

350 Fifth Avenue, 34<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10118-3299  
Tel: 212-290-4700  
Fax: 212-736-1300; 917-591-3452

#### **DIVISION AFRIQUE**

Mausi Segun, *Directrice exécutive*  
Maria Burnett, *Directrice adjointe, Afrique de l'Est*  
Corinne Dufka, *Directrice adjointe, Afrique de l'Ouest*  
Abdullahi Abdi, *Assistant de recherche*  
Laetitia Bader, *Chercheuse senior*  
Jehanne Henry, *Chercheuse senior*  
Felix Horne, *Chercheur senior*  
Zenaïda Machado, *Chercheuse*  
Dewa Mavhinga, *Directeur, Afrique australe*  
Lewis Mudge, *Chercheur senior*  
Timo Mueller, *Chercheur*  
Otsieno Namwaya, *Chercheur*  
Ida Sawyer, *Directrice, Afrique centrale*  
Lauren Seibert, *Assistante*  
Jean-Sébastien Sépulchre, *Assistant*  
Savannah Tryens-Fernandes, *Assistante*  
Jim Wormington, *Chercheur*

#### **COMITÉ CONSULTATIF**

Samuel Murumba, *Co-président*  
Ambassador Robin Sanders, *Co-président*  
Fareda Banda  
Innocent Chukwuma  
Jonathan Fantom  
Wendy Keys  
Wynette Labrosse  
Muna Ndulo  
Randy Newcomb  
Louis Marie Nindorera  
Peter Rosenblum  
John Ryle  
Kim Samuel Johnson  
Nick Shaxson  
Darian Swig  
Joanna Weschler  
Marsha Williams  
Michela Wrong

#### **HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

Kenneth Roth, *Directeur exécutif*

#### **DIRECTEURS EXÉCUTIFS ADJOINTS**

Michele Alexander, *Développement et initiatives internationales*  
Nicholas Dawes, *Médias*  
Iain Levine, *Programmes*  
Chuck Lustig, *Opérations*  
Bruno Stagno Ugarte, *Plaidoyer*

Dinah PoKempner, *Directrice des Affaires juridiques*  
James Ross, *Directeur juridique et politique*

#### **CONSEIL D'ADMINISTRATION**

Hassan Elmasry, *Co-président du Conseil d'administration*  
Robert Kissane, *Co-président du Conseil d'administration*

## **Appendix I:**

Letter to the Ministries of National Defense and Former Combatants  
and Justice, Human Rights and Civic Promotion of Burkina Faso

May 9, 2018

Colonel Sita SANGARE  
Directeur de la Justice Militaire  
Ministère de la Défense Nationale et des Anciens Combattants

M. Paul KABRE  
Directeur de la Protection Contre les Violations des Droits humains  
Ministère de la Justice, Des Droits Humains et de la Promotion  
Civique

**Re : Publication of a report on human rights violations in northern Burkina Faso**

Dear Colonel SANGARE and Mr. KABRE,

I hope this letter finds you well. I write to you, as my focal points within the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Justice, to both thank you for taking the time to meet in March 2018, and to share the conclusions of our research.

As discussed in our respective meetings, the letter is envisioned to provide the government advanced notice of our findings, which will be published in a report on May 17. We would be happy to include an official response in the communique which will accompany the report's release.

The report contains testimony and documents alleging human rights abuses in northern Burkina Faso by both armed Islamist groups and members of the security forces, particularly in Sahel Region, as well as testimony from the attacks in Ouagadougou.

The report is based on two research missions in February and March 2018, during which I conducted 67 interviews with victims and witnesses of abuse; health workers; local government officials;

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
WATCH

HRW.org

diplomats; security sector analysts; and youth, religious and community leaders.

With respect to abuses by **armed Islamist groups**, we documented alleged execution-style killings of 19 men by Islamist armed groups, which took place in or near 12 different villages.

The killings documented took place in or near Djibo, Nassoumbou, Tem, Sona, Dohouré, Koutougou, Kenou, Kourfayel, Soboulé, Yorsala and Pétéga and Kain.

- Those targeted included village counselors, mayors, village elders, marabouts, retired security force members, and teachers.
- Most victims were targeted for allegedly providing information to the security forces.
- Most had been killed in their homes or villages; a few had been held in bush camps in Burkina Faso or Mali for several days before being killed.

