

# Burkina Faso - Human Rights Scorecard<sup>1</sup>

Burkina Faso gained its independence from the French in 1960, becoming a semi-presidential republic. By West African standards, Burkina Faso is a poor country that is struggling to contend with recurring droughts and military coups. In addition, factors such as limited natural resources and a high population growth have resulted in poor economic prospects for Burkina Faso's citizens.

**Official language:** French

**Ethnic groups:** 48% Mossi, 10.3% Fulani, 6,9% Lobi, 6,9% Bobo, 6,7% Mandé, 5,3% Senufo

**Government:** Unitary semi-presidential republic

- President: Roch Marc Christian Kaboré

- Prime Minister: Paul Kaba Thieba

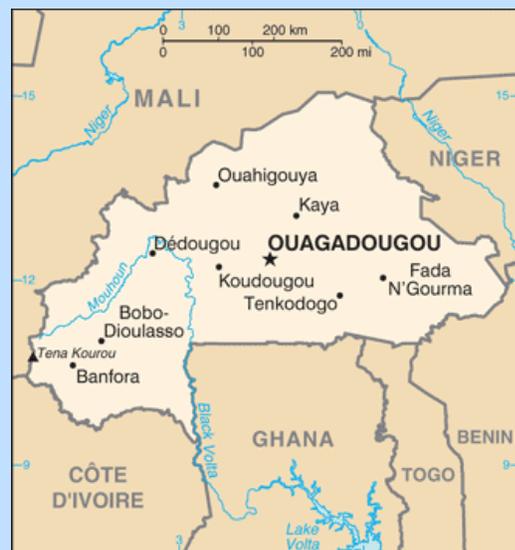
**Death penalty:** Abolitionist de facto

**Population:** 19 million

**Life expectancy:** 59.9 years

**Under-5 mortality:** 88.60 per 1000 in 2015

**Adult literacy:** 36 percent



## Section 1: Overall Development

The overall development of a country – considering education, health, income, and other factors – is a strong indicator of whether average citizens have a reasonable chance to enjoy social and economic well-being and mobility.

### Human Development (UNDP Human Development Index (HDI))<sup>2</sup>



#### 0.402 – Low Human Development<sup>3</sup>

According to the UNDP, Burkina Faso enjoyed a gross national income per capita of \$1591, and citizens could expect to have on average 7.8 years of schooling. However, other countries with comparable gross national income per capita tend to have a higher HDI.

## Section 2: Respect for the Integrity of the Person

Respect for the integrity of the individual is the most fundamental of human rights groupings. It guarantees protection of the person to ensure the right to life, and freedom from torture. It also prevents arbitrary detention, and disappearances, and ensures the right to a free and fair trial when accused.

### Freedom from arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life



#### Largely disrespected<sup>4</sup>

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

### Freedom from disappearance



#### Largely Respected<sup>5</sup>

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

### Freedom from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment



#### Partially disrespected<sup>6</sup>

The constitution and law prohibit such practices. Nevertheless, the Burkinabe Movement for Human Rights and People reported that members of the security forces tortured, threatened, beat, and abused individuals.

### Freedom from arbitrary arrest or detention



#### Partially disrespected<sup>7</sup>

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention, but security forces did not always respect these prohibitions. Use of excessive force, corruption, a climate of impunity, and lack of training contributed to police ineffectiveness.

### Freedom from denial of fair public trial



#### Largely disrespected<sup>8</sup>

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary, but the judiciary is often corrupt, inefficient, and subject to executive influence, according to NGOs.

### Freedom from arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence



#### Partially respected<sup>9</sup>

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, and the government generally respects these prohibitions. In cases of national security, however, the law permits surveillance, searches, and monitoring of telephones and private correspondence without a warrant.

## Section 3: Respect for Civil Liberties

Civil liberties are a basic category of internationally recognized human rights. They include the freedoms of expression, assembly, association, education, and religion. These are inalienable rights which should not be breached by government, and should ensure the rights of all, including women and minority groups.

### Freedom of speech and press (*Reporters Without Borders Press Freedom Index*)<sup>10</sup>



#### Score: 22.66, Rank: 42 / 179 – Mostly free, diverse and independent<sup>11</sup>

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and press, and the government generally respected these rights. In September 2015 the government adopted a law decriminalizing press offenses.

