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GEN Z UPRISING:

Youth, Protests and Peace Advocacy in Africa

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Abstract

This paper examines the surge of nationally coordinated, youth-led mass protests across Africa between 2023 and 2025. Driven by Generation Z and younger millennials, these movements emerged in response to acute economic hardship, systemic corruption, and unresponsive governance. The study provides a comparative analysis of twelve major national protest movements, including those in Kenya, Nigeria, Senegal, and Morocco, highlighting how tech-savvy youths leveraged digital mobilisation—via social media and encrypted apps—to bypass traditional political structures and state repression.

Key findings reveal that while some movements achieved tactical victories, such as policy reversals or the ousting of leaders (e.g., in Kenya and Madagascar), they also faced severe state crackdowns, including lethal force, internet blackouts, and the shrinking of civic space. Furthermore, the paper identifies emerging patterns, such as the rise of leaderless, pragmatic movements and the unsettling trend of military interventions filling power vacuums left by collapsed governments. Ultimately, the paper argues that this protest wave represents a paradigm shift in African politics, necessitating a transition from state repression to inclusive governance and the implementation of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda to ensure long-term stability and democratic progress.

Introduction

In the last four years, there has been a wave of nationally coordinated mass protests across Africa (Lawal, 2024). These protests, often led by young people who are fed up with economic hardship, corruption, and unresponsive governments, have challenged governments and in some cases altered the political landscape of some countries (Ahmed, 2025; Lawal, 2024; and Daoud & Sivieude, 2024). These protests have featured youths as organisers, mobilisers and major participants. These youths, often referred to as Gen Z or Generation Z (those born between the late 1990s and the 2000s), have used these protests to express their frustration over poor governance, corruption, economic exclusion and hardship, and governments' insensitivity.

Thus, the rise of youth protests in Africa must be seen in context: a continent where the median age is under 20, youth unemployment is high, and old political elites remain entrenched (Vandyck, 2024; Fong, 2025). Young people today are highly engaged in political issues, but they face a narrowing civic space when they dissent. This paper examines the contours of the Gen Z protest wave in Africa, its drivers and patterns, state responses, and what it means for democracy and youth empowerment on the continent.

In terms of outcomes, these protests have shown varied results. In the first instance, these protests have awakened the youth not only around governance and policy issues but also about organising and leadership. This has also extended to political participation. In some of the African countries where protests took place, the youths have become more politically involved (Fong, 2025). Secondly, the protests have achieved some victories in terms of policy reversal, provision of cushioning palliatives, resignation of political office holders or dissolution of government cabinet, and electoral victory (Lawal, 2024).

Overview of Major Protests across Africa (2023–2025)

The current wave of protest in Africa has taken different dimensions from country to country, yet there are common themes. In many cases, Gen Z or younger millennials formed the core of demonstrators, using social media to mobilise quickly, with governments often responding with a mix of concessions and crackdowns.

The table below summarises twelve (12) major national protest movements from 2023 to 2025, including their timing, triggers and demands, government actions, and the role of youth in each. Each section summarises the nature of each national protest movement. In all the cases, protesters leveraged youth power while leveraging online networks. For example, in Kenya (2024), young protesters forced the withdrawal of the widely unpopular finance bill using online mobilisation (Gathara, 2025). In Nigeria (2024), grassroots rallies against the worsening cost of living crisis drew thousands of youth who mobilised through social media such as X (formerly Twitter) (Princewill & Busari, 2024). The Angolan taxi drivers who sparked national protests gained from Facebook alerts (Wanneburg, 2025).

