



Atrocities Watch Africa Monitor

Monitor February 2023

Atrocities Watch Africa (AWA) is a non-partisan, civil society organisation that intends to provide continental leadership in matters pertaining to the prevention of mass atrocities within Africa, our strategies and approaches are grounded in the realisation that atrocities can be prevented through various interventions, including, but not limited to, early warning mechanisms, diplomatic efforts, use of social media and new technologies, litigation, and advocacy campaigns.

This newsletter builds on our team's continuous monitoring of the region that allows us to identify deteriorating situations where atrocities may be committed as well as track ongoing situations of ongoing atrocities to detect increasing tendencies or opportunities for improvement.

We were watching Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Libya, Mali, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. The monthly newsletters cover countries in which we believe significant changes have occurred and require us to pay close attention, the countries it covers are changing.

This month's newsletter covers:

- Burkina Faso
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Ethiopia
- Nigeria
- Somalia
- South Sudan

Burkina Faso:

The government managed to regain control of territory in December and January. Military operations allowed government forces to recapture six villages from Jamaa Nusra al-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) in Banwa province, in the western part of the country, which led to the highest number of reported territorial exchange events in the country in 2022, according to ACLED.¹ At the same time, attacks linked to Islamic State increased.² Soldiers were killed by

¹ ACLED, Regional Overview Africa: December 2022, 13 January 2022, <https://acleddata.com/africa/regional-overview/>

² Africa News, "Burkina Faso: at least eight dead, including six civilians, in two separate attacks," 19 December 2022, <https://www.africanews.com/2022/12/19/burkina-faso-at-least-eight-dead-including-six-civilians-in-two-separate-attacks/>

an explosive device in the northern province of Namentenga, in the Centre-Nord Region. Civilians were attacked in the east-central part of the country.³ At the end of January, armed assailants conducted attacks throughout the country where almost 30 people were killed.⁴

ACLED identified a growing trend of targeting of members of the Fulani community by government forces and local groups on suspicion of collaborating with Islamist militants.⁵ During the last days of December, over 80 bodies were found in Nouna, Kossi province, local forces allied to the government are believed to be responsible. This attack followed an Islamic militant attack on a gendarmerie by Dozos, a government proxy force.⁶

Rumours of a coup flourished at the end of November, resident Ibrahim Traoré, who has been in power since the end of September, requested people “be vigilant and set up watchdog cells in neighbourhoods, because it is civil society that must ensure the smooth running of the transition.”⁷

The country's government declared the UN's coordinator in the country, Barbara Manzi, "persona non grata" after she decided to withdraw nonessential UN staff from the capital.⁸ Following months of anti-French protests in the streets, Radio France Internationale (RFI) was suspended after the government accused them of publishing false information.⁹ The government also requested French troops withdraw from the country within a month, claiming their success in combating jihadist insurgents had been limited,¹⁰ and people took to the streets to celebrate the decision.¹¹ Tensions rose between the Burkinabe military government and Ghana after the latter accused the former of hiring the Russian Wagner

³ Africa News, “Burkina Faso: at least eight dead, including six civilians, in two separate attacks,” 19 December 2022, <https://www.africanews.com/2022/12/19/burkina-faso-at-least-eight-dead-including-six-civilians-in-two-separate-attacks/>

⁴ Al Jazeera, “Burkina Faso says 28 soldiers, civilians killed in rebel attacks,” 31 January 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/31/burkina-faso-says-28-soldiers-civilians-killed-in-rebel-attacks>

⁵ ACLED, Regional Overview Africa: December 2022, 13 January 2022, <https://acleddata.com/africa/regional-overview/>

⁶ Amnesty International, “Burkina Faso: Perpetrators of Nouna killings must face justice,” 10 January 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/01/burkina-faso-perpetrators-of-nouna-killings-must-face-justice/>

⁷ Radio France Internationale, “Burkina Faso: Transitional Leader Confirms Coup Attempt but Favours Dialogue,” 2 December 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212020206.html>

⁸ DW, “Burkina Faso: Govt Declares UN Coordinator 'Persona Non Grata',” 23 December 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212260004.html>

⁹ VOA, “Burkina Faso Bans French State Broadcaster in Blow to Press Freedom,” 5 December 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212060011.html>

¹⁰ DW, “Burkina Faso: France Agrees to Pull Troops From Burkina Faso,” 25 January 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301260104.html>

¹¹ RFI, “Junta supporters take to the streets to celebrate French troop withdrawal from Burkina Faso,” 29 January 2023, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20230129-junta-supporters-take-to-the-streets-to-celebrate-french-troop-withdrawal-from-burkina-faso>

group,¹² speculation about which increased following the request for withdrawal of French troops.¹³

International response:

The UN Secretary-General, António Guterres, defended UN coordinator Barbara Manzi and indicated that all UN staff members may remain in the country.¹⁴

Ghanaian President Nana Akufo-Addo accused Traore of hiring members of the Russian Wagner group to help fight the insurgency in Burkina Faso at the US-Africa Summit.¹⁵

Following the Burkinabe request, France agreed to remove its troops from the African country.¹⁶ French troops ended operations in February.

