



**AFRICA COALITION FOR
ACADEMIC FREEDOM**

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AFRICA ACADEMIC FREEDOM **MONITORING REPORT**

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025

Truth Matters:

Defending Academic Freedom and
Democratic Spaces in Africa.

AFRICA ACADEMIC FREEDOM

MONITORING REPORT 2025

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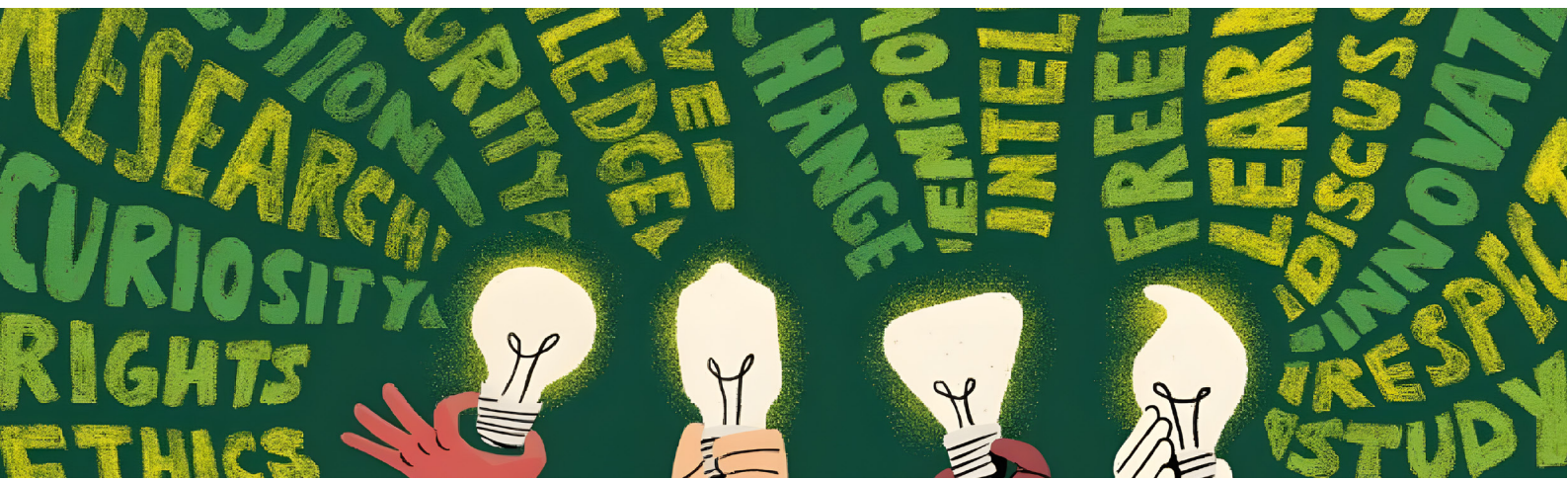
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ACRONYMS

Acronym	Full Form
ACAF	Africa Coalition for Academic Freedom
ASUU	Academic Staff Union of Universities
AU	African Union
AUF	Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie
AUWOL	Association of University Women of Liberia
CA	Central Africa
CAR	Central African Republic
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EA	East Africa
EACOP	East Africa Crude Oil Pipeline
EAA	Education Access and Affordability
FGN	Federal Government of Nigeria
GETFund	Ghana Education Trust Fund
H1	First Half (January–June)
H2	Second Half (July–December)
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HOD	Head of Department
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IGG	Inspector General of Government (Uganda)
ISTA	Institut Supérieur des Techniques Appliquées (DRC)
KES / KSh	Kenyan Shilling
M23	March 23 Movement (rebel group, DRC)
Mak-RIF	Makerere University Research and Innovation Fund
MSU	Midlands State University (Zimbabwe)
NA	North Africa
NSFAS	National Student Financial Aid Scheme (South Africa)
PLUDOC	Plateforme Unique de Documentation (Guinea)
REC	Regional Economic Community
SA	Southern Africa
SAR	Scholars At Risk
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
UCAD	Université Cheikh Anta Diop (Senegal)
UDSM	University of Dar es Salaam (Tanzania)
UDSN	Université Denis-Sassou N'Guesso (Republic of Congo)
UN	United Nations
UNESWA	University of Eswatini
UoL	University of Liberia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy (monitoring index)
VC	Vice Chancellor
WA	West Africa
WSU	Walter Sisulu University (South Africa)
ZINASU	Zimbabwe National Students Union
ZIM	Zimbabwe



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 ACAF Africa Academic Freedom Monitoring Report presents a comprehensive continent-wide picture of academic freedom under structural stress. The Africa Coalition for Academic Freedom (ACAF) monitored 30 countries across five sub-regions throughout January to December 2025, producing two half-year reports and this consolidated annual analysis. Across both monitoring periods and all five sub-regions, violations consistently outnumbered positive developments.

The first half of 2025 (January–June) documented 228 incidents across 30 countries, with a 79% violation rate. The second half (July–December) documented 117 cases, with a 58% violation rate reflecting some improvement but continued systemic challenges. Taken together, the full year recorded 343 total incidents, comprising 248 violations and 95 positive developments, constituting an annual violation rate of approximately 72%.

Key insights identified across the sub-regions are as follows. One, institutional governance failures and repression by the State are the single most consistent threat to academic freedom across all five regions in 2025. This pattern holds across both halves of the year. Two, West Africa shows the most positive momentum across the full year, driven by policy and access improvements — particularly Ghana's No-Fee-Stress policy (156,000+ students) and Nigeria's investment programmes in H2. Three, Uganda's April 2025 sweep remains the continent's most concentrated single-month academic freedom crisis. In H1, Southern Africa (94%) and North Africa (100%) recorded the highest violation rates.

Others are, four, the fall in the overall violation rate from 79% in H1 to 58% in H2, suggesting that advocacy and policy responses had some effect — particularly in North Africa (from 100% to 56%) and West Africa (from 75% to 39%). Violence and security threats to academics are uniquely pronounced in Nigeria (West Africa) and the DRC/Cameroon (Central Africa) throughout 2025, requiring dedicated monitoring separate from governance issues.

Five, across all sub-regions, financial failure unpaid salaries, broken agreements, scholarship corruption, fee hikes, pension arrears is the primary academic freedom violation category for the full year. Six, 5 student deaths documented in H1, with three directly linked to institutional negligence. Not one institution documented systemic reform in response. Campus mental health is an unaddressed continental crisis. Seven, the Trump administration's February 2025 US aid freeze disrupted research programmes at Makerere University, scholarship programmes in Liberia, and HIV/AIDS research across East Africa a new systemic threat category.

METHODOLOGY

ACAF's main source of information for monitoring and documentation is internet-based and through reports received from scholars and students in their countries. The data collected are corroborated or verified (by reference to other credible sources online or through contacts in the countries), reviewed, categorised, confirmed and then documented. Different monitors are assigned to five sub-regions but not strictly on geographical lines. Country contacts also gather and submit primary sources, which are subjected to the same verification and confirmation processes.

Unlike other monitoring sources (see details below), ACAF's monitoring does not capture only incidents which are predominantly in the realm of civil and political rights – imprisonment, violence, intimidation, wrongful arrests/ prosecution, discrimination, restrictions on travel or movement, retaliatory discharge/loss of position/expulsion from study, etc. In addition to this, the monitoring captures incidents touching on violations of economic, social and cultural rights that impact academic freedom.

These include infrastructure, working conditions, among others. The report also covers positive developments, which show attempts by the stakeholders to promote greater respect for academic freedom in their countries. See table below.

ACAF Incident Classification Framework

VIOLATIONS / NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS	POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTS
■ Activities of Non-State Actors ■ Conflict / Political Instability ■ Demotion / Loss of Position ■ Imprisonment ■ Killings / Violence / Disappearances ■ Poor Infrastructure / Facilities / Equipment ■ Poor University Governance ■ Poor Working Conditions ■ Prosecution ■ Student Abuse ■ Travel Restrictions ■ Other	■ Policy / Legislation ■ Jurisprudence ■ University Initiatives ■ Other

2025 Regional Summary (January–December)

Region	Total	Violations	Positive	Viol. Rate	Key Pattern for 2025
West Africa	180	124	56	69%	Labour disputes & broken agreements; Ghana leads on positive reforms; Nigeria paradox of investment vs. violations
East Africa	63	46	17	73%	Structural funding shortfalls & poor working conditions; Uganda's April sweep worst single-month crisis on continent
North Africa	31	23	8	74%	100% violation rate improving to 56% by year end; student prosecution & expression restrictions throughout
Southern Africa	46	35	11	76%	Highest governance failure rate; student death (WSU); financial exclusion & campus unrest throughout
Central Africa	21	18	3	86%	Armed conflict in DRC (1.6m children); Cameroon Anglophone crisis; systemic sexual corruption in Rwanda
TOTAL	341	246	95	72%	72% violations 28% positive

