

UNHCR POSITION ON RETURNS TO BURKINA FASO – UPDATE I

July 2023

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Map of Burkina Faso



Map No. 4230 Rev. 1 UNITED NATIONS
August 2018

Department of Field Support
Geospatial Information Section (formerly Cartographic Section)

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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, political instability, and a deteriorating humanitarian situation.¹ It supersedes and replaces the July 2021 Position on Returns to Burkina Faso.² This document is based on information available up to 30 June 2023, unless otherwise specified.
2. Given the prevailing circumstances of insecurity in Burkina Faso, UNHCR considers that persons fleeing the ongoing conflict in Burkina Faso are likely to be in need of international refugee protection in accordance with Article 1(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention.³ This could include sur place refugees seeking asylum using individual refugee status determination (RSD) procedures.⁴ In addition, persons fleeing the conflict in Burkina Faso may also meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status.⁵ In light of the deterioration of the security, human rights 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, Centre-Ouest, Centre-Sud, Est, Hauts-Bassins, Nord, Sahel and Sud-Ouest.

Introduction

3. Since the publication of UNHCR's July 2021 Position on Returns to Burkina Faso, countries in the Sahel region, including notably Burkina Faso and Mali, have experienced a further rise in violence linked to violent extremist groups, resulting in large-scale displacement and a further deterioration of the humanitarian situation.⁶ During 2022, the death toll as a result of violence by violent extremist groups in Burkina Faso and Mali reached unprecedented levels.⁷ Rapidly escalating violence has driven over two million persons from their homes in Burkina Faso, with levels of displacement up over 7,000 per cent since August 2018.⁸ The country "is experiencing one of the fastest-growing displacement crises in the world, marked by violence, poverty, food shortages and the growing impact of the climate crisis."⁹ Like other countries in the region, Burkina Faso is facing the impacts of climate change, including

¹ Human Rights Watch (HRW), *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html; UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children: Burkina Faso*, 22 December 2022, www.unicef.org/media/131986/file/2023-HAC-Burkina-Faso.pdf, pp. 1-2; Congressional Research Service (CRS), *Burkina Faso: Conflict and Military Rule*, 17 October 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10434/14>; International Crisis Group (ICG), *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso's Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html; US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burkina Faso*, 20 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2089213.html.

² UNHCR, *Position on Returns to Burkina Faso*, 30 July 2021, www.refworld.org/docid/60f8209c4.html.

³ 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.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36018.html.

⁴ 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, para. 52.

⁵ UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 189, p. 137, www.refworld.org/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.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html.

⁶ ICG, *10 Conflicts to Watch in 2023*, 1 January 2023, www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2023; Voice of America (VOA), *Deaths, Instability Increase Across the Western Sahel in 2022*, 29 December 2022, www.voanews.com/a/deaths-instability-increase-across-the-western-sahel-in-2022-6888640.html; Financial Times, *Security Forces Struggle to Cope with Upsurge in Sahel Jihadist Violence*, 9 October 2022, www.ft.com/content/f4dcccdbbc-1760-4b52-a290-ad62e99ea42b; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel/>; INTERSOS, *Sahel, Epicenter of a Fast-Growing Humanitarian Crisis*, 26 August 2022, www.intersos.org/en/sahel-epicenter-of-a-fast-growing-humanitarian-crisis/.

⁷ "Countries in Africa's Western Sahel region — including Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger — saw a 50% increase in deaths due to conflict in 2022." VOA, *Deaths, Instability Increase Across the Western Sahel in 2022*, 29 December 2022, www.voanews.com/a/deaths-instability-increase-across-the-western-sahel-in-2022-6888640.html. See also, Financial Times, *Security Forces Struggle to Cope with Upsurge in Sahel Jihadist Violence*, 9 October 2022, www.ft.com/content/f4dcccdbbc-1760-4b52-a290-ad62e99ea42b. "More than 4,200 people in Burkina Faso were killed by armed violence in 2022. In the first 3 1/2 months of 2023, armed violence in the country, fueled by insurgents such as al-Qaida and the Islamic State group, claimed about 3,000 more lives, according to Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, or ACLED." Africa Defense Forum, *In Burkina Faso, Violence Spirals Out Of Control*, 16 May 2023, <https://adf-magazine.com/2023/05/in-burkina-faso-violence-spirals-out-of-control/>.

⁸ Associated Press, *More than 2 Million People Displaced, Burkina Faso's Government Says, as Aid Falls Short*, 5 June 2023, <https://apnews.com/article/burkina-faso-displacement-violence-jihadis-3e2890c3c08f634019a63288daf1200a>; Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), *Burkina Faso: Almost 2 Million People Displaced amid Worst Food Crisis in a Decade*, 5 September 2022, www.nrc.no/news/2022/september/burkina-faso-almost-2-million-people-now-displaced-amid-worst-food-crisis-in-a-decad/. See also, UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal: Burkina Faso*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bfa>.

⁹ UNHCR, *UNHCR Urges Greater Support as Violence Continues Unabated in Burkina Faso*, 29 November 2022, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/11/6385db4222/unhcr-urges-greater-support-violence-continues-unabated-burkina-faso.html.

drought and desertification, which jeopardize access to water, food and land and increase poverty.¹⁰ These effects contribute to and compound the escalating conflict and exacerbate the already-dire humanitarian situation.¹¹

4. In December 2014, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger established an institutional framework for coordinating and monitoring regional cooperation on development and security policies (often referred to as the G5 Sahel).¹² 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.¹³ Its first operation took place in November 2017 involving the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.¹⁴ In May 2022, Mali announced its withdrawal from the G5 Sahel, completed as of 30 June 2022.¹⁵ In January 2023, Burkina Faso suspended a 2018 accord with France authorizing the presence of French troops in the country and ordered the remaining 400 French special forces to leave the country within a month.¹⁶

Political Developments

5. During 2021, the security situation deteriorated as a result of attacks by violent extremist groups.¹⁷ Dissatisfaction with the government's response led to protests across Burkina Faso in November 2021, following an attack by a violent extremist group that killed over 50 gendarmes in the country's Sahel region, the deadliest attack against the security forces since the conflict began.¹⁸
6. On 24 January 2022, a group of soldiers led by Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba and calling themselves *Le mouvement patriotique pour la sauvegarde et la restauration* (the Patriotic Movement

¹⁰ Global Resource Information Database (GRID), *Interactive Country Fiches: Burkina Faso*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://dicf.unepgrid.ch/burkina-faso/climate-change>; UN Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, *Moving from Reaction to Action: Anticipating Vulnerability Hotspots in the Sahel*, August 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2083634/SAHEL+PREDICTIVE+ANALYTICS+REPORT.pdf, pp. 30-35.

¹¹ NRC, *The World's Most Neglected Displacement Crises 2022*, 1 June 2023, www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/neglected-2022/the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crises-2022.pdf, p. 4; UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 35; Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), *Climate Change and Conflict in the Sahel*, November 2022, https://cdn.cfr.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/Climate%20Change%20and%20Conflict%20in%20the%20Sahel.pdf, pp. 1-9; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *How Climate Change Fuels Conflicts in West Africa*, 4 October 2022, www.ips-journal.eu/topics/economy-and-ecology/how-climate-change-fuels-conflicts-in-west-africa-6227/; NRC, *Burkina Faso: Almost 2 Million People Displaced amid Worst Food Crisis in a Decade*, 5 September 2022, www.nrc.no/news/2022/september/burkina-faso-almost-2-million-people--now-displaced-amid-worst-food-crisis-in-a-decade/; UN Office of the Special Coordinator for Development in the Sahel, *Moving from Reaction to Action: Anticipating Vulnerability Hotspots in the Sahel*, August 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2083634/SAHEL+PREDICTIVE+ANALYTICS+REPORT.pdf, pp. 48-50.

¹² *Convention portant création du G5 Sahel*, 19 December 2014, www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/images_convention.pdf.

¹³ G5 Sahel Secrétariat Permanent, *Résolution n° 00-01/2017 relative à la création d'une force conjointe du G5 Sahel*, 6 February 2017, www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/images_Docs_Resolutions_force_conjointe_05_02_20171.pdf.

¹⁴ Reuters, *G5 Sahel Launches Military Operation in African Scrublands*, 2 November 2017, www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-security/g5-sahellaunches-military-operation-in-african-scrublands-idUSKBN1D21VS.

¹⁵ UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 56; France 24, *Mali Withdraws from G5 Sahel Regional Anti-Jihadist Force*, 16 May 2022, www.france24.com/en/africa/20220515-mali-withdraws-from-g5-sahel-regional-anti-jihadist-force. "Mali's unilateral withdrawal in May 2022 from the G5 Sahel regional security coalition, which had enabled forces from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger to conduct joint border operations and share intelligence, thrust the effort into disarray." International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Security in the Sahel and the end of Operation Barkhane*, 5 September 2022, www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2022/09/security-in-the-sahel-and-the-end-of-operation-barkhane.

¹⁶ The withdrawal was completed on 18 February 2023. France 24, *French Army Officially Ends Operations in Burkina Faso*, 20 February 2023, www.france24.com/en/africa/20230220-french-army-officially-ends-operations-in-burkina-faso; Aljazeera, *Burkina Faso Demands Departure of French Troops: Report*, 22 January 2023, www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/22/burkina-faso-demands-departure-of-french-troops. EU and French troops have assisted with counterterrorism operations in the Sahel region in cooperation with the governments of the countries concerned and the G5 joint force. See International Peace Institute, *What Are the International Military Options for the Sahel?*, 12 April 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/what-are-international-military-options-sahel>. However, France ended its major counterterrorism operation in the Sahel in June 2021 and withdrew all troops from Mali by 15 August 2022. While some troops remain in other countries in the region, these will serve only in a training capacity and will not engage in combat. IISS, *Security in the Sahel and the end of Operation Barkhane*, 5 September 2022, www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2022/09/security-in-the-sahel-and-the-end-of-operation-barkhane.

