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GICJ AFRICAN AFFAIRS

HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFRICA

Geneva International Centre for Justice is pleased to present its November issue of the African Affairs Newsletter. This edition highlights key developments across Africa, with a focus on women's rights, business opportunities and challenges, and Africa's engagement in the Human Rights Council's 60th session (HRC60). Together, these themes showcase the continent's progress, ongoing struggles, and growing influence in global discussions.



The Conflict in Sudan Leaves Civilians Trapped Between War, Hunger, and Collapse

By Jamel Nampijja / GICJ

The humanitarian emergency in Sudan is rapidly worsening. On September 15, 2025, the United Nations reported that ongoing attacks in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur, have led to the collapse of essential services and mass displacement, pushing millions in Darfur and beyond to the brink of catastrophe.

Reports from El Fasher, capital of North Darfur, detail heavy shelling and assaults resulting in the deaths of at least six civilians and injuries to many others. These events triggered fresh waves of displacement.



Survivors who managed to escape described the conditions in the besieged city as "unbearable", as the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and allied groups have maintained a stranglehold for over a year.

The civil war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and RSF has resulted in thousands of deaths, destruction of villages, and displacement of nearly 12 million people, including over four million refugees in neighbouring countries. The situation has also escalated to the point where Sudan risks becoming the site of the world's largest hunger crisis in recent history. Famine has already been confirmed in the Zamzam camp, with other areas facing imminent risk.

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Upholding the Non-Delegable Duty: Eradicating Corporate Impunity to Safeguard Africa's Children

By Mihretab Mekonnen

The emergence of the Business and Human Rights (BHR) field signals the historical failure of state-centric governance to effectively address corporate-related harms. In Africa, the introduction of business accountability remains a complex but non-negotiable undertaking. The vast power of multinational enterprises (MNEs), coupled with the slow development of national legal standards, has created a dangerous vacuum.

This regulatory landscape is fragmented, frequently imposing universal norms without due consideration for the contextual disparities and the specific local, socio-economic, and political factors unique to African States. This failure of regulatory capture allows companies to operate without adequate domestic rules, resulting in a significant governance gap and fostering a permissive environment for corporate wrongdoing.



Crisis of Exploitation: Structural Child Vulnerability

Empirical evidence confirms an acute and escalating crisis of structural child vulnerability across the African continent. This crisis is fueled by systemic exploitation within key high-risk sectors, including extractive, agricultural, and manufacturing industries. In nations reliant on foreign investment in natural resources, the emphasis on large-scale infrastructure and extractive projects severely exacerbates the risk environment for children.

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The African Union on migration and forced displacement protection: Is it living up to its promises?

By Patricia Jjuuko/GICJ

On 3 August 2025, tragedy struck when a boat carrying 157 people, mostly of Ethiopian nationality, sank off the coast of Yemen due to bad weather. 68 migrants were reported dead, and only 12 people were rescued. This devastating incident is one among many similar shipwrecks that have occurred in recent months, painting a grim picture of the growing risks faced by African migrants seeking better opportunities or fleeing insecurity.

The Africa Union (AU) established the Migration Policy Framework for Africa (MPFA) in 2006 to help the continent better manage migration and benefit from it through strategic, coordinated approaches. The framework was designed to promote safe, orderly, and regular migration while protecting migrants' rights and dignity. However, as migration patterns shift and the scale of displacement grows, the question arises: has the AU lived up to its promises?

According to data from the International Organisation for Migration's Missing Migrants Project, 17, 580 migrants have gone missing on the African continent since 2014. These numbers highlight the urgent need for stronger implementation of existing frameworks and enhanced cooperation between governments, regional bodies, and humanitarian organizations to protect vulnerable migrants.

In recognition of this growing crisis, the AU member states, in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), convened a virtual meeting on 4 September 2025. The session aimed to strengthen policies and coordination mechanisms for preventing disappearances, supporting families of missing migrants, and enhancing protection measures across Africa.

While these efforts are commendable and mark important progress, implementation remains a major challenge. Policy commitments must be matched by tangible action. For the Migration Policy Framework to achieve its intended impact, member states must translate political will into concrete action, prioritising humanitarian protection, regional solidarity, and long-term socio-economic solutions.

