



National Human Rights Commission

2026 Human Rights Outlook for Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

The year 2025 was marked by significant challenges to the human rights landscape in Nigeria, with deepening insecurity, widespread violations, and systemic abuses affecting millions of Nigerians. The NHRC remains committed to promoting and protecting the rights enshrined in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and international human rights instruments to which Nigeria is a State Party.

2.0. 2025 Human Rights Review: Key Trends and Impact

A. Overall Human Rights Situation

- **High volume of rights complaints:** In 2025, the NHRC received a record 3,724,822 **complaints of human rights violations**, indicating pervasive and systemic issues across multiple sectors.
- **Regional hotspots:** The **North-Central**, **North-West**, and **North-East** regions reported the highest complaints, driven largely by insecurity, communal conflicts, and governance deficits.

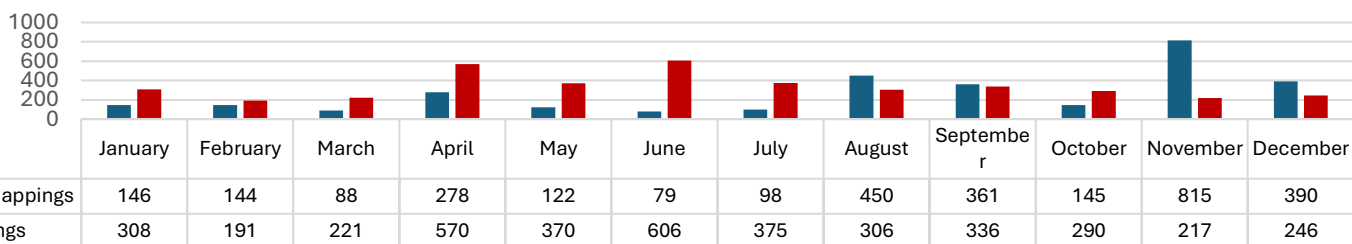
B. Security and Violence

- **Killings and kidnappings:** In April alone, the Commission documented 570 killings and 278 kidnappings—a pattern replicated in other months through 2025, pointing to a severe human rights crisis.
- **Mass abductions:** Multiple mass kidnappings occurred, including attacks on schools, with more than 300 children and teachers abducted in a single incident in Niger State.
- **Communal and herder-farmer conflicts** continued, as seen in central Nigeria where dozens were killed in attacks linked to resource disputes, underscoring the human toll of protracted communal clashes. In one incident alone in June 2025, over a hundred people were massacred in Yelewata community in Benue State.

Access to Education in 2025

More than a decade after the Chibok abductions, Nigeria witnessed a new round of abductions of nearly 400 school children in Government Girls Comprehensive Secondary School, Maga, Kebbi State and Saint Mary's Private Catholic Secondary School, Papiri, Niger State. Beyond the two states, subnational governments across northern Nigeria closed schools for weeks following the kidnappings to protect pupils from bandits.

Killings and Kidnappings January – December 2025



C. Gender, Children, and Vulnerable Groups

- Gender-based violence (GBV): Large numbers of reports of domestic and sexual violence, including rape and abandonment, highlighted persistent violations of women’s and girls’ rights.
- Child rights abuses: High levels of child abandonment, forced marriages, and trafficking were documented, underscoring the vulnerability of children in conflict and poverty contexts.

D. Governance and Civil Liberties

- Freedom from discrimination was the most frequently violated right recorded in late 2024 and continued into 2025, alongside infringements on freedom of expression, assembly, and association. Misapplication of the Cybercrimes Act by Law Enforcement led to many arrests and prolonged detention of journalists and activists. Freedom of Assembly continued to be violated in legitimate protests and agitations.
- State actors were implicated in unlawful arrests, torture, and other abuses, highlighting concerns over the rule of law and accountability.

E. Socio-Economic Conditions

- Socio-economic insecurity — including poverty, food insecurity, and declining agricultural output — was both a driver and consequence of rights violations, intensifying vulnerability and fuelling conflict dynamics. (General trend reported in analyses)