¹⁷ ICG, *The Ouagadougou Coup: A Reaction to Insecurity*, 28 January 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2069006.html.

¹⁸ VOA, *Protesters, Angry at Insecurity, Call for Burkina Faso's President to Resign*, 29 November 2021, www.voanews.com/a/protesters-angry-at-insecurity-call-for-burkina-faso-s-president-to-resign/6332258.html; Reuters, *Burkina Faso Protest Against Militant Violence Turns Violent*, 27 November 2021, www.reuters.com/world/africa/burkina-faso-police-fire-tear-gas-protest-against-militant-violence-2021-11-27/. "For many civilians and soldiers, the security situation reached a tipping point with the attack in Inata, in northern Burkina Faso, on 14 November 2021. Fifty-three gendarmes were killed in this vicious attack, which sealed President Kaboré's fate. As one local newspaper described it, the government 'symbolically collapsed' in the shock waves felt around the country after the incident, the single most lethal attack on soldiers in the country's history." ICG, *The Ouagadougou Coup: A Reaction to Insecurity*, 28 January 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2069006.html. See also, The New Humanitarian, *Can Local Dialogues with Jihadists Stem Violence in Burkina Faso?*, 16 December 2021, www.thenewhumanitarian.org/2021/12/16/can-local-dialogues-jihadists-stem-violence-burkina-faso.

for Safeguard and Restoration) took power in a coup d'état.¹⁹ While Damiba promised to provide security, increased attacks by non-state armed groups during his tenure as well as divisions within the security forces led to his downfall.²⁰ On 30 September 2022, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, a participant in the January 2022 coup, seized power from Damiba with support from the military, citing the deteriorating security situation.²¹

7. In October 2022, President Traoré met with a representative from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and stated the new government would hold to an election deadline of July 2024 previously agreed to by Damiba.²²

Security Situation in Burkina Faso

8. Violence escalated during 2022 in Burkina Faso, with significant civilian casualties caused by attacks from violent extremist groups against civilian and military targets.²³ During the year, violence spread throughout the country, affecting regions that had previously been free of conflict and driving displacement towards urban centres.²⁴ Between 1 January and 31 December 2022, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) documented 1,640 incidents of battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in Burkina Faso, causing 4,217 fatalities.²⁵ This was approximately a 24 per cent increase in the number of incidents and an 80 per cent increase in the number of overall fatalities as compared to 2021.²⁶ As of June 2023, violence continued at high levels across most of Burkina Faso, including kidnappings and attacks by violent extremist groups against civilians and attacks against the security forces.²⁷
9. Violence continues to affect mostly the north and the east of the country along the border with Mali but

¹⁹ VOA, *Burkina Junta Chief Sworn In as President*, 16 February 2022, www.voanews.com/a/burkina-junta-chief-sworn-in-as-president-6443982.html; HRW, *Burkina Faso: Coup Puts Rights at Risk*, 27 January 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2067160.html.

²⁰ Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Understanding Burkina Faso's Latest Coup*, 28 October 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/understanding-burkina-faso-latest-coup/>; Institute for Security Studies, *Security Priorities for Burkina Faso's New Transition*, 13 October 2022, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/security-priorities-for-burkina-fasos-new-transition/>; France 24, *Burkina Faso Army Captain Announces Overthrow of Military Government*, 30 September 2022, <https://f24.my/8vuc>; ICG, *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso's Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html.

²¹ UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 7; BBC, *Burkina Faso Coup: Ousted Military Ruler Damiba in Togo*, 3 October 2022, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-63111763; RFI, *Burkina Junta Leader Damiba Resigns, Flees in Wake of Military Coup*, 3 October 2022, www.rfi.fr/en/africa/20221003-burkina-junta-leader-damiba-resigns-flees-in-wake-of-military-coup; France 24, *Burkina Faso Army Captain Announces Overthrow of Military Government*, 30 September 2022, <https://f24.my/8vuc>. "Like the January putsch, the trigger was an attack, on September 26, by jihadist forces on a 150-truck convoy loaded with food heading for Djibo, one of the main cities in the war-torn north. The city of 60,000 people has been under siege by terror groups for the past 18 months. The attack, claimed by an al-Qaeda-linked group, killed 37 people, including 27 soldiers. Days later, Mr. Traore seized power in Ouagadougou, the capital that is home to 2.5 million people, with no significant resistance on the streets." GIS, *Burkina Faso: Another Russia-West Hotspot?*, 3 January 2023, www.gisreportsonline.com/r/burkina-faso/.

²² VOA, *Burkina Faso's 2024 Election Likely in Jeopardy After Coups: Analysts*, 5 October 2022, www.voaafrica.com/a/burkina-faso-2024-election-jeopardy-coups-6777509.html. See also, RFI, *Burkina PM Vows No Deal with Jihadists, Hints at Election Delay*, 30 May 2023, www.rfi.fr/en/international-news/20230530-burkina-pm-vows-no-deal-with-jihadists-as-40-killed.

²³ HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html; ICG, *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso's Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html; Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P), *Atrocity Alert No. 313: Mali and Burkina Faso, Cameroon and World Humanitarian Day*, 18 August 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/atrocity-alert-no-313-mali-and-burkina-faso-cameroon-and-world-humanitarian-day>; VOA, *As Conflict Spreads to South Burkina Faso, So Do Human Rights Abuses*, 2 March 2022, www.voanews.com/a/as-conflict-spreads-to-south-burkina-faso-so-do-human-rights-abuses/6466713.html.

²⁴ "For several years, Burkinabés originally from northern and eastern regions have been fleeing violence and terrorist attacks to reach safer areas in and around the country's main cities. But with insecurity now spreading throughout the country, urban areas are becoming overwhelmed by new arrivals." UNHCR, *UNHCR Urges Greater Support as Violence Continues Unabated in Burkina Faso*, 29 November 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2082966.html. See also, European Commission: European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, *Burkina Faso: Factsheet*, 2022, https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/africa/burkina-faso_en; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel/>.

²⁵ This data is available for export at ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Between 1 January and 30 June 2023, ACLED documented 862 incidents of battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians in 12 regions of Burkina Faso causing 4,458 fatalities, with Jamā'at nuṣrat al-islām wal-muslimīn (JNIM) and the Islamic State (IS) Sahel coded as the primary or secondary actor in 790 incidents (91.6%). Ibid. See also, HRW, *Burkina Faso: Upsurge in Atrocities by Islamist Armed Groups*, 15 June 2023, www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/15/burkina-faso-upsurge-atrocities-islamist-armed-groups; Le Monde, *Au Burkina Faso, plus de cinquante soldats tués dans une attaque attribuée aux djihadistes*, 20 February 2023, www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/02/20/au-burkina-faso-plus-de-cinquante-soldats-tues-dans-une-attaque-attribuee-aux-djihadistes_6162616_3212.html; VOA, *Le Burkina dans la spirale de violences jihadistes toujours plus intenses*, 16 February 2023, www.voaafrica.com/a/le-burkina-dans-la-spirale-de-violences-jihadistes-toujours-plus-intenses/6965781.html; Africanews, *Burkina : près de 40 tués dans des violences djihadistes en une semaine*, 13 February 2023, <https://fr.africanews.com/2023/02/13/burkina-pres-de-40-tues-dans-des-violences-djihadistes-en-une-semaine/>.

has spread throughout the country with incidents reported during 2022 in Sahel (443), Est (359), Centre-Nord (256), Nord (171) and Boucle de Mouhoun (145), followed by Centre-Est (91), Cascades (63), Hauts-Bassins (44), Sud-Ouest (39), Centre-Ouest (14), Centre (11) and Centre-Sud (4).²⁸ The first attack by a violent extremist group in Centre-Ouest happened in May 2022; multiple attacks have followed, including one in January 2023 where at least 12 civilians were killed.²⁹ High levels of conflict primarily affect civilians and in particular women and children.³⁰

10. 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.³¹ 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 2021.³² Reportedly, the state of emergency lapsed due to the January 2022 coup; however, the state of emergency was reactivated in April 2022.³³ In March 2023, the government declared a state of emergency covering 22 provinces in the above regions as well as in Centre-Nord.³⁴

Self-Defence Groups

11. Since 2014, self-defence groups such as the Koglweogo and the Dozo traditional hunters have operated throughout Burkina Faso and proliferated in response to violent extremist attacks.³⁵ Self-defence militias have held the approval of local and traditional authorities, and estimates have put their forces in the tens of thousands.³⁶

²⁸ The only region where no incidents occurred in 2022 was Plateau-Central. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>. See also, Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel/>. "A 143% increase in attacks in the southern areas of Burkina Faso was reported from January 2021 to May 2022. This resulted in the displacement of thousands of Burkinabe refugees to north-eastern Côte d'Ivoire and northern Benin". Global Education Cluster, *Education Under Attack in West and Central Africa: 2022 Update*, 6 September 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/education-under-attack-west-and-central-africa-2022-update>, p. 3. "La situation [sécurité] ne s'est pas améliorée et s'aggrave en raison de l'intensification des violences qui a pour corollaire la dégradation de l'environnement protecteur, notamment dans le Sahel, le Centre-Nord, le Nord-Est, le Centre-Est, les Cascades, les Hauts-Bassins et la Boucle du Mouhoun." Protection Cluster, *Revue des Données Secondaires Violence Basée sur le Genre au Burkina Faso*, 22 December 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085014.html, p. 1. At the time of writing, the number of recorded incidents in the Centre-Sud region, located between the Centre-Ouest and the Centre-Est regions, was low compared to the neighbouring regions. Nevertheless, in early 2023 violent incidents were reported in this region too. See for example, Lefaso.net, *Insécurité au Burkina : Une base terroriste démantelée dans le Nahouri*, 14 February 2023, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article119475>; and see also ACLED, *Data Export Tool*.