Country	Dates	Triggers	Government Response	Youth Role
Kenya	Jun–July 2024	Outrage over a proposed Finance Bill that would tax staples and fuel (part of austerity measures). Protesters demanded withdrawal of the bill and accountability for broken economic promises.	Violent crackdown: police and paramilitaries fired tear gas, water cannon and live ammo at unarmed protesters.	Gen Z and younger millennials led a leaderless, decentralized movement (echoing Nigeria's #EndSARS). Social media hashtags like #RejectFinanceBill2024 and #OccupyParliament went viral (Amnesty International, 2025; Ehi, 2025)
Nigeria	Aug 2024 -	Widespread discontent over removal of fuel and utility subsidies, resulting in higher food inflation and soaring petrol prices. Protesters demanded better education, jobs, and anti-corruption. (Al Jazeera, 2024)	1,200 people, including teenagers were reported detained (and dozens shot) by police. Government offered limited relief (food aid, grain distribution).	Youth and activists from social media campaigns like #EndBadGovernance led demonstrations; many teenagers and those in their 20s joined spontaneous street actions in several states. Organisers published 19-point demands list, focusing on cost-of-living issues. (Amnesty International, 2024, 2025b)

Uganda	Jul 2024	Protests against government corruption and nepotism. Youth marched demanding the resignation of Speaker Anita Among amid ethics probe scandals. Demonstrators called for greater accountability and transparency in President Museveni's government. (Hairsine, 2024)	Police preemptively blocked planned marches and arrested about 70 youth activists. Security forces deployed in Kampala to halt assemblies. No concessions on reforms were made. (Nyeko, 2024; Biryabarema, 2024)	Youth activists (students and opposition supporters) organised the "Save Democracy" marches by social media. Leaders of the marches were largely Generation Z, inspired by regional youth movements.
Senegal	March 2023 - July 2024	National protests erupted after opposition leader Ousmane Sonko was convicted and jailed on charges of "corrupting youth," which his supporters saw as politically motivated. Demonstrators demanded Sonko's release, fair elections, and accountability for government misrule (Al Jazeera , 2023a, 2023b and 2024)	Security forces brutally suppressed the protests. At least 16 people were killed and hundreds wounded in clashes. The government also instituted internet blackouts and arrested hundreds of activists (Felix & Dione, 2023; HRW, 2023).	Sonko's base is largely young and urban. Student groups and youth movements joined the rallies en masse. Many Senegalese youth, disillusioned with President Sall, provided the backbone of the demonstrations.
Mozambique	Nov 2024– present	Mass protests following highly contested October 2024 elections. Opposition accused FRELIMO of electoral fraud. Demonstrators demanded annulment of results and new elections (ICG, 2024; Lawal, 2024).	Authorities met largely peaceful marches with repression: hundreds of people were injured and at least 130 killed as of late 2024. The government claimed protests were violent. (Al Jazeera , 2024)	The uprisings were led by youth and students, who organised marches in cities including Maputo and Beira. They channeled the public's frustration at FRELIMO's decades-long rule through protests. Online networks helped share footage of the protests and crackdowns.

Madagascar	Sep–Oct 2025	Sparked by severe water and electricity outages, youth activists expanded demands to call for President Andry Rajoelina's resignation, job creation, and an end to corruption. Protesters also cited government neglect of rural areas and lack of basic services (**Shi, 2025**).	Police and presidential guards clashed with protesters, reportedly shooting and killing at least 22 people in the early days. After nearly two weeks of unrest, Rajoelina fled and was ousted, marking the end of his presidency. The military took over. (Savage & Rahenintsoa, 2025)	Over half the population is under age 20. The protests were explicitly led by Gen Z youth[27]. They organised without leadership on Discord and Facebook. University students and unemployed young people were prominent in the street actions.
Morocco	Sept–Oct 2025	Triggered by a scandal in early October when eight pregnant women died at an Agadir hospital. Protesters accused the government of misallocating resources (e.g. spending on World Cup bids) while neglecting healthcare. They broadened their demands to jobs, decent education and health services, and an end to corruption (Ruck, 2025; Colin, 2025).	King Mohammed VI responded by announcing a new budget with increased funding for health and education. The government made some concessions. Social media influencers calling for action were detained. Overall, the state adopted a cautious reformist posture to defuse the unrest. (CNN, 2025)	Young Moroccans under age 30 led the "Gen Z 212" movement. Tens of thousands of students and unemployed youth marched. The protests spread from Agadir to Casablanca and Rabat. Activists coordinated via encrypted apps. (Fasanotti, 2025).
Angola	July 2025	Sparked by government cuts to fuel subsidies (in line with IMF-recommended reforms). Living costs had already soared, with taxi strikes beginning the unrest. Protesters demanded reversal of subsidy removal and protection against	The authorities used lethal force to break up protest. Riot police fired live ammunition, killing 22 people and injuring nearly 200 on July 28	The protests drew many young Angolans frustrated by inequality. They organised quickly (the first wave was a sudden taxi- and fuel-price strike that grew on social media). Youth activists used

