

# **BURKINA FASO 2019 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Burkina Faso is a constitutional republic led by an elected president. In 2015 the country held peaceful and orderly presidential and legislative elections, marking a major milestone in a transition to democracy. President Roch Mark Christian Kabore won with 53 percent of the popular vote, and his party--the People's Movement for Progress--won 55 seats in the 127-seat National Assembly. National and international observers characterized the elections as free and fair.

The Ministry of Internal Security and the Ministry of Defense are responsible for internal security. The Ministry of Internal Security includes the National Police and the gendarmerie. The Army and the Air Force, which operate within the Ministry of Defense, are responsible for external security but sometimes assist with missions related to domestic security. Civilian authorities generally maintained effective control over security forces.

Significant human rights issues included unlawful or arbitrary killings by the government, including extrajudicial killings; forced disappearance by the government; torture by the government; arbitrary detention by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; widespread corruption; and crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of national, racial, and ethnic minorities.

The government investigated and punished some cases of abuse, but impunity for human rights abuses remained a problem.

Armed groups connected to violent extremist organizations, including Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslim, Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (JNIM), the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), and homegrown Ansaroul Islam perpetrated more than 300 attacks that resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths as well as the death of government security forces. In the protracted conflict with terrorist groups, members of the security forces engaged in numerous extrajudicial killings. The Koglweogo, a vigilante justice/self-defense group, carried out numerous retaliatory attacks, resulting in at least 100 civilian casualties. In August the government arrested nine members of the Koglweogo suspected of planning the January 1 attack on the village of Yirgou that killed at least 49 and displaced thousands more.

## **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:**

### **a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings**

There were numerous reports the government or its agents committed arbitrary and unlawful killings. Multiple independent domestic and international human rights groups accused the security forces (FDS) of committing hundreds of extrajudicial killings of civilians as part of its counterterrorism strategy (section 1.g.). On July 14, 11 detainees died under the custody of the antidrug police unit in Ouagadougou.

On May 31, Fahadou Cisse and Hama Balima, two human rights defenders with the Organization for Democratic Youth in Burkina Faso, were abducted in Sebba in Yagha Province while researching a case of alleged government corruption. Prominent local human rights organizations alleged gendarmes were responsible for their deaths. As of August 20, the government had not released the results of their autopsies or opened an investigation into their deaths.

Terrorists carried out approximately 300 attacks, targeting members of government security forces and civilians. For example, on October 11, terrorists killed 16 worshippers in a mosque in the town of Salmossi in the northern Oudalon Province. On August 19, approximately 50 members of terrorist groups ISGS, JNIM, or Ansaroul Islam on motorcycles and trucks with mounted machine guns attacked the Koutougou military outpost, killing 24 soldiers and wounding dozens more (section 1.g.).

There were several accounts of criminal groups working in concert with terrorist organizations and drug traffickers killing gendarme, police, and park rangers, especially in the East Region of the country. For example, on September 6, unidentified armed individuals attacked a forest ranger position located in the Boucle du Mouhoun Region, killing the commander.

On January 2, members of Koglweogo attacked a string of ethnic Fulani herding communities outside the town of Barsalogo, killing 46 civilians, according to the government, or 216 civilians, according to civil society groups, resulting in mass displacement of local communities. The attack occurred in retribution against Fulani herding communities the Koglweogo suspected of having provided shelter to purported terrorists allegedly responsible for the January 1 killings of a local village chief and two of his children.

According to the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Collective Torture and Impunity and Community Stigmatization (CISC), on May 22, members of the Batié Gendarmerie arrested and severely beat Diakite Saliou. Family members recovered his corpse on May 24 at University Hospital Center Souro Sanon.

### **b. Disappearance**

There were numerous reports of disappearances of civilians who were suspected of committing acts of terrorism, during counterterrorism military operations by security forces. According to CISC, on April 25, Ousseni Diallo and Souleymane Diallo disappeared after being interdicted by security forces. The Directorate of Military Justice continued its investigation of extrajudicial killings and disappearances of civilians in the village of Damba in 2017 and 2018 but, as of September 5, had not made any arrests. During a March military operation to dismantle terrorist networks in the eastern region, the military appointed human rights provosts to some deployed units, who sought to ensure that detainees captured during the operation received their due process rights.

Terrorists and criminal groups kidnapped dozens of civilians, including humanitarian aid workers (see section 1.g.). In December 2018 a Canadian citizen and an Italian citizen disappeared while travelling through the southwestern region of the country toward the border with Togo.

### **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**

The constitution and law prohibit such practices. Local rights groups alleged numerous accounts of torture committed by gendarmerie, police, and members of the Koglweogo. The majority of allegations of torture involved victims suspected of being linked with terrorists or of being of Fulani/Peuhl ethnicity.

According to local independent human rights groups, on April 4, Koglweogo abducted and tortured 11 persons in Tchambalawal before releasing them to the gendarmerie. Fatoumata Dicko, a 42-year old man, died from his wounds.

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

Conditions in prisons and detention facilities were harsh and at times life threatening due to overcrowding and inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care.

Physical Conditions: Authorities held pretrial detainees with convicted prisoners. Female prisoners had better conditions than those of men, in large part due to less crowding. Some infants and children younger than age five accompanied their inmate mothers. Prisoners received two meals a day, but diets were inadequate, and inmates often relied on supplemental food from relatives. In some prisons overcrowding or severe overcrowding exacerbated inadequate ventilation, although some cells had electricity and some inmates had fans. Sanitation was rudimentary.

According to local NGOs and international human rights and protection organizations, at least five deaths of inmates occurred during the year at the Central Prison in Ouagadougou (MACO) and the High Security Prison in Ouagadougou resulting from a combination of poor health, illness, and other undisclosed causes.

There were no appropriate facilities or installations for prisoners or detainees with disabilities, who relied on other inmates for assistance.

A human rights NGO reported that prison guards at the MACO occasionally used excessive physical force, inflicting injuries on prisoners.