²⁹ Jeune Afrique, *Au Burkina Faso, des attaques jihadistes sans répit*, 13 February 2023, www.jeuneafrique.com/1417389/politique/au-burkina-faso-des-attaques-jihadistes-sans-repit/; TV5Monde, *Burkina Faso : au moins une dizaine de civils tués dans deux attaques djihadistes*, 27 January 2023, <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/burkina-faso-au-moins-une-dizaine-de-civils-tues-dans-deux-attaques-djihadistes-486665>; Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : au moins un gendarme tué dans une attaque dans le Centre-ouest*, 29 May 2022, www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-au-moins-un-gendarme-tue-dans-une-attaque-dans-le-centre-ouest/2600569. See also, ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

³⁰ "La violence quasi quotidienne est généralisée sur 77% du territoire (10 sur 13 régions), affectant principalement les populations civiles, notamment les femmes et les enfants." UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Plan de Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 5. "Civilians are the first victims of the upsurge in violence and the exponential increase in human rights violations." UNHCR, *Operational Update: Burkina Faso*, 31 December 2022, <https://reporting.unhcr.org/document/4210>, p. 2.

³¹ 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>.

³² 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; Burkina Faso: Assemblée Nationale, *Compte rendu analytique de la séance plénière du vendredi 10 janvier 2020*, 10 January 2020, www.assembleenationale.bf/spip.php?article1161; Burkina Faso: Assemblée Nationale, *Loi n°045-2019/an portant prorogation de la durée de l'état d'urgence prorogée 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.

³³ Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : L'état d'urgence sera réactivé sur toute l'étendue du territoire*, 11 April 2022, www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-l-etat-d-urgence-sera-reactive-sur-toute-l-etendue-du-territoire/2561094.

³⁴ Project 21, *Protection Monitoring Note: March – April 2023*, 1 June 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101312>, p. 3; Crisis 24, *Burkina Faso: Authorities Impose State of Emergency in 22 Provinces from March 30, 28 March 2023*, <https://crisis24.garda.com/alerts/2023/03/burkina-faso-authorities-impose-state-of-emergency-in-22-provinces-from-march-30>.

³⁵ Clingendael Institute, *Self-Defence Groups, Politics and the Sahelian State*, 14 December 2022, www.clingendael.org/publication/self-defence-groups-politics-and-sahelian-state; ACCORD, *Self-defence Militias and State Sponsorship in Burkina Faso*, 15 March 2022, www.accord.org.za/conflict-trends/self-defence-militias-and-state-sponsorship-in-burkina-faso/; Bertelsmann Stiftung, *BTI 2022 Country Report: Burkina Faso*, 23 February 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2069763.html, p. 6; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Pandora's Box: Burkina Faso, Self-Defense Militias and VDP Law in Fighting Jihadism*, 2021, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/17590.pdf>, p. 8.

³⁶ Le Monde Diplomatique, *Les milices prolifèrent au Burkina Faso*, May 2020, www.monde-diplomatique.fr/2020/05/CARAYOL/61740; ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2025967/287-burkina-faso-spiral-of-violence.pdf, pp. 9-11. "One of the most

12. On 21 January 2020, a law was adopted to allow for the recruitment of *volontaires pour la défense de la patrie* (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.³⁷ The VDP suffered heavy casualties on the front lines, weakening in 2021 but remobilizing in 2022 in cooperation with the army.³⁸ In October 2022, the government announced their intention to recruit an additional 50,000 VDP.³⁹ On 17 December 2022, the legislative assembly passed an updated VDP law which outlines the recruitment of volunteers as well as the benefits and responsibilities of those who join.⁴⁰

Violent Extremist Groups

13. Since 2015, Burkina Faso has experienced conflict as a result of the presence of violent extremist groups, “creating one of the world’s most severe (and most neglected) humanitarian and displacement crises.”⁴¹ Attacks by such groups became more frequent during 2022; over 90 per cent of incidents of battles, explosions/remote violence and violence against civilians recorded by ACLED during 2022 involved violent extremist groups.⁴² Within the wider Sahel region, Burkina Faso has become the epicentre of violence linked to these groups.⁴³ The Burkina Faso authorities only control an estimated 60 per cent of territory, with the remaining areas held by such groups.⁴⁴ During 2022 and into 2023,

important federations of Dozo hunting brotherhoods in Burkina Faso is the National Union of Dozo, led by Ali Konaté. It claims 17,000 members from 142 brotherhoods.” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, *Pandora’s Box: Burkina Faso, Self-Defense Militias and VDP Law in Fighting Jihadism*, 2021, <https://library.fes.de/pdf-files/bueros/fes-pscc/17590.pdf>, p. 17.

³⁷ 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. “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 Pandora. 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>; ICG, *Stopping the Spiral of Violence*, 24 February 2020, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2025967/287-burkina-faso-spiral-of-violence.pdf, p. 24. See also, International Centre for Counter-Terrorism, *Civilians on the Front Lines of (Counter-) Terrorism: Lessons from the Volunteers for the Defence of the Homeland in Burkina Faso*, November 2021, <https://icct.nl/app/uploads/2021/11/Civilians-on-the-Front-Lines-of-Counter-Terrorism-1.pdf>, p. 5.

³⁸ ICG, *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso’s Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html.

³⁹ Jamestown Foundation, *Mass Civilian Defense Force Recruitment Raises Jihadist Threat to Civilians in Burkina Faso*, Terrorism Monitor Volume 22 Issue 5, 3 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2088239.html; Africanews, *Burkina Faso: 30,000 New Army Auxiliaries to Fight Terrorism*, 22 November 2022, www.africanews.com/2022/11/22/burkina-faso-30000-new-army-auxiliaries-to-fight-terrorism/; Africanews, *Burkina Faso Recruits 50,000 Civilians as Army Auxiliaries to Fight Jihadists*, 26 October 2022, www.africanews.com/2022/10/26/burkina-faso-recruits-50000-civilians-as-army-auxiliaries-to-fight-jihadists/. Reportedly, 90,000 persons signed up. Project 21, *Protection Monitoring Note: March – April 2023*, 1 June 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101312>, p. ; VOA, *4 Attacks Kill Dozens in Burkina Faso, Security Sources Say*, 20 January 2023, www.voanews.com/a/attacks-kill-dozens-in-burkina-faso-security-sources-say-6927428.html; RFI, *Burkina Faso: le recrutement de volontaires face au terrorisme dépasse les objectifs fixés*, 27 November 2022, www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20221127-burkina-faso-le-recrutement-de-volontaires-face-au-terrorisme-depasse-les-objectifs-fixes. The Burkinabé army has less personnel; estimates put their forces between 15,000 and 20,000. ICG, *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso’s Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html.

⁴⁰ This superseded and replaced the previous January 2020 law. Volunteers are recruited to serve at the village, communal or national level for a period of twelve months at a time. They are supposed to receive financial support and health coverage in case of injury or death. Burkina Faso: Legislative Assembly, *Loi no. 028-2022/ALT Instituant les volontaires pour la défense de la patrie (VDP)*, 17 December 2022, www.assembleenationale.bf/IMG/pdf/loi_no028_instituant_ldap.pdf.

⁴¹ Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (GI-TOC), *JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor*, August 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Burkina-Faso-JNIM-29-Aug-web.pdf>, p. 1. “The western Sahel has seen a quadrupling in the number of militant Islamist group events since 2019. The 2,800 violent events projected for 2022 represent a doubling in the past year. This violence has expanded in intensity and geographic reach”. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel/>.

⁴² JNIM and IS Sahel were noted either as the primary actor or the secondary actor in 1,492 incidents, making up 90.9 per cent of all recorded incidents. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>. To see these types of incidents mapped across the Sahel, see Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Time Lapse of Districts with Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Sahel-Heat-Maps-2017-2022.pdf>, p. 6. See also, Financial Times, *Security Forces Struggle to Cope with Upsurge in Sahel Jihadi Violence*, 9 October 2022, www.ft.com/content/f4dcccdb-1760-4b52-a290-ad62e99ea42b; The New Humanitarian, *In Post-Coup Burkina Faso, Jihadist Attacks Grow Fiercer Despite Junta Pledge*, 29 June 2022, www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/06/29/Burkina-Faso-displacement-coup-junta.

⁴³ “[M]ore than two-thirds of the violent events [during the first three quarters of 2022] linked to militant Islamist groups in the Sahel took place outside of Mali, mostly in Burkina Faso”. Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel/>. In the Sahel: “Burkina Faso is in the dire straits.” ICG, *10 Conflicts to Watch in 2023*, 1 January 2023, www.crisisgroup.org/global/10-conflicts-watch-2023.

⁴⁴ Le Monde, *Au Burkina Faso, plus de cinquante soldats tués dans une attaque attribuée aux djihadistes*, 20 February 2023, www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2023/02/20/au-burkina-faso-plus-de-cinquante-soldats-tues-dans-une-attaque-attribuee-aux-djihadistes_6162616_3212.html; France 24, *French Army Officially Ends Operations in Burkina Faso*, 20 February 2023, www.france24.com/en/france/20230220-french-army-officially-ends-operations-in-burkina-faso; Aljazeera, *State Controls Just 60 Percent of Burkina Faso: ECOWAS Mediator*, 18 June 2022, www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/18/state-controls-only-60-percent-of-burkina-faso-mediator. “Jihadist-inspired terrorist groups [control] large swathes of territory, especially in the countryside beyond the central government’s reach. According to estimates, the government controls slightly over 50 percent of the country’s territory, and the actual figure could be lower.” GIS, *Burkina Faso: Another Russia-West Hotspot?*, 3 January 2023, www.gisreportsonline.com/r/burkina-faso/.

violence by these groups has spread southward to Togo and Benin.⁴⁵

14. Two violent extremist groups remain active in Burkina Faso: the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM),⁴⁶ a coalition of groups including Katibat Macina⁴⁷ and Ansarul Islam,⁴⁸ and the Islamic State (IS) Sahel, also known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS).⁴⁹ JNIM exercises significant control in the Est, Nord, and Centre-Nord regions, while IS Sahel is most active in Oudalan and Seno provinces in the Sahel region.⁵⁰ The two groups originally cooperated in attacks against the government, but since mid-2019 they have engaged in “particularly deadly and protracted” conflict against each other, fighting over “influence and dominance in the tri-state [Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger] border region”.⁵¹

⁴⁵ “The deteriorating security situation is spreading rapidly southward to Togo and Benin, where JNIM or its affiliates are now conducting attacks and could seek to reproduce the same pattern of leveraging and exploiting community tensions. Less affected by this violence, Ghana could become the next target of JNIM, according to several Member States.” UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 13 February 2023 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 13 February 2023, S/2023/95, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2087006/N2303891.pdf (hereafter: UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 13 February 2023*, 13 February 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2087006/N2303891.pdf), para. 30. See also, RFI, *Togo: le président Faure Gnassingbé évoque les attaques armées dans le nord du pays*, 29 April 2023, www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20230429-togo-le-president-faure-gnassingbe-evoque-les-attaques-armees-dans-le-nord-du-pays.