Ultimately, safeguarding the dignity and lives of migrants is not only a policy obligation, it is a moral imperative. The African Union 's vision of an integrated, prosperous, and peaceful Africa cannot be realized if migration continues to be synonymous with danger and despair. The time to act decisively is now.

Female Genital Mutilation in West Africa

By Haliema Sharfeddine / GICJ

The death of a one month old baby girl in The Gambia on 11 August 2025 after undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM) has sparked grief and outrage across West Africa. The baby, from the Kombo North District near Banjul, was rushed to hospital with severe bleeding but was pronounced dead on arrival. Police later confirmed the arrest of two women suspected of performing the act. The case has reignited debate about the persistence of FGM in the region, despite existing bans and years of advocacy. The incident was widely condemned in national media as a failure to protect children and a reminder of the ongoing struggle against harmful traditional practices.

Although FGM has been banned in The Gambia since 2015, enforcement remains weak. A decade after criminalisation, there have been only two prosecutions and one conviction. Rights advocates warn that the practice is increasingly being carried out on infants to avoid detection. Campaigners have warned that families increasingly perform the practice on infants to avoid detection, believing that younger girls heal faster and that such cases are harder to trace.

Background

Female genital mutilation is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as “all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.” It has no health benefits and causes serious and lasting harm, including haemorrhage, infection, infertility, complications in childbirth, and psychological trauma. Globally, over 230 million girls and women alive today have undergone FGM in 30 countries across Africa, the Middle East, and Asia where the practice persists.



Ghana Proposes Motion Declaring Transatlantic Slave Trade the Greatest Crime Against Humanity during UN General Assembly Address

By Jamel Nampijja/ GICJ

President John Dramani Mahama made the declaration in his address to the 80th Session of the General Assembly in New York on 25 September 2025, calling on the international community to acknowledge both the historical atrocity and its enduring legacies.

“The suffering inflicted by the transatlantic slave trade must never be trivialised nor treated as a mere historical event,” President Mahama said. He emphasised that its impact continues to shape contemporary inequalities, systemic racism and underdevelopment across much of Africa and the African diaspora.

The proposed motion is expected to reaffirm Ghana’s leadership in global reparations advocacy, positioning the West African nation at the forefront of efforts to secure recognition, accountability and reparative justice. Ghana was historically a major departure point for enslaved Africans, and its government has repeatedly underscored its moral obligation to lead international discourse on the issue.

Precedents at the UN

The United Nations has previously adopted resolutions commemorating victims of slavery, including annual observances of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade. These texts, however, have largely been symbolic, focusing on education and remembrance rather than binding legal recognition.

In 2005, the General Assembly adopted the Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law (A/RES/60/147), which established global norms on reparation and remedy. Advocates believe this framework could guide the development of reparative measures related to slavery.

Growing Calls for Reparations

Recent years have seen increasing momentum within the UN system. Secretary-General António Guterres and High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk have both urged states to move beyond commemoration and take concrete steps towards reparatory justice. Discussions within the UN Permanent Forum on People of African Descent have also raised the prospect of creating a dedicated tribunal to examine claims related to slavery, colonialism and apartheid.

Mixed International Response

Support for reparations has been strong among African states and Caribbean nations, with the African Union and CARICOM coordinating joint positions. Civil society organisations have likewise pressed for formal recognition and redress.

However, reactions from former colonial powers have been mixed. The Netherlands, for instance, has issued an apology for its role in slavery and pledged €200 million towards awareness and engagement programmes. The United Kingdom and others have expressed regret but remain cautious about binding reparations, preferring to focus on education and development cooperation.

Next Steps

If adopted, Ghana's motion would represent a significant shift in UN language, reframing the transatlantic slave trade as not only a moral wrong but the preeminent crime against humanity. While enforcement or reparative measures would remain subject to negotiation, such recognition could strengthen ongoing campaigns for justice and open the door to more robust institutional responses.

Kenyan UPR – 4th Cycle

Executive summary

As rooted in establishment, the Universal Periodic Review is the United Nations approach to assessing a state's compliance with international human rights law. In accordance with that, the 49th session of the UPR working group was held from the 28th of April to the 9th of May 2025. The Kenyan review was conducted on the 1st of May 2025 and the delegation was led by the Attorney General of The Republic of Kenya, Dorcas Odour. She was accompanied by a team of members of the office of the Attorney General.

