

The human rights situation in Sahel

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its member organisations in Africa, meeting at its 42nd World Congress in Bogota, wish to draw the Federation's attention to the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in the Sahel.

Reaffirming the importance of protecting fundamental freedoms and international humanitarian law for the restoration of the rule of law and lasting peace in the Sahel;

Recalling the obligations of the Sahel countries (Mali, Burkina Faso, Chad, Niger and Mauritania) under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (hereinafter the African Charter), the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance and other regional and international human rights instruments duly ratified by these States;

Recalling Articles 2, 6 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), emphasising respect for fundamental rights, including the freedom to hold opinions and express them freely by all persons, and prohibiting arbitrary arrest and detention and promoting the release of persons accused pending trial;

Recalling the provisions of the African Charter guaranteeing the right to life, liberty and security of the person, the right to freedom of expression and access to information, the right to freedom of association, and the right to freedom of assembly;

Recalling the provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance which strongly condemn coups d'état and changes of government by undemocratic means;

Recalling the principles set out in Resolution 213 (CCXIII) 12 of the ACHPR on unconstitutional changes of government, which condemns «*attempts to establish autocratic regimes and unconstitutional changes of government on the continent, acts which it considers to be a serious threat to stability, peace, security, development and the protection of human rights*»;

Recalling Resolution 564 (LXXVI) 2023 of the ACHPR in which the ACHPR expressed its concern at the resurgence of unconstitutional changes of government in Chad, Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger;

Recalling the 1991 Constitution of Burkina Faso, the July 2023 Constitution of **Mali**, the 1991 Constitution of Mauritania revised in 2017, the March 2025 Charter for the Refoundation of Niger, and the 2023 Constitution of Chad revised in October 2025, which guarantee fundamental rights;

Deeply concerned by the continuing deterioration of the human rights situation in the Sahel countries, marked, on the one hand, by recurrent violations of international humanitarian law and, on the other hand, by violent repression of human rights defenders and other dissenting voices, particularly in **Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad**;

Condemning the refusal of the regimes in power in **Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger** to organise elections, despite this being a crucial step for the democratic life of these countries;

Particularly concerned by the restrictions imposed on [civic and democratic space](#) in Burkina Faso, Niger and Mali, and the resulting violations of the freedoms of opinion, expression, demonstration and the press, characterised in particular by acts of intimidation, judicial harassment, arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as other forms of threats and pressure exerted on individuals expressing opinions critical of the transitional authorities;

Condemning the adoption of restrictive laws, increased surveillance of civic activities, and the dissolution of political parties and associations as obstacles to the activities of civil society, the political opposition, and the media;

Condemning in particular the continued arbitrary detention of Nigerien human rights defender [Moussa Tchangari](#), who faces the loss of his nationality and the death penalty;

Condemning the [arbitrary detention](#) at the end of July 2025 and the ongoing detention and trial since 29 September of Malian opposition figure Moussa Mara for expressing [solidarity](#) with political prisoners, **and** the [sentencing](#) on 9 August of Chadian opposition figure Succès Masra to 20 years in prison following a political trial;

Condemning the increase in cases of enforced disappearances and forced requisitions in Burkina Faso, recently illustrated by the abduction and arbitrary detention of Maître Ini Benjamine Esther Doli, a lawyer and human rights defender, since 31 August 2025. The abduction of Ousséni Ilboudo, editorial director of L'Observateur Paalga, on 13 October, as well as six other people, mainly journalists, lawyers and magistrates, between 9 and 13 October, are symptomatic of this harmful situation. **Recalling** that between May and October 2025, at least eleven Burkinabe human rights defenders who had been kidnapped, disappeared or sent to the front lines were released, with the most recent releases on 6 October involving Rasmane Zinaba and Bassirou Badjo of Balai Citoyen;

Deploring in particular the continuing restrictions on the right to information and freedom of the press, manifested by media control by the authorities, the systematic practice of self-censorship by journalists and the media, and the suspension of international media **in Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger and Chad by the authorities of those countries;**

Condemning in particular the [illegal suspension](#) by the Conseil supérieur de la communication, the media regulatory body in Burkina Faso, **on 1 August 2025**, of the broadcasting licence of the private radio station OMEGA, one of the most popular stations;

Strongly condemning the [arbitrary dissolution](#) of five trade unions in the justice sector in Niger on 7 August 2025, followed on 14 and 15 August by the dismissal of two senior magistrates from the Autonomous Union of Magistrates of Niger (SAMAN) who had criticised these dissolutions;

Condemning also the assassination of Sidi Barka, presidential advisor to civil society in Ménaka, by the Islamic State in the Sahel (EIS) on 20 August 2025, and the enforced disappearance of Malian activist El Bechir Thiam, who was abducted on 8 May 2025;

Denouncing the attacks against human rights defenders against the backdrop of the hunt for migrants in Mauritania, where three activists from the IRA Association were arbitrarily arrested in March 2025 and are still in detention following their denunciation of the arbitrary arrests of West African migrants;

Dismayed by the deterioration of the security situation in Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger caused by the resurgence of armed jihadist groups, since May 2025, as well as by the «security-first» strategy of the authorities in these countries, which relegates to the background the search for solutions to the root causes of the conflict, such as impunity, extreme poverty, marginalisation and injustice suffered by civilian populations;

Strongly condemning the abuses and human rights violations against civilian populations that may constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, including jihadist groups, national armed forces, militias, self-defence groups and paramilitary partners;

Particularly concerned by the prevailing impunity of the perpetrators of these serious crimes **in Mali and Burkina Faso**, where proceedings relating to international crimes have made little progress or have stalled, while victims continue to demand truth and justice, fearing reprisals in the absence of adequate protection measures;

FIDH and its member organisations in Africa call on the Congress to:

- **Call on the Burkinabe, Malian and Nigerien authorities** to return definitively to constitutional governance by relaunching democratic processes based on the reopening of civic space and the organisation of free, credible, transparent and peaceful elections;
- **Call** on the United Nations and the African Union to urge the authorities of the Sahel countries and the groups that support them to immediately cease acts of intimidation and judicial harassment, attacks, threats and acts of reprisal against human rights defenders and their families, and to systematically and publicly condemn violations of the rights of human rights defenders;
- **Call on** the authorities of the four countries mentioned to immediately and unconditionally release all human rights defenders and political leaders who are arbitrarily detained, and to drop the charges against them;
- **Call** on the national authorities of these countries to guarantee respect for internationally recognised fundamental rights, such as the right to a fair trial and the rights to freedom of association, expression, assembly and the press, as recognised in particular by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights;
- **Urge the State of Burkina Faso** to repeal the decree on requisitions and to stop its discriminatory application targeting human rights defenders, as well as to release defenders, including journalists, who have been abducted and sent to the front line;
- **Call** on the Malian authorities to cease the abductions and enforced disappearances carried out by the National Intelligence Agency and to end the systematic criminalisation of dissenting voices under the pretext of «undermining the credibility of the State»;
- **Urge** the Nigerien State to repeal Ordinance No. 2024-43 of 27 August 2024 establishing the deprivation of nationality, including against persons who have exercised their right to freedom of expression and their right to information;
- **Encourage** the State of Chad to adopt a law on the protection of human rights defenders in order to guarantee the fundamental rights and freedoms of human rights defenders.