		runaway prices (Wanneburg, 2025; CIVICUS, 2025).	alone. Over 1,200 protesters were detained. (Campos, 2025)	smartphones to livestream the scenes.
Tunisia	July – Dec. 2025	Long-simmering protests flared in July and again in November to December 2025 against President Saied's authoritarian rule. Demonstrators united under slogans of "enough repression," demanding a return to democratic elections. (Sobhan, 2025; Amara, 2025)	Security forces used tear gas and arrested hundreds of protesters across Tunis. The government shut down meetings and cracked down on NGOs earlier in the year. Government made few new concessions.	Youth activists, many of them members of civil society organisations and bar associations, played a visible role. Social media helped link fragmented opposition groups; youths shared videos and coordinated marches. Though Saied's initial supporters came from middle-aged segments, these protests saw younger Tunisians in the streets demanding political change. (AP, 2025)
Ivory Coast	Oct 2025	A broad "anti-authoritarianism" demonstration against President Ouattara's bid for a third term (after scrapping term limits). Protesters decried the barring of opposition candidates and alleged drift toward dictatorship.	Police violently dispersed a banned march on Oct 11, 2025. Around 237 people were arrested nationwide during anti-government protests (AP, 2025).	Many participants were young Ivorians. Student associations and youth wings of opposition parties joined the street rallies. Even though the movement lacked an obvious leader, online groups and WhatsApp networks played a key role in mobilisation.

South Africa	Oct 2025 (campus protests)	Triggered by a government decision to end "provisional registration" for university students unless full funding is confirmed. Demands included adequate funding for education and living costs, and transparency in university funding (Qaba, 2025; Rukanga, 2025).	Universities attempted to enforce new funding rules. Student protests flared at the University of the Free State and others in October 2025. Protesters torched buildings and erected barricades. Police intervened on campuses to restore order. In response, the government announced a R13.3 billion emergency injection to address the financial aid crisis. (Petersen, 2025)	South Africa's protests were mostly led by students (many of whom are Gen Z) at universities. Movements like #FeesMustFall had set a precedent. [43]. Digital organisers used social media (Twitter, Instagram) to coordinate.
Cameroon	Oct. 2025	In the aftermath of President Paul Biya's declared re-election (controversial 53.6% win), opposition supporters on Oct 26 clashed with police. They demanded a re-run of the vote and Biya's resignation, accusing him of "stealing" the election. (Sharma, 2025; HRW, 2025)	The security forces responded with force. At least four demonstrators were killed in the clashes. Hundreds of youth activists were arrested. The government imposed curfews and cut internet access briefly.	The October 2025 protests were led by a coalition of opposition parties (the Union for Change) and their predominantly young supporters. Many demonstrators were in their 20s or 30s, including urban clerks and students.

In summary, the comparative table shows that across Africa between 2023 and 2025, large-scale protests have consistently been driven by youth discontent over economic and political grievances. While the specific triggers differ across countries (election fraud in Senegal and Cameroon; austerity in Kenya and Angola; authoritarianism in Tunisia), the movements share a youthful base and digital mobilisation. Government reactions have ranged from targeted concessions (Kenya's budget reversal and Morocco's health budget increase) to lethal repression (Angola, Cameroon, and Nigeria).

