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BURKINA FASO 2022

Armed groups and government armed forces committed violations of international humanitarian law. The armed conflict continued to affect the rights to food, water, health and education. There were cases of arbitrary detention and violations of the right to freedom of expression. Two historical judicial cases of high-profile killings were finally completed, including one related to the murder of President Thomas Sankara in 1987.

Background

Burkina Faso underwent two military coups. The first, in January, was led by Lieutenant-Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba. It toppled President Roch Marc Kaboré and his government and led to the dissolution of all elective offices – parliamentary and local. The army justified the coup on the basis of the government's poor handling of the armed conflict, which continued to have major impacts on civilians. The military

authorities placed Roch Marc Kaboré under house arrest until 7 April on grounds of “security”.

The state of emergency was renewed in April after a two-month suspension. The new government established military zones in northern and eastern Burkina Faso and ordered civilians to evacuate these areas. A two-year transition before presidential elections was negotiated under mediation from ECOWAS. In September, after military setbacks in the armed conflict, Lieutenant-Colonel Damiba was overthrown by military officers led by Captain Ibrahim Traoré.

Violations of international humanitarian law

Armed groups

The Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (GSIM) blocked access and commercial supply to several cities in northern and eastern Burkina Faso. In February, the GSIM cut access to the city of Djibo in response to the government’s prohibition of the movement of people and goods from Djibo to areas under the GSIM’s influence. In July, the main road access to the town of Sebba, which hosted 30,000 internally displaced people from neighbouring districts, was also cut off by the GSIM. The blockades reduced food security and access to medicines and healthcare for civilians.

In March, armed assailants launched an attack in Arbinda, a town in Soum province under siege since 2019, targeting people fetching water. Seven people were killed, including three civilians.

In Djibo, the GSIM attacked and destroyed civilian objects including water infrastructure affecting more than 300,000 residents, according to the Norwegian Refugee Council. Traders and others who attempted to supply food to the city were threatened with violence by armed groups, leading the government to deploy armed escorts to assist them to enter Djibo. On 26 September a 207-vehicle civilian supply convoy for Djibo, escorted by the military, was attacked by armed assailants at Gaskindé. Following the attack, 50 people remained unaccounted for. According to the government, the bodies of 11 soldiers were found after the attack.

In June, members of the Islamic State in the Sahel attacked the town of Seytenga, killing at least 80 people, mostly civilians. The assailants reportedly went from house to house, killing men. Thousands of residents were displaced; some 16,000 fled to the regional capital, Dori, and 360 crossed into Niger.

Government forces

In February, French forces supporting the national army killed four civilians during an aerial strike on the armed group Ansaroul Islam. There was no investigation into the incident to determine the lawfulness of the attack.

In April, media reports indicated that dozens of civilians were killed during military strikes against armed groups in the villages of Sokoundou, Wassakoré and Tin-Rhassan, in Oudalan province, close to the border with Mali. No investigation was set up into the incident.

In August, state authorities acknowledged their responsibility for the deaths of “several” civilians during aerial strikes against armed groups near Kompienga/Pognoa, close to the border with Togo. Media reports indicated that around 30 civilians, mostly women, were killed during the strikes.

On 30 December, two neighbourhoods with majority ethnic Fulani populations in the town of Nouna, Kossi province, were attacked by government auxiliary forces. At least 86 people were killed, according to local sources. The Office of the Prosecutor of Nouna announced an investigation into the killings.

Right to food

A combination of conflict-driven increases in the price of consumer products and variations in the climate severely affected food security in Burkina Faso. According to OCHA, 4.9 million people faced food insecurity by September, including many internally displaced people who had fled their homes and lost their livelihoods due to the conflict. Some 180,000 children were chronically malnourished, according to OCHA. This situation was most acute in the Nord, Sahel and Est regions where armed groups were most active.

Right to education

UNICEF reported that 4,258 schools were closed or non-functioning at the end of September due to the conflict. State authorities supported by UNICEF and other organizations developed educational radio programmes targeting children displaced by the conflict or otherwise not in school. UNICEF reported in September that some 292,861 children had accessed these radio programmes.

Freedom of expression

In March the former president of the National Assembly, Alassane Bala Sakandé, was arrested, detained and interrogated by the gendarmerie before being released the same day without charge. On 24 March, prior to his arrest and detention, he had

issued a press statement calling for an end to the illegal detention of the deposed president, Roch Marc Kaboré.

On 19 May, Luc Pagbelguem, a journalist working for the television channel BF1, was assaulted by a security detail of the transitional prime minister, Albert Ouédraogo, while reporting on an event. This prompted a statement by professional media organizations on 26 May which denounced the assault against Luc Pagbelguem and intimidation against several other journalists in Burkina Faso.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

In April, a military tribunal in the capital, Ouagadougou, found former president Blaise Compaoré and his former head of security, Hyacinthe Kafando, guilty of the murder of President Thomas Sankara and 12 other government officials in 1987. They were sentenced to life imprisonment in their absence, along with General Gilbert Diendéré. Eight other defendants were also found guilty and sentenced to between three and 20 years' imprisonment; a further three accused were acquitted. In May the military tribunal ordered Blaise Compaoré and nine of the other convicted men to pay a total of XOF 800 million (EUR 1.2 million) in compensation to the families of Thomas Sankara and the 12 other victims.

General Gilbert Diendéré was also found guilty in May of complicity in the unlawful arrest and aggravated abduction of student union leader Boukary Dabo in 1990 and sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of XOF 1 million (EUR 1,450) by the Ouagadougou High Court. These crimes had led to the death of Boukary Dabo. Two other accused in the same case were sentenced to 10 and 30 years' imprisonment respectively and ordered to pay damages.