

KOMBOA Consortium Joint Statement to the ACHPR

Reimagining Reparations to Centre the Voices of Women's Rights and Feminist Movements in the face of Backlash.

We welcome this opportunity to engage with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) in the current context of coordinated backlash targeting girls, women, and LGBTQIA+ partners across the African continent. Komboa is a feminist consortium comprising African Women's Development Fund, Initiative Sankofa d'Afrique de l'Ouest (ISDAO), Purposeful Doria Feminist Fund, and Strategic Initiative for Women in the Horn of Africa (SIHA) Network. Together, we support feminist movements and communities across Africa in resisting and strengthening their resilience against anti-rights and anti-gender backlash through resourcing, solidarity, and collective learning.

Women's rights and feminist movements across the continent continue to face intensified and coordinated rollbacks targeting women, girls, and the LGBTQIA+ community. Anti-rights groups use common, recurring tools. They continually weaponize culture and religion. They deliberately dress their messaging in "anti-west," "neo-colonial," or "foreign imposition" language. They assert their agenda through the selective denial or provision of funding under the guise of "family values." They also fuel backlash and coordinated attacks, both online and offline, to delegitimize and undo the hard-earned wins of continent-wide gender movements.

Overall, this has resulted in diluted laws and policies that do not adequately protect and even harm gender and the provision of key sexual and reproductive health services, violating the Maputo Protocol and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This is in addition to the overall deinstitutionalization of gender within key ministries, state institutions, and the infiltration of key national and regional mechanisms such as this one. This has also resulted in the shrinking of civic space, targeted smear campaigns, and harassment against critical organizations and activists at the grassroots who work to preserve women's rights and feminist movements in their respective countries. Moreover, this has resulted in resource diversion and the overall fragmentation of the feminist movement.

In the Northern Africa region, we have witnessed an overall crackdown on organizations defending the rights of women and gender diverse communities online and offline. In Tunisia, there has been an uptick in the targeting of feminist and queer activists. Additionally, by virtue of the Draft NGO Law of 2023 (Draft Decree Law No. 027/2023), if passed, this will tighten state control, funding, and censor the critical work of civil society organizations, driving feminist and queer organizing. In the West Africa region, we observe the rise of religious fundamentalism, which has driven the adoption of anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation in countries like Ghana and Liberia.

In the East African region, increased arms flows and militarization have intensified conflict. As a result, in countries such as Sudan, conflict-related sexual violence against women, girls, and gender diverse communities is at an all-time high. Women and women-led organizations providing critical services to survivors of sexual violence face vicious reprisals by armed groups for their frontline work. At the same time, anti-rights groups are also gaining a foothold: evident in the hosting of the 2nd Pan-African Conference on Family Values in Kenya and emerging efforts to develop an African Charter on Family Sovereignty and Values, drawing the participation of far-right and Western-funded conservative groups seeking to roll back the feminist movement.

As a Consortium of funds and organizations whose primary mandate is to center the voices of underrepresented communities, we resource feminist movements and ensure that, amid ongoing backlash, activists, collectives, organizations, and communities continue to thrive and strengthen their resilience.

In Sierra Leone, for instance, Purposeful, a member of the Komboa Consortium, won a case before the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice in July 2025, which mandated the Sierra Leone government to ban FGM and compensate the survivor represented. This precedent-setting ruling establishes FGM as a form of torture and a failure to protect women and girls. Our funding continues to support advocacy efforts that drive concrete progress in legislative and policy shifts, often in the face of significant resistance, including in member states such as Egypt, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Mozambique, Morocco, Tunisia, and Zimbabwe.



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We also recognize the recent and tireless work of the ACHPR with regard to these issues and applaud the rulings, resolutions, and instruments passed on the protection of women's rights in the region, notably:

- Resolution (LXXXII) on the Need to Raise Awareness for States to Withdraw Reservations on Some Provisions of the Maputo Protocol (2025) and,
- The Commission's landmark ruling in *Association des Femmes Avocat·es Défenseurs des Droits Humains, Equality Now, and the Institute for Human Rights and Development v the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)*, holding the DRC accountable for the widespread sexual violence committed by its military on January 1, 2011 in Fizi Territory, South Kivu.

However, as a Consortium, we continue to call on the ACHPR to hold its member states across the region accountable in fulfilling their obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Maputo Protocol and Resolution 275 (LV) 2014, on Protection Against Violence and Other Human Rights Violations Against Persons on the Basis of Their Gender Orientation or Gender Identity, in the protection women, girls, gender diverse persons and in pushing back against regression.

Though we also note the adoption of the African Union Convention on Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (AUCEVAWG) in February 2025, we call for a temporary hold on its ratification across States until its provisions are strengthened to adequately enhance protections for women, girls, and gender-diverse communities in the region. This is noting weaknesses in its structure, language, its insufficiency to create strong normative standards, and a robust, binding protection and accountability framework for victims of violence.



Overall, as a Consortium, we recommend that the ACHPR take the following steps towards curbing regional backlash:

- Strongly condemn all forms of anti-rights and anti- gender backlash targeted at frontline actors, and the means by which they continue to accelerate violence against women, girls, and gender diverse persons across the Continent. This is especially under the guise of “African family values” rhetoric.
- Urge for full compliance with State obligations under the African Charter, the Maputo Protocol, and Resolution 275 in safeguarding the rights of women, girls, and LGBTIQIA+ persons.
- Call for the ratification and domestication of the Maputo Protocol by the Governments of Egypt, Morocco, Burundi, Chad, Eritrea, Madagascar, Niger, Somalia, and Sudan in demonstrating their commitment to the rights of women and girls.
- Temporarily pause the call to ratify the AUCEVAWG, prioritizing strengthening the Convention’s form, structure, and substantive provisions. This will ensure alignment with existing norms on EVAWG and provide more robust protections for women and girls.
- Encourage engagement with religious and traditional leaders to affirm African family values in ways that honour the continent’s rich diversity of family structure, and uphold equal rights and justice within.
- Strongly condemn the harassment and intimidation of feminist, women, and queer HRDs both online and offline. The ACHPR must call on Member States to ensure their protection as they further their work in safeguarding the rights of women, girls, and gender diverse persons.
- Appeal for the protection of civil society organizations working on human and women’s rights amid concerns about the increasing censorship, shrinking civic space, and global funding cuts.



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