⁴⁶ “JNIM formed in March 2017 through the merger of four Salafi-jihadist groups in the Sahel: Ansar Dine, Katibat Macina, al-Mourabitoun, and the Sahara branch of al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). In announcing the group’s creation, JNIM emir Iyad Ag Ghaly stated the group’s intention to ‘stand in front of the occupying Crusader enemy’ and pledged allegiance to al Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.” Center for Strategic and International Studies, *Examining Extremism: Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin*, 15 July 2021, www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin. See also, UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 11 July 2022 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee Pursuant to Resolutions 1267 (1999), 1989 (2011) and 2253 (2015) Concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (Da’esh), Al-Qaida and Associated Individuals, Groups, Undertakings and Entities Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 15 July 2022, S/2022/547, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2075689/N2239429.pdf (hereafter: UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 11 July 2022*, 15 July 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2075689/N2239429.pdf), paras 26, 32. “JNIM’s strategic aims were a continuation of AQIM’s – to undermine regional governments by fighting state forces and to foster their own form of Islamist governance in an expansionist fashion.” GI-TOC, *JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor*, August 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Burkina-Faso-JNIM-29-Aug-web.pdf>, p. 19.

⁴⁷ “A central Malian jihadist group that joined the JNIM coalition in 2017. Given central Mali’s proximity to Burkina Faso, Katibat Macina is the most influential of JNIM’s components in Burkina Faso and was a critical support for Ansarul Islam’s development. Katibat Macina and its leader, Amadou Kouffa, have focused their recruitment efforts and rhetoric on Fulani grievances and intercommunal struggles in central Mali.” GI-TOC, *JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor*, August 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Burkina-Faso-JNIM-29-Aug-web.pdf>, p. 4.

⁴⁸ Ansarul Islam was founded by Ibrahim Malam Dicko, a Burkinabe religious preacher of fulani ethnicity from the province of Soum in the Sahel region in 2016. The group was allied with the Katibat Macina from Mali and cooperated with JNIM and ISGS from 2017 to 2019. Starting in 2019, however, ISGS and JNIM, along with its partners, have fought against each other. In this context, Ansarul Islam and JNIM’s attacks have “become essentially indistinguishable”, with evidence suggesting that Ansarul Islam has “been effectively absorbed into the JNIM coalition”. GI-TOC, *JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor*, August 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Burkina-Faso-JNIM-29-Aug-web.pdf>, p. 11, see also, pp. 4, 9-10. “Several militant groups, including remnants of the Burkinabe group, Ansarul Islam, fight under the banner of [JNIM].” Africa Center for Strategic Studies, *Five Zones of Militant Islamist Violence in the Sahel*, 26 September 2022, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/five-zones-militant-islamist-violence-sahel/>. “Within the context of increased instability associated with the coup d’état in Burkina Faso of 24 January, most of Ansarul Islam joined JNIM.” UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 11 July 2022*, 15 July 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2075689/N2239429.pdf, para. 27.

⁴⁹ “After its formation in May 2015, the group went through several phases in its wartime transformation until it was granted ‘provincial’ status in March 2022. Initially, IS Sahel was known as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS). The group did not carry out attacks, or at least did not claim responsibility for them, until September 2016, when it began to carry out a series of attacks on military and security force positions in Burkina Faso and Niger. [...] Between March 2019 and March 2022, IS Sahel was technically the Greater Sahara faction of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) as part of the IS organizational infrastructure before being declared a separate province in March 2022.” ACLED, *Actor Profile: The Islamic State Sahel Province*, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/>. See also, UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 11 July 2022*, 15 July 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2075689/N2239429.pdf, para. 30.

⁵⁰ “Through a series of battles with JNIM in 2021, ISGS in Burkina Faso has been increasingly confined to the Oudalan and Seno provinces within the Sahel region, and with a more limited presence in Soum and Yagha. It has been unable to make and hold significant territorial gains despite regular clashes with JNIM. By contrast, JNIM has consolidated its presence in the Est, Nord and Centre-Nord regions and has substantially increased its activity in Cascades, Hauts Bassins and Boucle du Mouhoun in the course of the past year.” GI-TOC, *JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor*, August 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Burkina-Faso-JNIM-29-Aug-web.pdf>, pp. 11-12. “[IS Sahel] has become the dominant actor in several of the regions encompassing this area, including the Gao and Menaka regions in Mali, the Oudalan and Seno provinces in Burkina Faso, and the Tillabéri and Tahoua regions in Niger, as well as areas adjacent to the aforementioned regions.” ACLED, *Actor Profile: The Islamic State Sahel Province*, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/>. See also, ICG, *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso’s Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html. In the north and east of the country, JNIM “is establishing itself as the central authority in the absence of strong governance.” UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 13 February 2023*, 13 February 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2087006/N2303891.pdf, para. 23.

⁵¹ ACLED, *Actor Profile: The Islamic State Sahel Province*, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/>. “Clashes between ISGS and the JNIM and Ansarul Islam factions began sporadically in mid-2019, concentrated in the tri-border area of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger. By early 2020, these had escalated to frequent bouts of violence and evolved into major territorial struggles throughout that year in the tri-border area, and the eastern and northern regions of Burkina Faso. [...] Throughout 2020 and 2021, JNIM-affiliated groups reversed many of the territorial losses to ISGS, particularly in the Est region of Burkina Faso, where it effectively replaced ISGS as the dominant

15. JNIM focuses on local acceptance and has used ethnic tensions and community grievances to drive recruitment and expand its territory, instituting a radical form of Islamic law in areas it controls.⁵² The group has also recruited in and spread to neighbouring countries, training foreign recruits in Burkina Faso before sending them back to their home countries to fight.⁵³ IS Sahel conducts large-scale and indiscriminate attacks against military and civilian targets.⁵⁴ JNIM and IS Sahel have targeted areas where the resident population has formed self-defence groups.⁵⁵
16. Since February 2022, JNIM has blockaded Djibo in Soum province, destroying infrastructure and attacking convoys.⁵⁶ The siege has exacerbated dire humanitarian needs, driven rising food insecurity and shortages of medicines, with improvised explosive devices (IEDs) planted on strategic roads preventing humanitarian access.⁵⁷ In the second half of 2022, violent extremist “groups in Burkina Faso continued encircling cities and targeting infrastructure”, destroying several bridges and attacking a supply convoy.⁵⁸ By destroying infrastructure, planting IEDs, attacking convoys and traders and prohibiting the importation of supplies, these groups have, in effect, blockaded Burkina Faso’s Sahel region.⁵⁹ In addition, both JNIM and IS Sahel have targeted infrastructure in order to cut off trade routes

armed actor in the zone.” GI-TOC, *JNIM in Burkina Faso: A Strategic Criminal Actor*, August 2022, <https://globalinitiative.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Burkina-Faso-JNIM-29-Aug-web.pdf>, p. 11, see also p. 12. From 23 June 2022 to 30 December 2022: “Al-Qaida-affiliated [JNIM] engaged in frequent confrontations with Islamic State in the Greater Sahara over access to resources and influence, with civilian populations caught in the crossfire.” UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 22.

⁵² “In the north, JNIM has exploited ethnic tensions and state neglect, as well as grievances over corruption, patronage politics, social stratification, and land disputes.” CRS, *Burkina Faso: Conflict and Military Rule*, 17 October 2022, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/IF/IF10434/14>, p. 1. “The JNIM instrumentalises ethnic tensions in Soum province to establish its presence in Sahel region. To avoid any counterspeech, the group has killed and threatened the customary and religious authorities playing the role of peacemaker between ethnic communities. A part of the population who feel aggrieved by ethnic rivalries in Soum province adhere to the discourse of the armed groups.” ACAPS, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Overview of Djibo Town Surrounded by Armed Groups*, 19 October 2022, www.acaps.org/special-report/burkina-faso-humanitarian-overview-djibo-town-surrounded-armed-groups#container-1823, p. 2. See also, US Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burkina Faso*, 15 May 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2087006/N2303891.pdf, para. 23; ACLED, *Actor Profile: The Islamic State Sahel Province*, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/>.

⁵³ “JNIM recruits from Côte d’Ivoire, Senegal and Togo are trained in Burkina Faso prior to being redeployed to their countries of origin.” The group also expanded in December 2021 to north-western Nigeria. UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 11 July 2022*, 15 July 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2075689/N2239429.pdf, paras 27, 32.

⁵⁴ IS Sahel uses “a distinct pattern of conflict characterized by large-scale violence against a variety of adversaries and civilians” and an “important aspect of [their violence] is that it tends to be indiscriminate: IS Sahel does not distinguish between combatants and civilian communities among opposing forces”. ACLED, *Actor Profile: The Islamic State Sahel Province*, 13 January 2023, <https://acleddata.com/2023/01/13/actor-profile-the-islamic-state-sahel-province/>.

⁵⁵ “Islamist armed groups allied to Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) killed hundreds of civilians during attacks on villages and convoys and at water points and gold mines. Many attacks targeted communities that had formed local civil defense groups.” HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html. “Violent extremist groups killed hundreds of civilians between January and September. Such violent extremist groups frequently targeted villagers suspected of collaborating with state-sponsored militias and security forces, or simply killed civilians in retribution for losses inflicted by security forces.” US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burkina Faso*, 20 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2089213.html.