Food, potable water, sanitation, heating, ventilation, lighting, and medical care were inadequate in the majority of detention facilities across the country. Tuberculosis, HIV, AIDS, and malaria were the most common health problems among prisoners. For example, at the High Security Prison, there were three nurses employed to treat more than 800 detainees and prisoners, with no doctor present on site but available on an on-call basis. Detention conditions were better for wealthy or influential citizens, or detainees considered nonviolent.

Local media regularly reported on cases of detainees who had spent more than one year without trial.

Administration: President Kabore ordered an administrative and a judicial investigation of the 11 detainee deaths at the police antidrug unit that occurred on July 14 and a temporary dismissal of prison guards under the antidrug unit who were on duty when the deaths occurred. The government immediately suspended the members of the unit on shift during the incident pending the conclusion of the

investigation. A new policy caps the number of detainees held at the National Police's Anti-Drug Unit detention facility at 10, with any additional detainees transferred to a different police station in Ouagadougou.

Independent Monitoring: The government permitted monitoring by independent nongovernmental observers. Due to strikes by prison guards, prison authorities sometimes denied access to representatives of local and international human rights groups, media, foreign embassies, and the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit prisons, even with advance notice of the visit.

#### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention and provide for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. Arbitrary arrests occurred, and judicial corruption and inadequate staffing of the judiciary, largely due to protracted strikes by civil servants, deterred detainees from challenging the lawfulness of their arrest in court.

#### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees**

By law police and gendarmes must possess a court-issued warrant based on sufficient evidence before apprehending a person suspected of committing a crime, but authorities did not always follow these procedures. Authorities did not consistently inform detainees of charges against them. By law detainees have the right to expeditious arraignment, bail, access to legal counsel, and, if indigent, access to a lawyer provided by the government after being charged. A judge may order temporary release without bail pending trial. Authorities seldom respected these rights. The law does not provide detainees access to family members, although authorities generally allowed detainees such access through court-issued authorizations.

The law limits detention without charge for investigative purposes to a maximum of 72 hours, renewable for a single 48-hour period. In terrorism investigations, the law allows detention for a 10-day period. In cases not related to terrorism, police rarely observed the law, and the average time of detention without charge (preventive detention) was one week. Once authorities charge a suspect, the law permits judges to impose an unlimited number of consecutive six-month preventive detention periods while the prosecutor investigates charges. Authorities often detained defendants without access to legal counsel for weeks, months, or

even years before the defendant appeared before a magistrate. There were instances in which authorities detained suspects incommunicado.

Arbitrary Arrest: Local independent rights groups alleged that security forces regularly arbitrarily arrested individuals for suspected involvement in terrorism. An official with the Ministry of Justice reported that hundreds of individuals detained at the High Security Prison remained in detention without being charged.

Pretrial Detention: Authorities estimated 52 percent of prisoners nationwide were in pretrial status, but local independent rights groups estimated it to be as high as 70 percent. A lack of counsel specialized in criminal law, particularly defense lawyers willing to represent detainees arrested on terrorism charges, greatly contributed to delays in bringing cases to trial. In some cases authorities held detainees without charge or trial for longer periods than the maximum sentence for conviction of the alleged offense. A pretrial release (release on bail) system exists, although the extent of its use was unknown.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: The law provides persons arrested or detained the right to challenge in court the legal basis or arbitrary nature of their detention. Prisoners who did so, however, reportedly faced difficulties due to either judicial corruption or inadequate staffing of the judiciary.

### **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, but the judiciary was corrupt, inefficient, and subject to executive influence, according to NGOs. There were no instances in which the trial outcomes appeared predetermined, and authorities respected court orders. Legal codes remained outdated, there were not enough courts, and legal costs were excessive. Citizens' poor knowledge of their rights further weakened their ability to obtain justice.

Military courts try cases involving military personnel charged with violating the military code of conduct. Rights provided in military courts are equivalent to those in civil criminal courts. Military courts are headed by a civilian judge, hold public trials, and publish verdicts in the local press.

### **Trial Procedures**

The law presumes defendants are innocent. Defendants have the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges, with free assistance of an interpreter. Trials are public but may be delayed. Judicial authorities use juries only in criminal cases. Defendants have the right to be present at their trials and to legal representation, consultation, and adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. Defendants have the right to provide evidence. Defendants have the right not to be compelled to testify or confess guilt, but a refusal to testify often resulted in harsher decisions. Defendants may challenge and present witnesses, and they have the right of appeal. In civil cases where the defendant is destitute and files an appeal, the state provides a court-appointed lawyer. In criminal cases court-appointed lawyers are mandatory for those who cannot afford one. The government did not always respect these rights, due in part to popular ignorance of the law and a continuing shortage of magistrates and court-appointed lawyers.

The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and Civic Promotion claimed courts usually tried cases within three months, although human rights organizations reported major case backlogs. The 2011 “processing of criminal penalties in real time” reform to shorten pretrial detention allows the prosecutor and investigators (police and gendarmerie) to process a case prior to the criminal hearing. This countrywide approach allows authorities to inform defendants of the charges and trial date before authorities release them pending trial.

### **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

There were no reports of political prisoners or detainees during the year, although some arrests and detentions may have been politically motivated.

### **Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies**

There is an independent judiciary in civil matters, but it was often inefficient, corrupt, and subject to executive influence. As a result citizens sometimes preferred to rely on the Office of the Ombudsman to settle disputes with the government.

The law provides for access to a court to file lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, a human rights violation, and both administrative and judicial remedies were available for alleged wrongs. Victims of human rights violations may appeal directly to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Court of Justice, even before going through national courts. For civil and commercial disputes, authorities may refer cases to the ECOWAS Common

Court of Justice and Arbitration in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. The courts issued several such orders during the year.

There were problems enforcing court orders in sensitive cases involving national security, wealthy or influential persons, and government officials.

#### **f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence**

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respected these prohibitions. In cases of national security, however, the law permits surveillance, searches, and monitoring of telephones and private correspondence without a warrant. In June the National Assembly passed revisions to the penal code that permit wiretapping in terrorism cases, to be authorized by the president of a tribunal for a limited term. Investigative judges have the authority to authorize audio recording in private places. These investigations techniques are new in the legal framework. The national intelligence service is authorized to use technology for surveillance, national security, and counterterrorism purposes.

