



ماعت للسلام والتنمية وحقوق الإنسان  
Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights

# Elections in Africa Throughout 2023

## Challenges Facing Democratic Path in the African Continent



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January 2024

Review  
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# **Elections in Africa Throughout 2023: Challenges Facing Democratic Path in the African Continent**

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## Introduction:

The will of the people serves as the foundation for government authority, and political participation plays a crucial role in achieving democratic governance and the rule of law. Elections serve as the backbone of democracy, providing the most compelling and effective means for people to express their will in selecting representatives to manage their affairs. However, the African continent has often faced uncertainties surrounding electoral processes, where elections have been transformed from a democratic pathway into tools for incumbent rulers to maintain their power.

Despite the numerous challenges faced by the African continent, which has endured a long legacy of colonialism, people still believe that elections are the most peaceful means to fulfill their political aspirations for democratic governance. Elections are considered a fundamental pillar of democracy, enabling political participation and reflecting the will of the people. The right to participate in elections is a prominent political right outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, aligned with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Through elections, citizens can actively engage in political life and shape the future of their country according to their own free will.

Elections serve as a common thread among all countries and democratic entities worldwide, as they embody the legal implementation of the people's right to choose their representatives, lending legitimacy to the exercise of power.

In the past year, 2023, the African continent encountered numerous challenges that posed threats to the timely conduct of elections. These challenges included economic and social obstacles, security concerns in various countries, regional and international conflicts, as well as historical legacies that continue to impact African nations. Factors such as military coups and one-party politics have influenced democratic processes.

Despite the significant challenges witnessed by the African continent in 2023, the year was marked by various electoral events. Elections were scheduled to take place in 24 African countries, representing 44% of the total number of independent African countries, which amounts to 54. This significant number of elections has the potential to bring about substantial change at both the continental and national levels. The elections encompassed presidential, legislative, and local elections, demonstrating the diversity of electoral processes across different countries.

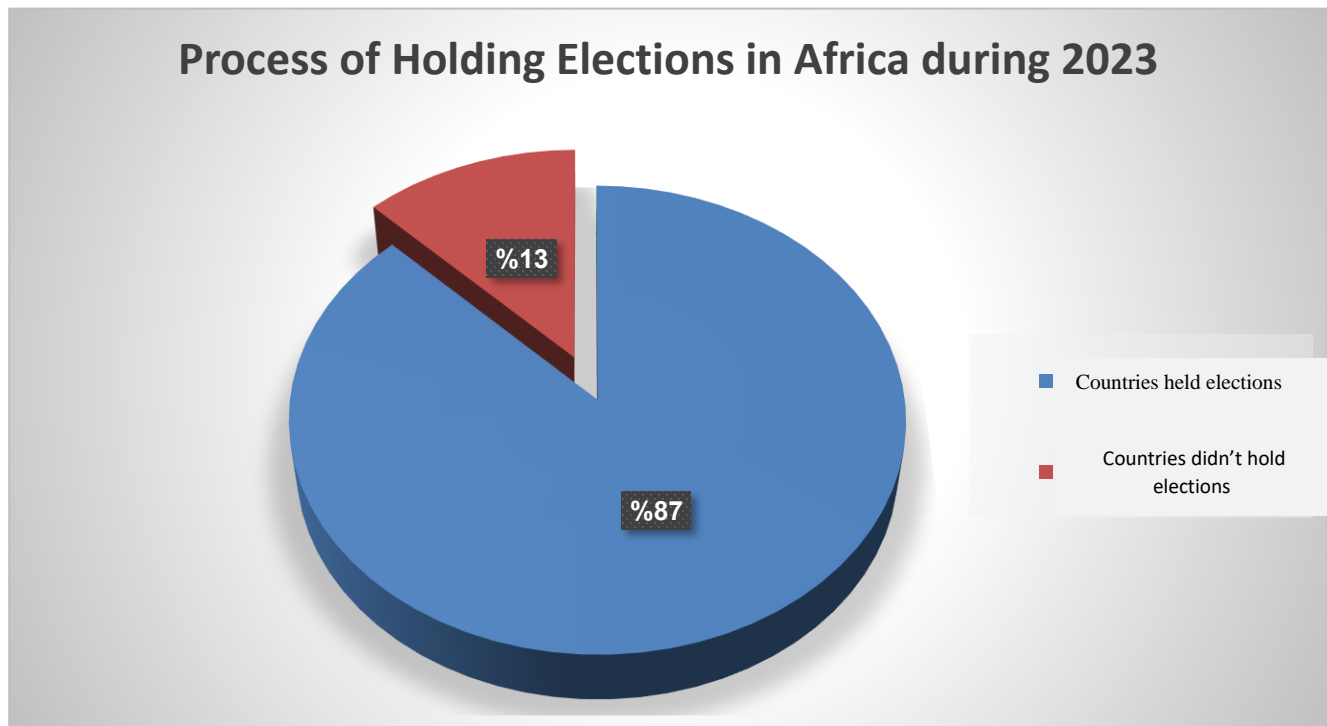
## Elections in Africa 2023



Given **Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights'** commitment to issues of democracy, this report focuses on the elections scheduled to take place in Africa during the year 2023. It aims to provide an overview of each country's stance regarding the timely conduct of elections, the impact of challenges faced by these countries on the integrity of the electoral process, and the participation rates in these elections.

## Process of Holding Elections in Africa during 2023:

According to the map of elections on the African continent for the year 2023, elections were scheduled to be held in 24 African countries. However, certain countries faced challenges that hindered their ability to hold the elections on time. Ultimately, 21 countries successfully conducted their elections, representing 87% of the total number of countries expected to hold elections. Only three countries—Libya, Togo, and Guinea—were unable to hold elections, accounting for a 13% rate. This rate indicates a strong desire among African countries to take



decisive steps toward democracy.

Despite the various political, economic, and security challenges experienced by many African countries, particularly those at risk of military coups, the fact that 21 out of 24 countries held elections demonstrates the commitment of these countries and their people to the path of democracy. However, the electoral landscape varied in terms of equal opportunities across different countries. Nevertheless, the countries that successfully held elections can be considered cohesive nations, despite the challenges they faced.

