



+20 12 111 44 560



info@elhak.org



Building No. 31, 26th of July Street,
Downtown, Cairo , Egypt

"2026 – The Year of African Accountability"

An Analytical Review of States

' Obligations before United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms.

(Universal Periodic Review and Human Rights Committee)

February 2026



"2026 – The Year of African Accountability"

An Analytical Review of States

' Obligations before United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms.

(Universal Periodic Review and Human Rights Committee)

Executive Introduction: A Year of Accountability and Review Amidst Geopolitical Shifts

The year 2026 represents a pivotal and highly significant juncture in the trajectory of international human rights law for the African continent. In a highly fluid regional and global context, marked by rapid geopolitical shifts and the challenges of a "liquidity crisis" plaguing the UN system, a broad and influential group of African states is subject to rigorous and comprehensive assessments before two of the most important UN protection mechanisms: the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in its fourth cycle, and the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This year is exceptionally significant not only because of the density of the schedule, but also because of the qualities of the states undergoing review. We are faced with a landscape that encompasses countries experiencing open armed conflict (such as Sudan and Somalia), countries undergoing sensitive transitions in the Sahel region (such as Niger, Chad, and Mauritania), and countries striving to consolidate their developmental and political models (such as Rwanda, Namibia, and Tanzania). This report, which covers the intricacies of these processes, aims not only to recount dates but also to provide an in-depth, forward-looking analysis of the political and human rights contexts that will be addressed during these sessions, drawing on the latest data and documents issued by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and international civil society.

The first section of the report presents a comprehensive overview of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) across its three cycles (51st, 52nd, and 53rd) in 2026, analyzing the cases of the twelve African countries on the agenda. In the second section, the analysis moves to the halls of the Palais Wilson in Geneva to examine the work of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR), carefully distinguishing between the public "report review" sessions,



which involve direct questioning of government delegations, and the "list adoption" sessions (LOIPR), which lay the groundwork for subsequent monitoring phases. The section also highlights the streamlined procedures the Committee has begun to adopt to address the backlog of reports.

Part One: The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) - Fourth Cycle (2026)

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the unique mechanism by which all 193 UN member states undergo a comprehensive review of their human rights records every 4.5 years. The fourth cycle began in November 2022 and is scheduled to continue until 2027. In 2026, the Human Rights Council's working groups will hold three major sessions (51st, 52nd, and 53rd), which will see a high volume of reviews of African human rights records. The records of 12 African countries, covering various geographical regions of the continent from the Sahel to the Horn of Africa, the Great Lakes region, and Southern Africa, will be examined.

1.1 The 51st Session (January 2026): Year Opening and the Challenges of the Sahel and Lakes

The 51st session for the Working Group of the Universal Periodic Review will be held between January 19 and January 30, 2026, in the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva. This session holds particular importance as it begins the timetable for the year 2026 and includes countries with very diverse legal contexts, which poses various challenges to the Troika (groups of three countries) which facilitates the review.

African Countries Under Review in the 51st Session:

The final list of African countries scheduled for review in this session includes: Mauritania, Rwanda, and Sao Tome and Principe.

First: Mauritania

Mauritania is at the forefront of the African scene in this session, as its presentation comes at a sensitive time coinciding with the country's ongoing efforts to address the legacy of slavery and its remnants, and to strengthen the rule of law.

1. The Legal and Political Context

- a. The issue of the "legacy of slavery" and contemporary slavery will be a



+20 12 111 44 560



info@elhak.org



Building No. 31, 26th of July Street,
Downtown, Cairo , Egypt

central focus of the discussion, as in previous cycles. However, the 2026 review is expected to focus more deeply on the “effectiveness of implementation” rather than simply the enactment of laws. The international community will question Nouakchott on the implementation of the 2015 anti-slavery law, the establishment of specialized slavery courts, and economic programs targeting vulnerable groups (the Haratin).