Democratic Republic of the Congo:

Clashes between M23 and the Congolese army (FARDC) and attacks against civilians continued. ACLED reported that militias including the Nyatura, Alliance of Patriots for a Free and Sovereign Congo, and *Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda* intensified their positions against M23, both independently and alongside tFARDC.¹⁷ About 300 civilians were killed in Kishishe village in eastern North Kivu between the last days of November and the beginning of December, M23 was accused but they denied their involvement.¹⁸

A third round of East African Community (EAC) peace talks took place at the end of November, led by former Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta. The parties agreed to continued dialogue between the government and local communities.¹⁹ Despite not having participated, M23 started withdrawing from occupied territory in eastern Congo in December, claiming this was in support of regional peace-making. However, continued clashes were reported.²⁰ On 23 December, M23 retreated from the strategic Kibumba area near Goma, and the East African

¹² BBC, "Wagner Group: Burkina Faso anger over Russian mercenary link," 16 December 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63998458>

¹³ Foreign Policy, "France Recalls Burkina Faso Ambassador Ahead of Troop Withdrawal," 27 January 2023, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/01/27/france-recalls-burkina-faso-ambassador-ahead-of-troop-withdrawal-wagner-russia-mali/>

¹⁴ UN News, "Burkina Faso Authorities Had No Authority to Expel Senior UN Official - Guterres," 26 December 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212270036.html>

¹⁵ VOA, "Burkina Faso: Ghana Says Burkina Faso Paid Russian Mercenaries With Mine," December , <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212160016.html>

¹⁶ DW, "Burkina Faso: France Agrees to Pull Troops From Burkina Faso," 25 January 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301260104.html>

¹⁷ ACLED, Regional Overview Africa: December 2022, 13 January 2022, <https://acleddata.com/africa/regional-overview/>

¹⁸ The Guardian, "DRC estimates 300 villagers killed in massacre by rebels," 5 December 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/dec/05/m23-rebels-in-drc-democratic-republic-of-congo-massacred-300-villagers>

¹⁹ VOA, "DRC Peace Talks End Amid Hopes of Opening Dialogue with M23," 6 December 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/drc-peace-talks-end-amid-hopes-of-opening-dialogue-with-m23-/6864791.html>

²⁰ Al Jazeera, "M23 says ready to 'withdraw' in eastern DRC, yet clashes reported," 7 December 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/7/m23-says-ready-to-withdraw-in-eastern-drc-yet-clashes-reported>

Regional Force took control. However, fighting continued in Masisi territory, raising questions about M23 intentions.²¹ Days later, the Congolese army called the M23 withdrawal a sham.²²

In January, Kenyatta met with M23's leader and the group agreed to "continue with an orderly withdrawal and to adhere to a strict cease-fire." In return, the rebels requested all fighting and attacks against the group cease and an end to the ongoing hate-speech against ethnic Tutsis.²³ Fighting erupted again on 21 January, after a few weeks of calm.²⁴

Tensions between the Congolese and Rwandan governments continued to increase in December and January with the Congo government accusing Rwanda of supporting M23 and Rwanda making a similar claim indicating the Congo's cooperation with the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR). Congo has violated Rwandan airspace three times since November 2022. After a second incident in December, the Congolese government detained a group of Rwandan nationals for espionage and accused them of plotting to shoot down a plane transporting Congolese president Tshisekedi.²⁵ In the third incident, at the end of January, Rwanda took "defensive measures," and fired at the jet. The DRC said the aircraft was flying in Congolese territory and accused Rwanda of an act of war.²⁶ Congolese police clashed with Rwandan forces on a small Congolese island in Lake Kivu after Rwandan soldiers allegedly entered Congolese territory.²⁷ The DRC requested Rwandan officers working in the EAC regional force to withdraw.²⁸

Tens of thousands of religious Christians took to the streets to protest the ongoing violence in the east and the lack of action from the international community for failing to hold Rwanda accountable for allegedly supporting M23.²⁹ In Goma, citizens protested the East African Regional Force deeming it ineffective and the demonstrations were violently repressed by police.³⁰

