

Document #2019275

USDOS – US Department of State

Country Report on Terrorism 2018 - Chapter 1 - Niger

Overview: The Government of Niger cooperated with its neighbors and international partners on counterterrorism. Niger is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

Niger’s efforts to fight terrorism were challenged by a small defense force, budget shortfalls, and continuing instability in Mali, Burkina Faso, Libya, and the Lake Chad Basin. Terrorist groups active along Niger’s border included Boko Haram (BH), ISIS in the Greater Sahara (ISIS-GS), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Libya (ISIL-Libya), ISIS-West Africa (ISIS-WA), Jama’at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslim (JNIM), and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO). Terrorist groups benefited from Niger’s long borders and sparsely populated desert regions to move fighters, weapons, and other contraband. Terrorist organizations recruited from border populations with low access to government services and high levels of poverty. In the west, terrorists leveraged citizens’ sense of injustice and a desire for protection stemming from historic farmer-herder violence.

2018 Terrorist Incidents: Terrorist groups carried out dozens of attacks in Niger along two main fronts: in the southeast from BH and ISIS-WA, and in the west and northwest from al-Qa’ida and groups affiliated with ISIS. Attacks targeted security forces and civilians. In the west, near the Burkina Faso border, the frequency and intensity of attacks increased and terrorists employed new tactics including the use of IEDs. Terrorist incidents in 2018 included the following:

- On April 11, armed men likely affiliated with ISIS-GS abducted a German aid worker, Joerg Lang, in Filingue, Tillaberi region. His whereabouts are unknown.
- On April 16, armed men likely affiliated with ISIS-GS attacked a Tuareg community in Filingue, killing eight people.
- On June 4, three BH suicide bombers simultaneously detonated in Diffa region, killing six people and wounding 37 others.
- On September 17, armed men abducted an Italian priest, Pier Luigi Maccalli, in Torodi, Tillaberi region. His whereabouts are unknown.
- On November 22, ISIS-WA terrorists attacked a residence where employees of a French drilling company, Foraco, were sleeping in Toumour, Diffa region. Seven local employees and one government representative were killed and seven more were injured.
- On November 24, BH members abducted 15 women and children in Toumour, Diffa region.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: Niger’s laws criminalized acts of terrorism consistent with international instruments. Niger finalized a National Border Security Strategy in 2018 with support from the U.S. Global Security Contingency Fund, an interagency program between the U.S. Departments of Defense, Justice, and State. In December, Niger’s National Assembly passed an

amendment defining the conditions under which a person associated with BH could benefit from support services, allowing increased international cooperation on the disarmament, de-radicalization, and reintegration of former BH members.

Nigerien law enforcement and security services were actively engaged in detecting, deterring, and preventing acts of terrorism. Counterterrorism investigations were primarily the responsibility of the Central Service for the Fight against Terrorism, an interagency body comprising representatives from Niger’s National Police, National Guard, and Gendarmerie. Niger continued to use rudimentary terrorism watchlists that it shared with the security services and at border checkpoints. Niger continued its efforts to disrupt terrorist activities by arresting and prosecuting terrorist suspects. Since 2017, more than 700 of an estimated 1,400 BH-related detainees have moved through trial processes.

Niger’s law enforcement capacity benefited from U.S.-provided assistance, including the use of PISCES and through the Department of State Antiterrorism Assistance program. Niger continued a U.S.-led biometric enrollment initiative for terror-related detainees in its two high-security prisons. Niger was one of six African countries participating in the Security Governance Initiative to strengthen coordination among its military and law enforcement services.

In connection with UNSCR 2396, Niger worked to expand terrorist watchlists and biometrics enrollment, used PISCES, and improved its disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration framework. Niger had adequate aviation security measures in place and hosted an ICAO meeting in July, although it did not take additional explicit steps to respond to UNSCR 2309 on aviation security.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: There were no significant changes in 2018. Niger is a member of the Inter-Governmental Action Group against Money Laundering in West Africa (GIABA), a FATF-style regional body. Niger’s FIU, the National Financial Intelligence and processing unit of Niger, is a member of the Egmont Group.

Countering Violent Extremism: The Government of Niger continued to focus on CVE with projects supported by international partners and NGOs, including CVE radio programming, sensitization caravans, and youth symposia. In June, Niger’s National Center for Strategic and Security Studies published a study on factors leading to radicalization to violence in five of Niger’s eight regions. In November, the government launched its CVE National Action Plan, which created a unit within the Ministry of Interior (MOI) devoted to preventing terrorism. Local leaders in the Diffa and Tillabéri regions initiated disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts supported by the MOI and the High Authority for the Consolidation of the Peace.

International and Regional Cooperation: Niger remained active in regional organizations and international bodies, including the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UN, and TSCTP. Niger is a member of the G-5 Sahel and the Sahel Alliance, and hosts the G-5 Sahel Joint Forces’ Central Sector Command in Niamey. Niger hosted the presidency of the G-5 Sahel for one year, starting in February 2018. Niger also hosts a G-5 Sahel Eastern Sector battalion at Madama, in the country’s extreme northeast. Niger contributes troops to the Multi-National Joint Task Force in the Lake Chad Basin. On a rotational basis, Niger deploys an infantry battalion to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA).

In late 2018, Niger, Burkina Faso, Benin, and Mali began developing a regional counterterrorism strategy to police nature reserves and ungoverned spaces. In April 2018, Niger hosted AFRICOM’s annual multinational FLINTLOCK military exercise, in which it participates annually. The Government of Niger participated in conferences hosted by the GCTF West Africa Region Capacity-Building Working Group and the Criminal Justice and Rule of Law Working Group. Niger also participates in the Sahel Judicial Platform. Niger is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

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Annual report on terrorism (covering 2018)



Country:

Niger

Source:

[USDOS – US Department of State](#) [\(/en/source/11558.html\)](#)

Original link (no longer valid):

<https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2018/#Niger>

Document type:

Periodical Report

Language:

English

Published:

1 November 2019

Document ID:

2019275

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ecoi.net is run by the Austrian Red Cross (department ACCORD) in cooperation with Informationsverbund Asyl & Migration. ecoi.net is funded by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Austrian Ministry of the Interior and Caritas Austria. ecoi.net is supported by ECRE & UNHCR.

