

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS Policy Brief

### Living under embargo: The impact of armed forces embargo on the population and their resilience facing such constraints (Based on examples of cities in Burkina-Faso)

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Issuance date: 20 March 2025

Application Deadline and Instructions:

Applications must be received by **14 April 2025**

All applications must be submitted electronically to [marie.riquier@sipri.org](mailto:marie.riquier@sipri.org) and [pauline.poupart@sipri.org](mailto:pauline.poupart@sipri.org) with, in the subject line "PB –Living under embargo".

#### 1. Introduction

The Research and Action for Peace (RECAP) project, funded by the European Union, is implemented by the West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) in 18 countries of West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin<sup>1</sup>. The overall objective of the project is to strengthen the role of civil society, including regional, national, and community practitioners and researchers in effective peacebuilding, crisis management, and prevention of conflict and violent extremism in West Africa and the Lake Chad Basin to enable more informed decision making by policymakers. The present call is administrated jointly by WANEP, SIPRI, and DRC.

#### 2. Rationale

WANEP, DRC and SIPRI are soliciting proposals for research from RECAP network members for the development of a policy brief on **Living under embargo: The impact of armed forces embargo on the population and their resilience facing such constraints (Based on examples of cities in Burkina-Faso)**.

From 2022, cities like Djibo, Pama, Diapaga, Nouna, and Arbinda in Burkina-Faso have experienced, sometimes repeatedly, a situation of "blockade" or "embargo" by jihadi groups operating under the banner of the *Jama'at Nusrat al Islam wal Muslimin* (JNIM, affiliated to al-Qaeda) or the Sahel Province of the Islamic State (IS Sahel).

Despite the local particularities, the forced isolation of the cities can be depicted as a war strategy serving as "a show of force against the national defence and security forces, an instrument of subjugation of the populations and an obstacle to humanitarian aid"<sup>2</sup>, leading aggravated life conditions and even hunger for many individuals trapped.

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<sup>1</sup> ECOWAS countries and Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Chad and Mauritania.

<sup>2</sup> "[Au Burkina Faso, "la mort nous guettait" : Amnesty International raconte la vie sous blocus djihadiste](#)", Le Monde, 3 November 2023.

In this context, this policy brief will identify the strategies and resilience factors developed by the populations put in a situation of “embargo”, and “blockade” by jihadi groups. It will thoroughly describe the context and ideally compare cities in Burkina-Faso.

It will identify the drivers leading to such situations and the modalities of the embargoes. It will analyse the responses from the authorities in the post-coup context in the assessed country.

This paper will finally enable policy recommendations and responses to protect and provide overall care (on the humanitarian, medical, socio-economic, and political levels) to populations (displaced and residents) living or having lived under embargo.

## 2.1 Background

Patterns of “blockades” and “embargos” are shared between the cities. They start with intimidations and threats towards the populations of a given location, generally for their ties with State authorities or with non-state “defence groups”, before the destruction of bridges or cutting off the main access roads preventing both people and trade mobility.

The cities chosen usually have strategic positions as Djibo, located 200km North of the capital Ouagadougou and close to the Malian border in Burkina-Faso, also known for its regionally connected cattle markets.<sup>3</sup>

Populations are usually prevented from cultivating and herding cattle, reducing food availability and food access.<sup>4</sup> This also leads to shortages of first necessity goods like flour, sugar, milk, and oil, as well as important price rises, followed by cuts in electricity and mobile phone networks.

In Djibo, in Burkina-Faso, 350,000 persons were put under an embargo for more than seven months in 2022 and were reduced to eating leaves to survive. Among them, an important number were Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) fleeing the numerous jihadi attacks in the Yagha province and often pressured by the jihadis to move to the towns.<sup>5</sup> In Burkina Faso, humanitarian access to the concerned populations has been growingly constrained when armed groups do not directly target humanitarians.<sup>6</sup>

Populations felt “abandoned” by the authorities despite the alerts made<sup>7</sup>. The military solution is the one currently privileged against the jihadi groups. Burkinabese authorities, for example, attempted to send escorted convoys to Djibo with limited success, given the multiplication of attacks, sabotage, and use of mines against their presence.