Violence flared up in Ituri province where over 60 people were killed in one week in January when a teacher belonging to the Lendu community was killed triggering reprisal attacks from the Cooperative for the Development of the Congo (CODECO). Some attacks in southern Ituri

²¹ Le Monde, "DR Congo's M23 rebels retreat from occupied territory in Kibumba," 23 December 2022, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2022/12/23/dr-congo-s-m23-rebels-retreat-from-occupied-territory-in-kibumba_6008881_4.html

²² VOA Africa, "DRC Rebels Did Not Retreat as Claimed: Locals," 2 January 2023, <https://www.voaafrica.com/a/drc-rebels-did-not-retreat-as-agreed-locals/6901480.html>

²³ The New Times, "M23 Rebels Agree to Continued Withdrawal, Strict Cease-Fire," 12 January 2022, https://allafrica.com/stories/202301130006.html?utm_campaign=daily-headlines&utm_medium=email&utm_source=newsletter&utm_content=aans-view-link

²⁴ Anadolu Agency, "Fresh clashes erupt between M23 rebels, DR Congo forces," 24 January 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/fresh-clashes-erupt-between-m23-rebels-dr-congo-forces/2796102>

²⁵ APA News, "DRC uncovers 'plot to shoot down' Tshisekedi's plane," 4 January 2022, <https://apanews.net/en/news/drc-uncovers-plot-to-shoot-down-tshisekedis-plane>

²⁶ RFI, "Congo-Kinshasa: Rwanda Fires At Congolese Jet Accused of Airspace Violation As Pope Prepares DRC Visit," 25 January 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301260138.html>

²⁷ Nation, "Rwanda troops clash with DRC police in Lake Kivu: Congolese sources," 29 January 2023, <https://nation.africa/africa/news/rwanda-troops-clash-with-drc-police-in-lake-kivu-congolese-sources-4103496>

²⁸ The Observer, "DRC orders Rwanda to withdraw troops immediately," 1 February 2023, <https://www.observer.ug/news/headlines/76686-drc-orders-rwanda-to-withdraw-troops-immediately>

²⁹ Al Jazeera, "Thousands of churchgoers protest violence in DR Congo," 4 December 2022, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/12/4/dr-congo-thousands-of-churchgoers-protest-rebel-violence>

³⁰ Nation, "Police crack down on protest against east DR Congo force," 18 January 2023, <https://nation.africa/africa/news/police-crack-down-on-protest-against-east-dr-congo-force-4090856>

were attributed to the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF). The exact number of deaths has not been verified.³¹ The following week, the bodies of 49 suspected victims of CODECO were found in mass graves near the Ugandan border. The UN peacekeeping mission, MONUSCO, launched an investigation.³²

International

response:

The international community spoke out on Rwanda's involvement in the conflict. The US secretary of state called on Rwanda to "use its influence on the M23" to encourage peace in Congo.³³ Belgium, France and Germany requested the country immediately cease supporting the rebel group.³⁴ The EU urged Rwanda to stop supporting M23 and to take all measures to ensure the group to comply with the decisions reached at the EAC summit.³⁵

As tensions between the DRC and Rwanda increased, Kenyatta called for a crisis meeting with the East African Community technical advisors to discuss the deteriorating situation in the country. He called for an "urgent return to dialogue and consultation in order to promote trust and confidence among the parties to the conflict and alleviate the suffering of people."³⁶

Alice Wairimu Nderitu, the United Nations Special Advisor on Genocide Prevention, warned of increasing violence against Rwandophones in DRC.³⁷

The UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN peacekeeping force MONUSCO for one year until December 2023 and strongly condemned all domestic and foreign armed groups operating in the Congo, demanding they immediately cease all violence and destabilising actions. They also requested the immediate withdrawal of M23 and expressed concern about Uganda's relationship with ADF. There have been a lot of anti-UN protests that took place this year, but the council is aiming to create minimum security conditions to allow the exit of MONUSCO in 2024.³⁸

Ethiopia:

In November 2022, the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) signed a cessation of hostilities agreement in Pretoria, as part of a peace process led by the AU High Representative for the Horn of Africa, H.E. Obasanjo

³¹ Macau Business, "Over 60 people killed in east DR Congo province in 1 week," 15 January 2022, <https://www.macaubusiness.com/over-60-people-killed-in-east-dr-congo-province-in-1-week/>

³² DW, "Congo: 49 bodies found in mass graves after militia attacks," 18 January 2023, <https://www.dw.com/en/congo-49-bodies-found-in-mass-graves-after-militia-attacks/a-64444474>