In December 2018 President Kabore declared a state of emergency in 14 provinces within seven of the country's 13 administrative regions that granted additional powers to the security forces to carry out searches of homes and restrict freedom of movement and assembly. The state of emergency was extended on July 11 for an additional six months.

According to international and local independent rights groups, the military employed informant systems to generate lists of suspected terrorists based on anecdotal evidence.

#### **g. Abuses in Internal Conflict**

Killings: There were at least 500 security force members and civilians that died as a result of actions by armed groups and terrorist groups, including ISGS, JNIM, and Ansaroul Islam, as well as more than 200 deaths of civilians allegedly resulting from the security forces' counterinsurgency efforts.

According to Human Rights Watch, from August 2018 through March, security forces executed at least 116 civilians within a 30-mile radius of the town of Arbinda, whom they suspected of supporting or harboring terrorists. The



Burkinabe Movement for Human Rights (MBDHP), a credible local human rights organization, documented 60 civilian deaths in Kahn and Bahn after a February 4 counterterrorist military operation executed by the security forces.

On March 18, during a counterterrorism military operation in the east, five civilians, four of whom were minors, were unintentionally killed by security force gunfire near the Boungou and Lopadi villages.

An investigation opened by the government in 2017 regarding allegations by Human Rights Watch of extrajudicial killings by soldiers in Damba remained open, with no arrests or charges made.

On June 9, dozens of armed unidentified gunmen, presumed to be terrorists by the government, killed at least 19 and injured 13 others in Arbinda in the north. On April 26, terrorists attacked a school in the village of Maitaougou, killing six civilians, including five teachers.

On May 12, terrorists attacked a Catholic church in the town of Dablo, killing six and wounding dozens more. On August 19, terrorist groups attacked the Koutougou military base located in the northwest, killing 24 soldiers and wounding dozens more.

On November 3, terrorists killed the mayor of Djibo and member of the National Parliament, Oumarou Dicko, along with three other passengers travelling by vehicle southward from Djibo towards Ouagadougou.

On November 6, terrorists killed 39 employees of the SEMAFO mining company in the East Region in a roadside ambush using an improvised explosive device and gunfire, injuring 60 others.

During the year terrorists killed seven municipal councilors.

On January 1, members of Koglweogo attacked a herding encampment outside the town of Yirgou, killing 49 ethnic Fulani civilians, according to the government, or more than 200 Fulani civilians, according to international aid organizations and local NGOs. The attack resulted in mass internal displacement of an estimated 25,000 civilians in the Center-North Region.

Abductions: Terrorists kidnapped dozens of civilians throughout the year, including international humanitarian aid and medical workers. For example, on

February 2, terrorists kidnapped four Red Cross workers deployed on a humanitarian mission from their marked vehicle. In April terrorists belonging to ISIS kidnapped four international travelers, including a U.S. citizen, holding them hostage between one to four weeks before they were liberated by French special forces on May 9. In addition, terrorists kidnapped one mayor and two other municipal counselors.

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture: According to Human Rights Watch and MBDHP, on several occasions, security force members tortured and beat civilians they suspected of having ties to terrorist groups, sometimes destroying their property. According to witnesses, in early August terrorists raped four women in the village of Naafu.

Other Conflict-related Abuse: Throughout the year armed groups and terrorists attacked medical facilities and hijacked ambulances and official vehicles of humanitarian and medical aid workers. Local authorities in the Sahel, North, and East Regions reported terrorists displaced thousands of civilians and limited movement in rural areas. On February 14, a bomb hidden in a corpse dressed in military uniform killed an army doctor and wounded two police officers. In July armed assailants, most likely belonging to violent extremist organizations Ansaroul Islam or JNIM, attempted to blow up a bridge connecting Djibo, the capital of Soum Province, to the rest of the country. On September 8, terrorists attacked a United Nations World Food Program convoy transporting food and materials for internally displaced persons (IDPs), killed two contracted civilian drivers, and seized and destroyed all materials.

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:**

### **a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press**

The constitution and law provide for freedom of expression, including for the press, but the government did not always respect this right. In June the National Assembly voted to amend the penal code banning journalists from reporting any security-related news in an effort to preserve national security and prevent the demoralization of the military. Attempts to “demoralize” members of the military was previously a crime, but the code was amended to state “by any means,” presumably to criminalize any press or other media intended to demoralize security forces. A 2015 law decriminalizes press offenses and replaces prison sentences with penalties ranging from one million to five million CFA francs (\$1,700 to

\$8,500). Some editors complained that few newspapers or media outlets could afford such fines.

Despite the advent of the 2015 law, journalists occasionally faced criminal prosecution for libel and other forms of harassment and intimidation.

Freedom of Expression: The June revision of the penal code criminalizes communicating the position or movements of defense forces, or sites of national interest or of a strategic nature, and the publication of any terrorist crime scene without authorization. The law also permits a judge, at the request of a “public minister” (prosecutor), to block internet websites or email addresses being used to spread “false information” to the public. Local and international associations of journalists called for the rejection of the amendments as an unacceptable attempt to stifle freedom of speech. The law significantly increases penalties for the existing crime of publicly insulting another person if electronic communications are used to publish the insult, and it prohibits persons from insulting the head of state or using derogatory language with respect to the office.

Press and Media, Including Online Media: Independent media were active and expressed a wide variety of views, albeit with some restrictions. Foreign radio stations broadcast without government interference.

All media are under the administrative and technical supervision of the Ministry of Communications, which is responsible for developing and implementing government policy on information and communication. The Superior Council of Communication (CSC) monitored the content of radio and television programs, newspapers, and internet websites to enforce compliance with standards of professional ethics and government policy. The CSC may summon journalists and issue warnings for subsequent violations. Hearings may concern alleged libel, disturbing the peace, inciting violence, or violations of state security.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: In addition to prohibitions on publishing security-related information and insulting the head of state, the law also prohibits the publication of shocking images or material that demonstrates lack of respect for the deceased. Journalists practiced self-censorship, fearing that publishing blatant criticism of the government could result in arrest or closure of their newspaper.

