

CRCA

CONFLICT RESEARCH CONSULTING & ADVOCACY

AFRICA PEACE AND CONFLICT OUTLOOK

APCO 2026

*Continental Analysis, Conflict Trends,
Risk Assessment and Strategic
Forecasts for Africa*



PRODUCED BY THE
AFRICAN CONFLICT
ANALYST NETWORK (ACAN)
*The analytical body of Conflict
Research, Consulting & Advocacy (CRCA)*



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AFRICA PEACE AND CONFLICT OUTLOOK (APCO) 2026

Continental Analysis, Conflict Trends, Risk Assessment, and Strategic Forecasts for Africa

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FOREWORD

Message from the Executive Director

Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook (APCO) 2026 arrives at a defining moment for the continent. Across Africa's diverse regions, we are witnessing competing trajectories: a resurgent wave of coups and unconstitutional changes of government in the Sahel and beyond, the deepening of violent extremism from the Lake Chad Basin to the Mozambican coast, and the consolidation of fragile peace processes that demand sustained international support.

Yet Africa also demonstrates extraordinary resilience. Community-led peacebuilding, traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, and an increasingly sophisticated civil society are producing durable solutions where formal state institutions have struggled. This report documents both the risks and the opportunities, offering evidence-based analysis to guide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers.

We present this Outlook not as a counsel of despair, but as a strategic resource for prevention. The conflicts described herein are not inevitable. With timely action, adequate resources, and principled political will, Africa's peace and security architecture can be strengthened to meet the challenges ahead.

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About CRCA

Conflict Research Consulting & Advocacy (CRCA) is a pan-African knowledge and collaboration platform dedicated to advancing conflict research, analysis, and evidence-informed peacebuilding across Africa.

CRCA brings together scholars, conflict analysts, practitioners, policymakers, and emerging researchers to generate, share, and apply knowledge that contributes to conflict prevention, conflict transformation, peacebuilding, and social cohesion. Through research, analysis, dialogue, mentoring, and strategic engagement, CRCA bridges academic knowledge and real-world practice. The organisation promotes African-led perspectives on peace and conflict issues. It provides opportunities for emerging analysts and researchers to develop their skills, contribute to public discourse, and engage with contemporary conflict challenges across the continent.

CRCA believes that sustainable peace requires informed decision-making, inclusive dialogue, and evidence-based approaches grounded in local realities while engaging global knowledge and best practices.

About the African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN)

The African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN) is a curated network of conflict analysts, researchers, and practitioners from across Africa who produce timely, evidence-based analyses of conflict trends, peacebuilding initiatives, governance challenges, and security developments.

ACAN is committed to deepening knowledge of peace and security dynamics across Africa's 55 states. ACAN serves as the principal research unit for the Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook series, coordinating country-level data collection, peer review, and regional analysis.

ACAN members contribute to the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI), regional assessments, and thematic chapters, ensuring that local expertise and contextual knowledge remain at the heart of continental analysis.



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Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook (APCO) 2026 is the product of a collaborative effort across the African continent and beyond. The editorial team extends sincere gratitude to the members of the African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN), whose data collection and analytical contributions form the empirical backbone of this report.

Special recognition is owed to the communities affected by conflict across the continent, whose experiences of violence, displacement, and loss motivate this work, and whose extraordinary courage and resilience animate every page.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword.....	4
Acknowledgements	5
Table of Contents.....	6
List of Abbreviations	7
List of Figures and Tables.....	10
Executive Summary.....	12
CHAPTER 1 — Africa's Peace and Security Landscape.....	16
CHAPTER 2 — Conflict Trends and Drivers.....	25
CHAPTER 3 — Regional Conflict Assessments.....	31
CHAPTER 4 — Country Spotlights.....	39
CHAPTER 5 — African Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026.....	46
CHAPTER 6 — Strategic Forecasts and Conflict Risk Assessment.....	52
CHAPTER 7 — Policy Recommendations.....	56
REFERENCES	60
ANNEXES	
ANNEX A - ACRI 2026 Methodology.....	64
ANNEX B - ACRI 2026 Indicator Definitions and Data Sources.....	71
ANNEX C - ACRI 2026 Country Rankings.....	76
About CRCA.....	79
About ACAN.....	79
About ACRI.....	79
About ACRI Sentinel.....	79
Contact Information.....	80

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Full Designation
ACAN	African Conflict Analyst Network
ACLED	Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project
ACRI	Africa Conflict Risk Index
ADF	Allied Democratic Forces
AES	Alliance of Sahel States (Alliance des États du Sahel)
AMISOM	African Union Mission in Somalia (2007–2022; succeeded by ATMIS, then AUSSOM)
ANC	African National Congress
APCO	Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook
APSA	African Peace and Security Architecture
ASGM	Artisanal and Small-Scale Gold Mining
ATMIS	African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (2022–2024; succeeded by AUSSOM in January 2025)
AU	African Union
AUSSOM	African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia
AU–UN	African Union–United Nations
CAR	Central African Republic
CEWS	Continental Early Warning System
CNDD-FDD	National Council for the Defense of Democracy–Forces for the Defense of Democracy (Burundi)
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CRCA	Conflict Research, Consulting & Advocacy
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
EAC	East African Community
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESN	Eastern Security Network

Abbreviation	Full Designation
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FARDC	Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo)
FAMa	Forces Armées Maliennes / Malian Armed Forces
FDLR	Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (Forces Démocratiques de Libération du Rwanda)
FSI	Fragile States Index (Funds for Peace)
G5	Group of Five for the Sahel (G5 Sahel); dissolved December 2023
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GERD	Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam
GNU	Government of National Unity (Libya)
HDI	Human Development Index
HoR	House of Representatives (Libya)
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDMC	Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IPOB	Indigenous People of Biafra
ISIS-DRC	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria – Democratic Republic of the Congo (the Allied Democratic Forces' Islamic State–aligned faction; part of the Islamic State Central Africa Province, ISCAP)
ISS	Institute for Security Studies
ISWAP	Islamic State West Africa Province
JNIM	Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims)
LNA	Libyan National Army
M23	March 23 Movement
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

Abbreviation	Full Designation
ND-GAIN	Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OLA	Oromo Liberation Army
R-ARCSS	Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan
RECs	Regional Economic Communities
RSF	Rapid Support Forces (Sudan)
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SAF	Sudanese Armed Forces
SAMIM	SADC Mission in Mozambique
SNA	Somali National Army
SPLM-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNSMIL	United Nations Support Mission in Libya
V-Dem	Varieties of Democracy (research project and dataset)
VDP	Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland (Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie)
WDI	World Development Indicators (World Bank)
WGI	World Governance Indicators (World Bank)

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Lowest Risk Countries – ACRI 2026

Figure 2: Top 10 Conflict Hotspots in Africa - ACRI 2026

Figure 3: Top 20 Highest Risk Countries – ACRI 2026

Figure 4: Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) Rankings 2026

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Top 10 Conflict Hotspots in Africa - ACRI 2026

Table 2: ACRI 2026 Domains, Weights, Indicators & Sources

Table 3: ACRI 2026 Domain Scores – Top 10 Countries

Table 4: ACRI 2026 Risk Category Distribution

Table 5: Priority Monitory Contexts 2026-2027

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Key Findings, Continental Risk Overview, and Strategic Priorities

Overview

Africa's peace and security environment in 2026 is defined by the intersection of entrenched armed conflicts, accelerating governance deficits, a climate-security crisis of historic proportions, and a humanitarian emergency that stretches existing response architectures to their limits. This inaugural edition of the Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook (APCO), produced by the African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN) — the analytical body of Conflict Research Consulting & Advocacy (CRCA) — presents a rigorous, evidence-based assessment of continent-wide conflict dynamics, structured risk analysis, and forward-looking strategic guidance for the period 2026–2027.

The APCO 2026 draws on the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI), CRCA's proprietary multi-dimensional conflict risk methodology, which ranks all 54 African states across structural factors, governance & institutions, security & conflict dynamics, and humanitarian factors domains. The Index provides a systematic and comparable basis for conflict risk assessment, moving beyond anecdotal or event-driven analysis to capture the structural drivers that make societies vulnerable to armed violence.

Key Findings

- Six African states are classified as Very High Risk on the ACRI 2026 (CRCA–ACAN, 2026), with Sudan (75.94), Somalia (71.72), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (68.57) occupying the top three positions. A further ten states fall in the High Risk category, with another twenty in the Moderate Risk Category, meaning that more than half of Africa's 54 states carry an elevated, critical, or significant risk profile.
- Violent extremism continues its geographic expansion with particular intensity. Jihadist movements affiliated with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State have consolidated significant territorial control across the Sahel, extended their reach into coastal West Africa — particularly Benin, Togo, and Ghana's northern regions — and maintained an active insurgent presence in the Lake Chad Basin, northeastern Nigeria, and northern Mozambique.
- Six unconstitutional changes of government have occurred in the Sahel since 2020, fundamentally reshaping the region's security architecture and dismantling the multilateral frameworks — the G5 Sahel, MINUSMA, Barkhane — that had anchored international engagement. The resulting governance vacuum has accelerated jihadist expansion and deepened humanitarian distress.
- Electoral violence risks are elevated ahead of elections in eight countries scheduled for 2026–2027, including Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Democratic backsliding — evidenced by shrinking civic space, electoral manipulation, and executive overreach — has been documented in over twenty countries.
- Climate-related conflict drivers are intensifying across multiple sub-regions. Competition over water, pasture, and arable land is fuelling intercommunal violence in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes region. Climate Vulnerability and Population Facing Acute Food Insecurity, two of the

five indicators within the ACRI's Structural Factors domain, record the highest average sub-regional values in West Africa and East Africa, underlining the structural nature of this risk.

- Displacement has reached historic highs, with over 31.5 million internally displaced persons and 14.2 million refugees recorded across the continent (UNHCR, 2026; IDMC, 2026). Sudan and the DRC together account for more than 40 percent of Africa's total internal displacement, and new displacement flows from Sudan's civil war represent one of the fastest-growing humanitarian crises globally.
- Organised crime networks have deepened their operational integration with armed groups and fragile-state governance structures across the Sahel, the Gulf of Guinea, and the Horn of Africa. Illicit gold mining, narcotics transit, human smuggling, and artisanal weapon flows constitute a conflict-financing ecosystem that undermines both state authority and peacebuilding efforts.

ACRI SENTINEL - RESEARCH ALERT

ACRI Sentinel is CRCA's AI-assisted conflict risk assessment platform. As part of its ongoing development, ACRI Sentinel has flagged a number of countries for closer analytical scrutiny based on early escalation indicators. Sentinel is still in its testing and validation phase, so these findings should be read as research output, not as operational early warning alerts. Chapter 6 covers the methodology, validation process, and preliminary results in detail.

Continental Risk Overview

Africa's conflict landscape in 2026 resists simplistic characterisation. The continent is simultaneously experiencing acute armed conflict, fragile peace, post-conflict reconstruction, and genuine democratic consolidation — sometimes within the same country. This diversity of trajectories demands context-sensitive analysis rather than continental generalisations.

In the Sahel and West Africa, the collapse of counter-terrorism partnerships, the withdrawal of French forces, the expulsion of United Nations missions, and the entrenchment of military juntas have created a permissive environment for jihadist expansion. The multi-front security challenges facing Nigeria — including Boko Haram and ISWAP in the northeast, banditry across the northwest and northcentral, and separatist agitation in the southeast — reflect the convergence of multiple risk factors and represent one of the most complex security environments on the continent.

In East and the Horn of Africa, the fragile cessation of hostilities in Ethiopia's Tigray region, negotiated under African Union mediation in November 2022, has held in formal terms, but sub-national conflicts in Amhara, Oromia, and the Somali Region of Ethiopia continue to generate significant displacement and civilian harm. Somalia's Al-Shabaab insurgency has proven remarkably resilient despite sustained counterterrorism pressure, and the country's transitional political structures remain fragile. Sudan's civil war, which erupted in April 2023, has produced a humanitarian catastrophe of generational proportions, with famine conditions spreading across multiple states and peace negotiations making only intermittent progress.

In Central Africa, the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo remains the epicentre of overlapping armed group activity. The M23 resurgence — backed by Rwanda according to UN Group of Experts reports — has resulted in the capture of Goma, mass displacement, and a breakdown in relations between the DRC and its eastern neighbours. The humanitarian system is severely strained, with over 7 million internally displaced persons in the DRC alone.

Against this challenging backdrop, the APCO 2026 also documents significant peacebuilding progress in select contexts. Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province has seen a gradual improvement in security conditions

following the deployment of the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) and the Rwandan Defence Force (RDF), though the insurgency has not been comprehensively defeated. Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone have maintained political stability following competitive elections. Senegal's peaceful democratic transition in 2024 demonstrated that constitutional norms can prevail even in high-pressure political environments.

Table 1: Top 10 Conflict Hotspots in Africa - ACRI 2026

Rank	Country	ACRI Score	Primary Conflict Drivers
1	Sudan	75.94	Civil war (SAF vs. RSF), famine, mass displacement
2	Somalia	71.72	Al-Shabaab insurgency, fragile state institutions, drought
3	DR Congo	68.57	M23/armed group proliferation, eastern DRC crisis, displacement
4	Burkina Faso	65.96	Jihadist territorial control, junta governance, humanitarian blockade
5	South Sudan	65.26	Fragile peace agreement, elite conflict, intercommunal violence
6	Nigeria	64.29	Boko Haram/ISWAP, banditry, farmer-herder conflict, separatism
7	Mali	59.86	Junta rule, JNIM expansion, withdrawal of international forces
8	Ethiopia	59.56	Post-Tigray fragility, Amhara/Oromia conflict, regional tensions
9	Cameroon	56.20	Anglophone crisis, Boko Haram, governance deficit
10	Chad	56.07	Political transition uncertainty, cross-border insurgency, displacement

ACRI 2026 Top Ten Conflict Hotspots | Source: CRCA-ACAN, Africa Conflict Risk Index 2026 (CRCA-ACAN, 2026).

Strategic Outlook for 2026–2027

The strategic outlook for the 2026–2027 period is cautiously pessimistic in aggregate, with meaningful differentiation across sub-regions and country contexts. Three scenarios frame CRCA's forward analysis:

Deterioration Scenario (estimated probability: 40%). Current conflict trends continue or worsen. Jihadist groups consolidate territorial gains in the Sahel. Sudan's civil war deepens into a prolonged state fragmentation. The eastern DRC crisis resists diplomatic resolution. Electoral violence in multiple countries produces post-election instability. International engagement remains fragmented and under-resourced. Climate shocks generate cascading food security crises that overwhelm humanitarian response capacity.

Stabilisation Scenario (estimated probability: 45%). Targeted international and regional investments in conflict prevention, humanitarian response, and governance support yield measurable improvements in specific contexts. The AU Peace and Security Council increases its operational engagement. ECOWAS maintains diplomatic pressure on Sahelian juntas. New mediation efforts in Sudan produce a sustainable ceasefire. The DRC crisis is contained through regional diplomacy. Electoral assistance programmes reduce post-election violence risks.

Transformation Scenario (estimated probability: 15%). Structural reforms address the root causes driving Africa's most entrenched conflicts. Sustained investment in inclusive governance, economic opportunity,

climate adaptation, and community-based peacebuilding shifts the structural risk environment. New African-led conflict prevention frameworks demonstrate effectiveness at scale. This scenario requires sustained political will and a multi-year investment horizon that currently appears beyond the reach of the prevailing international consensus.

The distribution of probabilities across these scenarios underscores the pivotal importance of decisions made in 2026. The window for prevention remains open in several emerging risk contexts, and CRCA urges policymakers, development partners, and African institutions to invest in the evidence-based, early warning capacity and political frameworks that can shift outcomes toward stabilisation and, ultimately, transformation.

Priority Policy Recommendations

- Strengthen the African Union's Peace and Security Architecture, including full operationalisation of the African Standby Force and the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and increase the AU Peace Fund's capitalisation to reduce dependence on external conflict-response financing.
- Prioritise prevention over response by shifting at least 15 percent of peace and security funding toward early warning, conflict prevention, and mediation, in line with the 2018 AU–UN Joint Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security.
- Address the climate-security nexus through integrated national adaptation plans that explicitly incorporate conflict risk analysis, and by establishing climate-security focal points within the AU Commission and IGAD structures.
- Condition bilateral and multilateral development assistance on measurable commitments to constitutional governance, electoral integrity, and civic freedoms, while ensuring that conditionality is applied consistently and without geopolitical double standards.
- Scale up community-based peacebuilding and local mediation as cost-effective, contextually grounded, and durable interventions that complement formal diplomatic processes.
- Enhance regional coordination on violent extremism, with particular attention to preventing the southward spread of Sahelian jihadist networks into coastal West Africa and the Great Lakes region.
- Invest in a comprehensive humanitarian response to Sudan's civil war, treating it with the same political and financial urgency accorded to comparable crises elsewhere in the world.
- Deploy ACRI Sentinel-style AI-powered early warning tools and conflict risk assessment analysis platforms to complement existing monitoring systems, enabling anticipatory action in the critical window before armed violence erupts.

CHAPTER 1

AFRICA'S PEACE AND SECURITY LANDSCAPE

Continental Trends, Governance Dynamics, Security Threats, and Humanitarian Conditions

1.1 Introduction

Africa's peace and security landscape in 2026 presents analysts and policymakers with a paradox of persistence and progress. Long-standing armed conflicts show few signs of sustainable resolution, new flashpoints have emerged with alarming speed, and the structural conditions that generate political violence — governance deficits, economic marginalisation, climate stress, demographic pressure — have in several contexts worsened rather than improved. Yet the same landscape also reveals extraordinary instances of resilience, innovation, and peace: community-led reconciliation processes, novel mediation architectures, and the steady, unglamorous work of civil society actors who sustain social cohesion under conditions of extreme stress.

This chapter provides a structured overview of the continental conflict environment in 2026, examining the key trends, drivers, and dynamics that shape Africa's peace and security landscape. It draws on the ACRI dataset, ACAN member-country analyses, and a review of primary and secondary sources across the structural factors, governance & institutions, security & conflict dynamics, and humanitarian factors domains. The chapter is structured to move from the continental to the sub-regional level, and from descriptive overview to analytical assessment.

A core analytical premise of this report is that Africa's conflicts are not mono-causal. The armed violence that ravages Sudan, the DRC, Somalia, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria simultaneously cannot be attributed to any single factor — whether poverty, ethnicity, religion, or foreign interference. These conflicts are products of interacting causal chains: weak institutions that fail to manage competing claims; economic systems that generate exclusion rather than opportunity; climatic changes that transform resource landscapes and intensify competition; and international dynamics that too often prioritise geopolitical interest over conflict prevention. Understanding these interactions is essential to designing effective responses.

1.2 Continental Conflict Trends

Quantitative data on armed conflict in Africa for 2025–2026 confirm a trend of sustained intensity punctuated by sharp escalations. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED, 2026), African conflict events — encompassing battles, violence against civilians, explosions, and remote violence — have maintained a trajectory of increase since 2019, with the Sahel-West Africa corridor and the Horn of Africa recording the highest event densities. Total fatalities directly attributed to political violence in 2025 exceeded 180,000, with civilian fatalities constituting an estimated 35 percent of the total (ACLED, 2026) — a figure that reflects both the deliberate targeting of non-combatants and the indiscriminate use of force in populated areas.

The geographic distribution of conflict is shifting in ways that demand strategic attention. While East Africa and the Horn remain the most conflict-intensive sub-region by cumulative event count, West Africa and the Sahel have recorded the sharpest increases in conflict intensity over the 2020–2026 period. The expansion of

jihadist movements into coastal West African states previously considered relatively stable — particularly Benin, Togo, and Ghana's Savannah and Upper East regions — represents a significant structural change in the continental risk environment.

The character of armed conflict is also evolving. Increasingly, conflict involves hybrid actors that combine features of insurgent movements, criminal enterprises, and political militias. The Wagner Group's (now Africa Corps) activities in Mali, the Central African Republic, Sudan, and Libya illustrate the growing importance of private military contractors as conflict actors with their own operational agendas. The proliferation of drones, including commercially available quadcopters modified for military use, has altered the tactical environment in several conflict zones. And the use of social media for recruitment, propaganda, and coordination by non-state armed groups creates dimensions of conflict that traditional conflict resolution mechanisms are poorly equipped to address.

