNSO, introducing six new offences. The legislation also declared six locations of the Chinese national security offices as "prohibited places", barring people from approaching or passing through them. Also in May, the Education Bureau updated its policy to integrate national security across primary and secondary school curricula, imposing strict oversight on teaching materials and activities, significantly restricting freedom of expression on campuses.

In June, jailed activist Joshua Wong faced a new charge under the NSL of "conspiring to collude with foreign forces". This was for his advocacy allegedly urging foreign governments to impose sanctions on Hong Kong or China.[9] In July and August, two young people (aged 18 and 19) were charged with sedition for, respectively, writing "seditious" slogans on the wall of a shopping centre toilet and filming promotional videos for the overseas-based group Hong Kong Parliament, which the authorities had labelled "subversive".

On 15 December, Jimmy Lai, the 78-year-old founder of the pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily, was convicted in a landmark national security case. The High Court found him guilty of conspiracy to collude with foreign forces and to commit sedition, despite his not-guilty pleas. Lai had spent more than five years behind bars before the conviction, much of it in solitary confinement. During the 156-day trial, Lai argued that Apple Daily's outspoken stance was protected expression. The judges rejected his defence and described him as a "mastermind" behind conspiracies to destabilize the Chinese government. He faced a maximum sentence of life imprisonment, with sentencing expected in early 2026.

Court rulings also impacted on freedom of expression with respect to other laws. In March, the High Court upheld the legality of section 27A of the Elections (Corrupt and Illegal Conduct) Ordinance, finding that the criminalization of public incitement to abstain or cast invalid votes during elections was constitutional on grounds of preserving "election integrity".

Freedom of peaceful assembly

Authorities continued to obstruct peaceful public assembly. On 4 June, police deployed heavy patrols and conducted searches around Victoria Park, a traditional site for the commemorations of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown. Police arrested two individuals and took another 10 people to police stations for their attempts to mourn, with some carrying flowers or candles.

In July, Pink Dot Hong Kong cancelled its annual Pride event, citing the government's refusal to allow use of the usual event venue.

Freedom of association

The city's two remaining major pro-democracy parties, the Democratic Party and the League of Social Democrats, officially disbanded in April and June respectively, amid political pressure. Also in June, the Legislative Council passed the Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill. The bill banned anyone convicted of national security offences from serving in trade unions; empowered the government to reject union registrations based on national security grounds; and required unions to seek approval before receiving foreign funding.

In July, police issued arrest warrants and bounties on 15 overseas-based activists for their involvement in the group Hong Kong Parliament. Also in July, four people, including a 15-year-old boy, were arrested under the NSL for "conspiring to subvert state power" due to alleged connections with Taiwan-based Hong Kong Democratic Independence Union. On 2 December, authorities officially imposed a ban on the two groups from operating in the city, citing them as a threat to national security under the SNSO.

Inhumane detention conditions

In July, the government amended the Prison Rules, granting the Correctional Services Department broad powers to restrict prisoners' visits and meetings with lawyers on vague "national security" grounds.

Interviews with nine former prisoners revealed a series of human rights violations in custody during their incarceration across 11 correctional facilities. These included physical violence, prolonged solitary confinement, poor sanitary conditions and dangerously high summer temperatures.[10]

In October, Chow Hang-tung was held in solitary confinement for 18 days after she made an online speech on having been nominated for the 2025 Nobel Peace Prize.

Workers' rights

In June, the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) dismissed a judicial review filed by a migrant domestic helper, who argued that the absence of a dedicated forced labour law in Hong Kong had led the police to fail to investigate effectively her complaint of forced labour. The CFA held that the enactment of bespoke legislation criminalizing forced labour was not necessary to provide practical and effective protection of the rights of foreign domestic helpers.

MACAO SPECIAL ADMINISTRATIVE REGION

In Macao, authorities applied its Safeguarding National Security Law for the first time to arrest former legislator Au Kam-san in July for alleged "collusion with foreign forces", raising serious concerns about the criminalization of peaceful political activity. Ahead of the September Legislative Assembly election, 12 candidates were disqualified for "not upholding the Basic Law" and "not pledging allegiance to Macao" after being vetted by the authorities. This further narrowed political participation and mirrored Hong Kong's clampdown on dissent.

1. "Thailand: 'Deportation' of Uyghurs to China 'unimaginably cruel'", 27 February ↑
2. *China: How Could This Verdict Be "Legal"? The Role of China's Courts in Targeting Human Rights Defenders*, 1 October ↑
3. "China: Jailed human rights lawyer's failed appeal highlights fear of dissent", 6 January ↑
4. "China: Journalist Zhang Zhan sentenced to prison again on baseless charges", 22 September ↑
5. "China: Authorities must end interference in Tibetan religious practices as Dalai Lama announces succession plan", 2 July ↑
6. "Hong Kong: Government must investigate and allow freedom of expression following deadly fire", 1 December ↑
7. "Hong Kong: Rejection of same-sex partnerships bill shows disdain for LGBTI rights", 10 September ↑
8. *Hong Kong: "The State Can Lock Up People, But Not Their Thinking": How Hong Kong's National Security Law Undermined Human Rights in Five Years*, 30 June ↑
9. "Hong Kong: New charges against Joshua Wong designed to prolong his stay behind bars", 6 June ↑
10. "Hong Kong: Prisons rife with violence and inhumane treatment, inmate testimony reveals", 17 December ↑

COLOMBIA

Republic of Colombia

Armed violence persisted despite ongoing peace negotiations. Violations of international humanitarian law against civilians continued. Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant and peasant communities were disproportionately impacted by violence and armed conflict. The work of defending human rights continued to be mired in risk. Despite having been decriminalized for some years, barriers to abortion persisted. The situation for Venezuelan nationals remained alarming, particularly in relation to access to asylum and refuge or other migration regularization alternatives.

BACKGROUND

Negotiations continued between the government and the various armed groups active in Colombia, but progress was scarce and impact limited. The government suspended negotiations with the National Liberation Army (ELN) in January and did not resume those with the Central General Staff or the Second Marquetalia. Talks with the

General Staff of Blocks and Front (EMBF), the National Coordinator of the Bolivarian Army and the Southern Commoners continued. The government also continued its "socio-legal dialogues" with groups operating in the cities of Quibdó, Medellín and Buenaventura, and started a dialogue with the Gaitanista Army of Colombia (EGC) in Qatar.

Despite progress in some of these processes and the introduction of a bill by the government in July, guarantees of truth, justice, reparation and non-repetition for victims remained unclear.

In June, the OHCHR, the UN human rights office, announced a scaling down of its presence in the country due to the drop in international aid to support its mission.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Armed violence continued despite peace negotiations and dialogue. Clashes between armed groups, and between these and the military and security forces, often resulted in violations of international humanitarian law. In May, the ICRC warned that if the trend of increasing violence and adverse impacts on communities continued, humanitarian indicators for the year 2025 would be the worst in a decade.

Particularly worrying events were recorded in Guaviare, Putumayo, Nariño, Cauca, Valle del Cauca, Chocó, Bolívar and La Guajira departments, as well as in Catatumbo, Magdalena Medio, North-east Antioquia and South Bolivar regions. Disputes over territorial, social, and economic control intensified, as did the fragmentation of armed groups. The Ideas for Peace Foundation identified 14 disputed zones among these groups – double the number at the start of President Gustavo Petro's term – and recorded an escalation in clashes between armed groups and the military and security forces.

According to OCHA, in 2025 there were 2,794 violent events in the country – of which 1,390 were attacks against the civilian population (including homicides, threats and social repression) – affecting more than 1.6 million people.

The Consultancy for Human Rights and Displacement (CODHES) documented 139 cases of multiple and mass forced displacement during the year, affecting at least 90,282 people, as well as 80 confinements and restrictions on human mobility, affecting at least 235,345 people. Escalation of violence in the Catatumbo region due to clashes between the ELN and the EMBF resulted in the forced displacement of more than 82,000 people between January and September.

Between January and November, the Coalition against the Involvement of Children and Young People in the Armed Conflict in Colombia recorded 196 events relating to armed conflict, which directly affected at least 364,382 children and adolescents, of whom 172 were victims of recruitment.

According to OCHA, during 2025, at least 7,728 people were affected by or were victims of different explosive devices. Several armed groups also increased the use of drones to carry out attacks with explosives.

The Institute for Development and Peace Studies recorded the killing of 39 ex-combatants who had signed the 2016 Peace Agreement. In September, the Constitutional Court ruled that the security situation of the signatories of that agreement remained critical.

DISCRIMINATION

Multiple and massive displacement predominantly affected the peasant and rural populations, who represented about 90% of the victims according to CODHES, with Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendent communities representing the other 10%. Confinement and restrictions on human mobility particularly affected Indigenous Peoples and Afro-descendant communities, who represented 40% of the victims.

In June, the Centre for Research and Popular Education reported that the EGC was still exercising territorial control in the Atrato river basin in the department of Chocó. It alleged that the accumulation of power had weakened the organizational structures of the

Afro-descendant communities and Indigenous Peoples who were the original inhabitants of the region.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The We Are Defenders Programme documented 509 attacks against human rights defenders between January and September, with an average of 1.67 attacks per day between July and September. Although this figure represented a reduction of 25% compared with the same period in 2024, 2025 was expected to exceed the two preceding years in the total number of attacks.

In February, a group of human rights defenders who had fled Venezuela to settle in Colombia reported hostile conditions for continuing their work in the country. In October, human rights defenders Luis Peche and Yendri Velásquez – the latter also an asylum seeker and member of Amnesty International – suffered a serious attack in the capital, Bogotá.[1]

Stigmatization of human rights defenders increased. In March, President Petro claimed that civil society organizations in the Catatumbo region were "subordinated" to armed groups operating in the area.[2] His government refused requests to retract such statements. Months later, several organizations reported the persistence of a stigmatization campaign against them on social media. In September, the 33rd Front of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia directly and publicly stigmatized the Catatumbo Social Integration Committee (CISCA) by claiming that it was involved in the actions of other armed groups.[3] Persistent and escalating attacks against CISCA and other social and human rights organizations generated concern with regard to their safety and the barriers they faced in carrying out their activities.

The National Committee on Safeguards, a space for dialogue between the state and civil society for defenders, met three times during the year. Since January, human rights platforms and civil society organizations involved in the roundtable warned of a lack of progress in agreeing security and participation measures for the defence of human rights and poor coordination of the institutional response. At year's end, publication and implementation of the Comprehensive Public Policy on Guarantees for the Defence of Human Rights was still pending.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Between January and May, the ICRC documented 136 new enforced disappearances in connection with armed conflict, including 26 children and adolescents.

In June, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) recognized Yanette Bautista as both a victim and, in an unprecedented decision, a woman working in the search for victims of enforced disappearance. Yanette Bautista died in September, leaving a legacy that was instrumental in defending the rights of victims of enforced disappearance and the women who search for them.

Discussions continued on regulations for Law 2364 of 2024, which recognized and comprehensively protected the work and rights of women searching for victims of enforced disappearance, but they had still not been approved at the end of the year.[4] Regarding implementation of the National Search System, talks continued for the adoption of a comprehensive public policy on the search for persons declared disappeared.

Between January and September, the Search Unit for Disappeared Persons found 111 people alive, recovered 1,161 bodies, delivered 762 bodies to the National Institute of Legal Medicine and Forensic Sciences, and conducted 166 acts of dignified delivery of remains and "meetings for truth" with relatives.

In January, the search for the remains of victims of enforced disappearance began in the city of Buenaventura's San Antonio estuary, on the Pacific coast. Human remains were also found in a sector of Medellín known as La Escombrera and on an army base in Bogotá where the intelligence and counter-intelligence Charry Solano Battalion or XX Brigade had operated.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In January, after over 20 years of litigation and negotiation, the government reached a settlement with the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, which included institutional commitments regarding recognition and reparation of victims of serious human rights violations. The Justice Evaluation Commission – chaired by the Ombudsperson's Office – was formally constituted in April and President Petro issued a public apology in June for the human rights violations suffered for many years by members of the Community.

In September, the JEP issued its first two rulings. In the first, it sentenced seven former commanders of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP) to eight years of restorative sanctions (*sanciones propias*) for their responsibility in war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the implementation of a policy of abductions between 1993 and 2012. In the second, it convicted five officers, four non-commissioned officers and three lower-ranking soldiers of the Colombian Army to between five and eight years of restorative sanctions for war crimes and crimes against humanity relating to 135 murders and enforced disappearances masked as combat casualties in the departments of Cesar and La Guajira between 2002 and 2005. In both cases, those convicted had already admitted responsibility for the crimes.

Before and after the rulings were issued, various actors, including the JEP itself, warned of shortcomings in funding and the construction of the infrastructure required for correct delivery of the restorative component of the sanctions. The scope of the retributive component of such sanctions was also criticized for lack of clarity in their application and incompatibility with the other activities of those convicted.

The JEP brought new indictments against former members of FARC-EP for their participation in crimes relating to the abductions policy in different regions of the country, recruitment and use of children and adolescents in the armed conflict, and attacks on the civilian population in Cauca and Valle del Cauca departments. It also filed charges against former members of the military and security forces for extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances in the department of Antioquia. Criminal proceedings against 16 members of the military and security forces were dropped because they were not considered ultimately responsible for the extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances under investigation in Meta and Santander departments.

Disputes between military criminal justice and the ordinary criminal justice system continued in investigations relating to possible human rights violations or crimes under international law.[5]

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Impunity for human rights violations committed during protests continued, although there was some progress. In June, an officer from the former police Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (ESMAD) was convicted at first instance for the murder of Juan Carlos León Acosta during the 2013 agrarian strikes. The Supreme Court had still to reach a decision regarding another of ESMAD members, on conviction for the murder of Nicolás Neira during protests in Bogotá on 1 May 2005, with Nicolás Neira's family continuing to denounce the impunity in the case 20 years after his death.

Resolution 1840 providing a manual for the National Police on the use of less lethal weapons, ammunition and devices was published in June. The civil society initiative Coalition for Police Reform highlighted the significant progress the manual represented in terms of protocol and technical and operational clarity in the use of such weapons by the police, but nevertheless warned of the risks and limitations of the regulations, in particular regarding criteria for the acquisition and use of less lethal weapons and the lack of both adequate independent oversight mechanisms and an ethno-racial perspective.

Comprehensive police reform with a human rights perspective remained pending.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In October, the Communications Regulatory Commission wrote to several media outlets requesting information and internal documents on editorial processes, warning of possible administrative sanctions in case of non-compliance. The Foundation for Press Freedom (FLIP) expressed concern at such requests and their implications for press freedom.

FLIP recorded 468 attacks on the press during the year, including 191 threats against journalists, 61 cases of stigmatization, 26 instances of judicial harassment and one murder. An attempted murder, 15 forced displacements and seven cases of exile were also documented.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In January, the president enacted legislation establishing the possibility of divorce based on the sole will of either of the spouses.

The Colombian Observatory of Feminicides registered 609 feminicides between January and September, compared with 662 during the same period in 2024. Despite this minor decrease, the number of feminicides highlighted the persistence of violence against women and the need to implement more and better measures for its eradication.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The NGO Caribe Afirmativo documented 85 serious acts of violence against LGBTI people in the country, mainly targeting gay men (39 cases) and transgender women (32 cases), as well as a sustained increase in threats and intimidation by armed groups against this population.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The update to the national policy on sexual and reproductive rights was still pending. The Roundtable for Women's Life and Health reported that barriers to accessing voluntary termination of pregnancy services persisted. The 2025 National Demographic and Health Survey identified some of the barriers hindering access to abortion, including health teams changing women's decisions (34.3%), a lack of comprehensive and timely information (21.1%) and delays by health facilities in scheduling procedures (16.2%).

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The Ombudsperson's Office, together with those of Panama and Costa Rica, reported a decrease of 97% in northward irregular migration flows between January and August, with a significant increase in southward migration over the same period. Despite such changes in human mobility dynamics, these bodies highlighted persistent violence along migration routes and borders and significant control exerted by human trafficking networks operating in the three countries.

In April, the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants noted that some 75,000 asylum applications had been registered in early 2025, of which 29,305 were still pending. The average processing time for asylum claims, based on the information available, was three to four years, leading him to conclude that Colombia lacked an efficient asylum system.

In August, the official website of the Migration Colombia government agency reported a total of 2,831,561 Venezuelan nationals in the country, 484,658 of whom had irregular migratory status. These figures showed an increase in the number of people entering the country on an "entry and stay permit". This revealed that Venezuelan migration to Colombia had continued under temporary immigration regularization schemes that were inaccessible to many and lacked protection mechanisms in line with the circumstances of those fleeing Venezuela.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

In January, the Inspector General's Office requested that the Constitutional Court declare an unconstitutional state of affairs in relation to the deterioration of the social security health system. In addition, in March, the Ombudsperson's Office requested that the rights of health service users be guaranteed. Discussions continued throughout the year on the need to increase and streamline public investment in health.

Labour and pensions legislative changes were enacted in June and July, affecting a number of economic and social rights. The outcome of a review of the constitutionality of the changes to pensions was pending at the end of the year.

1. "Colombia: Attack on Venezuelan human rights defender condemned", 14 October ↑
2. "Colombia: Stop stigmatizing civil society in Catatumbo", 13 March ↑
3. "Colombia: Further Information: Protect CISCA from attacks", 7 October ↑
4. "Colombia: One year on, women searchers for victims of enforced disappearance are still waiting for the country to deliver for them", 19 June ↑
5. *Colombia: Insist, Persist, Resist and Never Give Up? Impact of the Use of Military Criminal Justice on Impunity for Human Rights Violations in Colombia*, 14 November ↑

CONGO

Republic of the Congo

Human rights were restricted ahead of the 2026 presidential elections, including bans on public demonstrations. Opposition leaders remained arbitrarily detained. Civil society organizations condemned inhumane detention conditions. Women and girls continued to be affected by gender-based violence, with impunity for perpetrators. The right to a healthy environment was threatened by business activities. Food insecurity remained an acute issue.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions rose in the lead-up to the March 2026 presidential elections. Inflation worsened due to import-driven price increases. In June, unusually heavy rainfall caused at least seven deaths in the capital, Brazzaville, highlighting the city's vulnerability to such events. Scientific research predicted an increased likelihood of both higher-than-average rainfall and extreme daily rainfall events due to climate change.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

On 11 May, the leader of political opposition party *Les Socialistes Congolais* (the Congolese Socialists) and candidate in the 2026 presidential elections, Lassy Mbouity, was abducted in Brazzaville by armed, masked men. He was found in a critical condition on 20 May. In June, the International Federation for Human Rights and the Congolese Observatory for Human Rights condemned repeated bans on public demonstrations organized by civil society organizations (CSOs) and opposition parties, and their lack of representation on state media. At the end of the year, the authorities had still not responded to CSO demands for a law to protect human rights defenders.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Arbitrary detention remained a concern, notably with the continued imprisonment of former presidential candidates Jean-Marie Michel Mokoko and André Okombi Salissa. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded in 2018 that their detention was arbitrary and called on the authorities to ensure their immediate release and provide reparations, yet these recommendations remained unimplemented.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

On 23 May, detainees escaped from the government's CNSS Texaco la Tsiémé site (an administrative building converted into a makeshift holding centre in Brazzaville, established as part of an anti-crime operation to combat youth banditry). The prosecutor stated that just over 50 detainees escaped, forcing their way out during heavy rain. Six people were reportedly killed by police forces and eight hospitalized. CSOs, including the Congolese NGO Centre for Development Action (CAD) and a coalition of Congolese CSOs, condemned the excessive and disproportionate use of lethal force, and described CNSS Texaco la Tsiémé as an unlawful and inhumane detention facility. They called for an independent investigation and the closure of the facility but the authorities did not respond to this request.

In May, Ngayo Abed Négo died in custody under suspicious circumstances in the Ngo district of Plateaux department. The authorities initially described his death as suicide by hanging in police custody. They deployed police reinforcements to restore order after protesters set fire to the Ngo police station. No public announcement was made regarding an independent investigation; instead, Ngayo Abed Négo's body was swiftly released to the family without an autopsy.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

The CEDAW Committee expressed serious concerns during its periodic review about the large number of women and girls affected by gender-based violence, including women and girls with disabilities and Indigenous women. The committee also highlighted the culture of silence surrounding the violence, the barriers that prevent victims from reporting, such as discriminatory beliefs and cultural norms, and the tendency to resolve cases within families or communities through informal settlements rather than through formal legal proceedings.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In 2024, the minister of environment, sustainable development and the Congo Basin closed the Metssa Congo battery-recycling plant in the Vindoulou district of Pointe-Noire, after the residents complained about contamination risks, including lead exposure. During a meeting with residents on 11 January, the minister promised further medical examinations and compensation. However, by the end of the year, the authorities had taken no further steps to provide the necessary medical care or remedy.

According to the Rainforest Foundation UK, Earth Insight and CAD, the government approved the escalation of oil exploration activities within Conkouati-Douli National Park. The Niambi concession was approved on 18 April, following the licensing of the Conkouati block on 8 February 2024. The two concessions overlap with more than half of the park's land and nearly 90% of its wetlands. The NGOs warned that these permits endangered critical habitats, violated national conservation laws and international commitments, and threatened the livelihoods of approximately 7,000 park residents. They called for an immediate ban on extractive activities in the park and the cancellation of the permits.

RIGHT TO FOOD

The World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that approximately one in three people in the country experienced food insecurity, with 29.3% facing moderate food insecurity and 4% facing severe food insecurity. Among children under five, 5.2% experienced acute malnutrition, while 19.6% suffered from chronic malnutrition. This highlighted ongoing deficiencies in diet quality and access to essential services.

Food assistance in the country faced serious funding shortfalls, with the WFP reporting in March gaps of up to 47% of its needs. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, reported in July that its operations were only 14% funded, leaving an 86% gap in support for refugees and host communities.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

Authorities restricted civic space during the presidential election period. Assemblies and protests were banned, protesters received harsh prison sentences, and opposition supporters and a cyber activist were arrested in violation of international fair trial standards. Eleven people were arbitrarily detained for participating in strike action. Hundreds of women demonstrated against gender-based violence. Around 550 cases of cholera and 21 associated deaths were reported. Authorities failed to adequately compensate victims of forced evictions.

BACKGROUND

Political tensions mounted in the months leading up to the presidential elections on 25 October. This was particularly so after the Constitutional Council in September invalidated the candidacies of Laurent Gbagbo, former president and current leader of the opposition African People's Party-Côte d'Ivoire (PPA-CI); and Tidjane Thiam, leader of the opposition Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire-African Democratic Rally (PDCI-RDA). Alassane Dramane Ouattara was elected for a fourth term as president.

While inflation decreased to around 3%, the high cost of fuel, food and housing continued to put a strain on households.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

According to Reporters Without Borders (RSF), journalist and Beninese refugee Comlan Hugues Sossoukpè, was arrested in July in Abidjan and handed over to the Beninese authorities to answer charges of inciting rebellion, hatred and violence, harassment via electronic communication and glorifying terrorism. RSF said they received multiple reports of Ivorian government and political opposition members intimidating and threatening journalists.

In August the Abidjan prefect banned and then authorized a joint PPA-CI/PDCI-RDA march. In September authorities banned a sit-in by the National Union of State Suppliers.

On 2 October the National Security Council announced that "all necessary measures" would be taken to maintain order and security during the election period. Following the announcement, PPA-CI and PDCI-RDA demonstrations planned for 4 and 11 October were banned on public order grounds.[1] Despite the bans, the protests went ahead. On 13 November the National Security Council said that since 11 October, 11 people, including a gendarme, had died in the context of the protests and 1,658 people were arrested. More than 80 of those arrested were sentenced to three years' imprisonment, most of them for "disturbing public order".

On 17 October, a ministerial decree suspended for two months all public events or meetings organized by political parties, except those held by the five officially selected presidential candidates.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

At the beginning of April, authorities clamped down on education-sector protests. Ten teachers were detained during a 48-hour strike. Ghislain Duggary Assy, communications secretary of a teachers' union, was arrested at his home and questioned about the strike without his lawyer. On 8 April he was sentenced to two years' imprisonment on charges including obstructing public services.[2] He was provisionally released on 7 May. The Abidjan Court of Appeal upheld his conviction and sentence on 16 July, without issuing a committal order.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

Between June and September, authorities carried out a wave of arrests targeting opposition supporters. Their fair trial rights, including prompt access to legal counsel, were reportedly violated. According to party representatives, between 8 and 9 July, three PDCI-RDA youth leaders were taken into custody in Abidjan. In August, six PPA-CI members were arrested following unrest in Yopougon.

On 1 September, cyber activist Ibrahim Zigui was arrested. His family had no knowledge of his whereabouts until his lawyer obtained access to him at Abidjan's MACA prison on 6 September.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In March hundreds of women marched in Abidjan to denounce the rise in gender-based violence, including femicide. They called for stronger law enforcement against perpetrators, among other things. US government funding cuts undermined the provision of services to protect women and sexual minorities from such violence, exacerbating the situation.

In June, the Ministry of Women said that 9,607 gender-based violence incidents were

recorded in 2024, with 32,428 survivors receiving government assistance. However, access to justice remained limited for several reasons, including the requirement by some police officers for survivors to pay for medical certificates before filing complaints, which was not a legal requirement.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

A cholera outbreak was declared in June following reports of seven deaths and 45 related cases in Vridi-Akobrakré. By the end of September, authorities and UNICEF said that the outbreak had spread to Yopougon-Est, Jacqueville, Fresco and Sassandra with the death toll reaching 21 and the number of cases rising to about 550 (with a case-fatality rate of 3.8%). The National Institute of Public Hygiene intensified monitoring, treatment and risk-communication measures, and the WHO provided cholera kits to reinforce community oral-rehydration points and case management.

FORCED EVICTIONS

More than a year after authorities suspended forced eviction operations affecting tens of thousands of residents in districts of Abidjan, many of those affected were yet to receive adequate compensation. Among them were 133 farmers, their families and employees whose livelihoods were destroyed in the Gesco Rivière site.[3]

1. "Côte d'Ivoire: The authorities must stop stifling peaceful protests ahead of presidential election", 16 October ↑
2. "Côte d'Ivoire: A unionist sentenced to two years imprisonment must be released and the right to strike guaranteed for everyone in the country", 10 April ↑
3. "Côte d'Ivoire: One year on: Evicted Gesco Rivière farmers must be compensated for devastating loss of livelihoods", 21 February ↑

CROATIA

Republic of Croatia

Strategic lawsuits against public participation and political pressure

threatened freedom of expression. Access to abortion remained limited. Victims of domestic violence lacked adequate access to support services. The poverty rate increased due to the rising cost of living. Refugees and migrants intercepted at the border faced violence. Roma, Serbs and LGBTI people continued to experience discrimination. Croatia continued to rely on fossil fuels.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) continued to threaten freedom of expression. According to the Croatian Journalists' Association, there were at least 700 lawsuits pending against journalists by the middle of the year. Croatia failed to make notable progress in transposing the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive into domestic legislation.

Defamation remained a criminal offence and was used to bring both criminal charges and civil claims against journalists, significantly restricting freedom of expression. Civil defamation claims, including by politicians, businesses and even judges, represented the vast majority of all lawsuits against journalists.

Journalists reporting on corruption, the environment and governmental affairs faced physical attacks as well as harassment and online threats, including by senior government officials. According to the NGO Media Freedom Rapid Response, the combination of a hostile environment, inadequate protection, precarious working conditions and significant financial and political pressure on the media had significantly undermined press freedom and the right to information.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Access to abortion care remained extremely constrained due to the failure by the authorities to guarantee access to services in the context of widespread refusal of doctors and clinics to perform abortions on the grounds of conscience. Additionally, the high cost of the procedure, which is not covered by national insurance, and the inaccessibility of abortion care in rural and economically

deprived areas presented significant further barriers for women living in poverty, minorities and women with disabilities. Lack of access to abortion services forced women to travel abroad to obtain safe and timely abortion care.[1] The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) urged Croatia to facilitate and guarantee equal and effective access to abortion services for all.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In December, the government adopted the Action Plan on Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence 2025-2027, which included new measures to accelerate court proceedings. Women's organizations warned, however, that the plan did not include concrete measures to address some of the key challenges, including the lack of shelters and other support services.

Women and girls who experienced violence continued to face obstacles to accessing support. According to women's rights organizations, barriers included institutions' failure to recognize economic, psychological and emotional violence, the persistent practice of dual arrests (where victims are arrested alongside their abusers), retraumatizing procedures in social services and courts, and the lack of victim-sensitive support services.

Local organizations reported a rise in online violence against women and girls and noted the lack of institutional protection of women in digital spaces. Croatia did not align its legislation with the 2024 EU Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The Ombudsperson's Office warned about growing poverty rates caused by rising inflation and an increase in the cost of living. Single-parent families, Roma, older people and people living in rural areas were at particular risk. In its second periodic review, the CESCR urged authorities to redouble efforts to address poverty, including by providing direct cash transfers to affected families and individuals.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The number of people travelling through Croatia dropped considerably. Local organizations reported that refugees and migrants intercepted at the border frequently faced violence.

DISCRIMINATION

Roma people continued to experience significant social exclusion and obstacles when attempting to access education, employment, housing and healthcare. Around 70% of Roma families lived in extreme poverty and 46% lived in isolated settlements without essential services.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) noted widespread hate speech against Roma, Serbs and LGBTI people in political speech, public places and online. The commission urged the authorities to distance themselves from and challenge the expression of racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech.

Hate speech and negative discourse targeted the Serbian national minority, encouraging discrimination and negatively impacting on the realization of their rights. In a series of incidents in November, groups of masked people displaying fascist symbols targeted Serb cultural events and individuals. The ombudsperson called the incidents "extremely dangerous".

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Despite positive legal changes over the past years, LGBTI people continued to face prejudice and discrimination. The government failed to take action to ensure LGBTI equality. The procedure for legal gender recognition remained lengthy and complicated and required an obligatory medical opinion, including from a psychiatrist and psychologist.

The ECRI urged the authorities to adopt legislation explicitly prohibiting ongoing conversion practices aimed at changing the sexual orientation of LGBTI people.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The CESCR noted that Croatia's continued reliance on fossil fuels and inadequate measures for renewable energy fell short of its obligations under the Paris Agreement and urged authorities to enhance investment in renewable energy.

1. Europe: *When Rights Aren't Real for All: The Struggle for Abortion Access in Europe*, 6 November ↑

CUBA

Republic of Cuba

Electricity blackouts affected the right to health and education. Access to food and medicines supplied by the state deteriorated significantly. Systematic repression of dissent and peaceful assembly continued. Arbitrary detentions persisted. Denial of human rights, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment were commonplace in prisons. Women activists and human rights defenders suffered gender-differentiated forms of repression.

BACKGROUND

The economic crisis continued to worsen amid implementation of new economic measures and incomplete reforms in the private sector.

In May, the National Office of Statistics and Information acknowledged the existence of a serious demographic crisis and the impact of outward migration on population decline.

In July, the Code for Children, Adolescents and Youth was approved. However, it contained no differentiated procedural guarantees for children, presented barriers to access to justice for both children in conflict with criminal law and those who are victims of crimes, and favoured existing state centralism, thus enabling the Code to be used as an instrument of control.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Electricity supply was in a constant state of crisis during the year, with frequent massive blackouts that significantly affected access to food, education and health services.

In April, the government announced further cuts and other changes to the already dwindling "basic food basket".

In May, the Food Monitor Program stated that 96.91% of the population had lost access to food due to inflation, with more than 60% spending between five and 15 hours a week obtaining food.

Authorities acknowledged in July that only 30% of essential medicines were available, and the population had to resort to the non-state-regulated market to acquire these and other medical supplies.

In September, the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights published a report in which it estimated that 89% of the population was living in extreme poverty, with access to food and blackouts the main concerns.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

In January, after meetings with the Vatican, Cuban authorities announced the release of 553 prisoners, but the process was marked by lack of transparency, dehumanizing treatment and the absence of guarantees of reparation and non-repetition. Human rights organizations documented the release of 211 political prisoners and denounced the imposition of human rights restrictions on those released. In April, prisoners of conscience José Daniel Ferrer García, Félix Navarro and Donaida Pérez Paseiro – all of whom were released in January – had their parole revoked in retaliation for continuing their political activism and defence of human rights. In the preceding months, they had received threats and summonses and had been subjected to interrogations.

The systematic policy of repression against activists and members of the political opposition continued. Human rights defenders saw their rights restricted, and their work continued to be stigmatized and criminalized. Activists, members of the opposition, artists, intellectuals, university students and human rights defenders faced

threats, harassment, digital abuse and unlawful interrogation and surveillance. The Cuban Observatory of Human Rights documented at least 3,179 repressive actions.

Arbitrary detention, often followed by short-term enforced disappearance, was a repressive pattern used systematically against human rights defenders, activists, artists and journalists. In 2025, the Cuban Observatory of Human Rights registered 529 arbitrary detentions. Berta Soler, leader of the Ladies in White, was arbitrarily detained multiple times over the course of the year. In March, activist Leonardo Romero Negrín was arrested for peacefully protesting by holding a blank sign; he was beaten, accused of resisting arrest and placed under house arrest. The writer Jorge Fernández was arrested and beaten on multiple occasions for demonstrating peacefully; in August he was accused of resistance and placed under house arrest.

In June, a group of university students protested against the increase in internet fees and to demand greater inclusion in decision-making. The protest, ultimately silenced by the government with various repressive measures, included calls for a strike and the suspension of activities in several universities throughout the country.

Freedom of peaceful assembly continued to be repressed through the deployment of police forces and a pattern of targeted arrests in the days following peaceful protests.

In September, 15 people were sentenced to up to nine years in prison for participating in the March 2024 protests in the city of Bayamo. The authorities continued to use the crimes of public disorder, contempt and assault to criminalize peaceful social protest.

Freedom of expression remained severely restricted. In November, the authorities undertook a campaign to delegitimize, criminalize and harass the independent media outlet El Toque and 18 of its contributors. This included systematic attacks on journalists and their families, public defamation, threats of imprisonment and extradition for serious crimes such as financial terrorism, and the disclosure of personal data.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

Human rights organizations and political prisoners reported incidents of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in prisons.

In 2025, the organization Cubalex documented 39 deaths of prisoners in prisons in the country.

Prisoners of conscience Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara, Maykel Castillo, Loreto Hernández, Roberto Pérez Fonseca and Sayli Navarro reported recurring practices of deprivation, including denial of phone calls, family visits and prison benefits, as well as access to food, medicine and adequate medical care. In addition, they were subjected to beatings and threats against their lives, as well as further judicial proceedings.

In October, José Daniel Ferrer was released from prison and forced into exile after denouncing months of torture and threats against him and his family. This was part of a systematic pattern of silence and cruelty that used prisoners' families as a means of control and pressure.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Femicide was still not considered a distinct crime and the state provided no official statistics on femicides or violence against women. In 2025, the Alas Tensas Gender Observatory documented 48 cases of feminicide.

Women activists, human rights defenders and journalists suffered gender-differentiated forms of repression, such as threats against their children, surveillance at schools or stigmatization based on age, appearance or sexual orientation.[1]

1. *Cuba: They Want To Silence Us but We Will Continue To Resist: Authoritarian Practices and State Violence Against Women in Cuba*, 26 November ↑

CYPRUS

Republic of Cyprus

There were serious concerns around the investigation of a racialized man's fatal shooting by police. A contentious bill regulating protests was adopted. A voluntary return scheme for Syrians raised concerns for children's rights. Reports of unlawful summary returns at sea continued. Cyprus failed to effectively investigate two cases concerning allegations of rape.

RIGHT TO LIFE

In January, Cypriot police fatally shot Shoaib Khan, a 24-year-old migrant from Pakistan, in the island's UN buffer zone. In May, civil society expressed serious concerns regarding the authorities' handling of the case, including an initial assessment of natural death and failure to conduct an independent investigation into police responsibility. An official inquest into the incident started in October.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Following a peaceful protest in January over Shoaib Khan's fatal shooting, six protesters faced charges, including of "insult" for anti-police slogans heard during the protest.

In September, the OSCE highlighted the incompatibility with international human rights law of several provisions of legislation introduced in July to regulate protests.

In January, NGOs called for criminal charges to be dropped against Doros Polykarpou, former executive director of anti-racist NGO Kisa, as they appeared to be unfounded and linked to his human rights work.

In October, the Supreme Constitutional Court annulled a 2020 decision to remove Kisa from the Registry of Associations. At the end of the year, the Court's decision had not yet been implemented.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

A voluntary return scheme for Syrians, launched in June, offered families financial incentives to return to Syria voluntarily, while allowing one family member to stay in Cyprus on a temporary work visa. NGO Cyprus Refugee Council expressed concerns that the scheme did not consider the best interest of the child because it failed to consult children adequately, and that it encouraged families experiencing hardship in Cyprus to be returned to inadequate conditions in Syria.

Reports of unlawful summary returns at sea continued. These involved cases of Syrians being forcibly returned to Syria, where they would be at risk of serious human rights violations.

In July, a group of people stranded in the UN buffer zone for months in 2024 presented a case against Cyprus to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) alleging pushbacks and other violations.

IMPUNITY

In February, the Supreme Court confirmed an inquest's finding that army conscript Athanasios Nicolaou had been murdered in 2005.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

In February and July, the ECtHR issued rulings where it found that Cyprus failed to effectively investigate two cases concerning rape allegations. In its July ruling, the ECtHR also found that the applicant was exposed to secondary victimization that constituted gender-based discrimination.

CZECH REPUBLIC

Czech Republic

Ukrainian refugees faced xenophobic attitudes and economic challenges. A consent-based legal definition of rape was introduced in January. Forcibly sterilized Roma women gained a new chance for compensation. A legal form of partnership was introduced for same-sex couples but

lacked full marriage and parental rights. Roma children remained segregated in schools. The government failed to adopt a framework climate law. NGOs faced repeated political targeting and threats. Irresponsible arms transfers continued.

BACKGROUND

Following elections in October, the new administration announced a shift in government policy, including looser environmental protections and stricter regulation of the non-profit sector.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Xenophobic incidents targeting Ukrainian refugees continued. According to a Ministry of the Interior report, certain political figures and others deliberately promoted disinformation and hostility towards Ukrainians. In a widely reported incident in February, a tram driver in Prague verbally assaulted a Ukrainian couple and their two-year-old grandson. Legal proceedings against the driver were initiated at a Prague district court.

According to data from UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, 397,240 Ukrainian refugees were recorded in the country in October. Despite high employment rates, half of all Ukrainian households remained below the income-poverty line.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Under a law effective from January, rape was defined as any sexual intercourse committed against a person's will, without the requirement for physical resistance. In response to perceived lenient sentences in sexual violence cases, hundreds of people protested in Prague in April. The protesters called for systemic legislative reform, including the adoption of the Council of Europe's Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention).

A new law came into effect in July strengthening protections for victims of domestic violence. It introduced a unified legal definition of domestic violence covering physical, psychological, sexual, and economic violence, and controlling behaviour.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The deadline for women who had been forcibly sterilized between 1966 and 2012 to apply for compensation was extended until the end of 2026. Many of the affected women were Roma. By April, more than 2,300 requests had been submitted, with 591 pending approval.

Amnesty International and the NGO Konsent advocated for enshrining abortion rights in the Constitution, citing current laws as insufficient.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

As of January, the Civil Code was amended to introduce a new legal institution of partnership for same-sex couples, aligning it more closely with marriage. Many considered the reform insufficient in terms of legal and parental rights.

From July, surgery or hormone treatment were no longer required for legal gender recognition. The amendment was through a Ministry of Health guideline; a legal framework had not yet been adopted.

DISCRIMINATION

In October, journalists alleged that Filip Turek, a newly elected member of parliament, had posted racist, xenophobic and pro-Nazi remarks on social media. The police launched an investigation.

Segregation of Roma children in Czech schools persisted. A study identified more than 130 primary schools as segregated. In November, authorities introduced a new set of measures aimed at supporting the desegregation of Roma children and preventing their placement in special schools solely due to social disadvantage.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

On 1 July, the Office of the Children's Ombudsperson was officially established to oversee the rights of children and adolescents. Additionally, an amendment to the Civil Code banned the corporal

punishment of children, stating that it was not an acceptable form of discipline.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The Czech Republic failed to adopt a framework climate law, leaving emission reduction targets unenforceable. The government maintained a cautious policy and voted against the EU's proposed 2040 climate target in November.

Ecologists warned that the draft programme of the new coalition government threatened nature and quality of life by omitting key environmental protections and supporting fossil fuels. Elected officials within the coalition also called for the dissolution of the newly established Soutok Protected Landscape Area – a vast and biodiverse wetland area in the south of the country.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

There were efforts to control and restrict the non-profit sector. Several parties in the newly elected parliament repeatedly labelled NGOs as political and proposed funding cuts, stricter reporting requirements and a public grant registry.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

The Czech Republic continued to transfer large quantities of military equipment to Israel despite the substantial risk that it could be used to commit genocide, crimes against humanity and other war crimes in Gaza. The transfers also contravened the country's obligations under international law, including the Arms Trade Treaty.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Armed groups, some of which were backed by government forces, increasingly committed serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, which may have amounted to war crimes. The March 23 Movement (M23) summarily killed civilians, and subjected detainees to torture and other ill-treatment and inhumane conditions. Its fighters attacked hospitals in Goma and abducted patients, caregivers and, in some cases, Congolese soldiers hiding in the hospitals. Incidents of conflict-related sexual violence continued at an alarming rate. Fighters of the M23 and Wazalendo armed groups gang-raped women in North-Kivu and South-Kivu provinces. Armed groups and authorities restricted civic space. M23 fighters detained, tortured and threatened journalists, human rights defenders and civil society members because of their work. Hundreds of people perceived to be opponents of M23 were forcibly disappeared. Tens of thousands of internally displaced people were forced from camps near Goma. A regional commission ordered the government to prosecute members of government forces for acts of sexual violence against women in South-Kivu during 2011.

BACKGROUND

The conflict in the east intensified when the March 23 Movement (M23), a Rwandan-backed armed group, captured in January and February the cities of Goma and Bukavu in North-Kivu and South-Kivu provinces, respectively. M23 clashed with the Congolese army and Wazalendo ("patriots" in Swahili), a coalition of armed groups, some of them backed by the Congolese army.

The conflict led to various diplomatic efforts to stop the fighting. In June officials from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Rwanda signed a peace agreement that called for the "neutralization" of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) (an armed group primarily active in North-Kivu) and Rwanda's "lifting of defensive measures" in the DRC. The agreement was formalized on 4 December when the DRC and Rwandan presidents signed the Washington Accords that

reinforced previous commitments to end the fighting (see Rwanda entry). However, the fighting continued.

Separately, mediation facilitated by Qatar led to a "declaration of principles" signed in July by DRC and M23 representatives. A framework for a peace agreement was signed in November by the two parties, containing eight protocols, most of which still required negotiation.

Other armed groups operating in the DRC included the Cooperative for the Development for Congo/Union of Revolutionaries for the Defence of Congolese People (CODECO/URDPC), which carried out attacks in January and February that killed more than 150 people; and the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a Ugandan armed group, which killed hundreds of civilians. The Congolese and Ugandan armies conducted military operations against both groups.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Armed groups carried out serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, which may have amounted to war crimes.[1]

M23 and other armed groups intensified attacks against civilians perceived to be associated with their opponents. The UN documented at least 70 incidents of targeted killings by M23 in Goma, which resulted in more than 200 fatalities between 28 January and 9 April.

Between late February and mid-May, M23 fighters carried out six raids on hospitals in Goma. Fighters abducted and detained patients, caregivers, and Congolese soldiers or members of the army who were either patients or were hiding in the hospital. On three occasions, M23 fired their weapons near or inside hospitals, including in mid-March when they fired live rounds inside CBCA Ndosho hospital, damaging the emergency room. In early April, M23 fighters shot live rounds in Kyeshero hospital, killing one person and injuring at least two others.

On 22 February, during a gunfight in Goma's Kasika neighbourhood, Yannick Zirhumanana was shot in the ribs. It was unclear if he was deliberately targeted. After he was shot, M23 fighters searched his house and accused him of being a government soldier, which he denied. An M23 fighter accompanied him to a health centre and shot him in the forehead at point-blank range, killing him.

Between February and May, M23 killed at least three men in Goma and a father and son in South-Kivu. Some were shot while others had their throats cut.

On 10 April, a man believed to be linked to M23 shot Gilson Kasareka Makembe, a shopkeeper, in the face in Goma's Nyabushongo neighbourhood. Although two M23 fighters were outside his shop at the time, they did not pursue the fleeing assailant nor investigate the incident. It remained unclear why Gilson Makembe was killed.

On 12 May, truck driver Alain Byamungu was killed in Goma by M23 fighters following an argument with a motorcyclist with whom he had avoided a collision. Following the incident a group of M23 fighters in a vehicle and on a motorcycle pursued Alain Byamungu, shooting at his truck and into the cab, killing him and injuring his crew members. M23 fighters accused him and his crew of being FDLR members.

In June in Nyabiondo, a town in Masisi territory, North-Kivu, an M23 fighter shot a man at point-blank range, killing him. The man's arms were bound behind his back when he was shot. M23 fighters had accused him of stealing.

According to OHCHR, the UN human rights office, between 9 and 21 July, M23 fighters backed by members of the Rwanda Defence Force killed at least 319 civilians, including women and children, in Rutshuru territory.

Between July and August, the ADF killed more than 250 civilians in multiple attacks in Ituri province and Lubero, a territory in North-Kivu. The attacks were apparently in retaliation for the Congolese and Ugandan government forces' military operations to eradicate the ADF.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Incidents of sexual violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, were

staggeringly high in eastern DRC where between January and September, according to the UN, more than 81,000 rapes took place, an increase of 31.5% compared with the same period in 2024. Members of armed groups and government security forces were the main perpetrators.

Between January and April, staff at Ministry of Health facilities in Goma, supported by the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières, treated more than 7,400 survivors of sexual violence. In Sake, a city west of Goma, 2,400 survivors were treated during the same period.

In February the UN established the OHCHR Fact-Finding Mission on the situation in the South and North Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (OFFMK). OFFMK documented cases of gang rape and other conflict-related sexual violence by M23 fighters. Wazalendo fighters also gang-raped women in Masisi and in Kabare territory in South-Kivu. One survivor said that a Wazalendo fighter told her: "Any women who come to the field, we will always rape them."

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

M23 maintained at least seven detention sites in Goma and Bukavu where detainees were subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. M23 fighters beat detainees with flexible wooden rods, boards, electric cables, engine belts, gun butts or sticks on their backs, legs, buttocks and genitals. At its Chien Méchant (vicious dog) detention facility in Goma, M23 fighters took detainees from their cells to flog them in the courtyard with rubber electric cables or wooden rods. In April, an M23 fighter beat a detainee so badly at Chien Méchant that he could neither stand nor sit and could only lie on the ground.

In late February and early March, M23 used the Unity Stadium in Goma as a site to torture abducted hospital patients and caregivers, as well as some Congolese military personnel hiding in hospitals (see above, Unlawful attacks and killings). In March, a video showed uniformed men beating a man with wooden rods at the stadium.

Several videos published on social media during the year showed M23 fighters in various locations beating or whipping people.

The UN identified at least 13 detention sites controlled by Wazalendo leaders where detainees were frequently subjected to torture and other ill-treatment.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

Detainees at M23 detention facilities (see above) experienced inhumane and degrading detention conditions. M23 fighters forced detainees to sleep while sitting or standing on a concrete floor. Cells were dark, hot and poorly ventilated. Detainees received only one meal a day, usually consisting of a plate of boiled corn to be shared. There was often no running water and detainees spent weeks without bathing. Some detainees drank each other's urine or rainwater. At the Mount Goma detention site, there were three toilets for hundreds of detainees who were allowed to use the bathroom once a day; some resorted to defecating into bags or boxes.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Numerous human rights defenders based in North-Kivu and South-Kivu fled M23-controlled areas; many sought refuge in neighbouring countries. M23 repeatedly detained, interrogated, intimidated, ill-treated and, in some cases, tortured civil society members, human rights defenders and journalists. In February an M23 representative stated publicly that the group did not want civil society groups to be active in areas under its control, and that all problems should be brought to them, not to civil society organizations. In March, an M23 fighter detained a civil society activist in Goma and threatened to kill him for denouncing M23 abuses. The group held him at the 34th Military Region Compound where they whipped him and beat his ears until his nose bled. He was later released.

In the same month, M23 fighters detained another civil society member outside Goma. They demanded that he explain why he had defamed their movement, and also to tell them how they killed civilians, and how many people they had raped. They made him lie on

his stomach while a man sat on his shoulders and another on his legs. Meanwhile, an M23 fighter whipped his buttocks and thighs. He was released later that evening.

According to the UN, Rwandan authorities arrested a civil society member from North-Kivu on 1 February at the border crossing between Goma and the Rwandan town of Gisenyi. He was released after four days.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Throughout the year, M23 conducted cordon-and-search operations, primarily in Goma and Bukavu. They unlawfully detained large numbers of people who were taken to sports stadiums and subjected to lectures by M23 or pressured to join the movement. Many were later taken to undisclosed locations. M23 fighters frequently claimed the search operations were aimed at stopping criminality. They told some detainees that they would be taken to Rumangabo and Runyoni village, sites in Rutshuru used by M23 for military and other training. During these operations, M23 fighters used arbitrary criteria to determine who was a civilian and who was a DRC government soldier or an armed opposition member. They made judgements based, for example, on appearance.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

In May, M23 abducted hundreds of people, including women and children, during raids in several neighbourhoods in and around Goma. Many of the men and women detained in these raids as well as in similar raids were forcibly disappeared. Family members looking for missing relatives said they approached M23 fighters in Goma detention centres but were unable to locate their loved ones.

During the raids, M23 took hundreds of men, boys, women and girls to a football field in Goma. On one occasion, an M23-appointed mayor picked out Aloys Bigirumwami, a member of civil society movement Fight for Change (Lutte pour le Changement). After the mayor accused Aloys Bigirumwami of hiding weapons, he and five others were driven away. When his family asked M23 fighters at three detention facilities about his whereabouts, they were told he was not being held there. His whereabouts remained unknown at the end of the year.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In February, M23 closed several camps for internally displaced people near Goma, further displacing tens of thousands of people amid the deteriorating security situation.

DEATH PENALTY

In January, the then minister of justice announced that more than 170 inmates under sentence of death would be executed for armed robbery and were allegedly linked to criminal gangs commonly known as *kuluna*, or bandits. The executions had not apparently been carried out by the end of the year.

Former president Joseph Kabila was sentenced to death in his absence by a military court on 30 September, after he was found guilty of treason, murder, sexual assault, torture and insurrection in relation to his alleged support for M23, charges that he denied. Joseph Kabila was not represented by legal counsel during the proceedings and was ordered to pay USD 33 billion to the state and to victims' associations.

Military courts continued to be used to try civilians, in breach of international fair trial standards. Some civilians were sentenced to death.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In September, a high court in the capital, Kinshasa, convicted the former justice minister of embezzling USD 19.9 million in public funds to finance the construction of a prison. He was sentenced to three years' imprisonment with hard labour and barred from standing for election for five years after the expiry of his sentence.

In October, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights found the DRC accountable for widespread acts of sexual violence, including rape and torture,

committed by its military forces against more than 50 women in Fizi territory in South-Kivu in 2011. The Commission ordered the DRC to prosecute and sanction the perpetrators within six months, compensate survivors of rape and provide them with free medical and psychological care.

1. *Democratic Republic of the Congo: "They Said We Would Die" M23 and Wazalendo Abuses in Eastern Congo,* 20 August ↑

DENMARK

Kingdom of Denmark

Inuit women received an apology for having intrauterine devices implanted without their consent. An action plan on racism was launched following international criticism. A law on "terror approval" was used arbitrarily. A lawsuit brought by Amnesty International and others to stop the irresponsible transfer of arms to Israel was dismissed. Protesters were compensated for being detained for longer than the legally permitted period.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In August, the prime minister of Denmark together with the leader of Naalakkersuisut, the government of Greenland, issued a joint apology to thousands of Inuit women who had had intrauterine devices implanted without their consent between 1966 and the 1990s. Civil society organizations welcomed the move while demanding financial compensation for the Inuit women and other Inuit victims of discrimination.

In February, the government presented an action plan on racism following criticism from the CERD Committee and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. The plan included a focus on the Inuit people, the Indigenous population in Greenland.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Fourteen citizens, including a 16-year-old girl, were given prison sentences of up to nine months for "approving terror" for comments they made on social media following the 7 October 2023 attacks in southern Israel. Civil society organizations expressed concern about the arbitrary use of the law and the unclear definition of what constitutes the "approval of terror".

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In September, nine peaceful climate activists were each awarded compensation for being held in police custody for up to two hours for no legal reason after being charged for "disturbing the public order". This was just one of around 20 pending cases involving hundreds of peaceful protesters who were allegedly held by police beyond the legally permitted or justified period.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In April, the High Court ruled on a lawsuit filed by Amnesty International Denmark, ActionAid Denmark, Oxfam Denmark, and Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq against the Danish state (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Police) to stop arms exports to Israel through the country's participation in the F-35 fighter jet programme. The lawsuit claimed there was a clear risk that exports of parts and components for F-35 fighter jets would be used by Israel to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law against Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip.

The court found that the organizations did not have the right to pursue the case. In April, the case went to appeal before the Supreme Court, which would primarily focus on whether Amnesty International Denmark and the other organizations had legal standing in the matter. The organizations were concerned that, if the Supreme Court were to uphold the verdict, it would become impossible to legally challenge whether arms exports violated the provisions of the Arms Trade Treaty, to which Denmark is a state party.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Denmark's climate policies remained world-leading. However, increased investment would be needed to reach the goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050. Denmark's indirect emissions also remained high due to the level of imports and outsourced production.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Dominican Republic

Discrimination was structural and affected access to health and education. Human rights defenders faced physical and digital harassment and violence. Thousands of people continued to be arbitrarily deprived of their nationality. The migrant and refugee population lacked access to international protection and were subject to racist and discriminatory migration policies. Abortion continued to be banned.

DISCRIMINATION

Black people, Haitians and Dominican nationals of Haitian descent suffered structural and widespread racial discrimination.

Discriminatory policies affected access to education, health and international protection.

Public officials and government institutions used discriminatory and stigmatizing rhetoric.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The government still did not commit to establishing a protection framework for human rights defenders and failed to ensure timely, independent and impartial investigations into attacks against them.

Individuals and groups defending human rights – particularly in relation to racial justice, gender and migration – faced harassment, threats and restrictions on their right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. They also reported acts of digital harassment and disclosure of their personal data.

On International Women's Day, the authorities broke up an activity carried out by cultural collectives because participants sang in Haitian Creole.

In April, during the Great Unity March, antiracist activists and members of collectives defending the rights of Dominicans of Haitian descent were attacked and beaten by civilian groups describing the activity as a "Haitian march".

Defenders of women's rights and sexual and reproductive rights were subjected to physical and digital violence by nationalist and conservative groups acting with impunity.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF NATIONALITY

Dominicans of Haitian descent, who had been arbitrarily deprived of their nationality 12 years earlier by a Constitutional Court ruling, continued to face institutional barriers and bureaucratic hurdles to accessing Dominican identity documents. This breached the Dominican Republic's international obligations.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

According to the International Organization for Migration, at least 265,215 Haitians – including 65,702 women, 13,204 boys and 11,305 girls – were expelled from the Dominican Republic during the year, in many cases collectively. The *Groupe d'Appui aux Rapatriés et Réfugiés* (GARR) of Haiti reported that the Dominican government had deported at least 1,057 pregnant and 3,000 breastfeeding women to Haiti in 2025.

Migration policy lacked a human rights perspective, focusing on discriminatory and repressive measures against migration. Alarming patterns of racial profiling, arbitrary detention, excessive use of force and cruel and inhuman treatment continued to be reported during migration control operations and in immigration detention centres, as were collective expulsions, which are against international law. Haitians did not have access to asylum and refugee procedures to guarantee international protection, despite

the human rights crisis in their country of origin.

In April a healthcare protocol for migrants was introduced, establishing that those with irregular migratory status would be subject to deportation after receiving treatment. This protocol disproportionately affected access to health for Black people, Haitians and Dominican nationals of Haitian descent – in particular pregnant women – who were afraid to access public health services.[1]

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

A new Penal Code was approved in August establishing a total ban on abortion. It also maintained a statute of limitations for criminal proceedings relating to sexual violence against adult women; a regressive classification of the crime of intimate partner sexual violence that falls short of international standards; tolerance of physical punishment of children; and failure to punish discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

1. *Dominican Republic: Health Without Stigma: Myths and Realities About Healthcare for Haitian People in the Dominican Republic* (Spanish only) 17 November ↑

ECUADOR

Republic of Ecuador

There was little progress in investigations into enforced disappearances. Security forces cracked down on protests and a new law restricting freedom of association was passed. Detainees continued to face very precarious conditions. In the Amazon region, gas flaring and exploitation of natural resources continued without the consent of Indigenous Peoples. Human rights defenders continued to be at risk. The independence of the judiciary was threatened.

BACKGROUND

Daniel Noboa was re-elected president in April, and the militarization of public security continued. As of 19 December, a total of 8,847 homicides were recorded, the highest annual rate in the country's recent history.

In June, the National Assembly passed a series of security-centred laws proposed by the government that posed a threat to human rights. In September, the Constitutional Court declared the new Public Integrity and National Solidarity laws null and void and provisionally suspended some sections of the Intelligence Law.

In November, Ecuadorians voted against the call for a constituent assembly.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The Public Prosecutor's Office opened investigations into the possible enforced disappearance of 43 individuals following security operations carried out by the armed forces in 2024. However, progress in the criminal investigations was slow, with no cooperation from the armed forces.[1] In December, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted urgent protection measures to 26 of those people and six *mujeres buscadoras* (women searchers).

Also in December, 16 members of the armed forces were convicted for the enforced disappearance of four Afro-descendant children in 2024 after their detention in the city of Guayaquil. The sentence also confirmed that they had been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during their detention.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In August, the National Assembly passed a law that put freedom of association at risk, with the corresponding regulations being published in October.

The authorities carried out mass arrests and used unlawful force against protests led by Indigenous, social and trade union organizations, and opened abusive criminal proceedings against and froze the bank accounts of social leaders and protesters.[2]

Civil society organizations reported at least two people killed, 473 injured and 206 arrests during the protests that took place in September and October.

Journalist Patricio Aguilar was murdered on 4 March while reporting from the canton of Quinindé, Esmeraldas province. At the end of the year, the investigation into his murder remained open.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

Detainees continued to suffer from overcrowding and lack of adequate food and healthcare, as well as torture and other ill-treatment. According to the National Service for Comprehensive Care for Adults Deprived of Liberty and Adolescent Offenders, between January and September, 760 prisoners had died in the country's prisons, 105 of them violently.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The government continued to allow gas flaring in the Amazon region, despite a 2021 court ruling ordering the removal of flares. In January, the Constitutional Court rejected an appeal filed by the same group of girls who had brought the original lawsuit, which sought to ensure full compliance with the initial ruling.[3]

By year's end, the government had not yet ordered the closure of the hundreds of oil wells in Yasuní National Park in the Amazon rainforest, ignoring the result of the 2023 referendum held on the issue.

The exploitation of natural resources continued to violate individual and collective rights, in particular the right to free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights condemned Ecuador for violating the right to collective property of Indigenous Peoples in the Amazon region by authorizing mining projects in their territory.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders, especially land, territory and environmental defenders, reported harassment, stigmatization, persecution and criminalization, including an attempt on the life of a community leader.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Access to abortion, which was legally allowed in three cases, continued to be limited by institutional barriers, lack of official data, medical precariousness and stigma. The UN Human Rights Committee condemned Ecuador for violating the rights of a 13-year-old girl survivor of sexual violence who had been forced to carry her pregnancy to term.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child urged Ecuador to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children and to address the issue of child deaths, especially in security operations carried out by the military.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

The UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers and the IACHR expressed concern regarding the discrediting of the judiciary by the executive branch through harassment and public stigmatization, threats and a march led by President Noboa against the Constitutional Court, among other actions.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The government publicly apologized to the more than 300 victims of practices akin to slavery by a foreign company, pursuant to a 2024 ruling. The victims were still awaiting comprehensive reparation. Ecuador had still not signed or ratified the Ljubljana-Hague Convention on Mutual Legal Assistance.

IMPUNITY

Impunity persisted for human rights violations committed by security forces during the 2019 and 2022 protests.

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1. *"It Was the Military. I Saw Them": Enforced Disappearances in Ecuador at the Hands of the Armed Forces*, 23 September ↑
2. "Ecuador: Alert over repression of protests, judicial independence and enforced disappearances", 8 October ↑
3. "Ecuador: Justice has failed the Warriors for the Amazon, but their fight continues", 26 March ↑

EGYPT

Arab Republic of Egypt

Authorities referred thousands of people to trial on terrorism-related offences, many of whom were targeted solely for the peaceful exercise of their human rights. NGOs faced undue restrictions on access to funding, undermining their operations. Security forces detained dozens of social media influencers over vague morality charges. People died in custody following reports of torture or medical negligence. Police arrested workers demanding the enforcement of the minimum wage. Death sentences were imposed, including for crimes other than intentional killing, following grossly unfair trials. Executions were carried out. Impunity prevailed for grave human rights violations committed in 2025 and previous years. Women and girls, religious minorities and LGBTI individuals faced discrimination and prosecution for exercising their human rights. Amid the ongoing economic crisis, authorities failed to protect economic and social rights or to adequately adjust social security measures. The government introduced new legislation that risked jeopardizing the right to adequate housing for millions. Unlawful deportations of refugees from Sudan and elsewhere continued.

BACKGROUND

Voter turnout in the Senate and House of Representatives elections was 17% and 32.4% respectively. Pro-government parties and candidates won a majority in the parliamentary elections, amid reports of vote-buying, ballot tampering, procedural flaws, and multiple run-offs following cancellations of results by officials.

Egypt's human rights record was reviewed under the UPR process in January. Egypt accepted a small number of meaningful recommendations but merely noted many others, including those concerning the excessive use of pretrial detention, undue restrictions on civil society and discrimination against religious minorities. In September, President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi ordered, for the first time, the development of a national human rights strategy.

In June the European Council and European Parliament approved the remaining EUR 4 billion of the EUR 5 billion macro financial assistance that the EU pledged to Egypt in 2024.

The economy continued to face significant challenges. Domestic and external debt accounted for nearly two-thirds of total planned expenditure in the 2025-2026 state budget. In December, Egypt's annual inflation rate dropped to 10.3%, down from 23.4% a year earlier, while food and beverages prices rose by about 0.9%. For the fifth consecutive year, the government did not publish poverty figures.

The Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt remained mostly closed.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The government failed to uphold independent civil society organizations' right to freedom of association. Authorities imposed an unlawful authorization system for associations to register; forced the dismissal of staff and board members of associations without legal basis; and subjected associations to intrusive and excessively burdensome reporting requirements, effectively placing them under constant surveillance. National Security Agency (NSA) agents intimidated staff and board members, fostering a climate of fear and repression.[1] Associations continued to face severe restrictions on accessing funding or using financial services.

In May, the Association for Freedom of Thought and Expression, a human rights group, was granted access to banking services after an 11-month process. However, in November, authorities refused two of its project grants without explanation.

On 30 November, the Centre of Egyptian Women's Legal Assistance, an independent women's rights group, stated that authorities had refused three of its project grants without

explanation and had failed to respond to a fourth grant request.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities continued to criminalize dissenting forms of expression and peaceful assembly, targeting journalists, protesters, opposition politicians and others who criticized the government's human rights record or called for political change.

On 2 January, political opponent Hisham Kassem learned through news websites that he had a hearing scheduled for 9 February in a new criminal case on charges of "defamation" and "intentional disturbance" of a former minister. The charges related to the same social media post for which he was unjustly convicted, sentenced, and imprisoned in 2024. In May a court sentenced him in his absence to six months' imprisonment and a fine, with the option of bail to suspend the sentence pending appeal.

On 15 January the Supreme State Security Prosecution (SSSP) summoned Hossam Bahgat, executive director of the Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR), for questioning. Prosecutors opened an investigation into him on charges of terrorism and spreading false news in connection with an EIPR statement about deteriorating conditions of detention at the 10th of Ramadan prison. He was released on bail.

Also on 15 January, security forces arrested journalist Ahmed Serag. SSSP prosecutors accused him of terrorism-related offences and ordered his detention. On 5 June he was released pending investigations.

On 16 January, plain-clothes police officers arrested journalist Nada Mogheeth. SSSP prosecutors investigated her on terrorism-related charges in relation to a December 2024 interview about her detained husband, journalist Ashraf Omar. She was later released on bail.

Between 10 and 12 June, security forces arrested two men and one woman in their homes in Cairo and al-Sharkia governorates for supporting the Gaza March, a global peaceful initiative to break the blockade on Gaza. The SSSP opened investigations against them for terrorism-related offences and ordered their pretrial detention. They remained arbitrarily detained at the end of the year. Authorities also arbitrarily arrested scores of foreign nationals who came to participate in the march before deporting them (see below).

Authorities launched a crackdown against social media content creators. In August and September, security forces arrested dozens of social media influencers for their TikTok content, using charges of "indecency" and "violating family principles and values". Courts sentenced at least one man and two women to prison terms ranging between one and three years, in addition to fines.

On 17 September, police arrested journalist and researcher Ismail al-Iskandrani at a checkpoint in Marsa Matruh governorate. Later that day the SSSP accused him of terrorism-related offences in connection to Facebook posts and ordered his detention. He remained in pretrial detention at the end of the year.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Between September 2024 and May 2025, authorities referred around 6,000 people – including journalists, lawyers and human rights defenders – to trials before special terrorism circuits of criminal courts in connection with terrorism-related charges, many of which were solely based on the exercise of human rights. Such courts routinely failed to uphold fair trial guarantees or order investigations into detainees' claims of abuse.

On 19 February a military court sentenced five fishermen to one year in prison and a fine of EGP 50,000 (around USD 985). Military prosecutors charged them for fishing during "prohibited periods" and entering a military area without permission, in connection with fishing in a lake in North Sinai managed by a development agency operating under the Ministry of Defence.

On 22 September, authorities released Egyptian-British activist Alaa Abdel Fattah following a presidential pardon, ending six years of unjust imprisonment.

On 16 October, parliament approved amendments to the Code of Criminal Procedure bill. The amendments introduced additional alternatives to pretrial detention, including curfew, electronic monitoring and house arrest. Despite minor improvements from earlier proposals, the bill remained inconsistent with international human rights law, particularly regarding the right to legal representation during questioning. In November the president ratified the bill.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Security forces, including the NSA, continued to subject individuals held for political reasons to enforced disappearance or incommunicado detention. Torture and other ill-treatment remained routine in prisons, police stations and NSA-run facilities.

Between late December 2024 and February 2025, security forces arbitrarily arrested at least 55 men and four women for sharing social media content criticizing the government. SSSP prosecutors accused at least seven of the men of terrorism-related offences and ordered their pretrial detention. At least four remained in pretrial detention at the end of the year. NSA agents held five of the men in incommunicado detention for periods of between four and six weeks before bringing them before the SSSP. Two other men arrested in connection with the same case were subjected to enforced disappearance for 28 days and 41 days respectively at undisclosed NSA facilities. Four of the detained men told SSSP prosecutors that NSA agents subjected them to verbal insults and beatings, while two others described being subjected to electric shocks. On 9 February, plain-clothes security officers arrested Egyptian-Libyan activist and TV anchor Nasser al-Hawari outside his family home in Alexandria. He was forcibly disappeared for 16 days before his release without charge on 26 February.

Three Egyptian supporters of the Gaza March arrested between 10 and 12 June (see above, Freedom of expression and assembly), were held by security forces in incommunicado detention at undisclosed NSA facilities for periods of between nine and 10 days before being presented to the SSSP. During questioning, one man said that NSA agents had subjected him to beatings and electric shocks on his hands and body. Another man said that NSA agents beat him and forced him to strip naked.

Between 10 and 12 June, security forces held scores of foreign national supporters of the Gaza March in incommunicado detention for more than a day before deporting them. During the deportation of Stefanie Crisostomo, a Croatian-Peruvian activist, police handcuffed her, and caused bruising to her arms. Police beat a man with batons during arrest, striking his face and neck. The man said that a police officer also attempted to put their finger into his anus during the arrest. Two Norwegian men said they were struck in the face and chest by NSA agents.

DEATH PENALTY

Criminal courts, including those handling terrorism-related cases, imposed death sentences following unfair trials. Offences punishable by death included drug trafficking and rape, crimes that did not amount to "intentional killing" to which the use of the death penalty must be restricted under international law and standards. Executions were carried out.

IMPUNITY

Impunity prevailed for unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and other grave human rights violations committed in 2025 and in previous years, including the unlawful killings of at least 900 supporters of ousted president Mohamed Morsi on 14 August 2013.

In June, EIPR filed a complaint with the public prosecutor requesting an investigation into the deaths of seven men held at al-Omraniya Police Station in Giza governorate between March 2024 and May 2025. The prosecution dismissed the complaint without providing reasons.

In August, independent media website Mada Masr reported that three men died while in police custody in Alexandria and Qalyobiya governorates following reports of

torture or denial of healthcare. In the same month, the Ministry of the Interior denied that a fourth man died in custody after being tortured at a police station in Giza. No information was made public regarding any investigations into the deaths in custody.

Prosecutors, particularly from the SSSP, dismissed or ignored most torture complaints against police officers.

On 11 January, security forces arrested Mohamed Allam at a relative's house in Giza governorate. In the weeks prior to his arrest, Mohamed Allam had posted several videos on TikTok criticizing President al-Sisi. Before presenting him to the prosecution, NSA agents forcibly disappeared him for more than one week at an NSA facility in Giza. Mohamed Allam told prosecutors that NSA agents subjected him to electric shocks and beatings and kept him blindfolded for the duration of his enforced disappearance. In January, in a rare case, an SSSP prosecutor referred Mohamed Allam for forensic examination after raising allegations of torture. By the end of the year, prosecutors had not allowed his lawyer to review the forensic report.

DISCRIMINATION

Women and girls

Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice, including in matters of marriage, divorce, child custody and political office. Long-promised amendments to the Personal Status Law stalled amid concerns over lack of meaningful consultation with independent women's rights groups.

At least two women and one girl were arbitrarily arrested and prosecuted on vague morality charges in relation to publishing content on TikTok.

LGBTI people

The authorities continued to harass and prosecute individuals for their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Economic and social rights, including the rights to an adequate standard of living and to health, continued to be undermined including due to the ongoing economic crisis. The government failed to meet the constitutionally mandated allocation of at least 3% of GDP to health and 6% of GDP to education.

In the 2025-2026 budget, allocations for cash transfer programmes grew for people living in poverty, but remained inadequate to lift people above the poverty line, according to EIPR, or to reach all those in need. Since their launch in 2015, the Takaful and Karama cash transfer programmes had reached a total of 7.7 million beneficiaries, according to an official statement by the minister for social solidarity in July 2025. The most recent official figures, dating to 2020, placed the number of people living in poverty at around 30 million.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

On 25 January, security forces arrested nine workers at a clothing manufacturing company over their participation in a strike demanding the enforcement of the minimum wage and other rights. Prosecutors accused them of deliberate disruption of production, incitement to strike and incitement of unrest, and ordered their pretrial detention for four days. On 30 January, a court ordered their release, after which the company dismissed them.

In September, NSA officers summoned five workers from a factory in Qena governorate following their participation in a strike demanding higher annual bonuses and other benefits. The officers instructed the workers to end the strike, promising to relay their demands to the factory directors, and the workers complied. A day after the strike ended, the factory agreed to address some of their demands.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

In August, President al-Sisi promulgated a bill repealing the 1977 and 1981 rent laws, effectively ending decades-old rental contracts, affecting around 1.6 million

households. The bill set a fixed transition period of five years for commercial units and seven years for residential units, after which old rental contracts will expire, with rents rising by a set percentage. It also gave affected tenants priority access to available state-owned residential or commercial units. A decree detailing the compensation scheme lacked details on pricing, raising uncertainty about the affordability of available residential units for low-income tenants and the accessibility of the programme. The government did not conduct meaningful consultations on the proposed compensation scheme.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

State officials continued to discriminate against Christians and deny them their right to remedy after incidents of sectarian violence, insisting on resolving cases through customary reconciliation. This, however, regularly denied Christians compensation for material losses and sometimes even resulted in their banishment from their communities.

Between March and May, at least 15 members of the Ahmadi Religion of Peace and Light were arbitrarily detained solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of religion. The NSA subjected at least three of them to enforced disappearances for periods of between 29 and 34 days before bringing them before a prosecutor. NSA officers tortured two of the men by beating one with a stick and the other with a metal object, and by administering electric shocks to their genitals.[2]

In April, UN special procedures sent a joint allegation letter to the Egyptian government expressing concerns over discrimination against the Baha'i community, including the confiscation of Baha'i cemeteries; denial of identity documents recognizing the Baha'i faith as a religion and recognizing civil status and marriages; as well as harassment and surveillance of Baha'is.

The right to build or repair Coptic churches remained restricted under a 2016 law requiring approval from security agencies and other state bodies. In October, the government announced that 3,613 churches had been legalized out of 5,540 requests submitted since the law was enacted.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The authorities continued to unlawfully deport refugees from Sudan and other countries, including some registered with UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, according to independent NGOs EIPR and the Refugees Platform in Egypt.

The prime minister had yet to issue executive regulations for the asylum law, which were required to be issued within six months of the law's enactment in December 2024. Consequently, the law effectively remained unenforced, leaving the rights of refugees unregulated, particularly with respect to social and economic rights.

1. *Egypt: "Whatever Security Says Must Be Done": Independent NGOs' Freedom of Association Restricted in Egypt*, 24 November ↑
2. "Egypt: Halt arbitrary arrest, disappearance and threatened deportation of Ahmadi minority members", 8 April ↑

EL SALVADOR

Republic of El Salvador

The prolonged state of emergency entrenched the repressive regime. Mass and arbitrary detentions continued, with widespread allegations of torture, deaths in custody and enforced disappearances. The government continued to prioritize punitive security measures in a context of rising levels of extreme poverty. The approval of the Foreign Agents Law, which allowed further control and sanctions on civil society organizations, intensified the restrictions on civic space. Protest was repressed and human rights defenders and dissident voices were criminalized.

BACKGROUND

In January, the Legislative Assembly – controlled by the ruling party – ratified the amendment of Article 248 of the Constitution, drastically reducing space for debate and

civic engagement in decisions of public interest. In July, a reform was introduced to allow indefinite presidential re-election, modifying substantive elements of the country's political and electoral system and further weakening institutional checks and balances. These measures, adopted without civil society scrutiny, consolidated the executive's power and eroded the rule of law.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

The state of emergency was extended for the entire year and continued to provide grounds for thousands of arbitrary detentions. Local and international organizations reported that more than 90,000 individuals remained deprived of their liberty without sufficient evidence. Many of the detentions were the result of pressure on the police to meet daily arrest quotas and were based on false or uncorroborated evidence, anonymous complaints or discriminatory profiling.

In February, criminal and prison reforms were approved authorizing the transfer of adolescents convicted of organized crime offences to adult prison facilities and removing prison benefits. These changes established disproportionate and punitive prison treatment for children and adolescents, in contravention of international instruments.[1]

In August, upon expiry of Legislative Decree 803, which contained transitional provisions regarding deadlines and prosecution of those detained under the state of emergency, the Legislative Assembly amended eight articles of the Law against Organized Crime. These amendments extended pretrial detention to a maximum of two years, constituting a disproportionate restriction on the right to personal liberty, and allowed the Public Prosecutor's Office to group multiple defendants in a single case under the criterion of belonging to "gang cells", opening the door to mass trials without individual determination of criminal responsibility. The provisions affected basic procedural guarantees, including the right to a defence and the right to be tried within a reasonable time, in violation of El Salvador's international human rights obligations.

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) again called on El Salvador to end the suspension of rights and the restriction of guarantees under the state of emergency and to comply with its obligation to uphold judicial guarantees for all detainees.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

Extreme overcrowding in prisons continued and detainees lacked access to basic services. According to data from international bodies, the country had the highest incarceration rate in the world, with approximately 1,650 per 100,000 inhabitants deprived of their liberty. This was more than double the rate of the second country on the list.

The government maintained a policy of systematic incommunicado detention. Thousands of persons deprived of their liberty had no contact with family members or lawyers, and no official information on their whereabouts or health status was provided. This practice, widely condemned, left families in distress and enabled abuse and corruption in prisons.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Deaths in custody totalled approximately 470 since the beginning of the state of emergency, with causes linked to torture, unjustified denial of adequate and timely medical care, and unsanitary detention conditions. None of the deaths were investigated in a timely, comprehensive and independent manner. In the absence of effective national accountability mechanisms, several local organizations reported the situation to international human rights bodies, alleging a pattern of structural impunity.

The World Organisation against Torture ranked El Salvador as very high risk of torture and other ill-treatment, with documented systematic practices of beatings, sexual humiliation, sleep deprivation and collective punishment. The authorities failed to properly record cases and conduct independent

investigations, in breach of international standards such as the Manual on the Effective Investigation and Documentation of Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Istanbul Protocol).

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

In mid-March, the USA transferred 252 Venezuelan and 36 Salvadoran nationals, who it had expelled illegally, to El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Centre (CECOT). Upon their arrival in El Salvador, these individuals were detained, held incommunicado, and denied access to defence or contact with their family members, who lacked information about their whereabouts. The detainees were outside the protection of the law, in a situation that could constitute enforced disappearance under international standards. All Venezuelan nationals were reportedly returned to their country of origin in July, where several publicly reported having been victims of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in El Salvador.[2] In September, media outlets reported that at least three of the expelled Salvadorans remained missing, with the authorities providing no information about their fate or whereabouts. In addition, the IACHR granted precautionary measures in October to a Salvadoran man deported from the USA and allegedly detained in CECOT, in a situation also described as enforced disappearance. The IACHR urged El Salvador to employ all necessary efforts to immediately establish his fate and whereabouts.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In the first half of the year, 44 public schools were closed and there were 25,000 fewer enrolments in public education centres. According to organizations working in the education sector, school dropout rates had increased, particularly in rural areas, due to migration, the state of emergency and lack of infrastructure, in a context of scarce resources and loss of placements. Furthermore, the Multipurpose Household Survey reported an increase in extreme poverty for the third consecutive year, reaching 9.6%.

Mega-projects and urban planning resulted in forced evictions that directly affected low-income communities. Local organizations reported in June that nearly 11,000 peasant families were affected by evictions linked to tourism, urban and mining projects, resulting in loss of lands, food insecurity and internal displacement.

Between January and April, local media reported the eviction of more than 1,400 informal vendors and the removal of more than 1,000 vendor stalls in the historic centre of the capital, San Salvador, measures that significantly affected the subsistence of thousands of families in urban areas.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

The government intensified measures to restrict civic space and the work of civil society organizations, journalists and organized communities. It responded to expressions of social discontent with arbitrary detentions, criminalization of social protest, unlawful use of military force and laws to unduly restrict the work of those supporting victims of abuse.

In May, the authorities arbitrarily detained 16 transport operators, accusing them of a number of crimes, including breach of duty and refusal of aid, without legal basis, according to some media outlets. One of the drivers died in state custody a few days later. That same month, a peaceful protest by more than 300 families from the El Bosque community in the face of an impending eviction was suppressed, with improper deployment of the Military Police and the arbitrary detention of human rights defenders and community leaders.[3]

The Legislative Assembly passed the Foreign Agents Law, which required organizations receiving international funding to register as "foreign agents", imposed a 30% tax on such funds, and granted the executive powers to cancel the status of legal entities and apply fines. The broad and vague definition of "foreign agent" enabled the law to be applied arbitrarily and created an environment of uncertainty and self-

censorship. Human rights organizations alleged that the law was not intended to guarantee transparency but rather to institutionalize the persecution of independent civil society.[4]

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Selective criminalization of defenders and dissenting voices intensified through misuse of the criminal justice system.

In February, Fidel Zavala, spokesperson for the Human and Community Rights Defence Unit, was arrested and in April transferred to Mariona prison, in what civil society organizations described as an act of retaliation and a risk to his personal integrity.[5]

In May, lawyer Ruth López, head of the Anti-Corruption and Justice Unit of the NGO Cristosal, environmental defender Alejandro Henríquez, and community and religious leader José Ángel Pérez were arrested, arbitrarily charged and subjected to incommunicado detention and inhumane prison conditions.

In June, constitutional lawyer Enrique Anaya was detained in circumstances described as an enforced disappearance. During the first 48 hours, he was taken to different detention centres with no official record of his transfers and held in incommunicado detention without access to a lawyer. In September, the IACHR granted precautionary measures in his favour.

These cases reflected a systematic pattern of persecution marked by official stigmatization, undue secrecy in legal proceedings, removal of limits on pretrial detention and lack of judicial guarantees. In July, Amnesty International declared Ruth López, Alejandro Henríquez and José Ángel Pérez prisoners of conscience, concluding that they had been arrested and deprived of their liberty solely for defending human rights.[6] The latter two were released on 17 December.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The absolute ban on abortion remained in place, criminalizing women suffering from obstetric emergencies and violating their sexual and reproductive rights. By the end of 2025, at least six women were facing criminal prosecution for this reason.

1. "El Salvador: Criminal law reforms exacerbate human rights violations against children and adolescents", 27 February ↑
2. "Americas: Enforced disappearances in limbo: The human cost of repressive cooperation between the US and El Salvador", 14 April ↑
3. "El Salvador: Government deepens authoritarian pattern in the face of social discontent", 20 May ↑
4. "El Salvador deepens siege on civil society", 26 May ↑
5. "El Salvador: Fidel Zavala, human rights defender, at risk of torture and other ill-treatment", 8 April ↑
6. "El Salvador: Amnesty International declares Ruth Eleonora López, Alejandro Henríquez and José Ángel Pérez prisoners of conscience amid increasing repression", 1 July ↑

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

Republic of Equatorial Guinea

Over a year after his transfer to Oveng Azem prison in Mongomo, the fate of human rights defender Joaquín Elo Ayeto remained unknown. The Spanish Supreme Court refused to transfer jurisdiction of a case concerning alleged abduction of opposition activists to Equatorial Guinea. Dozens of people arbitrarily arrested, including protesters from Annobón island, were granted a presidential pardon. Migrants were expelled in violation of regional conventions.

BACKGROUND

The country continued to experience economic difficulties primarily due to its dependence on oil export earnings – accounting for 46% of GDP and 80% of revenues – which continued to decline. According to a report by the World Bank published in July, an estimated 57% of the population were living below the poverty line in 2024, due in part to inflationary pressures including a 4.1% increase in food prices.

The 2024 Corruption Perceptions Index published by Transparency International in February 2025 ranked Equatorial Guinea

173rd out of 180 countries. Several court proceedings concerning allegations of corruption, which implicated members of the government, including sons of President Teodoro Obiang, were ongoing throughout 2025. In February, military and governmental sources confirmed some 200 Russian instructors had been deployed to take charge of the protection of the president – in power since 1979 – and members of his family.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

On 6 January, five months after being suspended from his practice, human rights lawyer Ángel Obama Obiang Eseng received notice that the national Bar Association had lifted his suspension. On 21 July, a two-year suspension imposed in July 2024 on human rights lawyer Gemma Jones was revoked, allowing her to resume her work.

The fate of detained human rights defender Joaquín Elo Ayeto remained unknown at the end of the year. He had been arrested on 1 August 2024, accused of illegal activities as a member of the civil society platform, Somos+, which the authorities claimed was not legally registered. Neither his family nor his lawyer had heard news of him since his transfer from Black Beach prison in Malabo to Oveng Azem prison, Mongomo, on 13 August 2024.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In September, the Spanish Supreme Court rejected a petition from the Spanish National High Court, which had requested that the investigation of the alleged abduction case of opposition activist Julio Obama Mefuman and his colleagues be transferred to the Equatorial Guinean justice system. Julio Obama, a dual Spanish and Equatorial Guinean citizen residing in Spain, and three fellow activists from the opposition group "Movement for the Liberation of Equatorial Guinea Third Republic" (known as MLGE3R) were allegedly abducted in South Sudan in 2019 and detained in Equatorial Guinea. Julio Obama died in custody in 2023 in the Oveng Azem prison, having accused Equatorial Guinean authorities of torturing him multiple times.

The Spanish Supreme Court cited "total lack of cooperation" by the Equatorial Guinean authorities, which had refused to repatriate Julio Obama's body to Spain despite requests to do so by the Spanish National High Court and the European Parliament. Carmelo Ovono Obiang, son of President Obiang, and two other high-ranking members of the Equatorial Guinean government remained under investigation.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

On 4 June, the president issued a decree granting presidential pardon to 476 prisoners. These included two South African citizens detained in February 2023 on drug trafficking charges, as well as 37 protesters from the Equatorial Guinean island of Annobón detained in July 2024. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention had determined in both cases that these prisoners were being arbitrarily detained.

The 2024 protests on Annobón – situated some 500km from the mainland – arose from damage residents believed had been caused to their houses, farmlands and island ecosystem by constant dynamite explosions linked to mining operations.

On 9 October, the European Parliament adopted an emergency resolution to condemn the arbitrary detention of two Spanish citizens, Javier Marañón Montero and David Rodríguez Ballesta, in Equatorial Guinea. The two men had been hired by a Spanish tech businessman to install a digital terrestrial television service in the country. They were detained in January, and transferred in April to Black Beach prison in Malabo, without access to their lawyers. Both were reported to be in deteriorating health, having undertaken several hunger strikes to protest against the harsh living conditions in the prison.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

On 21 April, several Cameroonian nationals were expelled from the country without prior notification to the Cameroonian embassy. Cameroonian authorities condemned the measure, citing violation of regional

conventions allowing freedom of movement for Central African citizens.

In May, vice-president Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue confirmed that the government had engaged in conversations with the US government concerning the possibility that Equatorial Guinea could become a recipient country for migrants expelled from the USA by President Donald Trump. The first group of deported immigrants arrived in Equatorial Guinea at the end of November.

ERITREA

State of Eritrea

The policy of indefinite and forced military conscription, sometimes amounting to slavery, persisted. Hundreds of Eritreans who had been forcibly returned after they sought refuge in other countries faced arbitrary detention on their return. The right to freedom of expression was repressed, and the fate of 27 people forcibly disappeared in 2001 remained undisclosed. The government continued in its failure to investigate crimes under international law. The mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea was renewed.

FORCED LABOUR

The use of mandatory indefinite national military service which sometimes amounted to slavery continued. It was applied to anyone aged between 18 and 40, and the practice was associated with multiple human rights violations. In his May report to the UN Human Rights Council, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea said that the government had taken no steps to reform the programme, including by failing to address inhuman or degrading conditions of service, rape, other sexual and gender-based violence, and torture. He reported that girl recruits in the notorious Sawa military training camp faced the risk of sexual abuse and harassment by camp officials; and that the policy required all students, including children, to complete their final secondary school year at the Sawa camp, which restricted their access to education.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Hundreds of Eritreans continued to flee the country, many of them as a result of the military conscription policy, among other abuses. Between December 2024 and 27 February 2025, according to reliable reports from Ethiopia, more than 600 Eritreans who had sought refuge in Ethiopia were forcibly returned to Eritrea, where the government regarded their asylum claims as evidence of treason. The UN Special Rapporteur said in his May report (see above, Forced labour) that he had received credible information that refugees and asylum seekers returning to Eritrea following deportation were interrogated, arbitrarily detained and subjected to enforced disappearance and indefinite conscription.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Eritrea continued to severely restrict media freedom. The 2001 ban on all independent media remained in place as did the practice of subjecting journalists, political figures, religious leaders and other real or perceived dissidents to enforced disappearance, and arbitrary arrest and detention, among other violations. However, the exact number of people subjected to these measures remained unclear.

The fate and whereabouts of 11 members of the G-15 who were forcibly disappeared in 2001 remained undisclosed. The G-15 was a group of 15 politicians who demanded that President Afwerki implement the draft constitution and hold open elections. Additionally, 16 journalists accused of links with the G-15 were also detained that year and had not been heard from since.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In July the UN Human Rights Council voted overwhelmingly to defeat the government's

resolution to end the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, renewing it for another year.

The government failed to take steps to address the recommendations by the UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) on human rights in Eritrea, 10 years after its latest report found that crimes under international law may have been committed in Eritrea since 1991. These included crimes against humanity of enslavement, imprisonment, enforced disappearance, torture, persecution, rape, murder and other inhumane acts. The COI had also concluded that in the absence of appropriate domestic legal and institutional reforms by Eritrea, which might provide justice and accountability for these crimes, further international action should be taken. They should include a UN Security Council referral to the ICC Prosecutor, and the exercise of universal jurisdiction by UN member states to investigate and, where sufficient evidence exists, prosecute those suspected of responsibility for crimes under international law. Despite this and the findings by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea, justice was yet to be realized and crimes under international law and other serious violations persisted.

Multiple international NGOs continued to call for a stronger mandate from the UN Human Rights Council to enable further investigations and documentation of violations.

ESWATINI

Kingdom of Eswatini

Civic space was severely restricted. Authorities used broad provisions under anti-terror legislation and prolonged detention to punish their critics. A bilateral agreement with the US government resulted in the arbitrary detention of third-country nationals, who faced possible refoulement. Police disrupted an opposition party meeting. There was no accountability for the extrajudicial killing of human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko nor for past protest-related abuses. Although gender-based violence was a major concern for many people, protection and support for survivors remained limited.

BACKGROUND

Eswatini remained an absolute monarchy under King Mswati III, with political parties, including the main opposition People's United Democratic Movement (PUDEMO) party, banned. Courts continued to hear terrorism-related cases arising from the 2021-2022 pro-democracy protests.

Eswatini became one of several African countries to enter a bilateral arrangement to accept non-nationals deported from the USA (see below, Refugees' and migrants' rights).

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

On 5 November, Mthandeni Dube was released from prison following a royal pardon. The conditions of his release prevented him from interacting with the press, using social media or attending social gatherings, among other things, until the expiry of his sentence. In July 2024, Mthandeni Dube had been sentenced along with Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza to 18 and 25 years, respectively, under provisions in the 2008 Suppression of Terrorism Act (STA). The former MPs were prisoners of conscience held for their peaceful participation in protests during 2021 that demanded reform. Mduduzi Bacede Mabuza remained in prison.

On 5 May the Supreme Court dismissed an appeal brought by Menzi Bongeka Bhembe and Bonginkosi Bongo Nkambule against a High Court decision to refuse them bail. They had been arrested in January 2024 and charged under the STA in connection with the September 2022 pro-democracy protests. Authorities alleged that they burned the national flag at the University of Eswatini and damaged a police vehicle near the administrative capital, Mbabane. They remained in pretrial detention.

Refugees and migrants

The US and Eswatini governments reached an agreement under which 15 third-country nationals residing in the USA were deported to Eswatini, placing them at risk of arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and refoulement. All were held without charge and denied confidential access to legal counsel.

On 16 July, Roberto Mosquera Del Peral, Kassim Saleh Wasil, Dung Tien Nguyen, Phone Chomsavanh and Orville Etoria were detained on arrival from the USA at Matsapha Correctional Complex. On 25 September, Orville Etoria was repatriated to Jamaica, his country of birth, while the others remained in detention. On 6 October, a second flight carrying 10 deportees arrived in Eswatini. The detentions drew international and regional criticism from the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Commission expressed concern at the lack of transparency surrounding the agreement and the lack of adequate protections for deportees in receiving countries.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 29 March, police halted and banned a PUDEMO party meeting in the city of Manzini. Party members had gathered to discuss the lack of reforms, continuing repression of government critics and the party's strategy for its upcoming campaign.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

No credible progress was made in the investigation into the January 2023 extrajudicial killing of human rights lawyer Thulani Maseko. Authorities did not publish findings, nor hold any suspected perpetrators to account. Meanwhile, reports of intimidation by authorities of independent lawyers and judges continued.

