

# UNHCR POSITION ON RETURNS TO BURKINA FASO

July 2021

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Map of Burkina Faso.....                                     | 2  |
| Summary .....  | 2  |
| Introduction .....   | 3  |
| Political Developments Since 2014 .....                      | 3  |
| Security Situation in Burkina Faso.....                      | 4  |
| <i>Inter-communal clashes</i> .....                          | 6  |
| <i>Self-Defence Groups</i> .....                             | 6  |
| <i>Extremist Islamist Groups</i> .....                       | 8  |
| Human Rights Situation .....                                 | 10 |
| Humanitarian Situation .....                                 | 12 |
| Refugees and Internal Displacement.....                      | 14 |
| International Protection Needs and Non-Return Advisory ..... | 15 |

Map of Burkina Faso



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**Summary**

1. This document sets out UNHCR's position on returns to Burkina Faso, against a background of serious concerns about the security situation in the country. It is based on information available up to 30 June 2021, unless otherwise specified. Given the prevailing circumstances of insecurity in Burkina Faso, UNHCR considers that persons fleeing the ongoing conflict in Burkina Faso and those who were already in countries of asylum before the escalation of violence are likely to be in need of international refugee protection in accordance with Article 1(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention.<sup>1</sup> In addition, persons fleeing the conflict in Burkina Faso may also meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status.<sup>2</sup> In light of the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation, UNHCR calls on States not to forcibly return to

<sup>1</sup> Organization of African Unity, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa ("OAU Convention")*, 10 September 1969, 1001 UN, Treaty Series 45, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html). Sur place claims are accepted under the 1969 OAU Convention consistent with the interpretation of the 1951 Convention; see UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 12: Claims for Refugee Status Related to Situations of Armed Conflict and Violence under Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Regional Refugee Definitions*, 2 December 2016, [www.refworld.org/docid/583595ff4.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/583595ff4.html), para. 52.

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 189, p. 137, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html) and UN General Assembly, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 31 January 1967, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 606, p. 267, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html).

Burkina Faso any person originating from the following regions: Boucle du Mouhoun, Cascades, Centre-Est, Centre-Nord, Est, Hauts-Bassins, Nord, and Sahel.

## Introduction

2. The Sahel region of countries, including Burkina Faso and Mali, have experienced a significant rise in inter-ethnic violence and violence linked to extremist Islamist groups, resulting in large-scale displacement and a deterioration of the humanitarian situation.<sup>3</sup> During 2020, rapidly escalating violence drove over 500,000 persons from their homes in Burkina Faso and into internal displacement, bringing the total number of displaced persons to over one million.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, like other countries in the region, Burkina Faso is facing the impacts of climate change, including drought and desertification, which in turn have inflamed ethnic and community tensions.<sup>5</sup> Desertification and drought jeopardize agricultural production and increase poverty, thus exacerbating competition for scarce resources which fuels ethnic violence and conflict.<sup>6</sup>
3. In December 2014, five states of the Sahel region, namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (in this context often referred to as the G5 Sahel), established an institutional framework for coordinating and monitoring regional cooperation on development and security policies.<sup>7</sup> In July 2017, the G5 Sahel Heads of State formalized the launch of a joint cross-border force to pool their efforts in the fight against security threats in the Sahel.<sup>8</sup> Its first operation took place in November 2017 involving the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.<sup>9</sup> Other foreign troops are also involved in the Sahel region.<sup>10</sup>

## Political Developments Since 2014

4. On 31 October 2014, Blaise Compaoré, who had been president of Burkina Faso since 1987, resigned after four consecutive terms in office.<sup>11</sup> His resignation followed popular demonstrations in response

<sup>3</sup> See US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), *Factsheet: Islamists in Central Sahel*, May 2021, [www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021%20Factsheet%20-%20Sahel.pdf](http://www.uscirf.gov/sites/default/files/2021%20Factsheet%20-%20Sahel.pdf); People's Coalition for the Sahel, *The Sahel: What Needs to Change*, April 2021, [www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/sahel\\_people\\_coalition\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.fidh.org/IMG/pdf/sahel_people_coalition_report_final.pdf); International Crisis Group (ICG), *A Course Correction for the Sahel Stabilisation Strategy*, 1 February 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2044773.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2044773.html), pp. i, 4-5, 7-8.

<sup>4</sup> Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Global Report on Internal Displacement 2021*, 20 May 2021, [www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/grid2021\\_idmc.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/sites/default/files/publications/documents/grid2021_idmc.pdf), p. 19; UNHCR, *Sahel Internal Displacement Tops 2 Million as Violence Surges*, 22 January 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2021/1/600a85bd4/sahel-internal-displacement-tops-2-million-violence-surges.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2021/1/600a85bd4/sahel-internal-displacement-tops-2-million-violence-surges.html).

<sup>5</sup> UNHCR, *Climate Change and Conflict Pursue Displaced Burkinabes*, 25 January 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2021/1/600e86334/climate-change-conflict-pursue-displaced-burkinabes.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2021/1/600e86334/climate-change-conflict-pursue-displaced-burkinabes.html).

<sup>6</sup> "Climate change-related scorching droughts and devastating floods have put a lot of pressure on land and water, creating new sources of conflict." Cordaid, *Saving Lives and Reducing Conflict in the Sahel Region*, 15 November 2020, [www.cordaid.org/en/news/saving-lives-and-reducing-conflict-in-the-sahel-region/](http://www.cordaid.org/en/news/saving-lives-and-reducing-conflict-in-the-sahel-region/). Severe droughts in the 1970s and 1980s decimated herds, which led to an increase in available land being used for farming. Ethnic groups, traditionally either herdsmen or farmers, began to compete for resources. Additionally: "While the high demand for land exacerbates conflict, the regulatory mechanisms – whether traditional or set up by the central state – are not always efficient or legitimate enough to settle disputes. Many conflicts result from attempts to seize new land, a source of tension between populations that authorities are unable to manage peacefully." ICG, *The Central Sahel: Scene of New Climate Wars?*, 24 April 2020, [www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/b154-le-sahel-central-theatre-des-nouvelles-guerres-climatiques](http://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/b154-le-sahel-central-theatre-des-nouvelles-guerres-climatiques). See also, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), *Burkina Faso: How Conflict and Climate Change Are Worsening a Water Crisis*, 3 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-how-conflict-and-climate-change-are-worsening-water-crisis>; UN Security Council, *Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General*, 10 May 2021, S/2021/442, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/442>, para. 58; UNHCR, *Climate Change and Conflict Pursue Displaced Burkinabes*, 25 January 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2021/1/600e86334/climate-change-conflict-pursue-displaced-burkinabes.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2021/1/600e86334/climate-change-conflict-pursue-displaced-burkinabes.html); UNHCR, *UNHCR Warns of Mounting Needs in Sahel as Forced Displacement Intensifies*, 16 October 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2039376.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2039376.html); Stimson, *The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel: Time to Recognize a Growing Security Threat?*, 24 April 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2029326.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2029326.html).

<sup>7</sup> Convention portant création du G5 Sahel, 19 December 2014, [www.g5sahel.org/images/convention.pdf](http://www.g5sahel.org/images/convention.pdf).

<sup>8</sup> G5 Sahel Secretariat Permanent, *Résolution n° 00-01/2017 relative à la création d'une force conjointe du G5 Sahel*, 28 April 2017, [www.g5sahel.org/images/Docs/R%C3%A9solutions\\_force\\_conjointe\\_05\\_02\\_20171.pdf](http://www.g5sahel.org/images/Docs/R%C3%A9solutions_force_conjointe_05_02_20171.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Reuters, *G5 Sahel Launches Military Operation in African Scrublands*, 2 November 2017, [www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-security/g5-sahel-launches-military-operation-in-african-scrublands-idUSKBN1D21VS](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-security/g5-sahel-launches-military-operation-in-african-scrublands-idUSKBN1D21VS).

<sup>10</sup> EU and French troops have assisted with counterterrorism operations in cooperation with the governments and the G5 joint force. See ICG, *A Course Correction for the Sahel Stabilisation Strategy*, 1 February 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2044773.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2044773.html); Clingendael Institute, *Strategic Missteps: Learning from a Failed EU Sahel Strategy*, 9 November 2020, [www.clingendael.org/publication/strategic-missteps-learning-failed-eu-sahel-strategy](http://www.clingendael.org/publication/strategic-missteps-learning-failed-eu-sahel-strategy). However, France ended its major counterterrorism operation in the Sahel in June 2021, announcing a withdrawal of troops. The effects and implementation of this announcement remain unclear at the time of writing. France 24, *Macron Announces the End of France's Anti-Islamist Operation Barkhane in the Sahel*, 10 June 2021, [www.france24.com/en/africa/20210610-live-macron-to-announce-a-restructuring-of-french-forces-in-mali](http://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210610-live-macron-to-announce-a-restructuring-of-french-forces-in-mali).

<sup>11</sup> ICG, *Burkina Faso: Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2025967.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2025967.html) (hereafter: ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020).

to his attempt to reform the constitution to run for a fifth term.<sup>12</sup> After lieutenant-colonel Isaac Yacouba Zida announced on 1 November 2014 that he would assume the lead of the transitional government, a transition charter was adopted on 13 November 2014, establishing a transitional president and government as well as a national council.<sup>13</sup> On 17 November 2014, Michel Kafando was appointed as the transitional president.<sup>14</sup>

5. On 17 September 2015, the transitional president was removed by military elements, headed by Gilbert Diendéré, former chief of staff of the army under Blaise Compaoré.<sup>15</sup> Following negotiations between all parties involved, Michel Kafando was reinstated six days later.<sup>16</sup> Roch Marc Christian Kaboré was elected as president of Burkina Faso after presidential and parliamentary elections were held on 29 November 2015; his party, the People's Movement for Progress (*Mouvement du peuple pour le progrès*, MPP) won 55 of the 127 parliamentary seats.<sup>17</sup>
6. On 6 February 2020, the government announced that presidential and parliamentary elections would be held on 22 November 2020.<sup>18</sup> President Kaboré announced his candidacy for a second term on 24 June 2020, facing Eddie Komboïgo, the candidate for the Congress for Democracy and Progress (*Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès*).<sup>19</sup> The elections took place on 22 November 2020 despite threats of insecurity and violence.<sup>20</sup> The incumbent president was re-elected with 57.87 per cent of the vote.<sup>21</sup> Eddie Komboïgo, who was affiliated with the party of ex-president Blaise Compaoré, obtained only 15.58 per cent of the vote, while opposition leader Zéphirin Diabré finished third with 12.4 per cent.<sup>22</sup>

### Security Situation in Burkina Faso

7. Between 1 January 2020 and 1 July 2021, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) documented 615 incidents of violence against civilians in Burkina Faso.<sup>23</sup> During 2020, violence killed

<sup>12</sup> Secrétariat d'Etat aux migrations (SEM), *Note Burkina Faso : Le régime de transition post-Compaoré touche à sa fin*, 22 December 2015, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/1331023.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1331023.html); Le Monde, *Six jours qui ont changé le Burkina Faso*, 3 November 2014, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/03/six-jours-qui-ont-change-le-burkina-faso\\_4517145\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/03/six-jours-qui-ont-change-le-burkina-faso_4517145_3212.html).

<sup>13</sup> RFI, *Burkina : la charte de transition validée*, 14 November 2014, [www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20141114-burkina-faso-consensus-transition-ete-trouve-isaac-zida-cnt](http://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20141114-burkina-faso-consensus-transition-ete-trouve-isaac-zida-cnt); Le Monde, *Le jour où le colonel Zida a pris le pouvoir à Ouagadougou*, 1 November 2014, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/01/le-jour-ou-le-colonel-zida-a-pris-le-pouvoir-a-ouagadougou\\_4516457\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/01/le-jour-ou-le-colonel-zida-a-pris-le-pouvoir-a-ouagadougou_4516457_3212.html).

<sup>14</sup> Le Monde, *Un diplomate désigné président de transition du Burkina Faso*, 16 November 2014, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/17/int-un-diplomate-designe-president-de-transition-du-burkina-faso\\_4524590\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2014/11/17/int-un-diplomate-designe-president-de-transition-du-burkina-faso_4524590_3212.html).