Prior to the UPR session, the Kenyan government submitted a national report pursuant to council resolution 5/1 and 16/21 in which they addressed the different reforms they have made as a state since the last session. In this report, the government claims to have made great strides in the protection of human rights including those of women and vulnerable groups. Additionally, they claim to have further ensured the protection of freedom of assembly and press, but these claims are countered by the reports of mass killings of protesters in the summer 2024 protests and the ongoing extra judicial killings that soon followed.

In addition to the report, different states submitted questions in advance in which they were able to express their concerns following the last review sessions. Majority of the state's concerns were in relation to the rise in extra judicial killings in the recent years alongside the increase in involuntary disappearances.

Background

Established in 2006, The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism curated by the United Nations, aimed at assessing states' developments in the implementation of different legal obligations including their human rights obligations. This follows the General Assembly 60/251 resolution that aims to improve human rights standards in all member states. The overall goal of the UPR is the equal treatment of states in the aim for the significant improvement of human rights globally. The design of the UPR orbits around the main goal of protecting and upholding human rights and is done through assessment of the different states and effectively addressing the states when human rights violations occur.

In this session, a range of human rights issues were discussed ranging from women's rights issues, issues regarding enforced disappearances, extra judicial killings, protection of children against child labour and child sexual exploitation and much more.

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THE DECOLONISATION OF THE WORLD MAP

By Rose Chiara Atieno

Decades since the beginning of the end of colonialism, Africa continues to be subject to a different form of colonialism, cartography inequality. Established in the 16th century, the Mercator's projection has been the world's most used 2D projection of what earth looks like, reflected in most accessible maps.. However, this projection showcases how colonial narratives continue to influence Western views of Africa by reinforcing outdated and reductive perspectives that reduce the size of the continent.

Equal Earth Projection

In response to this, two African NGOs, Africa No Filter and Speak Up Africa have taken it upon themselves to initiate the #CorrectTheMap campaign. This campaign urges states to cease the use of the Mercator projection and to adopt the Equal Earth projection. Notably, in August 2025, African Union has recently reaffirmed its support for this initiative, strongly advocating for the widespread recognition and adoption of a new map created in 2018 that accurately represents the true scale of the African continent. Aside from presenting an accurate depiction of Africa, the importance of changing the map underscored by its role in reaffirming Africa's rightful place on the global stage and shifting the colonialist perspective of what the continent represents.



International Day for People of African Descent - 31 August 2025



[Click Here for the Full article by Jamel Nampijja](#)

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Impacts of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on People of African Descent

By Teboho Mosebo/ GICJ

The impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) on People of African Descent is a pressing concern. United Nations Human Rights Chief Volker Turk noted in his vision statement 'Human Rights: A path for solutions' that while generative AI offers unprecedented opportunities, its negative societal impacts are already widespread.

Challenges and Concerns

Recent advancements in generative AI and its increasing application raise significant human rights concerns. As AI increasingly influences critical aspects of modern life, it also perpetuates stereotypes and exacerbates racial disparities. This occurs due to the underrepresentation or misinterpretation of African Descendants in the datasets that inform AI systems.

Ongoing global dialogues aim to address the far-reaching impacts of Artificial Intelligence. From 14-17 April 2025, the United Nations Permanent Forum on People of African Descent held its fourth session, focusing on reparations and AI challenges, with the theme 'Africa and People of African Descent: United for Reparatory Justice in the Age of AI'.

The Africa group at **Geneva International Centre for Justice (GICJ)** is a coalition dedicated to advocating for human rights, justice, and peace across the African continent and for people of African descent. Operating within the framework of GICJ, the group provides expert analysis and policy recommendations to international bodies, governments, and civil society organisations.

Through research, advocacy, and engagement with the United Nations mechanisms, the GICJ Africa Group works to amplify African voices in global discussions on peace, security, and development.