Impunity for abuses by security forces during the June 2021 protests persisted, and human rights groups renewed their calls for independent investigations and reparations for victims and their families.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According to Afrobarometer, 41% of people from Eswatini identified gender-based violence as the most important women's rights issue in the country. Afrobarometer also highlighted the persistent risk of sexual violence faced by girls and women. Meanwhile, the government failed to adequately protect women and girls from abuses or provide support for survivors.

ETHIOPIA

Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia

Authorities carried out mass forced evictions without adequate warning, displacing thousands of people in the name of urban development. Journalists were arbitrarily detained and harassed. Civic space continued to shrink as authorities increased surveillance and suppression of activists and human rights defenders, while introducing draft legislation that threatened freedom of association. The transitional justice process stalled, and no steps were taken towards justice and accountability for crimes under international law in the Tigray conflict. Women and girls continued to face gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Women human rights activists were abused for their advocacy work. Ethiopia arbitrarily detained and deported at least 600 Eritrean refugees to Eritrea.

FORCED EVICTIONS

Thousands of Ethiopians faced sudden forced evictions under the Corridor Development Project, described by the authorities as an urban development project to "[improve] infrastructure, housing, and public spaces". Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was credited with its creation and closely oversaw its implementation, while the Ministry of Urban and Infrastructure led the project.

The mass evictions occurred in 60 cities, including the capital, Addis Ababa (which

accounted for most of the documented cases), Arba Minch, Hawassa, Dessie, Jimma, Adama and Jigjiga. Victims reported a pattern whereby affected residents received only 72 hours' notice of eviction without any consultation. Authorities harassed residents who challenged their eviction, and subjected people covering the issue for various media outlets to intimidation, including arbitrary arrest and threats. Millions of others lived in fear that they too would be evicted.

The evictions constituted serious violations of multiple human rights, including to adequate housing, education and justice, as well as the right to participate in meaningful consultations and to legal remedies and compensation. In early October, city officials announced a temporary suspension of the project and committed to more effective consultation with affected communities in Addis Ababa.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Authorities subjected journalists and other media workers to arbitrary arrests and unlawful detention. A growing number of arrests saw journalists being taken into custody by masked men and held incommunicado for up to 12 days. Detention patterns shifted from arresting journalists for publishing reports that were critical of the authorities to detaining them for private discussions.

On 21 June journalists Andualem Sisay and Wudineh Zenebe were detained for discussing politics in a bar in Addis Ababa. The police searched their electronic devices and released them a few hours later.

Earlier in June prominent journalist Tesfalem Waldyes was arrested and held for five days despite multiple court orders for his release, before being released on bail.

On 13 August Yonas Amare, a journalist at The Reporter, one of Ethiopia's largest newspapers, was taken into custody from his home in Addis Ababa by multiple masked men in military uniforms. He was released after 10 days in incommunicado detention.

Abdulsemed Mohammed, the host of Kidame Gebeya, a popular show on Ahadu Radio, was arrested on 11 August in Addis Ababa. He was released by police after 12 days in incommunicado detention.

No one was held accountable for the arrests and detentions of media workers.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Federal authorities increasingly restricted civic space by deploying unlawful surveillance of human rights defenders and activists, along with other forms of harassment in relation to their work.

The Ministry of Justice proposed a draconian draft amendment to the Organizations of Civil Societies Proclamation (the CSO law). It aimed to amend 2019 legislation that had been introduced as part of the legal reforms initiated by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government after he took office in 2018. The amendment sought to undermine judicial independence and oversight of the executive agency responsible for enforcing the CSO law. Among other harsh measures, it sought to prohibit national civil society organizations from receiving funding from foreign individuals or organizations. If passed, it would effectively close civic space by concentrating unchecked power in the executive.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities arrested more than 140 medical workers for allegedly participating in nationwide strikes that began on 12 May, demanding better working conditions and fair pay. Some were held for up to 27 days. Authorities ignored their demands and failed to engage in meaningful negotiations about their concerns. By the time of the protests, medical doctors were earning a monthly salary of just ETB 8,978 (around USD 60).

IMPUNITY

The transitional justice process remained stalled almost three years after the government began discussions on establishing and implementing legal and institutional policies, which the government claimed would deliver justice and accountability for atrocities committed in Ethiopia.

There remained no justice and accountability for crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, committed during the armed conflict in Tigray region in 2020. Meanwhile, violations in the context of the ongoing armed conflicts in Amhara and Oromia regions continued.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women and girls continued to face conflict-related sexual violence amid the ongoing armed conflicts. No steps were taken to secure justice and reparation for survivors of such abuses in Tigray region. Outside the conflicts, women and girls experienced gender-based violence that worsened due to the collapse of the rule of law following prolonged conflict.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Ethiopia arbitrarily detained and unlawfully deported at least 600 Eritrean refugees to Eritrea where they were arrested and detained on arrival. The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea said in his May report that he had received credible information that returnees deported from Ethiopia were interrogated, arbitrarily detained and subjected to enforced disappearance and indefinite military conscription. Many Eritrean refugees fled to escape military service, sometimes amounting to slavery (see Eritrea entry).

Credible media reports from February onwards indicated that the Eritrean government intensified its military mobilization on the border with Ethiopia as tensions between the countries escalated. This put Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia at increased risk of human rights violations.

FIJI

Republic of Fiji

Repressive laws continued to restrict civic freedoms amid UN scrutiny of the country's human rights record. Attacks on Hindu places of worship threatened religious freedom. Violence against women increased. Fiji welcomed the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on climate change and signed the Pacific Resilience Facility treaty to increase climate resilience.

BACKGROUND

In August, a Supreme Court ruling affirmed the validity of the 2013 Constitution, including the immunities of those involved in the 2006 coup, among others, and lowered the requirements for future amendments to the Constitution.

Despite Israel's genocide in Gaza and other crimes under international law throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Fiji either abstained or voted against UN resolutions supporting Palestinian refugees, statehood, ceasefire, humanitarian access and an end to Israel's unlawful occupation of the OPT.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Following January's UPR of Fiji's human rights record, the government refused to accept recommendations to reform repressive laws restricting civic freedoms. The Fijians for Palestine Solidarity Network protested throughout the year against Israel's genocide in Gaza and the Fiji government's failure to uphold its obligations under law. This failure included restricting protest actions in Fiji.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

A man was arrested and referred for psychiatric care after vandalizing a Hindu shrine in July. The following month, the Shree Baba Ragho Dass Vishnu Temple in Sawani was stoned. These serious attacks on Hindu places of worship sparked urgent calls from Hindu leaders for stronger protection and decisive government action on freedom of religion and racial discrimination.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Women continued to face high levels of gender-based violence, as highlighted by the CEDAW Committee in July. In April, a series of domestic violence incidents resulted in the

deaths of three women and one being left seriously injured. In May, the police commissioner reported a 19% surge in violence against women compared with 2024, prompting concern over the country's deep-rooted patriarchal norms and the urgent need for systemic reforms.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In July, the Ministry of Justice supported the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion on states' legal obligations regarding climate change, reinforcing Fiji's commitment to global climate accountability. In September, Pacific leaders signed the Pacific Resilience Facility treaty during the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' meeting in the Solomon Islands, establishing a regional fund aimed at strengthening climate resilience and disaster preparedness across the Pacific. It was unclear if this was new, additional funding to address the climate crisis.

FINLAND

Republic of Finland

Marginalized groups were disproportionately impacted by social security cuts. Legislative changes jeopardized asylum seekers' rights. Police restricted the right to protest. Government climate action was inadequate. Women distrusted the justice system and police. Legislation came into force boosting the Sámi people's rights.

BACKGROUND

Finland formally notified the UN of its intention to withdraw from the Ottawa Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, putting civilian lives at risk. Under the terms of the Convention, the withdrawal will take effect six months after notification, in January 2026.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In February, the government reported that the number of people experiencing homelessness had increased for the first time in over a decade. The year saw a high number of evictions and concerning increases in people struggling with housing costs and in need of housing-related services.[1]

In September, despite civil society warnings of risks to marginalized people, the government announced further cuts to social assistance and social housing. As predicted, these cuts had a disproportionately negative impact on the rights of marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, especially those with low incomes.[2]

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Citing Russia's "instrumentalization" of people seeking asylum, the Finnish government continued the closure of all crossing points on the Finnish-Russian border.

In June, parliament extended until 31 December 2026 the emergency act allowing the government to limit asylum applications at the border, grant border guards powers to prevent entry, including by force, and deny any genuine possibility of appeal.

The government continued to introduce legislative amendments rolling back protections in migration and asylum policies. These included compromising the fairness of asylum proceedings by no longer checking the accuracy of minutes of asylum interviews; restricting the rights of people who had received international protection to visit the country from which they had fled; imposing discriminatory requirements for citizenship; and tightening conditions for permanent residence permits.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Police used disproportionate force during a May Day protest in the city of Tampere by continuing to launch kinetic impact projectiles at a protester after they no longer posed a danger to others. A passer-by was also hit.

In June, in the capital Helsinki, an observer monitoring a climate protest was assaulted by a passer-by in front of police officers, who failed to intervene.

In July, in the town of Jyväskylä, police informed four climate activists that they had

been subjected to surveillance for four days the previous summer. The court permission allowing surveillance was based on inaccurate police information. A court of appeal upheld the decision in November.

In September, police refused a money collection permit to an NGO advocating for low-carbon technology because one of its board members had been fined in 2023 in connection with peaceful protests with another climate movement.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In January, the Supreme Administrative Court dismissed an appeal by NGOs regarding the government's lack of climate action. In June, the government's annual climate report confirmed that Finland had failed to meet the targets of its Climate Act due to diminishing carbon sinks caused largely by intensive logging. In September, the Ministry of the Environment reported that biodiversity had continued to deteriorate. It was feared that Finland would again fail to meet its fair-share obligations to provide climate finance to developing countries due to cuts in the development cooperation budget.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Research published in March revealed that 61% of women living in Finland did not trust the justice system's ability to treat victims of rape fairly. Marginalized and racialized women expressed even deeper distrust towards the police due to experiences of racism and discrimination.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In March, parliament adopted a national citizen's initiative to ban conversion practices. The minister of justice responded that due to other priorities the ministry would not have time to prepare the necessary legislation.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

The long-awaited reform of the Act on the Sámi Parliament came into force in August. It strengthened the Sámi people's right to self-determination and free, prior and informed consent.[3]

1. *Finland: "I Have to Choose Whether to Buy Food or Pay My Rent": The Human Rights Impact of Austerity Measures on Housing in Finland*, 14 April ↑
2. "Finland: Submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 33rd session, 11-29 August ", 26 June ↑
3. *Finland, Norway, Sweden: Just Transition or "Green Colonialism"?: How Mineral Extraction and New Energy Projects Without Free, Prior and Informed Consent are Threatening Indigenous Sámi Livelihoods and Culture in Sweden, Norway and Finland*, 1 January ↑

FRANCE

French Republic

Authorities failed to address systemic racism; antisemitic and anti-Muslim incidents increased. Progress towards colonial reparations for Haiti was limited. Excessive restrictions on peaceful protests and excessive use of force by police persisted. People expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people faced disproportionate restrictions. A lack of transparency shrouded arms transfers. The expanded use of AI-driven video surveillance raised serious concerns. Migration policies perpetuated exploitation of racialized foreign workers. The legal definition of rape was amended in line with international standards. Climate action was inadequate to meet 2030 targets.

BACKGROUND

Political turbulence dominated the year with ongoing fall-out from the 2024 dissolution of the National Assembly contributing to several changes in government.

Anti-rights statements openly questioning the rule of law became increasingly pervasive.

DISCRIMINATION

The increase in racist hate speech, including from political leaders, and crimes, including antisemitic and Islamophobic incidents, raised serious concerns. Meanwhile, the government continued its refusal to address

systemic racism, its failure to collect reliable data, and its persistence in discriminating against Muslim women and girls wearing headscarves.

Following the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games, in which French women athletes were banned from wearing sports hijabs, authorities increased gendered Islamophobic measures and rhetoric. In February, the Ministry of Sports published a guide on "secularism and religion in the field of sports", anchoring disproportionate and discriminating limitations to freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression.

On 18 February, the Senate passed a bill banning the wearing of religious signs in sports competitions and swimming pools. On 5 March, a National Assembly investigative mission into "communitarian and Islamist tendencies in sport" published a report calling for the adoption of the ban. The National Assembly had not yet discussed the bill.

In May, the Senate rejected a bill aimed at tackling discriminatory identity checks by the police.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

April marked the 200th anniversary of France requiring Haiti to pay compensation for the loss of colonial profits from enslaved labour. In April, President Macron announced the creation of a Franco-Haitian joint commission tasked with examining the countries' "shared past" and making "recommendations to both governments so that lessons can be learned and a more peaceful future can be built". Although a positive step towards reparation for slavery and colonialism, the declaration failed to put affected communities at the centre of this process or to recognize France's duty under international human rights law to provide reparations. Following long overdue calls for reparations, in June the National Assembly adopted a resolution aimed at the recognition, reimbursement and reparation by France of Haiti's "double debt".

On 29 July, France issued a new arrest warrant against former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad for the 2013 chemical weapons attacks. The new warrant followed the annulment in July of a previous warrant, which France's highest court ruled as invalid since he had personal immunity as president at the time it was issued.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Those expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people faced excessive and disproportionate restrictions. Authorities placed pre-emptive blanket bans on multiple demonstrations in several cities. In Paris, a demonstration was rerouted after a partial ban by the Paris police prefect.

Three Sciences Po university students were expelled and 10 suspended after protesting against Israel's genocide against Palestinians and expressing concerns about the university's partnerships with Israeli academic centres. Conferences on Palestine were cancelled at several universities, including in Strasbourg and Paris.

In March, the Paris police prefect banned a feminist march organized by the collective Insurrection Trans on the grounds of risks to public order, but it was reinstated following an urgent judicial appeal.

Other groups were also targeted. In July, the Tarn prefect pre-emptively banned gatherings of opponents to the A69 motorway. Environmental activists were subjected to criminal prosecution. In September, two activists were sentenced to prison terms (one with a suspended sentence) for spraying paint on the prime minister's office as part of a campaign calling for energy-saving renovation measures (one of the most severe penalties ever imposed in France for an act of civil disobedience).

Authorities announced the dissolution of the collective Urgence Palestine. This had not been implemented by year's end, but the bank accounts of the group's main leader, Omar Alsoumi, had been frozen.

On 10 September, the Ministry of the Interior issued an Operational Guide on Urban Violence with the stated aim of distinguishing the management of "urban violence" from that of demonstrations.

In September, a parliamentary commission of inquiry published its report into the

psychological effects of TikTok on children and young people. The report underscored concerns about the platform's recommendation system and recommended a ban on social media for children under 15 years. This was despite concerns that a ban risked unduly restricting young people's rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly online. The president and the minister delegate for artificial intelligence and digital affairs also called for a ban to be implemented.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Security forces were accused of using excessive force during demonstrations on 10 and 18 September and preventing some journalists from doing their work reporting on the protests. In May, the UN Committee against Torture expressed concern over the reported use of less lethal weapons, including stun grenades and projectile launchers, which regularly caused serious injuries.

The committee further noted particular concern at the number of deaths resulting from the use of firearms by law enforcement during traffic stops. It highlighted that Article L.435-1 of the Internal Security Code appeared to have expanded the scope of self-defence for police officers beyond reasonable limits, contributing to an increase in deaths caused by police firearms. It also emphasized that cases of excessive use of force disproportionately affected members of minority groups, particularly people of African or Arab descent, Indigenous Peoples and migrants.

In June, the police officer who shot and killed Nahel Merzouk, a 17-year-old French boy of North African descent, in 2023 was charged with murder.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

A lack of transparency continued to shroud arms transfers, with the government failing in its legal requirement to report on the previous year's transfers by the end of May. France continued to license war material exports to Israel despite calls by UN experts for the immediate cessation of such transfers, which likely violated international humanitarian law. Authorities stated that France did not export equipment that could be used in the Gaza Strip, South Lebanon or in the Occupied Palestinian territory; however, persistent lack of transparency rendered this information hard to verify.

IMPUNITY

Despite ICC arrest warrants pending for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, France allowed his aircraft to fly over its territory three times.

UNLAWFUL SURVEILLANCE

In May, the government introduced a bill on the 2030 Winter Olympic Games allowing the use of mass video surveillance technology powered by AI until December 2027. This bill renewed the use of surveillance technology at the 2024 Olympic Games, despite serious human rights risks, particularly to racialized individuals, underscored by civil society.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

French migration policies perpetuated a system of exploitation of and harm to racialized foreign workers. Research published in November reaffirmed previous findings that the migration system and rules governing the right to work and stay in France perpetuated the exploitation of racialized foreign workers.[1] The system directly violated their human rights in multiple ways and made them vulnerable to secondary, related rights violations due to delays and other systemic problems.

Many politicians continued to use harmful and xenophobic rhetoric against migrants, especially racialized migrants. This rhetoric also permeated debates surrounding laws adopted by the National Assembly reducing refugees' and migrants' rights. A reform adopted in July facilitated the detention of migrants convicted for "very serious offences" and "at a high risk of reconviction". Other reforms increased obstacles to obtaining French nationality for children born in the territory of Mayotte.

France and the UK continued to forge agreements that focused on "deterrents" and undermined migrants' rights, failing to create

alternative legal and safe routes. More than 41,000 people attempted to cross the Channel by boat, the second highest number since 2022. By year's end, according to Agence France-Presse, at least 29 people had died trying to reach the UK by boat from France, a decrease on 2024, but higher than 2023.

In July, the National Asylum Court found that Palestinians from Gaza qualified for refugee status because they would be at real risk of persecution by the Israeli armed forces on grounds of nationality if returned. However, in August, France temporarily stopped receiving Palestinians fleeing the occupied Gaza Strip.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In October, parliament approved a law amending the legal definition of rape to include the concept of consent in line with international standards.

According to official figures published in October, 107 women were killed by their partners or ex-partners in 2024. Data from feminist organizations covering the same period indicated that 141 women had been killed. According to feminist organizations, 164 women were killed in 2025.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The government's third National Adaptation Plan, published in March, was criticized by civil society and the High Council for the Climate for its lack of concrete measures to protect vulnerable populations and largely insufficient funding. In April, 14 climate disaster victims and associations sued the state for failing to protect people from the impacts of climate change.

In July, the High Council on Climate's annual report judged France's climate action in 2024 as insufficient, stating that the pace of decarbonization needed to double to reach the 2030 target. Rather than strengthening climate action, authorities proposed or adopted several setbacks to climate and environmental policies, including budget cuts or conditions to the adoption of the EU NDC, thereby threatening the Paris Agreement.

1. "France: Dysfunctional and discriminatory residence permit system violates racialized migrant workers' rights", 5 November †

GEORGIA

Georgia

The rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were severely curtailed. Repressive legislation, unfair trials and police impunity for unlawful use of force fuelled an ongoing government crackdown. Peaceful protesters, journalists, opposition figures and activists were subjected to arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment followed by unfair trials. Human rights defenders, NGOs and independent media faced ongoing harassment including asset freezes and regulatory pressure. Women protesters endured gender-based violence.

BACKGROUND

Protests which erupted towards the end of 2024, following the ruling Georgian Dream party's announcement that it was suspending EU membership talks, continued throughout the year. These included daily demonstrations in the capital, Tbilisi, and regular actions in other major cities.

Responding to the wave of protests, Georgian Dream pushed through a series of repressive laws. The party used its political influence to cement control and weaponize law enforcement, the judiciary and oversight bodies as tools of political retaliation. The purge extended across all state institutions, with widespread dismissals of civil servants and officials deemed sympathetic to the protests.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Hundreds of people continued to protest daily, facing intimidation, heavy fines, arbitrary detention, ill-treatment and unfair trials. Overwhelmingly peaceful protests were repeatedly met with unlawful force, which escalated tensions, leading to isolated

incidents of violence, mostly in reaction to police aggression.

In an attempt to suppress the ongoing protests, legislative amendments introduced at the end of 2024 had imposed large fines for peaceful protest actions such as wearing a mask or blocking a road. These were followed on 17 October by a new, sweeping package of laws that further curtailed the right to peaceful assembly. Law enforcement officials were granted broad powers to imprison people for peaceful acts of protest including covering one's face, setting up tents or blocking roads. These were punishable by up to 15 days' detention – or 20 days for organizers – with repeat offences carrying up to two years in prison.

The authorities began systematically targeting activists, journalists and opposition supporters, conducting searches and confiscating protest materials. More than 100 arrests were carried out in the week following the adoption of the laws.[1]

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Masked officers routinely beat detainees during arrests and in detention. Unidentified men in plain clothes – some armed and apparently linked to the authorities – intimidated and assaulted protesters and journalists with police complicity, including near their homes and workplaces. Many of those detained were denied access to lawyers, relatives or urgent medical care while in custody.

Saba Skhvitaridze, arrested on 5 December 2024, was sentenced on 3 September to two years in prison for allegedly causing bodily harm to a police officer. He described how he was questioned without a lawyer and repeatedly tortured by masked officers. Despite medical evidence of injuries sustained in custody, no effective investigation had been carried out by the end of the year.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Throughout the year, police continued to use unlawful force to disperse predominantly peaceful protesters, including tear gas, rubber bullets and water cannon. Hundreds of protesters reported sustaining serious injuries, including fractures and concussions, and over 100 journalists were wounded.

Police violence escalated following the 4 October post-election protests, during which some participants attempted to enter the presidential compound. In response, special forces carried out militarized raids, using excessive force and arresting more than 60 protesters in their homes.

Despite widespread reports of violence and ill-treatment, by the end of the year not a single police officer or pro-government assailant had been held accountable.

In December, the authorities opened an investigation into allegations by the BBC that prohibited toxic chemicals had been deployed in water cannons against protesters. Rather than addressing the allegations, the inquiry sought to intimidate experts and witnesses who had contributed relevant evidence to the BBC's report.[2]

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Arbitrary detention of protesters, journalists and opposition figures was commonplace. Some individuals were apprehended at home, at their workplace or in the street, solely for attending protests.

Courts routinely denied bail, without clear grounds or evidence that would justify remand.

Dozens of individuals, particularly those involved in anti-government protests, were subjected to unfair trials marked by procedural violations and prosecutorial bias.

Prominent journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli was detained twice on 11 January during a protest in the city of Batumi, initially merely for putting up a protest sticker. Upon release, she was re-arrested on criminal charges for slapping Batumi's police chief. She was denied bail in a swift remand hearing, followed by an unfair trial. On 5 August, she was sentenced to two years in prison. Her health severely deteriorated in custody.[3]

In January, protesters Omar Okribelashvili and Saba Meparishvili were each sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment for damaging police barriers. The sentences came after

months already served in detention where they had reportedly been subjected to ill-treatment. They were released on 14 November after a plea bargain which allowed for the remaining year to be served on parole.

Saba Jikia, 19, was sentenced in July to over four years in prison for allegedly kicking a police officer during a protest. The trial raised fair trial concerns, including the use of disputed video footage and the failure to apply the juvenile justice procedures normally extending to 19-year-olds in Georgia.

Nineteen protesters, among them actor Andro Chichinadze, were each sentenced to two or two-and-a-half years in prison in September following an unfair trial. They were convicted on politically motivated charges of participating in "group violence" during pro-European protests in late 2024.[4]

Between June and November, eight opposition politicians were arbitrarily detained and imprisoned after refusing to cooperate with a parliamentary commission whose legitimacy and impartiality were widely questioned. They remained in prison either pending trial or serving their sentences at year's end.[5]

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Civil society groups, independent media outlets, opposition parties and politicians were targeted through repressive legislation, politically motivated prosecution and administrative procedures.

Under the 2024 Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, authorities subjected independent civil society groups to intrusive inspections and criminal investigations. Such groups receiving foreign funding and engaging in vaguely defined "political activities" were threatened with penalties.

In August, the authorities froze the bank accounts of seven NGOs, alleging that they had engaged in sabotage by providing medical supplies, protective gear, legal aid and other support to protesters in 2024.[6] Several NGO leaders were repeatedly summoned for questioning.

In October, Georgian Dream filed a constitutional lawsuit seeking to ban three opposition parties – the United National Movement, Coalition for Change, and Lelo/Strong Georgia – accusing them of attempting to overthrow the constitutional order, incite protests and undermine territorial integrity.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Women protesters were increasingly targeted with gendered abuse, including sexist insults, threats of sexual assault and degrading full strip searches. Such abuses continued to be reported despite a government pledge in June to end full-body searches.[7] Misogynistic and sexist rhetoric from senior officials continued to fuel abuse against women protesters.[8]

Elene Khoshtaria, an opposition leader, was detained for protesting peacefully outside parliament on 28 March. She reported being violently restrained, stripped, forced to lie naked during her detention and denied medication needed for her condition.

Kristina Botkoveli, an activist, was forced to strip naked during an arbitrary police raid at her home on 1 February, triggering a panic attack requiring emergency care.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Local activists raised serious environmental concerns around a planned tourism project within the Balda Canyon Natural Monument, and the Krtsanisi-Eagle Hills urban development in Tbilisi. Lack of transparency and limited public consultations marred both projects.

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1. "Georgia: Escalating repression and arbitrary arrests threaten right to protest", 31 October ↑
2. "Georgia: Government's alleged use of toxic chemicals against protestors calls for international investigation and complete embargo on all policing equipment", 5 December ↑
3. "Georgia: Further Update: Georgian Journalist May Lose Eyesight in Jail: Mzia Amaghlobeli", 30 July ↑
4. "Georgia: Further Information: Actor Andro Chichinadze jailed after unfair trial", 15 September ↑
5. "Georgia: Crackdown on government critics deepens as another opposition politician is jailed", 27 June ↑

6. "The EU and its member states should take urgent, coordinated measures to respond to Georgia's crackdown on civil society and human rights organisations", 10 September. ↑
7. "Georgia: Women protesters are targeted with escalating violence and gender-based reprisals", 23 May ↑
8. "Georgia: Elections marred by severe reprisals and risk of further violence", 3 October ↑

GERMANY

Federal Republic of Germany

State representatives used stigmatizing language that fuelled fear of hate crimes. Excessive force was used in the policing of peaceful protests to support Palestinians' rights. Germany deported 83 individuals to Afghanistan and one person to Syria, violating the principle of non-refoulement. The federal government compromised the achievement of climate targets.

DISCRIMINATION

Serious concerns were raised by reports of increased racist, antisemitic and Islamophobic hate crimes, as well as hate crimes against women, LGBTI people and other minoritized groups. Such crimes more than doubled in number compared with pre-pandemic levels. Reports of attacks on Pride marches increased, while stigmatizing language by state representatives and their lack of commitment to LGBTI people's rights fuelled fear of hate crimes among the LGBTI community.

In November, the Federal Criminal Police Office reported a rise in gender-based violent crimes against women in 2024.

The fatal shooting of a 21-year-old Black man, Lorenz A., by a police officer in Oldenburg in April drew nationwide attention. According to data from civil rights reporting organization CILIP, fatal police violence peaked once again in 2025, resulting in 17 deaths, disproportionately affecting racialized people and those living in poverty.

Draft legislation to replace the Federal Police Act, introduced to parliament in December, proposed to expand police powers allowing arbitrary police stops and racial profiling. It failed to include mandatory identification badges to counter impunity.

Police officials and police union representatives made inflammatory and racist statements, primarily targeting Black, Arab, Muslim and refugee groups. A federal study published in May found that discrimination could occur in practically all areas of police work.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The timeline for reviewing legislation that facilitated access to legal gender recognition was reduced from five years to one and a half years, raising concern among LGBTI groups. They were especially concerned due to new draft regulations enabling tracking of previous legal gender and names, which risked people being forcibly outed.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In February, Berlin police ordered that speeches and slogans at a Palestinian solidarity demonstration be conveyed in German and English only. When protesters chanted in Hebrew and Arabic at a demonstration on 8 February, the protest was immediately violently dispersed by police.

In March, at a peaceful protest in Berlin, a woman was repeatedly hit in the face and on the head by a police officer. Similar violence by police officers was documented during protests on Nakba Day as well as at the Internationalist Queer Pride event in Berlin in July.

In February, the Christian Democratic Union Party led a parliamentary inquiry into the financing of civil society organizations. The inquiry consisted of 551 questions, aimed at assessing the political neutrality of state-funded organizations, particularly those campaigning against racism and for migrant rights. It thereby put such organizations under general suspicion.

On 20 March, the Administrative Court of Berlin ruled as unlawful the use of pain-compliance holds by the police to remove peaceful climate protesters from a previously dispersed gathering.

In March, the Berlin immigration authorities notified four foreign – EU and US – nationals of the termination of their residency status due to their involvement in student protests in support of Palestinians in 2024. None were convicted of any criminal charges. Leaked correspondence indicated that the Berlin Ministry of the Interior had pressured the immigration authorities to deport the four. All the cases were successfully challenged in preliminary proceedings and the deportations temporarily halted.

In May, following a Nakba commemoration protest, the Berlin Police claimed that an officer had been seriously injured at the hands of demonstrators. This allegation was used by police spokespeople, the mayor and the federal minister of interior to demand new police powers against protesters acting in solidarity with Palestinians. However, an independent investigation later discovered that the police officer had injured himself while beating protesters.

On 26 November the Administrative Court of Berlin ruled that the dissolution of a pro-Palestine conference in 2024 had been unlawful.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 29 January, parliament adopted a resolution establishing that schools and universities should use the working definition of antisemitism adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). The resolution conflicted with the determination of prominent legal scholars and civil society groups that the IHRA definition was incompatible with international standards on freedom of expression. It called for surveillance of students and closer cooperation with security and intelligence authorities to address any perceived deficits with regard to tackling antisemitism in schools.

Authorities continued their attempts to criminalize the slogan "from the river to the sea", which was banned in 2023 having been deemed "a symbol of Hamas".

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Resettlement and humanitarian admissions to the country were suspended in April. In July, parliament enacted a two-year suspension of family reunification rights for people granted subsidiary protection, with limited exceptions for hardship cases.

Only 3,087 admissions had been approved under the humanitarian admission programme for Afghanistan, launched in 2022, with only 2,230 individuals actually entering Germany. The scheme's original target had been to admit 1,000 people per month.

More than 1,300 people accepted to various admission programmes remained stranded in Pakistan or, in some 250 cases, were forcibly returned from Pakistan to Afghanistan. Despite close to 150 rulings by administrative courts obliging the government to issue visas, these had led to entry in only 756 individual cases by the end of the year. Overall, the new government had cut admissions for those waiting in Pakistan by half.

In July, Germany deported 83 individuals to Afghanistan and one person to Syria, violating the principle of non-refoulement.

Despite a Berlin Administrative Court ruling in June declaring it unlawful to deny asylum seekers access to German territory, authorities continued to summarily return people at EU borders.

In September, the government introduced a legal proposal to parliament to implement the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) reforms. The proposal introduced measures exceeding the tightening of regulations stipulated by CEAS. These included measures to allow the determination of safe third countries and countries of origin by ministerial decree as well as a significant expansion of scope for the detention of migrants.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

The State of Hesse deployed a biometric facial recognition system in the Frankfurt central station district. This enabled surveillance cameras to scan all passers-by in real time to identify individuals who had

been named in court orders. New federal and draft state laws would grant police authorities extensive new powers to automatically analyse large volumes of data and to extract all publicly available biometric information from the internet to identify and locate people of interest.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In September, the cabinet adopted a draft amendment to the Corporate Due Diligence Obligations in Supply Chains Act. This would roll back key enforcement and transparency measures, weakening corporate accountability.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A cross-party draft law to partially legalize abortion, which had been stuck in parliament before snap elections were held in February 2025, stalled after the new coalition government took office. In August, a government-funded research project on unwanted pregnancies revealed major deficiencies in abortion care.

In August, a doctor lost a labour court case after challenging a hospital's directive banning staff from performing abortions. Following the merger of two church-run but publicly funded hospitals in the East Westphalia-Lippe region, non-life-saving abortions were prohibited, severely limiting access to essential reproductive healthcare.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to development visited Germany in November. In his end of mission statement, he called for reparations for Germany's genocide against Ovaherero and Nama Peoples between 1904 and 1908 in the former colony of German South West Africa (see Namibia entry).

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In September, a report commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy revealed glaring shortcomings in Germany's transition to renewable energy. Nevertheless, the minister for economic affairs announced plans to reduce support for renewable energy and to further expand gas infrastructure – delaying the phase-out of fossil fuel use and production.

In May, the Higher Regional Court in Hamm dismissed a landmark case brought by Peruvian farmer Saúl Luciano Lliuya against German energy giant RWE. The court found the risk of climate-induced flooding to his property insufficiently imminent. However, it affirmed in principle that major emitters could be held liable under German civil law for trans-boundary climate harms.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In August, the chancellor announced that Germany would not authorize further exports to Israel of arms that could be used in the occupied Gaza Strip. However, previously granted licences were not revoked, and other military equipment continued to be exported. In November, the halt was reversed and individual export reviews were resumed. In the first half of the year, Germany authorized exports of weapons and other military equipment to Israel worth approximately EUR 90 million.

GHANA

Republic of Ghana

Attacks against journalists continued. Female genital mutilation continued to be practised, while accusations of witchcraft still threatened women's rights to life and health. The reintroduction of a bill to promote "family values" threatened to further criminalize LGBTI people. Refugee status was granted immediately to forcibly displaced Burkinabe asylum seekers. The health sector was seriously hit by USAID cuts as the country faced disease outbreaks. Efforts were made to fight illegal mining, encourage reforestation and combat illegal fishing.

BACKGROUND

In January, following parliamentary and presidential elections in December 2024,

John Dramani Mahama returned to office as president, with the National Democratic Congress back in power.

The president pardoned nearly 1,000 prisoners in a bid to reduce prison overcrowding.

The Constitutional Review Committee continued its work to identify gaps in previous constitutional reforms and recommend amendments to improve Ghana's constitutional framework.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

In January, the Attorney General dropped charges that had been brought against members of civil society group Democracy Hub after they participated in a protest against illegal mining in September 2024. In February, journalists' associations called on the police to investigate an attack by unidentified men on a journalist reporting on an illegal mining operation. In the same month, international NGO the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called for an investigation into attacks by unidentified men on five journalists covering the elections in the Ashanti region.

In April, the CPJ called on the president to deliver justice for the 2019 murder of the journalist Ahmed Hussein-Suale Divela and to reform laws criminalizing "false news". Three journalists were assaulted during local elections in July. Police officers were involved in two of these attacks; one police officer was suspended and charged in connection with one of the incidents.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Female genital mutilation (FGM) continued to be practised, especially in the Upper East, Upper West and Bono regions. The Ghana Statistical Service announced new plans to use citizen-generated data as well as traditional statistical surveys to obtain more accurate and timely information on FGM, especially in remote regions.

Following its reintroduction to parliament in March, a bill criminalizing accusations of witchcraft and related abuses had still not been passed at the end of the year. Women accused of witchcraft continued to suffer threats, physical attacks and even death. Many had no safe place to go to other than camps in the northern and north-east regions of Ghana. Although these camps offered shelter to women in need of refuge, the government continued its failure to ensure that they provided access to adequate food, safe housing, clean water and health services.[1]

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In March, lawmakers reintroduced the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values bill into parliament. This would further criminalize same-sex relationships and target people with diverse gender identities, imposing prison terms for those who identified as LGBTI. The bill had been passed in parliament in 2024 but lapsed after the then president Nana Akufo-Addo declined to sign it before leaving office. By the end of the year, the bill had still not been passed by parliament.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

UNHCR welcomed Ghana's decision to provide prima facie refugee status to Burkinabe asylum seekers fleeing armed conflict in their country.

Ghana agreed to accept West African deportees from the US. However, at least eight such deportees were reported to have secretly been transferred from Ghana to Togo and left without documentation or support.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Ghana continued to strengthen its health emergency preparedness, working in conjunction with the WHO. At the government's request, the WHO provided technical support for an external evaluation of the strength of the country's health security, described by the WHO as "a significant milestone in the country's efforts to enhance health security".

In January, a joint multi-sectoral Public Health Emergency Rapid Response Team, created to contain outbreaks in their early stages, was activated at the start of a fast-escalating outbreak of cholera; 948 new cases were reported in the first three weeks

of the year and 50 deaths by February. The response efforts were bolstered by a vaccination campaign which had begun in late 2024, as well as improved sanitation and prevention work. In October, the WHO announced that the government had contained the outbreak.

In February, following cuts to US foreign aid, Ghana was left facing a USD 156 million funding shortfall, with health sector income reduced by USD 78.2 million. USAID had provided essential resources for maternal and child health, disease prevention, and rural healthcare access. In March, the government moved to fill the funding gap by uncapping the proportion of its revenues to be spent on the National Health Insurance Scheme.

In December, the Ghana Health Service confirmed 947 cases of the Mpox disease, and six Mpox-related deaths.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Mass deforestation and other land degradation caused by illegal mining and logging continued to threaten the environment, as well as the cocoa and shea nut industries. In March, the government launched an initiative to help restore degraded landscapes and improve forest management. In July, the government confirmed its commitment to fight illegal mining, which continued to contaminate and degrade land and water resources. The government announced that at least 1,486 illegal miners had been arrested since January and machinery used for illegal mining operations seized.

In April, Ghana launched the largest floating solar project in West Africa, aimed at increasing the country's share of renewable energy to 10% by 2030.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

In April, the government endorsed the Global Charter for Fisheries Transparency to combat illegal fishing and overfishing. In August, the president signed the Fisheries and Aquaculture Act. The new act aimed to strengthen artisanal fishing and counter illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing by, in part, increasing the inshore exclusion zone.

1. *Ghana: Branded for Life: How Witchcraft Accusations Lead to Human Rights Violations of Hundreds of Women in North Ghana*, 14 April ↑

GREECE

Hellenic Republic

Criminal proceedings were brought against 21 coast guard officers for the 2023 Pylos shipwreck. An unlawful and discriminatory three-month suspension of access to asylum for people coming to Greece through North Africa was imposed, leading to mass detentions in inadequate conditions. A new law on the return of third country nationals negatively impacted their rights. A felony trial started against 24 humanitarian workers who had assisted people in distress at sea. Reports of unnecessary and excessive use of force against peaceful protesters persisted. A controversial blanket ban was introduced on protests in areas outside the country's parliament. Legislation seeking to combat gender-based violence was criticized for failing to prioritize support and prevention. Four executives of companies linked with the Predator spyware scandal stood trial. Reports of attacks against members of the LGBTI community persisted. Over a quarter of the country's population were at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

BACKGROUND

Mass demonstrations took place demanding justice and accountability for the victims, survivors and families of those involved in the 2023 Tempi train crash in which 57 people were killed. In February, the Hellenic Aviation and Railway Safety Investigation Agency found that the tragedy was a combined result of human error, poor infrastructure and systemic failures in railway safety management.

Between June and August, amid a severe heatwave made more likely by climate change, major forest fires destroyed tens of thousands of hectares of land, killing one man and damaging houses and essential infrastructure in areas including Crete, Chios, Attika and Achaia.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In a landmark ruling in January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) noted "strong indications" that there had been a systemic practice of unlawful summary returns ("pushbacks") at the land borders with Türkiye in 2019. More cases involving summary returns remained pending before the court. NGOs expressed concern that despite over 200 domestic investigations into alleged summary returns having been launched between 2019 and 2024, none had resulted in charges against officials.

In May, the Naval Court prosecutor concluded the preliminary investigation into the coast guard's role in the 2023 Pylos shipwreck, in which over 600 people died, bringing felony charges against 17 officers and referring them for further investigation. In November, a Court of Appeal prosecutor brought criminal proceedings against four additional senior coast guard officers. Those charged included the crew and captain of the patrol boat that, according to survivors, caused their boat to capsize while attempting to tow it, as well as the head and former head of the coast guard.

In October, the ECtHR ruled in a case concerning a 2018 deadly shipwreck, condemning Greece for violations of the right to life due to shortcomings in both the rescue efforts and the investigation into the incident.

In June, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe ceased supervising Greece's implementation of the landmark judgment of the ECtHR, *M.S.S. v. Greece*, which dealt with deficiencies in the country's asylum procedures and in living conditions for asylum seekers. Despite reports by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, the UN and NGOs documenting shortcomings, the committee concluded it was satisfied with the progress made by the Greek authorities to comply.

Only a month later, a legislative amendment provided for the unlawful and discriminatory three-month suspension of the submission of asylum applications from people arriving on the Greek islands of Crete and Gavdos through North Africa. It also permitted their forced return to their country of origin or transit. The ECtHR issued interim measures in two cases involving people from Sudan and Eritrea affected by this measure, ordering Greece to refrain from returning them as long as the registration of their asylum claims remained suspended.

People subjected to the new provisions were largely detained across facilities in Greece, in some cases in inadequate conditions. The European Commission failed to use the tools at its disposal to ensure that Greece complied with its human rights obligations.

Throughout the year, asylum seekers living in the EU-funded Closed Controlled Access Centres (CCAC) on the Aegean islands continued experiencing "restrictions of freedom" amounting to unlawful detention. In February, the ECtHR issued interim measures to protect children in the "safe zone" of Samos CCAC and ensure their relocation.

In September, parliament adopted a new law on the return of third country nationals which reduced the protection of returnees, in parts in violation of existing EU law and standards, and signalled a punitive direction for the country's migration policy. The law criminalized irregular stay, expanded the penalties associated with irregular entry and exit, extended the length of detention beyond EU law limits and introduced electronic surveillance as a measure to reduce the risk of absconding. The law followed and was inspired by a much criticized European Commission return proposal from March which was not yet binding at year's end.

In March, the Council of State annulled the decision designating Türkiye as a safe third country, following a 2024 ruling by the Court of Justice of the EU on the compatibility of such designations with EU law when the

country in question has suspended readmission. Türkiye had suspended readmissions since 2020. NGOs expressed concerns that a new ministerial decision subsequently adopted in April effectively reinstated Türkiye's designation as a safe third country.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In June, an Athens court acquitted human rights defender Alexia Tsouni on charges including defamation which appeared to have been brought in response to her anti-racism work and activism in support of refugees.

In December, a felony trial started against 24 humanitarian workers, including Irish human rights defender Séan Binder, who rescued and assisted refugees and migrants on the island of Lesvos. The charges included people smuggling and carried up to 20 years in prison. In the same month, a legislative proposal introduced membership of a registered NGO as an aggravating factor in smuggling cases.

RIGHT TO LIFE

In June, a police officer was found guilty for the fatal shooting of Kostas Frangoulis, a 16-year-old Roma boy who had been killed during a police chase in Thessaloniki in 2022.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Police reportedly used unnecessary and excessive force against protesters and photojournalists in the policing of demonstrations, including those regarding the Tempi rail crash and protests in solidarity with Palestinians. There were also reports of police transferring peaceful protesters to police stations for identity checks prior to and after demonstrations. In July, authorities abused anti-racism legislation to arrest some protesters demonstrating in Rhodes in solidarity with Palestine.

In October, parliament introduced a blanket ban on protests in parts of Syntagma Square in Athens, in front of the parliament building, ostensibly to protect a national monument.

Concerns about long-term impunity persisted, although some law enforcement officials were brought to trial for human rights violations against protesters.

In February, three police officers were found guilty of causing Vasilios Maggos "dangerous bodily harm" outside the courthouse in the town of Volos in 2020. Vasilios Maggos had reported his ill-treatment during his arrest and detention and died a few weeks later. In November, six police officers went on trial on charges of torture, "dangerous bodily harm", exposure to danger and arbitrary detention in relation to the case.

In August, two senior police officers were referred to trial for unlawfully obstructing a lawful protest and attempted serious bodily harm against at least 10 lawyers participating in a protest in March 2021.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

In September, four executives of two companies linked with the Predator spyware scandal stood trial on misdemeanour charges for breaching communications privacy laws. The trial was ongoing at year's end.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In January, a law seeking to combat gender-based violence by criminalizing new forms of violence such as cyberstalking and revenge porn sparked criticism by women's rights groups for its emphasis on stricter penalties rather than prevention and support for victims.

Lawyers, activists and women's rights groups continued to express concerns about the impact of the implementation of the 2021 joint custody legislation on women and children survivors of gender-based violence.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Reports of attacks against members of the LGBTI community persisted.

In April, parliament adopted legislation effectively excluding same-sex male couples and single men from access to surrogacy.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

An October report by the Greek Anti-Poverty Network highlighted that 26.9% of the

country's population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion and that child poverty remained high at 22.4%.

A controversial bill adopted in October allowed certain private sector employees to work a 13-hour day on a voluntary basis for up to 37.5 days a year. The law was criticized by trade unions and opposition parties and triggered nationwide strikes and protests.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS' RIGHTS

In December, concerns were expressed about a bill introducing amendments in relation to armed forces failing to recognize the right to conscientious objection to military service in accordance with international human rights standards as the alternative civilian service remained punitive and discriminatory and the assessment of applications for conscientious objection status was still not under the full control of civilian authorities.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In November, the World Wildlife Fund highlighted s that Greece's agreements on hydrocarbon extractions with major oil companies and its long-term commitment to import liquefied fossil gas from the USA would lead to decades of dependency on fossil fuels, environmental risk and economic regression.

GUATEMALA

Republic of Guatemala

Human rights defenders, journalists, students, prosecutors and Indigenous leaders continued to be the targets of unfounded prosecutions and arbitrary detention. Impunity for crimes under international law and human rights violations committed during the internal armed conflict persisted. Access to clean water was limited and forced evictions threatened the rights of entire communities. Girls and LGBTI people faced high levels of violence, and several draft bills threatened their rights.

BACKGROUND

The misuse of criminal law against the president and vice president and other key actors in the 2023 electoral process continued, putting institutionality and the rule of law at risk.

In February, the government launched the Return Home Plan to support people returned or deported to Guatemala. The Guatemalan Migration Institute reported that more than 55,000 people had been returned from the USA and Mexico throughout the year.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

In March, a judge ordered that journalist Jose Rubén Zamora be returned to prison, although the proceedings against him were riddled with irregularities.[1] At the end of the year he was still in arbitrary detention.

The Public Prosecutor's Office charged three Indigenous leaders with "terrorism", "conspiracy" and "obstruction of justice" for their participation in the mass peaceful protests of October 2023 in defence of the rule of law. As of year's end, two of these individuals – Héctor Chaclán and Luis Pacheco – had been in pretrial detention and deprived of procedural guarantees for more than eight months. The third, Esteban Toc, was under house arrest.

The criminalization of teachers, students and human rights defenders, accused of participating in protests and the occupation of the public University of San Carlos between 2022 and 2023, continued.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

In May, following a visit to the country, the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers expressed concern regarding the undue influence of "partisan actors and private interests" over judicial appointments. She also denounced the pattern of criminalization involving the Public Prosecutor's Office and members of the judiciary against those seeking to end

impunity and corruption, defend human rights or speak out against abuses of power.

In July, former anti-corruption prosecutor Stuardo Campo was acquitted of the "breach of duty" charge in the Alfa Siete case. As of year's end, he was facing two other cases and had been in pretrial detention for more than two years. In August, after months of undue delays, a judge decided that Claudia González – a former employee of the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala – should be tried for the alleged crime of "dereliction of duty", although she had never been a public official.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights defenders faced violence and criminalization. In August, Leocadio Juracán, leader of the Altiplano Peasant Committee, was arrested for crimes allegedly committed during a forced eviction in Izabal department. Between January and September, the local organization Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala recorded at least 4,520 attacks against human rights defenders.

In November, the government approved the Public Policy for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. Guatemala had still not ratified the Escazú Agreement.

IMPUNITY

Rubén Morales García, a fugitive for years, was arrested and put on trial for his alleged participation in the murder of Archbishop Juan José Gerardi in 1998. Former colonel Edgar Rolando Hernández Méndez was charged with crimes against humanity and aggravated rape in the Diario Militar case.

Very little progress was made in cases relating to the internal armed conflict (1960 - 1996), where impunity prevailed. The court ruling that granted house arrest to a high-ranking military officer convicted of serious human rights violations in the Molina Theissen case constituted a breach of international human rights standards.

Guatemala had not yet signed or ratified the 2023 Ljubljana-The Hague Convention on International Cooperation in the Investigation and Prosecution of Genocide, Crimes against Humanity, War Crimes and other International Crimes.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

According to Human Rights Watch, access to safe water and decent sanitation was profoundly unequal, with Indigenous communities being disproportionately affected. In May, the government began a participatory listening process to prepare for the drafting of a water law.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Following a visit to the country, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing urged the authorities to end the widespread practice of violent forced evictions of Indigenous and peasant communities and implement measures to protect their rights.

The suspension of US aid to Guatemala had a negative impact on access to health services for marginalized groups such as survivors of violence.[2]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According to the Sexual and Reproductive Health Observatory, the authorities failed to guarantee girls' rights, who faced high levels of sexual violence. In June, the UN Human Rights Committee determined that Guatemala had violated the rights of a 14-year-old girl who had been forced to continue her pregnancy after being raped.

UN experts expressed concern regarding draft bills 6453, 6473 and 6575, which put at risk the rights of women and girls, LGBTI people and those defending the rights of these groups, including the right to non-discrimination and sexual and reproductive health.

The Human Rights Observatory responsible for monitoring cases of violence apparently motivated by sexual orientation and gender identity recorded at least 29 killings of LGBTI people during the year. Same-sex marriage remained illegal.

1. "Guatemala: Amnesty International condemns the return to prison of journalist Jose Rubén Zamora", 12 March↑
2. *USA: Lives at Risk: Chaotic and Abrupt Cuts to Foreign Aid Put Millions of Lives at Risk*, 29 May ↑

GUINEA

Republic of Guinea

The authorities suspended political parties and media outlets and maintained a ban on protests. Critics were subjected to enforced disappearances and abductions. A pardon granted to a former head of state convicted of crimes against humanity jeopardized access to justice and effective remedies for victims of the most serious crimes. The labour rights of workers at a state-owned rubber tree and oil palm company were abused. The authorities took measures to protect forest resources.

BACKGROUND

A new constitution, extending the presidential term from five to seven years, was adopted by referendum, with nearly 90% of voters in favour, according to the results announced by the Supreme Court on 26 September.

The presidential elections were held on 28 December. Opposition parties condemned the fact that the transitional president, Mamadi Doumbouya, who assumed power through a coup in 2021, ran as a candidate in violation of the transition charter.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

On 9 January, the minister of territorial administration and decentralization ordered political movements "without prior administrative authorization" to cease their activities. This decision came three days after a demonstration demanding the departure of the ruling military.

On 10 January, authorities resumed issuing licences to associations and NGOs after a four-month suspension.

On 23 August, three main opposition parties, Guinean People's Rally, Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea, and Party of Renewal and Progress, were suspended for three months. According to an announcement by the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization, these suspensions were for non-compliance with their obligations.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 7 January, opposition leader Aliou Bah, president of the Liberal Democratic Movement political party, was sentenced to two years in prison. He was convicted of "insulting and defaming" the transitional president Mamadi Doumbouya. On 28 May, the Conakry Court of Appeal upheld his conviction.

On 14 July, Ibrahima Koné, director of the government-run newspaper Horoya, and Daouda Taban Sylla, a journalist at the public news broadcaster RTG, were interrogated by the national police. They were accused of spreading an erroneous version of the draft new constitution. They were released the following day.

On 6 September, the online news service guineematin.com was suspended by the High Authority of Communication due to "violation of current regulations" and "illegal activity and non-compliance", among other charges. The suspension was lifted four days later.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities continued to enforce the 2022 ban on all protests and violently repress the right to freedom of peaceful assembly.

On 6 January, a coalition of opposition forces, known as "Living Forces of Guinea", organized a demonstration to demand an end to military rule. They claimed that security forces killed three young men during the protest.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Activists, journalists and opposition leaders were victims of enforced disappearances and abductions.[1]

On 19 February, Abdoul Sacko, national coordinator of the Forum of Social Forces of Guinea, was abducted by hooded men in uniforms, according to media reports. He was

found later that day, "in a critical state, tortured and abandoned by his abductors in the bush", according to his lawyers.

Mohamed Traoré, former president of the Guinean Bar Association, and a vocal critic of the authorities, was abducted from his home in June by a group of six heavily armed men. He was released hours later. On 23 June, the public prosecutor announced that an investigation had been opened into his abduction.

On 20 November, the OHCHR, the UN human rights office, shared its concerns regarding the alleged enforced disappearance of the children and other relatives of opposition figure and artist Elie Kamano, by armed men on 16 November.

The fate and whereabouts of Mamadou Billo Bah and Oumar Sylla, two leaders of the National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (FNDC), remained unknown at year's end, despite the announcement of a judicial investigation into their disappearance. According to a third FNDC member who was abducted with them on 9 July 2024 and released the following day, they were taken by special forces to the Loos archipelago.

The fate and whereabouts of Habib Marouane Camara, managing director of Le Révélateur news website, abducted in December 2024, remained unknown.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

On 10 March, at least 98 families filed complaints following the stadium stampede in December 2024 in the country's second largest city, Nzérékoré. Official figures confirm that 56 people died in the disaster; however local NGOs report that the death toll was 140 people. The complaints had not been acted upon by the end of the year.

On 28 March, the transitional president granted a pardon to former head of state Moussa Dadis Camara, citing health reasons and the aim of promoting national reconciliation. Moussa Dadis Camara was convicted and sentenced to 20 years in prison in 2024 for crimes against humanity relating to a massacre on 28 September 2009, during which at least 156 people were killed and more than 100 women were raped at an opposition rally in a stadium in the capital, Conakry. Moussa Dadis Camara's release after only two and a half years in detention, and the lack of public information regarding his state of health, sparked doubts about the reasons for his release and concerns about selective justice.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Labour rights abuses persisted in plantations linked to the state-owned rubber tree and oil palm company in the south-eastern region of Nzérékoré. Workers were paid well below the national minimum wage and faced potentially hazardous working conditions.[2]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

On 1 July, the Guinean authorities announced a nationwide ban on logging and timber transportation activities from 7 July to 30 September. This was to uphold the biological rest period, intended to protect forest resources severely threatened by intense, often uncontrolled, logging. According to the international NGO Global Forest Watch, Guinea lost nearly 30% of its forest cover over the past 30 years.

1. "Guinea: One year after the enforced disappearance of FNDC activists, abductions increase in a 'climate of terror'", 8 July ↑
2. *Guinea: Salaries That Make You Cry: Abuses of Workers' Rights Linked to Soguipah's Activities in Guinea*, 23 October ↑

HAITI

Republic of Haiti

Violence affected people's lives, limiting their access to food, health and education. Authorities were unable to guarantee the safety of the population and impunity was widespread. Security was a matter of concern and debate in the international community. Children were victims of human rights violations such as sexual violence and rape. Authorities' capacity to deliver child

welfare and social reintegration services continued to be severely impaired.

BACKGROUND

Haiti suffered from increased violence, political instability and multiple crises, particularly regarding human rights.

In August, Laurent Saint-Cyr took office as the fourth president of the Presidential Transition Council in 15 months. The council is responsible for governing and organizing elections.

Hundreds of thousands of Haitians left the country in search of safety, but generally suffered racist treatment in various countries and were denied the protection that should be guaranteed under international law.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Violence hindered the exercise and guarantee of the right to life, physical integrity, food, healthcare, clean water, housing and education.

In April, activists and organizations urged France to address its colonial past on the bicentenary of the "independence debt".[1]

The sudden suspension at the start of the year of foreign aid from the USA, the country's largest individual donor, forced the closure of many essential medical services, including care to victims of sexual violence.[2]

In September, the head of the OCHA expressed concern about the alarming humanitarian crisis, the urgent need for protection in the face of a cholera outbreak, and rising malnutrition rates. Half of the Haitian population faced food insecurity and the levels of forced displacement were unprecedented.

In December, the OCHA reported that nearly 1.4 million people – including more than 741,000 children – had been internally displaced, many of them two or three times.

According to UN data, the humanitarian response plan for Haiti received only 24.2% of the necessary funding in 2025, a percentage far below that of other response plans worldwide.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

Gangs expanded their influence and self-defence groups took on vigilante roles. The UN Integrated Office in Haiti reported more than 8,100 killings as of November.

In September, a massacre in the community of Labodri, 40km north of the capital, Port-au-Prince, highlighted the authorities' ineffectiveness in protecting the population.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Operation of the justice system was seriously impaired and impunity prevailed for abuses and violations of human rights. Many victims did not report crimes for fear of reprisals or because of the absence of police in areas controlled by gangs, which acted as de facto authorities.

In February, the UN Secretary-General submitted a proposal that included strengthening the Multinational Security Support (MSS) mission (deployment of which was plagued with serious shortcomings in human and economic resources), with the UN taking on greater responsibility for logistics and financing. In August, the secretary general of the Organization of American States (OAS) also presented a roadmap proposing a coordination mechanism under OAS leadership to coordinate initiatives promoted by the UN, the humanitarian aid sector, donor countries and other relevant actors to bring peace and security to Haiti.

In September, the UN Security Council passed a resolution for the transition of the MSS mission to the Gang Suppression Force. The resolution, which integrated both UN and OAS proposals, generated concern among human rights organizations due to lack of clarity on the operations to be carried out, financial sustainability, and compliance with human rights safeguards.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children were victims of various human rights abuses, including recruitment by armed gangs, rape and other forms of sexual violence, abductions, killings and injuries.

Children with disabilities were disproportionately affected.

There were serious shortcomings in the juvenile justice system, as well as overcrowded conditions in facilities such as the Centre for the Re-education of Minors in Conflict with the Law, which also housed adults.

The state's capacity to provide health services, support for the reintegration of children recruited by gangs and adequate protection and justice remained extremely weak, exposing them to continued human rights abuses.

1. "Haiti: Activists and organizations from Haiti and its diaspora urge France to address its colonial past in Haiti on the bicentenary of the 'independence debt'", 16 April ↑
2. *USA: Lives at Risk: Chaotic and Abrupt Cuts to Foreign Aid Put Millions of Lives at Risk*, 29 May ↑

HONDURAS

Republic of Honduras

Human rights violations were recorded during the third year of the uninterrupted state of emergency. Journalists and human rights defenders were at high risk of violence. Government measures to address climate change were insufficient. Women and LGBTI people were subjected to violence and discrimination.

BACKGROUND

There were delays in reporting the results of the general elections held in November, which were also marked by allegations of fraud.

In January, the government launched the "Sister, brother, return home" plan to provide assistance to people returning to Honduras. According to the National Institute of Migration, in 2025 more than 42,000 people were returned to the country, mostly from Mexico and the USA.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

The UN and the Ombudsperson (CONADEH) criticized the extension of the state of emergency, which had been in force for three consecutive years by December. In this context, civil society organizations denounced human rights violations perpetrated by the security forces, in particular arbitrary detention, excessive use of force and torture and other cruel and inhuman treatment.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists and media workers faced high levels of physical and digital violence, including stigmatizing statements from the authorities, smear campaigns and intimidation. In June, journalist Javier Antonio Hércules Salinas was killed, despite having been granted state protection measures.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Land and environmental defenders faced frequent violence such as intimidation, murder and criminalization. Garifuna communities experienced grave danger. In April, the Black Fraternal Organization of Honduras denounced the alleged enforced disappearance of Max Gil Castillo, brother of the community president of Punta Piedra. The UN and other organizations expressed concerns regarding threats received by Garifuna leaders, as well as harassment of Garifuna communities in the media and repeated threats with firearms.

In February, an Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts was launched under the auspices of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. The group's purpose was to support the investigation into the instigation and other crimes relating to the murder of the Lenca leader Berta Cáceres in 2016.

In September, a court decided that three men charged with the murder of environmentalist Juan López in 2024 should stand trial. The Public Prosecutor's Office repeated its commitment to investigate the instigation of this crime, but by the end of the year had not reported any progress in this regard.

At year's end, the government had not signed the Escazú Agreement.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The implementation of Decree 18-2024, which ordered the environmental restoration of the Carlos Escaleras National Park and banned mining activity in the country's protected areas, remained pending.

In May, a law was submitted to Congress that would ease the granting of environmental licences, generating alarm.[1] However, as of year's end, it had not been approved.

Honduras lagged behind in the development and adoption of measures for climate change adaptation. It lacked sustainable and consistent policies for addressing a climate crisis that had caused forced displacements from coastal and rural communities.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Local NGO Cattrachas recorded 35 murders of LGBTI people between January and December. Same-sex marriages remained banned.

Women faced high levels of violence. The National Autonomous University of Honduras recorded at least 270 femicides and violent deaths in 2025. Abortion remained criminalized.

1. "Honduras: Environmental bill threatens human rights", 29 May ↑

HUNGARY

Hungary

New legislation outlawed LGBTI-related assemblies. A draft bill would allow the government to blacklist and block the funding of civil society and media outlets, based on arbitrary criteria. The European Commission found that Hungary was still failing to address systemic deficiencies in judicial independence, media freedom and the country's anti-corruption framework. Asylum seekers continued to have their rights violated. Municipalities were allowed to pass discriminatory decrees restricting local housing.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In October, the police let a Palestine solidarity assembly take place in the capital, Budapest, having banned such assemblies in previous years.

In March, parliament passed a law providing a legal basis for banning LGBTI-related assemblies. The new law imposed criminal sanctions of up to one year's imprisonment on organizers and fines of up to HUF 200,000 (EUR 500) for participants of prohibited events.[1] It also expanded the circumstances under which police could disperse any kind of assembly. It revised notification rules, reducing the earliest possible submission of notice from three months to one month before the planned assembly, making it more difficult for organizers to effectively organize and promote their event.

The police used the legislation to ban multiple assemblies. Where challenged by the organizers, all such prohibitions were upheld by the Supreme Court. Among the assemblies banned were a demonstration calling for transgender people's rights and another protesting against its prohibition. Others included the Budapest and Pécs Pride marches, as well as a human rights celebration event. Despite the bans, Budapest Pride and Pécs Pride went ahead in June and October respectively with record numbers of participants and without police interference.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Attacks on independent civil society organizations and media intensified in 2025. On 15 March, Prime Minister Viktor Orbán publicly compared "politicians, judges, journalists, bogus civil society organizations and political activists" to "stink bugs".

In May, the ruling coalition submitted a draft bill that would allow the government to blacklist a broad range of independent civic and media organizations, as well as

commercial companies, based on arbitrary criteria. Where such organizations were deemed to "threaten Hungary's sovereignty", their funding would be blocked, including any revenues from abroad.

In September, the government created Hungary's first "national anti-terrorism list", giving a terrorist designation to the "Antifa" anti-fascist movement in general and specifically to the German group Antifa Ost (also known as Hammerbande or "hammer gang"). Anyone connected to a listed organization could face financial sanctions and, in the case of non-Hungarian citizens, expulsion and denial of entry.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

According to the European Commission, Hungary made no progress in seven of the eight recommendations included in the commission's 2024 Rule of Law Report. It found that Hungary had failed to address systemic deficiencies in judicial independence, media freedom and the country's anti-corruption framework.

After several years of salary decline, which had caused concern over risks to judicial independence, judges received a 15% salary increase in January. However, the increase followed parliament's adoption of a number of judicial reforms, raising new concerns. The reforms included contentious provisions over appointment criteria for new judges, lacked mechanisms to preserve the value of salaries over time and left salary decisions to the discretion of the executive and legislature. As such, the reforms left the judiciary still vulnerable to political leverage.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The government denied housing aid for mostly Hungarian-speaking refugees from Ukraine's western Transcarpathia region – an area known to include a significant minority Hungarian community. The denial of aid followed the omission of Transcarpathia from a government list of war-affected regions of Ukraine.

Hungary's legislation continued to allow often violent, forced returns of asylum seekers at its borders. There were 4,100 such cases at the border with Serbia in 2025. In June, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) condemned Hungary's mass forced returns as unlawful, ordering compensation and systemic change. The court also criticized Hungary's non-functional embassy asylum procedure, which stipulated that asylum applications could be submitted only in two designated Hungarian embassies. The ruling reinforced the ECtHR's determination that Hungary must stop mass forced returns, which did not involve any assessment of individuals' circumstances.

DISCRIMINATION

In July, a new law empowered municipalities to set local requirements, which would have to be met by anyone wishing to buy property or register an address in the area. Despite protests from Roma organizations, around 180 municipalities set discriminatory requirements – for example, no criminal record, a minimum level of education, or no debts to the state – which mainly targeted Roma people.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In March, the Court of Justice of the European Union ruled that individuals in Hungary had the right to rectify inaccurate personal data stored in public registers, including data on gender identity, without undue delay.

In April, parliament amended the Constitution to state that "human beings shall be male or female". The amendment further weakened the protection afforded to gender-diverse people by eliminating "gender identity" as an explicitly prohibited ground for discrimination and harassment.

In June, the Constitutional Court ruled that it was unconstitutional for the legislature not to provide legal recognition for same-sex marriages performed abroad by not allowing them to be registered as partnerships.

UNLAWFUL SURVEILLANCE

The new law banning LGBTI-related assemblies allowed blanket use of facial recognition technology by law enforcement

agencies to identify perpetrators of even the pettiest offences.

The global research organization Insikt Group reported suspected use of highly invasive spyware – dubbed "Devils Tongue" by tech researchers – in Hungary.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

The 2025 Gender Equality Index, published by the European Institute of Gender Equality, ranked Hungary 26th out of the 27 EU member states, and placed it last in the domain of gender equality in positions of political and economic power.

IMPUNITY

In April, Hungary announced its decision to withdraw from the Rome Statute of the ICC while hosting Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, refusing to arrest and hand him over to court authorities despite an ICC warrant. In June, Hungary formally began the process of ICC withdrawal.

ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF NATIONALITY

In June, a new law allowed for the suspension of Hungarian citizenship in relation to some categories of dual-nationality citizens, potentially facilitating forcible expulsions. The non-exhaustive list of reasons for suspension contained in the law created uncertainty and risked paving the way for arbitrary decisions.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In March, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education expressed serious concerns about "widening inequalities, curriculum rigidity, the marginalization of Roma students and the erosion of academic freedom".

In November, a report published by the deputy ombudsperson responsible for minorities in Hungary highlighted the segregation of Roma children in church-run schools, as maintained and reinforced by public education legislation.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In June, the Constitutional Court annulled the national climate law's target for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, ruling that the target was insufficient. The court also ordered parliament to draft comprehensive regulations by 30 June 2026, covering all areas of climate protection.

In July, the European Commission's 2025 Environmental Implementation Review found that Hungary needed to take measures on various aspects of nature conservation and restoration. It specified the need for action to improve biodiversity, recycling, landfilling, green innovation, wastewater treatment, air quality and climate adaptation.

1. "Legislating Fear: Banning Pride is the latest assault on fundamental rights in Hungary", 24 March ↑

INDIA

Republic of India

The human rights situation sharply deteriorated as authorities continued their assault on dissent. Sedition and anti-terror laws were used to criminalize journalists, comedians, academics and students exercising their right to freedom of expression. Social media platforms were ordered to block dissenting voices. Peaceful protesters were detained. Journalists and activists were arrested and prosecuted, while those already detained, such as the Bhima Koregaon activists, Umar Khalid and other Muslim activists remained behind bars. Religious and ethnic minorities faced escalating persecution, including Muslims targeted through discriminatory laws on marriage. Mass forced evictions of Muslims in Assam state left thousands homeless and punitive demolitions in Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir continued. Rohingyas and Bengali-origin Muslims were unlawfully deported or pushed back, and new immigration rules stripped asylum seekers of protection. Environment policy changes dismantled safeguards for Indigenous Peoples, exposing them to displacement. Floods, landslides and heatwaves continued

to claim hundreds of lives, underscoring the government's failure to act decisively to address the climate crisis. Climate policies and targets remained "highly insufficient", and coal reliance persisted. Caste-based violence against Dalits continued.

BACKGROUND

In April, armed men opened fire in the town of Pahalgam, a popular tourist destination in Kashmir, killing 26 people, mostly tourists. Indian authorities used sedition laws and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 (UAPA) to arrest or file First Information Reports (FIRs) against journalists, academics and students who demanded accountability for the security lapse. "Operation Sindoor" was launched against Pakistan in retaliation for the attack and at least 16 civilians were killed in cross-border firing. In November, a car exploded near the Red Fort in the capital, Delhi, killing at least 13 people and injuring around 30.

Authorities deployed troops to quell protests against the Waqf Amendment Bill, resulting in the deaths of at least three people and at least 150 arrests. This law, passed by parliament, centralized state control over Muslim assets and endowments in India.

On 3 March, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted concerns about the violence and displacement in the state of Manipur and the shrinking civic space in Jammu and Kashmir; these were dismissed by the government. In March, the National Human Rights Commission was recommended for downgrading to "B" status by the global accreditation body due to concerns about its independence, transparency and effectiveness. In October, India was elected to the Human Rights Council for 2026-28. At year's end, at least 19 visit requests from UN special procedures remained pending, including one from the Special Rapporteur on torture first requested in 1999 and reiterated multiple times since.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Authorities continued to target artists, academics and journalists through expanded censorship, weaponization of criminal laws and digital restrictions.

On 24 March, Maharashtra state police filed an FIR against comedian Kunal Kamra for a parody in his stand-up show "Naya Bharat" (New India) that referred to "a leader from Thane" as a *gaddar* (traitor). The reference was widely understood as a veiled reference to Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde and his 2022 political defection.

On 20 May, the government revoked the overseas citizenship status of British-Kashmiri academic Nitasha Kaul. She had consistently spoken out against rising authoritarianism in India.

Amid increased digital censorship over recent years, the government forced social media platforms to block accounts that published criticism of government policies. This included the account "The Savala Vada", a satirical meme page that frequently published content on shrinking civic space and persecution of religious minorities. On 8 July, the government ordered social media platform X to block more than 2,000 accounts from being viewed in India, including the international news service Reuters.

On 9 July, Maharashtra state government passed the Maharashtra Special Public Security Act, criminalizing dissent under the guise of public safety.[1] On 6 August, the government of Jammu and Kashmir banned 25 books by respected journalists, historians, feminists and peace scholars, accusing them of "glorifying terrorism and inciting violence".

Journalists

Authorities escalated reprisals against journalists who sought to expose corruption or voice dissent, by weaponizing criminal laws to stifle and undermine freedom of expression.

On 24 March, Assam state police arrested journalist Dilwar Hussain Mozumdar for reporting on a protest about alleged financial misconduct at a state government-run bank. He consistently reported on financial issues at the bank where the state's chief minister served as director.

On 9 May, Nagpur police in Maharashtra state arrested 26-year-old Rejaz M Siddique for allegedly criticizing Operation Sindoor on Instagram. He was charged under the UAPA.

On 16 September, a court in the city of Gandhinagar, Gujarat state, issued notices to appear to journalists Abhisaar Sharma and Raju Parulekar. They were accused of spreading false and defamatory content to malign the reputation of the Adani group, a business conglomerate with close links to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, after challenging the sale of land in Assam to the Adani group for a seemingly meagre amount.

Following the 10 November car explosion at Delhi's Red Fort, the Jammu and Kashmir State Investigation Agency raided the office of the Kashmir Times newspaper, run by journalist Anuradha Bhasin, alleging activities that "threaten[ed] India's sovereignty". A book written by Bhasin had been banned three months prior. No FIR was provided.

Human rights defenders

Authorities continued to misuse counterterrorism and other draconian laws to keep human rights defenders in detention.

In January, the Bombay High Court granted bail to Sudhir Dhawale and Rona Wilson after over six years in detention. In November, the Supreme Court granted interim bail to Jyoti Jagtap, and in December, the Bombay High Court granted bail to Hany Babu; both had spent over five years in jail. All four were among the 16 human rights activists who were arrested and detained without trial under the UAPA for their alleged involvement in the Bhima Koregaon (BK) case. By year's end, three of the "BK16" activists remained imprisoned without trial.

Various courts denied the bail applications of Umar Khalid and at least five other Muslim students and activists. At year's end, they remained in pretrial detention for their alleged involvement in the violence in North-East Delhi in February 2020, in which 53 people were killed, including 38 Muslims.[2]

On 16 May, Nagpur police in Maharashtra state filed an FIR against three people on sedition charges for reciting the poem "Hum Dekhenge" by renowned poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz. They included Pushpa Sathidar, wife of the late activist Vira Sathidar.

On 26 September, the Ladakh police arrested activist Sonam Wangchuk under the National Security Act, after a protest led by him demanding statehood for Ladakh turned violent. A day before his arrest, the licence of his NGO, Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL) was cancelled under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

On 27 April, Hazratganj police in the city of Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh state filed an FIR against folk singer Neha Singh Rathore. She was accused of making objectionable remarks about the Pahalgam attack on social media, in violation of various provisions of the *Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita* (penal code) and Information Technology Act, 2000, relating to national security, incitement, maintaining communal harmony and public order.

On 18 May, Haryana state police registered two FIRs against Ashoka University professor Ali Khan Mahmudabad for social media posts about Operation Sindoor, resulting in his arrest. He was accused of violations of the penal code pertaining to maintaining communal harmony, incitement, and insulting religious beliefs. He was later released on bail.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities curtailed peaceful assembly through administrative detentions, denying permission for protests and violently dispersing gatherings calling for justice and accountability.

On 13 February, Delhi police detained 12 Jamia Millia Islamia University students. The students were protesting against the "show cause" notices issued to two PhD students in 2024 for allegedly "sloganeering without permission or intimation to university authorities".

On 18 June, Mumbai police detained 19 people who had joined a rally supporting Palestinians at the Azad Maidan sports ground. The day before, police had denied permission for the rally leading the

organizers, including the Communist Party of India (Marxist), to seek permission from the Bombay High Court. The court initially rejected their request, but ultimately granted permission two months after the scheduled date once the police had withdrawn their objections.

On 11 August, Delhi police detained dozens of political opponents, including opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, for protesting against alleged electoral malpractices without permission.

Between 13 and 18 August, Tamil Nadu state police forcibly evicted nearly 800 sanitation workers in the cities of Chennai and Madurai. The workers were holding a peaceful sit-in protest demanding fair wages.

On 9 November, Delhi police detained peaceful protesters, including children, who had gathered at India Gate to demand urgent action to address the worsening air pollution in the capital.

FORCED EVICTIONS

State authorities continued to carry out forced evictions in Assam, and demolitions of properties in Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir, as a form of collective and arbitrary punishment. This was despite the Supreme Court's 2024 guidelines directing authorities to halt such actions.

Between 12 and 17 July, approximately 1,800 mostly Muslim households were rendered homeless after the Assam state government carried out an eviction drive in the Paikan Reserve Forest in Goalpara district. The stated objective was to remove "illegal encroachments" from protected forest land. During the eviction, some residents reportedly retaliated by throwing stones, prompting police gunfire that killed one person. Residents alleged the area was only recently designated as forest land and they had not been provided with adequate resettlement or rehabilitation opportunities prior to eviction.

On 29 June, the Assam government launched a large-scale eviction drive in Uriamghat area in Rengma Reserve Forest in Golaghat district, as part of efforts to reclaim nearly 4,900 acres of reserve land. This affected at least 2,000 households, mostly Bengali-origin Muslims, who the government alleged had migrated from Bangladesh. Residents claimed they had lived in the area since the 1970s and held valid identification documents. On 22 August, the Supreme Court stayed the evictions.

On 14 November, in response to the Red Fort attack, security forces demolished the family home of the main suspect, Umar Nabi, in the town of Pulwama in Jammu and Kashmir, without warning. Residents, including Nabi's parents and other family members were asleep inside and evacuated just moments before the demolition.

On 27 November, the Jammu Development Authority demolished the family home of journalist Arfaz Daing weeks after he had exposed a cross-border drug trafficking racket allegedly linked to a police officer. Daing received only one day's notice of the demolition.

DISCRIMINATION

Under the pretext of safeguarding women and security, state governments advanced laws that deepened discrimination against Muslims and interfaith couples.

On 20 January, Uttarakhand state passed rules enforcing the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), without considering the report of a panel appointed to develop the rules. The UCC mandated live-in relationships be registered with state authorities to supposedly combat religious conversion via fraudulent marriages.

On 9 October, Rajasthan state enacted a law prohibiting religious conversion by various forms of coercion, including through marriage, with a maximum of 10 years' imprisonment. Enacted under the pretext of preventing "love jihad" – a pejorative and unfounded belief that Muslim men seduce Hindu women for conversion – it effectively targeted all interfaith relationships, including consensual ones. On 14 February, Maharashtra state passed a resolution to form a committee to suggest steps to deal with "love jihad".

Between 22 April and 8 May, the Association of Protection of Civil Rights, a

local NGO, documented at least 184 hate crimes targeting Muslims and Kashmiris.

On 30 April, the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs announced its decision to conduct a caste census for the first time since independence. At year's end, this decision had yet to be implemented through the adoption of appropriate laws and regulations.

In May, authorities deported at least 300 Muslims living in the north-eastern state of Assam to Bangladesh, suspected of being "foreign nationals".

On 28 May, the Assam state government announced it would provide arms licences to Indigenous People in vulnerable and remote areas, especially in Muslim-majority districts sharing borders with Bangladesh. The aim was to provide them with a sense of security.

Citizens for Justice and Peace, a local NGO, documented at least 113 incidents of atrocities against Dalits between January and June, including assaults, sexual violence, discrimination and murder.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The government deepened its hostility against Rohingya refugees and Muslims. In May, following the Pahalgam attack which revived anti-Muslim sentiments across the country, at least 40 Rohingya Muslims were blindfolded and flown to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands by the Indian authorities. They were transferred to an Indian naval ship, which crossed the Andaman Sea before the group was forced overboard and made to swim to an island in the territory of Myanmar.

On 2 September, the Ministry of Home Affairs repealed four laws via a new Immigration and Foreigners Act and subsequent order, classifying asylum seekers as "illegal migrants" subject to deportation, undermining the principle of non-refoulement. The government further expanded state control by requiring prior approval for foreign filmmakers and NGOs hiring foreigners. It also mandated the establishment of foreigners' tribunals. These had previously been criticized for rendering millions stateless in Assam due to inadequate due process safeguards.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

On 4 February, Makhan Din, a 25-year-old man, was allegedly tortured by the police in Jammu and Kashmir for having a "number of suspicious contacts in Pakistan and other foreigner countries". He later died by suicide.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In September, the environment ministry eased the rules around forest land diversion, weakening protections for Indigenous communities. Safeguards relating to infrastructure projects were removed, increasing the risk of displacement, especially in non-designated forest areas.

In February, the chief minister of Manipur state, Biren Singh, resigned 21 months after ethnic violence killed more than 250 people. Internally displaced people remained in relief camps, living in inhumane conditions with limited access to healthcare, sanitation and adequate nutrition.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Between June and September, at least 423 people were killed in heavy rains, flash floods and landslides in the states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and in Jammu and Kashmir. During the summer, heatwaves caused at least 84 excess deaths, according to local NGO HeatWatch. The government did not record live data on deaths in heatwaves and experts suggested that the actual number was likely to be significantly higher than estimated. Dalit sanitation workers withstood the worst of heatwaves.

In October and November, an increase in air pollution in New Delhi posed a serious risk to residents' health, according to the Central Pollution Control Board. It made the capital the world's most polluted city.

The Climate Action Tracker rated the government's climate targets and policies as "highly insufficient", stating that they were inconsistent with the 1.5°C temperature increase limit. India ranked 23rd in the 2025 Climate Change Performance Index, slipping 13 places due to continued reliance on coal and limited fossil fuel phase-out policies.

India's first National Adaptation Plan was submitted to the UNFCCC in November.

1. "India: Open letter to the Governor of Maharashtra to withhold assent to the Maharashtra special public security bill", 15 August ↑
2. *India: Free Umar Khalid – Stop Invoking Counter-Terrorism Law to Silence Dissent*, 12 September ↑

INDONESIA

Republic of Indonesia

Authoritarian practices, especially restrictions on freedom of expression and assembly and excessive use of force, increased as the government suppressed dissent and police arrested and detained protestors across the country. Indigenous Peoples remained marginalized and faced charges and arrests for opposing extractive and development projects on their traditional lands. The government failed to provide adequate protection for religious minorities who were subject to attacks. Plans for the next 10 years relied on fossil fuels with little commitment to transitioning to renewable energy sources.

BACKGROUND

President Prabowo Subianto's first year in power was characterized by repression of dissent and expansion of military powers. Throughout the year, massive protests were held across the country as people expressed concern about budget reductions linked to austerity measures, rising living costs and the continuation of substantial benefits provided to lawmakers. In March, the government passed revisions to the military law, expanding the military's role by redefining the responsibilities of the armed forces to include economic and social functions, thereby increasing their power over civilian matters.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

In February, a band called Sukatani, from Purbalingga in Central Java, removed their song "Bayar bayar bayar" ("Pay pay pay") from streaming platforms. After removing the song, which satirized police corruption, they also publicly apologized to the national police.[1] In an official statement, they revealed they had faced intimidation and pressure from authorities since July 2024, including their vocalist losing her teaching position at an Islamic elementary school. Following public criticism, an investigation was launched by the Professional and Security Division of the National Police into the actions of the Cyber Directorate of Central Java Regional Police, but ultimately it found no breach of protocol.

Ahead of Independence Day on 17 August, numerous people in Indonesia raised pirate flags, inspired by the anime *One Piece*, as a symbol of defiance and anger towards the government. These acts quickly went viral on social media. In response, authorities targeted several individuals, conducting raids in multiple cities to confiscate *One Piece* flags from homes and cars, and remove related murals. Several officials, including the coordinating minister for political and security affairs, condemned the flags and labelled them as disrespectful of Independence Day and the national flag. The government threatened legal action against those participating in the trend, raising further concerns about freedom of expression.[2]

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

On 14 April, members of the Federal Republic of West Papua (NFRPB) visited several government offices in the province of West Papua to deliver two letters offering a solution for peace in West Papua. The delivery of the letters was filmed and broadcast, capturing some people shouting "Free Papua". On 5 May, Sorong City Police arrested and charged four people associated with the NFRPB with treason under the Criminal Code. The four were later transferred to Makassar District Court, allegedly for security reasons. In response, on 27 August, protests erupted in Sorong and Manokwari, the capital cities of Southwest Papua and West Papua respectively. The police used excessive force to quell the protests, arbitrarily arresting 23 people, firing live rounds and tear gas. One person was severely injured when tear gas was used in Sorong and one person was killed in

Manokwari. Those arrested were freed without charge in September.[3]

Protesters, students and media workers were subjected to arbitrary arrest, intimidation and violence by police in widespread demonstrations throughout the country. Between May and July, state forces used excessive force, physical violence, abductions and ill-treatment against Labour Day protesters in several cities. On 1 May, police officers fired water cannons to disperse peaceful protesters, and physically assaulted others, pushing, beating and kicking them. Journalists were blocked from entering the parliament complex in the capital, Jakarta. They were searched and forced to delete their footage. The police arbitrarily arrested at least 24 individuals in Jakarta, Bandung, the capital city of West Java, and Semarang, the capital city of Central Java province. Those arrested were later accused of allegedly "obstructing the work of law enforcement". At year's end, 14 of the 24 individuals arrested were still awaiting hearings in Jakarta. District courts in two other cities ruled that the remaining 10 defendants violated the Criminal Code.

On 30 July, four masked men abducted a volunteer paramedic at dawn in Depok, a city in West Java. They covered his head and forced him into a car, and tortured and interrogated him about the May Day protest for nearly one hour. The perpetrators showed him photos of at least 40 alleged protesters and pressured him to identify the networks behind the action. They confiscated his identity card and burned his skin with a cigarette. He was later abandoned on the street, injured and traumatized.[4]

Between 25 August and 1 September, thousands of protesters took to the streets in at least 15 provinces across Indonesia, criticizing the high allowances provided to members of the House of Representatives and demanding reform. On 28 August, public anger intensified when an armoured vehicle from the national police's mobile brigade drove into a crowded area, killing a motorcycle delivery driver. Throughout the protests, police officers repeatedly used excessive force. As part of the crackdown, dispersals were facilitated by the disproportionate use of tear gas and water cannons and other forms of intimidation. Security forces arrested more than 4,000 people. They assaulted more than 900, beating some and wounding others with rubber bullets, tear gas and water cannons. At least 10 people died. At the end of the year, only the death of the motorcycle driver was under investigation.[5]

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In South Papua, the Merauke Food Estate project adversely affected more than 40,000 Indigenous persons. Launched by the central government in October 2024 as a national strategic project to increase food resilience, land permits were issued to corporations without obtaining free, prior, and informed consent. The project threatened Indigenous livelihoods, contributing to malnutrition among women and children. Authorities harassed and intimidated those opposing the project. On 17 March, more than 250 Indigenous and local community members affected by the projects gathered for a meeting called "Solidarity Consolidation for Merauke". The gathering rejected the project due to a lack of meaningful consultation and a proper environmental impact assessment, expressing concern about the destruction of sacred customary forests. On 6 October, four people vandalized the home and car of Indigenous activist, Vincen, whose family refused to sell their land. It was not clear whether the perpetrators were affiliated with any of the corporations involved in the project. At year's end, the police were still investigating the incident.

In East Halmahera, a regency of North Maluku province, Indigenous People in Maba Sangaji village faced severe environmental degradation of their lands since nickel mining operations began in 2024. In response, the community protested against mining activities and demanded an immediate halt to operations.

In May, police charged 11 Indigenous persons from Maba Sangaji with obstructing mining activities. The clampdown started on 18 May after 27 residents held a traditional

ritual in protest. Police accused the residents of "thuggery" and carrying sharp weapons, and arrested the entire group. During interrogation, the residents were denied access to lawyers, one person was beaten and two were coerced into signing documents without proper explanation. They were also subjected to forced urine tests not covered by police procedures. The following day, 16 residents were released while 11 remained detained until October, when they were sentenced to prison terms of five months and eight days by the Soasio District Court.[6] By the year's end, all those detained had been released.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

In June, members of the Indonesian Ahmadiyah Congregation (JAI), an Islamic minority community, faced discrimination and intimidation in Banjar, a city in West Java province, and Manado, the capital city of North Sulawesi province. On 5 June, Banjar city officials visited a JAI place of worship and warned members not to conduct religious activities, saying they would return to "sterilize" JAI activities from the area. In Manado, on 2 June, the State Islamic Institute (IAIN) cancelled a scheduled book discussion about the Ahmadiyah community. The event was cancelled after the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI) of Manado city and North Sulawesi province sent a letter to the office of the president of IAIN Manado, saying that the activity should not proceed. The letter cited a Joint Ministerial Decree and an MUI fatwa declaring that the Ahmadiyah were heretical.[7]

The authorities failed to adequately protect religious groups from violence and harassment. On 27 June, local residents attacked a Christian youth retreat in Tangkil village, in Sukabumi regency in West Java, after a video circulated alleging protestant worship at a private villa. Before an official notice could be issued for lack of a permit for religious activities, residents broke into the property, vandalizing and breaking windows and furniture, and removed a Christian cross. Participants, including children and teenagers, were intimidated and expelled. Local authorities later justified the residents' actions, citing the absence of a "worship permit". Police arrested seven individuals suspected of vandalizing, but the Ministry of Human Rights initially requested their release – a request that was later withdrawn.[8]

On 27 July, a group of individuals attacked worship and religious education activities at a prayer house belonging to the Anugerah Padang congregation of the Indonesian Christian Congregation Church in the Koto Tangah district of the city of Padang. The group broke up the gathering and damaged the building and its facilities. Media reported that two children, aged eight and 11, sustained injuries from beatings and thrown objects. In addition to broken windows, the attack resulted in damage to furniture, electronic equipment and the disruption of electricity to the prayer house. Police arrested nine individuals suspected of vandalizing and charged them with acts of vandalism under Article 170 and property damage under Article 406 of the Criminal Code.[9]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In May, the Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources launched Indonesia's 10-year power grid plan, setting out a continued reliance on fossil fuels and a reduced commitment to a renewable energy transition. The plan was projected to increase the fossil fuel contribution to electricity generation by 16.6 gigawatts from coal and gas power plants.

The plan also removed the coal power plant retirement plan, previously outlined to be in operation from 2021 to 2030. This meant there was no phase-out plan for the period 2026-2034. The new grid plan decreased renewable energy share from 20.9 to 17 gigawatts of renewable energy sources, 22.7% below Indonesia's pledge under the multilateral Just Energy Transition Partnership in 2023.

1. "Indonesia: The national police chief must reveal those intimidating the Sukatani band and ensure art spaces are free from authorities' interference", 22 February (Indonesian only) ↑

2. "Indonesia: Stop crackdown on One Piece anime flag ahead of Independence Day", 8 August ↑
3. "Indonesia: Thoroughly investigate the shooting in Sorong and the deaths of civilians during the demonstration in Manokwari", 3 September (Indonesian only) ↑
4. "Indonesia: TAUD: Continued intimidation and submission of reports of the May Day 2025 demonstrators by National Police Headquarters", 6 August (Indonesian only) ↑
5. "Indonesia: Authorities must investigate eight deaths following violent crackdown on protests", 2 September ↑
6. "Indonesia: Release eleven Maba Sangaji residents from prison sentences", 16 October (Indonesian only) ↑
7. "Indonesia: Stop the discrimination against Ahmadiyah congregants and the suppression of Ahmadiyah discussions on campus", 9 June (Indonesian only) ↑
8. "Indonesia: The Ministry of Human Rights must cancel plans to request the suspension of detention for the suspect in the destruction of the Christian students' retreat site in Cidahu", 7 July (Indonesian only) ↑
9. "Indonesia: Thoroughly investigate the disruption and destruction of the prayer house in Padang", 28 July (Indonesian only) ↑

IRAN

Islamic Republic of Iran

The 12-day armed conflict between Iran and Israel led to civilian deaths and involved violations of international humanitarian law. Iranian authorities used the conflict to intensify internal repression. Thousands were arbitrarily detained, interrogated, harassed and/or unjustly prosecuted for exercising their human rights. Authorities used unlawful force and firearms to disperse protests, leading to deaths. Women and girls, LGBTI people, and ethnic and religious minorities suffered systemic discrimination and violence. Compulsory veiling was enforced. More than 1.8 million Afghans were unlawfully expelled or forced to return to Afghanistan. Enforced disappearances and torture and other ill-treatment were widespread and systematic. Corporal punishments amounting to torture, including flogging and amputation, were implemented. Trials remained systematically unfair. The death penalty was applied arbitrarily and was used disproportionately against minorities. The highest number of executions since 1989 was recorded. Systemic impunity prevailed for past and ongoing crimes against humanity and other crimes under international law. Authorities failed to address environmental degradation which contributed to thousands of deaths.

BACKGROUND

In April the UN Human Rights Council renewed the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran and the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Iran and broadened the latter's mandate. They and other independent UN experts and international human rights monitors were denied entry to Iran.

In September, nuclear-related UN sanctions were re-imposed on Iran.

Authorities continued to provide political, ideological, financial, logistical and military support to armed groups across the Middle East.

Authorities provided drones and ballistic missiles to Russia, which were used against civilian infrastructure in Ukraine.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

On 13 June, Israel launched air strikes on Iranian territory, damaging civilian infrastructure and killing more than 1,100 people, including 45 children.[1]

Israeli forces deliberately carried out air strikes on Evin prison complex in the capital, Tehran, causing damage and destruction. The strikes killed at least 80 civilians, including prisoners and their families, social workers and other prison staff.[2] The attack constituted a serious violation of international humanitarian law, requiring criminal investigation as a war crime.

Iranian forces launched retaliatory missiles and drones at Israel, unlawfully using cluster munitions in residential areas and killing at least 29 people, including children.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities criminalized speech critical of the Islamic Republic's political system.

Security and intelligence bodies and judicial authorities perpetrated widespread and systematic violations against those exercising their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.