Several conflict contexts that showed signs of improvement in 2023–2024 have experienced renewed deterioration. Ethiopia's Tigray peace process, welcomed as a major diplomatic achievement when signed in Pretoria in November 2022, has delivered a formal cessation of hostilities but has been accompanied by continuing atrocities in Amhara and Oromia, unresolved issues around the status of western Tigray, and a gradual deterioration in relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara. Mozambique's Cabo Delgado province has seen improved security conditions in the areas secured by Rwandan and SADC forces, but the insurgency has shown a capacity for geographic displacement, shifting southward and westward. CAR's peace process remains conditional on continued support from Russia's Africa Corps, which has its own governance and accountability deficits.

Conversely, several contexts are displaying meaningful signs of stabilisation. Guinea-Bissau has avoided the political violence that many observers feared in 2024. Sierra Leone has maintained democratic governance despite economic stress. Namibia's presidential transition was conducted without incident. And several countries in Southern Africa — Botswana, Zambia, Mauritius, Cabo Verde — maintain strong peace indicators that contrast sharply with conditions elsewhere on the continent.

1.3 Political Developments and Governance Dynamics

Governance remains the most consequential structural driver of conflict across the African continent. Where state institutions are inclusive, accountable, and capable of managing competing social claims through non-violent mechanisms, the risk of armed conflict is substantially reduced. Where institutions are exclusionary, captured by narrow elites, systematically corrupt, or simply absent in large swaths of national territory, the conditions for political violence are readily met.

The most dramatic governance development of the 2020–2026 period has been the wave of military coups in the Sahel and West Africa. Coups in Mali (2020, 2021), Chad (2021), Guinea (2021), Sudan (2019, 2021), Burkina Faso (2022, twice), Niger (2023), and Gabon (2023) have fundamentally altered the governance landscape of an entire sub-region. These coups share common features: they have occurred in contexts of active insurgency or political crisis; they have been initially received with significant popular support, reflecting deep frustration with incumbent civilian governments; and they have been followed by the consolidation of military power, the suppression of opposition, and the erosion of commitments to democratic transition.

ECOWAS's response to the Sahelian coup wave has exposed significant tensions within the regional body. The threat of military intervention following the Niger coup in July 2023 was not carried out, and the subsequent formation of the Alliance des États du Sahel (AES) by Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger — which includes their formal withdrawal from ECOWAS — has created a de facto fracture in the regional security architecture. This fracture has strategic implications that extend beyond the three member states: it signals that regional norms around democratic governance and unconstitutional change of government cannot be enforced through existing mechanisms, creating a permissive environment for future coups.

Beyond the Sahel, the ACRI Governance & Institutions domain scores reveal a continental pattern of democratic regression that, while less dramatic than a military coup, is no less concerning in its long-term implications. V-Dem's Liberal Democracy Index scores for 2025 (V-Dem Institute, 2025) show that 32 of 54 African states have experienced a net decline in democratic quality over the past five years. Key indicators of regression include: restrictions on media freedom and civic space; manipulation of electoral processes; executive attempts to extend term limits; judicial interference; and the use of anti-terrorism legislation to suppress political opposition.

At the same time, governance developments in 2024–2025 have included genuine positive signals. Senegal's March 2024 presidential election, held after a period of severe political tension, including mass arrests and internet shutdowns, produced a competitive and accepted outcome. South Africa's May 2024 election, while producing a complex coalition government, demonstrated the resilience of independent electoral institutions. Rwanda's efficient public service delivery model — whatever its democratic shortcomings — continues to demonstrate that African states can achieve significant development outcomes under effective governance.

GOVERNANCE ALERT

Freedom House's Freedom in the World 2025 report (Freedom House, 2025) classifies 25 African states as 'Not Free', 16 as 'Partly Free', and only 13 as 'Free'. The trajectory is deteriorating; the number of 'Not Free' states in Africa has increased by 6 since 2020. This deterioration correlates strongly with elevated ACRI scores in the Governance domain.

The relationship between governance quality and conflict risk is not, however, linear or simple. Several countries with strong governance & institution indicators — Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt — carry elevated conflict risk scores in other domains, particularly the security & conflict dynamics domain, due to authoritarian governance styles that suppress political expression without addressing underlying grievances. Conversely, some countries with significant governance deficits — Comoros, Djibouti — carry relatively low overall conflict risk due to the absence of armed groups capable of challenging state authority. The ACRI's multi-domain architecture is designed precisely to capture these non-linear relationships.

1.4 Security Threats and Emerging Risks

Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Violent extremism remains the most immediate and lethal security threat across multiple African sub-regions. Two transnational jihadist networks — al-Qaeda affiliates coordinated through Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State's various African branches, particularly ISWAP in West Africa and ISIS-Mozambique — have demonstrated a capacity for strategic adaptation, territorial expansion, and the development of governance-like structures in areas they control.

In the Sahel, JNIM's control extends across vast swaths of northern and central Mali, northern Burkina Faso, and significant portions of Niger. The group's governance approach — providing security, basic services, and Islamic jurisprudence in areas abandoned by the state — has generated a degree of social embedding that military pressure alone cannot undo. This is not to minimise the coercive dimensions of JNIM governance, which include the imposition of harsh restrictions on women's movement, education, and economic activity, and the violent suppression of any perceived resistance. But it does suggest that counter-terrorism strategies that are focused exclusively on military attrition are insufficient.

ISWAP has demonstrated a similar capacity for adaptation in the Lake Chad Basin, exploiting the organisational fracture between it and Boko Haram to consolidate territory and expand recruitment. In Nigeria, where multi-front security challenges converge, the northeast remains the epicentre of jihadist

activity, while banditry in the northwest — which some analysts characterise as a distinct insurgency rather than organised crime — has produced levels of civilian harm that rival the northeast's toll.

The southward spread of jihadist activity into coastal West Africa is among the most significant security developments of 2025–2026. Northern Benin has experienced a sharp increase in jihadist incursions from Burkina Faso, including several mass casualty attacks on security forces and civilians. Togo's Savanes Region has seen the emergence of a permanent jihadist presence. Ghana's northern border areas, while not yet experiencing large-scale attacks, are being used as transit corridors. The potential for these incursions to destabilise countries with stronger governance records and deeper economic roots represents a qualitatively new risk for West Africa.

Transnational Organised Crime

Transnational organised crime constitutes both an enabler of armed conflict and a driver of instability in its own right across the African continent. The illicit economy — encompassing narcotics transit, illegal mining, wildlife trafficking, human smuggling, counterfeit goods, and illicit financial flows — generates revenue streams that finance armed groups, corrupt state officials, and undermine legitimate governance.

West Africa has become a major transit hub for South American cocaine en route to European markets, with an estimated 30–50 metric tonnes passing through the region annually (UNODC, 2025). The associated corruption of military and political elites, and the capture of judicial systems by narco-networks, has produced governance fragility that intersects with and amplifies conventional conflict risks. In Guinea-Bissau — long identified as a 'narco-state' — the narcotics economy has survived multiple coups and political transitions, suggesting a structural entrenchment that political reform alone cannot address.

Illegal artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) in the DRC, Central African Republic, Mali, Burkina Faso, Sudan, and Zimbabwe finances armed groups, generates conflict over mining territories, and undermines formal economic governance. In eastern DRC, control over mineral-rich territories is a primary driver of armed group activity, with over 120 distinct armed groups competing for access to gold, coltan, cassiterite, and wolfram (UN Group of Experts on the DRC, 2025). The international supply chains through which these minerals reach consumer markets in Asia and Europe represent an underutilised leverage point for conflict prevention.

Maritime Security Challenges

Maritime insecurity in the Gulf of Guinea has remained stubbornly persistent despite the deployment of international naval assets and regional counter-piracy frameworks. While the number of reported piracy incidents declined in 2024–2025 compared to the 2020–2021 peak, the Gulf of Guinea continues to account for the majority of global maritime kidnapping incidents, with crews held for ransom for extended periods (ICC International Maritime Bureau, 2025). The economic cost to regional trade and the chilling effect on foreign investment in coastal economies are significant.

In the Red Sea and Indian Ocean, the Houthi campaign of attacks on commercial shipping, in the context of the Gaza conflict, has had direct implications for Africa: Djibouti's port revenues, a critical element of the country's economic model, have been affected by shipping route diversions, and the increased naval presence of extra-continental powers in the region introduces new geopolitical dynamics into an already complex security environment.

Piracy in the Gulf of Guinea is embedded in broader governance failures, economic marginalisation, and the absence of coastal community livelihood alternatives. Effective responses require investment in coastal community economic development, strengthened maritime law enforcement capacity, and regional intelligence sharing — none of which can be achieved through naval deployments alone.

Cyber and Information Threats

The information environment has emerged as a significant domain of conflict and insecurity across the continent. Disinformation campaigns — including those attributed to Russian and Chinese state actors — have been documented in association with Sahelian coup contexts, operating to delegitimise Western partners, normalise military governance, and manufacture consent for the presence of private military contractors. In the Central African Republic, coordinated disinformation campaigns attributed to Wagner-linked actors have been detected spreading anti-French, anti-UN, and anti-civil society narratives.

Hate speech and incitement spread through social media platforms have been linked to intercommunal violence in Ethiopia, Nigeria, Cameroon, and the DRC. The speed and reach of social media platforms create the conditions for rapid escalation of localised disputes into large-scale violence, as was documented in Burkina Faso's 2022 Sanmatenga violence and Kenya's 2022 post-election incidents. African states' capacity to regulate information environments without undermining legitimate political expression and media freedom remains deeply limited, and global platform companies have invested inadequately in content moderation for African languages and contexts.

1.5 Humanitarian Trends and Displacement

Africa's humanitarian situation in 2026 is defined by scale, complexity, and a chronic financing gap that leaves millions of people without adequate assistance. The continent hosts the majority of the world's internally displaced persons and a substantial proportion of its refugee population, with crises in Sudan, the DRC, Ethiopia, Somalia, and South Sudan generating displacement flows that strain both regional host countries and the global humanitarian system.

Sudan's civil war, which erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has produced the fastest-growing humanitarian crisis in the world. By mid-2026, an estimated 12 million Sudanese have been internally displaced, while an additional 2.5 million have fled to neighbouring countries — Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic. Famine conditions, declared by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in 2024, have spread to multiple states, including North Darfur, West Kordofan, and South Kordofan. The deliberate destruction of health infrastructure, food systems, and water supply by both warring parties constitutes what humanitarian organisations are describing as a war on civilians.

The humanitarian financing environment has become increasingly constrained. Total humanitarian funding for African crises in 2025 met approximately 43 percent of identified needs (OCHA Financial Tracking Service, 2026), creating significant gaps in food assistance, health services, WASH (water, sanitation, and hygiene), and protection programming. The reduction in US foreign assistance from 2025, the ongoing pressures on European donor budgets from competing crisis priorities, and the slow growth of Gulf and Asian humanitarian funding contributions have deepened the financing crisis. African states themselves contribute a fraction of the funding required to meet the needs within their own borders, reflecting both fiscal constraints and, in some cases, political sensitivity around humanitarian access.

The protection environment for humanitarian workers has deteriorated sharply. Aid worker casualties in 2025 — including fatalities, abductions, and assaults — were among the highest on record, with Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia accounting for the majority of incidents (Humanitarian Outcomes, 2026). Humanitarian access restrictions, including bureaucratic obstruction, movement limitations, and active interference by conflict parties, are reducing the operational reach of humanitarian organisations precisely in the areas of greatest need.

1.6 Climate, Food Security, and Conflict

Climate Stress and Resource Competition

The relationship between climate change and armed conflict in Africa has moved from academic hypothesis to documented operational reality. CRCA's ACRI Structural Factors domain, which incorporates Climate Vulnerability and Population Facing Acute Food Insecurity alongside State Fragility, the Human Development Index, and Economic Marginalisation, shows consistently elevated scores across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Central Africa — precisely the sub-regions that also carry the highest overall conflict risk.

Reduced and increasingly erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, and shifts in seasonal patterns have altered the viability of pastoral and agricultural livelihoods across large swaths of the continent. In the Sahel, where agro-pastoral systems have historically managed resource competition through customary norms and seasonal migration corridors, the contraction of viable grazing land and the advance of the Sahara desert have disrupted these adaptive mechanisms. The result is an intensification of farmer-herder conflict that, while not a new phenomenon, has become more frequent, more lethal, and more resistant to traditional mediation.

The Lake Chad Basin offers a graphic illustration of the climate-conflict nexus. Lake Chad has shrunk by approximately 90 percent over the past 60 years due to a combination of reduced rainfall, increased evaporation driven by rising temperatures, and excessive withdrawal for irrigation (UNEP, 2024). The loss of this critical resource has impoverished fishing communities, reduced water availability for both humans and livestock, and created a context of economic desperation that jihadist recruiters — particularly Boko Haram and ISWAP — have systematically exploited.

Food Insecurity and Vulnerability

Food insecurity in Africa in 2026 is shaped by the interaction of climatic shocks, supply chain disruptions (many traceable to the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war on fertiliser and grain prices), fiscal constraints on import-dependent states, and conflict-driven agricultural disruption. The FAO's latest State of Food Security report (FAO, 2026) estimates that over 280 million people in Africa are experiencing food insecurity at IPC Phase 3 (crisis) level or above, with famine conditions (IPC Phase 5) confirmed in parts of Sudan and South Sudan (IPC, 2026).

The interaction between food insecurity and conflict is bidirectional. Food insecurity creates the conditions for social grievance and economic desperation that armed groups exploit for recruitment. And conflict directly destroys food systems — displacing farmers, preventing planting and harvest, disrupting supply chains, and diverting agricultural land to military uses. Disentangling these dynamics is essential for designing responses that address root causes rather than symptoms.

Climate-Induced Mobility and Displacement

Climate-induced displacement is increasingly recognised as a distinct and growing driver of population movement in Africa, operating alongside — and interacting with — conflict-driven displacement. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's projections (IPCC, 2023) indicate that climate change could displace between 250 million and 300 million people globally by 2050, with sub-Saharan Africa accounting for a disproportionate share. In the near term, slow-onset climate changes — sea-level rise affecting coastal cities, prolonged drought reducing rural livelihoods, desertification reducing cultivable land — are generating migration pressures that existing legal frameworks and humanitarian response systems were not designed to manage.

The nexus between climate displacement and conflict risk is particularly acute in contexts where climate migrants move into areas already experiencing intercommunal tension. In Nigeria's Middle Belt, where farmer-herder conflict has cost tens of thousands of lives over the past decade, southward migration by

herders driven from their traditional grazing areas by drought and desertification has intensified competition over land with farming communities, with lethal consequences.

1.7 Regional Overview

North Africa

North Africa's conflict landscape is dominated by Libya's protracted political and military division, which has persisted since the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in 2011. The country remains effectively divided between a UN-recognised Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli and the Libyan National Army (LNA) commanded by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar in the east, with neither side in a position to achieve military victory or willing to commit to a comprehensive political settlement. External interference — from Turkey (supporting the GNU), the UAE, Egypt, and Russia (supporting the LNA through Africa Corps) — has perpetuated the stalemate while generating significant humanitarian harm.

Tunisia's democratic experiment, inaugurated by the 2011 revolution, has effectively ended following President Saied's 2021 self-coup and the adoption of a new constitution in 2022 that concentrated power in the executive. The country's economic crisis — characterised by high unemployment, fiscal stress, and declining foreign exchange reserves — creates conditions for social unrest that could escalate if political repression deepens. Algeria maintains stability through a combination of resource-backed patronage and security service control, but the underlying pressures of youth unemployment, regional identity politics, and limited political space are unresolved. Morocco's Western Sahara dispute, while a persistent source of regional tension, is unlikely to generate large-scale armed conflict in the near term.

West Africa and the Sahel

West Africa and the Sahel constitute the continent's most dynamically deteriorating security environment. The combination of jihadist expansion, military coups, ECOWAS fracture, international partner withdrawal, and humanitarian crisis has created a compound emergency without precedent in the region's post-independence history. JNIM's territorial reach now extends across most of northern Mali, large parts of Burkina Faso, and significant areas of Niger, representing effective state collapse in these areas. The juntas governing Burkina Faso and Mali lack both the military capacity to dislodge entrenched jihadist networks and the governance legitimacy to build the community-level trust essential to sustainable counter-insurgency.

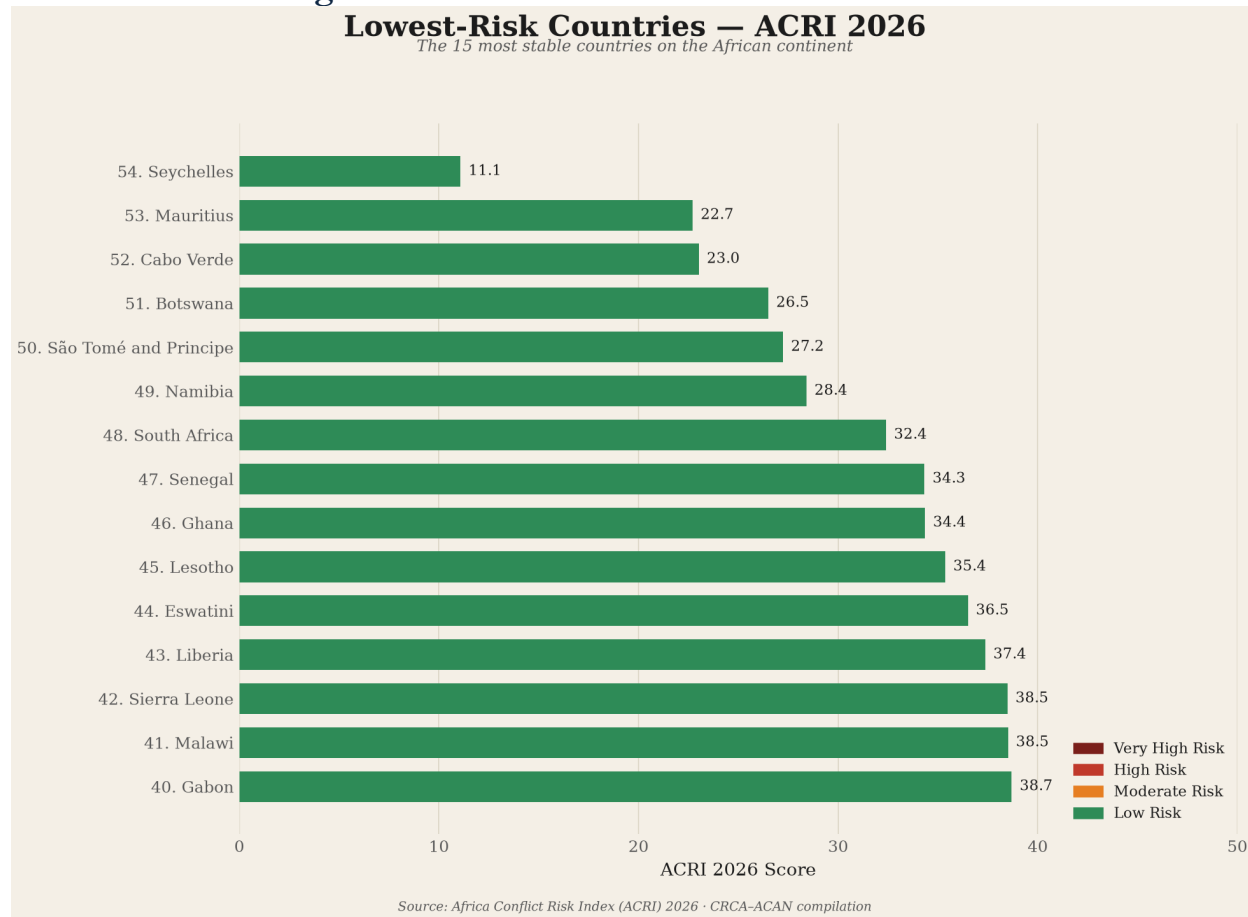
Nigeria's security crisis defies single characterisation. The Boko Haram-ISWAP insurgency in the northeast, which has claimed over 35,000 lives since 2009 (ACLED, 2026), continues despite sustained military pressure and the fragmentation of Boko Haram following the death of Abubakar Shekau. Banditry in the northwest — involving armed groups that kidnap for ransom, attack farming communities, and in some cases coordinate with ISWAP — has generated massive displacement and economic disruption. Farmer-herder conflict in the Middle Belt has its own dynamics, rooted in land competition, identity politics, and the failure of state mediation mechanisms. And separatist agitation in the southeast, associated with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB), creates additional security demands on a military and police service that is already severely overstretched.

