



Statement by Alliances for Africa at the

89th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Observer Status Number 235

On Behalf of the SOAWR Coalition

Honorable Chairperson of the African Commission, Honourable Commissioners, All Protocol Observed:

1. A Call for the Universal Ratification of the Maputo Protocol

We commend the 46 Member States of the African Union who have ratified the Maputo Protocol. We, however, are concerned about the 9 Member States who are yet to [ratify](#) the Protocol. ***We call upon the African Commission to continue urging Burundi, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Madagascar, Morocco, Niger, Somalia, and Sudan to urgently ratify the Protocol. We further call upon the African Commission to urge the nine Member States who have placed [reservations](#) to the Protocol to withdraw their reservations to ensure that African women fully benefit from all the rights enshrined in the Protocol.***

2. A call to protect women's rights from setbacks - African Charter on Family, Sovereignty and Values

Across Africa, progress on gender equality is increasingly under threat from coordinated anti-rights movements. We remain deeply concerned by the growing anti-rights movement across the continent, including the circulation of a '[Draft African Charter on Family, Sovereignty and Values](#)' that is urging governments to withdraw from progressive human

rights instruments, including the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol). The Draft Charter seeks to promote a restrictive interpretation of family and gender roles and institutionalise restrictive definitions of family, reinforce sovereignty-based resistance to international human rights norms, and consolidate continental anti-gender alliances. This is a direct threat to the two decades of hard-won gains for African women and girls.

We call on the Commission to publicly reaffirm its commitment to the Maputo Protocol and caution State parties against signing any instruments that seek to erode its protections on women's rights.

3. Demand for Kenya to develop a legislative and policy framework on abortion

We are deeply disturbed by the [Court of Appeal decision](#) of 24th April 2026, which set aside a 2022 High Court ruling recognising access to abortion as falling within the constitutional protections and reinstated criminal proceedings against a young woman and the health worker who provided her with life-saving post abortion care. The case, which began in 2019 with the woman's arrest in her hospital bed, illustrates the continued criminalisation of women and health providers even where care is sought or given in emergency services. We note with concern the Court's finding that abortion is not a fundamental right under the Constitution and remains permissible only within the narrow circumstances set out in Article 26(4), alongside its acknowledgement of the absence of a clear regulatory framework for safe abortion.

We call upon the Commission to urge the Government of Kenya to develop a clear legislative and policy framework on abortion under Article 26(4) to ensure that no girl or woman is criminalised for seeking or receiving emergency reproductive healthcare services.

4. Calling for an end to intimidation and violence against Ugandan Women's Rights Defenders

Uganda is witnessing an alarming escalation in [attacks on civic freedoms](#) and human rights. We express deep concern for, and unwavering solidarity with all women, activists, human rights defenders, journalists, organisers, lawyers, community leaders, and citizens who continue to face intimidation, unlawful arrests, surveillance, office raids, abductions, threats,

and other forms of state repression since the 2026 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections. We are particularly disturbed by the latest incidents in a sustained pattern of violence, intimidation, unlawful arrests, detentions, and public threats directed at women, including the offices of one of our SOAWR member organisations, Akina Mama wa Afrika. These attacks are not isolated; they represent a broader assault on civic space, democratic participation, and the rights of women to lead, organise, and speak without fear.

These incidents reveal a dangerous escalation in the use of state machinery to intimidate citizens and suppress civic engagement in Uganda at all levels. They also reveal the gendered nature of repression in Uganda today, where women who speak, lead, defend rights, and occupy public space are subjected to targeted humiliation, threats, surveillance, and punishment.

We therefore urge the Commission to call on the government of Uganda to uphold the Constitution, protect citizens, and defend the rule of law.

5. An urgent call to end femicide in South Africa

South Africa has one of the highest rates of femicide in the world. Women were killed at a rate of [12.2 per 100,000 people in 2022](#), nearly six times the global rate, according to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime. The latest discovery was on September 17, 2026, when the body of a woman was found in Dawn Park on the outskirts of Johannesburg in Ekurhuleni municipality. South African police [recorded 9,782](#) reported rapes and 12,590 sexual offences between January and March 2026. That amounts to roughly 108 reported rapes every day.

The killings reflect the persistent and deadly violence faced by women and girls in South Africa, causing [devastating impacts on families](#) and communities, heightening fear and insecurity among women and girls, and undermining their human rights, safety, wellbeing and socio-economic advancement. The safety of women and girls is fundamental to the realization of human rights, sustainable development, and social cohesion.

We call on the Commission to urge the Government of South Africa to translate commitments into tangible results to prevent violence and ensure the protection of women and girls in South Africa.

6. An urgent call to protect young African women from exploitation in labour migration

We remain deeply concerned by reports of trafficking, forced labour and sexual violence against African women recruited for domestic work in the Gulf. [Equidem's research involving 92 migrant care workers](#) from Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates documented deceptive recruitment, withheld wages, passport confiscation and confinement. [Amnesty International's 2025 investigation](#), based on interviews with 72 Kenyan women who had returned from Saudi Arabia, documented abuses that often amounted to forced labour and trafficking. These abuses undermine young women's dignity, economic independence and freedom of movement.