<sup>15</sup> BBC, *Burkina Faso Coup Sparks Deadly Street Protests*, 17 September 2015, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34276807](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-34276807).

<sup>16</sup> Le Monde, *Au Burkina Faso, les putschistes nomment un proche de l'ex-président Compaoré*, 17 September 2015, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/09/17/burkina-les-putschistes-annoncent-la-demission-du-president-et-la-dissolution-du-gouvernement\\_4760561\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2015/09/17/burkina-les-putschistes-annoncent-la-demission-du-president-et-la-dissolution-du-gouvernement_4760561_3212.html); Le Figaro, *Burkina Faso : le président Kafando revient au pouvoir*, 23 September 2015, [www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2015/09/23/97001-20150923FILWWW00111-burkina-faso-le-president-kafando-revient-au-pouvoir.php](http://www.lefigaro.fr/flash-actu/2015/09/23/97001-20150923FILWWW00111-burkina-faso-le-president-kafando-revient-au-pouvoir.php). For his role in the coup, Gilbert Diendéré was tried and sentenced to twenty years in prison on 2 September 2019. Le Monde, *Burkina Faso : vingt ans de prison pour le général Gilbert Diendéré*, 2 September 2019, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/09/02/burkina-faso-vingt-ans-de-prison-pour-le-general-gilbert-diendere\\_5505446\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/09/02/burkina-faso-vingt-ans-de-prison-pour-le-general-gilbert-diendere_5505446_3212.html).

<sup>17</sup> Al Jazeera, *Burkina Faso Elects New Leader in Historic Vote*, 1 December 2015, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/burkina-faso-elects-leader-historic-election-151201033702594.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/12/burkina-faso-elects-leader-historic-election-151201033702594.html); France 24, « *Burkina Faso : le parti du président Kaboré remporte les législatives mais sans majorité absolue* », 3 December 2015, [www.france24.com/fr/20151203-burkina-faso-legislatives-kabore-majorite-absolue-parti-president](http://www.france24.com/fr/20151203-burkina-faso-legislatives-kabore-majorite-absolue-parti-president)

<sup>18</sup> Jeune Afrique, « *Burkina Faso : la présidentielle fixée au 22 novembre* », 6 February 2020, [www.jeuneafrique.com/892248/politique/burkina-faso-la-presidentielle-fixee-au-22-novembre/](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/892248/politique/burkina-faso-la-presidentielle-fixee-au-22-novembre/)

<sup>19</sup> The Congress for Democracy and Progress (*Congrès pour la démocratie et le progrès*) is the party of former president Blaise Compaoré. Ouaga, *Présidentielle de 2020 au Burkina: Roch Kaboré annonce qu'il se représentera*, 26 June 2018, <http://news.aouaga.com/h/117676.html>; Le Faso, *CDP: Eddie Komboïgo élu candidat du parti à la présidentielle de novembre 2020*, 10 May 2020, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article96765>.

<sup>20</sup> One-fifth of the country was classified "red" by the Electoral Commission due to the threat of armed groups. "A cause de la menace des groupes djihadistes, affiliés à Al-Qaïda et à l'organisation Etat islamique (EI), près d'un cinquième du territoire a été classé en zone rouge par la CENI et a été exclu d'office du scrutin." Le Monde, *Présidentielle : la réélection contestée de Kaboré, dans un Burkina Faso sous pression djihadiste*, 27 November 2020, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/11/27/la-reelection-contestee-de-kabore-dans-un-burkina-sous-pression-djihadiste\\_6061288\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/11/27/la-reelection-contestee-de-kabore-dans-un-burkina-sous-pression-djihadiste_6061288_3212.html).

<sup>21</sup> France 24, *Burkina Faso's Kaboré Wins Re-election, According to Full Preliminary Results*, 26 November 2020, [www.france24.com/en/afrique/20201126-burkina-s-kaboré-wins-re-election-according-to-full-preliminary-results](http://www.france24.com/en/afrique/20201126-burkina-s-kaboré-wins-re-election-according-to-full-preliminary-results); Deutsche Welle (DW), *Burkina Faso Incumbent Kabore Wins Presidential Election, Preliminary Results Show*, 26 November 2020, [www.dw.com/en/burkina-faso-incumbent-kabore-wins-presidential-election-preliminary-results-show/a-55739023](http://www.dw.com/en/burkina-faso-incumbent-kabore-wins-presidential-election-preliminary-results-show/a-55739023).

<sup>22</sup> France 24, *Burkina Faso's Kaboré Wins Re-election, According to Full Preliminary Results*, 26 November 2020, [www.france24.com/en/afrique/20201126-burkina-s-kaboré-wins-re-election-according-to-full-preliminary-results](http://www.france24.com/en/afrique/20201126-burkina-s-kaboré-wins-re-election-according-to-full-preliminary-results).

<sup>23</sup> This data is available for export on their website. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 18 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

more than 2,000 persons in the country and displaced one million others,<sup>24</sup> while 543 persons were killed in the first five months of 2021.<sup>25</sup> The causes of violence include religious extremism, land disputes, intercommunal clashes and banditry, without full clarity on the identity and the motives of the assailants.<sup>26</sup> Attacks by Unidentified Armed Groups (*groupes armés non identifiés* – GANIs) increased in 2019 and 2020, a trend which has continued in 2021.<sup>27</sup>

8. From 1 January 2019, a partial state of emergency was declared by the authorities in 14 provinces, in the Hauts-Bassins, Boucle du Mouhoun, Cascades, Nord, Sahel, Est and Centre-Est regions.<sup>28</sup> It was extended for six months on 11 July 2019 and for 12 additional months on 27 December 2019, adjusted to 18 months on 10 January 2020, and again extended an additional 18 months from July 2021.<sup>29</sup>
9. While most of the violence has occurred in the Boucle du Mouhoun, Nord, Sahel, and Est regions, armed groups have also perpetrated attacks in the Cascades, Centre-Est and Haut Bassins regions; from 1 January 2018 until 1 June 2021, ACLED has recorded 44 security incidents of battles, remote violence/explosions or violence against civilians in the Cascades region, 25 incidents in the Centre-Est region, and 19 in the Hauts-Bassins region.<sup>30</sup> The security situation in Hauts-Bassins and Cascades deteriorated in September 2020.<sup>31</sup> Attacks in 2019 and 2020 led to a joint counterterrorism operation

<sup>24</sup> AP, *Women Fleeing Burkina Faso Violence Face Sexual Assault*, 14 February 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-violence-sexual-assault-only-on-ap-burkina-faso-308f0d4856bac8d426a889bfcdb3e4a6>. This data comes from the ACLED data export tool, which recorded 2,290 fatalities during 2020 associated with the following types of events: battles, explosions/remote violence, or violence against civilians. This number likely includes civilian as well as military deaths. When filtered for only violence against civilians in 2020, the total number of fatalities is 1,019 persons. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 1 March 2021, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

<sup>25</sup> This is the total number of fatalities associated with battles, explosions/remote violence, or violence against civilians. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 18 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>. According to UNICEF, during 2020 there were 486 incidents related to "Armed Conflict and Terrorism". UNICEF, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 10*, 23 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-10-1-november-31-december>, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> The Guardian, *Masked Men, Murder and Mass Displacement: How Terror Came to Burkina Faso*, 16 March 2020, [www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/16/we-dont-know-whos-in-control-900000-flee-violence-in-burkina-faso](http://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/16/we-dont-know-whos-in-control-900000-flee-violence-in-burkina-faso). Increased levels of violence have deepened ethnic divisions and inflamed conflict. "De nombreux Burkinabè vivent dans la peur des divisions ethniques. Les violences djihadistes et l'augmentation du banditisme tendent à faire disparaître le vivre-ensemble." DW, *Au Burkina Faso, la délicate question des Koglweogo*, 27 November 2020, [www.dw.com/fr/au-burkina-faso-la-d%C3%A9licate-question-des-koglweogo/a-55754873](http://www.dw.com/fr/au-burkina-faso-la-d%C3%A9licate-question-des-koglweogo/a-55754873).

<sup>27</sup> Often no group takes responsibility for an attack. See Voice of America (VOA), *More Than 160 Killed in Deadliest Attack of Burkina Faso's War*, 6 June 2021, [www.voanews.com/africa/more-160-killed-deadliest-attack-burkina-fasos-war](http://www.voanews.com/africa/more-160-killed-deadliest-attack-burkina-fasos-war); Reuters, *At Least 18 Killed in Attacks in Burkina Faso and Mali*, 19 February 2021, [www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-security-idUSKBN2A12PL](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-security-idUSKBN2A12PL); France 24, *Unidentified Gunmen Kill about 20 in Attack on Cattle Market in Eastern Burkina Faso*, 7 August 2020, [www.france24.com/en/20200807-unidentified-gunmen-kill-about-20-in-attack-on-cattle-market-in-eastern-burkina-faso-govt](http://www.france24.com/en/20200807-unidentified-gunmen-kill-about-20-in-attack-on-cattle-market-in-eastern-burkina-faso-govt); Al Jazeera, *More than a Dozen Killed in Northern Burkina Faso Attack*, 30 May 2020, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/30/more-than-a-dozen-killed-in-northern-burkina-faso-attack](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/5/30/more-than-a-dozen-killed-in-northern-burkina-faso-attack). According to information available to UNHCR, initially, GANI attacks mainly targeted positions of the Burkina Faso defense and security forces. However, during 2020 a tendency to systematically attack any representation of the State emerged, for example administrative, educational or health structures, but also influential community members or representatives of public authorities (local elected officials, political and religious leaders, important traders, owners of large herds of livestock, teachers and intellectuals, etc.) particularly in the affected regions of the Sahel, Est, Nord and Centre-Nord, through targeted assassinations, kidnappings and threats. Information available to UNHCR, March 2021. For examples of specific incidents, see UNHCR / INTERSOS, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection – Centre Nord*, 3 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85585>; UNHCR / INTERSOS, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection – Region Est (Decembre 2020)*, 15 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84939>, p. 4; UNHCR / INTERSOS, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection – Region Sahel (Janvier 2021)*, 15 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84938>, pp. 2-4; UNHCR / INTERSOS, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection – Region Boucle du Mouhoun (Decembre 2020)*, 15 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84940>, pp. 1-2. Further monitoring protection reports are available on UNHCR's operational portal: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/bfa>.

<sup>28</sup> Le Faso, *Etat d'urgence au Burkina Faso : Voici les zones concernées et le décret d'application*, 2 January 2019, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article87271>.

<sup>29</sup> The state of emergency was extended in June 2021 for an additional 18 months from 13 July 2021. Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : Le Parlement proroge l'état d'urgence de 18 mois dans 14 provinces*, 24 June 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-le-parlement-proroge-l-etat-d-urgence-de-18-mois-dans-14-provinces/2284444](http://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-le-parlement-proroge-l-etat-d-urgence-de-18-mois-dans-14-provinces/2284444); Burkina Faso: Assemblée Nationale, *Compte rendu analytique de la seance plenièrre du vendredi 10 janvier 2020*, 10 January 2020, [www.assembleenationale.bf/spip.php?article1161](http://www.assembleenationale.bf/spip.php?article1161); Burkina Faso: Assemblée Nationale, *Loi n°045-2019/an portant prorogation de la duree de l'etat d'urgence prorogee par la loi n°001-2019/an du 11 janvier 2019*, 11 July 2019, [www.assembleenationale.bf/IMG/pdf/loi\\_045\\_portant\\_prorogation\\_de\\_l\\_etat\\_d\\_urgence.pdf](http://www.assembleenationale.bf/IMG/pdf/loi_045_portant_prorogation_de_l_etat_d_urgence.pdf). See also, Le Faso, *Burkina Faso : L'état d'urgence prorogé jusqu'au 12 janvier 2020*, 11 July 2019, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article90714>; Panapress, *L'état d'urgence prolongé de 12 mois dans 14 provinces du Burkina*, 27 December 2019, [www.panapress.com/L-etat-d-urgence-prolonge-de-12--a\\_630620942-lang1-free\\_news.html](http://www.panapress.com/L-etat-d-urgence-prolonge-de-12--a_630620942-lang1-free_news.html).