Among those targeted were protesters, dissidents, women and girls defying compulsory veiling, journalists, lawyers, human rights defenders, labour rights activists, environmental activists, social media users, artists, musicians, writers, academics, university students, LGBTI people, members of oppressed ethnic and religious minorities, families of those killed during protests, and workers including nurses, teachers and truck drivers. Violations included: arbitrary detention; enforced disappearance; torture and other ill-treatment; death threats; unfair trials leading to prison sentences, flogging, fines and/or the death penalty; surveillance; harassment; interrogations; travel bans; asset freezes; confiscation of property; and suspension or expulsion from education or employment.

Authorities took punitive measures against the families of journalists, dissidents, protesters and human rights defenders based outside Iran, subjecting their relatives in Iran to interrogation, travel bans, arbitrary detention, and torture and other ill-treatment.

Platforms including Clubhouse, Facebook, Snapchat, Signal, Telegram, TikTok, X and YouTube remained blocked.

All independent political parties, civil society organizations, trades unions and newspapers remained banned.

Between March and August, security forces in cities including Esfahan, Mashhad and Sabzevar used unlawful force to quash peaceful protests over water and electricity cuts and inflation using tear gas, pepper spray, beatings and arbitrary arrests.

Repression intensified during and after the conflict with Israel. Authorities deliberately disrupted internet and mobile networks during the conflict, hindering access to life-saving information. Security forces established checkpoints, conducting invasive searches of mobile phones and arresting individuals for alleged "collaboration" with Israel based on social media posts and/or contact with journalists abroad.

In October a new Law on Intensifying the Punishment for Espionage and Collaboration with the Zionist Regime and Hostile States Against National Security and Interests (Espionage Law) took effect, prescribing the death penalty for peaceful activities, including sending information to journalists abroad, under the charge of "corruption on earth" (*efsad fel-arz*). The law also criminalized the use or handling of unlicensed satellite internet tools including Starlink, permitting the death penalty where authorities deem the individual an "enemy agent" acting with intent to "oppose the state" or "for espionage".

During protests that began on 28 December in Tehran and quickly spread nationwide, security forces unlawfully used rifles, shotguns loaded with metal pellets, tear gas and beatings to disperse largely peaceful protesters calling for the fall of the Islamic Republic system, leading to killings and injuries.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES AND TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention were widespread and systematic.

Following Israeli air strikes on Evin prison, dozens of prisoners detained for political reasons were forcibly disappeared for weeks or months.[3] Authorities transferred hundreds of other Evin prisoners to other prisons where conditions were cruel and inhumane and included overcrowding, insanitary conditions, poor ventilation, infestations of mice or insects, and insufficient access to potable water, edible food, bedding, toilets or washing facilities. Authorities continued to deny prisoners adequate healthcare. Several individuals died in custody in suspicious circumstances following credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment, including denial of healthcare.

Punishments amounting to torture – including flogging, blinding, amputation, crucifixion and stoning – were retained in law. Floggings and amputations were carried out.[4]

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Trials were systematically unfair, rendering detentions and executions arbitrary. Authorities routinely denied detainees access to lawyers during investigations and based convictions on torture-tainted "confessions" that were frequently broadcast by state television.

The judiciary lacked independence and was complicit in torture and other crimes under international law.

In August, authorities announced the arrests of 21,000 people in relation to the conflict with Israel.

The Espionage Law further eroded fair trial rights by establishing special Revolutionary Court branches, expediting criminal proceedings, limiting appeals to 10 days, and allowing courts to complete investigations, thereby eroding the separation of prosecutorial and judicial functions.

Authorities continued to arbitrarily detain foreign and dual nationals for leverage and committed hostage-taking with impunity.

In April, dissident Mehdi Karroubi's arbitrary house arrest ended after 14 years, while that of Mir Hossein Mousavi and Zahra Rahnavard entered its 15th year.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Authorities continued to discriminate against women and girls, denying them equal rights in marriage, divorce, child nationality and custody, employment, inheritance and political office.

The legal marriage age for girls remained 13, but fathers could obtain judicial permission for forced marriage at a younger age.

The minimum age of criminal responsibility for girls remained nine lunar years (approximately eight years and nine months) and 15 lunar years for boys (approximately 14 years and seven months).

Authorities subjected women's rights defenders, journalists, singers and others demanding gender equality and challenging compulsory veiling to arbitrary detention, unfair trials, flogging and social media bans.[5]

In May the government withdrew a bill that had been originally presented more than a decade previously to address violence against women, but which had been repeatedly diluted and renamed.

Lack of legal protections, shelters or accountability enabled femicide, with the number of women and girls murdered by male relatives surpassing 100, according to figures from domestic newspapers and human rights organizations outside Iran. As the authorities did not publish femicide statistics, the actual figure was likely far higher.

Widespread resistance by women and girls to compulsory veiling, together with a sustained domestic and global outcry over violence against them, forced authorities to retreat from the violent mass arrests and assaults of previous years and to maintain the pause in implementation of the Law on Protecting the Family Through the Promotion of the Culture of Chastity and Hijab. However, authorities continued to use existing laws and regulations to enforce compulsory veiling in workplaces, universities and other public sector institutions, leaving women and girls who resisted facing harassment, assault, arbitrary arrest, fines and expulsion from employment and education. Perpetrators included both state agents and vigilantes acting with state endorsement.

Electronic surveillance, including facial recognition, was central to enforcing compulsory veiling. Women continued to receive threatening SMS messages based on data from International Mobile Subscriber Identity-Catchers (IMSI-Catchers), contactless card readers, surveillance cameras and reports submitted by state agents and vigilantes via apps designed for this purpose.

The arbitrary confiscation of women's cars as punishment for defying veiling laws continued.

In October the head of the Tehran Headquarters for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced the creation of a "Hijab and Chastity Situation Room" and plans to deploy a trained force of 80,000 members to enhance surveillance and enforcement infrastructure.

In November and December, the Supreme Leader, the head of the judiciary and other senior officials portrayed women's and girls' widespread defiance of compulsory veiling as "social deviance" linked to foreign enemies. The head of the judiciary ordered prosecutorial, security and intelligence bodies to confront unveiling as a "flagrant crime".

Scores of businesses including restaurants were forcibly shut for serving unveiled women, with owners facing arrest and prosecution.

DISCRIMINATION

Ethnic minorities

Ethnic minorities including Ahwazi Arabs, Azerbaijani Turks, Baluchis, Kurds and Turkmen faced widespread violations, including discrimination in access to education, employment, adequate housing and political office. Under-investment in regions home to ethnic minorities, including lack of infrastructure supplying clean water, sustained their poverty and marginalization.

Children from ethnic minorities were denied education in their mother tongue, as Persian remained the sole language of instruction. This contributed to high dropout rates and reports of humiliation, harassment and unsafe school environments for non-Persian speaking students. In February, parliament rejected a bill to introduce the teaching of literature in ethnic minority languages.

Authorities smeared minority rights activists, portraying peaceful advocacy of minority rights as a threat to territorial integrity.

Those who challenged violations or demanded decentralization or regional self-governance faced arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance, torture and other ill-treatment, unjust prison terms or the death penalty.

Authorities continued to refuse to issue birth certificates and other identity documents to tens of thousands of Baluchi men, women and children, leaving them effectively stateless and without access to public services including education, healthcare, banking and marriage registration, and at risk of forcible removal to neighbouring countries as non-nationals.

Ethnic minorities were disproportionately affected by violations of the right to life, including unlawful shootings and the death penalty.

Religious minorities

Religious minorities, including Baha'is, Christians, Gonabadi Dervishes, Jews, Sunni Muslims and Yaresan, suffered widespread and systemic human rights violations, including discrimination in access to education, employment, adoption, political office and places of worship.

Religious minorities professing or practising their faith faced arbitrary detention, unjust prosecution, and torture and other ill-treatment.

People born to parents registered as Muslim risked arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and the death penalty for "apostasy" if they adopted other religions or atheism.

Authorities used the securitized climate after the conflict with Israel to intensify repression of Baha'i, Christian and Jewish communities.[6]

The Baha'i community faced systemic persecution amid intensified state propaganda falsely portraying them as Israeli spies. Violations against them included arbitrary detention, home raids, expulsion from employment, bans on higher education, forcible business closures, property confiscation or destruction, travel bans, death threats, unfair trials, imprisonment, exile, desecration of Baha'i cemeteries and denial of burial rights.

Authorities subjected dozens of Jews to arbitrary summonses, interrogations and unfounded espionage charges.

Authorities smeared Christians as "Mossad mercenaries", broadcast forced "confessions" of those detained, raided house churches and arbitrarily detained Christian converts.

LGBTI people

Consensual same-sex sexual relations remained criminalized. Punishments included flogging and the death penalty. Several men were flogged following convictions for consensual same-sex sexual relations.

Criminalization fuelled violence and discrimination against LGBTI people, hindering access to education, employment, housing and healthcare and leaving victims of homophobic and transphobic attacks without legal recourse or protection services.

Gender non-conforming expressions that diverged from state-imposed notions of masculine and feminine presentation, including choice of dress and appearance, were punishable by imprisonment, fines and flogging.

State-endorsed "conversion therapies" amounting to torture or other ill-treatment remained prevalent, including against children. Hormone therapy and surgical procedures, including sterilization, were mandatory for people changing the sex they were assigned at birth.

Teachers, principals and school security departments subjected LGBTI schoolchildren to harassment, exclusion, forced transfers to other schools and referrals for non-consensual psychiatric and medical interventions.

Hate speech by officials and state media persisted against LGBTI people.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Afghans faced widespread violence and discrimination, including in education, housing, employment, healthcare, banking and freedom of movement.

More than 1.8 million Afghans, including unaccompanied and separated children, women and girls, refugees and asylum seekers were unlawfully expelled or forced to return to Afghanistan.[7] The mass expulsions involved violent raids, stop-and-search and arbitrary arrests.

Authorities escalated racist, dehumanizing rhetoric against Afghans, scapegoating them for socio-economic ills, accusing them of being spies for Israel, and fuelling hate crimes.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

The Law on the Use of Firearms by Armed Forces in Necessary Incidents continued to entrench impunity for unlawful killings by authorizing the broad use of firearms, including for dispersing protests and intercepting individuals fleeing arrest or crossing borders illegally. A bill amending this law remained pending before parliament. If approved, it would allow additional forces beyond the police, the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and the army to carry firearms and expand the circumstances for their use.

Security forces continued to fire at people in cars with impunity, including at new checkpoints introduced in June, resulting in deaths of adults and children.

Border guards continued to kill scores of unarmed Baluchi fuel porters (*soukhtbars*) in Sistan and Baluchestan province, and Kurdish cross-border couriers (*kulbars*) between the Kurdistan regions of Iran and Iraq.

In July, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps agents used lethal force, including AK pattern rifles and shotguns loaded with metal pellets, against a group of Baluchi women during a raid on the village of Gounich, Sistan and Baluchestan province, unlawfully killing two and injuring 10 others.

DEATH PENALTY

Authorities carried out the highest number of executions recorded since 1989.[8] Public executions were carried out.

The escalation was driven by increased use of the death penalty as a tool of political repression and lethal anti-narcotics policies. A bill amending the Anti-Narcotics Law that would retain the death penalty for certain trafficking and distribution offences remained under parliamentary review.

Mass executions sparked unprecedented peaceful prison sit-ins and hunger strikes, with security forces threatening reprisals against prisoners.

The death penalty was retained for acts protected under the rights to privacy and freedom of expression, religion or belief, including drinking alcohol and consensual same-sex sexual relationships. "Adultery" (sexual relationships outside marriage) remained punishable by stoning to death.

At least one individual who was under 18 at the time of the crime was executed; scores of others also under 18 at the time of the crime remained on death row.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Systemic impunity prevailed for unlawful killings, torture, enforced disappearances and other crimes under international law committed in 2025 and in previous decades.

Prosecutors routinely dismissed victims' complaints and closed investigations. In rare cases that reached trial, military courts, which hold jurisdiction over security forces' violations, exonerated perpetrators, limited redress to state-paid "blood money" (*diyeh*) and excluded commanders and superiors from liability.

In June, authorities shielded the perpetrators of the unlawful killing of nine-year-old Kian Pirfalak during the Woman Life Freedom protests in 2022 from accountability by arbitrarily executing a protester, Mojahed (Abbas) Kourkouri, for Kian Pirfalak's death following a grossly unfair trial.[9]

The trial over the shooting down in 2020 of Ukraine International Airlines flight 752 stalled after an Iranian military court delayed proceedings. Victims' families and lawyers were denied access to the case file. The 10 defendants remained released on bail.

Authorities prevented victims' families from accessing the Khavaran mass grave site, containing the remains of some of the victims of the 1988 prison massacres. They also destroyed plot 41 of Tehran's Behesht Zahra cemetery, containing individual graves of those executed in the 1980s, to build a car park.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Iran maintained high levels of fossil fuel production and subsidies.

Authorities failed to address Iran's environmental degradation, which exacerbated existing inequalities and disproportionately affected marginalized communities. The crisis was marked by the loss of lakes, rivers and wetlands; groundwater depletion; water pollution from discharge of wastewater into urban water sources; deforestation; land subsidence; declining water reserves and soil health; and air pollution, partly from the industrial use of substandard fuels, which contributed to thousands of deaths.

People faced severe and prolonged water and electricity cuts, resulting in school and business closures. Authorities ignored systemic failures, blaming drought and over-consumption.

Environmental rights activists faced arbitrary detention.

In July, three environmental activists died in Kurdistan province while fighting a wildfire, sparking criticism of the authorities for leaving firefighting largely to volunteers while failing to provide protective gear and safety measures.

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1. "Urgent need to protect civilians amid unprecedented escalation in hostilities between Israel and Iran", 18 June ↑
2. "Iran: Deliberate Israeli attack on Tehran's Evin prison must be investigated as a war crime", 22 July ↑
3. "Iran: Tehran prisoners at risk after Israeli strikes", 7 July ↑
4. "Iran: Officials responsible for finger-amputations must face accountability for torture", 31 July ↑
5. "Iran: Authorities target women's rights activists with arbitrary arrest, flogging and death penalty", 17 March ↑
6. "Iran: Authorities unleash wave of oppression after hostilities with Israel", 3 September ↑
7. "Millions more Afghans in Iran facing expulsion", 30 July ↑
8. "Iran: Further information: Thousands at risk of execution in Iran", 10 September ↑
9. "Iran: Arbitrary execution of Woman Life Freedom protester after sham trial and torture", 11 June ↑

IRAQ

Republic of Iraq

Internally displaced people endured worsening conditions amid prolonged displacement. Security forces, armed militias and political actors continued to commit serious human rights violations with near-total impunity. Judicial dysfunction left victims of violations without justice or reparations. Environmental degradation compounded humanitarian challenges. The government increasingly used authoritarian practices, cracking down on dissent, targeting journalists, activists and civil society while curtailing freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Legislation threatened women's rights amid worsening societal attitudes towards gender-based violence. The death penalty was applied following trials undermined by severe procedural flaws, while information regarding executions remained opaque.

BACKGROUND

Iraq held parliamentary elections on 11 November. Dozens of candidates, among them independent and women candidates, were disqualified from running, a move criticized by civil society. In mid-October, a candidate was killed by an improvised explosive device attached to his car. At least two people were brought before an investigative judge and were awaiting trial for his murder at the end of the year. The election results were disputed by numerous candidates who claimed voting and procedural irregularities had taken place but on 14 December the Federal Supreme Court of Iraq ratified the results. By the end of the year, a new government was yet to be formed.

A peace agreement between Türkiye and the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) saw the latter lay down its arms in a ceremony in July. However, thousands of residents of villages in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KR-I) were unable to return to their homes due to the continued presence of Turkish forces.

Corruption in the public sector and among public and political officials continued to affect all aspects of life. Failure to enforce safety regulations due to corruption in local authorities led to fires in hospitals and shopping centres. Dozens died, among them infants.

The UN Assistance Mission to Iraq (UNAMI) ceased operations officially on 31 December 2025 following a request by the Iraqi authorities in May 2024.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

More than 1 million people remained internally displaced in Iraq. Among them, at least 101,000 people continued to live in 20 camps in the KR-I, while the rest resided in private settings, including rented homes and informal settlements across several governorates in the KR-I and Iraq.

Living conditions and hygiene standards continued to deteriorate in camps for displaced people in the KR-I. In April, July and September, fires broke out destroying dozens of shelters and injuring at least two people. The fires followed a pattern seen in previous years, largely attributed to deteriorating safety standards.

Humanitarian organizations reported slower progress in achieving durable solutions for long-term displacement, citing limited funding, ongoing insecurity, ongoing barriers to accessing civil documentation, and persistent obstacles to restoring livelihoods and housing.

Returnees

By the end of the year, Iraqi authorities had facilitated the return of hundreds of Iraqi nationals from Al-Hol camp in Syria as part of the government's ongoing repatriation and reintegration efforts. Returnees were still required to pass through the Al-Amal Rehabilitation Centre in Ninewa prior to returning to their areas of origin. Human rights and protection concerns persisted for returnees, who faced obstacles to accessing civil documentation, restricting their access to services, free movement and employment.

Social stigma remained pervasive, with some communities refusing to accept returnees who had a perceived affiliation to the Islamic State armed group, compelling families – especially women-headed households – to conceal their identities or relocate to unfamiliar areas to avoid discrimination. Economic hardship persisted, as most returnees lacked stable income or housing, and women and children faced heightened vulnerability to exploitation and violence, including child marriage, domestic violence and sexual harassment.

In August, a joint UN-Iraq initiative found that only 27% of registered returnee households had received their financial entitlements since 2019, citing data-related challenges and procedural delays.

Climate-induced displacement

Iraq experienced its lowest water reserves in more than 80 years, intensifying the country's environmental crisis. By September, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), approximately 186,000 people were displaced due to drought, water scarcity and related climate impacts, with very few reporting that they planned to return to their areas of origin.

The displacement primarily affected populations in the southern governorates of Thi Qar, Missan and Al-Diwaniya. Among the displaced, at least 1,800 families were living in substandard, temporary or makeshift shelters, while many climate-induced migrants relied on irregular housing arrangements and lacked formal permission to occupy land. The Iraqi authorities provided no financial or other assistance to those displaced, who were left to fend for themselves.

The IOM reported that climate-displaced Iraqis faced serious difficulties accessing food, water and other essential items, with poverty and inadequate support compounding their vulnerability. In addition, communities across the country struggled with declining agricultural productivity and limited livelihood opportunities, increasing their likelihood of long-term displacement.

IMPUNITY

Iraqi authorities made no significant progress in holding accountable those responsible for gross human rights violations including in the context of the years-long armed conflict with Islamic State and the October 2019 nationwide protests, also known as Tishreen, or their aftermath. No results from the numerous investigations announced by consecutive governments were made public. In courts, prosecutions for human rights violations remained limited and largely ineffective as suspected perpetrators were acquitted due to lack of evidence. Civil society actors decried political interference, corruption, and intimidation of witnesses and members of the judiciary, all of which further undermined the independence and credibility of the judicial process.

Survivors and families of victims of the state violence committed during the Tishreen protests and their aftermath continued to face severe obstacles in accessing the meagre reparations for which no official figures were made public.

In what civil society described as a "revenge campaign" for the Tishreen protests, authorities targeted dozens of activists and protesters using arrest warrants issued in the previous five years for charges that carried serious penalties under the Penal Code, including the death penalty. Acting on these arrest warrants, throughout the year security forces in the city of Nasriya raided the homes of activists and, in some cases, assaulted and arrested family members in place of activists to pressure those in hiding to hand themselves over.

The fate of thousands of men and boys who were arbitrarily detained and subsequently subjected to enforced disappearance at the hands of Iraqi security forces and factions of the Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) since 2014 remained undisclosed.

Iraq made no measurable progress towards adopting the long-pending draft law that would criminalize enforced disappearances, despite being a party to the International Convention Against Enforced Disappearance. The absence of such

legislation and the continued impunity for past and ongoing violations deepened public mistrust in state institutions.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

As in previous years, air and water pollution contributed to respiratory, cardiovascular and gastrointestinal illnesses as reported by Iraq's Ministry of the Environment and the WHO.

The air quality in the capital, Baghdad, was worsened by the use of heavy fuel oil in industrial activities, private generators, waste incinerators and refineries, coupled with weather conditions such as sand and dust storms.

In Basra and other southern governorates, rising salinity and pollution compounded by poor governance triggered a water crisis, leaving residents with little or no access to potable water.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Iraqi authorities, political actors and members of the PMU continued to harass, arrest or prosecute journalists, media workers and media outlets.

The authorities increased their crackdown on freedom of expression through a campaign that used vague legal provisions criminalizing "indecent content" and "public morality" violations to target critics, activists and independent media. Law enforcement under the Ministry of the Interior carried out dozens of arrests during the year. In September the campaign was renamed to cover "content that violates public decency and morals", while still failing to define such content.

Draft legislation debated during the year, including a law on the right to information, risked further restricting media freedoms and public access to information.

Government bodies continued to impose burdensome regulations, conduct background checks and interfere in programming, forcing civil society organizations to operate under increasing constraints. The withdrawal of international funding, including the dismantling of USAID, further compounded the impact of government interference on local NGOs.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Throughout the year, local authorities operating alongside PMU factions continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain activists, social media content creators and prominent protesters and protest organizers for criticizing the lack of justice and accountability for violations in the context of the Tishreen protests; the impact of government corruption and nepotism on human rights and the environment; inadequate public services; and the lack of employment opportunities.

Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Journalists in the KR-I, particularly those covering issues relating to human rights and government corruption, faced detention, harassment, assaults and threats at the hands of the authorities and individuals who identified themselves as affiliated to political actors, with little accountability for perpetrators. Between January and July, civil society organizations and media in the KR-I reported dozens of arrests of media professionals, often accompanied by assaults and raids. Authorities introduced legislation that would criminalize reporting on crime in certain circumstances, contributing to self-censorship.

Security forces in the KR-I repeatedly detained media workers at their place of work or while covering peaceful protests or security incidents, and assaulted them.

The KR-I judiciary often extended the detention of journalists, activists and critics through new additional cases brought against them. In August a court sentenced prominent journalist Sherwan Sherwani to a new prison sentence of four years and six months on spurious charges days before his scheduled release. An appeals court in the region's capital, Erbil, upheld his conviction in October but reduced his sentence to three years and five months – still heavier than the two-year maximum term prescribed by law. Sherwan Sherwani had been imprisoned

since 2020 and was previously convicted in an unfair trial in 2021.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Security forces repeatedly used unlawful force including live ammunition, water cannon and tear gas to violently disperse peaceful protests across Baghdad and in central and southern governorates. Demonstrations – often sparked by economic grievances, corruption and impunity – led to the arbitrary arrest of dozens, prolonged detentions without charge and harassment of activists and protesters. Authorities rarely held security personnel accountable for these abuses. Protests in Nasiriyah and Basra in April and October were particularly violently dispersed using tear gas, live ammunition and the beating of protesters. In southern governorates, protesters demanding clean water and improved electricity supply burned tyres and blocked roads, while anti-riot police units responded with tear gas and beat protesters.

Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Security forces dispersed peaceful gatherings across the KR-I, particularly those protesting about unpaid salaries and corruption, using tear gas and arbitrary arrests and detention.

In February, security forces in Erbil blocked teachers from entering the city to demonstrate, using violent tactics and tear gas to disperse them. Later that month, various security forces attacked peaceful protesters in the Arbat sub-district of Sulaymaniyah and detained journalists to prevent coverage of their actions. Asayish forces (the Kurdistan Regional Government's primary security and intelligence forces) fired tear gas and assaulted journalists covering the Arbat demonstration, arrested several reporters and raided a local TV station.

In June, security units cracked down on multiple demonstrations in Sulaymaniyah and Erbil, leading to further arrests and harassment of activists and demonstrators.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In January, parliament adopted an amendment to the Personal Status Law granting one religious sect increased authority over family law, including marriage and divorce, heightening risks to women's rights and deepening sectarian divisions. Meanwhile, parliament failed to criminalize domestic violence or to repeal problematic and discriminatory articles of the Penal Code, such as those mitigating so-called "honour-based killings" and permitting corporal punishment of wives and children.

Domestic violence and gender-based violence remained pervasive, with authorities failing to ensure accountability or provide adequate survivor or victim-centred services. By the end of the year, authorities in the KR-I reported the killings of at least 53 women and girls, mostly by male relatives. No centralized data existed for the rest of Iraq. Courts failed to hold perpetrators accountable, leading to public outrage from civil society. Derogatory statements and comments made by political figures and members of parliament normalized gender-based violence including the killing of female relatives.

DEATH PENALTY

Despite ongoing and deeply entrenched violations of the right to a fair trial, courts imposed death sentences, mostly for drug-related offences or terrorism-related crimes. Executions were carried out but information on numbers remained opaque.

IRELAND

Ireland

The housing crisis worsened. Redress for survivors of abuse in "mother and baby homes" was inadequate. Discrimination against Roma and Traveller women and girls continued. Concerns persisted over limited access to abortion. The government's Climate Action Plan faced criticism for lacking clear policies. Police used unnecessary force against protesters.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

The widespread crisis of housing availability and affordability worsened with record numbers of homeless people. The Programme for Government, published in January, lacked any commitment to a constitutional referendum on the right to adequate housing, as recommended by the previous government's Housing Commission.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In July, in its concluding observations on Ireland's eighth periodic report, the CEDAW Committee called for the removal of outstanding arbitrary barriers to redress for survivors of abuse in "mother and baby homes", Magdalene Laundries and other residential institutions for women and girls operating in the 20th century.

The committee observed that Roma and Traveller women and girls continued to face limited access to education, employment, health services and housing. It noted persistent over-representation of Traveller women in prisons.

The committee also expressed concern at the "failure to implement the recommendations of the 2023 independent review of the operation of the Health (Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy) Act 2018, the lack of available abortion services, the absence of available data, and stigma and conscientious objection among medical personnel".

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In April, the government published its Climate Action Plan 2025. Civil society groups expressed concern that the plan lacked clear policies and clear obligations on state bodies to equitably phase out fossil fuels and associated infrastructure.

Ireland's Climate and Environmental Finance Report, published in March, showed a one-third increase in climate finance spending in 2023, indicating that Ireland was on track to meet its commitment of EUR 225 million annually in 2025.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

The Guardian newspaper uncovered evidence that Microsoft's Ireland-based data centres had been used by the Israeli military for surveillance of, and planned air strikes on, Palestinians. In September 2025, following an investigation, Microsoft announced the termination of Israel's Unit 8200's access to certain Azure Cloud storage and AI services. However, at the end of the year it was unclear if Microsoft had investigated and terminated all contracts and products supplied to Israeli entities for involvement with potential violations against Palestinians.

The government failed to enact promised legislation banning trade with illegal Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Police made unnecessary arrests and used unnecessary force at a Mothers Against Genocide protest in March. In October, police used excessive force against people protesting against Israel's detention of Global Sumud Flotilla activists.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

In October, the charities regulator established a statutory consultative panel to inform how the new charitable purpose of "advancement of human rights", introduced in the Charities (Amendment) Act 2024, would be applied to decisions on allowing organizations to have charitable status. Concern remained at the ongoing negative impact of the Electoral Act on civil society organizations' access to funding for campaigning purposes.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

A draft bill published in April proposed to overhaul the asylum system in line with the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. However, the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission (IHREC) expressed fears that the draft legislation risked introducing a system that failed to respect asylum seekers' rights. Concerns related particularly to detention, access to legal representation and

counselling, and the treatment of children and vulnerable people.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

In March, the Department of Justice published its long-overdue review of section 7A of the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017, which criminalized the purchase of sex. The review recommended continuing the criminalization approach despite evidence that this exposed sex workers to a higher risk of violence and other abuse.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The CEDAW Committee expressed concern at the lack of free, prior and informed consent for medical interventions on intersex children and called for a ban on conversion practices for LGBTI people.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

In July, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture published the report of its findings following a visit to Ireland in 2024. The report noted worsening prison conditions, particularly for men, with evidence of inadequate mental healthcare, inter-prisoner violence and preventable deaths in custody, as well as allegations of abuse by staff.

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

In its first report as Ireland's Independent Monitoring Mechanism under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the IHREC noted a "chronic lack of community-based supports, housing and services amounting to a de facto policy of institutionalization". It also pinpointed "repeated state failure to protect disabled people" in institutional settings.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

In July, civil society organization Uplift filed a legal action alleging government failure to investigate evidence that civilian aircraft repeatedly and illegally flew from the USA to Israel through Irish airspace while carrying military cargo.

ISRAEL AND THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY

State of Israel

Israel continued to commit the crimes of genocide and apartheid. The population of Gaza was subjected to mass starvation, killings and displacement alongside destruction of homes and other civilian infrastructure, which persisted despite ceasefire agreements. In the West Bank, escalating attacks and killings by settlers and Israeli armed forces alongside other human rights violations caused the forcible transfer of the civilian population. Inside Israel, Bedouin villages remained subject to demolition and forced eviction. Israeli forces killed 56 Palestinian journalists and media workers. Thousands of Palestinians remained detained without charge or trial; dozens died after being subjected to torture and other ill-treatment. Impunity for such crimes was rife.

BACKGROUND

Israel's genocide in the occupied Gaza Strip entered its third year, leaving the Palestinian territory in ruins. A truce between Israeli armed forces and Palestinian armed groups between 19 January and 18 March collapsed when the Israeli government unilaterally re-escalated hostilities. On 9 September, Israeli air strikes on Doha, the capital of Qatar, hit buildings where a Hamas negotiating delegation was staying, killing six. In the following weeks a ceasefire was agreed, coming into effect on 10 October. Hamas and other armed groups released all 20 living hostages on 13 October in exchange for Israel's release of nearly 2,000 Palestinian detainees and prisoners. Despite the ceasefire, 415 Palestinians in Gaza were subsequently killed by Israeli forces, of whom

at least 100 were children, according to UNICEF.

Israel's armed conflicts extended to other regional actors throughout the year. On 4 May a missile fired by a Yemeni Huthi armed group hit Ben Gurion airport in central Israel. Between May and September, the Israeli air force and navy targeted Yemeni ports, airports and power stations (see Yemen entry). After the Israeli military attacked Iranian targets on 13 June (see Iran entry), Iran fired missiles at Israel, killing 29 people, and used cluster munitions. Israel conducted air strikes and raids on southern Syria in July and November. Israel continued to conduct almost daily air strikes on southern Lebanon, killing more than 127 civilians according to the OHCHR, the UN human rights office (see Lebanon entry).

GENOCIDE

Israel continued to deliberately inflict conditions calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip.

Following a period of improved humanitarian access between 19 January and 2 March, the Israeli military imposed a total siege that was only partially eased on 19 May. The relaxation of the siege did not include easing restrictions on certain critical supplies, such as fuel and cooking gas, which were not allowed into Gaza from 2 March until 11 September. Israeli authorities cut the electricity supply to the last desalination plant in Gaza on 9 March, further reducing access to water. Without fuel, electricity generators could not power hospital equipment.[1] Gaza residents seeking aid from Israeli and US-run distribution centres were attacked, killing 859 Palestinians between late May and August, as Israel and the USA sought to replace the existing UN-led aid mechanism with a militarized and deadly alternative.

More than 13,000 children were admitted to hospital with acute malnutrition, which has lifelong consequences, resulting from Israel's blocking of aid supplies. According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, by mid-August more than half a million people in the Gaza Strip faced famine, the highest level of catastrophic starvation. Another 1.07 million people were in the second-highest level of starvation, and 396,000 people were in the third, critical phase. According to Médecins Sans Frontières, the number of patients suffering from malnutrition presenting in clinics in Gaza City nearly quadrupled from the beginning of May to mid-July.[2]

Israel conducted direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects, and indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks, striking crowded civilian spaces, including hospitals, cafes, busy market streets, and schools housing internally displaced people. Israeli air and ground forces killed 26,791 and injured 64,065 in Gaza during the year, of whom 60% were children, women and older people. One of the deadliest days was 18 March, when 414 Palestinians were killed including 174 children. On 23 March the Israeli military attacked five ambulances, killing 15 aid workers including Red Crescent paramedics, and injuring two. On 30 June the Israeli military struck al-Baqa cafe in Gaza City, killing 32 people, mostly civilians.

The combination of air strikes on medical facilities and Israel's blocking of essential aid deliveries, including medical necessities for reproductive healthcare, had a devastating effect on the health of pregnant and breastfeeding women and on newborns and infants.[3]

The mass and repeated displacement of more than 90% of Gaza's population caused great physical and mental harm. All of Gaza's universities and colleges, hundreds of mosques and three churches were damaged or destroyed. Most schools were transformed into shelters for displaced people, although many were damaged by Israeli air strikes and unmanned demolition vehicles.

What was left of Khuza'a, a town of 11,000 inhabitants in the south, was completely destroyed in May,[4] as was much of Gaza City in September, without imperative military necessity.[5] On 5 September, Israel began a campaign to destroy high-rise residential and commercial buildings across Gaza City, razing at least 16 tower blocks in 10 days,

along with makeshift camps in their vicinity. This destruction resulted in the displacement of thousands of families. Even after the signing of the truce in October, Israeli authorities and forces persisted in committing genocide by continuing to deliberately inflict conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of Gaza's population without signalling any change in intent.[6]

APARTHEID

Forcible transfer

In the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities demolished 1,658 buildings, permanently displacing some 2,116 Palestinians, according to OCHA. In January an Israeli court ordered the eviction of 27 families from their homes in Silwan, a neighbourhood in occupied East Jerusalem, after a decade-long case filed by an Israeli settler organization.[7]

Eighty-six new outposts were established in addition to some 371 settlements and outposts already in existence, and Israeli authorities formally authorized the establishment of 54 settlements, according to Yesh Din, an Israeli anti-occupation organization.

Israeli forces allowed or encouraged settlers to terrorize Palestinians with impunity and sometimes joined in the violence. The attacks expelled some 220 families from 19 villages in all areas of the West Bank, according to B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization. The villages of Jinba and Shi'b al-Butum, in the South Hebron Hills in the southern West Bank were repeatedly attacked, with a school and clinic ransacked.

Inside Israel, Israeli authorities demolished some 5,000 homes in Bedouin villages in the Naqab/Negev desert in the south, according to the Advanced Steering Committee for Naqab Arabs, a local representative group. Expanding Jewish locales were administered by separate local authorities. More than 60 homes were demolished in Al-Sir village in the north-east of the Naqab/Negev during the hottest months, making some 1,500 Bedouin Palestinian citizens of Israel homeless or forcibly displaced to inadequate housing in Bedouin-only townships, which lacked essential services. On 12 November, Israel's Supreme Court ordered the forced displacement of about 500 residents of the village of Ras Jrabah within three months to make way for the expansion of the Jewish city of Dimona.

Thousands of children born of parents with different legal statuses determined by Israeli authorities continued to face discriminatory obstacles in obtaining birth certificates and family unification status, due to prohibitions in the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law (Temporary Order), which had been renewed almost continuously since 2003. On 9 May the Knesset further restricted family unification by amending the Citizenship Law to deny or revoke Jerusalem residency and Israeli citizenship in cases where a Palestinian spouse, parent or child has any extended family member with "security issues", including minor criminal records.

Israeli authorities continued to prevent the return home of refugees and internally displaced Palestinians expelled in 1948 and 1967.

Freedom of movement

The blockade of Gaza continued into its 19th year with increased restrictions and was escalated to a total siege between 2 March and 19 May. For the third consecutive year, Israeli authorities continued to completely prohibit medical evacuations from Gaza into the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, despite court petitions. It also continued to severely restrict medical evacuations abroad. Together with the destruction of Gaza's healthcare system, this led to hundreds of preventable deaths.

OCHA counted 849 roadblocks and checkpoints in the West Bank, obstructing Palestinians' movement between Palestinian villages and towns, and delaying emergency services' access.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

According to the International Federation of Journalists, Israeli forces killed 56 journalists and media workers, more than in any other

country. Some were killed while they were reporting.

West Bank

The Israeli army deployed tanks, carried out air strikes, destroyed civilian buildings and infrastructure, and imposed extensive restrictions on freedom of movement in order to conduct militarized arrest raids in Jenin, Tulkarem, Nablus and Tubas in the north, and in Hebron in the south of the West Bank. A total of 240 Palestinians, including 55 children, were killed by Israeli forces or settlers, including at least 225 by Israeli forces, according to OCHA. Israeli forces also shot at displaced civilians who tried to return to their homes, according to witnesses.[8]

Settlers killed at least nine Palestinians and injured at least 830, according to OCHA. On 28 July, Awda Al-Hathaleen, a human rights defender in Umm al-Kheir village in the South Hebron Hills, was killed by a settler who was released after three days under house arrest and did not face charges.[9] State-backed settler violence, mostly enjoying impunity, exacerbated the hostile environment resulting in the forcible transfer of the civilian population.[10]

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Some 4,622 Palestinians were held without charge or trial at the end of the year, of whom 3,385 were under administrative detention orders and 1,237 were held under the Unlawful Combatants Law, according to HaMoked, an Israeli rights group. HaMoked reported that hundreds more detainees from Gaza were held in military facilities without any form of legal process or even registration.

Dr Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza, continued to be detained arbitrarily since being arrested alongside colleagues on 27 December 2024 while caring for patients. His lawyer said that he was beaten and deprived of food and sleep.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Israeli prisons and detention centres continued to violate the prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including through the denial of medicine, food, clothing and sleep, continuous beating, cuffing and blindfolding, dog attacks, rape and other sexual violence, among other abuses. This led to the deaths of at least 98 Palestinian detainees between October 2023 and November 2025, according to Physicians for Human Rights – Israel. In November the UN Committee Against Torture described Israel's practices as a "de facto state policy of organized and widespread torture and ill-treatment".

Crimes committed by the armed forces were inadequately examined in internal military debriefs and in investigations by the Military Advocate General. On 6 February, only one of five soldiers charged by the Military Advocate General for assaulting a Palestinian detainee at Sde Teiman detention centre in southern Israel was convicted. Following a plea bargain, the soldier was sentenced to seven months' imprisonment.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Aside from the one soldier sentenced in relation to torture (see above), two soldiers and a platoon commander were imprisoned for seven days in April, and four other officers disciplined, in relation to the ransacking of a school and clinic in the West Bank village of Jinba in March (see above, Apartheid).

There was no impartial or effective Israeli investigation into the Golani brigade's killing of 15 medical staff and first responders in March (see above, Genocide).

The UN Commission of Inquiry received no response from the Israeli government and continued to be barred from entering Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT). Israel allowed no independent investigators or international journalists into Gaza.

Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the USA and Hungary, despite being subject to an ICC arrest warrant.

In September the UN General Assembly's deadline for ending Israel's unlawful occupation of the OPT passed unheeded.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In the context of increased domestic violence in Israel, there was a sharp rise in killings of women compared to previous years, according to Haaretz, an Israeli newspaper, which documented 46 femicides, 26 of which were committed by family members. According to an NGO, The Abraham Initiatives, cases of women murder victims who are Palestinian citizens of Israel are five times less likely to be resolved compared to those of Jewish women victims. In general, murders of Palestinian citizens were less than half as likely to be resolved compared to cases where the victims was a Jewish citizen.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel faced repression during protests when they expressed their opposition to the Israeli forces' attacks on Gaza, with the police occasionally using stun grenades and water cannons. Dozens were detained for social media posts commenting on Israeli military actions in Gaza. According to the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, 96% of incitement cases opened by the police under the over-broad Anti-Terrorism Law targeted Palestinian citizens of Israel. Meanwhile, Palestinian media monitoring organization 7amleh found thousands of Israeli social media posts inciting violence against Palestinians.

International solidarity activists carrying humanitarian aid by boat towards Gaza in June and September were detained by Israeli forces and deported. They included human rights defenders, doctors, parliamentarians and journalists protesting against Israel's blockade and genocide.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

Seven Israeli citizens were jailed for refusing to serve in the army based on their objections to military occupation, apartheid and genocide against Palestinians. Conscientious objector Yuval Peleg spent 130 days in prison.

DEATH PENALTY

On 11 November the Knesset approved in the first reading a proposed amendment to the Penal Law instituting the mandatory death penalty for those convicted of murder "motivated by racism or hostility toward a particular public, and under circumstances where the act was committed with the intent to harm the State of Israel and the rebirth of the Jewish people in their homeland". If passed in the second and third readings, the discriminatory bill would exclusively target Palestinians.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The destruction of sanitation and waste disposal systems in Gaza caused the release of untreated sewage and other toxic materials that polluted water systems. An international research team found that military activities in Gaza and post-war reconstruction would emit the equivalent of 32 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, more than the annual emissions of 102 countries in peacetime, undermining efforts to mitigate climate change.

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1. "Israel/OPT: Two months of cruel and inhumane siege are further evidence of Israel's genocidal intent in Gaza", 2 May ↑
2. "Israel/OPT: New testimonies provide compelling evidence that Israel's starvation of Palestinians in Gaza is a deliberate policy", 18 August ↑
3. "UN report on Israel's gender-based violence and genocidal acts against women's health facilities must spur action to protect Palestinians", 13 March ↑
4. "Israel/OPT: Satellite imagery reveals total razing of Khuza'a in May 2025 in further evidence of Israel's wanton destruction and genocide in Gaza", 13 June ↑
5. "Israel/OPT: Catastrophic wave of mass displacement under inhumane conditions as Israel obliterates Gaza City", 3 October ↑
6. "Israel/OPT: Post-ceasefire: Israel's genocide in the occupied Gaza Strip continues", 27 November ↑
7. "Israel/OPT: 'This is my home, and I will never leave': Israel's forced displacement of Palestinians", 15 May ↑
8. "Israel's destructive West Bank military operation fuels mass forced displacement of Palestinians", 5 June ↑
9. "Israel/OPT: Killing of prominent Palestinian West-Bank activist Awda Al-Hathaleen demands justice and accountability", 30 July ↑
10. "Israel/OPT: State-backed deadly rampage by Israeli settlers underscores urgent need to dismantle apartheid", 22 April ↑

ITALY

Republic of Italy

Conditions and treatment of people in detention, both in prisons and migration detention centres, raised concerns of torture and other ill-treatment. Levels of violence against women and girls remained high. A draconian law unduly limiting freedom of peaceful assembly was enacted. Journalists faced threats, attacks and surveillance. Barriers to accessing abortion persisted. The government's attempts to process asylum claims extraterritorially in Albania were stalled by the courts. Cooperation on migration with Libya and Tunisia continued despite evidence of serious human rights violations. Italy failed to surrender to the ICC a Libyan national arrested on an ICC warrant. Nearly 6 million people were living in poverty. Human-induced climate change caused thousands of deaths.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Detainees endured overcrowded conditions in substandard establishments. The number of deaths in custody remained high.

In migrant repatriation centres, people continued to be held in bare cells without access to meaningful activities. In July, the Constitutional Court found that the detention of migrants violated constitutional principles, citing parliament's persistent failure to establish regulatory frameworks.

An investigation into the torture and other ill-treatment of 33 boys at a juvenile prison in the city of Milan between 2021 and 2024 continued. In August, it emerged that 42 people were being investigated, including directors and medical staff.

In June, the European Court of Human Rights held that Italy had violated the prohibition of inhuman or degrading treatment in a 2001 case of ill-treatment in police custody, and that the investigation had been inadequate. Although 31 officials were charged, many prosecutions were discontinued as the statute of limitation had expired.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Levels of violence against women remained high. By year's end, 85 women had been killed in domestic violence incidents, including 62 women killed by their partners or former partners. In November, parliament failed to pass a bill that would have introduced a consent-based definition of rape.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Legislation passed in June introduced new offences and harsher penalties to disproportionately restrict civil disobedience and protests, including "passive resistance" in prisons and migration detention centres.[1] UN special rapporteurs criticized the government's decision to circumvent parliamentary procedures to avoid scrutiny of provisions not aligned with international law.

Concerns persisted about the use by police of excessive and unnecessary force against peaceful protesters. The authorities continued to misuse administrative restrictions of the right to freedom of movement to punish peaceful protesters. In October, in Udine, several peaceful protesters who had demonstrated against the genocide in Gaza were banned from entering the city for lengthy periods.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists continued to face intimidation, threats and attacks. In October, a bomb exploded under the car of a journalist but caused no injuries. An investigation was ongoing at year's end.

Vexatious lawsuits against journalists by public officials and politicians, including for alleged defamation, remained a concern. Defamation remained a criminal offence.

Paragon's Graphite spyware was unlawfully used to spy on human rights defenders and at least two journalists. In June, a parliamentary committee confirmed that Italy's intelligence services used it to spy on activists, alleging national security grounds. However, the government failed to respond to

credible allegations that journalists were also unlawfully spied on.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The authorities continued to fail to guarantee access to lawful abortion services, against a backdrop of high numbers of health professionals refusing to provide such services.[2]

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

At least 1,195 people died at sea along the central Mediterranean route while trying to reach Italy. Several shipwrecks occurred just outside Italian territorial waters. Rescue NGOs criticized the Italian authorities' delayed response to their alerts about boats in distress, which placed people's lives at risk.

In July, six customs police and coastguard officers were indicted for failing to prevent a shipwreck near Steccato di Cutro, Calabria, in February 2023, when at least 94 people, mostly from Afghanistan, drowned in Italian waters.

In March, the Cassation Court ruled that the government should compensate those rescued at sea and unlawfully held aboard the Italian coastguard ship *Diciotti* for 10 days in 2018, after the then minister of the interior blocked their disembarkation in Sicily.

The government continued to obstruct efforts by human rights defenders to rescue people at sea. It assigned distant ports of disembarkation to NGO ships as well as seizing NGO ships and aircrafts, thus increasing the risk of people drowning while trying to reach Italy.

In October, six members of the NGO Mediterranea Saving Humans went on trial in Ragusa, Sicily. They were charged with aggravated facilitation of irregular migration for transferring 27 shipwreck survivors on board their ship and then disembarking them in Sicily in 2020. The survivors, who included one child and a pregnant woman, had been rescued by a Danish oil tanker, under instructions from Maltese authorities, which then denied them disembarkation for nearly six weeks.

Cooperation with Albania

In March, Italy expanded the use of its migration detention centres in Albania to include holding people served with an expulsion order who were already in migration detention in Italy. The original purpose of the centres in Albania – detaining asylum seekers intercepted in international waters and presumed to come from countries designated as "safe" by Italy – continued to be challenged in the courts. In August, the EU Court of Justice ruled that competent courts must be able to judicially review the application of the "safe country of origin" concept, thereby undermining Italy's legal framework for processing such claims.

Also in August, a court in Rome ordered the urgent release of a man detained in Albania as the arrangements in place there did not guarantee the right to health.

Some Egyptian nationals were forcibly repatriated to Egypt from Albania by Italian officials, without that process being provided for in Italy's agreement with Albania or in other legislation.

Following monitoring visits, lawyers, members of parliament and ombudspersons from the Lazio region and Rome criticized the inadequate access of detainees at the centres in Albania to healthcare, legal assistance and other rights. The Ministry of Interior denied Amnesty International access to the centres, alleging "public order and safety reasons".

Cooperation with Libya

Italy continued to support Libyan authorities in preventing people from reaching Europe, including by renewing the Memorandum of Understanding with Libya in November. This was despite evidence of widespread, serious human rights violations against refugees and migrants in Libya and of the persistent failure of Libyan authorities to guarantee search-and-rescue operations in line with international law.

In two incidents in August and September, the Libyan coastguard opened fire on NGO rescue ships in international waters, endangering the lives of crew members and rescued people. The attacks were carried out

from ships transferred by Italy to Libya under EU-funded programmes.

Cooperation with Tunisia

Italy also continued to cooperate with Tunisia to intercept and disembark refugees and migrants there, despite evidence that they would be at risk of human rights violations.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In January, Italy failed to surrender to the ICC Osama Elmasry Njeem, a Libyan official accused of crimes against humanity and war crimes. Although Italian police arrested him pursuant to an ICC arrest warrant, he was then released, and returned to Libya by Italy. In October, the ICC found Italy non-compliant with its obligations under the Rome Statute but deferred a decision on further action.

The UN Human Rights Council criticized Italy for failing to establish a national human rights institution, despite past commitments to do so.[3]

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In October, the National Institute of Statistics reported that 5.7 million people were living in absolute poverty in 2024. More than 30% of families with at least one foreign national member fell into this category.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In September, UK-based scientists announced that climate change had caused 4,597 heat-related deaths in Italy between June and August.

Italy fell three places to 46th in the global Climate Change Performance Index, because its National Energy and Climate Plan lacked ambition and was "inconsistent with Italy's EU and Paris Agreement commitments".

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

Italy continued to transfer arms to Israel under licences issued before 7 October 2023. It also failed to prevent transfers coming from other countries – where the ultimate destination was reported to be Israel – from transiting through Italy, including a shipment of explosives that departed from the port of Ravenna in June.

1. "Italy: Draconian new law criminalizing peaceful protest while expanding police powers must be rejected", 31 May ↑
2. *Europe: When Rights Aren't Real for All: The Struggle for Abortion Access in Europe*, 6 November ↑
3. "Italy: Oral Statement: Item 6: Consideration of UPR reports: UN Human Rights Council 59th session 16 June-9 July", 30 June ↑

JAPAN

Japan

Japan held its first execution in nearly three years. Elections were marked by xenophobic and discriminatory rhetoric. A new law offered compensation to victims of forced sterilization. A new immigration plan proposed to fast track deportations. Japan's continued investment in fossil gas projects overseas endangered Indigenous Peoples' rights and undermined efforts to phase out fossil fuels. Court rulings produced mixed, but mostly positive, results in the fight for same-sex marriage equality and the rights of transgender people.

BACKGROUND

In October, Sanae Takaichi, known for her conservative values, was chosen as Japan's first female prime minister.

DEATH PENALTY

On 27 June, a 29-year-old man convicted of nine murders was executed by hanging – the first execution in Japan in nearly three years. Human rights organizations widely condemned the execution.

DISCRIMINATION

In July, Japan held elections for the upper house of parliament. There was widespread use of exclusionist rhetoric during election campaigns, accompanied by xenophobic and discriminatory comments on the streets and online against women, transgender people and foreigners. Human rights NGOs,

including Amnesty International Japan, criticized the campaigns for inciting xenophobia, hate speech and misinformation about foreign nationals and minorities in Japan.

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

On 17 January, Japan enacted a law offering compensation to victims of forced sterilization. Sterilization and abortion surgeries were performed without consent on an estimated 84,000 individuals who, it was deemed, would produce "defective offspring" under the 1948 eugenic protection law, including individuals with disabilities. The new compensation law followed the Supreme Court decision in July 2024 that declared the eugenics law unconstitutional, and included an apology from the government in its preamble. Many victims struggled to gather the evidence required for their claims, such as old medical records. By the end of November, only 1,560 claims had been approved. Victims' groups highlighted that some people did not even know that the surgery had been performed on them.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Japan's "Zero Plan" for immigration, released in May, described plans to enforce immigration law by fast-tracking deportations, among other measures. The plan aimed to cut in half the number of overstaying foreign nationals by 2030. Human rights advocates criticized the focus on the number of deportations and argued that the policy potentially endangered individuals seeking asylum. The law continued to allow immigration detention centres to detain people arbitrarily and indefinitely, in violation of international law.

In December, Japan forcibly repatriated Mustafa Khalil, a Pakistani national from Kashmir who had been detained for a cumulative total of 12 and a half years and whose health was in severe decline.

Japan continued to deny responsibility for the death of Wishma Sandamali, a Sri Lankan asylum seeker who died in an immigration detention centre in the city of Nagoya in 2021. In February, the family brought a second lawsuit against the government demanding the release of full video footage surrounding her death. The government cited the privacy rights of the deceased and a lack of resources to process video footage, among other reasons, to continue to deny access to the footage.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Japan continued to drive fossil gas (known as liquefied natural gas, LNG) extraction projects overseas, undermining global efforts to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and endangering the rights of fence-line communities.

In July, hereditary chiefs of the Wet'suwet'en Nation in Canada filed a formal objection to the state-owned Japan Bank of International Cooperation and the Mitsubishi Corporation to demand an end to the two entities' financing of the LNG Canada project, which was harming the climate and Indigenous Peoples' rights.

The Japan-USA summit on 7 February included an agreement to expand American LNG exports to Japan, as well as plans to move forward with a new LNG extraction project in Alaska, USA. The move incited criticism by climate and human rights groups for its potential impact on the climate and on the rights of the Indigenous Gwich'in People.

Government-supported "green energy" projects abroad were criticized as hindering a just transition to renewable energy. Six climate and civil society groups in Indonesia wrote to the Japan International Cooperation Agency demanding that it stop its projects in LNG, carbon capture and coal firing with hydrogen and ammonia. The groups claimed that the projects were imposing false climate solutions on Indonesia, prolonging reliance on fossil fuels and harming local communities.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

On 12 May, the CERD Committee sent an early warning letter in relation to the construction of a new US military base in Okinawa prefecture, highlighting the impact on the rights to health and to a clean, healthy

and sustainable environment of the Indigenous People of Ryukyu/Okinawa.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In March, the high courts of the cities of Nagoya and Osaka ruled that the denial of same-sex marriage was unconstitutional. Five high courts in Japan had passed a similar ruling. However, in November, the high court of Tokyo ruled that the denial did not violate the Constitution. This verdict was a step backwards in a series of high court rulings that raised hopes for legalization of same-sex marriage.

In September, the family court of the city of Sapporo became the first to rule that the "appearance requirement", which required transgender people to alter the appearance of their genitals to change their legal gender, was unconstitutional.

JORDAN

Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan

Authorities restricted the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. Activists and critics faced arbitrary detention and prosecution. Women and girls continued to face discrimination in law and practice. Refugees and asylum seekers endured deteriorating conditions, exacerbated by funding cuts. Severe water scarcity further undermined access to economic and social rights.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

The authorities arbitrarily restricted online and offline expression. In April, security forces arrested activist Adnan Abou Arkoub for chanting slogans during a pro-Gaza protest. He was placed in administrative detention for more than five months without being formally charged.

In May the Jordanian Media Commission, a statutory body responsible for regulating the media, blocked 12 local and foreign media websites for "spreading media poison and attacking Jordan and its national symbols".

In September the State Security Court upheld the conviction and five-year prison sentence against political activist Ayman Sanduka over a Facebook post addressed to the king in which he criticized Jordan's relationship with Israel. He had been convicted of "incitement to oppose the political regime".

Authorities continued to restrict the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, arbitrarily arresting individuals protesting against government policies towards Israel and refusing to allow several planned demonstrations.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Civil society organizations continued to face extensive restrictions, including mandatory registration, prior government approval, and strict control over foreign funding.

In April, Jordan announced a ban on the activities of the dissolved Muslim Brotherhood (an Islamist association) as well as the closure of its offices and the confiscation of its assets.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Thousands of individuals remained in arbitrary administrative detention without charge or trial, as local governors continued to invoke the 1954 Crime Prevention Law to detain anyone deemed "a danger to the people". Detainees did not have access to a judicial body to challenge the legality of their detention.

In July, activist Bushra al-Absi was administratively detained for 12 days. She was not informed of any charges, but during questioning was asked about communications with groups organizing Gaza solidarity protests. She told Amnesty International that she was mistreated, including by being placed in solitary confinement as punishment for her hunger strike.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice including in matters of marriage, divorce and child custody. They were also subject to male guardianship

requirements in certain personal status and administrative matters, which limited their autonomy.

In March the lower house of parliament approved key amendments to the Labour Law, including extending paid maternity leave from 10 weeks to 90 consecutive days. The amendments also prohibit the dismissal of pregnant employees at any stage of pregnancy, replacing the previous provision that protected women after six months of pregnancy. The draft law still required approval from the upper house and ratification by the king before it could enter into force.

Women remained under-represented in governmental positions due to restrictive gender norms and systemic inequalities. According to the Global Gender Gap Report 2025, structural gaps persisted, with men participating in the workforce at nearly four times the rate of women.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

From December 2024 to May 2025, approximately 75,500 Syrian refugees returned from Jordan to Syria, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.

As of August, according to UNHCR, Jordan was hosting around 506,000 refugees and asylum seekers, the majority from Syria but also from Iraq, Yemen, Sudan and other countries. Jordan also hosted more than 2.39 million Palestinian refugees registered with the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, most of whom were long-term residents.

Funding cuts, including reductions in financial aid from the USA, severely affected refugee services, leading to the reduction or suspension of essential programmes such as primary healthcare, education and protection. According to UNHCR, around 43,000 refugees risked losing access to primary healthcare and cash assistance, while 335,000 women of reproductive age were at risk of not receiving essential maternal services.

In January the national monthly minimum wage rose from JOD 260 to JOD 290 (approximately USD 367 to USD 409). However, this increase did not apply to certain groups including migrant domestic workers as well as workers in the garment/export sector, the majority of whom were migrants. The minimum wage for migrant workers remained lower under a separate sectoral agreement.

RIGHT TO WATER

Jordan continued to face one of the world's worst water crises. Per-person water availability fell to about 60m³ per year – well below the threshold for "absolute scarcity" of 500m³ per year – undermining the rights to water, health and an adequate standard of living, and disproportionately affecting rural communities, refugees and low-income households. Droughts were projected to intensify due to climate change, according to scientific studies.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

According to the World Bank, Jordan succeeded in reducing its consumption of hydrochlorofluorocarbons – potent greenhouse gases – by 87% through a World Bank-supported industrial phase-out project.

KAZAKHSTAN

Republic of Kazakhstan

The authorities continued to use overly broad charges of spreading false information and inciting ethnic, social, racial and religious discord to silence critical voices and suppress dissent. Detentions and prosecutions of civil society activists and ordinary citizens exercising their right to peaceful protest continued. NGOs and political opposition groups came under increasing pressure from the authorities, accused of using foreign funding to undermine the country and its "traditional values". Similar charges were made against the LGBTI community, which continued to face discrimination. Impunity persisted for the majority of serious human rights violations committed during the

January 2022 protests. Kazakhstan's reliance on fossil fuels continued and the president appeared to be reneging on commitments for a green transition.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to use overly broad charges of "disseminating knowingly false information" and inciting ethnic, social, racial and religious discord under Articles 274 and 174 of the Criminal Code, respectively, to silence critical voices and suppress dissent. The local human rights community recorded at least 39 people imprisoned on politically motivated charges during the year, including human rights defenders, activists, bloggers and journalists.

Human rights defender Bakhytzhan Toregozhina was fined in July under Article 274 after she expressed concern for the deteriorating health of imprisoned opposition politician Marat Zhylanbayev (see below, Freedom of association) on her Facebook page. Marat Zhylanbayev had repeatedly held hunger strikes to protest against his treatment and conditions in detention. Administrative penalties, including fines and administrative detention, were imposed on Meirzhan Doskaraev, Marat Zhylanbayev's lawyer, and at least two activists for raising similar concerns.

Blogger Temirlan Ensebek was detained in January and charged under Article 174 for a year-old social media post. The post, which featured excerpts from a widely circulated song with offensive lyrics about Russians, had not raised any undue concerns prior to his detention. He received a five-year non-custodial sentence in April following an unfair trial. The court banned him from publishing on social media, engaging in human rights activities, volunteering and speaking to media. The sentence was upheld on appeal.

Between January and April at least four supporters of Temirlan Ensebek were sentenced to administrative detention or fined for holding individual protests calling for his release. Five were detained and fined for protesting against the judge's decision to restrict public access to the courtroom.

In July the UN Human Rights Committee in its Concluding Observations reiterated its concern about the broad formulation of the concepts of "extremism" and incitement of ethnic, social, racial and religious discord under Article 174 of the Criminal Code. The committee urged the authorities to narrow the scope of the legislation to ensure that it did not "suppress protected conduct and speech".

In June and July, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs refused to renew the accreditations of 16 correspondents of Radio Azattyq, the Kazakh Service of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, on the grounds that they had violated the 2024 media law, which prohibits foreign journalists from reporting without accreditation. The journalists, who were all Kazakhstani nationals, had continued to work while a decision on their applications was pending. Radio Azattyq's appeal against the decision by a court in the capital, Astana, in August to uphold the ministry's decision against seven correspondents was pending at year's end.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In January the Constitutional Court ruled that permission to hold peaceful assemblies must not be automatically denied, although it reiterated the requirement for prior authorization. Nevertheless, local authorities still routinely refused to allow peaceful protests to take place. Civil society activists and members of the public continued to be detained and prosecuted for exercising their right to peaceful protest.

In February the statute of limitations in relation to assembly-related offences, which had allowed authorities to jail protesters long after the event, often to prevent them from participating in future protests, was reduced from 12 to two months. However, two members of the LGBTI NGO Feminita were sentenced to 10 days' administrative detention, one at the end of February and one at the beginning of March, for organizing a protest nine months earlier. These sentences, together with a refusal to grant applications for an assembly, deterred NGOs

from organizing a peaceful march for International Women's Day on 8 March.

In August, five community activists detained in 2024 for planning a peaceful protest against a planned nuclear power station were convicted of calling for mass disturbances under Article 272.3 of the Criminal Code. They were sentenced to four years' probation and banned from taking part in any public activities, such as attending demonstrations or press conferences, for five years. In November, an appeal court reduced their sentences to 30 months.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

NGOs and political opposition groups came under increasing pressure from the authorities, including President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, following the US administration's decision to cut foreign assistance to groups promoting diversity, equality and integration. In April the president accused "supposedly human rights organizations, bloggers and journalists" of being sponsored from abroad to seek out negative undercurrents and blame the authorities.

In May the Ombudsperson publicly criticized the independent NGO Coalition against Torture for submitting "biased" and "distorted" information to the UN Special Rapporteur on torture. The coalition had responded to a routine annual call for submissions by UN Special Mechanisms. The Ombudsperson falsely claimed that the EU had paid for the submission.

In July the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) called for the immediate release of Marat Zhylanbayev, who had been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment in 2023 for alleged membership of the arbitrarily banned political opposition movement Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan. WGAD found that his detention was arbitrary, his trial unfair, and that his "arrest and detention was based on discrimination resulting from his political opinion".

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI people and NGOs were targeted by the authorities, including the president, as well as pro-government and other groups who accused them of using foreign funding to promote "immoral behaviour" and denigrate "traditional values".

LGBTI NGO Feminita came under renewed attack by members of the Union of Parents and the Rahym charitable fund, who disrupted its training events on two occasions in February and accused the organizers and participants of being "foreign agents". Police failed to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators; instead, the co-founders of Feminita were detained and fined for running an unregistered NGO.

In its Concluding Observations, the UN Human Rights Committee reiterated concerns about discrimination against LGBTI people in law and practice, together with the targeting, harassment and prosecutions of LGBTI NGOs and human rights defenders.

In October a parliamentary working group put forward legislative amendments banning LGBTI propaganda. The Senate approved the changes on 18 December and the president signed the amendments into law on 30 December.

IMPUNITY

In May the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights reported on its monitoring of trials held in 2022-2023, stemming from the January 2022 mass protests during which security forces committed serious human rights violations. The report noted the "stark disparity between the high number of civilian deaths, widespread allegations of torture and ill-treatment and the low number of prosecutions for these killings". It also found that courts had failed "to address serious allegations of coercion, torture, and other unlawful means used to obtain statements from defendants and witnesses".

WORKERS' RIGHTS

No legislative or policy changes were adopted to address a rising trend in reported abuses of workers' rights in the mining of rare earth minerals. A July briefing by the NGO Business and Human Rights Resource Centre recorded more such allegations in

2024 than during the previous five years combined.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Kazakhstan's economy continued to be driven largely by oil production. Reliance on coal for electricity production grew and Kazakhstan planned to build 6 gigawatts of new coal capacity by 2030, despite environmental concerns and the pledge to achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. In September, President Tokayev appeared to be reneging on commitments to a green transition, declaring that climate change "appeared to be a massive fraud" and that Kazakhstan would remain reliant on coal.

KENYA

Republic of Kenya

Kenya's human rights situation deteriorated significantly. Security forces used unlawful and lethal force during demonstrations, resulting in deaths, injuries and enforced disappearances. Journalists, human rights defenders and activists faced arbitrary arrests, intimidation and surveillance. Authorities imposed media blackouts, while existing and draft legislation threatened privacy and freedom of expression. Economic inequality increased following the withdrawal of key social protection programmes; the new health insurance scheme limited access to healthcare. A government-led initiative promoted refugee rights, but cuts in donor aid undermined its implementation. Gender-based violence, particularly femicide, increased dramatically.

BACKGROUND

On 25 June 2024, thousands of Kenyans had demonstrated against a controversial finance bill. The protests continued through to July 2024 and were met by police use of unlawful and lethal force, resulting in at least 60 deaths. Youth-led movements, which had spearheaded the protests, continued to do so in 2025, raising concerns about government policies and inequality. Public frustration over economic hardship, corruption, poor governance, and the lack of accountability and reforms intensified.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression and media freedom came under sustained attack. Journalists, human rights defenders, bloggers and other activists were arbitrarily arrested, detained and assaulted while covering protests or exposing state abuses.

In June, as thousands of people gathered nationwide to mark the anniversary of the anti-finance bill protests, the Communications Authority of Kenya issued a directive ordering radio and television stations to cease live broadcasts of ongoing protests, claiming they would violate the Constitution.

The Kenya Information and Communication (Amendment) Bill, 2025, introduced to parliament in March, was under committee review, with public consultations ongoing. The Computer Misuse and Cybercrimes (Amendment) Bill, 2025, was enacted in October, sparking debate among lawmakers and civil society on its implications for digital rights and freedom of expression. Both laws contained provisions that allowed for broad surveillance powers that could threaten constitutional rights to privacy and freedom of expression. Authorities also used existing counterterrorism and cybercrime laws to intimidate critics. Youth-led movements, including Privacy First and Ijue Data Yako II (Know Your Data), called for stronger protections of digital rights.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The manner in which the police handled protests reflected the ongoing militarization of public order policing and the criminalization of dissent. Repeated violations by the authorities of the right to peaceful assembly, so prevalent in 2024, continued in 2025.

Youth-led anniversary protests on 25 June were met with arbitrary arrests, and the use of unlawful and lethal force by police. The Kenya National Commission on Human

Rights said at least 19 people were killed, hundreds were injured, 15 were forcibly disappeared, and several women reported experiencing sexual violence, including two rapes and an attempted gang rape.

On 7 July, nationwide protests marked the 35th anniversary of the Saba Saba Day pro-democracy demonstrations. Police unlawfully used lethal and less lethal force against peaceful demonstrators in more than 20 counties. At least 38 people were killed and more than 500 injured, while over 500 protesters faced criminal charges, including offences under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. Security forces also disrupted civil society gatherings and human rights events.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

According to human rights monitors and advocacy groups there was a continued rise in extrajudicial killings nationwide. The rise signalled a trend in which efforts to strengthen accountability and the rule of law were undermined. Many victims were linked to protest movements, informal economic sectors or human rights activism. The UN Human Rights Council's May review of Kenya cited the authorities' failure to curb extrajudicial killings, noting systemic impunity and lack of accountability mechanisms.

Albert Ojwang died in June in suspicious circumstances while in police custody at the Central Police Station in the capital, Nairobi. He had been arrested in connection with an online post calling for government accountability for human rights violations and corruption. His family said that his body bore signs of physical trauma. While the police claimed he died from self-inflicted injuries, an independent autopsy confirmed that his death resulted from severe head injuries and multiple soft tissue injuries, pointing towards an assault.

Boniface Kariuki, a street vendor, was shot in June while in the vicinity of a protest that was being dispersed by the police in Nairobi's Central Business District. An autopsy report confirmed that he died from severe head injuries caused by a gunshot fired at close range. His death became symbolic of the targeting by police of youth protesters and protesters connected with the informal employment sector.

Despite years of advocacy and international scrutiny, the government was yet to implement systemic reforms or provide justice and reparations to families of victims of extrajudicial killings. However, in May, four police officers were charged with the 2017 killing of six-month-old Baby Samantha Pendo. She died from head injuries inflicted by police in a house raid during a violent crackdown on post-election protests in Kisumu county. In September, the High Court ruled that the case should be transferred from Nairobi for hearing at a court in the city of Kisumu. The developments marked a rare instance of progress in prosecuting state violence, although broader accountability remained elusive.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Reports of enforced disappearances, particularly against civil society activists and protesters, continued (see above, Freedom of peaceful assembly).

In one notable case, Tanzanian activist Maria Sarungi Tsehai was abducted in Nairobi on 12 March while on her way to a media interview. She said she was taken by masked men in an unmarked vehicle and held for several hours during which her abductors choked and intimidated her. She was later dumped in an isolated spot. Maria Sarungi Tsehai had fled in 2020 from Tanzania to Kenya where she sought asylum. Her case raised concerns about possible transnational repression and the targeting of foreign activists in Kenya, and prompted calls for an independent investigation into the circumstances of her abduction and the possible involvement or negligence of Kenyan authorities.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Kenya's economic downturn worsened living conditions for low-income households. Inflation, rising taxes, food and transport costs, and limited social protection measures led to greater inequality.

In February, access to healthcare was severely affected due to systemic failures,

including the unlawful withholding of doctors' salaries, chronic delays in payments, stalled promotions, unpaid gratuities and delayed employment confirmation letters. Consequently, doctors were compelled to strike in protest. Services were further compromised by the withdrawal in June of the Linda Mama (Protect the Mother) programme, which had provided free maternal health services for pregnant and breastfeeding women. It was withdrawn when the new Social Health Insurance Fund (SHIF) (see below) scheme was introduced. Meanwhile, erratic medical supplies in public hospitals compounded the situation.

Implementation of the SHIF scheme, a key component of Kenya's Universal Health Coverage Agenda, faced major challenges that left patients, particularly those with chronic illnesses, unable to access care. At Kenyatta National Hospital and the Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral and Research Hospital, terminally ill patients were denied treatment due to delays in SHIF accreditation and the requirement for patients to make upfront cash payments.

Social protection spending remained critically low, accounting for less than 1% of GDP. Workers in the informal sector and poor urban communities were largely excluded from existing safety nets. The crisis was compounded by forced evictions and inadequate housing, particularly in informal settlements targeted for redevelopment. In May, hundreds of families were forcibly displaced in Lang'ata, a sub-county of Nairobi county, to make way for construction under the Affordable Housing Programme, without the provision of alternative shelter or compensation. Civil society organizations condemned the evictions and called for equitable resource distribution and universal social protection. However, meaningful reform remained stalled by political inaction.

Refugees and migrants

In March the Shirika Plan was launched. A collaborative initiative between the government and UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, it was a progressive plan that aimed to enhance the socio-economic integration of refugees. Based on the 2021 Refugees Act, it committed to increase refugees' self-reliance through access to work, education and public services. However, its anticipated benefits were threatened by inadequate resources. Abrupt funding cuts from key donors, including USAID, led to the World Food Programme making extensive cuts to food assistance in refugee camps and settlements. Consequently, food insecurity increased significantly. Those not classified as being most vulnerable were disproportionately affected, leading to widespread dissatisfaction and unrest. In the Kakuma and Dadaab refugee camps, protests that demanded the return of food aid led to clashes with security forces, resulting in injuries and one fatality.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence reached crisis levels. In January, the government established the Technical Working Group on Gender-Based Violence Including Femicide, ostensibly to coordinate policy and institutional responses. However, its visibility, mandate and impact remained unclear, raising concerns about the adequacy of state-led efforts and the government's political will to address systemic barriers to justice, healthcare and survivor protection.

Between January and March, 129 women were murdered, most of them by people they knew and often in their own homes. According to the Africa Data Hub, since 2016 there had been more than 930 murders of women, 628 of which met the UN Office on Drugs and Crime's definition of femicide.

Survivors, activists and artists highlighted the crisis through MASKAN (Home), an art installation honouring victims of femicide. Nationwide protests demanded stronger government action, including measures for more accountability and protection against gender-based violence.

KOSOVO

Republic of Kosovo

The government agreed to accept compensation claims from victims of former Kosovo Liberation Army members. Legislation to improve the lives of LGBTI people was delayed amid uncertainty following parliamentary elections. The Constitutional Court annulled legislation giving new powers to the Independent Media Commission, which had been condemned by civil society.

BACKGROUND

After elections in February, political parties could not reach consensus on constituting the parliament and creating a new government, causing an institutional deadlock that led to extraordinary elections in December.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATIONS

In April, Ramadan Nishori became the first male survivor of wartime sexual violence to speak publicly about his experience.

In June, the Basic Court of Pristina sentenced Živojin Nešić, a former member of Serbian police and military forces, to 15 years' imprisonment for war crimes committed in 1999, including rape.

In May, the government agreed to accept compensation claims from victims of former Kosovo Liberation Army members found guilty by the Kosovo Specialist Chambers in The Hague. In July, at a trial held in their absence, the Basic Court of Pristina sentenced Dragan Denić and Ivica Rajković to 15 years' imprisonment for raping an ethnic Albanian woman during the 1998-1999 conflict. In August, prosecutors indicted another 21 people in their absence for forcibly displacing 800,000 ethnic Albanians during the 1998-1999 conflict.

Enforced disappearances

In March, the Government Commission for Missing Persons announced the identification of the remains of 11 missing persons, who had been victims of the 1999 Kralani massacre.

Over 1,600 victims of enforced disappearance between 1 January 1998 and 31 December 2000 remained missing.

DISCRIMINATION

Women's and girls' rights

A European Commission report in November noted continued high levels of gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence. It acknowledged that efforts had been made to raise awareness of the issue and address shortcomings in institutional and legal protections for women. However, it found that these had been insufficient to effectively combat gender-based violence.

The Supreme Court upheld a 2014 Administrative Instruction prohibiting "religious uniforms in schools", which restricted access to education for girls wearing hijabs. Feminist organization QIKA criticized the decision as discriminatory.

LGBTI people's rights

In a groundbreaking case in July, the Basic Court of Pristina sentenced three people to a total of 9 and a half years' imprisonment for the crimes of abduction and physical injury as motivated by hatred based on sexual orientation. The municipality of Pristina designated two small flats as temporary shelters for individuals experiencing violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. No progress was made in opening a specialized shelter, despite commitments from the authorities to do so.

Legislation enabling legal gender recognition and recognition of same-sex unions was stalled during the deadlock following parliamentary elections in February and had still not progressed by the end of the year.

Roma and Ashkali people

Lack of access to official documents due to cost and bureaucratic obstacles left Roma families living in informal settlements, in constant fear of forced evictions.

In April, 15-year-old football player Belgin Jashari, a member of the Ashkali community, was physically assaulted during a match. He later reported that he had frequently experienced racial slurs, bottle throwing and other violent abuse during matches. Jashari's story prompted public condemnation by the Kosovo Olympic Committee and the president of Kosovo. The police arrested a suspect on charges of assault.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In a positive development, the Constitutional Court annulled a law that would have expanded the powers of the regulatory Independent Media Commission. Civil society organizations had condemned the law as unconstitutional, saying it threatened media freedom and independence.

The Association of Journalists of Kosovo reported 63 cases of threats and assaults against journalists in the year up to November.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In December, Kosovo began receiving non-Kosovan migrants deported from the USA as part of an agreement with the USA to accept up to 50 deportees. The acting prime minister announced that negotiations were in progress with the UK government to build a detention centre for asylum seekers whose claims had been rejected by the UK.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Despite not being a party to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change or the Paris Agreement, Kosovo adopted its first voluntary NDCs, committing the country to action on climate change.

KUWAIT

State of Kuwait

Authorities repressed the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and subjected their critics to arbitrary arrest and detention. The native stateless (Bidun) population remained subject to systematic discrimination. Women and girls faced discrimination. Tens of thousands of people, mostly women, had their Kuwaiti nationalities revoked. Migrant workers faced abuse, including mass summary deportations. Authorities retained the death penalty and carried out executions.

BACKGROUND

Parliament remained suspended. Consequently, legislative changes were introduced by executive decree without parliamentary oversight.

In September the UN Human Rights Council adopted the outcome of Kuwait's UPR. Kuwait received 290 recommendations; it accepted 206, partially accepted four, and took note of 80. It failed to accept recommendations to protect freedom of expression, reduce statelessness, eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, safeguard the rights of migrant workers and abolish the death penalty.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities repressed the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

The Penal Code and cybercrime law criminalized forms of expression deemed as "insulting" to religion, the emir, and/or foreign heads of state.

The Public Gatherings Law criminalized public assemblies involving more than 20 people gathering without a permit. Non-Kuwaitis were prohibited from participating in gatherings under certain circumstances.

Authorities engaged in transnational repression by coordinating with foreign governments to have dissident bloggers extradited to Kuwait. Salman al-Khalidi and

Mesaed Al-Musaileem were deported from Iraq and Malaysia, respectively. They were detained in Kuwait where they faced multiple prison sentences for social media posts deemed critical of the authorities of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Mesaed Al-Musaileem also faced prosecution for calling for protests in Kuwait.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

In April, former parliamentarians were sentenced to imprisonment on charges relating to publicly criticizing the authorities, including "insulting" the emir and demanding an end to the suspension of parliament and violations of the right to freedom of expression. They included Anwar Al-Fikr, Hamad Al-Olayan, Hussain Al-Qallaf, Mesaed Al-Quraifah and Walid Al-Tabtabaei, who were each sentenced to between two and four years in prison.

Authorities also subjected the former deputy speaker of parliament, Mohammed Al-Mutair, to criminal charges for "insulting" the emir in a public seminar and froze all his assets.

In July, a criminal court sentenced human rights defender Mohammed Al-Barghash, a member of the Bidun minority, to three years' imprisonment for criticizing the authorities' discriminatory anti-Bidun policies.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In January, the Foreigners' Residence Law, an executive decree-law regulating the entry and residency of migrants, entered into force. The law granted broad powers to employers and authorities, increasing migrants' dependency and vulnerability to exploitation. Article 19 of the law prohibits migrants from working for any entity without permission from their original employer or approval from the Ministry of the Interior. Article 20 grants the Ministry of the Interior sweeping powers to deport migrants on vague grounds such as "public interest, security, or morals" without judicial oversight or the right to appeal.

Thousands of migrants were arrested and summarily deported, either through judicial proceedings or administrative orders issued by the Ministry of the Interior.

In June, authorities introduced a requirement for foreign workers in the private sector to obtain an employer-approved exit permit prior to leaving Kuwait, which came into effect on 1 July. This measure reintroduced a key feature of the restrictive *kafala* (sponsorship) system, granting employers significant control over workers' freedom of movement.

DISCRIMINATION

Stateless (Bidun) population

Kuwait's Bidun population faced systematic discrimination, including through denial of citizenship and related rights, such as voting and equal access to healthcare, education and employment.

Most Bidun children (unless qualifying via a special exemption such as having a father or grandfather in the military or police) remained barred from free government schools and were relegated to poor-quality private schooling, often in low-cost or subsidized private institutions, which were overcrowded, underfunded and lacked basic facilities.

Religious minorities

Outdoor processions during the holy period of Ashura were banned for the Shia religious minority. In July, the Ministry of the Interior launched a security campaign overseeing Ashura-related religious gatherings, which included imposing night-time curfews on mosques and a limit of 50 people in private home gatherings.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Personal status laws continued to disadvantage women in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

Authorities revoked the Kuwaiti citizenship of tens of thousands of people by retroactively applying changes to the Nationality Law. The revocation mainly affected women who had naturalized through marriage to Kuwaiti men, stripping them of their rights and removing their access to essential services. In September, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against

women and girls expressed deep concern about the significant and disproportionate impact of these measures on women.

In March, an executive decree repealed Article 153 of the Penal Code, which previously granted reduced sentences of up to three years' imprisonment or a nominal fine for men who murdered female relatives in so-called "honour killings". Under the new law, such crimes became punishable by life imprisonment or death.

Also in March, executive decrees amended Article 26 of the Personal Status Law and Article 15 of the Jaafari Personal Status Law to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years for everyone. The previous legal marriage age was 15 years for girls and 17 years for boys, but judges had discretion to approve exceptions, which overwhelmingly affected girls.

DEATH PENALTY

New death sentences were issued and executions carried out, including for drug-related offences.

In December a new Anti-Narcotics Law came into effect, retaining the use of the death penalty for drug-related offences.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Kuwait, a major fossil fuel producer, remained among the world's highest per-capita emitters of greenhouse gases.

Kuwait's crude oil production capacity reached 3.2 million barrels per day, its highest level in more than a decade, highlighting the government's continued commitment to its long-term strategy of increasing oil production capacity to 4 million barrels per day by 2035.

KYRGYZSTAN

Kyrgyz Republic

The authorities intensified their repression of dissent, prosecuting journalists and activists under broadly defined charges like "extremism" and "inciting mass unrest."

Legislation on "foreign representatives" continued to stifle civil society. The independent torture prevention institution was dismantled. A new law curtailed freedom of religion.

BACKGROUND

Early parliamentary elections on 30 November saw presidential allies win almost all seats.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities intensified their crackdown on dissenting voices, targeting investigative media outlets, journalists, bloggers, and human rights activists for prosecution under trumped-up charges such as "inciting mass unrest", "calls for disobedience" or "extremism".

Under amendments to the Code of Offences that came into force in February, defamation in broadcast, print and online media became punishable by fines through new fast-track administrative court hearings.

The Supreme Court upheld the prison sentence of journalist Makhabat Tazhibek Kyzy in February, rejecting her appeal. She had been sentenced to six years' imprisonment in 2024 on politically motivated charges of calling for mass riots, after exposing corruption. In October, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found her detention arbitrary, urging Kyrgyzstan to release her and provide compensation.

Legislative amendments purporting to strengthen the fight against "extremism" came into force in July. They reinstated criminal liability for possession of materials deemed "extremist" under vaguely defined criteria and introduced a new offence of using the internet or mass media to publicly incite "extremist" activities or the "violent seizure of power".

Further amendments to penalize the spreading of "false or unreliable" information via mass media or the internet were also introduced in July.

In August, a controversial new law required all media outlets, including websites and blogs, to register, regardless of content. The Cabinet of Ministers was granted sole

authority to set registration procedures, without provision for judicial or parliamentary oversight.

Human rights defender Rita Karasartova was detained in April on trumped-up charges, including "organizing mass riots", in apparent retaliation for her human rights work. The case materials were classified and the trial was held behind closed doors. In September, a court in the capital, Bishkek, sentenced her to five years' probation.[1] Bishkek City Court turned down her appeal on 11 December.

In September, former Kloop Media camera operators Aleksandr Aleksandrov and Dzhoomart Duulatov were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment for purportedly inciting mass unrest. Prosecutors linked them to videos critical of the government on exiled journalist Bolot Temirov's YouTube channel, though without credible evidence. Both denied any connection with the videos and said their confessions had been coerced. In November, an appeal court reduced their sentences to three years' probation. An appeal to the Supreme Court was pending at year's end.

In October, a court in Bishkek officially designated as "extremist" all materials and information published by several independent media outlets, including Kloop Media, Temirov Live and Ait Ait Dese. This designation applied to content in any format. Consequently, virtually "liking", reposting or sharing such materials could lead to prosecution. Journalists Bolot Temirov and Rinat Tukhvatshin were also designated as "extremist". An appeal against the court decision was pending at year's end.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In June, the CERD Committee expressed serious concern that the 2024 Law on Foreign Representatives stigmatized civil society organizations and undermined the legitimate activities of human rights defenders and NGOs. During Kyrgyzstan's UPR in September, the authorities rejected all recommendations to repeal or amend this legislation.

Cuts to USAID assistance led to the suspension of funding for human rights and civil society development programmes. Dozens of NGOs were forced to cease activities or close because of the impact of the "foreign representatives" legislation and funding cuts.

Funding constraints, new legal amendments classifying election observations as political activity and fears of retribution for such monitoring greatly curtailed the ability of civil society to participate in public life. Only two domestic organizations received accreditation to monitor the parliamentary elections, compared with 40 in 2021.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In July, five UN special rapporteurs raised concerns about repeated failures to investigate the alleged torture during pretrial detention of pastor Pavel Schreider, the leader of the Free and True Reform Adventist Church (see below, Freedom of religion and belief), and members of his congregation. Pastor Schreider reported being beaten by five State Committee for National Security officers, including being struck with an iron pipe to force a confession. Other church members were reportedly tortured with stun guns. Pastor Schreider was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury and cognitive impairment in July and transferred to a prison medical facility.

In September, the National Centre for the Prevention of Torture (NCPT) was abolished and its mandate transferred to the Ombudsperson's Institute. UN experts expressed dismay at the decision to close the NCPT without proper consultation, warning the move undermined torture prevention efforts.

DEATH PENALTY

In September, President Sadyr Japarov proposed reintroducing the death penalty as punishment for the rape of a child and the rape and murder of a child or adult woman. The move followed the abduction, rape and murder of a teenage girl, which sparked widespread public anger. Human rights advocates expressed concern that the

reintroduction of the death penalty would violate Kyrgyzstan's international obligations, while not acting as a deterrent or addressing the root causes of gender-based violence. On 10 December, the Constitutional Court rejected the proposed amendment as unconstitutional and in breach of international commitments.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In September, at the UPR, Kyrgyzstan rejected all recommendations relating to LGBTI people's rights, including to amend anti-discrimination legislation to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics. Kyrgyzstan's representatives argued that the recommendations were not compatible with the country's "traditional values" and social norms.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

A restrictive new law that significantly curtailed the right to freedom of religion or belief entered into force in January. The law continued to prohibit all unregistered religious activity, introduced new re-registration requirements and restricted registration to groups with at least 500 adult citizens resident in the same region. The law also imposed a discriminatory blanket ban on the wearing of religious clothing "that makes it impossible to identify a person" in public spaces and buildings. In February, five UN special rapporteurs reiterated their concerns about the new law, in particular the use of vague "extremism" grounds to ban religious literature and close religious communities. They warned that the law disproportionately targeted religious minorities.

In March, a court designated the True and Free Reform Adventist Church as "extremist" and banned it from operating. In July, its pastor Pavel Shreider, a Russian national, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment for "incitement of racial, ethnic, national, religious, or regional enmity" after an unfair trial. He was to be deported after serving his term. His appeal faced repeated delays and was still pending at year's end.

In April, police conducted raids in Osh and Jalal-Abat provinces, stopping more than 300 women for wearing niqabs in public. At least 29 women were fined and hundreds received official warnings.

FORCED EVICTIONS

In April, Osh city authorities began partially demolishing approximately 200 properties on Navoi Street – a predominantly ethnic Uzbek neighbourhood – without adequate consultation with or compensation for the residents who had been forcibly evicted. The street was one of the worst affected areas during the 2010 inter-ethnic violence in the city and was later reconstructed with international assistance.

In June, the CERD Committee criticized the redevelopment plans for Osh for failing to include reconstruction of traditional Uzbek neighbourhoods.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In July, geologists, ecologists and residents raised concerns about the start of a pilot project extracting the mineral titanomagnetite at the Kyzyl-Ompol field. Despite earlier assurances that mining at Kyzyl-Ompol would begin only after technical and environmental assessments had been published, operations commenced without releasing these documents.

1. "Kyrgyzstan: Further information: Human rights defender sentenced to probation: Rita Karasartova", 21 October ↑

LEBANON

Republic of Lebanon

The Israeli military continued to conduct air strikes in Lebanon despite a ceasefire agreement, and the Lebanese government failed to robustly pursue accountability for violations of international humanitarian law. Israel also caused extensive destruction and damage to civilian structures and agricultural land in southern Lebanon, in

violation of international humanitarian law. The Lebanese authorities continued to summon activists and journalists on criminal defamation and other vague charges, while a draft media law that could better protect freedom of expression advanced in parliament. The government extradited Egyptian-Turkish poet Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi to the United Arab Emirates, where he was forcibly disappeared. After years without progress, the investigation into the 2020 Beirut Port explosion began to advance. Despite some improvement, Lebanon continued to lack a universal social protection system. A proposed amendment before parliament sought to amend the Lebanese nationality law to grant nationality to children of Lebanese women. Lebanon experienced its most severe drought in recent years.

BACKGROUND

Lebanon ended more than two years of political deadlock with the election on 9 January of a president – Lebanese Armed Forces commander Joseph Aoun – and the formation of a government. On 13 January, parliament named Nawaf Salam as prime minister.

Despite a ceasefire agreement reached in November 2024, the Israeli military continued to conduct almost daily air strikes in southern Lebanon and the Bekaa region – and occasionally in other locations, including the capital, Beirut – targeting what they described as Hezbollah military locations and personnel.

On 18 February, Israel announced it would maintain a military presence in and temporarily control five "strategic" vantage points in southern Lebanon. On 27 February the Israeli defence minister said that Israeli forces were "staying indefinitely" in a buffer zone on the Israel-Lebanon border. In August, Israel's prime minister linked Israel's "phased reduction" of troops on Lebanese territories to the disarmament of Hezbollah.

As of 1 October, according to the OHCHR, the UN human rights office, Israeli military operations had killed 103 civilians in Lebanon since the ceasefire went into effect, and 80,000 people remained displaced.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The Israeli military's air strikes on Lebanon caused extensive destruction and damage to civilian structures and agricultural land in southern Lebanon in violation of international humanitarian law.[1]

Between 1 October 2024 and 26 January 2025, more than 10,000 structures were heavily damaged or completely destroyed, including homes, mosques, cemeteries, roads, parks and football pitches. In three municipalities, more than 70% of all structures were destroyed. Most of the destruction occurred outside active combat, and in the apparent absence of imperative military necessity as required under international humanitarian law. The destruction continued while a ceasefire agreement was in effect.

In October, after a visit to Lebanon, the UN Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions found that Israel's attacks on first responders, hospital personnel and journalists raised serious concerns under international humanitarian law. He told journalists that the 13 October 2023 attack that killed Reuters photojournalist Issam Abdallah and wounded six other journalists appeared to be a war crime. He called on Lebanon to accept the jurisdiction of the ICC and to open domestic criminal investigations into potentially unlawful deaths.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A draft media law submitted to the parliamentary Justice and Administration Committee in May included positive advancements for freedom of expression, notably abolishing pretrial detention and prison sentences for speech-related offences and repealing criminal defamation and insult provisions from the Penal Code and military judiciary law. However, a number of proposed amendments under discussion risked undermining the right to freedom of expression, including reintroducing pretrial detention for "infringing on individuals'

dignity or private lives" and imposing blanket bans on media outlets publishing information about complainants during ongoing legal proceedings.

The Lebanese authorities continued to summon activists and journalists on criminal defamation and other vague charges in violation of the right to freedom of expression. More than 15 individuals were summoned, mostly following complaints by high-profile, influential political and finance figures.

On 15 February, judicial authorities summoned staff from independent outlets Daraj Media and Megaphone News after they published reports critical of candidates for the Central Bank governorship and of the government's financial decisions. The complaint, filed by three lawyers in a private capacity, accused the outlets of "undermining the state's financial standing" and "weakening national sentiment".[2] In November the Court of Cassation's public prosecutor summoned Megaphone News's editor-in-chief and its director following a complaint filed on behalf of the former Cybercrimes Bureau chief.

In January the Lebanese government extradited Egyptian-Turkish poet Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi to the United Arab Emirates (UAE), based on a warrant issued by the Arab Interior Ministers Council, despite concerns from human rights organizations that extradition could put him at risk of serious human rights violations.[3] During a visit to Syria in December 2024, Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi had filmed himself inside Damascus's Umayyad Mosque criticizing the authorities of the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. On 28 December 2024 he was arrested by Lebanese General Security. Upon arrival in the UAE, he was forcibly disappeared. His whereabouts remained undisclosed at the end of the year (see United Arab Emirates entry).

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Since the passing of the anti-torture law (law number 65/2017) in 2017, Amnesty International has documented dozens of complaints brought under the law that were not effectively investigated and never reached trial.

The State Shura Council, Lebanon's highest administrative court, ordered the government to pay actor Ziad Itani reparations of LBP 480 million (approximately USD 5,360) for the authorities' failure to prohibit, prevent and adequately investigate his allegations of torture and other ill-treatment. The council's decision, issued on 5 December 2024 and made public on 10 March 2025, acknowledged the state's failure to prohibit acts of torture, protect the presumption of innocence, and conduct the necessary investigations and prosecutions to ensure that perpetrators of torture and other ill-treatment are held accountable. By the end of the year, Ziad Itani had not received the court-ordered reparation.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Five years after the Beirut Port explosion, which killed at least 236 people and injured more than 7,000, authorities had yet to deliver truth and justice for the victims and their families.