Libel/Slander Laws: On September 23, the Djibo police filed a defamation suit for the “demoralization of police force” against the mayor of Djibo after he publicly denounced their behavior and accused them of rape and killing of civilians.

Nongovernmental Impact: Terrorist groups sought to inhibit freedom of expression by forcing women, predominantly in the North and Sahel Regions, to cover their heads, forcing men to wear religious garb, preventing children from going to non-Quranic school, and prohibiting civilians from drinking alcohol, smoking, frequenting bars, and listening to music at the risk of beatings or death.

### **Internet Freedom**

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet, although the CSC monitored internet websites and discussion forums to enforce compliance with regulations.

### **Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

### **b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

The law provides for the freedoms of peaceful assembly and association, but the government at times restricted these rights.

### **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly**

On multiple occasions throughout the year, the government denied requests for permits to NGOs and civil society organizations who sought to organize demonstrations and rallies. The government stopped a planned rally by a coalition of civil society organizations and labor unions on September 16, using tear gas to disperse demonstrators. The government had previously denied a permit to the demonstrators to hold the march, but the group proceeded to hold the event anyway.

Political parties and labor unions may hold meetings and rallies without government permission, although advance notification and approval are required for public demonstrations that may affect traffic or threaten public order. If a demonstration or rally results in violence, injury, or significant property damage, penalties for the organizers include six months' to five years' imprisonment and fines of between 100,000 and two million CFA francs (\$170 and \$3,400). These penalties may be doubled for conviction of organizing an unauthorized rally or

demonstration. Demonstrators may appeal denials or imposed modifications of a proposed march route or schedule before the courts.

### **Freedom of Association**

On November 13, the minister of territorial administration, decentralization, and social cohesion suspended the political party Renewal Patriotic Front for three months on the grounds the group had violated the charter of political parties when its leader publicly demanded the resignation of President Kabore on November 3 and again on November 11.

### **c. Freedom of Religion**

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at <https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/>.

### **d. Freedom of Movement**

The constitution provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.

In-country Movement: The government required citizens to carry a national identity document, and it authorized officials to request the document at any time. Without a national identity card, citizens could not pass between certain regions of the country and were subject to arrest and fines.

Armed terrorists restricted movement of thousands of rural inhabitants throughout the country by planting improvised explosive devices on major highways, hijacking vehicles, and setting up checkpoints. In response to dozens of attacks by unknown armed groups presumed to be terrorists, local authorities instituted a ban on motorcycle traffic from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. in the East and North Regions.

### **e. Internally Displaced Persons**

Recurrent armed attacks and interethnic clashes throughout the northern and eastern regions caused a steep increase in the number of IDPs from 39,731 registered in October 2018 to more than 560,000 by the end of October, according to the UN Office of Humanitarian Affairs. Since January an average of 30,000 persons every month fled from their homes. The government worked effectively with international and local aid organizations to improve food, water, health

services, and protection of affected civilians against abuse and violations. The government promoted local integration of IDPs by offering limited assistance to host families. Nevertheless, during the year the National Commission for Human Rights criticized the government for failing to provide sufficient resources and medical services to IDPs resulting from the January 1 attack on Yirgou.

#### **f. Protection of Refugees**

Abuse of Migrants, Refugees, and Stateless Persons: The government cooperated with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in providing protection and assistance to internally displaced persons, refugees, returning refugees, asylum seekers, stateless persons, and other persons of concern.

Recurrent terrorist attacks hampered access by humanitarian workers to deliver lifesaving supplies and assistance to refugees and IDPs. On March 19, suspected terrorists killed two persons teaching refugee students at a secondary school in Djibo. UNHCR relocated 18 refugee students from Mentao refugee camp to Goudoubo refugee camp, allowing them to participate in their final exams. On May 24, suspected terrorists kidnapped three Burkinabe staff members of UNHCR's international health partner, the Centre de Support en Sante International, resulting in the closure of a medical center for refugees. In July and August, hundreds of refugees living outside of camps in the North and Sahel Regions returned to camps seeking protection from attacks. On August 15, armed groups linked to violent extremist organizations attacked a security post on a main road near the Mentao refugee camp, killing three soldiers and wounding a refugee woman. In December 2018 a primary school in Mentao camp closed due to threats from terrorists.

Access to Asylum: The law provides for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. The Ministry of Women, National Solidarity, Family, and Humanitarian Affairs, aided by the National Committee for Refugees, is the focal point for coordination of national and international efforts.

Freedom of Movement: According to UNHCR, police arbitrarily arrested Fulani refugees travelling from the Sahel Region to Ouagadougou on multiple occasions, sometimes holding them in detention overnight before releasing them.

Access to Basic Services: According to UNHCR, public institutions such as banks, schools, and hospitals occasionally refused service to refugees on a discriminatory basis.

Temporary Protection: The government agreed to offer temporary protection to individuals who did not qualify as refugees, but there were no such applicants during the year.

### **g. Stateless Persons**

According to UNHCR, more than 700,000 habitual residents were legally or de facto stateless, mostly due to a lack of documentation. The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights, and Civic Promotion worked with UNHCR to deploy mobile courts to remote villages to issue birth certificates and national identity documents to residents who qualified for citizenship.

## **Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process**

The constitution provides citizens the ability to choose their government in free and fair periodic elections held by secret ballot and based on universal and equal suffrage.

### **Elections and Political Participation**

Recent Elections: In the 2015 national elections, Roch Mark Christian Kabore won the presidency with 53 percent of the popular vote. His party, the People's Movement for Progress, won 55 of the 127 seats in the National Assembly. The Union for Progress and Change won 33 seats, and the former ruling party, the Congress for Democracy and Progress, won 18 seats. National and international observers characterized the elections as free and fair.

