



Situation facing present-day conscientious objectors in different countries in Africa

Country	Mandatory military service	Can apply for recognition as a conscientious objector to military service	Challenges for conscientious objectors	References
<u>Africa</u>				https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-mandatory-military-service http://www.africanchildforum.org/clar/Harmonisation%20of%20Laws%20in%20Africa/other-documents-harmonisation-6_en.pdf
<u>Western Africa</u>				
Nigeria	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription, but most youth serve in the National Youth Service Corps (NYSC). The NYSC is compulsory for all Nigerians who graduate before the age of 30. The length of service is one year. This year the Director-General said that Corps members are part of the national defence policy and they can be mobilised if needed.	https://www.indexmundi.com/nigeria/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://punchng.com/corps-members-can-be-mobilised-for-war-says-nysc-dg/ https://punchng.com/revamping-nysc-for-better-productivity/
Ghana	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription in Ghana. Volunteers need to present a basic education certificate.	https://www.indexmundi.com/ghana/military_service_age_and_obligation.html

Ivory Coast	Yes	No	Conscription is not enforced and most of the soldiers are volunteers.	https://www.indexmundi.com/cote_d_ivoire/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.constituteproject.org/constitution/Cote_Divoire_2016.pdf?lang=en
Niger	Yes	No	Conscripts must be Nigerien citizens and unmarried. Women may serve in health care units.	https://www.indexmundi.com/niger/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/23/fewer-than-a-third-of-countries-currently-have-a-military-draft-most-exclude-women/
Burkina Faso	Voluntary	No	The minimum age for joining the military is 18. Women may serve in supporting roles. There is no military conscription or military training. In 1990 a 'civil and patriotic' training replaced the former military training for conscripts. The length of the training is one month and a half. This is followed by 10 months working in the production sector.	https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/africa/bf-personnel.htm#:~:text=Burkina%20Faso%20has%20no%20military,work%20in%20the%20production%20sector. https://www.indexmundi.com/burkina_faso/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.wathi.org/burkina-faso-thinking-security-out-of-informality/
Mali	Yes	No	Military service is for 2 years. There have been several coups since Mali's independence in 1960. Since then, the country has been governed by the military or a military leader for half the time. The last coup was in 2020. The strong influence of the military in the country's politics is evident. In 2021 Human Rights Watch published an investigation into the involvement of Mali's military forces in the assassination and forced disappearance of villagers.	https://www.indexmundi.com/mali/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/20/mali-killings-disappearances-military-operations https://africacenter.org/spotlight/legacy-military-governance-mali/ https://www.csis.org/analysis/malian-military-ousts-wayward-government
Senegal	Yes	No	Despite the fact that Senegal has had a law on conscription since it became independent, this law is not usually applied. In general, Senegal's army is made up of volunteers who can join at the age of 18. In comparison to other countries in the continent, Senegal is admired for establishing harmonious civil-military relations, and avoiding coups and internal conflict in an effective way.	https://www.indexmundi.com/senegal/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://mwi.usma.edu/senegals-military-good-case-study/ https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/23/fewer-than-a-third-of-countries-

				currently-have-a-military-draft-most-exclude-women/#:~:text=Fewer%20than%20a%20third%20of,military%20draft%3B%20most%20exclude%20women&text=An%20additional%2060%20countries%20%E2%80%93%20fewer,of%20an%20active%20conscription%20program.
Guinea	No	No	There is no compulsory military service.	https://www.indexmundi.com/guinea/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Benin	Yes	No	<p>In order to join the military in Benin a higher education diploma is required. Both men and women are eligible for conscription.</p> <p>In 2007 Benin passed the Military Service Law saying that every Beninese youth between the ages of 18 and 35 was 'subject to military service in the national interest'. The first step in this process is the obligatory registration of young people. Some of the registrants are then chosen to serve, and are expected to do military training. They will then be called upon for duties in the national interest.</p>	https://treaties.un.org/pages/ShowMTDSDetails.aspx?src=UNTSO&tabid=2&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/benin-military-service-law/#:~:text=The%20Law%20prescribes%20that%20every,young%20people%20in%20the%20c
Togo	Voluntary	No	At the moment the military is made up of volunteers. However the situation is a little unclear as it is also reported that there is a 2-year service obligation.	https://theodora.com/wfbcurrent/togo/togo_military.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/
Sierra Leone	Voluntary	No	In Sierra Leone the underaged can join the military with parental consent.	https://www.indexmundi.com/sierra_leone/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Liberia	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription in Liberia and there never has been. People can do voluntary military service from 18 years old.	https://www.indexmundi.com/liberia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://theodora.com/wfbcurrent/liberia/liberia_military.html
Mauritania	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription. The legal minimum age for voluntary military service is 18.	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mauritania/