Central Africa

Central Africa's conflict landscape is dominated by the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, where the resurgence of the M23 armed group — allegedly supported by Rwanda — has produced the most serious deterioration in regional security since the Second Congo War. The M23's capture of Goma in January 2025 and subsequent expansion into Masisi and Rutshuru territories has displaced over 2 million people since the resurgence began (OCHA, 2026), produced widespread atrocities against civilians, and strained relations between the DRC and Rwanda to the point of direct military confrontations along the shared border. The broader ecosystem of over 120 armed groups operating in eastern DRC — including the FDLR, the Allied

Democratic Forces (ADF/ISIS-DRC), Mai-Mai militias, and numerous community self-defence groups — creates an extraordinarily complex operational environment that defies simple military solutions.

Figure 1: Lowest Risk Countries - ACRI 2026



Sources: ACRI, 2026 CRCA-ACAN Compilation

Cameroon's overlapping conflicts — the Anglophone crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions, and Boko Haram activity in the Far North — represent distinct but interacting sources of instability. The Anglophone crisis, now in its eighth year, has produced over 700,000 displaced persons (OCHA, 2026), the effective collapse of educational and health services in conflict-affected areas, and a profound political impasse between the secessionist movement and the Yaoundé government. Humanitarian access to crisis-affected areas remains severely restricted.

East and Horn of Africa

East Africa and the Horn present a landscape of acute and protracted crises interspersed with notable governance achievements. Somalia's Al-Shabaab insurgency has proven remarkably durable despite the withdrawal of AMISOM and the rebranding of the AU mission as ATMIS (now AUSSOM, African Union Support and Stabilisation Mission in Somalia). The group controls significant rural territory, extracts taxation from populations and businesses across much of southern Somalia, and carries out regular complex attacks in Mogadishu and other urban centres. The formation of a new Somali government in 2022, and the subsequent military offensive against Al-Shabaab, produced some territorial gains but has not broken the movement's fundamental capacity for resistance and regeneration.

Sudan's civil war, as noted above, has produced a humanitarian catastrophe (OCHA, 2026; IPC, 2026). Ethiopia's transition from the Tigray conflict has been incomplete, with sub-national violence in Amhara and Oromia continuing to generate significant displacement and civilian casualties (ACLED, 2026; IDMC, 2026). South Sudan's Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict (R-ARCSS) faces mounting stress as the 2026 election timeline approaches and elite tensions within the governing coalition intensify.

Southern Africa

Southern Africa remains the continent's most stable sub-region on aggregate, but this stability is uneven and, in some contexts, fragile. South Africa, the region's largest economy and most established democracy, faces escalating social stress driven by persistently high unemployment (officially at 32 percent, with youth unemployment exceeding 60 percent) (Statistics South Africa, 2025), inadequate public service delivery, high levels of violent crime, and political volatility within the ANC-led Government of National Unity formed after the May 2024 election. Zimbabwe's economic fragility and political authoritarianism create ongoing vulnerability. Mozambique's Cabo Delgado crisis, while showing some improvement, has not been durably resolved.

The sub-region's brighter spots are significant. Botswana, Namibia, and Mauritius maintain strong governance indicators and low conflict risk. Zambia's successful democratic transfer of power in 2021 and ongoing economic reform programme, despite ongoing debt restructuring challenges, represent a positive governance trajectory. Madagascar's perennial political fragility has not, in recent years, escalated into large-scale armed conflict.

1.8 Key Takeaways

- Africa's peace and security landscape in 2026 is characterised by compound crises in which armed conflict, governance failures, climate stress, and humanitarian emergency interact and amplify each other. Single-domain responses are insufficient.
- The Sahel coup wave has fundamentally altered the regional security architecture of West Africa, creating governance vacuums that jihadist movements are systematically exploiting. The ECOWAS fracture and the formation of the AES require a strategic rethinking of regional conflict prevention frameworks.
- Sudan's civil war is the most under-resourced major humanitarian crisis in the world relative to the scale of need. The international community's inadequate response reflects a dangerous normalisation of African suffering that demands urgent correction.
- The geographic expansion of violent extremism — from the Sahel into coastal West Africa, and from East Africa into the Great Lakes — requires a regional, rather than country-specific, counter-terrorism strategy.
- Climate change is not a future risk for Africa's security environment — it is an operating reality that is already reshaping resource competition, livelihoods, and conflict dynamics across multiple sub-regions.
- Significant peacebuilding progress is documented in several contexts, demonstrating that conflict trajectories are not predetermined and that investment in prevention, mediation, and inclusive governance yields measurable results.

CHAPTER 2**CONFLICT TRENDS AND DRIVERS**

Armed Conflict Patterns, Governance Challenges, Extremism, Climate Risks, and Economic Pressures

2.1 Armed Conflict Patterns and Dynamics

The armed conflict landscape across Africa in 2026 exhibits several defining structural characteristics that distinguish it from conflict patterns in earlier decades and from conflict environments in other global regions. Understanding these characteristics is essential for designing responses that are appropriately calibrated to the actual nature of contemporary African conflict.

First, the fragmentation of armed actors. Africa's contemporary conflicts involve a multiplicity of armed actors — state forces, rebel movements, community militias, jihadist groups, criminal networks, mercenary forces, and hybrid organisations that combine elements of several of these categories. In eastern DRC, over 120 distinct armed groups have been identified by the UN Group of Experts; in Libya, dozens of armed factions operate with varying degrees of attachment to competing political authorities; in Nigeria, the security landscape includes formal military and police forces, civilian joint task forces, Amotekun (southwest security outfits), and a range of community self-defence groups alongside insurgent and criminal organisations. This fragmentation complicates both military and political responses: ceasefires negotiated with one faction do not bind others, and military degradation of one group often produces recruitment benefits for its competitors.

Second, the persistence of conflict despite military pressure. Several of Africa's most active conflict theatres have been subjected to sustained military counter-insurgency operations — the Multinational Joint Task Force against Boko Haram/ISWAP in the Lake Chad Basin, the G5 Sahel Joint Force, the French Barkhane operation, the AU Mission in Somalia — without achieving the conflict resolution outcomes their mandates envisaged. This reflects the fundamental insight, increasingly accepted in conflict studies, that military force can degrade armed groups but cannot address the governance failures, economic exclusion, and social grievances that sustain armed mobilisation. The Sahelian coup wave has, if anything, accelerated this realisation by demonstrating that military actors are as capable of political disruption as armed non-state groups.

Third, the increasing civilian harm dimension of African conflict. Deliberate targeting of civilians — including through mass killings, sexual violence, forced displacement, and destruction of livelihoods — is documented in virtually every major conflict context. The targeting of civilian infrastructure, including hospitals, schools, water facilities, and food markets, as a deliberate strategy by both state and non-state actors has been documented in Sudan, Ethiopia, DRC, and Cameroon. These violations of international humanitarian law demand both accountability mechanisms and preventive action.

2.2 Political Instability and Governance Challenges

Political instability and governance deficits remain the single most powerful structural driver of conflict risk across the African continent. CRCA's ACRI Governance & Institutions domain — which incorporates indicators on rule of law, control of corruption, political stability & absence of violence, regime type/democratic governance, and civil liberties — shows a strongly negative correlation with overall conflict

risk: countries with low Governance & Institutions domain scores almost invariably carry elevated overall ACRI scores.

The mechanisms through which governance failures generate conflict risk are multiple and reinforcing. Weak state institutions fail to provide public goods — security, justice, infrastructure, social services — creating service delivery grievances that armed groups can exploit. Corrupt governance structures divert public resources to political and military elites, generating inequality-driven grievances. Exclusionary political systems that concentrate power and resources in the hands of particular ethnic, regional, or religious groups create the structural conditions for identity-based political mobilisation that can escalate into armed conflict. And states that lack the capacity to exercise effective territorial control across their entire jurisdiction create ungoverned spaces in which armed groups can operate, recruit, and finance themselves with impunity.

The Fragile States Index (FSI) 2025, produced by the Fund for Peace (Fund for Peace, 2025), ranks 15 African states among the world's 20 most fragile countries, with South Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Syria, and the DRC occupying the top five positions. The FSI's cohesion, economic, social, and cross-cutting indicators paint a picture of multidimensional fragility in which the challenges of political governance are compounded by economic stress, social division, and cross-border security threats.

One of the most consequential governance challenges of the current period is the erosion of civilian control over security forces. In numerous African contexts, military and security institutions have developed autonomous political interests that they are prepared to defend through unconstitutional means. The Sahelian coup wave reflects this dynamic starkly: in each case, military officers who held significant power under civilian governments determined that they could better advance their institutional and personal interests through the removal of elected governments. This pattern underscores the importance of security sector reform — including civilian oversight mechanisms, accountability frameworks, and the cultivation of a professional military ethic — as a conflict prevention investment.

2.3 Violent Extremism and Terrorism

Violent extremism has emerged as the dominant security threat in multiple African sub-regions, with the geographic footprint of jihadist movements expanding faster than international counter-terrorism responses can contain. The ideological, organisational, and tactical evolution of African jihadist movements over the past decade reflects significant learning and adaptation.

JNIM — the al-Qaeda affiliate operating across the Sahel — has demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the political economy of conflict. Rather than seeking to control urban centres, where they would be exposed to air power and concentrated military force, JNIM has focused on controlling rural territory, taxing commerce, and providing governance-like services to populations abandoned by the state. This 'winning hearts and minds' approach is complemented by targeted assassinations of community leaders who resist their authority, creating a climate of fear that reinforces compliance. The group's engagement with local community tensions — including farmer-herder conflicts and inter-ethnic disputes — as a recruitment mechanism demonstrates political sophistication beyond simple jihadist ideology.

ISWAP's trajectory in the Lake Chad Basin has followed a different but equally concerning path. Following the death of Abubakar Shekau in 2021, ISWAP absorbed the majority of Boko Haram's fighting force, dramatically increasing its operational capacity. The group has demonstrated an ability to carry out complex, multi-phase attacks against military installations, acquiring weapons and vehicles that enhance its conventional military capabilities. Its financial model — incorporating taxation of agriculture and fishing, kidnapping for ransom, and exploitation of illicit mineral trade — has proven resilient to counter-financing measures.

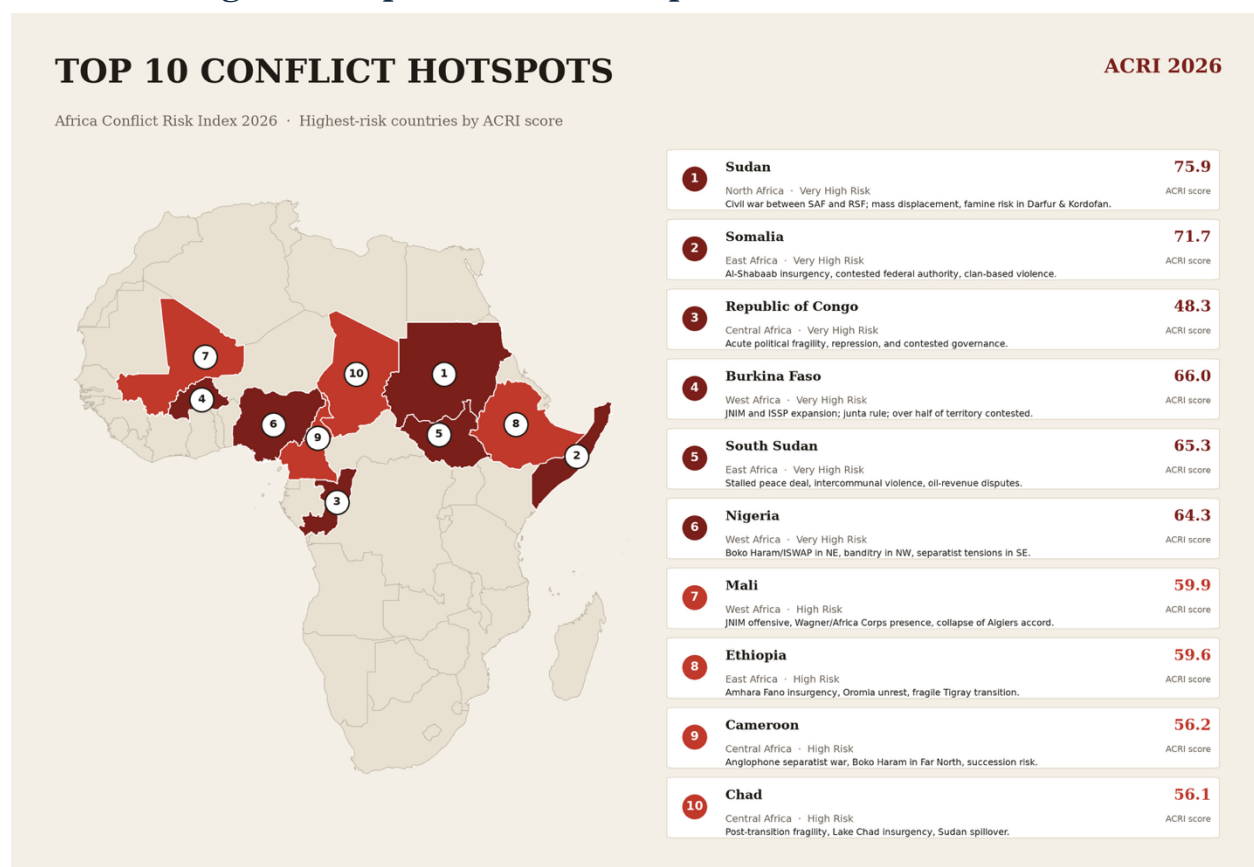
2.4 Communal, Ethnic, and Identity-Based Violence

While jihadist movements command international attention, communal and identity-based violence — often characterised as 'local' and therefore less strategically significant — accounts for a substantial proportion of

conflict-related fatalities across the continent. Farmer-herder conflict in Nigeria's Middle Belt, intercommunal violence in South Sudan's Jonglei State, ethnic violence in Ethiopia's Oromia and Amhara regions, and identity-based conflict in the DRC's Ituri and South Kivu provinces collectively produce displacement and civilian harm comparable in scale to the more prominent insurgencies.

The drivers of communal conflict are structural rather than simply a matter of 'ancient ethnic hatreds' — a framing that has been thoroughly discredited by empirical research. Competition over land, water, pasture, and other natural resources is consistently identified as the primary material driver of farmer-herder conflict. This competition is intensified by climate change, population growth, the breakdown of customary resource-sharing arrangements, and the failure of state land administration systems. Political elites who mobilise ethnic identities for electoral purposes, and who arm community militias for political protection, act as force multipliers that transform localised resource disputes into sustained political violence.

Figure 2: Top 10 Conflict Hotspots in Africa - ACRI 2026



Sources: ACRI, 2026 CRCA-ACAN Compilation

The Plateau State and Kaduna State conflicts in Nigeria illustrate this dynamic. What began as localised disputes over grazing routes between Fulani herders and Berom, Mwaghavul, and other farming communities has, over decades, been transformed by political manipulation, weapons proliferation, the collapse of traditional mediation mechanisms, and the securitisation of responses that treat herders as a security threat rather than a community with legitimate grievances. The result is a conflict that has proven resistant to both military and political solutions.

2.5 Climate-Related Security Risks

Resource Competition

Climate change is fundamentally altering the resource landscape across the continent, with direct implications for conflict dynamics. Water scarcity, which affects over 40 percent of Africa's population with increasing severity (UN-Water, 2024), is generating interstate tensions — including the ongoing dispute between Ethiopia, Sudan, and Egypt over the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) — and intensifying intrastate resource competition. The GERD dispute, while managed diplomatically since the signing of a Declaration of Principles in 2015, remains unresolved, and the potential for escalation to armed confrontation cannot be dismissed, given the existential nature of the Nile water resource for both Egypt and Sudan.

Farmer-Herder Conflicts

The intensification of farmer-herder conflict across the Sahel-Horn corridor represents one of the most significant climate-security dynamics in Africa today. Pastoral communities, whose livelihoods depend on the mobility of livestock across seasonal grazing corridors, are losing access to traditional pastures as rainfall becomes more erratic, the Sahara advances, and farming communities expand into areas previously used for grazing. The resulting land conflicts have been documented across a broad geographic arc from Senegal and Mauritania through Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda.

Climate Fragility Nexus

The ND-GAIN Country Index, which measures countries' vulnerability to climate change and their readiness to adapt (ND-GAIN, 2025), shows that the 20 most climate-vulnerable African countries are also among the 30 countries ranking from Very High Risk to Moderate Risk on the ACRI 2026 (CRCA-ACAN, 2026). This correlation is not coincidental: climate vulnerability and conflict risk share common structural antecedents, including weak governance, economic underdevelopment, limited adaptive capacity, and geographic exposure to climate hazards.

2.6 Economic Pressures and Social Grievances

Inflation and Cost of Living Pressures

Economic stress across the continent has intensified in 2025–2026, driven by a combination of inherited vulnerabilities and new external shocks. The sustained impact of COVID-19 on African economies, the food and energy price increases generated by the Russia-Ukraine war, the strengthening US dollar (which increases debt service costs for dollar-denominated obligations), and the reduction in development assistance have combined to produce a cost-of-living crisis that has increased social grievances and created fertile conditions for political instability.

Food price inflation has been particularly severe in import-dependent countries. Nigeria, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Zimbabwe have all experienced food price increases exceeding 50 percent in 2024–2025, driven by currency depreciation, import disruption, and domestic supply chain failures (World Bank, 2025). For households already spending 60–80 percent of income on food — a common situation among the continent's poorest quintiles — these price increases represent an immediate and acute welfare crisis that can translate rapidly into political grievance.

Youth Unemployment

Africa's demographic profile (UN Population Division, 2024) — with a median age of approximately 19 years and the world's fastest-growing youth population — creates both an extraordinary development opportunity and a significant social risk. The World Bank estimates that Africa will need to create 12 million new jobs per

year through 2030 to absorb new labour market entrants (World Bank, 2025). Actual job creation in formal sectors falls far short of this target, producing a large and growing cohort of young people who are educated to levels their economies cannot absorb and who face structural exclusion from formal economic participation.

This youth unemployment challenge intersects with conflict risk in ways that are empirically documented and analytically significant. Armed groups — including jihadist movements, criminal networks, and political militias — actively recruit from among economically marginalised young men, offering income, status, and a sense of belonging that formal social structures fail to provide. The correlation between youth unemployment rates and the geographic recruitment patterns of JNIM, ISWAP, and Al-Shabaab is strong and consistent. Addressing youth economic exclusion is not merely a development policy priority; it is a conflict prevention imperative.

Fiscal Stress and Public Debt

The fiscal position of many African governments has deteriorated significantly over the past five years, constraining their capacity to invest in the public goods — security, education, health, infrastructure — that build social cohesion and reduce conflict risk. Total public debt across sub-Saharan Africa has risen to an average of approximately 65 percent of GDP (IMF, 2025), with debt service consuming an increasing share of government revenues that might otherwise fund social expenditure. Zambia's debt restructuring, Ghana's IMF programme, Ethiopia's debt service challenges, and Kenya's sovereign debt concerns are among the most visible manifestations of a continental fiscal stress that undermines governance capacity.

2.7 Humanitarian and Displacement Dynamics

The humanitarian situation in Africa in 2026 represents the convergence of multiple acute crises and chronic vulnerabilities that overwhelm both national response capacities and international humanitarian systems. The scale and complexity of displacement — combining conflict-driven, climate-induced, and economic migration — defies traditional categorisation and demands more integrated and flexible response frameworks.

