Rights watchdog reports army and jihadist abuses in Burkina Faso

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By AFP

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Security forces in Burkina Faso have carried out extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests and other abuses in their campaign against terrorism, Human Rights Watch says.

A 60-page report by the US-based watchdog said Sahel villagers found themselves caught between jihadists, who threatened to kill those who collaborated with the government, and security forces, who expected locals to give them information about insurgents.

Human Rights Watch Report: [*By Day We Fear the Army, By Night the Jihadists*](https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/05/21/day-we-fear-army-night-jihadists/abuses-armed-islamists-and-security-forces)

Human Rights Watch said it had documented the execution-style killings by Islamists of 19 men from 12 villages who had been accused of providing information to the security forces.

On the government’s side, witnesses implicated the security forces in "at least" 14 alleged summary executions and said four other men died in custody from mistreatment.

"Many witnesses described seeing bodies along local roads and footpaths in northern Burkina Faso," the report said. "The majority of victims were last seen in the custody of government security forces."

Northern Burkina Faso has been in the grip of a jihadist insurgency since 2016. Armed groups including al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara have attacked army bases and police posts and carried out a campaign of intimidation against officials and teachers.

The violence has killed scores of people and driven more than 12,000 from their homes. The fatalities include 47 civilians murdered by jihadists in two attacks in the capital, Ouagadougou, during 2016 and 2017.

"The growing insecurity in Burkina Faso has led to terrible crimes by both armed Islamists and state security forces," said Corinne Dufka, HRW’s Sahel director. "The government should follow through on its important commitment to investigate alleged abuses by state forces, and the armed Islamists should stop attacking and threatening civilians." Responding to the accusations, Defence Minister Jean-Claude Bouda said that he was already "aware of certain allegations of abuses" against civilians in counter-terrorism operations.

"The government undertakes to carry out inquiries into all the cases of abuse referred to (in the report) which had not already been brought to its attention," Bouda said