On the other hand, three countries were unable to hold the elections scheduled for 2023 due to the obstacles preventing their conduct. In Libya, the presidential and parliamentary elections were originally planned for December 2023, but they were postponed until the first half of 2024. The Libyan House of Representatives has approved the election laws and submitted them to the Electoral Commission. However, Libya still faces other challenges, including ongoing disputes between key actors in the country. The United Nations Special Envoy

in Libya continues efforts to invite active parties to engage in political dialogue aimed at reaching a settlement on contentious issues.<sup>1</sup>

Regarding Guinea, local elections were intended to take place, but due to security instability, they could not be held on time. Legislative elections, initially scheduled for December 2023, were postponed until March 2024 in Togo.<sup>2</sup>

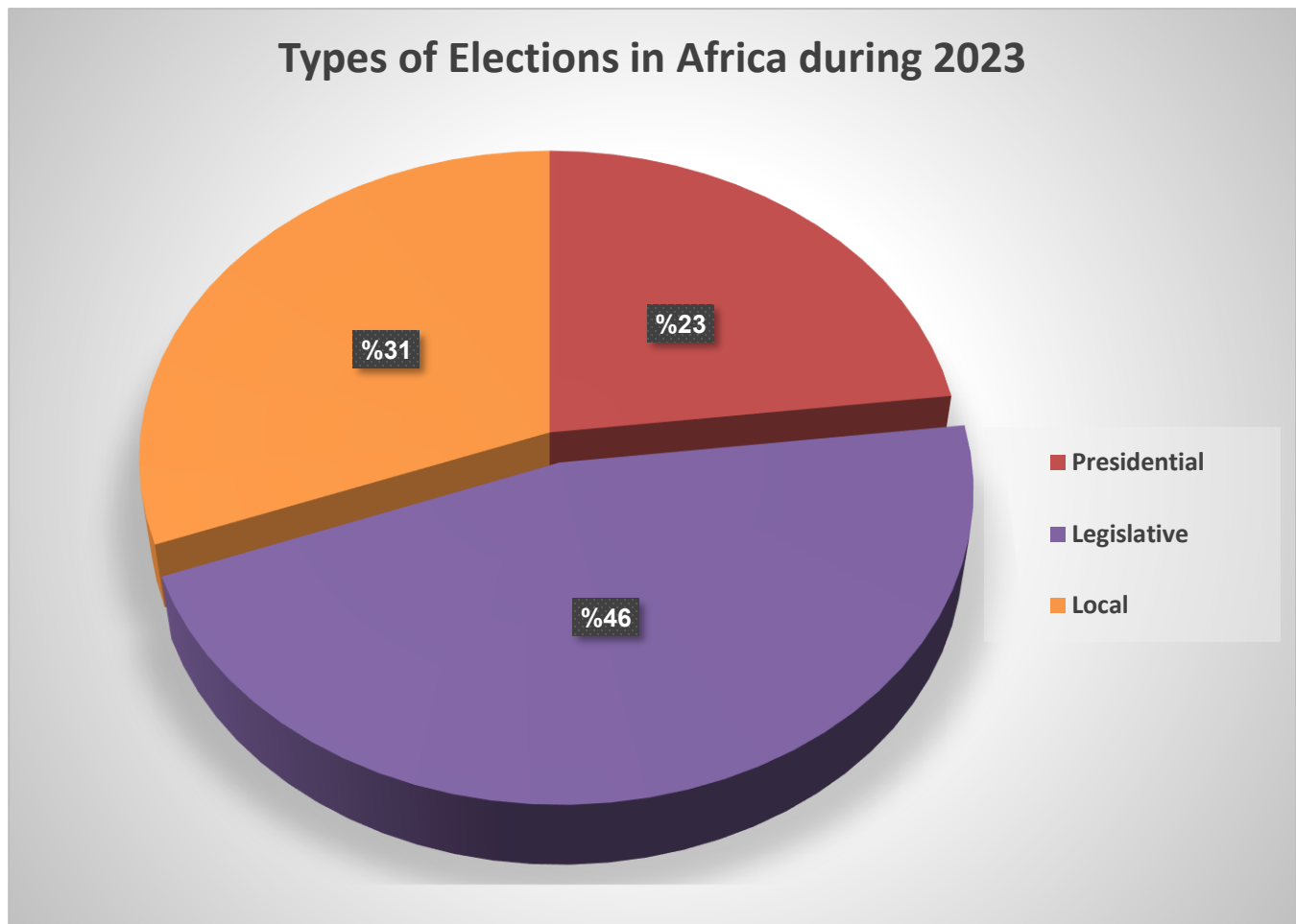
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<sup>1</sup> وكالة الأنباء الليبية، تقرير.. الانتخابات الرئاسية والبرلمانية.. حلم الليبيين في 2024، 31 ديسمبر 2023 ، متاح على الرابط التالي:  
<https://lana.gov.ly/post.php?lang=ar id=298657>

<sup>2</sup> توجو: تمهيد الطريق لإجراء انتخابات عام 2024 وسط تحديات المعارضة [: https://qrcd.org/49gp](https://qrcd.org/49gp)

## Types of Elections in Africa during 2023:

The elections planned for 2023 in the 24 African countries encompassed various types, including presidential, legislative, and local elections. It is worth noting that some countries combine multiple types of elections simultaneously. Specifically, there were nine presidential elections, accounting for 23% of the total planned elections. Legislative elections were the most common, taking place in 18 countries, representing 46% of the total planned elections. Additionally, 12 countries scheduled local elections, constituting 31% of the total planned elections in Africa for the year 2023.



### First, Presidential Elections:

Presidential elections hold a distinctive significance as they entail a change in leadership within countries. In the context of the African continent, nine presidential elections were anticipated in 2023. Eight of these elections have already taken place in the Arab Republic of Egypt, the Congo, Nigeria, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Gabon, Liberia, and Zimbabwe. However, presidential elections were not conducted in Libya.





### 1. Presidential Elections in Arab Republic of Egypt:

Arab Republic of Egypt successfully held its presidential elections from 10th to 12th December 2023, despite encountering several unprecedented challenges that extended beyond the nation's borders. These challenges encompassed not only the decline in economic indicators within Egypt but also regional concerns, particularly the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. Given Egypt's proximity to occupied Palestine and the presence of the Rafah land crossing as the sole outlet for the besieged Gaza Strip, the conflict directly impacted Egyptian national security. Egypt played a vital role in facilitating the entry of humanitarian aid, the passage of wounded individuals, and foreigners through the Rafah crossing. Furthermore, Egypt actively supported negotiations between the conflicting parties, resulting in a temporary truce that endured for seven days.

Despite apprehensions regarding national security, the presidential elections proceeded as scheduled, accompanied by three consecutive days of nationwide celebrations. Contrary to

expectations, these concerns led to an unprecedentedly high voter turnout, with a participation rate of 66.8% among eligible voters. The National Elections Authority reported that 98% of the cast votes were deemed valid.<sup>3</sup>

The elections witnessed significant support for incumbent President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, reflecting widespread public backing and unity in the face of the aforementioned challenges. President El-Sisi secured first place in the elections, garnering 89% of the total votes. Hazem Omar, the candidate from the Republican Popular Party, secured second place with 4.5% of the votes, followed by Farid Zahran, the candidate from the Egyptian Democratic Party, who obtained 4% of the votes and secured third place. Abdel-Sanad Yamama, the candidate from the Wafd Party, obtained 1.9% of the votes, finishing in last place.