³³ HumAngle, "US Secretary Of State Calls On Rwanda To Use Its Influence On M23 To Bring About Peace In DR Congo," 16 December 2022, <https://humanglemedia.com/us-secretary-of-state-calls-on-rwanda-to-use-its-influence-on-m23-to-bring-about-peace-in-dr-congo/>

³⁴ AP, "Growing pressure on Rwanda from France, Germany over Congo," 21 December 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/politics-rwanda-violence-united-nations-foreign-aid-6951260f3c7c287a3a0916bafc4f25de>

³⁵ France 24, "European Union urges Rwanda to stop supporting M23 rebels in DR Congo," 31 December 2022, <https://www.france24.com/en/africa/20221231-european-union-urges-rwanda-to-stop-supporting-m23-rebels-in-dr-congo>

³⁶ Anadolu Agency, "Rwandan military confirms its army officers expelled from Congo," 1 February 2023, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/rwandan-military-confirms-its-army-officers-expelled-from-congo/2803360>

³⁷

³⁸ AP, "UN extends Congo peacekeeping force with an eye to its exit," 20 December 2022, <https://apnews.com/article/violence-united-nations-06b80b6ca3cb74cfe4ae8b2efa12e936>

accompanied by H.E. Kenyatta, former President of the Republic of Kenya, and H.E. Dr. Mlambo-Ngcuka, former Deputy President of the Republic of South Africa.³⁹ Weeks prior, the Ethiopian government forces and their allies had seized territory in Tigray and were making rapid advances.⁴⁰ After the agreement was signed, violence decreased in Tigray, however there were reports of Eritrean soldiers committing abuses blocking aid convoys and killing and kidnapping Tigrayan civilians in December.⁴¹

The fragile agreement is being implemented, although with delays. Electricity was reconnected in Tigray's capital city and some banking services began to be restored around mid-December,⁴² however, services remain inadequate.⁴³ The TPLF started its disarmament process in January,⁴⁴ days later Obasanjo confirmed that Eritrean troops had withdrawn to the border,⁴⁵ although this was later questioned.⁴⁶ Amhara special forces also pulled out, and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) withdrew from key Tigrayan cities including Adwa, Aksum and Shire⁴⁷ Humanitarian aid began to enter the region, although not meeting the population's needs and some areas remained hard to reach.⁴⁸ Such conditions led Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the TPLF to meet face-to-face for the first time in over two years, to discuss the progress on the implementation of the agreement in the first days of February.⁴⁹

³⁹ AU, Cessation of Hostilities Agreement between the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Tigray Peoples' Liberation Front (TPLF), 2 November 2022, <https://www.peaceau.org/en/article/cessation-of-hostilities-agreement-between-the-government-of-the-federal-democratic-republic-of-ethiopia-and-the-tigray-peoples-liberation-front-tplf>

⁴⁰ VOA, "Ethiopian Forces Seize Three Towns in Northern Tigray," 18 October 2022, <https://www.voanews.com/a/ethiopian-forces-seize-three-towns-in-northern-tigray-/6794869.html>

⁴¹ The Africa Report, "Eritrea's troops remain in Tigray, holding up ceasefire execution," 2 December 2022, <https://www.theafricareport.com/265458/eritreas-troops-remain-in-tigray-holding-up-ceasefire-execution/>

⁴² RFI, "Banking services return to Ethiopia's Tigray as conflict ends," 20 December 2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20221220-banking-services-return-to-ethiopia-s-tigray-reopening-as-conflict-ends>

⁴³ Addis Standard, "Ethiopia: Analysis - Amid Growing Concerns On Delayed, Inadequate Services Restoration, Premier Meets Tigrayan Negotiating Team, Promises to Speed Up Process," 4 February 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202302060041.html>

⁴⁴ RFI, "Ethiopia's Tigray rebels start disarming under terms of Pretoria peace deal," 11 January 2023, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20230111-ethiopia-s-tigray-rebels-start-disarming-under-terms-of-pretoria-peace-deal>

⁴⁵ Peoples Dispatch, "Peace deal between Ethiopian government and TPLF holds despite delays in implementation; US escalates attempts to scapegoat Eritrea," 6 February 2023, <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/02/06/peace-deal-between-ethiopian-government-and-tplf-holds-despite-delays-in-implementation-us-escalates-attempts-to-scapegoat-eritrea/>

⁴⁶ Reuters, "Eritrea troops still on Ethiopian soil, U.S. says," 29 January 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/eritrea-troops-still-ethiopian-soil-us-2023-01-28/>

⁴⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO January 2023 Monthly: The information landscape in Ethiopia," 8 February 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/02/08/epo-january-2023-monthly-the-information-landscape-in-ethiopia/>

