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The State of the World's Human Rights; Nigeria 2024

Journalists and critics of the authorities were arrested, charged and arbitrarily detained. Security forces arrested and ill-treated protesters, and used excessive force to quash protests, resulting in the deaths of several protesters. Hundreds of people were murdered in mob violence. Girl victims of abductions by Boko Haram continued to be denied support and justice. Communities in Rivers state were given the go-ahead in a UK court to hold Shell accountable for environmental devastation.

Background

Flooding in 33 states killed more than 300 people and displaced tens of thousands. More than 61,000 hectares of land in Kogi state were inundated. In Borno state, flooding prevented access to humanitarian aid for 27,000 people. Also in Borno state, 1,618 children were recorded as malnourished between mid-May and June due to the high price of staple foods as well as a lack of adequate sanitation. As of mid-October, more than 14,000 suspected cases of cholera were recorded, resulting in 378 deaths.

Freedom of expression

On 23 July the House of Representatives introduced the Counter Subversion Bill, which aimed to impose strict penalties on Nigerians who failed to recite the newly approved national anthem, or who criticized politicians or community leaders. The Bill passed the first reading and proceeded to the second, but on 14 August was withdrawn by the House speaker following a public outcry.

The authorities continued to arbitrarily arrest and detain journalists and others expressing dissenting views. On 15 March, journalist Segun Olatunji from the online news outlet The First News was abducted from his home by members of the Nigerian Army. This was because of an article he wrote accusing an official from the Nigeria Defence Intelligence Agency (NDIA) of nepotism. Following public pressure, NDIA officials acknowledged having him in their custody and released him on 28 March.

On 1 May, Daniel Ojukwu, a reporter with the Foundation for Investigative Journalism, was abducted and detained by the police. This was after he had reported that Adejoke Orelope-Adefulire, senior special assistant to the president on sustainable development goals, had paid NGN 147 million (USD 106,154) into a restaurant's bank account. The payment came from public money intended for school building. Daniel Ojukwu was released 10 days later after a public outcry. On 14 August, Fisayo Soyombo, editor-in-chief of the Foundation for Investigative Journalism, was detained over the same report. He was released later that day on conditional bail.

On 29 August, journalist Muktar Dahiru was arrested by police for a Facebook post considered "insulting" to Governor Abba Yusuf of Kano state. He was charged with criminal conspiracy, defamation of character and intentional insult.

On 29 May a federal high court in Abuja Federal Capital Territory (FCT) remanded Chioma Okoli in prison after she was charged with defamation under the Cybercrime Act. Chioma Okoli had posted on Facebook that a tomato purée produced by Erisco Foods Ltd contained an unhealthy amount of sugar. She was released on 31 May on stringent bail terms. Her trial was ongoing at the end of the year.

On 27 May, Precious Eze Chukwunonso, the publisher of online news outlet News Platform, was arrested by police and detained for 18 days. He had written an article alleging that a local businessman was involved in a confrontation with a neighbour in a Lagos residential estate, during which shots were fired. He was facing criminal charges of “conduct likely to cause a breach of the peace, provoking a breach of the peace by offensive publication, and conspiracy to commit a felony”.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

On 8 August, police raided the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) headquarters. On 19 August, the Department of State Service (DSS) called Joe Ajaero, the NLC president, for questioning over alleged criminal conspiracy, terrorism financing, treasonable felony, subversion and cybercrime. On 9 September, Joe Ajaero was arrested by DSS officials at Nnamdi Azikwe airport in Abuja, Federal Capital Territory (FCT).

Freedom of peaceful assembly

The government placed unlawful restrictions on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Following the #EndBadGovernance protests from 1 to 10 August, more than 1,000 people were detained nationwide and at least 24 protesters were killed in violent crackdowns by the security forces in the cities of Kano and Maiduguri and in the states of Jigawa, Katsina, Niger and Kaduna.¹

On 2 September, the authorities arraigned 12 #EndBadGovernance protesters: Adeyemi Abiodun Abayomi, Musa Abdullahi, Michael Tobiloba Adaramoye, Bashir Bello, Angel Love Innocent, Nuradeen Khamis, Buhari Lawal, Lucky Ehis Obiyan, Mosiu Sadiq, Opaluwa Eleajo Simeon, Suleiman Yakubu and Abdulsalam Zubairu. They were brought before a federal high court in Abuja FCT on bogus charges, including felony and treason, conspiring to destabilize Nigeria, inciting mutiny, and levying war against the Nigerian state.

