



Centre for Democracy & Development
Centre pour la démocratie et le développement

WEST AFRICA

SECURITY TRACKER

MID-YEAR SECURITY REPORT 2025

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The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) is a nonprofit organisation committed to advancing democracy, security, and development in West Africa through research, advocacy, and strategic analysis. This report is a reflection of that mission, providing independent, data-driven insights into security trends in the region.

The West Africa Security Tracker is made possible through rigorous analysis and the use of high-quality data. We acknowledge the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) for supplying the foundational data that informs this report.

CDD-West Africa upholds the values of quality, independence, and impact in its research. The unwavering support of its leadership ensures that work on West Africa's security landscape remains rigorous, timely, and actionable.

WITH SPECIAL THANKS

Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED)



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JANUARY-JUNE 2025



Table of Contents

<u>Executive Summary</u>	5
<u>General Overview</u>	7
<u>High Impact Countries</u>	10
<u>Spillover and Emerging Conflict</u>	19
<u>Relatively Peaceful</u>	23
<u>Patterns of Violence in West Africa</u>	25
<u>Key Actors Driving Security Crises in West Africa (Conflict Types)</u>	28
<u>Strategic Developments</u>	30
<u>Conclusion</u>	34
<u>About CDD-West Africa</u>	35

Executive Summary

The first half of 2025 witnessed an unrelenting escalation of insecurity across West Africa, resulting in 12,964 fatalities recorded between January and June.¹ Violence was overwhelmingly concentrated in four countries: Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and the Niger Republic, accounting for nearly 96% of all regional deaths. The geographic spread, operational diversity, and tactical evolution of armed actors underscore both the deepening fragility of state control and the entrenched capacity of non-state groups to sustain and adapt their campaigns.

Nigeria remains the epicentre, contributing 44.5% of total fatalities (5,768 deaths) and reflecting a complex, multi-front conflict landscape. Jihadist insurgency in the northeast, banditry in the northwest, and secessionist militancy in the southeast converged into a volatile mix, marked by peaks in January with 1,374 deaths and renewed surges in May and June. Borno (1,504 fatalities), Zamfara (1,034 deaths), Katsina (618 deaths), Benue (617 deaths), and Plateau (298 fatalities) emerged as the deadliest states, while an alarming shift toward mass abductions (306 incidents recorded) signalled the entrenchment of hostage-taking as a core revenue stream by the perpetrators. Coordinated assaults on soft targets and military installations further indicate a strategic broadening of insurgent objectives.

Burkina Faso, with 3,539 fatalities (27.3% of the total fatalities), continued to bear the brunt of the Sahel insurgency. Violence was concentrated in Boucle du Mouhoun with 911 deaths. Est recorded 841 deaths; Centre-Est with 327 deaths, with peaks in March (743 deaths) and May (808 deaths). The persistence of large-scale civilian killings, including alleged state-perpetrated massacres, eroded public trust and raised serious accountability concerns. Despite a brief decline in June, 367 fatalities, the enduring territorial control of armed groups and the weakness of rural governance structures make sustained de-escalation unlikely.

Mali recorded 2,157 fatalities (16.6%), reflecting continued volatility in the central and northern regions. Fatalities surged in May and June, with the country recording 253 and 543 deaths, respectively. This period saw an increase in air/drone strikes that resulted in 118 deaths. The post Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) security order, anchored in bilateral defence agreements and private military contractors, has generated tactical wins at the expense of transparency and civilian protection.²

Niger, with 947 fatalities (7.3%), experienced an increase in fatalities in January (90 deaths), April (81 deaths) and May (83 deaths). This increase was driven by intensified

^[1] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/regions/africa/all-analysis-africa>

^[2] United Nation Peace Keeping: [MINUSMA](#)

jihadist incursions from Mali and Burkina Faso. Tillabéri and Dosso bore the heaviest tolls, as Tillabéri had 635 deaths, and Dosso recorded 130 deaths with incidents such as the April Fambita mosque attack, which killed 44 worshippers, underscoring the targeting of religious gatherings.³ Political isolation and an overstretched military continue to hamper adequate response capacity.

Across the region, armed clashes (7,122 fatalities) and targeted attacks (3,680 deaths) dominated the violence profile, while air/drone strikes (1,110 fatalities) and remote explosives (358 fatalities) added to the death toll. The operational patterns observed point to a sustained asymmetric warfare model anchored in cross-border mobility, control of ungoverned spaces, and exploitation of weak intelligence networks. The first semester of 2025 reveals not only the scale of violence but also its strategic entrenchment. Without robust regional coordination, strengthened intelligence-sharing, and credible accountability measures, the second half of the year risks deepening the insecurity trap, further destabilising an already fragile West African security architecture.