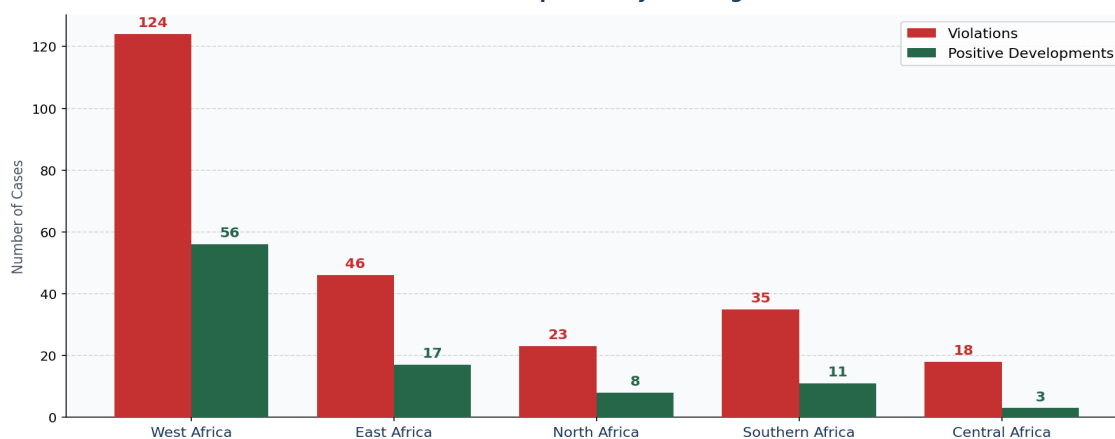
CRITICAL ANNUAL FINDING

North Africa recorded a 100% violation rate in H1 2025 — improving to 56% in H2, but remaining among the continent's most constrained academic environments. West Africa showed the most positive trajectory in H2, driven by Ghana and Nigeria's investment programmes.

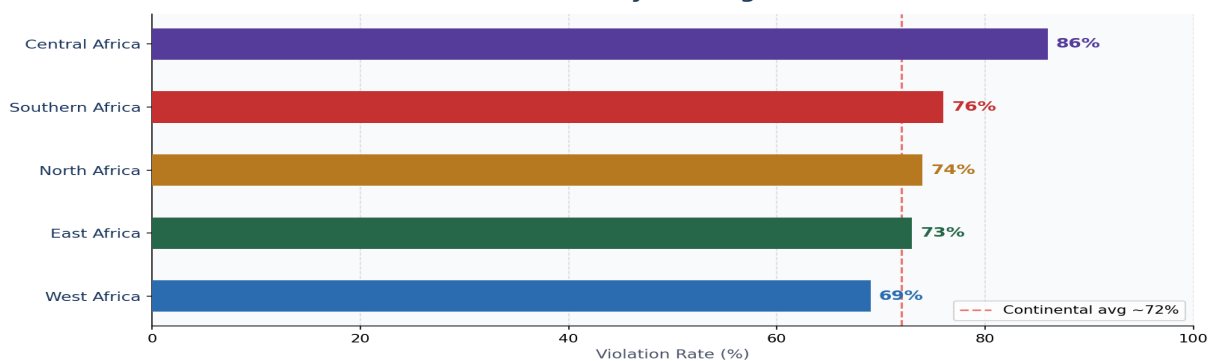
Five student deaths were documented in H1 across four sub-regions — WSU South Africa, UNESWA Eswatini, University of Tripoli Libya, Gaston Berger University Senegal, and University of Education Winneba Ghana. Uganda's April 2025 sweep — centralising admissions, scrapping 1,000+ programmes, and deploying live ammunition against students — remains the continent's most concentrated single-month attack on academic freedom in 2025.

Data Visualisations — 2025 (January–December)

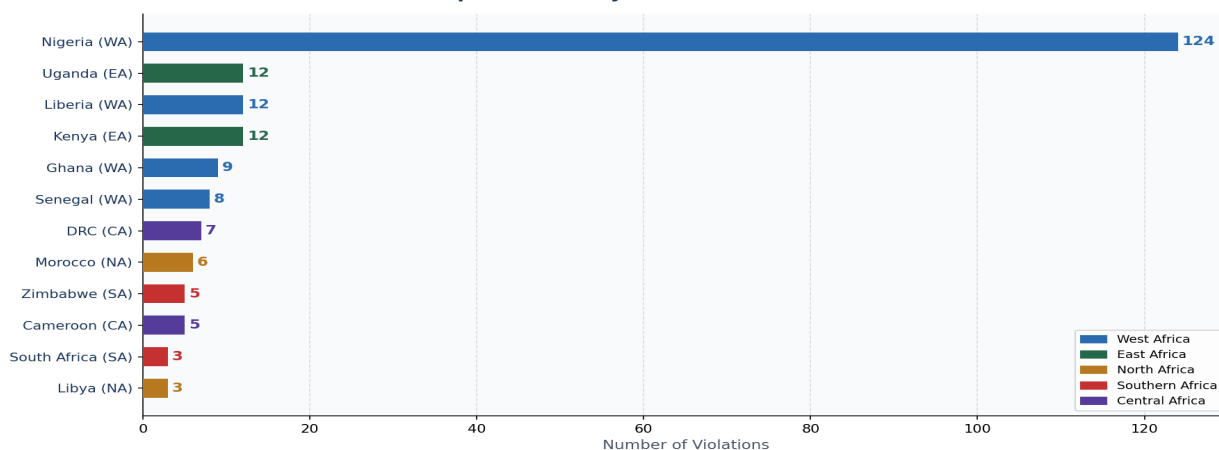
Violations vs Positive Developments by Sub-Region — Full Year 2025



Annual Violation Rate by Sub-Region — Full Year 2025



Top Countries by Violations — Full Year 2025



COUNTRIES CAPTURED IN 2025 MONITORING

The following 30 countries were included in ACAF's 2025 monitoring, organised by sub-region:

West Africa (9)	East Africa (5)	North Africa (5)	Southern Africa (8)	Central Africa (4)
Nigeria	Uganda	Morocco	Zimbabwe	Cameroon
Ghana	Kenya	Libya	South Africa	DRC (Kinshasa)
Liberia	Tanzania	Algeria	Eswatini	Rep. of Congo (Brazzaville)
Senegal	Rwanda	Egypt	Mozambique	Central African Republic
Benin	Ethiopia	Tunisia	Madagascar	
Guinea			Botswana	
Gambia			Namibia	
Togo			Malawi	
Niger				

COUNTRIES NOT CAPTURED ON OUR RADAR

Africa has 54 recognised countries. The ACAF 2025 report covers 30 countries across five sub-regions. The following countries — organised by sub-region — were not captured in 2025 monitoring data. This is either because of no stories specifically highlighting academic freedom concerns or press freedom restrictions or information just not being available.

West Africa

- Sierra Leone
- Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)
- Burkina Faso
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Guinea-Bissau
- Cape Verde

East Africa

- Somalia
- South Sudan
- Burundi
- Eritrea
- Djibouti
- Comoros
- Seychelles

North Africa

- Sudan
- Western Sahara (disputed territory)

Southern Africa

- Lesotho
- Zambia
- Angola

Central Africa

- Chad
- Gabon
- Equatorial Guinea
- São Tomé and Príncipe

NUMBER OF TIMES EACH COUNTRY HAS BEEN CAPTURED

The table below reflects the approximate number of distinct incidents (violations + positive developments) attributed to each country in the 2025 report. Where the report provides only sub-regional totals, figures are apportioned based on narrative detail. Countries with no incidents explicitly reported are marked accordingly.

Country	Violations	Positive Devs	Total Incidents
WEST AFRICA			180 sub-regional total
Nigeria NG	60	10	70
Ghana GH	8	30	38
Liberia LR	8	2	10
Senegal SN	4	1	5
Benin BJ	2	0	2
Guinea GN	0	1	1
Gambia GM	0	2	2
Togo TG	0	1	1
Niger NE	1	0	1
EAST AFRICA			63 sub-regional total
Uganda UG	28	2	30
Kenya KE	14	3	17
Tanzania TZ	3	3	6
Rwanda RW	7	0	7
Ethiopia ET	4	0	4
NORTH AFRICA			31 sub-regional total
Morocco MA	6	1	7
Libya LY	5	2	7
Algeria DZ	5	2	7
Egypt EG	4	2	6
Tunisia TN	5	1	6
SOUTHERN AFRICA			46 sub-regional total
South Africa ZA	10	0	10
Zimbabwe ZW	10	0	10
Eswatini SZ	5	0	5
Mozambique MZ	5	0	5
Madagascar MG	2	1	3
Botswana BW	2	0	2
Namibia NA	0	1	1
Malawi	1	0	1
CENTRAL AFRICA			21 sub-regional total
Cameroon CM	7	3	10
DRC CD	7	0	7
Rep. of Congo CG	3	1	4
Central African Rep. CF	1	0	1

RANKING OF BEST-PERFORMING COUNTRIES

Countries are ranked by two criteria: (a) lowest violation rate, and (b) highest volume of meaningful positive developments. These are distinct rankings — a country may have zero incidents (good) or many positive developments (actively improving).