In February, after a two-year suspension, Judge Tarek Bitar resumed the investigation by summoning additional employees and officials implicated in the explosion. In March, prosecutor Jamal Hajjar overturned the measures imposed by his predecessor that had effectively frozen the investigation. Some of those summoned – including former prime minister Hassan Diab, Major General Abbas Ibrahim and Major General Tony Saliba – complied with the summons and appeared for questioning. However, other officials including two MPs – Ali Hassan Khalil and Ghazi Zaaiter – and the former prosecutor continued to obstruct the investigation by refusing to submit to questioning.

The government failed to pursue accountability for violations of international humanitarian law committed during the conflict with Israel by refraining from providing the ICC jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute crimes within the Rome

Statute committed on Lebanese territory and ensure victims' right to remedy.

Amnesty International documented repeated international humanitarian law violations committed by the Israeli military in Lebanon between 2023 and 2025, including strikes on healthcare facilities and vehicles in Beirut and in southern Lebanon.[4] Amnesty International also documented multiple air strikes that killed civilians, including children, and destroyed civilian properties.

RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY

Despite limited reforms, Lebanon remained far from having a universal social protection system. Following the 2019 economic crisis, many families with children, older people and those unable to work still lacked access to affordable health insurance and basic income security.

In June the National Social Security Fund announced a series of changes to its end-of-service and family allowances, including higher employer contributions and increased benefits for employees, including increased family allowances. These changes were implemented from 1 July.

While a major step forward when adopted in 2024, the National Social Protection Strategy remained underfunded and under-implemented, and continued to exclude non-Lebanese communities, including migrants and refugees.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women's rights groups continued to advocate for a unified personal status law and rights including equal custody of children, full protection from domestic violence, and the ability of women to pass on their nationality to their children and foreign spouses. Under Lebanon's nationality law, citizenship continued to be primarily passed down through the father.

On 2 September, MP Cynthia Zarazir submitted a proposal to parliament to amend Article 1 of the Lebanese Nationality Law to grant Lebanese nationality to children of Lebanese women. She announced the draft on 16 October, as part of the "My Nationality is a Right for Me and My Family" campaign, founded in 1999 by a group of affected rights holders.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Lebanon continued to host a large number of refugees, including Syrians and Palestinians. While thousands of Syrians returned home after the ousting of former Syrian president Bashar al-Assad in December 2024, as of 30 September, 636,051 Syrian refugees remained registered with UNHCR in Lebanon, according to the UN refugee agency. The government estimated that 1 million Syrian refugees remained in Lebanon and an additional 120,000 Syrian refugees had arrived after December 2024, escaping deadly tensions and violence in Syria's coastal and southern regions (see Syria entry).

UNHCR said that, due to budget cuts, it had closed its reception centres in the cities of Tripoli, Akkar and Tyre, and the Bekaa area. By the end of September, only 25% of UNHCR's required funding for programmes in Lebanon had been received. UNHCR had phased out all education and primary healthcare support by July, and by 1 December it ended secondary healthcare support, including hospitalization, maternity care and emergency admissions, leaving 85,000 refugees (40,000 formerly receiving primary care and 45,000 secondary care) without these services.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In August, UNICEF's Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Programme in Lebanon reported that the country experienced its most severe drought in recent years, with the winter of 2024-5 bringing less than 50% of the average seasonal rainfall and minimal snow cover. This sharply reduced surface and groundwater availability, affecting rivers, reservoirs, springs and wells. A study by the Litani River National Authority, which manages Lebanon's largest reservoir, found that climate change had contributed to the drought.

On 30 September the Ministry of the Environment submitted its third NDC, committing Lebanon to reduce its

greenhouse gas emissions by 22% unconditionally, and 33% conditional on international support, based on a 2035 business-as-usual scenario. It also committed Lebanon to increase renewable energy generation to meet 25% of its electricity demand unconditionally, and 30% conditionally, also by 2035. This represented a small increase in Lebanon's mitigation targets compared to its first NDC in 2020.

1. "Lebanon: Israeli military's deliberate destruction of civilian property and land 'must be investigated as war crimes'", 26 August ↑
2. "Lebanon: Authorities must immediately dismiss complaint against independent media outlets", 14 April ↑
3. "Lebanon: Poet Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi must not be extradited to Egypt or UAE", 7 January ↑
4. "Lebanon: Israeli attacks on health facilities, ambulances and paramedics must be investigated as war crimes", 5 March ↑

LESOTHO

Kingdom of Lesotho

USAID funding cuts to HIV and tuberculosis programmes created a healthcare crisis. Communities affected by the Polihali Dam project lodged a formal complaint seeking protection of their water sources, land and houses, adequate compensation and meaningful consultation. Tšolo Thakeli was charged for his online criticism of economic policy. Peaceful protests were restricted. A commission found that correctional service officers physically assaulted hundreds of prisoners, leaving one man dead.

BACKGROUND

Labour Force Survey statistics from 2024 revealed that around 30% of people were unemployed, rising to almost 50% among people aged between 15 and 24.

In September, during its fourth UPR, the government accepted most recommendations, but only noted recommendations to abolish the death penalty and decriminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

In January, USAID funding cuts to HIV and tuberculosis health programmes put the already fragile health service under immense strain. Around 1,500 health workers employed through donor-supported programmes lost their jobs; several NGO and church-run facilities reduced or suspended HIV testing as well as counselling and outreach work. It was increasingly difficult for people living with HIV and tuberculosis, particularly in rural areas, to access services, including essential antiretroviral therapy and programmes to prevent mother-to-child transmission. Authorities and their partners announced mitigation strategies, including plans to secure alternative funding for the re-employment of health workers

In September, 18 communities (comprising around 1,600 people), affected by Phase II of the Lesotho Highlands Water Project, filed a formal complaint to the African Development Bank's Independent Recourse Mechanism, the project funder. The complaint alleged damage to homes, blocked access to fields, water pollution, inadequate compensation, and a lack of meaningful consultation. The communities requested the project's suspension pending a resolution of their concerns. The project diverted water from the Polihali Dam in the Mokhotlong district to Gauteng province in South Africa at an estimated cost of USD 3 billion. It was scheduled for completion by 2029, a decade later than planned.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In June, social media activist Tšolo Thakeli was arbitrarily arrested after posting a video criticizing the government's economic record. He was released the next day and almost immediately re-arrested and charged with sedition under colonial-era legislation criminalizing free speech. The use of sedition charges to punish online criticism of the government's socio-economic policy had a chilling effect on activists, journalists and other social media users.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

From June the police denied permits for a series of protests in the capital, Maseru, connected to job losses in the textile sector. Organizers said that the police imposed onerous conditions as prerequisites for demonstrations and had also threatened to take action against protests that went ahead outside agreed routes or time periods.

Trades unions and community workers complained that police restricted the authorization of protests and public meetings connected to strike action in September by Polihali Dam workers demanding better wages and working conditions.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The Commission of Inquiry into events surrounding a prison break-out at Maseru Central Prison in December 2023 delivered its report to Prime Minister Ntsokoane Matekane on 16 June. The Commission concluded that Lesotho Correctional Services (LCS) officers subjected hundreds of detainees to physical assaults and other ill-treatment, leaving one man dead and another with permanent disabilities. It also identified serious leadership and management failures within the LCS and recommended disciplinary and criminal action against those responsible.

In August the report was tabled before parliament with some sections redacted, prompting criticism from lawyers, civil society members and detainees' families about the authorities' unwillingness to ensure truth, justice and accountability for victims of torture and other ill-treatment.

DEATH PENALTY

While Lesotho retained the death penalty, the last known execution was in 1995 and no death sentences were known to have been imposed during the year.

LIBYA

State of Libya

Rival militias used large-calibre weapons in an imprecise manner in densely populated areas, resulting in civilian casualties. Armed groups and militias arbitrarily arrested social media users and others for exercising their rights to freedom of expression. Thousands of people remained arbitrarily detained. Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread and systematic. "Confessions" extracted under torture were published online. Women, girls and members of ethnic minorities faced entrenched discrimination. LGBTI individuals were subjected to arbitrary arrests and prosecutions. The EU-backed Libyan Coast Guard (LCG) in western Libya and armed groups in eastern Libya continued to intercept thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at sea and forcibly return them to detention where they were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment and sexual violence. The LCG fired at two NGO rescue boats. Thousands were collectively and summarily expelled to neighbouring countries. A militia in western Libya suspended the operations of international organizations supporting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. Courts imposed death sentences following unfair trials; no executions were recorded. Impunity for crimes under international law remained entrenched in Libya, but for the first time since the situation of Libya was referred to the ICC in 2011, a suspect was apprehended abroad and surrendered to the court for crimes against humanity and war crimes.

BACKGROUND

Libya's rival authorities failed to agree on a unity government. In August the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) unveiled a plan for holding long-delayed presidential and legislative elections.

In July and August, elections were cancelled or delayed in 20 municipalities due to interference by armed groups affiliated with the self-proclaimed Libyan Arab Armed Forces (LAAF), in control of eastern and southern Libya.

In September the Government of National Unity (GNU) and the Deterrence Apparatus for Combating Terrorism and Organized Crime (DACTO) militia, also known as al-Radaa, reached an agreement to prevent an anticipated escalation of armed clashes in the capital, Tripoli, according to media reports. Al-Radaa continued to maintain influence over Mitiga airport and held an undisclosed number of detainees at the end of the year.

Greek and EU officials called for renewed engagement with Libyan rival authorities on migration control following a surge in refugees, asylum seekers and migrants arriving by sea to Greece. On 15 October, Italy's Chamber of Deputies confirmed the renewal of the Italy-Libya Memorandum of Understanding on migration cooperation for another three years, maintaining significant material and technical support to the GNU's Libyan Coast Guard (LCG).

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Thousands continued to be arbitrarily detained solely for their tribal or political affiliations, following grossly unfair trials or without legal basis.

In July the Tripoli-based Public Prosecutor announced that, during the first half of the year, the prosecution ordered the release of 258 detainees arbitrarily held by al-Radaa in Mitiga Prison in Tripoli. On 15 April a Tripoli court sentenced nine Libyan men, one Libyan woman and one Pakistani man to prison terms ranging from three to 15 years on charges including insulting religion, promoting banned groups and advocating constitutional change. The convictions followed a grossly unfair trial.[1]

On 2 November the Constitutional Court ruled that the House of Representatives' Law No. 4 of 2017, on the trial of civilians before military courts for terrorism-related offences and crimes against the state, was unconstitutional.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment remained systematic in prisons and detention facilities nationwide. Reported methods included beatings, electric shocks, sexual violence and stress positions. "Confessions" extracted under torture continued to be published online by militias and armed groups.

In January, videos circulating on social media showed a group of men in camouflage uniform and plain clothes subjecting detainees inside the LAAF-controlled Gernada prison, 250km north-east of Benghazi, to torture and other ill-treatment including beatings with iron rods. On 16 January the Military Prosecutor of the LAAF announced investigations, but no additional information was made public during the year. Detainees at the prison continued to be held in overcrowded and poorly ventilated rooms and denied adequate healthcare.

In May, videos emerged on social media showing parliamentarian Ibrahim al-Dersi shirtless in a dimly lit, confined space with concrete walls. He bore visible signs of torture and a metal chain and large padlock were fastened around his neck. In the videos, he pleaded to Saddam Haftar, the effective commander of the Tariq Ben Zeyad (TBZ) armed group, for his release. Ibrahim al-Dersi's fate and whereabouts remained unknown since his disappearance on 16 May 2024 in Benghazi.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Armed groups and militias arbitrarily arrested and detained activists, protesters, journalists and online content creators simply for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

On 14 May, militias affiliated with the GNU opened fire at protesters to disperse anti-GNU demonstrations in Abu Salim neighbourhood and Martyrs' Square in Tripoli. At least three individuals were injured in the shootings, according to Libya Crimes Watch.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS

On 12 May, after news emerged of the killing of one of the most powerful militia leaders in Tripoli – Abdel Ghani al-Kikli, known as "Gheniwa" – armed clashes erupted in densely populated residential areas between rival militias including the GNU-affiliated Brigade 444, al-Radaa, and the Stability Support Authority. The clashes involved the use of large-calibre weapons, including anti-aircraft guns, in an improper and imprecise way. A Tripoli-based NGO reported that 53 civilians died in the clashes.

The Ministry of the Interior announced it had received 69 reports from residents of Tripoli whose property, including houses and cars, were damaged.

IMPUNITY

In May the GNU dissolved the Department of Operations and Judicial Security (DOJS), and integrated its members into the Ministry of the Interior. It did so without conducting individual vetting to exclude and hold accountable those reasonably suspected of involvement in well-documented crimes under international law against Libyans, migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

Following the dismissal in May of Lotfi al-Harari, former head of the Internal Security Agency (ISA), authorities failed to investigate torture and other crimes under international law that were allegedly committed under his command.

In July the Public Prosecutor issued arrest warrants for 172 members of the Stability Support Authority (SSA) militia – which had been under the command of "Gheniwa" (see above) – in connection with incidents of murder, torture, abduction and arbitrary detention. The prosecution ordered the detention of 11 individuals but did not address the status of the remaining suspects.

In August the ICC unsealed the arrest warrant issued initially on 10 November 2020 against Saif Suleiman Sneidel, a member of Group 50, an armed sub-group of the Al-Saiqa Brigade, affiliated with the LAAF. Saif Suleiman Sneidel is accused of committing the war crimes of murder, torture and outrages upon personal dignity in Benghazi or surrounding areas. He and seven other Libyans under arrest warrant by the ICC remained at large.

In September the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution renewing its technical assistance and capacity building in Libya, which fell far short of the investigative and monitoring mechanism advocated by NGOs and therefore risked further entrenching impunity.

In November the Public Prosecutor ordered the detention of Osama Njeem – the former head of the DOJS and long-term member of al-Radaa militia – against whom the ICC had issued an arrest warrant. The detention order was issued in connection with incidents of torture and other cruel and degrading treatment of inmates at Mitiga Prison, and a death in custody. In January, Italy had arrested Osama Njeem but failed to surrender him to the ICC and returned him to Libya. In October the ICC found that Italy had failed to comply with its international obligations under the Rome Statute by not properly executing the court's request for the arrest and surrender of Osama Njeem while he was on Italian territory.

On 1 December the German authorities surrendered Khaled Mohamed Ali El Hishri (also known as "Al-Buti") – another senior and long-term member of al-Radaa militia – to the ICC. The ICC had issued a warrant for his arrest for crimes against humanity and war crimes, also in connection to incidents at Mitiga Prison.

DISCRIMINATION

Women and girls

Women faced discrimination in law and practice, including in matters relating to marriage, child custody, nationality rights, access to political office and employment.

In March the Tripoli-based ISA arrested a social media content creator on baseless charges of "producing and displaying pornographic material" after she shared personal content. The prosecution ordered her pretrial detention for 10 days.

LGBTI people

Consensual same-sex sexual relations between adults remained criminalized. The ISA in Tripoli and other militias and armed groups arrested at least nine individuals in Tripoli on the basis of their actual or perceived gender identity and/or sexual orientation, according to Libya Crimes Watch.

In February the Agency for Supporting Security Directorates in the Regions, a militia affiliated with the Ministry of the Interior, published a video showing nine men and two women "confessing" to committing "homosexuality" and "forming a network to spread HIV".

Ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples

Members of the Tebu and Tuareg communities, who lacked national identity cards owing to discriminatory laws and regulations governing Libyan citizenship, faced barriers in accessing education and health services.

Between August and October the Subul al-Salam Battalion – an armed group under LAAF command – and the LAAF-affiliated police in the district of Kufra carried out unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances against members of the Tebu community in Kufra district, based on their ethnic origin.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Across Libya, security forces, militias and armed groups and other non-state actors continued to commit widespread and systematic human rights violations and abuses with impunity against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.

The EU-backed LCG in western Libya and the LAAF-affiliated Libyan Special Naval Forces and TBZ armed groups in eastern Libya intercepted at least 26,940 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at sea and forcibly returned them to Libya.

On 24 August, LCG officials fired gunshots at the NGO rescue ship Ocean Viking from an EU-funded boat donated by Italy. On 26 September, LCG officials fired shots at a Sea-Watch NGO rescue ship. The European Commission stated that Libyan authorities had launched an "investigation" into the latter incident.

In May, the GNU dissolved the Directorate for Combating Illegal Migration (DCIM), a department nominally overseen by the Ministry of the Interior but with its own budget, replacing it with a new body, the General Administration for Combating Illegal Migration under the Ministry of the Interior. The decision led to the closure of most DCIM migration detention centres in Tripoli, excluding the Tajoura detention centre. DCIM detention centres in eastern Libya also remained operational. According to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, at least 5,818 refugees, asylum seekers and migrants continued to be held by the DCIM across Libya. Thousands more were held directly by armed groups and militias in unofficial detention centres.

Refugees, asylum seekers and migrants were held in cruel and inhuman conditions in both DCIM and unofficial detention centres.

Libyan Border Guards (affiliated with the Ministry of the Interior), the DCIM and armed groups arbitrarily arrested hundreds of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants who had been collectively expelled and transferred to Libya by Tunisian and Algerian authorities (see Tunisia entry).

Armed groups affiliated to LAAF continued to collectively and forcibly expel thousands of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants without due process.

On 7 and 8 February, two mass graves containing a total of 93 bodies were found in the Wahat (north-east) and Kufrah (south-east) districts following raids by the Ministry of the Interior on human trafficking sites.

In March, GNU-affiliated forces led a wave of racially motivated and mass arrests of sub-Saharan refugees, asylum seekers and migrants across western Libya. The crackdown coincided with an increase in speech inciting racial discrimination and violence against sub-Saharan Africans from Libyan social media users and GNU officials. This sparked racial violence leading to the death of a foreign national on 13 March in the city of Sabratha.

In March the Tripoli-based ISA also launched a crackdown on international humanitarian organizations assisting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. It suspended the operations of 10 organizations for several months, subjecting staff members to unlawful interrogations and confiscating passports. On 9 October the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Médecins Sans Frontières that it had one month to close its operations in the country.

DEATH PENALTY

Libya retained the death penalty for a wide range of offences. Courts continued to impose death sentences for murder following grossly unfair trials. No executions were recorded.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Libya again failed to ratify the Paris Agreement or submit any formal plans for climate mitigation and adaptation. It remained one of the biggest fossil fuel producers in Africa.

1. "Libya: Harsh sentences punishing freedom of thought following grossly unfair trial", 12 August ↑

MADAGASCAR

Republic of Madagascar

Severe droughts, US government aid cuts and the national government's failure to devote adequate funding to essential services increased poverty levels. Millions of people lacked potable water and thousands of children suffered from acute malnutrition. Security forces violently repressed protests against poor governance and extractive projects, resulting in deaths, injuries and arbitrary arrests. There were no investigations into extrajudicial killings or other abuses. Women, girls and persons with albinism were denied protection from violence and discrimination as key reforms stalled.

BACKGROUND

Hundreds of people joined nationwide demonstrations between late September and mid-October, led by the Gen Z Madagascar youth movement. They protested against poor service delivery, including persistent water and power shortages, which they linked to corruption and poor governance. On 14 October, Michael Randrianirina, head of the Army Corp of Personnel and Administrative and Technical Services, a specialized unit, took power in a military coup, deposing then-president Andry Rajoelina and his government. Andry Rajoelina fled Madagascar and, on 17 October, Michael Randrianirina was sworn in as president to lead the country through a political transition process, which he said would take two years at most.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

There were severe droughts linked to climate change. Meanwhile, the US government's abrupt funding cuts to USAID impaired the work of humanitarian organizations, including UNICEF, the WHO and the World Food Programme. Consequently, the population's access to food, water and health services was severely affected. In February around 8,000 children were admitted to specialist health centres with severe acute malnutrition in the Grand Sud region. More than 40% of the population lacked access to safe drinking water, with people in the Grand Sud particularly affected.

The government did not fulfil pledges to increase spending on essential services and provided little information on how the national budget was spent. Climate strategies lacked effective assessments to ascertain the needs of those displaced by drought-induced famines. Persistent nationwide power cuts led to increased insecurity and disrupted education services for more than 3,000 students at the École Supérieure Polytechnique Antananarivo, among others.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

During the anti-government protests in the capital Antananarivo and other major cities (see above, Background), hundreds of Gen Z

movement activists were joined by civil society groups, government employees and trades unions. Security forces used unnecessary and excessive force to disperse the peaceful protesters, including firing tear gas directly into crowds, using rubber bullets at close range and, in some cases, live ammunition against those not posing an imminent threat of death or serious injury. At least 22 people were killed, including bystanders and reportedly one child, while more than 100 others were injured.

Authorities continued to use Ordinance 60-082 of 13 August 1960 to criminalize unauthorized protests and arbitrarily arrest participants. In the Anosy region, at least 80 people remained subject to five-year suspended prison sentences for protesting against the operations of mining company QIT Madagascar Minerals. In April, activist Rodney Rehosy Fanampera received a three-year suspended prison sentence for leading peaceful demonstrations against the Base Toliara mining project. The same month, trade unionist Armand Frédéric Rakotoalison received a six-month suspended prison sentence for organizing a demonstration in the grounds of the Joseph Ravoahangy Andrianavalona University Hospital Centre.

In July and August, authorities harassed three journalists for covering "sensitive topics". Government officials wrote to two media outlets requesting that they replace journalists Pauline Le Troquier and Gaëlle Borgia after the women suggested that the cause of some 32 deaths following a party might be botulism, challenging the official version that the cause might be intentional poisoning. During a press conference, journalist Tsilaviny Randriamanga asked about a Boeing 777 aircraft registered in Madagascar and found in Iran. Following this, the senate president issued a statement intimating that Tsilaviny Randriamanga was "in the pay" of government opponents.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In July the Ordinary Criminal Court in Anosy sentenced a man convicted of raping a girl, to surgical castration, a punishment allowed in child rape cases under the revised Penal Code. The practice violates the absolute prohibition of torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment. The authorities continued to promote the punishment as a populist solution to the alarming rise in child rape cases

IMPUNITY

The alleged extrajudicial execution of Jean Salomon Andriamamonjy by security forces in October 2023 was not investigated. He died after suffering a head injury while held in a military camp after he had led a protest against QIT Madagascar Minerals.

The National Preventive Mechanism, an official body that was established to investigate cases of torture and extrajudicial killings, remained non-operational throughout the year. Security force members who used excessive and often lethal force to disperse protests, including the Gen Z protests in September and October, were not held accountable for their alleged crimes.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The new government pledged to release those imprisoned for opposing the previous government. In practice the releases, which began in October, were not limited to unlawfully detained political prisoners but were extended to people held for recognizable criminal offences whose sentences had not yet expired.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Survivors of gender-based violence, particularly girls, did not receive adequate protection and support. No specific government budget was allocated to their care.

Parliament's failure to advance a 2021 bill meant that abortion remained criminalized in all cases. Madagascar failed to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted by the AU in 2003. It contains provisions to protect reproductive rights by authorizing abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape or incest, where the continued pregnancy endangers the life or

the mental and physical health of the pregnant woman, or in cases of fatal fetal impairment.

DISCRIMINATION

Children with albinism continued to face abductions and killings in acts driven by dangerous superstitious misconceptions about the condition. At least four children with albinism were known to have been abducted during the year. In March, the body of a four-year-old girl was found. Parts of her body, including her head, had been removed. No one was arrested for her killing.

In August the High Constitutional Court rejected a proposed bill that could have strengthened protections for persons with albinism, citing inconsistencies and vagueness in its provisions.

MALAWI

Republic of Malawi

Food insecurity levels increased, while drug shortages and an Mpox outbreak led to a health crisis. Civic space remained restricted. Discrimination against LGBTI people persisted. Two police officers were convicted for torturing a detainee. Gender-based violence was widespread, including against women refugees.

BACKGROUND

The Department of Disaster Management Affairs said in February that during the 2024/25 rainy season, severe weather affected approximately 160,000 people, leaving around 644 families displaced, and approximately 35 people dead. The department continued to develop initiatives to address climate-induced shocks, including improved early warning systems.

RIGHT TO FOOD

According to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network, southern districts faced crisis-level food insecurity due to poor harvests and below-average purchasing power. A survey by the National Statistics Office and the Department of Nutrition, revealed that malnutrition rates had risen sharply from 4.4 to 7.1%, despite the government's provision since September 2024, of Super Cereal Plus, a fortified food supplement, to vulnerable groups.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

International aid cuts led to critical drug shortages for tuberculosis treatment, only months after the WHO reported a 40% decrease in cases and a reduction in the number of deaths. By September stocks were dangerously low.

In September the Public Health Institute of Malawi reported 118 Mpox cases and one related death following an outbreak in April, affecting 12 districts. The institute successfully managed the outbreak using a multi-sector approach.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In June, in the capital, Lilongwe, protesters at a peaceful demonstration against the electoral commission's handling of upcoming elections were attacked by unidentified armed men suspected of belonging to the then-ruling Malawi Congress Party. Several people were injured and security forces failed to intervene when one activist was reportedly beaten.

DISCRIMINATION

Finalization of the government's 2022 national action plan to protect and promote the rights of persons with albinism was delayed by funding constraints.

In April, a UPR submission from local and international NGOs highlighted the use of discrimination and torture against LGBTI people, identifying patterns of violence, intimidation, extortion and harassment by law enforcement officers.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Two police officers were convicted in April by the Mulanje Magistrate Court of grievous bodily harm and neglect of official duty in connection with the torture of a 13-year-old boy in police custody in 2024, which

reportedly resulted in the amputation of his arms. They were sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In June, a Clooney Foundation for Justice report revealed that 27 of 63 women detained for serious violent offences were, at the time of their alleged crimes, defending themselves from gender-based violence.

On 28 October the High Court of Malawi upheld the rights of girls who had survived sexual violence, affirming their right to seek an abortion. The Ministry of Health was ordered to provide clear direction for healthcare providers to offer on-demand access to legal pregnancy termination services for girls.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Dzaleka refugee camp, which has capacity for 12,000 people, was believed to host over 50,000 refugees. In September, *The Guardian* newspaper reported an increase in gender-based violence against women refugees in the camp, many of whom were forced by hardship into sex work.

MALAYSIA

Malaysia

Broad laws limiting freedom of expression continued to be used against critics. Authorities restricted peaceful protests and harassed, investigated and arrested activists and students. The number of people on death row decreased significantly. Refugees and undocumented migrants continued to face indefinite detention, arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment. LGBTI people's rights were attacked and activists demanded greater recognition of Indigenous Peoples.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to use vague laws to restrict freedom of expression.

In March, the High Court in the capital, Kuala Lumpur, dismissed a constitutional challenge raised by the makers of the banned film *Mentega Terbang*, who were charged under the Penal Code for "wounding religious feelings". The trial remained pending at year's end.

In August, the Court of Appeal ruled in favour of activist Heidy Quah's request to strike down the terms "offensive" and "annoy" from section 233(1)(a) of the Communications and Multimedia Act (CMA). She had claimed that criminalizing online comments on this basis violated the right to freedom of expression.[1] The government appealed the decision.

In October, police arrested seven individuals for allegedly posting seditious and threatening content on social media targeting political leaders. They were investigated under the Sedition Act, CMA and Penal Code.[2] Later that month, the High Court ruled that Australian academic and blogger Murray Hunter had defamed Malaysia's internet regulator over articles criticizing the agency. Weeks earlier, Malaysian and Thai authorities had arrested him in Thailand, where he resided and where a criminal trial was scheduled for 2026.

In December, activist Fahmi Reza was arrested and investigated under the Sedition Act and CMA for a social media post critical of the Regent of Johor, and was released on police bail. Earlier in the year, he had been erroneously blocked from travelling overseas and was arrested and banned from entering Sabah for publishing satirical cartoons of the state governor.

LGTBI people's rights

The government censored LGBTI-related publications and other forms of expression by LGBTI people.[3] In November, authorities raided venues in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, arresting over 200 people perceived to be LGBTI, and launching investigations under various laws including those criminalizing same-sex sexual conduct.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In February, the government moved to amend the Peaceful Assembly Act (PAA) and suspended the requirement for organizers to

obtain permission from venue owners. In July, the Federal Court ruled section 9(5) of the PAA unconstitutional, after activist Amir Hadi challenged charges for not notifying police before a 2022 protest.[4]

Despite these developments, authorities continued to restrict peaceful protests using the PAA, the Penal Code and the Minor Offences Act. Protesters faced harassment, intimidating tactics, arbitrary arrests and investigations, and excessive use of force.

In July, police arrested activist Badrul Hisham Shaharin, known as Chegubard, under numerous laws, including the Sedition Act, after he participated in a rally calling for the resignation of the prime minister. The following month, activist Arutchelvan Subramaniam was arrested under the Penal Code and released later the same day, after joining a peaceful march by plantation workers and activists to submit a memorandum to parliament. At least seven student activists in Sabah were investigated and charged under the Penal Code, PAA and CMA over anti-corruption protests.[5] In July, student activists and civil society groups delivering a memorandum to parliament on proposed amendments to the PAA were met with heavy police presence outside the parliament building.

In October, police arrested two people outside the US Embassy as they participated in a peaceful protest against Israel's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla. As of December, one person faced charges under the Penal Code for allegedly voluntarily causing hurt after the police used force to restrain them.

DEATH PENALTY

Since the 2023 repeal of the mandatory death penalty, the confirmed number of people on death row had remained historically low. Executions of Malaysians for drug-related offences in neighbouring Singapore continued to spark debate on the death penalty in Malaysia. In July, the government announced it would form a task force to review policies towards the full abolition of the death penalty.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

In November, the High Court ruled that the government and police were involved in the enforced disappearance of pastor Raymond Koh and Amri Che Mat. The court awarded over MYR 40 million (USD 9 million) in damages to their families. The government said it would appeal and reopened an investigation into the disappearances.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

In June, civil society groups renewed calls for justice for Teoh Beng Hock, who was found dead in 2009 after questioning by Anti-Corruption Commission officers. The Attorney General's chambers closed the case in May, citing insufficient evidence to prosecute.

In November, three men aged 24 to 29 were shot dead by police at an oil palm estate in Durian Tunggal, Melaka, prompting the case to be investigated as murder, amid public scrutiny and conflicting accounts of the incident.

In December, a prison warden was charged with causing the death of inmate Gan Chin Eng during a riot at the Kamunting Correctional Detention Centre in January.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In January, authorities detained 196 Rohingya refugees who landed in Langkawi, an island near the Thai border. Later they pushed back two boats carrying 300 people believed to be Rohingya refugees.

Immigration raids intensified. Human rights groups denounced arbitrary detentions and called for an end to torture in detention. Refugees and undocumented migrants, including children, continued to face indefinite detention. As of 31 August, 20,143 people were held at 20 detention facilities, including 2,196 children. Rights groups urged ending child detention and the adoption of community-based alternatives to detention.

In October, Myanmar authorities announced the arrest of activist Thuzar Maung and her family, believed to have been abducted in Malaysia and returned to Myanmar in 2023. The arrests prompted human rights groups to urge the Malaysian

government to seek their immediate release from the Myanmar authorities.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In November, the government presented a paper on its proposed amendments to the Aboriginal Peoples Act 1954. The amendments would expand protections for Indigenous Peoples, following calls from the National Human Rights Commission for a national action plan. Activists urged formal recognition of the Orang Asli as Malaysia's First Peoples and the protection of their right to self-determination.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In October, the government postponed the tabling of the National Climate Change Bill to allow for further engagement with business and industry associations.

1. "Malaysia: Heidy Quah's court victory a win for all Malaysians speaking truth to power", 19 August ↑
2. "Malaysia: Malaysia's assault on online expression must end now", 7 October ↑
3. "Malaysia: Weaponizing morality: new report exposes sharp rise in censorship of LGBTIQ publications under outdated Malaysian law", 16 July ↑
4. "Malaysia: Federal Court ruling a powerful step towards restoring the right to peaceful assembly", 1 July ↑
5. "Malaysia: The Madani government must stop weaponizing laws against student voices", 23 May ↑

MALI

Republic of Mali

Authorities further curtailed the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. Political opponents and civil society members were arbitrarily arrested and detained or subjected to enforced disappearance. Government forces, their allies and armed groups carried out unlawful attacks and killings against civilians. Armed groups imposed blockades on several towns and cities. More than 2,036 schools were closed due to the conflict.

BACKGROUND

In February, the government drafted the National Charter for Peace and Reconciliation, following the collapse of an earlier peace process that was boycotted by political parties, civil society and some armed groups. In April the political transition period, which followed the 2020 military coup, was extended by five years.

In June the Wagner group, a private military company, was replaced by the Africa Corps Initiative under the Russian defence ministry's control as part of its security partnership with Mali.

In August the government said it had foiled a military coup attempt, arresting several senior army officers and a French diplomat who was also a member of the French intelligence services.

In September Mali announced its intention to withdraw from the ICC.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The government's decision to dissolve all political parties illustrated the alarming and continuing crackdown on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association. In April and May, protests denouncing the move were violently repressed by the security forces in the capital, Bamako.[1]

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Security forces forcibly disappeared activists, civil society members and politicians.

On 14 March, Alou Badra Sacko, coordinator of the 20 February Appeal for a Return to Constitutional Rule and president of Don't Touch My Money civil society movements, was abducted in central Bamako by hooded gunmen and taken to an undisclosed destination. Days earlier, he had called for the withdrawal of taxes on mobile money transactions. He was released on 24 May.

On 8 May El Bachir Thiam, a Yelema party leader, was abducted by unidentified men

from his home. His whereabouts were not disclosed. The UN Human Rights Council called for his immediate release, and he was freed on 26 September. El Bachir Thiam had been central in opposing the dissolution of political parties and the extension of the political transition.

Also on 8 May, hooded gunmen, driving an unmarked vehicle and claiming to be gendarmes, abducted Alhassane Abba, secretary general of the Convergence for Mali's Development political party, from his home in Bamako. He was not presented to a judge during his detention and was released on 5 June.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

In March, the UN Human Rights Council called for the release of political activists Moulaye Baba Haïdara, Mahamoud Mohamed Mangane and Amadou Togola, who were tortured during their detention. They had been held since 2023 and awaited trial on charges including "undermining the external and internal security of the state", and "undermining national unity and… the credibility of the state".

In August, former prime minister Moussa Mara was arrested for posting a call on X in which he said he will "fight by all means" for the rights of those imprisoned for expressing their opinions. He was charged with discrediting the state and opposing legitimate authority. In October he was convicted and sentenced to one year in prison.[2]

Clément Dembele, an anti-corruption activist, remained in detention despite a court in April dismissing the charges against him and ordering his release. He was detained in 2023, accused of making death threats against the president and his family. In August the UN Human Rights Council called for his unconditional release.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Armed groups unlawfully attacked and killed civilians.

In February, around 34 civilians were killed in an attack on a civilian convoy by the Islamic State in the Sahel (IS-Sahel), according to media. The convoy was being escorted by Malian security forces close to the village of Kobé, near the city of Gao.

In May Sidi Barka, a civil society leader, was abducted by IS-Sahel members in the town of Ménaka in the east. According to local sources, his body was found on the outskirts of the town in August.

Also in May, Ousmane Kampo, the mayor of Konna, Mopti region, was abducted by members of the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM) while working in his fields, according to media. He was freed on 4 October.

In August, Katiba Macina members attacked Farabougou in the Dogofry commune, capturing army positions in an indiscriminate attack that killed civilian men, and led to an exodus of the residents. Also in August, Dogofry's mayor Modibo Kimbiri and his driver were killed by traditional hunters who fired on their vehicle between Diabaly and Dogofry.

On 6 November armed group members abducted social media personality Mariam Cissé in Echell, Timbuktu region. The next day, they drove her to Tonka, her home town, executed her and left her body in a public square.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The army and its allies committed violations of international humanitarian law, including torture and extrajudicial killings.

On 16 March, a Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) drone strike in Ejdeir, Timbuktu region, killed at least 10 civilians on market day.

On 12 April, FAMa officers and their Wagner partners arrested around 100 men, mostly from the Fulani community, at a market in the village of Sebabougou, Kayes region. According to OHCHR, the UN human rights office, about 60 of them were taken to the Kwala military camp in the Koulikoro region, where they were tortured during interrogation. Most of them were then taken from the camp and, according to survivors' testimonies, extrajudicially executed by shooting. A week later decomposing bodies believed to be of some of the men were

found near the Kwala camp by relatives searching for their loved ones.

On 12 May around 10 Malian soldiers accompanied by Dozo militia fighters arrested between 23 and 27 men at the weekly market in the town of Diafarabé. The men were blindfolded, their hands tied behind their backs, and transported by canoes across the river, where they were executed and buried in mass graves.[3] While the army pledged that the "alleged" executions would be investigated, no further information was made public.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

GSIM continued to block access to several towns and cities, including Gossi, Léré and Diafarabé, undermining the rights to food security and freedom of movement, among other rights. In July GSIM announced a blockade against Kayes and Nioro du Sahel, two major cities in the west. In the same month, it announced that all fuel transportation and supplies from neighbouring Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire to Mali would be restricted and began targeting fuel tankers travelling on roads in western and central Mali.

Right to education

As of June, the education crisis worsened with more than 2,036 schools considered non-functional due to insecurity, compared to 1,984 schools in June 2024. Meanwhile, 618,000 schoolchildren were denied their right to education. Kidal region was the most affected with 63% of children out of school.

1. "Mali: Authorities must abandon alarming proposal to dissolve political parties", 30 April ↑
2. "Mali: Authorities must immediately release former Prime Minister Moussa Mara and stop crackdown on civil and political rights" 27 October ↑
3. "Mali: Investigation into executions of civilians in Diafarabé must be conducted urgently", 22 May ↑

MALTA

Republic of Malta

Independent monitoring of places of detention, including to prevent ill-treatment, was inadequate. There were new reports that Malta failed to respond to distress calls from refugees and migrants in peril at sea. Refugees and migrants continued to be arbitrarily detained. The conditions and treatment of people in immigration detention remained punitive. Abortion remained illegal in most circumstances. No progress was made on establishing a national human rights institution.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In July, the Council of Europe's Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) published the report of its 2023 visit to Malta. The committee reiterated long-standing concerns that the National Preventive Mechanism lacked sufficient independence and powers. It also highlighted the need to review the prison disciplinary system, which allowed prisoners to be confined to a cell for 23 hours a day. The committee received several allegations of ill-treatment and noted that conditions in Corradino prison remained poor.

An investigation by the Parliamentary Ombudsman, published in July and focused on maladministration in the prison system between 2018 and 2021, also revealed allegations of degrading treatment of prisoners.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

At year's end 246 people had reached Malta irregularly by sea, having been rescued by the authorities. However, reports persisted that Malta had delayed or failed altogether to respond to cases of distress at sea. In September, the UN Human Rights Committee addressed a complaint by 41 survivors of a shipwreck in August, who had

been left stranded for days on a supply ship in the Maltese search and rescue region. The committee stated that Malta and Italy had a duty to coordinate to ensure rescue and disembarkation in a place of safety. The procedure to establish the two states' responsibilities in the incident was pending at year's end. In March, in a separate incident involving 32 individuals stranded on a gas platform, the committee had requested that Malta coordinate a rescue operation and ensure that people were disembarked at the nearest place of safety.

Malta continued to cooperate with Libya to intercept people trying to reach Europe by sea in the Maltese search and rescue region and take them back to Libya, which was not a safe country for the disembarkation of people rescued at sea.

In May, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances expressed concern at reports of "non-assistance and pushbacks of migrants at sea, including reports of delays in search and rescue operations." It also noted the absence of safeguards against enforced disappearances in Malta's 2020 memorandum of understanding with Libya to control migration.

Malta continued to automatically detain people arriving irregularly by sea. Detention based on public health grounds was no longer extended, following condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights. However, the authorities adopted new practices under which most asylum seekers continued to be automatically detained on other grounds. Available appeals processes remained largely ineffective.

In July, with reference to its 2023 visit, the CPT noted that, despite some improvements, the immigration detention system's overall regime remained "deeply punitive". Conditions and treatment in the Safi and Hal Far centres continued to "undermine detainees' dignity". Some allegations of violence by staff were also received.

The criminal court in the capital, Valletta, continued to hear the case of two asylum seekers, who – together with a third individual – had opposed attempts to unlawfully return them to Libya in 2019 when two of them were still children. The charges against them included acts of terrorism and they faced life imprisonment if convicted. The third man involved in the case was facing extradition to Malta from the UK.[1]

In March, the Constitutional Court ordered a retrial in a case brought by asylum seekers who were unlawfully returned to Libya in 2020 by a commercial ship contracted and instructed by the government. The court had previously dismissed the case, known as the "Easter Monday push back", on procedural grounds.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Abortion continued to be criminalized in most circumstances.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In June, two men were found guilty of complicity in the 2017 killing of journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia, for having supplied the bomb that exploded in her car. The trial of a businessman accused of commissioning the killing had not begun by year's end.

An EU report on the rule of law in the country concluded that there had been no progress towards the establishment of a national human rights institution, and only limited progress on measures to strengthen the independence of the judiciary. Journalists continued to face challenges in accessing official information.

1. "Malta: El Hiblu case 'everything wrong with migration policies in the central Mediterranean'" 22 January ↑

MEXICO

United Mexican States

Protection mechanisms and human rights guarantees deteriorated. Rights defenders, journalists and those searching for disappeared people continued to be subjected to threats, criminalization, killings and enforced disappearance. The

authorities failed to recognize the work of women who search for disappeared people, despite the recommendations of international bodies. Protests continued to be suppressed by the police. Torture remained widespread. The number of enforced disappearances increased by 10.5% compared to the previous year, and feminicides and trans-feminicides persisted. Abortion was decriminalized in most states. The authorities continued to deny rights and international protection to migrants. The number of internally displaced people increased.

BACKGROUND

In March, the Congress of the Union passed a package of secondary laws to regulate the constitutional reform that had suppressed the National Institute for Transparency, Access to Information and Personal Data Protection. In August, civil society organizations warned that Transparency for the People, the new body under the Anticorruption and Good Governance Secretariat, had dismissed 99.6% of the appeals for review submitted.

The number of reported homicides decreased by 27.4% compared to 2024.

The government continued to deny that the country was being militarized, arguing that command of the National Guard rested with the president, that the security strategy was designed by the Ministry of Security, and that there was no breach of human rights in the country.

The first elections to the judiciary were held on 1 June, despite concerns about the independence of the judicial system. A total of 881 posts were elected at the federal level and nearly 2,000 in 18 states and in Mexico City. Only 13% of the electorate voted, and 22% of votes cast were void or incomplete. The Organization of American States claimed that the nine most voted candidates to the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation had been promoted through lists distributed by political parties and local government structures before the election.

The General Law to Prevent, Investigate and Punish Extortion was approved in November. Civil society organizations expressed concern that the law contained provisions contrary to human rights, allowing evidence obtained through means that violate human rights, such as torture, to be admitted in certain exceptional circumstances. Additionally, the law's ambiguous wording enabled criminal prosecution of journalists and media outlets publishing information of public interest.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

In October, the Senate approved a reform of the Amparo Law (protection of constitutional rights) that included positive elements, such as the expediting of *amparo* proceedings but also negative ones, such as limitations on the granting of suspensions, continued use of mandatory pretrial detention, and new criteria to determine legitimate interest, which could restrict access to *amparo* for vulnerable individuals or groups.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

According to a Front Line Defenders report published in May, Mexico continued to rank second worldwide in killings of human rights defenders, with 32 cases recorded in 2024, up from 30 in 2023. In a report published in April, the Mexican Centre for Environmental Law warned of an increase in the number of people killed for protecting the environment, with 25 cases in 2024 compared to 19 in 2023.

Civil society organizations were also targeted. In July, unidentified individuals raided the home of Dora Roblero, director of the Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas Human Rights Centre. Over the previous 11 months, the organization had reported 51 incidents against its members, including harassment, intimidation and surveillance.[1]

In September, the Mexico City government attempted to remove the fence surrounding the Women Who Fight Roundabout, which had been taken over in 2021 by a group of women who installed a statue symbolizing women demanding justice for feminicides, those searching for missing relatives, and prominent women in history. Removal of the fencing was stopped after various groups,

activists and civil society organizations spoke out.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

According to Reporters Without Borders, Mexico continued to be one of the most dangerous countries for journalists. Article 19 reported that seven journalists had been killed during the year for their reporting, and warned of an increased use of regulatory frameworks as censorship tools within the country. The organization registered 51 cases of judicial harassment between January and July, affecting 39 journalists and 12 media outlets, more than double that of the previous year (21).

Between June and September, Congress passed several laws on mass surveillance that made confidential information available to public institutions, including the armed forces.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On the fifth anniversary of the police repression of the feminist protest of 9 November 2020 in the municipality of Benito Juárez, Quintana Roo state, local government representatives unveiled a memorial but failed to issue a public apology. Full reparation for the harm caused was therefore not attained.

In at least 14 of the country's federal states, the authorities continued to commit human rights violations during demonstrations.[2] In Puebla, police cracked down on two women-led protests in August and September.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

In March, a court sentenced four military officers to 40 years in prison for the extrajudicial execution of five young people in Nuevo Laredo, Tamaulipas state, in 2023.

On 6 May, two girls aged seven and 11 died when members of the 42nd Infantry Battalion fired on a vehicle in the municipality of Badiraguato, Sinaloa state. Survivors of the incident rejected the initial official accounts that the shooting was in response to an attack on the military. In December, the National Human Rights Commission recommended that the authorities give reparation for the damage suffered as a result of unlawful use of force.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The Global Torture Index 2025 of the World Organisation Against Torture classified Mexico as a country where people faced a high risk of torture and other ill-treatment, noting that torture was widespread and occurred with impunity.

Following a court ruling, in February the Office of the Attorney General published the National Programme to Prevent and Punish Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, a programme developed with the participation of civil society organizations that had been pending since the 2017 enactment of the General Law to Prevent, Investigate and Punish Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

In a case involving a survivor of sexual torture, the Supreme Court of Justice ruled in June that the precautionary measures issued by international human rights bodies were binding on the Mexican state and that the jurisdictional authorities could supervise such measures.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The number of missing people increased by 10.5% compared to the previous year. In December, the number of such cases stood at 133,500.

Given the poor response from the authorities, relatives of disappeared people – mostly women organized in collectives – undertook their own searches and found hundreds of human remains, some of them burned, and clandestine graves. These searches were high risk and those who carried them out faced threats, extortion, disappearance and murder.[3] During the year, six searchers were killed (four women and two men). The CEDAW Committee recommended that the Mexican state formally recognize "*mujeres buscadoras*" (women who search for disappeared people) as a special category of human rights defenders, monitor the specific violence they

experience, guarantee gender-sensitive protection measures, provide comprehensive reparation for the damage suffered, and include them in truth-seeking and memorialization processes.[4]

Official figures for the number of clandestine graves located were not updated for 2025. Search collectives found mass graves in at least 10 of the country's states. In March, the collective *Guerreros Buscadores de Jalisco* (warrior searchers of Jalisco) found a forced recruitment camp, which potentially also functioned as an extermination camp, in the municipality of Teuchitlán, Jalisco state, shocking Mexican society. Evidence of killings, and hundreds of personal items such as shoes, backpacks and identity documents were found at the site. The authorities had been aware of the existence of the camp six months earlier, before it was brought to light by the search collective, but had failed to open investigations into enforced disappearances or look for any mass graves.

In April, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances announced that it would for the first time activate the procedure of Article 34 of the International Convention against enforced disappearance with regard to the situation in Mexico, to determine whether enforced disappearances in the country were systematic or widespread and submit the matter to the UN General Assembly. In response, the Mexican president categorically denied the existence of enforced disappearances in the country, and the Senate called for the Committee chair to be sanctioned for "speculating" that widespread or systematic enforced disappearances were taking place. The National Human Rights Commission also denied that Mexico was experiencing a crisis of enforced disappearances and questioned the Committee's decision on the activation of the procedure.

In June, Congress approved amendments to the General Law on Enforced Disappearance of Persons, Disappearance Perpetrated by Individuals and the National Search System, as well as changes to the General Population Law in relation to enforced disappearances. The changes focused on the mass cross-referencing of data through the creation of a single identity platform and an identity document including biometric data, which could pose a risk to privacy and be used for citizen surveillance. Moreover, these changes did not combat impunity or reinforce prosecutors' offices or the National Centre for Human Identification to reduce the forensic backlog. According to research undertaken by civil society organizations, in the absence of reliable official data, there were 72,100 unidentified bodies in the country in 2023.

Also in June, the Supreme Court of Justice ordered the Office of the Attorney General to release the case file on the enforced disappearance of 43 students from the Ayotzinapa teacher training college in 2014. The military continued to deny family members information that could serve to access truth and justice.

In September, the Senate appointed the 13 members of the National Search System's Citizen Council, comprising relatives of disappeared persons, experts and members of civil society organizations. The Council had been inactive for 16 months.[5]

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

As of November, prosecutors' offices had opened 2,589 investigations into the killings of women, 672 of them classified as possible feminicides. These figures represented a decrease of 24.16% and 21.2%, respectively, compared to 2024. In addition, the authorities registered 3,637 cases of disappeared women during the year, of which 1,745 were under 19 years of age, an increase of 11.5% and 29.4%, respectively, compared to 2024.

In July, the CEDAW Committee expressed concern regarding the increase in gender-based violence by state and non-state actors, including criminal organizations, as well as the increased involvement of the military in public security and other areas, which had led to rising reports of gender-based violence against women committed by the military.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The states of Campeche, Nayarit, Tabasco and Yucatán adopted legislation decriminalizing abortion. At the end of the year, abortion was legal in 24 of the country's 32 states.

In December, the Supreme Court of Justice revoked several norms that criminalized abortion and restricted access to sexual and reproductive health services in the state of Tlaxcala.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Between June and July, the states of Baja California, Baja California Sur, Campeche and Mexico incorporated the crime of trans-feminicide into their respective penal codes. By the end of the year, the crime of trans-feminicide was recognized in six of the country's 32 states.

The National Observatory of Hate Crimes Against LGBT Persons registered at least 17 trans-feminicides during the year.

In December, the Guanajuato Congress approved marriage equality and banned conversion therapies. By the end of 2025, all of Mexico's federal entities had legalized same-sex marriage.

The Supreme Court of Justice twice ruled in favour of transgender people. In February, it ordered reparation for the harm caused to a number of trans women victims of discrimination who had been denied access to women-only bathrooms and required to provide official identification, on grounds that their presence in such spaces was a potential risk; the ruling included a fine for the company responsible. In June, it granted protection to a transgender refugee woman, ordering the National Institute of Migration to recognize her gender identity in immigration documents and to establish a simple and accessible procedure for adapting immigration documents to guarantee people's gender identity.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

During COP30 in November, Mexico announced new commitments to address the climate crisis, including, for the first time, a component on loss and damage, and the integration of social approaches such as climate justice, a gender perspective and a human rights approach. It also updated its NDC targets for 2035 under two scenarios: cutting emissions to between 332 and 363 million tons of CO_2 equivalent ($MtCO_2e$) with international support, or to between 364 and 404 $MtCO_2e$ unconditionally.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The Mexican Commission for Refugee Assistance received more than 58,800 asylum applications during the year, the majority from Cuban (more than 28,700), Venezuelan (more than 12,100) and Haitian (more than 7,000) nationals.

In February, Mexico deployed 10,000 National Guard troops to the US border. Migrants and refugees travelling through Mexico continued to be forced to make illegal payments to Mexican authorities, criminal gang members or unidentified individuals at immigration checkpoints set up on roads throughout the country. They were also frequently subject to extortion and kidnapping and had difficulty accessing healthcare, education and employment opportunities.[6]

Civil society organizations expressed concern over the failure to issue visitor cards for humanitarian reasons to asylum seekers and victims of crime in Mexico, which placed these groups at greater risk and hindered their access to rights.

In September, in compliance with a court order, the then head of the National Institute of Migration apologized publicly to the families of the victims of the 27 March 2023 fire at the immigration detention centre in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua state, acting in a personal capacity. However, responsibilities remained unclear and no comprehensive reparations were provided.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

According to a report published in August by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography, 29.6% of the population experienced multidimensional poverty in 2024, a decrease of 6.3% compared to

2022. Extreme poverty also decreased from 7.1% to 5.3% over the same period. Chiapas, Guerrero and Oaxaca were the states with the highest poverty rates.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT

In June, the Ibero-American University's Human Rights Programme published a report documenting an increase in internal forced displacement from at least 12,623 in 2023 to at least 28,900 in 2024. Of all displacements, 79% were due to violence, and 20% were due to social causes or natural disasters. Most occurred in the states of Chiapas, Sinaloa, Michoacán, Chihuahua and Guerrero, with 17,860 displaced people registered in Chiapas alone.

In September, the state of Oaxaca approved the Law to Prevent, Address and Comprehensively Repair Internal Forced Displacement, becoming the fifth state to have a specific law addressing the issue.

1. "Mexico: Human rights organization at risk", 28 August ↑
2. "Amnesty International calls on the Mexican state to guarantee the right to peaceful protest", 18 December (Spanish only) ↑
3. *Mexico: Disappearing Again: Violence and Impacts Experienced by Women Searchers in Mexico*, 8 July ↑
4. "Report to the CEDAW Committee, 91st Session, June-July 2025", 17 June (Spanish only) ↑
5. "Mexico: Senate must renew Citizen Council", 28 March ↑
6. *USA: Lives in Limbo: Devastating Impacts of Trump's Migration and Asylum Policies*, 20 February ↑

MOLDOVA

Republic of Moldova

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were arbitrarily restricted. Torture and other ill-treatment remained unaddressed, and impunity prevailed for past violations. Discrimination against LGBTI people remained commonplace. The remote prescription of abortive medicines was banned. Substantial barriers continued to impact Moldova's climate change targets. In Russian-occupied Transnistria media freedom was further suppressed and new legislation prohibited the promotion of "non-traditional sexual relations".

BACKGROUND

The economic slowdown continued, underpinned by sluggish growth and high energy costs which eroded the economic well-being of lower-income groups. Russian-occupied Transnistria experienced electricity blackouts, affecting several enterprises, after the Russian gas supply via Ukraine stopped and Moldova's offer to supply EU-sourced gas was rejected. Parliamentary elections in September reduced the majority of the governing Party of Action and Solidarity. Allegations of Russian interference and vote-buying persisted. The elected leader of the autonomous Gagauzia region, Evghenia Guțul, was arrested and imprisoned for arranging illegal Russian funding for a political party.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Delicensing of pro-Russian TV channels without due process guarantees continued. In March, the Council for the Promotion of Investment Projects of National Importance suspended TVC21's broadcasting licence for 60 days for allegedly failing to disclose full information about the holding company's ultimate beneficiaries.

Pro-European media remained financially extremely vulnerable, with many hugely affected by the discontinuation of USAID funding. According to several media outlets, certain pro-government politicians allegedly sought to influence editorial choices by suggesting that unfavourable coverage could jeopardize access to foreign grants.[1]

Gagauzia-based news site Nokta.md suffered repeated distributed denial-of-service (DDOS) attacks, which it linked to its criticism of the region's authorities.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 30 April, parliament introduced heavy fines for soliciting, accepting or receiving financial incentives to attend public assemblies, including those deemed to be

"aimed at ... political advertising". The authorities explained the introduction of the measure as a response to mounting allegations of street protests and other forms of political opposition being funded from Russia. The new legislation was vaguely worded, lacked legal clarity, and potentially restricted protected practices of remuneration and compensation ensuing from holding public events.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The structural issues behind torture and other ill-treatment in places of custody remained unaddressed. Local human rights monitors continued to report instances of torture and other ill-treatment, and the authorities' failure to investigate them effectively.

In its report published in March, the Prosecutor General's Office recorded seven allegations of torture and 306 of inhumane and degrading treatment in 2024. This represented a slight increase in the alleged cases of torture and a decrease in the number of allegations of ill-treatment compared to its previous report covering 2023. Detainees in adult and juvenile penitentiary institutions continued to suffer overcrowding, unsanitary and otherwise inadequate detention conditions and inadequate health provision.

IMPUNITY

Impunity for past human rights violations by members of law enforcement agencies prevailed.

There was no further investigation in connection with the abduction and forcible return of seven Turkish teachers to Türkiye by Moldovan security services in 2018, beyond the 2020 conviction of the former director of the Security and Intelligence Services, whose penalty was a fine for a related economic offence.

No further investigations were conducted into the allegations of wide-scale torture and other ill-treatment of peaceful protesters by police in 2009.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

On 15 June, approximately 1,000 people joined the Moldova Pride march in the capital, Chişinău, despite a ban imposed by the City Council. Law enforcement officers did not cordon off one of the streets used to traffic, insisting that participants instead use the pavement. The organizers were fined MDL 1500 (USD 90) for "blocking the traffic" after those taking part failed to keep to the pavement only. The fine was challenged and cancelled in court. Two counter-protests were held at the same time, with the participants of one of them holding anti-LGBTI posters.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In January, the Ministry of Health banned medical abortions via telemedicine (remote prescription of abortive medicines), citing safety issues, after receiving an anti-abortion petition signed by 19 people. The decision was taken without consulting medical professionals or civil society representatives working on women's rights.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Moldova published its third NDC in May. It included plans to expand forests by 145,000 hectares by 2032 to enhance carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.

Climate-driven disasters cost Moldova 1.3% of its GDP each year, according to the Stockholm Environment Institute. Its May report stated that, although Moldova had committed to reducing emissions by more than 70% by 2030 and had established a national framework aiming for climate neutrality by 2050, there were substantial barriers to achieving these goals. They included the lack of a functional National Commission on Climate Change; insufficient domestic funding; limited, albeit growing, local innovation capacity in green and digital solutions; and underdeveloped adaptation actions.

TRANSNISTRIA

Freedom of expression

Media freedom was further suppressed by the de facto authorities. In March a draft law

was tabled in the legislature proposing fines for "journalists of media outlets registered in foreign states" who operate in the region without prior approval from the de facto authorities. This would include journalists from the government-controlled territory of Moldova.

LGBTI people's rights

New provisions enacted in July by the de facto authorities prohibited "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations and/or preferences" as well as the promotion of "sex change" and a childfree lifestyle. The provisions introduced severe penalties for such "offences" including heavy fines, "administrative detention" for up to 15 days, deportation of a foreign "offender" (which included Moldovan nationals from the government-controlled territory), and suspension of media platforms for up to 90 days.

1. *Moldova: Media Freedom in Moldova: Fragility, Undue Restrictions and Self-Censorship in the Face of Polarized Politics*, 17 November ↑

MONGOLIA

Mongolia

Infringements of the rights of people affected by urban redevelopment persisted. The Criminal Code was used to limit freedom of expression of human rights defenders, journalists and media organizations. Community engagement consultations for mining projects were inadequate.

BACKGROUND

Two changes in government highlighted the public's concerns about corruption and government integrity. High-ranking government officials repeatedly made public statements significantly undermining the independence and impartiality of the judiciary.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

People affected by development projects in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar, were not given sufficient time and information to engage in negotiations. They were compelled to accept assessments that undervalued their land and property, compromising their livelihoods. Household businesses were undervalued or not appraised, and property valuation reports were not provided. Parliament failed to establish effective mechanisms or provide adequate legal safeguards for affected groups to file complaints and seek remedies in this regard.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Community engagement consultations for mining projects were often superficial, poorly timed, or inaccessible, despite legal requirements for environmental impact assessments (EIAs).[1] Many herders were unaware of EIAs or they were neglected at a local level by state authorities. Mining operations and their associated infrastructure reduced and degraded pasture, fragmenting herders' migratory routes and grazing areas and threatening the sustainability of their nomadic livelihoods.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities failed to protect individuals exercising their right to peaceful assembly from attacks by third parties. On 12 January, during a demonstration at Sukhbaatar Square in Ulaanbaatar, law enforcement officials failed to intervene when a group of individuals physically assaulted a protester.[2]

In May, reports emerged on social media regarding the extravagant lifestyle of Prime Minister L. Oyun-Erdene's son, prompting public outrage. This ignited a 21-day peaceful youth-led protest calling for the prime minister's resignation and eventually resulting in the government's resignation.

A draft law on the Freedom of Assembly and Demonstration, submitted to parliament on 23 January, remained pending at year's end.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

The Criminal Code was used to impose bans on disseminating information, limiting freedom of expression for human rights defenders, journalists and media organizations. The Constitutional Court, after being asked to consider the legality of basing such restrictions on vague terms like "false" or "misleading", ruled on 25 November that Article 13.14 of the Criminal Code was unconstitutional.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

On 17 March, police raided the office of Noorog Creative Studio, a media agency, seizing equipment and personal phones. According to Noorog staff, they were detained on suspicion of violating Article 19.9.1 of the Criminal Code, which criminalizes acts "disrupting national unity", and subjected to overnight interrogation. This raised concerns regarding the right to a fair trial.[3]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Decree No. 48, issued on 30 July, established the National Committee Against Violence. The government highlighted this as an effort to address domestic violence, but did not clarify how it would address gender-based violence more broadly, including technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Recommendations for strengthening related legislation were not implemented.

1. *Mongolia: Suggested Recommendations to Mongolia for its Review during the 50th Session of the UPR Working Group, November 2025,* 25 August ↑
2. "Mongolia: We must protect people who are exercising their right to listen", 14 January (Mongolian only) ↑
3. "Mongolia: Targeting one to scare thousands, undermining the right to a fair trial", 24 March ↑

MOROCCO/WESTERN SAHARA

Kingdom of Morocco

Moroccan authorities intensified their crackdown on freedom of expression and peaceful dissent. Journalists, human rights defenders and government critics faced prosecutions, intimidation and digital surveillance, despite royal pardons granted to some prisoners of conscience in previous years. Widespread protests over the economic crisis, inequality and the state of public services were met with excessive use of force, arbitrary arrests and unfair trials. Discriminatory laws continued to undermine the rights of women and LGBTI people, including the criminalization of consensual same-sex sexual relations and restricted access to sexual and reproductive health services including safe abortion. Climate change-related drought undermined the rights to food and an adequate standard of living.

BACKGROUND

In October the UN Security Council adopted a resolution to extend the mandate of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for a year. The resolution called for negotiations to achieve self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. It noted that Morocco's 2007 Autonomy Plan remained a serious and credible basis for the political process and acknowledged that genuine autonomy under Moroccan sovereignty could represent a feasible outcome.

Following a wave of nationwide, youth-led protests in September, the Moroccan government vowed to implement reforms responding to protesters' demands. Most notably, the government announced an increase in the budget allocated to health and education from MAD 128 billion to MAD 140 billion (approximately USD 15.1 billion) for 2026 and promised to create more jobs

for young Moroccans, especially in rural areas, in addition to political reforms easing young people's access to decision-making positions, plus a commitment to open dialogue with young people to draft and implement reforms.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Authorities continued to attempt to silence activists, bloggers and critics through over-broad laws criminalizing blasphemy, defamation, insulting public institutions and insulting Islam.

In January, Said Ait Mahdi, an activist who criticized the kingdom's response to the 2023 El Haouz earthquake, was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for "defamation" and "insulting public officials" after he called for more aid to the affected populations and faster reconstruction. In March, the Rabat Court of Appeal, in Morocco's capital, added one year to his sentence.

Also in March, a Casablanca court sentenced human rights defender and activist Fouad Abdelmoumni to six months in prison in his absence following a Facebook post about Morocco's use of Pegasus spyware.

On 1 July, human rights defender Saida El-Alami was detained in Casablanca on charges including "insulting a legally organized body, disseminating false allegations, and insulting the judiciary" linked to her online activism. She was denied legal counsel when she first appeared before the prosecutor. In September, she was prosecuted and sentenced to three years in prison on charges of "spreading false information", "insulting a public institution" and "insulting a legally organized body". In December the Casablanca court of appeal upheld the verdict. She had previously been imprisoned on a separate charge in 2022 and released in 2024 following a royal pardon.

On 9 July, two journalists from the Spanish media organization El Faradio and an activist from the Spanish NGO Cantabria por el Sáhara were intercepted and detained at a police checkpoint in the city of Laayoune when they tried to enter Western Sahara. Moroccan authorities declared them "persona non grata" (unwelcome persons) without justification, and deported them.

In August, feminist activist Ibtissame Lachgar was arrested and charged with "causing harm to Islam" for a social media post in which she wore a T-shirt with the slogan "Allah is lesbian". In September she was sentenced to 30 months' imprisonment and a fine. In October the Rabat appeals court upheld the verdict and sentence.

In October the Rabat Court of First Instance convicted a woman with documented mental health needs and sentenced her to eight months' imprisonment on charges of "insulting the monarchy" and participating in unauthorized gatherings. She was convicted and sentenced despite her defence team's consistent appeals for medical support rather than prosecution.

Also in October, authorities arrested and prosecuted two students and the owner of a printing shop in Rabat, for "inciteful slogans" after they printed pro-Palestine slogans on shirts.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

In February, parliament adopted Draft Law 97-15 setting out conditions and procedures around the right to strike. The law came into effect in September and imposed restrictions and criminal penalties that conflicted with other fundamental human rights including a broad prohibition on strikes for "political purposes". Trades unions and other workers' rights groups voiced concerns that, while the law was a long-awaited framework, its procedural requirements (including notification deadlines that are set to 45 days in the public sector, representation rules and definition of "essential services") may lead to significant constraints on the effective exercise of the right to strike. The Conseil National des Droits de l'Homme, Morocco's national human rights institution, published a memorandum on Draft Law 97-15 sharing recommendations from various stakeholders including the removal of all criminal penalties and providing a narrower definition of the ban on "political strikes".

Moroccan authorities continued to commit violations in Western Sahara. The Collective of Sahrawi Human Rights Defenders (CODESA) reported ongoing arbitrary arrests of Sahrawi activists, prolonged surveillance, house arrests of entire families and systematic censorship tactics used against protest organizers.

In February and March, security forces violently dispersed peaceful demonstrations in Laayoune and other cities calling for Sahrawi independence and self-determination. In one such protest on 17 March, police physically assaulted Sahrawi activists Mahfouda Lefkir and Salha Boutenguiza in Laayoune after they protested in Smara Street, a focal point for such demonstrations.

In June a court in the city of Salé sentenced six members of the organization Moroccan Front in Support of Palestine and Against Normalization to suspended prison sentences in relation to "undeclared" pro-Palestine sit-ins in December 2024.

In September, nationwide protests erupted after the youth movement GenZ 212 called for protests to demand an end to corruption and improvements to public healthcare and education. They criticized public spending on sporting events that Morocco is set to host, such as the 2030 International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) World Cup. Police and the Royal Gendarmerie responded by banning protests and forcibly dispersing protesters including with lethal force, killing three people, injuring dozens and carrying out mass arrests of peaceful protesters. Security forces arrested nearly 2,480 people and judicial authorities brought criminal cases against at least 1,473 protesters, all of whom were placed in pretrial detention.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Legislation continued to deepen gender inequality, most notably in inheritance laws and child custody rules. Systemic barriers continued to deprive women and girls of safe and legal access to abortion and comprehensive reproductive health services.

Morocco proposed and pushed for the adoption of a UN Human Rights Council resolution for greater participation of women in diplomacy. The resolution was officially adopted in April.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Consensual same-sex sexual relations remained criminalized under Article 489 of the Penal Code and punishable by up to three years in prison and a fine. LGBTI individuals continued to face arbitrary arrests, harassment and prosecution.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

In February the Moroccan government announced the establishment of a DNA fingerprint bank to help solve crimes. A proposal to build a DNA fingerprint database raised concerns around data privacy, oversight, who controls genetic data, and how to prevent misuse.

In July, parliament adopted a bill to reform the Code of Criminal Procedure. Key proposed changes included broader use of alternatives to pretrial detention, strengthening guarantees of access to a lawyer from the beginning of custody, improved protections for victims and witnesses, more judicial oversight, use of digital technologies, and commitment to promptness and efficiency in criminal cases. Despite positive advancements with the adoption of the bill, journalists, human rights defenders and activists continued to be prosecuted and sentenced.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

In May, Moroccans with disabilities held a sit-in in front of parliament in Rabat to protest the government's lack of effort towards social and economic inclusion of people with disabilities, including in access to education, employment and public infrastructure. Authorities failed to adopt and implement adequate policies to guarantee equality of opportunity.

Spending on the 2030 World Cup was prioritized over support for the survivors of the 2023 earthquake who continued to demand the reparations and housing aid promised by the government.

Youth unemployment and underemployment remained high. According to the Moroccan Economic, Social and Environmental Council, around one-quarter of young people aged 15-24 were not in education, employment or training. This fuelled protests led by GenZ 212 and other youth collectives. Authorities did not implement sufficient measures to address the gap in employment opportunities for young people.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Morocco continued to suffer from a persistent climate-driven drought. In January the authorities reported a rainfall deficit of around 60 to 70%, with reservoirs only about 25 to 30% full. The drought affected the irrigation of agricultural land, livestock and rural livelihoods, and undermined the rights to food and an adequate standard of living, particularly for rural households. In response, authorities accelerated investment in seawater desalination plants. As of mid-year, according to the Ministry for Water, Morocco operated 17 desalination plants, with several more under construction or planned. However, there were fears that rural farmers, Amazigh communities and other vulnerable groups may continue to lack sufficient water despite these efforts.

In September the government submitted its updated NDC, pledging more ambitious emissions reduction targets of 21.6% unconditionally and 53% with international support by 2035, alongside commitments to expand renewable energy and phase out coal. However, the extent to which these measures would translate into concrete protections for populations already experiencing severe climate impacts was unclear. The NDC identified priority adaptation needs in water management, agriculture and support for vulnerable groups. Yet its heavy reliance on international financing and the lack of a clearly defined just-transition framework raised concerns about whether marginalized communities – particularly rural households, smallholder farmers and low-income groups – would see their rights to water, food and an adequate standard of living safeguarded effectively.

DEATH PENALTY

Morocco retained the death penalty in law but continued to observe a hiatus in executions since 1993.

MOZAMBIQUE

Republic of Mozambique

The conflict between government forces and the armed group Al-Shabaab resulted in the killings of scores of civilians and the displacement of more than 330,000 people, among other serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law. The severe crackdown on opposition supporters continued with police using excessive force, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance. Police failed to protect people from kidnappings by criminals.

BACKGROUND

Following disputed election results in October 2024, Daniel Chapo was sworn in as president on 15 January 2025. Unrest related to the elections led to nationwide protests that were violently repressed by police, which by the end of January 2025 had left at least 277 people dead. Former presidential candidate Venâncio Mondlane rejected the results.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

The armed conflict in Cabo Delgado province between the Mozambique Defence and Security Forces (FDS), with its allies, and the armed group Al-Shabaab spread to Nampula province in November. The conflict resulted in scores of civilian deaths, mainly in Cabo Delgado. Both parties were responsible for killing civilians, destruction of civilian property and the displacement of more than 330,000 people.

Armed groups

Al-Shabaab carried out dozens of attacks on civilians, killing scores of people, taking

dozens hostage, destroying scores of homes and causing mass displacement.

Between 23 January and 4 March, at least 11 children were among those taken hostage in the villages of Mumu and Chibau, Mocímboa da Praia district. Four of the children from Chibau were returned soon afterwards. Also in March, in the same district, an attack killed three people between the villages of Chinda and Mbau. Three others were killed in Xitaxi village in Muidumbe district, while 70 homes were burned down and one man was killed in Meluco district.

In April, a teacher was killed by beheading in Ntotwe village, Mocímboa da Praia district. Several people were reportedly taken hostage after fighters set fire to homes in Namoro village, Montepuez district. An attack on Muaja village, Ancuabe district, led to the mass displacement of many of its inhabitants, most of them women.

On 11 May, three girls were killed and eight other children were taken hostage in an attack on Magaia village, Muidumbe district. Their whereabouts remained undisclosed.

Four farmers were beheaded in Ancuabe district on 21 July. The next day, at least six civilians were killed during an attack near Nathocua village. Between 24 July and 3 August, six attacks in Chiúre district led to at least four civilian killings, and the displacement of almost 52,000 people.

Also in August, two civilians were killed in crossfire between Al-Shabaab and the FDS in Nangumi village, Macomia district. Another six civilians were killed by Al-Shabaab in Uvilili village, Palma district and in Mapate village, Muidumbe district.

In September, four people, including two believed to be police officers, were killed in Mocímboa da Praia district, after Al-Shabaab summoned them from their homes. Five civilians were killed in the Filipe Nyusi neighbourhood of Mocímboa da Praia town. A grocery store in Nangade district was looted. Three civilians who were taken hostage were used to carry the stolen goods. At least four civilians were killed and two children taken hostage in the Nanga neighbourhood of Macomia town. Their whereabouts remained undisclosed.

Between 10 and 21 November, Al-Shabaab carried out at least 13 attacks in the Memba district of Nampula province, killing at least 21 civilians and displacing over 66,000 people.

In December, clashes between the Rwandan Defence Forces, allies of the FDS, and Al-Shabaab in Simbolongo, an area in Macomia district, resulted in at least 35 deaths, including civilians.

Government forces

On 22 August, government naval forces reportedly killed at least five civilians on a sailing boat off the coast between Macomia and Ibo districts. According to credible sources, they fired at the boat in response to unverified information concerning the hijacking by Al-Shabaab of a boat carrying food supplies. Bodies were later found by fishermen along the shore between the villages of Goludo and Crimize. There was no investigation announced into the incident.

On 29 December, civilians were killed in Mogovola district, Nampula province. Although authorities acknowledged only seven deaths, sources from civil society organizations indicated between 13 and 38 fatalities, including one police officer. Most of the killings were perpetrated by the FDS in their attempt to stop artisanal mining.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

On 15 January, Rapid Intervention Unit (UIR) officers beat Vanilda Fernando Mondlane at a protest in the capital, Maputo, against Daniel Chapo's inauguration as president. Credible sources said 10 people were shot dead by UIR officers that day in the cities of Matola and Nampula.

On 24 February, UIR officers killed a bystander and injured another man when they fired gunshots into the air to stop looting and the burning down of the ruling Front for Liberation of Mozambique party headquarters in Morrumbene district.

On 5 March, UIR officers fired live ammunition and tear gas to disperse crowds that were following Venâncio Mondlane's

convoy in Maputo's Hulene neighbourhood, injuring at least three people, including two children. Nearly two weeks later, they used live ammunition against a protest by opposition supporters, killing one man in the Casa Branca area of Matola city.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The fate and whereabouts of journalist Arlindo Chissale, a supporter of Venâncio Mondlane, remained undisclosed since he was forcibly disappeared on his way to work on 7 January by suspected military officers, after receiving death threats from unidentified men. The outcome of an apparent investigation by the National Criminal Investigation Services into his disappearance was not made public.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

On 12 March, Glória Monteiro Nobre Chire, Venâncio Mondlane's financial manager, was arrested and taken to the 8th police station in Maputo city. Accused of crimes against state security and criminal conspiracy, she was denied access to her lawyer and family members. She was released on 4 September due to insufficient evidence.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In February, the Mozambique National Institute of Communication suspended for 48 hours the radio stations Vida and Encontro in Nampula city. It claimed that their broadcasting was disrupting the connection between the local airport's control tower and aircraft. At least one of the stations – Radio Encontro – was known to be critical of the government and of the 2024 elections.

In June, around 16 journalists were arrested and their equipment confiscated by the FDS in Muidumbe district, Cabo Delgado. They were interrogated and intimidated for two hours in nearby Macomia district in connection with their recent attempt to photograph the destruction during armed conflict of public infrastructure in Macomia. The district administrator had previously authorized the journalists to take photographs.

RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

Authorities failed to take adequate measures to ensure the safe release of eight men who were kidnapped between January and October by unidentified armed criminals demanding ransoms. Five of them were kidnapped in Maputo city; three during a period of just over five weeks between January and February.

MYANMAR

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Five years after the military coup, armed conflict escalated further. A powerful earthquake and US aid cuts exacerbated the suffering of civilians. A record number of air strikes were carried out during military offensives, with several major attacks on schools killing dozens of students. Hospitals, religious buildings and other civilian infrastructure were also targeted. Forced labour was used by the military and armed groups, and in scam compounds where people were at risk of human trafficking and torture. Military authorities invoked laws to crack down on freedom of expression, especially any criticism of junta-organized elections that started in December. Torture and other ill-treatment in prisons continued, including the denial of adequate healthcare, causing deaths in custody. While most violations were carried out by the military, armed groups also violated the rights of civilians, using forced labour, forced recruitment, beatings and attacks on informants.

BACKGROUND

The military, recovering from a year of battlefield losses in 2024, made substantial political, territorial and diplomatic gains, while continuing to erode human rights. The death toll of civilians climbed past 7,000, while ousted civilian leaders Aung San Suu Kyi, Win Myint and others remained in arbitrary detention. More than 3.5 million people

remained displaced. An earthquake in March killed nearly 4,000 people according to the military's figures, hitting Sagaing Region and other parts of central Myanmar hardest. Senior General Min Aung Hlaing travelled to Thailand, attending his first meetings in an ASEAN country since the coup, even as his military violated the ceasefire in place after the earthquake. Min Aung Hlaing remained the junta's de facto leader, following the death of acting president Myint Swe in August, and the earlier dissolution of the country's state of emergency, paving the way for the December elections. While the junta's State Administration Council was formally abolished, martial law continued in many areas, and the council rebranded as the State Security and Peace Commission, with Min Aung Hlaing as acting president. Min Aung Hlaing also made high-level visits to Belarus, China and Russia. China and Russia backed the military's election plans, while China pressured two powerful armed groups to agree to ceasefires with the military, resulting in territory being handed back to junta control. Opposition political and armed groups condemned the planned poll and urged the international community not to recognize the results. ASEAN stated it would not send observers to the poll.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS

Aerial attacks far exceeded the number in 2024, making 2025 the deadliest year for civilians since the coup. According to OHCHR, the UN human rights office, air strikes increased by more than 50% compared to 2024. Central Myanmar experienced the most air strikes against civilians.

Unlawful attacks continued after the earthquake, particularly in areas where armed groups opposing the military were active, including Sagaing and Mandalay Regions. Aerial attacks by the military were conducted on Sagaing Region's Chaung-U township, including several on 1 April and one on the day of the earthquake.[1] Aid was blocked to areas where resistance groups were active, hindering post-earthquake humanitarian relief efforts that were allowed to operate more freely in areas under the control of the military.

High-casualty unlawful air strikes continued to target schools. In May, less than two months after the earthquake hit Sagaing Region, an air strike in Ohe Htein Twin village killed at least 20 students. The attack occurred amid an earthquake-related ceasefire, which the military repeatedly violated. In September, the military launched an air strike in Rakhine State that killed at least 19 students at a boarding school in Kyauktaw township. In December, a military air strike also hit a hospital in Rakhine State's Mrauk-U township, killing dozens.[2] Days before, a separate strike in Sagaing Region's Tabayin township reportedly killed 18 people in an attack that hit a tea shop where people had gathered.

Air strikes killed, injured or displaced civilians in almost every state and region in the country. The strikes intensified after the military's State Administration Council formally disbanded in July, after which election planning for December picked up pace. It became more routine for attacks to be carried out using manned motorized paragliders, referred to locally as "paramotor" attacks, often carrying 120mm mortars. This was a new tactic used by the military, particularly in central Myanmar, requiring fewer resources such as jet fuel. On 6 October, during a candlelit protest on the Buddhist holiday of Thadingyut, a paraglider attack killed at least 18 people, including children as young as two years, and injured dozens in Sagaing Region's Chaung-U township.[3]

FORCED LABOUR

Scamming compounds

A highly publicized crackdown took place on scamming compounds in the southeast of the country, coordinated by the militaries and officials from China, Myanmar and Thailand. Inside these compounds, estimated to hold tens of thousands of people, those in charge forced people to carry out online fraud against victims abroad and used torture as a method of punishment.

The US Treasury Department adopted multiple rounds of sanctions in May and September, targeting the owners and operators of compounds within the Shwe Kokko development project in Myawaddy township. In May, the USA designated the Karen National Army (KNA), the militia that controls the Shwe Kokko development, as a transnational criminal organization. It also sanctioned KNA leader Saw Chit Thu and two of his sons for their roles in human trafficking and cross-border smuggling. In September, the USA expanded its sanctions to cover additional figures in the KNA, as well as joint venture, holding and energy companies tied to operations in Shwe Kokko. This included Yatai International Holding Group and its owner She Zhijiang, who was arrested by Thai officials in 2022. After an October court ruling in Thailand, upheld on appeal in November, She Zhijiang was expected to face extradition to China, where those convicted of involvement in scamming compounds have been sentenced to death.

In November, the USA expanded sanctions to another armed group called the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army, or DKBA, and four of its leaders, for supporting scamming compounds in Myanmar.

While many victims of human trafficking were freed as a result of the crackdown on scamming compounds, and many of the leading figures responsible for the abuses were sanctioned, the crisis persisted. Reports indicated that the industry remained intact at the end of the year, especially in south-eastern Myanmar, and that perpetrators there had not been held to account.

Armed conflict

In January, the Myanmar military expanded its forced recruitment drive by adding new restrictions. These made it harder for those eligible to leave the country without additional layers of approval, and outlined punishments for those evading military service. Military defectors reported that new recruits were often sent to frontline areas, where many were killed or captured. There was no widely known alternative option of civilian service, and no opportunity to be exempt from military service whether from conscientious objection or religious belief.

The military, the Arakan Army, and Rohingya armed groups all carried out forced labour and forced recruitment in Rakhine State. Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh faced the threat of being forcibly taken to Myanmar to fight in the conflict there. The Arakan Army used Rohingya who were internally displaced within the northern Rakhine State as forced labourers and beat those who did not comply. The Arakan Army said that it did not practise forced labour against civilians, but that prisoners of war or criminal convicts would sometimes be put to work either as a means of exercise or as part of their sentence. They also disputed testimony about discriminatory bans on livelihood options and freedom of movement.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Restrictive laws, notably on cybersecurity and election interference, came into effect and further restricted freedom of expression. Some of the new legislation, particularly on elections, led to arbitrary arrests and detention of those who criticized the military or December elections. According to analysis by Human Rights Myanmar, the cybersecurity law contained overly broad language that could be deployed to criminalize dissent. This included sentences of up to six months in prison for sharing information "unsuitable for public viewing". It also created additional requirements for social media platforms to remove objectionable content under broad categories, potentially fuelling censorship.

The Law on the Protection of Multiparty Democratic General Elections from Obstruction, Disruption, and Destruction, which entered into force in July, added to the chilling effect. It was ostensibly aimed at preventing interference and protecting those employed to run the junta-managed elections. The law set out punishments including prison terms ranging from three years to life for offences such as disrupting the process, threatening or hurting those involved (including voters), and damaging election equipment. It also provided for use

of the death penalty if these actions result in loss of life. The law's impact on freedom of expression was evident within months of its passage. In September, a blogger was sentenced to seven years in prison for posts considered to be critical of the election. Furthermore, two young men were detained for posting anti-election stickers in Yangon. According to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, more than 150 people were arrested or charged under the election law by the end of the year.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention determined that the post-coup arrest of Linn Htut, the former chief minister of Shan State, was unlawful. The working group reported that his confession in 2021 was extracted through torture, including sleep deprivation. Human rights groups called for his immediate and unconditional release, as well as all others arbitrarily detained under the coup.[4]

The military's failure to provide access to adequate healthcare to people deprived of their liberty persisted. Deaths in custody also persisted, many due to a systematic denial of healthcare, including untreated injuries sustained during abusive interrogations following their arrest. Independent media and prison monitoring groups reported deaths in separate detention places in July. Student activist Ma Wutt Yee Aung, arrested in September 2021 over alleged terrorism and incitement charges, died in Insein Prison in Yangon city on or around 19 July. The Dagon University Students Union expressed concern that her death may have been the result of head injuries sustained during interrogations while in detention and prison authorities' denial of adequate treatment.

On the same day, 44-year-old Ko Pyae Sone Aung, a representative of the National League for Democracy party chapter in Mon State's Belin township, died in the state's Thaton Prison after being violently beaten. Research released in July by the UN Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar revealed cruel treatment of detainees, including sexual assault, beatings, electrocutions, strangulations and "denailing".

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Economic conditions worsened. Young people fled the country, and hunger and the price of food staples rose in areas of armed conflict. The US government's abrupt and sweeping freeze on foreign aid early in the year severely imperilled the rights of refugees from Myanmar, civilians in armed conflict areas and other individuals fleeing persecution. Human rights and humanitarian groups warned that lives could be lost unless the decision was reversed. In some cases, waivers were granted, but foreign aid was reduced to a fraction of former levels. The cuts impacted health, education and humanitarian aid, stranding students and putting human rights defenders both in Myanmar and overseas at risk. They led to the shutdown of hospitals in refugee camps and threatened programmes helping to prevent atrocities caused by the armed conflict in the country.

Funding to Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh continued but at lower levels, leaving Rohingya children exposed to violence, forced recruitment and child labour. The drop in funding for humanitarian aid for camps along the Thai-Myanmar border meant a lack of access to healthcare and food. A new Thai policy permitting the right to work for tens of thousands of refugees provided a degree of hope to mitigate the impact of the aid cuts.

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1. "Myanmar: Inhumane military attacks in earthquake areas hindering relief efforts", 1 April ↑
2. "Myanmar: Deadly military air strike on hospital shows vicious disregard for right to life", 11 December ↑
3. "Myanmar: 'Deadly attack' on festival highlights paraglider threat to civilians", 7 October ↑
4. "Myanmar: Grave concerns for tortured ex-politician: Linn Htut", 22 August ↑

NAMIBIA

Republic of Namibia

Indigenous Peoples continued to be denied reparatory justice for genocide committed during Germany's colonial rule. Climate change-related droughts exacerbated hardship, while authorities withdrew drought relief support. Rates of gender-based violence remained high, and reproductive rights were restricted. New legislation imposed harsh prison sentences for anyone officiating same-sex unions. Access to essential health services was reduced for LGBTI people and other groups.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

On 28 May, Namibia commemorated its inaugural Genocide Remembrance Day, marking the massacre of the Ovaherero and Nama Peoples by German colonial forces between 1904 and 1908. Despite ongoing discussions between the Namibian and German governments, Germany continued to deny its legal duty to provide reparations to Nama and Ovaherero descendants for crimes committed during the colonial period, when an estimated 80% of the Ovaherero and 50% of the Nama populations were killed. Women and girls were systematically subjected to sexual violence, including rape. The skulls of prisoners who died in Germany's colonial prison camps were shipped to German universities and museums for racist pseudo-scientific research. The descendent communities remained a minority in Namibia, leaving them politically unrepresented and with few opportunities for political influence. They faced a lack of meaningful and effective participation in reparations negotiations, and no provision of reparations or return of most of their ancestral remains and cultural artefacts taken by Germany during the genocide.[1]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

From 2024 severe drought conditions attributed to climate change continued to affect large parts of Namibia, adversely affecting crop production and rural livelihoods. Despite this, the authorities ended the drought relief programme that had provided food assistance, livestock support and marketing incentives for approximately 1.4 million people in 384,935 households.

The government did not incorporate assessments of adaptation needs, or of losses and damages suffered by communities displaced internally or across borders due to the prolonged drought, into Namibia's climate strategies or submissions under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Authorities continued to return hundreds of Angolan nationals fleeing severe drought in southern Angola, raising concerns about refoulement and the absence of humanitarian safeguards.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Authorities estimated that there were at least 400 reported gender-based violence cases each month.

Legislation restricting sexual and reproductive rights remained in force, outlawing abortion except under certain conditions, including where the pregnancy resulted from rape or incest, or would endanger the mother's life. The law required that the procedure, which was permissible only in state-controlled facilities, be certified by two doctors.

A woman faced prosecution after she was arrested in Walvis Bay for suspected possession of abortion pills.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The government's appeal against a 2024 High Court ruling, which found legislation criminalizing consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults to be unconstitutional and discriminatory, remained pending before the Supreme Court.

The Marriage Act of December 2024 defined marriage as the union between two people of opposite sexes. Under the act, anyone officiating for same-sex unions faced up to two years' imprisonment.

Authorities failed to address widespread hate speech and online harassment targeting LGBTI people.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Transgender people, sex workers and people living with HIV faced prejudice and exclusion from public services. Meanwhile, the US government's reduction in funding for USAID impacted health programmes, including mobile and community-based clinics for HIV treatment.

1. "Namibia: Germany must deliver reparatory justice for its brutal colonial past", 2 October ↑

NEPAL

Nepal

Law enforcement authorities used lethal force against protesters. Authorities continued to misuse the law to silence critics. Victims questioned the selection of commissioners investigating conflict-era human rights abuses. Discrimination and violence against women and Dalits persisted.

BACKGROUND

Following widespread protests, Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli resigned on 9 September. Former Chief Justice Sushila Karki was appointed as head of an interim government. Elections were scheduled for March 2026.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Law enforcement authorities continued to use lethal and less-lethal force against protesters. In March, authorities used live ammunition in response to pro-monarchy protests in the capital, Kathmandu, killing 29-year-old Sabin Maharjan. According to the police, law enforcement authorities shot and injured another 20 individuals. Protesters set fire to a building, killing a journalist trapped inside.

On 8 September, law enforcement agencies responded to a "Gen-Z" youth-led protest against corruption and a sweeping ban on social media with unlawful use of lethal and less-lethal force, including live ammunition. A total of 76 people died and 2,000 were injured during the protests, which lasted for two days.[1]

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The Social Media Bill, tabled in January, was still pending before the National Assembly at year's end. The law would allow the government to order social media platforms to remove content and provide user details without judicial warrant, and for users to be fined or imprisoned for posting false or misleading information. In July, authorities blocked access to the messaging app Telegram, citing its use in unlawful activities. In September, a further 26 social media platforms were blocked, triggering protests.

In February, the Supreme Court released the full text of its 2024 decision to uphold section 47 of the Electronic Transaction Act, a provision misused for repressing online expression.[2] In June, journalist Dil Bhusan Pathak was charged under the provision for his video report on the alleged business dealings of senior political figures.[3]

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The government failed to deliver truth, justice and reparations to victims of grave human rights violations committed during the 1996-2006 conflict.

In May, the government appointed commissioners to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Commission of Investigation on Enforced Disappeared Persons. Many victims' groups boycotted the commissions citing lack of trust and transparency in the selection of commissioners.[4]

In a positive development, in July, the Supreme Court ordered the government to reopen an investigation against former Speaker Agni Sapkota into the murder of Arjun Lama in 2005.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

Prison authorities failed to take adequate measures to address overcrowding of prisons and prevent violent clashes between detainees. In August, a clash among detainees at Bardiya prison resulted in 10 injuries and a separate clash between detainees at Kailali Prison resulted in one death and 47 injuries. In July, 13 detainees were injured in a clash at Siraha Prison; in November, a detainee at the same prison was beaten by other detainees.

In December, the National Human Rights Commission reported that it had received 14 complaints under the UN Convention against Torture during the year. The commission made recommendations relating to three complaints, none of which were implemented by the government.

DISCRIMINATION

Despite laws against caste-based discrimination, numerous incidents of discrimination and violence were reported against members of the Dalit community, including by authorities and against children. In February, a local priest in Achham district refused to apply *tika*, a Hindu ritualistic forehead mark, to students and parents of the Dalit community. Also in February, police authorities attempted to break off a consensual inter-caste marriage. The Supreme Court intervened, issuing an order upholding the couple's right to marry.

In March, authorities in Siraha district demolished the house of Deepak Malik Dom and scraped away the upper layer of soil claiming that the land had been rendered impure for *mahayagya*, a Hindu ritual.