### Freedom from academic censorship



#### Respected<sup>12</sup>

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

### Freedom of peaceful assembly and association



#### Partially disrespected<sup>13</sup>

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly, but the government did not always respect this right. Authorities sometimes banned or violently dispersed demonstrations.

### Freedom of religion



#### Largely respected<sup>14</sup>

The constitution lists the country as a secular state, and provides for freedom of religion.

### Freedom of movement



#### Largely respected<sup>15</sup>

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

### Protection of refugees and stateless persons



#### Largely respected<sup>16</sup>

The law provides for granting asylum or refugee status, and the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees.

### Overall protection of civil liberties (*FreedomHouse Civil Liberties Index*)<sup>17 18</sup>



#### 3.5 / 7 – Partly free<sup>19</sup>

Although the constitution guarantees freedom of expression, which is generally respected, many media workers practice self-censorship.

## Section 4: Respect for Political Rights

Political rights ensure all members of society are able to influence the political process. The assessment of political rights includes an examination of the electoral process and the selection of representatives, the political empowerment of the general public, the tolerance of dissent, the accountability of government, etc.

### Overall protection of political rights (*FreedomHouse Political Rights Index*)<sup>20</sup>



**4 / 7 – Partly free**<sup>21</sup>

Burkina Faso's political rights rating improved due installation of a civilian government, after the ouster of long-time president Blaise Compaoré in 2014 and a brief and ultimately unsuccessful military coup in September 2015.

## Section 5: Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

The civil, political, economic and social rights exercised within a country are often modulated by the degree of transparency and freedom from corruption. Various international metrics assess transparency and corruption, including the OECD anti-bribery convention, the Bribe Payers Index, and the Open Budget Index.

### Transparency and freedom from corruption (*Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index*)<sup>22</sup>



**Rank: 72 / 176 – Limited corruption**<sup>23</sup>

Although the law is supposed to prosecute officials who engage in corruption, often they have impunity.

## Section 6: Governmental Response to Criticism

This section deals specifically with the response heads of state have to civil society or international human rights reports.

### Governmental attitudes vis-à-vis independent investigations of alleged human rights violations



**Largely respected**<sup>24</sup>

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

## Section 7: Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Legal and social discriminatory practices related to sex, race, creed or sexual orientation, are violations of human rights. Countries with strong civil liberty traditions should have a fair legal system that ensures the rule of law, allows free economic activity, and ensures equality of opportunity for all.

### Endangered Minorities (*Peoples Under Threat – Minority Rights Group International*)<sup>25</sup>



**No threat listed – Limited dangers to minorities**<sup>26</sup>

According to Minorities Rights Group International, Burkina Faso does not have any minorities which face an immediate threat of sectarian violence.

### Rights of Children (*KidsRights Index Overall Score*)<sup>27</sup>



**Score: 51% Rank: 143 / 163 – Slightly Vulnerable**<sup>28</sup>

The legal age for marriage is 17 for girls and 20 for boys, but early and forced marriage was a problem. Moreover, Authorities tolerated light corporal punishment, and parents widely practiced it.

### Rights of persons with disabilities



**Partially respected**<sup>29</sup>

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with physical, sensory, intellectual, and mental disabilities, but the government did not effectively enforce these provisions.

## Rights of national/racial/ethnic minorities (e.g. discrimination, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism etc.)



### Partially disrespected<sup>30</sup>

Longstanding conflicts between Fulani herders and sedentary farmers of other ethnic origins sometimes resulted in violence. Conflict between ethnic groups also occurred because of disputes regarding the designation of local traditional chiefs.

## Freedom from abuse and discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity



### Largely disrespected<sup>31 32</sup>

LGBTI individuals are 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. The country has no laws in place concerning the LGBTI community.

## Section 7: Workers' Rights

*Workers' rights are a group of legal rights relating to labour relations between workers and their employers. At their core are things like the ability to negotiate pay, benefits, terms of employment, and safe working conditions. These rights often devolve from the right to unionize and access to collective bargaining.*

## Rights to freedom of association and to collective bargaining



### Partially disrespected<sup>33</sup>

Despite limitations on the right to strike, the government generally respected freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining. The law allows workers to form and join independent unions of their choice without prior authorization or excessive requirements.

