

Türk urges prompt, transparent investigation after 28 people found killed in Burkina Faso

GENEVA (6 January 2023) – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk today called on the transitional authorities in Burkina Faso to expedite investigations into the killing of at least 28 people whose bodies were found in the north-western town of Nouna, in the Kossi Province Boucle du Mouhoun region, on 30-31 December.

“It is encouraging that the authorities have announced an investigation into the incident. I call on them to ensure it is prompt, thorough, impartial and transparent and to hold all those responsible to account regardless of position or rank,” he said.

“I have sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs underlining this exact message. The victims and their loved ones are owed no less.”

According to local sources, members of the *Volontaires pour la Défense de la Patrie* (VDP), armed auxiliaries to the defence and security forces, descended on the town killing 28 men, in apparent retaliation for an earlier attack on the group’s military base the previous night by suspected members of the *Jamā‘at nuṣrat al-islām wal-muslimīn* (JNIM) armed group.

A government spokesperson said in a statement on 2 January that an investigation had been launched and that the transitional government was “fundamentally opposed to any form of abuse or human rights violations on any grounds” and reiterated its commitment to protect all civilians without any distinction.

The High Commissioner has previously raised concerns directly with the authorities regarding the potential human rights risks linked to recruitment, arming and deployment of auxiliaries in Burkina Faso. There is an urgent need to strengthen their vetting procedures, pre-deployment training on international human rights and humanitarian law, their effective supervision by the security and defence forces and to ensure inclusion and transparency during their recruitment.