In October, a group of people demolished the homes of five Dalit families in Siraha district after a local dispute.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Coercion of survivors to settle gender-based violence cases informally continued. On 12 February, village leaders in Siraha imposed fines on three men who had allegedly raped a 17-year-old Dalit girl, Rinku Kumari Sada, and forbidden her family from approaching the police. On 13 February, she was found dead in her home. Police arrested eight people on 7 March.

In April, 24-year-old Dalit woman, Ananda Devi Sadaya, apparently died by suicide in Siraha after authorities failed to investigate two men for her attempted rape in 2024.

The illegal practice of banishing menstruating women and girls to huts and sheds continued. While staying in these isolated and remote huts lacking basic infrastructure, in January a 40-year-old woman was injured in a leopard attack and in July a 28-year-old-woman died after being bitten by a snake.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In May, senior government officials were implicated in a human trafficking scheme that took bribes from prospective Nepali migrant workers to clear airport immigration without valid employment visas and other documents required for travelling abroad for work.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In January and February, law enforcement authorities in Taplejung district used arbitrary force and firearms in confrontations with members of the Indigenous Limbu People who were objecting to the construction of a cable car that passed through their sacred ancestral land. The confrontations led to several injuries. Despite failure to ensure the Limbu People's free, prior and informed consent for the project, and despite key project documents not being made public, in May, the Supreme Court allowed construction to proceed.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

In December, the Supreme Court overturned the government's decision to dissolve the Land Issue Resolving Commission and its district committees. The commission was formed in 2024 to verify claims of landless squatters and informal settlers and issue land ownership certificates.

1. *Nepal: "We Went There to Raise Our Voice, Not to Be Killed": Nepal's Deadly Crackdown on Protesters*, 8 December ↑
2. "Nepal: Editors' interaction program on transitional justice and freedom of expression held", 3 July. ↑
3. "Nepal: Arrest warrant against journalist Dil Bhusan Pathak an attack on media freedom", 13 June. ↑
4. "Nepal: Ensure credible transitional justice appointments", 12 May. ↑

THE NETHERLANDS

Kingdom of the Netherlands

Draft legislation would make it a criminal offence to be without valid residence papers. Protection against the use of discriminatory risk models in the benefits system remained inadequate. A draft bill criminalizing the "glorification of terrorism" threatened freedom of expression. Plans to criminalize psychological violence in domestic abuse situations were published.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In July, a court serving the Caribbean countries and municipalities of the Kingdom of the Netherlands – the Joint Court of Justice of Aruba, Curaçao, Sint Maarten, and of Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba – declared that the practice of automatically detaining refugees solely on the grounds of irregular entry was unlawful.

Two new policies introduced in Curaçao in March aimed to improve refugees' and migrants' rights, including by allowing undocumented individuals to apply for a residence permit on humanitarian and economic grounds. The practical impact of these improvements remained unclear at year's end.

The Emergency Asylum Measures Bill, passed by the House of Representatives of the Netherlands in July, was designed to limit the number of asylum seekers in the country. The bill restricted family reunification for certain groups of refugees and denied refugees permanent residency after five years. In December, the bill was amended to criminalize people without valid residence papers. It had not been passed by the Senate by year's end.[1]

DISCRIMINATION

In August, in an interim judgment, a court ordered that the system used by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to allocate short-stay visas should be subjected to a human rights impact assessment. The court referred to concerns raised by Amnesty International about the automated ethnic profiling used by the system's algorithm. Protection against the use of such models in welfare fraud detection, policing and migration remained inadequate.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In June, the Ministry of Justice and Security proposed legislation criminalizing the "glorification of terrorism". Under this bill, slogans, statements or symbols "associated with a terrorist group" would be punishable with up to three years in prison, regardless of the context. There were fears that the bill could criminalize permissible speech.

In July, the Ministry of Justice and Security proposed a bill to monitor public online platforms, a move which would allow the police to process personal data, including information about peaceful protesters.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Parliament passed motions in support of curbing protest rights, including restrictions near commemorations, cost recovery resulting from civil disobedience, penalties for blocking infrastructure and expanded surveillance measures. The government commissioned independent reviews of these and related proposals which concluded that no additional legislation was necessary or would be effective.

In April, the government acknowledged that it had violated the right to protest of Extinction Rebellion activists by prohibiting them from protesting in specific areas, and offered them compensation.

In July, the Council of State ruled that so-called "administrative relocation" had been used unlawfully to disperse Extinction Rebellion protesters during a demonstration

in 2020. The protesters had been moved by bus to a different location after they had ignored an order to leave.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In July, the State Secretary for Legal Protection unveiled plans to criminalize psychological violence as a separate offence in the context of domestic violence.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The Netherlands maintained its overall climate targets but implementation was problematic and climate polices had stagnated, according to the Climate Change Performance Index.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

The Guardian newspaper uncovered evidence that Microsoft's Netherlands-based data centres had been used by the Israeli military for surveillance and military targeting of Palestinians. In September 2025, following an investigation, Microsoft announced the termination of Israel's Unit 8200's access to certain Azure Cloud storage and AI services. However, at the end of the year it was unclear if Microsoft had investigated and terminated all contracts and products supplied to Israeli entities for involvement with potential violations against Palestinians.[2]

1. "Netherlands: Criminalization of people without valid papers is inhumane and impracticable", 5 August (Dutch only) ↑
2. "Israel/IOPT: Microsoft's move to block Israeli military unit's access to its mass surveillance technology is a moment for corporate reckoning" 26 September ↑

NICARAGUA

Republic of Nicaragua

Patterns of repression continued to consolidate, including arbitrary deprivation of nationality, undue restrictions on freedom of movement, arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance of dissidents, as well as severe limitations on freedom of expression and religion. Authoritarian practices in the closure of civic space persisted, including cancellation of legal status and confiscation of assets of social organizations.

BACKGROUND

The authorities approved a constitutional reform that eliminated the prohibition of torture and restricted dual nationality. At the same time, the state expanded its repressive apparatus by creating a "patriotic military reserve" and swearing in thousands of volunteer police officers. Nicaragua also announced its withdrawal from the UN Human Rights Council and suspended cooperation with multilateral bodies. Nevertheless, the international community maintained its initiatives for accountability and renewed the mandate of the Group of Human Rights Experts on Nicaragua (GHREN) for two years.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

GHREN documented 318 bans on entry into Nicaragua between 2018 and 2025 and warned that the real figure could be higher, due to victims' fear of reprisals, including through confiscation of assets. These measures affected Nicaraguan nationals – who were left in a situation of effective statelessness as they could not return to their country – and foreigners, including journalists and staff of international organizations. In the first quarter of 2025, local organizations and the media registered at least 290 additional cases of Nicaraguans who had been prevented from entering the country, based on changes to the Migration Law and amendments to the Penal Code that allowed denial of entry or expulsion of individuals deemed to pose a "threat" or a "social risk" or be capable of "undermining" national sovereignty. Those affected included health professionals, business people and journalists.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The use of practices and norms restricting freedom of association continued as the main strategy of Daniel Ortega and Rosario

Murillo's government to dismantle civic space. In addition to consistent application of Law 1115 and related legislation, in March the Ministry of the Interior issued regulations aimed at strengthening administrative and financial oversight of non-profit organizations, with new requirements on due diligence, reporting and tracking of donors and beneficiaries, and extending the powers of inspection and suspension for alleged non-compliance. In practice, these provisions facilitated the cancellation of legal status and increased the risk of accounts being frozen and operations suspended.

According to reports by exiled organizations and the media, new waves of cancellations occurred throughout the year, with around 20 organizations of various kinds being dismantled. The confiscation of buildings, land and equipment from such NGOs, media outlets and individuals who had been exiled or made stateless also continued, with the state taking over these assets.

The Special Monitoring Mechanism for Nicaragua of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) updated its database and reported the closure of thousands of organizations since 2018, calling it a systematic attack on civic space.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

Arbitrary detention of dissidents or perceived dissidents persisted. Local organizations registered more than 50 cases during the year and the Mechanism for the Recognition of Political Prisoners, a group of civil society organizations, documented that at least 60 people remained deprived of their liberty for political reasons in December, several of them in a situation of enforced disappearance due to concealment of their whereabouts and denial of visits. GHREN warned that the resurgence of enforced disappearance was one of the most worrying developments observed since the beginning of its mandate.

The repeal of Article 36 of the Constitution, which expressly prohibited torture, weakened existing safeguards and increased the risk to the physical integrity of detained individuals.

The IACHR condemned the deaths in custody of Carlos Cárdenas Zepeda and Mauricio Alonso Petri on 29 and 25 August respectively, demanding immediate, impartial and effective investigations.

Throughout the year, the IACHR also requested that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights extend provisional measures to protect the life and integrity of some detainees. On 4 February, the Court ordered the release of journalist Catalino "Leo" Cárcamo on grounds of serious risk of irreparable damage to his rights. He was released from prison and placed under house arrest in November, though this continued to restrict his rights.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Religious persecution intensified. According to reports from the media and from Nicaraguan and international organizations, the authorities expelled at least 30 Poor Clare nuns, evicting them from three of their monasteries in the departments of Managua, Matagalpa and Chinandega. For the second consecutive year, some religious celebrations were restricted or banned, through measures including surveillance of parishes and the freezing of bank accounts belonging to members of the clergy critical of the government.

NIGER

Republic of Niger

Armed groups committed unlawful attacks and killings. Authorities continued to crack down on human rights through the dissolution of several unions and the arbitrary detention of journalists, human rights defenders and opposition figures including the former president and his wife. The fate and whereabouts of a former minister abducted in January remained unknown. National consultations recommended measures to address violence against women and children. In response to the influx of migrants deported from

Algeria, the government announced a repatriation programme to avoid a humanitarian crisis.

BACKGROUND

In January, Niger left ECOWAS along with Burkina Faso and Mali, members of the Alliance of Sahel States. On 31 January, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs demanded the closure of the ICRC offices in Niger and the immediate departure of its expatriate staff.

In March the Refoundation Charter was adopted, replacing the constitution and introducing provisions infringing human rights. General Tiani, who took power by coup in 2023, was officially invested as President of the Republic of Niger for a five-year renewable mandate. A transitional parliament was put in place in June. In September, the Alliance of Sahel States announced its withdrawal from the ICC.

In December, the government adopted a new ordinance on civic mobilization for national defence purposes, paving the way for the conscription of Nigeriens.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Between 22 and 25 February, 16 people in the Dosso region were reportedly killed by "armed bandits".

On 21 March a deadly attack struck the mosque in the village of Fambita in western Niger as Muslim worshippers gathered for the main Ramadan prayer. The attack killed at least 44 people and was attributed to members of the Islamic State – Sahel Province, according to the minister of defence.

During the night of 21-22 June, armed men attacked the locality of Manda killing at least 71 people and injuring more than 20 people, according to local sources.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

On 26 March, President Tiani issued a decree dissolving all political parties.

In August, the Ministry of Interior dissolved several trade unions of judiciary professionals citing "repeated failings of the public service delivery" and corporatism.[1] In the same month, the Nigerien president sacked Abdoul Nasser Bagna Abdourahamane and Moussa Mahamadou, secretary general and deputy secretary general of the Autonomous Union of Nigerien Magistrates respectively, from the civil service. This followed their criticism of the dissolution of the magistrates' union and the announcement of a general strike within the judiciary.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 18 January, the Ministry of Communications suspended private television channel Canal 3 Niger and journalist Seyni Amadou after the broadcast of a report on the government's performance. The next day, Seyni Amadou was arrested and taken into custody. On 21 January he was released and the suspension of Canal 3 Niger lifted.

In May, three journalists from Sahara FM, a radio station based in the city of Agadez, were arrested after reporting that Niger and Russia had allegedly terminated their security contract. After their arrest, acting editor-in-chief Hamid Mahmoud, news presenter Mahaman Sani, and journalist Massaouda Jaharou were transferred to the capital, Niamey. Massaouda Jaharou was freed in June, but her other two colleagues were charged with "infringing on national defence" and "plotting against state authority before a military court."

On 3 November, several journalists were arrested, including Moussa Kaka, director of television channel Saraounia TV. Three of them were transferred to Kollo prison, charged with "complicity in the dissemination of a document likely to disturb public order" in connection with a case linked to the leak of an invitation to a press conference.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

On 3 January, one month after his arrest, Moussa Tchangari, secretary general of the civil society organization Citizens' Alternative Spaces, was charged with "plotting against the authority of the state through intelligence with enemy powers" and remanded in custody. Known for his public statements on governance and politics, he could face the

death penalty if convicted.[2] He was awaiting trial at the end of the year.

In March, several former ministers and officials who had been arbitrarily arrested after the coup in January were released, with the exception of former minister of Interior Hama Adamou Souley.

Former president Mohamed Bazoum and his wife Hadiza Mabrouk, arrested during the 2023 coup, remained in arbitrary detention.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 23 July, the administrator of Niamey decided to ban a demonstration planned by the Independent Movement for a New Niger in Justice and Equality for "security reasons". The movement's demands included the independence of the judiciary, the prosecution of "economic offenders", the strengthening of the capacities of defence and security forces, and the "immediate and unconditional" release of former president Mohamed Bazoum.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

During the night of 13-14 January, former minister of oil Mahaman Moustapha Barke was abducted from his home by men in civilian clothes and taken to an unidentified destination. At the end of the year his fate and whereabouts remained unknown.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

National consultations undertaken in February by the military authorities recommended the strengthening of laws and mechanisms to protect the rights of women and children against various forms of violence and the restoration of the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and Child Protection. They also recommended that free medical expertise and holistic care (psychological, medical, legal and social) be guaranteed for victims of gender-based violence.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In April, more than 6,000 people were deported from Algeria to the border town of Assamaka, where irregular migrants are often returned to, after being left without food and water in the middle of the desert.

On 17 May the government announced that, by April, there had already been a mass expulsion of 16,000 migrants from Algeria, more than half the total for the whole of 2024. The government announced a repatriation programme for more than 4,000 migrants in collaboration with the International Organization for Migration to avoid further overcrowding and a humanitarian crisis in reception centres that were already at capacity.

1. *Niger: A Serious Step Back for Human Rights Since the 2023 Coup d'Etat: Amnesty International: Submission to the 52nd Session of the UPR Working Group*, 10 October ↑
2. "Niger: Six month-long arbitrary detention of human rights defender Moussa Tchangari must end", 3 June ↑

NIGERIA

Federal Republic of Nigeria

Journalists and other people critical of the authorities were arrested, charged and arbitrarily detained. Security and law enforcement agents used excessive force to disperse peaceful protesters, killing several people and arbitrarily arresting others. Authorities failed to protect girls from abductions and people from killings by gunmen. Military air strikes unlawfully targeted civilians. Armed group Boko Haram continued to kill civilians. Acute food and nutrition insecurity remained high throughout the country. Forced evictions occurred in several states. The UK High Court confirmed the Court of Appeal's ruling permitting communities in Rivers State to hold Shell accountable for environmental damage.

BACKGROUND

On 18 March, a six-month state of emergency was declared in Rivers State. During the state of emergency, democratically elected state authorities were

suspended, and authorities increased militarization, resulting in increased marginalization of political minorities. The armed conflict between Boko Haram and the military persisted. The authorities' failure to protect lives and property from daily attacks by armed groups and bandits cost thousands of lives and created a potential humanitarian crisis across many northern states.

In May, at least 110 people died when floods submerged and washed away more than 50 homes and their occupants in the town of Mokwa, Niger state.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The authorities continued to arrest and detain journalists and others expressing dissent. On 27 January, Omoyele Sowore, publisher of the online news site Sahara Reporters, was arrested and detained by police for his posts on X against the Inspector General of Police, calling him "illegal IGP Kayode Egbetokun". He was charged under the Cybercrimes Act 2024 and released on bail.

On 2 March, 19-year-old social media critic Haruna Mohammed, known as Abale Borno, was arrested and detained after a viral social media post on the ramshackle state of public schools in Borno state. The police charged him with "defaming and degrading the personality of the governor". The magistrate granted him bail, and although the case had not been formally withdrawn by year's end, the police were no longer pursuing it.

On 7 March, peaceful protests took place in the city of Port Harcourt in response to the increasing clampdown on the right to freedom of expression through the use of the Cybercrimes Act. During the protests, the police assaulted journalists Charles Opurum of Channels Television, Allwell Ene of Naija FM, Soibelemari Oruwari of Nigeria-Info, Ikezam Godswill of AIT and Femi Ogunkhilede of Super FM. The police fired tear gas at peaceful protesters, confiscated cameras and ordered journalists at gunpoint to delete video footage recording their actions.

On 16 March, Ushie Uguamaye, known as Raye, a national service corps member, received threats and intimidation from National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) officials for posting a TikTok video lamenting the escalating economic hardship across the country. Following her refusal to delete the video, upon completion of her service in August the NYSC withheld her discharge certificate, extending her service by two months as punishment.

On 25 March, police arrested Buhari Abba, an online editor with Kano Times, and Ismail Auwal, a freelance journalist, over a report deemed critical of the Kano State Commissioner of Information Ibrahim Waiya. They were detained for several hours before being released, and there was no record of an ongoing trial.

In April, the National Broadcasting Commission banned singer Eedris Abdulkareem's song "Tell your papa" for being critical of the government, categorizing the song as "not to be broadcast".[1]

On 23 September, lawyer and activist Chinedu Agu was remanded in prison after arraignment on criminal defamation charges over his opinion articles criticizing Imo state governor Hope Uzodimma. He was released after 28 days in prison, pending trial. At year's end, the court had not set a trial date.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 27 March, the military fired live ammunition on supporters of the Islamic Movement in Nigeria during a protest in the capital, Abuja, marking the end of Ramadan fasting. They killed at least five people, with several others sustaining life-threatening injuries.[2] Thirteen people, including pro-democracy campaigner Omoyele Sowore and lawyer Aloy Ejimakor, were arrested on 20 October in Abuja for participating in a peaceful protest calling for the release of Nnamdi Kanu, leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra. They were arraigned on multiple charges, including criminal conspiracy, disobedience of a lawful order, inciting public disturbance, and causing a breach of the peace. On 24 October, they were granted bail and their trial remained ongoing at year's end.

RIGHT TO LIFE

The authorities failed to fulfil their obligations to prevent attacks on individuals and communities, to safeguard their rights to life and physical integrity, and to ensure justice by investigating and prosecuting those responsible for the violence.[3]

On 2 February, herders attacked Amagu, a village in Ishielu local government area (LGA), Ebonyi state, killing at least 15 people and destroying several properties. On 27 March, at least 16 people — hunters travelling from Rivers State to the city of Kano to celebrate Eid with their families — had their vehicle blocked and were dragged one by one, beaten and then set ablaze by a local vigilante and armed youths in the city of Uromi, Edo state.

Between 27 March and 2 April, at least 60 people were killed by gunmen in a coordinated attack across several communities — Mangor Tamiso, Daffo, Manguna, Hurti and Tadai — in Bokkos LGA, Plateau state. On 4 March, gunmen abducted and killed Sylvester Okechukwu, a priest serving in Tachiri village in Kaura LGA, Kaduna state. On 13 April, at least 51 people were killed when gunmen invaded Zikke village of Bassa LGA, Plateau state.[4] On 24 April, gunmen invaded Gobirawa Chali village of Dan Gulbi district Maru LGA, Zamfara state and killed over 20 people.

On 8 May, gunmen killed at least 30 people and burnt over 20 commuter vehicles and trucks along the Okigwe-Owerri road in Imo state. Between 25 May and 1 June, at least 85 people were killed by gunmen in Tse Antswam community, near Naka in Gwer West LGA, and in Edikwu Ankpali village in Apa LGA, Benue state. On 14 June, gunmen raided the town of Yelewata, Benue state, killing more than 100 people and forcing at least 3,941 more to flee their homes.[5] On 20 June, at least 12 travellers from Basawa village in Zaria LGA, Kaduna state were killed, and 11 people were injured by a mob in Mangu LGA, Plateau state.

On 15 July, gunmen attacked Bindi-Jebbu of Tahoss community in Riyom LGA, Plateau state, killing at least 27 people; families were locked up in their rooms and slaughtered one by one. On 19 August, gunmen attacked a mosque and nearby homes and killed at least 50 people and abducted 60 others at Unguwan Mantau community in Malumfashi LGA, Katsina state.

On 18 November, gunmen attacked worshippers at Christ Apostolic Church Oke-Isegun in the town of Eruku, Kwara state, killing three people and abducting 38 others. They were freed on 23 November.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

The military continued to perpetrate indiscriminate or disproportionate attacks against civilians. On 11 January, a military air strike killed at least 20 people at Tungar Kara village of Maradun LGA, Zamfara state. On 15 February, a military air strike killed at least six civilians at Zakka village, and another six civilians in Yauni community in the Safana LGA, Katsina state. On 31 May, military air strikes killed 20 people and wounded dozens in Maraya and Wabi villages in Maru LGA, Zamfara state, including local vigilantes who gathered to confront bandits that attacked their villages.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

According to the UN, Boko Haram continued to perpetrate indiscriminate attacks and to target civilians. On 15 May, Boko Haram fighters killed 23 farmers and fishermen in Malam Karanti village, Borno state. In September, Boko Haram fighters killed at least 60 people in an overnight attack on the village of Darul Jamal, Borno state, destroying 20 houses and burning 10 buses.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The escalating price of food drove millions of people deeper into poverty, and families were increasingly unable to afford the costs of healthcare and education. The new Tax Act 2025, which introduced a 5% fossil fuel products tax on petrol and diesel, effective from January 2026, was expected to further increase poverty. According to a report by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and Nigeria's Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 30.6 million people were estimated

to be facing acute food and nutrition insecurity.

The cuts to USAID funding affected health programmes, leaving thousands of people living with HIV to face uncertain futures.

Attacks by gunmen in the central state of Benue caused the internal displacement of 500,000 people. Many people remained living in squalid camps with poor sanitation, food and healthcare and lack of access to sufficient water.

Forced evictions

On 3 February, at least four people were killed during a violent forced eviction carried out by Kano state government in Rimin Auzinawa, a suburb in Ungogo LGA. The eviction occurred without genuine consultation, adequate prior notice, provision of compensation or alternative housing for affected residents.

On 7 March, the Lagos state government conducted a violent forced eviction of the Ilaje-Otumara community of Lagos, rendering over 10,000 people homeless.[6] On 25 October, the Lagos state government carried out violent forced evictions at Oworonshoki community – demolishing over 70 residential buildings – despite a State High Court order against the demolition. Some homes were torn apart by bulldozers while families were still inside, as security operatives fired tear gas canisters, which scattered hundreds of families.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Implementation failures continued to undermine Nigeria's climate policies in the non-energy sector. The government failed to halt funding for carbon-intensive projects. The nation's energy supply remained heavily reliant on fossil fuels, compelling many people to depend on petrol-powered generators for electricity.

On 20 June the UK High Court ruled that Shell could be held responsible for its oil spills in the Niger Delta.[7] A trial was scheduled to take place in 2027.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

The authorities failed to take effective measures to prevent attacks on women and girls across several communities. On 27 February, gunmen abducted four female students from their hostel at J.S. Tarka University in the city of Makurdi, Benue state. On 15 April, Hisbah operatives (government-sanctioned religious police) assaulted Hauwa'u Lawal Suleiman and her sisters in Katsina state over so-called "immoral gatherings". The authorities failed to investigate allegations of sexual harassment raised by Senator Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan against the president of the Senate, Godswill Akpabio.

On 17 November, gunmen abducted 25 schoolgirls from their school in the town of Maga, Kebbi state, and killed the school's vice principal. The students were released on 25 November.

On 21 November, gunmen abducted 303 schoolgirls and 12 staff from a school in Papiri community, Agwara LGA, Niger state. Fifty girls later escaped.

1. "Nigeria: Banning a song for criticizing government is unlawful", 11 April ↑
2. "Nigeria: Violent crackdown on IMN protests must end", 30 March ↑
3. *Nigeria: A Decade of Impunity: Attacks and Unlawful Killings in South-East Nigeria*, 13 August ↑
4. "[Nigeria:] Plateau: Killing of 51 people is an inexcusable security failure", 14 April ↑
5. "Nigeria: Violence and widespread displacement leave Benue facing a humanitarian disaster", 10 July ↑
6. "Nigeria: Lagos: Ruthless demolition targeting people in poverty must stop", 10 March ↑
7. "UK: Court ruling on Shell oil spills in Niger Delta an 'important step forward' for devastated communities", 20 June ↑

NORTH KOREA

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

Government control over all aspects of life persisted, with strict constraints on freedom of expression and movement. Surveillance

continued and distribution of foreign media was punished. Arbitrary detention, political prison camps and torture were ongoing, and the death penalty was applied without transparency. Escapees risked detention and ill-treatment if returned. Food insecurity, inadequate healthcare and restricted access to education were reported, while authorities continued to impose severe restrictions on international humanitarian support. People with disabilities faced systemic discrimination, violence and abuse.

BACKGROUND

Under the ongoing rule of Kim Jong-un, the authorities pursued closer military and economic ties with Russia and China, as demonstrated by military support for Russia's war in Ukraine. Despite increased diplomatic visibility by state officials, including participation in commemorative events abroad such as China's Victory Day parade, people inside the country remained isolated due to continuing restrictions on freedom of movement and independent engagement with international actors and institutions. Severe humanitarian needs persisted, but access was largely denied to UN agencies and humanitarian organizations, in particular their international staff.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Restrictions on freedom of expression remained severe. The authorities used laws, surveillance and ideological campaigns to suppress any contact with the outside world. The Reactionary Ideology and Culture Rejection Law and the Pyongyang Cultural Language Protection Act continued to underpin censorship.[1]

Access to outside information was almost non-existent: radio broadcasts were jammed and people living near the North Korea-China border were heavily policed. House-to-house inspections persisted, with officials searching for mobile phones, storage devices and printed material without prior notice or warrants, aimed at finding "anti-socialist" materials.[2] Schools and universities continued to face close monitoring by the authorities. Students' devices containing prohibited foreign media content, South Korean content in particular, were confiscated, and students found with foreign content were expelled or sent to juvenile detention. Teachers were ordered to deliver political lectures equating interest in foreign culture with treason. At other workplaces, managers were expected to monitor employees and report suspected violations. Digital surveillance persisted, particularly targeting young people attempting to bypass restrictions.

OHCHR, the UN human rights office, reported that the authorities had intensified surveillance of people's communications and cultural life and imposed harsh punishments for distributing foreign media. Individuals accused of distributing South Korean or foreign films faced serious penalties. In one reported case, a man was executed for distributing foreign music and films. Military personnel caught with foreign material also faced punishment.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Arbitrary detention remained central to the authorities' system of control. Escapees (from detention and the country) reported minor improvements in detention conditions and procedures for complaints, although fear of retaliation persisted and overall conditions remained harsh. People accused of political offences, including accessing foreign media or attempting to leave the country, were held without fair trial or legal safeguards. Families were denied information on the fate or whereabouts of detainees, such that those detentions amounted to enforced disappearance.

Political prison camps reportedly continued operating. Detainees were subjected to forced labour, inadequate food and harsh punishments in conditions amounting to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

The UN documented the use of torture and other ill-treatment during interrogations, including beatings and sleep deprivation, to extract confessions. Escapees described coerced "confessions" and mistreatment that

caused lasting physical and psychological harm. No independent monitors were permitted access to detention facilities so conditions could not be verified.

DEATH PENALTY

Reports that the death penalty continued to be imposed for acts that did not meet the "most serious crimes" threshold under international law emerged during the year. Proceedings remained opaque and defendants were reportedly denied fair-trial guarantees. Public executions remained common. People, including children, were forced to attend executions or later briefed in mandatory neighbourhood meetings.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The authorities maintained severe restrictions on internal and external movement. Travel permits were required for journeys between provinces and checkpoints were heavily monitored. Strengthened border controls further curtailed mobility and limited humanitarian access. Escapees forcibly returned from China faced detention and torture and other ill-treatment.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

UNICEF reported that immunization campaigns in February and June reached more than two million children in 2025, with full coverage for those born up to 2024. Water, sanitation and hygiene programmes supported by UNICEF were expected to reach 48,000 people across three provinces, including the provision of hygiene kits for emergencies. International staff continued to be barred from entry, limiting oversight.

Health services remained under-resourced. Hospitals frequently lacked basic medicines and equipment, leaving staff to work with minimal supplies. Families were often required to provide medication and bedding for the patient.

Chronic food insecurity remained widespread. Although early-season weather conditions were favourable for planting, fertilizer shortages, limited fuel and outdated equipment constrained agricultural output, which was further affected by recurrent climate shocks. People in rural areas faced severe hardship due to the failure of state food distribution; independent monitoring was denied. According to UNICEF, between January and June, community-based programmes treated 18,444 malnourished children, including 7,728 severe cases, but need far exceeded available resources.

Access to education was hampered by shortages of heating fuel and textbooks in rural schools, restricting attendance and learning.

RIGHTS OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

People with disabilities continued to face systemic discrimination and barriers to education, healthcare and employment. Stigma remained widespread and policies guaranteeing reasonable accommodation were absent.

In its periodic review, the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities noted that children with disabilities were excluded from mainstream schools and placed in segregated settings with inadequate resources. Access to health services, including medicines and assistive devices, was limited, particularly outside the capital, Pyongyang. Employment opportunities were also restricted, with no anti-discrimination legislation in place.

Reports indicated that people with psycho-social or intellectual disabilities were subjected to forced institutionalization without consent, where conditions were marked by neglect and lack of oversight. The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities urged North Korea to enact comprehensive legislation, ensure inclusive education and healthcare, and prohibit forced institutionalization.

1. "Oral statement – Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea – HRC58", 19 March ↑
2. "Oral Statement – Enhanced Interactive Dialogue on High Commissioner report on Democratic People's Republic of Korea – HRC60", 24 September ↑

NORWAY

Kingdom of Norway

A Black lawyer was awarded state redress for ethnic discrimination by police. A new bill proposed to reduce solitary confinement in prisons. Parliament finally adopted a consent-based legal definition of rape. Sámi communities continued to be excluded from decisions affecting their land rights.

DISCRIMINATION

In November, the Oslo City Court awarded compensation to Awon Amidu, a Black lawyer, for ethnic discrimination involving repeated unjustified police stops between 2015 and 2020. The legal action was brought on the back of a 2021 decision by the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, which found that the police had discriminated against Amidu based on his ethnicity.

CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In August, the government presented a draft bill to reduce solitary confinement in prisons and set a minimum standard of eight hours a day for prisoners to spend outside cells.

The proposal followed a report criticizing prison conditions published by the Parliamentary Ombudsperson in March, as well as long-standing concerns raised by UN and Council of Europe bodies.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In an historic vote in June, parliament adopted a consent-based legal definition of rape, which came into effect in July, bringing the provision in line with human rights standards.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In June, parliament passed a new Minerals Act, which lacked provisions to ensure the free, prior and informed consent of Indigenous Peoples in relation to mineral exploration or extraction projects on their traditional lands. As such, the legislation ignored concerns over land use raised in March by the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, as well as those consistently raised by Sámi and other civil society organizations.[1]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In November, the Borgarting Court of Appeal heard an appeal brought by environmental organizations against the Norwegian state, which challenged the approval of development plans for three North Sea oil projects on the grounds that their global climate impacts had not been properly assessed. The court found in favour of the applicants but did not suspend operations in the oil fields. In December, the state appealed the decision.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

The Norwegian sovereign wealth fund came under increasing scrutiny over its investments in companies operating in the Occupied Palestinian Territory or connected to Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip.

In June, a majority of parliamentarians voted in favour of a proposal to ban trade and business activities with such companies.

In August, the state-owned manager of the fund, Norges Bank Investment Management, divested from six companies with connections to the West Bank and the occupied Gaza Strip.

In November, parliament voted to allow the government to review the fund's ethical framework and put the proposals for ethical divestments on hold until then. Civil society organizations were critical of the measure.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Norway drastically reduced its annual refugee resettlement quota to just 500 in 2025, down from 1,000 in 2024, and a high of 2,000 in 2022. The government cited the large number of refugees fleeing Ukraine that it had received until 2023, but its decision defied the calls from civil society organizations – and the UNHCR's guidance figure of 5,000 – to increase the quota.

1. Finland, Norway, Sweden: Just Transition or 'Green Colonialism'? How Mineral Extraction and New Energy Projects Without Free, Prior and Informed Consent are Threatening Indigenous Sámi Livelihoods and Culture in Sweden, Norway and Finland, 1 January ↑

OMAN

Sultanate of Oman

Restrictions on freedom of expression increased. A new citizenship law enabled authorities to revoke citizenship from critics of the Sultan or the state, while activists and protesters faced arrests and imprisonment for peaceful expression. Press freedom was further restricted by new media regulations granting state authorities broad powers of censorship and surveillance. Minimum standards for employing domestic workers were introduced but migrant workers, particularly domestic workers, remained trapped under the abusive *kafala* (sponsorship) system, suffering exploitation with limited legal protection. Women and girls continued to experience gender-based discrimination, including under the new citizenship law, and lacked protection from domestic violence.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

On 11 February the Sultan of Oman ratified a new citizenship law that allowed the authorities to revoke Omani citizenship from people who verbally or physically "offend" Oman or the Sultan, or who belong to a group, party or organization that embraces principles or beliefs that "harm the interests" of Oman – vague terms that can be used to silence opponents and restrict opinions.

Authorities continued to summon, arrest and prosecute activists, government critics and peaceful protesters.

On 8 April, activist Talal Al-Salmani was arrested after joining a peaceful gathering during which he criticized the government. He was sentenced two days later to a fine for "participation in an unlawful gathering" and to one year in prison for "spreading news likely to undermine the prestige of the state". In May the Muscat Court of Appeal upheld his conviction but reduced the prison term to three months for each charge, to be served concurrently. He was released on 6 August.

Salem bin Salam Al-Salti was summoned for interrogation on 8 August. He was subjected to enforced disappearance, the duration of which could not be confirmed by the end of the year. Media outlets and an Omani NGO reported that his summons was related to his comments on social media criticizing government policy on unemployment.

Omani authorities arrested writer Mohammed Ali Al-Bar'ami on 18 June, two days after he posted comments on the platform X criticizing the government system as "corrupt". On 28 July the Primary Court in the city of Salalah sentenced him to four years in prison, fined him OMR 5,000 (around USD 13,000) and ordered the closure of his social media accounts for "using information networks and information technology means to publish what may harm public order".

Press freedom

In September the Ministry of Information issued Executive Regulations to operationalize the Media Law passed in December 2024. The Media Law expanded state power to restrict press freedom by granting authorities broad powers to control media content and licensing of newspapers, broadcasting channels, news agencies, media workers and publishing houses. The law also granted sweeping powers to suspend activities without judicial approval, impose surveillance on journalists and media institutions, and limit the licensed use of social media accounts to Omani citizens in that profession.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Despite official pledges to abolish the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, it remained in force leaving hundreds of thousands of migrant workers – particularly domestic workers –

vulnerable to abuse. Sponsors continued to exert control by illegally confiscating workers' documents, restricting their freedom of movement and employment, while the authorities failed to provide adequate protection to those fleeing exploitation.

In September at least 11 Indian migrant workers were stranded after the company employing them withheld four months' wages, denied overtime pay and confiscated their passports when they protested.

On 13 October the Ministry of Labour issued Ministerial Decision No. 574/2025, which introduced regulations to establish minimum standards for domestic workers, including weekly and annual leave, sick leave, regulated working hours and rest periods, prohibition of forced labour, and banning the retention of workers' passports.

While these changes were long overdue, they did little to shift the power imbalance between employers and migrant workers. It remained unclear how the changes were being implemented, as many migrant domestic workers continued to face abuse, poor working and living conditions, unpaid wages, long working hours, movement restrictions and illegal passport confiscation.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Oman continued to lack comprehensive legal protections against domestic violence. There remained no stand-alone law that explicitly criminalized domestic abuse. Existing legislation on divorce, marriage and inheritance continued to uphold gender biases, consistently favouring men.

The new citizenship law, passed in February, discriminated against women by restricting their ability to confer nationality to their children and foreign spouses on the same basis as men and imposing stricter conditions for children of Omani women married to foreign men. This perpetuated gender inequality and put children at risk of statelessness.

PAKISTAN

Islamic Republic of Pakistan

Despite a significant decline in inflation, poverty was pervasive. Budget cuts and flooding caused loss of life and further affected economic well-being. Amendments to online speech and anti-terrorism laws significantly impacted freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, leading to detention of journalists, activists and opposition party members. Enforced disappearances remained a significant concern. Violations of the freedom of religion and belief continued, particularly the ongoing persecution of the Ahmadiyya community. Violence against women and transgender people increased. Afghan refugees were deported under Pakistan's Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan after their registration cards had expired. The post-disaster response to severe flooding was inadequate.

BACKGROUND

Terrorist attacks continued unabated, along with heightened tensions with India, resulting in increased military operations in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces. Drone strikes and attacks by both militants and state forces in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa resulted in dozens of civilian deaths. In May, tensions with India escalated into armed attacks leading to loss of civilian life. The Twenty-seventh Constitutional Amendment, passed in November, significantly undermined the independence of the higher judiciary and provided broad immunity to the heads of the armed forces and the president. Inflation remained on average lower than in 2024, dropping to a historic low of 0.3% in April, but rising steadily since. Rates rose to above 5% in the aftermath of the summer floods. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) approved two payments during the year: USD 1 billion in May and provisional approval for USD 1.2 billion in October.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Despite the significant decrease in inflation, according to the World Bank, 44.7% of Pakistanis were living below the poverty line. Due to constraints imposed by the IMF, the developmental budget for the year was substantially reduced, including funding for food, water, energy and social sectors such as health, education and social protection. The budget released in June saw defence spending increase by 20.2%, while spending on health and education declined as a proportion of GDP.

The economic situation particularly affected marginalized groups. The ILO reported that the gender pay gap in Pakistan was at 25% for hourly wages and 30% for monthly wages. Sanitation workers, particularly non-Muslims belonging to so-called "lower castes", faced systemic discrimination and lacked protections related to fair wages, workplace security and access to social security.[1] Exploitative practices continued in other areas of work, including bonded labour in brick kilns.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

There were some signs of progress as courts granted relief in certain cases related to journalists, and the 15-month ban on social media website X was lifted in May. Overall, however, the authorities continued to use detention and cybercrime and anti-terror laws to clamp down on freedom of expression. Amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA), introduced in January, expanded powers of censorship and introduced "false and fake information" as a criminal offence.[2]

Censorship of online content persisted with the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) implementing arbitrary internet shutdowns, particularly in Balochistan. Pakistan updated its web monitoring system to block online content, primarily with technology from China.[3] The authorities also selectively withdrew advertisements from newspapers, a significant source of revenue, in retaliation for critical reporting.

In May, the PTA blocked 16 Indian YouTube channels and 32 websites for spreading "propaganda". In June, speeches by opposition party members were censored on state television during the budget session. In July, a court issued orders to ban 27 YouTube channels belonging to journalists and opposition parties for "anti-state" content. In September, the Islamabad High Court overturned the lower court's order to ban the channels.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Parliament passed the Anti-Terrorism (Amendment) Bill in August, allowing detention without charges for up to three months. Journalists were repeatedly targeted under PECA for reporting deemed critical by the authorities. In March, journalists Farhan Mallick and Waheed Murad were separately arrested for sharing alleged "anti-state" content online. Both were subsequently released on bail. In August, journalist Khalid Jamil was arrested by the National Cyber Crimes Investigation Agency for allegedly sharing "fake content" on social media. He was released a day later. Human rights defenders and lawyers, Imaan Mazari and Hadi Ali Chatta, faced a criminal trial for alleged "anti-state" tweets. Hadi was briefly detained in relation to the charges and the trial raised grave due process concerns.

There was a crackdown on so-called "anti-state" content after the conflict with India in May, leading to the arrest and detention of nearly a dozen people. Additionally, Baloch activists were also targeted, including Mahrang Baloch, Bebarg Zehri, Beebow Baloch, Shah Jee Sibghat Ullah, Ghaffar Qambarani and Gulzadi Baloch, leading to detention under the Maintenance of Public Order Ordinance and anti-terror laws.[4] In August, a criminal case was registered against a minor from the city of Gwadar for allegedly sharing the video of a speech by human rights activist Gulzar Dost. Activist Ali Wazir, along with various members of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement, remained unlawfully detained. Leader of political party Pakistan Tehreek-i- Insaf (PTI), Imran Khan, remained in jail, marking two years of incarceration on 5 August on politically motivated charges. Reports indicated that he

had been kept in solitary confinement for weeks and arbitrarily denied access to legal counsel and family members.

Freedom of movement was also severely restricted. Balochistan National Party President Sardar Akhtar Mengal was not allowed to leave the country in July on account of being placed on the Provisional National Identification List. Journalists Asad Toor and Sohrab Barkat were barred from travelling outside the country on separate occasions. Sohrab was later charged under PECA after being stopped from travelling to attend a UN conference. In October, 32 individuals, including several Baloch activists, were designated as "proscribed persons" under the Anti-Terrorism Act, restricting their freedom of movement and liberty.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Enforced disappearances remained a significant concern. The government's Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances recorded 125 new cases in the first half of 2025. A significant number of cases were not reported or registered by the commission. Civil society organization Defence of Human Rights separately documented 60 new cases during the year; regional organizations reported significantly higher numbers.[5] The government commission claimed in September that it had "disposed of" 83% of all the cases it had received since inception; however, concerns remained from civil society and victims' families regarding the processes adopted by the commission.

In March, exiled journalist Ahmad Noorani's house was raided and his two brothers were forcibly disappeared for over a month.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In March, protests and rallies by Baloch activists in Balochistan and Sindh were curtailed by the state. During a protest by the Baloch Yakjethi Committee on 21 March calling for the release of Baloch activists forcibly disappeared, three protesters were killed through use of unlawful force by law enforcement, according to reports from local activists.[6] In September, authorities clamped down on protests in Pakistan-administered Jammu and Kashmir region. They imposed a nearly week-long blanket network and internet shutdown and used force against protesters, leading to the deaths of nine people, including at least six protesters.

During the year, more than 100 PTI leaders and activists were convicted by anti-terrorism courts in cases relating to the 9 May 2023 protests, including opposition leaders in the National Assembly and Senate, Omer Ayub and Shibli Faraz respectively, member of the National Assembly Zartaj Gul, and activist Khadija Shah. In May, the Supreme Court upheld the convictions of protesters by military courts following the 9 May protests.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Violence against the Ahmadiyya community escalated in the form of arrests, attacks on places of worship, grave desecrations and targeted killings.[7] At least three Ahmadis were killed during the year, including an Ahmadi man who was lynched after Friday prayers. Severe restrictions were imposed on Ahmadis celebrating occasions such as Ramadhan, Eid and Ashura. In December, an Ahmadi man in Khushab, Punjab province, was shot by gunmen while returning home from work. An Ahmadi man was arrested in the city of Gujranwala in a blasphemy case for distributing free food on Ashura in July. In September, an Ahmadi man narrowly escaped a gun attack in the city of Sahiwal. On 28 September, Ahmadis in the city of Sialkot, Punjab province, were attacked, resulting in at least five injuries, and multiple Ahmadi properties were set on fire. On 10 October, an Ahmadi place of worship was attacked by a gunman during Friday prayers. Many of these instances of violence were organized by right-wing religious groups such as Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). Civil society expressed concern that TLP and other groups were not held adequately accountable for these acts of violence. However, in October, the federal government approved a ban of TLP under the

Anti-Terrorism Act following violent protests that month.

Abuse of the blasphemy law continued. In July, the Islamabad High Court ordered the formation of a commission to investigate the alleged entrapment of hundreds of people in reportedly trumped-up online blasphemy cases. The order was suspended a week later during an intra-court appeal. In December, Mubarak Saani, an Ahmadi man, was sentenced to life imprisonment on blasphemy charges.

Accountability for the 2023 Jaranwala attack on the Christian community remained elusive, with 10 people acquitted by a local court in June due to lack of evidence. Christian organizations highlighted the failure of the police to conduct a transparent investigation, alleging that they had ignored crucial evidence.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Violence against women continued unabated. Sahil, an organization monitoring gender-based violence through newspaper reports, recorded a 25% rise in the number of reported cases in the first 11 months of 2025. The NGO the Sustainable Social Development Organisation recorded more than 20,000 incidents nationwide during the first six months of the year.

A high-profile case of a so-called "honour killing" emerged in July in Balochistan after a video went viral of a tribal council killing a woman and man for being in a relationship against the families' wishes. Sixteen people were arrested in the immediate aftermath of the killings. Violence was also reported against women active on social media, such as 17-year-old Sana Yousaf, who was murdered after she rejected a marriage proposal from a man following her on social media.

In May, parliament passed the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Marriage Restraint Act, setting 18 years as the minimum age for marriage, with criminal sanctions for violations, despite opposition from religious parties. Similarly, Balochistan province passed a bill in November raising the minimum age to 18 years. Both houses of parliament passed the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill for Islamabad; religious parties expressed opposition.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The number of killings of transgender people remained high. At least 10 murders of transgender people were reported in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province alone. In September, three transgender women were shot and killed in an incident in the city of Karachi, Sindh province. There were at least four reports of transgender women being gang raped in Islamabad, Sahiwal, Kasur and Bahawalnagar cities. A local organization working on transgender rights reported that 56 transgender people had been killed in two years in Sindh province.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Pakistan began phases two and three of the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan, announced in October 2023, deporting people with a Proof of Registration or Afghan Citizen Card, in breach of the principle of non-refoulement. In March, Pakistan also announced that all Afghan nationals, including refugees and asylum seekers, must leave the cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi.[8] Proof of Registration Cards issued by UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, expired at the end of June and the authorities failed to renew their registration. As a result, more than 999,000 Afghan nationals returned to Afghanistan between January and December, 153,670 of whom were deported, according to the UN International Organization for Migration. Between September 2023 and December 2025, 1,930,937 Afghan nationals returned to Afghanistan, the majority forcibly returned, or pushed by conditions in Pakistan.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Flooding that began in late June affected 6.9 million people, resulting in more than 1,000 deaths and more than 3.5 million people displaced. Disaster response, particularly to flash flooding in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, was

seen as inadequate, particularly in terms of early warnings and post-disaster relief.

In April and June, parts of Pakistan experienced heatwaves with temperatures rising to 49°C, putting residents under levels of thermal stress that could be deadly. Both the extreme temperatures and flooding were made more likely by climate change.

Pakistan announced its third NDC, voluntarily pledging to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by up to 50% by 2035. Of this, 17% was unconditional through domestic resources and policy and 33% was conditional on the provision of adequate grant-based or concessional international climate finance.

1. *Pakistan: "Cut Us Open and See That We Bleed Like Them": Discrimination and Stigmatization of Sanitation Workers in Pakistan*, 29 July ↑
2. "Pakistan: Authorities pass bill with sweeping controls on social media", 24 January ↑
3. *Pakistan: Shadows of Control: Censorship and Mass Surveillance in Pakistan*, 9 September ↑
4. "Pakistan must end crackdown on Baloch human rights defenders", 28 May ↑
5. "Pakistan: Failure to address enforced disappearance perpetuates injustice against victims", 30 August ↑
6. "Pakistan: Systematic attacks and relentless crackdown on Baloch activists must end", 27 March ↑
7. "Pakistan: End cyclical harassment and persecution of minority Ahmadiyya community", 5 June ↑
8. "Pakistan: Opaque 'Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan' targeting Afghan refugees must be withdrawn", 26 March ↑

PALESTINE (STATE OF)

State of Palestine

Palestinian armed groups in Gaza held and mistreated hostages until their release after the October ceasefire, and endangered Palestinian civilians by locating military objectives in or near densely populated areas. Palestinian authorities failed to conduct independent investigations into serious violations of international law, including possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, and into violations of human rights against Palestinians. Palestinian armed individuals killed Israeli civilians, including settlers living illegally in the occupied West Bank. Intra-Palestinian violence and lawlessness surged in Gaza, enabled by Israel's genocide. Palestinian Hamas-run forces executed civilians whom they accused of collaborating with Israel, and summarily punished others accused of offences including looting. There were reports of torture and other ill-treatment in Palestinian detention centres and prisons in the West Bank.

BACKGROUND

Parallel Palestinian authorities – Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in the Gaza Strip – continued to function in restricted areas of administration despite Israel's assassination of most of Hamas's senior leadership, while those who survived were in exile. The Palestinian authorities could not pay full public sector wages due to Israel's arbitrary diversion of Palestinian tax revenues, leading to teachers' strikes and increasing poverty. Two years of Israel's war and genocide and 18 years of siege left Gaza's economy in ruin, shrunk by 86% compared to 2022, according to UN Trade and Development. There had been no Palestinian parliamentary elections since 2006.

At least four new Palestinian armed groups formed in northern and southern Gaza, with Israel's backing.

US President Donald Trump's "Peace Plan" was signed in Egypt on 13 October by the leaders of the USA, Türkiye, Egypt and Qatar. On 17 November the UN Security Council adopted a US-drafted resolution for "peace", without any provisions on upholding Palestinians' human rights or ensuring accountability for international crimes. The number of UN member states recognizing Palestinian statehood reached 157.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Armed conflict in Gaza

Armed groups fired indiscriminate rockets and shells from Gaza, which did not kill or injure Israeli civilians. Until the October ceasefire agreement, they continued to hold and mistreat hostages.[1]

Palestinian armed groups endangered Palestinian civilians by locating military objectives in or near densely populated areas.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

West Bank

Palestinian armed individuals or groups killed 12 Israeli civilians, of whom seven were settlers living illegally in the occupied West Bank, according to OCHA. Hamas leaders praised and justified such attacks.

Gaza

In a surge of intra-Palestinian violence and lawlessness triggered by Israel's imposition of conditions of life that led to the destruction of the social fabric, Palestinian forces run by Hamas reported that they had executed at least 39 civilians whom they accused of collaborating with Israel, and summarily punished scores of others for alleged looting and other offences.

For example, on 11 June, Hamas news channels and independent eyewitnesses who took video footage reported that gunmen affiliated with Sahim – a militarized unit established by Hamas – abducted, tortured and killed 12 Palestinians, whom they accused of working with the US-Israeli run Gaza Humanitarian Foundation. On 13 October, gunmen affiliated with Al-Qassam Brigades, Hamas's armed wing, announced that they had extrajudicially executed eight men from the Dughmush family in Gaza City whom they accused of "collaborating with Israel".

In December, armed groups backed by Israel summarily killed two men in Rafah, southern Gaza, whom they claimed were Hamas members.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

West Bank

The Independent Commission for Human Rights (ICHR), the Palestinian national human rights institution, received at least 378 complaints of arbitrary detention by Palestinian security services. On 19 November, President Mahmoud Abbas issued a decree-law stating that commitment to the Palestinian Liberation Organization and its international obligations was a precondition for local electoral candidacy.

According to the Palestinian Centre for Development and Media Freedoms, 14 journalists were detained by the Palestinian police for periods ranging from two hours to two weeks during which they were interrogated about their work.

Gaza

Hamas-run forces beat and briefly detained dozens of protesters at peaceful demonstrations in Beit Lahia, a town in northern Gaza, in March and April.[2]

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The ICHR received 61 complaints of torture and other ill-treatment in Palestinian detention centres and prisons in the West Bank, mostly during interrogations. The destruction of the justice and law enforcement systems in Gaza meant that the ICHR could not collect complaints of arbitrary detention or of torture and other ill-treatment by Palestinian authorities against Palestinians in Gaza.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Palestinian authorities failed to conduct independent investigations into serious violations of international law, including possible war crimes and crimes against humanity, and into violations of human rights against Palestinians.

The Palestinian authorities cooperated with the UN Commission of Inquiry.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

One in seven families in Gaza was headed by women, due to the death and imprisonment of men, according to UN Women. Due to women being disproportionately prevented from accessing aid, the increase in female-headed households periodically left tens of thousands of households without food, according to the Women's Refugee Commission, a US-based advocacy organization. According to the Integrated Food Security Phased Classification, women and girls waited longer than men at water and aid distribution points, where they faced gendered harassment, in addition to the insecurity affecting everyone. Oxfam reported that Palestinian authorities' programmes for improving the participation of women in decision-making were hindered by a lack of political will.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

In addition to 49 hostages released between January and October, Israeli citizens Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed were released in an exchange deal on 22 February after being subjected to enforced disappearance in Gaza since 2014 and 2015 respectively.

1. *Israel/OPT: Targeting Civilians: Murder, Hostage-Taking and Other Violations by Palestinian Armed Groups in Israel and Gaza*, 11 December ↑
2. "Palestine: Hamas security services must stop targeting protesters in reprisal and respect freedom of peaceful assembly in Gaza", 28 May ↑

PARAGUAY

Republic of Paraguay

Judicial independence was threatened by the links between organized crime and members of parliament and the judiciary. The health system faced a permanent crisis due to corruption and lack of sufficient public investment. Threats against journalists, repression of social protest and setbacks in Indigenous Peoples' rights were reported. High levels of gender-based violence continued. Criminalization of human rights defenders and structural discrimination persisted.

BACKGROUND

Multidimensional poverty affected 15.67% of the population, affecting their right to work, social security, adequate housing, health and education. In addition, 20.1% of the population were below the monetary poverty line and 4.1% below the extreme poverty line.

In July, the minimum wage increased by 3.6%, far below the 24% demanded by trade unions. A bill was introduced that sought to link the statutory minimum wage to variations in the consumer food price index. Informal employment rates stood at 62.5%.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

Investigations by journalists revealed the existence of a network of influence between alleged members of organized crime and members of parliament and the judiciary, affecting judicial independence.

RIGHT TO LIFE

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child found that Paraguay had failed to comply with its obligations to respect and protect the lives of two girls during a military operation carried out on 2 September 2020, and that it had not properly investigated their deaths.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Paraguay ratified the Inter-American Convention on Protecting the Human Rights of Older Persons. According to the National Institute of Statistics, older persons represented 13% of the country's population, of which 63.9% lacked social security cover and 14.4% were in a situation of monetary poverty.

Right to health

The health system crisis continued due to lack of public investment, which was under the minimum 6% of GDP recommended by the WHO.

Avoidable deaths occurred in public health centres, including that of a newborn baby in March in a neonatal intensive care unit at the Regional Hospital of Villarrica, which was not yet operational despite having been officially inaugurated by the national government a few days earlier.

In March, the executive branch created a team tasked with improving the health system. However, it focused solely on infrastructure and failed to address funding and other issues relating to equitable and non-discriminatory access.

In July, an official audit uncovered signs of corruption in the management of cancer drugs, which caused interruptions in treatment. By year's end, no investigations had been conducted and those involved had not been held accountable.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Law 7363 of 2024, establishing disproportionate restrictions on the right to freedom of association, came into force in October following approval of its corresponding regulations.

A parliamentary commission conducted an inquiry into civil society organizations and media outlets critical of the government, and published a report containing unsubstantiated allegations linking them to money laundering in connection with political financing. The commission subsequently took legal action against five of the organizations for the purpose of accessing sensitive information about their activities and use of funds.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The police arbitrarily restricted the right to freedom of assembly of those critical of the government, based on a legal provision (Law 1066 of 1997), which disproportionately limited the right to peaceful assembly.

The criminal justice system was used to deter protest. The acquittal of three activists accused of arson in connection with a social protest during the Covid-19 pandemic was overturned by the courts, with all three now having to face a new trial.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Death threats and harassment of journalists continued. Paraguay's Bureau for the Protection of Journalists registered 20 attacks and acts of harassment.

Journalist Aníbal Gómez received death threats after calling out corruption in the town of Pedro Juan Caballero. The International Federation of Journalists and the Paraguayan Journalists' Union called for urgent measures, including the adoption of a law on the protection of journalists at risk.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Environmental defender Vidal Brítez was arrested in March as reprisal for his activism against pollution caused by gold mining, on charges of alleged serious coercion during an incident at which he was not present.[1]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In April, the National Social Pastoral organization and several universities led an investigation that detected cyanide and mercury contamination in the district of Paso Yobái, in the centre of the Eastern Region, as a result of gold mining. Despite the evidence, the legislative branch failed to pass a bill to ban the use of cyanide in mining activities.

According to the World Bank, Paraguay faced increasing risks relating to climate change, including droughts, floods and rising temperatures affecting the right to education, employment and health, among others.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

The Avá Guaraní Paranaense People were still awaiting the restitution of their ancestral lands, from which they had been displaced due to the construction of the Itaipú Binacional hydroelectric dam on the border with Brazil. Although Brazil had moved towards a legal agreement to purchase and return part of the land, the communities in Paraguay were still awaiting a response from the company and the authorities.[2]

The closure of the central offices of the Paraguayan Institute of Indigenous People was considered a regression that revealed patterns of historical and structural discrimination.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Trans people continued to face obstacles in obtaining legal recognition of their gender identity. Two trans migrants were denied the issuance of documents reflecting their gender identity.

The city council of the capital, Asunción, banned an event to honour a transgender human rights defender who died in March.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights granted precautionary measures in favour of a boy victim of vicarious violence.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

The Ministry of Women registered 37 feminicides and 55 attempted feminicides in 2025.

In April, a bill was introduced to eliminate the Ministry of Women by merging it with the recently created Ministry of the Family.

1. "Paraguay: Free environmental defender", 1 April ↑
2. "Brazil and Paraguay: Itaipú takes a step towards restoring land to the Avá Guaraní Paranaense People, but integral reparation is still pending", 1 April ↑

PERU

Republic of Peru

Authorities used unnecessary and disproportionate force against demonstrators. The victims of excessive force during the 2022-2023 protests had still not obtained justice. Attacks on journalists and human rights defenders intensified. Legislation affecting the functioning of civil society organizations was approved. Crimes under international law and serious human rights violations committed between 1980 and 2000 could go unpunished following the entry into force of Law 32419. Violence against women and girls remained a major concern, as did reduced access to abortion and medical emergency kits in cases of rape.

Recognition of the rights of transgender people suffered setbacks. Venezuelan nationals continued to lack protection.

BACKGROUND

The institutional crisis continued to affect human rights. The loss of independence of the Public Prosecutor's Office, the Constitutional Court and the Ombudsman's Office, among other autonomous state bodies, seriously threatened the rule of law. Organized crime increased, as did the perception that the authorities were failing to address it. In October, Congress removed from office President Dina Boluarte on grounds of moral incapacity. José Jerí Oré took over as president with a nine-month mandate until elections scheduled for 2026.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists Gastón Medina and Raúl Celis were killed in January and May respectively, and Fernando Núñez and Mitzar Castillejos in December. The Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights condemned the killings and pointed to the victims' journalistic work as a possible motive.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Law 32301 amending legislation governing the Peruvian Agency for International Cooperation (APCI) was enacted. This new law established the mandatory registration of civil society organizations and prior approval by the state of their plans, activities or programmes, thereby weakening civic space and leaving the work of these organizations open to arbitrary and disproportionate control and potential self-censorship. In the case of journalists, such oversight could result in state bodies obtaining information on ongoing investigations against authorities.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Amendment of APCI legislation jeopardized access to justice for the victims of excessive use of force in the protests of that took place between December 2022 and March 2023, by classifying the use of international

development funds to "advise, assist or finance, in whatever form or modality, administrative, judicial, or other actions against the state in national or international instances" as a serious offence. Proceedings for excessive use of force in the protests were brought mainly by civil society organizations that now faced fines of over USD 700,000 if they persisted with such actions.

In September, the complaint against the then president and some of her ministers for constitutional violations around the deaths and the hundreds of injuries during the protests that took place between December 2022 and March 2023, was dismissed. Three years on, no formal charges had yet been filed against those allegedly responsible, with most investigations still in the preliminary stages and limited progress made. Throughout the year, staff cuts and changes were made at the Special Team of Prosecutors for Cases with Victims during Social Protests within the Public Prosecutor's Office, hampering progress in the investigations and undermining the confidence of victims and their families.

On 15 October, the police again used unnecessary and disproportionate force against protesters. The government reported dozens of injured people, including two teenagers and an 11-year-old girl passer-by hit by a tear gas canister, and the death of protester Eduardo Mauricio Ruiz Sanz from a gunshot wound. In the latter case, the Peruvian National Police confirmed that an active officer in civilian clothes had fired his weapon but insisted that it was not a human rights violation and that the investigation should be carried out by the institution itself. In December, the Public Prosecutor's Office ratified that it should be the police who carry out initial inquiries in one of the investigations into the events of that day.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Law 32419 came into effect in August, granting amnesty to all members of the armed forces, National Police and self-defence committees investigated, charged, tried and sentenced in relation to serious human rights violations, including crimes against humanity, committed between 1980 and 2000.

At least five judges refrained from applying laws 32419 and 32107 (the latter approved in 2024 to apply the statute of limitations to war crimes and crimes against humanity), considering them contrary to Peru's international obligations.

With regard to the monitoring of enforcement of the sentences in the Barrios Altos and La Cantuta cases, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled in October that laws 32419 and 32107 constituted a failure by the Peruvian state to comply with previous judgments issued by the Court, and urged the authorities and the judiciary to refrain from applying them. However, the Constitutional Court ruled in December that claims of unconstitutionality of Law 32107 were unfounded. It stated that the non-applicability of the statute of limitations applied only to events occurring after 2002. This could result in hundreds of cases being dismissed and disciplinary action taken against judges and prosecutors who fail to apply the law.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations registered 135 feminicides and 30,029 cases of sexual violence against girls and women in 2025. However, only 8.2% of survivors (2,472 cases) received emergency care kits. In the same period, 13,096 rapes were registered. Over the year, the National Police reported the disappearance of 12,044 women, girls and adolescents, an increase of 17% over the previous year.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In June, grounds 13 and 14 of the Technical Handbook on Therapeutic Abortion Procedures of Peru's Perinatal Maternal Institute were repealed, in contravention of the recommendations made by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child regarding therapeutic abortion in the case known as "Camila" and negatively affecting all girls. These grounds allowed access to medical abortion in cases of fetal

malformations incompatible with life and pregnancies resulting from sexual violence against girls and adolescents. Removal of such grounds was preceded by a public campaign led by different state bodies, as well as by harassment against health professionals defending sexual and reproductive rights.

In 2025, 992 girls under the age of 15 were forced to carry their pregnancies to term.

A new equal opportunities law approved by Congress introduced worrying setbacks, including removal of a gender perspective and all references to Peru's international obligations, replacing "comprehensive" sex education with a scientific, biological, ethical and values-based approach, limiting the concept of sexual health to safe motherhood and the prevention of teenage pregnancy, and banning organizations that take legal action against the Peruvian state from providing training to public officials.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Law 32331 establishing differentiated access to public toilets according to "biological sex", with the stated aim of protecting the "sexual integrity of children and adolescents", was approved. This dangerously correlated gender identity with a threat to children, without any evidence.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Environmental defenders Hipólito Quispe Huamán Conde and Isai Shuk Shawit were killed in July and November, respectively. According to the Ministry of Justice, at least 161 environmental defenders and Indigenous people experienced dangerous situations during the year. Congress eliminated the Commission on Andean, Amazonian and Afro-Peruvian Peoples, Environment and Ecology from the organizational structure of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, thus abolishing a technical and intercultural space in which to address attacks against human rights defenders.

In the case of the online harassment of human rights defender Jennie Dador, the Meta oversight board recognized the importance of considering context when interpreting digital threats that could result in physical attacks or incitement of violence against defenders, and ordered the removal of the manipulated image posted.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The Special Exceptional Administrative Sanctions Procedure remained in force and was applied without respect for due process, mainly to Venezuelan nationals. Expulsions were carried out before appeals were resolved, with individuals being taken to the nearest border in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, which is binding in international law.

PHILIPPINES

Republic of the Philippines

The ICC detained former president Rodrigo Duterte following his arrest for murder as a crime against humanity. Killings in the context of the "war on drugs" continued. At least four journalists were killed and another detained for alleged violations of terrorism-related laws, which were also used against activists and development workers. Hundreds of people, including children, were arrested and detained following protests against corruption in flood-control projects. Online harassment by authorities created a climate of fear among young human rights defenders.

BACKGROUND

In May, mid-term elections were held for senators, congressional representatives and local government officials. In September and October, earthquakes struck Cebu and Davao provinces, killing more than 80 people. Several tropical cyclones caused flooding and landslides, resulting in hundreds of people killed, injured or missing, and more than 2 million displaced.

IMPUNITY

On 11 March, former president Rodrigo Duterte was arrested by police in the capital city Manila on a warrant issued by the ICC for murder as a crime against humanity. The warrant was issued in relation to unlawful killings in the "war on drugs" while he was president[1] and for killings in Davao City during his time as mayor (2013-2016), a development welcomed by families of victims and civil society.[2] He was subsequently transferred to The Hague and remained in detention at the end of the year.[3] The ICC Office of the Prosecutor was preparing to request that Duterte be charged with three counts of murder as a crime against humanity, but his lawyers submitted that he was unfit to stand trial. The ICC's Pre-Trial Chamber postponed his confirmation of charges hearing, originally scheduled for 23 September. No new date had been set by the end of the year.

There remained little domestic accountability for police officers and others implicated in deadly anti-drug operations. Reports of unlawful killings during police operations related to the "war on drugs" persisted, with at least 271 drug-related deaths recorded at year's end by the university-based group Dahas. In September, a court convicted police colonel Dante Lubos of homicide for the death of Ryan Dave Almora during a police operation in July 2016. Despite thousands of people being unlawfully killed since 2016, only five cases had resulted in convictions of a total of nine police officers in relation to the "war on drugs". In May, a court denied bail for three police officers accused of killing Spanish businessman Diego Bello Lafuente during a police operation in 2020. In December, the Supreme Court affirmed the conviction of three police officers for killing 17-year-old Kian delos Santos in an anti-drug operation in 2017.

In October, a court dismissed with finality the last charge against "war on drugs" critic and congressional representative Leila de Lima, after government prosecutors withdrew an appeal against an earlier dismissal of her case.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

In April, research revealed online harassment by authorities, including the practice of "red-tagging" or labelling individuals as "communists", creating a climate of fear among young human rights defenders.[4]

In June, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression reported that the government's progress in implementing the recommendations following her January 2024 visit was "not enough to make a meaningful difference to the state of freedom of expression". She called on the government to end the practice of "red-tagging", decriminalize libel, amend the Anti-Terrorism Act 2020 and abolish the National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict.[5]

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

On 21 September, more than 200 individuals, including children, were arrested and detained by police in Manila during protests against corruption.[6] Police used excessive force against demonstrators.

Authorities condemned violence reportedly carried out by some protesters. Those arrested and detained alleged police committed human rights violations, including beatings, during their arrest and detention, and denied them access to their lawyers and families.[7] Police denied the allegations. Two individuals reportedly died during the protests: a 15-year-old boy who was stabbed by an individual claiming self-defence and a construction worker who was reportedly hit by a stray bullet.

The children were eventually released without charges, but more than 90 others faced charges including "sedition" and "conspiracy". Other charges, such as "illegal assembly" and "assault on persons in authority", were dismissed in November.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Killings of journalists continued with at least four killed during the year, including press freedom advocate and former politician Juan Dayang, human rights defender and former broadcaster Ali Macalintal,[8] and radio

broadcasters Erwin Segovia and Noel Bellen Samar. Police claimed they arrested a suspect for Segovia's killing. Investigations were ongoing for the three other cases, including Juan Dayang's killing for which police said a suspect had been identified.

Government authorities continued to use anti-terrorism laws to target development and humanitarian workers, journalists and activists. In January, two staff members of Paghidaet sa Kauswagan Development Group were arrested and charged with financing terrorism.[9] In March, the case was dismissed, and in April, a court rejected prosecutors' attempts to reverse this dismissal.

In July, the NGO consortium Community Empowerment Resources Network filed criminal and administrative complaints against prosecutors for their alleged negligence in filing terrorism financing charges against 27 individuals associated with the group.

Court proceedings continued for journalist Frenchie Mae Cumpio and development worker Marielle Domequil, detained for over five years on charges of illegal possession of firearms and terrorism financing, charges that civil society groups claimed were fabricated. In November, a court dismissed a murder charge against Cumpio.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

On 6 October, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) ordered a business process outsourcing company in Cebu province to stop its operations due to a lack of a disaster response plan. This followed a 6.9 magnitude earthquake that struck the province on 30 September and killed at least 75 people. Another company was ordered to implement corrections after a building inspection revealed occupational safety and health deficiencies. The DOLE said it would conduct more inspections after complaints from call centre employees. Workers' complaints included being forced to continue taking calls during the earthquake and being unable to leave their buildings due to deliberately blocked exits.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Research revealed government failure to adequately consult Indigenous Peoples and rural communities. Authorities failed to obtain Indigenous Peoples' consent for nickel mining projects that caused deforestation, metal contamination and health problems in these communities.[10]

In August and September, respectively, the Senate and Congress began hearings into allegations of corruption involving flood-control and related infrastructure projects. Both investigations revealed extortion, bribery and other forms of corruption involving high-level politicians, government officials and private contractors. The revelations sparked large-scale public protests.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

In February, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called on the government to take measures to protect economic, social and cultural rights, to adopt legislation to protect human rights defenders, and to investigate and prosecute all cases of corruption, among other recommendations.

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1. "Philippines: Former President Duterte's arrest a monumental step for justice", 11 March ↑
2. "Philippines: 'I have no reason to stay silent' – relative of 'war on drugs' victim tells of fight for justice", 24 September ↑
3. "Philippines: Duterte's appearance at ICC a symbolic moment for 'war on drugs' victims", 14 March ↑
4. *Philippines: Left to Their Own Devices: The Chilling Effects of Online Harassment on Young Human Rights Defenders in the Philippines*, 4 April ↑
5. "Philippines: Human rights in the Philippines: Oral Statement Item 3: Inter-active dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression: HRC59", 19 June ↑
6. "Philippines: Unnecessary and excessive use of force by PNP against protesters must be investigated", 23 September ↑
7. "Philippines: Testimony points to torture and other abuses by police as new protests loom", 24 November ↑
8. "Philippines: Deadly situation for journalists continues under Marcos presidency", 23 June ↑
9. "Philippines: End use of anti-terror laws to target development and human rights workers", 5 February ↑

10. *Philippines: What Do We Get in Return? How the Philippines Nickel Boom Harms Human Rights, 9 January* ↑

POLAND

Republic of Poland

Parliament passed a law threatening the rights of refugees and migrants on the Polish-Belarusian border, in particular by suspending the right to asylum. Environmental activists were convicted for peaceful acts of civil disobedience. The LGBTI community faced technology-facilitated gender-based violence. Access to abortion remained severely restricted. Poland's economy remained one of the most emission-intensive in the world, and reliance on imported oil and gas increased.

BACKGROUND

Presidential elections in June were won by Karol Nawrocki, who campaigned using anti-migrant rhetoric. In July, Prime Minister Donald Tusk's government conducted a restructure, abolishing the posts of Minister of Equality, Minister for Older Persons, and Minister for Civil Society.

In August, Poland notified the UN of its withdrawal from the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (the Ottawa Treaty), prohibiting the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel mines and requiring their destruction. Under the terms of the Convention, the withdrawal was due to take effect six months after notification, in February 2026.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In March, Poland introduced a 60-day suspension of people's right to submit applications for international protection at the country's border with Belarus, under a law adopted by parliament a month earlier. The suspension was repeatedly extended and remained in place throughout the year. The new powers effectively codified the carrying out of unlawful forced returns ("pushbacks") at the border. As such, they were incompatible with international law and the Polish constitution.[1]

Furthermore, the authorities continued to enforce an exclusionary "buffer zone" along the Polish-Belarusian border, banning unauthorized people including journalists and civil society monitors. Assisting migrants remained criminalized. In September, a group of activists known as the Five from Hajnówka were acquitted of "assisting in the illegal stay of foreigners", a charge carrying up to five years' imprisonment. They had been accused of enabling the illegal presence in Poland of people on the move by providing humanitarian aid to migrants who had crossed the border irregularly. The prosecutor's office announced its intention to appeal.

In June, a list of countries to which returns were not permitted was scrapped. The list had previously included countries such as Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Sudan.

IMPUNITY

In January, the government adopted a resolution declaring that it would ensure "free and safe" participation in the commemorations of the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp for "the highest representatives of the State of Israel." This occurred despite the ICC issuing arrest warrants in 2024 for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant on charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes in Gaza. Ultimately, neither attended the commemoration.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Environmental activists from the Last Generation movement continued to be convicted for peaceful acts of civil disobedience occurring in 2024. Several activists were sentenced to community service, arrested or fined, including for blocking a bridge and roads and for disrupting a concert.

In July, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered a precedent-setting judgment in the case of *Siedlecka v. Poland,* finding that the frequent practice of

prolonged detention within a police cordon violated the rights to liberty and security.

DISCRIMINATION

In March, parliament passed a law including disability, age, gender and sexual orientation as grounds for the criminal prosecution of hate crimes. However, the bill was not signed by the president, who referred it to the politically compromised Constitutional Tribunal. In September, the tribunal declared the bill to be unconstitutional.

Regardless, in March, the prosecutor general issued binding guidelines for the prosecution service on conducting proceedings in cases of hate crimes which included these new grounds.

In a landmark ruling issued in March, the Supreme Court decided that the process for gender recognition should be classified as non-litigious proceedings. This would eliminate the harmful requirement for applicants to sue their parents in order to amend their legal gender. Court proceedings were still necessary, however, in the continued absence of any specific law on legal gender recognition.

Poland's LGBTI community continued to experience a range of technology-facilitated gender-based violence on X. Although a digital services coordinator was appointed in May, Poland still failed to transpose into law the EU Digital Services Act, which placed obligations on platforms to identify and mitigate systemic risks to fundamental rights.[2]

In November, in a landmark judgment, the Court of Justice of the EU held that Poland must recognize a same-sex marriage lawfully concluded by its nationals in another EU country.

In December, a draft law proposing the introduction of a civil partnership for same-sex couples was submitted to parliament. Entitled On the Status of the Closest Person in a Relationship and the Shared Living Arrangements, the bill was more limited in scope than previous drafts.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Access to abortion care remained severely restricted. In November, the ECtHR delivered a judgment in the case of *A.R v. Poland*, finding that Poland had violated the right to a private and family life in the case of a pregnant woman who had travelled abroad to have an abortion.

In February, an appeal court referred the case of human rights defender Justyna Wydrzyńska back to a lower instance court on fair trial grounds. The activist faced a retrial for helping a pregnant woman to access abortion pills.

On 8 March, the Abortion Dream Team collective opened the AboTak Centre to provide information about safe abortion and support for those having an abortion. Anti-abortion protesters regularly gathered outside and, on several occasions, poured butyric acid – a strong smelling substance that can pose a health risk – near the centre's entrance. The protesters also used tactics that raised concerns about harassment and intimidation. These included displays of disturbing images and extremely high levels of noise, which affected AboTak Centre staff, users of the centre, passers-by and local residents.

In April, a criminal investigation was opened into the conduct of Dr Gizela Jagielska, who had provided a lawful late-term abortion. Dr Jagielska was subsequently subjected to physical and verbal attacks, in person and online.[3] In December, the case was dismissed by the prosecutor's office.

In July three doctors were found guilty of endangering the life of a woman from the town of Pszczyna. She had died in 2021 from sepsis after being denied medical care in a situation where an abortion may have saved her life. The judgment was not final and the doctors appealed the verdict.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

From July, a new social security benefit for widows and widowers came into force, enabling them to collect both their own and part of their late spouse's pensions. The government estimated that this would financially benefit some 2 million older

people. However, the benefit was available only to married widowed people, discriminating against unmarried couples and LGBTI+ people in the absence of marriage equality in Poland.

Poland had still not ratified the additional protocols to the ICESCR or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, through which individuals would be allowed to bring complaints about violation of their rights at the international level. In September, 14 organizations including Amnesty International called on the government to take this step.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The contribution of coal to electricity production dropped to below 50% for the first time. Nevertheless, Poland remained heavily dependent on fossil fuels, with 85% of its primary energy coming from coal, oil and gas. Dependence on imported oil and gas increased, with gas playing a growing role in the power sector. According to the thinktank Energy Forum Foundation, Poland's economy remained one of the most carbon-intensive in the world, both in terms of GDP and energy consumption.

The Ministry of Climate and Environment approved a new version of the draft National Energy and Climate Plan in July with updated targets extending to 2040. Among other issues, the plan was criticized for its unambitious renewable energy targets, which increased too slowly to match EU-wide goals.

In July, the European Commission launched infringement proceedings after Poland failed to fully transpose the EU Renewable Energy Directive, which formed part of Poland's legal obligations under EU energy governance.

1. *"Poland: Law 'suspending' asylum claims is a flagrant violation of international law and poses a serious threat to the rights of refugees and migrants", 1 May* ↑
2. *Poland: "A Thousand Cuts" - Technology-Facilitated Gender-Based Violence Against Poland's LGBTI community on X*, 1 September. ↑
3. "Poland: End investigation into conduct of doctor who provided a lawful late-term abortion", 28 August. ↑

PORTUGAL

Portuguese Republic

Investigations revealed new evidence of ill-treatment in prisons. Prosecutors pursued cases of alleged unlawful killings of racialized people by police. Authorities continued to place unlawful limitations on peaceful assemblies. Hate crimes were reportedly on the rise. Gender-based violence remained high and legal safeguards were insufficient. Access to abortion remained inadequate.

BACKGROUND

In May, the centre-right government coalition was re-elected. Chega, a party known for its anti-immigrant and anti-Roma rhetoric and positions, won 60 parliamentary seats, becoming the country's largest opposition party.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In July, an Ombudsman's report revealed evidence of ill-treatment in three out of 10 prisons visited during 2024.

Prosecutors investigated allegations that, in May, two people in prison in the Azores had been subjected to ill-treatment.

In October, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture expressed concern about persistent systemic failures in criminal investigations of torture allegations. It also noted the over-representation of foreign nationals in cases of ill-treatment.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

In July, two police officers were charged with "aggravated kidnapping" and "aggravated homicide", in connection with an attack against two Moroccan immigrants in Olhão, Algarve region, in March 2024. Both victims had been handcuffed at the time of the assault. One died as a result of his injuries.

The police officers were suspended pending trial.

In October, in Sintra, near the capital, Lisbon, the trial began of a police officer charged with the 2024 homicide of a Black chef, Odair Moniz, in the neighbourhood of Cova da Moura, following a police chase. A second investigation was opened against two police officers for giving false testimonies on the case.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Activists reported being charged for failing to comply with mandatory notification requirements prior to holding demonstrations. The government took no action to review the decades-old legislation regulating freedom of peaceful assembly, which breached international standards.

In June, following several appeals, a court confirmed the conviction of activist Francisco Pedro on charges of "qualified disobedience" and fined him EUR 300 for failing to notify the authorities about a peaceful protest against the construction of a new airport in Lisbon in 2019.

DISCRIMINATION

In June, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) expressed concern about gaps in the legal framework to combat hate crimes and insufficient prosecutions, leading to a perception of impunity. Data obtained in July from the Attorney General's Office showed that only 19 of 1,020 investigations into alleged hate-related crimes between 2019 and 2024 had resulted in indictments.

In October, parliament began discussing a bill to restrict the use of face coverings in public places, which risked violating the rights to freedom of expression, religion, peaceful assembly and privacy.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

In May, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) identified a number of barriers to protection for victims. These included lenient sanctions and ineffective restraining orders.

In July, parliament reclassified rape as a public crime, allowing authorities to investigate cases even where victims had not filed a complaint or reported the case to the police.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Access to abortion remained unequal across the country. Large numbers of medical professionals refused to provide the procedure on conscience grounds, with the gravest restrictions experienced by people in the Azores islands and the Alentejo region. Data released by the Spanish Ministry of Health in July showed that 2,525 people living in Portugal had sought abortion care in Spain between 2019 and 2023, often due to the 10-week legal limit in Portugal.[1]

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In September, parliament passed legislation restricting family reunification rights for migrants and asylum seekers.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In July and August, wildfires devastated the north-central region causing four deaths. Portugal had the highest "burned area" percentage (3.02%) of any EU country in 2025.

In August, the Aarhus Convention Committee found that Portugal had violated the right to access to information in a "deliberate and unfounded manner" in its environmental assessment process for the Barroso lithium mine in Boticas, north-eastern Portugal.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

In July, at least 50 families were forcibly evicted, with many rendered homeless, following demolitions in neighbourhoods near Lisbon.

In September, the government implemented measures to tackle affordable housing shortages. However, the lowering of taxes for landlords charging rents of up to EUR 2,300 per month led to concerns that this would trigger rent increases up to that limit.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

The government acknowledged that at least three F-35 fighter jets, sold to Israel by the USA, were authorized to stop over at the Lajes Air Base in the Azores in April. The stopover facilitated the transfer of arms to Israel in violation of Portugal's obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and international humanitarian law.

1. *An Option Without Choice: Report on Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy in Portugal*, June ↑

PUERTO RICO

Commonwealth of Puerto Rico

In the context of immigration control operations that were being carried out, human rights organizations denounced arbitrary and discriminatory detention of people from Black and impoverished communities. The Legislative Assembly approved bills that violated the rights of LGBTI people. Legislation was also approved restricting sexual and reproductive rights and access to public information.

BACKGROUND

Power outages were frequent, as were massive blackouts, affecting access to health and water for millions of people.

In November, the federal Department of Justice requested the death penalty for Edwin Yadiel Flores Tavárez. Although prohibited at the state level, it could still be applied in cases under federal jurisdiction.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Implementation of US president Donald Trump's immigration policy led to an increase in raids and arrests carried out by US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents, using racial profiling based on accent and physical appearance. As of 26 November, 1,431 migrants had been detained, according to data published on social media by the US Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) in San Juan. These arrests were sometimes carried out without a warrant, and the handing over of administrative documents, such as a driver's licence, was used as a means to obtain information by deception. The government collaborated with US federal agencies by providing this type of information on people with irregular migratory status.

Puerto Rico lacked immigration detention centres, so those arrested were taken to temporary ICE facilities on the island and subsequently transferred out of Puerto Rico; this made it difficult for them to communicate with local legal professionals and limited their access to adequate legal representation.

A bill introduced in the House of Representatives at the request of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) that seeks to establish safe spaces for migrant communities was still pending approval at the end of the year.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In February, the Senate approved Bill 297, requiring written consent from a parent or legal guardian for girls under the age of 16 to access abortion services. This requirement did not apply when pregnancy was the result of sexual violence by the father or legal guardian.

In June, the secretary of justice announced that steps would be taken to prosecute clinics or individuals performing abortions outside the limits permitted by law.

In August, Puerto Rico's governor signed Senate Bill 2 into law, enabling parents and legal guardians of pupils in the public education system to object to curricular content relating to sex and emotional education.

In December, the governor also signed into law Senate Bill 504, which recognized the legal status of an "unborn child", despite warnings from a group of doctors and other health professionals that the bill posed risks to the lives of pregnant people and violated their autonomy.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In April, the government signed the Fundamental Right to Religious Freedom Act, seen by human rights defenders as a means to enable discrimination, especially against LGBTI people, under the guise of religious freedom.

In May, the Federal District Court of Puerto Rico ordered the Demographic Registry to include the "X" marker as a third gender identity option on birth certificates. In June, the US First Circuit Court of Appeals initially accepted the government's request to stay that order.

In July, the government signed Law 63-2025, prohibiting gender-affirming health care for people under the age of 21.

In October, the House of Representatives approved Bill 165 to ban inclusive bathrooms in government facilities, arguing, without evidence, that this would prevent sexual violence against women.

By the end of the year, four bills under consideration in the House of Representatives that sought to further restrict the rights of LGBTI people were still pending approval.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

According to the Gender Equity Observatory, 63 feminicides or alleged feminicides had been reported in the year. In October, Puerto Rico's Court of Appeals declared an article of the Penal Code relating to this type of homicide unconstitutional, on grounds that it violated due process and the presumption of innocence.

According to human rights organizations, migrant women were more exposed to domestic violence, exploitation and abuse due to fear of being deported after filing a report, in light of new immigration policies. ICE refused to release sex or gender disaggregated data on detainees, despite this being public information.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

According to the organization *Kilómetro 0*, at least 13 people died in Puerto Rico at the hands of the police, four of them involving cases of emotional crisis associated with mental health problems. In order to determine whether excessive force had been applied, the police commissioner in March ordered an administrative investigation following an incident where an electric stun gun had been used during a woman's arrest.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Law 114-2025, amending the Demographic Registry Law, was approved in September. This restricted access to public information, including birth, marriage and death certificates, and created further obstacles to the right of access to information, particularly for the scientific community. Human rights organizations warned that the law made it more difficult to obtain the information required for research and public policy development.

In December, the governor signed Bill 63 into law, which amends the Transparency and Expedited Procedure for Access to Public Information Act and significantly extends the response times of government agencies, affecting accountability for government actions and decisions.

QATAR

State of Qatar

Migrant workers remained vulnerable to labour abuses and exploitation despite recent reforms. Freedom of expression and peaceful assembly continued to be tightly restricted. Religious minorities, women, children and LGBTI people continued to face discrimination in law and practice. Qatar remained a leading exporter of liquefied natural gas.

BACKGROUND

In March the UN Human Rights Council adopted the results of Qatar's UPR. Qatar received 317 recommendations of which it accepted 245 and took note of the remaining 72. The latter included recommendations related to labour rights and migrant worker protection.

In September, Israel conducted an air strike on Qatar's capital, Doha, targeting the Hamas negotiating team, killing six men including Hamas members and a Qatari official.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Despite recent legal reforms, migrant workers continued to face labour abuses, including an exploitative *kafala* sponsorship system, restrictions on freedom of assembly, inadequate access to justice and remedy, and excessive powers of employers to control workers' entry, residency and ability to change jobs.

The monthly minimum wage of QAR 1,000 (USD 275), introduced in 2021, had yet to be adjusted to rising living costs, leaving it insufficient for migrant workers to meet living costs.

Domestic workers, primarily women, continued to face harsh working conditions and abuses, including verbal, physical and sexual assault, with weak protections as they remained excluded from the labour law.

Authorities failed to conduct meaningful investigations into the deaths of migrant workers, denying their families accountability and compensation. Qatar and the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA), failed to ensure justice or compensation for thousands of workers for abuses linked to the 2022 World Cup, including deaths, injuries and unpaid wages.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Authorities maintained tight restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

In March, Qatari authorities arrested 20 Filipino nationals, including three children, for participating in a protest supporting former Filipino president Rodrigo Duterte, who was on trial at the ICC for crimes against humanity. The authorities accused them of holding an unauthorized political demonstration but released the children shortly afterwards and the adults one week later. All charges were dropped.

In August the government amended the cybercrime law, criminalizing the online publication or circulation of images and videos of individuals in public spaces without their consent. Although the authorities presented the amendment as a step to protect privacy, its provisions remained vague and posed a serious threat to freedom of expression and independent journalism.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

In March, Abdullah Ibhais, former media manager for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, was released from prison after serving his full three-year sentence. He had been arrested in 2019 on trumped-up bribery charges after raising concerns about the conditions faced by migrant workers on World Cup construction sites.

In April the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found the detention of Tayeb Benabderrahmane, a French-Algerian former adviser to Qatar's National Human Rights Committee, to be arbitrary. He had been arrested in January 2020 and held for 307 days without access to legal counsel, in violation of fair trial guarantees. Authorities accused him of "intelligence with a foreign power and espionage".

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Members of Qatar's Baha'i community continued to face systemic discrimination and restrictions on their religious freedoms.

In April, 71-year-old Remy Rowhani, the chairman of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is, was re-arrested in relation to posts on the Baha'i community's social media accounts. He was sentenced in August to five years in prison for "promot[ing] a doctrine or ideology that casts doubt on the foundations and teachings of Islam". On 30 September the Court of Appeal acquitted Remy Rowhani, leading to his release from prison.

WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice, notably through a male guardianship system that restricted their rights to marry, work, travel (if under the age of 25) and access reproductive healthcare. Qatari women remained unable to pass their

nationalities to their children or foreign spouses.

The Penal Code still lacked specific provisions criminalizing gender-based violence, including within the family, leaving women inadequately protected.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

In June the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child criticized Qatar's discriminatory nationality and birth registration laws and its punitive juvenile justice system, calling for reforms to guarantee equal nationality rights, universal birth registration, and stronger safeguards for children in conflict with the law.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Legislation continued to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations, making it punishable with imprisonment, and provided no legal protections against discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Qatar remained one of the world's leading exporters of liquefied natural gas, contributing significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Qatar took steps to address its climate impact, including by building new solar power plants and publishing a national plan to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 25% by 2030. However, it failed to commit to a net zero target.

ROMANIA

Romania

Roma people continued to face systemic exclusion and discrimination. LGBTI people's rights remained limited. Xenophobic rhetoric against migrants intensified. Journalists and NGOs faced harassment and legal threats. Reports of domestic violence increased. Reproductive rights and access to abortion were eroded. Romania advanced its 2030 fossil-free fuel strategy, but environmental activists continued to face the threat of lawsuits.

BACKGROUND

Following the Constitutional Court's annulment of the November 2024 presidential vote, new elections were held in May. In January, the Council of Europe's Venice Commission criticized the court's unilateral annulment as lacking legal basis, evidence, or due process. It called for urgent legislative reforms and a possible reversal of the decision to restore democratic legitimacy and safeguard future electoral integrity.

The government's austerity measures—wage and pension freezes, benefit cuts and hiring limits—sparked criticism. NGOs, unions and students argued that they disproportionately affected vulnerable groups.

DISCRIMINATION

A government plan to merge the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) with the office of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) triggered concerns. Civil society organizations warned that such a merger would breach EU anti-discrimination rules, weaken mandates and limit victims' access to justice. They called for meaningful consultation and the strengthening of the CNCD's independence.

Roma

Roma people continued to face police violence, racial profiling, and discrimination in education and housing. A 2025 study by NGOs on the use of EU funds in six countries including Romania found that, in some cases, the funds allocated amplified the segregation and marginalization of Roma communities. The report highlighted several funding cases where Roma pupils were segregated into separate classes or buildings within schools, and where Roma families were accommodated in social housing units built in isolated, low-quality container-type settlements.

LGBTI people

Despite growing public support, LGBTI people's rights remained restricted, with

progress towards civil partnership legislation stalled. ILGA-Europe, an LGBTI-rights NGO, ranked Romania last among EU states in relation to the legal and policy landscape for LGBTI people. Around 30,000 people participated in the largest-ever Pride march in the capital, Bucharest, celebrating LGBTI visibility and advocating for civil partnerships, transgender healthcare and legal protections. A small counter-protest also took place, promoting "traditional family values" and opposing same-sex marriage.

Migrants

Authorities in Bucharest launched a public consultation on a new Migrant Inclusion Strategy amid a sharp rise in migrant numbers in the city. However, xenophobic rhetoric intensified, especially in the context of anti-rights protests and online hatred campaigns. Civil society called on the CNCD to act pre-emptively to protect migrants from intimidation and hate speech.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

The US State Department reported that journalists and NGOs faced restricted access to public information as well as frequent litigation, harassment and legal threats, including strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs). State-owned energy company Romgaz briefly sought Greenpeace Romania's dissolution after it opposed the company's Black Sea gas exploitation project.

Despite civil society and EU pressure, Romania had not adopted anti-SLAPP laws by year's end. Drafts remained under debate, with concerns raised over their limited scope and enforcement.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Eurostat data from June placed Romania fourth among EU countries for levels of violence against women. Reports increased, with over 138,000 domestic violence cases and 59 femicides recorded by the year's end.

Some legislative strides were made. The "Romania Without Violence" law adopted in June doubled assault penalties and strengthened restraining orders. Parliament and the Ministry of Justice made progress towards adopting broader reforms to protect women from violence and launched a consultation on proposals to increase penalties for aggravated femicide. These followed protests demanding stronger measures against violence against women.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

NGOs denounced increasing restrictions on sexual and reproductive rights in the country, including the right to access abortion and contraception. Barriers included conscience-based refusals of care by doctors and entire hospitals, as well as anti-abortion activism including the spreading of misinformation, which disproportionately affected rural and marginalized women.[1]

A bill submitted in September by two parliamentarians aimed to further restrict and potentially criminalize abortion in Romania. The bill provoked widespread condemnation from civil society and NGOs, who warned that it would increase demand for unsafe abortions and violate international standards.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Romania advanced its 2030 fossil-free fuel strategy, with increased solar capacity and expanded battery storage. Challenges remained, however, particularly in relation to coal plant closures which were delayed due to lack of progress in developing replacement projects.