In spite of national differences, these protests have some common underlying drivers and new patterns:

Common Drivers

1. Economic frustration and inequality: A recurring driving factor in most of these protests is worsening economic conditions. Inflation and unemployment are soaring at a time when basic living incomes of most families are either stagnant or falling. Youth unemployment rates across African countries are soaring, e.g., Morocco's youth jobless rate was 22.8% in 2024, while that of South Africa was 60.9% in 2024 (O'Neill, 2025a; 2025b). In Nigeria and Angola, two major oil producers in Africa, sudden fuel subsidy cuts or removals in 2024 doubled or tripled fuel prices overnight, sparking higher inflation of goods and services (Clark, 2025). In Kenya and Ghana, planned tax increases on essentials ignited fury among young consumers already feeling the pinch. Protesters frequently empha-sise inequality: young leaders point out a "two-sided" economy where elites benefit while ordinary youth face joblessness and unaffordable costs (CIVICUS, 2024; Najimdeen, 2024). (See the table in the appendix.)

2. Governance failures and corruption: Another common cause is distrust in leadership linked to corruption by government officials and lack of touch with realities faced daily by the average young person. In several countries, protesters explicitly decry corruption and unfulfilled promises. In Kenya, youth protests centred on broken promises by politicians. In Senegal, youth opposed the attempt by the ruling government to selectively use state laws against opposition politician Sonko, who was perceived to be popular among the youths. In Morocco, students were piqued by the government committing billions to international events while public health facilities lack doctors and resources. In Nigeria, the protests in 2024 and beyond were not only about economic issues but also about government abuse of power and rule of law; this underscores why the protest was tagged #EndBadGovernance.

3. Electoral Demand: Aside from economic and governance issues, election is another cause of youth protests in Africa, as witnessed in Cameroon, Ivory Coast (term-limit extensions), Madagascar and Tanzania (Maclean, 2025). Protesters accuse incumbents of rigging elections or clinging to power. These demands echo a common narrative: "Enough is enough" after decades of misrule. Of course, protesters usually align with a political party or politicians (Cameroon, Senegal and Tanzania), but the demands and the anger usually run deeper, sometimes rooted in economic exclusion and governance failure.

4. Political repression and irresponsive democracy: One of the driving factors for youth restiveness is the absence of an effective channel of grievance expression and resolution. The political environment is very formalistic, with processes for interrogating and correcting government policies complex and complicated. Given the nature of politics in Africa, which is based on patronage and loyalty or mostly skewed against ordinary citizens, many African youth feel shut out of formal politics: an analyst notes the average African leader is sixty three (63) while the median citizen is nineteen (19), fueling frustration (Vandyck, 2024). When legal opposition or the media are weak, street protest becomes one of the few outlets. Many protests began as legitimate expressions of dissent (about taxes or elections) and then escalated as governments responded repressively. For instance, Tunisia's crackdown on NGOs and speech under President Saied helped trigger national outrage (AP, 2025).

Emerging Patterns

1. Digital mobilisation and global influences. An important feature of these youth-led protests in Africa is digital mobilisation and coordination. Social media and encrypted apps allow movements to form quickly, outside state control. Young organisers have used memes, hashtags, pop culture symbols, and influencer networks to galvanise peers (Nyamweya, 2025; Vandyck, 2024; Najimdeen, 2024). In some cases, tech-savvy youths used satellite internet and VPNs to circumvent shutdowns of internet and social media platforms by authorities. This mirrors a global pattern of youth protests which has been identified by scholars in such think tanks as CFR (Fong, 2025).

The use of digital (online) mobilisation helps to easily:

1. Mobilise youths; 2. Bypass repression and disbandment of protest leadership;
3. Reduce the need for official leadership or structures; and
4. Help to internationalise the local protests.