The Africa Group, is actively engaged in addressing the ongoing issues of racism, racial discrimination, and slavery, with a strong focus on supporting the full and effective implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Recognising the deep historical and structural roots of racial injustice, the team works to expose contemporary forms of discrimination, advocate for reparative justice, and amplify the voices of affected community. The Africa team continues to push for accountability, equality, and the dismantling of systemic racism in line with the principles of the Durban Declaration & Programme of Action (DPPA)

Expert Insights

Mutale Nkonde, CEO of AI for the People, highlighted concerns about facial recognition systems. These systems, commonly used at borders and in law enforcement, have been shown to misidentify people with darker skin tones more frequently. The implications for migration and asylum processes are significant.

Nkonde also pointed out issues with speech recognition, where AI often flags African American Vernacular English as toxic, leading to biased content moderation outcomes.

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AMPLIFYING AFRICAN VOICES AT HRC60

The 60th session on the Human Rights Council on the 8 September to 8 October, posed as a session of reflection on the different crisis in the world. GICJ rigourously engaged with the different items on the agenda of this session and used the opportunity to amplify African voices at the council



Voices Silenced: Uncovering the Human Rights Emergency in DRC

By Elena Hadad

At the 60th Session of the Human Rights Council, interactive dialogues addressed grave human rights situations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Testimonies highlighted atrocities by armed groups, including M23, ADF, and allegations of Rwandan involvement. The Council heard calls that urged all parties to respect commitments made during the Washington agreement to end the gender based violence, sexual abuse, and repression of human rights defenders.



The Council mandated an independent fact-finding mission in February to investigate the recent escalation of violence in North and South Kivu provinces.

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The Politics of Unaccountability: Impunity and Insecurity in the Central African Republic

By *Shalina Prakash/GICJ*



The Interactive dialogue with the Independent Expert on the issue of human rights in the Central African Republic took place during the 38th meeting of the 60th session of the Human Rights Council. Concluding with the Independent Expert recognising CAR's resilience and significant progress, the recognition was also met with numerous delegations emphasising the urgent and essential need for continued support for a country that has experienced protracted conflict.

Expressing grave concerns over recurrent human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, Mr. Agbetse outlined essential services the Central African Republic needs, directing his recommendations to the international community, crucial stakeholders in the region and the CAR government.

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Libya in Transition: Navigating Human Rights Challenges

By *Teboho Mosebo /GICJ*

During the 38th and 39th meetings of the 60th Session of the Human Rights Council, held on October 2-3, 2025, the Interactive Dialogue on technical cooperation in Libya highlighted the pressing need for meaningful progress on human rights in the country. Deputy High Commissioner Nada Al-Nashif presented the report [A/HRC/60/82](#) on technical assistance and capacity-building carried out by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in cooperation with Libyan authorities from April 2024 to May 2025.



Al-Nashif underscored the concerning human rights situation in Libya, particularly the stalled transitional justice and reconciliation efforts, widespread arbitrary detention, and deteriorating civic space and women's rights. She emphasised the need for Libya to prioritise human rights and implement the recommendations, which include ensuring accountability, supporting Libyan-led reconciliation, and enhancing technical assistance and capacity-building efforts.

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HRC60: Burundi's crisis – A call for acknowledgement and accountability



By Marcela Miteva/ GICJ

The debate at the Human Rights Council involved the report of the Special Rapporteur for the situation of human rights in Burundi. The debate shows a highly polarised interpretation of the development of the country, with vigorous disagreement regarding the legitimacy of the Rapporteur's mandate, the state of democratic freedoms, and the general state of human rights, all the more against the background of recent and upcoming elections.

One of the core points of contention revolves around the political crisis which began in 2015. Different member states and civil society organisations view the current stalemate as a continuation of the crisis, defined by persistent impunity for historical and ongoing atrocities.

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HRC 60: Repairing historical injustices: key to dismantling systemic racism



By Lea Farge /GICJ

On 1 October 2025, during the 36th meeting of its 60th session, the UN Human Rights Council held an enhanced interactive dialogue. During this meeting, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the representative of the Expert Mechanism presented the recommendations outlined in their respective reports to combat systemic racism and discrimination against Africans and people of African descent. It served as a platform for States and NGOs to exchange views and share best practices aimed at building societies free from racial discrimination and violence.

The discussions reiterated that the legacies of slavery, the transatlantic slave trade, and colonisation have left deep and lasting scars, not only in economic terms, through systemic inequality, impoverishment, and land dispossession, but also at institutional, cultural, and symbolic levels.

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