Gambia	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription. The legal minimum age for voluntary military service is 18. Service length is 6 months.	https://www.indexmundi.com/the_gambia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Guinea-Bissau	Yes	No	There is conscription, with the exception of the Air Force where military service is voluntary. The underaged can join with parental consent. It is unclear whether conscription applies to women.	https://www.indexmundi.com/guinea-bissau/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/ https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/23/fewer-than-a-third-of-countries-currently-have-a-military-draft-most-exclude-women/
Cape Verde	Yes	No	There is conscription for men aged 18 – 35. And selective compulsory military service for women. The underaged can volunteer with parental consent.	https://theodora.com/wfbcurent/cabo_verde/cabo_verde_military.html https://www.indexmundi.com/cape_verde/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/04/23/fewer-than-a-third-of-countries-currently-have-a-military-draft-most-exclude-women/
<u>Eastern Africa</u>				
Ethiopia	Voluntary	No	Although there is no compulsory military service, the military does occasionally have call-ups and it is compulsory to serve. After the peace agreement the UN encouraged the Ethiopian government to change its conscription laws and to start investing in society so that young people could have employment opportunities and complete their education. (As a result of the conflict with Eritrea, many people had to stop their education in order to join the military.)	https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/08/they-are-making-us-slaves-not-educating-us/how-indefinite-conscription-restricts https://www.indexmundi.com/ethiopia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Tanzania	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription in Tanzania. However, it is mandatory to join the National Service and those who join are considered as reserve forces for the military. Youth have to register and do their training before they go to college. However, if a person has already been offered a university	https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20131018130241163#:~:text=Tanzania%20recently%20re%2Dintroduced%20compulsory,training%20before%20going%20to%20university. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/tanz

			place, he / she can postpone their service. Military training includes lessons on human rights, civics, and the history of the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar. In the past the idea of reintroducing military training has been highly criticised by society.	ania/national-service.htm
Kenya	Voluntary	No	The underaged can join with parental consent. There are no active military reserves, although the Ministry of Defence has stated that they would like to create them.	https://www.indexmundi.com/kenya/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/
Uganda	Voluntary	No	The underaged can join the military with parental consent. However, the government has previously stated that “no person under the apparent age of 18 years shall be enrolled in the armed forces.” In order to join the military people need a secondary education and they must be single, with no children.	https://www.indexmundi.com/uganda/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/
Mozambique	Yes	No	Men and women have to register for military service. Mozambique’s government spends significant resources doing a census of all youth and registering them for military service. This does not mean that they will be necessarily be incorporated into the military. This is subject to doing aptitude tests and dependent on the number (decided annually) of people who can join the Mozambique Armed Defence Forces (FADM).	https://clubofmozambique.com/news/mozambique-over-200000-youths-to-be-registered-for-military-service-181450/ https://www.indexmundi.com/mozambique/military_service_age_and_obligation.html http://www.apanews.net/en/news/mozambique-military-conscription-targets-170000-youth
Madagascar	Voluntary	No	Madagascar’s military is all-volunteer.	https://www.indexmundi.com/madagascar/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/madagascar
Malawi	Voluntary	No	For enlisted recruits a high school certificate is required. For officer recruits a college certificate is required. In times of public emergency, every citizen aged between 18 and 60 may be called up for national service.	https://www.indexmundi.com/malawi/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/malawi https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/C157333FCA91F573C1256C130033E448-

				chilsold.htm
Zambia	Voluntary	No	Men and women can volunteer in the military. They have to register. The underaged can join with parental consent. It requires grade 12 certification and Zambian citizenship. There is civilian service called the Zambian National Service.	https://www.indexmundi.com/zambia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Somalia	Yes	No	The minimum age for military service is 18.	https://www.indexmundi.com/somalia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Zimbabwe	Voluntary	No	People aged between 18 and 24 can join the military.	https://www.indexmundi.com/zimbabwe/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/zimbabwe
Rwanda	Voluntary	No	Rwandan citizenship and a 9th grade education are required to join the military.	https://www.indexmundi.com/rwanda/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/rwanda
Burundi	Voluntary	No	The armed forces law does not specify a minimum age for enlistment. However, the Government has stated that the underaged must not be recruited. One of the biggest challenges for Burundi's army is the political perspective and influence within its ranks. This has led to coups and a big influence of the military in politics.	https://www.indexmundi.com/burundi/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-01951938/document https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/burundi/247-burundi-army-crisis
South Sudan	Yes	No	18 is the minimum age for compulsory military service. Previous agreements signed by the government of South Sudan included the demobilisation of all child soldiers. However, recruitment of children by the warring parties continues. According to UNICEF, from 2013 (when the civil war began) until 2018 more than 19,000 children were recruited.	https://www.indexmundi.com/south_sudan/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/field/military-service-age-and-obligation/