Egyptian National Election Authority confirmed that no appeals were filed by the presidential candidates within the designated timeframe. The elections were conducted in a smooth atmosphere, with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi hosting all three competing candidates following the announcement of the results. The meeting was characterized by congratulations and mutual appreciation.<sup>4</sup>

## 2. Presidential Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo:

Presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo took place on December 20, 2023, amidst significant risks and challenges posed by a severe economic crisis and widespread security instability due to the presence of armed groups. Initially, 26 candidates submitted their papers for candidacy, including President Felix Tshisekedi. However, seven candidates later withdrew voluntarily, resulting in the inclusion of 26 candidate names on the ballot papers. President Felix Tshisekedi emerged victorious, securing 73.34% of the total votes cast. The voter turnout for the elections stood at 43% of the eligible voting population, which is the preliminary figure. The announcement of the election results, originally scheduled for January 3, 2024, was postponed.<sup>5</sup>

Following the Independent Electoral Commission's announcement of the results on Sunday, December 31, 2023, tensions escalated in the country. The opposition contested the validity of the results, alleging fraud and irregularities. Election observers from Catholic and Protestant churches also noted numerous irregularities that they believed undermined the legitimacy of the electoral process. Additionally, voting was extended for an extra day due to delays in delivering voting materials to several polling stations.<sup>6</sup>

## 3. Presidential Elections in Federal Republic of Nigeria:

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<sup>3</sup> الهيئة الوطنية للانتخابات، نتيجة الانتخابات الرئاسية، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://www.elections.eg/archive/pres-2024/pres-2024-result>  
<sup>4</sup> المركز الإعلامي، الرئيس السيسي يستقبل المرشحين الذين خاضوا انتخابات رئاسة الجمهورية، 19 ديسمبر 2023، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://rb.gv/86czcr>

<sup>5</sup> Paul Lorget, DW, RDC : Félix Tshisekedi est réélu avec 73,34% des voix, 31 December 2023, available on: <https://www.dw.com/fr/rdc-f%C3%A9lix-tshisekedi-est-r%C3%A9lu-avec-73/a-67863901>

<sup>6</sup> Agenzia fides, AFRICA/DR CONGO - Tshisekedi re-elected President but the opposition denounces irregularities in the election, 2 January 2024, available on: <https://www.fides.org/en/news/74556>

[AFRICA DR CONGO Tshisekedi re-elected President but the opposition denounces irregularities in the election](https://www.fides.org/en/news/74556)

The presidential elections in Nigeria held special significance not only within the African continent but also for Western countries. Nigeria, with its large population and geopolitical position in the ECOWAS region, is considered the largest African country. These elections signaled a positive development for constitutional change in the ECOWAS region and West Africa, which has recently experienced insecurity and military coups. Despite economic instability and resource shortages leading to popular discontent, Nigeria successfully conducted the elections on February 25, 2023. Notably, these elections recorded the lowest voter turnout since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999, with a turnout of 26.72%.

The elections witnessed intense competition, with three prominent politicians vying for the presidency: Atiku Abubakar, the former vice president representing the People's Democratic Party; Bola Tinubu, the former speaker of parliament from the ruling party, the All Progressives Congress; and Peter Obi, a leader from Nigeria's oil-rich south and head of the Nigerian National Labor Party. Bola Tinubu emerged as the winner, receiving 37% of the total votes, followed by Atiku Abubakar with 29% of the votes, and Peter Obi with 25% of the votes.<sup>7</sup>

The newly elected president extended an olive branch to the opposition, urging them to come together for the benefit of the nation. Despite increasing allegations of fraud leveled by the opposition regarding the electoral process and results, the Nigerian elections of 2023 marked a significant departure from previous elections. The number of voters increased by 10 million compared to the 2019 elections, and the introduction of an electronic voting system helped mitigate tampering with voting papers.<sup>8</sup>

#### 4. Presidential Elections in the Republic of Liberia:

Liberia successfully conducted presidential elections that garnered significant attention from international actors, particularly the United States of America and the European Union Parliament, which deployed a large contingent of international observers. The elections took place on October 10, 2023, with the participation of 20 candidates.

According to the country's electoral law, the winner was required to secure more than 50% of the votes. However, since no candidate achieved this threshold, a second round of elections was organized on November 14, 2023. The runoff was contested between Joseph Boakai, the main opposition leader, and George Weah, the incumbent president and leader of the ruling Alliance for Democratic Change party. Ultimately, Joseph Boakai emerged victorious, securing 50.9% of the total votes, while George Weah received 49.1%. The voter turnout for the elections reached 66.10% of the eligible voting population.<sup>9</sup>

The presidential elections in Liberia stood out for their peaceful and fair conduct, setting them apart from the prevailing trend of military coups in the West African region. The

<sup>7</sup> Independent Nigerian National Electoral Commission, Presidential election, results, available on:

<https://www.inecelectionresults.ng/elections/63f8f25b594e164f8146a213>

<sup>8</sup> لينا الشوابكة، بي بي سي نيوز عربي، الانتخابات النيجيرية: مرشح الحزب الحاكم بولا تينوبو رئيسا للبلاد وخصومه يشككون في النتائج، 3 مارس 2023، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://www.bbc.com/arabic/world-64829085>

<sup>9</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Republic of Liberia Election for Liberian President, available on: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/4255/>

competition between Boakai and Waya was fierce, but the electoral atmosphere was marred by mutual accusations of violence and corruption between the two candidates.<sup>10</sup>

### 5. Presidential Elections in Sierra Leone:

Sierra Leone held its elections on June 24, 2023, with 13 candidates vying for the presidency, including former President Julius Maada Bio and Samura Kamara, the candidate from the main opposition party, the General People's Congress. The country faced mounting economic and political tensions, and last year, approximately 60% of the population fell below the poverty line, presenting numerous challenges. Many viewed these elections as a crucial test of the incumbent president's performance.

Former President Julius Maada Bio emerged as the winner, securing 56.17% of the total votes. His main rival, Samura Kamara, received 41.16% of the votes. The voter turnout for the elections reached an impressive 83% of the eligible voting population.<sup>11</sup>

While the conduct of presidential elections in Sierra Leone represents a significant step towards democracy, European Union observers raised concerns about the transparency of the Electoral Commission and reported several incidents of violence. These allegations align with Kamara's statements, who claimed that live ammunition was fired inside his party headquarters during a press conference.<sup>12</sup>

### 6. Presidential Elections in the Republic of Madagascar:

Despite the challenges surrounding the elections, including political crises and doubts about the legitimacy of President Rajoelina, Madagascar successfully conducted its presidential elections. However, concerns regarding the integrity of the elections and calls for a boycott escalated, particularly after several opposition candidates withdrew from the race. The elections featured former President Rajoelina and 12 other competitors.

