2.18.2. Overview of legal framework and mechanisms in place

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Chapter IV of the 1999 Nigerian Constitution guarantees the fundamental rights of citizens,831 including the rights to ‘life’, ‘dignity of human person’, ‘personal liberty’, ‘fair hearing’, ‘private and family life’, ‘thought, conscience and religion’, and ‘acquire and own immovable property anywhere in Nigeria’, as well as freedom of ‘expression and the press’, ‘peaceful assembly and association’, ‘movement’, and from ‘discrimination’.832

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups monitoring or investigating human rights conditions or cases and publishing their findings generally operated without government restriction.833 However, sources indicated that members of some organisations faced intimidation and physical harm for speaking out against Boko Haram,834 or encountered obstacles when investigating alleged human rights violations committed by security forces.835

National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)

In 2010, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) was established through the National Human Rights Commission (Amendment) Act, 2010, which conferred on the NHRC

> ‘additional independence and strengthened the Commission's power with respect to promotion and protection of human rights, investigation of alleged violation of human rights and enforcement of decisions. The Amendment Act has also widened the scope of the Commission's Mandate to include vetting of legislations at all levels to ensure their compliance with human rights norms’.836

Complaints can be filed by ‘individuals whose rights have been violated or threatened, or by a proxy, acting on their joint behalf’.837 The NHRC also initiates investigations of its own accord when it has knowledge of an abuse or human rights violation.838 The NHRC website indicated that complaints can be filed by individuals or a group of individuals, via online, a mobile application, email, WhatsApp, telephone, or physically at any of the NHRC’s helpdesks located in each state.839

In 2024, the NHRC received over 2.08 million complaints,840 and in June 2025, it received 327 154 complaints, mostly related to ‘law enforcement and human dignity’ (84 333 complaints), ‘freedom from discrimination’ (81 147), and ‘rule of law and access to justice’

(30 542).841 Most complaints were filed in the North Central (137 179 complaints), North West (67 220), and North East (63 743).842 The USDOS 2023 report indicated that the NHRC has investigated 'allegations of human rights abuses and published periodic reports detailing its findings, including torture and poor prison conditions', and that observers have considered the NHRC as 'independent and somewhat effective, but the commission could not compel the government to prosecute perpetrators of human rights abuses'.843 Corroborating information could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Community Court of Justice (CCJ)

The ECOWAS CCJ, of which Nigeria is a part, 'has jurisdiction to hear human rights cases and expands the admissibility rules to include disputes between individuals and their own member states'.844 Decisions made by the CCJ are 'final and binding' and member states are required 'to execute the judgment according to its national courts'.845 Sources indicated, however, that CCJ rulings are largely disregarded by members states, including Nigeria.846

In July 2024, the CCJ ruled that the federal government violated the rights of protesters during the 2020 EndSARS demonstrations against the police, and ordered compensation for claimants whose rights had been breached.847 On 9 April 2025, the CCJ delivered a ruling against blasphemy laws in Nigeria, declaring certain provisions of the Kano State Penal Code and the Kano State Sharia Penal Code Law (2000) in violation of international human rights standards, particularly the right to freedom of expression, and ordered the federal government to repeal or amend the law to comply with its international obligations.848 Additional information on the status of these cases could not be found among the sources consulted within the time constraints of this report.

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