The 2015 electoral code approved by the National Transitional Council stipulated the exclusion of certain members of the former political majority. The code stated that persons who "supported a constitutional change that led to a popular uprising" are ineligible to be candidates in future elections. In July 2018 the National Assembly passed a new electoral law that allows all political candidates to run for election and opened the vote to members of the Burkinabe diaspora in possession of a national identity card or passport.

Participation of Women and Minorities: No laws limit participation of women and members of minorities in the political process, and they did participate. Although the gender quota law requires political parties to name women to fill at least 30 percent of the positions on their candidate lists in legislative and municipal elections, no political party met this requirement during the 2016 and the May 2017 make-up municipal elections. In March a new law establishing “zebra lists” mandates that electoral lists alternate names of men and women in order to better achieve a 30 percent quota. The law also establishes positive incentives for political parties respecting the quota, but no penalties for those who did not abide by the law. Parties and government officials stated women were less engaged in politics, due to cultural and traditional factors. Women held seven of 32 ministerial seats and 14 of 127 seats in the National Assembly.

#### **Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government**

The law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively. Throughout the year the press reported cases of misappropriation, fraud, or other offenses. The NGO National Network for Anti-Corruption cited the customs, police and General Directorate of Land and Maritime Transport as the most corrupt entities in the government.

Corruption: In August the government announced it would prosecute 12 employees of Iamgold Essakane SA for smuggling and fraud in the marketing of gold and other precious substances as hazardous waste for illegal export. Authorities opened an investigation of former minister of defense Jean-Claude Bouda and Minister of Infrastructure Eric Bougouma for using government funds to build personal wealth.

Financial Disclosure: A 2015 anticorruption law requires government officials--including the president, lawmakers, ministers, ambassadors, members of the military leadership, judges, and anyone charged with managing state funds--to declare their assets and any gifts or donations received while in office. The Constitutional Council is mandated to monitor and verify compliance with such laws and may order investigations if noncompliance is suspected. Disclosures are not made public, however, and there were no reports of criminal or administrative sanctions for noncompliance. As of September National Assembly members elected in 2015 had not complied with this law yet faced no sanctions.

In 2016 the Higher Authority for State Control and the Fight against Corruption extended the requirement to declare assets to include government officials’ spouses



and minor children. Infractions are punishable by a maximum prison term of 20 years and fines of up to 25 million CFA francs (\$42,400). The law also punishes persons who do not reasonably explain an increase in lifestyle expenditures beyond the 5 percent threshold set by regulation in connection with lawful income. Convicted offenders risk imprisonment for two to five years and a fine of five million to 25 million CFA francs (\$8,500 to \$42,400). A 2016 law limits the value of a gift a government official may receive to 35,000 CFA francs (\$60).

### **Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights**

A variety of domestic and international human rights groups operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials were cooperative and somewhat responsive to their views.

Government Human Rights Bodies: As a result of a January 24 government reshuffle, President Kabore established the Ministry of Human Rights and Civic Promotion, separating it from the Ministry of Justice, which previously was charged with overseeing human rights. During the year the ministry organized several training sessions for security forces on the law of armed conflict, provided assistance to victims of terrorist- and gender-based violence, and organized antistigmatization and social cohesion campaigns. The government also assigned a human rights provost to accompany deployed troops during military operations in order to assure detainees were afforded proper treatment and due rights. On October 22, the minister of security administered human rights training to law enforcement members in Dori, the capital of the Sahel Region. This was the first of a series of three training sessions to be expanded to include security forces in other regions in the east and west.

The Office of the Ombudsman addresses citizen complaints regarding government entities and other bodies entrusted with a public service mission. The ombudsman, whom the president appoints for a nonrenewable five-year term and who may not be removed during the term, was generally viewed as effective and impartial.

The government-funded National Commission on Human Rights provides a permanent framework for dialogue on human rights concerns. Its members include 15 representatives of human rights NGOs, unions, professional associations, and the government. Although inadequately funded, the commission produced a well

documented report on intercommunal violence and made recommendations to the government on responding to IDP population needs.

## **Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons**

### **Women**

Rape and Domestic Violence: Violence against women was prevalent, including rape and domestic violence. According to the penal code, rape is punishable by a prison sentence of 11 to 20 years and a fine of one million to three million CFA francs (\$1,700 to \$5,000) when committed against a minor between ages 13 and 15. The penalty is punishable by 11 to 30 years in prison and a fine of three to 10 million CFA francs (\$5,000 to \$17,000) when the victim is younger than age 13. Rape was widely underreported in part due to societal taboos and the drawn-out judicial process owing to the overburdened justice system. Media, however, reported on the prevalence of rape cases and subsequent convictions. For example, an investigation was underway into the rape of a 12-year-old girl in December 2018 who became pregnant.

Victims seldom pursued legal action due to shame, fear, or reluctance to take their spouses to court. For the few cases that went to court, the Ministry of Justice could provide no statistics on prosecutions, convictions, or punishment. A government-run shelter for women and girls who were victims of gender-based violence welcomed victims regardless of nationality. In Ouagadougou the Ministry of Women, National Solidarity, Family, and Humanitarian Affairs assisted victims of domestic violence at four centers. The ministry sometimes provided counseling and housing for abused women.

The ministry has a legal affairs section to educate women on their rights, and several NGOs cooperated to protect women's rights. To raise awareness of gender discrimination and reduce gender inequalities, the ministry organized numerous workshops and several awareness campaigns mainly in the North, Sahel, East, and Center-West Regions.

The law makes conviction of "abduction to impose marriage or union without consent" punishable by six months to five years in prison. Conviction of sexual abuse or torture or conviction of sexual slavery is punishable by two to five years in prison. Conviction of the foregoing abuses may also carry fines of 500,000 to one million CFA francs (\$850 to \$1,700).

The law requires police to provide for protection of the victim and her minor children and mandates the establishment of chambers in the High Court with exclusive jurisdiction over cases of violence against women and girls. The law requires all police and gendarmerie units to designate officers to assist female victims of violence--or those threatened by violence--and to respond to emergencies; however, some units had not complied by year's end. It also mandates the creation of care and protection centers in each commune for female victims of violence and a government support fund for their care. The centers receive victims on an emergency basis, offer them security, provide support services (including medical and psychosocial support), and, when possible, refer the victims to court.

Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting (FGM/C): FGM/C is a practice prohibited by law, and those found guilty are liable to a prison sentence of one to 10 years with a fine of 500,000 to three million CFA francs (\$850 to \$5,000). If a victim of FGM/C dies following the excision, the sentence increases to a term of 11 to 20 years' imprisonment and a fine of one to five million CFA francs (\$1,700 to \$8,500). Accomplices are also punishable with penalties. The government continued to fund and operate a toll-free number to receive anonymous reports of the practice.

The government continued to fund the Permanent Secretariat of the National Council for the Fight Against the Practice of Excision. During the year it reported that 1,089 practitioners of FGM/C agreed to cease practicing excision. The government provided training to 6,272 health workers to strengthen their skills in caring for FGM/C-related medical complications, enabling medical care to reach 520 victims of excision.

In December 2018 the Ministry of Women, National Solidarity, Family, and Humanitarian Affairs convened 55 judicial actors and members of the ministry's gender task force. The purpose was to discuss guidelines for the care of survivors and the application of the law on FGM/C and child marriage.

Other Harmful Traditional Practices: In the Center-East Region, self-proclaimed traditional healers performed rituals in which participants denounced relatives as witches they held responsible for their misfortune, and subsequently punished them. The latter were tied up, humiliated, beaten, and brutalized. Neighbors accused elderly women, and less frequently men, without support, living primarily in rural areas, and often widowed in the case of women, of witchcraft and subsequently banned them from their villages, beat them, or killed them. On

August 8, a man accused of witchcraft was beaten to death by the population in Samba commune in Yako. Widows were disproportionately accused of witchcraft by male relatives, who then claimed their land and other inheritance. The law, which was seldom enforced, makes the conviction of physical or moral abuse of women or girls accused of witchcraft punishable by one to five years in prison, a fine of 300,000 to 1.5 million CFA francs (\$500 to \$2,500), or both.

Sexual Harassment: The law provides for sentences of three months to one year in prison and a fine of 300,000 to 500,000 CFA francs (\$500 to \$850) for conviction of sexual harassment; the maximum penalty applies if the perpetrator is a relative or in a position of authority, or if the victim is “vulnerable.” The government was ineffective in enforcing the law. Owing to social taboos, victims rarely reported sexual harassment.

Coercion in Population Control: There were no reports of coerced abortion or involuntary sterilization.

Discrimination: Although the law generally provides the same legal status and rights for women as for men--including under family, labor, property, and inheritance laws--discrimination frequently occurred. Labor laws provide that all workers--men and women alike--should receive equal pay for equal working conditions, qualifications, and performance. Women nevertheless generally received lower pay for equal work, had less education, and owned less property.

Although the law provides equal property and inheritance rights for women and men, land tenure practices emphasized family and communal land requirements more than individual ownership rights. As a result, authorities often denied women the right to own property, particularly real estate. Many citizens, particularly in rural areas, held to traditional beliefs that did not recognize inheritance rights for women and regarded a woman as property that could be inherited upon her husband’s death.

The government conducted media campaigns to change attitudes toward women. It sponsored a number of community outreach efforts and awareness campaigns to promote women’s rights.

## **Children**

Birth Registration: Citizenship derives either from birth within the country’s territory or through a parent. Parents generally did not register births immediately;

lack of registration sometimes resulted in denial of public services, including access to school. To address the problem, the government periodically organized registration drives and issued belated birth certificates.

Child Abuse: The penal code provides for a prison sentence of one to three years with a fine of 300,000 to 900,000 CFA francs (\$500 to \$1,500) for those found guilty of inhuman treatment or mistreatment of children. On August 6, the government launched a National Child Protection Strategy to create a strengthened institutional, community, and family environment in order to ensure effective protection for children by 2023.

Early and Forced Marriage: The law prohibits forced marriage and provides for sentences ranging from six months to two years in prison for offenders, as well as a three-year prison sentence if the victim is younger than age 13.

According to the family code, “marriage can only be contracted between a man older than age 20 and a woman older than 17, unless age exemption is granted for serious cause by the civil court.” According to UNICEF, 10 percent of girls were married before the age of 15 and 52 percent before the age of 18. In March the government, in collaboration with UNICEF, launched a national campaign called “Do not call me Madam” to combat child marriage, as part of their National Strategy against Child Marriage, with the goal of eliminating child marriage by 2025. Despite government efforts at combatting early marriage, civil society organizations reported that minors, especially girls, were kidnapped on their way to school or to market and forced into early marriage. In May the government organized a travelling campaign called “zero child marriage,” targeting specific communes for education against the practice.

According to media reports, the traditional practice persisted of kidnapping, raping, and impregnating a girl and then forcing her family to consent to her marriage to her violator.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: The law provides penalties for conviction of “child prostitution” or child pornography of five to 10 years’ imprisonment, a fine of 1.5 to three million CFA francs (\$2,500 to \$5,000), or both. The minimum age of consensual sex is 15. A 2014 law criminalizes the sale of children, child commercial sexual exploitation, and child pornography. Children from poor families were particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking. The government did not report any convictions for violations of the law during the year. The penal code prescribes penalties of 11 to 20 years’ imprisonment and a fine of two million to 10

million CFA (\$3,400 to \$17,000) francs for sex trafficking involving a victim 15 years or younger. It also prescribes five to 10 years' imprisonment and fines of one million and five million CFA francs (\$1,700 and \$8,500) for sex trafficking involving a victim older than age 15.

Infanticide or Infanticide of Children with Disabilities: The law provides for a sentence of 10 years' to life imprisonment for infanticide. Newspapers reported several cases of abandonment of newborn babies.

Displaced Children: Recurrent armed attacks displaced thousands of children. According to a UN humanitarian organization, women and children accounted for 85 percent of the IDPs (see section 2.e.). The government, in collaboration with humanitarian actors, provided 12,372 children with formal and informal education.

