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# World Report 2024



## Nigeria

### Events of 2023

*Bola Tinubu, center, now president of Nigeria, as a presidential candidate for the All Progressive Congress with Muhammadu Buhari, center right, then president of Nigeria, during Tinubu's campaign rally in Lagos, Nigeria, on February 21, 2023.*

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Former Governor of Lagos State Bola Ahmed Tinubu emerged as the winner of Nigeria's closely watched February 2023 presidential election. Despite [repeated calls](#) to Nigerian authorities to prioritize accountability for [past elections-related abuses](#) and address [widespread insecurity](#), the February elections were blighted by incidents of logistical failures and violence at the polls.

Multiple armed groups continue to kill and jeopardize the livelihood of millions across the country. In the Northwest, gangs of so-called bandits carry out widespread killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and lootings, while in the Northeast, there has been a resurgence of attacks by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), a breakout faction of Boko Haram.

Decades long intercommunal conflict between farmers and herders in the Middle Belt and Northcentral region continue to claim lives, while the authorities struggle to contain the clashes around land and other resources, which are exacerbated by ethnic and religious tensions.

In their responses to the security crisis across the country, security forces continue to be implicated in gross human rights abuses, including indiscriminate airstrikes, while the authorities have repeatedly failed to hold officers responsible for the abuses accountable through the justice system.

High rates of inflation due to the removal of a subsidy on petrol, among other factors, gave rise to an increase in multidimensional poverty and economic inequality. The high inflation rate

undermined access to food and other necessities in a country where millions live in extreme poverty without a functional social protection system.

## Election-Related Violence

According to the Center for Democracy and Development, a nongovernmental organization (NGO), [a total of 109 election-related deaths were recorded across Nigeria in the build-up to the 2023 general elections.](#)

The presidential and federal legislative elections [recorded several incidences of violence at the polls](#), especially in battleground states like Lagos. Voters were exposed to violence by people referred to as “thugs” acting for, or on, behalf of politicians and political parties.

In some cases, voters were injured and stripped of their right to vote without any intervention from security forces.

## Violence in the Northwest and Northcentral Regions

In the Northwest, armed gangs of “bandits” continue to carry out widespread killings, kidnappings, sexual violence, and lootings. In February, a bloody confrontation between local vigilantes and bandits led to the killing of over 100 people in Katsina State. In April, [at least 80 people](#), mostly women and children, were kidnapped by bandit gangs in Zamfara State. In July, [a video surfaced online](#) where four female college students, whom they had abducted six months earlier, begged the government to pay their ransom so they would not be married off by the bandits.

Intercommunal violence between farmers and herders in the Northcentral region also recorded a high number of deaths. In May, over 100 people were killed in Plateau State. The violence was [reportedly in reprisal](#) for farmers killing a herder after he and his cattle had encroached on their land.

A March [report by the International Organization for Migration \(IOM\)](#) documented a total of 1,190,293 internally displaced people in 191,688 households across the 8 states in the Northcentral and Northwest regions because of violence.

## Separatist Agitations in the Southeast Region

An ad hoc committee of the House of Representatives investigating communal clashes in Abia State [called for the release of Nnamdi Kanu](#), the leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), a group agitating for the secession of the Southeast region. Kanu was discharged and acquitted of treason and terrorism-related charges by Nigeria’s Court of Appeal, but he remains in custody following [a further appeal to the Supreme Court](#) by the federal government to challenge this decision.

States in the Southeast sought to put an end to the “sit at home order,” introduced by IPOB in 2021, which required citizens in the region to stay at home and for public places to stay closed on Mondays and any other day that is announced, including days Kanu is set to appear in court. Although IPOB says it has suspended the order, gunmen seeking to enforce it continue to kill, maim, and destroy properties of citizens in the region who defy it.

In Enugu, the state government [sealed some commercial banks and shops](#) for allegedly observing the Monday sit-at-home order.

## Boko Haram Conflict

Communities in Borno State, the epicenter of the Boko Haram conflict, witnessed a resurgence in attacks and kidnappings by armed groups. In March, over [30 fishermen and farmers were gruesomely killed](#) in an attack in Ngala Local Government Area. In June, [about 36 people](#), including farmers, were killed in Dambo, Jere, and Mafa Local Government Areas.

According to [a media report](#), ISWAP, a prominent breakout faction of Boko Haram, imposed a ban on farming, fishing, and herding activities in Marte Local Government Area. The move to halt agricultural activities was apparently to punish the farming communities for spying on them for the military, which carried out aerial bombardment against ISWAP.

## Abuses by Security Forces

In January, an [erroneous military airstrike in Nasarawa State](#) killed 39 people and injured 6 others. Since 2017, [over 300 people are reported to have been killed by airstrikes](#) that the Nigerian air force claimed were intended for bandits or members of Boko Haram and its breakout factions but instead hit civilians. In 2022, [the Nigerian air force announced an investigation into accidental airstrikes on civilians](#) but provided no further details.

In July, anti-police brutality [protests erupted in Anambra State, following the death of Chidubem Ezenwa in police custody](#), after allegedly being beaten by police operatives and other inmates. [Police said](#) the inmates who beat him up have been arraigned for murder.

## Accountability for Serious Crimes

In February, the National Human Rights Commission began an investigation into allegations of [forced abortions](#) and [infanticide](#) in the Northeast Boko Haram conflict, but it has yet to produce its findings.