⁴⁸ OCHA, Ethiopia - Situation Report, 15 Dec 2022, 15 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-15-dec-2022>

⁴⁹ Reuters, "Ethiopian PM meets Tigray region leaders for first time since peace deal," 4 February 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/ethiopian-pm-meets-tigray-region-leaders-first-time-since-peace-deal-2023-02-03/>

The situation in Oromia is fast deteriorating.⁵⁰ The war in Tigray created a security vacuum which enabled the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA or OLF-Shene) to expand its operations, violence has spread across the region and close to the capital, Addis Ababa.⁵¹ During the last months of 2022, OLA launched unprecedented attacks at urban areas and managed to take control of 11 out of 21 Woredas; the ENDF were able to regain control of most.⁵² OLA also targeted ethnic Amharas living in Oromia, while the Amhara militias did the same with Oromo civilians living in the Amhara region.⁵³ The group released over 480 prisoners from a prison in southern Oromia.⁵⁴

Communal violence also took place in Oromia with clashes between Amhara ethnic militia and associated Fano militias against Oromia regional special forces.⁵⁵ ACLED reported that violence involving ethnic Amhara militias in Oromia worsened over the past year and reached a critical level.⁵⁶

Oromia had the highest amount of reported violent events in the country in the last three months,⁵⁷ ACLED reported an all-time high of organised political violence in November.⁵⁸ In Western Oromia, essential services, including electricity, telecommunications, health facilities, banks and markets are not functioning.⁵⁹ The Ethiopian Human Rights Commission documented extrajudicial killings by ENDF⁶⁰ and members of the Ethiopian parliament elected from the Oromia region drafted a letter urging the government to make a peace deal

⁵⁰ OCHA, Ethiopia - Situation Report, 2 Feb 2023, 2 February 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-2-feb-2023>

⁵¹ The New Humanitarian, "As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares," 12 January 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/01/12/Ethiopia-Oromia-conflict-OLA>

⁵² Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO Monthly: November 2022," 7 December 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2022/12/07/epo-monthly-november-2022/>,

⁵³ The New Humanitarian, "As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares," 12 January 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/01/12/Ethiopia-Oromia-conflict-OLA>

⁵⁴ Addis Standard, "OLA fighters break into prison, set hundreds of detainees free in West Guji Zone, Southern Oromia," 11 January 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-ola-fighters-break-into-prison-set-hundreds-of-detainees-free-in-west-guji-zone-southern-oromia/>

⁵⁵ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO Monthly: November 2022," 7 December 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2022/12/07/epo-monthly-november-2022/>,

⁵⁶ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO Monthly: November 2022," 7 December 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2022/12/07/epo-monthly-november-2022/>,

⁵⁷ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO January 2023 Monthly: The information landscape in Ethiopia," 8 February 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/02/08/epo-january-2023-monthly-the-information-landscape-in-ethiopia/> and Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO Monthly: November 2022," 7 December 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2022/12/07/epo-monthly-november-2022/>,

⁵⁸ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO Monthly: November 2022," 7 December 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2022/12/07/epo-monthly-november-2022/>,

⁵⁹ OCHA, Ethiopia - Situation Report, 15 Dec 2022, 15 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/ethiopia/ethiopia-situation-report-15-dec-2022>

⁶⁰ The New Humanitarian, "As violence subsides in Tigray, Ethiopia's Oromia conflict flares," 12 January 2023, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2023/01/12/Ethiopia-Oromia-conflict-OLA>

with OLA,⁶¹ unfortunately both the federal and the Oromo regional governments said they would not sit down for talks with OLA.⁶²

In January the Amhara region recorded the highest number of fatalities throughout the country,⁶³ violence erupted in North Shewa and Oromia Special zones when Amhara special forces killed ethnic Oromo youths accused of being members of OLA. This led to clashes between OLA and the Amhara special forces and Fano militia which left at least 98 people dead.⁶⁴

A split in the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church (EOTC) occurred when three Archbishops appointed a group of 26 Bishops without the involvement of EOTC's Holy Synod and announced the creation of a new all-inclusive synod as the previous failed to serve mostly Oromo believers in their native language.⁶⁵ Violence erupted when supporters from both groups attempted to reach St. Michael Church in Shashemene, Oromia. The followers of the EOTC were violently repressed by Oromo security forces. In other areas of the region, priests and other members of the church were harassed by Oromo forces, and multiple arrests were reported.⁶⁶

Nigeria:

Election related violence was ongoing, reported incidents included at least five reported attacks against the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) offices, in Owerri four INEC staff were killed presumably by Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB).⁶⁷ A local INEC office and a police station in Anambra State were bombed, voting materials were destroyed and one civilian was killed.⁶⁸ There were also attacks among party supporters, a