Lowest Violation Rate (Best on Compliance / Non-Repression)

Rank	Country	Sub-Region	Viol. Rate	Notes
1	Namibia NA	Southern Africa	0%	Zero violations; historic free tertiary education announcement for 2026
2	Guinea GN	West Africa	0%	No violations; launched PLUDOC open-access academic platform (2m+ resources)
3	Gambia GM	West Africa	0%	No violations; passed Tertiary Trust Fund Bill into law
4	Togo TG	West Africa	0%	No violations; one policy reform recorded
5	Ghana GH	West Africa	21%	Mostly positive — No-Fee-Stress policy for 156,000+ students; repeated strikes in H1 were offset by major reforms
6	Madagascar MG	Southern Africa	67%	Modest case count; partial positive resolution recorded

Most Positive D

No Fees Stress

No Academic Fees at the University for Level 100 Students

GHANA

No-Fee-Stress policy (156,000+ students); GETFund GH¢150m; gender inclusion; ICT/AI integration; accounts for >50% of all West Africa positive developments

- WEST AFRICA

NAMIBIA

President announces free tertiary education at ALL state universities and vocational colleges from 2026 — described as the continent's most consequential access-to-education announcement in 2025

- SOUTHERN AFRICA



NIGERIA

Significant scholarship investments; infrastructure support; ICT/AI integration; research collaboration frameworks; gender inclusion policies — despite parallel serious violations

- WEST AFRICA



evelopments

CAMEROON

Doctoral admissions resumed across all 11 state universities; researcher strike averted; new doctoral framework with AUF; demonstrates reform is possible amid conflict

- CENTRAL AFRICA



GUINEA

PLUDOC platform launched — 2m+ freely accessible academic and scientific resources

- WEST AFRICA

GAMBIA

Tertiary Trust Fund Bill passed into law; access-to-education initiatives

- WEST AFRICA



Who Are the Violators? Ranking by Actor Type

The report does not present a formal breakdown by perpetrator type, but named incidents and thematic analysis allow us to construct the following actor-type ranking. This is drawn from the full narrative, incidents described, and cross-cutting themes.

Rank	Violator Type	Estimated Share	Evidence from 2025 Report
1	The STATE / Government	~55–60%	Consistently identified as the single most common violator across all regions. Includes: failed financial obligations (unpaid salaries, broken agreements); centralising control over academic institutions (Uganda's April sweep); arresting, detaining, or prosecuting academics and students (Algeria, Egypt, Cameroon, Zimbabwe); political appointments interference; permit bans (Botswana); aid freeze impact (US-based, external). The report explicitly identifies 'repression by the State' as the 'single most consistent threat to academic freedom across all five regions in 2025.'
2	UNIVERSITIES / Institutional Administration	~25–30%	University administrations feature prominently as direct violators: WSU residence manager shooting a student (South Africa); Makerere VC blocking staff association meetings (Uganda); poor governance at multiple institutions (Liberia, South Africa, Kenya, Morocco); sexual corruption by staff at Rwanda HEIs; forced exam sittings (Libya); expulsion of student for union membership (Zimbabwe); blocking of salary payments; credential fraud audits revealing administrative failures (DRC).
3	Non-State Armed Actors	~8–10%	Primarily in Central Africa and parts of West/East Africa: M23 rebels forcing closure of 2,500+ schools in DRC (1.6m children displaced); Cameroon Anglophone armed groups attacking schools and targeting teachers; Meta/Facebook algorithmic facilitation of ethnic violence resulting in death of Prof. Meareg Amare (Ethiopia). Unique in their scale of impact despite limited country-level coverage.
4	ACADEMICS (perpetrators)	~3–5%	A smaller but documented category: 42.6% gender-based corruption rate among HEI staff in Rwanda ('sex for grades'); Dr. Manirakiza (Rwanda) arrested for abusing underage students; credential fraud by staff (DRC); phantom employee scandals (Morocco). The report treats these as institutional failures enabled by weak governance rather than isolated bad actors.
5	STUDENTS (as violators)	<2%	The report largely portrays students as victims rather than perpetrators. Campus unrest and protest disruptions are mentioned in passing (South Africa, DRC) but are framed as responses to institutional failures rather than primary violations. No student group is identified as a primary violator of academic freedom in 2025.

Key finding: The State and university administrations together account for an estimated 80–90% of all academic freedom violations documented in 2025. This has significant implications for ACAF's advocacy strategy — remedies must target both government policy and institutional governance simultaneously.

Positive Developments Driven by Victim or Victim-Group Advocacy

This section examines which positive developments in the 2025 report appear to be directly attributable to advocacy, legal action, or organising by victims, victim groups, or their allies — as distinct from top-down government or institutional reform.

The 2025 report does not systematically code positive developments by causal mechanism, which limits precision here. However, the following cases stand out:

Country / Incident	What Happened	Advocacy Link
South Africa WSU Student Death (Sisonke Mbolekwa)	Student shot dead by a WSU residence manager during a housing protest. High Court intervened — recorded as a positive development (judicial intervention).	This is a victim/civil society pathway: the case reached the High Court, which intervened. While the report does not name the litigants, a High Court intervention in a student death following a housing protest strongly implies legal action by the family, student body, or civil society.
Egypt — Banha University	A Banha University student was denied a teaching appointment on security grounds. The Administrative Court overturned the decision — explicitly recorded as a positive development.	This is the clearest example of successful legal advocacy in the 2025 dataset: an individual victim took their case to the Administrative Court and won reinstatement. The victim's own legal action produced the positive outcome.
Cameroon — Researcher Strike Averted	A researcher strike was averted through government dialogue following partial salary payments.	Partially attributed to collective bargaining by the researcher union/association. The threat of collective action (strike) prompted government dialogue — a form of victim-group advocacy.
Algeria — Student Protest for Curriculum Reform	Students arrested for demanding curriculum reform. Not a 'win', but the protest itself is documented — suggesting organised student advocacy.	No positive outcome recorded in 2025, but the existence of organised student advocacy is notable. Monitoring for follow-up outcomes in 2026 is recommended.
Nigeria — ASUU Labour Disputes	The 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement continues to drive ACUF monitoring. The April 2025 N50bn EAA disbursement — a partial positive — came in the context of sustained ASUU pressure over 16 years.	This is a long-running advocacy case: ASUU (Academic Staff Union of Universities) has pursued government compliance through strikes, negotiations, and public pressure since 2009. The partial disbursements are attributable to sustained union advocacy, even if full compliance has not been achieved.
Ethiopia — Prof. Meareg Amare Case	Meta/Facebook faces a \$1.8bn lawsuit over algorithms facilitating ethnic violence including the killing of Prof. Meareg Amare. Filed by Amnesty International in Kenya.	Direct advocacy by Amnesty International (as ally of the victim's family) through litigation. This case, if it proceeds, could set a precedent for holding tech platforms accountable for academic killings enabled by their algorithms.

Key Insights Across All Regions

Universal Threat	Institutional governance failures and repression by the State are the single most consistent threat to academic freedom across all five regions in 2025. This pattern holds across both halves of the year.
Best Performer	West Africa shows the most positive momentum across the full year, driven by policy and access improvements — particularly Ghana's No-Fee-Stress policy (156,000+ students) and Nigeria's investment programmes in H2.
Crisis Region	Uganda's April 2025 sweep remains the continent's most concentrated single-month academic freedom crisis. In H1, Southern Africa (94%) and North Africa (100%) recorded the highest violation rates.
Improvement in H2	The overall violation rate fell from ~79% in H1 to 58% in H2, suggesting that advocacy and policy responses had some effect — particularly in North Africa (from 100% to 56%) and West Africa (from 75% to 39%).
Security Alert	Violence and security threats to academics are uniquely pronounced in Nigeria (West Africa) and the DRC/Cameroon (Central Africa) throughout 2025, requiring dedicated monitoring separate from governance issues.
Financial Failure Dominates	Across all sub-regions, financial failure — unpaid salaries, broken agreements, scholarship corruption, fee hikes, pension arrears — is the primary academic freedom violation category for the full year.
Mental Health Crisis	Five student deaths documented in H1, with three directly linked to institutional negligence. Not one institution documented systemic reform in response. Campus mental health is an unaddressed continental crisis.
External Aid Threat	The Trump administration's February 2025 US aid freeze disrupted research programmes at Makerere University, scholarship programmes in Liberia, and HIV/AIDS research across East Africa — a new systemic threat category.



AFRICA COALITION FOR ACADEMIC FREEDOM

JANUARY - DECEMBER 2025
10 HIGHLIGHTED VIOLATIONS



1. UGANDA'S 'APRIL SWEEP'

The continent's most concentrated single-month attack on academic freedom. Government centralized all university admissions, scrapped over 1,000 academic programs (including Makerere University's Bachelor of Laws), and deployed live ammunition against students at Kyambogo University protesting fee surcharges.