The internationalisation of these protests is relevant on two grounds. First, it helps to secure support for local protests and pile pressure on local authorities. Secondly, it serves as inspiration for youths in other countries facing similar or worse situations. This has been seen in the Arab Spring but is also starkly reflected in the current wave of youth-led protests in Africa. And digital resources are a major impetus for this. Thus, we now have highly networked, leaderless, youth-led protest movements that can transnationally inspire one another. For example, Nigeria's #EndSARS protests in the year 2020 were seen by many young Kenyans as a courageous inspiration, especially in terms of organisation and global resonance (Ajibola, 2024). Yet, Nigeria's #EndbadGovernance protests in 2024 also saw Kenya's protests against the finance bill as an example of how victory can be won (Ikpa, 2024). Such connectivity has raised alarm in some capitals: some governments threatened to ban social apps and even ordered internet blackouts to try to stop the spread of dissent.




2. Leaderless, Unstructured, and Pragmatic Movement: Additionally, these youth-led protests have avoided organisational building and formal leadership structure. By formal leadership, we mean an elected leadership coordinating and managing the movement over a fixed term, not impromptu or emergency leadership adopted for specific tasks such as negotiation or mobilisation or logistics in the course of the protests. Some pundits have mixed these up (Obadare, 2024). A formal leadership leads every aspect of the protests and claims ownership of the movement and therefore cannot be discarded. On the other hand, impromptu or emergency leadership can be discarded anytime. Moreover, formal leadership usually evolves from structured platforms.

The use of social media and encrypted messaging apps has made organising much easier and helps to diffuse responsibility. This is not enough reason why youths are abandoning formal organisation structure and/or structured leadership. Aside from serving as a strategy to evade authorities' crackdown, the leaderless and loose organisational nature of the protests also reflects the deep distrust of youth with existing mass organisations of social movements or political parties whose leadership buckles in the face of repression or compromises. Absence of formal structure and leadership therefore makes it difficult for authorities to behead or undermine protests through crackdowns on organisations or their leadership, or through compromise and corruption of leaders.

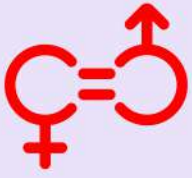
Furthermore, these waves of protests have been less about ideology but more about pragmatism. The youth-led protests have focused on specific demands and policy reviews and less on the ideological question of wealth distribution or redistribution, economic ownership, socio-economic alternatives or generally the question of economic theories behind government policies and decisions. Avoiding broader ideological questions makes mobilisation around specific demands easier and may actually lead to some immediate victories, while preventing the protest movement from being bogged down with divisions along ideological lines or thoughts. Mobilising around specific demands unites people of different ideologies and socioeconomic worldviews.

But this also has its downside. It denies the movement the opportunity to build the movement beyond the immediate needs. Government policies are informed by a rooted ideology, while corruption and bad/unresponsive leadership reflect a deep-rooted political system that tends to favour a tiny clique of elites, whose wealth is premised on access to political power. Therefore, organising protests against specific demands, while they may lead to some immediate concessions, is not sustainable within the framework of the economic ideology and entrenched political system that generate such policies. This is why such policy reversals or political reforms are usually short-lived, because the system finds its way around to undermine what was given as a concession.

Consequently, as much as building the movement on a clear ideology or political programme may prove tedious and complicated, they promise a longer-lasting solution than a single-issue protest movement. The impact of a lack of political alternative or programme is reflected in the military coups that emerge out of powerful protest movements in some African countries, because the power was on the street and the protest movement had no political programme of their own. This led to a power vacuum that was filled by the military.

3. **Emergence of coups:** One unsettling pattern is the entrance of the military into the political arena on the basis of, or as an outcome of, some of these protests. At least four military coups have been linked to protests against authorities. While the protest movements did not actually call for military takeover, the political vacuum created by the weakness of the governments, their inability to resolve the protest demands and the collapse of the support base of the governments have led to the collapse of these governments, which has led to the military stepping in. From Burkina Faso and Mali to Gabon and Madagascar, the military have employed the vacuum created by the collapse of government to take political power. In Gabon, alleged electoral fraud protests were superseded by an August 2023 coup (Al Jazeera, 2023c). In Madagascar, Gen Z protests directly led to a military-assisted regime change in Oct 2025 (Savage & Rahenintsoa, 2025). Yet, the military regimes that emerged also trample upon human rights and civic space (Ousmane, 2025).