International Child Abductions: The country is a party to the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. See the Department of State's *Annual Report on International Parental Child Abduction* at <https://travel.state.gov/content/travel/en/International-Parental-Child-Abduction/for-providers/legal-reports-and-data/reported-cases.html>.

### **Anti-Semitism**

There was no known Jewish community. There were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

### **Trafficking in Persons**

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

### **Persons with Disabilities**

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities in employment, education, transportation, access to health care, the judicial system, or the provision of other state services. There is legislation to provide persons with disabilities less costly or free health care and access to education and employment. The law also includes building codes to provide for access to government buildings. The government did not effectively enforce these provisions.

Persons with disabilities encountered discrimination and reported difficulty finding employment, including in government service.

The government had limited programs to aid persons with disabilities, but NGOs and the National Committee for the Reintegration of Persons with Disabilities conducted awareness campaigns and implemented integration programs.

During the year President Kabore presided over a national forum on developing more socioeconomic inclusion for persons with disabilities. The government continued to arrange for candidates with vision disabilities to take the public administration recruitment exams by providing the tests in Braille. Additionally, authorities opened specific counters at enrollment sites to allow persons with disabilities to register more easily for public service admission tests. According to the Ministry of Education, children with disabilities attended school at lower rates than others, although the government provided for limited special education programs in Ouagadougou.

### **National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities**

Longstanding conflicts between Fulani (Peuhl) herders and sedentary farmers of other ethnic groups sometimes resulted in violence. Herders commonly triggered incidents by allowing their cattle to graze on farmlands or farmers attempting to cultivate land set aside by local authorities for grazing. Government efforts at dialogue and mediation contributed to a decrease in such incidents. In the aftermath of the January attack on Yirgou, President Kabore and the minister of foreign affairs and cooperation convened ethnic and religious leaders in private audience in an attempt to de-escalate violence and promote community cohesion.

Between March 31 and April 1, terrorists reportedly shot and killed Cheickh Werem Issouf, a revered religious leader, along with six members of his family, in the village of Arbinda, and raped the women of his family. On April 1, dozens of ethnic Fulse killed at least 62 Fulani villagers in a reprisal attack, whom they suspected to be complicit with the terrorists that carried out the assassination of their leader.

### **Indigenous People**

Indigenous persons and their institutions sometimes participated in decisions affecting their land. Exploitation of natural resources near indigenous land endangered the welfare and livelihoods of indigenous communities. A Chinese

construction project to build a hospital in a classified forest in Bobo-Dioulasso sparked a controversial debate and was strongly rejected by the local population. Indigenous communities criticized the government's decision to downgrade 16 hectares (approximately 38 acres) of this forest and suggested that the hospital be built on another site. Following the controversy, the government suspended the project and commissioned an environmental impact study of the site. The results of the study were pending at year's end.

### **Acts of Violence, Discrimination, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity**

The country has no hate crime laws or other criminal justice mechanisms to aid in the investigation, prosecution, or sentencing of bias-motivated crimes against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) community. NGOs reported police occasionally arrested gay men and transgender individuals and humiliated them in detention before releasing them.

Societal discrimination against LGBTI persons was a problem, and it was exacerbated by religious and traditional beliefs. Medical facilities often refused to provide care to members of the transgender community, and LGBTI individuals were occasionally victims of verbal and physical abuse, according to LGBTI support groups. There were no reports the government responded to societal violence and discrimination against LGBTI persons.

LGBTI organizations had no legal status in the country but existed unofficially with no reported harassment. There were no reports of government or societal violence against such organizations, although incidents were not always reported due to stigma or intimidation.

### **HIV and AIDS Social Stigma**

Societal discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS continued to be a problem and prohibited some individuals from receiving medical services due to fear of harassment. Families sometimes shunned persons who tested positive and sometimes evicted HIV-positive wives from their homes, although families did not evict their HIV-positive husbands. Some property owners refused to rent lodgings to persons with HIV/AIDS. The government distributed free antiretroviral medication to some HIV-positive persons who qualified according to national guidelines.



## **Other Societal Violence or Discrimination**

Vigilante groups apprehended and sometimes arbitrarily detained individuals usually involved in petty crime, employing severe beatings to solicit a confession. On August 7, a security guard working for the Youga Gold Mine shot and killed a local artisanal miner. The following day an estimated 100 artisanal miners in the area launched an attack against the Youga Gold Mine, injuring several employees. According to journalists in the community, this attack was related to preexisting labor disputes at the mine and locals' discontent over the hiring of foreign workers.

NGOs reported that police frequently discriminated against the Fulani, stigmatizing them as terrorists. According to NGOs, police often arrested them because of their physical appearance, interrogated them on terrorism charges, and finally released them without charging them.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

### **a. Freedom of Association and the Right to Collective Bargaining**

The law allows workers to form and join independent unions, except for essential workers, such as magistrates, police, military, and other security personnel, who may not join unions. The law provides unions the right to conduct their activities without interference.

The law provides for the right to strike, although it significantly limits that right. For strikes that call on workers to stay home and that do not entail participation in a rally, the union is required to provide eight to 15 days' advance notice to the employer. If unions call for a march, they must provide three days' advance notice to the city mayor. Authorities hold march organizers accountable for any property damage or destruction that occurs during a demonstration. The law also gives the government extensive requisitioning powers, authorizing it to requisition private- and public-sector workers to secure minimum service in essential services.

The law prohibits antiunion discrimination and allows a labor inspector to reinstate immediately workers fired because of their union activities. Relevant legal protections cover all workers, including migrants, workers in the informal sector, and domestic workers. There were no reports of antiunion discrimination during the year.

The law provides for freedom of association and collective bargaining. The government effectively enforced the law. The law lists sanctions for violations, including warnings, penalties, suspension, or dissolution and were generally sufficient to deter violations. Penalties consist of imprisonment and fines and vary depending on the gravity of the violation. Amendments to the law award a legal existence to labor unions of NGOs, create a commission of mediation, and require that associations abide by the law concerning funding terrorism and money laundering. The law also states that no one may serve as the head of a political party and the head of an association at the same time.