2. SOUTH AFRICA: FATAL SHOOTING AT WALTER SISULU UNIVERSITY

Student Sisonke Mbolekwa was shot dead by a residence manager during a protest regarding campus housing. The incident triggered High Court intervention but represents a tragic failure of institutional duty of care

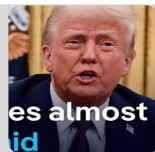


3. INSTITUTIONAL NEGLIGENCE IN LIBYA

A female pharmacy student at the University of Tripoli died after being compelled by the institution to sit for an examination while she was medically unfit. This represents the most direct case of institutional negligence causing student death in the 2025 dataset.

4. NIGERIA'S ASUU LABOR DISPUTE PEAK

In April 2025, the 16-year-old conflict over the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement reached a peak of 35 documented incidents in a single month, part of a broader crisis involving 150bn naira in outstanding revitalization funds.



5. UGANDA & LIBERIA: US FOREIGN AID FREEZE IMPACT

An aid freeze by the Trump administration in February 2025 disrupted research programs at Makerere University and led to the revocation of USAID scholarships in Liberia, leaving hearing-impaired and other vulnerable students unable to finish their degrees.

6. CAMEROON: MILITARY SWEEP AT UNIVERSITY OF BAMENDA

In May 2025, approximately 70 students were arrested during a military sweep related to the ongoing Anglophone crisis. This is part of a broader pattern affecting 700,000+ students with near-total impunity.

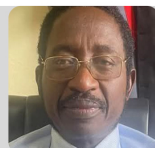


7. ZIMBABWE: EXPULSION FOR POLITICAL AFFILIATION

Takunda Mhuka, a student at Midlands State University (MSU), was expelled for his peaceful membership in the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU). The case is now documented by Scholars at Risk.

8. DR CONGO: VIOLENT SUPPRESSION OF FEE PROTESTS

In February 2025, police clashed with students at ISTA Kinshasa who were protesting tuition fee hikes, resulting in three students being injured. This reflects broader patterns of violent protest suppression.



9. CAMEROON: DETENTION OF PROFESSOR POST-ELECTION

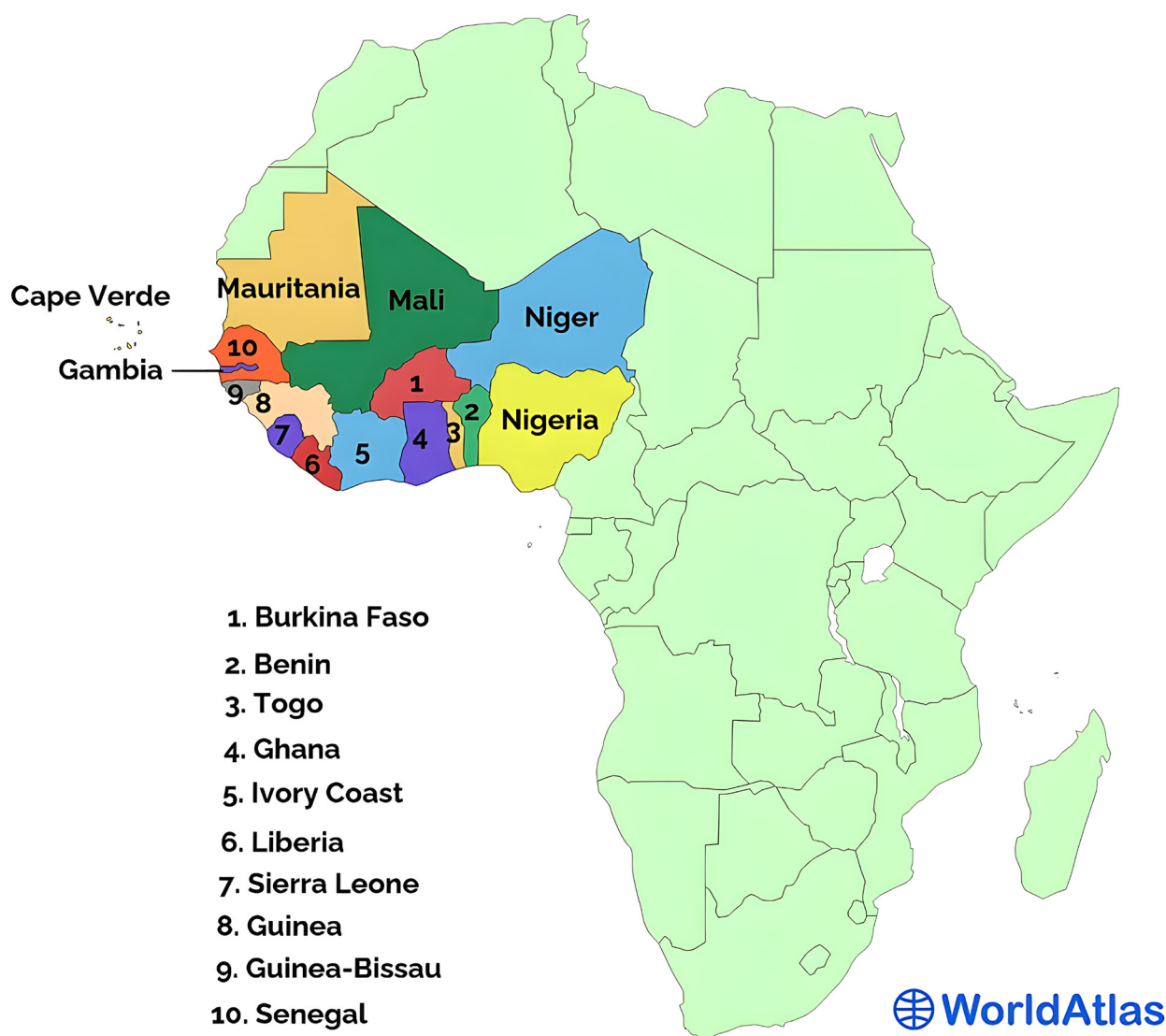
In October 2025, intelligence agents forcibly detained Professor Jean-Calvin Aba'a Oyono from the University of Yaoundé II following the national election. This signals dangerous erosion of university sanctuary.

10. EGYPT: TERRORISM CHARGES FOR STUDENT PROTESTER

A student at Al-Azhar University was detained on terrorism charges for participating in a pro-Palestine protest. This represents the criminalization of legitimate academic expression.



WEST AFRICA — WA



West Africa — WA

180 Total (Full Year)	124 Violations	56 Positive Devs	8+ Countries
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Countries Monitored:

Ghana · Liberia · Senegal · Benin · Guinea · Gambia · Nigeria · Togo · Niger

West Africa demonstrates the most encouraging trajectory among all regions monitored. The first half was dominated by Nigeria's structural labour disputes and Ghana's repeated bad-faith government cycle. The second half showed significant improvement, with West Africa recording the most positive developments of any sub-region driven by Ghana's policy reforms and Nigeria's scholarship and infrastructure investment programmes.

Country	Violations / Key Issues	Positive Developments
Nigeria	Governance crises in multiple institutions throughout the year. Killings and violence against academics/students. ASUU labour disputes — 16-year accumulation of non-compliance with 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement; April 2025 peak of 35 incidents in one month. Funding constraints and budget shortfalls. Student rights violations. Political interference in appointments. ₦150bn+ in revitalisation funds outstanding.	Significant investments in scholarships and financial access programmes. Infrastructure support and development. Education expansion initiatives. ICT and AI integration in higher education. Research collaboration frameworks. National credential and accreditation systems. Gender inclusion policies. Policy reforms at federal level.
Ghana	Repeated government bad-faith cycle; 5 separate strikes in H1. One student abuse incident recorded.	No-Fee-Stress policy covering 156,000+ first-year students. GETFund expanded to GH₵150m. Ghana accounts for over half of all positive developments in West Africa — policy reforms, access-to-education initiatives, student rights support.
Liberia	Campus violence (UoL, Tubman). 28+ months salary arrears. \$75,000 corruption scandal. USAID scholarship revocations — hearing-impaired and vulnerable students unable to complete degrees. Poor university governance and working conditions persist.	AUWOL-Liberia women in academia launched. Limited access-to-education initiatives recorded.
Senegal	Police tear gas against peaceful scholarship protesters (UCAD). Staff physically assaulted. Law student death (suspected suicide). One poor university governance case in H2.	One policy/legislative reform recorded.
Benin	9-year research recruitment freeze — only one researcher hired across the entire cohort in a decade.	None recorded.
Guinea	None recorded.	PLUDOC platform launched — 2 million+ academic and scientific resources freely accessible.
Gambia	None recorded.	Tertiary Trust Fund Bill passed into law. Access-to-education/institutional support initiative recorded.
Togo	None recorded.	One policy/legislative reform recorded.
Niger	One restriction on student expression/prosecution/arrest.	None recorded.