⁵⁶ “Since 17 February 2022, armed groups affiliated with the Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) have surrounded Djibo town in Soum province, located at the border with Mali. The groups have been controlling the access routes to the city, preventing the entry and exit of people and goods. The population of Djibo (over 89,000 community members and at least 285,000 IDPs) depends on the few escorted supply convoys to access food and other essential items. These convoys often fall under the attacks of armed groups, who have systematically planted improvised explosive devices (IEDs) along strategic roads. These IEDs have killed civilians and prevented movements.” ACAPS, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Overview of Djibo Town Surrounded by Armed Groups*, 19 October 2022, www.acaps.org/special-report/burkina-faso-humanitarian-overview-djibo-town-surrounded-armed-groups#container-1823, p. 1. See also, HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html; Bellinca, *Five Kilometres of Destruction: Satellite Imagery Reveals Extent of Damage to Civilian Convoy in Burkina Faso*, 18 November 2022, www.bellingcat.com/news/2022/11/18/five-kilometres-of-destruction-satellite-imagery-reveals-extent-of-damage-to-civilian-convoy-in-burkina-faso/; Le Monde, *Au Burkina Faso, les djihadistes intensifient leur stratégie d’asphyxie des villes du Nord et de l’Est*, 7 September 2022, www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2022/09/07/au-burkina-faso-les-djihadistes-intensifient-leur-strategie-d-asphyxie-des-villes-du-nord-et-de-l-est_6140529_3212.html.

⁵⁷ MSF, *Burkina Faso : la vie sous blocus à Djibo*, 5 May 2023, <https://www.msf.fr/actualites/burkina-faso-la-vie-sous-blocus-a-djibo>; Aljazeera, *Forced to Eat Leaves: Hungry and Besieged in Burkina Faso*, 12 December 2022, www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2022/12/12/forced-to-eat-leaves-hungry-and-besieged-in-burkina-faso; ACAPS, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Overview of Djibo Town Surrounded by Armed Groups*, 19 October 2022, www.acaps.org/special-report/burkina-faso-humanitarian-overview-djibo-town-surrounded-armed-groups#container-1823, pp. 1-2. “In the city of Djibo, home to nearly half the people living under siege, food insecurity became so dire in late 2022 that up to 85 per cent of families’ meals consisted of wild leaves.” NRC, *The World’s Most Neglected Displacement Crises 2022*, 1 June 2023, www.nrc.no/globalassets/pdf/reports/neglected-2022/the-worlds-most-neglected-displacement-crises-2022.pdf, p. 4.

⁵⁸ UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 23.

⁵⁹ This represents an “evolution in [their] modus operandi”, where they cut off the region from the rest of the country; “whereas the blockade of towns had become a recurring problem (notably Djibo, Titao, Bourzanga, Sebba), the entire Sahel region now risks being in a situation of blockade.” Food Security Cluster, *Burkina Faso: From Blockade to the Brink of Famine*, August 2022, https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/bulletin2_august_english.pdf, p. 1. See also, Run Down Bulletin, *In Burkina Faso, the Inhabitants of the City under the Blockade of the Jihadists Are at Risk of Starvation*, 3 August 2022, <https://rundownbulletin.com/world-news/48308.html>.

to Ouagadougou.⁶⁰

17. The impacts on civilians of insecurity due to extremist violence⁶¹ are multi-faceted and include, *inter alia*: increasing food insecurity, restrictions on children's access to education,⁶² an increase in gender-based violence⁶³ and internal and cross-border displacement.⁶⁴

Human Rights Situation

18. Significant human rights violations and abuses include extrajudicial executions and killings, forced disappearance, arbitrary detention, torture and kidnappings.⁶⁵ Observers allege that persons suspected of having links to JNIM or IS Sahel have been tortured.⁶⁶ In several instances, civilians have been targeted and killed by armed actors, resulting in mass civilian casualties.⁶⁷ JNIM and IS Sahel have

⁶⁰ "For some months, JNIM has been trying to disrupt or even block supplies transported on the main roads leading to Ouagadougou. Certain products such as fish, which comes largely from the East region, and foodstuffs imported from Côte d'Ivoire are becoming scarce. This strategy of isolating the capital [...] began before 24 January but has since intensified, with both JNIM and ISIS Sahel recently sabotaging a series of bridges in several regions, mainly in the Sahel and East." ICG, *An Initial Assessment of Burkina Faso's Transitional Leadership*, 14 September 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2079016.html. "JNIM and its affiliates, particularly through the strong presence of Ansarul Islam [...], have sought to control the north-south communication axis in the east of [Burkina Faso]. The N18 road leading to Togo and Benin and crossing the provinces of Gnagna and Fada Ngourma was particularly targeted." UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 13 February 2023*, 13 February 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2087006/N2303891.pdf, para. 27.

⁶¹ "In Burkina Faso, the number of civilian deaths reported in February [2023] reached its highest level in recent years as a result of offensives by Islamist militant groups. The number of civilians killed in February was nearly double the average monthly death toll for 2022." UN Security Council, *Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General*, 9 May 2023, S/2023/328, <https://reliefweb.int/attachments/40681369-cb91-4612-a7b5-302121aa8ef8/N2312627.pdf>, para. 3. See also, VOA, *33 Civilians Killed in Burkina Faso Attack, Governor Says*, 13 May 2023, www.voanews.com/a/civilians-killed-in-burkina-faso-attack-governor-says-7092472.html; France 24, *'General Mobilisation' Declared in Burkina Faso after Series of Terrorist Attacks*, 14 April 2023, www.france24.com/en/africa/20230413-general-mobilisation-declared-in-burkina-faso-after-series-of-jihadist-attacks; France 24, *Dozens of Soldiers Killed in Jihadi Attack on Burkina Faso Army Unit*, 20 February 2023, www.france24.com/en/africa/20230220-dozens-of-soldiers-killed-in-jihadi-attack-on-burkina-faso-army-unit; Africanews, *Jihadi Violence Intensifies in Burkina as Militants Kill Nearly 30 in 2 Days*, 31 January 2023, www.africanews.com/2023/01/31/jihadi-violence-intensifies-as-militants-kill-nearly-30-in-2-days/; CGTN, *More than 10 people Killed in Two Attacks in Burkina Faso*, 28 January 2023, <https://africa.cgtn.com/2023/01/28/more-than-10-people-killed-in-two-attacks-in-burkina-faso/>; VOA, *4 Attacks Kill Dozens in Burkina Faso*, *Security Sources Say*, 20 January 2023, www.voanews.com/a/attacks-kill-dozens-in-burkina-faso-security-sources-say-6927428.html; Africanews, *Burkina Faso: At Least Eight Dead, Including Six Civilians, in Two Separate Attacks*, 19 December 2022, www.africanews.com/2022/12/19/burkina-faso-at-least-eight-dead-including-six-civilians-in-two-separate-attacks/.

⁶² OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire (Au 31 décembre 2022)*, 30 January 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-apercu-de-la-situation-humanitaire-au-31-decembre-2022>; HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html; Africanews, *Burkina Faso: A Million Students Deprived of School Because of the Jihadists*, 24 November 2022, www.africanews.com/2022/11/24/burkina-faso-a-million-students-deprived-of-school-because-of-the-jihadists/. This is in the context of a significant spike in school closures due to insecurity across the Sahel region: "About 11,100 schools remained closed or non-operational owing to violence across the Sahel, up from 6,800 in the previous reporting period, with 40 million children out of school." UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 33. See also, US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burkina Faso*, 20 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2089213.html.

⁶³ "Selon le rapport semestriel 2022 du sous-groupe sur la GBV [gender-based violence], 91% des cas de GBV rapportés pendant la période sont des personnes déplacées à l'intérieur du pays (IDP). Les femmes et les filles représentent 97% des cas rapportés. [...] 7% des cas sont des filles de moins de 18 ans. 87,5% du nombre total de cas signalés ont été commis dans des régions où les projections d'insécurité alimentaire aiguë sont élevées". Protection Cluster, *Revue des Données Secondaires Violence Basée sur le Genre au Burkina Faso*, 22 December 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085014.html, p. 1.

⁶⁴ HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html; The New Humanitarian, *In Post-Coup Burkina Faso, Jihadist Attacks Grow Fiercer Despite Junta Pledge*, 29 June 2022, www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/06/29/Burkina-Faso-displacement-coup-junta. "The deteriorating security situation in the southern and eastern parts of Burkina Faso, as well as the overall socioeconomic conditions in the Sahel, have triggered increasing waves of displacement to coastal countries, creating emergency needs and exacerbating underlying vulnerabilities." UN Security Council, *Activities of the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel*, 3 January 2023, S/2022/1019, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2085264/N2300032.pdf, para. 34.

⁶⁵ US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burkina Faso*, 20 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2089213.html; The Guardian, *Suspected Jihadists Kidnap 50 Women in Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/16/burkina-faso-suspected-jihadists-kidnap-women; HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html; Africanews, *Burkina: NGOs Denounce "Extrajudicial Executions of more than 40 People"*, 15 August 2022, www.africanews.com/2022/08/15/burkina-ngos-denounce-extrajudicial-executions-of-more-than-40-people/; HRW, *Burkina Faso: Armed Islamists Kill, Rape Civilians*, 16 May 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2073070.html.

⁶⁶ US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burkina Faso*, 20 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2089213.html; GCR2P, *Atrocity Alert No. 330: Ukraine, Burkina Faso and South Sudan*, 11 January 2023, www.globalr2p.org/publications/atrocity-alert-no-330/.