Compared to the previous presidential elections in 2018, voter turnout was low, with only 46.4% of eligible voters participating. Former President Rajoelina emerged as the winner, securing 58.95% of the total votes.<sup>13</sup>

The opposition intensified its accusations against the president, with opposition candidate Cetinje Asolunyaiko appealing to the Supreme Court to annul the election results. The opposition, represented by the "Opposition Gathering" composed of 11 candidates, rejected the election results, stating, "We refuse to recognize these illegitimate elections, marred by irregularities, and we will not accept any responsibility for the potential political and social instability that may arise as a result."<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> فرانس 24، الليبيريون يدلون بأصواتهم في انتخابات رئاسية حاسمة للاختيار بين جورج ويا وجوزيف بواكي، 11 نوفمبر 2023، متاح على الرابط <http://tiny.cc/m4nrvz>:التالي

<sup>11</sup> Electoral Commission for Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Presidential Election Results, available on: <https://results.ec.gov.sl/>

<sup>12</sup> BBC NEWS, Sierra Leone election 2023 winner: Julius Madaa Bio declared winner of presidential poll by ECSL, 27 June 2023, available on: <https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-66034689>

<sup>13</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Republic of Madagascar Election for Malagasy Presidency, available on: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/4137/#>

<sup>14</sup> فرانس 24، إعادة انتخاب راجولينا رئيسا لمدغشقر بعد اقتراع قاطعته المعارضة، 25 نوفمبر 2023، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://rb.gy/471zqw>

## 7. Presidential Elections in the Republic of Gabon:

Presidential elections took place in Gabon on August 26, 2023, resulting in the re-election of former President Ali Bongo for a third term. Bongo ran as a candidate for the Gabonese Democratic Party, which has governed the country since its independence in 1960. He secured 64.27% of the total votes. The voter turnout for the elections reached 59.95% of eligible voters.<sup>15</sup>

Tensions arose immediately after the announcement of the election results by the Gabonese Electoral Commission. Gunfire was reported in the center of the capital, Libreville, followed by a televised appearance of uniformed soldiers announcing the seizure of power, effectively nullifying the presidential election results.<sup>16</sup>

## 8. Presidential Elections in Zimbabwe:

The presidential elections were held in Zimbabwe amidst criticism from the opposition regarding the integrity and transparency of the electoral process, which took place on August 23, 2023, with a participation rate of 69% of the total number of those entitled to vote, and former President Emmerson Mnangagwa won the elections, after he received 52.6% of the total votes, compared to 44% for the opposition leader and main competitor, Nelson Chamisa.<sup>17</sup>

The presidential elections in Zimbabwe faced significant criticism, particularly regarding President Emmerson Mnangagwa's record. Mnangagwa came to power in 2017 through a military coup that ousted the late President Robert Mugabe. The opposition rejected the election results, deeming them invalid, a sentiment shared by international observers from the European Union and Commonwealth countries. These observers raised concerns about the electoral process, citing violations of international standards meant to ensure democratic elections.<sup>18</sup>

## Analysis of 2023 Presidential Elections in Africa:

The nature of the elections in each country varied based on political, economic, social, and security conditions. By examining the eight presidential elections that took place in Africa in 2023, we can observe both similarities and differences according to the following criteria:

### 1. Standard of Participation Rate in Presidential Elections:

The participation rate in presidential elections serves as a measure of citizens' awareness of their social responsibility and their role in driving democratic change within their country. In this regard, Sierra Leone achieved a historic milestone with an 83% participation rate in the presidential elections. On the other hand, Nigeria recorded the lowest participation rate, with only 26.72% of eligible voters turning out. This marked the lowest percentage in Nigeria's

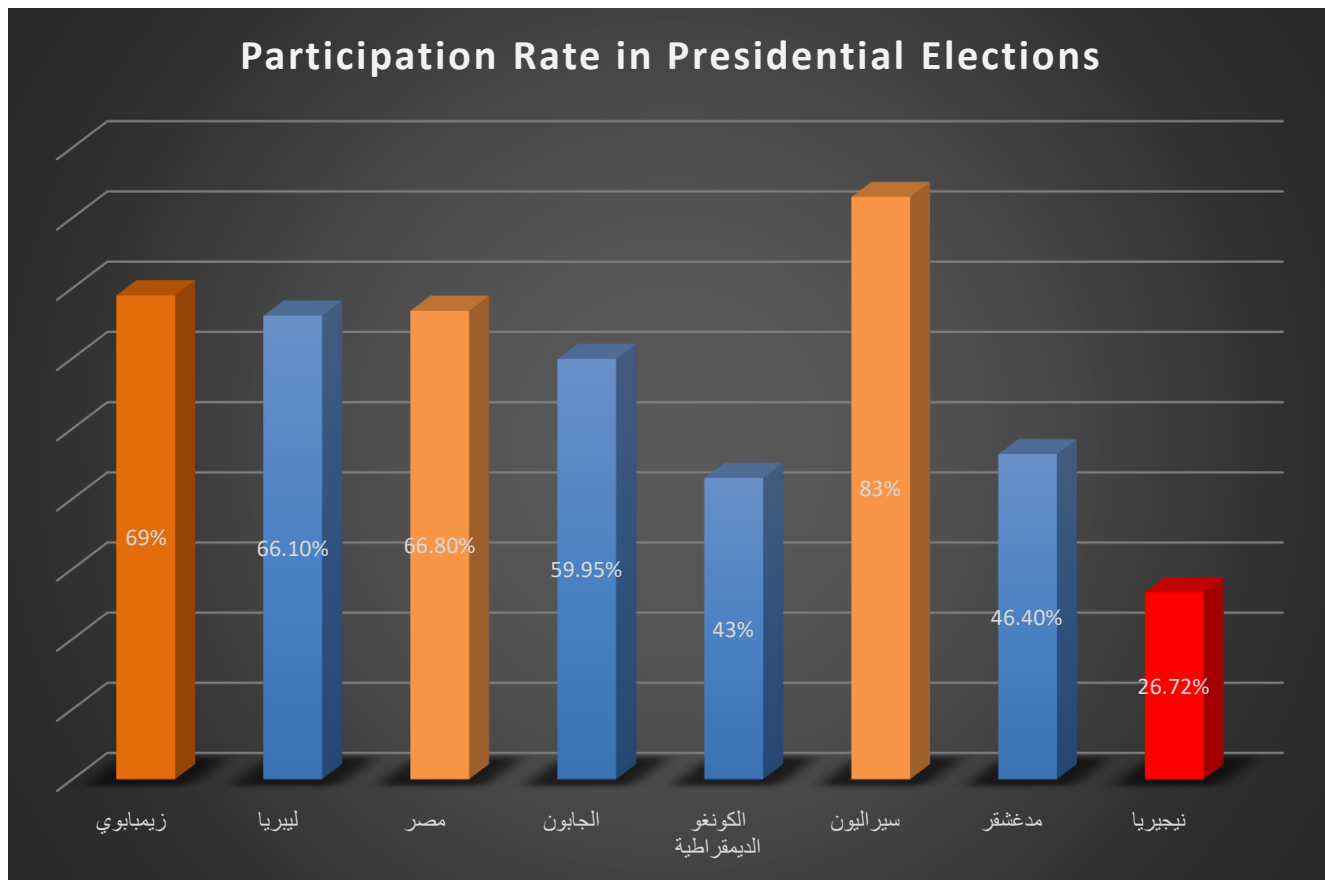
<sup>15</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Gabonese Republic Election for Gabonese Presidency, available on: <https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/79/>

