

## **Oral Statement**

### **Pre-Session UPR on Burkina Faso**

**Geneva, August 29, 2023**

#### **COLLECTIVE AGAINST IMPUNITY AND STIGMATIZATION OF COMMUNITIES**

##### **Statement by Mr. Salif Daniel GNIENHOUN**

###### **Pre-Session UPR on Abuses and Atrocities by Conflict Parties in Burkina Faso.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of the Collective Against Impunity and Stigmatization of Communities (CISC) to draw your attention to the gravity of the situation regarding abuses and atrocities committed by conflicting parties in Burkina Faso. This statement aims to shed light on ongoing human rights violations in this country and to seek the support of the international community, particularly in terms of humanitarian assistance or in promoting peace and stability.

A national consultation was held in Ziniaré, a town located about thirty kilometers from the capital, during which various concerns were raised by stakeholders, including 13 Burkinabe civil society organizations.

This statement will focus on two aspects: abuses and atrocities by conflicting parties in Burkina Faso. Firstly, we will discuss cases of abuses caused by non-state armed groups (I), and secondly, we will address cases of atrocities attributed to state actors, namely the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) and pro-state militias, the Volunteers for the Defense of the Nation (VDP) (II).

#### **I. ABUSES CAUSED BY NON-STATE ARMED GROUPS (NSAGs)**

During Burkina Faso's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2018, specific recommendations were made regarding Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs) and the challenges they pose due to their presence and actions in the country. These recommendations aimed to encourage Burkina Faso to take measures to address the challenges posed by NSAGs and to protect human rights in this context. In this section, we will outline these recommendations (A) and provide an update on developments since the UPR (B).

##### **A. Recommendations from the 2018 UPR**

Among these recommendations, we can mention:

1. Prevent the recruitment and use of children by non-state armed groups and promote their rehabilitation and reintegration.
2. Strengthen collaboration with international and regional organizations to combat the activities of non-state armed groups, while respecting international human rights and humanitarian law standards.

3. Establish mechanisms for dialogue and negotiation with non-state armed groups to achieve peaceful and sustainable solutions to ongoing conflicts.
4. Protect civilian populations living in areas affected by the activities of non-state armed groups, ensuring the respect for their fundamental rights.

These recommendations highlighted the necessity for Burkina Faso to effectively address the challenges posed by non-state armed groups while preserving human rights and seeking peaceful conflict resolutions. What, then, can we say about the implementation of these recommendations?

#### **B. Developments since the last UPR**

Regarding the implementation of these recommendations, it should be noted that they have not been fully implemented, as evidenced by the following events:

- The Solhan massacre, which claimed the lives of 138 people in 2021.
- The Seytenga attack, resulting in the death of at least a hundred people.
- The Gaskindé attack on September 26, 2022, which caused 37 deaths, among others. What about the cases of the atrocities perpetrated by the Defense and Security Forces?

## **II. ATROCITIES ATTRIBUTED TO DEFENSE AND SECURITY FORCES (FDS) AND PRO-STATE MILITIAS, THE VOLUNTEERS FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE NATION (VDP)**

In this regard, it is worth mentioning that UN member states made a number of recommendations during the 2018 UPR. In this second part, we will first address these various recommendations (A), and finally, we will raise the issue of the effectiveness of implementing these recommendations (B).

#### **A. Recommendations from the 2018 UPR**

Among these recommendations, we can mention :

1. Strengthen the protection of civilians during armed conflict, preventing abuses and violations of human rights by security forces and non-state armed groups, in line with international norms.
2. Cease targeted attacks against civilian populations, schools, and infrastructure, while combating the recruitment of child soldiers.
3. Conduct investigations and bring prosecutions against those responsible for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law.
4. Facilitate humanitarian access to populations affected by conflicts, ensuring the safety of humanitarian workers.

## **B. Developments since the last UPR**

However, despite these recommendations that were meant to be rigorously taken into account by the state authorities, it is evident that they have not been fully implemented, as evidenced by alarming figures: 2432 cases of extrajudicial executions from 2019 to 2023 and more than 200 cases of forced disappearances and torture. Among these figures, we can mention the most emblematic incidents such as the Yirgou massacre that resulted in the death of over 200 civilians in 2019, the killings in Banh, as well as the recent Karma massacre that claimed the lives of more than 150 civilians. Given the gravity of the situation, it becomes necessary to propose a number of solutions to adequately address this situation.

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## **III. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Considering all the above, we formulate a number of recommendations, including:

- Respect internationally ratified commitments by Burkina Faso, as well as national legislation regarding human rights.
- Address stigmatization and discrimination with education, legal changes, community engagement, and media responsibility.
- Expedite the judicial processing of cases related to the security crisis (Yirgou, Barga, Banh, Karma, Tawalbougou, Arbinda, Solhan, Inata).
- Prevent the recruitment and use of child soldiers by armed groups, while ensuring their release and rehabilitation.
- Ensure safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to populations affected by conflict.
- Enhance the personnel and capabilities of the FDS while ensuring a strong commitment to upholding human rights principles.
- Disarm armed civilians (VDP, Kolgweogo and the Dozzo).
- Facilitate community dialogues and advance peacebuilding initiatives by establishing platforms for open discussions, collaborative projects, and cross-cultural understanding.
- Reduce vulnerability of pastoral communities, herders, and minorities through improved services, economic opportunities, and inclusive decision-making.