Eritrea	Yes	No	<p>Military service is extremely strict in Eritrea. Through their history, thousands of young people have been forced into indefinite national service and, despite the peace agreement signed to end the conflict with Ethiopia, some people have labeled military service as “like slavery”. However, the government defends the system of recruitment. Recruits are made to perform forced labour and they receive physical abuse. For example, there have been reports in the past stating that conscripts often work 72-hour weeks in extremely harsh conditions with inadequate food and low pay. Moreover many of them cannot usually go to visit their families. If a conscript fails to return after taking leave their parents may be jailed until they return.</p> <p>As a result of the rigorous conscription, an estimated 507,300 Eritreans live in exile. Eritrea’s government has created a generation of refugees. On many occasions the military has recruited youth before they complete their high school education. There are reports of secondary school students who intentionally failed their classes in order to avoid military service, and young women who purposely become pregnant. Conscientious objectors have been detained, tortured and harassed. In the case of Jehovah’s Witnesses they are compelled to renounce their faith.</p>	<p>https://www.hrw.org/report/2019/08/08/they-are-making-us-slaves-not-educating-us/how-indefinite-conscription-restricts</p> <p>https://www.infomigrants.net/en/post/18744/report-eritrea-s-military-conscription-adds-to-migrant-crisis</p> <p>https://www.africanews.com/2019/03/13/eritrea-keeps-mandatory-national-service-despite-peace-hrw-worried/</p> <p>https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/8/9/eritrea-n-students-forced-into-indefinite-military-govt-jobs-hrw</p> <p>https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2018/oct/11/its-just-slavery-eritrean-conscripts-wait-in-vain-for-freedom</p> <p>https://www.reuters.com/article/uk-eritrea-politics-religion-idUKKBN28H1J6</p>
Mauritius	No army	No	<p>There is no compulsory military service in Mauritius. Indeed, there are no regular military forces. However, the Mauritius Police Force (MPF) has a paramilitary unit called the Special Mobile Force.</p>	<p>https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/mauritius</p> <p>https://www.wvi.org/sites/default/files/WVI_Child_Soldiers_2019.pdf</p> <p>https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/8000/pol310012014en.pdf</p>
Djibouti	Voluntary	No	<p>The underaged can join the military as volunteers.</p>	<p>https://www.indexmundi.com/djibouti/military_service_age_and_obligation.html</p> <p>https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/djibouti/</p>
Comoros	Voluntary	No	<p>Conscription was abolished in 2008 in Comoros. The length of voluntary service is 2 years.</p>	<p>https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/countries-with-mandatory-military-</p>

				service https://www.indexmundi.com/comoros/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/comoros
Seychelles	Voluntary	No	The underaged can join the military with parental consent.	https://www.indexmundi.com/seychelles/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/seychelles https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/594902744.pdf
<u>Northern Africa</u>				
Egypt	Yes	No	People can join the military on a voluntary basis once they turn 15. The duration of military service depends on their level of education. Each Egyptian has to have a military number that is located on their ID. The military is revered in the country and, for this reason, conscientious objectors have faced difficult challenges, for example, being imprisoned. Although refusing to do military service is taboo in Egypt, military service is becoming increasingly unpopular and many people try to avoid it. However, there are no options for refusing to do military service.	https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/egypts-army-conscripts-who-refuse-serve#:~:text=Egypt%20is%20a%20nation%20where,nationality%20or%20supports%20his%20parents. http://datacenter.aucegypt.edu/jmc471/ezines/egyptkuwait/exemption.html https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/it-hell-chronicles-military-conscripts-egypt https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2017546.html https://en.qantara.de/content/conscientious-objection-in-egypt-playing-the-system
Algeria	Yes	No	18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary service. Compulsory service starts at the age of 19. However, each Algerian must register on the military service list once they have turned 17. In 2014 the duration of military service was reduced to 12 months. Conscientious objectors are considered deserters and they can be imprisoned for 30 days in a military prison. Then, when they are released, they are automatically drafted for military service. They could be	https://www.indexmundi.com/algeria/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.algeria-cgny.org/national-service/#:~:text=Conscription%20or%20national%20service%20is,of%20physical%20or%20mental%20disorders. https://en.connection-ev.org/article-2331#:~:text=Conscientious%20objection%20%