<sup>16</sup> سكاى نيوز عربية، انقلاب الغابون.. ماذا حدث بعد إعلان فوز علي بونغو؟، 30 أغسطس 2023، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://shorturl.at/qlJ78>

<sup>17</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Republic of Zimbabwe Election for Zimbabwean Presidency, available on: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/4046/>

<sup>18</sup> يورو نيوز، زعيم المعارضة في زيمبابوي يرفض إعادة انتخاب منانغاوا ويعلن فوزه 27 أغسطس 2023، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://arabic.euronews.com/2023/08/27/zimbabwe-president-mnangagwa-wins-second-term-opposition-rejects-result>

history since gaining independence. In contrast, the Arab Republic of Egypt experienced the highest participation rate ever recorded in the country's presidential elections, reaching 66.8%, despite the challenges faced during the electoral process.



## 2. Standard of Integrity and Transparency:

Integrity and transparency are crucial aspects of the electoral process, as they reflect the overall perception of the democratic nature of presidential elections. Unfortunately, many of the presidential elections held in Africa in 2023 were marred by accusations of fraud and lack of transparency. The opposition parties in Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and the Congo raised concerns regarding the integrity and transparency of the elections. In Gabon, the elections resulted in a military coup, further undermining the credibility of the electoral process. In Sierra Leone, accusations extended beyond the opposition, with European Union observers highlighting a lack of transparency and instances of violence. Conversely, the Egyptian elections were characterized by integrity and transparency, with no significant violations that could impede the integrity of the electoral process. Similarly, the elections in Liberia were marked by peace and fairness, providing a contrast to the tense political climate in the wider West African region.

## 3. Standard for Accepting Election Results:

The analysis of the electoral process extends beyond its conduct and encompasses the stage of result announcement and public acceptance. The acceptance of election results serves as an

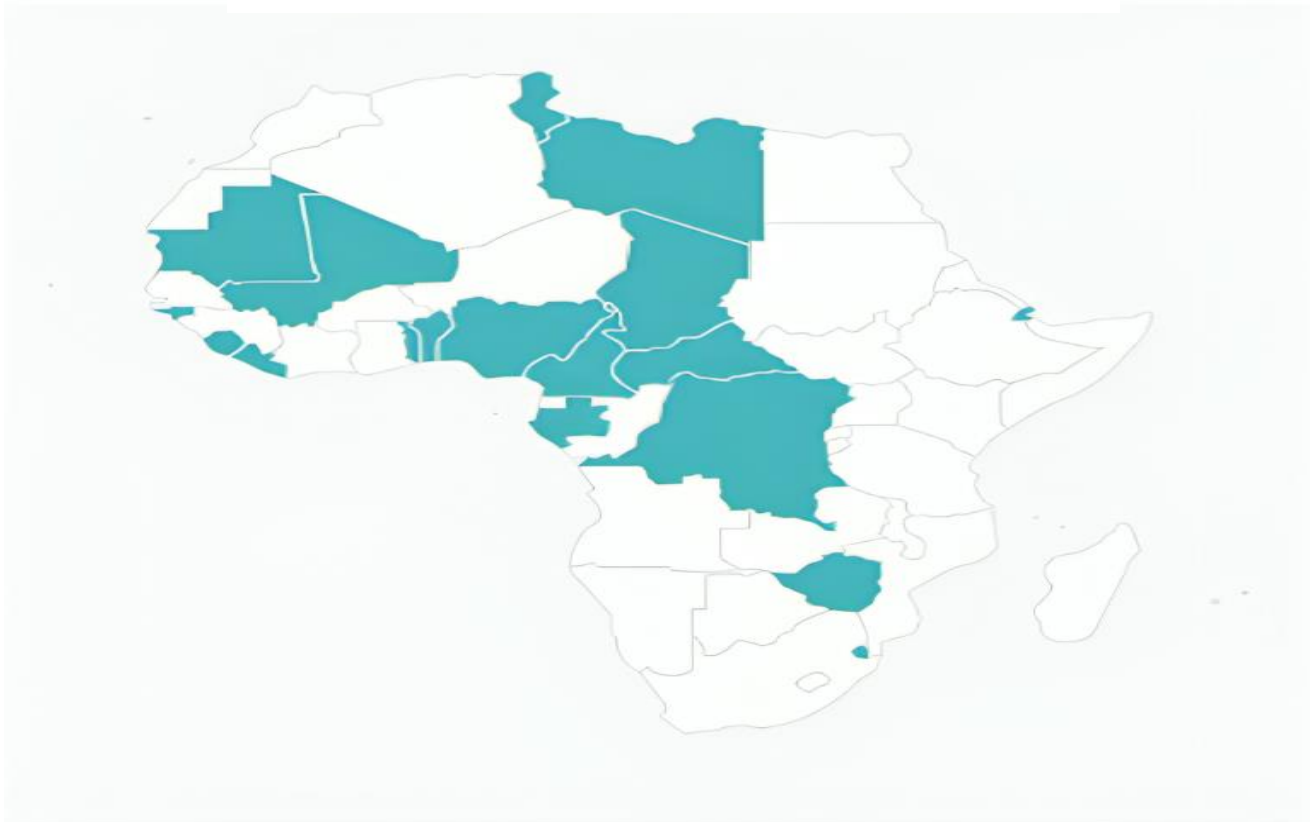
indicator of societal integration, political harmony, and confidence in state institutions. The presidential elections in Egypt serve as a prime example of accepting election results, as evidenced by the statements of opposition candidates who participated in the race. They exchanged congratulations with the winning candidate, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, during a unique meeting that emphasized their confidence in state institutions and the president's legitimacy.