The government generally respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The government generally respected the right of unions to conduct activities without interference. Unions have the right to bargain directly with employers and industry associations for wages and other benefits. Worker organizations were independent of the government and political parties. There were no reports of strikebreaking during the year. Government resources to enforce labor laws were not sufficient to protect workers' rights.

There were no reports of government restrictions on collective bargaining during the year. There was extensive collective bargaining in the formal wage sector, which was where many worker rights violations occurred.

#### **b. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor**

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. The law considers forced or compulsory any labor or service provided by an individual under the threat of any type of sanction and not freely offered. The government did not effectively enforce applicable laws. The government did not have a significant, effective program in place to address or eliminate forced labor. The government continued to conduct antitrafficking advocacy campaigns and operated a toll-free number for individuals to report cases of violence and trafficking. Penalties were not sufficiently stringent to deter violations.

Forced child labor occurred in the agricultural (particularly cotton), domestic labor, and animal husbandry sectors, as well as at gold panning sites and stone quarries. Educators forced some children sent to Quranic schools by their parents to engage in begging (see section 6, Children). Women from other West African countries were fraudulently recruited for employment and subsequently subjected to forced prostitution, forced labor in restaurants, or domestic servitude in private homes.

See the Department of State's *Trafficking in Persons Report* at <https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report/>.

### **c. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment**

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, child pornography, mining, and jobs that harm the health of a child. The law sets the minimum age for employment at 16 and prohibits children younger than age 18 from working at night, except in times of emergency. The minimum age for employment was consistent with the age for completing educational requirements, which is 16. In the domestic labor and agricultural sectors, the law permits children who are 13 and above to perform limited activities for up to four and one-half hours per day. Penalties were sufficient to deter violations.

The government was implementing the National Action Plan to combat the worst forms of child labor and to reduce significantly exploitative child labor.

The plan coordinated the efforts of several ministries and NGOs. Its goals included greater dissemination of information in local languages, increased access to services such as rehabilitation for victims, revision of the penal code to address the worst forms of child labor, and improved data collection and analysis. The government organized workshops and conferences to inform children, parents, and employers of the dangers of exploitative child labor.

The government did not consistently enforce the law. Largely due to the insecurity imposed by violent extremist groups, the Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Security, which oversees labor standards, lacked transportation and access and other resources to enforce worker safety and the minimum age law. No data were available on number of prosecutions and convictions during the year.

Child labor took place in the agricultural sector, or in family-owned small businesses in villages and cities. There were no reports of children younger than age 15 employed by either government-owned or large private companies. Children also worked in the mining, trade, construction, and domestic labor sectors. Some children, particularly those working as cattle herders and street hawkers, did not attend school. Many children younger than age 15 worked long hours. A study by the International Labor Organization reported that children working in artisanal mining sometimes worked six or seven days a week and up to 14 hours per day. Street beggars often worked 12 to 18 hours daily. Such children

suffered from occupational illnesses, and employers sometimes physically or sexually abused them. Child domestic servants worked up to 18 hours per day. Employers often exploited and abused them. Criminals transported Burkinabe children to Cote d'Ivoire, Mali, and Niger for forced labor or sex trafficking.

Also see the Department of Labor's *Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor* at <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/ilab/resources/reports/child-labor/findings>.

#### **d. Discrimination with Respect to Employment and Occupation**

The law prohibits discrimination with respect to employment and occupation. The government did not effectively enforce the laws and regulations.

Discrimination occurred based on race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, social origin, gender, disability, language, sexual orientation or gender identity, HIV-positive status or having other communicable diseases, or social status with respect to employment and occupation. The government took few actions during the year to prevent or eliminate employment discrimination.

#### **e. Acceptable Conditions of Work**

The law mandates a minimum monthly wage in the formal sector, which does not apply to subsistence agriculture or other informal occupations. The minimum wage was less than the poverty income level.

The law mandates a standard workweek of 40 hours for nondomestic workers and a 60-hour workweek for household employees. The law provides for overtime pay, and there are regulations pertaining to rest periods, limits on hours worked, and prohibitions on excessive compulsory overtime.

The government sets occupational health and safety standards. There are explicit restrictions regarding occupational health and safety in the labor law. Employers must take measures to provide for safety and protect the physical and mental health of all their workers and verify that the workplace, machinery, materials, substances, and work processes under their control do not present health or safety risks to the workers.

The law requires every company with 30 or more employees to have a work safety committee. If an employee working for a company with fewer than 30 employees

decides to remove himself due to safety concerns, a court rules on whether the employee's decision was justified.

The Ministry of Civil Service, Labor, and Social Security is responsible for enforcing the minimum wage and hours of work standards. The government employed 255 labor inspectors, an increase of more than 50 percent compared with the previous year, surpassing the International Labor Office's technical advice of the appropriate level of labor inspectors for the country. Ministry inspectors and labor tribunals are responsible for overseeing occupational health and safety standards in the small industrial and commercial sectors, but these standards do not apply in subsistence agriculture and other informal sectors.

These standards were not effectively enforced. Penalties for violations were insufficient to deter violations. There were no reports of effective enforcement of inspection findings during the year.

Employers often paid less than the minimum wage. Employees usually supplemented their income through reliance on extended family, subsistence agriculture, or trading in the informal sector. Employers subjected workers in the informal sector, who made up approximately 50 percent of the economy, to violations of wage, overtime, and occupational safety and health standards.

Between April and June, approximately 500 workers lost their jobs at Youga gold mine, and foreign workers were hired instead. Some Burkinabe workers were critical of the dismissals, stating that management violated the 2015 mining code by hiring unqualified foreign workers instead of giving preference to local employees as stipulated in the code. Mining operations at Youga were suspended on June 7, as employees and management could not reach an agreement regarding work schedules and wages. In particular, the company proposed a 14-day work period with a single day of rest and an hourly wage as opposed to a monthly salary; workers rejected the proposals. Labor laws call for a 24-hour rest period every week, unless an exception has been granted with the consent of a labor inspector.