The emergence of military rule as fallout of protests has posed a major threat to genuine protest movements and civic space. Aside from reversing democratic gains and leading to democratic recession, it also ends in worse human rights abuses. Worse still, the examples of military takeover become a ready excuse for governments to violently repress peaceful protests and curtail human rights and civic space.

Thus, across the continent we see a "perfect storm" of young demographics confronting economic downturn and authoritarian governance, with digital media enabling fast mobilisation. The grievances – jobs, cost of living, and corruption – are remarkably consistent from Nairobi to Nouakchott. And the patterns of regime response – emergency laws, arrests, firings on protesters – repeat themselves. These trends pose a profound question for African democracies: will elite governments adapt and address youth demands, or will they clamp down even tighter?

State Response and the Shrinking Civic Space

Government responses have varied. Yet, a constant in all protests is government repressive actions through brutality by security forces and using lax legal provisions to punish protest organisers. A clear pattern emerges in how governments have reacted to the 2023–25 protest wave: in most cases, states moved to suppress dissent. Security forces in many countries used lethal force against protesters. For example, in Kenya police shot and killed dozens of mostly young demonstrators during the June 2024 Finance Bill protests (Rukanga & Vock, 2024). In Angola, rioting drivers were met by armed units who fired on the crowds, killing 22 (Al Jazeera, 2025a). In Cameroon's 2025 election protests, riot police and military wounded many demonstrators and killed at least four (Al Jazeera, 2025b). Governments also invoked emergency or public order laws to outlaw protests. For instance, Ghana's courts banned planned protest marches (Adombila, 2024), while police and courts in Uganda dispersed and arrested demonstrators ahead of scheduled marches (Biryabarema, 2024).

Also, there has been a government crackdown on digital space through internet shutdown, infiltration of social media, and online surveillance, among others. Governments have also used existing laws to undermine civic space or enact new ones (Yusuf, 2024; Civicus, 2023). In Nigeria, journalists have been charged under the Cybercrimes Act for critical reporting (over 50 journalists were harassed during the August 2024 protests (Akanbi, 2024)). Morocco detained Gen Z activists for "inciting" protests (HRW, 2025b). This shrinking civic space limits not only current dissent but also the development of a healthy democratic culture.

While some of the protests took violent turns, the role of the government's responses has been identified as having contributed to some of the protests, which started on a peaceful note before turning violent (AP, 2025). Aside from the brutal response by the security agents, which inputted violence into the protests, the government's insensitive attitude towards the demands of protesters has made some of the protesters vent their frustration on public properties. There are also cases of governments employing thugs to attack peaceful protests as a means of undermining their legitimacy and to scare protesters. (Gomez-Ruiz, Donni, & Marino, 2025)

Nevertheless, some governments made limited concessions under pressure, highlighting the impact of youth protests. For example, facing a flood of demonstrations, Kenya's president Ruto rolled back the proposed housing levy in the Finance Bill – a rare instance of protesters forcing policy change (Paravicini & Ross, 2024). In Morocco, King Mohammed VI announced new social spending after the Gen Z mobilisation (Metz & Oubachir, 2025). These examples show that even authoritarian-leaning regimes may respond to popular outcry when confronted with mass mobilisation. However, these concessions are typically tactical. In most cases authorities have moved to tighten control (e.g., deploying the army, passing emergency decrees, or enlisting militias) once immediate tensions subside.