On 1 November, after being arrested and ill-treated, 114 #EndBadGovernance protesters were arraigned in groups at a federal high court in Abuja FCT. The majority of those arraigned in one of the groups were children. Four of the children collapsed in the courtroom, having spent more than two months detained in appalling conditions. In Katsina state, 12 children under the age of 16 were also facing an unfair trial, charged with participating in the #EndBadGovernance protests. Many of these children were arrested simply for being on the streets during the protests.²

Right to truth, justice and reparation

On 10 July, the ECOWAS Court ruled in *Obianuju Catherine Udeh and 2 Others v. Federal Republic of Nigeria* that the Nigerian authorities had violated #EndSARS protesters' rights. The rights violated included the rights to security of person, freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, as well as freedom from torture and other ill-treatment, duty of the state to investigate, and the right to an effective remedy. However, the Court failed to hold the Nigerian authorities accountable for the killing of 12 protesters in October 2020 in two incidents: at Lekki toll gate; and in the district of Alausa, Lagos state.

Unlawful attacks and killings

In a report published in October, Amnesty International documented at least 555 deaths from mob violence in 363 documented incidents between January 2012 and August 2023. Many of the victims were tortured to death or murdered after being accused of theft, witchcraft and blasphemy, among

other things. The small number of these incidents investigated and prosecuted demonstrated a failure by the authorities to protect people from violence.³

Between December 2023 and February 2024, gunmen attacked communities in Barkin Ladi, Bokkos and Mangu local government areas of Plateau state, killing 1,333 people, including 260 children.

In March, a bomb exploded in Kawori, in the Konduga local government area of Borno state, killing 16 people and injuring dozens.

In April, farmers and herders clashed in Omala local government area of Kogi state, resulting in the deaths of 21 people. In June, eight people were injured in an attack by herdsmen in Birninkudu, Dutse and Kiyawa local government areas of Jigawa state.

On 24 December, gunmen killed at least 15 people — majority of them women and children — during an attack on Gidan Ado community of Ganawuri in Riyom LGA of Plateau state, with dead bodies scattered in homes, backyard and farms.

Violations of international humanitarian law

On 30 September, the Nigerian Air Force conducted air strikes on Jika da Kolo village in Yadin Kidandan district, Kaduna state, killing 23 villagers, including children. Worshippers at a mosque and shoppers at a market were among the victims.

On 25 December, military air strikes killed at least 10 persons at Gidan Sama and Rumtuwa communities in Silame LGA of Sokoto state.

Women's and girls' rights

The authorities failed to take effective measures to prevent attacks on girls and schools. Ten years since 276 schoolgirls were abducted by Boko Haram fighters in Chibok, Borno state, 82 continued to remain in captivity. Twenty of those released were forced to stay with “repentant” Boko Haram fighters who they had been forced to marry while in captivity. Several girls had been abducted in subsequent attacks.⁴

Amnesty International reported in June that girls associated, or perceived to be associated with Boko Haram, having survived years of abuse by both Boko Haram and Nigerian forces, were denied reintegration support and justice.⁵

On 24 August, a bill to repeal the Violence Against Persons (Prohibition) Act (2015) – a law designed to curb gender-based violence in Nigeria – advanced to its second reading in the Senate.

Economic, social and cultural rights

An inflation rate of 33.4% – an increase of 9.32% from July 2023 – and the high cost of goods and services caused a drop in people's standard of living. On 5 September, the government increased the price of petrol from NGN 617 (USD 0.37) to NGN 817 (USD 0.50) per litre without providing any compensatory measures to protect incomes. On 9 September, Department of State Service agents unlawfully broke into the office of human rights organization, Socio-Economic Rights Accountability Project, after the organization had called on the president to reverse the price increase within 24 hours.

Between 18-22 December, 67 people — the majority of them on the brink of starvation — were killed in stampedes while trying to get food in charity events for the sharing of rice. On 18 December, 35 children died in Ibadan town in Oyo state. On 21 December, 22 people died in Okija town in Ihiala LGA of Anambra state. On 21 December 10 people died in Abuja FCT.

Right to a healthy environment

On 11 October, the UK Court of Appeal ruled that the case presented in 2015 by the Bille and Ogale communities of Rivers state against Shell Petroleum Development Company should proceed to a full trial. This will likely result in the disclosure of crucial internal Shell documents. This overruled a decision by a UK High Court in March that denied justice to the two communities who had filed the case to hold Shell accountable for decades of environmental devastation caused by oil spills.

Nigeria's response to climate change remained inadequate due to its poor climate policies and insufficient renewable energy options.