While there were exchanges of accusations between candidates in Liberia following the announcement of the election results, former President George Weah gracefully accepted defeat, considering a victory for Liberia more important than the interests of his party. However, such examples of acceptance were not widespread across Africa. The opposition challenged the election results in the Congo, and the opposition parties in Zimbabwe, Madagascar, and Sierra Leone refused to recognize the legitimacy of the presidential elections. In Gabon, the elections resulted in a military coup, leading to the annulment of the results.

### Second, Legislative Elections:

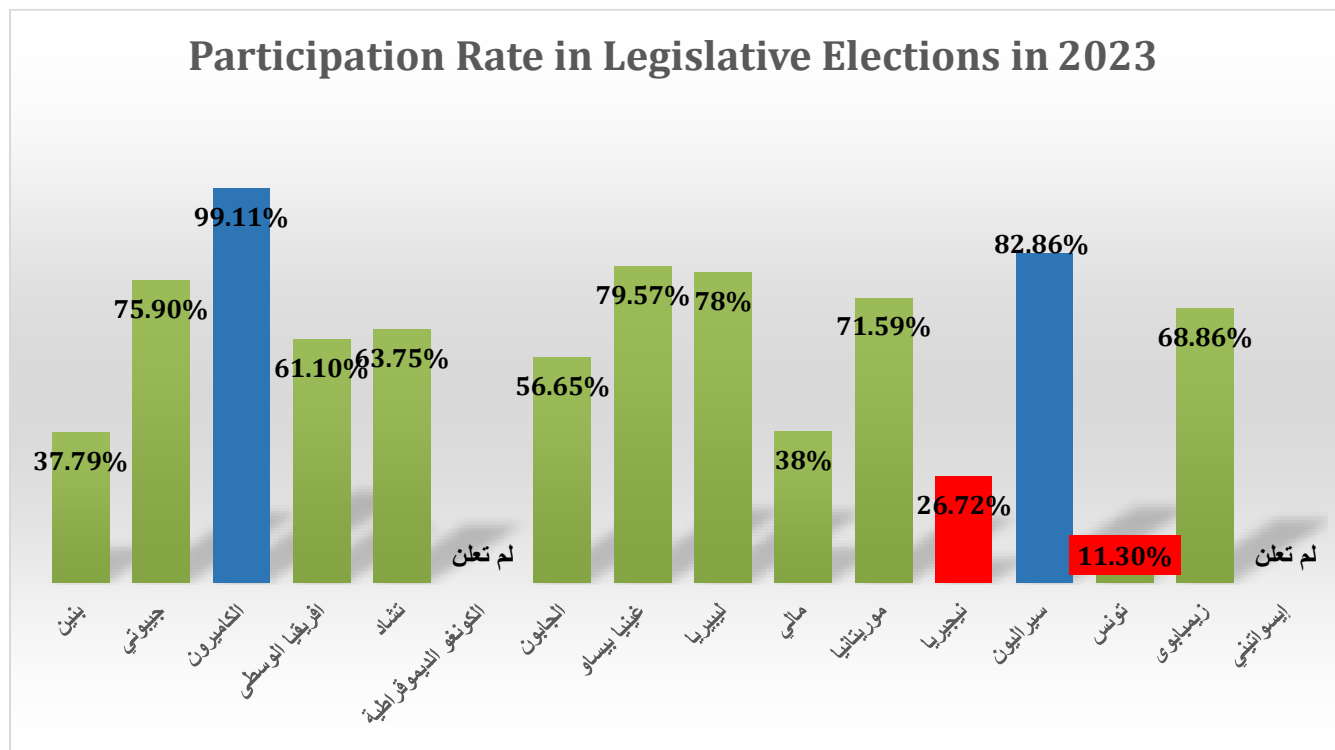
Legislative elections constituted the majority of scheduled or already conducted elections on the African continent. Eighteen African countries had planned legislative elections, including constitutional referendums, Shura Council elections, Representative elections, or National Assembly elections. Sixteen of these elections were successfully held, indicating the societal awareness of the African people.

## Legislative Elections in Africa 2023



In 2023, legislative elections took place in 16 countries across the African continent. Some countries held separate legislative elections, while others combined them with presidential elections. Nonetheless, the ability of a significant number of countries to hold elections demonstrates a sense of social responsibility. Two countries, Libya and Togo, were unable to hold legislative elections and have rescheduled them for 2024.

Participation rates in the legislative elections varied greatly. Cameroon recorded the highest participation rate at 99.11%, followed by Sierra Leone at 82.86%, and Djibouti at 75.9%. Conversely, Tunisia had the lowest participation rate at a mere 11.3%, followed by Nigeria at 26.72%. Congo and Eswatini did not announce the participation percentages for their elections. Nevertheless, the data from the 2023 legislative elections in Africa indicate a strong desire for democratic transformation on the continent.



Here is a summary of the legislative elections held in Africa in 2023:

### 1. National Assembly Elections in the Republic of Benin

On January 8, 2023, the Republic of Benin held elections for the National Assembly, with a turnout rate of 37.79%. This low turnout was notable as it marked the first comprehensive elections in Benin to record such limited mobilization. The Progressive Union Party, Renewal Party, and Republican Bloc Party collectively won 81 out of 109 seats, representing the major parties in the country. The Democratic Party also made a return to opposition and secured 28 seats.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>19</sup> RFI Afrique, Législatives au Bénin: l'opposition de retour à l'Assemblée avec le parti Les Démocrates, 11/01/2023, available on: <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20230111-l-1-C3%A9gislatives-au-b-C3%A9nin-l-opposition-de-retour-%C3%A0-l-assembl%C3%A9e-avec-le-parti-les-d%C3%A9mocrates>



## 2. National Assembly Elections in the Republic of Djibouti

The Republic of Djibouti conducted its National Assembly elections on January 24, 2023, with a significant participation rate of 75.9%. The Union for a Presidential Majority Party achieved a resounding victory, securing a total of 58 seats. The Union for Democracy and Justice Party won seven seats, leaving no representation for the opposition.<sup>20</sup>

## 3. Senate Elections in the Republic of Cameroon

On March 13, 2023, the Republic of Cameroon held Senate elections, which witnessed an unprecedented participation rate of 99.11%. The ruling Democratic Rally of the Cameroonian People retained all 70 seats, while the other nine political parties did not compete for any seats. The Senate consists of 100 seats, 70 of which are elected, and the remaining 30 are appointed by the president. The President of the Constitutional Council, Clement Atangana, confirmed the peaceful conduct of the voting process, with no reports of fraud or law violations.<sup>21</sup>

## 4. Constitutional Referendum in the Central African Republic

On July 30, 2023, the Central African Republic held a constitutional referendum with a participation rate of 61.10%. Approximately 95% of the voters approved the draft of the new constitution, despite boycott campaigns by the opposition. The referendum aimed to amend the constitution amidst accusations that the current president, Faustin Archange Touadera, intended to remain in power for life. The successful "yes" vote in favor of the new constitutional draft allows President Touadera to potentially run for a third term.<sup>22</sup>