Environmental activism remained robust, but activists continued to face pressure and the threat of SLAPP-type lawsuits. Civil society groups called for stronger legal and institutional protection for environmental defenders.

1. *When Rights Aren't Real for All: the Struggle for Abortion Access in Europe*, 6 November ↑

RUSSIA

Russian Federation

Russia continued its war of aggression against Ukraine. Restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association intensified. Censorship of the internet escalated. Violations of the right to freedom of religion and belief continued. Legislation was weaponized to clamp down on dissenters. Arbitrary detentions on fabricated charges, coupled with a lack of independent and impartial investigations and unfair trials, remained a hallmark of the law enforcement and justice systems. Torture and other ill-treatment was endemic and perpetrated with near total impunity. Detainees were held in inhuman or degrading conditions. Restrictive requirements kept most migrant children from enrolling in school. The LGBTI community continued to be outlawed and queer culture supressed. Domestic violence remained absent from the legislative agenda. More regional authorities introduced barriers to abortion. Economic considerations prevailed over obligations to take action on climate change.

BACKGROUND

The war of aggression against Ukraine continued with Russia occupying more Ukrainian territories and committing further violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes and other crimes under international law (see Ukraine entry).

In April, Russian forces recaptured parts of Kursk region occupied by Ukrainian forces since August 2024.

Ukraine expanded attacks on military and other targets inside Russia, including oil and gas production and export facilities, triggering local fuel shortages. A number of such attacks resulted in casualties and damaged civilian infrastructure.

The government raised some taxes and took other steps to replenish the wartime budget. Economic growth slowed, inflation was high and the cost of living continued to increase.

Russia still refused to cooperate with the mandate of the UN Special Rapporteur on Russia.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Gross human rights abuses continued against Ukrainian prisoners, both military and civilian, who were transferred to Russia. These violations included enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and unfair trials. Some of these acts amounted to war crimes and crimes against humanity.[1]

An OSCE report presented in September documented "widespread and systematic torture and ill-treatment" of Ukrainian prisoners of war throughout their captivity, as well as other human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions on the battlefield and in detention.

Following the escalating Russian attacks on Ukraine's energy infrastructure, from September Ukraine launched strikes on Russian energy facilities, causing temporary local power blackouts in several regions (see Ukraine entry).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Freedom of expression remained severely restricted. People opposing the war against Ukraine, criticizing government policies and individual officials, or expressing other dissenting views faced severe penalties under a variety of administrative and criminal proceedings.

In March, the Supreme Court upheld the 12-year prison sentence on transgender activist Mark Kislitsyn, who had transferred RUB 865 (approximately USD 10) to a Ukrainian bank account as a peaceful protest against Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The authorities claimed that the money was sent "for the needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces".[2]

In April, a court in St Petersburg sentenced former medical student Daria Kozyreva to 32 months' imprisonment. The

charges were "discrediting" the Armed Forces for posting a blog criticizing Russia's war in Ukraine, giving an interview to the news organization RFE/RL and affixing a quote from a poem by renowned Ukrainian poet Taras Shevchenko to his monument in St Petersburg.

In July, the Supreme Court designated the non-existent "International Movement of Satanists" as an "extremist" organization and banned it. The hearing took place behind closed doors, without any representatives of the alleged group present. In November, a court in St Petersburg handed down a 12-day sentence of administrative detention for possession of a book and a glass that allegedly featured symbols connected with the banned movement.

From September, "deliberately searching the internet for extremist materials" and advertising virtual private networks (VPNs) became an administrative offence punishable by a fine. The first such fine was issued in December.

In October, three members of the band Stoptime were arrested for their street performances and sentenced to between 12 and 13 days' administrative detention. Immediately after the first administrative punishment expired, all three musicians were given a further 13 days' detention. When this expired, two of the band members – the singer and the guitarist – were then immediately detained for another 13 days. The singer was also fined for "discrediting" the Armed Forces for performing songs banned by the authorities. When finally released, the singer and the guitarist left the country. Other street musicians who performed in support of them were also given administrative detention.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

Censorship permeated public life. References to various prohibited topics were banned, as were music, books and films by authors designated as "foreign agents" or arbitrarily listed as "terrorists and extremists".

The authorities continued their efforts to build a "sovereign internet" by blocking access to websites, internet platforms and social media, and slowing down internet traffic.

From August, the media regulator Roskomnadzor imposed restrictions on WhatsApp and Telegram, the two platforms widely used for confidential communications, purportedly as a defence against scammers. Users were being forced to switch to the Russian-created platform MAX, prompting privacy concerns.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The authorities persisted in refusing to authorize protests, dispersing and prosecuting peaceful protesters. Despite the clampdown, protests continued across Russia, albeit on a small scale and in relation to locally relevant issues.

In the Republic of Altay, hundreds of people took part in a series of peaceful protests against the local governor. At least eight protesters were subjected to administrative detention.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The authorities continued to weaponize legislation, including on "foreign agents" and "undesirable organizations", to clamp down on civil society.

During the year, a further 219 organizations, media outlets and individuals were designated as "foreign agents". Prosecution under administrative and criminal law for "evading the obligations of a foreign agent" increased, with many cases being heard in the absence of the defendants.

Legislative amendments enacted in September prohibited organizations deemed "foreign agents" from conducting any educational or teaching activities, cut them off the municipal support and benefits extended to "socially-oriented NGOs" and established more burdensome rules.

Amendments to the Criminal Code introduced in October allowed authorities to bring a criminal prosecution for repeated violation of the "foreign agents" legislation after just one administrative penalty, not two as previously.

Ninety-five more organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, were designated as "undesirable".

In May, a Moscow court sentenced Grigory Melkonyants, co-chair of the election watchdog Golos, to five years' imprisonment on charges of "organizing the activities of an 'undesirable' organization" and banned him from engaging in any civic activity for nine years.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Violations of the right to freedom of religion and belief continued.

Jehovah's Witnesses continued to be arbitrarily prosecuted under "extremism" charges. As of October, at least 157 people were imprisoned, including those from Russia-occupied Ukraine.

As of November, at least 10 Baptist communities were banned from meeting unless they had registered officially and notified the authorities of their activities.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

There was a rise in criminal prosecutions on politically motivated charges, including extremism, terrorism, treason, espionage and "confidential cooperation with a foreign state, foreign or international organization". Repressive moves against opposition politicians within and outside Russia, as well as the movements they represented, opened a pathway to mass repressions against their associates.

In March, a military court in St Petersburg sentenced Aleksander Skobov to 16 years' imprisonment on terrorism charges for his social media posts and participation in a conference organized by the Free Russia Forum in Lithuania. The organization, already labelled "undesirable", was subsequently designated as "terrorist" in August.

In October, prominent Yabloko party member Maksim Kruglov was detained on charges of "disseminating fake news about the Armed Forces" for his social media posts and placed on the register of "terrorists and extremists". The investigation was ongoing at the end of the year. Several other prominent Yabloko members were arbitrarily placed in detention, fined or convicted.[3]

Also in October, the Federal Security Service (FSB) charged in their absence 23 members of the Anti-War Committee, established in exile by prominent figures to oppose Russia's war of aggression. They were accused of "organizing a terrorist community" and planning the "violent seizure of power" – offences that carried a potential life sentence.

In November, the Supreme Court designated the US-registered Anti-Corruption Foundation (ACF), founded by colleagues of the deceased prisoner of conscience Aleksei Navalny, as a "terrorist organization".

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Arbitrary detentions on fabricated charges remained a hallmark of the law enforcement system. Investigations were conducted with procedural violations; trials, including in politically motivated cases, were unfair.

In January, three of Aleksei Navalny's lawyers – Vadim Kobzev, Aleksei Liptser and Igor Sergunin – were sentenced to up to five-and-a-half years' imprisonment. They were charged with "participation in an extremist community" for allegedly helping their client communicate with his colleagues outside prison.

In March, journalist Maria Ponomarenko, serving a six-year sentence for her anti-war social media posts, was sentenced to 22 months' imprisonment under new charges of "disrupting the work of a penal colony". Another case was brought against her on the same charge in August.

Prosecution of Aleksei Navalny's supporters ramped up. In April, four journalists – Antonina Favorskaya, Sergei Karelin, Konstantin Gabov and Artem Krieger – were sentenced to five years' imprisonment for allegedly cooperating with the ACF (see above). As of December, overall more than 100 cases had been initiated against people who had donated to the ACF.

In May, human rights lawyer Maria Bontsler was arbitrarily arrested and detained on charges of "confidential cooperation with

a foreign state". At a court hearing in August, her lawyer stated that the case had been initiated by an FSB officer who wanted her to implicate another lawyer, and that evidence in her case had been falsified.

In July, a military court in Moscow sentenced prominent writer Boris Akunin in his absence to 14 years' imprisonment on charges of "evading the obligations of a foreign agent" and "terrorism" for his support for Ukraine. In December, he was sentenced in his absence to a further year's imprisonment for failing to comply with foreign agent requirements.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Torture and other ill-treatment in custody remained endemic, as did impunity for perpetrators. Detainees were held in inhuman or degrading conditions and were often denied healthcare and contact with the outside world.

In June, law enforcement officials arrested dozens of ethnic Azeris in the city of Yekaterinburg, reportedly in connection with an investigation into past crimes. One of those detained described how they were all beaten and tortured with electric shocks for about an hour. Several people were hospitalized and two men died in custody.

Following transfer to a penal colony in the Altay Kraii in July, imprisoned dissenter Aleksei Gorinov was arbitrarily placed in a punishment-isolation cell (SHIZO) and held there for over two months in inhuman and degrading conditions. In September, he was arbitrarily placed in a strict-regime isolation cell for two months before being transferred back to SHIZO in November.

The family of human rights defender Bakhrom Khamroev, sentenced in 2023 to more than 13 years' imprisonment on fabricated "terrorism" charges, reported that he had been arbitrarily placed in a punishment cell, ill-treated and denied adequate medical care. In August, he was transferred to a highest security penal colony in the far north, thousands of kilometres from his family home.

Activist Mikhail Krieger, serving a seven-year sentence for criticizing the authorities on social media, spent almost 50 days on hunger strike in protest against ill-treatment, including arbitrary placement in a punishment cell.

In September, Russia officially withdrew from the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

IMPUNITY

Despite thousands of appeals from the public, there was no progress in the investigation into the 2023 abduction and suspected "honour killing" of a young Chechen woman, Seda Suleimanova. Instead, her friend Elena Patyeva, who had been campaigning for justice since Seda Suleimanova's disappearance, was repeatedly detained during the year and served a 10-day term of administrative detention for holding single-person pickets.

The independent media outlet Verstka reported widespread financial extortion, extrajudicial executions, torture and other ill-treatment within Russian military forces in Ukraine, perpetrated with near-total impunity primarily by senior officers.

In September, the ACF alleged that opposition leader Aleksei Navalny's 2024 death in prison had resulted from poisoning, citing test results from two unidentified foreign forensic laboratories and photographs from his cell. The allegations were not subject to any official inquiry.

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

In April, the authorities made Russian language tests mandatory for migrant children and required proof of legal entry into the country for both them and their parents as conditions for school enrolment. In September, education regulator Rosobrnadzor reported that over 87% of children from migrant families had failed to meet the enrolment requirements.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Authorities continued to criminalize the expression of LGBTI identity and suppress queer culture. Individuals were arbitrarily targeted under administrative and criminal

law for "LGBT propaganda" and "extremism". Raids on LGBTI-friendly venues continued. Bookshops, publishing houses, media and online cinemas faced censorship and had to take cultural works out of circulation, redact them or face fines.

In November, in a closed trial, a court in Moscow posthumously found Andrey Kotov, owner of the tourist company Men Travel, guilty of participating in an "extremist organization – LGBT movement" and using minors to distribute pornography. He had been arrested in November 2024 and complained of torture and other ill-treatment during his arrest and detention. The following month, his lawyer was informed that Andrey Kotov had taken his own life.

In May, three book publishers were arrested in Moscow and placed under house arrest on extremism-related charges over alleged "LGBT propaganda" in books published by affiliated printing houses.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Although polls showed strong public backing for the introduction of legislation combatting domestic violence, lawmakers failed to act, deprioritizing even modest reform efforts.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Regional authorities continued to introduce barriers to abortion, including financial incentives for anti-abortion measures. Service providers faced growing pressure and, in some cases, unofficial directives from the authorities prohibiting the procedure. Pregnant women seeking an abortion reported being coerced into continuing the pregnancy. Some had to travel to a clinic in another region to get an abortion. As of May, authorities in at least eight regions had introduced a one-off payment to pregnant minors, reportedly to meet birthrate targets. Calls to prohibit "coercing an abortion" at the federal level grew increasingly vocal.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In October, the NGO Greenpeace noted that Russia had entrenched itself in a "war economy, running on fossil fuels and propaganda", causing domestic environmental devastation and impacting global sustainability. The background to this was "the dramatic escalation of repression against civil society… [that] radically changed the state of environmentalism in Russia".

Russia submitted its updated NDC in September, although experts from the Climate Change Performance Index noted that its new emissions target was actually higher than current emissions levels. The Climate Action Tracker rated Russia's overall climate policies, targets and action as "critically insufficient" to meet the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C goal.

1. "Russia/Ukraine: Ill-treatment of Ukrainians in Russian captivity amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity", 4 March ↑
2. "Russia: Release transgender activist Mark Kislitsyn", 29 August ↑
3. "Russia: Authorities step up criminal reprisals against anti-war Yabloko party", 5 December ↑

RWANDA

Republic of Rwanda

Forced evictions associated with urban development projects in the capital disproportionately affected low-income and marginalized populations. Labour rights protections were limited, and structural barriers impeded trade union activity. Civic space remained severely restricted and political opposition members faced unfair prosecution. A bilateral agreement was made that allowed the US to deport third-country nationals to Rwanda. Efforts to prosecute crimes related to the 1994 genocide continued through domestic judicial proceedings and international cooperation, resulting in an extradition and a conviction.

BACKGROUND

The UN Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo concluded that Rwanda had provided "critical" support to

the March 23 Movement (M23), an armed group operating in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). M23's operations had displaced hundreds of thousands of people and caused significant loss of life.

In February, a European Parliament resolution threatened to suspend cooperation with Rwanda unless it ceased its interference in the DRC conflict and stopped exporting minerals from M23-controlled areas. Meanwhile, UN Security Council Resolution 2773 called on Rwanda to cease its support for M23 and withdraw its troops from the DRC. On 4 December a peace agreement was formalized when the DRC and Rwandan presidents signed the Washington Accords that reinforced previous commitments to end the fighting, which, however, continued (see Democratic Republic of the Congo entry).

FORCED EVICTIONS

Large-scale urban development in the capital, Kigali, progressed rapidly. In May, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty expressed serious concerns about forced evictions and relocations in Kigali's informal settlements and areas designated as being at high risk of floods or landslides. Many residents reported receiving only a few days' notice before demolitions of their homes were carried out without prior consultation, compensation, provision of alternative housing, or meaningful opportunities to challenge decisions. These practices disproportionately affected low-income households and marginalized groups. They raised concerns that some relocations, justified on safety grounds, may in fact have served "commercial or aesthetic interests", thereby exacerbating inequality.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

Labour rights, including the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, remained restricted in practice due to the broader limitations on civic space. UN bodies raised concerns about limitations imposed on trade unions that affected their ability to organize, as well as the inadequate enforcement of labour protections.

According to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which reviewed Rwanda's fifth periodic report in February, trade union rights were restricted by burdensome requirements that hindered the ability of workers to become trade union representatives, lengthy registration timelines for forming trade unions, and the obligation to submit to compulsory arbitration or mediation before engaging in collective bargaining or strike action. Such restrictions significantly impeded the right to freedom of association within the labour movement.

In a statement following his May visit to Rwanda, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty said that despite the country's strong commitments to job creation, structural challenges undermined labour rights protections, including the lack of an adequate minimum wage, high levels of informal employment, insufficient enforcement mechanisms for labour regulation and the persistent use of child labour. He emphasized the need to strengthen protections for workers through increased labour inspections and by creating an environment to enable trade unions.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

Civic space remained severely restricted, with authorities continuing to suppress dissenting voices across political, civil society and labour sectors. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (see above) urged Rwanda to strengthen protections for human rights defenders, including by simplifying NGO registration procedures.

The Committee said that the National Human Rights Commission (an official body) enjoyed limited independence, which further weakened accountability mechanisms. The selection process for its members was overseen by a presidential-appointed committee, and commissioners were obliged to obtain clearance from the Prime Minister's Office before undertaking official travel, undermining compliance with the Paris Principles (minimum standards that national human rights institutions must meet to be deemed credible and effective).

On 19 June, Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza was arrested at her home in Kigali by the Rwanda Investigations Bureau (RIB). The RIB said the arrest had been requested by the public prosecutor, in connection with a long-running case involving nine people, most of them members of her unregistered Development and Liberty for All (DALFA-Umurinzi) party. They had been arrested in 2021 and charged with "forming or joining a criminal organization" and "inciting public disorder". The authorities charged Victoire Ingabire Umuhoza in connection with allegations that she participated in or guided the group's alleged activities. She denied the charges.

There were concerns that the case, which was emblematic of a pattern of political repression, lacked any credible legal basis and was a means to criminalize peaceful political opposition.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In August, Rwanda entered a bilateral agreement with the US government to, according to Rwandan officials, accept up to 250 migrants and asylum seekers facing deportation from the USA. By the end of August, Rwanda said it had received seven people under the scheme. As with previous agreements with Israel and the UK, this arrangement risked violations of the UN Refugee Convention, particularly the prohibition on refoulement, given Rwanda's human rights record and deficiencies in its asylum system. The country had not demonstrated an ability to ensure fair procedures, meaningful appeals, and adequate protection for individuals forcibly transferred from another jurisdiction.

In June, Rwanda launched its Refugee Sustainable Graduation Strategy (2025–2030), which aimed to enable refugee households to transition from long-term aid dependence to self-reliance. It aimed to benefit 50% of eligible refugee families by 2030. The strategy prioritized expanding access to education, vocational skills and employment, strengthening livelihood opportunities through private-sector integration, and improving social protection systems to help refugees withstand economic shocks.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Rwanda continued to pursue justice and accountability for the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi population, including through domestic prosecutions and extradition requests to other countries.

In May, French judicial authorities announced they were closing the investigation into Agathe Habyarimana – the widow of Rwanda's former president Juvénal Habyarimana – who had been accused of complicity in the genocide.

In August, François Gasana, who was arrested in Norway in 2022, was extradited to Rwanda where he faced trial on charges of participating in the genocide, including murdering a child and inciting killings. He had been convicted in Rwanda in his absence in 2007 for his role in the genocide.

In November, Germain Musonera, a former ruling party parliamentary candidate, was sentenced by the Kiyumba Primary Court in Rwanda to 20 years in prison for complicity in the genocide.

SAUDI ARABIA

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia executed the highest number of people on record in any given year. People were put to death for a wide range of crimes, including drug-related offences often involving foreign nationals. At least two men were executed for crimes allegedly committed when they were children. Despite a series of releases of individuals arrested for exercising their right to freedom of expression, authorities continued to severely restrict freedom of expression and association, with critics and human rights defenders facing long prison terms, grossly unfair trials, and arbitrary travel bans including for those recently released from detention. Migrant workers, including

domestic workers, remained bound by the *kafala* (sponsorship) system and continued to face abuse, exploitation and mass deportations. Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice. Saudi Arabia failed to take adequate measures to realize the right to a healthy environment.

BACKGROUND

Saudi authorities continued to promote their flagship Vision 2030 programme aimed at diversifying Saudi Arabia's economy, fostering a "vibrant" society and positioning the Kingdom as a global leader. Saudi Arabia invested in cultural and entertainment events and prepared to host Expo 2030 and the FIFA World Cup in 2034.

The Ministry of the Interior and its General Directorate of Narcotics Control made regular announcements of drug seizures as part of an ongoing campaign to combat drugs.

In January, Interpol announced plans to open a regional office in Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia continued to play a prominent regional and international role and hosted high-level diplomatic meetings during the year, including US-Russian talks on ending the war in Ukraine. In May, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced that Saudi Arabia had signed deals worth more than USD 300 billion with the USA, including a USD 142 billion weapons package.

DEATH PENALTY

Saudi Arabia executed the highest number of people on record in any given year. It executed people for a wide range of crimes, particularly drug-related offences, as well as "terrorism"-related offences.

As in previous years, most of those executed for drug-related offences were foreign nationals, particularly people from Somalia, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Egypt and Afghanistan. Foreign nationals on death row faced severe violations of their right to a fair trial, including lack of access to legal representation, inadequate consular support, and no access to effective interpretation. In some cases, they were subjected to torture or other ill-treatment during pretrial detention to extract "confessions" of guilt.

Saudi judges continued to issue death sentences for *ta'zir* (discretionary) offences – offences where no specific penalty is mandated in law – contradicting official claims that use of the death penalty for discretionary offences had been limited. Executions on the basis of *ta'zir* accounted for at least 47.5% of all reported executions between January 2014 and June 2025. On 16 December, Saudi authorities executed Egyptian fisherman Essam Ahmed after a grossly unfair trial for non-violent, drug-related offences. The judge imposed a *ta'zir* death sentence despite the discretion he had to choose another punishment. Many others remained at imminent risk of execution for non-violent, drug-related offences.

Shia people in Saudi Arabia have long faced discrimination and their peaceful dissent has often been prosecuted as "terrorism". Authorities continued to execute an alarmingly high number of people belonging to the Shia minority, including those who engaged in dissent in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province. While the Shia community comprised an estimated 10-12% of the total Saudi population, Shia people accounted for around 42% of "terrorism"-related executions in the period between January 2014 and June 2025.

Saudi authorities executed two men – Jalal Labbad on 21 August and Abdullah al-Derazi on 20 October – for crimes allegedly committed when they were under 18 years of age.[1] The Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) also retried Yusuf al-Manasif, Jawad Qureiris and Hassan al-Faraj and re-sentenced them to death for crimes allegedly committed when they were children. Other individuals who were under 18 at the time of their alleged crimes remained on death row, some at imminent risk of execution.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Critics and human rights defenders continued to be subjected to lengthy prison sentences, unfair trials and travel bans.

In February, UN officials acknowledged that a recording of a panel discussion

featuring human rights organizations at the Internet Governance Forum in the capital, Riyadh, had been edited by the UN to redact criticism by a human rights defender following a complaint from the Saudi government.

In April the Public Prosecution announced that it had begun implementing legal procedures against anyone "harming the reputation of tourism" in the kingdom under the Anti-Cybercrime Law and the Anti-Forgery Law.

On 21 August, the SCC appeals court re-sentenced fitness influencer and women's rights activist Manahel al-Otaibi to five years' imprisonment, reduced from 11 years, followed by a five-year travel ban. She was convicted in 2024 for her tweets in support of women's rights and for posting photos of herself without an *abaya* (traditional garment).

During the year, the authorities released dozens of people arrested for exercising their freedom of expression. In February, Salma al-Shehab, a Saudi PhD student who had been living in the UK, was released after serving four years of a 27-year prison sentence following an unfair trial for publishing tweets in support of women's rights. The same month, teacher Asaad bin Nasser al-Ghamdi, who was initially sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for social media posts criticizing the government's Vision 2030 programme, was released after two years. In June, Dutch-Yemeni national Fahd Ezzi Mohammed Ramadhan was released after 18 months in detention without charge.

Travel bans

Many released prisoners remained subject to lengthy travel bans and measures restricting their freedom of expression. They included Abdulaziz al-Shubaily, co-founder of the now disbanded Saudi Civil and Political Rights Association (ACPRA), released in July after eight years in prison but placed under an eight-year travel and social media ban; and Mohammed al-Qahtani, human rights defender and ACPRA co-founder, released in January after 12 years in prison but subjected to a 10-year travel ban separating him from his family abroad. Women's rights defenders Loujain al-Hathloul and Maryam al-Otaibi remained under travel bans after imprisonment for their human rights activism.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Almost all human rights defenders brought to trial before the SCC – which remained notorious for undermining fair trial rights – or before other courts were handed harsh sentences following grossly unfair trials.

On 12 May the SCC sentenced British national Ahmed al-Doush to 10 years in prison, later reduced to eight years on appeal. His interrogations revolved around his social media posts and alleged association with a Saudi critic in exile. Saudi authorities withheld court documents, including charges and conviction details, from his family and British consular officials.

Older people's rights

Older detainees remained in harsh detention conditions. Dr Sabri Shalaby, a 69-year-old Egyptian physician, remained in prison serving a 10-year sentence following an unfair trial on baseless "terrorism" charges. During his imprisonment, he was held in solitary confinement, denied medical care, and faced reprisals after suing the Ministry of Health for withheld wages. Sheikh Salman al-Odah, also aged 69, had spent more than eight years in solitary confinement, which constitutes torture under international law. His health, hearing and eyesight deteriorated severely. He was arrested in 2017 after posting a tweet calling for unity during a diplomatic dispute. A UN expert requested to visit him in April, but authorities denied her access.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Saudi Arabia remained home to more than 13 million migrant workers, including almost 4 million domestic workers from Africa and Asia. Migrant workers continued to be bound by the *kafala* (sponsorship) system, which restricts their ability to change jobs or leave the country, putting them at heightened risk of exploitation. Despite some limited reforms, labour abuses were widespread, with workers

subjected to wage theft, unsafe working conditions, racial discrimination and substandard living conditions.

Amnesty International research uncovered how migrants delivering Riyadh's new metro system – which opened in January – endured a decade of exploitation with insufficient government protection. Many paid extortionate recruitment fees to secure their jobs on the project before working long hours for low and discriminatory pay, often in the searing summer heat. Hundreds of migrant workers on high-profile projects went unpaid for months – in some cases nearly a year – and were left stranded without adequate social protection and unable to pay for basics such as food. Some protested or took to social media to share their plight. The Saudi government failed to intervene effectively to ensure timely remediation and, in one case, according to a trade union, detained 11 workers for around 48 hours following a protest in September.

Domestic workers continued to be excluded from the Labour Law, a fact which abusive employers exploited and for which they largely enjoyed impunity due to the government's weak enforcement of protections. Kenyan women hired as domestic workers described gruelling and abusive conditions that often amounted to forced labour and human trafficking, including unpaid wages, excessive working hours, and physical and sexual abuse, often underpinned by systemic racism.

In May, the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Development (MHRSD) announced a six-month grace period to regularize the status of domestic workers reported as absconding. This was renewed for a further six months in November. The Wage Protection System, previously limited to private sector workers, was extended in May to include domestic workers, who should be paid electronically. This obligation was introduced in stages, applying from 1 January 2026 to all employers of domestic workers. Following a public consultation the MHRSD confirmed significant reductions to its 2021 list of penalties for breaches of labour regulations. These included sharp reductions to fines for violations such as confiscating a worker's passport, denying weekly rest days and breaching the midday summer work ban. The revised framework did, however, introduce new penalties targeting violations against specific categories of workers, including those not covered by the Labour Law, such as those in the maritime, agricultural and domestic work sectors.

In June the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) – led by ITUC Africa – submitted a complaint to the ILO documenting a widespread pattern of forced labour, wage theft, physical and sexual abuse, and systemic racism particularly – though not exclusively – affecting African migrant workers.

The same day as the ITUC submitted its complaint, the ILO announced the third phase of its cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia, which focuses on fair recruitment and labour mobility for migrant workers, protection of domestic workers and access to justice, among other things.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Guardianship laws remained in force, affecting many areas of women's lives. Women continued to face discrimination in law and practice. Almost three years after Saudi Arabia's Personal Status Law was passed on 8 March 2022, the Official Gazette published Implementing Regulations of the Personal Status Law on 21 February. While the Personal Status Law introduced some positive reforms, such as setting a minimum age for marriage, it codified gender-based discrimination in most areas of family life, including in marriage, divorce, child custody and inheritance.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Saudi Arabia continued to be one of the world's top 10 carbon emitters per capita. Saudi Aramco, majority-owned by the state, remained the world's largest corporate greenhouse gas emitter. The company's CEO said in October that the global surge in electricity demand, driven by electric vehicles and artificial intelligence data centres, would

be powered by fossil fuels, not renewables, and that hydrocarbons would "remain the backbone of global energy". The government did not set out plans to phase out fossil fuel production.

On 10 September, Saudi Arabia ratified the Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol, committing to freeze production of hydrofluorocarbons – a potent greenhouse gas – by 2028 and reduce consumption by 85% by 2047.

1. "Saudi Arabia: Deplorable execution exposes broken promise to halt death penalty for juveniles", 22 August ↑

SENEGAL

Republic of Senegal

New laws promoting access to information and combating corruption were introduced, while people continued to be detained for expressing their beliefs. The judiciary began investigating deaths and violent incidents relating to protests that occurred between 2021 and 2024. Departing migrants continued to die at sea along the Atlantic coastline. There was no legislative progress on the rights of women and children, and *talibé* children (students in Quranic schools) continued to be victims of violence and abuse.

BACKGROUND

In July, the government unveiled an economic recovery plan after an audit of the state accounts revealed unaccounted debt. The government also enacted several laws and decrees to fight corruption and promote fairer redistribution of mining revenue.

In August, the National Assembly established a new National Anti-Corruption Office and passed a new law requiring asset declarations by ministers and heads of institutions. A new law on the status and protection of whistle-blowers was also adopted.

In July, the last remaining French troops stationed in Senegal departed after 137 years of continuous presence, in accordance with a prior agreement that returned all French military installations in the country to the national authorities.

Tensions between the government and the press persisted after the state audit and an economic downturn.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

The government adopted a new law aimed at fostering constructive public debate by providing people with access to authentic and reliable government information.

In April, the Ministry of Telecommunications, Information and Digital Technology announced it was suspending broadcasting for several media outlets, declaring they were in violation of the Press Code. In June, the Supreme Court ruled the ministerial decree was illegal and ordered its suspension.

In November, Senegalese authorities suspended two TV channels (7TV and TFM) from broadcasting for a week, after they interviewed a fugitive who broke bail.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Several journalists and commentators were arrested and detained for offences relating to expression of their opinions. In April, TV commentator Abdou Nguer was arrested and charged with spreading false news, insulting the head of state, and promoting a crime. This followed the release of a TikTok video in which he suggested the government was responsible for the death of a former president of the Constitutional Court. Abdou Nguer denied being responsible for the TikTok video. He was tried in November and was acquitted of the offences of spreading false news and promoting crime but found guilty of insulting the head of state. He was sentenced to six months in prison, including three months without parole, and ordered to pay a fine of XOF 200,000 (EUR 305). He was released after the trial.

In June, former MP and opposition leader Moustapha Diakhaté was arrested after a televised appearance and accused of

insulting the head of state. In July, he was convicted and sentenced to two months in prison, including 15 days without parole. He was released at the end of his sentence.

In July, prominent columnist Badara Gadiaga was arrested for dissemination of false news and "discourses contrary to public decency" after a public TV spat with an MP, during which he accused the prime minister of being a rapist. InDecember, he was granted conditional release after an appeal.

In October, Mandoumbé Diop and Serigne Mbaye Diagne, two supporters of the ruling party, were convicted and sentenced to one month in prison for indecent speech after they published social media videos in which they insulted opponents of the prime minister.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

On 9 February, four environmental activists – Lamine Diédhiou, Aliou Sané, Mohamed Tendeng and Madeleine Senghor – were arrested while protesting against the establishment of an open-air household waste dump in the village of Tobor. They were prosecuted for participating in an unauthorized demonstration, convicted, sentenced and subsequently paroled.

DETAINEES' RIGHTS

In March, a new law was adopted establishing the National Observatory of Detention Centres. The government also announced a plan to reduce the number of people in pretrial detention. According to the Ministry of Justice, there were 15,267 people in detention as of August, yet the total detention capacity was only 4,924.

In July, 18-year-old Talla Keita died in hospital in Richard Toll, following his transfer from the police station in Rosso, where he was allegedly abused. Two police officers were arrested following the incident.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In February, ahead of a planned investigation into the excessive use of force and arbitrary detentions during the 2021-2024 political protests, the Ministry of Families, Social Action and Solidarities provided financial and medical assistance to some of the victims.

In April, the Constitutional Court ruled that the 2024 amnesty law would not impede the prosecution of killings and torture committed between February 2021 and February 2024. This opened the door to legal actions in connection with the 65 deaths and the 1,000-plus people injured during the protests. Several persons of interest were interviewed by the judiciary in October.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

According to the Spanish NGO Caminando Fronteras, 110 migrants died at sea between January and May while attempting to depart from the Senegalese and Gambian coastlines.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

There was a lack of legislative progress in child protection, particularly concerning *talibé* children in Quranic schools, who remained vulnerable to abuse.

In May, four *talibé* children died of food poisoning in Thienaba, a town in the western Thiès region, after consuming a wild plant without supervision, while another child became severely sick. A judicial investigation into their deaths was announced, and their Quranic teacher received a three-month suspended sentence from a court for "endangering the lives of others".

In September, an eight-year-old *talibé* student died after being denied food and severely beaten by his Quranic teacher in Ribot-Escale, a town in central Senegal.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

The Family Code remained discriminatory towards women and girls, conferring exclusive "marital and paternal authority" rights to men and designating the husband as the head of the family. This deprived women and girls of their rights and authority over their households and children. Article 111 of the Family Code maintained the minimum legal marriage age at 16 for girls and 18 for boys, reinforcing gender inequality. The law also prohibited women from obtaining abortion services, even in

instances of rape and incest, despite ratification of the Maputo Protocol. Consequently, women and girls faced the risk of unsafe and clandestine abortions.

SERBIA

Republic of Serbia

Protesters, journalists and civil society organizations continued to face intimidation, harassment and unlawful surveillance as authorities sought to rein in widespread discontent. Discrimination remained a significant concern affecting women and girls, Roma, LGBTI people and people with disabilities. There was limited progress on ensuring the right to a healthy environment. War crimes prosecutions and regional judicial cooperation were sidelined. The government stepped up arms transfers to Israel.

BACKGROUND

The year was marked by persistent demonstrations across the country, triggered by the November 2024 collapse of a railway station's concrete roof in the northern city of Novi Sad, which killed 16 people. Protesters alleged corruption-fuelled negligence and demanded political accountability from President Aleksandar Vučić as well as early elections and broad reforms. The protests prompted a heavy-handed response by police and the ruling Serbian Progressive Party.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Protesters were subjected to excessive use of force in multiple cases across the country, with police cracking down on largely peaceful demonstrations. Human rights monitors and journalists recorded cases of intimidation, beatings and ill-treatment by plain-clothes and uniformed police. Student protesters were also violently attacked by supporters of the Serbian Progressive Party, whose actions were subsequently condoned and pardoned by the president.

In mid-March, police used what appeared to be an unidentified sonic weapon – also known as an acoustic device – against protesters in the capital, Belgrade, causing a stampede. Some protesters reported long-term effects from the weapon including hearing problems, nausea and dizziness. At the end of April, the European Court of Human Rights issued an interim measure indicating that the government must prevent the use of sonic weapons or similar devices for crowd control.

Police detained hundreds of protesters arbitrarily. Dozens were subjected to slapping and kicking while already restrained, and some detainees were threatened with rape, violence and death.

Journalists were targeted while reporting on the protests and other public-interest issues, with over 160 cases of intimidation and attacks recorded by mid-year.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The European Commission reported that high-level officials and government-friendly tabloids were intensifying verbal attacks and smear campaigns against civil society organizations and activists advocating for the rule of law. These included disclosure of personal data.

In February, Serbian police raided the offices of four NGOs to investigate an alleged "abuse of USAID funds," citing statements by senior US government officials on the USAID funding freeze.

In June, UN special rapporteurs publicly expressed concern at what appeared to be "a systematic campaign" aimed at discrediting human rights defenders, election observers and journalists through concerted media stories by pro-government outlets, surveillance and criminalization.

UNLAWFUL SURVEILLANCE

Authorities continued the unlawful use of spyware and other invasive digital forensic tools against activists and journalists. In January, the Prosecutor for High Technological Crime formally registered a complaint by an association of 10 civil society organizations, which had filed criminal

charges against police and intelligence authorities.[1] In February, two journalists from the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) were targeted with NSO Group's Pegasus spyware.[2] The same month, digital forensics company Cellebrite announced that it would suspend the use of its equipment by some of its customers in Serbia over concerns of abuse.[3]

DISCRIMINATION

OHCHR, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, expressed concern about a rise in hate speech targeting women, Roma and other communities, as well as LGBTI people and journalists.

Women and girls

In September, the Council of Europe's independent Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) reported ongoing prevalent discrimination against women and girls related to childbirth, maternity and childcare. This continued alongside gender-based violence and killings, as well as "obstetric violence, digital violence, public insults and belittling comments targeting women", GREVIO said.

Roma

The continued implementation of the Law on Social Cards, which introduced algorithmic decision-making in determining who should receive monetary social support, resulted in 60,000 people losing access to financial aid over the three years since its roll-out in March 2022, disproportionately affecting Roma. Roma communities continued to face high poverty rates, exclusion, and limited access to healthcare, education, employment and other essential services.

People with disabilities

Following a visit to Serbia in June, the UN Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture called for more measures to protect people with disabilities from ill-treatment in state institutions.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In November, the European Commission made a number of recommendations to Serbia to improve its policies and legislation on environmental issues. These included recommendations in relation to climate change, waste management, water quality, nature protection, industrial pollution and public participation in environmental matters, among others.

The government submitted its third NDC in September, committing Serbia to a 40.1% decrease in greenhouse gas emissions by 2035, compared to 1990 levels. The NDC noted that Serbia had suffered at least EUR 10.45 billion in losses and damages due to extreme weather and climate-related events between 2000 and 2024.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

By year's end, the High Prosecutorial Council had failed to appoint a permanent Chief War Crimes Prosecutor. The government blocked effective judicial cooperation with other countries in the Balkans and failed to deliver on its commitment to promote accountability for long-standing war crimes in the region.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In the first half of the year, Serbia exported over EUR 55 million worth of ammunition to Israel, violating its obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty and international humanitarian law. Serbia rejected freedom of information requests for details of the transfers between the two countries.

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1. *Serbia: Cellebrite Zero-Day Exploit Used to Target Phone of Serbian Student Activist*, 28 February ↑
2. "Serbia: BIRN journalists targeted with Pegasus spyware", 27 March ↑
3. "Serbia: Cellebrite halts product use in Serbia following Amnesty surveillance report", 26 February ↑

SIERRA LEONE

Republic of Sierra Leone

Freedom of expression was threatened, particularly through libel provisions in cybersecurity legislation, and a proposed law that could curtail press freedom. While new legislation provided greater protection of women's and girls' rights, it failed to criminalize female genital mutilation, and a bill to protect maternal health and reproductive rights remained pending. The government made efforts to reduce food insecurity. US cuts to foreign aid undermined the right to health. Meanwhile, more than half of Africa's Mpox cases were concentrated in Sierra Leone, while hundreds of people died in the capital as a result of using kush, a harmful synthetic drug. Authorities took steps to respond to the effects of climate change.

BACKGROUND

In June, President Bio was the first Sierra Leonean head of state to become chairman of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS. He outlined four key strategic priorities: restoring constitutional order and deepening democracy; revitalizing regional security cooperation; unlocking economic integration; and building institutional credibility.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In March, parliament passed a new anti-terrorism bill that granted broad powers to authorities. The bill, which was awaiting the president's assent, threatened to severely restrict press freedom and criminalize journalists for doing their job, under the guise of national security. In May, Reporters Without Borders warned that the bill's imprecise definition of a "terrorist act" could allow authorities to interpret legitimate journalism as a threat to national security. If enacted, journalists could face up to 30 years in prison for reporting information that the authorities deem prejudicial or false.

In March, Hawa Hunt, an artist and reality television personality, was released after more than two months in detention, during which she was repeatedly refused bail. She was arrested on live television and charged with insulting the president and the First Lady in a video she posted on social media. She was charged under the Cyber Security and Crime Act 2021, which criminalizes libel and defamation, among other offences.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

On 8 July, the ECOWAS Court of Justice ordered Sierra Leone to criminalize female genital mutilation (FGM) after hearing the case of a woman forced to undergo the procedure.

On 14 October, President Bio signed the 2024 Child Rights Act into law after it was passed in July by parliament. The law banned early and forced child marriage, reinforcing children's rights to autonomy and protection from harmful traditional practices. However, its failure to criminalize FGM sparked criticism from civil society.

The Safe Motherhood Bill, which aimed to improve maternal healthcare and reproductive rights, and to legalize abortion in certain cases, remained pending at the end of the year. Meanwhile, childbirth continued to pose significant risks for women, with persistently high maternal and newborn mortality rates, largely due to obstetric violence in public health facilities.

LGBTI people

While consensual sexual relations between women was not explicitly outlawed, lesbian women continued to face significant social, cultural and economic challenges making it difficult for them to live freely and in safety. They continued to experience stigma, harassment, and limited acceptance from their families and communities.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

According to development and humanitarian organizations, drastic cuts in USAID funding in March resulted in the closure of clinics, staff retrenchments and the suspension of essential services such as HIV testing,

treatment and care, and threatened to seriously affect maternal health services. Maternal mortality rates in Sierra Leone were among the highest in the world, although government initiatives in recent years led to a decline in 2025 compared to previous years.

By May, more than half of Africa's confirmed Mpox cases were in Sierra Leone. Over 61,000 doses of the Mpox vaccine were distributed and more than 24,000 people vaccinated, with healthcare workers and high-risk groups prioritized.

Also in May, the Ministry of Health, supported by the WHO, convened a high-level policy dialogue on a draft bill to establish the Sierra Leone Agency for Universal Health Coverage.

In July, President Bio launched the Water Security and Hygiene Program. It aimed to reach 4 million people by 2035 to improve access to clean water and promote hygiene in schools and health facilities, among other things.

According to Freetown City Council, between January and October it collected the bodies of 220 people who had died on the capital's streets as a result of kush consumption (a cheap synthetic drug). Measures were taken to fight substance abuse, particularly kush, in response to the national emergency declared by President Bio in April 2024. Strategies included treatment and support for addicts, and strengthening law enforcement measures to dismantle drug trafficking networks and hold traffickers accountable.

RIGHT TO FOOD

In January, the minister of agriculture renewed a commitment to increase rice production to improve food security. According to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, about 1.2 million people were estimated to be facing acute food insecurity during the June-August lean season period.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The country remained at risk of coastal erosion. According to the World Bank in its June Country Climate and Development Report, climate change, together with unregulated urban growth, threatened to hinder agricultural growth and aggravate poverty. In August the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change engaged with parliament to accelerate climate action progress. The ministry, with the Environment Protection Agency, also engaged in a nationwide consultation for the review of Sierra Leone's NDC.

SINGAPORE

Republic of Singapore

Government suppression of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly remained relentless. Repressive laws targeted activists, journalists and political opponents and migrant workers faced exploitation. Executions of people for drug offences escalated.

BACKGROUND

In May, the People's Action Party was re-elected in the general elections. Opposition parties faced an unequal playing field and achieved relatively low results.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The government continued to use laws, including the Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Act (POFMA), to stifle freedom of expression and silence dissent. In January, the government blocked access to the website of NGO East Asia Forum (EAF) after claiming it failed to comply with a POFMA order. The order – in which the government accused EAF of "false statements of fact" – was issued in reaction to an article criticizing the government. Meta platforms and X were also required to carry correction notices for posts related to the article.

In February, Minister for Law and Home Affairs K Shanmugam and Minister for Manpower Tan See Leng sued news agency Bloomberg and its journalist Low De Wei for defamation for allegedly libellous statements about their property dealings. The ministers

also sued Terry Xu, editor of independent news site The Online Citizen (TOC), for reporting on the same issue. The government previously issued POFMA orders against both Bloomberg and Xu in 2024.[1]

In March, a POFMA order was issued against the leader of the Reform Party, Kenneth Jeyaretnam, the ninth against him, for an article on his blog and social media accounts criticizing auxiliary police officers.

In June, TOC was designated a "Declared Online Location" for a second time, requiring it to display a message stating that it had been accused of "multiple falsehoods". It was banned from receiving funds via its website or social media accounts for an additional two years. Multiple other POFMA orders were issued against activists and dissidents for criticism of the death penalty and other issues deemed sensitive by the government. In December, opposition leader Pritam Singh lost his appeal against a conviction for lying to a parliamentary committee, which carried a fine of SGD 14,000 (USD 10,800). Police investigated a filmmaker for remarks allegedly wounding religious and racial feelings after a screening of his documentary on the 2018 Gaza flotilla.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In January, police investigated students who participated in a memorial event at the National University of Singapore. The students, who displayed shoes to represent victims of the genocide in Gaza, were investigated for unlawful assembly under the Public Order Act.

In February, police charged activist Jolovan Wham under the Public Order Act for participating in five candlelight vigils for prisoners on death row. Police also used the act to investigate a group who took a photo outside the court in support of Wham.

In October, activists Mossammad Sobikun Nahar, Siti Amirah Mohamed Asrori and Annamalai Kokila Parvathi were acquitted of organizing an unlawful assembly for delivering letters protesting human rights violations in Gaza to the presidential palace. They had each faced fines of up to SGD 10,000 (USD 7,700) or up to six months in prison, or both, under the Public Order Act. The government said it would appeal.

In October, Hong Kong activist Nathan Law was denied entry into Singapore, despite holding a visa, after the government said his visit would not be in the "national interest". He was trying to attend a closed-door conference.

DEATH PENALTY

Executions continued at an alarming rate. In August, clemency in a death penalty case was granted for the first time since 1998.[2] UN special rapporteurs expressed serious concerns about the use of the death penalty and the Misuse of Drugs Act. In October, a Malaysian man Pannir Selvam was executed – the 13th execution of the year – despite public outcry.

MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Reports continued of poor treatment of migrant workers, including long hours, low wages and labour exploitation. In July, the Ministry of Manpower disclosed that since January it had received 120 reports of workers being charged recruitment fees and trapped in jobs with low wages and excessive hours in scams involving a training visa scheme.

1. *Singapore: Relentless Repression: Submission to the 52nd Session of the UPR Working Group, April-May 2026*, 3 November ↑
2. "Singapore: Call for death penalty moratorium renewed after first clemency since 1998 and third execution in three weeks", 22 August ↑

SLOVAKIA

Slovak Republic

Constitutional amendments undermined international human rights obligations, entrenched discrimination against LGBTI people and stripped away rights to education and private and family life. Onerous new legal requirements were imposed on NGOs. Roma communities

continued to face systemic discrimination, particularly in education and housing. Legal changes restricted access to social benefits. Authorities failed to ensure transparency in arms exports to Israel. Reliance on fossil fuels persisted, with limited progress on climate policy.

BACKGROUND

In September, parliament adopted constitutional amendments that were incompatible with international human rights obligations, despite UN experts previously urging Slovakia to reconsider the reforms. These developments were part of a broader authoritarian shift that saw an intensified crackdown on civil society, including LGBTI groups and organizations supporting minorities and marginalized communities.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In April, parliament adopted a new law regulating NGOs, which imposed intrusive administrative requirements and increased state oversight over their activities, thereby threatening their rights to association, information and privacy. In August, the ombudsperson challenged the law before the Constitutional Court.

NGOs, particularly those critical of the government, were subjected to smear campaigns, threats and intimidation.[1]

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Systemic shortcomings persisted in the handling of complaints of police ill-treatment, including a lack of impartial and effective investigations into credible allegations of torture.[2]

In June, Amnesty International and the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) filed a legal complaint and called for an investigation into possible racially motivated police violence during a raid on the Roma community in the town of Veľká Ida.[3]

DISCRIMINATION

Constitutional amendments on "national identity" and "cultural and ethical issues", adopted in September, were vaguely defined and risked being used to justify discrimination.

Roma

Roma communities continued to face structural discrimination, particularly in education and housing. In February, in the case of *Salay v. Slovakia,* the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the authorities had discriminated against a Roma boy and violated his right to education by wrongfully placing him in a "special" class for children with mild intellectual disabilities.

In April, an Amnesty International and ERRC briefing highlighted the continued lack of progress in eliminating segregation.[4]

In August, the advocate general of the Court of Justice of the EU issued an opinion in the case of *European Commission v. Slovakia*, concluding that Slovakia had failed to effectively address widespread segregation of Roma children in education.[5]

Roma people continued to face systemic discrimination in access to municipal housing, including being offered substandard social housing and subjected to short-term rental contracts that reinforced segregation.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Parliament adopted constitutional amendments to legally recognize only two genders (male and female) and prohibit adoption outside "male-female" marriage, effectively banning adoption by LGBTI and non-binary people.[6] The amendments, which also restricted comprehensive sexuality education, severely undermined the rights of LGBTI people and gender equality.

RIGHT TO SOCIAL SECURITY

In June, parliament adopted amendments to social security laws that made access to social assistance conditional on participation in state-organized work or the acceptance of a "suitable" job offer. Civil society organizations and labour unions warned that the changes risked arbitrarily excluding vulnerable groups from essential support.[7]

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

The authorities maintained secrecy around arms exports to Israel, in conflict with the principles of transparency and reporting in the International Arms Trade Treaty.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Subsidies for fossil fuels continued, particularly for so-called "natural" gas, and progress on renewable energy remained slow. Performance on waste management remained well below expectations, with the 2035 landfill target very unlikely to be met.

1. "Demonization, stigmatization and threats against NGOs in Slovakia", 7 July (Slovak only) ↑
2. "Slovakia: Systemic failure of justice in Slovakia: Procedural violations of the prohibition of torture by the police", 25 June (Slovak only) ↑
3. "Slovakia: Amnesty and ERRC call for investigation into racially motivated police violence against Roma in Veľká Ida", 1 July (Slovak only) ↑
4. *Separate and Unequal: School Segregation Persists for Roma Children in Slovakia*, 16 April ↑
5. "Slovakia: Government fails to make progress in eliminating segregation of Roma children", 13 August (Slovak only) ↑
6. "Slovakia: Parliament's approval of draconian constitutional amendments is a step towards erosion of human rights", 26 September ↑
7. "Slovakia: Request to veto a law changing the conditions for access to support in material need", 9 June (Slovak only) ↑

SLOVENIA

Republic of Slovenia

New legislation raised concerns over media censorship. The shortage of family doctors left around 140,000 people without access to primary healthcare. Roma faced systemic discrimination, particularly in housing and education. Gay couples, transgender people and single men were excluded from assisted reproductive technologies. Court backlogs delayed asylum claims. Fossil fuel subsidies continued.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The new Media Act, adopted in September, gave two government agencies the authority to determine whether media content could be interpreted as incitement to violence, "hate speech" or "terrorism". There were concerns that such a review may not be impartial, leading to media censorship, and that the law's proposed new mechanism for state-granted financial aid to the media could be subject to political bias.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Around 140,000 people remained without a designated family doctor, including over 30,000 adults who continued to receive primary care in additional family medicine clinics set up to serve patients without an assigned personal doctor. Due to severe capacity shortages and other systemic issues at these clinics, they could not guarantee adequate primary care for everybody who needed it.

DISCRIMINATION

The "erased"

Over 25,000 citizens of former Yugoslavia remained excluded from the official registry of permanent residents after being unconstitutionally removed in 1992 following Slovenia's independence.[1] There remained no pathway to permanent residency, resulting in ongoing violations of their right to nationality and the denial of access to political participation and essential services. Despite court rulings in favour of the "erased", no effective remedies had been provided.

Roma

Roma continued to face systemic discrimination, particularly in housing and education. The Act on Urgent Measures to Ensure Public Security ("Šutar's Act") was adopted in November under an accelerated procedure, two weeks after a fatal incident in the city of Novo Mesto involving a member of the Roma community. The law expanded police and judicial powers, removed procedural safeguards, and linked social

benefits to the payment of fines; measures likely to disproportionately affect Roma and deepen their social exclusion.

LGBTI people's rights

Lesbian couples were officially granted access to assisted reproductive technologies in June, upholding the right of all women to non-discriminatory treatment. However, gay couples, transgender people and single men remained excluded. The Ministry of Health confirmed that medical treatment was not required for legal gender recognition and formally requested that the Ministry of Internal Affairs amend the Civil Registry Act to reflect this change.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In April, the Aliens Act was amended to enable asylum seekers in formal employment or covered by social insurance for three of the previous four months to apply for a combined residency and work permit.

Due to court backlogs, applicants in the regular asylum procedure experienced prolonged waiting times for final decisions.

Despite reports of police violence and pushbacks against asylum seekers in Croatia, Slovenia continued transfers to the country under the EU's Dublin regulation, raising concerns about the safety and legality of such returns.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Although the 2025 Climate Law legally bound Slovenia to reach climate neutrality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, emissions from the road transport sector increased and subsidies for fossil fuels remained in place, keeping CO_2 emissions cheap and making the transition to renewable energy less favourable. The slow pace of transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy across all industries further threatened air quality.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

A shipment of military cargo was sent to Israel in August, just seven days after the government banned the import, export and transit of military equipment to Israel.[2] Representatives from the cargo company claimed that it was not aware of the new legislation, raising serious concerns about the company's fulfilment of its human rights responsibilities and Slovenia's enforcement of the law.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The post of the human rights ombudsman remained vacant from February onwards, with the deputy ombudsman not authorized to perform the position's full oversight duties.

1. "On the 33rd anniversary of the erasure: The wrongs of the erased remain uncorrected and threaten lives", 26 February (Slovenian only) ↑
2. "Slovenia: Facilitating the transfer of arms to Israel 'alarming' and violates international law", 22 August ↑

SOMALIA

Federal Republic of Somalia

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the devastating armed conflict, while children faced grave violations of their rights. All parties to the conflict continued to commit serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. Women and girls were exposed to gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence. Climate change exacerbated droughts, undermining the rights to food and water and driving internal and cross-border displacement. Internally displaced people were forcibly evicted nationwide. The right to freedom of expression was severely restricted. The UN Human Rights Council terminated the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia. Somaliland authorities severely restricted the right to freedom of expression and media freedom.

BACKGROUND

In January Somalia joined the UN Security Council as a non-permanent member for a two-year term.

The AU Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) became operational in January, replacing the AU Transition Mission in Somalia. In December, the UN Security Council extended AUSSOM's mandate by one year.

A new election model for the 2026 elections, and 2024 constitutional amendments, continued to cause tension between the federal government and some of its regional member states, particularly the leaders of Jubaland and Puntland who, in June, issued a joint statement rejecting the constitutional amendments.

Tensions between Ethiopia and Somalia, arising from a memorandum of understanding between Ethiopia and Somaliland in January 2024, de-escalated following Türkiye's mediation efforts. Following the signing of the Ankara Declaration in December 2024, the leaders of Ethiopia and Somalia made reciprocal state visits.

On 26 December, Israel became the first country to recognize Somaliland as an independent state.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Civilians continued to bear the brunt of the ongoing armed conflict between the Somali government, supported by its international allies, and the armed group Al-Shabaab, with massive civilian casualties reported throughout the year. There was no accountability for violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.

The UN Transitional Assistance Mission in Somalia reported 395 civilian casualties (144 killed and 251 injured) between March and September alone. Al-Shabaab was reported to be responsible for 40% (159) of these casualties, while the others were attributed to state security forces, clan militias and other unidentified armed actors.

On 18 March journalist Mohamed Abukar Mohamed (also known as "Dabaashe") was killed when an improvised explosive device, which was targeting President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's convoy, hit his residence in the Eel Gaabta area of the capital, Mogadishu. Al-Shabaab claimed responsibility for the attack, which also killed other civilians.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Between March and August, the UN-mandated country task force that monitors and reports on six grave violations of children's rights in armed conflict zones, reported 1,394 such violations affecting 1,096 children (840 boys and 256 girls). They included abductions, recruitment and use in conflict, killing and maiming, rape and other forms of sexual violence, attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access. Al-Shabaab was responsible for 77% of the verified violations while the rest were attributed to Somali security forces, clan militias and other unidentified armed actors.

According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, between July 2025 and June 2026, an estimated 1.85 million children aged between six months and 59 months were expected to suffer acute malnutrition, including about 421,000 children who were likely to suffer severe acute malnutrition.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence, including conflict-related sexual violence, against women and girls continued. Between March and September, the UN reported eight incidents of conflict-related sexual violence affecting five girls and seven women, all of whom were internally displaced. Six incidents were attributed to unidentified armed men and two to uniformed men operating in Jubaland state. These included six incidents of gang rape and two of attempted rape.

The federal parliament failed to pass bills on sexual offences and female genital mutilation. However, in March, Jubaland state passed the Prohibition of Female Genital Mutilation Act.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Internally displaced people continued to face significant human rights violations and abuses. Nearly 550,000 people were internally displaced due to drought, floods, conflict, and food insecurity. According to the UN, more than 250,000 people – most of whom were already internally displaced – were forcibly evicted nationwide. The Banadir region accounted for 56% of the evictions.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Somalia suffered recurrent climate change-related droughts. Despite this, authorities failed to provide adequate clean water for domestic use after groundwater and surface water sources dried up. They also failed to protect water sources from contamination, leading to many people using contaminated water, resulting in cholera outbreaks. The drought also caused rampant malnutrition, drying up of farms, death of livestock, destruction of livelihoods and increased food prices.[1]

Reduced water levels in rivers during drought led to the destruction of riverbanks by farmers trying to access water, which exposed low-lying riverine areas to floods. This was compounded by the government's failure to repair the damage.

While a lack of access to health services continued to contribute to deaths from malnutrition and cholera outbreaks, the allocated health budget remained below 5%, falling short of the 15% recommended in the Abuja Declaration. Al-Shabaab imposed taxes on water sources, food, and livestock traders, exacerbating the situation.

Inadequate climate finance provided to Somalia by high-income and high-emitting countries made it difficult for the government to budget for climate adaptation, leading to internal and cross-border displacement.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The right to freedom of expression, including freedom of the media, was restricted. Journalists were attacked by security forces and subjected to threats, harassment, intimidation, beatings, arbitrary arrests and prosecution.

Following multiple attacks by Al-Shabaab in Mogadishu and its neighbouring towns and villages, the government stepped up attempts to control and censor journalists reporting on public interest issues, including insecurity and forced evictions. On 16 March, the minister for information issued a directive banning the publication of "statements or news that could threaten national security" or "that directly or indirectly misuses or fabricates information."

On 15 March National Intelligence and Security Agency officers raided the home of RTN Somali TV reporter Bahjo Abdullahi Salad and arrested her. She was held at Wardhigley police station in Mogadishu for about four hours in relation to a TikTok video in which she commented on the authorities' failure to clear rubbish from areas of Wardhigley district. She was released without charge.

On 18 March police arrested at least 22 journalists who had covered the attempted assassination of the president. Police raided the offices of Risaala Media Corporation, which had aired a video featuring the site of the attack, arresting five of the corporation's journalists – reporters Ali Abdullahi Ibrahim and Hamda Hassan Ahmed, cameramen Mohamed Said Nur and Abdullahi Sharif Ali, and technician Liban Abdullahi Hassan. They were interrogated at Hamar Jajab police station in Mogadishu and released later that day.

On 1 April police officers raided the offices of Five Somali TV and arrested journalists Mohamed Roraye, Ahmed Mohamud, Mohamed Abdi Afgooye and Dahir Dayah. This followed the outlet's report on the alleged desertion of police officers. They were all released without charge later that day.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In July the National Independent Human Rights Commission (NIHRC) was established, the first of its kind in Somalia, and the appointment of nine commission members was approved by the cabinet. On 11 October, parliament approved the members' appointments, after which they were sworn

into office. Sections of Somali civil society questioned the appointment process and the NIHRC's independence, arguing that the selection process was not transparent.

In October, the UN Human Rights Council terminated the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia, which had been in place since 1993. The council's resolution instead tasked OHCHR, the UN human rights office, with providing technical assistance and capacity-building to Somalia, and assessing, monitoring and reporting on human rights, in consultation with the NIHRC, civil society and other relevant authorities.

SOMALILAND
Freedom of expression

Hopes that President Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, who assumed office in December 2024, would improve the human rights situation in Somaliland were unrealized. Authorities continued to restrict freedom of expression, including by arresting and prosecuting journalists. According to the media advocacy organization Somali Journalists Syndicate, authorities in Somaliland arrested at least 24 journalists.

On 5 August, after responding to a police summons, journalist Ahmed Mohamud Dool was arrested and detained at the headquarters of the Criminal Investigations Department in the capital, Hargeisa, in relation to his Facebook post about murders in the city. The next day he was charged with "spreading false information." The Maroodi Jeh Regional Court in Hargeisa remanded him in custody for four days, after which the court granted the police permission to hold him for a further seven days, pending investigations. On 3 September, his case was transferred to Hargeisa District Court, which fined him SOS 1,500,000 (about USD 150) before releasing him.

1. *Somalia: No rain, No Food, No Animals: The Human Rights Impact of Drought and Displacement in Somalia*, 10 November ↑

SOUTH AFRICA

Republic of South Africa

High levels of gender-based violence continued. The murder rate remained high, while the government disbanded the police's Political Killings Task Team. Threats against and killings of human rights defenders continued with impunity. The Department of Basic Education failed in its promise to eradicate pit latrines in schools. Legal challenges to the National Health Insurance Act continued. Water outages persisted nationwide. Migrants were harassed by a xenophobic vigilante group, which blocked their access to health and education services. The court case continued against eight VIP protection unit officers accused of assault. People living in informal settlements were disproportionately affected by flooding.

BACKGROUND

South Africa assumed the G20 Presidency between December 2024 and November 2025.

Diplomatic relations with the USA were tense following the US government's misinformation campaign about a "white genocide" in South Africa and its special refugee resettlement programme for Afrikaners, as well as the USA's imposition of targeted tariffs and non-renewal of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

According to official unemployment statistics, 31.9% of the working-age population was unemployed, while unemployment among 15 to 24-year-olds was 58.5%.

In August, President Cyril Ramaphosa opened the National Dialogue process, envisioned as a space for South Africans to reflect on the state of the country and its future, and lay the groundwork for the next National Development Plan to address poverty and inequality. Following civil society's concerns about the National Dialogue's initial budget allocation of ZAR

700 million (around USD 40.8 million), its lack of transparency and potential mismanagement of funds, the government reduced the estimated budget to ZAR 485 million.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

High levels of gender-based violence continued. According to the most recent available crime statistics, 12,787 sexual offences were reported, including 10,154 cases of rape, between July and September.

The issue of the forensic DNA testing backlog resurfaced in March when the police's Forensic Science Laboratory confirmed that the backlog had exceeded 140,000 cases. This threatened the processing of and potential for prosecutions in gender-based violence cases and other cases.

In May, three people were convicted for the kidnapping and trafficking of six-year-old Joshlin Smith. Her whereabouts remained undisclosed since her disappearance in February 2024. Her mother was among those convicted.

Eight years since the murders of Popi Qwabe and Bongeka Phungula, no one was brought to justice. The inquest into their killings, established in 2023, remained stalled. Prior to the establishment of the inquest, the National Prosecuting Authority had been unable to prosecute due to insufficient evidence, and the case was moved to the Department of Justice which opened the inquest. The women were shot during a night out, and their bodies dumped on the side of a road in Johannesburg.

In February, a video was distributed on social media showing two female police officers assaulting a woman who had reported domestic violence. Later that month, the officers were arrested, appeared in court in Bloemfontein, Free State province, and were released on bail, pending trial.

RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

The murder rate remained high. Police recorded 5,794 cases between July and September.

Threats to, and killings of, human rights defenders and whistle-blowers continued, as did impunity for the perpetrators. There were no further moves by the Department of Justice and Constitutional Development to strengthen legislation to protect whistle-blowers, following the call for submissions on a discussion document in 2023.

The investigation into who ordered the murder of whistle-blower Babita Deokaran continued four years after her death.

The South African Police Service (SAPS) failed to provide protection or to conduct effective and thorough investigations into the killings between 2018 and 2022 of members of Abahlali baseMjondolo, a shack dwellers movement. While eight members were killed during this period for their activism, a conviction was secured for only one of them. No public updates on investigations into the remaining seven cases were made available.

In February, Muhsin Hendricks, the first openly gay imam and an LGBTI human rights defender, was killed while on his way to officiate two marriages. In March, whistle-blower Pamela Mabini, who campaigned against gender-based violence and supported witnesses in the rape trial against televangelist Timothy Omotso, was killed outside her house. In September, Bouwer Van Niekerk, an insolvency lawyer, was killed in his office days after receiving death threats in connection with his role in an insolvency case linked to an alleged Ponzi scheme. In none of these cases were perpetrators brought to justice.

In July the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) province police commissioner announced that there was political interference and corruption in the criminal justice system, which included law enforcement collusion with criminal syndicates; government interference in police investigations; and abuse of power by the minister of police in connection with his disbanding the Political Killings Task Team without consultation or explanation. President Ramaphosa responded by announcing the appointment of a commission of inquiry to investigate the allegations, and the minister of police's immediate "leave of absence".

RIGHT TO EDUCATION

There was no justice for the family of three-year-old Unecebo Mboteni, more than a year after he died after falling into a pit latrine at his preschool in the Eastern Cape province. In April, the Department of Basic Education said it had eradicated 96% of pit latrines in schools that were part of its Sanitation Appropriate for Education (SAFE) initiative. According to an Education Facilities Management System report, an estimated 448 schools (only some of which were part of the SAFE initiative) still used pit latrines. However, the minister for basic education said her department would conduct a new sanitation audit.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

US cuts to foreign aid terminated funding for many organizations providing HIV services nationwide and ended significant funding for HIV and tuberculosis research in South African universities. Prior to the cuts, the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief had provided 18% of South Africa's HIV services budget. Approximately 17% of people between 15 and 49 years were living with HIV in South Africa, which had the largest HIV epidemic in the world.

Several legal challenges to the National Health Insurance Act were ongoing in the Constitutional Court and elsewhere. The challenges included that the Act was unconstitutional and could further obstruct access to quality healthcare.

RIGHT TO WATER

Water outages continued across the country with heightened crises in the Gauteng and KZN provinces. Residents in the West Rand in Gauteng protested after going without water for more than a month. The Department of Water and Sanitation continued to lose billions of South African rands due to its poor leadership and planning, and delays in implementing projects. In its annual report released in September, the department said there was a significant and growing backlog in the maintenance and refurbishment of national water resources infrastructure. In his February State of the Nation Address, President Ramaphosa acknowledged that South Africa's water situation had become a "crisis".

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Xenophobic vigilante group Operation Dudula harassed migrants and denied them entry to hospitals and health clinics. Consequently, a one-year-old baby died after he was unable to receive treatment at the Alexandra Clinic in Johannesburg in July. Operation Dudula later warned schools not to admit undocumented foreign national children, in violation of Section 29 of the Constitution which guarantees the right to basic education for everyone. In November the South Gauteng High Court issued an interdict against Operation Dudula, prohibiting them from harassing and intimidating migrants who are accessing services.

In May the Western Cape High Court found that sections of the Refugee Act, which denied new asylum seekers access to the asylum system, were unconstitutional. The matter was in the Constitutional Court awaiting confirmation.

The government continued to pursue its White Paper on Citizenship, Immigration and Refugee Protection, which had been adopted by the cabinet in 2024. Civil society organizations raised concerns, including its negative portrayal of migration, incorrect research used to justify limits on migration, and the proposal to withdraw South Africa from the UN Refugee Convention and re-accede with reservations that would significantly reduce refugees' constitutional rights and in turn violate international law obligations.

UNLAWFUL USE OF FORCE

Eight officers of the deputy president's VIP Unit were acquitted by an internal SAPS disciplinary process, held in May. The officers had been filmed assaulting three members of the South African National Defence Force in 2023. They faced 12 charges in a continuing court case, including assault with intent to cause grievous bodily harm and assault by threat and obstruction to

justice. Their trial date was set for March 2026.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

KZN, the Eastern Cape and Western Cape provinces experienced extreme flooding in some areas, with hundreds of lives lost and thousands of homes destroyed.

People living in informal settlements were disproportionately affected by flooding, which was expected to increase in frequency and intensity due to climate change.

Basic services, including clean water, toilets, waste collection and electricity, remained out of reach for millions of people in informal settlements.

South Africa fell three places in the Climate Change Performance Index's ranking of countries, to 41st place, making it a "low climate performer". Following the withdrawal of US support in March to South Africa's Just Energy Transition (JET) programme, the EU pledged a EUR 4.7 billion Global Gateway Investment package – a combination of grants and loans – of which EUR 4.5 billion would be allocated to JET.

SOUTH KOREA

Republic of Korea

Peaceful protests by disability rights activists were criminalized and protesters were sentenced to imprisonment. A court ruling found requirements for the submission of advance notice for assemblies to be excessive. The declaration of martial law in late 2024 was ruled unconstitutional. The government's greenhouse gas reduction target remained inadequate, but a new ministry was established with an expanded mandate to address the country's climate crisis. A legislative amendment was adopted to address technology-facilitated gender-based violence, but enforcement and accountability remained lacking. A bill was proposed to decriminalize abortion. Conscientious objectors were subject to a disproportionate duration of alternative service. LGBTI people faced barriers to legal gender recognition. Migrants and ethnic groups, especially those of Chinese background, faced discrimination.

BACKGROUND

In April, the Constitutional Court ruled unanimously to impeach then-president Yoon Suk-yeol for his declaration of martial law in December 2024. An early election was held in June, won by Lee Jae-myung of the Democratic Party. A special prosecutor was appointed to investigate the former government and military leadership for their roles in the martial law declaration.

In March, South Korea was hit by its worst wildfire on record, leaving 30 people dead and burning more than 48,000 hectares of land. From July to September, extreme rainfall caused widespread damage throughout the country, while the hottest summer on record claimed 16 lives.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

On 7 March, the Seoul Administrative Court ruled that the requirement to submit advance notice of outdoor assemblies in person at a police station excessively limited freedom of assembly. The police station that was the subject of the lawsuit appealed to a higher court, but the ruling was upheld, allowing assembly organizers to give notice via other means such as post.

On 18 March, the Supreme Court sentenced Park Kyung-seok, co-representative of NGO Solidarity against Disability Discrimination, to four months in prison and two years of probation for having conducted a peaceful protest in 2021. In September, another disability rights activist was sentenced to one year in prison and two years' probation for ramming his wheelchair into a police officer during a 2023 protest held in a metro station in the capital, Seoul. In November, a disability rights activist was arrested on charges of assaulting a police officer.

In an April ruling, the Constitutional Court found the proclamation of martial law in

December 2024 unconstitutional and a violation of freedom of conscience, assembly and expression.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In August, the National Policy Planning Committee proposed a transition to renewable energy as one of the government's key five-year strategic priorities; however, the committee failed to specify the methods for achieving a just transition. The government retained the 2030 greenhouse gas target at 40% reduction compared to 2018 levels, failing to meet the 43% target specified by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. In November, the Presidential Commission on Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth set the country's 2035 greenhouse gas reduction target at 53-61% compared to 2018.

In October, the new government established a Ministry of Climate, Energy and Environment with an expanded mandate compared with its predecessor, the Ministry of Environment, to enable it to address the country's acute climate-related risks.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Technology-facilitated gender-based violence remained a significant challenge. Legislative reforms were adopted to address AI-generated "deepfake" content, including an amendment to the Sexual Violence Prevention and Victims Protection Act. The amendment provided additional resources to national authorities to facilitate the removal of content perpetuating technology-facilitated gender-based violence, from illegal recordings to victims' personal information. However, enforcement and platform accountability remained limited, leaving survivors with inadequate remedies.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In September, the new government appointed a Minister of Gender Equality and Family, filling a post that had been left vacant since February 2024. The government announced an administrative restructuring of the ministry that include expanding its mandate to provide enhanced personal growth support for teenagers and children, as well as better protection mechanisms for women against physical and online threats such as technology-facilitated gender-based violence and intimate partner violence.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In July, the National Assembly proposed a bill to completely decriminalize abortion and to provide national health insurance coverage for abortion, as well as to make abortion pills publicly accessible. In August, the National Policy Planning Committee identified the provision of abortion pills as one of the government's key five-year strategic priorities, although it did not provide a concrete roadmap for accomplishing this task.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In August, the Seoul District Court decided that legal gender recognition could be based on self-determination, without medical gender-affirming interventions. Nonetheless, individuals seeking legal gender recognition faced financial, physical and psycho-social barriers arising from the lack of a formal law on legal gender recognition in South Korea.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Conscientious objectors remained subject to a punitive 36-month alternative service – twice the average duration of military service – confined to correctional facilities under military oversight. The excessive length, detention-like conditions and lack of independence from the military violated freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, as well as rights to work, family life and cultural participation.

DISCRIMINATION

Concerns persisted regarding the discrimination and violence facing migrant workers, including restrictions on changing workplaces, wage theft, industrial accident fatalities, and verbal and physical violence. According to media reports, in February, at a brick factory in the city of Naju, Jeollanam-do province, a Sri Lankan migrant worker was subject to physical violence by his manager at the workplace. President Lee Jae-myung

condemned the discrimination and violence manifested towards migrant workers and instructed strong measures be taken to prevent recurrence. The perpetrator was subsequently prosecuted and penalized for workplace abuse.

Throughout the year, anti-Chinese rallies were held in areas with large Chinese communities, such as Daerim-dong and Myeong-dong in Seoul, where expression of hatred was repeatedly aimed at Chinese people, including ethnic Koreans of Chinese nationality.

In May, the CERD Committee expressed concern over the continued rise, both online and offline, in "hate speech and incitement to discrimination in South Korea". The committee recommended a number of actions to prohibit racist hate speech, including the implementation of public education campaigns to combat prejudice and hostility towards migrants, asylum seekers and refugees.

In July, the government announced a "zero tolerance" policy towards violence, discrimination and human rights abuses against socially vulnerable groups, including foreign workers. It formally acknowledged the need to improve related systems and practices.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In May, South Korean heavy equipment manufacturer HD Hyundai asserted that it had "no involvement with activities" in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, despite Amnesty International research showing shipments of excavators between 2021 and 2023 that had been credibly linked to unlawful demolitions.[1] In June, the National Assembly introduced a revised act on the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment for Sustainable Corporate Management, designed to hold companies accountable for human rights and environmental abuses throughout their supply chains by enforcing mandatory human rights due diligence. In July, following criticism of its electric vehicle battery sourcing practices, Hyundai Motors published a sustainability report that outlined plans to expand sustainability assessments to cover tier-2 suppliers and to extend coverage of their responsible minerals policy.

1. "South Korea/Israel/OPT: HD Hyundai machinery used in West Bank demolitions", 27 March ↑

SOUTH SUDAN

Republic of South Sudan

Systemic corruption resulted in underfunded public services. The US government's funding cuts adversely affected the right to health, while around 6 million people were acutely food insecure and more than 70% of children were out of school. Authorities continued to use authoritarian practices to oppress or stifle dissent and political opposition, including arbitrary detentions. The armed conflict that erupted in 2013 escalated, resulting in mass displacement and dozens of killings. The presence in the country of Ugandan military forces constituted a violation of the UN Security Council arms embargo, which was renewed in May. While authorities took a small step towards establishing the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing, there was no progress in establishing a body for compensation and reparation for victims of the conflict, or towards the creation of the Hybrid Court for South Sudan. The UN Human Rights Council renewed the mandate of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan.

BACKGROUND

The Tumaini Initiative peace negotiations between the government and armed groups that had not signed the 2018 peace agreement broke down in July.

There were frequent political reshuffles and speculation about presidential succession. President Salva Kiir Mayardit appointed Benjamin Bol Mel as vice president of the cabinet's Economic Cluster

in February and deputy leader of the ruling party in May. In 2017, Benjamin Bol Mel had been sanctioned by the US government on corruption allegations. In November, the president replaced him for both positions with a former vice-president, James Wani Igga, and placed him under house arrest.

In September, opposition leader Riek Machar Teny was suspended as first vice-president. He remained under house arrest imposed in March. He went on trial with seven others, on charges including murder and treason, which carry the death penalty, related to an attack on the army in Upper Nile State by the "White Army" (an armed "self-defence" group). The prosecution's allegation that Riek Machar Teny commanded and controlled the group was contested by experts. Journalists and foreign nationals were intermittently denied access to the trial.

The government began issuing meteorological data internationally to improve early warning systems. Extreme weather events included a deadly heatwave. Widespread flooding particularly affected Jonglei and Unity states, leading, according to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, to the internal displacement of nearly 375,600 people and impacting over 1.35 million people. Floodwater damaged farmlands and critical infrastructure, further restricting access to services and humanitarian assistance.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

A report by the UN Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan (CHRSS) found that systemic corruption and diversion of state revenues resulted in the severe underfunding of essential services, including health and education, fuelling a human rights crisis.

Right to food

As of November, approximately 6 million people (more than half the population) were acutely food insecure, including an estimated 28,000 people who experienced catastrophic hunger. More than 2.1 million children were at risk of malnutrition.

An Integrated Food Security Phase Classification report in November raised concerns about the risk of famine among populations in parts of the Greater Upper Nile region, including in Fangak county and south of the town of Nasir. The report projected that more than 2.1 million children aged under five years would suffer acute malnutrition between July 2025 and June 2026. According to the report, high levels of food insecurity were driven primarily by armed conflict, high insecurity and widespread flooding, causing displacement and disrupting agriculture.

Right to health

South Sudan experienced its most severe cholera outbreak on record. As one of the most aid-dependent countries in Africa, it was among those most affected by US government funding cuts.[1] In April, the *Al Jazeera* newspaper reported that eight people, including five children, died in Jonglei State after walking for hours to receive medical care for cholera, following the closure of clinics and a patient transport service funded by USAID.

Right to education

According to UNICEF, 2.8 million children (more than 70% of the child population) were out of school – most of them girls. Barriers to education for girls included poverty and child marriage. Children in pastoral communities missed school when they were needed to move livestock.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Authorities continued to use authoritarian practices to oppress or stifle dissent. Critics were harassed, intimidated, threatened and arbitrarily detained and, in some cases, forcibly disappeared. The National Security Service (NSS) continued its requirement for civil society organizations to seek NSS approval to hold meetings, threatening to disable genuine dialogue.

On 22 January, the National Communication Authority (NCA) issued to internet service providers an arbitrary and disproportionate order to block social media

platforms for a minimum of 30 days, extendable to a maximum 90 days.[2] Following a public outcry, including from human rights actors, the NCA lifted the ban. The order had stated that it was issued in response to violent attacks on people from Sudan and their businesses in South Sudan.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

In March, authorities arrested at least 22 people aligned with the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army – In Opposition. Six were forcibly disappeared, and others were held in incommunicado detention. There were concerns about the legality of and lack of transparency surrounding the arrests, which followed violent clashes in mid-February between government forces and armed groups in Upper Nile State.

Eight men, who had been deported from the USA and held in a US military base in Djibouti since May, arrived in South Sudan's capital, Juba, on 4 July. Their deportation was part of the US government's mass deportation campaign. They were then arbitrarily detained in an undisclosed location. By early September, two of them[3] had been released while six remained in detention. [4]

The NSS continued to monitor media, including social media, and use the information to arbitrarily arrest and unlawfully detain government critics. In November, the media reported that the NSS had arrested and detained for four days comedian Amath Jok after she referred to President Kiir as a "big thief wearing a hat" during a live broadcast on TikTok. She was banned from using social media indefinitely. Media reported that she was re-arrested later the same month, along with a singer and a TikTok personality. She was released before the end of the year.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

South Sudan's non-international armed conflict, which erupted in December 2013, escalated. According to the CHRSS, armed clashes occurred on a scale not seen since 2017, with civilians bearing the brunt of the violence. Large numbers of civilians were displaced. While clashes took place throughout South Sudan, the Greater Equatoria and Greater Upper Nile regions were the most affected. In February, for example, there was a surge in fighting between the "White Army" and the South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) (government forces) in Upper Nile State. These clashes were accompanied by reports of international humanitarian and human rights law violations and abuses, including crimes under international law.[5]

There was documented evidence of the SSPDF's ongoing use of attack helicopters, which strongly suggested that the supply of spare parts to refurbish the helicopters continued in violation of the UN Security Council arms embargo (see below, Irresponsible arms transfers).[6] There was also a marked increase in reports of the use of attack helicopters compared to previous years, as well as a significant rise in air strikes across the country. According to Human Rights Watch, the government allegedly used improvised air-dropped incendiary weapons in at least four attacks in Upper Nile State that killed dozens of people, burned others and destroyed civilian infrastructure. The attacks may have amounted to war crimes.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In May, the UN Security Council renewed for another year its arms embargo on South Sudan, in place since 2018.[7] However, soldiers of the Uganda People's Defence Forces and military equipment from Uganda had been deployed to South Sudan since 11 March, or earlier, without advance notification to the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee for an exemption under the terms of the relevant resolution. This represented a flagrant violation of the arms embargo.

While its implementation had been inconsistent, the arms embargo was a crucial measure to curtail the flow of weapons used to violate international humanitarian law. Despite this, and the rapidly deteriorating human rights situation, several Security Council member states and the AU Peace

and Security Council called for the arms embargo to be lifted in the weeks leading up to its renewal in May.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

The government took no meaningful action towards establishing, in line with legislation passed by the National Legislative Assembly in November 2024, the Compensation and Reparation Authority (CRA). If established, CRA's role would be to provide material and financial support to citizens whose property was destroyed by the conflict and help them to rebuild their livelihoods. Authorities appointed a nine-member selection panel for the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH), which began the process to select its South Sudanese commissioners. Civil society expressed concerns about the lack of transparency and public participation in the selection process as required under the CTRH law. The process to establish the AU-backed Hybrid Court for South Sudan (HCSS) to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law and other human rights violations committed in the conflict since 2013 remained stalled. In February, the media quoted the minister of information, communication, technology and postal services blaming the AU for the delay in the HCSS's establishment, which for years national authorities had actively sought to block.

In April, the UN Human Rights Council extended the CHRSS's mandate. It was the only viable mechanism equipped to independently collect and preserve evidence of crimes under international law committed during the ongoing armed conflict.[8]

1. *USA: Lives at Risk: Chaotic and Abrupt Cuts to Foreign Aid Put Millions of Lives at Risk*, 29 May ↑
2. "South Sudan: Authorities must reverse blanket ban on social media and investigate attacks on civilians", 25 January ↑
3. South Sudan: End two deportees' arbitrary detention: Nyo Myint and Enrique Arias Hierro", 9 September ↑
4. "South Sudan: End four deportees' arbitrary detention", 18 September ↑
5. "South Sudan: The UN Human Rights Council should renew the mandate of the CHRSS by at least two years", 20 February ↑
6. "South Sudan: UN Security Council must renew and enforce arms embargo to protect civilians", 14 May ↑
7. "South Sudan: Renewal of UN arms embargo a welcome move to protect civilians", 30 May ↑
8. "South Sudan: The UN Human Rights Council should renew the mandate of the CHRSS by at least two years", 20 February ↑

SPAIN

Kingdom of Spain

Thousands of evictions continued to be enforced, mostly on economic grounds. A legislative amendment sought to improve access to universal health care. Parliament failed to repeal provisions that violated freedom of expression. Disproportionate restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly persisted. One case was pending before the European Court of Human Rights after Spanish courts refused to investigate torture cases from the Franco era. Unaccompanied migrant children were not duly protected. Spain banned the export of arms to Israel. Authorities failed to comply with commitments on flood risk prevention and management.

BACKGROUND

In June, the Constitutional Court upheld the 2024 Amnesty Act. This granted amnesty for actions related to the Catalan independence process between 2011 and 2023, including the excessive use of force by police.

In November, the Attorney General was forced to step down after the Supreme Court convicted him for revealing confidential information. The withdrawal by one political party from the coalition government affected the government's stability and its legislative agenda.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

Between January and September there were 19,347 evictions, more than 90% of which

were linked to economic reasons. In January, measures to suspend evictions for people in extremely economically vulnerable situations were extended until the end of the year.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

In September, the central government launched a public consultation on how to reform and improve the 2018 Royal Decree on universal access to public healthcare. Draft amendments to the bill had not been made public by the end of the year.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In October, the VOX political party launched a widespread social media campaign of harassment against journalist and writer Cristina Fallarás, who subsequently reported receiving serious threats and abuse. As a result, she cancelled planned public appearances and filed a formal complaint with the public prosecutor against VOX's legal secretary for incitement of hatred, harassment, defamation and violation of privacy.

Parliament failed to undertake reforms to the Public Security Law and the criminal code, such as repealing provisions which violated freedom of expression and decriminalizing libel and slander. These had been widely demanded by civil society and recommended by human rights mechanisms, including the UN Human Rights Committee in its concluding observations after reviewing Spain's international obligations in July.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Disproportionate restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly continued, as did the use of excessive force against protests held in solidarity with the Palestinian people. These included acts of civil disobedience such as the Palestinian solidarity protests in the capital, Madrid, in September, which forced the final stage of the Vuelta Ciclista race to be suspended.

A peaceful protester was pardoned and released from prison after a year and a half, following an unjust conviction for public disorder and "assault on authority" based solely on police testimony.

Although criminal courts continued to refuse to investigate cases of police infiltration into social movements, some complaints were pending before the Constitutional Court. A legislative proposal to amend the Criminal Procedure Act in order to prevent such police operations had not been approved by parliament by the end of the year.

Twenty-seven climate activists from the group Futuro Vegetal remained under investigation for allegedly participating in a criminal organization in connection with their involvement in non-violent direct actions.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In its concluding observations, the UN Human Rights Committee welcomed the adoption of the Democratic Memory Law which aimed to recognize victims of crimes under international law from the civil war and Franco era. The committee expressed concern, however, that the 1977 Amnesty Law had yet to be repealed, and that proceedings initiated against alleged perpetrators of serious human rights violations committed during the Civil War and the Franco era had not resulted in any effective criminal action.

In this regard, following the Constitutional Court's dismissal of several appeals challenging the refusal of Spanish courts to investigate complaints of torture during the Franco era, at least one case was pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

A former high-ranking official during the Franco era continued to be investigated and summoned to testify in relation to crimes committed during Spain's political transition to democracy.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence persisted, with 46 women killed by partners and ex-partners and 15 by other individuals during the year. Three children were killed in the context of gender-based violence.

A number of designated crisis centres intended to provide immediate and specialized assistance to victims and

survivors of sexual violence were available. In practice, however, many of them were not fully effective as they did not operate around the clock, provide holistic support or ensure effective access to all victims and survivors.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Official data released in October showed that 13 out of 17 autonomous communities had established registers of health professionals refusing to perform abortions on grounds of conscience. Such registers were intended to ensure sufficient staffing and guarantee access to abortion. Private clinics operated if abortions were not available through public healthcare centres, although in some cases patients had to travel outside their region to access these services.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In March, the Superior Court of Andalucia ruled that returning migrants intercepted at sea around Ceuta to Morocco without safeguards or due process was illegal. The government's representative in Ceuta said that the ruling was not final, implying the intention to disregard or not fully enforce it in the meantime.

The rights of unaccompanied migrant and refugee children were compromised in the Canary Islands and Ceuta. In March, the Supreme Court ordered the central government to urgently implement measures to improve reception conditions for more than 1,000 asylum seeking children. Failure to comply would entail fines or even criminal proceedings against officials responsible. By the end of the year, only 408 children had been transferred to state reception centres.

The Provincial Court of Cádiz convicted both Ceuta's former government representative and the former vice president of the city on charges of administrative malfeasance. It found that they had acted arbitrarily and manifestly unjustly in the expedited repatriation of 55 unaccompanied Moroccan children without the legally required individual assessments.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In October, Spain banned the export of arms to Israel and banned imports from illegal settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, in line with its obligations under international law.

DISCRIMINATION

In July, xenophobic violence broke out in the village of Torre Pacheco, Murcia Region, following an assault on a 68-year-old man. Anti-rights groups organized "hunts" for racialized people, including specifically those perceived as North African. The unrest was amplified by racist content online, with a 1,500% increase in hate speech against the North African community between 6 and 22 July. On 14 July, a kebab restaurant was attacked by around 50 men wearing helmets and wielding bats and sticks despite a police presence nearby. The owner had to escape out of the back door.

RIGHT TO PRIVACY

The former director of the National Intelligence Centre was placed under judicial investigation regarding the use of Pegasus spyware against pro-independence activists and politicians in Catalonia. She invoked the Official Secrets Act, refusing to disclose details on the grounds that the information was classified.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Following the October 2024 floods that killed 238 people, mostly in the Valencian Community, officials faced scrutiny through ongoing criminal investigations and parliamentary inquiries which sought to determine facts and responsibility.

The government of the Valencian Community and the central government failed to comply with certain commitments outlined in reconstruction plans drawn up following the flooding. These commitments were, respectively, a local flood risk prevention plan and the reform of national flood-risk management regulations. Instead, the regional government adopted Law 2/2025 of 15 April on urgent urban planning measures to support reconstruction after the

damage caused by the torrential rains. The law relaxed urban planning rules and permitted construction in flood-prone areas without prior or adequate risk assessment.

Spain registered its worst year on record for wildfires, with more than 392,183 hectares of forests, scrubland and pastures destroyed by the end of October, according to the European Forest Fire Information System. Driven by human-induced climate change, the summer was the warmest on record, with an average temperature of 24.2°C across peninsular Spain, 2.1°C above the 1991-2020 reference period.

The government adopted Royal Decree 214/2025, which established the Carbon Footprint, Compensation and Carbon Absorption Projects Registry. This required certain large companies and public bodies to calculate and publicly disclose their annual greenhouse gas emissions, as well as prepare and publish five-year emission reduction plans.

SRI LANKA

Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka

A new government took office in late 2024, promising transformational change. However, the new administration continued to use the draconian anti-terror law and failed to reform other laws, negatively affecting freedom of expression and rights for Muslims, women and girls, and LGBTI people. Minorities, especially the war-affected Tamil community, continued to be harassed for demanding justice for wartime atrocities, which were yet to be addressed through credible domestic mechanisms. Cyclone Ditwah claimed lives and destroyed homes.

BACKGROUND

After the newly elected National People's Power (NPP) government took office in late 2024, overdue local government elections were held in May. In June, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights undertook an official visit. In October, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reached an agreement on the extended fund facility arrangement, enabling Sri Lanka to access USD 347 million in financing. In October, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution extending the mandate of OHCHR, the UN human rights office's Sri Lanka Accountability Project to collect and preserve evidence for future prosecutions, and calling for ongoing monitoring and reporting.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Despite increased social welfare payments under the "Aswesuma" programme, the IMF reported that poverty levels remained higher than before the economic crisis.

The Malaiyaha Tamil community working in the tea plantations remained one of the most marginalized groups, continuing to suffer from over two centuries of racial discrimination. The community faced limited access to land ownership, inadequate housing and exploitative working conditions. In the garment sector, workers continued to experience rights abuses, including union repression, low wages, gender-based violence and unsafe working conditions.[1]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In late November and early December, cyclone Ditwah hit the country, causing significant damage and loss of life, raising questions about the government's climate-related disaster preparedness and communications. An estimated 646 people died in the resulting floodings and landslides, and 114,343 homes were destroyed.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In the wake of cyclone Ditwah, the president declared a state of emergency in late November and passed broad emergency regulations granting extensive powers to authorities including the armed forces and police. The Deputy Minister of Public Security instructed the police to take action against those spreading false and defamatory statements during the disaster and slandering the president on social media.

Police reported that investigations had been launched in relation to 57 social media posts.

The NPP pledged to amend the Online Safety Act of 2024, which was enacted by the previous government, to remove excessive restrictions on freedom of expression. The law granted broad powers to an Online Safety Commission to determine what constitutes "prohibited statements". In August, the government called for public submissions on proposed amendments.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Despite the NPP's commitment to repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA), the draconian law remained in use, including for offences not remotely connected to terror-related acts, such as to detain "underworld" figures linked to drug-related crimes. The government disclosed that the PTA had been used to make 49 arrests in the first five months of the year.

