

"So how do we resolve life's many contradictions?

Sometimes we need to convert others to our side, but most times we can compromise our contradictions creatively."

-Robert H. Schuller

WORLD

HOT SPOTS



AFGHANISTAN

Already plagued by insecurity, COVID, corruption, government over-centralization and mismanagement, declining revenues and drought, the Afghan economy will now face a host of challenges in the aftermath of the Taliban's takeover and the international community cracking down on aid and assistance. (United States Institute of Peace)



BURKINA FASO

A poor country even by West African standards, landlocked Burkina Faso has suffered from recurring droughts and military coups. Burkina Faso, which means "land of honest men", has significant reserves of gold, but the country has faced domestic and external concern over the state of its economy and human rights. A former French colony, it gained independence as Upper Volta in 1960. (BBC News)

The military coup deposing Burkina Faso's President Roch Kabore is the fourth in a string of recent military takeovers in West and Central Africa, prompting fears of further regional instability. Mutinous soldiers demanding more support for their fight against armed groups announced on Monday that they had toppled the democratically-elected president. While the takeover sparked widespread international condemnation, it was greeted with significant support in Burkina Faso. (Aljazeera)



COLOMBIA

The peace accord in 2016 between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the government ended a 52-year armed conflict and brought an initial decline in violence. But conflict-related violence has since taken new forms, and serious abuses continue. Violence associated with the conflicts has forcibly displaced more than 8.2 million Colombians since 1985. (Human Rights Watch)



ETHIOPIA

The security and human rights situation in Ethiopia deteriorated as Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed struggled to maintain order amid growing unrest and political tensions. The rights landscape was defined by ongoing abuses by government security forces, attacks on civilians by armed groups, deadly violence along communal and ethnic lines, and a political crisis. (Human Rights Watch)



HAITI

Corruption, vulnerability to natural disasters, resurgent gang violence, and disproportionate use of force by police against protesters remain major human rights concerns in Haiti.

Below is a list of some of the major problems that the people of Haiti are faced with which make life uncomfortable and miserable:

- Displacement
- Rights to Health, Water, and Food
- Criminal Justice System
- Illiteracy and Barriers to Education
- Abuses by Security Forces

(Human Rights Watch)



IRAN

Iranian authorities continued to repress their own people. The country's security and intelligence apparatus, in partnership with Iran's judiciary, harshly cracked down on dissent, including through excessive and lethal force against protesters and reported abuse and torture in detention. President Rouhani and his administration have shown little inclination to curb or confront these serious rights violations perpetrated by Iran's security agencies, while Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei continues to greenlight these rampant abuses. Broad United States sanctions also impacted the country's economy and Iranians' access to essential medicines and harmed their right to health. (Human Rights Watch)



ISRAEL-PALESTINE

For more than 70 years, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has affected the Middle East landscape. A comprehensive diplomatic solution has defied international efforts, leaving the public disillusioned about the prospect of peace. Large-scale violence ebbs and flows, leaving communities insecure and enabling the conflict to persist as a rallying tool for extremist actors, thereby demanding continued U.S. and international attention. (United States Institute of Peace)



LIBYA

Nine years after the fall of Muammar Qaddafi, Libya continues to struggle to end its violent conflict and build state institutions. External actors have exacerbated Libya's problems by funneling money and weapons to proxies that have put personal interests above those of the Libyan people. U.N. efforts to broker a lasting peace have not yet succeeded, overshadowed by competing peace conferences sponsored by various foreign governments. Meanwhile, Libya's borders remain porous, particularly in the southern Fezzan, facilitating an increase in trafficking and smuggling of illicit materials, including weapons. (United States Institute of Peace)



MALI

- Political Crisis, Violent Protests
- Communal Violence
- Abuses by Armed Islamist Groups
- Abuses by State Security Forces
- Accountability for Abuses
- Transitional Justice Mechanisms and Human Rights Commission

(Human Rights Watch)



MYANMAR

The overall human rights situation in Myanmar deteriorated in 2020, including heightened restrictions on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly. Fighting between Myanmar's military and several ethnic armed groups continued, with government forces committing increased abuses against ethnic Kachin, Karen, Rakhine, Rohingya, and Shan minority populations. Military and police abuses were amplified with arbitrary arrests, detention, torture, and killings in custody. (Human Rights Watch)



