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<http://www.rsf.org/burkina-faso-african-court-says-burkina-faso-03-04-2014,46078.html>

Africa - Burkina Faso

Historic decision

African Court says Burkina Faso failed to investigate murder properly

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Reporters Without Borders hails a ruling issued by the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights on 28 March, finding that Burkina Faso failed to properly investigate the 1998 murder of **Norbert Zongo**, the editor of the Ouagadougou-based weekly *L'Indépendant*.

The burned bodies of Zongo and three other people were found in a car on 13 December 1998. At the time of his death, Zongo had been investigating the suspicious death in prison of David Ouédraogo, the driver of presidential adviser François Compaoré, the president's brother.

"This decision sends a strong signal to Burkina Faso's authorities 15 years after Zongo's murder and nearly eight years after the judicial system dismissed all charges and abandoned the case," said Cléa Kahn-Sriber, the head of the Reporters Without Borders Africa desk.

"We hope that President Blaise Compaoré's government will seize this opportunity to reopen the case and find a satisfactory response to the denial of justice that Zongo's family and friends have suffered for so long.

"On a broader level, this decision highlights the need to [combat impunity](#) for crimes against journalists throughout Africa, not just for the sake of the families of the victims but also, as the court said, to avoid creating a climate of fear in the media."

Based in the Tanzanian city of Arusha, the court condemned the failure to diligently investigate the murders, the unduly prolonged legal proceedings, the time the authorities took to question the victims' families and the fact no further investigation was carried out after [charges against the main suspect were dropped in 2006](#).

The court gave both parties 30 days to submit arguments before it takes a decision on any reparations.

Reporters Without Borders participated in the independent commission of enquiry that the government created on 18 December 1998 in response to a public outcry.

In its findings, submitted to the prime minister on 7 May 1999, it concluded that the victims died in an "ambush" and "the motives for this quadruple murder should be sought in the investigations carried out over many years by the journalist, in particular, his recent investigations into the death of David Ouédraogo, the driver of presidential adviser François Compaoré."

Burkina Faso is ranked 52nd out of 180 countries in the [2014 Reporters Without Borders press freedom index](#).

[More information in Burkina Faso and the Norbert Zongo case](#)