Through community representatives, the population has launched local dialogue and local negotiations, leading to temporary and precarious advancements, including the return of farmers to their fields.<sup>8</sup> Since these attempts, the space for dialogue has significantly reduced, and negotiations have stalled.<sup>9</sup>

The daily situation of the populations in the regions concerned by these embargos is, therefore, a striking illustration of the great exposure of civilians to dire insecurity and the necessity to protect their basic needs, and to complement or reinforce the tools and strategies put in place to navigate the tensions between surrounding State and non-State armed actors.

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<sup>3</sup>“Burkina: sous blocus jihadiste, Djibo 'au bord de la famine'”, APA News, 5 October 2022.

<sup>4</sup> “Burkina Faso: “La mort nous guettait”: Vivre dans des localités assiégées au Burkina Faso”, Amnesty International report, 2 November 2023.

<sup>5</sup> Dicko, H, “De la difficulté d'intervenir au Sahel”, MSF Crash, 24 June 2024.

<sup>6</sup> “Au Burkina Faso, Médecins sans frontières suspend ses activités dans la ville de Djibo”, Le Monde Afrique, 21 October 2024.

<sup>7</sup> “Burkina Faso: la vie sous blocus à Djibo”, MSF, 5 May 2023.

<sup>8</sup> Mednick, S., “Talking to jihadists: How three community leaders took a bold step in Burkina Faso”, The New Humanitarian, 25 May 2022.

<sup>9</sup> “How Burkina Faso’s military junta outlawed local peace talks with jihadists”, The New Humanitarian, 18 November 2024.

## 2.2 Objectives of the consultancy

This study aims to produce an evidence-based policy brief analysing the situation of embargo that will serve as a tool for influencing policy and practice in the protection of civilians.

In this context, the study will thoroughly assess the different situations that took place in Burkina Faso to illustrate the concrete consequences of the embargos on the populations and the strategies they put in place to survive these periods, both at the individual and community levels and in relation to socio-economic, humanitarian, and political aspects through negotiation attempts.

More specifically, the objectives of this policy brief are as follows:

- An assessment of the embargo situations chosen for study by the applicant (modalities, causes, specific consequences at the local and regional levels).
- A problem analysis containing
  - o A stakeholder analysis, including identification and analysis of the needs and challenges of concerned populations;
  - o An assessment of the role of humanitarian actors (local, regional, international) in response to the embargo situations;
  - o An assessment of the responses given by the State (in terms of security, humanitarian and economic assistance, and political response).
- An analysis of the situation in one city, or several cities in Burkina Faso
- Recommendations for involved State and non-state actors active in protecting civilians in the countries and at the regional and international levels.

The policy brief's findings and recommendations should contribute to the increased understanding of the shortcomings of past and ongoing initiatives and provide concrete and evidence-based recommendations to stakeholders to address these challenges.

This policy brief will be presented by its author and discussed during Recap Network online research Meet Up with fellow authors, members of the RECAP network, the EU and interested stakeholders and partners.

## 3. Scope of work and methodology

The researcher(s) or institution should clarify their research question, methodology, geographical scope and work plan in their proposal, indicating how the objectives of the research and policy brief will be achieved.

The study should cover the previously mentioned country of Burkina Faso (ideally in a comparative perspective of different cities).

The researcher(s) will be responsible for implementing all stages of the study, from the design of the methodology to the drafting of the final report, including document review and data collection in the field.

The researcher(s) will apply the highest rigour, quality and professionalism standards. The quality of the research produced will be assessed at each stage to meet the contract expectations.

The researcher(s) will carry out the following tasks:

- Carry out a **literature review** based on existing documentation (scientific and academic literature,

- NGO and institutions reports) to provide a summary of current knowledge on the subject.
- Drawing up a **preliminary preparatory report** highlighting: the definition of the subject of the study; the research and data collection methodology to be used in the field; the methodological approach to data processing and analysis adopted; the findings and conclusions of the literature review.
- Conduct **key informant interviews with main stakeholders**, especially representatives of international, regional and local organisations in contact with impacted populations, as well as local, regional and national authorities.
- **Write the first draft of the Policy brief** based on the analysis of the desk review.
- **Write the final draft of the Policy brief** including comments received from the REcAP Scientific Committee and EU FPI.
- Produce a high-quality policy brief as a resource or tool for advocacy and policy discourse.

If travel is required, the researcher(s) or institution will be responsible to arrange transportation, accommodation, insurance, securing proper visas and research authorizations for their research activities and to make adequate provision in the Financial Proposal. The researcher(s) or institution is also responsible for any staff or sub-consultant they may engage as part of this mission. The final research product is subject to REcAP’s internal review and editing process, and the researcher(s) or institution will resolve all necessary revisions within the scope of the contract.