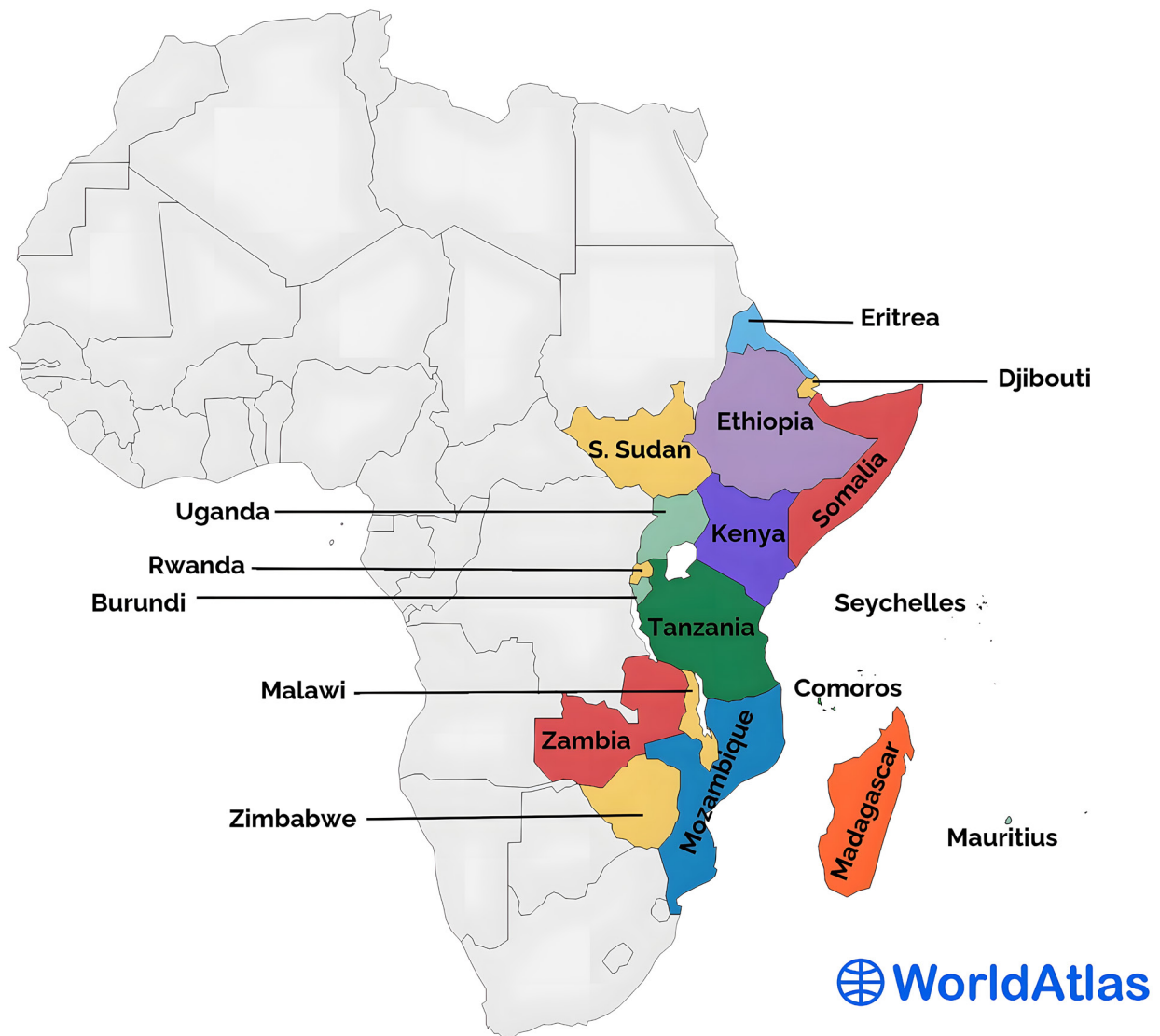
Nigeria — The 2009 Agreement: A Full-Year Assessment

Nigeria's academic freedom crisis is structurally unique: caused by 16 years of accumulated non-compliance with the 2009 FGN/ASUU Agreement. The ₦50bn EAA disbursement in April 2025 generated renewed conflict because it addressed only one element of a multi-clause agreement. Significant positive investments were recorded across the year — scholarships, infrastructure, ICT integration — but governance crises, killings/violence, and ASUU labour disputes continued. ₦150bn+ in revitalisation funds remain outstanding. Until the full agreement is implemented, Nigeria's higher education sector will remain in a state of managed crisis.

Regional Insights — West Africa

1. Ghana accounts for over half of all positive developments in the sub-region across the full year.
2. Governance deficits in Liberia undermine otherwise positive access initiatives.
3. Legislative reform momentum in Togo and Senegal signals emerging policy awareness.
4. Nigeria's paradox: simultaneous bold investment and serious rights violations, including violence against academics.
5. ASUU-related labour disputes in Nigeria represent a chronic, recurring challenge throughout 2025.
6. Student welfare and funding remain the most common violation category across West Africa.

EAST AFRICA — EA



East Africa — EA

63 Total (Full Year)	46 Violations	17 Positive Devs	5 Countries
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Countries Monitored: Uganda · Kenya · Tanzania · Rwanda · Ethiopia

East Africa is predominantly characterised by violations, with funding shortfalls and poor working conditions as the leading issues. Uganda's April 2025 sweep the continent's most concentrated single-month academic freedom crisis defines the sub-region's narrative throughout the year.

Country	Violations / Key Issues	Positive Developments
Uganda	Makerere VC credentials challenged; staff censored; Inspector-Gen of Govt investigation into corruption at Makerere; physical assault on campus. April sweep: admissions centralised, 1,000+ courses scrapped including Makerere's Bachelor of Laws, live bullets fired at Kyambogo protesters. VC blocked staff association meetings. US aid freeze halted multiple Makerere research programmes and scholarship schemes.	Mak-RIF: 500+ research outputs; increased research funding pledged.
Kenya	KSh50bn owed to 34 private universities (9 years). KES 25.9bn pension arrears. Moi University near-collapse. Technical Univ of Keny closed Feb-Mar 2025. Rose Njeri arrested for civic tech tool. Poor working conditions, funding challenges, governance failures, infrastructure deficits, and restrictions on academic expression throughout.	Higher Education Loans Board 80% penalty waiver for loan defaulters. Limited scholarship and access initiatives.
Tanzania	Electoral violence caused violations of academic freedom	Speaker pledges academic freedom legal reforms at CODESRIA conference. UDSM 576-bed hostel expansion. 64 peer educators trained in SGBV response.
Rwanda	Research commercialisation strategy pressuring academics toward market-driven agendas. Systemic 'sex for grades' corruption: 42.6% gender-based corruption rate in HEIs. Dr. Manirakiza arrested for abusing underage students.	None recorded.
Ethiopia	Meta/Facebook faces \$1.8bn lawsuit over algorithms facilitating ethnic violence, including killing of Prof. Meareg Amare. Filed by Amnesty International in Kenya.	None recorded.

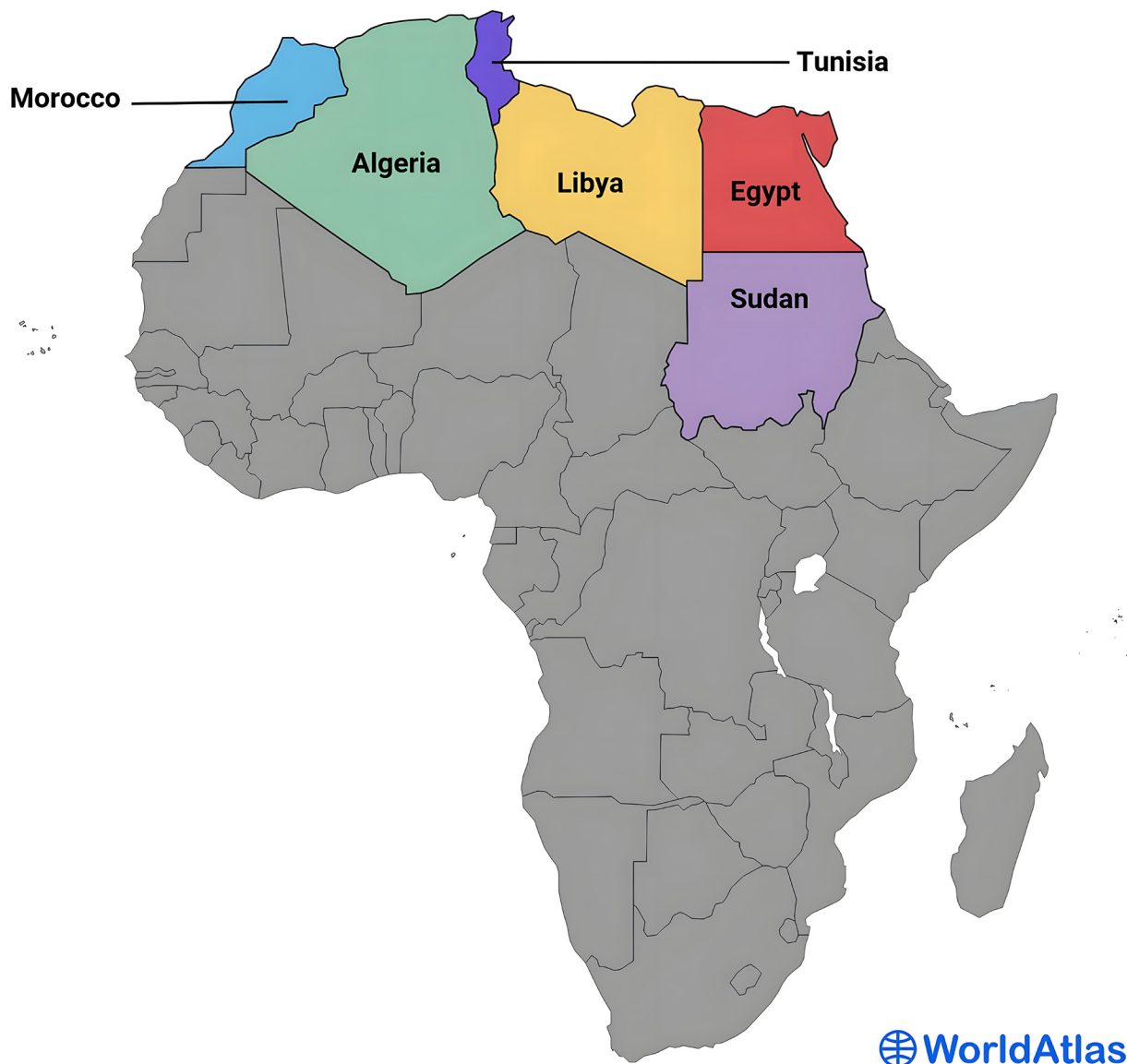
Uganda's April 2025 Sweep — The Continent's Most Concentrated Single-Month Attack In April 2025, Uganda's government:

1. stripped all universities of independent admissions authority;
2. scrapped 1,000+ academic programmes including Makerere's Bachelor of Laws;
3. deployed live ammunition against students at Kyambogo protesting a fee surcharge; and
4. the Makerere VC blocked staff association meetings. All in one month. The Trump administration's February aid freeze simultaneously halted multiple Makerere research programmes. No other country in Africa produced this concentration of academic freedom violations in a single month in 2025.

Regional Insights — East Africa

1. East Africa records the second-highest violation count of all regions across the full year.
2. Funding challenges are structural, not incidental — requiring systemic government intervention.
3. Working conditions for academic staff remain a crisis-level concern throughout 2025.
4. Rwanda's sexual corruption crisis is systemic rather than isolated — requiring structural institutional reform.

NORTH AFRICA — NA



North Africa — NA

31 Total (Full Year)	23 Violations	8 Positive Devs	5 Countries
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Countries Monitored: Morocco · Libya · Algeria · Egypt · Tunisia

North Africa presents the most dramatic shift of the year. In H1, the sub-region recorded a 100% violation rate—not one positive development across five countries. By H2, all five countries showed both positive and negative developments, with a 56% violation rate. The region reflects a transition environment where progressive policy competes with entrenched restrictive practices

Country	Violations / Key Issues	Positive Developments
Morocco	University housing meets only half of demand; unsafe dormitories. Medical students' settlement breached. Phantom employees scandal. General strike dismissed. School violence rising. Restrictions on student expression continue.	Innovation initiatives recorded.
Libya	6,000+ fraudulent overseas scholarship awards. Education Minister convicted for textbook scandal. Female pharmacy student dies after being forced to sit exam while ill. Governance concerns continue.	Policy reforms and international collaboration agreements recorded.
Algeria	Student protesters arrested for demanding curriculum reform. Teachers strike over wages barely above minimum wage — constitutional right to strike undermined. Student abuse and governance concerns continue.	System-level institutional reform recorded.
Egypt	Al-Azhar student detained on terrorism charges for pro-Palestine protest. Banha University student denied teaching appointment on security grounds (overturned by Administrative Court). Academic job losses and access restrictions.	Policy reform initiatives and innovation/research programmes recorded.
Tunisia	Student death in Kairouan dormitory. Teacher exclusions. Hunger strikes. Violence in educational spaces. Protest limitations and employment constraints continue.	Policy reform efforts recorded.

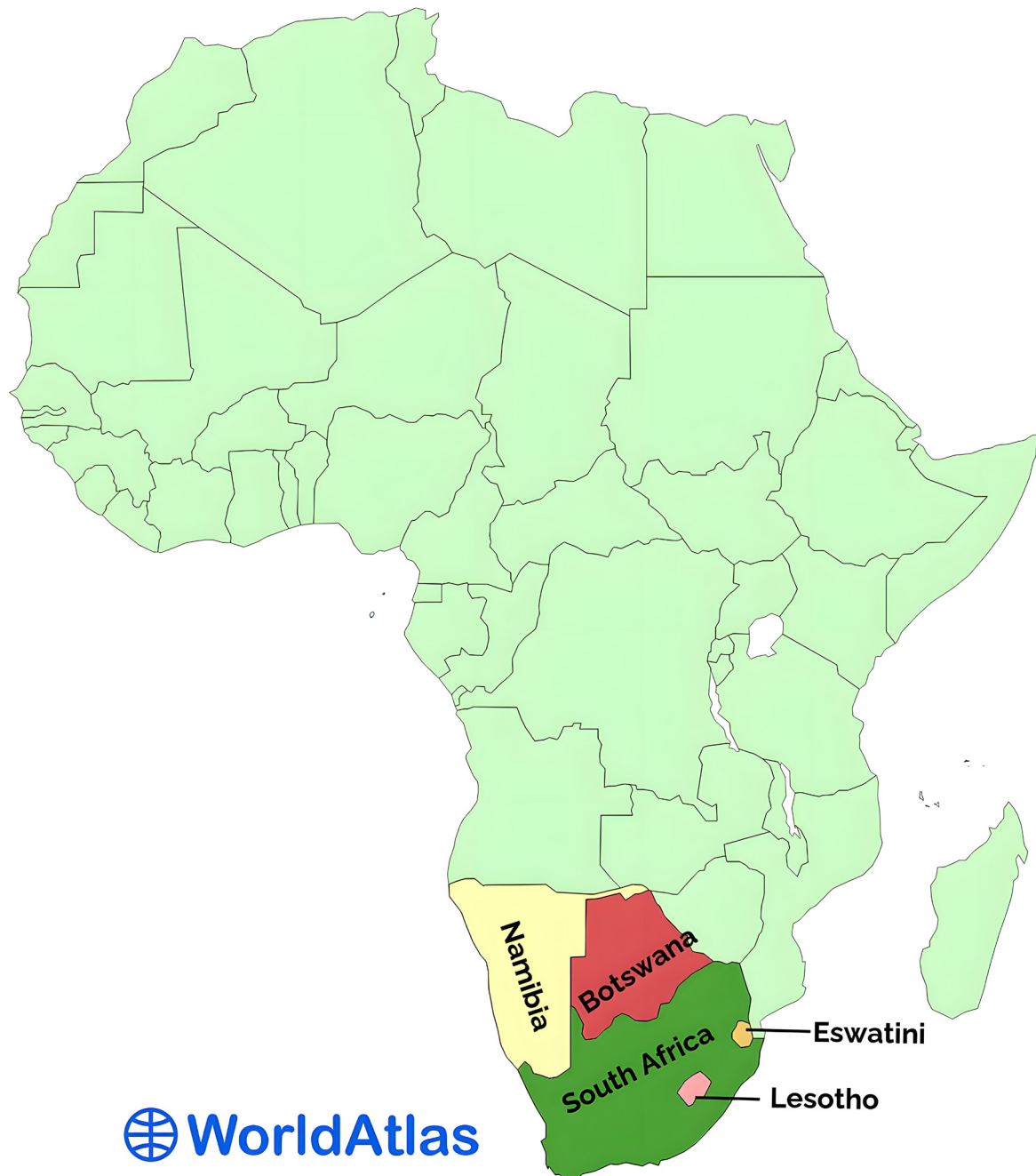
North Africa — From 100% to 56%: A Meaningful Shift

North Africa's improvement from 100% violation rate in H1 to 56% in H2 2025 represents the most significant positive shift of any sub-region across the year. All five countries recorded positive developments in H2 — none had done so in H1. The Libya pharmacy student death — compelled to sit an examination while medically unfit — remains the most direct case of institutional negligence causing student death in the entire 2025 dataset. Student prosecution and expression restrictions remain region-wide concerns throughout.

Regional Insights — North Africa

1. All five monitored countries show both positive and negative developments across the full year.
2. Student prosecution and expression restrictions are region-wide concerns throughout 2025.
3. International collaboration (Libya) offers a model for regional academic integration.
4. System reform efforts in Algeria suggest top-down institutional change, though implementation lags.
5. The improvement requires sustained monitoring — structural issues have not been resolved.

SOUTHERN AFRICA — SA



Southern Africa — SA

46 Total (Full Year)	35 Violations	11 Positive Devs	7 Countries
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Countries Monitored:

Zimbabwe · South Africa · Eswatini · Mozambique · Madagascar · Botswana · Namibia

Southern Africa records the highest total case count, heavily skewed towards violations. Governance failures are pervasive across the full year, compounded by labour unrest, campus disruptions, and restrictions on student expression. The student death of Sisonke Mbolekwa at WSU — shot dead by a residence manager during a housing protest — is the sub-region's most severe incident.