Refugee movements across international borders present particular challenges for host countries, many of which already face domestic governance and service delivery challenges. Chad, one of the world's poorest countries and itself classified as High Risk on the ACRI (CRCA–ACAN, 2026), hosts over 1 million refugees from Sudan, the CAR, and Nigeria (UNHCR, 2026). Uganda, which has won international recognition for its relatively open refugee policy, hosts over 1.6 million refugees, predominantly from South Sudan and the DRC (UNHCR, 2026). The fiscal and social costs of refugee hosting, which are inadequately compensated through international burden-sharing mechanisms, create domestic political pressures that can generate host-community tensions and, in some contexts, contribute to political instability.

The protection of internally displaced persons presents distinct challenges, as IDPs remain within the jurisdiction of states that have, in many cases, been directly responsible for their displacement. Access to IDPs in conflict zones is frequently contested by governments that characterise humanitarian access as an infringement on sovereignty, while armed non-state groups impose their own access restrictions based on tactical considerations. The result is that the most vulnerable populations — those displaced by active armed conflict — are often the least accessible to humanitarian assistance.

2.8 Outlook for 2026–2027

Looking ahead to 2026–2027, several key risk trajectories merit particular attention from policymakers, humanitarian actors, and conflict prevention practitioners.

Sudan's civil war shows no signs of sustainable resolution. Both the SAF and the RSF retain sufficient capacity to continue prosecuting the war, external support for the warring parties continues to flow despite international calls for restraint, and the humanitarian consequences of continued fighting are catastrophic.

The risk of state fragmentation — with Sudan effectively partitioned between SAF-controlled east and north and RSF-controlled west and southwest — represents a scenario with profoundly destabilising implications for the broader region.

The Sahelian security vacuum will almost certainly deepen before it improves. The junta's expulsion of international partners, combined with Africa Corps' inability to decisively defeat JNIM, creates a context in which jihadist territorial consolidation is the most probable near-term trajectory. The southward spread of jihadist activity into coastal West Africa represents a qualitatively new risk that requires pre-emptive investment in the governance and security capacity of countries not yet deeply affected.

Electoral dynamics in 2026–2027 will be a significant source of political risk across multiple contexts. Eight countries are scheduled to hold elections, and in at least five — Nigeria (governorship elections), Tanzania, Burundi, Uganda, and the DRC — the risk of electoral manipulation, post-election violence, or democratic backsliding is assessed as elevated. CRCA's ACRI Sentinel platform (still in its testing and validation phase) is actively monitoring pre-election indicators in all eight contexts.

The climate-security nexus will continue to intensify. 2025 recorded the hottest temperatures in Africa in 150 years of instrumental measurement (World Meteorological Organization, 2026), and the projected climate trajectory for 2026–2027 suggests continued above-average temperatures, intensified drought in the Sahel and Horn, and an increased frequency of flood events in Central and West Africa. These climate dynamics will translate into continued pressure on agricultural livelihoods, heightened resource competition, and increased displacement — each of which has direct conflict risk implications.

CHAPTER 3**REGIONAL CONFLICT ASSESSMENTS**

North Africa | West Africa and the Sabel | Central Africa | East and Horn of Africa | Southern Africa

3.1 North Africa**Regional Overview**

North Africa's security landscape is shaped by three overarching dynamics: the persistence of Libya's political and military fragmentation; the tightening of authoritarian governance in Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria; and the region's role as both a transit zone and a destination for migration and displacement flows from sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East. The sub-region is more directly integrated into Middle Eastern and European security dynamics than other African sub-regions, creating a distinctive geopolitical context that shapes both conflict drivers and response options.

The ACRI 2026 scores for North African states (CRCA–ACAN, 2026) reflect this complexity. Libya (53.16, High Risk) carries the region's highest conflict risk score, reflecting its ongoing political fragmentation and armed actor landscape. Egypt (49.21, Moderate Risk) registers elevated scores in the Governance & Institutions domain due to the sustained repression of political opposition under President el-Sisi, offset by relatively strong socioeconomic and security management indicators. Tunisia (42.33, Moderate Risk) reflects the democratic regression under President Saied alongside relatively better socioeconomic conditions than its Saharan neighbours. Morocco (43.68, Moderate Risk) and Algeria (43.26, Moderate Risk) show broadly comparable risk profiles, with security management offsetting governance concerns.

Libya: Protracted Fragmentation

Libya in 2026 remains the defining case study of protracted political fragmentation in North Africa. Seven years after the collapse of the most recent major power-sharing arrangement, the country continues to be governed by competing authorities: the Government of National Unity (GNU) in Tripoli, nominally recognised by the United Nations, and the House of Representatives (HoR)/Libyan National Army (LNA) government in the east, supported by Field Marshal Khalifa Haftar. Numerous sub-national armed actors — urban militias, tribal forces, jihadist remnants, and migrant-facilitating criminal networks — operate within and between these two governance poles, creating a highly fragmented security environment.

The humanitarian consequences of this fragmentation are significant. Over 300,000 Libyans remain internally displaced, while the country hosts an estimated 600,000–700,000 migrants and refugees from sub-Saharan Africa (UNHCR, 2026; IOM, 2025), many of whom are subjected to severe human rights abuses — including arbitrary detention, torture, and forced labour — by militias and criminal networks. Libya's role as a transit country for Mediterranean migration has drawn sustained European attention, generating a complex set of containment-oriented migration cooperation agreements that have significant humanitarian implications.

International mediation efforts, coordinated by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), have produced several frameworks — the Libyan Political Dialogue Forum, the October 2020 ceasefire, various roadmaps — but have consistently failed to translate agreements into durable political arrangements. The UN arms embargo on Libya has been systematically violated by multiple external actors, and the presence of Africa

Corps personnel in eastern Libya and Sudan introduces an additional complicating variable into the regional political economy.

Egypt, Tunisia, and Algeria: Authoritarian Consolidation

Egypt's political landscape under President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi has been characterised by the systematic dismantling of the civic and political infrastructure that emerged from the 2011 revolution. Independent media, civil society organisations, labour unions, and political parties operating outside of sanctioned bounds have all faced sustained legal and extra-legal pressure. The ACRI Governance & Institutions domain scores Egypt among the lowest-ranked states in North Africa on control of corruption and civil liberties indicators. Against this background, Egypt's economic challenges (IMF, 2025) — high inflation, declining foreign exchange reserves, a large debt service burden, and the pressure of hosting over 9 million migrants and refugees (UNHCR, 2026) — create potential flashpoints for social unrest.

Tunisia's democratic regression under President Kais Saied — who in July 2021 suspended parliament, dismissed the government, and subsequently adopted a new constitution that concentrated power in the executive — has produced a political environment characterised by the suppression of opposition, the jailing of critics, and the erosion of judicial independence. The economic crisis, with unemployment above 15 percent and youth unemployment approaching 40 percent (World Bank, 2025), combined with political repression, creates conditions of latent instability that the Tunisian security services are managing through surveillance and pre-emptive detention rather than addressing through inclusive political processes.

Key Takeaways: North Africa

- Libya's fragmentation is structural and will not be resolved through military means alone; a new internationally supported political process with genuine buy-in from eastern as well as western power centres is essential.
- Egypt and Tunisia's authoritarian trajectories create long-term governance risks that international partners currently subordinate to security and migration management considerations.
- North Africa's role in trans-continental migration flows — as a transit zone and a site of severe migrant rights abuses — requires a human rights-centred policy response that current EU-North Africa migration cooperation frameworks inadequately provide.

3.2 West Africa and the Sahel

Regional Overview

West Africa and the Sahel constitute the continent's most dynamically deteriorating security environment and the region of greatest concern for the 2026–2027 period. The sub-region is experiencing the convergence of multiple structural crises: the breakdown of post-independence governance compacts that delivered neither economic development nor political inclusion; a jihadist expansion that has moved beyond the capacity of existing counter-terrorism frameworks to contain; a wave of military coups that has fractured regional institutions and expelled international partners; and a humanitarian emergency of historic proportions that is receiving dramatically inadequate international attention.

The ACRI 2026 data (CRCA–ACAN, 2026) shows that six of the ten highest-risk countries on the continent are in West Africa or the Sahel: Burkina Faso (65.96), Nigeria (64.29), Mali (59.86), Niger (55.39), Togo (50.21), and Guinea (44.67).

The Sahelian Coup Wave and Its Consequences

The six military coups that have occurred in the Sahel since 2020 — Mali (2020, 2021), Chad (2021), Guinea (2021), Burkina Faso (February 2022, September 2022), Niger (2023) — represent the most concentrated

period of unconstitutional change of government in the sub-region since independence. These coups share common structural antecedents: popular frustration with civilian governments perceived as corrupt, ineffective, and complicit in their countries' security crises; the institutional strengthening of militaries as counterterrorism partners that simultaneously built political ambitions; and an international environment in which coup-makers calculated that the costs of international condemnation would be manageable.

The formation of the Alliance des États du Sahel (AES) by Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger in September 2023, and their subsequent withdrawal from ECOWAS in February 2024, has created a de facto security bloc that explicitly rejects the governance conditionality of the regional body. The AES states have expelled French forces, demanded the departure of MINUSMA (which completed its withdrawal from Mali in December 2023), and welcomed Africa Corps (formerly Wagner Group) as a security partner. This reshaping of security partnerships has fundamental implications for the regional architecture.

Africa Corps' presence in the Sahel — estimated at 1,500–2,500 personnel across Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, and Chad (ISS Africa, 2025) — has not produced the security improvements that junta leaders promised their populations. Jihadist territorial control has continued to expand since the Africa Corps deployments, and multiple high-casualty attacks on military forces — including the Tonka and Djibo massacres in Mali and Burkina Faso, respectively — have demonstrated that the group's tactical capabilities do not compensate for the strategic gap created by the departure of French and international forces.

The Jihadist Landscape in West Africa

JNIM, formally established in 2017 as a merger of al-Qaeda affiliates in the Sahel, has become the dominant jihadist force across the Sahelian zone. The group controls significant territory in northern Mali, large parts of Burkina Faso, and growing swaths of Niger, implementing a form of governance — including taxation, dispute resolution through sharia courts, and provision of basic services — that has created a degree of social embeddedness extending beyond pure coercion. JNIM's relationship with local communities is complex and contested: it is resisted vigorously in many areas but accepted, and in some cases welcomed, in communities that have experienced predatory state conduct or have been abandoned by governance entirely.

The spread of jihadist activity south of the Sahel into coastal West Africa represents the most significant geographic development of the 2024–2025 period. Northern Benin has experienced sustained attacks, with jihadist groups establishing a presence in the Atakora and Alibori departments and conducting ambushes of security forces and civilian convoys. Togo's Savanes Region has seen the emergence of permanent jihadist infrastructure. Ghana's Savannah, Upper East, and Upper West regions are experiencing reconnaissance and infiltration. These developments raise the prospect of a 'second front' opening in West Africa's coastal states — countries with stronger governance records and economic institutions than the Sahelian states, but with limited capacity to mount effective counter-insurgency responses in their northern hinterlands.

Nigeria: A Multi-Front Security Crisis

Nigeria's security environment in 2026 is characterised by simultaneous and interacting crises that collectively constitute the most complex security challenge of any African state. The northeast remains the epicentre of the Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgency, which has claimed over 35,000 lives since 2009 and produced the displacement of over 2 million persons in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states. The Nigerian military's sustained offensive operations have produced tactical successes without a strategic breakthrough, and ISWAP has demonstrated a consistent capacity to regenerate and adapt.

In the northwest — Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina, Kebbi, and Kaduna states — a distinct security crisis involving armed bandits, now numbering in the tens of thousands, has produced mass displacement, widespread kidnapping, the disruption of agricultural production, and the effective non-function of governance across large rural areas. The relationship between the bandit groups and jihadist networks is contested analytically, but evidence of coordination and mutual support is growing. The Nigerian

government's shifting approach — military operations, local ceasefires, bounty payments, and in some cases amnesty negotiations — has not produced durable improvements.

The Igbo secessionist movement in the southeast, centred on IPOB and its armed wing the Eastern Security Network (ESN), has maintained a campaign of targeted killings of security forces, attacks on electoral infrastructure, and enforcement of 'sit-at-home' orders that have severely disrupted economic activity in the southeast. The political dimensions of Igbo discontent — including genuine grievances around political representation, federal character, and the treatment of Biafra war veterans — are not addressed by security-only responses. The Tinubu government's engagements with Igbo political leaders represent a necessary but insufficient step toward a political solution.

Humanitarian Situation in West Africa

The humanitarian situation in West Africa and the Sahel has reached historic levels of severity. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimates that over 18 million people in the Sahel alone require humanitarian assistance — a number that has quadrupled over the past five years (OCHA, 2026). In Burkina Faso, jihadist groups are deliberately blockading towns and villages, using food denial as a weapon of war. In Mali, the collapse of the transitional government's control over much of the north has created access challenges that humanitarian organisations struggle to navigate. In Nigeria, the northeast's population of over 8 million remains in a protracted humanitarian crisis despite a decade of international response.

The financing gap for humanitarian response in West Africa is severe. OCHA's 2026 Humanitarian Response Plan for the Sahel is funded at approximately 38 percent of assessed needs (OCHA, 2026), reflecting both the competing demands on donor budgets and a degree of donor fatigue with a crisis that shows no near-term trajectory toward resolution.

Outlook for West Africa and the Sahel

The outlook for the sub-region is among the most concerning of any in Africa. In the absence of significant positive disruptions — a breakthrough in mediation with JNIM, a genuine governance commitment from Sahelian juntas, a major increase in international humanitarian funding, or a reversal of climate trends — the most probable trajectory is continued deterioration. The southward spread of jihadist activity into coastal West Africa, if not addressed now through preventive investment, risks creating a second arc of acute insecurity in countries that currently maintain much stronger stability foundations.

3.3 Central Africa

The Eastern DRC Crisis

The eastern Democratic Republic of Congo represents the most acute and complex armed conflict environment in Africa in 2026. The DRC hosts Africa's largest humanitarian operation and has been the site of armed conflict, in various configurations, since the collapse of the Mobutu state in 1996. The current crisis is centred on the resurgence of the M23 movement — a Tutsi-led rebel group that first emerged in 2012 before being militarily defeated with UN intervention — and has been characterised by accusations, supported by a body of UN Group of Experts evidence, of direct Rwandan military support for M23.

The M23's capture of Goma in January 2025, following a rapid military advance through North Kivu, represented the most significant territorial change in the DRC conflict since the Second Congo War. The fall of Goma — North Kivu's provincial capital and a major humanitarian hub — produced a massive displacement emergency, with over 700,000 people displaced from the city and its surrounds in the weeks following the capture. The city's hospitals, which were treating tens of thousands of conflict-affected patients, were ransacked. Humanitarian warehouses were looted. Aid workers were killed.

The broader ecosystem of armed groups in eastern DRC creates a compounding complexity. The FDLR (Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda), which the DRC military has used as an informal counterweight to M23, continues to commit serious crimes against civilians in territories under its influence. The ADF (Allied Democratic Forces), a Ugandan Islamist group affiliated with ISIS, conducts regular mass killings in North Kivu and Ituri. Community-based militias, known as Mai-Mai, proliferate across multiple provinces. And FARDC (Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo) units themselves are responsible for documented human rights abuses against civilians.

Cameroon's Overlapping Crises

Cameroon's security landscape in 2026 is defined by two distinct but interacting crises: the Anglophone conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions, and the Boko Haram/ISWAP insurgency in the Far North. The Anglophone crisis, which erupted in 2016–2017 from an initially non-violent teachers' and lawyers' strike protesting the imposition of French-language administrative and judicial practices on the English-speaking minority, has evolved into a protracted armed conflict between government forces and a constellation of separatist armed groups seeking the independence of 'Ambazonia'.

After eight years of conflict, the Anglophone crisis has produced over 700,000 internally displaced persons, the deaths of an estimated 6,000–7,000 people (combatants and civilians), the near-total collapse of educational services in conflict-affected areas (with over 700,000 children out of school), and the destruction of economic livelihoods across two of Cameroon's most agriculturally productive regions. Peace initiatives — including the 2019 Major National Dialogue, Canadian-mediated talks, and Swiss diplomatic engagement — have failed to produce a durable framework for resolution, as the government resists any federal or autonomy arrangement that it regards as a precedent for fragmentation.

Regional Outlook for Central Africa

The outlook for Central Africa is shaped primarily by the trajectory of the DRC crisis. If the AU-led mediation between the DRC and Rwanda produces a durable ceasefire and political process, and if the M23 forces can be gradually demobilised and disarmed, there is a basis for stabilisation — though the ecosystem of armed groups in eastern DRC will remain a challenge for years. If the conflict continues on its current trajectory, with M23 consolidating territorial control and humanitarian access remaining severely constrained, the risk of further escalation — including a broader DRC-Rwanda military confrontation — cannot be excluded.

In Cameroon, the Anglophone crisis will remain intractable without a genuine political process that addresses Anglophone communities' core grievances around linguistic rights, educational governance, and political representation. The government of President Biya — now the longest-serving head of state on the continent, with over 40 years in power — has shown a limited appetite for the structural accommodation required.

3.4 East and Horn of Africa

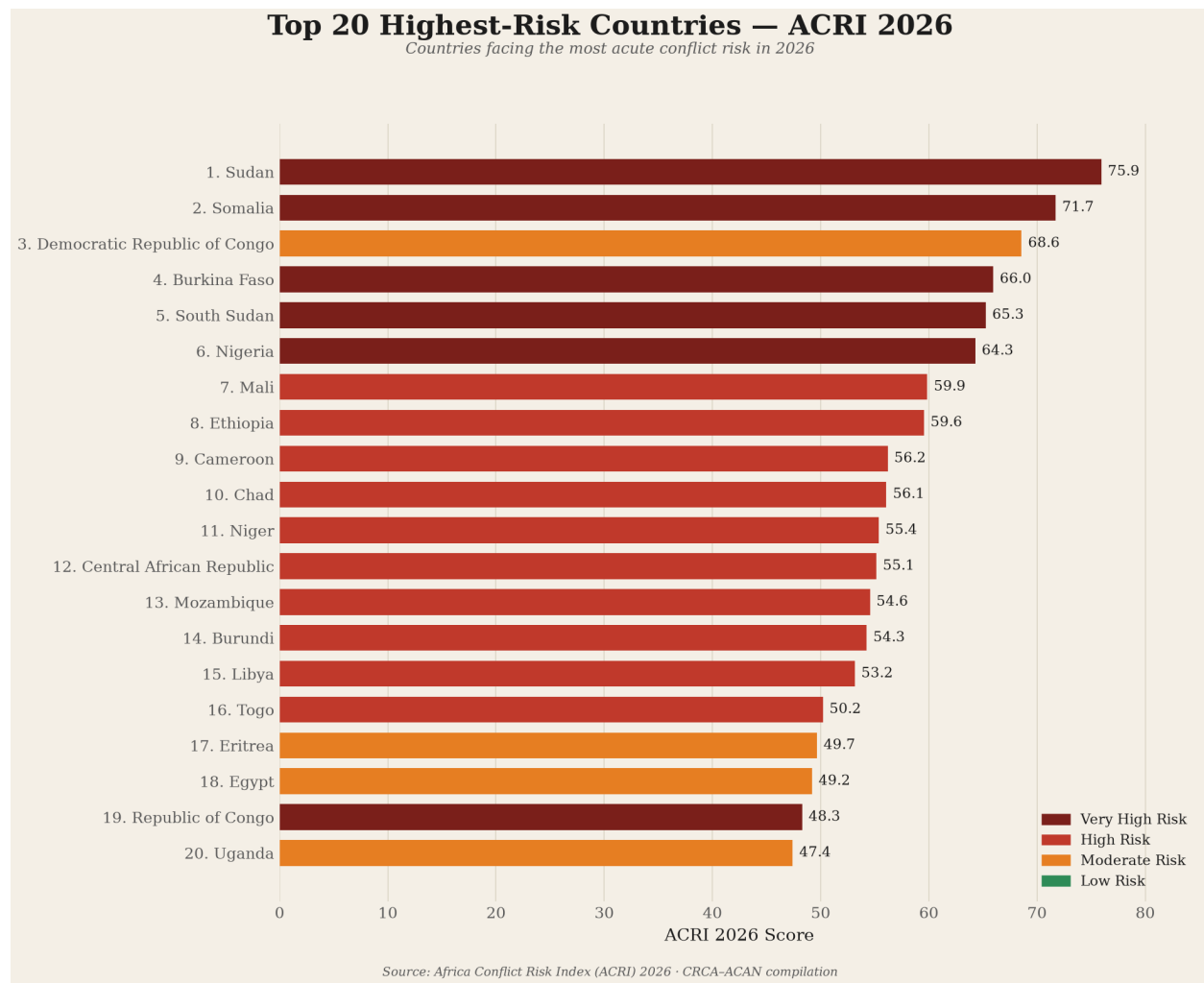
Sudan: A Catastrophe in Motion

Sudan's civil war, which erupted in April 2023 from a power struggle between the SAF and the RSF, has produced what the UN describes as the world's largest humanitarian crisis. The conflict's dynamics are deeply rooted in the unresolved tensions of Sudan's 2019 revolution and the subsequent transitional period: the RSF, commanded by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo ('Hemeti'), had built a massive and well-armed force during the Darfur conflict and subsequent mining and security operations, while the SAF under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan sought to consolidate its institutional primacy. The failure of the Framework Agreement transitional process in late 2022 set the conditions for the April 2023 outbreak.