Based on a request from the REcAP Project Secretariat, and conditional on the final product not revealing information that can put anyone or an organization in danger, the researcher(s) or institution might present a briefing of the findings for the public with a focus on targeting practitioners in the field, policymakers, and financial and technical partners.

#### 4. Expected deliverables & timeline

The researcher(s) will be expected to deliver to the Project Secretariat:

- A policy brief on the selected topic in English or French.
- The policy brief should be approximately **three thousand words (3,000)**, excluding the cover page, the executive summary, the table of content, and references (single spacing using Calibri 12).
- The researcher(s) will provide the deliverables by e-mail to the to the Publication Team ([marie.riquier@sipri.org](mailto:marie.riquier@sipri.org) and [pauline.poupart@sipri.org](mailto:pauline.poupart@sipri.org) )
- The researcher(s) might be invited to a virtual meeting with REcAP’s Scientific Committee to discuss the contents, including policy claims and positions, intellectual arguments, and any other issues.

Expected deliverables	Indicative description	Maximum expected timeframe
<b>Inception report</b>	Definition of the subject of the study, research and data collection methodology, methodological approach adopted for processing and analysing the data, results and conclusions of the preliminary documentary analysis.	5 working days
<b>Draft Policy Brief</b>	Desk research, work meetings and analysis. The draft Policy Brief embedded with in-depth situation analysis, key findings and action-oriented recommendations is presented to the REcAP Scientific Committee. The researcher might be invited to a virtual meeting with REcAP’s Scientific Committee and the EU FPI to discuss the findings.	13 working days
<i>Comments</i>	<i>Comments &amp; feedback from the Scientific Committee and/or the EU FPI</i>	<i>7 working days</i>
<b>Final Policy Brief</b>	Final version taking into consideration comments & feedback from the Scientific Committee and/or the EU FPI <sup>6</sup>	7 working days

## 5. Duration of Assignment and payment schedule

- The assignment is expected to last one month (25 working days) from the contract signature date.
- The payment will be made in one instalment upon approval by the Scientific Committee of the final version of the deliverable.
- The maximum budget available per policy brief is two thousand euros (2,000 EUR).

## 6. Qualifications

Interested researcher(s) are expected to have the following qualifications:

- Be a member of the REcAP Network. Members of the REcAP's Scientific Committee cannot apply. However, other researchers from their respective organisations can apply.
- Have a master's degree or PhD in a relevant field.
- Have research experience in the selected themes/topics.
- Excellent command of French (spoken, read, and written) or English (spoken, read, and written). Working knowledge of the other one. Knowledge of Portuguese is considered an advantage.

## 7. Application

Interested researcher(s) should submit the following documents to the REcAP Project Secretariat ([marie.riquier@sipri.org](mailto:marie.riquier@sipri.org) and [Pauline.poupart@sipri.org](mailto:Pauline.poupart@sipri.org) ) **before 23.59 GMT on 14 April 2025.**

- One page statement of Interest in one of the themes/topics and presenting an interesting and innovative angle to approach the theme.
- A CV with an updated list of publications.
- Two examples of policy briefs or similar documents published.

Only those shortlisted will be contacted.

## 8. Evaluation criteria for research proposals

The following criteria will be used by the Scientific committee to evaluate research proposals:

No.	Criteria	Max. Score
1	<b>Education:</b> Master's degree or PhD in a relevant field.	10
2	<b>Languages:</b> Excellent command of French (spoken, read, and written) or English (spoken, read, and written). Working knowledge of the other one. Knowledge of Portuguese is considered as an advantage.	10
3	<b>Research Experience:</b> At least 3 years of research. Familiarity and knowledge of the selected topic/theme as well as evidence of previous research experience in the selected theme/topic	20
4	<b>Relevance technical narrative proposal:</b> Does the research proposal address the objective of the research? Are the research objectives and research questions well-constructed and easily understood? Do they align with the research problem?	25
5	<b>Methodology: Technical soundness and quality of the proposed methodology including understanding of the assignment and innovativeness of the approach to undertake it.</b>	25
6	<b>Overall quality of proposal:</b> the degree to which the proposal complies with the application guidelines and is of high quality (table of contents, organization, pagination, margin and font size, ideas effectively presented, referencing, well prepared vitae etc.)	10