

Foreword

Just over six years ago, seven African non-governmental research organisations - the African Security Dialogue and Research, Africa Peace Forum, Human Rights Trust of Southern Africa, Institute for Human Rights and Development in Africa, South African Institute for International Affairs, West Africa Network for Peace Building, and Institute for Security Studies - met in Pretoria at the invitation of the Institute for Security Studies. They agreed to establish a network to review and monitor the performance of African leaders in respect of decisions on broad human security issues that were taken at OAU and AU summits. This marked the birth of the African Human Security Initiative (AHSI) a year later. The University for Peace Africa Programme (UPEACE) has since joined the original seven organisations.

Because of the success of the studies and particularly the cooperation and assistance of the countries monitored - Algeria, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda - the above organisations decided to embark on a second phase of the African Human Security Initiative Project. The AHSI decided to complement the formal New Partnership for Africa's Development / African Peer Review Mechanism (NEPAD/APRM) process by focusing on the criminal justice system in five selected countries, namely Benin, Mali, Sierra Leone, Tanzania and Zambia.

Criminal justice systems in Africa tend to work slowly and are encumbered with bureaucratic procedures that impede the effective delivery of justice. Crime and defective justice systems have slowed down development and prevented Africans from realising their full developmental potential. As the links between crime, the criminal justice systems, democracy and development in the region have remained largely unexplored, AHSI decided to draw attention to the need for reforms in the criminal justice system that will enhance human security.

Over the years, the African Union and its predecessor, the Organisation of African Unity, have adopted far-reaching decisions in the form of conventions, treaties, agreements, resolutions or declarations, the implementation of which should have had far-reaching and significant impacts on enhancing the quality of criminal justice systems of countries in the region. Among others, these decisions touch on good governance and the respect for human rights and peoples' rights; the eradication of discrimination against women; the protection of the rights of the African child; and economic growth and poverty reduction.

The African Human Security Initiative is indebted to the many researchers in the above five countries who have dedicated their valuable time in producing the country reports which, apart from complementing the work of the African Peer Review Mechanism, also provide governments with empirical evidence on the status of criminal justice and its impact on political processes in their countries.

In order to maintain the momentum arising from these studies and remain focused on the need to remind African leaders to comply with their commitments taken at summit level, the African Human Security Initiative will encourage dialogue and public awareness of the studies - particularly those on crime and criminal justice - while focusing on their impact on democracy in the region.



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