- b. Freedom of Expression and Civic Space: Under the controversial law protecting national symbols, Mauritania is expected to face questions about the space for journalists and bloggers to operate, and the extent to which national legislation aligns with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- c. Women’s and Children’s Rights: Issues of gender-based violence and child marriage will be prominent, particularly in light of the internal debates surrounding the Personal Status Code and the “Dignity” Law.
- d. The Death Penalty: Mauritania will face many questions concerning its efforts to abolish the death penalty, as “The Right to Life” is absent from the Mauritanian constitution and there are over forty provisions for the application of the death penalty.

2. The Strategic Importance of the Review

- a. This review is viewed as an opportunity for the Mauritanian government to present a new “roadmap” for the post-2024 elections period and to reaffirm its commitment to the human rights track as a part of its security and development strategy in the troubled coastal region.

Second: Rwanda

Rwanda’s review represents a complex case study on the contradiction between astonishing developmental and economic progress on one hand, and continuing criticism of the civil and political rights record on the other.



1. The Legal and Political Context

- a. Civil and Political Rights: The review focused on the issues of freedom of press, forced disappearance, and freedom of political opposition. The work environment of human rights defenders and the extent of their ability to work without fear of reprisal were highlighted.
- b. Reconciliation and Justice: Progress in national reconciliation files following the genocide was assessed, but from a new perspective that focuses on “freedom of memory” and the right to express different historical narratives.
- c. Women’s and Children’s Rights: Questions were raised concerning Rwanda’s efforts to bolster the rights of women and ameliorate the high rates of gender-based violence and discrimination, as well as steps being taken to combat child marriage and child trafficking and ensure child well-being and safety.
- d. Regional Role: NGOs presented information concerning Rwanda’s role in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, its support of the M23 armed group, and the impact of this on human rights in the region.

2. Recommendations

- a. Rwanda received recommendations to open the political space, amend media laws, ensure the independence and protection of the judiciary, join the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and strengthen efforts to combat gender inequality and persistent gender-based violence.

Third: Sao Tome and Principe

As a small island country, the context of Sao Tome and Principe’s review differs radically from its neighbors on the continent, where the developmental and economic character overshadows the rights debate.

1. The Legal and Political Context

- a. Social and Economic Rights: The review focused on poverty challenges, rights to health and education, and the impact of climate change on this



island country. Western countries and NGOs also focused on the need to strengthen freedom of press and ensure that journalists can work without fear of reprisal.

- b. Justice Sector Reform: There is a need to update the judicial system and bolster judicial independence, as well as to improve prison conditions, issues that have been raised repeatedly in previous reviews. There was also extensive about corruption.
- c. Women's Rights: Domestic violence and political participation for women were main points of discussion.

1.2 The 52nd Session (May 2026): The Africa-Heavy Session

The 52nd session will be held between May 4 and May 15, 2026. This session can be described as "The Africa-Heavy Session" in 2026, not only for the number of countries (6 countries), but for the weight of the issues at hand, which include terrorism, piracy, state-building, armed conflicts, and climate change.

African Countries Under Review in the 52nd Session:

The list includes: Namibia, Niger, Mozambique, Somalia, Seychelles, and Sierra Leone.

First: Niger

The Niger review is highly sensitive given the radical political changes that the country and the region have recently witnessed.

1. Strategic analysis:

- a. This review will test the ability of UN mechanisms to deal with "transitional authorities" or military governments in the Sahel region.
- b. Key issues: political rights and the return to constitutional order, freedom of assembly, counterterrorism and its impact on civilian rights, and the protection of refugees and migrants (given Niger's status as a major transit route).



Second: Mozambique

The crisis in Cabo Delgado province will be the elephant in the room during Mozambique's review.

1. Strategic Analysis:

- a. The conflict in the north: There will be a strong focus on violations committed in the context of counterinsurgency in the north of the country, the protection of internally displaced persons, and ensuring humanitarian access.
- b. Natural resource management: With the massive gas discoveries, issues of "community rights" and the environmental and social impact of major extractive projects will be raised.