⁶¹ Addis Standard, "Ethiopia: Lawmakers From Oromia Region Request Tigray Peace Deal Redo Between Govt, OLA Armed Group," 13 December 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212130464.html>

⁶² Addis Standard, "OLA fighters break into prison, set hundreds of detainees free in West Guji Zone, Southern Oromia," 11 January 2023, <https://addisstandard.com/news-ola-fighters-break-into-prison-set-hundreds-of-detainees-free-in-west-guji-zone-southern-oromia/>

⁶³ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO January 2023 Monthly: The information landscape in Ethiopia," 8 February 2022, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/02/08/epo-january-2023-monthly-the-information-landscape-in-ethiopia/>

⁶⁴ Ethiopia Peace Observatory, "EPO Weekly: 21-27 January 2023, 31 January 2023, <https://epo.acleddata.com/2023/01/31/epo-weekly-21-27-january-2023/>

⁶⁵ TGHAT, "Ethiopian Orthodox Synod Split, New Synod Established," 23 January 2023, <https://www.tghat.com/2023/01/23/ethiopian-orthodox-synod-split-new-synod-established/>

⁶⁶ Borkena, "Shashemene: Death toll from massacre of Orthodox Christians now over 30," 6 February 2023, <https://borkena.com/2023/02/06/ethiopia-shashemene-death-toll-massacre-of-orthodox-christians-now-over-30/>

⁶⁷ ACLED, Nigeria Election Violence Tracker, Situation Summary: 13 December 2022 – 15 January 2023, 19 December 2022, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/19/nigeria-election-violence-tracker-situation-summary-13-december-2022-15-january-2023/>

⁶⁸ TRT World, "One killed in attack on Nigeria polling office just weeks before vote," 2 February 2022, <https://www.trtworld.com/africa/one-killed-in-attack-on-nigeria-polling-office-just-weeks-before-vote-65120>

member of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) in Oyo state was killed, the PDP accused the All Progressives Congress (APC) of inciting violence against rivals and arming mobs.⁶⁹

Candidates were targeted in Imo state, at the start of December, a Labour Party (LP) candidate of Onuimo Local Government Area mysteriously died, days later gunmen broke into the house of another LP candidate of neighbouring Onuimo Local Government Area and killed him, they also broke into the houses of other politicians in the area which turned out to be empty.⁷⁰ There was an assassination attempt on the candidate of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) for Ideato federal constituency House of Representatives, this was considered “sponsored terrorism and act of war to silence the opposition voice in the state.”⁷¹

INEC announced the possible cancellation or postponement of elections if the security situation is not “monitored and dealt with decisively,”⁷² this was later denied, and elections are expected to take place as scheduled.⁷³

The Nigeria Mourns violence incident tracker reported at least 440 civilians killed in the month of December and a 100% increase in abductions when compared to the month of November.⁷⁴ In the first 20 days of January at least 508 people were killed across the country.⁷⁵ In Edo state, 31 passengers and staff of the Nigerian Railway Corporation (NRC) were believed to have been abducted by gunmen.⁷⁶ At the end of January, around 40 herders-mostly ethnic Fulani- were killed by an airstrike in central Nigeria where disputes between cattle herders and farmers over land, grazing and water rights are common. The Nigerian army was suspected responsible.⁷⁷

⁶⁹ ACLED, Nigeria Election Violence Tracker, Situation Summary: 13 December 2022 – 15 January 2023, 19 December 2022, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/19/nigeria-election-violence-tracker-situation-summary-13-december-2022-15-january-2023/>

⁷⁰ Premium Times, “2023: Gunmen kill Labour Party house of assembly candidate,” 16 December 2022, <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/570820-2023-gunmen-kill-labour-party-house-of-assembly-candidate.html>

⁷¹ Vanguard, “Attack on CUPP spokesperson: Call for anarchy in Imo – Onyeagocha,” 16 January 2023, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/01/attack-on-cupp-spokesperson-call-for-anarchy-in-imo-onyeagocha/>

⁷² Sahara Reporters, “2023 General Elections May Be Postponed If Insecurity Isn’t Addressed – Nigeria’s Electoral Body, INEC,” 10 January 2023,

⁷³ Reuters, “Nigeria will not postpone presidential vote - election chief,” 18 January 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/nigeria-will-not-postpone-presidential-vote-election-chief-2023-01-18/>

⁷⁴ Twitter, @NigeriaMourns, 20 January 2023, <https://twitter.com/NigeriaMourns/status/1616446618638733314>