⁶⁷ For example, 220 civilians were killed in an attack on a village in April 2023. Project 21, *Protection Monitoring Note: March – April 2023*, 1 June 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101312>, p. 3. See also, HRW, *Army Linked to Massacre of 156 Civilians*, 26 May 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2091462.html; Le Monde, *33 Civilians Killed in Burkina Faso Attack*, 14 May 2023, www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/14/33-civilians-killed-in-burkina-faso-attack_6026592_4.html; UN News, *Burkina Faso: l'ONU demande une enquête sur le massacre de 150 civils*, 25 April 2023, <https://news.un.org/fr/story/2023/04/1134517>; CNN, *At Least 44 Killed in Burkina Faso Attacks*, 9 April 2023, <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/04/09/africa/burkina-faso-civilians-killed-intl/index.html>; Jamestown Foundation,

targeted both Christian and Muslim worshippers in and near mosques and churches, including Imams they accused of assisting government forces.⁶⁸ Christian churches in the Est region have been closed due to the danger posed by these groups.⁶⁹

19. Children are exposed to risks of serious human rights violations such as forced recruitment by armed groups, child labour and its worst forms, as well as other types of violence, abuse, exploitation and gender-based violence.⁷⁰ The number of school closures has increased from approximately 3,000 schools in November 2021 to 6,334 schools as of 31 March 2023.⁷¹ The majority of displaced children are unable to attend school.⁷² Early and child marriage is prevalent and forced marriages continue to be reported.⁷³ Half of all children in Burkina Faso are estimated to be exposed to gender-based violence or mistreatment, with the estimate as high as 82 per cent for girls.⁷⁴
20. The UN verified the recruitment and use of 115 children between the ages of 3 and 17 in 2022, most for combat roles, by JNIM (65), IS Sahel (28) and unidentified perpetrators (22).⁷⁵ In the Centre-Nord and Sahel regions, JNIM has abducted children “as punishment for not adhering to the norms set by armed groups”.⁷⁶ JNIM and IS Sahel have targeted schools and hospitals.⁷⁷ Between September 2021 and May 2022, Human Rights Watch documented dozens of cases where fighters from these groups “raped and otherwise abused women and girls who were foraging for wood, traveling to and from the

Mass Civilian Defense Force Recruitment Raises Jihadist Threat to Civilians in Burkina Faso, Terrorism Monitor Volume 22 Issue 5, 3 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2088239.html; Amnesty International, *Burkina Faso: Perpetrators of Nouna Killings Must Face Justice*, 10 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085210.html.

⁶⁸ US Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burkina Faso*, 15 May 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2091877.html.
⁶⁹ Ibid.; Open Doors, *Christians in Burkina Faso Face 'Existential Threat' amid Second Coup this Year*, 5 October 2022, www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/burkina-faso-threat/. See also, Anadolu Agency, *Burkina Faso : Un prêtre tué dans une attaque dans le nord-ouest (Eglise)*, 3 January 2023, www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/burkina-faso-un-prêtre-tué-dans-une-attaque-dans-le-nord-ouest-eglise/2778767.

⁷⁰ “Les enfants, qui représentent malheureusement plus de 61% des PDI, sont exposés à plusieurs risques de protection notamment la séparation familiale, les violences sexistes et sexuelles, la déscolarisation, la détresse psychosociale, les mariages précoces, l’exploitation dans les pires formes de travail, le recrutement par des groupes armés, etc”. Protection Cluster, *Burkina Faso: Etat de la réponse protection de l'enfant*, 15 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-etat-de-la-reponse-protection-de-lenfant-au-30-novembre-2022>, p. 1. See also, Project 21, *Child Protection and Education Trends: Triangulation of Protection Monitoring Findings Central Sahel January 2022 - March 2023*, 1 June 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2092867.html, pp. 3-6; HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html. Children who are out of school are at a higher risk for forced recruitment and GBV. OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 71.

⁷¹ UNICEF, *Humanitarian Situation Report No. 3: Burkina Faso*, 5 May 2023, www.unicef.org/media/139801/file/Burkina-Faso-Humanitarian-SitRep-March-2023.pdf, pp. 1, 3. See also, US Department of State, *2022 Report on International Religious Freedom: Burkina Faso*, 15 May 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2091877.html; Africanews, *Burkina Faso: A Million Students Deprived of School Because of the jihadists*, 24 November 2022, www.africanews.com/2022/11/24/burkina-faso-a-million-students-deprived-of-school-because-of-the-jihadists/. “Because of rampant terrorist attacks, about 200 Burkina schools close every month. In the far northern Sahel region, nearly 90% of the schools are closed.” Africa Terrorist Forum, *In Burkina Faso, Violence Spirals Out Of Control*, 16 May 2023, <https://adf-magazine.com/2023/05/in-burkina-faso-violence-spirals-out-of-control/>.

⁷² As of November 2022: “Only 161,000 out of 1,057,149 IDP children [were] enrolled in public schools”. UNICEF, *Humanitarian Situation Report No. 7: Burkina Faso*, 24 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-7-1-30-novembre-2022>, p. 2.

⁷³ Reuters, *Escaping Forced Marriage, Burkina Faso Girls Find Refuge in Education*, 15 March 2022, www.reuters.com/world/africa/escaping-forced-marriage-burkina-faso-girls-find-refuge-education-2022-03-15/. Child marriage exposes girls to a higher risk of GBV. OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 21.

⁷⁴ “Un enfant sur deux est touché par la violence physique et violences basées sur le genre ou maltraitance dont 82% sont des filles.” OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 21.

⁷⁵ “A total of 115 children (111 boys, 4 girls), between the ages of 3 to 17, were recruited and used by Jama'a Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) (65), Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) (28) and unidentified perpetrators (22), mostly in the Sahel Region. Most children (102) were used in combat. In 2022, the United Nations verified the recruitment and use of 10 boys by the Defence and Security Forces that had occurred in 2021.” Additionally: “Some 13 boys were detained in the high security prison of Ouagadougou for their alleged association with armed groups, including 6 who have been in detention for a number of years.” UN Security Council, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 5 June 2023, S/2023/363, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/144/96/PDF/N2314496.pdf>, paras 222-23. “Plus de 1/3 d'enfants à risque de recrutement et d'utilisation par les groupes armés se trouvent dans la région du Sahel et 20% se trouvent dans la région de l'Est.” OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 21. “Numerous villagers described seeing children they estimated to be as young as 12, many armed with military assault weapons, among armed Islamist ranks. They were seen in assaults on the towns of Namissiguima, Namsiguia, Foube, Rofenga, Pensa, Dablo, and in several areas of Est region, as well as during attacks on convoys of fleeing civilians.” HRW, *World Report 2023: Burkina Faso*, 16 January 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085396.html.

⁷⁶ UN Security Council, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 5 June 2023, S/2023/363, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/144/96/PDF/N2314496.pdf>, para. 228.

⁷⁷ “Responsibility for 163 verified attacks on schools (120) and hospitals (43), including protected persons in relation to schools and/or hospitals, was attributed to JNIM (109), ISGS (41), unidentified perpetrators (12) and joint operations of the Defence and Security Forces and VDP (1). Incidents involved the abduction and killing of, as well as threats against, protected persons, and the destruction, closure and looting of facilities.” UN Security Council, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 5 June 2023, S/2023/363, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/144/96/PDF/N2314496.pdf>, para. 226. See also, Insecurity Insight, *Burkina Faso: Violence Against Healthcare in Conflict*, May 2023, <https://insecurityinsight.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/2022-SHCC-Burkina-Faso.pdf>, p. 3.

market, and fleeing the violence.”⁷⁸

21. Armed militants entered Goudoubou refugee camp on 6 November 2021, stealing food and medicine; all 13,000 residents then fled to Dori, leaving the camp abandoned.⁷⁹ On 27 November 2022, armed men attacked two IDP sites in Ouahigouya in the Nord region, forcing 13,000 persons to flee.⁸⁰
22. In February 2023, Burkina Faso’s parliament passed a law increasing the role of provost marshals responsible for military discipline, which Human Rights Watch said was “a positive step toward ensuring that the armed forces respect basic rights in military operations and detainees are treated humanely and afforded due process before the law”⁸¹

Humanitarian Situation

23. In 2023, an estimated 4.7 million persons are in need of humanitarian assistance, over twenty per cent of the country’s population.⁸² During the period from March to May 2023, an estimated 2.6 million persons were estimated to have been acutely food insecure.⁸³ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) was unable to issue a report covering the whole country due to insecurity in conflict-affected areas and lack of humanitarian access. Despite this, within the 31 provinces covered, an estimated 393,476 children will suffer acute malnutrition between August 2022 and July 2023, with 95,557 suffering from severe acute malnutrition.⁸⁴ An estimated 40 per cent of the population lives below the national poverty line, and the rate of poverty is higher in rural areas and areas affected by conflict.⁸⁵
24. Food prices remained high in 2022 compared to previous years, with the prices of basic cereals 51 per cent higher in October 2022 than in 2021.⁸⁶ An estimated 86 per cent of people in Burkina Faso are subject to “high to extremely high levels of water vulnerability”.⁸⁷ Almost half of health facilities in eight regions have been affected by insecurity, with at least 202 completely closed and others reducing

⁷⁸ HRW, *Burkina Faso: Armed Islamists Kill, Rape Civilians*, 16 May 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2073070.html. During 2022, the UN verified the “rape of 16 girls by JNIM (9), unidentified perpetrators (4), the Defence and Security Forces (2) and ISGS (1)”. UN Security Council, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 5 June 2023, S/2023/363, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N23/144/96/PDF/N2314496.pdf>, para. 225.

⁷⁹ “Everyone was very scared. Once the armed groups had gone, we returned to the camp, packed our things and left,” said Mamadou, a refugee community leader. “Some even dismantled their shelters to make sure they had a place to stay once in Dori. We now have to start our lives from scratch again.” UNHCR, *Persistent Insecurity Forces Malian Refugees in Burkina Faso Out of Goudoubou Camp*, 12 November 2021, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/89609>, p. 1. See also, UNHCR, *Project 21: Monitoring régional de protection, Sahel Central*, 30 May 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2073848/projet_21_-_analyse_annuelle_-_2021.pdf, p. 7.