<sup>30</sup> ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 22 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>. See also, Le faso, *Région des Cascades : « La fréquence des attaques à main armée donne à croire qu'elles ne s'écartent pas forcément du terrorisme »*, dit le gouverneur, 26 May 2021, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article104980>; Le Faso, *Situation sécuritaire dans les Cascades : La région a subi plus d'une quinzaine d'attaques terroristes, d'octobre 2018 à mai 2021*, 25 May 2021, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article104948>; Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : un gendarme tué dans une attaque dans le sud-ouest*, 10 February 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-un-gendarme-tue-dans-une-attaque-dans-le-sud-ouest/2139965](http://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-un-gendarme-tue-dans-une-attaque-dans-le-sud-ouest/2139965).

<sup>31</sup> "La situation sécuritaire s'est relativement dégradée au cours du mois de septembre, dans les régions des Hauts-Bassins et des Cascades. Ces deux régions ont connu des attaques de groupes armés non identifiés (GANI)". UNHCR, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection*, 21 October 2020, <https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/documents/details/82519>, p. 2.

between Cote d'Ivoire and Burkina Faso in May 2020.<sup>32</sup>

10. After a period of brief calm, the conflict in Burkina Faso has rapidly escalated since April 2021, and “profound effects of the conflict are deepening, as evidenced by the ever-increasing displacement and humanitarian emergency”.<sup>33</sup>

### *Inter-communal clashes*

11. The weakening of the state security apparatus in 2014 led to the proliferation of localized violence in the forms of banditry and inter-communal clashes.<sup>34</sup> In the Sahel, West and Centre-North regions, and to a lesser extent in the eastern part of the country, the increasing migration of farmers has intensified land pressures and disputes, inflaming intercommunal tensions.<sup>35</sup> In addition, clashes occur between Fulani herders and sedentary groups.<sup>36</sup> Attacks carried out by armed groups have been found to provoke retaliations against Fulani herders, suspected of supporting extremist Islamist groups.<sup>37</sup> The perception that some ethnic groups have been favoured by the government has further entrenched ethnic divides and fuelled recruitment by armed groups.<sup>38</sup>

### *Self-Defence Groups*

12. Around 2014, in response to increased levels of violence and the absence of state authorities in rural areas, community self-defence groups called Koglweogo, which have historically operated alongside traditional local structures, began acting as local militias.<sup>39</sup> Starting in the Centre-Sud region, they have

<sup>32</sup> The operation led to some counter attacks, including a rare attack across the border into Cote d'Ivoire in the village of Kafolo. For a full analysis of the presence of armed groups in Burkina Faso close to the Ivorian border, see ACLED, *In Light of the Kafolo Attack: The Jihadi Militant Threat in the Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast Borderlands*, 24 August 2020, <https://acleddata.com/2020/08/24/in-light-of-the-kafolo-attack-the-jihadi-militant-threat-in-the-burkina-faso-and-ivory-coast-borderlands/>.

<sup>33</sup> ACLED, *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*, 17 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines>. See also, AP, *Gunmen Kill 11 Police Officers in Burkina Faso; 4 Missing*, 22 June 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/automated-insights-earnings-africa-burkina-faso-police-bafea2061af5dab76bfd4b60dccc41bd>; Al Jazeera, *Solhan Massacre Exposes Failure to Tackle Sahel Crisis*, 10 June 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/10/solhan-massacre-exposes-failure-tackle-sahel-crisis-burkina-faso](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/10/solhan-massacre-exposes-failure-tackle-sahel-crisis-burkina-faso); VOA, *More Than 160 Killed in Deadliest Attack of Burkina Faso's War*, 6 June 2021, [www.voanews.com/africa/more-160-killed-deadliest-attack-burkina-fasos-war](http://www.voanews.com/africa/more-160-killed-deadliest-attack-burkina-fasos-war). More information on the humanitarian situation in Burkina Faso is available later in this document.

<sup>34</sup> “Following former President Blaise Compaoré’s ouster in October 2014, the state’s already limited capacity to maintain order in rural areas has further weakened. Villagers increasingly distrust elites, both local and urban. The absence of any form of regulation across much of the countryside has led to a rise in banditry and land disputes, as well as the emergence of self-defence groups”. ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 4. This localized violence has evolved into and is interconnected with attacks by extremist Islamist groups. See, for example, ACLED, *Insecurity in Southwestern Burkina Faso in the Context of an Expanding Insurgency*, 17 January 2019, <https://acleddata.com/2019/01/17/insecurity-in-southwestern-burkina-faso-in-the-context-of-an-expanding-insurgency/>.

<sup>35</sup> Desertification across the Sahel region has reduced the amount of usable land, which means traditional herders and farmers, often separated by ethnicity, compete for scarce resources. International Peace institute, *How Did Extremism and Violence Become a Dangerous Reality in Burkina Faso?*, 10 February 2021, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/02/how-did-extremism-violence-become-dangerous-reality-burkina-faso/>. See also, The Africa Report, *Role of Climate Change in Central Sahel's Conflicts: Not So Clear*, 24 April 2020, [www.theafricareport.com/26791/role-of-climate-change-in-central-sahels-conflicts-not-so-clear/](http://www.theafricareport.com/26791/role-of-climate-change-in-central-sahels-conflicts-not-so-clear/); ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, pp. 7, 25-26.

<sup>36</sup> The New Humanitarian, *How Jihadists Are Fuelling Inter-communal Conflict in Burkina Faso*, 20 February 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/20/How-jihadists-fuelling-inter-communal-conflict-Burkina-Faso](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/20/How-jihadists-fuelling-inter-communal-conflict-Burkina-Faso). The UN Secretary General noted in December 2020 that: “Terrorist activities have increasingly become intertwined with intercommunity and farmer-herder conflict, compounding a precarious security situation and acute humanitarian needs in large parts of the Sahel.” UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 24 December 2020, S/2020/1293, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html).

<sup>37</sup> “Several Islamist armed factions, including Ansarul Islam, were founded by Fulani individuals, and Fulanis are often accused of colluding with militants.” Congressional Research Service, *Burkina Faso*, 10 December 2020, [www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> “The supposed predominance of Fulani jihadists is less a reflection of this community’s support for global jihad than of the particular exposure of Fulani herders and landowners to injustices and their relative underrepresentation in state institutions, starting from their presence in public education.” ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 14. There may also be a religious dimension: “Minority Christian dominance of the civil service and political class had reportedly spurred sectarian tensions.” Congressional Research Service, *Burkina Faso*, 10 December 2020, [www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download), p. 1. See also, Refugees International, *Atrocities and Displacement in Burkina Faso*, May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/issue-brief-atrocities-and-displacement-burkina-faso>, pp. 6-7; Clingendael Institute, *The Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland*, 9 March 2021, [www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland](http://www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland); The New Humanitarian, *How Jihadists Are Fuelling Inter-communal Conflict in Burkina Faso*, 20 February 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/20/How-jihadists-fuelling-inter-communal-conflict-Burkina-Faso](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news-feature/2020/02/20/How-jihadists-fuelling-inter-communal-conflict-Burkina-Faso).

<sup>39</sup> While self-defence groups have traditionally played a security role and addressed local crime “since 2014, in a context of political and social crisis, these self-defence groups are symptomatic of the absence of the State and the lack of public services.” R. Da Cunha Dupuy and T. Quidelleur, *Self-Defence Movements in Burkina Faso: Diffusion and Structure of Koglweogo Groups*, November 2018, <https://noria-research.com/self-defence-movements-in-burkina-faso-diffusion-and-structuration-of-koglweogo-groups/>. See also, Arte TV, *Burkina Faso : la loi des milices*, 26 February 2021, [www.arte.tv/fr/videos/101519-000-A/burkina-faso-la-loi-des-milices/](http://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/101519-000-A/burkina-faso-la-loi-des-milices/); Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Une boîte de Pandore. Le Burkina Faso, les*

now spread across the Centre, Plateau-Central, Centre-Nord, Centre-Est and Est regions, with the support of traditional local authorities, with an estimated 4,500 Koglweogo groups in 2020, representing up to 45,000 individuals.<sup>40</sup> Koglweogo are progressively assuming new State prerogatives, including presiding over trials and imposing fines.<sup>41</sup> Koglweogo have been accused of perpetrating attacks against Fulani civilians in retaliation for security incidents.<sup>42</sup> The government has, in some cases, armed, equipped and financed Koglweogo groups.<sup>43</sup>

13. In western Burkina Faso, the Dozo, a group of traditional hunters, also operate as a self-defence force.<sup>44</sup> The Dozo have also targeted Fulani civilians<sup>45</sup> and clashed with the Koglweogo.<sup>46</sup>
14. The Fulani developed their own self-defence force in 2016, called the Rouga, which other groups, including Koglweogo, have “accused of colluding with jihadists”.<sup>47</sup>
15. On 21 January 2020, a law was adopted to allow for the recruitment of “volunteers for the defence of the homeland” (VDP) among civilians, with the objective to defend and protect, through the use of armed force, persons and property in their respective village or area of residence.<sup>48</sup> Volunteers are supposed to receive fourteen days of training and then a military kit including weapons.<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Watch expressed concern about the risk of intensification of ethnic tensions and arbitrary executions.<sup>50</sup> By June 2021, ACLED noted: “More than a year after the launch of the VDP program, the fear of many observers that arming civilians would escalate the conflict and deepen cleavages along ethnic fault lines

*milices d'autodéfense et la loi sur les VDP dans la lutte contre le jihadisme*, 2021, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/17591-20210423.pdf>, pp. 10-20; S. Leclercq and G. Matagne, ‘With or Without You’: The Governance of (Local) Security and the Koglweogo Movement in Burkina Faso, 9(1) *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development*, 2020, [www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.716/](http://www.stabilityjournal.org/articles/10.5334/sta.716/); The New Humanitarian, *Jihadis, Vigilantes, and Demoralised Troops: A Who's Who in Burkina Faso's Spiralling Crisis*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis). The Koglweogo are primarily of Mossi ethnicity (some are Fulse as well). When a Mossi chief was killed by extremist Islamists in late 2018, the Koglweogo responded by massacring “scores of Fulani civilians in the village of Yirgou, in the Centre-Nord region, after accusing them of harboring armed Islamists”. HRW, *Burkina Faso: New Massacres by Islamist Armed Groups*, 23 April 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/23/burkina-faso-new-massacres-islamist-armed-groups](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/23/burkina-faso-new-massacres-islamist-armed-groups). See also the description contained in this article: The New Humanitarian, *Jihadis, Vigilantes, and Demoralised Troops: A Who's Who in Burkina Faso's Spiralling Crisis*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis). The members of the volunteers for the defence of the homeland are also primarily Mossi, some of whom may have been recruited from Koglweogo or Dozo self-defence groups. Clingendael Institute, *The Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland*, 9 March 2021, [www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland](http://www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland).

<sup>40</sup> “Aujourd’hui, le pays compterait près de 4 500 groupes de koglweogo mobilisant entre 20 000 et 45 000 membres. Même s’ils suscitent des craintes, les populations de certaines régions les créditent d’avoir réduit l’insécurité”. Le Monde Diplomatique, *Les milices prolifèrent au Burkina Faso*, May 2020, [www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2020/05/CARAYOL/61740](http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2020/05/CARAYOL/61740).

<sup>41</sup> ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, pp. 6, 8-10. See also, Arte TV, *Burkina Faso : la loi des milices*, 26 February 2021, [www.arte.tv/fr/videos/101519-000-A/burkina-faso-la-loi-des-milices/](http://www.arte.tv/fr/videos/101519-000-A/burkina-faso-la-loi-des-milices/).

<sup>42</sup> ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 23. See also, Insecurity Insight, *Protection in Danger*, 10 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/protection-danger-monthly-news-brief-may-2021>.