NIGERIA

As Africa's most populous country, largest economy and most notable democracy, Nigeria is a bellwether for the continent. A weakening economy, rising insecurity and violent conflicts threaten progress made in its democratic development. Amid deepening distrust in government and institutions, Nigeria has significant work to do in improving national, state and local security and governance ahead of national and state elections in 2023. The country is also faced with the challenge of agitations by two prominent ethnic groups for self-determination. The Constitution of the country is defective as this was packaged and handed over to the civilians in 1999 by the military. The question of restructuring the country for equitable distribution of the economy is on the front burner. (United States Institute of Peace)



SAHEL

The security situation in the Sahel continues to deteriorate, with terrorist groups operating in the Sahel expanding their presence southward, increasingly threatening coastal West African states. Recent months also witnessed political instability in Chad following the death of President Idriss Déby while fighting rebels invading from Libya and in Mali when the perpetrators of last year's coup d'état carried out a second coup against Mali's transitional authorities. (Security Council Report)



SUDAN

Sudan's first year of a three-year transition to democratic rule following the dramatic ouster of President Omar al-Bashir in 2019, was marked by a failing economy, political tensions and continuing popular protests for justice and reforms. These challenges were compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic. The government introduced some reforms but has not yet implemented most of the institutional and law reforms called for in the August 2019 constitutional charter.

Here are some of the issues:

- Conflict and Abuses in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile
- Crackdown on Protesters
- Arbitrary Detentions, Torture
- Malicious Prosecutions, Harassment
- Restrictions on the Media
- Sexual Violence and Discrimination
- Freedom of Religion
- Refugees and Migrants

(Human Rights Watch)



SYRIA

Now in its 10th year, the Syrian conflict has led to more than 500,000 deaths and displaced an estimated 13 million—over half of Syria's pre-war population. Over 6.2 million Syrians are internally displaced, and 5.6 million are refugees, predominantly in Lebanon, Jordan, and Turkey.

The war began after the Syrian regime cracked down against peaceful civilian protestors, quickly evolving into a more complex conflict. Various factions—the Syrian regime, Syrian rebels, the self-styled Islamic State, al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist organizations, Kurdish-led organizations, and foreign militias including Hezbollah—have engaged in a costly contest for control. Russia, Iran, Turkey, and the United States have also intervened. Most recently, the emergence of COVID-19 poses great risk both for an ISIS resurgence and for conflict-affected refugee and displaced communities, and threatens to exacerbate the country's existing health, economic, political, and security crises. (United States Institute of Peace)



UKRAINE

The armed conflict in eastern Ukraine continued to take a high toll on civilians during 2020, from threatening their physical safety to limiting access to food, medicines, adequate housing, and schools.

The Covid-19 pandemic worsened these trends. Travel restrictions imposed by Russia-backed armed groups in parts of eastern Ukraine and by Ukrainian authorities in response to the pandemic had a devastating impact on economic and social rights, exacerbating hardship for civilians and driving them deeper into poverty. Older people, women, children, and people with disabilities were hit the hardest. The threat of invasion of Ukraine by Russia has led to reactions from the United States and her allies as well as the NATO countries, keeping them on alert with a plan to impose a serious consequence on Russia including sanctions by the United States. (Human Rights Watch)



YEMEN

Six years into an armed conflict that has killed and injured over 18,400 civilians, Yemen remains the largest humanitarian crisis in the world. Yemen is experiencing the world's worst food security crisis with 20.1 million people—nearly two-thirds of the population—requiring food assistance at the beginning of 2020.

Since March 2015, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have led a military coalition against Houthi-led forces that took over Yemen's capital, Sanaa, in September 2014. In 2020, fighting in northern Yemen increased sharply when the Houthis seized new areas held by the internationally recognized Yemeni government and advanced toward Marib governorate, where thousands of Yemenis were internally displaced and faced dire humanitarian conditions and increased risk of Covid-19. (Human Rights Watch)

Compilation by Sharon S. Johnson