



Index: AFR 01/0445/2025
26 October 2025

-Check against delivery-

ORAL STATEMENT

**85th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights
21 – 30 Oct 2025, Banjul, The Gambia**

Agenda Item 7(i): Activity Report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders and Reprisal in Africa

Honourable Chairperson,

Amnesty International remains gravely concerned by the ongoing repression in the Central Sahel against human rights defenders, journalists, civil society members, politicians, and citizens who harbour a dissenting voice from their government's national narratives. In Mali, Niger, and Burkina Faso, the military regimes are progressively curtailing freedoms and rights on the guise of fighting anti-imperialism and protecting national sovereignty. In the three countries, laws are mainly implemented by ordinances, without parliamentary oversight, and without constitutional review, as the executive controls the legislative and judiciary powers.

Across the Central Sahel, authorities have hollowed out pluralism by dissolving parties and suspending political activity in violation of the right to freedom of association.

In Niger, the March 2025 National Refoundation Charter dissolved political parties and stretched the transition to five years—extendable on vague “security” grounds. In Mali, all parties were dissolved in May 2025 following the conclusions of national “consultations,” while the transition—originally 18 months from September 2020—was rolled forward repeatedly, culminating in a further five-year, security-contingent extension. When the agreed two-year extension expired in March 2024, parties calling for constitutional rule faced a three-month suspension of political activity and the detention of at least ten political leaders between June and December 2024. In Burkina Faso, political activities have remained suspended since the October 2022 coup.

This assault extends beyond parties to unions and associations. In Niger on 7 August 2025, the Interior Ministry dissolved key judiciary unions—including SAMAN, UMAN, SNAJ, SYNCAT and SIMAN—on spurious grounds of “service failings” and corporatism. Days later, the head of state dismissed the SAMAN leadership from the civil service after they criticized the move and announced a judiciary-wide strike. In Mali in 2024, authorities dissolved multiple civil society groups—including the Observatory for Elections and Good Governance, Kaoural Renouveau, CMAS, AEEM and the Synergy of Actions for Mali—targeting voices campaigning for a return to civilian, constitutional rule.

Governments in the region are now weaponizing nationality itself. In Niger, Ordinance No. 2024-43 of 27 August 2024 created a register (FPGE) of persons and entities deemed involved in terrorism or “offences against strategic interests,” a sweep so broad it includes cyber- and opinion-related acts. Listing triggers asset freezes, movement restrictions and even deprivation of nationality—without a final conviction. By January 2025, 21 Nigeriens had been temporarily deprived of citizenship under this measure.



In Burkina Faso, the September 2025 Code of Persons and Family authorizes deprivation of nationality for naturalized citizens on loosely framed grounds—including alleged allegiance to another state, offences against state security, or acts deemed incompatible with Burkinabè nationality.

Amnesty International calls upon the African Commission to:

- Urgently engage the authorities of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger to restore freedoms of association, expression and assembly, end intimidation of human rights defenders, and rescind blanket suspensions and dissolutions.
- Call on Niger to repeal Ordinance No. 2024-43 (FPGE) and halt nationality stripping, and on Burkina Faso to amend its Code of Persons and Family to remove deprivation-of-nationality provisions incompatible with the African Charter.
- Request in-country visits to assess the situation of human rights in the three countries.

Thank you.