The conflict has produced famine conditions in North Darfur, South Kordofan, and West Kordofan, with IPC assessments indicating that over 8 million people face emergency food insecurity (IPC Phase 4). The

deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure — including hospitals, water systems, and food markets — by both parties has been documented by UN human rights bodies and independent investigators. Mass atrocities, including ethnically targeted killings in Darfur reminiscent of the 2003–2005 genocide, have been reported by multiple credible sources. The Jeddah process, co-mediated by Saudi Arabia and the United States, has produced several humanitarian access agreements that neither party has consistently implemented.

Figure 3: Top 20 Highest Risk Countries - ACRI 2026



Top 20 Highest Risk Countries – ACRI 2026 | Source: CRCA-ACAN, Africa Conflict Risk Index 2026 (CRCA-ACAN, 2026).

Somalia: Resilient Insurgency, Fragile State

Somalia's Al-Shabaab insurgency has confounded repeated predictions of its imminent defeat with a demonstrated capacity for regeneration, adaptation, and sustained military effectiveness. The movement controls significant rural territory across southern and central Somalia, collects taxation from businesses and communities across a much wider area than it physically controls, and carries out regular complex attacks —

including vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices, suicide bombings, and multi-phase assaults — in Mogadishu and other urban centres.

The Somali National Army (SNA), supported by ATMIS (the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia) and US special operations forces, has conducted sustained offensive operations against Al-Shabaab territory since late 2022, producing some territorial gains. However, the movement's political base — rooted in social networks, kinship ties, and a governance presence that predates many Somali citizens' memories of effective state authority — has proven resistant to military pressure alone. Al-Shabaab's ability to exploit clan grievances, recruit from economically marginalised communities, and present itself as a legitimate governance alternative to a Mogadishu government perceived as corrupt and externally dependent is the political dimension of the conflict that military operations cannot address.

Ethiopia: Fragile Post-Tigray Transition

The Pretoria Agreement of November 2022, which ended the Tigray conflict, was a significant diplomatic achievement that halted a war that had killed an estimated 300,000–500,000 people. However, the peace has proven fragile. Implementation of the agreement — which includes the disarmament of the Tigray Defense Forces, the return of Tigrayan territory occupied by Eritrean and Amhara forces, and the restoration of essential services to Tigray — has been partial and contested. The unresolved status of western Tigray, the continued presence of Eritrean forces, and the failure to establish accountability for the war's atrocities create an ongoing risk of resumption.

Meanwhile, sub-national conflicts in Amhara and Oromia have intensified. The Amhara Fano militia movement, which initially fought alongside federal forces in Tigray, has turned against the federal government in response to the disarmament of Amhara Special Forces and disputes over regional governance. In Oromia, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) continues its insurgency in a conflict that has produced massive displacement and civilian harm, particularly in the western and southern regions. Ethiopia's federal government faces the strategic challenge of simultaneously managing post-Tigray reconstruction, Amhara conflict, and Oromia insurgency — three distinct and demanding security environments.

South Sudan: Fragile Peace Under Stress

South Sudan's Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), signed in 2018, has maintained a formal framework for political engagement among the country's principal conflict parties, but the peace it has produced is more accurately characterised as managed tension than genuine reconciliation. The 2026 election timeline, which represents a critical milestone in the agreement's implementation, faces mounting obstacles: the absence of a constitutional framework, the non-operationalisation of security sector reforms, the failure to establish a transitional justice mechanism, and the continued use of subnational violence as a political tool by both governing coalition members and opposition actors.

3.5 Southern Africa

South Africa: Economic Stress and Political Uncertainty

South Africa, the sub-region's largest economy and most established democratic system, entered 2026 in a period of significant uncertainty following the May 2024 election, which produced no single-party majority for the first time since 1994. The ANC, with 40 percent of the vote, formed a Government of National Unity (GNU) with the Democratic Alliance and a range of smaller parties — a structural change in South African politics that introduces both opportunities for more inclusive governance and risks of coalition instability. President Cyril Ramaphosa's second term is focused on economic reform, energy sector restructuring (addressing the severe load-shedding crisis), and anti-corruption measures.

Despite its relatively strong governance institutions, South Africa faces acute social tensions driven by persistently high inequality (Gini coefficient of approximately 0.63, among the world's highest), unemployment levels that leave one-third of the working-age population without formal employment, inadequate public service delivery in townships and rural areas, high levels of violent crime, and intermittent episodes of xenophobic violence against African migrants. The 2021 July unrest, triggered by the jailing of former President Zuma, demonstrated that social tensions can escalate rapidly into large-scale violence in the absence of effective preventive response.

Mozambique: Cautious Stabilisation

Mozambique's northern Cabo Delgado province has experienced a gradual improvement in security conditions since the deployment of Rwandan Defence Force troops and the SADC Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) from mid-2021. The insurgent group — al-Shabaab (unrelated to the Somali movement), also known as Ansar al-Sunna or ISIS-Mozambique — has been pushed out of the key port of Mocímboa da Praia and several other urban centres, and the resumption of operations at the Afungi liquefied natural gas complex has proceeded cautiously. However, the insurgency has not been defeated: it has dispersed geographically, moving south and west of its original operational area, and the underlying governance and economic marginalisation that fuelled its initial emergence have not been addressed.

3.6 Regional Outlook for 2026–2027

North Africa: Libya will remain fragmented. The electoral ambitions of Haftar's LNA and the political survival instincts of the GNU create incentives against a power-sharing deal that would require meaningful concessions from either side. Tunisia's economic crisis risks creating social unrest that the Saied government will manage through further repression. Morocco-Algeria tensions over Western Sahara will persist, but are unlikely to escalate to armed confrontation.

West Africa and the Sahel: The most probable trajectory is continued security deterioration in the Sahelian core, with moderate risk of spillover into coastal West Africa. Nigeria faces a critical governance test ahead of the governorship and presidential elections. Ghana and Senegal represent positive outlooks contingent on continued governance performance.

Central Africa: The DRC crisis trajectory depends heavily on the success or failure of AU-mediated DRC-Rwanda diplomacy. Cameroon's Anglophone conflict will remain stalemated without a new political initiative. CAR's stability remains conditionally dependent on the Africa Corps presence.

East and Horn of Africa: Sudan's civil war shows no near-term resolution prospect. Somalia will maintain a fragile status quo with a persistent Al-Shabaab threat. Ethiopia faces the compounded challenge of Tigray reconciliation, Amhara conflict, and Oromia insurgency simultaneously. South Sudan faces high stakes in the 2026 election period.

Southern Africa: The sub-region will maintain relative stability, with South Africa's coalition government managing tensions through compromise. Mozambique's northern stabilisation will remain partial. Zimbabwe's economic stress will continue to generate governance risk without triggering large-scale conflict.

CHAPTER 4

COUNTRY SPOTLIGHTS*Detailed Analysis of Africa's Highest-Risk Countries and Emerging Concerns***4.1 Sudan — ACRI Score: 75.94 | Very High Risk**

Sudan's civil war, which erupted in April 2023 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF), has produced what the United Nations describes as the world's largest humanitarian crisis and the fastest-growing displacement emergency globally. By mid-2026, an estimated 12 million Sudanese are internally displaced, 2.5 million have fled to neighbouring countries, and over 25 million people — more than half the population — require humanitarian assistance (UNHCR, 2026; OCHA, 2026). Famine conditions have been confirmed in North Darfur, South Kordofan, and West Kordofan (IPC, 2026).

The conflict's origins lie in the unresolved structural tensions of Sudan's 2019 transitional period following the fall of Omar al-Bashir. The RSF, commanded by General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo (Hemeti), built a force of an estimated 100,000 fighters during the Darfur conflict and subsequent gold mining operations, accumulating both military capacity and independent financial resources that challenged the SAF's institutional primacy. The Framework Agreement, brokered in 2022, which was intended to establish a civilian-led transitional government, failed to resolve the fundamental question of RSF integration into the national armed forces — the triggering issue for the April 2023 outbreak.

Both parties to the conflict have committed serious violations of international humanitarian law. RSF forces have been responsible for mass killings of civilians in Darfur, systematic sexual violence, and the looting of humanitarian supplies. SAF aerial bombardment has struck civilian areas, markets, and hospitals with apparent indiscriminate targeting. The deliberate blocking of humanitarian access by both parties has intensified the civilian toll of the conflict.

SUDAN – ACRI SENTINEL PILOT ASSESSMENT

CRCA is currently pilot-testing ACRI Sentinel, its AI-assisted conflict risk assessment platform, and during this testing the prototype flagged rising escalation indicators in El Fasher (North Darfur) and other parts of the Darfur region. ACRI Sentinel works by drawing together structural, conflict, governance, humanitarian variables to surface locations that may warrant closer analytical attention. Because the tool is still under validation, these findings should be read as part of ongoing research and methodological development, not as an operational early warning forecast.

The Jeddah process, co-mediated by Saudi Arabia and the United States, produced several Declarations of Commitment to Protect Civilians that neither party has implemented consistently. African Union-led mediation efforts have been complicated by divisions among AU member states over the recognition of the SAF-aligned government and the relative weight to be given to humanitarian access versus political negotiation.

Sudan's ACRI score reflects extraordinary values across all four domains: Structural Factors (72.2), Governance and Institutions (89.4), Security and Conflict Dynamics (58.6), and Humanitarian Factors (100). The Humanitarian domain score reflects the scale of displacement, famine, and unmet needs documented above. The Governance domain score captures the collapse of legitimate political authority, the suspension of constitutional arrangements, and the total absence of civilian oversight over either warring party. The Structural Factors domain score reflects Sudan's pre-existing state fragility, low human development, and acute food insecurity — conditions that predated the 2023 outbreak and have been dramatically compounded by it.

4.2 Somalia — ACRI Score: 71.72 | Very High Risk

Somalia's conflict landscape in 2026 reflects the paradox of a state that has made genuine institutional progress — holding elections, establishing a federal architecture, building a national army — while facing an insurgency whose ideological, organisational, and financial foundations remain essentially intact after 30 years of state fragility. Al-Shabaab's durability is explicable not primarily by its military capacity, though this is significant, but by its political intelligence: its understanding of clan dynamics, its ability to present itself as a legitimate governance provider, and its exploitation of the perceived illegitimacy and corruption of the Mogadishu state.

The Hassan Sheikh Mohamud government, elected in May 2022, launched an ambitious military offensive against Al-Shabaab from late 2022, achieving some territorial gains in the Middle Shabelle and Hiiraan regions with strong community support from clan militias (Macawisley). However, the momentum of the offensive stalled in 2024, and Al-Shabaab has demonstrated a capacity to absorb territorial losses while maintaining its financial base, conducting effective attacks in previously cleared areas, and continuing to recruit from economically marginalised communities.

The humanitarian situation in Somalia reflects the compounding of conflict vulnerability with climatic shocks. After the worst drought in 40 years in 2022–2023, which pushed millions to the brink of famine, Somalia experienced damaging floods in 2023 and 2024 associated with an above-average El Niño season. Over 3.8 million people remain internally displaced, and approximately 7.8 million people require humanitarian assistance. Al-Shabaab's taxation of humanitarian supply chains — taking a percentage of aid deliveries in exchange for access — creates a perverse dynamic in which humanitarian response inadvertently finances the insurgency.

ATMIS was originally expected to transfer security responsibilities to Somali security forces by the end of 2024, following an extension of the initial 2023 timeline. Continued security challenges, however, delayed the process, prompting the establishment of AUSSOM in 2025 to succeed ATMIS and support the next phase of Somalia's security transition. The Somali National Army (SNA), while growing in size, retains significant gaps in training, equipment, and logistics that make a full transfer of security responsibility premature. The risk that the transition from ATMIS to AUSSOM could create security gaps exploitable by Al-Shabaab remains significant and has been consistently highlighted in United Nations Security Council assessments.

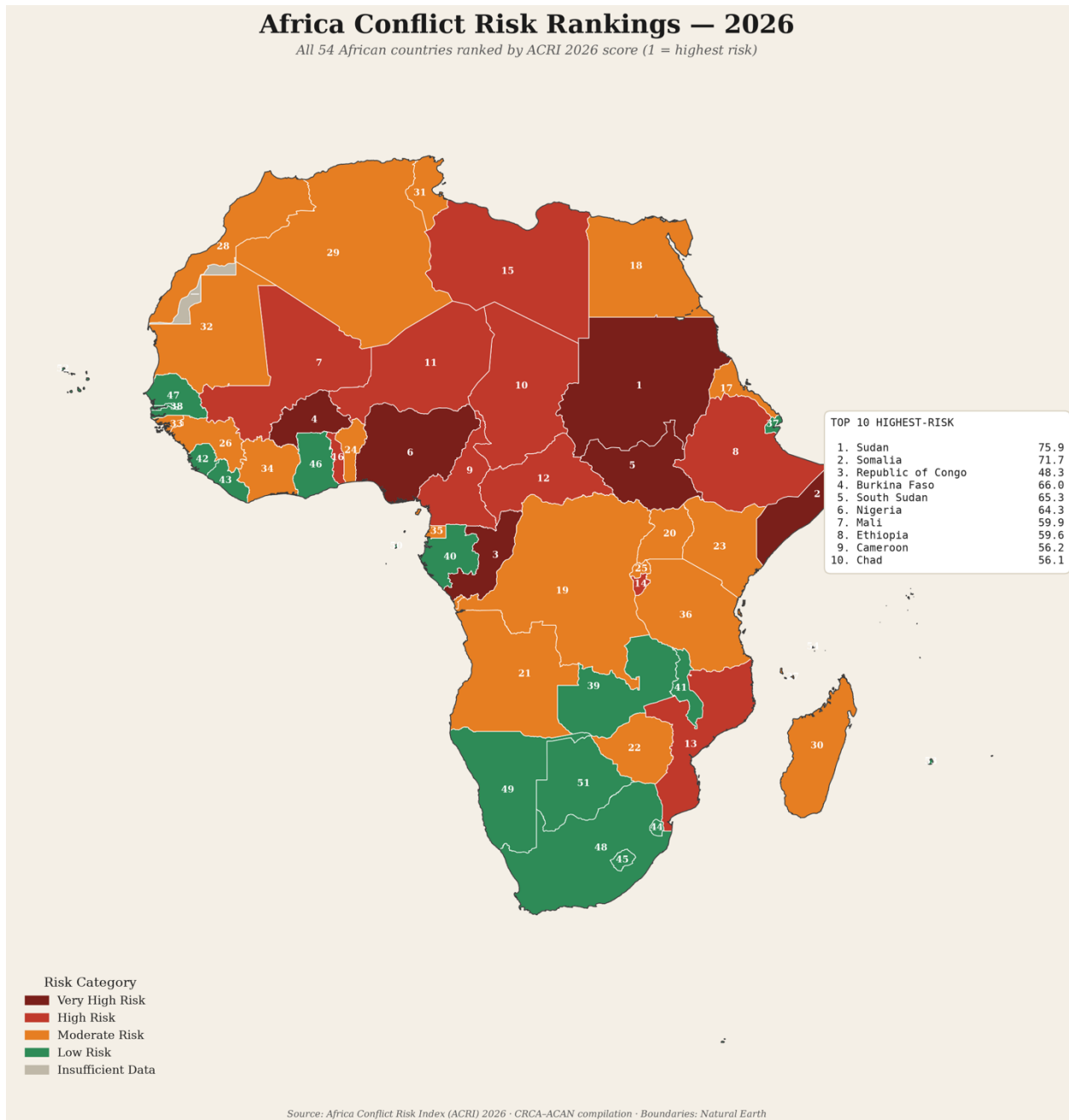
4.3 Democratic Republic of Congo — ACRI Score: 68.57 | Very High Risk

The DRC's conflict landscape in 2026 is defined by a combination of the acute M23/Rwanda crisis in the east, the persistent ecosystem of over 120 armed groups operating across multiple eastern provinces, the ADF's sustained campaign of mass killings in Ituri and North Kivu, and a political governance environment in which institutional fragility creates chronic structural vulnerability.

The M23's capture of Goma in January 2025 and subsequent territorial expansion into Masisi and Rutshuru territories represent the most significant armed confrontation in the DRC since the Second Congo War. UN Group of Experts reports — which Rwanda has consistently denied and disputed — document the presence of Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) units operating alongside M23, providing artillery support, intelligence, and

command coordination. The DRC government has characterised the situation as a foreign military invasion; Rwanda characterises it as support for a domestic rebel movement responding to security threats on Rwandan territory.

Figure 4: Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) Rankings 2026



Sources: ACRI, 2026; CRCA-ACAN Compilation

The regional diplomatic effort to address the M23 crisis has involved multiple frameworks: the Nairobi Process led by former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta; the Luanda Process facilitated by Angolan

President João Lourenço; and a bilateral DRC-Rwanda diplomatic engagement that has produced several ceasefires, none of which has held sustainably. The AU Peace and Security Council has been engaged but has not generated the sustained political pressure on Rwanda that would be necessary to alter the calculations of Kigali's political leadership.

The humanitarian consequences of the eastern DRC crisis are catastrophic. The DRC now hosts over 7 million IDPs, the largest internal displacement crisis in Africa. Eastern DRC's humanitarian operations represent one of the largest and most complex in the world, involving hundreds of NGOs, UN agencies, and donor governments — yet funding consistently falls well below assessed needs, and humanitarian workers face security threats that have resulted in multiple fatalities.

4.4 Burkina Faso — ACRI Score: 65.96 | Very High Risk

Burkina Faso has experienced the most rapid security deterioration of any African state over the past five years, transforming from a country without significant armed conflict in 2015 to one where jihadist groups control an estimated 40–60 percent of national territory in 2026. The two military coups of 2022 — the first in January under Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba, the second in September under Captain Ibrahim Traoré — have produced a junta government that has adopted an increasingly confrontational stance toward international partners while failing to produce the security improvements that were the ostensible justification for military rule.

The humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso has become among the most severe on the continent, characterised by the deliberate use of siege tactics by jihadist groups against major towns in the north and east of the country. The towns of Djibo, Titao, Kongoussi, and others have been under effective blockade — with supply convoys subject to jihadist attack — producing severe food insecurity and generating massive displacement. An estimated 2.1 million people are internally displaced, and over 20,000 have been killed since 2015. The Traoré government's response has combined military offensives (with Africa Corps support), the forced recruitment of civilian self-defence groups (Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie, VDP), and increasingly repressive measures against civil society, journalists, and political dissent.