Third: Somalia

The review of Somalia presents a particular challenge for the UPR mechanism, as it assesses a country still in the process of building its basic institutions amidst ongoing conflict.

1. Strategic Analysis:

- a. State-building and Human Rights: The focus will be on rebuilding the justice system, reforming the police, and protecting journalists in one of the world's most dangerous media environments.
- b. Rights of Vulnerable Groups: Child recruitment, conflict-related sexual violence, and the rights of internally displaced persons will be key themes. Member States will urge Somalia to accelerate the implementation of its National Human Rights Action Plan.

Fourth: Namibia, Seychelles, Sierra Leone

These countries represent the other side of the coin in this session:

- Namibia: Its review will focus on issues of economic justice and poverty reduction, land distribution, the rights of indigenous peoples (the San), and gender-based violence.



+20 12 111 44 560



info@elhak.org



Building No. 31, 26th of July Street,
Downtown, Cairo , Egypt

- Seychelles: Climate diplomacy will be the main theme, with Seychelles linking human rights to climate change and ocean protection, as well as drug control and its impact on public health.
- Sierra Leone: A review of progress made in abolishing the death penalty (a historic step), strengthening women's rights, and combating corruption, with a focus on implementing the outstanding recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Report Deadline: It is worth noting that the deadline for submitting national reports for this session is January 26, 2026, meaning that the early months of the year will see intense diplomatic activity in the capitals concerned to prepare these documents.

1.3 The 53rd Session (November, 2026): Review of Crises and Transformations

This session is scheduled to take place from November 2 to November 13, 2026. It will include a review of key countries in East and Southern Africa, most notably Sudan.

African countries under review at the 53rd session:

According to the approved timetable: Sudan, Eswatini, Tanzania

First: Sudan

The Sudan review is the most prominent, complex, and controversial event on the entire UPR agenda for 2026.

1. Context of Crisis and Collapse:

- a. The review comes at a time when the country is experiencing a devastating armed conflict (since April 2023). The first procedural question will be: Who will represent Sudan? And how will the national report be prepared given the collapse of institutions in Khartoum?

2. Expected Review Themes:

- a. Grave Violations: The review will effectively become an accountability session regarding war crimes, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing (particularly in Darfur), and systematic sexual violence.



- b. International Humanitarian Law: Obstruction of aid, targeting of hospitals, and famine will be central issues, extending beyond the traditional scope of human rights to touch the core of humanitarian law.
- c. The Role of International Mechanisms: The review will rely heavily on the UN Compilation of Information (UN Compilation) and the reports of the Fact-Finding Mission (FFM), given the difficulty of independent field monitoring.

Second: Eswatini

Africa's only absolute monarchy faces a difficult review amid ongoing political tensions.

1. Strategic Analysis:

- a. Democracy and Governance: Recommendations will focus on lifting the ban on political parties, reforming the electoral system, ensuring freedom of peaceful assembly, and investigating the use of excessive force against protesters in previous years.
- b. Women's Rights: The legal status of women under customary and civil law will be discussed.

Third: Tanzania

1. Strategic Analysis:

- a. Civic Space: After years of restrictions, the steps taken by the new leadership to open up the political and media spheres will be assessed.
- b. Indigenous Rights: The issue of Maasai land rights in the Ngorongoro region and the preservation of nature reserves versus the rights of indigenous peoples will be a hotly contested international issue during this review.

Part 2: The Human Rights Committee (CCPR) - 2026 Agenda

The working mechanism of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR) differs from that of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). It is a committee of independent experts– not states– that examines the length of states' legal commitment to the provisions of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Currently, the committee is based on the Predictable Review Cycle that has lasted for 8 years to ensure regularity.



In 2026, the committee will hold three main sessions (145th, 146th, 147th). During these sessions, the committee will consider some African country reports and adopt Lists of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR) for others. It is important to differentiate here between consideration of a report, which is the major event that includes interactive dialogue and immediate recommendations, and between the adoption of a list of issues (LOIPR), which is the preparatory procedure that precedes the examination by one or two years.