⁸⁰ OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire (Au 30 Novembre 2022)*, 15 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-aperçu-de-la-situation-humanitaire-au-30-novembre-2022>.

⁸¹ HRW, *Burkina Faso Acts to Tackle Armed Forces Abuses*, 17 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2088995.html.

⁸² OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023: Mid-year Update*, 18 June 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2023-mid-year-update-snapshot-18-june-2023>, p. 13; OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire (Au 31 décembre 2022)*, 30 January 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-aperçu-de-la-situation-humanitaire-au-31-décembre-2022>; OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 8.

⁸³ “During the lean season period (June-August 2023) this number will rise to 3.4 million people. Worryingly, this projection includes almost 43,000 people in phase 5 (catastrophe).” World Food Programme (WFP), *WFP Burkina Faso Country Brief: April 2023*, 30 April 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2092822.html, p. 1. “Burkina Faso is currently one of only four countries in the world where people are facing starvation and death (IPC 5).” OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2023: Mid-year Update*, 18 June 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/global-humanitarian-overview-2023-mid-year-update-snapshot-18-june-2023>, p. 13. See also, OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire (Au 31 décembre 2022)*, 30 January 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-aperçu-de-la-situation-humanitaire-au-31-décembre-2022>.

⁸⁴ IPC, *Burkina Faso: Acute Malnutrition Analysis August 2022 - July 2023*, 17 January 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-acute-malnutrition-analysis-august-2022-july-2023-published-january-17-2023>, p. 1.

⁸⁵ “L’incidence de la pauvreté est plus accentuée en milieu rural (44.6%) qu’en milieu urbain (10%). Ces inégalités et cette pauvreté endémique font nids dans les régions qui sont durement touchées pour la crise sécuritaire actuelle, notamment la Boucle du Mouhoun (50,6%), Centre-Est (53,3%), Centre-Nord (60,8%), l’Est (45,1%), le Nord (70,9%) et le Sahel (44,2%). Ainsi, une corrélation entre la violence et la pauvreté peut être observée.” OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, p. 8, see also p. 10.

⁸⁶ WFP, *WFP Burkina Faso Country Brief: November 2022*, 22 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/wfp-burkina-faso-country-brief-november-2022>, p. 2.

⁸⁷ OCHA, *Sahel Crisis Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview 2022*, 27 June 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/sahel-crisis-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-overview-2022>, p. 25.

services which has meant that over two million people do not have access to healthcare.⁸⁸

25. Violence and conflict have destroyed critical infrastructure and driven state services and institutions from areas across the country, notably from conflict-affected areas.⁸⁹ As of 31 December 2022, an estimated 800,000 to 900,000 persons were living in isolated areas which they are unable to leave and where they do not have access to humanitarian aid or to civilian markets.⁹⁰ The humanitarian situation is especially severe for persons living in towns that have been blockaded by violent extremist groups, including large numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs).⁹¹ According to the WFP: “markets are no longer functioning and basic foodstuffs are almost nonexistent in blockaded towns such as Djibo, Sebba and Pama.”⁹²
26. While updated statistics are not available, it is reported that female genital mutilation (FGM) is still widely practised, despite its criminalization.⁹³ Ongoing violence and displacement have left many women vulnerable to GBV, including sexual violence, and restricted services available to survivors.⁹⁴ During 2022, the Protection Cluster documented 6,065 reported cases of GBV, which included rape, sexual aggression, physical aggression, forced marriage, denial of resources and psychological violence.⁹⁵
27. As of 30 June 2023, only 43.8 per cent of the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan for Burkina Faso

⁸⁸ “The situation remains particularly critical in the Sahel (65%), Centre-North (27.5%), North (11.9%), East (9.8%), South-West (5.3%), Boucle du Mouhoun (4.6%), Cascades (3.6%), and Centre-East (1.6%) regions, which have recorded a very large proportion of closed health facilities. Insecurity has had a negative impact on access to health care, especially in the Sahel, Centre-North, East, North, Boucle du Mouhoun and Centre-East regions, and the provision of quality health care is becoming uncertain. In the Sahel, for example, 65% of health facilities are closed, exposing populations to the risk of disease.” Health Cluster, *Bulletin N°34 du cluster santé: Burkina Faso*, 13 January 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/bulletin-ndeg34-du-cluster-sante-novembre-2022>, p. 2.

⁸⁹ “Les populations dans 172 communes vivent durement les conséquences de la rupture des services sociaux de base à tous les niveaux. La fermeture de centres de santé, des écoles et des marchés, l’abandon des mairies, violence contre les populations civiles et la rareté des ressources en eau dans plusieurs localités impactent la vie des populations, surtout les plus vulnérables. [...] Les relations entre l’Etat et les populations demeurent difficiles dans plusieurs localités des régions du Sahel, de l’Est, de la Boucle du Mouhoun, de Centre-Est, du Centre-Nord et du Nord. Cette situation s’explique entre autres par la faible présence de l’administration publique. En effet, la faible couverture nationale de l’administration publique, limite l’offre de services publics tels que l’éducation, la santé, l’eau, l’énergie, l’état civil, la sécurité, la justice, etc. Cette situation, couplée à la persistance de la corruption et la dégradation continue de la situation sécuritaire, renforce le sentiment d’abandon que les populations de ces régions ont vis-à-vis de l’Etat.” OCHA, *Plan De Réponse Humanitaire: Burkina Faso*, March 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2069815/bfa_hrp_2022_mars.pdf, pp. 10, 12.

⁹⁰ UNICEF, *Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8: Burkina Faso*, 3 February 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/unicef-burkina-faso-humanitarian-situation-report-no-8-1-31-december-2022>, p. 2.

⁹¹ See, for example, Aljazeera, *Forced to Eat Leaves: Hungry and Besieged in Burkina Faso*, 12 December 2022, www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2022/12/12/forced-to-eat-leaves-hungry-and-besieged-in-burkina-faso; ACAPS, *Burkina Faso: Humanitarian Overview of Djibo Town Surrounded by Armed Groups*, 19 October 2022, www.acaps.org/special-report/burkina-faso-humanitarian-overview-djibo-town-surrounded-armed-groups#container-1823; Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), *Violence and Severe Supply Shortages Leave People Across Burkina Faso in Dire Need*, 17 October 2022, www.msf.org/violence-and-severe-supply-shortages-leave-people-across-burkina-faso-dire-need; Première Urgence Internationale, *Burkina Faso: The Situation Remains Critical in Sebba, a Town under Blockade*, 19 August 2022, www.premiereurgence.org/en/burkina-faso-the-humanitarian-situation-remains-critical-in-sebba-a-town-under-blockade/. “Households are forced to adopt harmful coping strategies in a context where Burkina Faso now has six regions with ‘enclaves’ and 26 localities referred to as ‘enclaved areas’, where: (i) civilian populations cannot move freely; (ii) traders cannot move freely; (iii) the parties to the conflict have demonstrated their clear intention to prevent civilian populations from moving freely.” Project 21, *Protection Monitoring Note: March – April 2023*, 1 June 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101312>, p. 3.

⁹² WFP, *WFP Burkina Faso Country Brief: November 2022*, 22 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/wfp-burkina-faso-country-brief-november-2022>, p. 2.

⁹³ “[D]eux tiers des femmes ont été victimes de mutilations génitales féminines (MGF) au Burkina Faso (63%), plus des trois quarts dans les régions du Centre-est (75%), du Nord (76%), du Plateau central (77%), et du Sahel (83%). La pratique est effectuée à plus de 80% par des exciseuses, confirmant sa professionnalisation et son acceptation sociale.” Le Faso, *Burkina Faso : Deux tiers des femmes ont été victimes de mutilations génitales féminines*, 13 December 2022, <https://lefaso.net/spip.php?article118093>. See also, Burkina24, *Journée nationale de lutte contre la pratique de l’excision : Le message de la ministre du genre*, 18 May 2022, <https://burkina24.com/2022/05/18/journee-nationale-de-lutte-contre-la-pratique-de-lexcision-le-message-de-la-ministre-du-genre/>; US Department of State, *2022 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: Burkina Faso*, 20 March 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2089213.html.

⁹⁴ United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) / Equality Now, *Use of the Multi-Sectoral Approach to Ending Gender-Based Violence and Female Genital Mutilation in Africa*, December 2021, <https://equalitynow.storage.googleapis.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/22123712/Use-of-the-Multi-Sectoral-Approach-to-Ending-Gender-Based-Violence-and-Female-Genital-Mutilation-in-Africa-EN.pdf>, p. 21. See also, Protection Cluster, *Revue des Données Secondaires Violence Basée sur le Genre au Burkina Faso*, 22 December 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2085014.html, p. 1; UNHCR, *Project 21: Monitoring régional de protection, Sahel Central*, 30 May 2022, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2073848/projet_21_-_analyse_annuelle_-_2021.pdf, pp. 7, 18-20. As of June 2022: “service coverage remains woefully inadequate; in Burkina Faso, for example, specialized GBV services cover only 18 per cent of priority areas.” OCHA, *Sahel Crisis Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview 2022*, 27 June 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/sahel-crisis-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-overview-2022>, p. 14.