The report contains numerous testimonies of witnesses to these incidents, as well as witnesses and victims of the brutal 2016 and 2017 attacks in **Ouagadougou**. We also present our findings on the numerous **attacks on the education sector** including the killing or kidnapping of teachers, threats and intimidation of teachers, and the destruction of school materials.

With respect **to the security forces**, Human Rights Watch documented the alleged summary executions by state security forces of 14 men, and four deaths in their custody. Almost all of these victims were last seen in the custody of government security forces. We also detail several other cases witnesses believe implicate members of the security forces and which merit further investigation. Most of the alleged abuses occurred between September 2017 and February 2018.

Specifically, the report presents findings on the following alleged violations:

- The alleged killing of seven of over 25 men detained on or around December 27 during a military operation in Damba. They were allegedly summarily executed the next morning after having spent one night in a security force camp. An eighth victim later died of gunshot wounds.
- The alleged killing by men stationed within the Gendarmerie in Djibo of counsellor Moumouni Moussa Dicko, in late September 2017. His body was found the next morning near Djibo.
- The alleged killing by security forces dressed in civilian clothing of Franco-Arab teacher Amadou Dicko, in mid-October 2017. His body was found later the same day near Djibo.
- An alleged killing in March 2018 of a merchant a witness observed being detained by soldiers in the Nassoumbou market. His body was found the next morning.

- The alleged killing in late November 2017, of two traders from around Tem who were detained as they were leaving the Nassoumbou market. Their bodies were found some four kilometers away.
- The alleged killing of a man detained in November 2017 by soldiers on patrol near Bourou; his body was found one week later.
- The deaths in detention of two men detained by the police and army near Baraboulé in late January 2018.

Most witnesses were unable to identify the individual security force members, commanders or particular units involved in the violations described in the report, with most simply describing the alleged perpetrators as “soldiers” or “gendarmes.”

However, some witnesses, community members and security sources said they believed the alleged perpetrators were members of the Burkina Faso Army, the National Gendarmerie, the Combined Anti-Terrorist Forces (GFAT) and the Special Intervention Unit of the National Gendarmerie (USIGN), and to a lesser extent, the National Police.

Witnesses clearly describe those involved in most of the incidents documented by Human Rights Watch as dressing in military uniform, driving in state vehicles known to be used by the security forces and, in a few cases, being detained by soldiers manning checkpoints or being detained within well-known bases. Some of the alleged perpetrators involved a few security force members while others took place in the context of large operations involving numerous vehicles filled with security force personnel.

Community leaders also complained of numerous instances in which the security forces appeared to randomly detain men *en masse* who happened to be in the vicinity of incursions, attacks or ambushes by armed Islamist groups.

Human Rights Watch documented six such mass arrests during which numerous men were severely mistreated in custody and four men died, including the two men from Baraboulé mentioned above, allegedly as a result of severe beatings. Health workers described treating men for cuts, bruises, hematomas and gashes sustained in detention.

Those interviewed consistently described being caught between Islamists’ threats to execute those who collaborated with the state, and the security forces, who expected them to provide intelligence about the presence of armed groups and meted out collective punishment, including mistreatment and arbitrary detention, when they didn’t.

With respect to justice, victims of violence by both the armed Islamists and security forces complained about the slow pace, or complete lack, of investigations into human rights cases since 2016. They also complained about what they perceived to be a partial response to abuses by the authorities. They said killings and abuses by armed Islamists almost always triggered an investigation and, often arrests, while alleged abuses by security force personnel were rarely, if ever, investigated by the security forces or the judiciary.

The report includes several recommendations, including to **the Government of Burkina Faso** to:

- Ensure that everyone taken into custody by government security forces is treated humanely, is promptly brought before a judicial authority to ensure the legality of their detention, and is able to contact their families.
- During any operations involving military personnel, ensure the inclusion of military police – or those exercising the provost marshal function – mandated to monitor and respond to any abuse.
- Investigate and prosecute, in accordance with international fair trial standards, members of the security forces responsible for serious human rights violations, regardless of position or rank, including commanding officers.
- Ensure all persons accused of criminal offenses have access to adequate legal representation regardless of their means, and that they have access to prompt and fair trials as required under international law.

It recommends the National Human Rights Commission of Burkina Faso to conduct impartial, public investigations into alleged human rights abuses by security force personnel and armed Islamist groups.