2.1: 145th Session (March 2026): Chad Under The Microscope.

Dates: From March 2 to March 19 2026.

Place: Palais Wilson\ Palace of Nations

This session is distinguished by intensive activities involving African states. Chad will be the only African state whose report will be subjected to a full and immediate examination during this session while preparations for other countries will be made.

First: Examination of Country Report - Chad

The subjection of Chad to an examination of its report during this session.

1. The Strategic Importance:

a. The review of Chad comes in front of the expert committee at an extremely sensitive time for the transitional phase. This will represent a rare opportunity for the experts of the United Nations for the direct questioning of the Chad government on precise legal details.

2. Expected issues on the table:

a. Fundamental freedoms: the right to peaceful assembly and the suppression of protests (The events of October 2022 and the aftermath), and the freedom of association.

b. Transitional Justice: Courts pertaining to political events and the conditions of detainment in prison, and independence of the judiciary from the executive branch and military.

c. Counter-Terrorism and human rights: The measures taken in the Lake Chad Basin and the compliance of Chad with the International Covenant, particularly pertaining to arbitrary detention and fair trial guarantees.



Second: Adoption of Lists of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR)

At this stage, no state delegation is invited. Rather, the committee meets in closed sessions to draft and approve a list of questions (LOIPR) to send to the state. The following response of a state to this list of questions is considered its periodic report. It is known as the "simplified reporting procedure," which seeks to lessen the reporting burden on states. The list of African states scheduled for this procedure at the 145th Session:

1. Democratic Republic of the Congo:
 - a. The committee will approve a list of questions pertaining to the DRC, which will no doubt focus on the violence in the east, elections, and the freedom of the press.
2. Senegal:
 - a. Adoption of a list of issues, which will cover post-election issues, individual freedoms, and the rights of women and children.

Third: Follow-Up Procedure:

1. Botswana: The committee will examine in the follow-up report pertaining to Botswana to evaluate the extent of its implementation of previously-issued priority recommendations classified by the committee as urgent.
- 2.2. The 146th Session (June\July 2026) and the 147th Session (October\November 2026)

Data drawn from the Master Calendar indicates that the second half of 2026 will witness intense preparatory activity (LOIPR) for a number of African states, paving the way for their review in the following years (2027-2028).

Dates:

1. 146th Session: June 22 - July 17, 2026
2. 147th Session: October\November 2026

Timetable for the Adoption of Lists of Issues (LOIPR)

According to the specified deadlines in the documents, there are crucial dates for the adoption of lists of issues for the following states:



1. Eswatini: The final deadline for the LOIPR is February 2, 2026. This means the committee will discuss Eswatini's file (in preparation) for the 146th or 147th session in conjunction with the countries' UPR review in November.
2. Gambia: The final deadline for the LOIPR is October 31, 2026. It will focus on questions of transitional justice, truth, reconciliation, and reparations commission.
3. Guinea: The final deadline is September 2026 with a focus on the courts related to the massacres of 2009, and the transitional political situation.
4. Liberia: The final deadline is October 31, 2026, and issues of impunity from punishment for past war crimes will be a key issue.
5. Sudan
 - a. Key Note: Sudan's incorporated list of questions' deadline is October 31, 2026. This creates a unique situation for dual pressure where the preparation for the questions of the human rights council will be completed in the same month where the state will be subjected to a universal periodic review.

Part 3: Analysis of Strategic Trends and Structural Challenges.

A cross-cutting analysis of statements on a number of trends and challenges that will shape the African human rights scene within UN forums in 2026.

3.1: The Double Review Burden Phenomenon:

Some states face a logistical and political challenge in that for different mechanisms the deadline is in the same year.

- Sudan and Eswatini: Both countries face a UPR (political in character) in November, and the adoption of the CCPR lists of issues (legal-technical) in the second half of this year. This puts enormous pressure on the diplomatic missions of these countries, but at the same time it provides in return an opportunity for civil society for the uniting of advocacy efforts and provided integrated shadow reports that feed both mechanisms together.