⁷⁵ Vanguard, “Bloody January: Nigeria loses 508 citizens to violence, accidents, others in 19 days,” 21 January 2023, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2023/01/bloody-january-nigeria-loses-508-citizens-to-violence-accidents-others-in-19-days/>

⁷⁶ Reuters, “Gunmen kidnap 32 people from southern Nigeria train station,” 9 January 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/gunmen-kidnap-32-people-southern-nigeria-train-station-2023-01-08/>

⁷⁷ Africa News, “Herders blame airstrike that killed dozens on Nigeria's air force,” 27 January 2023, <https://www.africanews.com/2023/01/27/herders-blame-airstrike-that-killed-dozens-on-nigerias-air-force/>

International response:

The UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide expressed concern over the security situation specially in the North West and North Central regions where the plane attack on Fulani herders took place as such attacks risk fuelling intercommunal tensions, recruitment by armed groups and retaliatory attacks. She also mentioned the importance of addressing hate speech, incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence present in political discourse.⁷⁸

Somalia:

Clashes between al-Shabaab and Somali security forces continued. After months of a sustained offensive, government forces took control of several strategic al-Shabaab strongholds in December, some of which had been under control of the extremist group since 2016.⁷⁹ Most of the regained territory was in the Middle Shabelle, where the military said they liberated the last town held by al-Shabab militants in the region.⁸⁰ ACLED reported territorial exchange events over 60% higher than the 2022 monthly average.⁸¹ In January, attacks between government forces and the extremist group continued. The government captured the coastal town of Harardhere that had been under the militant group's control for more than a decade, al-Shabaab retaliated by attacking an army camp north of Mogadishu where 11 soldiers were killed.⁸² At least two attacks using explosive devices were recorded in central Somalia and at least 15 people were killed. In both cases, the attacks took place in villages that have been under al-Shabaab control for over 10 years and have recently been the focal point of government efforts to mobilise the local population against the group.⁸³ At the end of January, the US admitted to having killed the regional leader of the Islamic State in Somalia responsible for coordinating the funding for Islamic State operations in Africa.⁸⁴ The extremist group respond with violence storming a government building in Mogadishu,⁸⁵ mortar shells landed near the presidential palace.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ UN News, "Nigeria: UN genocide expert warns against worsening security situation," 2 February 2023, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/02/1133107>

⁷⁹ ACLED, Regional Overview Africa: December 2022, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/africa/regional-overview/>

⁸⁰ VOA, "Somalia: Somali Military Takes Al-Shabab's Last Stronghold in Middle Shabelle," 22 December 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202212230038.html>

⁸¹ ACLED, Regional Overview Africa: December 2022, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/africa/regional-overview/>

⁸² The East African, "11 soldiers killed in attack on Somali army camp claimed by Shabaab," 17 January 2023, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/11-soldiers-killed-in-somali-shabaab-attack-4089006>

⁸³ VOA, "Somalia: Al-Shabaab Attacks Key Towns in Somalia, Killing At Least 15 People," 14 January 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301150036.html>

⁸⁴ DW, "Somalia: US Forces Kill Key IS Leader in Somalia Operation," 26 January 2023, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301270038.html>

⁸⁵ Youtube, Reuters, "WARNING: GRAPHIC CONTENT - Al Shabaab storms government building in Mogadishu," 23 January 2023, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7Bglge5NE>

⁸⁶ VOA, "Regional Leaders Vow to Support Somalia's War Against Al-Shabab," 1 February 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/regional-leaders-vow-to-support-somalia-s-war-against-al-shabab/6943380.html>

In the Somali capital, hundreds of people attended a government organised rally against the extremist group, the president used this opportunity to address the citizens and requested them to help flush out al-Shabaab members he described as “bedbugs.”⁸⁷

In Somaliland, demonstrations against the secessionist rule of Muse Bihi Abdi, president of Somaliland who is accused of having assassinated an opposition party member, took place. Security forces clashed with protesters and at least 20 were killed.⁸⁸ Protests later spread through Somaliland demanding the right to self determination. In Sool, Sanaag, and Cayn (SSC), where a majority has historically been opposed to secession from Somalia, anti-secessionist clans have taken control of the city and sworn to defend it from Somaliland. Activists fear violence may increase.⁸⁹ Presidential elections were supposed to take place in Somaliland in November, however the House of Elders extended the term of office of President Muse Bihi Abdi by two years.⁹⁰

A study led by the World Health Organization (WHO) determined that over 75% of the population suffer from various mental disorders, somewhat attributable to the political instability, prolonged violence and humanitarian crisis.⁹¹

International response:

