Nigeria, one of Africa’s largest economies, has been struggling for years with the effects of the worst economic crisis in 30 years, but is gradually overcoming recession. Even more serious are the ongoing violent conflicts in the country and widespread organized crime, which, coupled with a deep political, social and cultural divide, is threatening the stability of the country. In such a context, the relatively peaceful outcome of the last elections was remarkable. For the first time in Nigerian history an acting president, Goodluck Jonathan, was deposed by election. Muhammadu Buhari has ruled since May 2015, but has many problems to tackle during the second half of his term of office. The Islamic militia Boko Haram continues to terrorize the north of the country. Since 2013, the militia has abducted more than 1000 children and turned two million people who tried to escape violence into internally displaced persons. In the centre of the country and in the Niger Delta, too, distribution conflicts and organized crime dominate people’s daily lives. Despite this crisis, Buhari has succeeded in launching a promising moderate reform program, particularly in the social and education sectors.

Elections
The 2015 presidential and parliamentary elections were the most credible in the country’s history. This was mainly due to the Independent National Electoral Commission, which structured and tidied the electoral roll, intervened in a de-escalating manner and stuck to the elections despite the violence-related postponement of the deadline.

Freedom of speech
In general, freedom of expression is rarely restricted. Private media have become more important than state media. They have a high degree of autonomy and are often very critical. Increasingly, shrill headlines or gossip news dominate. Many private media are very biased or simply for sale, “brown envelope journalism” is common.

Civil rights protection
Protection of civil rights is not ensured because the state monopoly on the use of force and access to justice are limited. Human rights violations by state security forces and other actors are widespread. Activists denounce torture, ill-treatment in police custody and extrajudicial killings.

Social inclusion
The differences in development and income between Nigeria’s south and the conflict-ridden north are huge. Women are disadvantaged and must fear violent attacks. Social security is only provided by family networks. 80% of the population live on less than $2 a day.

Corruption prevention
Integrity mechanisms and institutions are weak and constantly undermined by strong veto powers. The new government is demonstrating its commitment to reform and has launched an anti-corruption campaign. Personal enrichment in office is common at all political levels, but has recently been penalized more severely.