## 5. Constitutional Referendum in the Republic of Chad

The Republic of Chad conducted a constitutional referendum on December 17, 2023. The Chadians approved the draft new constitution presented by the ruling military junta, with an 86% majority. The participation rate for the referendum reached 63.75%, despite opposition calls for a boycott and questioning the validity of the results.<sup>23</sup>

## 6. Legislative Elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

On December 20, 2023, the Democratic Republic of the Congo held legislative elections. The announcement of the election results, initially scheduled for January 3, 2024, was postponed by the Independent National Electoral Commission under the pretext of continuing the process of compiling the results.<sup>24</sup> This delay occurred despite the official confirmation by the

<sup>20</sup> Agence Djibouti d' information, Résultats provisoires des élections législatives 2023 : L'UMP arrive largement en tête dans la capitale et dans les cinq régions de l'intérieur, 25/02/2023, available on: <https://www.adi.dj/index.php/site/Plus/10348>

<sup>21</sup> Rtv, Sénatoriales 2023: le RDPC rafle les 70 sièges, 23 mars 2023, available on: <https://www.crtv.cm/2023/03/senatoriales-2023-le-rdpc-rafle-les-70-sieges/>

<sup>22</sup> France24, La Centrafrique approuve un projet constitutionnel ouvrant la voie à un nouveau mandat de Touadéra, 07/08/2023, available on: <https://www.france24.com/fr/afrique/20230807-la-centrafrique-approuve-un-projet-constitutionnel-ouvrant-la-voie-%C3%A0-un-nouveau-mandat-de-touad%C3%A9ra>

<sup>23</sup> Le Monde, Tchad : la nouvelle Constitution approuvée par référendum, l'opposition conteste le résultat, 24 décembre 2023, available on: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/12/24/tchad-un-projet-de-nouvelle-constitution-approuve-par-referendum-avec-86-des-voix\\_6207576\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/12/24/tchad-un-projet-de-nouvelle-constitution-approuve-par-referendum-avec-86-des-voix_6207576_3212.html)

<sup>24</sup> Mediacongo, Élections 2023: la publication des résultats des législatives reportée sine die (Ceni), 02.01.2024, available on: [https://www.mediacongo.net/article-actualite-131452\\_elections\\_2023\\_la\\_publication\\_des\\_resultats\\_des\\_legislatives\\_reportee\\_sine\\_die\\_ceni.html](https://www.mediacongo.net/article-actualite-131452_elections_2023_la_publication_des_resultats_des_legislatives_reportee_sine_die_ceni.html)

Constitutional Court of the victory of outgoing President Felix Tshisekedi. The results of the legislative elections, which were organized simultaneously with the presidential elections, remain undetermined.<sup>25</sup>

### **7. Elections for Members of the National Assembly in the Republic of Gabon:**

The Republic of Gabon conducted legislative elections on August 26, 2023, with a participation rate of 56.65%. Following a military coup and the annulment of the election results by the Defense Forces, detailed publication of the results was limited.<sup>26</sup>

### **8. Elections to the National People's Assembly in the Republic of Guinea-Bissau:**

On June 4, 2023, the Republic of Guinea-Bissau held legislative elections to renew the membership of the National People's Assembly, consisting of 102 members. The elections recorded a participation rate of 79.57%. The party of the country's president, Umaru Sissoko Embaló's Madim, secured 29 seats. Meanwhile, the PAI-Terra Ranka coalition, led by the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde, won 54 seats, granting them the majority. According to the constitution, the party that obtains the parliamentary majority automatically assumes the position of Prime Minister.<sup>27</sup>

### **9. Legislative Elections in the Republic of Liberia**

On October 10, 2023, the Republic of Liberia held legislative elections, including elections for the House of Representatives and the Senate. The House of Representatives recorded a participation rate of 78.13%, while the Senate had a participation rate of 78.35%.<sup>28</sup>

### **10. Constitutional Referendum in the Republic of Mali**

On June 18, 2023, the Republic of Mali organized a constitutional referendum. The turnout was relatively low, at 38.23%. However, the majority of voters, approximately 97%, approved the draft new constitution. Opposition calls to boycott the referendum gained momentum.<sup>29</sup>

### **11. Elections for Members of the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania**

The Republic of Mauritania conducted legislative elections in May 2023 to elect members of the Mauritanian National Assembly. The elections witnessed a turnout rate of 71.71%. The Independent National Elections Commission expressed its satisfaction with the peaceful and disciplined participation of the Mauritanian people.<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, the ruling "Insaf" party

<sup>25</sup> RFI, Législatives en RDC: quels sont les grands enjeux de résultats toujours attendus: <https://bit.ly/3HfT4tP>

<sup>26</sup> gabonreview, Gabon : Ali Bongo officiellement réélu, des militaires prennent le pouvoir, 30 août, 2023, available on:

<https://www.gabonreview.com/gabon-ali-bongo-officiellement-reelu-des-militaires-prennent-le-pouvoir/>

<sup>27</sup> Rfi, Législatives en Guinée-Bissau: majorité absolue pour l'opposition, selon les résultats provisoires, 08/06/2023, available on: <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20230608-1%C3%A9gislatives-en-guin%C3%A9e-bissau-majorit%C3%A9-absolue-pour-l-opposition-selon-les-r%C3%A9sultats-provisoires>

<sup>28</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Recent Elections, Liberia, available on:

<https://www.electionguide.org/elections/type/past/>

<sup>29</sup> Le monde, Au Mali, le nouveau projet de Constitution approuvé à la quasi-unanimité, sur fond de faible participation et d'irrégularités, 23 juin 2023, available in: [https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/06/23/au-mali-le-nouveau-projet-de-constitution-approuve-a-la-quasi-unanimité-sur-fond-de-faible-participation-et-d-irregularites\\_6178994\\_3212.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/06/23/au-mali-le-nouveau-projet-de-constitution-approuve-a-la-quasi-unanimité-sur-fond-de-faible-participation-et-d-irregularites_6178994_3212.html)

<sup>30</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Islamic Republic of Mauritania, available on:

<https://www.electionguide.org/countries/id/137/>

secured a majority of parliamentary seats by winning 27 seats in the second round, bringing their total tally to 107 out of 176 seats in the Mauritanian parliament. Some have raised concerns about the ruling party's control over Parliament and the potential for a political crisis.<sup>31</sup>

## 12. Legislative Elections in the Republic of Nigeria:

On February 25, 2023, the Republic of Nigeria held legislative elections, including elections for the House of Representatives and the Senate. These elections witnessed the lowest turnout in Nigerian history, with only 26.72% participation.<sup>32</sup>