3.2: The Liquidity Crisis at the United Nations

It is not possible to read the 2026 agenda in isolation from the severe financial crisis which the United Nations faces. Several reports have indicated the influence of this crisis on the work of treaty bodies.

- Direct impact: The lack of funding may lead to shorter meeting times, the cancellation of direct translation for some languages, or the transformation of some interactive dialogues to hybrid (remote) formats. In the case of African countries, in-person participation in Geneva and technical translation support is considered a vital matter for ensuring a fair review. Any reduction in these services might lead to negative effects on the quality of interactive dialogue with states like Chad and Niger.

3.3: The transition to Simplified Reporting Procedure:

- The 2026 schedule shows the Human Rights Council's growing dependence on LOIPR with African countries (Congo, Senegal, Gambia, Ghana). This transformation reflects the committee's strategy to break the cycle of non-reporting. Instead of waiting for years for states to write a report, the committee takes the initiative to propose questions. This means that 2026 will be a year of drafting questions for the Committee in regards to Africa which paves the way for a wave of substantive reviews in 2027 and 2028.

3.4: Integration with Regional Mechanisms:

While Geneva is preoccupied with these reviews, integration with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) should not be overlooked. The pressure which will be generated by the review of Sudan and Somalia at the United Nations in 2026 will certainly resonate in Banjul (the headquarters of the African Commission), which will require greater cooperation between UN and African recommendations to prevent inconsistencies and strengthen implementation.

Conclusion and Reference Data Tables

The year 2026 presents a comprehensive panorama of the human rights situation in Africa.



+20 12 111 44 560



info@elhak.org



Building No. 31, 26th of July Street,
Downtown, Cairo , Egypt

From Nouakchott to Mogadishu, and from Khartoum to Maputo, African governments will be required to provide clear answers regarding their international commitments.

Schedule 1: African Countries in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR 2026)

African Country	Session	Expected Areas of Focus	Time
Mauritania	51	Slavery, poverty, economic rights	January 2026
Rwanda	51	Political freedoms, reconciliation, the .media	January 2026
Sao Tome and Principe	51	Development, women's rights, the court	January 2026
Niger	52	Political transition, terrorism, .immigration	May 2026
Namibia	52	.Land, social justice, resources	May 2026
Mozambique	52	The Cabo Delgado conflict, gas, .displacement	May 2026
Somalia	52	State-building, security, children's .rights	May 2026
Seychelles	52	Climate change, the blue economy, .drugs	May 2026
Sierra Leone	52	Abolishing the death penalty, .transitional justice	May 2026
Eswatini	53	Democracy, monarchy, freedom of assembly	November 2026
Tanzania	53	Civic space, the rights of indigenous .(peoples (Maasai	November 2026
Sudan	54	Armed conflict, humanitarian law, .impunity	January-February 2027

Schedule 2: African Countries before the Human Rights Commission (CCPR 2026)

Country	Session	Time	Type of procedure	Notes
Chad	145	March 2026	Adoption of the List of Issues ((LOIPR	Preparatory procedure (without (a delegation
Democratic Congo	145	March 2026	Adoption of the List of Issues ((LOIPR	Preparatory procedure (without (a delegation
Senegal	145	March 2026	Adoption of the List of Issues ((LOIPR	Preparatory procedure (without (a delegation
Botswana	145	March 2026	Adoption of the List of Issues	Technical evaluation of



+20 12 111 44 560



info@elhak.org



Building No. 31, 26th of July Street,
Downtown, Cairo , Egypt

			((LOIPR	implementation
Eswatini	Deadlines	February 2026 (Submission date)	Adoption of the List of Issues ((LOIPR	.Sync with UPR
Sudan	Deadlines	October 2026	Adoption of the List of Issues ((LOIPR	Dual compression .with UPR
Gambia, Liberia, Guinea	Deadlines	Gambia and Liberia (October 2026) Guinea (September 2026	Adoption of the List of Issues ((LOIPR	Preparing for the .2027 reviews