## Freedom from forced or compulsory labour



### Partially disrespected<sup>34</sup>

The law prohibits all forms of forced or compulsory labor. Nevertheless, the government did not have a significant, effective program in place to address or eliminate forced labor.

## Freedom from forced labour for children, and a minimum age of employment



### Respected<sup>35</sup>

The law prohibits the worst forms of child labor, including the commercial sexual exploitation of children, child pornography, and jobs that harm the health of a child.

## Right to acceptable conditions of work



### Respected<sup>36</sup>

There is a minimum wage for workers, as well as standard work week hours. The law provides for overtime pay, and there are regulations pertaining to rest periods, limits on hours worked, and prohibitions on excessive compulsory overtime.

## Right to employment



### 3.11% - Reasonable unemployment<sup>37</sup>

For the past ten years, the unemployment rate has been stable between 2.7% and 3.3%.

<sup>1</sup> A hybrid human rights and freedoms model, leveraging both legal principles and intuitive classifications, has been used for this human rights assessment. The CJPME Foundation has sought to integrate as many independent sources and metrics into its summary analysis as possible. In many cases, for qualitative material pertaining to the respect for a particular right in a country, the CJPME Foundation has drawn on material from Human Rights Watch and the US State Department country reports. Human Rights Watch (HRW) publishes a World Report which assesses the respect for human rights in each country. HRW uses a methodology of local reporting and interviewing, combined with research and analysis to assess the level of respect of human rights. The U.S State Department keeps an updated publication on the state of human rights internationally. Their system of research and accountability draws from the research of official US State Department officials, as well as local civil-society and international human rights organizations.

<sup>2</sup> The UN Development Program HDI was created to emphasize that people and their capabilities should be the ultimate criteria for assessing the development of a country, not economic growth alone. The HDI can also be used to question national policy choices, asking how two countries with the same level of GNI per capita can end up with different human development outcomes. These contrasts can stimulate debate about government policy priorities. The Human Development Index (HDI) is a summary measure of average achievement in key dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, being knowledgeable and have a decent standard of living. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>

<sup>3</sup> "Table 1: Human Development Index and its components, Burkina Faso" UNDP, based on 2014 or the most recent year available. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI>.

<sup>4</sup> ""Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Burkina Faso." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2015. Accessed November 23, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. For purposes of the present analysis, a "disappearance" is different than simple arbitrary detention because a "disappearance" is considered permanent.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>10</sup> The Press Freedom Index published by Reporters Without Borders ranks the level of freedom of information in 180 countries. This is determined through the polling of local NGOs and freedom of expression civil society organizations across the globe. This index is also determined by local correspondents and follow-up work done on reports of infringement to press freedom where ever it takes place. Their methodology looks at six different indicators: 1) Media pluralism, 2) Media independence, 3) Media atmosphere and self-censorship, 4) the Law around media, 5) Media transparency, and 6) Media infrastructure. The score from these six indicators is combined with a rating for the violence against journalists in the country to create an overall score. The CJPME Foundation classifies the Press Freedom Index as follows: 0 – 14.99 (16 countries), Largely free, diverse and independent; 15 – 24.99 (37 countries), Mostly free, diverse and independent; 25 – 29.99 (31 countries), Partially free, diverse and independent; 30 – 39.99 (39 countries), Partially controlled, limited or intimidated; 40 & higher (57 countries), Highly controlled, limited or intimidated.

<sup>11</sup> "World Press Freedom Index." Reporters Without Borders: For Freedom of Information. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 23, 2016.

<https://rsf.org/fr/classement>.

<sup>12</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Burkina Faso." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2015. Accessed November 23, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/#wrapper>.

<sup>13</sup> "Burkina Faso." World Report 2016: Burkina Faso. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265440.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> "Burkina Faso." International Religious Freedom Report for 2016. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

<sup>15</sup> Burkina Faso." World Report 2016: Burkina Faso. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265440.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> "Burkina Faso." World Report 2016: Burkina Faso. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/265440.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Freedom House is an internationally recognized NGO based in the U.S which documents and rates the quality of democratic practice in a given country. Freedom House splits its grading system between the two areas of civil and political rights in a country. On each scale, the Freedom House rating is 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free).