## 13. Parliamentary Elections in Sierra Leone:

The State of Sierra Leone conducted legislative elections, specifically for members of the Sierra Leonean Parliament. The elections recorded a participation rate of 82.86%.<sup>33</sup>

## 14. Elections for the House of Representatives in the Republic of Tunisia:

On January 29, 2023, the Republic of Tunisia held runoff legislative elections, which experienced an extremely low turnout of just 11.3%. This marked the lowest voter turnout in the past decade, amidst a significant political division currently prevailing in Tunisia.<sup>34</sup>

## 15. Senate and House of Representatives Elections in the Republic of Zimbabwe:

On August 23, Zimbabwe held legislative elections concurrently with the presidential elections. The participation rate for these elections was 68.86%.<sup>35</sup> It is worth noting that the US State Department expressed concern about the conduct of the elections in Zimbabwe and called on all parties to ensure free and fair elections. The United States, which has imposed sanctions on Zimbabwe for years due to human rights violations, emphasized the need for "free, fair, and peaceful elections," clarifying its impartiality towards any specific candidate.<sup>36</sup>

## 16. Legislative Elections in the Kingdom of Eswatini:

The Kingdom of Eswatini (formerly Swaziland) conducted legislative elections for the Senate and House of Representatives on September 29, 2023. These elections took place without any signs of unrest or violence. The government published the election results; however, specific details about the participation percentages were not disclosed.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>31</sup> سبوتنيك: سيطرة حكومية واتهامات بالتزوير.. ما تداعيات نتائج الانتخابات التشريعية في موريتانيا؟: <https://qrcd.org/4DZ9>

<sup>32</sup> Dataphyte, Nigeria records only 26.72% voter turnout in 2023 election, March 3, 2023, available on: <https://www.dataphyte.com/latest-reports/nigeriadecides-nigeria-records-only-26-72-voter-turnout-in-2023-election/>

<sup>33</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Republic of Sierra Leone Election for Sierra Leonean Parliament, available on: <https://www.electionguide.org/elections/id/4025/>

<sup>34</sup> يورو نيوز، تونس: نسبة المشاركة في الدور الثاني من الانتخابات التشريعية وصلت إلى 11,3%، متاح على الرابط <https://arabic.euronews.com/2023/01/29/polls-open-in-second-round-of-tunisia-legislative-elections>: التالي

<sup>35</sup> Election Guide, DEMOCRACY ASSISTANCE AND ELECTION NEWS, Zimbabwe Presidency 2023-General available on: <https://electionguide.org/elections/id/4046/>

<sup>36</sup> فرنسا 24، قلق أمريكي بشأن سير الانتخابات التشريعية والرئاسية في زيمبابوي: <https://qrcd.org/4DZY>

<sup>37</sup> Africa news, Eswatini: government announces election results, 03/10/2023, available on: <https://www.africanews.com/2023/10/03/eswatini-government-announces-election-results/>

### Third, Local Elections:

Local elections took a significant part of the total elections held in Africa during the year 2023, as it was supposed that 12 elections would be held on the African continent, ten of which were held in Côte d'Ivoire, Zimbabwe, Gambia, Mozambique, Mauritania, Nigeria, Madagascar, Sierra Leone, Congo and Tunisia, while two countries were unable to hold local elections: Guinea and Libya.<sup>38</sup>

Although data on participation rates in the local elections in Africa in 2023 is limited, Tunisia likely recorded the lowest turnout in its local elections held on December 24, 2023, with preliminary results indicating a weak participation rate of no more than 11.66%.<sup>39</sup>

## Local Elections in Africa 2023



<sup>38</sup> The Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, Election Calendar 2023, available on: <https://www.eisa.org/election-calendar/>

<sup>39</sup> راديو الشرق، تونس.. "إقبال ضعيف" على الانتخابات المحلية، 25 ديسمبر 2023، متاح على الرابط التالي: <https://cutt.ly/cwGMhyTQ>

## Conclusion:

Despite the end of traditional colonialism in Africa many years ago and the subsequent emergence of political and social development after gaining national independence, the democratic experience in Africa has undergone various transformations. Initially, the establishment of liberal democratic systems aimed to facilitate the transfer of power to national liberation leaders, characterized by enthusiasm and optimism. However, it quickly diverged from Western democratic systems as single-party control and political power monopolization emerged.

Nevertheless, several African countries have made some progress towards the path of democracy, albeit to varying degrees. They have faced numerous challenges, including security deterioration, military coups, political conflicts, and foreign interventions akin to modern colonialism. Additionally, the repercussions of events such as the Russian-Ukrainian war and the recent conflict in Gaza have impacted the region. Amidst these challenges, the year 2023 witnessed the successful organization of various scheduled elections, including presidential, legislative, and local elections in many African countries. This reflects their commitment to the democratic path despite the prevailing difficulties.

However, holding elections alone does not guarantee the achievement of democracy. Several criteria must be considered, such as ensuring the integrity of elections, acceptance of their results, and the level of participation, which reflects their significance and confidence in the electoral process. In 2023, different countries exhibited contrasting indicators in these areas. While legislative elections in Cameroon and presidential elections in Sierra Leone witnessed high participation rates, local elections in Tunisia and general elections in Nigeria experienced low turnout.

Moreover, although many countries witnessed high participation rates, some African countries faced accusations of electoral irregularities, and many opposition entities refused to accept the election results. In some cases, this led to military coups and the annulment of election outcomes, as seen in Nigeria. Therefore, political will plays a crucial role in strengthening the democratic path, and this can be achieved through timely and transparent elections. It was particularly noteworthy to observe the Egyptian presidential elections held amidst unprecedented challenges, including internal economic issues and regional and international conflicts, notably the war on Gaza along the Egyptian border. These experiences highlight the significant milestones countries possess in conducting elections amid surrounding challenges.

Despite the difficulty of providing a comprehensive assessment of the electoral landscape in Africa during 2023, as each country faces its own unique political, economic, social, and security challenges, it is evident that many countries encountered difficulties in smoothly executing the electoral process and gaining acceptance of the results. These challenges include the lack of political harmony, societal integration of opposition entities and competing candidates, and a lack of confidence in election outcomes, which in some instances led to

military coups and the subsequent cancellation of results. Nevertheless, numerous African countries have taken steps towards a more democratic future.

Out of the 24 African countries scheduled to hold elections in 2023, 21 successfully did so, representing a commendable achievement given the complex challenges these nations face. While some elections faced accusations of irregularities, these must be evaluated within the context of broader struggles African countries contend with, including enduring colonial legacies, economic and social hardships, security threats, and the vulnerability to military coups. Considering the evolving global landscape, holding elections, even if not perfect, marks a positive step towards democratic consolidation in Africa. However, instances of electoral manipulation led to result cancellations and military coups.