All of these pose specific challenges to the promotion of the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda. While youth engagement in the civic space and democratic governance is a positive development for the YPS agenda, as it promotes the participation pillar of the YPS, government responses and the outcomes, especially in terms of the emergence of military rule and violence witnessed in the protests, have undermined the YPS agenda. There is the need to examine the positives in those protests in terms of how they can help to restructure governance in ways that will further benefit the citizenry, especially the young people who constitute the largest bloc of the African population, and prevent radical outbursts. Secondly, how do we ensure that the protests help ensure youth engagements and participation in governance?

This wave of youth-driven activism reflects a global pattern: CFR analysts note that Gen Z movements have erupted from Madagascar and Morocco to Nepal and Peru, often focusing on corruption, economic inequality and lack of opportunity (Fong, 2025). In Africa specifically, protests have centred on issues like rising fuel and food prices, unemployment, and poor public services, amplified by viral hashtags (e.g., #EndBadGovernanceInNigeria, #RejectFinanceBill2024) and online campaigns.

Conclusion

Africa's recent "Gen Z" protest wave underscores deep frustrations and anger among the continent's youth on economic and political directions. For a continent that is essentially a youth continent, the question of youth's perception and anger cannot just be left unaddressed. Across at least a dozen countries – from Kenya to Morocco, Nigeria to South Africa – young people have flooded the streets to demand jobs, fair governance, and respect for rights. Digital space has enabled these movements to coalesce quickly and spread ideas internationally.

Unfortunately, governments have largely viewed these protests as threats and responded with repression. Nationwide crackdowns, legal bans on assembly, and media censorship have become common. Civic space in many African countries has shrunk even as people mobilise. This tension between rising youth activism and tightening state control poses a dilemma for the future of African democracy. On one hand, it shows that the continent's largest generation refuses to be marginalised; on the other, it reveals how far many regimes will go to preserve power.

The implications are significant. If unaddressed, youth anger could fuel chronic instability or drive more young people into political violence or migration. Alternatively, the protest wave might be an inflection point, pushing some governments toward reform. The resurgence of protest movements across African countries provides both advantageous and dangerous situations for youth, peace and security across the continent.

Ultimately, this new phase marks the beginning of a new paradigm shift in African politics: one where governments must reckon with a generational demand for inclusion and accountability. For youth empowerment to translate into lasting progress, both state and society will need to adapt by expanding civic space instead of closing it and by integrating youth into decision-making rather than sidelining them.

Policy Recommendations

The following are recommended as policy reviews for governments in Africa, civil society, youth and youth activists, and regional organisations.

For African governments:

1. Governments in Africa must recognise youth grievances and respond through policy reforms rather than repression.

2. Furthermore, governments should conduct impartial enquiries into protest violence and hold security forces accountable, while bans on peaceful assembly and communications and other draconian cyber-laws that target activists must be reversed. Rather, governments should open up national dialogues with youth, youth-led groups and civil society on issues like employment, subsidies and governance reforms.

3. The government's socioeconomic policies must prioritise job creation, vocational training and education funding to address youth unemployment and inequality.

4. Governments in Africa should domesticate, implement and promote the youth, peace and security (YPS) agenda, especially its pillars on participation and engagement. Government must ensure youth representation in governance: appoint youth ministers, support youth wings of parties, and engage young civil society in advisory roles to the legislature and executive.

For civil society and NGOs:

1. They should support youth activists by providing civic education, advocacy training and legal aid.

2. They should help in documenting rights violations during protests and publicise them internationally to pressure governments.

3. They should encourage intergenerational dialogue between older activists and leaders on one hand and youth and youth activists/leaders on the other hand on issues affecting young people.

4. Build coalitions among youth and student groups, labour unions and religious organisations to amplify young voices.

5. Advocate for legal reforms to protect freedom of assembly and speech, and challenge unfair laws in court.

6. Foster alternative forums for youth engagement (e.g., community development projects, local governance councils) so that young people have a stake in the system beyond street protest.

7. Strengthen young people's influence within the civil society and NGOs by ensuring that youths have a significant numerical presence in the membership and staffing of civil society and NGOs.