Country	Violations / Key Issues	Positive Developments
Zimbabwe	Great Zimbabwe University fee hike. Midland State Univ student Takunda Mhuka expelled for peaceful ZINA-SU membership (Scholars at Risk case). UZ lecturers on <\$300/month after 87% salary cut since 2018. 6 students arrested for flash protest. Univ of Zimbabwe replaces striking staff with \$3/hour adjuncts.	None recorded.
South Africa	NSFAS and housing protests at Univ of Cape Town, Stellenbosch, Wits. Sisonke Mbolekwa shot dead by Walter Sisulu Univ residence manager — High Court intervenes. Fort Hare students demand laptops and R450,000 in unpaid allowances. Governance failures and systemic institutional crises continue.	None recorded.
Eswatini	Swaziland College of Technology 4-year HOD vacancy. UNESWA law student Farido Singwa dies by suicide amid lecturer bullying; boycott suppressed. Lecturer salary delays. Ongoing institutional governance challenges.	None recorded.
Mozambique	Associacao Nacional Dos Professores teachers illegally transferred for demanding overtime pay. Union blocked from member interaction in Nampula province — labelled 'illegal political activity'. Labour disputes and poor working conditions continue.	None recorded.
Madagascar	5-day power outage at University of Toliara triggers strike; 5 months of overdue scholarships demanded.	Partial resolution recorded.
Botswana	Work permit ban on foreign teachers — reduces academic diversity and international exchange.	None recorded.
Namibia	None recorded.	President announces free tertiary education at all state universities and vocational colleges from 2026 — the continent's most consequential access-to-education announcement in 2025.

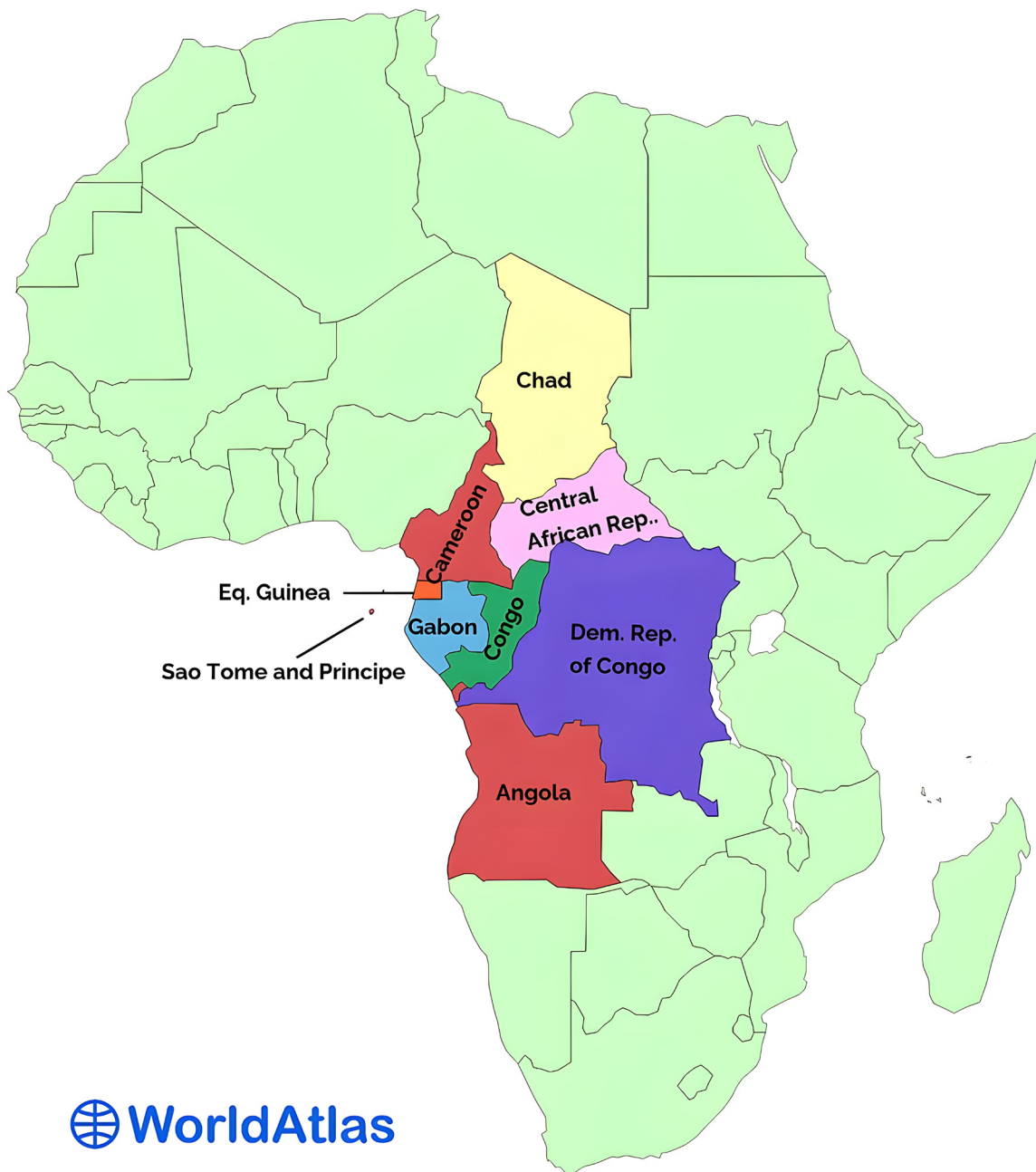
Malawi

Malawi's public universities are increasingly being used to accommodate senior government and state enterprise officials who are politically sidelined or rewarded, rather than being staffed based on academic merit and institutional needs. Turning universities into political repositories threatens institutional autonomy and could ultimately harm an entire generation of students and the country's long-term development.

Regional Insights — Central Africa

1. Governance failures account for the largest single violation category across Southern Africa for the full year.
2. Labour disputes are the second-largest violation category — persistent staff-management tensions signal systemic failure.
3. The WSU student death (Sisonke Mbolekwa) and the expulsion of Takunda Mhuka (Zimbabwe) are the sub-region's most severe individual cases.
4. Namibia's free tertiary education announcement is the sub-region's sole major positive development — implementation from 2026 must be monitored closely.
5. Campus unrest reflects broader socio-political tensions spilling into academic institutions across the region.

CENTRAL AFRICA — CA



Central Africa — CA

~21 Total (Full Year)	~18 Violations	~3 Positive Devs	4 Countries
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Countries Monitored:

Cameroon · Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) · Republic of Congo (Brazzaville) · Central African Republic

Central Africa presents the most complex and multi-layered picture of any sub-region monitored. Armed conflict in the DRC has produced catastrophic disruption to education, while Cameroon's Anglophone crisis continues to endanger students and academics. At the same time, positive reforms — including Cameroon's resumption of doctoral programmes and digital development partnerships — demonstrate that institutional progress remains possible even amid instability.

Country	Violations / Key Issues	Positive Developments
Cameroon	Anglophone crisis continues — 700,000+ students affected, schools attacked, teachers targeted, near-total impunity. 70 University of Bamenda students arrested in military sweep (May 2025). Prof. Jean-Calvin Aba'a Oyono (University of Yaoundé II) forcibly detained by intelligence agents post-election (October 2025).	Researcher strike averted through government dialogue and partial payments. PhD doctoral admissions resumed across all 11 state universities (600 slots, 2025/2026). New doctoral framework developed with international partners (AUF) to raise research standards.
DRC	Police clashed with ISTA Kinshasa students over tuition fee hike; 3 students injured (February 2025). M23 conflict forced closure of 2,500+ schools in North/South Kivu; Educational facilities used as military installations. UN Fact-Finding Mission documented potential war crimes. 14 staff dismissed after credential fraud audit.	None recorded.
Republic of Congo (Brazzaville)	Marien Ngouabi University resumed classes after three-month strike following partial salary payment — recurring cycle since 2016 remains structurally unresolved.	Université Denis-Sassou N'Guesso (UDSN) signed digital cooperation agreement with AUF for academic modernisation.
Central African Republic	Ongoing conflict and fragile security conditions continue to affect educational institutions. Monitoring capacity severely limited by security conditions and press freedom constraints.	None recorded.

The Cameroon Anglophone Crisis and DRC Conflict — Continental Emergency

The two most severe ongoing academic freedom violations on the continent are both in Central Africa. In Cameroon, 700,000+ students remain affected by the Anglophone crisis — 70+ documented school attacks, near-total impunity, and post-election academic arrests.

In the DRC, M23 conflict has forced closure of 2,500+ schools in North/South Kivu with 1.6 million children out of school — and the UN Fact-Finding Mission has documented potential war crimes against educational institutions. Both crises require urgent, dedicated ACAF monitoring capacity and advocacy distinct from other sub-regions.