<sup>43</sup> “In reality, the president’s call [for volunteers] seems to have validated what has existed inconspicuously since the summer of 2019: the arming, equipping and financing of the Koglweogo.” ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 24.

<sup>44</sup> Africa News, *Believing They Can't Be Shot, Burkina Faso Hunters Confront Extremists*, 29 April 2020, [www.africanews.com/2021/04/29/believing-they-can-t-be-shot-burkina-faso-hunters-confront-extremists/](http://www.africanews.com/2021/04/29/believing-they-can-t-be-shot-burkina-faso-hunters-confront-extremists/); The New Humanitarian, *Jihadis, Vigilantes, and Demoralised Troops: A Who's Who in Burkina Faso's Spiralling Crisis*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis); ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 9. There are an estimated 5,000 members of Dozo groups. RULAC, *Burkina Faso is the Theatre of Several Non-International Armed Conflicts against Jihadist Groups*, 15 October 2020, [www.rulac.org/news/burkina-faso-is-the-theatre-of-several-non-international-armed-conflicts-ag](http://www.rulac.org/news/burkina-faso-is-the-theatre-of-several-non-international-armed-conflicts-ag).

<sup>45</sup> ACLED, *Regional Overview: 2-8 February 2020*, 13 February 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/acledata.com-Regional%20Overview%20Africa%202-8%20February%202020.pdf>, p. 2.

<sup>46</sup> “In the Hauts-Bassins region, for example, the Mossi’s attempts since 2015 to set up Koglweogo groups have provoked fierce resistance from the Dozo, and occasional clashes such as in Solenzo and Karankasso-Vigué.” ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 10. See also, Clingendael Institute, *Burkina Faso: Casting a Shadow Over the Polls? The Role of Vigilante Groups in the 2020 Elections*, May 2020, [www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Policy\\_Brief\\_Burkina\\_Faso\\_casting\\_shadow\\_over\\_polls\\_May\\_2020.pdf](http://www.clingendael.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/Policy_Brief_Burkina_Faso_casting_shadow_over_polls_May_2020.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> “The Fulani, and in particular the Rouga, are accused of colluding with jihadists, and the Koglweogo of the Centre-North are eager to combat them by enlisting in the state’s war on terrorism. [...] It [...] becomes difficult to distinguish between the war on terrorism and the settling of personal and, by extension, communal scores.” ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 38.

<sup>48</sup> The New Humanitarian, *In Burkina Faso, Arming Civilians to Fight Jihadists. What Could Go Wrong?*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2020/03/09/burkina-faso-jihadists-vigilantes-civilian-law](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2020/03/09/burkina-faso-jihadists-vigilantes-civilian-law). “Alors que l’objectif est de recruter à terme 13 000 VDP, seulement un peu plus de 2 000 avaient été recrutés au début du mois de juin 2020 selon un rapport de l’Assemblée nationale.” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Une boîte de Pandore. Le Burkina Faso, les milices d'autodéfense et la loi sur les VDP dans la lutte contre le jihadisme*, 2021, <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/17591-20210423.pdf>.

<sup>49</sup> However, as of October 2020, volunteers claimed they were not sufficiently well-equipped to combat the extremist Islamist groups. The New Humanitarian, *Victims or Villains? The Volunteer Fighters on Burkina Faso's Front Line*, 12 October 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line).

<sup>50</sup> Le Monde, *Au Burkina Faso, des civils armés pour lutter contre le terrorisme*, 19 February 2020, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/02/19-au-burkina-faso-des-civils-armes-pour-lutter-contre-le-terrorisme\\_6030131\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/02/19-au-burkina-faso-des-civils-armes-pour-lutter-contre-le-terrorisme_6030131_3212.html). Out of 19 attacks between February and October 2020 by volunteers, over half targeted Fulani civilians; the volunteers have been accused of abusing their power. The New Humanitarian, *Victims or Villains? The Volunteer Fighters on Burkina Faso's Front Line*, 12 October 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line).

— between mainly Fulani pastoralists and sedentary communities such as the Mossi, Foulse, and Gourmantche — has become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The high number of VDP fatalities suggests that volunteers have replaced the army on the front lines.<sup>51</sup> In some areas, self-defence group members have become VDP volunteers.<sup>52</sup>

### Extremist Islamist Groups

16. Burkina Faso suffered its first attack attributable to extremist Islamist groups on 9 October 2015, which targeted a gendarmerie station and killed three gendarmes in Samorogouan in the Hauts-Bassins region.<sup>53</sup> Since then, Burkina Faso has been affected by violence linked to four extremist Islamist groups: Ansarul Islam,<sup>54</sup> the Islamic State in West Africa Province (ISWAP),<sup>55</sup> the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM).<sup>56</sup> The latter is the most active group in the Sahel countries and describes itself as al-Qaeda's official branch in Mali.<sup>57</sup> The

<sup>51</sup> ACLED, *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*, 17 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines>. "The establishment of civilian volunteer groups have aggravated tensions along ethnic lines in some locations and triggered human rights concerns." UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 24 December 2020, S/2020/1293, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html), para. 21. "In Burkina Faso, meanwhile, 89 percent of attacks by government-affiliated civilian security volunteers have targeted the Fulani community, killing dozens of civilians." Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, *R2P Monitor, Issue 56*, 15 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2047316.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2047316.html), p. 5. "According to interviews, there are very few members of the Fulani ethnicity in the VDP, and villages that are primarily Fulani do not have a VDP force." Clingendael Institute, *The Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland*, 9 March 2021, [www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland](http://www.clingendael.org/publication/volunteers-defense-homeland).

<sup>52</sup> According to one analyst, Koglweogo groups may have disbanded in some areas, with their members joining the volunteer force instead. "Dans certaines régions, comme le Centre-Nord, les Koglweogo sont toujours actifs et luttent contre la criminalité. Mais dans la majorité des cas, ces milices ont disparu et ses membres se reconvertisent en effet en Volontaires de défense de la patrie." Jeune Afrique, *Burkina Faso : « Face à la menace terroriste, nous ne faisons que colmater les brèches »*, 2 February 2021, [www.jeuneafrique.com/1114980/politique/burkina-faso-face-a-la-menace-terroriste-nous-ne-faisons-que-colmater-les-breches/](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/1114980/politique/burkina-faso-face-a-la-menace-terroriste-nous-ne-faisons-que-colmater-les-breches/).

<sup>53</sup> Reuters, *Gunmen Kill Three Burkina Faso Gendarmes near Mali Border*, 9 October 2015, [www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-attacks-idUSKCN0S31X620151009](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-burkina-attacks-idUSKCN0S31X620151009). For further analysis of Islamist extremist violence in Burkina Faso from 2015 to 2017, see ICG, *The Social Roots of Jihadist Violence in Burkina Faso's North*, 12 October 2017, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/1416007.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/1416007.html).

<sup>54</sup> In December 2016, Ansarul Islam claimed their first attack, referring to an assault against a military base which caused 12 casualties among Burkinabe soldiers. The group was founded by Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a Burkinabe religious preacher of fulani ethnicity, originating from the province of Soum, in the Sahel region, who, according to the International Crisis Group, challenged the government as well as the social order in place and, most particularly, the influence of traditional leaders, attracting the youth and the socially disadvantaged. In June 2017, following his disappearance, his brother, Jafar Dicko, took his place. Originally founded as an autonomous movement, Ansarul Islam later merged with JNIM. As of February 2020, Ansarul Islam is active in the Soum province of the Sahel region and the western part of the Centre-North region, namely in the Bam province and the western part of the Sanmatenga province. See US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html); Congressional Research Service, *Burkina Faso*, 10 December 2020, [www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download), p. 1; The New Humanitarian, *Jihadis, Vigilantes, and Demoralised Troops: A Who's Who in Burkina Faso's Spiralling Crisis*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis); ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, pp. 11-12; Human Rights Watch (HRW), *Burkina Faso: Armed Islamist Atrocities Surge*, 6 January 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/06/burkina-faso-armed-islamist-atrocities-surge](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/06/burkina-faso-armed-islamist-atrocities-surge).

<sup>55</sup> ISWAP is active over a larger geographical area of the country than JNIM. While the first attack claimed by the group took place in September 2016 in Markoye, in the Oudalan province in the Sahel region, its activities have since expanded to the Soum province in the same region, and in two provinces of the Centre-Nord region, namely Namentenga and eastern Sanmatenga, as well as, more recently, in the east of Burkina Faso. ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 12. ISWAP has targeted civilians, for instance on 4 December 2019, in the Soum province, killing 35 civilians, most of them women. France 24, *Islamic State Group Claims Responsibility for Burkina Faso Attack on Military Base*, 27 December 2019, [www.france24.com/en/20191227-islamic-state-group-claims-responsibility-for-burkina-faso-attack-on-military-base](http://www.france24.com/en/20191227-islamic-state-group-claims-responsibility-for-burkina-faso-attack-on-military-base). See also, ACLED, *ACLED Regional Overview – Africa (8-21 May 2021)*, 27 May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/acled-regional-overview-africa-8-21-may-2021>.

<sup>56</sup> JNIM encompasses several factions, including groups formerly known as Ansar Dine, al Mourabitoun and the Macina Liberation Front. It is headed by Iyad ag Ghali, a Malian Tuareg. While JNIM has been active in the Soum province of the Sahel region and in the western part of Burkina Faso since 2016, a second front appeared in the east of the country in 2018. JNIM targets both civilians and the military. In January 2016, the group took responsibility for two attacks carried out against a hotel and a cafe in Ouagadougou, leaving 28 people dead. In March 2018, a twin assault against the French embassy and the Burkina Faso military Headquarters in Ouagadougou, leaving eight soldiers dead, was also claimed by JNIM. In April 2021, JNIM took responsibility for an attack which killed two Spanish reporters and an Irish activist in eastern Burkina Faso. See AP, *Two Spanish Reporters, Irish Activist Killed in Burkina Faso*, 27 April 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/africa-burkina-faso-37d0e10ebdf1a925dc14155c3bc74ce>; Congressional Research Service, *Burkina Faso*, 10 December 2020, [www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download), p. 1; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel*, December 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041726.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041726.html); The New Humanitarian, *Jihadis, Vigilantes, and Demoralised Troops: A Who's Who in Burkina Faso's Spiralling Crisis*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis); BBC, *Burkina Faso attack: French Embassy Targeted in Ouagadougou*, 2 March 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43257453](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43257453); BBC, *Burkina Faso Attack: Foreigners Killed at Luxury Hotel*, 16 January 2016, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35332792](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-35332792).

<sup>57</sup> "Stretching from northern Mali to southeastern Burkina Faso, violent events attributed to Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimeen (JNIM) comprise more than 64 percent of all episodes linked to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel since 2017." Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *The Puzzle of JNIM and Militant Islamist Groups in the Sahel*, December 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041726.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041726.html), p. 1.



four groups cooperate and attribution of incidents to a specific group is not always possible.<sup>58</sup> According to the International Crisis Group, most “fighters and commanders are Burkinabe nationals with a set of mainly local interests.”<sup>59</sup> Groups have targeted the ethnic Fulani for recruitment, playing on community tensions and furthering inter-ethnic conflict.<sup>60</sup> Violence attributable to extremist Islamist groups intensified sharply in 2019,<sup>61</sup> and continued at a high level during 2020 and into 2021.<sup>62</sup> As of November 2020, an estimated one-fifth of the territory of Burkina Faso was outside of government control.<sup>63</sup>

17. The impacts on civilians of insecurity due to Islamist extremist violence<sup>64</sup> are multi-faceted and include, *inter alia*: increasing food insecurity, limiting children’s access to education,<sup>65</sup> fuelling an increase in sexual and gender-based violence,<sup>66</sup> and restricting polling places and affecting the political process.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>58</sup> ISWAP and JNIM have collaborated on attacks. Additionally: “Since 2019, the armed attacks committed by ISGS have been claimed by the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), “which adopted a new narrative to show a unified ISIL [Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant] presence in the region.” Rule of Law in Armed Conflict (RULAC), *Non-International Armed Conflicts in Burkina Faso*, accessed 17 February 2021, [www.rulac.org/browse/conflicts/non-international-armed-conflicts-in-burkina-faso#collapse5accord](http://www.rulac.org/browse/conflicts/non-international-armed-conflicts-in-burkina-faso#collapse5accord). The groups have also fought among themselves over territory. See The New Humanitarian, *Burkina Faso’s New Conflict Front: Jihadists Against Jihadists*, 17 August 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/08/17/burkina-faso-s-new-conflict-front-jihadists-against-jihadists](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/08/17/burkina-faso-s-new-conflict-front-jihadists-against-jihadists).

