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Burkina Faso: Student Association of Burkina Faso; its objectives; the names of its main leaders; whether the authorities are interested in this organization (1999-2000)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to sources consulted by the Research Directorate, there is more than one student association in Burkina Faso (*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 14-20 Nov. 2000, 37; *Sidwaya* 2 Dec. 2002; PANA 8 Jan. 2001). Thus, the 14-20 November 2000 issue of *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* used the words [translation] "student associations," and named the National Association of Burkina Students (Association nationale des étudiants du Burkina, ANEB) (37). In its 2 December 2002 issue, the *Sidwaya* daily newspaper mentioned three student associations in Burkina Faso, namely, the National Association of Burkina Students (Association nationale des étudiants du Burkina, ANEB), the General Union of Burkina Students (Union générale des étudiants du Burkina, UGEB), and the Secondary Students Association of Ouagadougou (Association des élèves du secondaire de Ouagadougou, AESO). According to another source, the full name of the ANEB is "Association nationale des étudiants burkinabè" (AFP 6 Sept. 2001). Moreover, the Pan African News Agency (PANA) stated that the National Union of Faso Students, along with the ANEB, was one of the main student unions at the University of Ouagadougou (8 Jan. 2001).

The ANEB, held to be [translation] "the main group responsible for the crisis situation at the university" (*Sidwaya* 2 Dec. 2002), drew the attention of the authorities through its actions on the campus of the University of Ouagadougou, particularly in 2000 (*ibid.*; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 14-20 Nov. 2000, 37; *ibid.* 17-23 Oct. 2000, 26-27; PANA 7 Oct. 2000; *ibid.* 8 Jan. 2001).

According to *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent*, the ANEB, founded about thirty years ago (17-23 Oct. 2000, 27), is a [translation] "powerful" organization, in spite of [translation] "the repression of its leaders" (*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 14-20 Nov. 2000, 37). The association, whose leaders come from all university departments, exerts authority over the Ouagadougou and Bobo-Dioulasso campuses, and has no [translation] "serious rivals" (*ibid.* 17-23 Oct. 2000, 27). Moreover, the ANEB is an ally of [translation] "the largest labour union in the country," the Burkinabe General Confederation of Labor (Confédération générale des travailleurs du Burkina, CGTB), [translation] "with which it often undertakes joint protest actions" (*ibid.*).

In late 2002, the president of the ANEB was Bertrand Meda (AFP 25 Nov. 2002). The sources consulted by the Research Directorate did not indicate whether Mr. Meda was already president in 2000. In 2001, the secretary-general of the ANEB was Souleymane Kologo (AFP 6 Sept. 2001); in 2000, one source referred to him as [translation] "the person in charge of students" (*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 17-23 Oct. 2000, 27).

Below is an overview of incidents involving the ANEB in 2000.

In January 2000, militants of the National Union of Faso Students (Union nationale des étudiants du Faso, UNEF) attacked ANEB members who were organizing a protest against a strike called by the UNEF (PANA 8 Jan. 2001). On 3 May 2000, University of Ouagadougou students, answering a call from the ANEB, launched a

three-day strike to support the students of the Faculty of Health Sciences, who were demanding paid hospital internships (*ibid.*). On 8 May 2000, University of Ouagadougou students participated in a demonstration organized by the ANEB to obtain better living and study conditions (*ibid.*). On 5 June 2000, the ANEB launched a four-day strike to protest against the delay in negotiations with the government (*ibid.*).

In October 2000, following a boycott that had disrupted the university for five months, the government closed down the University of Ouagadougou, dissolved all its faculties, and invalidated the 1999-2000 academic year (*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 17-23 Oct. 2000; PANA 7 Oct. 2000; *ibid.* 8 Jan. 2001). According to the Minister of Secondary and Higher Education and Scientific Research, the government took this decision as a result of [translation] "the students' radicalism" (*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 17-23 Oct. 2000, 27). The students had demanded that

[translation]

a scholarship be awarded to all students under the age of 22 who had obtained a baccalaureate average of 11 or higher. They wanted the annual loan of CFAF165,000 allocated under the National Education and Research Fund [Fonds national de l'éducation et de la recherche] to be extended beyond the current 4,925 recipients, as well as an increase in the CFAF100,000 subsidy distributed to 639 students (*.ibid.*).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Keesing's Record of World Events

New African

Resource Centre country file. Burkina Faso

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