Regional Insights — Central Africa

1. The DRC conflict represents the most severe ongoing violation of the right to education in Africa — 1.6 million children out of school in 2025.
2. State repression of academics in post-election Cameroon signals dangerous erosion of university sanctuary.
3. Positive doctoral reforms in Cameroon demonstrate institutional progress is achievable even in crisis contexts.
4. Central Africa urgently requires dedicated ACAF monitoring capacity and targeted advocacy strategies distinct from other sub-regions.

'STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, AND WHAT SETS ACAF METHODOLOGY APART

Stated Methodology

ACAF's monitoring is largely obtained from secondary sources (internet-based), supplemented by direct reports from scholars and students in-country. Data is corroborated, reviewed, categorised, confirmed, and then documented. Five sub-regional monitors are assigned, though not strictly on geographical lines.

Strengths

Strength	Description
Africa-first scope	ACAF monitors all five African sub-regions with continent-wide coverage 30 countries in 2025. No other dedicated monitoring programme covers the full continent at this granularity.
Positive devts. are tracked	Unlike most freedom monitoring programmes, ACAF explicitly classifies and counts positive developments alongside violations. This enables trend analysis (e.g. the improvement from 79% to 58% violation rate H1→H2) and gives credit to governments and institutions making progress.
Dual reporting cadence	The half-year structure allows for within-year trend detection — the H1 vs H2 comparison in 2025 revealed meaningful improvement in North Africa and West Africa that an annual-only model would have captured less precisely.
In-country sources	Supplementing internet monitoring with direct reports from scholars and students in-country adds ground-level credibility and surfaces incidents that do not reach international media.
Multi-category classification	The ACAF Incident Classification Framework (12 violation types, 4 positive development types) is more granular than many comparable frameworks, enabling pattern analysis by violation type across regions.
Institutional focus	ACAF captures both state-level and university-level violations — a distinction that is often collapsed in other frameworks but is critical for targeted advocacy.
Student deaths tracked	Five student deaths were documented and contextualised in 2025 — an unusually specific welfare monitoring contribution that most academic freedom reports do not attempt.

Weaknesses / Limitations

Limitation	Description
Internet-based bias	Internet monitoring disproportionately captures incidents that receive media or online coverage — which skews toward urban institutions, English/French-language sources, and countries with freer press environments. Incidents in low-press-freedom or conflict-affected countries (CAR, DRC interior, Niger) are almost certainly undercounted.
No perpetrator classification	Incidents are not coded by actor type (state, university, non-state actor, individual academic). This makes it difficult to answer 'who are the violators?' systematically without manual reading of every case.
No causation coding for positive devs	Positive developments are classified by type (policy, jurisprudence, etc.) but not by what caused them — so it is currently impossible to distinguish top-down government reform from bottom-up advocacy wins without manual analysis.
28 countries leaves about 26 uncaptured	Roughly half of Africa's 54 countries were not covered in 2025. Several of these (Sudan, South Sudan, Somalia, Burkina Faso, Mali) are likely to have significant academic freedom concerns.
No longitudinal baseline	The 2025 report does not appear to include multi-year trend data. Without a systematic comparison to 2023 or 2024, it is difficult to assess whether the continent is getting better or worse over time.

Benchmarking: Comparing ACAF methodology with other global monitors-What Sets ACAF Apart from SAR's Free to Think and V-Dem

Scholars At Risk (SAR) and V-Dem are global monitors and we are benchmarking our methodology against theirs:

Dimension	ACAF	SAR — Free to Think	V-Dem
Geographic focus	Africa only (continent-specific)	Global, but primarily case-by-case (individual scholars at risk)	Global, country-level dataset
Unit of analysis	Incidents (Violations + positive devts)	Incidents (Violations) Individual scholars/ students at risk	Country-level indicators (aggregate scores)
Positive developments	Yes — explicitly tracked and classified	No — primarily violation-focused	Partial — captured in aggregate scores but not as distinct events
African coverage depth	Deepest available for the continent so far — 28+ countries, 5 sub-regions	Africa covered but not the primary focus; fewer named African cases per year	All countries scored, but Africa may have data quality gaps in V-Dem's expert surveys
Perpetrator type	Implicit in narrative (not yet formally coded)	Coded: state, non-state, university, etc.	Not applicable — aggregate index scores
Timeliness	Annual + half-year (near real-time monitoring)	Annual (calendar year)	Annual (typically 1–2 year lag for data processing)
Advocacy orientation	Explicit — outputs intended for AU, UN treaty bodies, RECs	Explicit — individual cases escalated to governments and advocacy campaigns	Academic/research tool; limited direct advocacy output
Student welfare focus	Yes — student deaths, financial exclusion, campus unrest tracked	Limited — primarily faculty/researcher focus	No
Positive reforms tracking	Yes — a key comparative advantage	No	Partial (aggregate change captured over time)

Summary of ACAF's core differentiators:

1. Africa-exclusive focus with continent-wide depth — no comparable programme covers all 5 sub-regions simultaneously.
2. Positive developments are tracked as first-class data — not merely the absence of violations.
3. Student welfare (deaths, financial exclusion, campus unrest) is explicitly monitored — a gap in both SAR and V-Dem.
4. Half-year cadence enables within-year trend detection that annual reports cannot provide.
5. Advocacy-oriented outputs directly linked to African Union, UN, and REC submission processes.

Cross-Cutting Themes — What the Full-Year Data Reveals

1. Financial Failure Is the Primary Academic Freedom Violation

Across all sub-regions in both halves of 2025, the most common violation category is financial failure: unpaid salaries (Nigeria, Zimbabwe, DRC, Republic of Congo, Liberia, Kenya, Eswatini), broken financial agreements (Ghana, Mozambique, Morocco), scholarship corruption or revocation (Libya, Liberia, Kenya via USAID), fee hikes (Zimbabwe, DRC, Madagascar), and pension arrears (Kenya, South Africa). This continent-wide pattern reflects governments making financial commitments to higher education and then failing to honour them.

2. The Criminalisation of Protest Is Accelerating

Governments and institutions across six+ countries responded to legitimate academic expression with criminal prosecution, live ammunition, suspension, or expulsion in 2025: Uganda (EACOP student arrests, Kyambogo live bullets), Zimbabwe (6 students arrested, MSU expulsion), South Africa (student shot dead), Cameroon (~70 students arrested, professor detained post-election), DRC (police disperse fee protesters), Algeria/Egypt (protest suppression). This is a continent-wide pattern of coercive suppression of academic voice.

3. The US Aid Freeze — A New Systemic Threat

The Trump administration's February 2025 freeze on US foreign aid disrupted research programmes at Makerere University, scholarship programmes in Liberia, and HIV/AIDS research across East Africa. USAID scholarship revocations in Liberia left hearing-impaired and other vulnerable students unable to complete degrees. This externally imposed disruption represents a new monitoring category not previously captured in ACAF's frameworks.

4. Campus Mental Health Is an Unaddressed Crisis

Five student deaths were documented across four sub-regions in H1 2025. Three are connected to institutional negligence or direct institutional action: WSU South Africa (shot by staff member), Tripoli Libya (compelled to sit exam while ill), Kairouan Tunisia (dormitory neglect). Two are connected to campus mental health failures. Not one institution is documented as having implemented systemic reforms in response. Universities are failing their duty of care.

5. The Improvement from H1 to H2 is Real but Fragile

The continent-wide violation rate fell from ~79% in H1 to 58% in H2 — a meaningful improvement. West Africa showed the most positive trajectory; North Africa improved most dramatically (from 100% to 56%); and Central Africa also improved (from 100% to 62%). However, the structural failures documented in H1 remain largely unresolved.

Recommendations for 2026

Region / Scope	Recommended Action
All Regions	Establish a unified governance accountability framework targeting the most pervasive and consistent threat to academic freedom across Africa. Develop a specific monitoring category for external donor disruptions — US aid freeze, World Bank conditionality, scholarship cancellations.
West Africa	Replicate Ghana's policy reform model across the sub-region. Address Liberia's compound governance and welfare challenges with targeted institutional support. Dedicate monitoring to Nigeria's security and violence concerns separate from governance issues. Continue tracking full implementation of the 2009 Federal Govt of Nigeria /Academic Staff Union of Universities Agreement.
East Africa	Develop regional funding frameworks to address structural resource deficits. Introduce minimum working condition standards for academic staff. Track IGG investigation outcome at Makerere. Address Rwanda's systemic sexual corruption in HEIs through structural institutional reform mechanisms.
North Africa	Build on the improvement by strengthening protections for student expression and academic employment. Monitor Libya's post-pharmacy-student-death accountability. Continue positive development monitoring explicitly — the improvement must be sustained.
Southern Africa	Prioritise mediation mechanisms for labour disputes. Establish independent oversight bodies to address campus governance failures. Monitor Namibia's free tertiary education implementation from 2026. Track Sisonke Mbolekwa murder prosecution and Takunda Mhuka reinstatement.
Central Africa	Establish dedicated monitoring for conflict-affected academic communities, particularly in eastern DRC and anglophone Cameroon. Advocate for the cessation of all attacks on educational institutions. Support full implementation of researcher benefit decrees in Cameroon. Call for independent accountability for sexual corruption cases in Rwanda's universities.



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