<sup>59</sup> ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 13.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. i; HRW, *Burkina Faso: Armed Islamist Atrocities Surge*, 6 January 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/06/burkina-faso-armed-islamist-atrocities-surge](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/06/burkina-faso-armed-islamist-atrocities-surge). Due to political and ethnic grievances, extremist Islamist violence is sometimes indistinguishable from inter-community tensions. “In the north, Ansarul Islam and JNIM have exploited ethnic tensions and perceptions of state neglect, as well as grievances over corruption, patronage politics, social stratification, and land disputes.” Congressional Research Service, *Burkina Faso*, 10 December 2020, [www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download](http://www.justice.gov/eoir/page/file/1345241/download), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> “Armed groups are proliferating, including bandits, jihadists and self-defence movements. In 2019, Burkina Faso suffered more jihadist attacks than any other Sahelian country.” ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, p. 3. “Terrorist activity in Burkina Faso rapidly and significantly increased in 2019, as members of JNIM and ISIS-GS conducted the highest level of targeted political assassination, the largest attack on civilians, the largest attack on Burkinabe security forces, and the largest attack altogether on a combined population of security forces and civilians.” US Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism: Burkina Faso*, 24 June 2020, [www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/burkina-faso/](http://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/burkina-faso/). See also, The New Humanitarian, *Jihadis, Vigilantes, and Demoralised Troops: A Who’s Who in Burkina Faso’s Spiralling Crisis*, 9 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2020/03/09/who-is-who-burkina-faso-crisis).

<sup>62</sup> “The country experienced deadly attacks by violent extremist organizations during [2020]. Terrorist groups Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims) and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara, and other armed groups, such as the homegrown Ansarul Islam, perpetrated more than 500 attacks that resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths as well as scores of deaths among government security forces.” US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html). “The number of attacks linked to jihadist activity rose from just three in 2015, to 516 between mid-2019 and mid-2020.” International Peace institute, *How Did Extremism and Violence Become a Dangerous Reality in Burkina Faso?*, 10 February 2021, <https://theglobalobservatory.org/2021/02/how-did-extremism-violence-become-dangerous-reality-burkina-faso/>. See also, UN Security Council, *Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General*, 10 May 2021, S/2021/442, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/442>, paras 3-4; UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 24 December 2020, S/2020/1293, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html), para. 21.

<sup>63</sup> BBC, *Burkina Faso Election Takes Place Amid Jihadist Threat*, 23 November 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55014928](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55014928).

<sup>64</sup> At the time of writing, there were numerous reports of extremist Islamist attacks. See, for example, UNHCR, *UNHCR Condemns Deadliest Attack in Burkina Faso in Years*, 8 June 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/6/60bf25064/unhcr-condemns-deadliest-attack-burkina-faso-years.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/6/60bf25064/unhcr-condemns-deadliest-attack-burkina-faso-years.html); Al Jazeera, *Dozens Killed in Eastern Burkina Faso Attack*, 4 May 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/dozens-killed-in-eastern-burkina-faso-attack](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/4/dozens-killed-in-eastern-burkina-faso-attack); France 24, *More than a Dozen Killed in Attacks in North Burkina Faso, Says Local Source*, 28 April 2021, [www.france24.com/en/africa/20210427-more-than-a-dozen-killed-in-attacks-in-north-burkina-faso-says-local-source](http://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210427-more-than-a-dozen-killed-in-attacks-in-north-burkina-faso-says-local-source); Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : une dizaine de présumés terroristes abattus dans deux attaques*, 21 March 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-une-dizaine-de-présumés-terroristes-abattus-dans-deux-attaques/2183356](http://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-une-dizaine-de-présumés-terroristes-abattus-dans-deux-attaques/2183356); Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso: au moins sept travailleurs d’un centre de santé enlevés dans le nord*, 19 March 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-au-moins-sept-travailleurs-d-un-centre-de-santé-enlevés-dans-le-nord/2181729](http://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-au-moins-sept-travailleurs-d-un-centre-de-santé-enlevés-dans-le-nord/2181729); Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : six morts dont un militaire dans une embuscade au Sahel*, 7 March 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-six-morts-dont-un-militaire-dans-une-embuscade-au-sahel/2167375](http://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-six-morts-dont-un-militaire-dans-une-embuscade-au-sahel/2167375); La Presse, *Six morts dans l’explosion d’une mine contre une ambulance*, 2 March 2021, [www.lapresse.ca/international/afrique/2021-03-02/attaque-islamiste-au-burkina-six-morts-dans-l-explosion-d-une-mine-contre-une-ambulance.php](http://www.lapresse.ca/international/afrique/2021-03-02/attaque-islamiste-au-burkina-six-morts-dans-l-explosion-d-une-mine-contre-une-ambulance.php); 24 Heures, *Burkina Faso: huit morts dans une attaque dans le Nord*, 18 February 2021, [www.24heures.ch/burkina-faso-huit-morts-dans-une-attaque-dans-le-nord-191010965487](http://www.24heures.ch/burkina-faso-huit-morts-dans-une-attaque-dans-le-nord-191010965487).

<sup>65</sup> “According to the Ministry of National Education, as of September 15, 2,300 schools had closed due to attacks or insecurity, negatively affecting almost 350,000 students and more than 11,200 teachers”. US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html). “By early March 2020, the Ministry of National Education, Literacy, and the Promotion of National Languages [...] reported that over 2,500 schools had closed due to attacks or insecurity in Burkina Faso, negatively affecting almost 350,000 students and over 11,200 teachers. [...] The documented cases include 107 attacks on or at schools, half of which took place in 2019. At least 12 of the attacks on schools involved violence against education workers, and students were present during at least 31 incursions. In 84 cases, attackers damaged, destroyed, or pillaged school infrastructure, materials or supplies.” Twelve teachers and school personnel were killed, and at least one child. HRW, *Their War Against Education: Armed Group Attacks on Teachers, Students, and Schools in Burkina Faso*, 26 May 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2030441.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2030441.html).

<sup>66</sup> AP, *Women Fleeing Burkina Faso Violence Face Sexual Assault*, 14 February 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-violence-sexual-assault-only-on-ap-burkina-faso-308f0d4856bac8d426a889bfcdb3e4a6>.

<sup>67</sup> BBC, *Burkina Faso Election Takes Place Amid Jihadist Threat*, 23 November 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55014928](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-55014928); DW, *Burkina Faso’s Election Overshadowed by Terrorism*, 20 November 2020, [www.dw.com/en/burkina-fasos-election-overshadowed-by-terrorism/a-55674584](http://www.dw.com/en/burkina-fasos-election-overshadowed-by-terrorism/a-55674584). “[The 2020] elections were held in a largely calm environment; however, about 7 per cent of the electorate were unable to vote owing to the closure of polling stations because of insecurity. It should be recalled that, on 25 August [2020], the National Assembly had amended the electoral code, allowing for a validation of the polls even if voting could not take place in an estimated 17 per cent of the national territory owing to insecurity.” UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 24 December 2020, S/2020/1293, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html), para. 5.

A series of deadly attacks against Christians and their churches have been reported from 2018 in, *inter alia*, the Komandjari and Boulgou provinces, Centre-Est region; in the Soum and Yagha provinces, Sahel region; in the Sanmatenga province, Centre-Nord region; in the Tapoa province, Est region; and in the Loroum province, Nord region.<sup>68</sup> On 8 June 2021, an unidentified armed group perpetrated the “deadliest attack since 2015”, killing at least 138 civilians in the village of Solhan in the Sahel region.<sup>69</sup>

18. Since 2017, Human Rights Watch has documented the killing of several hundred men reportedly by government security forces for their alleged support of Islamist extremist groups.<sup>70</sup>

## Human Rights Situation

19. Significant human rights violations include extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and killings;<sup>71</sup> forced disappearance; arbitrary detention; torture and kidnappings by Islamist extremist groups, against both government security forces and civilians.<sup>72</sup> Victims include both Christian and Muslim worshippers, attacked in mosques and churches; Islamist extremist groups also attacked aid convoys and schools.<sup>73</sup>
20. In November 2019, experts from the Committee Against Torture expressed concern that there had been “grave attacks on human rights attributable to members of self-defence groups, commonly known as ‘Koglweogo’”.<sup>74</sup> During 2020, Koglweogo carried out numerous attacks, resulting in

<sup>68</sup> For examples, see: VOA, *Gunmen Kill 24 in Attack Near Church in Burkina Faso*, 17 February 2020, [www.voanews.com/africa/gunmen-kill-24-attack-near-church-burkina-faso](http://www.voanews.com/africa/gunmen-kill-24-attack-near-church-burkina-faso); DW, *Burkina Faso: Church Attack Kills Dozens*, 17 February 2020, [www.dw.com/en/burkina-faso-church-attack-kills-dozens/a-52404694](http://www.dw.com/en/burkina-faso-church-attack-kills-dozens/a-52404694); HRW, *Burkina Faso: Armed Islamist Atrocities Surge*, 6 January 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/06/burkina-faso-armed-islamist-atrocities-surge](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/01/06/burkina-faso-armed-islamist-atrocities-surge); France 24, *Armed Assailants Kill 14 in Attack on Church in Eastern Burkina Faso*, 1 December 2019, [www.france24.com/en/20191201-armed-assailants-kill-more-than-10-in-church-in-eastern-burkina-faso](http://www.france24.com/en/20191201-armed-assailants-kill-more-than-10-in-church-in-eastern-burkina-faso); The Washington Post, *Islamist Militants Are Targeting Christians in Burkina Faso: ‘They Are Planting Seeds of a Religious Conflict’*, 21 August 2019, <https://wapo.st/37Z7qxv>; Al Jazeera, *Four Killed in New Church Attack in Burkina Faso*, 26 May 2019, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/killed-church-attack-burkina-faso-190526192956228.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/killed-church-attack-burkina-faso-190526192956228.html); BBC, *Burkina Faso Christians Killed in Attack on Church*, 29 April 2019, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48094789](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48094789). See also, US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html).

<sup>69</sup> The violence displaced 3,300 persons and a further 40 persons were seriously injured. UNHCR, *UNHCR Condemns Deadliest Attack in Burkina Faso in Years*, 8 June 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/6/60bf25064/unhcr-condemns-deadliest-attack-burkina-faso-years.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/6/60bf25064/unhcr-condemns-deadliest-attack-burkina-faso-years.html).

<sup>70</sup> HRW, *Burkina Faso: Security Forces Allegedly Execute 31 Detainees*, 20 April 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/20/burkina-faso-security-forces-allegedly-execute-31-detainees](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/20/burkina-faso-security-forces-allegedly-execute-31-detainees). See also, HRW, *Burkina Faso Executions Prompt Broad Call for Inquiry*, 16 September 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/16/burkina-faso-executions-prompt-broad-call-inquiry](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/16/burkina-faso-executions-prompt-broad-call-inquiry).

<sup>71</sup> “As of August [2020] extremists [...] had conducted 22 attacks against political leaders and village officials in various locales, unlike in prior years when there were few known incidents of apparent targeted assassinations.” US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html). See also, VICE, *U.S.-Funded Counterterrorism Efforts in West Africa Aren’t Helping*, 3 December 2020, [www.vice.com/en/article/k7a7be/us-funded-counterterrorism-efforts-in-west-africa-arent-helping](http://www.vice.com/en/article/k7a7be/us-funded-counterterrorism-efforts-in-west-africa-arent-helping).