^[3] UN News: [Niger: Mosque attack which killed 44 should be 'wake-up call', says rights chief](#)

General Overview

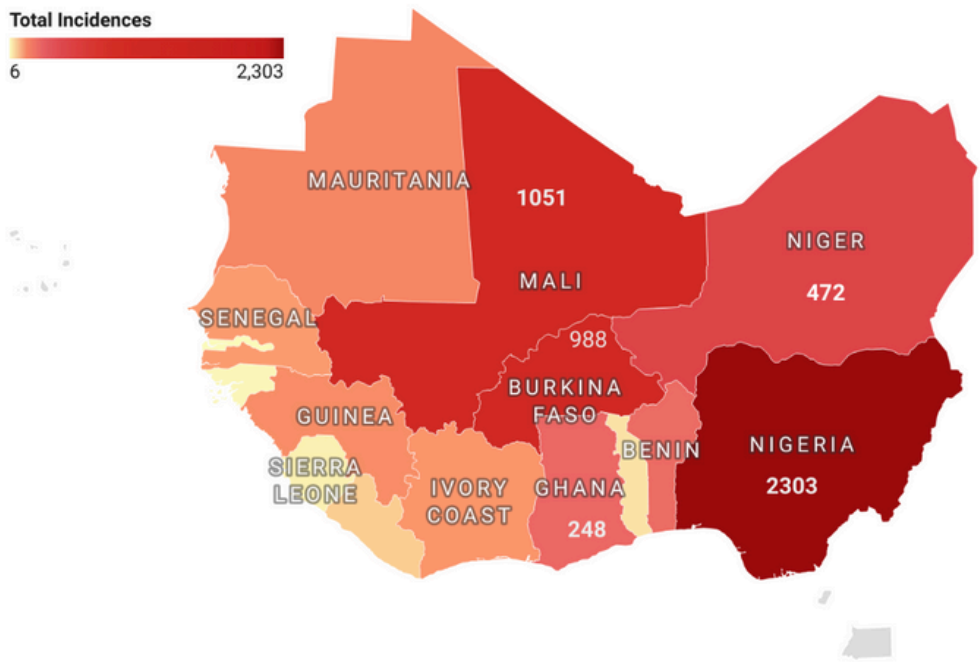
The West African security environment in the first half of 2025 remained defined by persistent insurgencies, adaptive armed groups, and fragile state responses. From the Sahelian frontlines to the coastal states, patterns of violence were shaped by a combination of entrenched conflicts, opportunistic attacks, and shifting tactics that blurred the lines between insurgency, criminality, and communal violence. Across the region, 12,964 fatalities were recorded between January and June, spread over 5,907 violent incidents. The distribution of violence was highly uneven. Four countries, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger, accounted for the overwhelming majority of deaths, illustrating the gravitational pull of the Sahel conflict corridor. This core zone of instability continues to influence, and at times spill over into, coastal states such as Ghana, Togo, and Benin, where lower incident counts mask the underlying risk of escalation. The conflict typology reveals that armed clashes were the leading cause of fatalities (7,122 deaths), followed by targeted attacks (3,680 deaths) and aerial strikes (1,110 deaths). These figures underscore the predominance of direct combat engagements while also highlighting the growing role of airpower, both state and non-state, in shaping battlefield dynamics. The use of remote explosives and improvised explosive devices (IEDs) remained a significant threat, responsible for 358 fatalities, often targeting military convoys and civilian transit routes.

In Nigeria, violence remained both geographically dispersed and strategically diverse, driven by insurgent operations in the northeast, bandit activity in the northwest, with the rise of Lakurawa in the Sokoto State, and separatist agitation in the southeast.⁴ Burkina Faso's conflict intensity persisted at extreme levels, with several regions experiencing repeated mass-casualty events. Mali's security landscape was marked by an uptick in aerial strikes and persistent intercommunal violence, while Niger's fatalities surged in May due to cross-border militant incursions. Outside these high-impact states, countries such as Senegal, Ghana, and the Gambia experienced sporadic but symbolically significant incidents, often tied to protests, local disputes, or the regional influence of extremist narratives. These events demonstrate the breadth of insecurity's reach, even in contexts where large-scale insurgent operations are less pronounced, showing that violence can persist outside of organised insurgency.

This period reinforced the reality that West Africa's violence is not confined to active war zones but is part of a broader regional security crisis. The operational agility of armed actors, combined with governance vacuums, porous borders, and the erosion of local trust in security forces, continues to fuel instability. This environment sets the stage for a volatile second half of the year, with the potential for both escalation in established theatres and the emergence of new flashpoints along the region's peripheries.