It recommends the **armed Islamist groups** to cease all extrajudicial killings, kidnappings, and other serious human rights abuses including against the education sector.

It urges Burkina Faso's **international partners** to publicly and privately call upon the government to conduct prompt, credible investigations into allegations of abuses by the Burkina Faso security forces.

We will send you our full report as soon as it is published. And, as noted above, we would welcome a response from you to include in our communique. Don't hesitate to contact me at the contacts listed below. Thank you.



**Corinne DUFKA**

Directrice adjointe, Division Afrique

Human Rights Watch

1 301 852 9972

[dufkac@hrw.org](mailto:dufkac@hrw.org)

## Appendix II:

Response from Ministry of Defense and Former Combatants of Burkina Faso

MINISTRE DE LA DEFENSE NATIONALE  
ET DES ANCIENS COMBATTANTS

CABINET



BURKINA FASO  
Unité - Progrès - Justice

E---0487  
N° 2018-...../MDNAC/CAB

Ouagadougou, le 15 MAI 2018

CONFIDENTIEL

*Le Ministre*

A

Madame Corinne Dufka  
Directrice adjointe, Division  
Afrique Human Rights Watch  
-New York-

**Objet :** Publication d'un rapport sur de présumées violations de droits humains dans le nord du Burkina Faso.

**Références :** V/L S/N en date du 09 mai 2018.

Comme suite à votre lettre ci-dessus citée en références et relative à l'objet susmentionné, j'ai l'honneur et le plaisir de vous faire parvenir les éléments d'informations ci-dessous qui reflètent les vues du gouvernement du Burkina Faso :

1. Le gouvernement du Burkina Faso tient d'abord à réaffirmer son attachement au respect des droits humains et son souci à les faire respecter par ses agents, particulièrement les personnels des Forces de Défense et de Sécurité au cours des différentes missions de sécurisation ou des opérations de soutien à la paix ;
2. Il saisit l'occasion pour vous remercier des rencontres d'échanges que vous avez eus courant mois de mars 2018 avec les ministères en charge de la Défense et de la Justice ;

3. Pour ce qui est des efforts engagés pour la promotion des droits humains, il rappelle que des modules de droit international humanitaire sont enseignés dans toutes les écoles et centres de formation des Forces Armées Nationales. Par ailleurs, avant leur déploiement sur les théâtres d'opération des modules spécifiques sur le respect des droits humains en opération sont dispensés aux éléments devant être projetés ;
4. En ce qui concerne les opérations de sécurisation actuellement en cours au Nord de notre pays contre la menace terroriste, des allégations d'exaction contre les populations civiles ont été portées à la connaissance du gouvernement. Elles ont donné lieu à la prise de mesures immédiates. Ainsi, un responsable d'opérations dans le secteur de Banh a été relevé de ses fonctions à titre conservatoire en attendant la suite de l'enquête ordonnée par le commandement militaire. Cette enquête qui se situe à deux niveaux (disciplinaire et pénal) a déjà abouti à une sanction disciplinaire de quarante-cinq (45) jours d'arrêt de rigueur entièrement purgés par l'Officier mis en cause. Le dossier pénal ouvert devant le tribunal militaire de Ouagadougou (TMO) suit son cours. Le parquet du TMO a saisi en date du 07 décembre 2017 par réquisitoire introductif n° 046/2017 le juge d'instruction du cabinet n° 3 ;
5. Le gouvernement souscrit entièrement aux recommandations formulées dans votre lettre et s'engage à les mettre en œuvre. En particulier, il s'engage à diligenter des enquêtes sur tous les cas d'exaction cités qui n'avaient pas auparavant été portés à sa connaissance ;
6. Le gouvernement s'engage à vous tenir informée des suites des enquêtes en cours ou à venir et vous réaffirme son entière disponibilité à coopérer dans le cadre du nécessaire respect des droits humains dans les opérations de sécurisation.



7. Afin d'assurer une fluidité des informations entre votre Organisation et mon Département, il me plaît de vous rappeler que nous avons désigné comme votre point focal le Directeur des Renseignements Militaires, avec lequel je vous exhorte à échanger toute information relative à des violations de droits humains dont vous aurez connaissance, pour nous permettre de prendre au plus tôt les mesures correctives qui s'imposent. Veuillez agréer, chère madame, l'expression de ma parfaite considération.



**Jean Claude BOUDA**  
Commandeur de l'Ordre National