The leaders of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia met to discuss the ongoing flight against the terrorist group. The four countries agreed to join resources to support the ongoing military operations in Somalia against al-Shabaab.⁹²

South Sudan:

Fighting erupted in the Upper Nile in August 2022, and violence has since spread to Jonglei and Unity states and in recent months it has escalated. It was estimated that since the resurgence of violence in August 2022, over 30,000 people had been forced to flee their homes.⁹³

⁸⁷ Al Jazeera, “Hundreds rally against al-Shabab in Somali capital Mogadishu,” 13 January 2023, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/13/hundreds-rally-against-al-shabab-in-somali-capital-mogadishu>

⁸⁸ ACLED, Regional Overview Africa: December 2022, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/africa/regional-overview/>

⁸⁹ Peoples Dispatch, “Protests in breakaway Somaliland call for reunification with Somalia,” 17 January 2023, <https://peoplesdispatch.org/2023/01/17/protests-in-breakaway-somaliland-call-for-reunification-with-somalia/>

⁹⁰ The New Arab, “Lawmakers in breakaway Somaliland extend president’s term,” 1 October 2022, <https://www.newarab.com/news/lawmakers-breakaway-somaliland-extend-presidents-term>

⁹¹ VOA, “Somalia: Study - Somali People 'Highly Traumatized' After Years of Conflict,” 18 January 2022, <https://allafrica.com/stories/202301190024.html>

⁹² VOA, “Regional Leaders Vow to Support Somalia’s War Against Al-Shabab,” 1 February 2023, <https://www.voanews.com/a/regional-leaders-vow-to-support-somalia-s-war-against-al-shabab/6943380.html>

⁹³ RFI, “UN says armed raids force 30,000 to flee homes in South Sudan,” 30 December 2022, <https://www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20221230-un-says-armed-raids-forced-30-000-to-flee-homes-in-south-sudan>

Since February 2022, the threats facing South Sudan have worsened and the Center for the Prevention of Genocide of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) warned the country could slip into full scale war. Experts expressed concern over the political instability at the national level, targeting of civilians based on ethnicity or perceived political affiliation, ongoing conflicts in multiple regions in the country fueled by parties on a national level, blockage of humanitarian assistance, the use of hate speech by government members and arbitrary arrests and detention of those who speak out against the government.⁹⁴ This is exacerbated by the fact that the period of implementation of the peace agreement has been extended to 2024, thus ensuring that those responsible for mass atrocities stay in power until then and progress on accountability efforts is null.⁹⁵ The USHMM indicated that one of the key elements that must be addressed in order to avert future conflict are the underlying grievances which must be done through international support for programming on social cohesion, depolarization, and local dialogue.⁹⁶

International response:

The UN Security Council was briefed on the situation in South Sudan in December. UNMISS expressed concern at the militarization of the Nile River, as well as over the deteriorating situation in Upper Nile State which has the potential to further deteriorate as violence has taken an ethnic dimension.⁹⁷

The international community, including the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD),⁹⁸ Kenyan president Ruto⁹⁹ and the Troika and EU¹⁰⁰ called on South Sudan to de-escalate the conflicts in Upper Nile and Jonglei states.

⁹⁴ USHMM, Worsening Risk of Mass Atrocities in South Sudan, January 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/South_Sudan_Policy_Brief_January_2023.pdf

⁹⁵ USHMM, Worsening Risk of Mass Atrocities in South Sudan, January 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/South_Sudan_Policy_Brief_January_2023.pdf

⁹⁶ USHMM, Worsening Risk of Mass Atrocities in South Sudan, January 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/South_Sudan_Policy_Brief_January_2023.pdf

⁹⁷ UNMISS, Briefing to the United Nations Security Council by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head Of UNMISS Mr. Nicholas Haysom, 13 December 2022, 14 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/briefing-united-nations-security-council-special-representative-secretary-general-and-head-unmiss-mr-nicholas-haysom-13-december-2022-delivered>

⁹⁸ IGAD, South Sudan: IGAD Calls for De-Escalation of Tension and Violence in Upper Nile, 27 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-igad-calls-de-escalation-tension-and-violence-upper-nile>

⁹⁹ The East African, "Kenya's William Ruto urges President Kiir to end war in Upper Nile, Jonglei," 26 December 2022, <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/kenya-ruto-urges-president-kiir-to-end-war-in-upper-nile-jonglei-4066952>

¹⁰⁰ US Department of State, Joint Statement on Violence in Upper Nile and Jonglei States, South Sudan, 16 December 2022, <https://www.state.gov/joint-statement-on-violence-in-upper-nile-and-jonglei-states-south-sudan/>