Domestic trials for hundreds of Boko Haram suspects have remained postponed since 2018.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) Office of the Prosecutor continued to consider whether to open an investigation into serious crimes committed in Nigeria and [indicated plans](#) to decide in 2024.

## Freedom of Expression and Media

In May, a Nigerian Court [found](#) that the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), the country's broadcast regulator, has no power to impose fines on broadcast stations. In April, NBC had fined [Channels Television 5 million](#) Nigerian naira (about US\$6,500) for allegedly violating the NBC code in a program during which a vice presidential candidate called on the authorities not to swear in Bola Tinubu.

Although the Nigerian Constitution guarantees the right to freedom of expression, thought, and conscience, insult to religion remains a criminal offense and Sharia (Islamic law), applicable in 12 northern states, criminalizes blasphemy.

Blasphemy-related accusations and killings [remain a concern](#) in northern Nigeria. In June, [Usman Buda was attacked and killed by a mob](#) in Sokoto State for alleged blasphemy against the Prophet Mohammed.

## Poverty and Inequality

President Tinubu announced the [removal of an existing subsidy on fuel](#) during his inauguration in May, resulting in increases in the price of food and other basic necessities. The authorities did not put in any measures to cushion the impact of the petrol subsidy removal, leaving [many Nigerians struggling to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families](#).

[The ability of communities to fish and farm continues to be stunted by rampant oil spills](#) while the costs to public health is worsened by oil pollution and the [ongoing practice of excessive gas flaring](#).

In August, President Tinubu announced a [\\$650 million package](#) that included funds to allow for a review of the minimum wage; support for small and medium businesses; and the purchase of gas-powered buses to reduce the cost of transportation, among other things.

## Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

In August, police in Delta State arrested dozens for [allegedly participating in a gay wedding](#) at a hotel. The police streamed on Facebook a public parade of the detainees in front of journalists, where they were interrogated regarding the accusations in violation of their rights to fair trial, dignity, and privacy.

A total of [69 people were remanded to prison](#) in connection with the incident and later [released on bail pending trial](#).

In October, [76 people were arrested in Gombe State for allegedly attending a birthday party for gay people](#). The arrests were conducted by the Nigerian Security and Civil Defense Corps, the country's paramilitary agency, which also alleged that the organizers of the party planned to hold a same-sex wedding.

The [Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act](#), 2013, punishes same-sex marriage and public displays of same-sex relationships with 14 and 10 years' imprisonment, respectively. It also punishes establishing, supporting, and participating in gay organizations with 10 years in prison.

A 2016 Human Rights Watch [report](#) found that, despite no evidence that anyone had been prosecuted or sentenced under the law by that time, the law had served to legitimize abuses against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people in Nigeria, including extortion, arbitrary arrest, torture, and physical and sexual violence.

The police used the law for the first time in 2019 to [prosecute 47 men accused of same-sex public displays of affection](#) in Lagos State. A court [dismissed](#) the case because the police failed to appear and present witnesses.

## Women's and Girl's Rights

The outcomes of the 2023 elections in Nigeria have continued to raise concerns about the participation and representation of women in politics. [Women were elected to only 20 out of 469 federal legislative seats in the National Assembly](#), which comprises the Senate and the House of Representatives. This is a decline from the already abysmal number of 21 in the previous national elections.

A 2022 report by [Gender Strategy Advancement International](#), a Nigerian NGO, highlights that although women make up [49 percent of Nigeria's population](#), [only 6.7 percent hold positions in government](#), as women continue to suffer injustices and marginalization resulting from laws, religious and cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and low levels of education, among other things.

The [government has yet to adopt proposed amendments](#) to the country's constitution, aimed at fostering women's equality and participation in politics and government leadership, including through affirmative action.

Nigeria continued to have one of the [highest rates of maternal mortality in the world](#), attributable to inadequate and inequitable access to maternal health care and a lack of access to safe and legal abortion. Nigeria also has one of the world's highest rates of child marriage because of poor enforcement of national and state laws.

## Disability Rights

In January, then-President Muhammadu Buhari signed the Mental Health Bill into law, replacing the 1958 Lunacy Act. The new bill established some protections for people with mental health conditions, including the right to participate in their treatment plans. It also imposes a ban on chaining people with mental health conditions and aims to expand community-based coverage so more people can access mental health services. Contrary to international human rights standards, the law continues to permit involuntary treatment and allows coercion in other forms, including restraints and seclusion.

[Thousands of people with mental health conditions or psychosocial disabilities in Nigeria continue to be shackled](#), chained, and locked in confined spaces in various facilities across the country, including in some traditional and religious healing centers, state-run rehabilitation centers, and even in some psychiatric hospitals.

## Older People's Rights

Following a visit to Nigeria, the United Nations independent expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons [said](#) in a [July report](#) that ageism and age discrimination are pervasive; poverty in older age is rampant; older people's access to health care is limited; violence against older people is a serious concern, particularly for women and LGBT people; and large numbers of older people are without appropriate care and support in the country.

## Foreign Policy

Nigeria [condemned the July military coup d'état in neighboring Niger](#) and called for a restoration of democracy in the country. President Tinubu led the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Although the junta in Niger defied the ultimatum, ECOWAS did not follow up on its threat of military intervention.