The junta's expulsion of French forces (Operation Sabre) in February 2023, the demand for the withdrawal of Danish and Swedish counter-terrorism trainers, and the invitation to Africa Corps have restructured Burkina's international security relationships without improving the security environment. JNIM has continued to expand, has carried out several mass casualty attacks on military and VDP forces, and has demonstrated a capacity to operate simultaneously across multiple regions of the country. The strategic outlook for Burkina Faso is deeply concerning: without a fundamental change in the political-security approach, including a willingness to engage in dialogue with communities caught between jihadist governance and state military operations, the trend toward territorial consolidation by JNIM is likely to continue.

4.5 South Sudan — ACRI Score: 65.26 | Very High Risk

South Sudan's peace process in 2026 is at a critical juncture. The R-ARCSS, signed in September 2018 between President Salva Kiir's government and Riek Machar's SPLM-IO, established a governance framework that has maintained political engagement among the principal parties while failing to resolve the deeper structural tensions that generated the civil war. The agreement's 2026 election timeline — now approaching — faces multiple implementation gaps, including the non-operationalisation of security sector reform, the absence of a constitutional framework, persistent use of subnational violence as a political tool, and an economic environment characterised by oil-revenue dependence, hyperinflation, and acute humanitarian need.

The food security situation in South Sudan is one of the continent's most severe. Famine conditions (IPC Phase 5) have been confirmed in Unity State, Upper Nile, and Jonglei, while approximately 9.4 million people — nearly 80 percent of the population — require humanitarian assistance. The combination of conflict,

floods (which have inundated large areas of South Sudan in three of the past four years), and an economic collapse driven by oil revenue decline and currency depreciation has produced a humanitarian emergency that international response has been unable to match.

4.6 Nigeria — ACRI Score: 64.29 | Very High Risk

Nigeria occupies a unique position in Africa's conflict landscape: it is simultaneously the continent's most populous country (approximately 220 million), its largest economy (by GDP), a democracy with functioning electoral institutions, and the site of one of the continent's most complex multi-front security crises. The Tinubu administration, which took office in May 2023 following a contentious but constitutionally managed electoral process, has focused on economic reform — including the removal of petrol subsidies and the liberalisation of the exchange rate — that has generated significant social pain while promising medium-term stabilisation.

The security environment is managed through a combination of military operations, police deployments, civilian joint task forces, and, in the northwest, a controversial set of local-level ceasefires and amnesty negotiations with bandit groups. None of these approaches has produced durable security improvements at the strategic level, though tactical successes — including the disruption of specific ISWAP units and the killing of high-profile bandit leaders — are documented. The fundamental challenge is that Nigeria's security crisis is rooted in governance failures that military and police responses cannot address: the absence of effective state authority across vast rural areas, economic marginalisation of northern populations, land tenure conflicts that the state lacks the capacity to adjudicate, and political elite manipulation of religious and ethnic identities for electoral purposes.

Nigeria's ACRI profile is distinguished by the breadth of its risk drivers: the Security and Conflict Dynamics domain score (66.2) reflects the multiple concurrent conflict theatres; the Structural Factors domain score (74.2) reflects mass poverty, youth unemployment, and climate-linked food insecurity; the Governance and Institutions domain score (59.7) captures institutional fragility and corruption; and the Humanitarian Factors domain score (30.7) reflects significant displacement in the northeast and northwest.

4.7 Mali — ACRI Score: 59.86 | High Risk

Mali's trajectory since the 2020 coup has been one of accelerating governance deterioration combined with expanding jihadist territorial control — a paradox that the junta government of Colonel Assimi Goïta has been unable to reconcile. The expulsion of MINUSMA, completed in December 2023, removed the only monitoring and protection presence with a mandate to document human rights violations in JNIM-controlled territories and in areas of FAMa and Africa Corps operations. The resulting information vacuum has made independent assessment of conflict dynamics significantly more difficult.

Africa Corps' deployment in Mali — focused on training, advisory functions, and direct military operations alongside FAMa — has not produced the security improvements that justified the expulsion of French Barkhane forces. JNIM continues to control significant territory, including key transit routes that generate taxation revenues. Multiple mass casualty attacks in 2024–2025, including complex operations against army bases, have demonstrated that Africa Corps presence has not degraded JNIM's operational capacity. Reports of serious human rights violations by Africa Corps personnel operating alongside FAMa, including massacres of civilians in Moura in 2022, and subsequent incidents, have generated international condemnation but no accountability.

4.8 Ethiopia — ACRI Score: 59.56 | High Risk

Ethiopia's peace and security environment in 2026 reflects the complex aftermath of the Tigray war (2020–2022), the most lethal armed conflict in the world during that period. The Pretoria Agreement has ended the

Tigray front but left multiple significant implementation questions unresolved, while sub-national conflicts in Amhara and Oromia continue to generate substantial displacement and civilian harm.

In Amhara, the federal government's attempt to integrate the Amhara Special Forces into the federal military triggered a confrontation with the Fano militia that has produced sustained armed conflict across multiple zones of the Amhara region. Amhara civil society and political actors articulate grievances around the loss of Raya and western Tigray territories, the treatment of Amhara communities in Oromia, and the perceived marginalisation of Amhara political interests under Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's government. The conflict has produced an estimated 1 million IDPs in Amhara alone (IDMC, 2026).

In Oromia, the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) — also known as Shane — continues a guerrilla insurgency in western, southern, and Kellem Oromia zones that has generated massive displacement and significant civilian harm. Peace talks between the government and OLA, facilitated by Norway and other international actors, have not produced a durable ceasefire. The political dimensions of Oromo discontent — including the grievances of Oromo communities that had initially supported the Abiy government but feel their aspirations have been betrayed — are not easily resolved through military pressure.

4.9 Cameroon — ACRI Score: 56.20 | High Risk

Cameroon's Anglophone crisis has entered its eighth year with no political settlement in sight and a human rights situation that continues to deteriorate in conflict-affected areas. The Northwest and Southwest regions, which have historically been among Cameroon's most economically productive, have experienced the near-total collapse of educational and health services. Ghost town operations — enforced by separatist armed groups — have disrupted economic activity and driven out much of the professional and business class. An estimated 700,000 people remain internally displaced, and over 50,000 Cameroonians have fled to Nigeria as refugees (UNHCR, 2026).

The separatist landscape has become increasingly fragmented, with multiple armed factions — including the Ambazonia Defense Forces, the Southern Cameroons Defense Forces, and the Tigers — competing for political authority and territorial control within the Anglophone region. This fragmentation complicates any political process, as there is no single negotiating partner capable of delivering compliance from all armed actors. The Yaoundé government's position — that decentralisation, as provided for in the 2019 constitutional revision, is the maximum accommodation available — falls well short of what even moderate Anglophone political actors regard as a sufficient response to the community's fundamental grievances.

4.10 Chad — ACRI Score: 56.07 | High Risk

Chad's political transition, managed by President Mahamat Idriss Déby following the death of his father Idriss Déby in April 2021, reached a formal milestone with the May 2024 presidential election — which Mahamat won, albeit in a process that opposition parties characterised as neither free nor fair. The transition from military to formally civilian rule, achieved through a constitutional referendum in November 2023, has produced an institutional framework that maintains significant continuity with the pre-2021 authoritarian system while providing a degree of international legitimacy.

Chad's security environment is shaped by its position at the epicentre of multiple regional crises: the Sahelian jihadist landscape to the west, the Sudan conflict to the east (generating massive refugee inflows into eastern Chad), and the fragility of the Central African Republic to the south. Over 1.1 million refugees in Chad (UNHCR, 2026) — among the largest refugee populations in Africa relative to the country's population — place extraordinary demands on public services and local community resources. The security forces, while experienced in operating in complex environments, face challenges of professionalism, accountability, and political neutrality that have not been comprehensively addressed under the Déby family's governance.

4.11 Countries to Watch

Niger

Niger's military government, which seized power in July 2023 under General Abdourahamane Tchiani, has expelled French forces, terminated security cooperation with the EU, and welcomed Africa Corps engagement — following the established junta playbook. The security situation in Niger has not improved under military governance: JNIM activity in the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions has continued, and the Diffa region bordering Nigeria and Chad remains affected by ISWAP operations. The country's economic situation is extremely fragile, with the suspension of international aid following the coup and the economic costs of ECOWAS sanctions (subsequently lifted but with lasting economic damage) compounding pre-existing development challenges.

Mozambique

Mozambique's 2024 presidential election produced a disputed result — with incumbent Frelimo candidate Daniel Chapo declared winner — that triggered the most significant popular protests since independence. The post-election violence, in which over 300 people were killed by security forces (ACLED, 2026), has introduced a new dimension of political instability to a country already managing the Cabo Delgado insurgency and the social and economic legacies of the COVID-19 pandemic. The political legitimacy crisis resulting from the disputed election creates risks for governance stability that interact with the unresolved insurgency in the north.

Central African Republic

The CAR's stability in 2026 remains conditionally dependent on Africa Corps presence, which provides the military backbone of the state's capacity to maintain control of key territories. The political situation — under President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, re-elected in disputed circumstances in 2020 and with constitutional amendments permitting indefinite re-election — reflects the consolidation of an externally dependent authoritarian model. The humanitarian situation, with approximately 3.1 million people requiring humanitarian assistance in a country of just under 5 million (OCHA, 2026), reflects the depth of the crisis.

Burundi

Burundi under President Évariste Ndayishimiye — elected in June 2020 following the death of Pierre Nkurunziza — has shown some improvement from the political crisis that followed Nkurunziza's third-term bid in 2015, but the country remains deeply fragile. Ethnic tensions between Hutu and Tutsi communities, though not the primary driver of current conflict dynamics, remain a latent risk factor. Political space remains severely constrained, with the ruling CNDD-FDD party maintaining dominant control and the security forces operating with limited accountability. The Burundian security services' involvement in regional conflicts — including documented Burundian military deployments in the eastern DRC alongside FARDC — introduces additional risk vectors.

CHAPTER 5**AFRICA CONFLICT RISK INDEX (ACRI) 2026***Methodology, Indicators, Rankings, and Policy Implications*

5.1 Introduction

The Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026 is CRCA's flagship quantitative assessment of conflict risk across Africa. The index provides a comparative framework for identifying countries facing elevated risks of instability, violent conflict, humanitarian deterioration, and governance breakdown. ACRI is the analytical backbone of the APCO series, providing the empirical foundation for country rankings, regional comparisons, and the evidence base for the policy recommendations set out in Chapter 7.

The 2026 edition assesses 54 African countries (Western Sahara has insufficient data for analysis) using a multidimensional framework that combines structural vulnerabilities, governance performance, security dynamics, and humanitarian pressures. By integrating diverse indicators into a single composite score, the index provides a continent-wide picture of conflict risk while highlighting the specific drivers shaping national trajectories.

Higher scores indicate greater conflict risk. Lower scores indicate stronger resilience and lower levels of vulnerability. The 2026 edition establishes the first complete implementation of the ACRI framework and provides a baseline for future editions.

5.2 Conceptual Framework

The ACRI is based on the premise that conflict risk is shaped by the interaction of long-term structural pressures, institutional performance, active security threats, and humanitarian stress. No single domain is sufficient to explain conflict risk on its own: a state can carry severe structural vulnerabilities and remain stable if its institutions are capable and its security environment is calm, just as a state with comparatively strong structural fundamentals can be destabilised by acute governance collapse or active armed conflict. ACRI therefore measures conflict risk as an emergent property of the interaction among four domains, rather than as the sum of unrelated parts.

The 2026 framework is organised into four domains: Structural Factors (40%), Governance and Institutions (25%), Security and Conflict Dynamics (25%), and Humanitarian Factors (10%).

Structural factors receive the highest weighting (40%) because they capture the long-term conditions that shape vulnerability to conflict. Governance and Security domains each contribute 25%, reflecting the importance of institutional performance and active conflict dynamics. Humanitarian factors contribute 10%, capturing the human consequences of instability while avoiding double-counting conflict impacts already reflected in other domains.

5.3 Indicators

ACRI 2026 is built from 18 indicators distributed across the four domains. Each domain's indicators are summarised below.

Structural Factors (40%) — 5 Indicators

The structural domain captures long-term vulnerabilities that increase susceptibility to instability. Each indicator carries a weight of 8 percentage points within the overall index.

- State Fragility
- Human Development Index (HDI)
- Economic Marginalisation (GDP per capita, PPP)
- Climate Vulnerability
- Population Facing Acute Food Insecurity

Governance and Institutions (25%) — 5 Indicators

The governance domain assesses state legitimacy, institutional effectiveness, accountability, and political inclusion. Each indicator carries a weight of 5 percentage points within the overall index.

- Rule of Law
- Control of Corruption
- Political Stability and Absence of Violence
- Regime Type
- Civil Liberties

Security and Conflict Dynamics (25%) — 5 Indicators

The security domain measures the intensity and spread of violent conflict. Each indicator carries a weight of 5 percentage points within the overall index.

- Conflict Event Frequency
- Conflict Fatality Rate
- Violence Against Civilians
- Terrorism Impact
- Cross-Border Conflict Exposure

Humanitarian Factors (10%) — 3 Indicators

The humanitarian domain measures the human consequences of conflict and instability.

- Population Displacement Rate (4%)
- Humanitarian Needs Severity (3%)
- Refugee and IDP Burden Ratio (3%)

Table 2: ACRI 2026 Domains, Weights, Indicators & Sources

Domain	Weight	Indicators	Key Sources
Structural Factors	40%	State Fragility (8%); HDI (8%); Economic Marginalisation (8%); Climate Vulnerability (8%); Acute Food Insecurity (8%)	Fund for Peace, UNDP, World Bank, ND-GAIN, GRFC
Governance & Institutions	25%	Rule of Law (5%); Control of Corruption (5%); Political Stability (5%); Regime Type (5%); Civil Liberties (5%)	World Bank, Freedom House, EIU Democracy Index
Security & Conflict Dynamics	25%	Conflict Event Frequency (5%); Fatality Rate (5%); Violence Against Civilians (5%); Terrorism Impact (5%); Cross-Border Exposure (5%)	ACLED, IEP (GTI)
Humanitarian Factors	10%	Displacement Rate (4%); Needs Severity (3%); Refugee/IDP Burden Ratio (3%)	IDMC, INFORM Severity Index, UNHCR

ACRI 2026 Domain Architecture, Weights, Indicators, and Data Sources | Source: CRCA–ACAN Methodology Framework (CRCA–ACAN, 2026); see Annex B for full indicator-level sourcing.

5.4 Data Sources

The 2026 ACRI draws upon internationally recognised datasets, including:

- Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace)
- UNDP Human Development Report
- World Bank GDP and Governance Indicators
- ND-GAIN Climate Vulnerability Index
- Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC 2026)
- Freedom House
- Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index
- Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED)
- Global Terrorism Index (GTI 2025), Institute for Economics and Peace
- IDMC Global Internal Displacement Database
- UNHCR Global Trends
- INFORM Severity Index 2026

5.5 Normalization and Aggregation

Data Normalization

Indicators originate from different scales and units. To ensure comparability, all variables were normalised to a common 0–100 scale using Min-Max normalisation. For indicators where higher values indicate greater risk, scores were normalised directly. For indicators where higher values indicate lower risk, the scale was reversed so that higher normalised values consistently represented greater conflict risk. Following normalisation, higher scores uniformly indicate higher levels of conflict risk.

Domain scores were calculated as weighted averages of normalised indicators.

Treatment of Missing Data

Where indicator values were unavailable, ACRI applies an available-data weighting approach. Missing values were excluded from calculations rather than assigned a value of zero. Domain scores were calculated using the weighted average of available indicators, ensuring that countries were neither unfairly penalised nor rewarded because of data gaps.

Final Score Calculation

The final ACRI score was calculated as the weighted sum of the four domain scores:

- Structural Factors × 0.40
- Governance and Institutions × 0.25
- Security and Conflict Dynamics × 0.25
- Humanitarian Factors × 0.10

The resulting score ranges from 0 to 100, with higher scores indicating greater conflict risk.

5.6 Ranking Methodology

Countries were ranked according to their final ACRI score. Rank 1 represents the highest level of conflict risk on the continent. Western Sahara was excluded from the ranking due to insufficient data availability across multiple indicators; its omission does not imply an assessment of its conflict risk status.

5.7 Domain Scores

Domain scores for the ten highest-risk countries are presented in Table 5.2 (CRCA–ACAN, 2026), illustrating how different combinations of structural factors, governance & institutions, security & conflict dynamics, and humanitarian factors produce each country's overall ACRI score.

Table 3: ACRI 2026 Domain Scores – Top 10 Countries

Country	Overall ACRI Score	Structural Factors	Governance & Institutions	Security & Conflict Dynamics	Humanitarian Factors
Sudan	75.94	72.2	89.4	58.6	100
Somalia	71.72	68.7	91.3	56.2	73.3
DR Congo	68.57	69.9	80.7	64.0	44.0
Burkina Faso	65.96	73.0	70.5	56.0	51.0
South Sudan	65.26	73.8	90.0	32.8	49.7
Nigeria	64.29	74.2	59.7	66.2	30.7
Mali	59.86	60.0	78.1	52.9	30.8
Ethiopia	59.56	72.5	70.1	38.6	33.1
Cameroon	56.20	54.6	74.5	48.5	35.7
Chad	56.07	58.1	80.6	34.9	39.0

ACRI 2026 Domain Scores — Top 10 | Source: CRCA–ACAN, Africa Conflict Risk Index 2026 (CRCA–ACAN, 2026).

5.8 Continental Rankings

The full ACRI 2026 continental rankings, covering all 54 African states, are presented in Annex C. The distribution of scores reveals a continent in which the majority of states carry elevated risk profiles: 6 states (11 percent) are classified as Very High Risk; 10 states (19 percent) as High Risk; 20 states (37 percent) as Moderate Risk; and 18 states (33 percent) as Low Risk.

Table 4: ACRI 2026 Risk Category Distribution

Risk Category	Score Range	No. of States	% of States	Example Countries
Very High Risk	60–100	6	11%	Sudan, Somalia, DRC, Burkina Faso
High Risk	50–59.99	10	19%	Mali, Ethiopia, Cameroon, Chad, Niger
Moderate Risk	40–44.99	20	37%	Kenya, Uganda, Morocco, Algeria, Tanzania
Low Risk	10–39.99	18	33%	Botswana, Namibia, Mauritius, Cabo Verde

Table 5.3: ACRI 2026 Risk Category Distribution | Source: CRCA-ACAN, Africa Conflict Risk Index 2026 (CRCA-ACAN, 2026).

5.9 Top-Ranked High-Risk States

The ten highest-risk countries identified by ACRI 2026 are Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, South Sudan, Nigeria, Mali, Ethiopia, Cameroon, and Chad. These countries exhibit combinations of armed conflict, humanitarian emergencies, governance fragility, and displacement pressures.

Sudan records the highest overall score, reflecting the continued impact of civil war, mass displacement, governance collapse, and severe humanitarian need. Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo remain among the continent's highest-risk environments due to persistent insecurity, displacement, and governance challenges. The Sahel continues to emerge as Africa's most volatile regional conflict system, with Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and Chad all ranking among the continent's highest-risk states.

The 2026 ACRI identifies Sudan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, and South Sudan as the highest-risk countries on the continent. These countries combine severe humanitarian pressures, active conflict dynamics, governance challenges, and structural vulnerabilities.

5.10 Key Regional Patterns

Three broad regional trends emerge from the 2026 index. First, conflict risk remains heavily concentrated in states experiencing protracted armed conflict and large-scale humanitarian crises, with the highest-risk countries concentrated in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes region. Second, governance deficits continue to act as major conflict multipliers, particularly where institutional weakness coincides with economic and environmental stress. Third, climate vulnerability and food insecurity increasingly interact with existing political and security pressures, particularly across the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and parts of Southern Africa.

These findings reinforce the importance of integrated approaches to conflict prevention that address both immediate security threats and underlying structural drivers.

The regional comparison reveals important structural patterns. East Africa and the Horn record the highest average Humanitarian and Structural domain scores, driven by the Sudan, Somalia, South Sudan, and Ethiopia crises. West Africa and the Sahel record the highest average Security domain scores, reflecting jihadist expansion, military coups, and the proliferation of armed actors. Southern Africa records the lowest average scores across all domains, consistent with its relative stability.

