

2.7. Protesters

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Freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association rights are guaranteed under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), and Sections 39 and 40 of the Nigerian Constitution. Although the Public Order Act[547] requires police approval for protests, the Court of Appeal of Nigeria ruled this unconstitutional in 2007, yet authorities continued to enforce the requirement.[548]

Federal and state governments frequently ban public events perceived as security threats, particularly those tied to political, ethnic, or religious tensions, such as protests linked to groups like the separatist Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB). [549]

Between August 2024 and April 2025, Nigerian security forces reportedly used excessive force to disperse protests across Nigeria.[550] Between 1 and 10 August 2024, protests organised by a coalition of various activist groups and known by the hashtag #EndBadGovernance took place across Nigeria, driven by public outrage over soaring inflation, corruption, and the removal of fuel subsidies.[551] According to Amnesty International, at least 24 protesters were killed during the protests, many of them shot with live ammunition at close range by security forces. The organisation also documented the detention of over 1 200 individuals, including minors,[552] activists and journalists.[553] In the aftermath, authorities charged 146 protesters.[554] Dozens of protesters, including minors, were charged with treason, facing a possible death sentence.[555] In November 2024, the high court in Abuja arraigned 114 #EndBadGovernance protesters, most of them minors, who spent over two months in detention under 'appalling conditions'.[556] Outrage over court images of the children showing their poor conditions, including signs of malnutrition, [557] led Nigeria's president to order the release of more than 29 children facing the death penalty and launch an investigation into the officials responsible.[558] In Katsina State, 12 children under 16 also faced unfair trials, many 'arrested simply for being on the streets during the protests', according to Amnesty International.[559]

Labour unions were also involved in the #EndBadGovernance protests.[560] In August 2024, security forces raided the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC) headquarters in Abuja, allegedly searching for protest-related materials.[561] The following month, the NLC's President was arrested after criticising fuel price hikes and threatening a national strike,[562] then was later released.[563]

On 29 March 2025, Nigerian security forces used live ammunition against a peaceful pro-Palestinian procession by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in Abuja, killing and arresting protesters.[564] On 7 April 2025, Nigerians in different states participated in protests organised

by the Take It Back Movement, opposing the misuse of the Cybercrime Act and worsening economic conditions. Police used tear gas in Abuja, Lagos, and Port Harcourt to disperse demonstrators and restricted access to public spaces. 565 Authorities claimed the organisers attempted to discredit the Nigeria Police Force by holding the protest on the same day designated to celebrate its contributions to national security.566

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