<sup>72</sup> Organisation mondiale contre la torture (OMCT), *Burkina Faso: Graves violations des droits humains des Peuls*, 1 October 2020, [www.omct.org/fr/ressources/declarations/statement-to-the-attention-of-the-human-rights-council-on-grave-human-rights-violation-against-funali](http://www.omct.org/fr/ressources/declarations/statement-to-the-attention-of-the-human-rights-council-on-grave-human-rights-violation-against-funali); US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html).

<sup>73</sup> “Media reported that the terrorist groups regularly targeted Muslim and Christian clergy, religious congregations, houses of worship, teachers, local government employees, and schools. Some imams were killed after being accused of collaborating with security forces. [...] In a number of attacks, militants singled out and killed individuals wearing Christian imagery such as crucifixes, according to media reports and church leaders. Some attacks took place at houses of worship, both Christian and Islamic, during prayers or services.” US Department of State, *2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burkina Faso*, 12 May 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2051526.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2051526.html). See also, US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html); HRW, *Burkina Faso: World Report 2021*, 13 January 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html). For examples of attacks perpetrated against Christians and Muslims, including attacks with sectarian motives, see: The Guardian, *Burkina Faso Church Attack Leaves 24 Dead*, 17 February 2020, [www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/17/burkina-faso-church-attack-dead-wounded](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/17/burkina-faso-church-attack-dead-wounded); Le Monde, *Burkina Faso : seize personnes priant dans une mosquée tuées lors d'une attaque*, 12 October 2019, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/10/12/burkina-faso-seize-personnes-priant-dans-une-mosquee-tuees-lors-d-une-attaque\\_6015289\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2019/10/12/burkina-faso-seize-personnes-priant-dans-une-mosquee-tuees-lors-d-une-attaque_6015289_3212.html); The Washington Post, *Islamist Militants Are Targeting Christians in Burkina Faso: ‘They Are Planting Seeds of a Religious Conflict’*, 21 August 2019, <https://wapo.st/37Z7qxv>; Al Jazeera, *Four Killed in New Church Attack in Burkina Faso*, 26 May 2019, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/killed-church-attack-burkina-faso-190526192956228.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/05/killed-church-attack-burkina-faso-190526192956228.html); BBC, *Burkina Faso Church Attack: Priest among Six Killed*, 12 May 2019, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48246715](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-48246715); The Defense Post, *‘Death Toll in Burkina Faso Ethnic Clashes Rises to 46’*, 4 January 2019, [www.thedefensepost.com/2019/01/04/burkina-faso-ethnic-clashes-46-dead/](http://www.thedefensepost.com/2019/01/04/burkina-faso-ethnic-clashes-46-dead/).

<sup>74</sup> OHCHR, *Experts of the Committee against Torture Urge Burkina Faso to Safeguard Human Rights while Combatting Terrorism and Insecurity*, 14 November 2019, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx).

casualties among civilians.<sup>75</sup> Rights groups allege torture committed by members of the Koglweogo.<sup>76</sup> Victims include individuals suspected of being linked with extremist Islamist groups and persons of Fulani ethnicity.<sup>77</sup>

21. There were reports of disappearances of civilians suspected of committing acts of terrorism during counterterrorism military operations by security forces, and extrajudicial killings by security forces, committed with impunity.<sup>78</sup> Between November 2019 and June 2020, the remains of 180 men likely executed by security forces were found within 5 kilometers of Djibo, in the Sahel region; many of the victims had been blindfolded or had their hands bound.<sup>79</sup> Security forces from Burkina Faso are alleged to have arbitrarily executed a further 50 persons between 26 and 28 May 2020 during operations in Mali.<sup>80</sup> State security forces have been accused of using torture against persons they have suspected of being affiliated with extremist Islamist groups.<sup>81</sup>
22. Children are exposed to risks of serious human rights violations such as forced marriage, early pregnancy, forced recruitment by armed groups, child labour and its worst forms as well as other types of violence, abuse, exploitation and gender-based violence.<sup>82</sup> Over 2000 schools have closed due to insecurity in the north of Burkina Faso; there are reports that school closures have driven an increase in child labour.<sup>83</sup> Extremist Islamist groups have targeted schools, burning at least 25 schools between

<sup>75</sup> See, for example, Insecurity Insight, *Burkina Faso: Threats Against Civilians and Vital Civilian Facilities (Bulletin 2)*, 11 November 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-threats-and-violence-against-civilians-and-vital-civilian-0>, p. 1; UNHCR, *UNHCR Sahel Crisis Response External Operational Update*, 15 May 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/76835.pdf>, p. 2; The New Humanitarian, *In the News: Dozens Dead in Latest Burkina Faso Attack*, 10 March 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/10/burkina-faso-attack-fulani](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/03/10/burkina-faso-attack-fulani).

<sup>76</sup> “[The Koglweogo] have repeatedly been accused of abuses, including sequestration and torture of crime suspects.” HRW, *The Country of Honest Men at a Crossroad*, 18 March 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/18/country-honest-men-crossroad](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/18/country-honest-men-crossroad). During 2020, “Local rights groups alleged numerous accounts of torture committed by the military, gendarmerie, police, VDPs, and members of the Koglweogo. The majority of allegations of torture involved victims suspected of having links to terrorists or persons of Fulani/Peuhl ethnicity.” US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html). See also, Refugees International, *Atrocities and Displacement in Burkina Faso*, May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/issue-brief-atrocities-and-displacement-burkina-faso>, pp. 6-7; The New Humanitarian, *Victims or Villains? The Volunteer Fighters on Burkina Faso's Front Line*, 12 October 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2020/10/12/victims-or-villains-volunteer-fighters-burkina-faso-s-front-line).

<sup>77</sup> US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html).

<sup>78</sup> “Burkinabé security forces from the army and gendarmerie unlawfully executed suspects during counterterrorism operations in both Burkina Faso and Mali, during cross-border operations. Most of the victims were from the Peuhl [Fulani] ethnic group and were rounded up by security forces in marketplaces and taken from villages, watering holes, or off public transport vehicles.” HRW, *Burkina Faso: World Report 2021*, 13 January 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html). See also, US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html); HRW, *Sahel: End Abuses in Counterterrorism Operations*, 13 February 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2045558.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2045558.html); Washington Post, *Burkina Faso Army Blamed for Extrajudicial Torture, Deaths*, 24 August 2020, <https://wapo.st/3khloj9>; ACLED, *State Atrocities in the Sahel: The Impetus for Counterinsurgency Results is Fueling Government Attacks on Civilians*, 21 May 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/state-atrocities-sahel-impetus-counterinsurgency-results-fueling-government>; Amnesty International, *“They Executed Some and Brought the Rest with Them”: Human Rights Violations by Security Forces in the Sahel*, June 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2031423.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2031423.html). “In the protracted conflict with terrorist groups, members of the security forces engaged in numerous extrajudicial killings.” Additionally, during 2019: “The government investigated and punished some cases of abuse, but impunity for human rights abuses remained a problem.” US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html).

<sup>79</sup> Most of the victims of executions by the security forces were Fulani (Peuhl). HRW, *Burkina Faso: World Report 2021*, 13 January 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html). See also, HRW, *Burkina Faso Executions Prompt Broad Call for Inquiry*, 16 September 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/16/burkina-faso-executions-prompt-broad-call-inquiry](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/16/burkina-faso-executions-prompt-broad-call-inquiry); HRW, *Burkina Faso: Residents' Accounts Point to Mass Executions*, 8 July 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/08/burkina-faso-residents-accounts-point-mass-executions](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/08/burkina-faso-residents-accounts-point-mass-executions).

<sup>80</sup> “En effet, dans le cadre de la sécurisation et des opérations de lutte contre le terrorisme, les éléments des FDS du Burkina Faso se sont rendus responsables de 50 exécutions arbitraires entre le 26 et le 28 mai 2020 sur le territoire malien, notamment dans le village de Boulkessi et les campements environnants.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et abus de droits de l'homme au Mali 1<sup>er</sup> avril – 30 juin 2020*, 6 August 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/note-sur-les-tendances-des-violations-et-abus-de-droits-de-l-homme-1er-avril-30-juin>, pp. 10-11.

<sup>81</sup> US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html); Washington Post, *Burkina Faso Army Blamed for Extrajudicial Torture, Deaths*, 24 August 2020, <https://wapo.st/3khloj9>.

<sup>82</sup> The Borgen Project, *The Challenges for Children in Burkina Faso*, 7 January 2021, <https://borgenproject.org/children-in-burkina-faso/>; US Department of Labor, *2019 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Burkina Faso*, 30 September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2040510.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2040510.html). Additionally, at least 31 children died during 2020 due to security-related incidents. UNICEF, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Situation Report No. 10*, 23 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-10-1-november-31-december>, p. 1. “The crisis in Burkina Faso is having a profound impact on the lives of children and their communities.” Global Protection Cluster, *Burkina Faso Protection Crisis: Advocacy Brief – Child Protection*, 24 March 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cp\\_aor\\_note\\_de\\_plaidoyer\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cp_aor_note_de_plaidoyer_en_0.pdf).

<sup>83</sup> “As of February 12, 2021, 2,208 schools remained closed, affecting 314,486 students (167,582 boys and 146,904 girls) and 11,048 teachers (7,192 men and 3,856 women).” UNICEF, *Burkina Faso Humanitarian Situation Report No. 11*, 5 May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-11-1-january-28-february>. See also, US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html); HRW, *“Their War Against Education”: Armed Group Attacks on Teachers, Students, and Schools in Burkina Faso*, 26 May 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2030441.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2030441.html).

January and August 2020.<sup>84</sup> According to the Global Protection Cluster: “Hundreds of children have been separated from their parents or primary caregivers while fleeing from attacks and violence.”<sup>85</sup>

23. During 2020, Malian refugees hosted in the Goudoubou and Mentao camps came under attack from extremist Islamist groups and were forced to flee to other areas of the country or back to Mali along with new refugees from Burkina Faso.<sup>86</sup> Goudoubou camp has been re-opened; however, armed groups directly targeted UNHCR and partner vehicles on their way to the camp on 30 April and 19 May 2021.<sup>87</sup>

## Humanitarian Situation

24. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), “across parts of the country considered most fragile due to political marginalization, climate variability and climate change and lack of economic opportunity, particularly for youth, the conflict and violence have resulted in the emergence of an unprecedented humanitarian emergency” in Burkina Faso.<sup>88</sup>
25. In 2021, an estimated 3.5 million persons are in need of humanitarian assistance, an increase of 1.3 million persons from 2020, and over 15 per cent of the total population of Burkina Faso.<sup>89</sup> The 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview estimates that of the 3.5 million people in need, 1.3 million people have needs directly related to their survival, 2.9 million people are food insecure, 2.5 million people do not have access to health services and approximately 813,000 are deprived of education.<sup>90</sup> Forty per cent of the population is below the national poverty line.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>84</sup> “Most of these attacks took place in Est, Nord, and Boucle du Mouhoun regions.” HRW, *Burkina Faso: World Report 2021*, 13 January 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043530.html).

<sup>85</sup> Global Protection Cluster, *Burkina Faso Protection Crisis: Advocacy Brief – Child Protection*, 24 March 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cp\\_aor\\_note\\_de\\_plaidoyer\\_en\\_0.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/cp_aor_note_de_plaidoyer_en_0.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>86</sup> UNHCR, *UNHCR Expresses Alarm over Insecurity in Burkina Faso*, 3 March 2020, [www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2020/4/5e8745ca4/unhcr-expresses-alarm-insecurity-burkina-faso.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2020/4/5e8745ca4/unhcr-expresses-alarm-insecurity-burkina-faso.html). “In 2020, the refugees and asylum-seekers living in Burkina Faso have also been impacted by violence. The majority were living in two camps, Mentao and Goudoubou, near the border with Mali. Following a series of attacks and ultimatums by armed groups, over 9,000 refugees left Goudoubou camp, with some 5,000 opting to return home to Mali”. UNHCR, *Operational Update: Burkina Faso*, 11 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84828>, p. 2. See also, UNHCR, *West and Central Africa Update*, 18 January 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/download/84283>, p. 2; Voice of America, *Malian Refugees Return to Camp They Fled in Burkina Faso*, 24 December 2020, [www.voanews.com/africa/malian-refugees-return-camp-they-fled-burkina-faso](http://www.voanews.com/africa/malian-refugees-return-camp-they-fled-burkina-faso).

