

Country Reports on Terrorism 2021: Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso

Overview: Terrorist attacks increased in 2021, compared with 2020. The Global Terrorism Index ranked Burkina Faso as the country fourth-most affected by terrorism in 2021, after Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. JNIM continues to be the most prominent terrorist group in Burkina Faso, followed by ISIS-GS and the homegrown Ansaroul Islam.

According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, the country registered 597 security incidents with 1,073 fatalities and an estimated 1.6 million internally displaced persons in 2021. Those attacks included armed attacks, abductions, carjackings, IEDs, vehicle-borne IEDs, rocket attacks, and ambushes. The most-affected regions in Burkina Faso are the Sahel, Nord, Centre-Nord, and Est.

2021 Terrorist Incidents: Defense and security forces, civilians, humanitarian workers, religious, political, traditional, and community figures have all been victims of terrorist attacks:

- On May 3, armed militants attacked the village of Kodyel in the eastern Komandjari province. Homes were burned. At least 30 people were killed, and another 20 were wounded.
- On June 5, 160 people were killed, including 20 children, when gunmen stormed the Solhan Commune in the Yagha province along the northern border with Niger. • On August 18, groups affiliated with ISIS-GS attacked a convoy made up of civilians who left Dori heading to Arbinda, under the escort of Defense and Security Forces and Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland (VDPs) in the Sahel region. Thirty civilians, 14 gendarmes, and three VDPs were killed in the attack.
- On November 14, JNIM militants attacked the gendarmerie detachment at Inata resulting in the deaths of 57 people, including 54 gendarmes. The incident provoked protests throughout the country about the authorities' failure to curb the years-long conflict.
- On December 23, Islamist insurgents attacked a convoy escorted by VDPs in the Centre Nord region. About 41 people were killed, including a beloved national icon of the fight against terrorism.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The state of emergency declared in six regions and 14 provinces since 2019 has been again extended by the Parliament until late 2022. Burkina Faso's Defense and Security Forces are augmented by VDPs units. The country's specialized counterterrorism units are the Army Special Forces, the Special Legion of National Gendarmerie, and the Multipurpose Intervention Unit of National Police.

The *Brigade Spéciale des Investigations Antiterroristes* (BSIAT, Special Anti-Terrorism Investigation Brigade) refers cases to the specialized counterterrorism court for prosecution. The court held the only trials from August 9 to 13, convicting five persons of terrorism and acquitting one. On October 6, the Council of Ministers adopted the National Counterterrorism Strategy and the National Security Policy to combat terrorism by defining new strategic imperatives. Burkina Faso has 21 border police stations. The country uses border security systems sponsored by the IOM to help collect, store, and analyze travelers' information. In 2021, INTERPOL Burkina increased the use of terrorist and criminal screening watchlists.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Trafficking of illicit goods (in coordination with organized criminal groups), robberies, kidnappings, and illegal gold mining remain terrorist groups' primary sources of funding. In December, a Ouagadougou tribunal, with the assistance of the Financial Intelligence Unit, sentenced 39 individuals for fuel smuggling and endangering the lives of persons. The defendants also were accused of supplying fuel to terrorists; those allegations were transferred to the counterterrorism court for further investigations.

Countering Violent Extremism: In January, a ministry in charge of national reconciliation and social cohesion was created as part of the Government of Burkina Faso's efforts to counter violent extremism and radicalization. On May 10, a workshop was held in Ouagadougou to validate the national strategy for the prevention of radicalization to violence and the fight against violent extremism and its action plan. This strategy, developed with the support of USAID, aims to provide the Government of Burkina Faso with effective policies to fight against radicalization to violence and violent extremism, considering all the actors contributing to the expansion of the phenomenon and proposing adequate and sustainable solutions to population resilience.

International and Regional Cooperation: Burkina Faso continues its participation in the G-5 Sahel, along with Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger. The country is also part of the Accra Initiative with Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo. Mali and Niger are observer members. The Accra Initiative is a cooperative and collaborative security mechanism aimed at preventing the spillover of terrorism from the Sahel and addressing transnational organized crime and violent extremism in member countries' border areas. Burkina Faso became the 84th member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS in November.