8. Amplify and promote the Youth, Peace and Security Agenda across countries as a way of converting youth aspirations and energies to tools of development, peace and development.

For youth activists:

1. Youth should organise strategically and nonviolently in order to maintain public support.

2. They should develop clear, prioritised demands and communicate them effectively.

3. Use digital tools (social media, encrypted apps, online petitions) innovatively, but also prepare for government censorship (e.g., by creating backup channels like offline meetings or radio).

4. Youth should seek partnerships with civil society, professional associations and sympathetic lawmakers, politicians and political parties.

5. Youth should be at the forefront of those championing the Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) Agenda as a tool to advance their cause.

6. Youth should internationalise their cause by linking with global youth movements (peace advocacy, climate change, and anti-corruption) to draw broader solidarity.

7. Youth should develop organisations beyond social media and digital space. This should be matched with long-term programmes on how they want their society to be run. Remember that widespread protest alone may not win reforms; consider contesting elections, running for office, or pressuring transitional bodies where possible to achieve lasting change.

For regional organisations and international partners:

1. They should monitor the human rights situation actively and, where necessary, apply diplomatic pressure on governments that overreact to protests.

2. They should support internet freedom initiatives (satellite connectivity, circumvention tools) so that activists cannot be silenced by shutdowns.

3. They should fund youth-led initiatives focused on the YPS Agenda, entrepreneurship and education to address root economic causes.

Appendix

Table 1: Youth Socioeconomic Indicators in Protesting African Countries (latest data)

Country	Youth Unemploy.	Youth NEET (%)	Youth Literacy	Inflation (CPI, %)	Gini (Income Inequality)
Kenya	11.9 % (2024)	~19.7 % (2019)	95.7 % (2022)	4.5 %	40.8 (2015)
Nigeria	8.6 % (2023)	13.7 % (2023)	73.7 % (2021)	34.2 % (2024)	35.1
Senegal	3.9 % (2023)	33.0 % (2022)	78.1 % (2022)	0.8 % (2024)	38.1 (2018)
Ghana	25.8 % (2024)	–	73 % (2021)	25.8 % (2024)	43.5 (2016)
Cameroon	3.9 % (2022)	–	80 % (2015)	4.5 % (2024)	46.6 (2014)[21]
Uganda	13.5 % (2023)	12 %	85 % (2022)	4.0 % (2024)	42.7 (2019)
Mozambique	23.0 % (2023)	–	85 % (2017)	5.3 % (2023)	54.0 (2014)
Madagascar	10.1 % (2023)	–	67.5 % (2018)	7.4 % (2024)	42.6 (2012)
Morocco	29.0 % (2022)	–	98.5 % (2022)	1.0 % (2024)	39.5 (2013)
Angola	39.0 % (2022)	–	67.0 % (2018)	21 % (2023)	51.3 (2018)
South Africa	63.0 % (2022)	42.0 % (2022)	99.1 % (2018)	6.9 % (2024)	63.0 (2015)
Tunisia	33.3 % (2022)	–	99.9 % (2018)	7.9 % (2023)	35.7 (2015)
Ivory Coast	30.8 % (2022)	–	88.5 % (2018)	3.5 % (2024)	41.5 (2021)
DR Congo	37.0 % (2022)	–	87.3 % (2017)	13.5 % (2024)	42.1 (2012)

Notes: *Unemployment rate is for the youth aged 15 to 24 years. Literacy rates for 15–24 are from UNESCO/UN data or global compendia. Inflation rates are CPI year-on-year; where possible latest annual values are given. Gini coefficients are from the CIA World Factbook or IMF data for the latest available year.*

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About Us

Building Blocks for Peace Foundation is an incorporated youth NGO working on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, prevention of violent extremism, accountability governance and sustainable development across communities in Africa.

Vision

A world where there is peace, justice, respect for human rights and youth meaningful engagement.

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