The [complaint brought by African trade unions against Saudi Arabia](#) remains before the International Labour Organization, with [further discussion scheduled for November 2026](#). [Saudi Arabia's request to dismiss the complaint](#) makes continued scrutiny essential. The pursuit of jobs and remittances must never come at the expense of women's safety and freedom.

We call upon the Commission to urge States Parties to fulfil their obligations under [Articles 4 and 13 of the Maputo Protocol](#) by regulating recruitment agencies, investigating and prosecuting trafficking, and securing enforceable protections in labour migration agreements. Governments must fund emergency consular assistance, safe shelter, legal aid and voluntary return, and support survivors to recover unpaid wages and obtain compensation.

Done in Nigeria on 24th of September 2026

About Alliances for Africa:

[Alliances for Africa](#) is an international African-led feminist non-governmental human rights, peace, and sustainable development organization. AfA works with partners in, around, and beyond the continent of Africa. Alliances for Africa is a member of the Solidarity for African Women's Rights Coalition (SOAWR).

About SOAWR:

The [Solidarity for African Women's Rights](#) (SOAWR) is a Coalition of over 70 organizations working on women's rights in 33 countries in Africa. SOAWR was formed with the principal objective of advocating for the ratification, domestication, and implementation of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (the Maputo Protocol), adopted 23 years ago. The SOAWR Coalition is comprised of:

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1. Action for Development (ACFODE)
2. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
3. African Women's Development and Communication Network (FEMNET)
4. Akina Mama wa Afrika
5. Alliances for Africa
6. Association de Promotion de la Culture Environnementale (APCE)
7. Association des Juristes Maliennes (AJM)
8. Association des Juristes Sénégalaises (AJS)
9. Association of Egyptian Female Lawyers (AEFL)
10. Atwar Organization for Research and Social Development (Atwar)
11. BAOBAB for Women's Human Rights
12. Cellule de Coordination sur les Pratiques Traditionnelle Affectant la Sante des Femmes et des Enfants (CPTAFE)
13. Center for Health Human Rights and Development (CEHURD)
14. Center for Human Rights – University of Pretoria
15. Center for Reproductive Rights
16. Centre for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW)
17. Centre for Justice Studies and Innovation (CJSI)

18. Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (CSV)
19. Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW)
20. Collectif des Associations et ONGs Féminines du Burundi (CAFOB)
21. Communication Techniques for Development (ACT)
22. Eastern African Sub-regional Support Initiative
23. Equality Now
24. Federation of Women Lawyers Kenya
25. Fondation Pour l'Egalité/ CIDDEF
26. Forum Mulher
27. Forum for Development and Human Rights Dialogue (FDHRD)
28. Girl Child Network
29. Great Lakes Initiative for Human Rights and Development (GLIHD)
30. Haki Nawiri Africa
31. HelpAge International
32. Her Voice Liberia
33. Human Rights Law Service (HURILAWS)
34. IGED Africa
35. ICJ Kenya
36. Inter-African Committee (IAC) on Harmful Traditional Practices
37. Inter-African Network for Women, Media, Gender Equity and Development (FAMEDEV)
38. Ipas Africa Alliance for Women's Reproductive Health and Rights
39. Jossour
40. Journal Féministe Algérien
41. KADIRAT
42. Legal and Human Rights Centre (LHRC)
43. Make Every Woman Count
44. Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre
45. MPOWER
46. National Association for the Defense of Rights and Freedoms (NADRF)
47. Network Against Female Genital Mutilation (NAFGEM)
48. NGO Gender Coordination Network
49. Oxfam GB
50. People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA)

51. Question de Femmes
52. Réseau des Femmes Leaders pour le Développement (RFLD)
53. Sister Nambia
54. Source of Peace Organization (SPO)
55. STEWARD Women
56. Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA)
57. The New Generation Girls and Women Development Initiative (NIGAWD)
58. Tomorrow's Child Initiative
59. Tshwaranang Legal Advocacy Centre (TLAC)
60. Uganda Women Network (UWONET)
61. Union Nationale Des Femmes Djiboutiennes
62. Voix de Femmes
63. Women's Advocacy and Communication Network (WANET)
64. Well Being Africa
65. Women and the Law Southern Africa(WLSA Zambia)
66. Women and the Law Southern Africa (WLSA Zimbabwe)
67. Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF)
68. Women Lead Movement (WLM)
69. Women's NGO Secretariat of Liberia(WONGOSOL)
70. Women of Liberia Peace Network(WOLPNET)
71. Women on the Watch (WOW) Society Initiative
72. Women Peace Initiatives Association
73. Women's Advocacy and Communication Network
74. Women's Counselling and Information Centre (WCIC)
75. Women For Justice and Equality (WOJE)
76. Women's Rights Advancement & Protection Alternative (WRAPA)
77. Young Liberian Women Organization for Improvement (WOFIM)
78. Y-PEER PETRI

