

Peace & Justice Report

For the week of January 16, 2015



Fast Facts on Burkina Faso

- ★ A former French colony, it gained independence as Upper Volta in 1960. Since independence, the military has on several occasions intervened during times of crisis.
- ★ Burkina Faso has significant reserves of gold, but cotton is the economic mainstay for many Burkinabes.
- ★ This industry is vulnerable to changes in world prices.
- ★ A poor country even by West African standards, landlocked Burkina Faso has suffered from recurring droughts and, until the 1980s, military coups.
- ★ In 1983, Captain Thomas Sankara seized power and adopted radical left-wing policies.
- ★ He renamed the country Burkina Faso, which translates as "land of honest men."
- ★ In 1987, Thomas Sankara is ousted and killed in a coup led by his close aide, Blaise Compaore. Compaore is elected president for the next 27 years.
- ★ A popular uprising forced long-term leader Blaise Compaore from office in October 2014. *See top box at right*
- ★ An interim administration was put in place for a year, after which elections are to be held.
- ★ Read more: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-13072774>

POWER STRUGGLE IN BURKINA FASO AFTER BLAISE COMPAORE RESIGNS AS PRESIDENT



Burkina Faso's president, Blaise Compaore, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, has been swept from power after 27 years by a violent popular uprising.

Compaore announced his resignation on Friday as hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in protest at plans to extend his rule.

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BURKINA FASO'S UPRISING PART OF AN ONGOING WAVE OF AFRICAN PROTESTS

By Zachariah Mampilly—Nov. 2, 2014



In 1984, a year after coming to power at the head of a military coup, Thomas Sankara addressed the U.N. General Assembly. Claiming the

mantle for the dispossessed, for women, for youths, for the poor, Sankara — then all of 34 years old and just three years away from his tragic killing — told the assemblage of international elites: "I protest on behalf of all those who vainly seek a forum in this world where they can make their voice heard and have it genuinely taken into consideration."

Over the past week, I have been thinking about Sankara a lot, both as I watch events unfold in Burkina Faso, a country he bequeathed with its unquestionably brilliant

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*(Continued from page 1)***POWER STRUGGLE IN BURKINA FASO AFTER BLAISE COMPAORE RESIGNS AS PRESIDENT**

General Honoré Traoré, head of the armed forces, said he had taken charge of the west African country. But further confusion and uncertainty broke out after another military leader, Lieutenant Colonel Isaac Zida, declared himself to be president and said Traoré's claim was "obsolete".

Read more: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/31/burkina-faso-president-blaise-compaore-ousted-says-army>

*(Continued from page 1)***BURKINA FASO'S UPRISING PART OF AN ONGOING WAVE OF AFRICAN PROTESTS**

name (Land of the Upright People), and because my students and I have been discussing his seminal 1987 speech on women's liberation in class.

As events in Burkina Faso move ahead at breakneck pace, I'm struck by how much they encapsulate different political struggles that have defined African protest since the anti-colonial period. Political transformations across Africa have rarely come piecemeal. Instead, they tend to come in waves, sweeping across the region and leaving massive social transformations in their wake.

Read more: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2014/11/02/burkina-fasos-uprising-part-of-an-ongoing-wave-of-african-protests/>