			in the military for up to two years.	26%20alternative%20service&text=Anyone%20who%20has%20been%20detained,their%20total%20time%20in%20prison.
Sudan	Yes	No	Military service is mandatory for both men and women. In previous years the government has cancelled the requirement that people need to have completed their military service in order to work in the public and private sectors.	https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/applic/ihl/ihl-nat.nsf/0/9d58d31886fef99dc1257110003a88d1/\$FILE/National%20Service%20Act%20-%20Sudan%20-%201992.pdf
Morocco	Yes	No	Compulsory military service was reintroduced in 2019. Those who refuse to fulfil their duty can be imprisoned for one month to one year. However, there are exemptions for those who do not meet the physical requirements, and for university students. There is no recognition of conscientious objection.	https://www.reuters.com/article/us-morocco-army-idUSKCN1L52DA https://english.alarabiya.net/News/north-africa/2019/02/08/Morocco-officially-restarts-compulsory-military-service https://mipa.institute/6451
Tunisia	Yes	No	There is compulsory military service. However, mechanisms for recruitment are fairly ineffective. There are plans to organise and change these mechanisms. There is not much interest among the youth in joining the military. In some scenarios, conscripts can do their military training, pay a fee and do civilian service instead of military service. Conscription includes women.	https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20180213-tunisia-31000-summoned-only-506-respond-to-call-for-military-service/ https://www.indexmundi.com/tunisia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/76654
Libya		No	It is unclear whether or not there is compulsory military service in Libya. The government has been unstable over the last few years. In 2017 the government announced the formation of seven military zones in Libya, for preparing and training troops. At the time the following was written, illustrating the uncertainty of the situation; <i>'Given the limited control the Presidency Council has across the country, it is unclear how they will assert authority over some areas, especially those that Khalifa Haftar and his Libyan National Army control. Nor is mention made of how the Presidency Council will deal with the array of powerful militias nominally under its authority'</i> .	https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/Treaties/CCPR/Shared%20Documents/LBY/INT_CCPR_NGO_LBY_91_9488_E.doc https://wri-irg.org/en/programmes/world_survey/reports/Libya https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20170602-libya-to-be-divided-into-7-military-zones/ https://www.libyaherald.com/2017/06/01/pc-decides-to-divide-the-country-into-seven-military-zones/

Middle Africa				
Democratic Republic of the Congo	Yes	No	There is compulsory military service in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. One of the main challenges for the government is the forced recruitment of children.	https://www.indexmundi.com/democratic_republic_of_the_congo/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Angola	Yes	No	The length of military service is two years.	https://www.indexmundi.com/angola/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Cameroon	Voluntary	No	Both males and females can volunteer and the service length is 4 years. A high school diploma is required. On some occasions civilians have been forced by soldiers to perform military duties for protection in their communities.	https://www.indexmundi.com/cameroon/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/cameroon https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/10/cameroon-civilians-forced-do-guard-duty
Chad	Yes	No	There is compulsory military service. The legal minimum age is 21 and the length of service is three years. 18 is the legal minimum age for voluntary service. The underaged can join the military with parental consent. There is compulsory military or civic service for women. It is for one year at age 21. A report in 2015 indicated that ' <i>while provisions for military service have not been repealed, they have never been fully implemented</i> '.	https://www.indexmundi.com/chad/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Congo	Voluntary	No	The minimum age men or women can volunteer to join the military is 18.	https://treaties.un.org/pages/ShowMTDSGDDetails.aspx?src=UNTSO&tabid=2&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en
Central African Republic	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription in the Central African Republic.	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/central-african-republic/
Gabon	Voluntary	No	People can join the military when they are aged 20.	https://www.indexmundi.com/gabon/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Equatorial Guinea	Yes	No	There is a selective compulsory military service once people are 18 years old. However, conscription is rare. Women can join only in administrative positions.	https://www.indexmundi.com/equatorial_guinea/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.nationmaster.com/country-

				info/stats/Military/Military-service-age-and-obligation
Sao Tome & Principe	Yes	No	The underaged can join the military.	https://www.indexmundi.com/sao_tome_and_principe/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
<u>Southern Africa</u>				
South Africa	Voluntary	No	The service length is two years and women can join in non-combat roles.	
Namibia	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription.	https://www.indexmundi.com/namibia/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Botswana	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription in Botswana. The minimum age for joining the military is 18.	https://www.indexmundi.com/botswana/military_service_age_and_obligation.html https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/botswana
Lesotho	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription. Women can join the military as commissioned officers.	https://www.indexmundi.com/lesotho/military_service_age_and_obligation.html
Eswatini	Voluntary	No	There is no conscription.	https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/eswatini/

Note

The information in this table relates to official armies in nation states.

Researched and written by Santiago Forero
 Edited by Karen Robinson
 July 2021