<sup>18</sup> Freedom House's Civil Liberties index measures things such as a) freedom of expression and belief, b) associational and organizational rights, c) the rule of law, and d) personal autonomy and individual rights. Freedom House rates countries as 1-2.5 (free), 3-5.5 (partly free) and 6-7 (not free). Accessed Dec. 9, 2014

<https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#VldwWzHF98F>

<sup>19</sup> "Burkina Faso." Freedom in the World 2016: Burkina Faso January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/burkina-faso>

<sup>20</sup> See footnote about the Freedom House organization above. The Freedom House Political Rights assessment looks at a) the electoral process, b) political pluralism and participation, and c) the functioning of government. Accessed Dec. 9, 2015 [https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-](https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#VldwWzHF98F)

[2014/methodology#VldwWzHF98F](https://www.freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2014/methodology#VldwWzHF98F)

<sup>21</sup> "Burkina Faso." Freedom in the World 2016: Burkina Faso. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2017/burkina-faso>

<sup>22</sup> Transparency International (TI) publishes a "Corruption Perceptions Index" annually, which is based on independent research and polling. The main categories of corruption are broken down within the index to provide particulars on issues including things such as perceptions of corruption, control of corruption, and financial secrecy. A country receives a score on 100; the higher the score, the less corrupt the society. The CJPME foundation has classified them into categories as follows: 80-100 (11 countries): Very limited corruption; 60-79 (27 countries): Limited corruption; 40-59 (41 countries): Some corruption; 20-39 (80 countries): Highly corrupt; 0-19 (15 countries): Extremely corrupt

<sup>23</sup> "Burkina Faso." Corruption by Country. January 1, 2015. Accessed November 25, 2015. <https://www.transparency.org/country/BFA>.

<sup>24</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Burkina Faso." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2015. Accessed November 23, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

<sup>25</sup> The Peoples under Threat assessment by Minority Rights Group International highlights countries most at risk of genocide and mass killing. The ranking is created by compiling data on the known antecedents to genocide or mass political killing. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017 <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

<sup>26</sup> "Burkina Faso." Peoples under Threat, Minority Rights Group International. 2015, or most recent data. Accessed Jan. 8, 2017. <http://peoplesunderthreat.org/>.

<sup>27</sup> This metric is based on the KidsRights Index Overall Score. This index has five subdomains: life expectancy and maternal mortality; health; education; protection; and child rights environment. Each country is given a percentage score; the higher the percentage, the better the protections. KidsRights classes the countries according to these percentages, and the CJPME Foundation has given each class a term as follows: 70-100% (77 countries): Protected; 60-70% (29 countries): Somewhat protected; 45-50% (33 countries): Slightly vulnerable; 30-45% (12 countries): Highly vulnerable; Lower than 30% (11 countries): Extremely vulnerable

<sup>28</sup> "The KidsRights Index: Overall Ranking." The KidsRights Index. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://www.kidsrightsindex.org/>

<sup>29</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Burkina Faso." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2015. Accessed November 23, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>31</sup> "ILGA World Map." International Lesbian Gay and Intersex Association. January 1, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016. <http://ilga.org/>. See also Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>32</sup> ILGA, the International, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, was founded in 1978 on the principle of highlighting state sponsored homophobia where it exists around the world. ILGA annually publishes a map with an accompanying report on sexual and gender based harassment, which focuses on both the legal and non-legal acts of state sponsored discrimination.

<sup>33</sup> "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015 Burkina Faso." U.S Department of State. January 1, 2015. Accessed November 23, 2016.

<http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/religiousfreedom/index.htm#wrapper>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. U.S Department of State. See also a well-done Wikipedia comparison of wage, income and work week metrics across countries at

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_minimum\\_wages\\_by\\_country](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_minimum_wages_by_country)

<sup>37</sup> "Global Employment Trends." International Labour Organization. January 1, 2013. Accessed December 7, 2014. [http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS\\_233936/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/research/global-reports/global-employment-trends/2014/WCMS_233936/lang--en/index.htm).