In February, the government appointed a committee to draft a replacement bill and in May invited public submissions. In December, the government released a draft bill entitled the Protection of the State from Terrorism Act.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

A group of 116 Rohingya refugees, including 57 children, who arrived in December 2024, remained in detention at a Mullaitivu Air Force Camp run by the Department of Immigration and Emigration. UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, was not permitted access to register the refugees.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

There were oppressive restrictions on the right to unionize and state interference in union activities.

The requirement for NGOs to register with the governmental NGO secretariat after obtaining security clearance from the Ministry of Defence continued, despite registration already being mandated under other laws.

In August, the former inspector general of police was arrested on charges related to the failure to prevent attacks against peaceful protesters in May 2022.

In September, police used excessive force against protesters in the town of Mannar who were demonstrating against a wind energy project they feared would negatively affect the environment.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

There were at least 13 known cases of custodial deaths during the year. Two officers were suspended over the death of Muthuwadige Sathsara Nimesh in police custody in April. His family alleged he had been subjected to torture while detained at Welikada Police Station, in the capital, Colombo. The Special Investigation Division investigated six cases of torture by police officers and two cases of illegal arrest during the year.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In February, a new mass grave was discovered near Chemmani in the Jaffna district. By September, 239 skeletons had been exhumed. Concerns were raised about transparency and the need for resources to complete the excavation process. In August, the Kaluwanchikudy Magistrate ruled against the Attorney General's no-action directive and ordered the excavation of the Kurukkalmadam mass grave, located in the Batticaloa district, where people were allegedly massacred and buried by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 1990. The government failed to respond to calls for enhanced forensic capacity and criminal inquiries into mass graves.

In August, ministers approved the development of a national action plan on reconciliation, with support from the UN country office. In September, the government announced it had initiated a process to establish a truth and reconciliation commission.

Several arrests were made in emblematic wartime cases. Former MP Sivanesathurai Chandrakanthan (known as Pillaiyan) was arrested over the 2006 disappearance of Eastern University vice-chancellor

Sivasubramaniam Raveendranath. Two ex-army intelligence officers were arrested for the 2008 abduction of journalist Keith Noyahr. The Navy 11 case, involving the alleged enforced disappearance of 11 youths between 2008–2009, remained stalled in court. In July, ex-navy commander Nishantha Ulugetenne, implicated in the Navy 11 case, was arrested over a separate disappearance during his tenure in the intelligence services.

In April, the president submitted the final report of the commission of inquiry into the 2019 Easter Sunday attacks. A police committee was established to investigate but no updates were available by year's end.

War-affected communities struggled with ongoing land disputes with numerous state departments. Via a notification issued in March, authorities sought to acquire 5,941 acres (approximately 2,400 hectares) of land from several districts in the Northern Province. The government withdrew the notice following a Supreme Court interim order preventing the acquisition.

Reports of surveillance and harassment of war victims' families, journalists and Tamil activists continued. Journalist Kumanan Kanapathipillai was summoned by the Counterterrorism Investigation Division, following a complaint by military intelligence about his coverage of protests and commemorations by the war-affected community. In response to UN concerns, the government cited unsubstantiated allegations of terrorism and financial crimes.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

In August, the government announced that the Office of Missing Persons (OMP) would open inquiries into 10,531 missing persons cases from before 2000. Recent cases remained unaddressed. In September, the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances noted that the OMP had traced only 23 disappeared persons out of the 16,966 cases received. It stated concern about the high level of impunity reflected by the lack of progress in investigating and prosecuting enforced disappearances.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In February, the CEDAW Committee raised concerns about the Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act, which permitted child marriage. The Committee welcomed the Women, Peace and Security action plan.

In September, the government appointed members to the first Women's Commission; however, the Commission was not yet operational at year's end.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

No progress was made on decriminalizing consensual same-sex sexual activity, despite the National Human Rights Commission urging action on a Private Members' bill to reform the Penal Code and the government's pledge to revise discriminatory laws.

1. *South Asia: Stitched Up: Denial of Freedom of Association for Garment Workers in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka,* 27 November ↑

SUDAN

Republic of the Sudan

All parties to the conflict continued to commit serious violations and abuses of international human rights law, and violations of international humanitarian law, resulting in mass civilian casualties. States continued to supply weapons to parties to the conflict, including in Darfur, in violation of the existing UN Security Council arms embargo. Women and girls were subjected to widespread and systematic conflict-related sexual violence. Impunity persisted for conflict-related violations and abuses. Looting and destruction of civilian property violated economic and social rights. The conflict continued to cause mass displacement of civilians, with many seeking refuge in neighbouring countries where conditions were dire.

BACKGROUND

The armed conflict that erupted in the capital, Khartoum, between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in April 2023 continued across the country with a devastating impact on civilians. Despite multiple political processes, fighting continued and intensified throughout the year.

In January and February, the SAF recaptured territory, including Khartoum and Gezira state, from the RSF.

In August the RSF announced the formation of a new parallel government in the city of Nyala, South Darfur, headed by its leader, Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, and deputized by Abdelaziz al-Hilu, leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-North), an armed group that controlled much of the South Kordofan and Blue Nile states. The SPLM-North had entered into an alliance with the RSF in February.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Thousands of civilians were killed and injured in direct and indiscriminate attacks by the parties to the conflict, while others were caught in crossfire as both the SAF and RSF frequently used explosive weapons with wide area effects.

The SAF and their allies targeted civilians with reprisal attacks when they recaptured Khartoum and Gezira state in January and February. On 31 January OHCHR, the UN human rights office, reported that at least 17 men and one woman were killed in attacks attributed to SAF-affiliated fighters and militia since the SAF regained control of parts of Khartoum Bahri in late January.

In Gezira state, the SAF and their allies, the Sudan Shield Forces, targeted members of the Kanabi community in reprisal attacks, accusing them of collaborating with the RSF. According to the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission for the Sudan (FFM), between 9 and 12 January, the Sudan Shield Forces attacked several Kanabi villages, including Tayba and Dar al-Salam al-Hideba. They killed civilians, burned homes and looted property and livestock. In Tayba alone, at least 26 individuals, including a child, were killed.

On 11 April the RSF launched a large-scale attack on Zamzam internally displaced people's camp in North Darfur that lasted at least three days, causing immense harm to civilians and civilian infrastructure.[1] While there was no independently verified death toll, the FFM reported between 300 and 1,500 deaths and over 157 people wounded, most of them women and children. On the first day, RSF fighters attacked a health facility operated by Relief International, killing nine staff members. Two other staff members later died from injuries sustained during the attack. In addition, RSF fighters deliberately set fire to homes, businesses, the market and structures within the compound of the Sheikh Farah school and mosque in Zamzam, destroying and damaging critical civilian infrastructure. They also looted homes, businesses and shops, leaving residents without critical food and non-food items. Health facilities were destroyed and ransacked, depriving civilians of crucial care.

On 26 October the RSF seized control of El Fasher, North Darfur, following an 18-month siege of the city during which it carried out relentless attacks. After the takeover, the RSF carried out mass civilian killings, subjected women and girls to sexual violence and took hostages for ransom.[2] The prolonged siege and the prevention of humanitarian aid triggered famine in internal displacement camps in the area. Many civilians, including children, remained trapped in the city, in grave danger of further attacks and abuses.

The RSF also escalated attacks in the Kordofan region, including against the town of Bara in North Kordofan in October where they carried out summary killings. On 3 November, a drone strike reportedly killed at least 40 people at a funeral outside El Obeid, a city in North Kordofan. Civilians in the cities of Kadugli in South Kordofan and Babanusa in West Kordofan remained under RSF siege at constant risk of imminent attacks.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In September the UN Security Council extended for another year an arms embargo in place since 2004, which applies only to the Darfur region. It failed to expand the embargo to the rest of Sudan. The existing arms embargo had been poorly implemented, frequently violated and was wholly inadequate to meet the needs of the current crisis.

External actors continued to fuel the conflict, supplying weapons to parties to the conflict. The United Arab Emirates provided advanced Chinese weaponry to the RSF, which the group used in Darfur.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Parties to the conflict, particularly the RSF, subjected women and girls to widespread and systematic conflict-related sexual violence in Khartoum, and in towns and villages in the states of Gezira, and north and south Darfur. Sexual violence was used in a strategic manner to humiliate, punish, assert control, inflict fear and displace women and their communities.

In addition to rape, gang-rape and sexual slavery, RSF fighters subjected women and girls to other forms of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.[3]

Survivors of sexual violence suffered physical injuries and psychological trauma. Some developed health conditions, including kidney pains, irregular periods and walking difficulties. Some of them developed occasional memory loss.

Survivors of sexual violence had no access to post-rape care services and could not report violations to authorities. Ongoing fighting made it difficult for them to access health facilities and the police, as did the fear of stigmatization and reprisals.

The FFM reported that the SAF also committed sexual violence, including rape, sexual harassment and sexualized torture against women and men, particularly during detention in White Nile, Blue Nile, Khartoum and the Northern state.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

Approximately 24.6 million people, half of Sudan's population, experienced acute food insecurity. Famine conditions were confirmed in various parts of the country, and millions were at risk of starvation. Aid cuts, including those by the US government, exacerbated food shortages.

Meanwhile, disruptions to food supply chains and agricultural production, as well as administrative challenges and delays in delivering aid, contributed to widespread hunger and malnutrition.

In North Darfur, including in El Fasher, and the Zamzam and Abu Shouk internally displaced people's camps, the situation was particularly dire. The RSF cut off all critical food and water supplies. Basic food items, including oil, lentils, sugar and water, were also scarce and unaffordable, leading to malnourishment, dehydration and death, particularly among children.

The FFM reported that large-scale looting and destruction of infrastructure essential for civilian survival, mainly by the RSF and its allies, affected non-Arab communities, particularly in the Darfur region. The livelihoods of these communities were undermined as was civilian infrastructure, including shelters, food and water sources, health systems, water stations, and public offices and facilities.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The escalating conflict proved increasingly devastating for civilians. According to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, the conflict caused the world's fastest-growing displacement crisis. As of December, nearly 12 million people had been forcibly displaced since the beginning of the conflict in 2023; 7.8 million of them were inside Sudan and more than 4 million were in neighbouring countries living in dire conditions.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Impunity persisted for crimes under international law and conflict-related violations and abuses.

On 6 October, Trial Chamber I of the ICC convicted Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-Al-Rahman, also known as "Ali Kushayb", a principal leader of the Janjaweed militia, of 27 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur between August 2003 and March 2004. On 9 December he was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment. However, four other suspects, against whom ICC arrest warrants had been issued, including former president Omar al-Bashir, were yet to be arrested and handed over to the ICC for trial.

Also in October, the UN Human Rights Council extended the FFM's mandate for the second time. In September the FFM released its second report, which found that the SAF and RSF had committed war crimes and that the RSF had also committed crimes against humanity. It made recommendations to protect civilians, including lifting sieges, particularly on El Fasher and on towns in North and South Kordofan, and ensuring unhindered humanitarian access. It also gave recommendations for accountability and access to justice for victims, including the expansion of the ICC's jurisdiction and support for the establishment of an independent and impartial judicial mechanism for Sudan.

In October, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights published the first report of its joint Fact-Finding Mission on the situation in Sudan, which found that the SAF and RSF had committed serious human rights violations, including attacks on civilians, ethnic based killings, torture and sexual violence. It recommended the deployment of an AU peacekeeping mission to Sudan and the establishment of an accountability mechanism with a mandate to prosecute grave violations.

1. *Sudan: "A Refuge Destroyed": RSF Violations in Darfur's Zamzam Camp for Internally Displaced Persons*, 2 December ↑
2. "Sudan: El Fasher survivors tell of deliberate RSF killings and sexual violence – new testimony", 25 November ↑
3. *Sudan: "They Raped All of Us": Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Sudan*, 10 April ↑

SWEDEN

Kingdom of Sweden

Concerns persisted over repression of climate activists for acts of civil disobedience. National legislation remained inadequate to protect Indigenous rights. The use of a discriminatory risk model in the benefits system was discontinued. The government proposed reforms that would erode the rights of migrants and refugees in various areas.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In July, the Supreme Court acquitted 11 climate activists accused of sabotage after blocking a road, concluding that the action did not reach the level of social disruption required for a conviction. During the year, however, others faced arrest and prosecution for acts of civil disobedience. In September, six Greenpeace activists convicted of trespass for protesting against the expansion of an oil refinery in 2020 brought a case against Sweden before the European Court of Human Rights, arguing that their right to freedom of expression had been violated.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

There remained no legislative safeguards obliging decision-makers to obtain free, prior and informed consent from Sámi institutions – and the state failed to ensure meaningful consultations – before initiating land use projects that could significantly impact on Sámi rights. In October, the Equality Ombudsman criticized Sweden's failure to respect Sámi rights.

The EU's Critical Raw Materials Act enabled an intensification of mining on traditional Sámi lands, further threatening Sámi rights.[1]

DISCRIMINATION

In November, the Authority for Privacy Protection announced that the Social Insurance Agency was no longer using the AI tool employed to risk-profile applicants in the

automated state welfare system. The tool's intrusive algorithms had discriminated against people on the basis of their gender, "foreign background", income and level of education.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The government continued to put forward harmful changes to asylum and migration laws. Areas of concern included amendments to the rules on permanent residence, family reunification, returns, access to welfare benefits, citizenship and legal aid in asylum procedures.

In April, a commission of inquiry set up by the government proposed the introduction of a vaguely defined "good conduct" requirement in the Aliens Act. This would lead to the risk of residence permits being denied or revoked based on behaviour that was neither illegal nor punishable for Swedish citizens. The Equality Ombudsman opposed the proposals, finding that they carried a risk of discrimination.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In December, the government proposed a bill which would amend the constitution to enshrine the right to abortion.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

According to data published by the country's Climate Policy Council in March, Sweden's existing climate policies were insufficient to meet its climate targets and EU commitments for 2030. Similar concerns were raised in the same month by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

1. *Finland, Norway, Sweden: Just Transition or "Green Colonialism"?: How Mineral Extraction and New Energy Projects Without Free, Prior and Informed Consent Are Threatening Indigenous Sámi Livelihoods and Culture in Sweden, Norway and Finland,* 1 January ↑

SWITZERLAND

Swiss Confederation

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were restricted at universities, with demonstrators unjustly prosecuted for protests against Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Due to a surge in femicides urgent measures to protect women from domestic violence were announced. Some rejected asylum seekers faced forcible return to Afghanistan.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

The right to protest continued to be unduly restricted: authorization requirements, excessive liability of organizers and police tactics such as kettling, and the use of kinetic impact projectiles hindered peaceful assemblies. In a positive development, a number of local authorities started reviewing the police's use of force against protesters in Lausanne[1], Geneva[2] and Bern.[3]

In May, the cantonal court in Fribourg ruled that an invoice of CHF 1,380 (EUR 1,440) issued to the organizer of a peaceful Palestinian solidarity demonstration lacked a valid legal basis and unlawfully restricted the rights to freedom of expression and assembly. The invoice had been submitted in November 2023 to cover costs relating to policing traffic during the event.

In July, an event organized by Amnesty International with the UN Special Rapporteur on the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 was cancelled at the last minute by the University of Bern, which accused her of taking "unbalanced and extreme" positions.

In October, the Zurich District Court sentenced five students to suspended fines for trespassing following peaceful sit-in protests at the university ETH Zurich against Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. At least 10 people were awaiting trial.[4]

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In June, the national committee responsible for the implementation of the Istanbul

Convention announced emergency measures to tackle a surge in femicides, including more places in emergency accommodation and shelters. The police recorded 21,127 domestic violence offences, an increase of 6% on the previous year, with women and girls accounting for nearly 70% of victims. More than half of all the killings of women and girls took place in their homes. In November, the government launched the first national prevention campaign against domestic, sexual and gender-based violence.

DISCRIMINATION

In July, the health department of the canton of Zurich called for a national ban on gender-affirming treatments for minors, which would undermine non-discriminatory access to healthcare for trans adolescents.[5]

In December, the Federal Council adopted the first national strategy against racism and antisemitism, following reports of an increase in complaints of racism to counselling centres and a surge in anti-Muslim and antisemitic incidents. In Switzerland's report to the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), shortcomings were identified in the protection provided in civil law against discrimination, the systematic recording of racist incidents, and combating racial profiling.

In September, eight police officers were suspended by the city of Lausanne over discriminatory messages in WhatsApp groups amid allegations of systemic racism within the police force.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In March, the State Secretariat for Migration announced that it would again permit deportations to Afghanistan for certain asylum seekers whose claims were rejected, violating the principle of non-refoulement.

In March, parliament passed a new asylum law providing a legal basis for coercive measures in federal asylum centres, such as the temporary detention of children over the age of 15.

In October, the Federal Council lifted temporary protection for people fleeing areas of Ukraine to which a return was deemed "reasonable", even though no region in Ukraine was safe from Russian attacks.

In July, the CEDAW Committee ruled in three cases that Switzerland had violated the convention by ordering the return of survivors of gender-based violence to third countries despite lack of protection.[6]

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Following the European Court of Human Rights' landmark 2024 ruling in the case of *KlimaSeniorinnen Schweiz and Others v. Switzerland*, the Council of Europe advised the government in September to establish an independent national body to monitor the implementation and effectiveness of Swiss climate policy and the achievement of Paris Agreement climate targets.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In May, a coalition of NGOs submitted a new Responsible Business Initiative to the government with over 280,000 signatures, calling for a strong and effective corporate accountability law.

1. "Switzerland/Lausanne: Enable protests whenever possible", 19 September (French only) ↑
2. "Switzerland: Amnesty condemns police action against demonstrators in Geneva", 10 October (French and German only) ↑
3. "Switzerland: Gaza protest in Bern: Unjustified and excessive use of police force", 16 December (French and German only); ↑
4. "Switzerland: Gaza protests at ETH Zurich: protecting students' freedom of expression and assembly", 25 August (French and German only) ↑
5. "Switzerland: Healthcare for young trans people", 2 September, (French and German only) ↑
6. "Switzerland Reprimanded by the UN Committee on the Status of Women (CEDAW): Endangerment of Asylum-Seeking Women" 26 August (German only) ↑

SYRIA

Syrian Arab Republic

The newly appointed president formed a transitional government. Government authorities established a National

Commission for Transitional Justice and a National Commission for Missing Persons and began to try five former high-ranking officials for Assad-era crimes. Arbitrary detention continued to be used by the government and by the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) in north-eastern Syria. More than 30,000 people in SDF custody continued to be subjected to human rights violations. Government forces, government-backed forces and militia members unlawfully killed people from the Alawite minority and extrajudicially executed members of the Druze community. Druze armed groups and Bedouin tribal fighters committed serious abuses in Suwayda governorate, including abductions, unlawful killings and the burning of homes. The authorities failed to adequately investigate abductions of Alawite women and girls or hold perpetrators accountable. Syria faced its most severe drought in decades, worsening the humanitarian crisis. Israel continued to occupy the Golan Heights and moved troops into the UN-demilitarized buffer zone.

BACKGROUND

On 29 January the Syrian Military Operation Command appointed Ahmad al-Sharaa to lead Syria through a transitional period following the fall of the former government led by President Bashar al-Assad on 8 December 2024. The new Constitutional Declaration endorsed on 13 March by President al-Sharaa provided a framework for a five-year transitional period. On 29 March, President al-Sharaa formed a transitional government, including 23 ministers.

On 10 March, President al-Sharaa and Mazloum Abdi, commander of the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) – the military wing of the Kurdish-led Autonomous Administration of North and East Syria – signed an agreement to integrate the civilian and military institutions in north-eastern Syria into the Syrian government. The agreement was not implemented.

In May the Ministry of Defence announced the integration of all armed factions into the military.

On 22 June the Syrian health ministry said that at least 25 people were killed and 63 injured in a suicide bomb attack at a church in the capital, Damascus.

The EU, UK and USA lifted or waived most of their sanctions on Syria.

In October, electoral subcommittees elected 122 of 140 MPs. The remaining 18 seats, representing Suwayda, a governorate in southern Syria, and north-eastern Syria, remained vacant due to ongoing security and political challenges. President al-Sharaa did not appoint an additional 70 members, despite the new Constitutional Declaration requiring such appointments.

The humanitarian crisis remained dire; 16.7 million people required urgent assistance. The UN's humanitarian response plan remained only 10% funded. The USA's sudden suspension in January of much of its humanitarian funding to Syria forced some medical facilities and human rights organizations to close, the suspension of food assistance, and reductions in staff and operations of local NGOs.

In October the World Bank estimated the cost of rebuilding in Syria following 13 years of conflict to be around USD 216 billion.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Throughout the year, Syrian civil society organizations and newly established independent media registered and opened offices in Damascus and elsewhere in the country following decades of stifling restrictions on civic space under the former Assad government.

However, repressive legislation remained in place allowing for speech-related prosecutions. For example, on 31 July the authorities prosecuted journalist Nour Suleiman for expressing her opinion online regarding the abduction of Alawite women and girls and other attacks on the Alawite community, accusing her of "spreading false news."

Syrian and international organizations were able to hold public events on human rights issues in different parts of the country. However, towards the end of the year, local

authorities increasingly required prior authorization for such events.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

The authorities took some steps towards addressing the urgent need for judicial reform. However, the appointment of judges remained firmly in the hands of the executive, the death penalty was not abolished, and crimes under international law had yet to be incorporated into national law.

In June the government suspended the Counterterrorism Court, used by the former Assad government to target perceived opponents through unfair trials. In October the Ministry of Justice announced the annulment of at least 287,000 court sentences issued by the former Assad government's counterterrorism and military courts. This included the annulment of sentences based on charges commonly used to criminalize the exercise of human rights, such as insulting the head of state, insulting the army and participating in protests.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

In May the government established the National Commission for Transitional Justice (NCTJ). While the decree establishing the commission mandated it to address violations by the former Assad government, in November the NCTJ told Amnesty International that it would address abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including the former Assad government and armed opposition groups; and that the new draft transitional justice law would stipulate this.

In July the authorities arrested former ministers Kinda Shamat and Rima al-Qadiri, and others, for their alleged role in the enforced disappearance of children separated from their detained parents between 2011 and 2024.

The authorities arrested other suspected perpetrators of human rights violations and crimes against people in Syria carried out between 2011 and 2024, including the heads of intelligence branches where people were tortured and forcibly disappeared; suspected perpetrators of mass killings; and other high-ranking officials. In November, the minister of justice confirmed to Amnesty International that five trials of former high-ranking officials for Assad-era crimes were ongoing and dozens of others were in detention pending investigations. At least two high-profile figures from the former government appeared to have been given guarantees against prosecution despite credible information regarding their responsibility for serious human rights violations.

In September the authorities issued an arrest warrant for former president Bashar al-Assad on charges of murder and torture.

Courts in France, Germany and the Netherlands continued to investigate and prosecute people suspected of committing crimes under international law in Syria, including under the principle of universal jurisdiction. International rights mechanisms, including the UN Independent Institution on Missing Persons, were granted access to Syria.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Throughout the year, families of the disappeared organized demonstrations, including sit-ins at "truth tents" across Syrian towns and cities,[1] calling for action to uncover the fate and whereabouts of their loved ones, to recover the remains of those who died, to see those responsible held to account, and to ensure an end to enforced disappearances. Families of the disappeared and survivors of detention expressed frustration that the search for the disappeared had not yet begun in earnest. [2]

In May the authorities established the National Commission for Missing Persons, which was tasked with "uncovering the fate of thousands of missing persons in Syria and delivering justice to their families". More than 100,000 people were estimated to have gone missing between 2011 and 2024.

Lawyers reported at least three new cases of enforced disappearance during the year.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Syrian government

Government authorities arrested members of the Alawite community without arrest warrants. Among them were former Assad government low-ranking officials. Some were subjected to enforced disappearance for several weeks or months before their families were allowed to see them. Throughout their detention, they were not informed of the charges against them, were denied legal counsel, and/or were not brought before a judge.

On 6 March at least 25 Alawite men – including a retired teacher, a student and a mechanic – were arrested from their homes in al-Qadam neighbourhood, Damascus, without arrest warrants. A witness said his brother, who was among the 25, was arrested by general security officers and that his fate and whereabouts were undisclosed.

Syrian Democratic Forces

The SDF was responsible for the large-scale violation of the rights of more than 30,000 people in their custody for their perceived affiliation with the Islamic State armed group. Victims included children, women and men held in at least 27 detention facilities and two detention camps – Al-Hol and Roj – in north-eastern Syria. Many had been detained since 2019.

Activists reported that SDF forces arbitrarily arrested at least five people, predominantly Arabs, for expressing views online in support of President al-Sharaa's government.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

On 6 March, armed groups affiliated with the former government launched multiple coordinated attacks on security and military sites in the predominately Alawite coastal governorates of Latakia and Tartous. In response the government, backed by supporting militias, launched a counter-offensive. This led to a significant escalation of violence in the coastal governorates, as well as in the governorates of Hama and Homs. The UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic (UN CoI) said that 1,400 people, predominately civilians, were killed "in the ensuing massacres".

On 8 and 9 March, government-backed militias killed more than 100 people in the coastal city of Banias, Tartous governorate. Amnesty International documented at least 32 of these killings that were deliberate and targeted members of the Alawite community.[3] Armed men asked people if they were Alawite before threatening or killing them, and, in some cases, blaming them for violations committed by the Assad government.

In August the UN CoI reported that it had documented murder, torture, inhumane acts related to the treatment of the dead, large-scale looting, burning of homes, and other serious violations predominantly targeting the Alawite community in Latakia, Tartous and Hama that were carried out by members of security and military forces, militias and "private individuals" working alongside or in proximity to government forces. The commission found that armed groups associated with the former Assad government also carried out serious abuses.

On 18 November a public trial began for suspects accused of carrying out the mass killings of Alawite civilians in Latakia and Tartous. The minister of justice told Amnesty International that an additional 80 suspects were in detention pending trial.

On 22 July the national fact-finding committee, established by the president on 9 March, presented its main findings and said it had identified 298 alleged perpetrators of crimes belonging to the military and security forces, as well as affiliated forces; and 265 alleged perpetrators belonging to armed groups affiliated with the former Assad government. Despite calls to do so, the government did not publish the report of the fact-finding committee.

EXTRAJUDICIAL EXECUTIONS

In July, armed clashes between Druze and Bedouin fighters erupted in southern Syria. In response, on 15 July, government forces

entered Suwayda city for 48 hours and imposed a curfew.

Amnesty International documented the deliberate shooting and killing by Syrian government forces and affiliated forces of 44 Druze men and two women in a public square, residential homes, a school, a hospital and a ceremonial hall in Suwayda, amounting to extrajudicial executions.[4] Armed men in military uniforms filmed themselves killing at least 12 men by gunfire. CCTV footage from the National Hospital in Suwayda showed an armed man in military uniform, in the presence of other armed men and a general security officer, deliberately shooting and killing a medical worker.

On 31 July the minister of justice established an investigative committee into the events in Suwayda. However, by the end of the year, committee members had not yet been able to visit Suwayda city. On 2 September the Ministry of the Interior welcomed Amnesty International's report on Suwayda and declared "its commitment to protecting all Syrians from all backgrounds". In September and November, the committee spokesperson said that members of the security and military forces suspected of committing abuses in Suwayda had been referred to the judiciary.

ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Druze armed groups and Bedouin tribal fighters also committed serious abuses in Suwayda governorate, including abductions, unlawful killings and the burning of homes.

On 16 July the search-and-rescue humanitarian organization Syria Civil Defence dispatched Hamza al-Amareen, head of its Emergency Response Centre in Daraa, to Suwayda city in response to a UN call for assistance following clashes between Syrian government forces and Druze armed groups that had erupted the previous day. Based on credible information received by his close relatives, Hamza al-Amareen was abducted by Druze-led armed groups while travelling in a car clearly marked as "Civil Defence" with a group of civilian evacuees. Witnesses reported that armed men took Hamza al-Amareen and his vehicle, while the other passengers were left at the roadside. His whereabouts and fate remained undisclosed at the end of the year.[5]

On 17 July, clashes resumed between Druze and Bedouin fighters. On 19 July, a ceasefire agreement was reached. During the fighting, thousands of Druze and Bedouin community members were displaced from their homes.

On 20 July the Syrian Arab Red Crescent reported "attacks targeting volunteers, an ambulance being shot at, and the burning of a warehouse and several parked vehicles" during armed clashes in Suwayda.

On 13 August, several humanitarian aid workers were abducted by Bedouin tribal fighters in Daraa while travelling to deliver aid in Suwayda. On 21 August the Ministry of the Interior announced it had located the abducted workers and secured their release.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Amnesty International documented the abduction of at least 36 Alawite women and girls, aged between three and 40 years, by unidentified armed men in Latakia, Tartous, Homs and Hama governorates.[6] Some families were contacted by the abductors using Syrian or foreign telephone numbers, demanding ransom payments or threatening families if they continued searching for their loved ones. Ransom demands ranged from USD 10,000 to USD 14,000 and, even when paid, the captives were not released. At least two women, who were married at the time of their abduction, contacted their families to request a divorce from their husbands. They informed their families that they had been, or would be, forcibly married to their abductors.

In the majority of cases, police and security forces failed to conduct effective investigations. Some families of the missing who reported the abductions to the authorities said that their concerns were dismissed or that they were blamed for the disappearances.

On 3 November, the minister of the interior's spokesperson announced the results of an internal investigation into the abductions. He stated that, of 42 reported cases, only one was confirmed as an

abduction while the others involved disappearances for various reasons such as domestic abuse or elopement.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Syria experienced its lowest rainfall in three decades, triggering a severe drought that decreased wheat production by 40% and aggravated the humanitarian crisis resulting from 13 years of conflict that left more than half the population food insecure.

Farmers urged the government to rehabilitate agricultural infrastructure in key regions, promote drought-resistant crops, shift to less water-intensive farming and invest in sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture. The government did not appear to take any such steps during the year.

OCCUPIED GOLAN HEIGHTS

The Golan Heights remained under Israel's occupation and illegal annexation. Following the ousting of former president Assad, the Israeli military constructed at least eight military bases and moved troops into the UN-demilitarized buffer zone that separated the 1967-occupied Golan Heights from the rest of Syria.

Residents in the UN-demilitarized buffer zone reported that Israeli military forces forcibly displaced residents, demolished homes, destroyed forests, prevented residents from reaching agricultural land, and arbitrarily detained residents, some of whom were transferred to Israel.

1. "Syria: Torture survivors of Saydnaya and other detention centres grappling with devastating needs and minimal support", 26 June ↑
2. *Truth Still Buried: The Struggle for Justice of Disappeared People's Families in Syria*, 29 August ↑
3. "Syria: Coastal massacres of Alawite civilians must be investigated as war crimes", 3 April ↑
4. "Syria: New investigation reveals evidence government and affiliated forces extrajudicially executed dozens of Druze people in Suwayda", 2 September ↑
5. "Syria: Druze armed group should immediately release humanitarian worker abducted three months ago", 16 October ↑
6. "Syria: Authorities must investigate abductions of Alawite women and girls", 28 July ↑

TAIWAN

Taiwan

New regulations eased restrictions on execution. Infringement of freedom of assembly persisted. No progress was made on improving protections for refugees. Judicial independence was at risk. Legislation was passed providing limited protections for the Pingpu Indigenous Peoples. Mechanisms to hold businesses accountable remained limited, but awareness increased. Discrimination persisted.

BACKGROUND

Following deep disagreement over a budget bill passed in January, opposing positions between the main political factions grew further entrenched. In the face of wide-ranging cuts, the government focused on addressing national security concerns, while long-standing rights commitments failed to advance.

DEATH PENALTY

Taiwan executed Huang Lin-kai for murder in January, shortly after the Constitutional Court identified systemic flaws in the death penalty system. Despite a pending appeal and concerns raised by his lawyer regarding his mental health, the execution proceeded. Amendments to the regulations on implementing death sentences were adopted in April, permitting executions during retrials or constitutional litigation. The amendments violated international safeguards and restrictions set out in a 2024 Constitutional Court ruling to prevent arbitrary use of the death penalty.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

The legal framework and enforcement continued to arbitrarily restrict peaceful assembly, especially in politically sensitive

zones, apparently to target the activities of selected civic groups. In September, police expelled peaceful pro-Palestinian protesters and detained a foreign participant for several hours.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The government failed to pass a long-anticipated refugee law, citing national security concerns. The Temporary Alien Registration Certificate, introduced in 2023, remained opaque with unclear application procedures. No cases were approved.

An investigation begun in June by the Control Yuan (ombudsperson) highlighted the urgent need for a formal asylum mechanism. A separate Control Yuan investigation exposed serious deficiencies in foreign national detention centres, including poor conditions, and underlined the lack of legal safeguards and risks of torture.

RIGHT TO TRUTH, JUSTICE AND REPARATION

Amendments to the Constitutional Court Procedure Act (CCPA) introduced structural barriers to constitutional justice, including higher quorum thresholds and stricter voting requirements. Failure to appoint enough judges had rendered the Constitutional Court inoperative since 25 January, raising serious concerns about judicial independence and alignment with international human rights standards. Finally, in December, the remaining judges found the amendments to the CCPA unconstitutional and began to accept cases, despite failing to meet quorum.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

In October, after rushed consultation, the Legislative Yuan passed the Pingpu Indigenous People's Identity Act, establishing a separate legal framework for Pingpu Indigenous Peoples and offering limited protections for cultural rights. Indigenous Peoples seeking formal recognition noted that the act failed to provide full recognition of Indigenous status and thus did not meet the Constitutional Court's 2022 requirement to provide inclusive recognition.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Authorities announced plans to fund a medical project in an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank, which could make Taiwan complicit in Israel's violations of international law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In January, a landmark ruling in the Radio Corporation of America toxic exposure case underscored systemic gaps in corporate accountability and improved public awareness. Nonetheless, mechanisms to hold businesses accountable remained limited.

DISCRIMINATION

The government failed to pass the Anti-Discrimination Act. Indigenous students continued to face systemic discrimination in education settings. Migrants were subjected to exclusionary policies, including inadequate protection under the Labor Standards Act.

TAJIKISTAN

Republic of Tajikistan

A series of prisoner deaths highlighted inhumane conditions of detention, and there was near complete impunity for widespread torture and other ill-treatment. Opposition politicians, former officials and journalists were given lengthy sentences on dubious charges after unfair trials. Human rights lawyer Buzurghmehr Yorov continued serving a long sentence despite international outcry. Although "liking" critical social media posts was decriminalized, freedom of expression remained severely restricted and journalists faced prosecution. Persecution of the Pamiri minority continued. Authorities moved to expel Afghan refugees. Incidents of domestic violence increased. Lack of access to water and sanitation persisted.

BACKGROUND

In February the OSCE cancelled its planned mission to observe parliamentary elections the following month. It cited a "lack of assurance by the authorities of Tajikistan that observers would be accredited and able to carry out their work", voicing concerns about the fairness and overall integrity of the electoral process.

The economy remained heavily reliant on remittances from the diaspora, particularly labour migrants working in Russia. Although the economy continued to grow, the pace of growth slowed, declining from 8.4% in 2024 to an estimated 7.5%.

RIGHT TO LIFE

Conditions of detention, including a lack of adequate medical treatment, apparently led to a series of deaths of prisoners. Particularly affected were those prosecuted on politically motivated grounds or sentenced following unfair trials and who appeared to be targeted for harsher treatment.

Five Pamiri activists died in custody between January and July: Kulmamad Pallaev, Bogsho Imatshoev, Aslan Gulobov, Muzaffar Davlatmirov and Eronsho Makhmadrakhimov. No effective investigations were known to have been carried out into the circumstances of their deaths.

Zubaidullo Rozik, a dissident and former senior member of the arbitrarily banned Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan, died in prison on 24 September. He had been serving a 25-year sentence on politically motivated charges.

In October, Saidazam Rakhmonov died within a week of being arrested, presumably on suspicion of extremism or terrorism. Relatives reported signs of beating and electric burns on his body. Officials claimed he had committed suicide.

IMPUNITY

Reported past human rights violations by members of law enforcement agencies remained unaddressed. Despite evidence of widespread ongoing torture and other ill-treatment in penitentiary institutions, including beatings, denial of necessary medical care and prolonged incommunicado detention, only one official was reported as prosecuted and convicted under torture charges during the year.

In violation of Tajikistan's obligations under the Rome Statute, the authorities failed to arrest Russian president Vladimir Putin during his visit to the country in October as per the arrest warrant issued by the ICC.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

Eight defendants, including prominent opposition politicians and former senior officials, were sentenced on 5 February to up to 27 years' imprisonment on charges of state treason and attempted violent seizure of power. The trial was closed to the public, and the authorities did not disclose publicly any evidence of either the defendants' guilt or of a conspiracy as such.

On 29 September, 12 international human rights organizations called on the Tajikistani authorities to release human rights lawyer Buzurghmehr Yorov, arbitrarily imprisoned since 2015 for his work. There was no official response by year's end and he continued serving his 23-year sentence.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In May, virtually "liking" online publications that "call for or justify terrorism or extremism" was decriminalized. However, freedom of expression remained unduly restricted and public criticism of the authorities was effectively prohibited.

On 10 January, a court in the city of Kulob sentenced Ahmad Ibrohim, editor-in-chief of the independent weekly newspaper *Payk*, to 10 years and four months in prison on dubious charges of bribery, extortion and extremism. The case was classified, and the trial held inside the pretrial detention centre.

Journalist Rukhshona Khakimova was among those convicted in a closed trial by the Supreme Court on 5 February on politically motivated charges of state treason (see above). She was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment, and her bank savings were confiscated. Media reported that

according to confidential sources, the prosecution was connected to her unpublished investigation into China's influence in Tajikistan.

DISCRIMINATION

Members of the Pamiri minority in Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast continued to face discrimination and persecution. Their languages, cultural practices and religious identity remained restricted or denied, and their aspiration for genuine autonomy suppressed. Community leaders and activists arbitrarily detained and imprisoned in the wake of the overwhelmingly peaceful 2021–2022 protests remained behind bars and were not included in the amnesty announced by the president in March. Human rights violations by security services during the protests, including alleged extrajudicial executions, had still not been investigated.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In July, the State Committee of National Security conducted raids targeting Afghan refugees, thousands of whom had arrived in Tajikistan in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. The authorities claimed to have uncovered various violations and threatened to deport the refugees. Some refugees received anonymous SMS messages instructing them to leave Tajikistan within 15 days. In several instances, entire families were taken away and likely forcibly returned to Afghanistan.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Domestic violence and forced and early marriages persisted. Official statistics recorded an increase of some 15% in the number of cases of domestic violence against women and girls in the first six months of 2025 compared to the previous year.

Domestic violence was not criminalized as a distinct type of crime, which made justice and remedies less accessible to survivors.

Many shelters for victims of domestic violence were heavily dependent on foreign assistance and were reportedly negatively impacted by the closure of USAID-funded programmes.

RIGHT TO WATER

The authorities adopted a plan to invest approximately USD 300 million to improve access to clean water. Most of the money was expected to come from international donors.

According to official data, 59% of the population had no access to centralized plumbing systems, and 8% had no access to local water sources at all. The situation was particularly bad in rural areas, where 76% of people lacked a centralized water supply. Moreover, 85% of the population, including virtually everyone in rural areas, had no sewage systems.

TANZANIA

United Republic of Tanzania

Repression of dissent intensified during the election period, particularly against opposition members and supporters. Security forces used unlawful and lethal force against protesters, killing hundreds and injuring thousands. A commission of inquiry into the killings did not make public any findings. The rights of actual and perceived government critics to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly were severely undermined. Opposition and ruling party members were forcibly disappeared, while opposition leader Tundu Lissu was charged with treason. Two foreign activists were tortured and subjected to other ill-treatment. Officials unlawfully demolished property belonging to the Indigenous Maasai People in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area. The East African Court of Justice's decision on an appeal brought by regional NGOs challenging the legality of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline project remained pending.

BACKGROUND

In May, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) disqualified the main opposition Party for Democracy and Progress (Chadema) from participating in the 29

October general elections after it refused to sign the election code of ethics, citing concerns about electoral integrity. In September, the Dodoma High Court overturned the INEC's decision to bar Luhaga Mpina from standing as the presidential candidate for the Alliance for Change and Transparency (ACT Wazalendo) party, claiming the party had violated its own internal procedures. However, the INEC reinstated his disqualification.

Following the elections, Samia Suluhu Hassan was re-elected as president with 98% of the vote. Her ruling Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM) party won 99% of the parliamentary seats. The results were highly disputed among opposition members and supporters, leading to nationwide protests that were brutally repressed (see below).

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

The government's continued campaign to repress dissent escalated during the election period, reaching unprecedented levels on and following election day. From 29 October, authorities severed internet access across the country for five days. Meanwhile security forces suppressed election protests with deadly violence and arbitrarily arrested hundreds of demonstrators solely for exercising their right to peaceful assembly (see below, Unlawful attacks and killings).

Throughout the election period, opposition members and supporters, civil society members, journalists and others expressing dissent were targeted by the authorities. Tactics to silence dissenting voices included the use of arbitrary arrests and detentions, enforced disappearances, and torture and other ill-treatment.

Critics faced prosecution and unfair trials under legislation containing vague and overly broad provisions. The prosecution of Chadema's leader, Tundu Lissu, who was detained simply for urging his supporters to boycott the election, represented the broader crackdown and shrinking space for political participation. He was arrested in April during a political rally in the town of Mbinga, during which police used unnecessary and excessive force to disperse his supporters, including firing tear gas and shooting into the air. He was charged with treason, an offence that precludes bail, and remained in detention at the end of the year. Also in April, five other Chadema leaders were arrested, including Vice Chairman John Heche, to prevent a rally in Kariakoo, an area of Dar es Salaam.

In June a Dar es Salaam High Court injunction barred Chadema from political activities, after three Chadema party trustees from Zanzibar filed a lawsuit alleging discriminatory allocation of the party's resources, which favoured mainland Tanzania over the Zanzibar archipelago. Dozens of members were subsequently arrested for participating in "illegal assemblies".

Also in June, police detained Janeth Rithe, Chairperson of ACT Wazalendo's Women's Wing, for four days after she expressed doubt regarding President Hassan's claims about Tanzania's economic performance.

In July, police in the Lindi region arrested and briefly detained former ACT Wazalendo leader Zitto Kabwe for comments he made during a rally in Tunduru district about electoral malpractice.

In August, the home affairs minister ordered police to conduct "online patrols" to, he claimed, monitor individuals who used digital platforms to disrupt peace and security.

In September, the Tanzania Communications Regulatory Authority imposed a 90-day ban on online platform JamiiForums, alleging it had published misleading and defamatory content about the government in contravention of the 2020 Online Content Regulations and its amendments.

On 7 September, police disrupted nationwide gatherings commemorating Heroes Day, arresting Chadema party officials in Serengeti region, and 20 supporters at a church in the city of Mwanza.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Between 29 October and 3 November, authorities responded to nationwide protests (see above) with unlawful and lethal force,

tear gas and other less lethal weapons. Hundreds were killed and thousands of others injured. The internet shutdown allowed these grave human rights violations to be committed out of public view and with impunity. As a result of the imposition of curfews and the lack of government transparency, the actual number of casualties remained unknown. On 14 November, President Hassan announced the formation of a commission of inquiry into the killings but no findings were released by the end of the year.

In February John James, from Dar es Salaam, was shot dead by a Tanzania Forest Service (TFS) Agency guard in Kisarawe district, Pwani region. In March, two TFS officers were arrested in relation to the killing, and the police said that investigations were ongoing. In July, Frank Sanga was shot dead by a member of a police motorcycle patrol unit in the Ntyuka area of Dodoma region. Police authorities confirmed that two officers were detained in connection with the incident and pledged to conduct a "thorough" investigation. No further information was made public.

In May, Charles Kitima, Secretary General of the Tanzania Episcopal Conference (TEC), was hospitalized following an attack by unidentified assailants at the TEC headquarters in Dar es Salaam. Hours earlier, he had circulated a video online condemning police "lawlessness" and calling for electoral justice. The incident did not appear to have been investigated.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The fate and whereabouts of tens of political party members, apparently subjected to enforced disappearance, remained undisclosed. Nor was there any public information to suggest their cases were being investigated.

On 27 March, ACT Wazalendo party member Fakih Ali Salim from Zanzibar was reportedly abducted at his home by unidentified men. On 2 May, unidentified individuals – believed to be police officers – raided Chadema member Mdude Nyagali's home, beat him and took him to an undisclosed location.

The whereabouts of at least four CCM party members remained unknown. Daniel Chonchorio, Siza Mwita Keheta and Anthony Gabriel had not been heard from since March, July and August, respectively. Humphrey Polepole, a former Tanzanian ambassador to Cuba who had criticized the Tanzanian government, was forcibly disappeared on 6 October.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In April police officers assaulted 23 Chadema party supporters in detention, two of whom said they were also sexually abused. They were abandoned in a forest in Bagamoyo district, having suffered extensive injuries. They had been detained at a gathering outside a Dar es Salaam court where Tundu Lissu was facing charges (see above). More than 50 other supporters were also reportedly beaten when they tried to enter the court.

On 19 May, Ugandan human rights defender Agather Atuhaire and Kenyan activist Boniface Mwangi were arbitrarily arrested by security officers in Dar es Salaam, where they had arrived to observe Tundu Lissu's trial. They were held incommunicado in undisclosed locations and tortured and otherwise ill-treated for four days, before being forcibly deported to Uganda and Kenya, respectively. Also on 19 May, President Hassan publicly warned foreign activists against involvement in Tanzanian affairs.

FORCED EVICTIONS

In February, the Presidential Commission on Land in Ngorongoro and the Presidential Commission on Relocation from Ngorongoro were established to assess land conflicts and the relocation of Indigenous Maasai People from their land in the Ngorongoro district. The commissions' failure to deliver their findings (as mandated) to President Hassan within three months and fulfil their pledges to provide regular updates raised concerns about transparency and accountability.

In June the president publicly criticized the presence of members of the local Maasai

community and their livestock in the Ngorongoro Conservation Area (NCA). The NCA was the subject of protracted land disputes between the Maasai community and the government, which claimed the Maasai's presence undermined tourism. Following the president's statement, park rangers demolished newly renovated homes and a church belonging to the Maasai in the NCA's Oldupai area. They arrested several Maasai villagers, claiming they were encroaching on NCA land. Maasai land activists said the actions were intended to pressure them into "voluntarily" relocating from their land.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In February, the East African Court of Justice (EACJ) heard an appeal filed by four East African NGOs challenging the legality of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline (EACOP) project, which followed an earlier EACJ ruling that had declared their case inadmissible. The judges' decision remained pending. The 1,443km underground fossil fuel pipeline, to transport crude oil from Uganda's oil fields in Hoima to Tanga Port in Tanzania, was nearing completion.

DISCRIMINATION
Persons with albinism

In February, the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights ruled that the government was responsible for human rights violations against persons with albinism. It highlighted longstanding discrimination, violence and exclusion faced by this group, citing failures in state protection, accountability and access to essential services. The court ordered the government to take measures including compensating victims, reforming legislation to classify violence against persons with albinism as aggravated offences, and conducting national public awareness campaigns to challenge harmful myths and superstitions about albinism.

THAILAND

Kingdom of Thailand

The authorities continued to suppress freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, detaining protesters and charging activists and an academic under repressive laws. Leaked documents revealed coordinated cyber operations targeting civil society and opposition groups. Human rights defenders received online threats of violence. Refoulement persisted with the unlawful deportation of 40 Uyghurs to China and the extradition of a Montagnard activist to Viet Nam. A landmark verdict held 13 soldiers accountable for torture committed in 2024. The government allowed Myanmar refugees living in camps to work legally outside the camps, while new legislation on ethnic groups drew criticism for sidelining Indigenous Peoples.

BACKGROUND

On 28 May, a Cambodian soldier was killed in a clash with Thai troops at the Thai-Cambodia border. This led to months of tension and armed conflict, resulting in the deaths of at least 40 people. Thousands of people fled from towns and villages.

In June, Cambodian Senate President Hun Sen made public the audio recording of a compromising private phone call he had with then Thai prime minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra during the border clashes. This led Thailand's Constitutional Court to suspend her on 1 July and officially remove her from office on 29 August. On 7 September, parliament elected Anutin Charnvirakul, the leader of the Bhumjaithai Party, as the new prime minister.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

On 7 January , a gunman shot and killed 74-year-old Cambodian-French former opposition member of parliament Lim Kimya in the capital, Bangkok. In October, a former Thai navy marine was sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder. Warrants were

issued for two Cambodian suspects, but both remained at large.

At the end of the year, 55 people remained in detention serving prison sentences due to the exercise of their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly during large-scale protests between 2020 and 2022 calling for political reforms.

In April, the Third Army Area Commander charged Paul Chambers, a prominent US academic living in Thailand specializing in Thai civil-military relations and democratization, under the lese-majesty law and the Computer Crimes Act. He was charged over a promotional blurb for an academic seminar in Singapore on Thailand's annual police and military reshuffle. Prosecutors dropped the charges against him in May. In September, Chambers filed a case against four police units for unlawfully revoking his visa.

In May, 15 activists from P-Move, a civil society coalition working on labour, environmental and land rights, were charged for joining public assemblies in 2024-2025, allegedly violating a 50m protest ban around Government House in Bangkok.

In July, parliamentarians began deliberating five bills on granting amnesty for criminal offences related to political activities.[1] These bills included one drafted by the Network for People's Amnesty – a coalition of 20 civil society organizations – which explicitly included amnesty for individuals facing charges under two articles of the Criminal Code: Article 110 (violence or threat against the Queen, the Heir-Apparent, or the Regent) and Article 112 (lese-majesty). In October, parliament voted to reject provisions that allowed amnesty for those charged under these laws.

In August, police charged three activists for "failure to notify authorities about a public demonstration within 24 hours", as required under the Public Assembly Act. The activists had held a protest against Myanmar military leader Min Aung Hlaing's participation at the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation Summit in Bangkok on 5 April.

On 5 September, the Bangkok Court of Appeal overturned the acquittal of five activists involved in a peaceful protest in the vicinity of the royal motorcade in October 2020. They were found guilty of multiple charges, including violence against the Queen (Article 110), illegal assembly (Article 215) and obstructing traffic (Article 385), all punishable under the Thai Criminal Code. The activists remained in prison because the court had denied their request for bail.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

During a parliamentary no-confidence debate in March, an opposition parliamentarian disclosed leaked internal documents revealing that Thai police and military units were jointly running a "Cyber Team" to tarnish the reputations and undermine the work of civil society organizations and political opposition members. According to the leaked information, Amnesty International was explicitly identified as a "high-value target".[2] Other INGOs, local civil society groups, prominent activists and pro-democracy figures were also on this list, including human rights organizations Thai Lawyers for Human Rights and iLaw, and human rights defender Anna Annanon.

On 10 September, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders expressed concern over the defamation charge against Witoon Lianchamroon, Secretary-General of the BIOTHAI Foundation. The Special Rapporteur said the charge "may be in retaliation for his work on community rights and food security". The lawsuit stemmed from his warning that the invasive Blackchin Tilapia, an alien fish species, could harm river ecosystems and threaten local fishermen's livelihoods.

On 15 October, the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders raised concerns about online threats of violence against Thai human rights defender Angkhana Neelapaijit. The threats were linked to her criticisms of potential human rights violations resulting from the authorities' management of the border conflict with Cambodia.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

On 27 February, the authorities deported 40 Uyghurs to China, despite the real risk of serious human rights violations, and the prohibition of refoulement under Thailand's anti-torture law.[3] The men deported were among approximately 300 Uyghurs who had been apprehended by the government on 13 March 2014 after they had fled persecution and discrimination in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. A total of 109 people from the group were deported to China in July 2015. As of December, five other Uyghur refugees were at risk of being forcibly returned.

On 27 May, the Criminal Court for Corruption and Misconduct Cases Region 2 in Rayong Province delivered the first verdict under Thailand's Prevention and Suppression of Torture and Enforced Disappearance Act passed in 2022. The court found two army instructors and 11 senior conscripts guilty of the torture of Worapratch Phadmasakul, an 18-year-old conscript, and sentenced them to prison terms ranging between 10 and 20 years. Worapratch Phadmasakul died after being severely tortured and beaten during disciplinary training on 2 August 2024.

On 28 November, authorities extradited Indigenous Montagnard and Ede human rights defender and refugee Y Quynh Bdap to Viet Nam, following a Court of Appeal ruling approving Viet Nam's extradition request.[4] In 2024, Viet Nam convicted Bdap in absentia on terrorism charges over an alleged 2023 attack on a government building.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

On 26 August, the cabinet passed a resolution allowing refugees from Myanmar to work regularly in Thailand. The resolution applied to around 81,000 forcibly displaced people hosted in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border. The refugees were required to apply for a work permit, which would last for one year.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Local communities and civil society organizations raised concerns about the lack of public participation in Land Bridge, the government's large-scale infrastructure project aimed at connecting shipping routes between the Gulf of Thailand and the Andaman Sea. The first phase of the project was set to be completed in 2030. Concerns included the negative ecological impacts of the project, which could threaten the livelihood of coastal communities, including the Indigenous Moken people whose primary source of livelihood is artisanal fishing.

On 6 August, parliament passed the Act on Protection and Promotion of the Way of Life of Ethnic Groups aimed at protecting the cultural rights of ethnic minority communities. However, civil society and OHCHR, the UN human rights office, criticized the law because it failed to include the term "Indigenous", using the term "ethnic" instead, and did not fully reflect the principle of free, prior and informed consent.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Residents in Nakhon Ratchasima province demanded an end to potash-mining operations. The operations caused soil and groundwater salinity to rise, rendering farmland infertile and contaminating water sources, thereby undermining the rights to water, adequate food, health and livelihoods.

Meanwhile, in the north of the country along the Kok River, arsenic contamination traced to rare-earth and gold mining upstream in Myanmar exposed ethnic communities and Indigenous Peoples – particularly in Chiang Rai province – to serious health risks, deprived them of safe drinking water and infringed their right to health.

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1. "Thailand: New amnesty law must clear peaceful protesters of all charges including lese-majesty", 15 July ↑
2. "Thailand: Authorities must end malicious smear campaigns and cyberattacks on civil society", 7 April ↑
3. "Thailand: 'Deportation' of Uyghurs to China 'unimaginably cruel'", 27 February ↑
4. "Thailand: Extradition of Montagnard activist to Viet Nam places him at grave risk of torture", 26 November ↑

TOGO

Republic of Togo

Freedom of expression was severely restricted, with media outlets suspended, the internet disrupted and arbitrary detention used against government critics. Peaceful protests were regularly banned, and there were reports of torture and security forces using excessive force against protesters. The president enacted a law to address climate change.

BACKGROUND

Following the adoption of the April 2024 constitution, power was concentrated in the hands of the President of the Council of Ministers – the leader of the majority party – a post assumed in May by former president Faure Gnassingbé, who had held power since 2005.

The spillover of the Central Sahel conflict caused an influx of refugees into northern Togo and the internal displacement of thousands of Togolese. Between January and August, around 60 people were killed in attacks by armed groups in the northern Savanes region where, in March, the state of security emergency was extended by one year.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 6 June, the gendarmerie arrested a TV5 Monde correspondent while she covered a protest and forced her to delete her camera footage.

Media outlets Radio France Internationale and France 24 remained suspended at the end of the year after being issued with a three-month suspension by the High Authority for Audiovisual and Communication (HAAC) on 16 June. The HAAC claimed that the outlets had used words that were "inaccurate, biased, or even contrary to established facts".

Between the end of June and September, internet access was disrupted. Social media platforms were particularly targeted.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

On 12 January, artist Honoré Sokpor was arrested after publishing a poem on Facebook denouncing the government's arbitrary and oppressive tactics. He was charged with inciting rebellion against the state, among other charges. In December, he was released on bail.

On 26 May, the singer and activist known as Aamron used social media to call on people to mobilize against the government. He was arrested the following night at his home in the capital, Lomé, without prior summons or an arrest warrant. Released on 21 June, he said he was forcibly admitted to a psychiatric hospital and made to take medication. On 19 September, Aamron was re-arrested and held in police custody for inciting the population to revolt, among other charges. He was released under judicial supervision hours later.

On 22 August, Armand Agblézé and Oséi Agbagno, members of civil society organization Tournons La Page ("Let's Turn the Page"), a movement promoting democratic change and good governance, were arrested in Lomé. They had been participating in a meeting connected to protests planned for 30 August. They were detained on several charges including "serious disruption to public order" and released on bail in December.

On 17 September, former defence minister Marguerite Gnakadé was arrested for publishing articles and videos denouncing poor governance and calling for Faure Gnassingbé's resignation. She remained in detention on charges including inciting revolt against state authority and publishing false news.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In June, protests against the crackdown on peaceful dissent, the cost-of-living crisis and changes to the Constitution increased.[1] The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders said at least 81 protesters were arrested on 5 and 6 June. According to the public prosecutor, 56 of them were released on 9 June. The others were released

on bail on 31 December under clemency measures.

The violent repression of protests in Lomé escalated between 26 and 30 June. Victims and other witnesses said that security forces used unlawful force and ill-treatment against protesters, bystanders and others living in the vicinity of the protests.[2] In a statement shared on 29 June, Togolese civil society organizations reported the deaths of seven people whose bodies were found in rivers in Lomé, and the "beatings" and "arbitrary arrests of passers-by, youth, and older people". They also reported cases of security forces chasing young people, including children, forcing them "to take refuge in the lagoon". No public information was made available concerning the progress of an investigation announced by the public prosecutor in July into the deaths of five people whose bodies were found in rivers.

On 30 August, the authorities banned a protest against poor governance and restrictions on human rights organized by the June 6 Movement (M66), a collective of diaspora artists and bloggers. The same day, security forces surrounded the homes of several prominent figures who had supported M66's call to demonstrate.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Fourteen of those arrested at protests on 5 and 6 June said they were tortured and otherwise ill-treated during detention, claims which were supported by medical certificates. Complaints filed by victims with the military court had not been investigated by the end of the year.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In April, the President enacted a law to better regulate the effects of human-induced climate change, including mechanisms to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

1. "Togo: Authorities must investigate allegations protesters were tortured and end crackdown on dissent", 17 June ↑
2. "Togo: Testimonies provide glimpse into violent repression of protests", 3 July ↑

TUNISIA

Republic of Tunisia

Authorities escalated the crackdown on freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and all forms of dissent. Human rights organizations were targeted with investigations or asset freezes, with human rights defenders and NGO staff prosecuted and detained for their human rights work. Mass trials and harsh sentencing of opposition members under counterterrorism or cybercrime laws further contributed to a crisis in the rule of law. Tunisia maintained its suspension of access to asylum and committed widespread human rights violations against migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. These included collective expulsions amounting to refoulement, arbitrary detention, torture and other ill-treatment, and reckless interceptions at sea.

BACKGROUND

On 20 March, Prime Minister Sarra Zaafarani formed a new cabinet, the sixth under President Kais Saied. Days later, Prime Minister Zaafarani's government communicated to the AU Commission its decision to withdraw its declaration under Article 34(6) of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. When the withdrawal comes into effect in March 2026, it will prevent individuals and NGOs bringing cases against Tunisia before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

The authorities intensified their targeting of political opposition leaders and activists, with new criminal trials opening and lengthy prison sentences confirmed on appeal.

Two such examples were the mass trials of opposition politicians and dissidents. In April the Tunis Court of First Instance convicted 37 opposition members from different political affiliations and human rights defenders on

unfounded state security and terrorism charges, imposing prison sentences ranging from four to 66 years, in what was known as the "Conspiracy Case". In November the Tunis Court of Appeal upheld the convictions of 34 defendants and sentenced them to between five and 45 years in prison. A few days after the verdict, lawyer and human rights defender Ayachi Hammami and political opposition activists Chaima Issa and Ahmed Nejib Chebbi were arrested to enforce their sentences of five, 20 and 12 years respectively.

In June the Tunis Court of Appeal confirmed the 10-year prison sentence against senior Ennahdha leader and former minister of justice Noureddine Bhiri for "trying to change the form of the government and inciting people against each other". The charge was based on a social media post attributed to him, which he denied having written.

Also in June, the Tunis Court of First Instance sentenced Abir Moussi, leader of the opposition PDL party, to a two-year prison sentence for criticizing the electoral commission. On 30 December the Tunis Court of Appeal upheld the conviction and sentence. In November, in a separate case, Abir Moussi was sentenced to 12 years' imprisonment on unfounded charges of "trying to change the form of the government and inciting people against each other".

In July the Tunis Court of First Instance convicted 21 senior members of the Ennahdha opposition party on unfounded and vague terrorism and state security charges in a separate case known as "Conspiracy Case two", imposing sentences of 12 to 35 years' imprisonment.

In November, the trial of human rights defender and former president of the Truth and Dignity Commission, Sihem Bensedrine, opened on charges of "fraud and forgery" and "abuse of official capacity" for allegedly falsifying the final report of the Truth and Dignity Commission denouncing corruption in the banking sector. She had been provisionally released in January after five months' arbitrary detention and placed under a travel ban.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Judicial authorities continued to use Decree Law 2022-54 on Cybercrime (Decree Law 54) to silence dissenting journalists, social media users, lawyers, artists and activists. By September, according to the National Syndicate of Journalists, 29 journalists were facing investigations or prosecutions under Decree Law 54.

In September the Nabeul Court of First Instance sentenced Saber Chouchane to death for his Facebook posts, including criticism of President Saied and calls for a public protest and political change. He was pardoned by President Saied and released after a few days.

On 6 October the Jendouba Court of First Instance convicted Moncef El-Houaidi under Article 24 of Decree Law 54, based on social media posts in which he criticized President Saied. He was sentenced to two years in prison and fined TND 1,000 (approximately USD 339).

The trial of lawyer Dalila Ben Mbarek Msaddak opened with a first hearing on 17 October, on charges of "spreading false news" for comments she made on television in November 2023 defending her clients detained in the Conspiracy Case. She had told television presenter Borhene Bsaies, whom she was indicted alongside, that the charges against her clients were unfounded and the case fabricated. The trial was postponed to January 2026.

In November, media figure Sonia Dahmani was provisionally released after spending 18 months in arbitrary detention. She had been sentenced to a total of four years and four months in prison in three cases based on Decree Law 54. She continued to face charges under the same decree in two separate cases.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Human rights defenders and NGO workers faced arbitrary detention, prosecutions and/or harassment through criminal investigations in relation to their legitimate work.[1] At least 40 individuals remained under investigation or had been indicted, and eight were brought to trial during the year. Banks began regularly

delaying incoming transfers from abroad, in some cases for up to 10 weeks, pending re-submission of paperwork to show compliance with government regulations on associations.

On 24 November the Tunis Court of First Instance convicted human rights defenders Mustapha Djemali and Abderrazak Krimi from the NGO Tunisian Council for Refugees. The court sentenced them to two years in prison on charges of "assisting the clandestine entry" of foreign nationals and "providing them shelter" in relation to their work as implementing partners of UNHCR, the UN refugee agency.[2] They were released after the court suspended the remainder of their sentence as they had already spent more than 18 months in pretrial detention.

On 15 December the criminal trial opened of six human rights defenders and NGO workers from the Tunisian branch of the French humanitarian organization France Terre d'asile. The trial was in relation to their work providing critical assistance to migrants and refugees and was adjourned to 5 January 2026.

Other organizations targeted by the authorities included anti-racism organization Mnemty – of which nine staff and partners had been under investigation since May 2024 for financial crimes – and the children's rights NGO Children of the Moon of Medenine.

The Tax Evasion Investigation and Prevention Unit intensified its investigation of at least 18 NGOs, including Amnesty International's International Secretariat Regional Office in the capital, Tunis. In November the Gorjani financial crimes unit opened a criminal investigation into the Amnesty International office and summoned its auditor and legal representative to appear for questioning.

In July the financial investigations unit launched a new investigation into the Tunisian Forum for Social and Economic Rights. The complex financial crimes police unit launched investigations into dozens of NGOs including independent journalism outlet Nawaat and the anti-corruption NGO IWatch. Elections monitoring NGO Mourakiboun continued to face an asset freeze.

Between July and November, the authorities issued at least 17 suspension orders to associations. In July the Tunis Court of First Instance ordered the suspension of the activities of IWatch for 30 days. In August the same court arbitrarily suspended the activities of the women's rights organization Aswat Nissa (Voices of Women). Aswat Nissa confirmed that it did not receive the prior notice and hence the procedure for suspension was not respected. Both organizations appealed the decision.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Authorities continued to use baseless "obstruction" charges, a provision lacking legal clarity, to arbitrarily detain, prosecute and convict individuals simply for exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association, including the rights to form and join a union and to organize and participate in a strike.[3] Authorities particularly targeted individuals from marginalized and impoverished communities for attempting to raise concerns through protests, strikes and comments in the media, in relation to socio-economic and environmental issues such as poor working conditions, pollution and access to water.

In April, police forces in Tunis prevented a mock trial organized by civil society organizations from taking place at the Rio Hall. The event aimed to shed light on the violations committed against political detainees and prisoners of conscience in Tunisia, and to defend the right to a fair trial.

RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL

Trials of opposition members and government critics were marked by serious due process violations and a lack of transparency. For most of the year, terrorism-related trials took place without defendants being allowed to attend, with the Tunis Court of First Instance citing unspecified "real dangers". Defendants were forced to participate via video link, severely restricting their ability to communicate with legal counsel and engage with the court. In high-profile trials, judges

frequently barred independent journalists, families and international observers – including diplomats – from attending proceedings, severely undermining the transparency of the trials.

Lawyers representing members of political opposition groups and victims of violations were targeted with criminal investigations under bogus charges such as "offending others" and "spreading false information". In April, lawyer Ahmed Souab was arrested by the anti-terrorism brigade after criticizing the Conspiracy Case trial, highlighting the procedural violations and lack of independence of the court in a press conference after the trial. He was charged under counterterrorism legislation and Decree Law 54. On 31 October the Tunis Court of First Instance convicted him and sentenced him to five years in prison and a three-year additional sentence of administrative supervision after a trial that lasted seven minutes.

Independence of the judiciary

The Tunisian Judges' Association (AMT) documented the continued direct interference of the executive in the appointment and careers of judges, undermining the independence of the judiciary. This included, according to AMT, direct orders of appointment by the minister of justice, and transfer or suspension of judges and prosecutors through hundreds of executive memoranda without due process. AMT also reported that executive memoranda were used to punish several judges of various ranks by arbitrarily transferring them to courts far from their homes, with no fair and transparent disciplinary process.

Judges and prosecutors who were summarily dismissed by presidential decree in June 2022 continued to be denied reparation and to suffer professional, economic and reputational harm. No judicial action was taken following individual complaints filed on 23 January 2023 by 37 of the dismissed judges against the minister of justice. The complaints contested the minister's failure to implement a court order to reinstate 49 of the 57 dismissed judges and prosecutors.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Migration and asylum policies and practices continued to be characterized by widespread human rights violations, predominantly affecting Black refugees and migrants.[4] Officials continued to carry out life-threatening collective expulsions to Libya and Algeria on a routine basis, in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, following often reckless sea interceptions or racially targeted arrests, frequently accompanied by torture and other ill-treatment, including dehumanizing sexual violence. The government's suspension in June 2024 of UNHCR's registration and refugee status determination activities continued to deprive people of the right to seek asylum.

From February onwards, public comments from parliamentary and governmental figures contributed to a spike in racist violence against Black migrants, with social media users sharing videos of themselves "tracking down [Black] Africans" and threatening violence and other abuses against them. In April, authorities announced an "operation of dismantlement" in the eastern region of Sfax and carried out forced evictions of makeshift camps established by refugees and migrants in the previous two years.

In April a preliminary draft law on expulsions of irregular migrants was submitted to the relevant parliamentary commissions for examination. The draft failed to protect refugees, asylum seekers and migrants against the risk of summary expulsions and refoulement.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI groups reported an increase in prosecutions for consensual same-sex sexual conduct between adults under Article 230 of the Penal Code as well as other articles pertaining to morality and indecency.

According to the Tunisian LGBTI organization Damj, between July and November, 79 people – mostly trans women – were arrested under Articles 230, 226, 226 bis, and 231 of the Tunisian Penal Code,

solely based on their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. By the end of the year, 37 had been sentenced to prison terms ranging from six months to three years in Greater Tunis and various governorates including Medenine, Sousse and Sfax.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In late September and October, thousands of residents took to the streets in the eastern city of Gabès to protest against severe pollution caused by toxic smoke emanating from the factories of the state-owned Tunisian Chemical Group. Police made excessive use of tear gas against the demonstrators. Despite the protests and demands from residents, the factories continued to operate. In October and November, local media and civil society reported that hundreds of people, particularly children, in Gabès were taken to emergency care with respiratory issues and other health complaints. The region has long suffered environmental degradation from industrial and chemical activity. Residents claimed that emissions contributed to rising cancer rates, respiratory disease and ecological harm.

1. "Tunisia: Escalating crackdown on human rights organizations reaches critical levels", 14 November ↑
2. "Tunisia: Conviction of human rights defenders confirms criminalization of civil society work", 25 November ↑
3. *Tunisia: "We Were Only Asking for Our Rights and Dignity": Obstruction Charges Used To Punish Peaceful Assembly*', 17 June ↑
4. "Tunisia: Rampant violations against refugees and migrants expose EU's complicity risk", 6 November ↑

TÜRKIYE

Republic of Türkiye

Baseless investigations, prosecutions and convictions of human rights defenders, journalists, opposition politicians and others intensified. Executive interference with the judiciary deepened further. Binding European Court of Human Rights judgments remained unimplemented in several emblematic cases. The rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association were arbitrarily restricted. Law enforcement officials used less lethal weapons against peaceful protesters, causing numerous injuries. The country continued to host large numbers of refugees and migrants; some remained at risk of unlawful return. Victims of human rights violations, including alleged torture and other ill-treatment by state officials, continued to face a culture of impunity. Türkiye's overall climate policies were assessed as "highly insufficient".

BACKGROUND

Türkiye continued to face a growing cost of living crisis, with general inflation running at over 30%, food inflation over 28% and housing inflation over 49% by the end of year.

Authorities launched criminal investigations and prosecutions against scores of elected representatives and members of the Republican People's Party (CHP) across Türkiye in a widespread clampdown on the main opposition party. Key figures were imprisoned, including Istanbul Mayor and presidential candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu. He faced up to 2,352 years in prison on a slew of charges including corruption and establishing and leading a criminal organization.

A peace process between the state and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), including direct talks with its imprisoned leader Abdullah Öcalan, led to arms decommissioning and the establishment of an all-party parliamentary peace process commission.

The General Directorate of Forestry announced that 16,500 hectares of forest had burnt in over 5,200 fires between January and August.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

In January, Istanbul Bar Association board member Fırat Epözdemir was arbitrarily

detained after returning from an advocacy visit to the Council of Europe and held in pretrial detention on allegations of "membership of an armed terrorist organization" and "making propaganda for a terrorist organization". He was released in May under judicial control measures, pending trial.

In February, Gezi Park trial defendants Mücella Yapıcı, Hakan Altınay and Yiğit Ekmekçi were acquitted of violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations (Law No. 2911). They had been retried after their initial convictions, for allegedly aiding Osman Kavala (see below) in "attempting to overthrow the government" during mass protests in 2013, were overturned in September 2023.

In February, at least 50 people across 10 provinces, including journalists, political activists, lawyers and human rights defenders, were detained in the context of an investigation carried out by the Istanbul Chief Public Prosecutor. Thirty people, including journalists Yıldız Tar, Elif Akgül and Ercüment Akdeniz, were subsequently remanded in prison by Istanbul courts for "membership of an armed terrorist organization". They were alleged to have links to the People's Democratic Congress, a lawful platform established in 2011 and including various opposition political parties and groups focused on gender, the environment and the rights of religious minorities. At least three of those prosecuted were convicted and one acquitted; the trials of others were continuing at year's end.

In June, Mehmet Pehlivan, lawyer of detained Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu, was arbitrarily detained for "membership of a criminal organization" amid intensifying reprisals against members of the legal profession.[1]

In October, a ruling by the Constitutional Court found that prisoner of conscience Tayfun Kahraman's right to a fair trial had been violated when he was convicted in 2022 in relation to the 2013 Gezi Park protests. His appeal for release following the ruling was rejected in November.

Prisoner of conscience Osman Kavala remained in prison despite two binding European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments to release him and infringement proceedings against Türkiye initiated by the Council of Europe in 2022. Two Constitutional Court applications challenging Osman Kavala's 2022 conviction, and the 2023 Court of Cassation decision upholding his conviction, remained pending.

Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, former leaders of the People's Democratic Party, also remained in prison despite ECtHR rulings ordering their immediate release. In July, the court published a new judgment finding that Selahattin Demirtaş' continued detention was "based on inadequate reasoning and had pursued an ulterior purpose".

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In February, after a government-appointed official replaced the elected mayor of Van Metropolitan Municipality following the latter's criminal conviction, a blanket ban on protests was imposed for 15 days. Law enforcement officials used unlawful force, including beatings, tear gas and plastic bullets, to disperse peaceful protesters who had gathered at the municipality building. At least 348 people were detained, including 70 children and six journalists. Also in February, police detained 18 people after using pepper spray and unlawful force to disperse a protest organized by the Free Women's Movement in Van province.

The Beyoğlu governorate banned protests marking International Women's Day on 8 March in Istanbul. Over 100 peaceful protesters were detained for violating Law No. 2911. One person was also accused of "insulting the President".

Mass protests, mainly by university students, took place across the country between 19 and 26 March following the revocation of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu's university diploma and his subsequent detention.[2] At least four governors issued blanket bans on demonstrations, although in November a court overturned the ban in Istanbul

governorate on the grounds that it was "disproportionate" and "unlawful". Law enforcement officials used unlawful force, at times amounting to ill-treatment, against peaceful protesters. These included seven women who reported that they had been strip searched and beaten when detained at the Anti-Terrorism Branch of the Ankara Provincial Directorate of Security. Unlawful use of less lethal weapons against peaceful protesters caused numerous injuries. The Ministry of Interior announced that 1,879 people had been detained at the protest locations or their homes during this period.

The authorities banned protests in Taksim Square, Istanbul, despite a 2023 Constitutional Court ruling that banning May Day demonstrations there constituted a violation of the right to peaceful assembly. Authorities closed several metro and other public transportation lines as well as dozens of roads across Istanbul on 1 May. On 29 and 30 April, at least 111 people were preventively detained in house raids. Over 430 people, including 11 lawyers, who tried to gather on 1 May faced unlawful force and were detained. In contrast, thousands were instead allowed to gather in the Kadıköy and Kartal districts of Istanbul for official rallies.

In June, blanket bans were issued against the LGBTI and Trans pride marches in Istanbul and peaceful protesters were subjected to unlawful use of force by police. Over 90 people were arbitrarily detained. On 29 June, three activists were remanded in prison for violating Law No. 2911, then subsequently released on 8 August pending trial. Prosecutions involving 92 people for participating in pride marches continued at year's end.

In September, an Istanbul court ruled to remove the CHP's elected leadership in the province, leading to protests where police used unlawful force.[3]

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In January, 11 members of the executive board of the Istanbul Bar Association were indicted for "propaganda for a terrorist organization" and "publicly disseminating misleading information". They had publicly called for an effective investigation into the deaths of two journalists, citizens of Türkiye, in Syria in December 2024.[4] The prosecution was continuing at year's end.

In March, British journalist Mark Lowen was detained and deported, owing to his coverage of protests related to the imprisonment of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu. Swedish journalist Joakim Medin was detained upon his arrival in Türkiye in March on charges of "insulting the President" and "membership of an armed terrorist organization". He was sentenced to 11 months' imprisonment on the former charge and released in May pending trial on the latter charge.

In June, following the publication of a cartoon in the satirical magazine *LeMan*, cartoonist Doğan Pehlevan, accountant Ali Yavuz, editor-in-chief Zafer Aknar, graphic designer Cebrail Okçu and editor-in-chief Aslan Özdemir were remanded in pretrial detention for "inciting the public to hatred or hostility".[5]

Human rights defender Enes Hocaoğulları was remanded in pretrial detention in August on his return to Türkiye from a Council of Europe conference and released in September pending trial.[6] He was charged with "publicly disseminating misleading information" and "inciting the public to hatred and enmity" for speaking about human rights violations committed during the protests following the detention of Istanbul Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu.

Singer Mabel Matiz faced criminal charges for the lyrics in his song "Perperişan" which were deemed to have violated public morality under Article 226/1-b, 2 of the penal code. He faced up to three years' imprisonment.

In October, Tele 1, an independent TV channel, was taken over by the state and its editor-in-chief Merdan Yanardağ was remanded in pretrial detention on charges of espionage.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March, an administrative court order terminated the mandate of the Istanbul Bar Association board. This followed a civil lawsuit seeking the dismissal of its members

on the grounds that they had acted outside the scope of their legal duties.

In March, an administrative court issued its full judgment regarding the 2024 decision to close the Migration Monitoring Association for allegedly "operating in line with the goals and objectives of an armed terrorist group". The organization's appeal against the decision was pending at year's end.

In December, an İzmir court ordered the dissolution of the Young LGBTI+ Association, ruling that it had engaged in activities outside its stated purpose and shared "obscene" images on social media that were incompatible with "society's moral values" and could "encourage or promote" LGBTI identities.

The lawsuit filed in 2022 to shut down the Tarlabaşı Community Center in Istanbul – on the grounds that it had engaged in "activities contrary to its purpose, law, and morality" – was ongoing at year's end. The organization was accused of "attempting to influence children's sexual orientation" by "normalizing the sexuality of individuals known as LGBTI people in society".

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In February, refugee rights lawyer and former Chair of Amnesty International Türkiye, Taner Kılıç, was acquitted almost eight years after his arrest in June 2017. He had been detained for over 14 months. In 2020, he was convicted of "membership of a terrorist organization" despite the absence of any credible evidence and sentenced to more than six years in prison. The Court of Cassation overturned the conviction in 2022, citing an incomplete investigation. The trial court upheld this ruling in June 2023. The acquittal became final in 2025 when the Court of Cassation dismissed the prosecutor's appeal.

In February, Professor Şebnem Korur Fincancı was acquitted of "insulting the Turkish nation" for her broadcast comments as a forensic medicine expert about allegations of torture. The appeal against her 2023 conviction for "propaganda for a terrorist organization" was pending at year's end.

After over four months in prison, Nimet Tanrıkulu was released in March after an interim decision by Istanbul Heavy Penal Court No. 24 at the opening hearing of her prosecution for "membership of a terrorist organization".

In March, 45 members of Saturday Mothers/People – relatives of victims of enforced disappearances in the 1980s and 1990s – were acquitted in a criminal case brought against them for their 700th peaceful vigil in 2018.[7] Restrictions on the group's weekly vigils in Istanbul continued, including a police blockade in Galatasaray Square.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

High-level public officials continued to use discriminatory speech that entrenched harmful gender stereotypes and institutional homophobia and transphobia.

In June, the Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency, part of the Ministry of Health, banned the prescription and supply of specific hormones for gender affirmative procedures for people under 21. The move, purportedly aimed at preventing the use of these hormones "for purposes other than their intended use", violated the existing law which permitted access for those over 18.

Three draft law packages targeting LGBTI people were made public during the year, marking an unprecedented assault on the human rights of LGBTI people and their allies. The proposals, which would criminalize any expression of LGBTI identities and consensual same-sex relations and make legal gender recognition nearly impossible to obtain, were ultimately not submitted to parliament.[8]

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

According to the We Will Stop Femicide Platform, in 2025 men killed 294 women and 297 women were found dead in suspicious circumstances.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In April, Turkmenistani bloggers and activists Alisher Sakhatov and Abdulla Orusov were detained and held in a deportation centre.

They disappeared from the centre in July, and concerns persisted that they may have been deported to Turkmenistan. Neither Türkiye nor Turkmenistan had disclosed their fate or whereabouts as of the end of the year.

In February, the Bursa Migration Management Directorate rejected Afghan asylum seeker Tabriz Saifi's application for international protection, abruptly ending his access to essential medical treatment.[9] His asylum seeker status was reinstated in May, as was his full access to medical care. Tabriz Saifi died in September of health complications.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

In September, the trial began of 13 law enforcement officers charged with the death in custody of Ahmet Güreşçi and the torture of his brother Sabri Güreşçi, both of whom had been arrested for alleged looting following the 2023 earthquakes. All the officers remained at liberty.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The Climate Action Tracker rated Türkiye's overall climate policies and actions as "highly insufficient", criticizing the country's reliance on fossil fuels.

1. "Türkiye: Unlawful detention of lawyer Mehmet Pehlivan and escalating repression of the legal profession", 1 July ↑
2. "Türkiye: "I Cannot Breathe" Allegations of torture and other ill-treatment in the context of mass protests between 19 – 26 March must be investigated", 19 June ↑
3. "Türkiye: Crackdown on freedom of expression and assembly exposes troubling pattern of police violence", 10 September ↑
4. *Türkiye: Amicus Curiae Brief in Legal Proceedings Against the Istanbul Bar Association Executive Board*, 9 September ↑
5. "Türkiye: Release imprisoned satirical magazine staff", 21 July ↑
6. "Türkiye: Release arbitrarily imprisoned activist: Enes Hocaoğulları", 19 August ↑
7. "Türkiye: Acquittal of Saturday Mothers protesters brings seven year ordeal to an end", 14 March ↑
8. "Türkiye: Factsheet on leaked law proposals against LGBTI+ rights in Türkiye", 25 November ↑
9. "Türkiye: Asylum seeker at serious health risk: Tabriz Saifi", 11 March ↑

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan

The authorities maintained a tight grip on information, punished critics and censored internet access. Independent voices faced prosecution, travel bans and other reprisals, while dissidents abroad risked arrest and potential deportation. Enforced disappearances persisted, with some prisoners not being released after the expiration of their terms. Torture and other ill-treatment in detention remained widespread, with no independent oversight. Same-sex sexual relations between men remained criminalized. The country's carbon-intensive economy undermined its climate commitments amid growing gas extraction. Water scarcity remained a serious issue threatening food security.

BACKGROUND

Turkmenistan's economy grew more slowly than in 2024, while inflation rose, particularly affecting less well-off groups. Despite plans to expand the private sector and diversify, the economy continued to rely heavily on natural gas extraction. The authorities pursued major energy projects, including the development of new gas deposits and construction of a pipeline to India.

The authorities continued their attempts to raise the country's international profile, with limited success. The Third UN Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries was held in Turkmenistan in August, focused on improving connectivity, trade facilitation and sustainable development. The event, attended by the UN Secretary-General, avoided discussion of Turkmenistan's human rights issues.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The country remained effectively closed to human rights monitoring. The authorities tightly controlled information within the country and severely restricted its exchange with the outside world. Independent

journalists and other local sources faced intimidation and reprisals for covering sensitive issues.

Internet access remained expensive and slow. Authorities censored access to websites containing independent information and proscribed or tightly controlled virtual private network (VPN) services.

Activist Murat Dushemov, imprisoned in 2021 for purported extortion and violence, completed his four-year prison sentence in June. Instead of being released, however, he faced apparently trumped-up charges of beating another inmate and was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment in a closed trial on 16 September.

Turkmenistani authorities targeted independent journalists and critics abroad. In May, activist Umida Bekchanova was arrested in Türkiye with a view to deporting her to Turkmenistan. The deportation was postponed, but her exact status remained unknown at the end of the year.

In April, Turkmenistani bloggers and activists Alisher Sakhatov and Abdulla Orusov were arrested in Türkiye and placed in a deportation centre. They disappeared from there in July and were likely secretly returned to Turkmenistan. Neither country had disclosed their fate or whereabouts by the end of the year.

Videoblogger Didar Amansakhatov went missing in November after criticizing meat prices. He was subsequently reported to have died under unclear circumstances, raising suspicion that he had been arbitrarily arrested, tortured and unlawfully killed.

Authorities ignored a communication from the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders regarding the forcible hospitalization and alleged attempted poisoning of journalist Soltan Achilova, apparently in order to prevent her from travelling to an international human rights event.

Media sources reported that the authorities in Balkan province banned private law firms and printing shops from helping their customers to write, print or copy appeals to the president, threatening licence revocation for non-compliance.

FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The authorities continued to impose arbitrary travel bans, including on people apparently suspected of dissent and their relatives. Independent journalist Nurgeldy Khalykov was prevented from leaving Turkmenistan in January by an arbitrary decision of an undisclosed government body. Activist Murat Dushemov's brother and sister were arbitrarily denied permission to leave the country.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Turkmenistan continued to use prolonged incommunicado detention, which may amount to enforced disappearance, and failed to release prisoners who had completed their sentences. These included dozens of individuals accused of participating in an alleged assassination attempt on then-president Saparmurat Niyazov in 2002. The authorities persisted in refusing to disclose their status, fate or whereabouts or to investigate their disappearances.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

The UN Committee against Torture in its April review expressed deep concerns about allegations of widespread practice of torture and other ill-treatment including beatings, denial of medical care and prolonged solitary confinement in places of detention.

There was no independent oversight of penitentiary institutions by either national or international monitors.

According to reports, allegedly gay prisoners were subjected to anal tests that violated the prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Consensual sexual conduct between men remained criminalized, punishable by up to two years' imprisonment.

Security services reportedly detained and subjected to torture and other ill-treatment more than 20 alleged gay men and adolescent boys in order to extort money. Authorities also reportedly arrested women and girls thought to be lesbian and pressured

their families to "marry them off" as soon as possible.

RIGHT TO WATER

Severe problems persisted with access to water for agriculture and other needs, undermining food security and economic development. Factors contributing to water scarcity included the lack of a comprehensive water strategy, the authorities' failure to maintain and improve water facilities, and the inefficient use of water resources in agriculture.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

Turkmenistan continued to rely on gas for electricity generation and other uses. Its economy was the most carbon-intensive in the region, according to the UN, jeopardizing the country's commitments to reducing its climate change footprint under the Paris Agreement and the Global Methane Pledge.

Turkmenistan pursued plans to further expand its production of natural gas, including through development of the large Galkynysh gas deposit.

UGANDA

Republic of Uganda

Authorities used torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, and arbitrary arrests and detentions against actual and perceived government opponents. The Uganda Human Rights Commission held tribunals addressing the use of torture and unlawful detention, awarding compensation to survivors of human rights violations. Authorities insisted on trying civilians in military courts in violation of a Supreme Court ruling that found the practice to be unconstitutional. Security forces assaulted journalists and cracked down on peaceful protests, while opposition party offices were raided. LGBTI people faced numerous human rights violations and continued to be discriminated against under the Anti-Homosexuality Act. Uganda's support for nearly 2 million refugees and asylum seekers remained severely underfunded. The construction of the East African Crude Oil Pipeline continued to raise environmental and human rights concerns, including threats to communities and wildlife habitats.

BACKGROUND

In June the ruling National Resistance Movement party announced that Yoweri Museveni, the president since 1986, would run for re-election in 2026. In September the Electoral Commission approved his candidacy. Meanwhile, Muhoozi Kainerugaba, President Museveni's son and the Chief of Defence Forces, used his X account to issue death threats and incite violence against opposition leaders, members and supporters, and other government critics. Those threatened included the National Unity Platform (NUP) party leader and presidential candidate Robert Kyagulanyi (also known as Bobi Wine), and the leader of the People's Front for Freedom party, Kizza Besigye. The X posts were later deleted.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

On 11 February the Uganda Human Rights Commission, an official body established to investigate and monitor human rights violations, began a series of tribunal sessions nationwide. The tribunals handled cases of alleged torture and unlawful detention, among other violations by security agencies. They handed down five rulings, awarding more than UGX 300 million (around USD 87,000) to victims of human rights violations that occurred in various districts. The Commission warned the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (UPDF) and the police against engaging in acts of torture and extrajudicial killings, which it emphasized were explicitly forbidden under Article 221 of the Constitution.

On 27 April, Eddie Mutwe, Robert Kyagulanyi's bodyguard, was forcibly disappeared following his abduction by unidentified armed men near the capital, Kampala. On 1 May, in an X post that was

later deleted, Muhoozi Kainerugaba claimed responsibility for Eddie Mutwe's disappearance and torture in detention. He said he had beaten him and shaved his head, and he threatened to continue the torture. Eddie Mutwe was held incommunicado until 5 May when UPDF officers took him to Masaka Court where, according to the justice minister, he was "in a visibly weak condition" and showed "signs of torture". Eddie Mutwe's lawyer told the media that Eddie Mutwe had been subjected to electrocution during his detention. The court charged him with aggravated robbery and assault in connection with an alleged incident in 2024. He remained in detention at the end of the year.

UNFAIR TRIALS

In January, Uganda's Supreme Court ruled the trials of civilians by military courts to be unconstitutional, ordering the transfer of such cases to civilian courts. The decision followed the military prosecution of Ugandan nationals Kizza Besigye (see above) and Obeid Lutale, who were abducted in Nairobi, Kenya, in November 2024 and unlawfully transferred to Uganda to face charges relating to security and possession of firearms. Although their case was later moved to a civilian court, they remained in Luzira Prison.

In June, President Museveni signed into law the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces (Amendment) Act, 2025, which allowed for civilians to be tried in military courts. The law used vague provisions that targeted civilians accused of military-related offences, including acquiring arms or equipment for violent acts, impersonating military officers, or collaborating with military personnel to commit offences.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

On 7 January a Kampala military court sentenced human rights lawyer Eron Kiiza to nine months' imprisonment for "contempt of court". This followed his arrest for protesting when soldiers blocked his access to a courtroom area designated for defence lawyers. He was there for the arraignment hearing of his clients Kizza Besigye and Obeid Lutale. During his arrest he was beaten. He said that he was also tortured by military personnel during detention. On 4 April the High Court granted him bail.

On 17 July, security agents arbitrarily arrested Robert Kayingo, a Ugandan-South African lawyer and leader of the opposition Ugandan Federal Alliance party, on his arrival at Entebbe International Airport from South Africa. He was held incommunicado, despite a court order requiring his appearance, before being forcibly deported to South Africa on 13 August. Robert Kayingo said he was held in isolation and subjected to threats and other psychological intimidation during his detention.

In November and December, at least 400 NUP members were arbitrarily arrested and detained during Robert Kyagulanyi's various presidential campaign rallies. Some were released on bail while most remained in detention.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

On 26 August, UPDF officers abducted Sam Mugumya, secretary general of the Forum for Democratic Change Youth League and a former aide to Kizza Besigye, in the city of Mbarara. His fate and whereabouts remained undisclosed despite a ruling on 5 September from the High Court in Kampala ordering the government and the UPDF to produce him. The UPDF publicly denied holding him.

On 1 October, armed men in military uniform and wearing masks abducted Kenyan human rights activists Bob Njagi and Nicholas Oyoo in Kampala after they attended Robert Kyagulanyi's election campaign rally. Their whereabouts were undisclosed until 8 November when President Museveni confirmed they had been arrested by security services for being "experts in riots". They were freed the same day and handed over to the Kenyan authorities. They said they had been tortured in detention.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 13 March, security forces attacked tens of journalists who were covering parliamentary by-elections in multiple polling stations in

Kawempe, Kampala. The officers also damaged and confiscated their equipment. The journalists had been documenting arrests of people accused of disrupting the voting process. Police authorities said they would investigate formal complaints filed at Kawempe Police Station by the victims.

