

2. Human rights and treatment of specific profiles

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2.1. General situation

Nigeria has ratified several of the core[44] international human rights treaties, including the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).[45] The country has also ratified the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.[46] However, Nigeria has not ratified the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming to the abolition of the death penalty (CCPR-OP2-DP).[47]

The country has continued to face significant human rights challenges.[48] Despite constitutional safeguards, ongoing human and civil rights violations point to systemic deficiencies in rights protection. Main challenges include insecurity, limited access to justice, restrictions on freedom of expression, and discrimination against marginalised groups.[49] Women and Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) individuals face ‘pervasive discrimination.’ [50] Journalists, protesters, and government critics were subject to arbitrary arrest and detention. [51] Particularly, journalists who cover politically sensitive topics have been targeted by criminal defamation laws as well as frequent harassment and arrest.[52] Security forces frequently used excessive force in response to demonstrations, resulting in casualties.[53]

Insurgencies, kidnappings, and communal violence have continued[54] to threaten the basic rights of millions of Nigerians.[55] Crime (including cultism, rural banditry, kidnappings, and farmers-herders violence) represented a primary cause of violence.[56] While insurgency led by Boko Haram and related al-Qaeda and Islamic State affiliates was long seen as the most significant threat to the country’s stability, by early 2024 violence arising from banditry had become more lethal and widespread. Perpetrated by groups described as ‘highly fragmented’ and diverse in terms of their capabilities and degree of organisation,[57] banditry was reported in

the country's North-West[58] and North-Central zones,[59] as well as in Lagos and other areas of the South-West.[60] Banditry appeared in a variety of forms such as armed robbery, murder, rape, kidnapping,[61] cattle rustling, armed attacks, and raids targeting local communities.[62] For more information see EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025.

Mob violence led to numerous deaths, with many victims tortured or killed following accusations of theft, witchcraft, or blasphemy. Only few of these incidents were investigated or prosecuted, indicating the authorities' failure to prevent and respond to such violence.[63] Victims of Boko Haram, including abducted girls (some of whom remain in captivity), received limited access to justice and support.[64] Cases of abuses committed by security forces have been reported,[65] including extrajudicial killings, torture, and other violations by military and law enforcement agencies[66] (for more information see EUAA COI Report – Nigeria Security Situation November 2025).

Religious freedom is constitutionally protected.[67] According to Freedom House, the government, however, has reportedly carried out crackdowns against 'religious groups that have questioned its authority.'[68] No other sources could be found to corroborate this information. Sources also indicated that local governments have been known to *de facto* endorse official religions in their territory, and placing limits on other religious activity.[69] For more information see Christians in areas where they are a minority and Muslims in areas where they are a minority.

Northern Nigeria operates under a dual justice system (see 2.18.1 Justice system for more detailed information) in which the secular provisions of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution coexist with sharia law in 12 states.[70] Although sharia law had traditionally been applied in the region to matters of personal status and civil law, since 2000 its application was expanded to criminal justice, raising significant human rights concerns.[71] The states where sharia law has been adopted as both civil and criminal law are: Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Niger, Sokoto, Yobe, and Zamfara.[72] This parallel legal framework has created ongoing tensions[73] between constitutional human rights protections and religious legal principles, particularly in cases involving alleged blasphemy.[74]

In a resolution adopted in February 2025, the European Parliament (EP) urged Nigerian authorities to abolish provisions on religious insults in criminal law as well as the death penalty, pointing out that these provisions are in violation of international law, Nigerian constitutional rights and human rights. The EP resolution also urged the country to combat false blasphemy accusations, mob violence, and bring perpetrators to justice.[75]

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