

# CONFLICT IN THE SAHEL

## Violence and displacement in the region bordering Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger



In 2019 the border area shared by Burkina Faso, Niger, and Mali, known as Liptako Gourma, saw a rise in intercommunal violence and jihadist activities. Across the region, security incidents were recorded on an almost daily basis (UNHCR 28/10/2019), increasingly resulting in civilian casualties (ACLEd 23/03/2019). Armed groups have continued to expand their frontlines while authorities struggle to contain the crisis (The Conversation 05/09/2019), including widespread displacement and civil discontent. Across the region, 1.5 million people have been displaced, either within their own countries or abroad (UNHCR accessed 20/11/2019).

From early 2019, jihadist groups consolidated their presence in Burkina Faso's northern and Mali's central regions, and violence continues to expand (The Conversation 05/09/2019; ACLEd 07/08/2019). Islamic State in the Greater Sahel (ISGS) continued to be active across the region. Islamic State central attributed an increasing number of attacks to Islamic State in West African Province (ISWAP); however it is unclear whether ISWAP cooperates operationally with ISGS (The Defense Post 30/05/2019). ISGS started claiming attacks in eastern

Niger targeting Nigerien forces (ACLEd 07/08/2019); armed groups more generally have also targeted civilians (The New Humanitarian 28/03/2019). The ISGS has increased its use of improvised explosives along roads used by military units, frequently leading to civilian deaths (Africa Research Bulletin, 10/2019). The Group for Support of Islam and Muslims (known as the JNIM), comprising several jihadist groups, also consolidated its foothold in the region (VOA 19/04/2019).

Weak governance has been a problem in the region (FT 11/2019). The prime ministers of Burkina Faso and Mali resigned in 2019, reportedly in both cases, over their respective government's incapacity to address crises (RFI 19/01/2019; VOA 19/04/2019). Anti-war protests are frequent across the region (Africa Research Bulletin 10/2019). Additionally, in Mali, progress on the Peace Agreement has been slow. A lack of government control in many of Mali's crisis areas, and active distrust of national and international forces (RFI 01/08/2019), has left civilians to rely on ethnically-aligned paramilitary groups (RFI 06/11/2019) who often attack other ethnic communities. They have proven difficult to control – an

agreement signed between paramilitary groups in Mopti in August failed to ensure peace (France 24 05/11/2019) and operations targeting paramilitary groups led to protests in September (Africa Research Bulletin, 10/2019).

Most of the year's civilian deaths have been attributed to intercommunal conflict, rather than jihadist attacks (ACLEd 07/08/2019). Abuses committed between Peuhl and Dogon groups have resulted in retaliatory attacks:

	Severity	Access
BURKINA FASO	2.8	2
MALI	3.6	4
NIGER*	2.7	3

\*This applies to the crisis 'Cross-border violence'. Scale values go from 0 to 5. Source: GCSI October 2019.

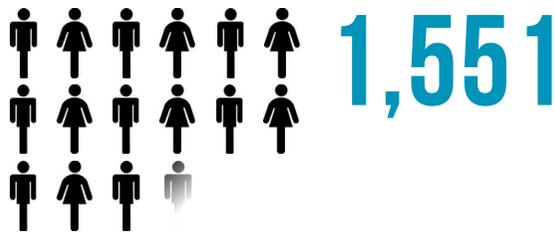
## Number of casualties as of October 2019

 ..... 100 people

### BURKINA FASO



### MALI



### NIGER



Source: ACLED 2019

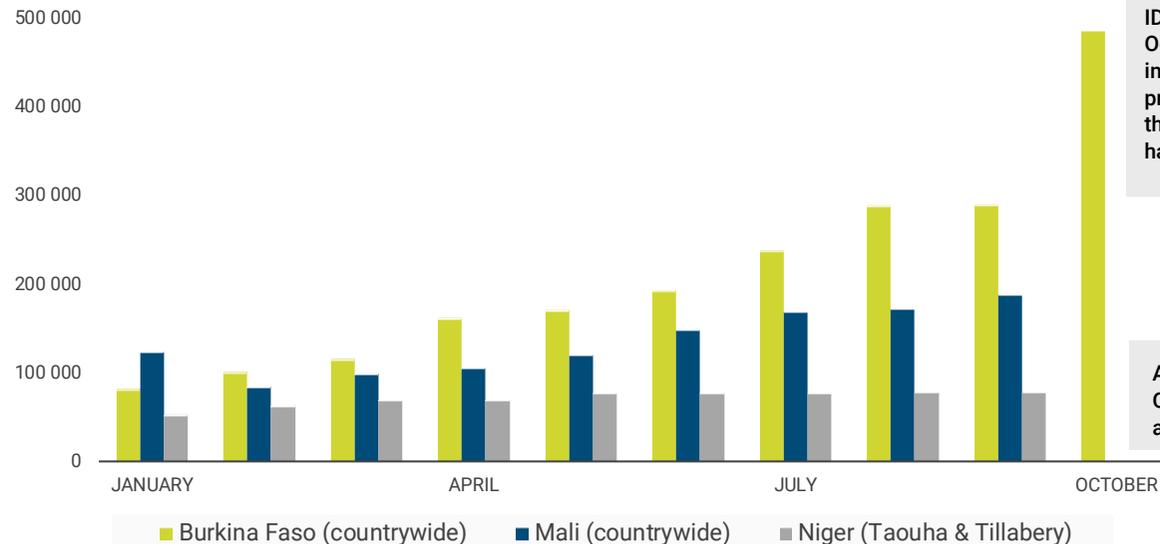
in March, Dogon paramilitary groups killed 160 Peuhl civilians (MSF 20/06/2019) near the Burkina Faso border and a retaliatory attack targeting Dogon communities resulted in 75 deaths in June. These figures are not exceptional and deaths from intercommunal violence are underreported (ACLED 07/08/2019).

In Burkina Faso, violence spread into the Centre-Nord and Est regions (Africa Research Bulletin, 10/2019) and took on an increasingly intercommunal character. While jihadist groups targeted Bella, Foulse, and Mossi communities, civilian militias and security forces were accused of targeting Peuhl communities, who are commonly conflated with jihadists (HRW 03/2019). Da Na Ambassagou, a Dogon paramilitary group that has

targeted Peuhl in Mali, have been active in Burkina Faso, joining local civilian militias known as Koglweogo ('the guardians of the bush'); ethnic based attacks, blamed on these militias, led to more than 200 deaths in early 2019 (The New Humanitarian 18/04/2019). States of Emergency in the northern regions were renewed mid-year, further limiting civilian livelihoods and access (Le Monde 12/07/2019).

More than 18 million people are estimated to have been exposed to the year's dramatic events, according to ACAPS' own calculations – and they may bear the brunt of future violence and displacement, if this year's trends continue into 2020 (Government of Burkina Faso and OCHA 08/10/2019; UNHCR 31/07/2019; UNHCR 30/09/2019; UN OCHA 07/2019; UN OCHA 12/2018; UN OCHA 08/2019).

### IDPs in Liptako Gourma region in 2019



The increase in Burkina Faso's IDP numbers for the month of October resulted largely from improvements in registration procedures, which allowed for the registration of people who had already been displaced.

At the date of research no October IDP figures were available for Mali or Niger.

Source: UNHCR 2019