<sup>87</sup> UNHCR, *Goudoubou: Camp Profile*, 31 May 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/87312>.

<sup>88</sup> OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Situation Report*, 1 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-situation-report-1-feb-2021>, p. 2. See also, OCHA, *Burkina Faso, Mali & Western Niger: Humanitarian Snapshot*, 11 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-mali-western-niger-humanitarian-snapshot-31-may-2021>; OCHA, *Plan de Réponse Humanitaire – Version Abrégée*, 18 February 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bfa\\_hrp\\_2021-abridged\\_20210207.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bfa_hrp_2021-abridged_20210207.pdf); Stars and Stripes, *UN: Burkina Faso on Brink of Protracted Humanitarian Crisis*, 12 February 2021, [www.stripes.com/news/africa/un-burkina-faso-on-brink-of-protracted-humanitarian-crisis-1.662041](http://www.stripes.com/news/africa/un-burkina-faso-on-brink-of-protracted-humanitarian-crisis-1.662041); International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Burkina Faso: in the Grip of a Triple Crisis – Armed Conflict, COVID-19 and Floods*, 15 September 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-grip-triple-crisis-armed-conflict-covid-19-and-floods>.

<sup>89</sup> OCHA, *Plan de Réponse Humanitaire – Version Abrégée*, 18 February 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bfa\\_hrp\\_2021-abridged\\_20210207.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bfa_hrp_2021-abridged_20210207.pdf), pp. 2-3. As of July 2020, the total population of Burkina Faso was estimated at 21,382,659. CIA, *The World Factbook: Burkina Faso*, accessed 21 June 2021, [www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burkina-faso/#people-and-society](http://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/burkina-faso/#people-and-society). “The conflict and violence have led to the displacement of more than one million people in just two years and has left 3.5 million people in need of assistance – a 60 per cent increase from January 2020 to January 2021.” OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Situation Report*, 1 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-situation-report-1-feb-2021>, p. 2. See also, UNICEF, *Burkina Faso Humanitarian Situation Report No. 11*, 5 May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-11-1-january-28-february>; UNICEF, *Burkina Faso Humanitarian Situation Report No. 10*, 23 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-10-1-november-31-december>, pp. 2-3. Burkina Faso is ranked 182 out of 189 countries on the Human Development Index (HDI). WFP, *Covid-19 Pandemic: Impact of Restriction Measures in West Africa*, 7 December 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/covid-19-pandemic-impact-restriction-measures-west-africa>. “The most recent survey data that were publicly available for Burkina Faso’s MPI [multidimensional poverty index] estimation refer to 2010. In Burkina Faso, 83.8 percent of the population (16,559 thousand people) are multidimensionally poor while an additional 7.4 percent are classified as vulnerable to multidimensional poverty (1,471 thousand people).” UNDP, *The Next Frontier: Human Development and the Anthropocene: Burkina Faso*, 2020, [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/BFA.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/BFA.pdf).

<sup>90</sup> “L’évaluation des besoins humanitaires a noté que sur les 3,5 millions de personnes dans le besoin, 1,3 millions de personnes sont en situation de besoins de survie et 2,9 millions de personnes en situation d’insécurité alimentaire. 2,5 millions de personnes n’ont pas accès aux services de santé et approximativement 813 000 sont privés d’éducation.” OCHA, *Plan de Réponse Humanitaire – Version Abrégée*, 18 February 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bfa\\_hrp\\_2021-abridged\\_20210207.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bfa_hrp_2021-abridged_20210207.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>91</sup> World Food Programme (WFP), *WFP Burkina Faso: Country Brief*, 18 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/wfp-burkina-faso-country-brief-may-2021>, p. 1. “Burkina Faso has registered the biggest increase with the numbers of desperately hungry people almost tripling compared to 2019, driven by increasing conflict, displacement and COVID-related impacts on employment and food access.” WFP / FAO, *UN Food Agencies Warn of Rising Levels of Acute Hunger with Potential Risk of Famine in Four Hotspots*, 6 November 2020, [www.wfp.org/news/un-food-agencies-warn-rising-levels-acute-hunger-potential-risk-famine-four-hotspots](http://www.wfp.org/news/un-food-agencies-warn-rising-levels-acute-hunger-potential-risk-famine-four-hotspots). Approximately 3.3 million people needed external food assistance from June to August 2020, according to the government. This was “well above the 687 000 food insecure people that were estimated for the same period in

26. As of 21 June 2021, there had been 13,468 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 167 deaths.<sup>92</sup> All 13 regions of the country had been affected by COVID-19 by December 2020, and the regions of Centre and Hauts-Bassins were most affected by the epidemic with more than 50 per cent of cases recorded by December 2020.<sup>93</sup> The effects of the pandemic have exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities and the severity of humanitarian needs, due to the effect of the pandemic on the economy.<sup>94</sup> The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimated in November 2020 that the GDP of Burkina Faso would contract by 2.8 per cent in 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions and insecurity.<sup>95</sup>
27. Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is widely practised, despite its criminalization.<sup>96</sup> Ongoing violence and displacement have left many women vulnerable to gender-based violence (GBV), including sexual violence.<sup>97</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and increased rates of GBV in Burkina Faso and across the Sahel.<sup>98</sup> In monitoring surveys, respondents identified forced and early marriage, domestic violence, sexual violence and other risks as affecting women across the Sahel; among the types of GBV to which communities feel the most exposed, those interviewed highlighted forced and early marriages (22%) and female genital mutilation (12%).<sup>99</sup> Sexual violence

2019. This sharp increase is mainly due to the deterioration of the security situation in the Centre-Nord and Sahel regions as well as the impact of the restrictive measures to contain the COVID-19 pandemic on households' ability to earn income." Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), *GIEWS Country Brief: Burkina Faso*, 23 October 2020, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/BFA\\_14.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/BFA_14.pdf), p. 2. "In 2020, Burkina Faso, South Sudan and Yemen witnessed IPC 5 — 'catastrophe' levels of food insecurity on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system — with 133,000 people facing starvation. The number has since risen to 155,000." WFP, *Acute Hunger at Five-Year High, Study Warns, as Famine Looms for Millions*, 6 May 2021, <https://www.wfp.org/stories/acute-hunger-five-year-high-study-warns-famine-looms-millions>.

<sup>92</sup> "In Burkina Faso, from 3 January 2020 to 11:46am CEST, 21 June 2021, there have been 13,468 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 167 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 20 June 2021, a total of 17,775 vaccine doses have been administered." World Health Organization (WHO), Burkina Faso, accessed 21 June 2021, <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/bf>. See also, UNICEF, *Burkina Faso Humanitarian Situation Report No. 11*, 5 May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-11-1-january-28-february>, p. 3; Ministère de la santé, *Rapport de situation sur l'épidémie de la maladie à Coronavirus (COVID-19) au Burkina Faso*, 30 December 2020, [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fcyhkfU3XzP\\_jfT\\_e0\\_xprXoyLjFc9ek](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fcyhkfU3XzP_jfT_e0_xprXoyLjFc9ek).

<sup>93</sup> Ministère de la santé, *Rapport de situation sur l'épidémie de la maladie à Coronavirus (COVID-19) au Burkina Faso*, 30 December 2020, [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fcyhkfU3XzP\\_jfT\\_e0\\_xprXoyLjFc9ek](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fcyhkfU3XzP_jfT_e0_xprXoyLjFc9ek).

<sup>94</sup> Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *Downward Spiral: The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and Displaced People*, September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2039787.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2039787.html), p. 13. "The vast majority of non-farm businesses (72.5%) experienced a reduction of income since March 16th. Non-farm businesses operating in industry and services were most affected. Closure due to Covid-19 and lack of customer are the main reasons for the lower income of non-farm businesses. Since mid-March, most farmers (90.1%) are having difficulties in their activities mainly due to seasonality and Covid-19 related restrictions." World Bank, *The Socio Economic Impacts of COVID -19 in Burkina Faso: Results from a High Frequency Phone Survey of Households*, 12 August 2020, <https://bit.ly/3rdROO6>. See also, World Bank, *Capturing the Impact of the Pandemic in Burkina Faso: Results from the Third Round of the High-Frequency Phone Survey*, 16 December 2020, <https://blogs.worldbank.org/opendata/capturing-impact-pandemic-burkina-faso-results-third-round-high-frequency-phone-survey>; Innovations for Poverty Action, *Prioritizing Evidence-Based Responses in Burkina Faso to Mitigate the Economic Effects of COVID-19: Lessons from RECOVR*, 25 August 2020, [www.poverty-action.org/blog/prioritizing-evidence-based-responses-burkina-faso-mitigate-economic-effects-covid-19-lessons](http://www.poverty-action.org/blog/prioritizing-evidence-based-responses-burkina-faso-mitigate-economic-effects-covid-19-lessons).

<sup>95</sup> IMF, *Burkina Faso: IMF Country Report No. 20/304*, 18 November 2020, [www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2020/11/17/Burkina-Faso-Fourth-Fifth-Reviews-Under-the-Extended-Credit-Facility-Arrangement-Request-for-49899](http://www.imf.org/en/Publications/CR/Issues/2020/11/17/Burkina-Faso-Fourth-Fifth-Reviews-Under-the-Extended-Credit-Facility-Arrangement-Request-for-49899).

<sup>96</sup> The Minister for Women said in 2021: "Au Burkina Faso, l'excision est la forme de MGF la plus pratiquée. (...) Selon l'Enquête Démographique et de Santé (EDS) IV de 2010 et l'Enquête Multisectorielle Continue (EMC) de 2015, ce taux est passé de 75,8% à 67,6% pour les femmes de 15 à 49 ans et de 13,3% à 11,3% pour la tranche d'âge des filles de 0 à 14 ans." WHO, *Le Burkina – Faso expérimente une nouvelle approche de collecte de données liées aux mutilations génitales féminines*, 20 February 2021, [www.afro.who.int/fr/news/le-burkina-faso-experimente-une-nouvelle-approche-de-collecte-de-donnees-liees-au-mutilations](http://www.afro.who.int/fr/news/le-burkina-faso-experimente-une-nouvelle-approche-de-collecte-de-donnees-liees-au-mutilations). See also, UNFPA, *Female Genital Mutilation Dashboard (FGM): Burkina Faso*, accessed 26 March 2021, [www.unfpa.org/data/fgm/BF](http://www.unfpa.org/data/fgm/BF); Enabel, *Stop aux mutilations génitales féminines : Faire, ensemble, du Burkina Faso un endroit plus sûr pour les filles*, 1 December 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/stop-aux-mutilations-g-nitales-f-minines-faire-ensemble-du-burkina-faso-un>.

<sup>97</sup> UNHCR, *Project 21: Monitoring regional de protection*, 15 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85474>; AP, *Women Fleeing Burkina Faso Violence Face Sexual Assault*, 14 February 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-violence-sexual-assault-only-on-ap-burkina-faso-308f0c4856bac8d426a889bfcdb3e4a6>; Plan International, *Central Sahel Facing a Protection Crisis as Gender-Based Violence Against Girls Continues to Rise*, 11 December 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/central-sahel-facing-protection-crisis-gender-based-violence-against-girls>; Oxfam, *Over 1 Million Women in Burkina Faso Caught between Conflict and COVID-19*, 24 May 2020, [www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/over-1-million-women-burkina-faso-caught-between-conflict-and-covid-19](http://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/over-1-million-women-burkina-faso-caught-between-conflict-and-covid-19). See also UNHCR's protection monitoring reports, available at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/bfa>.

