

# The State of the World's Human Rights; Benin 2025

## 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.<sup>1</sup> 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From 12 March to 20 May, the news website *Bénin Web TV* was suspended and the press card of its managing director withdrawn.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 Alloché, 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.

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