In March, journalists from NTV Uganda and the *Daily Monitor* newspaper were banned from covering stories about the presidency. In October, these news outlets were also banned from covering parliamentary proceedings.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

On 17 February, police arrested Kampala City Deputy Lord Mayor, Doreen Nyanjura, and activists Ingrid Turinawe, Faridah Nangonzi, Shadiya Namubiru and Phionah Kabayinza, near Arua Park in Kampala. They were protesting against the detention of Kizza Besigye and Obeid Lutale in violation of the Supreme Court ruling (see above, Unfair trials). The next day the five women were charged at Buganda Road Chief Magistrate's Court with public nuisance and remanded in custody at Luzira Prison. They were released on bail three weeks later.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Between February and June, police and UPDF officers cordoned-off and raided NUP party premises in Kampala, including its headquarters, on four occasions. During the raids, security forces fired live ammunition in the air and in some cases made forced entries to conduct searches. The police spokesperson said the search was part of an investigation into "illegal military training at the party premises". In February, Muhoozi Kainerugaba said on X that he had ordered the raids.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The Supreme Court did not deliver its decision on an appeal against the Constitutional Court's decision in 2024 to uphold provisions in the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. The provisions discriminated against LGBTI people and carried harsh penalties, including the death penalty, for "aggravated homosexuality" and up to 20 years' imprisonment for the "promotion of homosexuality".

The Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum NGO documented 194 cases of human rights violations against LGBTI people. These violations often involved targeting people based on their real or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity or expression of their sexuality. They included 71 cases of violence or threats, 48 arrests on sexuality-related charges, 60 home evictions and 15 instances of employment discrimination.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

In July the US and Ugandan governments entered a bilateral agreement that would allow the USA to deport to Uganda third-country nationals who had been refused asylum in the USA but were unable to return safely to their country of origin.

According to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, Uganda hosted 1,971,983 refugees and asylum seekers, an increase of almost 154,000 people compared to 2024. Most new arrivals entered the country from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Sudan or Sudan. As of 31 August, UNHCR had received only around 32% of its USD 361 million funding requirement for Uganda, compared to the 42% received in the same period of 2024. It said the effects of the deficit included high rates of school dropouts, and shortages of food, water and medicine, which increased malnutrition among children.

RIGHT TO FOOD

According to the 2025 Global Hunger Index, Uganda ranked 87th out of 123 countries. It categorized the country's hunger level as "serious", with 22% of the population undernourished and 3.9% of children dying before their fifth birthday.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In March, the East African Crude Oil Pipeline Project Ltd announced the "closure of its first tranche of external financing" for the construction of a 1,443km underground

fossil fuel pipeline to be used to transport crude oil from Kabale town in the Hoima district of western Uganda to Tanzania's Tanga Port (see Tanzania entry). The project raised environmental and human rights concerns as it threatened global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and passed through human settlements and wildlife areas, agricultural land and water sources. The project also undermined Uganda's NDC commitment to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions by 22% by 2030.

UKRAINE

Ukraine

Russia continued indiscriminate attacks on heavily populated areas, targeted critical civilian infrastructure and appeared to deliberately target civilians. Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilian detainees were subjected to torture, enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention in Russian-occupied territories, where repression of non-Russian identities continued. Investigative journalists reported being subjected to targeted smear campaigns. The right to freedom of religion was restricted. Conscientious objectors were denied alternative service and prosecuted. Prosecution for collaboration raised fair trial concerns.

BACKGROUND

Russia continued to pursue further territorial gains and increased the intensity and scale of deep strikes across Ukraine. The war of attrition took a considerable toll on both sides. Ukraine developed, produced and deployed innovative military hardware and tactics and sought to reduce its huge dependence on foreign-supplied weapons systems and ammunition. Its negotiators resisted US pressure to make territorial and other concessions as part of a peace deal with Russia.

The number of civilian casualties remained high with a total of 14,999 killed and 40,601 injured between 24 February 2022 and September 2025. June and July were the deadliest months on record for the civilian population of Ukraine since April 2022.

The economy remained fragile and deeply dependent on foreign financing and other aid. The authorities' attempts to weaken anti-corruption institutions through new legislation were thwarted by popular protests. While severe energy shortages escalated, Ukraine's National Anti-Corruption Bureau and a specialized prosecutor's office uncovered an alleged kickback scheme in the energy sector, leading to high-level arrests and resignations. EU membership remained a priority, while the prospect of NATO membership appeared increasingly uncertain.

VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW

Unlawful attacks

Intensifying Russian aerial attacks across Ukraine included indiscriminate strikes inside heavily populated areas, targeting of critical civilian infrastructure and the targeting of civilians, which amounted to war crimes.[1] The UN-established Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine concluded that Russian drone attacks targeting civilians in the Kherson region constituted the crime against humanity of murder and war crimes.

The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine reported that most civilian casualties occurred near the frontline. In December, they comprised 67% of the total, with nearly 30% caused by First Person View (FPV) drone attacks. With the advent of colder months, Russia targeted energy infrastructure almost daily.[2] By November, official figures suggested that energy generation was less than half its pre-February 2022 level. Millions endured heating and power shortages, with electricity on some days limited to three hours a day as temperatures dropped. In response, from September Ukraine launched reciprocal attacks on energy infrastructures inside

Russia, causing temporary local power blackouts.

According to the UN, 472 civilians were killed and 1,188 injured by mines or other explosives between February 2022 and December 2025.

Extrajudicial executions

According to media reports, as of 10 December the Office of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine had documented 322 cases in which Ukrainian prisoners of war were executed by Russian forces since the start of the full-scale war. In August, Vladyslav Nahornyi was captured near the city of Pokrovsk in Donetsk region. He told Ukrainian media that he and seven other Ukrainian prisoners of war were tortured by Russian forces, who then killed the others. Despite having his throat slit, he survived and crawled back to a Ukrainian position.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Russia continued to deny any international monitors access to prisoners of war held in occupied Ukraine and elsewhere, and systematically subjected such prisoners to enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention (see Russia entry). Prisoners released through exchanges testified to widespread torture and other ill-treatment, including denial of medical care and malnutrition, and regular deaths.[3] One prisoner, who had spent 33 months in Russian captivity, weighed only 40kg when Amnesty International interviewed him weeks after his release in January. Another former prisoner died of poor health in November, aged 46, six months after his release.

Russian prisoners of war held by Ukraine who were visited by Amnesty International delegates in April and September, in two prisoner camps, described incidents of ill-treatment at the point of capture. There were also minor complaints about their treatment in the camps where they were subsequently held; for example, over the limited range of food in the camp's store. Non-Russian captives reported racist slurs by fellow prisoners and guards.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Ukraine's derogation from its obligations under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, covering freedom of expression, remained in effect.

Investigative journalists reported being targeted by coordinated smear campaigns and strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) initiated by officials and business people impacted by their investigations. Environmental reporter Olena Mudra was subjected to a campaign of discrediting articles and fabricated imagery in online media after reporting on a controversial wind farm project.

Anti-corruption activist Vitaliy Shabunin faced a criminal investigation on suspicion of fraud, widely regarded as retribution for his history of criticizing the Ministry of Defence and the President's Office over weapon procurement.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

In July, spontaneous protests erupted in the capital Kyiv and elsewhere, against legislation undermining key anti-corruption institutions. Despite martial law restrictions and concerns over Russian aerial attacks targeting open gatherings, hundreds of protesters remained in the streets for 10 days until their demands were effectively met.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF

Further steps were taken to disband the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC). The state regulator requested that the UOC "break its ties" with the Russian Orthodox Church. The UOC refused, claiming it had already done so. Litigation involving its Kyiv diocese followed in September, with no decision delivered by year's end. In October, UN experts criticized the legislation behind these proceedings as lacking legal certainty and falsely "equating religious affiliation with threats to national security". They also warned of "persecution" against the UOC, criticized prosecutions of clergy, a journalist and a defence lawyer as "collective punishment", and urged Ukraine to cease such trials and review restrictive laws.

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS' RIGHTS

On 1 May, the Supreme Court of Ukraine ruled that citizens could not refuse military service during wartime based on religious beliefs and that an alternative form of service was only available during peacetime. The court noted that conscientious objectors' beliefs should nonetheless be "considered" to enable them to perform conscription duties that would "not involve carrying and/or using weapons". The ruling upheld the conviction of the applicant, a Jehovah's Witness, but replaced his three-year custodial sentence with one year of probation.

OLDER PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Older people continued to suffer disproportionate harm from Russia's aggression, with particularly high casualty rates near the frontline, where many chose to remain due to concerns over housing, access to services and the risks of isolation if displaced. On 9 September, a Russian aerial strike in the village of Yarova, Donetsk region, killed 25 people and injured 19, most of them pensioners queuing at a postal services vehicle.

More than half of the residents in temporary shelters (housing around 2% of the displaced population) were people aged over 60. According to UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, as of January, 70% of shelters lacked accessible sanitary provisions and 65% lacked accessible bomb shelters.[4]

Universal pensions for people of retirement age left older people below the real subsistence minimum of UAH 7,461 (USD 178) per month, with 62% of pensioners receiving less than UAH 5,000 (USD 119) per month.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

The number of children killed in Russian strikes increased by more than 200% between March and May compared to the previous quarter, according to the UN.

Children were reportedly clandestinely recruited online for attacks on military objects, sabotage or information gathering. At least two boys reportedly died and one was injured while undertaking such missions. In addition, according to the UN, as of May, 91 boys and 12 girls were in detention. Forty-two children were convicted of terrorism, spying and sabotage-related offences, leading to the incarceration of at least seven children.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Members of Territorial Recruitment Centres (TRC) continued to forcibly apprehend draft-age men in public spaces for military conscription. Videos showing violence by TRC staff emerged, alongside reports of physical and other abuse and even fatalities.

Roman Sopin was stopped in Kyiv on 18 October and taken to the local TRC. The next day he was hospitalized with a severe head injury and he died on 23 October. The TRC claimed he had had a fall. Police only opened a criminal investigation six days later, following a public outcry. No outcome had been reported by the end of the year.

UNFAIR TRIALS

Custodial and non-custodial sentences were handed down to hundreds of people convicted for "collaboration activities". According to OHCHR, the UN human rights office, dozens were convicted "for actions that could lawfully be compelled by the occupying Power." Human rights monitors emphasized that the practice was inconsistent and the vaguely-worded charges were wrongly applied in some cases to those providing essential services or pursuing survival strategies under occupation.

On 8 October, Viktoria Krykunova was sentenced to five years in prison for working briefly at a Russian-controlled pension fund in 2022, which she said was to finance her family's relocation to government-controlled territory.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

As part of EU accession plans approved in May, Ukraine committed to adopting the 2023 draft bill on civil (including same-sex) partnerships, but had failed to do so by year's end. In June, in the first decision of its kind, a local court in Kyiv recognized a same-sex couple as a "de facto family" under Ukrainian law.

On 14 June, Kyiv hosted a Pride march, with more than 1,500 participants. Attendance was capped and prior registration required, due to martial law.

In June, a survey found that over 50% of the population supported same-sex unions and more than 70% supported equal rights for LGBTI people, reflecting notable progress in attitudes.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In February, conflict-related emissions since the beginning of the full-scale invasion were said to have reached the equivalent of 230 metric tons of CO_2. Russia's ongoing war of aggression continued to cause major environmental damage and risk environmental calamities. On 14 February, Ukrainian authorities reported a Russian overnight drone strike on the protective shelter over Chornobyl's damaged reactor, raising the risk of radioactive leakage.

In September, the International Atomic Energy Agency expressed concern that their seven indispensable pillars of nuclear safety were being compromised at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant.

According to media reports, on 8 November Russian drones destroyed Ukraine's first industrial biomass power plant, which had been a symbol of Ukraine's push for green energy.

RUSSIAN-OCCUPIED TERRITORIES (GOVERNMENT OF RUSSIA)

Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression remained severely restricted, with limits on access by independent media and on the free flow of information. Attempts to exercise this right were punishable by imprisonment and other severe penalties under Russia's national legislation and practices (see Russia entry).

Arbitrary deprivation of nationality

In March, Russia enacted legislation that obliged Ukrainian nationals without the formal right to reside in the Russian Federation to leave or "regularize their legal status" by 10 September. If they failed to do this they would face "forcible removal". For the residents of the occupied territories in particular, compliance meant obtaining Russian passports or residence permits as "foreigners" to avoid deportation.

Internally displaced people's rights

Russia continued to take forward legislation to deprive the residents of the territories it unlawfully annexed in 2022 of their property and other rights if they refused to take up Russian citizenship, in manifest violation of the laws of war. In March, it updated the legislation which forbade citizens of Ukraine and other "unfriendly states" from "registering property rights to real estate" in these territories until 2028. Further legislation in July invalidated any Ukrainian documents confirming property rights in these territories except by official validation or (for post-September 2022 documents) strict exemption. Legislation adopted in December enabled the seizure and reassignment of so-called "ownerless" properties – a measure expressly targeting persons displaced from the occupied Ukrainian territories.

Arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance

Ukrainian civilians were routinely subjected to torture and other ill-treatment, prolonged incommunicado detention, enforced disappearance and other inhumane treatment. These abuses remained commonplace in both the occupied territories and, for transferred individuals, in Russia.

In March, the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine described the practice of enforced disappearance and torture as crimes against humanity committed by Russian authorities "as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population and pursuant to a coordinated state policy".

In May, the Ukrainian Ombudsperson reported documenting almost 16,000 cases of arbitrary detention by occupying Russian authorities since 2014, with more than 1,800 people being held in custody inside Russia at the time.

Torture and other ill-treatment

According to a report in September by OHCHR, the UN human rights office, over 92% of 216 released civilian detainees interviewed between June 2023 and September 2025 gave consistent and detailed accounts of having been subjected to torture and other ill-treatment during their captivity. The report noted that 38 civilians had died in custody as a result of torture or other ill-treatment, poor detention conditions, or denial of necessary medical care.

Right to education

The occupying authorities continued to restrict or eliminate non-Russian language education under the Russian curriculum uniformly imposed in all occupied territories. This subjected children to indoctrination and denied them a quality education. Instruction in Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar further declined, hindered by systemic obstacles and families deterred from pursuing it. By the start of the new school year in September, all academic disciplines involving the study of, or in, "the native (Ukrainian) language" were removed from Russian federal school programmes. The only option remaining was to study Ukrainian as an extracurricular subject.

Right to water

Donetsk, Mariupol, Makiivka and other occupied towns faced a worsening water crisis. Pre-war water infrastructure cutting across the front line, including the Siverskyi Donets-Donbas canal, remained in ruins; reservoirs dried up; and the occupying authorities failed to develop reliable alternative supply sources. By year's end, water reportedly reached some locations by pipes for only three to four hours once every three days; its poor quality made it unsafe for drinking. Makeshift supplies, including water deliveries by truck, were sparse and unreliable, leading to long queues and incidents of violence. Monitors described the situation as a humanitarian emergency.

1. "Ukraine: Civilians killed in indiscriminate strikes on Sumy city as Russian military increase attacks – new research", 24 June ↑
2. "Russia/Ukraine: Blackout in Chernihiv exposes Russia's unlawful attacks on civilian infrastructure", 21 October ↑
3. *Ukraine: A Deafening Silence: Ukrainians Held Incommunicado, Forcibly Disappeared and Tortured in Russian Captivity*, 4 March ↑
4. *'The Right to Social Protection and the Right to Work of Older Persons': Submission to the UN Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of All Human Rights by Older Persons*, 10 March ↑

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

United Arab Emirates

Dozens of defendants in a mass trial, including human rights defenders, had their convictions on terrorism-related charges and lengthy prison sentences upheld by the Federal Appeal Court, despite violations of their right to a fair trial. Others were re-convicted following an earlier dismissal of their cases in the same trial. Political opponents and activists faced enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention. Dubai authorities' crackdown on partitioned apartments – commonly used by low-skilled workers – led to widespread evictions, worsening their precarious living conditions. Fossil fuel production continued to expand. The death penalty was retained and executions carried out.

UNFAIR TRIALS

In March the Abu Dhabi Federal Appeal Court upheld the conviction and lengthy sentences of 53 defendants, including human rights defender and blogger Ahmed Mansour and academic Nasser Bin Ghaith, in a final ruling. The 53 defendants were among at least 84 people subjected to a 2023 mass trial that flagrantly violated their fair trial rights, and which culminated in sentences of between 10 years and life imprisonment. They were convicted under the UAE's Counterterrorism Law for forming

an advocacy group in 2010 and signing a petition calling for reforms in 2011.

In June the Federal Supreme Court overturned the Appeal Court's ruling to dismiss 24 of the 84 defendants' cases, bringing them back to court, reconvicting them, and sentencing them to life imprisonment. Life sentences were handed down to 67 of the original 84 defendants.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

On 8 January, Lebanese authorities extradited Egyptian-Turkish poet Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi to the UAE, after arresting him in December 2024 at the Lebanon-Syria border. The UAE had issued an extradition request to the Lebanese authorities for charges of "disturbing public security", "spreading false information" and "inciting unrest" related to a video he posted on social media while in Syria, criticizing Egyptian, Emirati and Saudi Arabian authorities. On arrival in the UAE, Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi was forcibly disappeared and denied access to his lawyers and family members; a situation that continued at the end of the year.[1] In March, a group of independent human rights experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council expressed deep concern over the lack of information on his fate, whereabouts and safety.

On 19 January, UAE authorities arrested Sudanese political activist and leading member of the Sudan National Alliance, Mohammed Farouk Salman, at Dubai's International Airport. Authorities provided no reason for his arrest and denied him access to a lawyer and to his family. He remained forcibly disappeared at the end of the year.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

Before the International Court of Justice in March, Sudan accused the UAE of violating the Genocide Convention by providing financial, military and political support to the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a rebel paramilitary group in military conflict with the Sudanese Armed Forces. In May the Court dismissed the case for lack of jurisdiction.

Also in May, an investigation published by Amnesty International found that the UAE had violated the UN Security Council arms embargo on Darfur, Sudan. Analysis of pictures and videos showing the aftermath of RSF attacks that killed at least 13 people, identified the use of Chinese guided bombs and howitzers. Amnesty International concluded that the weapons, manufactured by a Chinese state-owned defence corporation, were almost certainly re-exported to Sudan by the UAE.[2]

WORKERS' RIGHTS

The *kafala* (sponsorship) system continued to bind migrant workers to their employers, severely restricting job mobility and exposing them to systemic abuse, including wage theft, excessive working hours and crippling debt from recruitment fees. Despite some legal protections, enforcement remained weak, and migrant workers were still denied the right to form unions or assemble peacefully.

In June an Indian human rights defender working at an organization documenting abuses against migrant workers in Gulf nations was arbitrarily detained and ill-treated while transiting through Dubai. She was eventually released without being given any information about the legal basis for her enforced disappearance.

In July, Dubai authorities' crackdown on partitioned apartments – commonly used by low-skilled workers – led to widespread evictions, worsening their precarious living conditions and underscoring the government's failure to guarantee safe, adequate housing and social protections.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Following a visit to the UAE, in April the UN Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children found that the government could do more to encourage reporting of sexual abuse and violence against children.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The UAE was ranked a "very low performer" by the Climate Change Performance Index,

particularly for its high energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. The UAE accelerated its oil and gas expansion plans despite the harmful effects of human-induced climate change.

DEATH PENALTY

The UAE maintained the death penalty in law and resumed executions after a hiatus of several years. There were serious fair trial concerns.

1. "United Arab Emirates: Egyptian-Turkish poet forcibly disappeared: Abdul Rahman Al-Qaradawi", 7 February ↑
2. "Sudan: Advanced Chinese weaponry provided by UAE identified in breach of arms embargo – new investigation", 8 May ↑

UNITED KINGDOM

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

The government continued to use counterterror laws to restrict peaceful protests against the genocide in Gaza and ban the organization Palestine Action. Arms exports to Israel continued. The authorities intensified their hostile agenda to suppress asylum seekers' and migrants' rights in the UK. Racist and religious hate crimes remained prevalent. A Supreme Court decision greatly reduced the scope of legal gender recognition. Social security reforms pushed people into poverty, including people with disabilities.

BACKGROUND

The government maintained its policy of retaining the Human Rights Act and remaining a member of the European Convention on Human Rights, but took a number of policy steps that sought to diminish the application of these human rights protections, particularly in relation to immigration and asylum. In September, the government introduced the welcomed "Hillsborough Law" Bill, which should increase accountability of state actors for victims of state-related deaths and disasters.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Police powers continued to be used against peaceful protests, particularly those against the genocide in Gaza. In January, the police arrested 73 peaceful protesters, including protest organizers and prominent politicians, for an alleged "breach of conditions" imposed by the police on a "Stop the Genocide" protest.

In February, the government published a new Crime and Policing Bill, which contained further powers for police to impose restrictions on protests based on the "cumulative disruption" of previous protests, as well the power to restrict protests in the vicinity of places of worship. Police were also to be given powers to ban face coverings at protests. The bill remained pending at year's end.

In July, the government proscribed "Palestine Action" (PA) – a direct-action protest movement – as a terrorist organization. The government justified this on the basis of PA's involvement in serious damage to property at arms manufacturing factories linked to Israel and at RAF Brize Norton, a UK air force base. Membership or "support" of a proscribed group continued to be a criminal offence under the Terrorism Act 2000. One of the co-founders of PA launched a judicial review of the decision to proscribe the group, arguing that this was a disproportionate interference with rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. The case was heard in November, but no decision had been reached by year's end.

Following the proscription, a widespread campaign of civil disobedience broke out led by the "Defend Our Juries" group. In a series of large-scale protests, peaceful protesters held signs stating, "I oppose genocide. I support Palestine Action". By the end of the year, over 2,700 arrests had been made and approximately 254 people had been charged, facing a maximum of six months in prison under section 13 of the Terrorism Act. [1]

A smaller number of protest organizers were arrested and charged under section 12 of the Terrorism Act, which criminalized organizing or participating in meetings in

support of a proscribed organization. Prosecutors indicated that they would seek between six and nine years in prison for the perpetrators.

In September, the McCullough Review identified multiple cases of covert surveillance by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) against journalists and lawyers, including likely unlawful actions in breach of the Human Rights Act. This followed a December 2024 judgment by the Investigatory Powers Tribunal that the PSNI and Metropolitan Police Service had breached the human rights of two journalists by conducting surveillance to reveal their sources.[2]

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

In July, the High Court dismissed a judicial review of UK policy on licensing arms exports to Israel, which had been filed by Palestinian human rights organization Al-Haq and the Global Legal Action Network in December 2023. The claimants argued that the risk of weapons being used to commit serious violations of international humanitarian law, including genocide, met the threshold for stopping the sales. The court ruled that the decision regarding sales of arms to Israel was a matter for the government, not the courts.

In September, the First Minister of Scotland publicly recognized evidence that Israel was committing the crime of genocide against Palestinians. He announced that no new economic development grants would be given by Scotland to arms firms involved in Israel or any country plausibly suspected of genocide.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

Asylum seekers accommodated in hotels were subjected to sometimes violent protests. Immigration lawyers, judges and NGO workers were subjected to threats and intimidation, including targeted campaigns of disinformation by newspapers and politicians.

In August, the government made a deal with France permitting the UK to return to France people who had crossed the Channel to the UK using irregular routes. In return, the UK would receive from France an equal number of asylum seekers via an agreed legal route. The number transferred under these arrangements by year's end was small.

In November, the government published plans to remove its duty to support people seeking asylum if they would otherwise be destitute and to refuse to consider permanent residence for refugees until at least 20 years after being granted asylum. The plans would restrict access to asylum and undermine the rights of refugees. The government suspended refugee family reunion and announced it would severely restrict access to refugee family reunion visas in future.

Also in November, the government published plans regarding how migrants could "earn" permanent residence in the UK. The plans would penalize people who had migrated to the UK on skilled worker visas but did not meet the "high income" threshold. Minimum periods of residence and work in the UK before applicants could be considered for permanent residence were extended from five to 10 years or more. The revisions would apply retrospectively to people already on the pathway to residency. Exemptions would favour wealthy migrants or those qualifying for exclusive "global talent" visas. Such people could apply after three or five years in the UK. Reliance on public funds or offences could delay or permanently bar applications.

In December, the Border Security, Asylum and Immigration Act 2025 was passed increasing the government's powers, including the prosecution and penalization of people seeking asylum. The stated aim of the legislation was the disruption of people smuggling operations.

DISCRIMINATION

The number of hate crimes recorded by police in England and Wales in the year ending March 2025 rose for the first time in three years, with reports that racism had been normalized across public discourse and life.

In October, the Royal College of Nursing reported a 55% rise in members facing racist abuse since 2022.

Sustained attacks on places of worship were reported. A total of 27 attacks on mosques occurred between July and October. Some attacks coincided with the "Raise the Colours" flag campaign in August, which was associated with anti-rights groups and protests outside hotels housing asylum seekers. In October, a synagogue in Manchester was targeted in an attack that led to the killing of two people.

In August, the PSNI revealed that there had been 1,329 race hate crimes recorded by the police year to date, 434 more than in the previous 12 months. The figures included widespread racist attacks in towns across Northern Ireland in June, which resulted in families from migrant and minoritized communities being forced from their homes.

Also in August, the government announced its decision to release nationality and ethnicity details of suspects in high-profile criminal cases, a decision fuelled by increased prejudice and racial discrimination.

Police forces continued to use automated algorithmic risk assessment tools and systems known as "predictive policing", disproportionately targeting Black and racialized people and people from a lower socio-economic background, leading to violations of their human rights.[3]

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

In April, the Supreme Court ruled that the definition of sex in the Equality Act should be understood as "biological sex" or sex assigned at birth, thus greatly reducing the scope of legal gender recognition. The court affirmed the right of transgender people to protection from discrimination and harassment. Following the judgment, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published non-binding interim advice, advising service providers to exclude transgender people from certain single-sex spaces. In some instances, the advice suggested that transgender people could be excluded from spaces that aligned with their sex at birth.

The EHRC then conducted a consultation on updating its statutory code of practice, which had not been presented to parliament by year's end. Some companies and charities brought in harmful trans-exclusionary policies following the judgment.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In June, parliament passed an amendment to the Crime and Policing Bill to end criminal prosecutions of pregnant people who had an abortion outside the scope of the law in England and Wales. Abortion providers and those assisting with abortions would remain subject to criminalization, contrary to international standards. The bill was pending at the end of the year.

Obstacles to abortion care in Northern Ireland remained, including access to medical abortion, despite the commissioning of abortion services in 2022. Lack of early screening for fetal impairments continued to be a concern, contravening health standards and having significant repercussions for pregnant people's rights to personal autonomy and health. Northern Ireland remained the only part of the UK where telemedicine was unavailable.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

In February, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights concluded that the UK had failed to comply with its international obligations, including to ensure the rights to food, housing and adequate social security.

Systemic failings of the social security system continued to push people deeper into poverty.[4] In June, the government introduced a bill proposing changes to Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) aimed at saving GBP 5 billion. The government's own impact assessment concluded that the measures would force an additional 250,000 people with disabilities into poverty. Following strong campaigning, some of the most harmful proposals of the bill were dropped pending a review. In August, a new bill passed into law introducing a two-tier social security entitlement, with lower payments for new claimants and requirements aimed at excluding people with fluctuating health conditions. In September, the UN Committee

on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and UN Special Rapporteurs on extreme poverty and disability rights condemned the legislation as regressive and incompatible with the principle of non-discrimination under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In November, the government announced the abolition of the two-child limit for Universal Credit payments. Although this measure was expected to remove 450,000 children from poverty, concerns remained about its limited impact due to the failure to couple it with the removal of the benefits cap.

IMPUNITY

In September, the UK and Irish governments adopted the "Joint Framework" to address the incompatibility of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023 with international human rights obligations.

In October, the UK government published the Northern Ireland Troubles Bill to repeal and replace the widely opposed 2023 Legacy and Reconciliation Act and the draft Remedial Order. The latter sought to repeal the de facto amnesty scheme and lift the prohibition on civil claims, as ordered by the Belfast courts in the *re Dillon and Ors* case. The UK government's appeal against this judgment was heard in the Supreme Court in October. The judgment remained pending.

In December, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers examined the *McKerr v. United Kingdom* cases. These cases concerned a failure to properly investigate cases relating to charges of abuses by UK security forces and the possibility that these failures had been exacerbated by the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Act 2023. The Committee of Ministers agreed to revisit the cases in 2026 as concerns over the Troubles Bill remained.

1. "UK: End prosecution of peaceful protesters", 22 August ↑
2. *Occupational Hazard: Threats and violence against journalists in Northern Ireland Report*, 31 July ↑
3. *UK: Automated Racism: How Police Data and Algorithms Code Discrimination into Policing*, 20 February ↑
4. *UK: Social Insecurity: The Devastating Human Rights Impact of Social Security System Failures in the UK*, 31 July ↑

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

United States of America

Access to asylum at the border ended and immigration enforcement increased dramatically. Protesters' rights were violated. Protections were reduced for LGBTI people, especially transgender people. Attacks on reproductive rights intensified. Police use of lethal force disproportionately affected Black people. Progress towards abolishing the death penalty was minimal. Arbitrary and indefinite detention at Guantánamo Bay continued. Despite ongoing gun violence, President Trump discontinued programmes to address the issue. The USA continued using lethal force around the world and provided arms to Israel that were used in direct attacks on civilians and indiscriminate attacks. Gender-based violence continued to disproportionately affect Indigenous women. Environmental and climate regulations were rolled back.

BACKGROUND

Immediately following his inauguration, President Trump took an unprecedented number of actions undermining the rule of law. The arbitrary use of power unfolded in a series of authoritarian practices that included attacking the judiciary, legal system and media; retributive targeting of political enemies while granting clemency to his supporters; undermining academic freedom; abolishing and attacking diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts; crippling federal oversight; and dismantling USAID and cutting foreign assistance.

In January, President Trump rescinded an executive order (EO) that imposed sanctions

on individual Israeli settlers, Israeli settler organizations and a Palestinian armed group for undermining peace, security and stability in the West Bank. The USA attacked organizations, international bodies and tribunals that had labelled the ongoing violence in Gaza as genocide.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

The Trump administration implemented a racist, anti-migrant agenda through EOs that dehumanized and criminalized migrants and people seeking safety.[1] Nearly all federal law enforcement agencies were deputized to engage in civil immigration enforcement. Masked agents seized migrants and citizens, armoured vehicles patrolled streets, and agents targeted areas near schools, faith centres, hospitals and other previously prohibited areas for immigration enforcement. New state-funded detention facilities such as "Alligator Alcatraz" were built.

The mass immigration detention system expanded, holding thousands of people in overcrowded, inhumane facilities sometimes on military bases, limiting access to bail and resuming the detention and separation of families.[2] The administration deported third-country nationals to foreign countries without due process.

Invoking the Alien Enemies Act, the administration illegally expelled 252 Venezuelan men to El Salvador's Terrorism Confinement Centre, subjecting them to enforced disappearance and torture. After months in detention, they were sent to Venezuela, the country many had fled.[3]

The administration ended the Cuban, Haitian, Nicaraguan and Venezuelan Parole Program and Temporary Protected Status for Afghanistan, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Haiti, Honduras, Myanmar, Nepal, Nicaragua, South Sudan, Syria and Venezuela, putting thousands at risk of unlawful deportation while litigation was ongoing.

The US Refugee Admissions Program was suspended. There was a complete travel ban on nationals from 19 countries and individuals using travel documents issued by the Palestinian Authority, and a partial ban on nationals from 19 others.

President Trump declared a national emergency at the US-Mexico border. The "CBP One" mobile application's scheduling system for asylum seekers was terminated and all existing appointments were cancelled, ending access to asylum at the border.[4]

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

Repression of widespread campus protests against Israel's genocide of Palestinians in the occupied Gaza Strip continued. The Trump administration further targeted universities by rescinding federal funding and research grants, threatening and launching civil rights investigations by the Departments of Justice (DOJ) and Education.

The administration targeted international students and faculty members, who became hesitant in voicing opinions or protesting on campus for fear of deportation. Many students stopped attending classes or events on campus. Students were targeted for visa revocation and deportation through social media monitoring, visa status tracking, and automated threat assessments of foreign individuals on visas.[5] At least 11 foreign students and protesters were sought for detention and deportation specifically for their activism in support of Palestinian rights. The authorities revoked approximately 8,000 visas, the majority for criminal activity, including minor traffic violations or arrests not leading to convictions. However, 200-300 were identified for "support for terrorism" or expressing "anti-US views", purportedly for engaging in peaceful protests or posting against the ongoing genocide.

On 7 June, President Trump deployed 2,000 California National Guard troops to Los Angeles County following mass protests against immigration enforcement raids, suppressing protesters' rights to freedom of assembly. The order provoked immediate backlash and a legal battle with Californian officials.[6] Local law enforcement used less lethal weapons, including thousands of kinetic impact projectiles and tear gas grenades, to suppress protests near a federal building where immigrants were being

detained in Los Angeles, causing six injuries. Journalists were specifically targeted; federal agents also used unnecessary or excessive force against protesters.

Congress and 24 states introduced 62 bills restricting the right to protest, with five bills enacted in five states.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

The Trump administration rolled back protections for LGBTI people and used federal agencies to attack LGBTI rights, particularly of transgender people. President Trump issued an EO "restoring biological truth", defining sex as an "immutable biological classification as either male or female". In response, agencies cut programmes and funding protecting LGBTI people and erased mentions of LGBTI identity from official materials.

The NGO GLAAD documented 932 anti-LGBTI incidents in 49 states and the District of Columbia in the period May 2024 to May 2025 – the equivalent of 2.5 incidents every day. Violent attacks resulted in 84 injuries and 10 deaths. In July, the administration shut down the LGBTI youth-specific option on the national suicide hotline.

Across the country, 616 anti-LGBTI bills were introduced; 74 become law, restricting healthcare for transgender youth and censoring LGBTI content in schools. Following President Trump's EO to ban gender-affirming care for people under 19 years, the Supreme Court upheld state bans for minors in June. Twenty-five statewide bans remained in effect.

DISCRIMINATION

While revoking parts of a 60-year-old EO aimed at tackling workplace discrimination, the Trump administration declared that DEI's "foundational rhetoric and ideas foster intergroup hostility and authoritarianism". President Trump's anti-DEI measures have led to surveillance by private individuals of Black women, particularly those employed in the federal government. Federal staffing reductions targeted departments where racialized people and women were most prevalent. Removing DEI initiatives resulted in cuts to education funding and threatening investigations and fines against non-governmental entities with DEI policies.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Trump administration significantly rolled back sexual and reproductive rights, creating a volatile legal landscape. It rescinded prior policies that helped expand and protect access to reproductive care. It cut funding for reproductive care facilities and programmes, forcing clinic closures that disproportionately impacted people living on lower incomes. States further restricted access, and the Supreme Court made it easier for them to exclude reproductive health protections for beneficiaries of Medicaid (health insurance programme providing free or low-cost medical coverage for eligible people living on lower incomes).

Forty-one states had abortion bans of some kind, including 13 with total bans and seven with bans at or before 18 weeks of gestation. According to the Gender Equity Policy Institute, pregnant people living in states that banned abortion were nearly two times as likely to die during pregnancy, childbirth or soon after giving birth, compared with mothers living in states where abortion was legal.

Additional barriers to reproductive healthcare, including birth control, pregnancy care and abortion, disproportionately affected marginalized and racialized groups.

EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

According to NGO sources, police shot and killed 1,143 people in 2025. Black people were disproportionately impacted by the use of lethal force, comprising more than 23% of deaths from police use of firearms, while representing 13% of the population. The government continued to fail to fully implement the Death in Custody Reporting Act to document the number of people killed by law enforcement officers every year.

On 28 April, President Trump issued an EO that directed federal resources to promote aggressive policing tactics and further militarized local law enforcement agencies; provided greater protections for law

enforcement officers accused of misconduct; and threatened possible federal prosecutions of government officials who "wilfully and unlawfully direct the obstruction of criminal law" through their policies. The DOJ halted federal oversight over a number of local law enforcement agencies engaging in a "pattern or practice" of rights-violating policing by rescinding or ending active lawsuits and investigations.

The administration deployed the National Guard to cities with Black mayors and large populations of racialized groups, such as the District of Columbia and Chicago, Illinois. The president also threatened National Guard deployments to additional cities based on false claims of rising crime.

DEATH PENALTY

President Trump issued an EO that ended the Biden administration's federal execution moratorium. The EO instructed the US attorney general to re-establish as a policy the pursuit of death sentences at federal and state levels in every eligible federal crime, especially where the victim was a police officer or the perpetrator of the crime was a migrant; to support states to obtain lethal injection drugs; and to pursue cases that would overturn Supreme Court precedent limiting the use of the death penalty. It also ordered the attorney general to evaluate the placement of each of the 37 men whose federal death sentences were commuted by former president Joe Biden in December 2024, and to work with prosecutors to determine whether these individuals could be charged with state-level capital crimes.

Unable to obtain lethal injection drugs, states continued to expand the use of other methods of execution. For instance, after enacting legislation in 2024, Louisiana executed a person in March for the first time in 15 years, using nitrogen hypoxia. Arkansas enacted legislation in March allowing nitrogen hypoxia as a method of execution. Also in March, South Carolina carried out the first US execution by firing squad in 15 years. Idaho passed legislation making firing squad its primary method of execution. States also sought to reinstate the death penalty, such as a bill pending in Iowa, or enact laws to expand the crimes subject to capital punishment in Oklahoma and Idaho, despite being unconstitutional.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Although the Biden administration transferred 11 detainees out of the Guantánamo Bay detention centre in January, the prison continued to hold 15 detainees without access to a fair trial. Three had never even been charged with a crime. The only charges brought have been in the Guantánamo military commissions, in violation of international law and standards regarding fair trials. Detainees could face the death penalty if convicted. Three defendants in the 9/11 military commission case in 2024 reached an agreement with military prosecutors to plead guilty and avoid the death penalty, but the secretary of defense reversed that agreement, and the case remained in legal limbo, with the death penalty still an option. The use of capital punishment in these cases, after proceedings that did not meet international standards and after the detainees were systematically tortured, would constitute arbitrary deprivation of life. After 24 years, there had been no accountability for the perpetrators of the 9/11 attacks.

The Trump administration detained at least 700 migrants and asylum seekers at Guantánamo during 2025.

On 19 January, former president Joe Biden commuted the sentence of Native American activist Leonard Peltier to home confinement due to serious concerns about his conviction, sentencing and appeals process. He had spent nearly 50 years in prison on two life sentences relating to the deaths of two federal agents in South Dakota in 1975.[7]

RIGHT TO LIFE AND SECURITY OF THE PERSON

According to government statistics released in 2025, 46,728 people were killed by gun violence in 2023, the most recent year for which data exists. There were 408 mass shootings in 2025, including 233 school

shootings. Gun violence was the leading cause of death among US children and teenagers. Rising political extremism and violent rhetoric led to several incidents of political violence and fatal shootings of public figures and politicians via firearms.

The Trump administration enacted and implemented various pro-gun policies including EOs, regulatory changes, reversals of prior policies and creation of task forces to protect gun owners' rights. These actions rolled back prior efforts to address gun violence.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS AND KILLINGS

Since March, hundreds of people had been killed and injured by US air strikes in Yemen. In April, a US air strike on a migrant detention centre in the city of Sa'ada killed and injured dozens of migrants. Amnesty International found no evidence that the detention centre was a lawful target and called on the USA to investigate the strike as a potential violation of international humanitarian law.[8] In May, the USA and Yemen reached a ceasefire deal, pausing the conflict.

There was no accountability or reparations paid for previous killings of civilians by the USA, documented by Amnesty International, in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia.

Since September, the USA used drones to strike 35 boats in the Caribbean and Pacific that were allegedly carrying drugs, killing at least 123 individuals.[9] The USA claimed the boats were used by drug traffickers to ship narcotics and attempted to justify the actions as "self-defence" or as part of a widespread "war on drugs". Based on all available reporting, these lethal strikes lacked legal justification and amounted to extrajudicial executions because the boats posed no immediate threat to the USA or to the life of any person.

IRRESPONSIBLE ARMS TRANSFERS

The USA continued to supply arms and other military and security equipment to Israel in violation of US laws and policies intended to prevent arms transfers that risked contributing to civilian harm and violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Sexual violence against American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) women remained alarmingly high. Government data suggested that they were 2.2 times more likely to experience sexual violence than non-Indigenous women. Only a limited number of Indigenous Tribes could legally prosecute non-Indigenous perpetrators of violence against Indigenous women (though most perpetrators were non-Indigenous men). AI/AN survivors continued to face barriers to accessing post-rape care, including forensic examinations necessary for criminal cases.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The Trump administration revoked executive measures addressing environmental impacts on marginalized communities, including eliminating environmental justice offices in federal agencies and terminating funds for local organizations to tackle environmental and climate harms. On 20 January, President Trump signed an EO to initiate the USA's withdrawal from the Paris Agreement – the global treaty to combat climate change – annulling the Biden administration's emissions reduction targets.

In January, the Trump administration issued an EO declaring "energy dominance" a national emergency and put forth policies to increase energy production, including reviving the coal-mining industry despite its known harmful environmental and health concerns. Simultaneously, the administration issued an EO prioritizing AI development despite the extensive amounts of energy required by AI data centres. The International Energy Agency reported that by 2030 the electricity consumption for AI globally would be slightly more than the total electricity consumption of Japan, with the USA using more than half of this.

In June, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) staff urged the Trump administration to stop politicizing the EPA and prioritize science-based environmental protections for vulnerable communities. In

July, the Department of Energy issued a report discrediting the scientific community's consensus that greenhouse gas emissions were major drivers of climate change and adversely impact health, concluding that climate change was not an urgent concern.

1. "Amnesty International USA reaction to President Trump's anti-immigrant executive actions", 20 January ↑
2. *USA: Dehumanized by Design: Human Rights Violations in El Paso*, 22 May ↑
3. "Unlawful expulsions to El Salvador endanger lives amid ongoing state of emergency", 25 March ↑
4. *USA: Lives in Limbo: Devastating Impacts of Trump's Migration and Asylum Policies*, 20 February ↑
5. "USA/Global: Tech made by Palantir and Babel Street pose surveillance threats to pro-Palestine student protestors & migrants", 21 August ↑
6. "USA: Deployment of National Guard to Los Angeles in response to ICE raids is dangerous", 9 June ↑
7. "President Biden right to commute the life sentence of Leonard Peltier", 20 January ↑
8. "Yemen: US air strike that has left dozens of migrants dead must be investigated", 19 May ↑
9. "Reported U.S. strike in the Caribbean Sea would violate international human rights law", 3 September ↑

URUGUAY

Eastern Republic of Uruguay

Restrictions on freedom of expression and access to public information continued. Prison overcrowding resulted in inhumane conditions of detention, and mortality rates were high. Members of the armed forces continued to be prosecuted for crimes against humanity committed during the civil-military regime (1973-1985), but no progress was made in investigations into enforced disappearances during that period. The rate of femicides and complaints for violence against women continued to be high. The provision of mental health services and of social assistance were inadequate. Adolescent pregnancy remained a concern.

BACKGROUND

Uruguay's system of rights guarantees continued to weaken. During the debate on the government's 2025-2029 budget, a reduction in the allocation of resources for policies to strengthen the system of rights guarantees was detected, in areas such as the fight against gender-based violence, the protection of children and adolescents, and access to mental health services.

In September, the interim attorney general, Mónica Ferrero, was attacked in her home, generating great public alarm.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

According to a report published in May by the Centre for Archives and Access to Public Information, between April 2024 and March 2025 there were 51 incidents of threats and restrictions on freedom of expression against journalists. The restrictions imposed on free journalism continued to generate concern.

In July, journalist Fernanda Kosak was censored after she spoke out in support of Palestine.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION

More than 15 years after Law 18381 on the Right of Access to Public Information was approved, access to public information was still inadequate, with policies on transparency and access to public information still not implemented by public institutions subject to the law.

In April, the interim attorney general banned the publication of requests to formalize investigations into cases of public interest. This obscured the work of the Attorney General's Office and restricted access to information.

INHUMANE DETENTION CONDITIONS

Overcrowding in the prison system persisted. According to data from the ministry of the interior, the prison population increased steadily, exceeding 16,000 inmates in December, which represents a rate of 32 people per police officer, 63 for each civilian prison worker, and 157 for each medical technician, compared to the international standard of three people in custody in direct

contact with each prison officer. In addition, the system had 10,000 people under alternative measures besides prison, supervised by the Interior Ministry. Civil society organizations expressed concern about deteriorating and unsanitary detention conditions, including overcrowding, which affected prisoners' health. In June, four inmates died due to a fire in module 11 of the Santiago Vázquez prison (formerly known as COMCAR).

IMPUNITY

In May, the Ministry of the Interior announced that the files of the Directorate of Information and Intelligence containing information on the events of the civil-military regime (1973-1985) would be reopened.

Fifteen convictions were handed down against active and retired members of the military and the police were convicted of torture, abductions and killings that amounted to crimes against humanity committed during the civil-military regime of the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, a former Uruguayan military officer was convicted in Rome, Italy, as part of that country's ongoing investigation into the so-called Operation Condor. However, no substantive progress was made in clarifying the fate of the victims of enforced disappearance during that period.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

Access to mental health services was inadequate, and suicide rates generated concern among both the authorities and relevant civil society organizations. According to the National Police Union, 15 police officers died by suicide in 2025, a significantly higher rate than the general population. In July, the government reported 764 people died by suicide in 2024, with a suicide rate of 21.35 per 100,000 of the population.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

According to the Ministry of the Interior, 16 femicides and 35,443 reports of violence against women were recorded between January and October. The high levels of gender-based violence continued to be attributed to the lack of implementation of Law 19580 on gender-based violence against women, with insufficient resources allocated to establishing multipurpose courts for dealing with all matters relating to this type of violence.

In September, a man committed suicide after murdering his daughter and son, aged two and six, respectively, in an incident of vicarious violence in the department of Río Negro. In the preceding three years, at least 13 children died as a result of vicarious violence.

RIGHT TO SOCIAL CARE

In April, the Ministry of Social Development announced it would be working on the development of a national care plan. In October, the National Care Board presented the plan for the period 2026-2030 without having convened relevant civil society organizations during the development process.

A decade after its creation by Law 19353, the National Integrated Care System was still not functioning effectively. Those targeted by the care system were still unable to access the care services established by law. Women, who often carried out unpaid care work due to entrenched gender discrimination, were disproportionately affected.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Progress was made during the year in access to sexual and reproductive rights, but barriers to prevention of adolescent pregnancy persisted due to continued shortcomings in government policy. According to previously published information from the Ministry of Public Health and the State Health Services Administration, 190 girls under 15 years of age became pregnant in the period between 2021 and 2024. In 2024, out of a total of 29,899 births, there were 2,390 births to girls between 15 and 18 years of age, and 37 to girls under 15 years of age.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

In June, a three-month-old baby under the care of the Uruguayan Children and

Adolescents Institute (INAU) was found dead in the department of Colonia. In August, a 13-year-old girl also under the care of the INAU was killed by her father while attending a medical consultation in the department of Maldonado.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In July, the government decided to cancel implementation of the Neptuno project for the construction of a water treatment plant for the metropolitan area of the capital, Montevideo, and announced the construction of a new plant in the town of Aguas Corrientes in the department of Canelones, without submitting comprehensive information on either environmental impact or impact on nearby communities.

Serious restrictions on access to public information on the implementation of production investment projects and mega-projects persisted, making it impossible to determine the impact of such projects on the environment, access to water and people's quality of life.

UZBEKISTAN

Republic of Uzbekistan

Freedom of expression remained under threat, with activists and journalists facing politically motivated prosecutions and travel restrictions. Authorities continued to stall reforms addressing impunity for torture and other ill-treatment. Forced evictions and demolitions targeting marginalized communities persisted. LGBTI people faced systemic discrimination and rights violations. Farmers were coerced into cotton production under threat of land loss. Despite environmental pledges, severe air pollution posed serious health risks.

BACKGROUND

In October, Uzbekistan signed an Enhanced Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with the EU and hosted the first UNESCO General Conference held outside Paris in more than 40 years. These developments proceeded despite ongoing concerns regarding Uzbekistan's compliance with international human rights standards.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Human rights activists, bloggers and social media commentators continued to face politically motivated prosecutions for reporting on corruption, human rights abuses and other sensitive topics such as the 2022 mass protests in support of Karakalpakstan's autonomous status. At least 30 individuals, including suspected Karakalpak independence activists, were convicted under Article 244-1(3) of the criminal code for allegedly spreading "separatist" propaganda online.

In July, a court in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan convicted Dastan Uzakov of disseminating "separatist" propaganda. He had posted publicly available video clips of Karakalpak editor and lawyer Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov's 2022 unfair trial on his Instagram account. Dastan Uzakov stated that he had shared the clips to gain "likes" and was unaware he had broken any laws, as the trial had been public and covered by national media. He received a five-year non-custodial sentence, and his mobile phone was confiscated.

In May, a civil court in the capital, Tashkent, fined Abdurakhmon Tashanov, chair of Ezgulik – one of the few registered independent human rights NGOs – over a Facebook post responding to repeated public criticism of his human rights work by two law professors. In a closed trial, the court ruled that his post harmed the academics' dignity and reputation, ordering him to pay damages, delete the post, issue a public apology and publish a retraction.

Also in May, authorities prevented independent journalist and human rights defender Sharifa Madrakhimova from travelling to Ireland to receive the Front Line Defenders Award by damaging the microchip in her passport, in apparent retaliation for her human rights work.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Authorities continued to delay legal reforms to address impunity for torture and other ill-treatment and to establish genuinely independent mechanisms for monitoring detention conditions. The full report of the parliamentary commission investigating the 2022 violent crackdown of protests in Karakalpakstan – including allegations that detained protesters were tortured – remained unpublished.

In March, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD) expressed "grave concern" over credible, unrebutted allegations of mass detentions and excessive force against Karakalpaks and opponents of constitutional amendments, highlighting discrimination based on ethnicity and political opinion. Authorities continued to ignore calls for an independent international investigation.

The WGAD also raised serious concerns about credible reports of torture and other ill-treatment of Dauletmurat Tazhimuratov, who had been sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment after an unfair trial for allegedly conspiring to incite violence during the protests in Karakalpakstan. In April, he was reportedly beaten unconscious by other inmates for refusing to sing the national anthem. Despite repeated complaints addressed to her office, the Ombudsperson failed to meet him during a prison inspection that month. In May, his lawyer reported that he continued to be beaten by fellow inmates – allegedly at the direction of prison authorities – and had been placed in solitary confinement. The authorities denied all allegations of violations in a June reply to UN experts.

RIGHT TO HOUSING

In March, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing expressed concern over widespread forced evictions, demolitions and expropriations, following his August 2024 visit. His report cited a lack of public consultation, ineffective judicial remedies and courts favouring developers. He also warned of ongoing intimidation, prosecution and detention of affected individuals, housing rights defenders and journalists.

In June, three UN special rapporteurs expressed their concern to the government about forced evictions and demolitions in Samarkand's UNESCO World Heritage neighbourhoods, home to Multoni (Mughat) and ethnic Tajik minorities. They noted that the urban redevelopment had proceeded in violation of World Heritage Committee conditions, without social impact assessments or human rights due diligence. Marginalized and often illiterate residents were not consulted; many were coerced by police and local officials into signing expropriation agreements they did not understand and accepting inadequate compensation. The authorities had not responded to these concerns by year's end.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI people continued to face serious human rights abuses by both law enforcement and private individuals, including intimidation, physical violence, online defamation and arbitrary detention on fabricated charges. Authorities maintained their refusal to decriminalize consensual same-sex relations between men and rejected the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in anti-discrimination laws, citing "traditional family values".

Cuts to US foreign assistance led to the suspension of human rights programmes addressing stigma and discrimination, undermining the rights of LGBTI people and those living with HIV. Civil society organizations working on HIV-related legal reforms, anti-discrimination and access to healthcare faced increasing obstacles in advocating for policy change and human rights protections.

WORKERS' RIGHTS

A May report by the Cotton Campaign warned that, despite the ending of systemic forced labour, the state continued to impose production targets and crop mandates on small-scale farmers, forcing them to grow cotton or grain under threat of losing land or having crops destroyed. In July, leaked audio

revealed a senior presidential adviser threatening local government officials with violence over unmet quotas.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

As EU-Central Asia economic and environmental cooperation strengthened, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev declared 2025 as the year of "Environmental Protection and Green Economy," aiming for 55% of new industrial and infrastructure projects to be "green" by 2030. A national strategy to reduce black carbon was adopted, and new laws introduced fines for construction-related air pollution. Despite these efforts, air pollution remained severe. The Ministry of Ecology recorded nearly 300 serious violations of these new laws in the first eight months of the year. In November, soon after Tashkent was again ranked among the most polluted cities in the world, the president signed a decree on urgent response measures.

VENEZUELA

Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

Crimes against humanity persisted and were committed with impunity. All branches of the state continued to persecute and severely punish real or perceived dissent against the government of Nicolás Maduro. Hundreds of people suffered arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance, as well as torture and other human rights violations, for opposing or criticizing the government. Many of these individuals were subjected to criminal proceedings that lacked judicial guarantees, being denied counsel of their own choosing, access to information on the charges against them, or the right to appear before an independent tribunal. Human rights defenders and journalists continued to be one of the main targets of the government's policy of repression. Around 7.9 million Venezuelan refugees had fled the country since 2015. The humanitarian crisis persisted, with almost two million people dependent on international aid. No progress was made on sexual and reproductive rights. Discrimination against the LGBTI population and Indigenous Peoples continued and there was no legislative progress to promote their rights. Illegal mining and environmental devastation continued to generate concern.

BACKGROUND

Claims persisted regarding the results of the 2024 presidential election. Parliamentary and regional elections were held in March and July, respectively, in an environment of repression similar to that of the presidential elections.

From 2 September, the USA carried out air strikes in the Caribbean and the Pacific on 34 vessels allegedly transporting drugs from Latin America to the USA, resulting in the extrajudicial killing of at least 110 people. US president Donald Trump attempted to justify these attacks by citing potential risk to life in his country. Tensions between the two governments increased due to the aggressive rhetoric used and the fact that the attacks were carried out off the coast of Venezuela, mostly against vessels and crew the majority of which were likely to be Venezuelan.

In January, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights submitted a report on human rights violations committed during the 2024 electoral period. The report examined the authorities' repressive strategy to prevent political participation by the opposition, hinder the development of a free electoral contest and instil fear among citizens. In September, the commission sought approval for a visit to the country to observe the human rights situation there. In August, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights reaffirmed its jurisdiction over Venezuela. In September and December respectively, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela submitted two reports documenting the human rights violations committed during the post-election repression and the role played by the

Bolivarian National Guard in the commission of crimes against humanity.

Both the Office of the Prosecutor of the ICC and OHCHR, the UN human rights office, announced the closure of their respective country offices.

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to opposition leader María Corina Machado, who had been disqualified from participating in the 2024 presidential elections and suffered persecution.

REPRESSION OF DISSENT

The government continued to exercise widespread repression against political dissent, resulting in serious human rights violations and crimes against humanity. The authorities continued to use the state apparatus, including the security and intelligence forces, the judicial system and restrictive laws, as well as groups of armed civilians, to repress, silence and punish dissent and the defence of human rights.

ARBITRARY DETENTION

Politically motivated arbitrary detentions persisted, although fewer than in 2024. In December, the government announced the release of multiple detainees, with the NGO Foro Penal verifying 117 releases. Of more than 2,000 people arbitrarily detained following the 2024 presidential election, at least 806 remained in illegal detention as of 31 December. Those released were still subject to criminal proceedings.

In most cases, detainees were charged with vague and unfounded crimes, such as "terrorism" or "treason", which carried severe penalties. Criminal proceedings continued to lack due process guarantees. Detainees were assigned public defenders lacking capacity or motivation to act effectively. Defendants were tried in courts that lacked independence, including those known as "anti-terrorism courts", and they were denied knowledge of the charges and evidence against them, among other rights violations.

In addition to the use of state security forces and detention centres, the instrumentalization of the Public Prosecutor's Office as a means for political persecution and of the judiciary as an enforcement mechanism was key in the implementation of the government's policy of repression against political dissent, allegedly to "fight terrorism". The involvement of senior state officials in identifying and publicly stigmatizing victims of repression demonstrated the systematic nature of this practice.

At year's end, hundreds of people were still in incommunicado detention.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

The whereabouts of many people forcibly disappeared following the 2024 elections or individuals detained in 2025 remained unknown. According to Foro Penal, at least 63 people were still disappeared at the end of the year.

Enforced disappearances generally began with arbitrary detention by state agents, followed by lack of information, refusal to acknowledge the detention, and deliberate concealment of the fate and whereabouts of the detained person. In most cases, days or even months passed before the detention was communicated, and even then the only certainty that relatives had was that the person was in state custody. There were cases of people being subjected to enforced disappearance as they were transferred from one detention centre to another.

Enforced disappearances directly, though not exclusively, resulted in a systematic denial of judicial guarantees through simulated proceedings, such as initial hearings (which must take place within 48 hours of detention) being held behind closed doors and de facto suspension of habeas corpus, among other practices.

IMPUNITY

Near total impunity for human rights violations persisted and little progress was made in the Venezuela I investigation at the ICC.

In August, the ICC Appeals Chamber ordered prosecutor Karim Khan to step down from the Venezuela investigation. This followed a request for recusal filed a year earlier by an organization alleging a possible

conflict of interest due to family ties between the prosecutor and a lawyer from the legal team representing the Venezuelan state at the ICC. Deputy Prosecutor Mame Mandiaye Niang took over the investigation.

In December, the National Assembly voted to repeal Venezuela's ratification of the Rome Statute and withdraw from the ICC.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSOCIATION

As of October, the NGO Espacio Público had recorded 217 attacks on freedom of expression. The National Union of Press Workers reported the detention of at least 23 press sector workers, some of whom had initially suffered enforced disappearance. The whereabouts of journalist Carlos Marcano were unknown for 13 days following his detention. In December, journalist and political analyst Nicmer Evans was disappeared for three days after the Bolivarian National Intelligence Service took him for an "interview" at the El Helicoide centre. At year's end, he remained arbitrarily detained.

The VEsinFiltro project implemented by the organization Conexión Segura y Libre documented the censorship of independent media and their internet domains, allegedly under the orders of the National Telecommunications Commission.

In February and May respectively, the deadlines expired for the accreditation and registration in the NGO registry, in accordance with the Law on the Oversight, Regulation, Operation, and Financing of Non-Governmental Organizations and Nonprofit Social Organizations. This law restricted civic space. At the end of the year, it was unclear how many organizations had been registered under this law.

In October, authorities encouraged citizens to use VenApp to report potential dissidents. The app, initially developed for receiving social benefits and reporting deficiencies in public services, became a tool for political persecution.

The Venezuelan Observatory of Social Conflict recorded 2,219 protests during the year, of which 1,129 related to labour rights and the right to decent housing.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Arbitrary detention and judicial persecution of human rights defenders continued, as did the use of incommunicado detention and restrictions on due process as a form of reprisal. Javier Tarazona, Rocío San Miguel, Carlos Julio Rojas and Kennedy Tejeda remained arbitrarily deprived of their liberty at the end of the year. Carlos Julio Rojas was held incommunicado for almost four months, without access to family visits or contact with the outside world.

On 7 January, the director of the NGO Espacio Público and prominent human rights defender Carlos Correa was detained and subjected to enforced disappearance, generating concern among national and international organizations. He was released eight days later.

Eduardo Torres, defender and member of the NGO PROVEA, was arbitrarily detained in May. He was forcibly disappeared for five days and subsequently held incommunicado and without access to a trusted lawyer, among other violations of due process. In October, he was allowed to make a call to say he would be transferred from El Helicoide to Yare II prison.

Similarly, Martha Lía Grajales, a defender with the Surgentes collective, was detained in August after accompanying a group of mothers of people imprisoned for political reasons in a peaceful protest. Her whereabouts were also unknown until she was released from prison six days later, under measures alternative to imprisonment.

Human rights defender Pedro Hernández, coordinator of the NGO Campo, was detained in September. Several of his relatives were also arbitrarily detained while searching for him and released three days later. Pedro Hernández was released from prison in October.

The Centre for Defenders and Justice recorded 455 attacks and incidents against human rights defenders, including continued restrictions on the defence of human rights,

intimidation and criminalization of humanitarian and social work.

Several organizations warned of a climate of intimidation and threats created by the Law on the Supervision, Regularization, Performance and Financing of Non-Governmental and Related Organizations, which undermined freedom of association and the legitimate work of NGOs in the country. The arbitrary detention of activists and journalists continued throughout the year, forcing human rights organizations and defenders to work in exile and seek international protection.

REFUGEES' AND MIGRANTS' RIGHTS

UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, reported that approximately 7.9 million people had left the country since 2015, seeking international protection.

In July, 252 Venezuelan men were returned to Venezuela from El Salvador. All of them had been forcibly disappeared for more than three months at the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT) in that country, to which they had been transferred from the USA.

During the year, hundreds of people seeking international protection in the USA were illegally expelled and returned to Venezuela, where they were at risk of their government's policy of persecution.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

According to the Centre for Documentation and Social Analysis of the Venezuelan Federation of Teachers, the International Monetary Fund estimated that inflation would reach 269.9% by the end of the year. The cost of the basic food basket for a family of five was USD 503.73 in April, equivalent to VES 45,335.73, while the monthly minimum wage remained frozen since 2022 at VES 130. At the end of 2025, this amounted to less than one US dollar at the official exchange rate, highlighting how people's purchasing power has continued to erode.

Humanitarian aid continued and reached 1.9 million people as of November, according to OCHA.

Water and electricity outages persisted throughout the year, as did protests related to basic services.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

There was no progress on sexual and reproductive rights, including access to abortion and family planning methods. The state did not develop or implement public policies aimed to prevent the violation of these rights or to ensure their effective enjoyment. In addition, the absence of official data made it difficult to develop and evaluate evidence-based policies. Abortion remained criminalized in most cases.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Lack of progress on LGBTI rights persisted. OHCHR, the UN human rights office, reported that transgender persons were being held in detention centres according to their sex assigned at birth, further exposing them to protection risks while in custody. It also denounced the use by state authorities of sexist and anti-LGBTI rhetoric on public media to discredit members and supporters of the opposition. LGBTI people's rights organizations continued to demand approval on second reading of the Organic Law on Gender Equity and Equality, introduced in 2009.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Lack of guarantees and respect for Indigenous Peoples' rights continued to be a matter of concern.

In January, some Yekuana Indigenous communities in the state of Amazonas reported that a conflict had arisen due to illegal mining activity in their territory.

According to information published in October on digital media channels, a group of 14 Indigenous Sanemá had tested positive for tuberculosis. This raised concern among civil society organizations about the lack of data on morbidity and mortality rates within Indigenous territories.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The authorities announced that, in a meeting with the executive secretary of the UN

Framework Convention on Climate Change, they had expressed Venezuela's commitment to environmental justice, climate change mitigation and adaptation projects, and the fight against the climate crisis.

The media continued to warn of the impacts of illegal mining and environmental devastation. A report on illegal mining and human rights published by several NGOs pointed to the lack of reliable data and the absence of monitoring systems as barriers to climate management, despite official statements on this.

The NGO SOS Orinoco documented 10 mining accidents in the first quarter of the year, with a total of 10 deaths. In October, the media reported the death of 14 miners in Bolívar state after a flood in the gold mine where they were working. There were questions as to whether the mine had all necessary legal permits; the authorities provided no information on the issue.

Venezuela had still not signed the Escazú Agreement.

VIET NAM

Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

The government continued to rely on vague Penal Code provisions and tried to introduce additional new laws to counter dissent and suppress freedom of expression, resulting in further arbitrary arrests and detentions. Concerns persisted over the ill-treatment of activists in prisons across the country. LGBTI people's rights lacked meaningful protection in both law and practice. The government abolished the death penalty for eight crimes.

BACKGROUND

Reforms consolidated 63 provinces and cities into 34 administrative units. This was seen by many as an attempt by Tô Lâm, the general secretary of the Communist Party of Vietnam, to centralize control ahead of the Party Congress in 2026.

Viet Nam was re-elected as a member of the UN Human Rights Council until 2028. The UN Human Rights Committee scrutinized the country's human rights record, raising concerns about transnational repression, torture, conditions of detention, freedom of expression and the right to fair trial.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Journalists and activists

Long prison sentences continued to be used as a tool of repression against dissenting voices. Prominent journalist Đoàn Bảo Châu faced ongoing harassment for his reporting and criticism of the government. In August, police charged him under Article 117 of the Penal Code, which criminalizes "propaganda against the state". The charges related to six videos and media interviews he conducted with international media about social issues and human rights violations in Viet Nam. If convicted, he faces up to 20 years in prison.

In August, a journalist for the BBC's Vietnamese service was interrogated and prevented from leaving the country after she visited to renew her passport.

In 2025, police arrested and prosecuted at least 43 people, including citizens, activists, and journalists, under broad and vaguely worded Articles 109, 116, 117 and 331 of the Penal Code. They were targeted solely for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

In October, civil society raised concerns about a proposed press law that could require journalists to disclose their sources to the police.

Repression of dissent

In August, the Ministry of Public Security established the Digital Trust Alliance, a national coalition ostensibly aimed at combating misinformation. However, civil society organizations viewed the new alliance as another platform to amplify further government propaganda. The coalition comprised more than 300 "key opinion leaders" and influencers nationwide. This new initiative complemented the already

existing "Committee 35" and "Force 47" projects, operated by the police and military. These projects sought to shape public opinion and suppress dissenting voices under the guise of "fighting against disinformation and fake news".

In September, the Ministry of Public Security submitted a proposal to amend the Cyber Security Law 2018. The draft amendment requires internet providers to hand over users' IP addresses to the police, remove content, and suspend their services within 24 hours of a request from the police. The proposal raised concerns about the rights to privacy and online freedom of expression.

The police used laws including Decree No. 14/2022/ND-CP, which penalizes dissemination of "illegal content" or "disinformation and defamation", to impose fines on citizens expressing dissent about public policies and the police on social media. These administrative fines ranged from VND 5,000,000 to 10,000,000 (USD 190 to 380). In November, police in various provinces threatened and fined owners of numerous social media accounts for posting "false information" about deadly floods and landslides that hit the country, and the government's humanitarian relief efforts. In Đắk Lắk province alone, police dealt with at least 52 cases.

TORTURE AND OTHER ILL-TREATMENT

Concerns about the health of imprisoned activists persisted due to their lack of access to adequate healthcare. Land rights activist Cấn Thị Thêu was denied access to her medical records, despite grave concerns about her well-being.[1] There were also concerns about the health of other detained journalists, including Lê Hữu Minh Tuấn, Phạm Chí Dũng and Nguyễn Tường Thụy.

Imprisoned human rights defenders, including music teacher Đặng Đăng Phước, pro-democracy activist Lê Đình Lượng , environmental activist Hoàng Đức Bình, activist Bùi Tuấn Lâm, and land rights activist Trịnh Bá Tư were subjected to harsh punishments in prison. These included being held in leg shackles for 10 days, weeks of solitary confinement and limited family visits.

On 2 September, dissident Vương Văn Thả died in An Phước Prison in Bình Dương province. In 2017, he began a 12-year sentence for "propaganda against the state". His family disputed official accounts that he committed suicide, calling for an independent investigation into his death, but experienced harassment from authorities.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

On 28 August, at least five human rights and pro-democracy activists were arrested and detained in the lead-up to National Day on 2 September. Police said they were under investigation under Article 117 of the Penal Code and would remain in detention until at least the first quarter of 2026.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI individuals remained vulnerable due to lack of legal protections. Laws on marriage and family did not recognize same-sex marriage. The absence of regulations for LGBTI people on child adoption, medical care or the property rights of non-married couples continued to expose them to discrimination. Transgender rights remained in limbo; the draft law on gender recognition remained delayed for the 10th year. Pro-government disinformation campaigns intensified technology-facilitated gender-based violence against LGBTI people online. The Viet Pride parade in Ho Chi Minh City was cancelled for the first time in 13 years, while other pride events faced censorship or cancellation following harassment by local authorities.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In January, air pollution topped global charts. In March, levels of particulate matter (PM 2.5) in the capital, Hanoi reached 25 times WHO limits, forcing school closures, affecting access to education and health, particularly for people at risk. Concerns persisted over the gasoline vehicle ban in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, set for July 2026. While the government touted the ban as a means to reduce air pollution and support net-zero

goals, critics warned it could hurt low-income motorbike users unless affordable clean alternatives were offered.

DEATH PENALTY

Viet Nam abolished the death penalty for eight offences, substituting it with life imprisonment from July. However, a lack of due process in capital proceedings and secrecy surrounding the use of the death penalty continued to raise concerns about whether death sentences continued to be imposed.

1. "Viet Nam: Grave concern for imprisoned activist's health", 27 August 1

YEMEN

Republic of Yemen

Parties to the conflict in Yemen continued to arbitrarily detain, forcibly disappear and unjustly prosecute people who criticized their human rights records and policies, including human rights defenders, journalists and humanitarian workers. The USA and Israel carried out attacks that killed civilians. The Huthi de facto authorities carried out mass arrests of aid workers. The Southern Transitional Council de facto authorities cracked down on peaceful protests. All parties to the conflict failed to protect economic and social rights amid international funding cuts that further worsened the humanitarian crisis. Women and girls continued to experience gender-based violence and discrimination. Prosecutions of LGBTI people continued. Parties to the conflict contributed to environmental degradation.

BACKGROUND

Despite the UN-brokered ceasefire, parties to the conflict sporadically attacked civilian areas and frontlines including in Ta'iz, Lahj, Hodeidah and Hadramout governorates.

Between 15 March and 6 May, the USA conducted further air and naval strikes in Yemen, coined Operation Rough Rider, in response to the Huthi de facto authorities' attacks on shipping. US air strikes killed at least 224 civilians, according to estimates by the independent organization Airwars.

On 18 March the Huthis resumed missile and drone attacks on Israel. While most were intercepted by Israeli defence systems, on 4 May four people were reportedly injured in a Huthi missile strike near the main terminal of Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. On 24 September a Huthi drone attack near a hotel in Eilat reportedly injured more than 20 people.

In July the Huthis resumed attacks on commercial ships, sinking two Greek-owned, Liberian-flagged vessels in the Red Sea, killing at least three crew members.

Between May and September, Israel carried out strikes on major infrastructure in northern Yemen. The Civilian Impact Monitoring Project reported that hundreds of civilians were killed and injured as a result. An Israeli strike in the capital, Sana'a, on 28 August killed the Huthi Prime Minster Ahmad al-Rahawi, nine ministers and two cabinet officials.

An average of one child was killed or injured every day during the year, according to Save the Children, most by air strikes. More than twice the number of children were killed in 2025 compared to 2024.

UNLAWFUL ATTACKS

On 28 April a US air strike hit a migrant detention centre in Sa'ada, north-western Yemen, killing and injuring dozens of African migrants being detained by the Huthi de facto authorities. Many survivors were left with life-changing injuries including head trauma, spinal injuries and loss of limbs. An investigation by Amnesty International concluded that the strike amounted to an indiscriminate attack that should be promptly and transparently investigated as a war crime.[1]

In August, US Central Command responded to Amnesty International's questions about the attack saying it was

"assessing all reports of civilian harm resulting from operations during that time period". However, despite promises to do so, the USA had not released results of these assessments by the end of the year.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

Huthi de facto authorities

The Huthi de facto authorities escalated their targeting of civil society organizations, UN staff, and journalists who criticized them. The Huthis carried out multiple waves of arrests in areas under their control, arbitrarily detaining at least dozens of UN staff. By December, according to the UN, this brought the total number of its staff arbitrarily detained by the Huthis since 2021 to 69.

Dozens of staff members from Yemeni and international civil society organizations rounded up by the Huthis over the previous year remained detained without charge and without adequate access to their lawyers or families.[2]

On 11 February a detained aid worker from the World Food Programme died in Huthi custody.[3]

In May the Huthis arrested six journalists and media activists in Hodeidah, according to the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate.

On 24 May the Sana'a based Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) convicted Mohammed al-Mayahi of spreading false and misleading news. He was sentenced to one-and-a-half years in prison according to the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate.

Also in May, the Huthi authorities issued a decision prohibiting any media outlet or content creator from filming or conducting field interviews in Sana'a without obtaining prior authorization from the Huthi-run Ministry of Information.

On 25 September the Huthis arbitrarily detained prominent human rights lawyer Abdul Majid Sabra for social media posts marking the 26 September national anniversary. The Huthis also stopped people at checkpoints and searched their phones for content related to the anniversary and arrested dozens of people in northern governorates who celebrated the day.[4]

Southern Transitional Council

The Southern Transitional Council (STC) de facto authorities cracked down on assembly in areas under their control. In May and June, women led peaceful protests in Aden demanding socio-economic rights, sparked by frequent outages of electricity and water. On various occasions, STC security forces used excessive force against protesters, unlawfully restricted the movement of protests and prevented protesters from taking photos or videos.

On 17 May the STC Aden security committee issued a ban on all protests and public events in Aden until "conditions are met to ensure their peacefulness and the organizers' compliance with legal regulations".

On 14 June, STC-affiliated security forces arbitrarily arrested women human rights defenders Maha Awad and Afraa Harriri during a peaceful protest in Mu'alla district in Aden. They were held briefly at al-Mu'alla police station before being released.

On 18 January, journalist Ahmad Maher was released from Bir Ahmad prison in Aden following his acquittal on 25 December 2024 by the Aden-based Specialized Criminal Court (SCC) of Appeal. He had been sentenced by the SCC in May 2024 to four years in prison following a grossly unfair trial on charges of disseminating false and misleading news – a crime that is not recognized under international law – and forging identity documents.[5]

STC de facto authorities continued to arbitrarily detain journalist Naseh Shaker, who was forcibly disappeared in November 2023, according to Marsadak, a Yemeni observatory for media freedoms.

Government of Yemen

The internationally recognized government continued its harassment and prosecution of journalists in areas under its control. Between January and October in Hadramout and Ta'iz governorates, 10 journalists were either summoned for investigation or arbitrarily

detained for publishing content that was deemed critical of the authorities, according to the Yemeni Journalists Syndicate.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

The collapsing economy and deteriorating public services, the ongoing conflict, increasingly frequent climate shocks and humanitarian funding cuts severely affected people's economic and social rights, including access to food, health and water.

Access to food remained severely restricted. According to the World Food Programme, severe food deprivation continued to affect 34% of households nationwide. Yemen was the "world's third most food insecure context", according to OCHA.

Yemen continued to suffer one of the world's most severe cholera emergencies. Between March 2024 and August 2025, more than 332,000 suspected cases and 1,073 associated deaths were reported across the country, according to OCHA.

Abrupt and irresponsible US cuts to foreign assistance threatened the health and human rights of millions of people in Yemen who depended on humanitarian aid. It also ended life-saving assistance and protection services, including malnutrition treatment and healthcare services for children suffering from cholera and other illnesses.[6]

The Huthis exacerbated the humanitarian crisis by repeatedly conducting mass arrests of and arbitrarily detaining UN aid workers and other humanitarian staff working to deliver life-saving services in northern Yemen.

People in southern Yemen, including in Aden, Hadramout and Ta'iz governorates, experienced frequent and widescale outages of water and electricity and deteriorating basic services, undermining their right to an adequate standard of living.

Heavy rains and flooding in governorates including Ma'rib, Mahwit, Hodeidah and Ta'iz caused deaths, destroyed homes and livelihoods, exacerbated internal displacement and left hundreds of people without shelter, food and clean water.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Women and girls across Yemen continued to face systemic discrimination and gender-based violence. Yemen had no legal minimum age of marriage, and almost one-third of women were married before the age of 18. Child marriage was associated with a lifetime of human rights harms. Around 5 million women faced difficulty accessing reproductive health services with nearly 200 women dying for every 100,000 births, according to the UN Population Fund (UNFPA).

By March, USAID funding cuts had already forced the closure of dozens of safe spaces designed to prevent or respond to gender-based violence across Yemen. By July, dozens of health facilities and reproductive health and protection clinics were also forced to close, denying hundreds of thousands of women and girls – including survivors of gender-based violence – access to crucial healthcare, psycho-social support and legal aid, according to UNFPA.

In addition to the funding cuts, the US designation of the Huthis as a "Foreign Terrorist Organization" led international organizations running life-saving programmes that provided support to malnourished children and pregnant and breastfeeding women to suspend operations in Huthi-controlled areas.

The Huthi de facto authorities continued to restrict women's right to freedom of movement without the accompaniment or written approval of a male guardian (*mahram*). This restricted women's right to work, among many other discriminatory effects.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

Yemen's Criminal Code (1994) continued to criminalize consensual same-sex sexual relations. Article 264 punishes anal sex with 100 lashes and up to one year in prison if the accused are not married. The punishment is death by stoning if the accused are married. Article 268 punishes sex between women with up to three years in prison.

On 20 January the Huthi-run SCC in Sana'a sentenced 18 men to death, while

113 other men were handed prison sentences of between two-and-a-half and 15 years on various charges including "prostitution", "posing as women" and "immoral acts".

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The Huthis' attacks on shipping posed significant environmental risks, threatening marine life and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

On 6 and 7 July, the Huthis attacked the *MV Magic Seas* and *MV Eternity-C* respectively. Both bulk carriers sank leaving massive oil slicks, according to Pax for Peace.

US and Israeli air strikes on Ras Isa oil terminal and Israeli attacks on power infrastructure, including Ras Kathib, Hezyaz and Dhahaban power stations and fuel storage facilities, caused explosions and large fires, threatening air quality and soil and water contamination.

In Shabwa governorate, damage to an oil pipeline connecting Ayaz oil field with al Nashima port continued to cause severe pollution, as large quantities of spilled crude oil contaminated agricultural land and groundwater, according to the local authority in al Rawda district.

1. *Yemen: "It Is a Miracle We Survived": Us Air Strike on Civilians Held in Sa'ada Detention Centre*, 29 October ↑
2. "Yemen: A year on, Huthis should free UN, civil society staff", 30 May ↑
3. "Yemen: Investigate death in custody of arbitrarily detained UN aid worker", 12 February ↑
4. "Yemen: Huthis must immediately release prominent human rights lawyer and cease relentless crackdown on civic space", 1 October ↑
5. "Yemen: Further information: Journalist Ahmad Maher released", 21 January ↑
6. "Yemen: US abrupt and irresponsible aid cuts compound humanitarian crisis and put millions at risk", 10 April ↑

ZAMBIA

Republic of Zambia

The rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly were repressed. Opposition party members were harassed and intimidated and journalists were arrested. Authorities misused the Public Order Act to curb peaceful protests. Rising living costs and foreign aid cuts jeopardized access to essential services, including HIV treatment and support. LGBTI people and persons with albinism faced ongoing discrimination and barriers to justice. Gender-based violence surged, with more than 10,000 cases reported to the police between January and March. Women and girls remained under-represented in politics and education despite broad public support for gender equality.

BACKGROUND

In March, OCHA reported that its Drought Flash Appeal for May 2024 to June 2025 had so far benefited 2 million of the 4.6 million people targeted. The appeal was set up to provide a coordinated response to people adversely affected by the El Niño-induced drought.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY

In June the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of expression voiced concerns about harassment and intimidation by the police and affiliates of political parties against political opposition members and activists. She raised further concerns about the failure to repeal or amend the colonial-era Public Order Act that continued to be used to suppress peaceful protests.

On 25 January, a rally by the Tonse Alliance (comprising various political parties) was declared illegal by the police on grounds that the organizers had not provided formal notification as required by the Public Order Act.

On 16 May the Socialist Party held a protest in the capital, Lusaka, demanding the

arrest of those responsible for the theft of life-saving drugs donated by international aid agencies. Stanley Muba'sa, the party's youth leader, said that following the protest he was threatened, intimidated and surveilled.

On 11 July the Law Association of Zambia filed a petition before the High Court of Zambia challenging certain provisions in the Cyber Security Act No. 3 of 2025 and the Cyber Crimes Act No. 4 of 2025, arguing that they contravened rights and freedoms protected under the Constitution.

Journalists

On 7 March, Wave FM journalist Hope Chooma was attacked by ruling party supporters while covering an event in Mazabuka town. Police arrested four suspected perpetrators. However, on 23 March, Hope Chooma was also arrested and detained overnight on charges of "assault occasioning actual bodily harm" after one of the suspects lodged a counter-complaint.

On 25 August, journalist Thandizo Banda of *The Mast* newspaper was arrested and detained for three hours at Chowa police station in the city of Kabwe. He was arrested for taking a photograph of a vehicle transporting the Electoral Commission Chairperson to visit her daughter who was in police custody on murder charges. Thandizo Banda was released after paying an "admission of guilt" fine.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RIGHTS

While the World Bank predicted that Zambia's economy would grow by 5.8% following the 2024 drought, concerns persisted about the high cost of living, which was exacerbated by recurring power cuts and fuel price increases.

In May the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection reported that the Basic Needs and Nutrition Basket (a tool to assess the monthly cost of living and nutritional needs) was ZMW 11,272 (about USD 497), a rise of nearly 20% from 2024. Given that the average monthly income was ZMW 5,369 (about USD 233), most families could not afford basic necessities.

Right to health

The health sector was allocated 10.7% of the national budget, in comparison with 11.8% in 2024. This fell short of the 15% recommended in the Abuja Declaration.

In February, following US government aid cuts, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS reported the closure of 32 drop-in centres in seven of Zambia's 10 provinces. The centres had provided HIV support services to more than 20,000 persons belonging to key populations living with the virus and receiving antiretroviral therapy. According to the UNAIDS country director, all US government-supported DREAMS programmes, which were part of a global initiative to support adolescent girls and young women living with HIV, and which supported these groups in 22 districts, were shut down. Sixteen other centres providing voluntary male circumcision ceased to operate.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In September, 176 residents of the town of Chambishi in Copperbelt province sued the Zambian mining company Sino-Metals Leach Ltd after the February collapse of its tailings dam, alleging it resulted in the release of toxic waste into the Mwambashi and Kafue rivers, though its Chinese parent company stated the claim was "clearly unfounded". According to the lawsuit, approximately 300,000 households that made their living from fishing were affected, while the government identified only 449 affected households. Residents reported suffering respiratory problems, stomach pain, diarrhoea, rashes and eye irritation.

DISCRIMINATION

LGBTI people

LGBTI people faced stigma, discrimination and intolerance, particularly from state officials and religious leaders, contributing to exclusion and a climate of fear.

In July the Constitutional Court dismissed the Zambian Civil Liberties Union's petition seeking to have Sections 155(a)(c) of the Penal Code declared unconstitutional on grounds of discrimination on the basis of sex.

The court held that it lacked jurisdiction to consider or adjudicate on an alleged contravention of the Constitution and that the petitioners must defer to the High Court in matters falling under the Bill of Rights.

Persons with albinism

Persons with albinism continued to face discrimination and violent attacks driven by dangerous superstitious misconceptions about the condition.

In March, a report from several Zambian organizations highlighted the barriers experienced by persons with albinism to accessing justice for physical attacks and for violations of their economic, social and cultural rights. Barriers included inadequate legislation to ensure accountability and redress for attacks. There were no legal provisions criminalizing perpetrators for being in possession of body parts belonging to a person with albinism. Even where victims relied on applicable laws to enforce their rights, the investigation and prosecution processes were opaque and ineffective. Pervasive negative perceptions of persons with albinism also proved an obstacle to justice and equality.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

In April, civil society members, parents, artists and musicians held a protest against the rise in sexual assaults on children. According to the National Crimes Statistics Unit there were 10,170 reported cases of gender-based violence during the first quarter of the year. They included 685 child rape cases, only 224 of which reached court.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

In July an Afrobarometer survey found that while more than 70% of Zambians believed in gender equality, only 39% of women accessed secondary education compared to 49% of men. The gap was attributed to the high level of pupils leaving school due to early marriage and pregnancy resulting from gender-based violence. Only 15% of parliamentarians were women.

ZIMBABWE

Republic of Zimbabwe

Authorities stifled dissent through the continued use of arbitrary arrests and detention, and harassment of perceived opponents. Those targeted included prominent journalists, opposition supporters and human rights activists. Scores of people were arrested after protesting against President Emmerson Mnangagwa's rule. A law that allowed the government broad powers to interfere in the work of civil society organizations was introduced. Draft legislation promised to protect people's rights to healthcare if enacted. Authorities began re-sentencing people on death row following legislation that abolished the death penalty.

BACKGROUND

In March Blessed Geza, a former legislator who was expelled from the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party in March, called for nationwide protests to demand President Emmerson Mnangagwa's resignation. He named the protests the "One Million Men March".

In October, ZANU-PF adopted a plan to amend the Constitution to extend Emmerson Mnangagwa's presidential term by two years. If implemented, his presidency, currently set to expire in 2028, would be extended to 2030. Opposition members and supporters denounced the move as unlawful, while authorities increased their use of harsh measures to stifle dissent.

The debt crisis continued, with high and unsustainable public debt limiting Zimbabwe's access to international financing and the government's fiscal capacity to provide social services. Authorities announced plans to transition to a mono-currency system by 2030.

ARBITRARY DETENTION AND UNFAIR TRIALS

On 24 February Blessed Mhlanga, a journalist with Alpha Media Holdings, presented himself to the police in the capital, Harare, after they made a public call for information on his whereabouts (see below, Freedom of expression, association and assembly). He was arrested and charged the same day with "transmitting data messages that incite violence or damage to property" under the Cyber and Data Protection Act. Prior to his arrest he had interviewed Blessed Geza. Blessed Mhlanga was held on remand and repeatedly denied bail. On 6 May, however, the High Court granted him bail, having previously rejected his appeal against bail refusal and he was released the next day. His trial was ongoing at the end of the year.

Scores of people were arrested and charged in connection with participation in the One Million Men March protests on 31 March. At least 82 of them were charged with participating in a gathering with the intent to promote violence, among other charges. They were released on remand and their trial was scheduled to begin in January 2026. Three others were tried in December on charges including promoting public violence; two of them were acquitted while one was given a two-month suspended sentence on condition that she paid a USD 300 fine. Also in December, a fourth protester was fined USD 100 for obstructing traffic.

On 16 April, University of Zimbabwe lecturers Obvious Vengeyi, Desmond Ndedzu and Boncase Mwakorera were arrested on campus in Harare for picketing during a university strike. They were protesting against low salaries and poor working conditions. The men were released on 17 April after they paid "admission of guilt" fines for disorderly conduct. However, on 22 April their lawyers wrote to the Provincial Magistrate challenging the fines following which, in May, the Resident Magistrate set aside their convictions and ordered the police to repay the fines. He also ordered a full trial where the men would answer charges of disorderly conduct.

On 1 July Faith Zaba, editor of the *Zimbabwe Independent* newspaper, was arrested on charges of "undermining the authority of, or insulting", President Mnangagwa, relating to a satirical article published in her newspaper. She was granted bail on 4 July after spending three nights in custody because the magistrate responsible said a power cut prevented him from promptly typing up the ruling. In the same month, Alpha Media Group, Zimbabwe Independent's parent media house, faced the same charges in connection with the article.

On 21 August, the Harare Magistrates Court acquitted human rights activists Robson Chere, Namatai Kwekweza and Samuel Gwenzi of charges of disorderly conduct following a year-long trial. In July 2024, state security agents had forcibly removed them from a plane at Harare's international airport and held them incommunicado for around eight hours. The arrests took place amid a growing campaign against opposition and civil society members. They were tried alongside other human rights activists, including Vusumuzi Moyo, Phillies Pikitayi, Dephine Gutsa, Simbarashe Blackson, Emmanuel Sitima and Last Chinodya, all of whom were also acquitted of the same charges.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

On 11 April, the Private Voluntary Organisations Amendment Act (No. 1) of 2025 was introduced. Its provisions gave the government broad powers to interfere with the governance and activities of civil society organizations and threatened to shrink civic space.

On 8 February, Job Sikhala, a former opposition MP, and 39 co-members of his pro-democracy movement, the National Democratic Working Group (NDWG)) were arrested. The police allegedly raided their NDWG meeting at a private resort near the city of Mutare, and assaulted them. They were released without charge hours later.

On 28 October, unidentified assailants carried out an arson attack at the premises of the Southern Africa Political Economy Series

Trust, a regional NGO based in Harare. During the attack a security guard was allegedly abducted. The Trust was due to host a national press conference the same morning to denounce ZANU-PF plans to extend the presidential term. A few hours later, a fire was reported at Gilbert Bgwende's home in the Harare suburb of Highfield. He was a member of the Constitutional Defence Forum, a civil society group that also opposed proposals to extend the presidential term.

On the night of 10 November, university students Lindon Zanga and Malvin Madanda, members of the Zimbabwe National Students Union, were allegedly abducted by unidentified individuals driving an unmarked vehicle at Mzimba shopping centre in the city of Chinhoyi. At the time of their abduction, the men were participating in the Students Representative Council election campaigns at Chinhoyi University. Their abductors had reportedly been seen earlier distributing campaign materials for the Zimbabwe Congress of Students Union, a rival union, on the student campus. Lindon Zanga and Malvin Madanda were released some 12 hours later. They said they were tortured during captivity.

Journalists

On 3 February, police summoned Blessed Mhlanga, only to release him without charge a few hours later. During his interview, the police officers claimed that they wanted to ask him about the status of a civil and criminal case he had brought against incarcerated politician Terence Mukupe.

On 31 March, Canaan Rusike was detained by police while conducting interviews on the street in Harare about the One Million Men March demonstrations. He was detained for nearly six hours at Harare Central Police Station. Canaan Rusike was released without charge after police verified his journalistic credentials, despite having presented his Zimbabwe Media Commission accreditation card to the police prior to arrest. According to the Media Institute of Southern Africa Zimbabwe, nine other journalists were rounded up that day while covering protests and taken to the same police station. They were released soon afterwards, having established their status as accredited journalists.

On 5 September, Nyasha Mariga, chief photographer with the *Masvingo Mirror* newspaper, was reportedly assaulted by police officers in Masvingo while photographing an unlicensed taxi driver resisting the impounding of his vehicle. During the assault Nyasha Mariga's shirt was apparently torn and his camera damaged. He was detained for two hours before being released without charge following intervention by the newspaper's lawyer.

RIGHT TO HEALTH

In October, the National Assembly approved key changes to the Termination of Pregnancy Act (1977) under the Medical Services Amendment Bill, 2025 — a major step towards modernizing Zimbabwe's reproductive health laws. The Medical Services Amendment Bill, which sought to align the Medical Services Act [Chapter 15:13] with the Constitution, and was gazetted in July 2024, was also approved by the National Assembly in October. It was awaiting the Senate's consideration at the end of the year. The bill focused primarily on safeguarding the right of all citizens to access basic healthcare services, including reproductive and emergency medical care, while extending protections to vulnerable groups such as children, older people, people with disabilities and veterans of the war of independence. Additionally, the bill set standards for health institutions and healthcare providers, introduced regulations to enhance healthcare, and empowered the minister of health and childcare to offer incentives for the establishment of health facilities in marginalized areas.

DEATH PENALTY

Zimbabwe began re-sentencing people held on death row in line with requirements under the Death Penalty Abolition Act. According to information available by the end of the year, this affected approximately 48 men who had been under sentence of death when the

legislation was introduced on 31 December 2024.

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS

APRIL 2026

It may seem that the last year has shown more of the same abuses of human rights. Authoritarian practices have intensified worldwide. Anti-rights rhetoric and discrimination against disadvantaged groups are on the rise. Will existing protections for human rights be further pushed aside?

The 2026 edition of Amnesty International's annual report, *The State of the World's Human Rights*, assesses national, regional and global developments across a wide range of human rights themes. It highlights how states have undermined the international rules-based system, hindering the resolution of problems that affect the lives of millions. It also identifies trends regarding armed conflicts, repression of dissent, discrimination, economic and climate injustice, the abrupt halt of humanitarian aid, and the misuse of technology. Many of these trends represent setbacks that risk continuing beyond 2026.

This report documents human rights concerns during 2025 in 144 countries, connecting global and regional issues and looking to the future. It includes calls for action by governments and others to improve people's lives. It is essential reading for government leaders, policymakers, advocates, activists and anyone interested in human rights.

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