5.12 Key Findings and Policy Implications

- The concentration of Very High and High Risk countries in East Africa/Horn and West Africa/Sahel confirms that these two sub-regions require prioritised policy attention and resource allocation.
- Structural Factors carry the largest single weight (40%) in the overall ACRI score, underscoring that long-term investment in human development, economic inclusion, and climate resilience offers the highest-return conflict prevention pathway.
- Governance and Security domains, each weighted at 25%, confirm that institutional performance and active conflict dynamics are co-equal and mutually reinforcing drivers of risk: governance failures create conditions for armed mobilisation, and armed mobilisation further undermines governance.
- Climate vulnerability and acute food insecurity, captured within the Structural Factors domain, increasingly interact with governance and security pressures across the Sahel and Horn of Africa, justifying the integration of climate adaptation into conflict prevention and peacebuilding programming.
- The 18 countries classified as Low Risk represent a core of African stability that requires proactive maintenance. These countries provide models of governance and institutional performance that merit analytical attention and serve as platforms for regional stability.

CHAPTER 6**STRATEGIC FORECASTS AND CONFLICT RISK ASSESSMENT**

Continental Forecast | Escalation Scenarios | ACRI Sentinel (Pilot Conflict Risk Assessment Platform)

This chapter's forecasts draw on three sources: the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026, qualitative assessments from CRCA's regional analyst network, and early outputs from ACRI Sentinel, CRCA's AI-assisted conflict risk assessment platform. ACRI Sentinel is still in pilot testing, so its outputs should be read as experimental, useful for research and horizon scanning, but not yet reliable enough for operational forecasting.

6.1 Continental Forecast

CRCA's strategic forecast for the 2026–2027 period identifies three overarching trajectories that will shape Africa's peace and security landscape: the continuation of the Sahelian security deterioration, with expanding jihadist territorial control and deepening governance vacuum; the humanitarian catastrophe in Sudan, which is likely to worsen in the near term and produce increasingly severe regional displacement and destabilisation; and the political risk concentration in the eight countries scheduled to hold elections, where democratic quality and post-election stability will be significant variables.

Against these deteriorating dynamics, several contexts offer genuine prospects for improvement. The DRC-Rwanda diplomatic process, if sustained with sufficient political will, could produce a ceasefire that reduces displacement and humanitarian harm in eastern DRC. Somalia's new government has demonstrated political ambition in confronting Al-Shabaab, and the community mobilisation (Macawisley) that accompanied the 2022–2023 offensive represents a genuine new tool in the counter-insurgency toolkit. Several Southern African states are pursuing economic reform programmes that, if implemented effectively, could reduce the socioeconomic drivers of conflict risk.

6.2 Countries to Watch in 2026–2027

ACRI Sentinel, CRCA's conflict risk analysis platform identifies the following countries as facing elevated risk of significant deterioration in the 2026–2027 period, even though they are not currently in the top tier of ACRI risk rankings.

- Senegal: Post-election political tensions between the new Faye government and established political networks, combined with social frustrations over economic performance, create governance volatility that merits monitoring.
- Guinea-Bissau: Political fragility driven by competition among military factions, narco-politics, and constitutional manipulation creates persistent coup risk.
- Comoros: Recurring institutional instability and President Azali's consolidation of power through constitutional manipulation create vulnerability.

- Togo: The arrival of jihadist actors in the Savanes region represents a qualitative escalation of conflict risk in a country previously outside the acute conflict belt.
- Zambia: Debt restructuring, economic stress, and approaching elections (2026) create political pressures that could generate instability in a country with a strong democratic tradition.

6.3 Emerging Flashpoints

Several specific geographic locations and political dynamics constitute emerging flashpoints that merit pre-emptive attention from early warning practitioners and conflict prevention actors.

The DRC-Rwanda border: The potential for the M23 crisis to escalate into direct DRC-Rwanda military confrontation remains a significant risk. The presence of Rwandan forces in DRC territory, in combination with DRC military mobilisation and the diplomatic breakdown between Kigali and Kinshasa, creates the conditions for incidents that could rapidly escalate.

Chad's eastern border: The Sudan civil war is generating significant cross-border dynamics in eastern Chad — refugee flows, weapons spillover, and competition for resources among displaced and host communities — that could destabilise Chad's own fragile political environment.

Northern Benin-Burkina Faso border: Jihadist infiltration into northern Benin from Burkina Faso's Sahel and Est regions (now Golmou, Sirba, and Tapoa) represents the active front of JNIM's geographic expansion into coastal West Africa. Benin's security forces have responded with both military operations and community engagement, but the risk of escalation is real.

Ethiopia-Eritrea relations: The deterioration of relations between Addis Ababa and Asmara following the Pretoria Agreement — with Eritrea apparently unhappy with the settlement and maintaining unacknowledged forces in western Tigray — creates a risk of renewed confrontation that would have catastrophic implications for the region.

6.4 Escalation Scenarios

CRCA identifies three key escalation scenarios for 2026–2027, each of which has a probability assessment and defined trigger indicators.

Scenario A — Sudan State Fragmentation (Probability: 25%). If the civil war continues on its current trajectory for another 12–18 months, the operational and political consolidation of SAF control in the east and RSF control in the west and southwest could reach a point of de facto partition. Trigger indicators: continued failure of Jeddah process; SAF-RSF military entrenchment along current front lines; collapse of social infrastructure in RSF-controlled territories.

Scenario B — Sahelian Jihadist Consolidation into Coastal States (Probability: 35%). JNIM successfully establishes permanent operational infrastructure in northern Benin, Togo, and/or Ghana, triggering large-scale security crises in these previously stable states. Trigger indicators: increased attack frequency in Benin's Atakora and Alibori departments; detection of JNIM supply and logistics networks in coastal states; local recruitment activities in northern Ghana.

Scenario C — DRC-Rwanda Military Escalation (Probability: 20%). A direct military confrontation between FARDC and RDF, whether through an incident on the DRC-Rwanda border or through M23 operations that draw in direct RDF forces in response to FARDC pressure, could trigger a broader regional conflict drawing in Uganda, Burundi, and other Great Lakes actors. Trigger indicators: increased cross-border shelling incidents; breakdown in AU-mediated DRC-Rwanda diplomatic process; large-scale FARDC offensive against M23 positions.

6.5 Conflict Mitigation Opportunities

Against the foregoing risk scenarios, CRCA's analysis identifies several specific conflict mitigation opportunities that, with appropriate investment and political will, could produce meaningful improvements in conflict trajectories.

- Engagement with JNIM leadership: Several mediators and analysts have assessed that elements of JNIM's political leadership may be open to negotiation with states that offer genuine governance commitments and are willing to acknowledge legitimate community grievances. The Mali government's initial (and since abandoned) engagement with Iyad Ag Ghaly in 2020 provides a precedent, however limited. The challenge is identifying interlocutors and conditions under which negotiated engagement could produce meaningful outcomes.
- Community-based conflict prevention in coastal West Africa: The pre-emption of jihadist expansion into coastal West Africa requires immediate investment in community-based violence prevention, inter-faith dialogue, and livelihood support in northern Benin, Togo, and Ghana — before jihadist networks establish deep roots.
- Sudan ceasefire and humanitarian corridor: Sustained AU and Arab League pressure on both the SAF and RSF, backed by credible security guarantees and meaningful economic incentives for compliance, represents the best available path toward a humanitarian corridor agreement that could save millions of lives in the near term.

6.6 Early Warning Priorities

CRCA's early warning analysis identifies the following as priority monitoring concerns for the 2026–2027 period, based on ACRI Sentinel's tracking of pre-conflict indicators across all 54 states.

Table 5: Priority Monitoring Contexts, 2026 -2027

Priority	Country/Context	Key Monitoring Indicators	Risk Timeline
1	Sudan — famine spread	IPC Phase 5 geographic expansion; SAF/RSF humanitarian access blockades; market price collapse	Immediate — ongoing
2	Coastal West Africa — jihadist infiltration	Attack frequency; territorial movement patterns; local recruitment; cross-border flows	3–12 months
3	DRC-Rwanda border escalation	Cross-border incidents; diplomatic communiqués; M23 territorial movement; RDF positioning	3–9 months
4	South Sudan elections	R-ARCSS implementation pace; elite political signalling; subnational violence incidents	6–18 months
5	Zambia political stability	Debt restructuring progress; protest events; opposition space; pre-election incidents	6–18 months

Priority Monitoring Contexts, 2026–2027 | Source: CRCA–ACAN, ACRI Sentinel Platform (2026).

6.7 Introducing ACRI Sentinel: CRCA's AI-Conflict Risk Assessment Platform

ACRI Sentinel is CRCA's AI-assisted conflict risk assessment and intelligence platform, currently in pilot testing. It has been developed to complement the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) by providing an

anticipatory analytical layer for monitoring emerging conflict dynamics between annual ACRI assessment cycles.

The platform is designed to enhance human analysis by integrating multiple conflict-relevant data streams, including media reporting, selected social media signals, satellite imagery, humanitarian situation reports, market price trends, and displacement data across Africa. Rather than replacing expert judgement, ACRI Sentinel supports analysts by identifying emerging patterns that may warrant closer examination.

ACRI Sentinel builds upon ACRI's analytical framework, using the Index's domain architecture to organise incoming information and assess changes in conflict-related indicators. Where multiple indicators suggest a consistent deterioration in the security environment, the platform generates a preliminary risk assessment for review by the Africa Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN). These assessments are evaluated alongside contextual knowledge and qualitative analysis before any findings are considered for inclusion in CRCA's conflict risk assessments.

A central objective of the platform is to strengthen anticipatory analysis by identifying situations where preventive engagement may be warranted before violent escalation occurs. In the long term, CRCA intends for ACRI Sentinel to support governments, humanitarian organisations, development partners, regional organisations, and peace support actors with evidence-informed conflict risk assessments that contribute to prevention, preparedness, and timely decision-making.

During its pilot phase, ACRI Sentinel provides monitoring coverage across all 54 African states, with enhanced analytical attention directed towards higher-risk contexts. The platform draws upon a range of established datasets and information sources, including ACLED, UNHCR, OCHA, WFP, and UCDP, alongside CRCA's own analytical assessments. As the platform continues to undergo testing and methodological refinement, its outputs should be regarded as experimental analytical products intended to support research, horizon scanning, and methodological development rather than operational forecasts or definitive predictions.

CHAPTER 7**POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

African Union | Regional Bodies | National Governments | International Partners | Civil Society

The policy recommendations presented in this chapter are informed by the findings of the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026 and the accompanying strategic forecast assessment. Particular attention is given to countries and regions exhibiting elevated structural vulnerabilities, governance deficits, active conflict dynamics, and humanitarian pressures.

7.1 African Union

The African Union Peace and Security Architecture (APSA) has been systematically underfunded and underutilised relative to the scale and complexity of the continent's conflict challenges. Strengthening APSA — and particularly the AU Peace and Security Council (PSC), the Continental Early Warning System (CEWS), and the African Standby Force (ASF) — must be the foundational institutional priority for the 2026–2027 period.

- Fully operationalise the African Standby Force and its rapid deployment capacity, enabling the AU to mount a response to mass atrocity situations within 14 days of PSC authorisation, as envisaged in the APSA framework.
- Capitalise the AU Peace Fund to at least the target of 25 percent of all AU peace operations budgets, with a trajectory toward full African financing of African peace operations. Dependence on external financing is a strategic vulnerability that compromises AU independence and responsiveness.
- Strengthen the Continental Early Warning System's integration with AI-assisted conflict risk assessment platforms like ACRI Sentinel and other data platforms, ensuring that CEWS has access to the best available conflict risk intelligence.
- Issue unequivocal and consistent condemnation of unconstitutional changes of government, regardless of the geopolitical affiliations of the parties involved, and enforce Article 30 of the AU Constitutive Act (suspension of member states subject to coups) without exception.
- Establish a dedicated AU mediation capacity for the Sudan conflict, with the political authority and resources to engage both the SAF and the RSF as well as international external supporters, and with a mandate to pursue both humanitarian access and political resolution simultaneously.

7.2 Regional Economic Communities

Africa's Regional Economic Communities (RECs) — ECOWAS, IGAD, SADC, EAC, and ECCAS — are essential components of the continental conflict prevention architecture, and their engagement must be strengthened, coordinated, and adequately resourced.

- ECOWAS must develop a strategic response to the Alliance des États du Sahel (AES) that balances principled commitment to democratic governance norms with pragmatic engagement on the security challenges shared by AES and ECOWAS member states. A security cooperation framework that

does not require AES states to accept political conditionality may be a necessary transitional arrangement.

- IGAD should elevate its Sudan mediation efforts, complementing the Jeddah process with an African-led track that engages Sudan's immediate neighbours — Chad, Ethiopia, Egypt, South Sudan — who bear the greatest burden of the conflict's regional spillover.
- The EAC and SADC-led mediation in the DRC crisis must be sustained with high-level political engagement, including direct presidential involvement from regional leaders, and backed by credible security guarantees for any ceasefire arrangements.
- All RECs should develop pre-emptive engagement strategies for electoral risk, including pre-election mediation missions, electoral assistance programmes, and rapid-response mediation capacity for post-election disputes.

7.3 National Governments

The primary responsibility for conflict prevention lies with national governments, which have both the sovereign authority and the greatest knowledge of domestic conflict dynamics. The following recommendations are addressed to governments across the risk spectrum.

- Governments of high-risk states should prioritise the development of inclusive national dialogue processes that bring together political, civic, traditional, and community actors to develop shared approaches to the governance challenges driving conflict risk.
- Security sector reform — including civilian oversight mechanisms, accountability frameworks for human rights violations, and professionalisation of military and police services — should be treated as a conflict prevention investment, not merely a governance aspiration.
- Counterterrorism strategies must integrate governance, development, and community engagement dimensions alongside security operations, recognising that military pressure alone cannot defeat insurgencies with significant social roots.
- Governments facing electoral cycles should commit to independent electoral management, accept the decisions of electoral bodies, and guarantee the political and physical security of opposition candidates, civil society monitors, and media.
- Climate adaptation must be integrated into national development planning and security strategies, recognising the conflict risk implications of climate-driven resource competition and livelihood disruption.

7.4 Humanitarian Action and Displacement Response

- Dramatically increase funding for humanitarian response to the Sudan crisis, treating it with the same political urgency and financial commitment accorded to comparable humanitarian emergencies elsewhere in the world.
- Negotiate enforceable humanitarian access agreements for besieged populations in Burkina Faso, Mali, Sudan, and the DRC, backed by international monitoring and meaningful consequences for obstruction.
- Develop durable solutions frameworks for protracted displacement in the Horn of Africa, with particular attention to the rights and livelihoods of the 3.8 million people who have been displaced for over five years.
- Invest in host community support in Chad, Uganda, Ethiopia, and other countries bearing disproportionate burdens of refugee hosting, recognising that sustainable protection requires investment in the communities that provide it.

7.5 Climate Resilience and Food Security

- Integrate conflict sensitivity into all climate adaptation programming, ensuring that adaptation investments do not inadvertently exacerbate resource competition or political tensions between communities.
- Establish a dedicated Africa Climate-Security fund, with capitalisation from developed country climate finance commitments, to support integrated climate adaptation and conflict prevention programming in high-risk contexts.
- Invest in weather-indexed agricultural insurance, drought-resistant seed varieties, and water infrastructure in climate-vulnerable, conflict-prone communities, reducing the impact of climate shocks on livelihoods and thereby on social stability.
- Address farmer-herder conflict through integrated land governance reforms that recognise both agricultural and pastoral land rights, restore degraded seasonal migration corridors, and invest in community-level conflict resolution mechanisms.

7.6 International Partners and Donors

- Shift the balance of peace and security funding toward prevention, early warning, and conflict mediation, recognising that investments in prevention yield far higher returns — in human welfare and financial efficiency — than investments in crisis response.
- Apply consistent standards in condemnation of democratic backsliding and human rights violations, regardless of the geopolitical positioning of the states concerned. Selective condemnation of governance failures based on geopolitical considerations undermines the credibility of international norms.
- Increase the volume and predictability of development assistance to African states, recognising that under-investment in development is a direct contributor to the conflict risk that generates humanitarian emergencies requiring far more costly responses.
- Engage African research and policy institutions — including CRCA and its network partners — as genuine intellectual partners in the design and evaluation of conflict prevention strategies, rather than as implementing agents for externally designed programmes.

7.7 Private Sector and Civil Society

- Private sector actors operating in conflict-affected environments should commit to conflict-sensitive business practices, including supply chain due diligence that does not finance armed groups, community benefit-sharing arrangements that address exclusion grievances, and participation in multi-stakeholder dialogue processes.
- African civil society organisations — including women's movements, youth networks, interfaith platforms, and traditional leadership structures — should be recognised and funded as essential actors in conflict prevention and peacebuilding, rather than as peripheral to state-centred peace processes.
- Media organisations should invest in conflict-sensitive journalism training and standards, recognising that irresponsible media coverage of ethnic, religious, and political tensions can contribute to conflict escalation.

7.8 Conclusion

The conflicts described in this report are not inevitable. They are the products of human choices — choices by political leaders who have subordinated the interests of their populations to personal and factional

enrichment; choices by external actors who have prioritised geopolitical interests over the welfare of conflict-affected communities; choices by the international community to invest in crisis response rather than conflict prevention; and choices by all actors to accept Africa's conflict landscape as a natural condition rather than a policy failure with human causes and human solutions.

CRCA presents this inaugural APCO 2026 report in the conviction that better analysis, more systematically deployed, can contribute to better choices. The evidence assembled in these pages demonstrates that conflict risk is measurable, that early warning is possible, and that timely, well-informed action can shift trajectories toward stabilisation and transformation. The window for prevention is not closed. What is required is the political will to use it.

The Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook will be updated annually, providing a continuous evidence base for conflict prevention, humanitarian action, and peacebuilding investment. CRCA and ACAN welcome engagement from all partners committed to a more peaceful Africa.

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ANNEXES

Methodology | Indicator Definitions and Data Sources | Country Rankings |

ANNEX A – ACRI 2026 Methodology

The **African Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026** is a composite index designed to assess the relative risk of conflict, instability, and humanitarian deterioration across African countries. The index combines structural vulnerabilities, governance conditions, conflict dynamics, and humanitarian pressures into a single risk score ranging from **0 to 100**, where higher scores indicate greater conflict risk.

The methodology is grounded in the principle that conflict risk is multidimensional and cannot be adequately explained by a single factor. Instead, ACRI integrates long-term structural drivers, institutional performance, contemporary security threats, and humanitarian stressors.

Conceptual Framework

ACRI is organized into four domains:

Domain	Weight
Structural Factors	40%
Governance & Institutions	25%
Security & Conflict Dynamics	25%
Humanitarian Factors	10%
Total	100%

The weighting structure reflects the assumption that structural vulnerabilities create the conditions under which conflict emerges, while governance, security, and humanitarian conditions influence the likelihood of escalation, persistence, and impact.

Domain 1: Structural Factors (40%)

Structural indicators capture the underlying socio-economic and environmental conditions that increase vulnerability to instability.

Indicators

Indicator	Weight
State Fragility Score	8
Human Development Index (HDI)	8
Economic Marginalization (GDP per capita PPP)	8
Climate Vulnerability	8
Population Facing Acute Food Insecurity	8
Total	40

Sources

- Fragile States Index (Fund for Peace)
- UNDP Human Development Report
- World Bank GDP PPP data
- ND-GAIN Climate Vulnerability Index
- Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC 2026)

Rationale

Structural factors represent the long-term drivers of conflict risk. Countries characterized by weak institutions, low development, poverty, climate stress, and food insecurity face greater challenges in maintaining stability and resilience.

Domain 2: Governance & Institutions (25%)

Governance indicators assess state legitimacy, institutional effectiveness, political inclusion, and respect for civil liberties.

Indicators

Indicator	Weight
Rule of Law	5
Control of Corruption	5
Political Stability & Absence of Violence	5
Regime Type / Democratic Governance	5
Civil Liberties	5
Total	25

Sources

- World Governance Indicators (WGI)
- Freedom House
- Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index

Rationale

Weak governance reduces state capacity to manage grievances, resolve disputes, and provide public goods. Governance deficits often act as accelerants of conflict when combined with structural vulnerabilities.