⁹⁵ Protection Cluster, *Etat de la réponse du domaine de responsabilité Violences basées sur le genre : Burkina Faso Année 2022*, 8 February 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2086686/16_dashboard_aor_vbg_burkina_faso_annee_2022.pdf, p. 1.

had been funded.⁹⁶ Humanitarian workers have been targeted by armed actors; for example, on 8 February 2023, armed men attacked a clearly identified *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) vehicle, killing two humanitarian workers.⁹⁷

Refugees and Internal Displacement

28. As of 31 May 2023, UNHCR continued to address the needs of 91,734 asylum-seekers and refugees from Burkina Faso within the region.⁹⁸ This includes 28,759 Burkinabe refugees in Niger;⁹⁹ and 19,064 arrivals from Burkina Faso in the north of Côte d'Ivoire.¹⁰⁰
29. As of 31 March 2023, there were an estimated 2,062,534 IDPs in Burkina Faso.¹⁰¹ During 2022, 668,000 persons were newly displaced within Burkina Faso.¹⁰² Displacement increases humanitarian needs and puts additional stress on host communities, which has also caused inter-communal tension, including as IDPs increasingly move to urban centres.¹⁰³ While the majority of IDPs are hosted in the regions of Sahel (501,961), Centre-Nord (493,954), Nord (256,060) and Est (219,719), there are displaced persons in all thirteen regions.¹⁰⁴ Reportedly, secondary displacement is becoming more common.¹⁰⁵ Displacement primarily affects women and children, who make up an estimated 83 per cent of IDPs in

⁹⁶ OCHA Financial Tracking Service (FTS), *Burkina Faso Plan de Réponse Humanitaire 2022*, accessed 30 June 2023, <https://fts.unocha.org/appeals/1087/summary>. "While the humanitarian situation becomes increasingly dire, the 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for Burkina Faso (with a total requirement of USD 805 million) remains heavily underfunded at only 35 percent as of 9 December according to OCHA. The food security pillar of the HRP was funded at only 40 percent." WFP, *WFP Burkina Faso Country Brief: November 2022*, 22 December 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/wfp-burkina-faso-country-brief-november-2022>, p. 1.

⁹⁷ MSF, *MSF Condemns the Brutal and Deliberate Killing of Two Staff in Burkina Faso*, 9 February 2023, www.ecoi.net/en/document/2086928.html. On 17 February 2023, MSF indefinitely suspended operations in Burkina Faso as a result of the attack. Swissinfo, *Medical Charity MSF Suspends Operations in Burkina Faso to Assess Risk*, 17 February 2023, www.swissinfo.ch/eng/reuters/medical-charity-msf-suspends-operations-in-burkina-faso-to-assess-risk/48296332. See also, Insecurity Insight, *Burkina Faso*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://insecurityinsight.org/country-pages/burkina-faso>; UN Security Council, *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 12 May 2023, S/2023/345, www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2092630/N2312710.pdf, para. 57.

⁹⁸ UNHCR, *RBWCA: Forcibly Displaced Population and Trends from 2018-2023*, 12 June 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101336>. See also, UNHCR, *UNHCR Urges Greater Support as Violence Continues Unabated in Burkina Faso*, 29 November 2022, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/11/6385db4222/unhcr-urges-greater-support-violence-continues-unabated-burkina-faso.html. As of 16 May 2023, 52,461 persons were estimated to have arrived from Burkina Faso to the coastal countries (Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Togo and Benin), over half of whom were registered. UNHCR, *RBWCA: Refugees and Asylum Seekers from Burkina Faso in Coastal Countries*, 16 May 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100734>.

⁹⁹ UNHCR, *Personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR (PoC)*, 7 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101857>.

¹⁰⁰ UNHCR, *Rapport de la situation des demandeurs d'asile au Nord*, 3 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101668>.

¹⁰¹ Conseil national de secours d'urgence et de réhabilitation (CONASUR), *Enregistrement des personnes déplacées internes du burkina faso*, 14 May 2023, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100707>; UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal: Burkina Faso*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bfa>. This is over 9 per cent of the population. OCHA, *Sahel Crisis Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview 2022*, 27 June 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/sahel-crisis-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-overview-2022>, p. 40.

¹⁰² OCHA, *Burkina Faso: Aperçu de la situation humanitaire (Au 31 décembre 2022)*, 30 January 2023, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/burkina-faso-aperçu-de-la-situation-humanitaire-au-31-décembre-2022>.

¹⁰³ "With successive waves of displacement, the town of Dori has grown threefold and is now home to almost 76,000 displaced Burkinabe, as well as some 20,000 refugees from Mali. [...] competition for resources such as water and land for pasture and agriculture, plus rising inflation, pressure on basic services and shortages of essential supplies like fuel, are all testing peaceful coexistence between different communities." UNHCR, *UNHCR Calls for Urgent Support to Assist almost 16,000 Newly Displaced in Burkina Faso Who Fled Massacre*, 17 June 2022, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/6/62ac2d714/unhcr-calls-urgent-support-assist-16000-newly-displaced-burkina-faso-fled.html. "Forced displacements continue to put pressure on the country's major urban centers, where essential public services were already insufficient, and disrupt the livelihoods of displaced households and host communities." Project 21, *Protection Monitoring Note: March – April 2023*, 1 June 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101312>, p. 3. See also, UNHCR, *UNHCR Urges Greater Support as Violence Continues Unabated in Burkina Faso*, 29 November 2022, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/11/6385db4222/unhcr-urges-greater-support-violence-continues-unabated-burkina-faso.html.

¹⁰⁴ UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal: Burkina Faso*, accessed 25 July 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/bfa>; CONASUR, *Enregistrement des personnes déplacées internes du burkina faso*, 14 May 2023, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/100707>. However, 45 per cent of all IDPs originate from the Sahel region. UNHCR, *Burkina Faso: Personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR (PoC)*, 9 January 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97990>.

¹⁰⁵ NRC, *Burkina Faso: Almost 2 Million People Displaced amid Worst Food Crisis in a Decade*, 5 September 2022, www.nrc.no/news/2022/september/burkina-faso-almost-2-million-people-now-displaced-amid-worst-food-crisis-in-a-decad/. During 2022, increasing numbers of IDPs fled across international borders after their initial internal displacement. See, for example, UNHCR, *Burkina Faso: Monitoring des Frontières*, 31 December 2022, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97988>; UNHCR, *Mixed movements in West and Central Africa*, 31 October 2022, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/96655>.

Burkina Faso.¹⁰⁶ Most IDPs live in regions where humanitarian access is difficult or impossible, and many live in poor conditions without access to adequate shelter or basic services.¹⁰⁷

International Protection Needs and Non-Return Advisory

30. As the situation in Burkina Faso remains fluid and uncertain, UNHCR calls on all countries to allow civilians fleeing Burkina Faso access to their territories. The principle of non-refoulement should be respected at all times.¹⁰⁸ Given the prevailing circumstances of insecurity in Burkina Faso, UNHCR considers that persons fleeing the ongoing conflict in Burkina Faso are likely to be in need of international refugee protection in accordance with Article 1(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention.¹⁰⁹ This could include sur place refugees seeking asylum using individual RSD procedures.¹¹⁰ In addition, persons fleeing the conflict in Burkina Faso may also meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status.¹¹¹ Depending on the profile and individual circumstances of the case, exclusion considerations may need to be looked into.¹¹²
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, Centre-Ouest, Centre-Sud, Est, Hauts-Bassins, Nord, Sahel and Sud-Ouest.
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.¹¹³
33. The bar on forcible return to the identified regions 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

¹⁰⁶ In addition, 38% of displaced households are female-headed, and 60% of all IDPs are children. UNHCR, *Burkina Faso: Personnes relevant de la compétence du HCR (PoC)*, 9 January 2023, <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/97990>.

¹⁰⁷ African Development Bank Group, *Burkina Faso: African Development Bank Supports Government Efforts to Relieve Internally Displaced Persons*, 27 September 2022, www.afdb.org/en/news-and-events/burkina-faso-african-development-bank-supports-government-efforts-relieve-internally-displaced-persons-55090; UNHCR, *UNHCR Calls for Urgent Support to Assist almost 16,000 Newly Displaced in Burkina Faso Who Fled Massacre*, 17 June 2022, www.unhcr.org/news/briefing/2022/6/62ac2d714/unhcr-calls-urgent-support-assist-16000-newly-displaced-burkina-faso-fled.html. In the Sahel generally: "Internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees often live in unsafe conditions with inadequate shelter in flood-prone locations, and with high risk of fire outbreaks. For far too many women and girls in places of displacement, gender-based violence is a daily occurrence." OCHA, *Sahel Crisis Humanitarian Needs and Requirements Overview 2022*, 27 June 2022, <https://reliefweb.int/report/burkina-faso/sahel-crisis-humanitarian-needs-and-requirements-overview-2022>, pp. 8-9.

¹⁰⁸ The principle prohibits States from returning any person in any manner to territories where they would face a threat to life or freedom on 1951 Convention grounds (1951 Convention, Art. 33); a real risk of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Convention Against Torture, Art. 3; International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), Art. 7); arbitrary deprivation of the right to life (ICCPR, Art. 6); or irreparable harm. UN Human Rights Committee, *General Comment No. 31 [80], Nature of the General Legal Obligation Imposed on States Parties to the Covenant*, 26 May 2004, CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.13, www.refworld.org/docid/478b26ae2.html. Under international human rights law, it also applies to all people at risk of return to the risk of serious human rights violations, by direct or indirect means. This also includes the right to protection against return to face threats to life, liberty and security of the person, enshrined among other instruments in the OAU Convention: Organization of African Unity, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, 10 September 1969, 1001 UN, Treaty Series 45, www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36018.html, Article 1(2). The principle of non-refoulement to torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment is absolute in character. See Council of Europe: European Court of Human Rights, *Hirsi Jamaa and Others v. Italy*, Application no. 27765/09, 23 February 2012, www.refworld.org/cases,ECHR,4f4507942.html. The prohibition on refoulement under international refugee law applies not only to persons formally recognized as refugees, but also to asylum-seekers pending a final determination of their status. The non-refoulement principle also applies to people intercepted or rescued at sea: see UNHCR Executive Committee, *Conclusion on Protection Safeguards in Interception Measures*, No. 97(LIV)(2003), www.refworld.org/docid/3f93b2894.html.

¹⁰⁹ Organization of African Unity, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa*, 10 September 1969, 1001 UN, Treaty Series 45, www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b36018.html.

¹¹⁰ 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, para. 52.

¹¹¹ UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 189, p. 137, www.refworld.org/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.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html.

¹¹² 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.refworld.org/docid/3f5857684.html.

¹¹³ 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.refworld.org/docid/3f2791a44.html.

significantly improved to permit a safe and dignified return of those determined not to be in need of international protection.

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July 2023