IMUN 2026 Research Report

African Union Issue #3: The question of mitigating political repression and electoral fraud.

Political repression and electoral fraud are major issues in several African countries, threatening the political stability and diminishing public trust in governmental institutions, such as the courts and electoral commissions during the competitive election cycles in Kenya, Zimbabwe, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. The diminished trust in these key political institutions has significantly weakened democratic legitimacy and created obstacles in development through the increased acceptance of illegal activities and polarization (Adaba and Boio). Political repression occurs within countries where the government heavily restricts the citizens' participation and freedom in political discourse to maintain power unjustly. This can include the criminalization of opposing political parties, restrictions on freedom of speech, censorship of non-state regulated media, frequent invasions of privacy and monitoring programs, and banning forms of protest (Bartusevičius et al.). Electoral fraud significantly worsens this political instability across African States. Electoral fraud refers to illegal interference with electoral processes, often including vote buying, ballot stuffing, voter impersonation, and tampering with election results in other forms ("Electoral Fraud"). Ultimately, this widespread electoral fraud directly drives further governmental oppression, heightening the urgency needed to resolve this issue.

In the past, the African Union has attempted to address these challenges through the implementation of multiple regulations and charters. Among these is the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, a document encouraging Member States to promote democratic principles, credible elections, and political participation ("African Charter"). Furthermore, the African Union regularly deploys Electoral Observation Missions (EMOs),

which help monitor elections in African states, identifying areas of improvement and strengthening transparency as well as public confidence ("Preliminary Statement").

Despite past efforts to mitigate electoral fraud and political oppression, there are still ongoing concerns regarding the effectiveness of current political frameworks. Specifically, Article 19's independent election observation missions and Article 25's institutional mechanisms against unconstitutional power retention, from the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (ACDEG). It provides vital preventative measures against electoral fraud and political oppression, but the enforcement methods are heavily compromised due to a dire state-reporting deficit, where out of the 39 ratifying nations, only a minor percentage have submitted their mandatory biennial compliance reports. Furthermore, a total lack of transparency has also contributed to the failure of enforcement methods as the AU Peace and Security Council carries out their governance evaluations entirely behind closed doors ("African Charter"). The direct impact of these unaddressed causes further worsens democratic processes and elections within several countries, including Zimbabwe, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of Congo ("Africa Programs"). Because there are no biding consequences or penalties for non-compliance, these ruling institutions can easily manipulate electoral processes without facing accountability. Therefore, Governmental bodies in these nations continuously deploy these restrictive practices to intentionally suppress dissent, maintain authoritarian power, and to neutralize opposition parties. Additionally, while the public may recognize these systemic flaws within their country's election processes, they often lack the power and authority to prevent electoral fraud due to deliberate government intimidation and the militarization of voting stations.

Debate should be centered on measures to be taken that strengthen electoral integrity while also respecting Member States' sovereignty and right to self-governance. Data shows that

public trust in parliament across Africa has steadily declined to an average of just 37%, and only 46% trust in their president, reflecting widespread doubt toward state institutions (Adaba and Boio). Delegates should have a clear understanding of their country's views on democracy, election monitoring, and political freedoms. Furthermore, in their research, they should investigate whether the state they are representing has ever experienced any electoral disputes or introduce regulations to prevent electoral fraud.

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