Domain 3: Security & Conflict Dynamics (25%)

Security indicators measure the current intensity, diffusion, and lethality of conflict.

Indicators

Indicator	Weight
Conflict Event Frequency	5

Indicator	Weight
Conflict Fatality Rate	5
Violence Against Civilians	5
Terrorism Impact	5
Cross-Border Conflict Exposure	5
Total	25

Sources

- ACLED
- Global Terrorism Index (GTI)

Rationale

Security indicators capture active manifestations of instability and provide direct evidence of conflict dynamics occurring within or affecting a country.

Domain 4: Humanitarian Factors (10%)

Humanitarian indicators assess the consequences of conflict and societal stress.

Indicators

Indicator	Weight
Population Displacement Rate	4
Humanitarian Needs Severity	3
Refugee and IDP Burden Ratio	3
Total	10

Sources

- IDMC GRID 2025
- UNHCR Global Trends 2025
- INFORM Severity Index 2026

Rationale

Humanitarian pressures provide insight into the scale of human suffering and societal strain associated with conflict and instability.

Data Collection

The index covers:

- 54 African sovereign states

- Western Sahara is retained in the database but excluded from ranking due to insufficient data availability

Data were collected from internationally recognized and publicly available datasets released between 2025 and 2026.

Where multiple sources reported related information, the most recent and methodologically robust source was selected.

Normalization

Formula for 2026 ACRI Score Calculation

The formula used to normalise indicators, calculate domain scores, and compute the overall 2026 Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) Score

1	Risk-positive indicator normalization	$\text{Score} = \frac{X - X_{\min}}{X_{\max} - X_{\min}} \times 100$	(1)
2	Risk-negative indicator normalization	$\text{Score} = \frac{X_{\max} - X}{X_{\max} - X_{\min}} \times 100$	(2)
3	Domain score	$\text{Domain Score} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \text{Score}_i}{n}$	(3)
4	Indicator weighting	Weighted Indicator = Indicator Score × Indicator Weight	(4)
5	Composite index (ACRI)	$\text{ACRI} = \sum_{i=1}^k (D_i \times W_i)$	(5)
6	Expanded ACRI formula (four domains)	$\text{ACRI} = (\text{Structural} \times 0.40) + (\text{Governance} \times 0.25) + (\text{Security} \times 0.25) + (\text{Humanitarian} \times 0.10)$	(6)
7	Average regional ACRI score	$\text{Regional Average} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^n \text{ACRI}_i}{n}$	(7)
8	Percentage change	$\text{Percentage Change} = \frac{\text{New} - \text{Old}}{\text{Old}} \times 100$	(8)

Where: X = observed country value; X_{\min} = minimum observed value in the dataset; X_{\max} = maximum observed value in the dataset; Score_i = normalized score for indicator i ; n = number of indicators in a domain; D_i = domain score for domain i ; W_i = weight for domain i ; k = number of domains ($k = 4$ in ACRI).

Indicators originate from different scales and units.

Examples include:

- Percentages
- Counts
- Index scores
- Rates per population

To make indicators comparable, all variables were normalized to a common **0–100 scale** using Min-Max normalization.

Normalisation of Risk-Positive Indicators

For indicators where higher values represent higher risk, the normalisation is formula 1:

Examples:

- Conflict fatalities
- Terrorism
- Food insecurity
- Displacement

Normalisation of Risk-Negative Indicators

For indicators where higher values represent lower risk, the normalisation is formula 2:

Examples:

- HDI
- Rule of Law
- Control of Corruption
- Civil Liberties

After normalization:

- 0 = Lowest observed risk
- 100 = Highest observed risk

Missing Data Treatment

A small number of countries lacked data for selected indicators. Rather than assigning missing values a score of zero, ACRI applies **available-data weighting**.

For each domain:

1. Indicators with available data retain their assigned weights.
2. Missing indicators are excluded.
3. The domain score is calculated using only available indicators.
4. The denominator is adjusted accordingly.

This approach avoids artificially rewarding or penalizing countries because of data gaps.

Domain Score Calculation

Each domain score is calculated as a weighted average of normalized indicators. The domain score formula is Formula 3

The resulting domain score ranges from 0 to 100.

Final ACRI Score

The final score combines all four domains. The Composite Index formula is Formula 5 and 6.

The final ACRI score ranges from:

- **0 = Lowest conflict risk**
- **100 = Highest conflict risk**

Ranking Procedure

Countries are ranked according to their final ACRI score.

- Rank 1 = Highest risk
- Rank 54 = Lowest risk

Western Sahara is excluded from the ranking due to insufficient data coverage.

Risk Classification

For interpretation, scores are grouped into risk tiers:

Score Range	Category
10-39.99	Low Risk
40-44.99	Moderate Risk
50-59.99	High Risk
60-100	Very High Risk

Strengths of the ACRI Methodology

- Multi-dimensional approach combining structural, governance & institutions, security & conflict, and humanitarian dimensions.
- Uses authoritative international datasets.
- Transparent weighting structure.
- Comparable across all African countries.
- Incorporates both conflict drivers and conflict outcomes.
- Handles missing data through available-data weighting.
- Produces a replicable and annually updateable framework.

This methodology provides a systematic and evidence-based assessment of conflict risk across Africa and supports comparative analysis, early warning, policy prioritization, and conflict prevention efforts. ACRI scores represent composite conflict risk assessments based on the best available data as of Q1 2026. They should be interpreted as structured analytical judgements rather than precise measurements. The following methodological limitations should be noted by users of ACRI data.

- Data quality varies across indicators and countries. Countries with active armed conflict are more likely to have data gaps, and these gaps are managed through the available-data weighting approach described in Section 5.5, under which missing values are excluded rather than assigned a value of zero.
- ACRI scores reflect structural risk at the national level. They do not capture sub-national variation in conflict risk, which can be extremely significant: in Nigeria, for example, the conflict risk in Borno State is dramatically higher than in Lagos State.
- ACRI is designed to measure conflict risk, not to predict specific conflict events. A high ACRI score indicates elevated structural vulnerability; it does not predict that conflict will occur in any specific timeframe.
- The Index is designed to be updated annually, reflecting changes in the underlying data. Significant events occurring after Q1 2026 will be reflected in the ACRI 2027 edition.
- CRCA welcomes engagement from researchers, practitioners, and policy actors who wish to contribute to the ongoing development and refinement of the ACRI methodology.

For more information on the ACRI methodology, to request access to underlying data, or to engage with CRCA's research programme, please contact CRCA through the following email address: research@crcabub.org

ANNEX B - ACRI 2026 Indicator Definitions and Data Sources

ACRI 2026 is built from 18 indicators distributed across four domains: Structural Factors (40%), Governance and Institutions (25%), Security and Conflict Dynamics (25%), and Humanitarian Factors (10%). Within the Structural, Governance, and Security domains, each indicator carries an equal weight of 8, 5, and 5 percentage points respectively. Within the Humanitarian domain, indicator weights vary (4%, 3%, 3%) to reflect their differing analytical centrality.

Domain	Indicator	Weight in Index	Source
Structural Factors (40%)	State Fragility	8%	Fragile States Index, Fund for Peace, 2026
Structural Factors (40%)	Human Development Index (HDI)	8%	UNDP Human Development Report, 2026
Structural Factors (40%)	Economic Marginalisation (GDP per capita, PPP)	8%	World Bank, 2026
Structural Factors (40%)	Climate Vulnerability	8%	ND-GAIN Climate Vulnerability Index, 2026
Structural Factors (40%)	Population Facing Acute Food Insecurity	8%	Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC 2026)
Governance & Institutions (25%)	Rule of Law	5%	World Bank Governance Indicators, 2026
Governance & Institutions (25%)	Control of Corruption	5%	World Bank Governance Indicators, 2026
Governance & Institutions (25%)	Political Stability and Absence of Violence	5%	World Bank Governance Indicators, 2026
Governance & Institutions (25%)	Regime Type	5%	Economist Intelligence Unit Democracy Index, 2026
Governance & Institutions (25%)	Civil Liberties	5%	Freedom House, 2026
Security & Conflict Dynamics (25%)	Conflict Event Frequency	5%	ACLED 2026
Security & Conflict Dynamics (25%)	Conflict Fatality Rate	5%	ACLED 2026
Security & Conflict Dynamics (25%)	Violence Against Civilians	5%	ACLED 2026

Domain	Indicator	Weight in Index	Source
Security & Conflict Dynamics (25%)	Terrorism Impact	5%	Global Terrorism Index (GTI), IEP 2026
Security & Conflict Dynamics (25%)	Cross-Border Conflict Exposure	5%	ACLED 2026
Humanitarian Factors (10%)	Population Displacement Rate	4%	IDMC Global Internal Displacement Database 2026
Humanitarian Factors (10%)	Humanitarian Needs Severity	3%	INFORM Severity Index 2026
Humanitarian Factors (10%)	Refugee and IDP Burden Ratio	3%	UNHCR Global Trends 2026

Indicator Weights and Sources Summary | Source: CRCA–ACAN Methodology Framework (CRCA–ACAN, 2026); indicator-level sources as listed.

Note: The Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026 is a forward-looking assessment published in 2026. Indicator values are derived from the most recent verified datasets available at the time of analysis. While some indicators incorporate 2026 observations where available, many international datasets are reported with a one-year publication lag and therefore use 2025 (or the latest available) data. The index reflects the most current and reliable evidence available during the ACRI 2026 assessment period.

ACRI 2026 Detailed Indicator Definitions and Primary Sources

This Annex provides the conceptual definitions, measurement criteria, and principal data sources for all 18 indicators used in constructing the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI). It serves as a methodological reference to ensure transparency, consistency, and reproducibility in the assessment process. Each indicator is defined according to its analytical purpose, accompanied by a description of what it measures, its relevance to conflict risk, and the primary sources from which data are obtained. Together, these definitions provide the conceptual foundation for the ACRI methodology and support informed interpretation of country scores, regional comparisons, and conflict risk forecasts presented throughout this report.

Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026 — Indicator Framework

Eighteen indicators across four weighted domains, drawn from twelve primary data sources.

Indicator	Definition	Primary Source
STRUCTURAL DOMAIN — 40% of overall ACRI score		
1. State Fragility Score	Measures the overall vulnerability of a state to conflict, institutional failure, and societal pressures by assessing cohesion, economic conditions, political legitimacy, public services, and human rights. Higher scores indicate greater fragility and conflict risk.	<i>Fund for Peace – Fragile States Index (FSI)</i>
2. Human Development Index (HDI)	Measures long-term human development through life expectancy, educational attainment, and gross national income per capita. Lower levels of human development are associated with increased structural conflict risk.	<i>United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report</i>
3. Economic Marginalisation (GNI per Capita)	Assesses the extent of economic deprivation using Gross National Income per capita as a proxy for economic opportunity and living standards. Lower income levels indicate greater economic marginalisation and higher conflict vulnerability.	<i>World Bank – World Development Indicators – (WDI)</i>
4. Climate Vulnerability	Measures a country's exposure, sensitivity, and capacity to adapt to climate-related stresses such as drought, flooding, and environmental degradation that can increase conflict risks.	<i>Notre Dame Global Adaptation Initiative (ND-GAIN) Index</i>
5. Population Facing Acute Food Insecurity	Measures the proportion of the population experiencing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of food insecurity, reflecting humanitarian vulnerability and potential conflict pressures.	<i>Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC)</i>
GOVERNANCE DOMAIN — 25% of overall ACRI score		
6. Rule of Law	Measures public confidence in the legal system, contract enforcement, property rights, police effectiveness, and the independence of the judiciary. Stronger rule of law generally reduces conflict risk.	<i>World Bank – Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)</i>

Indicator	Definition	Primary Source
7. Control of Corruption	Assesses the extent to which public power is exercised for private gain, including both petty and grand corruption as well as state capture. Lower control of corruption is associated with higher governance risks.	<i>World Bank – Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)</i>
8. Political Stability and Absence of Violence	Measures the likelihood of political instability, unconstitutional government change, political violence, and terrorism. Lower political stability indicates elevated conflict risk.	<i>World Bank – Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)</i>
9. Regime Type (Polity Score / Electoral Democracy Index)	Assesses the level of democratic governance, electoral competition, political participation, and institutional constraints on executive authority. More democratic systems generally demonstrate greater resilience against violent conflict.	<i>Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute</i>
10. Civil and Political Liberties	Measures the degree to which citizens enjoy political rights, civil liberties, freedom of expression, association, and participation in public life. Restrictions on freedoms may increase instability and grievances.	<i>Freedom House</i>
SECURITY DOMAIN — 25% of overall ACRI score		
11. Conflict Event Frequency	Measures the number of recorded conflict-related events occurring within a country during the reporting period, indicating the intensity and persistence of organised violence.	<i>Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Conflict Index</i>
12. Conflict Deadliness	Measures the severity of conflict by assessing fatalities associated with organised political violence and armed conflict events. Higher values indicate more lethal conflict environments.	<i>Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Conflict Index</i>
13. Violence Against Civilians	Measures the frequency of deliberate attacks targeting civilians by state or non-state armed actors. High levels indicate deteriorating civilian protection and heightened insecurity.	<i>Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Dataset</i>
14. Terrorism Incidents and Impact	Assesses the frequency, severity, and societal impact of terrorist attacks, capturing both direct casualties and broader security implications.	<i>Institute for Economics and Peace – Global Terrorism Index (GTI)</i>
15. Conflict Diffusion and Spillover Exposure	Measures the extent to which conflict dynamics spread across borders or neighbouring regions, reflecting the risk of regional contagion and cross-border insecurity.	<i>Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) Conflict Index</i>

Indicator	Definition	Primary Source
HUMANITARIAN DOMAIN — 10% of overall ACRI score		
16. Humanitarian Needs Severity Score	Measures the overall severity of humanitarian needs by combining indicators of vulnerability, exposure, coping capacity, and humanitarian conditions.	<i>INFORM Severity Index (European Commission Joint Research Centre & ACAPS)</i>
17. Population Displacement Rate	Measures the proportion of the national population that has been forcibly displaced internally or across international borders due to conflict, violence, or persecution.	<i>UNHCR Global Trends Report and Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC)</i>
18. Refugee and IDP Burden Ratio	Measures the relative burden of refugees and internally displaced persons as a share of the national population, indicating humanitarian pressure and potential social strain.	<i>UNHCR Global Trends Report</i>

Source: CRCA-ACAN, Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI) 2026 methodology.

The ACRI framework is subject to periodic methodological review to ensure that its indicators remain analytically relevant, empirically robust, and responsive to evolving conflict dynamics, emerging risks, and improvements in data availability across the continent. Consequently, indicators, definitions, and data sources may be refined or updated in subsequent editions of this publication as part of CRCA's commitment to continuous methodological improvement.

ANNEX C - ACRI 2026 Country Rankings

The full ACRI 2026 Country Rankings for all 54 African states are provided in the accompanying ACRI 2026 Country Rankings and Risk Categories.

Rank	Country	Region	Score	Category
1	Sudan	East Africa	75.94	Very High Risk
2	Somalia	East Africa	71.72	Very High Risk
3	DR Congo	Central Africa	68.57	Very High Risk
4	Burkina Faso	West Africa	65.96	Very High Risk
5	South Sudan	East Africa	65.26	Very High Risk
6	Nigeria	West Africa	64.29	Very High Risk
7	Mali	West Africa	59.86	High Risk
8	Ethiopia	East Africa	59.56	High Risk
9	Cameroon	Central Africa	56.20	High Risk
10	Chad	Central Africa	56.07	High Risk
11	Niger	West Africa	55.39	High Risk
12	Central Afr. Rep.	Central Africa	55.15	High Risk
13	Mozambique	Southern Africa	54.55	High Risk
14	Burundi	East Africa	54.26	High Risk
15	Libya	North Africa	53.16	High Risk
16	Togo	West Africa	50.21	High Risk
17	Eritrea	East Africa	49.67	Moderate Risk
18	Egypt	North Africa	49.21	Moderate Risk
19	Rep. of Congo	Central Africa	48.29	Moderate Risk
20	Uganda	East Africa	47.42	Moderate Risk
21	Angola	Southern Africa	47.08	Moderate Risk
22	Zimbabwe	Southern Africa	45.86	Moderate Risk
23	Kenya	East Africa	45.31	Moderate Risk
24	Benin	West Africa	45.01	Moderate Risk
25	Rwanda	East Africa	44.91	Moderate Risk
26	Guinea	West Africa	44.67	Moderate Risk
27	Comoros	East Africa	43.82	Moderate Risk
28	Morocco	North Africa	43.82	Moderate Risk
29	Algeria	North Africa	43.26	Moderate Risk

Rank	Country	Region	Score	Category
30	Madagascar	Southern Africa	42.97	Moderate Risk
31	Tunisia	North Africa	42.33	Moderate Risk
32	Mauritania	West Africa	42.26	Moderate Risk
33	Guinea-Bissau	West Africa	42.02	Moderate Risk
34	Ivory Coast	West Africa	41.59	Moderate Risk
35	Equatorial Guinea	Central Africa	41.27	Moderate Risk
36	Tanzania	East Africa	40.56	Moderate Risk
37	Djibouti	East Africa	39.73	Low Risk
38	Gambia	West Africa	39.70	Low Risk
39	Zambia	Southern Africa	39.35	Low Risk
40	Gabon	Central Africa	38.69	Low Risk
41	Malawi	Southern Africa	38.51	Low Risk
42	Sierra Leone	West Africa	38.48	Low Risk
43	Liberia	West Africa	37.37	Low Risk
44	Eswatini	Southern Africa	36.50	Low Risk
45	Lesotho	Southern Africa	35.36	Low Risk
46	Ghana	West Africa	34.35	Low Risk
47	Senegal	West Africa	34.33	Low Risk
48	South Africa	Southern Africa	32.40	Low Risk
49	Namibia	Southern Africa	28.41	Low Risk
50	São Tomé and Príncipe	Central Africa	27.24	Low Risk
51	Botswana	Southern Africa	26.49	Low Risk
52	Cabo Verde	West Africa	23.02	Low Risk
53	Mauritius	East Africa*	22.71	Low Risk
54	Seychelles	East Africa*	11.08	Low Risk

Annex C: ACRI 2026 Full Country Rankings (All 54 States) | Source: CRCA–ACAN, Africa Conflict Risk Index 2026 (CRCA–ACAN, 2026).

Western Sahara (Not Ranked)

Rank	Country	Region	Score	Category
55	Western Sahara	North Africa	N/A	Insufficient Data

About Conflict Research Consulting & Advocacy (CRCA)

CRCA is a pan-African knowledge and collaboration platform advancing conflict research, analysis, and evidence-informed peacebuilding. Through its analytical body, the African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN), CRCA produces the continent's leading independent assessments of conflict risk, governance, and humanitarian conditions, anchored in the proprietary Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI).

About African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN)

The African Conflict Analyst Network (ACAN) is CRCA's analytical body and a curated network of conflict analysts, researchers, and practitioners from across Africa who produce timely, evidence-based analyses of conflict trends, peacebuilding initiatives, governance challenges, and security developments.

ACAN coordinates country-level data collection, peer review, and regional analysis for the Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook series, and its members contribute directly to the Africa Conflict Risk Index (ACRI), regional assessments, and thematic chapters, ensuring that local expertise and contextual knowledge remain at the heart of continental analysis.

About the African Conflict Risk Index (ACRI)

ACRI is CRCA's proprietary, multidimensional conflict risk methodology that assesses all 54 African states across governance, security, humanitarian, socioeconomic, and climate-environment domains. ACRI provides the empirical foundation for the Africa Peace and Conflict Outlook series and is updated annually to reflect the continent's evolving risk landscape.

About ACRI Sentinel

ACRI Sentinel is CRCA's AI-powered conflict risk assessment and intelligence platform. By continuously analysing conflict-relevant data streams across all 54 African states, ACRI Sentinel is designed to identify emerging risk signals in the critical window before armed violence erupts, thereby supporting anticipatory action by humanitarian organizations, development partners, and peace and security institutions.

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