



ACHPR
African Commission on
Human and Peoples' Rights

Special Interest Group on Enforced Disappearances Calls for Urgent Action to Address Enforced Disappearances Across Africa

Dakar, Senegal 14th October 2026- Human rights organisations and associations representing families of disappeared persons have called on African States and regional human rights institutions to take urgent and coordinated action to prevent and address enforced disappearances across the continent.

The call follows a collective meeting held during the NGO Forum preceding the 89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, where participating organisations developed recommendations aimed at strengthening prevention, accountability and protection for victims, survivors and families of disappeared persons.

The organisations expressed concern that enforced disappearances remain a persistent yet frequently invisible human rights violation in Africa, occurring in diverse contexts, including elections, armed conflicts, migration, counter-terrorism operations and the repression of dissent. They further highlighted the use of enforced disappearances in transnational repression targeting human rights defenders.

The recommendations reaffirm the importance of the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance and the African Commission's Guidelines on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances in Africa as essential frameworks for preventing and eliminating the crime.

Key recommendations

The organisations called on African States to:

- Ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED) without reservations and recognise the competence of its Committee.
- Criminalise enforced disappearance as a distinct offence that is not subject to a statute of limitations, repeal amnesty laws that shield perpetrators, and guarantee families access to truth, justice and reparation without requiring a declaration of death.
- Protect families of disappeared persons and their associations, including ending the closure of their offices and restrictions on their freedom of movement.

- Strengthen regional action and accountability by urging the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights to adopt a dedicated resolution on enforced disappearances, including short-term disappearances and transnational repression.
- Establish a Special Interest Group on enforced disappearances in Africa and make the issue a standing item on the annual NGO Forum agenda.
- Strengthen the mandates and resources of relevant African Commission working groups to enhance their capacity to address enforced disappearances.

The organisations emphasised that addressing enforced disappearances requires sustained cooperation between African and United Nations human rights mechanisms, in line with the Addis Ababa Roadmap, and meaningful engagement with civil society and families of disappeared persons.

They urged the NGO Forum to incorporate the recommendations into its conclusions and bring them to the attention of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights for consideration and action.

Participating organisations

The collective recommendations were developed with the participation of:

- Committee for Justice
- Independent Medico-Legal Unit (IMLU)
- DefendDefenders
- Centre d'Actions pour le Développement
- International Service for Human Rights
- Réseau Ouest Africain des Défenseurs des Droits Humains
- United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances
- African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- Angolan Network of Human Rights Defenders (KUTAKESA)
- Collectif des Familles de Disparus en Algérie (CFDA)
- Fédération Euro-Méditerranéenne contre les Disparitions Forcées (FEMED)
- WAVE-Gambia

- Changement Social Bénin

The recommendations represent a collective effort grounded in the experiences of human rights organisations and associations of families of disappeared persons. They underscore the urgent need to ensure that every disappearance is investigated, every family has access to truth and justice, and perpetrators are held accountable in accordance with international and regional human rights standards.