<sup>98</sup> "Les femmes et les filles du Sahel central font face à l'un des taux le plus élevé de violences basées sur le genre (VBG) au monde. Une situation dramatique exacerbée en 2020 par l'intensification du conflit et la pandémie de COVID-19 et qui affecte non seulement les populations du Sahel mais également les nombreux réfugiés et migrants en route vers l'Afrique du Nord et l'Europe, exposés à un risque élevé de trafic, de kidnapping, de travail forcé et d'esclavage sexuel." UNHCR, *Project 21: Monitoring regional de protection*, 15 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85474>, p. 19. "In May [2020], Oxfam reported more than one million women and girls in the country faced increased sexual violence, as well as hunger and water shortages, as a result of the conflict and further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic." US Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2020: Burkina Faso*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048114.html).

<sup>99</sup> UNHCR, *Project 21: Monitoring regional de protection*, 15 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85474>, pp. 19-20. One woman in Dori said in May 2020 that: "Five young girls were raped by armed groups. One girl was raped in front of the whole village and left for dead, another saw her husband and son murdered before her eyes". Oxfam, *Over 1 Million Women in Burkina Faso Caught Between Conflict and COVID-*

has been perpetrated by armed groups, including during raids and when displaced women return to collect belongings.<sup>100</sup>

## Refugees and Internal Displacement

28. As of 23 July 2021, UNHCR and partners continued to address the needs of asylum-seekers fleeing Burkina Faso; the total number of asylum-seekers fleeing Burkina Faso has nearly doubled from January to June 2021, there are now 38,000 Burkinabe refugees and asylum-seekers across the region, including 11,400 Burkinabe asylum-seekers in Niger, 20,000 in Mali, at least 4,500 in Benin and 430 in Cote d'Ivoire.<sup>101</sup>
29. As of 31 March 2021, the *Conseil national de secours d'urgence et de réhabilitation* (CONASUR) had registered 1,147,699 persons as internally displaced.<sup>102</sup> In the first half of 2021, "237,000 people fled their homes to other parts of Burkina Faso, a sharp increase compared to the 96,000 registered during the second half of 2020."<sup>103</sup> More than 71,000 persons were displaced in April 2021 alone, bringing the number of internally displaced persons to 1,218,754 as of 30 April 2021.<sup>104</sup> This means that the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) increased from 87,000 in January 2019 to over 1.2 million persons in just over two years, with displacement affecting all 13 regions.<sup>105</sup> In January 2021, UNHCR described it as the "world's fastest growing displacement crisis".<sup>106</sup> The Centre-Nord and Sahel regions are most affected by internal displacement, with smaller numbers of IDPs in the Nord, Est and Boucle du Mouhoun regions.<sup>107</sup> Of the total IDP population, 61.2 per cent are children.<sup>108</sup> IDPs frequently live

19, 24 May 2020, [www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/over-1-million-women-burkina-faso-caught-between-conflict-and-covid-19](http://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/over-1-million-women-burkina-faso-caught-between-conflict-and-covid-19). See also, UNHCR, *Rapport mensuel de protection région de l'est-janvier 2021*, 3 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85213>, p. 8; UNHCR, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection Janvier 2021 - Boucle du Mouhoun*, 2 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85193>, p. 8.

<sup>100</sup> AP, *Women Fleeing Burkina Faso Violence Face Sexual Assault*, 14 February 2021, <https://apnews.com/article/islamic-state-group-violence-sexual-assault-only-on-ap-burkina-faso-308f0d4856bac8d426a889bfcdb3e4a6>; Oxfam, *Over 1 Million Women in Burkina Faso Caught Between Conflict and COVID-19*, 24 May 2020, [www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/over-1-million-women-burkina-faso-caught-between-conflict-and-covid-19](http://www.oxfam.org/en/press-releases/over-1-million-women-burkina-faso-caught-between-conflict-and-covid-19). Women are also vulnerable when collecting firewood or otherwise alone. "Le taux d'agression physique [VBG] est élevé, cela est le fait, en premier lieu, des HANI [Hommes armés non identifiés] qui brutalisent les femmes qui se rendent en brousse pour la recherche du bois de chauffe." UNHCR, *Rapport mensuel de monitoring de protection Janvier 2021 - Centre Nord*, 3 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85218>. "Le mode opératoire des HANI est principalement axé sur des privations de droits aux libertés, les violences physiques et sexuelles et les restrictions forcées aux mouvements." UNHCR, *Rapport mensuel de protection région de l'Est - Janvier 2021*, 2 March 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/85213>, p. 2. See also, Sidwaya, *Exactions des groupes terroristes : les hommes armés non identifiés violent les femmes à mort*, 30 December 2020, [www.sidwaya.info/blog/2020/12/30/exactions-des-groupes-terroristes-les-hommes-armes-non-identifies-violent-les-femmes-a-mort/](http://www.sidwaya.info/blog/2020/12/30/exactions-des-groupes-terroristes-les-hommes-armes-non-identifies-violent-les-femmes-a-mort/).

<sup>101</sup> "UNHCR is equally alarmed by an acceleration in the numbers of people from Burkina Faso forced to cross a border to reach safety. Since January, more than 17,500 people have fled to neighbouring countries, nearly doubling the total number of refugees from the country in just six months. There are now 38,000 Burkinabè refugees and asylum seekers across the region." UNHCR, *Record Numbers Forced to Flee Ongoing Violence in Burkina Faso*, 23 July 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/7/60fa77864/record-numbers-forced-flee-ongoing-violence-burkina-faso.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/7/60fa77864/record-numbers-forced-flee-ongoing-violence-burkina-faso.html).

<sup>102</sup> CONASUR, *Enregistrement des personnes déplacées internes du Burkina Faso*, 31 March 2021, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qmSOIPVEeQb2LwLAE8k2kEiD\\_eGJvdJ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qmSOIPVEeQb2LwLAE8k2kEiD_eGJvdJ/view). This was an increase of 50,237 persons from 31 January 2021 to 31 March 2021. CONASUR Information, 31 January 2021.

<sup>103</sup> UNHCR, *Record Numbers Forced to Flee Ongoing Violence in Burkina Faso*, 23 July 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/7/60fa77864/record-numbers-forced-flee-ongoing-violence-burkina-faso.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2021/7/60fa77864/record-numbers-forced-flee-ongoing-violence-burkina-faso.html).

<sup>104</sup> OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Snapshot*, 27 May 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-humanitarian-snapshot-25-may-2021>.

<sup>105</sup> "Worsening insecurity has sparked an unprecedented internal displacement crisis, now affecting all 13 regions of Burkina Faso: the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) has increased from 87,000 in January 2019 to more than 1 million in December 2020." OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Situation Report*, 1 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-situation-report-1-feb-2021>, p. 2. "[L]'ampleur globale des déplacements en 2020 représente une augmentation de 92 % entre décembre 2019 et décembre 2020." OCHA, *Burkina Faso : Situation des personnes déplacées internes (PDI)*, 31 December 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/map/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-situation-des-personnes-d-plac-es-internes-pdi-31-d-cembre-2020>. The number of IDPs as of 8 December 2019 was 560,033. OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Snapshot*, 9 December 2019, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20191209\\_aperçu\\_de\\_la\\_situation\\_humanaire\\_bfa\\_en.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20191209_aperçu_de_la_situation_humanaire_bfa_en.pdf), p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> UNHCR, *Sahel Internal Displacement Tops 2 Million as Violence Surges*, 22 January 2021, [www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2021/1/600a85bd4/sahel-internal-displacement-tops-2-million-violence-surges.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2021/1/600a85bd4/sahel-internal-displacement-tops-2-million-violence-surges.html); UN News, *One Million Flee Escalating Violence in Burkina Faso*, 18 August 2020, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2020/08/1070432>. See also, Washington Post, *UN: Burkina Faso on Brink of Protracted Humanitarian Crisis*, 12 February 2021, [www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/un-burkina-faso-on-brink-of-protracted-humanitarian-crisis/2021/02/12/d8d27878-6d31-11eb-a66e-e27046e9e898\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/africa/un-burkina-faso-on-brink-of-protracted-humanitarian-crisis/2021/02/12/d8d27878-6d31-11eb-a66e-e27046e9e898_story.html).

<sup>107</sup> UNHCR, *Operational Update: Burkina Faso*, 11 February 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/84828>, p. 1. According to official government statistics, as of 31 March 2021, IDPs are located mostly in the following regions: Centre-Nord (40.3%), Sahel (30.2%), Nord (8.7%), Est (7.8%), Boucle de Mouhoun (3.9%), Centre-Est (2.7%). The other provinces host the remaining 6.4% of IDPs. CONASUR, *Enregistrement des personnes déplacées internes du Burkina Faso*, 31 March 2021, [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qmSOIPVEeQb2LwLAE8k2kEiD\\_eGJvdJ/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qmSOIPVEeQb2LwLAE8k2kEiD_eGJvdJ/view).

<sup>108</sup> UNICEF, *Burkina Faso Humanitarian Situation Report No. 2*, 10 June 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-2-1-march-30-april-2021>, p. 2. Also, 54 per cent of IDPs are women or girls. OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Situation Report*, 1 February 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-situation-report-1-feb-2021>, p. 2.

in inadequate conditions, without access to shelter.<sup>109</sup> Additionally, IDPs often relocate to urban centres, which places additional pressure on infrastructure and services in these locations.<sup>110</sup>

### International Protection Needs and Non-Return Advisory

30. Given the prevailing circumstances of insecurity in Burkina Faso, UNHCR considers that persons fleeing the ongoing conflict in Burkina Faso and those who were already in countries of asylum before the escalation of violence are likely to be in need of international refugee protection in accordance with Article 1(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention.<sup>111</sup> In addition, persons fleeing the conflict in Burkina Faso may also meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status.<sup>112</sup> Depending on the profile and individual circumstances of the case, exclusion considerations may need to be looked into.<sup>113</sup>
31. Against this background and in light of the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation, UNHCR calls on States not to forcibly return to Burkina Faso any person originating from the following regions: Boucle du Mouhoun, Cascades, Centre-Est, Centre-Nord, Est, Hauts-Bassins, Nord, and Sahel.
32. UNHCR does not consider it appropriate for States to deny international protection to persons originating from the areas listed above on the basis of an internal flight or relocation alternative to other parts of Burkina Faso, unless that person has close and strong links to the proposed location of return. Any such proposed return would require careful consideration of the individual circumstances of the case.<sup>114</sup>
33. The bar on forcible return serves as a minimum standard and needs to remain in place until such time as the security, rule of law, and the human rights situation in Burkina Faso has significantly improved to permit a safe and dignified return of those determined not to be in need of international protection.

UNHCR  
July 2021

<sup>109</sup> “[...] more than 75 per cent [of IDPs] remain without adequate shelter.” UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 24 December 2020, S/2020/1293, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2043180.html), para. 36.

<sup>110</sup> “With many displaced seeking refuge in urban areas, local authorities are in the forefront of crisis response and often, the rapid influx of additional people put strains on already scarce resources, with cities and town in the Sahel having doubled in population and expansion over the last months.” UN-HABITAT, *Durable Solutions for Internal Displacement in the Sahel Zone*, 3 November 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/durable-solutions-internal-displacement-sahel-zone>. “In Burkina Faso, the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in the Sahel and Centre-Nord regions has led to an increase in internal displacement placing additional strain on the basic services and resources available in the various localities.” UNHCR, *UNHCR Sahel Crisis Response External Operational Update*, 29 April 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unhcr-sahel-crisis-response-external-operational-update-1-15-april-2020>.

<sup>111</sup> Organization of African Unity, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* (“OAU Convention”), 10 September 1969, 1001 UN, Treaty Series 45, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html). Sur place claims are accepted under the 1969 OAU Convention consistent with the interpretation of the 1951 Convention; see UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 12: Claims for Refugee Status Related to Situations of Armed Conflict and Violence under Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees and the Regional Refugee Definitions*, 2 December 2016, [www.refworld.org/docid/583595ff4.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/583595ff4.html), para. 52.

<sup>112</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 189, p. 137, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html) and UN General Assembly, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 31 January 1967, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 606, p. 267, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html).

<sup>113</sup> UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, 4 September 2003, HCR/GIP/03/05, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html).

<sup>114</sup> UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: “Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative” Within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 23 July 2003, HCR/GIP/03/04, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f2791a44.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f2791a44.html).