



African leaders' adherence to constitutional term limits is a key component of institutionalizing predictable norms of democratic succession. Progress toward establishing this norm has been mixed, however. While a number of African countries have succeeded in upholding term limits over the past two decades, leaders in more than 20 countries effectively do not face restrictions on their time in power.

- Eighteen African countries have established a constitutional two-term limit on their executive officeholders. Chief executives in these countries have been in power for less than four years, on average.
- Ten African leaders have evaded term limit restrictions. The average time in power for leaders in these countries is 21 years.
- Eight of the 10 countries where term limits have been undone are in Central Africa.
- Southern Africa is the sub-region with the strongest adherence to term limits.
- Term limits for leaders in North and East Africa largely remain weak or absent.



No Constitutional Two-Term Limit	Countries with Two-Term Limit in Constitution				
	Limit Not Yet Met by Any President (Year Limit to Be Reached)	Limit Not Retroactively Applied to Current Executive	Two-Term Limit Reached		Left Office (First Leader to Adhere to Limit)
			Attempted Modification or Elimination of Limit		
			Successful	Unsuccessful	
Cape Verde ¹ (three-term limit)	Liberia (2017)	Algeria ⁴	Togo (Eyadéma, 2002)	Zambia (Chiluba, 2001)	Tanzania (Mwinyi, 1995)
Equatorial Guinea	Côte d'Ivoire (2018)	Zimbabwe ⁵	Gabon (Bongo, 2003)	Malawi (Muluzi, 2003)	Ghana (Rawlings, 2001)
Eritrea	Mauritania (2019)		Uganda (Museveni, 2005)	Nigeria (Obasanjo, 2006)	São Tomé and Príncipe (Trovoada, 2001)
Ethiopia ¹	Guinea (2020)		Chad (Deby, 2005)	Niger (Tandja, 2009)	Kenya (Moi, 2002)
Gambia	Egypt (2022)		Cameroon (Biya, 2008)	Senegal (Wade, 2012)	Mozambique (Chissano, 2005)
Guinea-Bissau	Madagascar (2024)		Djibouti (Guellah, 2010)	Burkina Faso (Compaoré, 2014)	Benin (Kérékou, 2006)
Lesotho ¹	Tunisia (2024)		Rwanda (Kagame, 2015)		Comoros (Assoumani, 2006)
Mauritius ¹	Central African Republic (2026)		Burundi (Nkurunziza, 2015) ⁶		Sierra Leone (Kabbah, 2007)
Morocco ²	Angola (2027)		Republic of Congo (Nguesso, 2015)		Botswana (Mogae, 2008)
Seychelles (three-term limit)	Libya ³		DRC (Kabila, 2016) ⁷		Mali (Konaré, 2008)
Somalia					South Africa (Mbeki, 2008)
South Sudan					Namibia (Pohamba, 2015)
Sudan					
Swaziland ²					

¹ Executive authority largely rests with the office of the prime minister, which does not face any restrictions on tenure.

² Executive authority rests with a monarch.

³ Libya: The draft 2016 Constitution imposes two-term limits.

⁴ Algeria: The term-limit clause was removed in 2008 for Abdelaziz Bouteflika to run again and reinstated in 2016 as he serves out his last term.

⁵ Zimbabwe: The Constitution adopted in 2013 introduced a two-term limit. Robert Mugabe is due to run for his second term in 2018.

⁶ Burundi: While legitimacy remains contested, Pierre Nkurunziza has held onto power past term limit expiration in 2015.

⁷ DRC: Joseph Kabila served out his second term in 2016 but negotiated to stay on until December 2017.