3.0. Impact on Victims and Communities

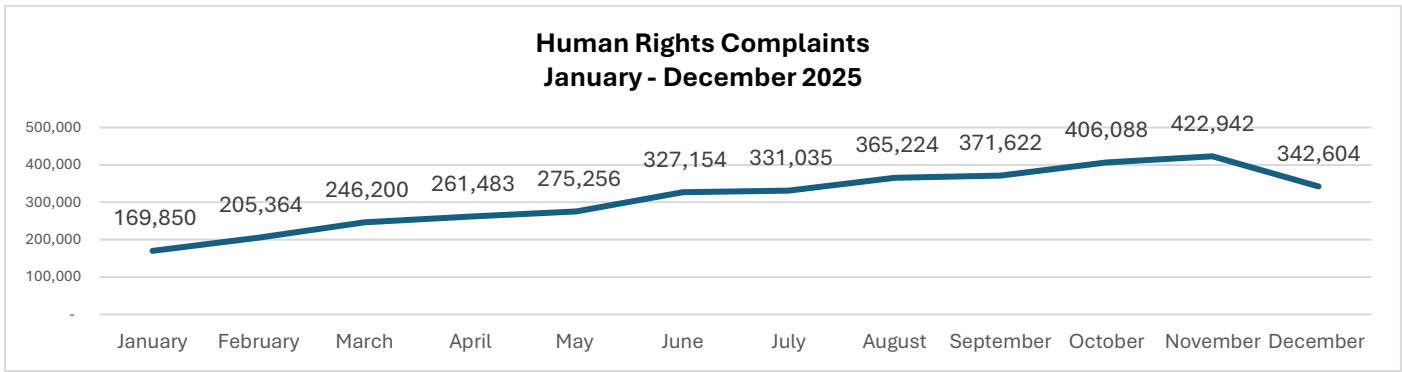
3.1 Primary Victims

1. **Civilians in conflict zones:** Farmers, women, children, and displaced communities bore the brunt of violence and insecurity.
2. **Women and girls:** Disproportionately affected by sexual and gender-based violence and harmful cultural practices.
3. **Children:** Faced threats from school attacks, abductions, abandonment, and lack of access to education and protection.
4. **Minority and marginalized groups:** Frequently targeted in communal and discrimination-related violations.

3.2 Broader Impact

1. **Displacement and loss of livelihood:** Violence disrupted agriculture and local economies, particularly in food-producing regions.
2. **Psychological trauma and social fragmentation:** Widespread fear and loss eroded community cohesion.

3. Erosion of public trust in institutions: Failures in protection and accountability undermined confidence in the state’s ability to uphold rights.



4.0. 2026 Human Rights Outlook: Emerging Risks and Opportunities

4.1. Security and Rule of Law

Risks:

- Continued insurgency, banditry, and communal conflicts pose a persistent threat to the right to life and security. Recent government declarations of security emergencies reflect the severity of the situation.

Strategies:

- Strengthen community policing and local security architecture with human rights oversight.
- Revise security policies to incorporate human rights training and accountability mechanisms for security forces.
- Roll out early warning systems in conflict-prone areas to prevent violence against civilians.
- Approve the National Policy on Protection of Civilians in Conflict.

4.2. Social and Gender Rights

Risks:

- GBV and violations against women and children may escalate without targeted social protection and enforcement of existing laws.

Strategies:

- Scale up support for GBV survivors — shelters, legal aid, psychosocial services, and community awareness campaigns.
- Implement child protection frameworks in partnership with Ministries of Education and Social Welfare.
- Increased social protection and antipoverty programmes at local levels
- Enhance enforcement of laws against harmful practices such as child marriage.

4.3. Civil and Political Rights

Risks:

- Restrictions on freedoms of expression and assembly could undermine democratic space amid political tensions and anticipated elections in 2027.

Strategies:

1. Advocate for legal reforms protecting civic space, freedom of media, and anti-discrimination.
2. Train law enforcement on rights-based approaches to protests and public order management.
3. Support civic education initiatives promoting constitutional rights awareness.
4. Electoral Reforms to enhance political plurality and citizens participation

4.4. Economic and Social Rights

Risks:

- Economic reforms and fiscal pressures could deepen inequality, food insecurity, and social exclusion — negatively affecting the right to an adequate standard of living and access to essential services.

Strategies:

1. Monitor the human rights impact of economic policies, including tax reforms and subsidy changes.
2. Collaborate with the Ministries of Health, Education, and Agriculture to ensure equitable access to healthcare, education, and food security.
3. Promote decent work and social protection schemes for vulnerable populations.

4.5. Institutional Strengthening and Accountability

Risks:

- Weak accountability for human rights violations encourages persistent abuses.

Strategies:

1. Support judicial reforms to expedite human rights cases and ensure justice for victims.
2. Institutionalize independent oversight bodies for police, military, and other state agents.
3. Strengthen the NHRC Regional Offices for rapid response and data collection.

5.0. Strategic Actions for NHRC and Government (2026)

	Priority Area	Actionable Strategies
1	Prevention & Protection	Rapid response teams; conflict-sensitive early warning mechanisms; community peacebuilding programs
2	Justice and Accountability	Legal reforms for speedy justice; human rights courts; prosecution of rights violators
3	Social Support Systems	Comprehensive services for GBV survivors; child protection; disability-inclusive programs
4	Economic & Social Rights Monitoring	Policy impact assessments; advocacy for inclusive economic reforms
5	Electoral Reforms & Citizens' Participation	Promote and protect right to participation; engage in citizens' awareness programs on right to vote; advocacy and policy advisories on hate speech, electoral malpractices and violence
6	Data & Research	Strengthen human rights observatories and dashboards; qualitative research on violations and impacts
7	Partnership & Collaboration	National dialogue platforms; partnerships with civil society, traditional leaders, and international bodies

6.0. Conclusion

The 2026 Human Rights Outlook for Nigeria reflects a call to collective action — government agencies, lawmakers, civil society, and citizens — to stem the tide of rights violations and build resilient, rights-respecting institutions. The NHRC recommits to its mandate to protect and promote human rights, and urges collaborative efforts that ensure dignity, justice, and equality for all Nigerians.