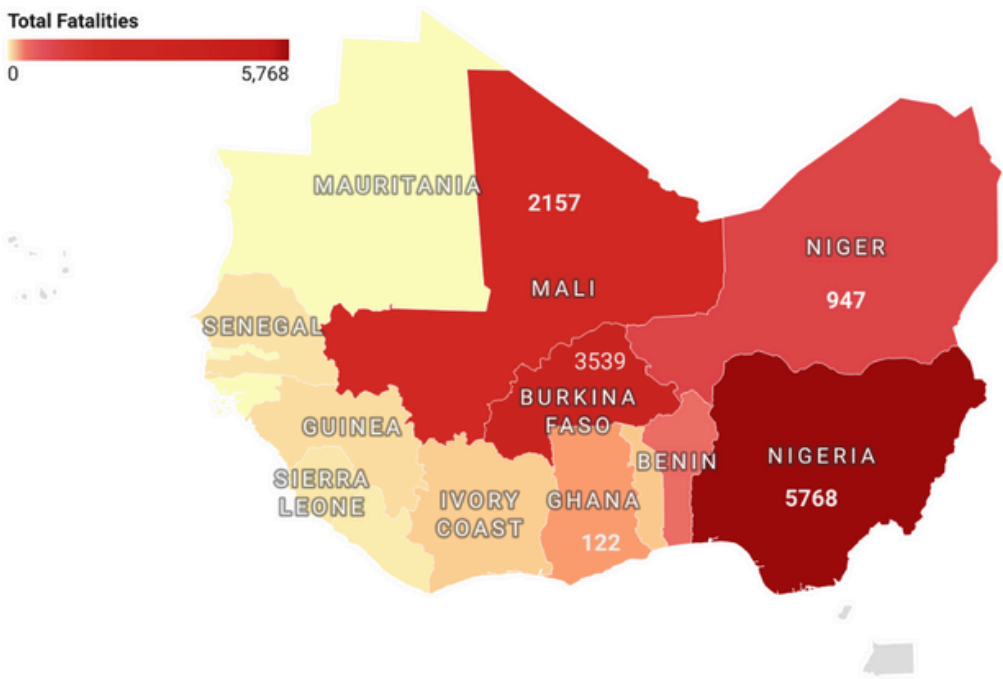
^[4] Aljazeera: [Lakurawa, the new armed group wreaking havoc on the Nigeria-Niger border](#)

Figure 1: Conflict Incidences Across West Africa (January-June 2025)



Source: Acled • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 2: Conflict Fatalities Across West Africa (January-June 2025)



Source: Acled • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 3: Conflict Fatalities And Incidences Across West Africa (January - June 2025)

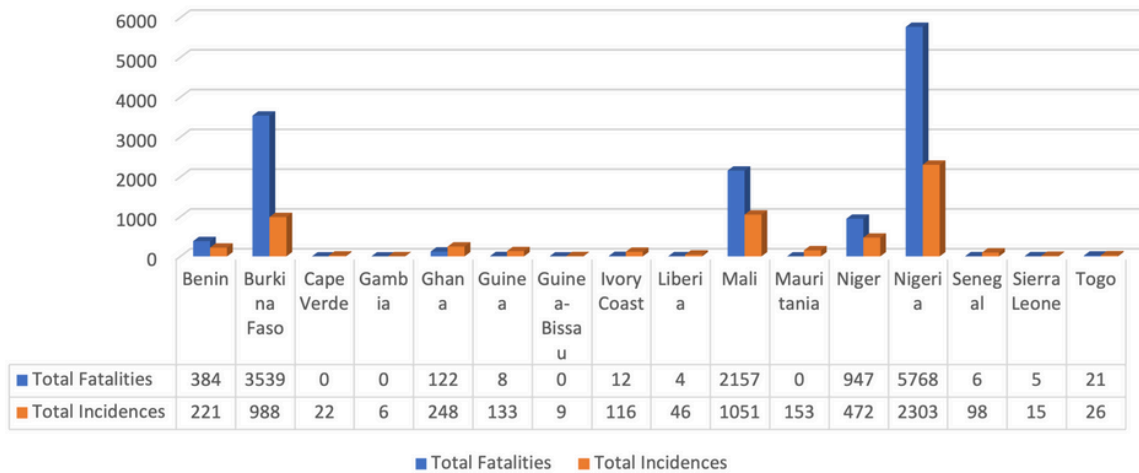
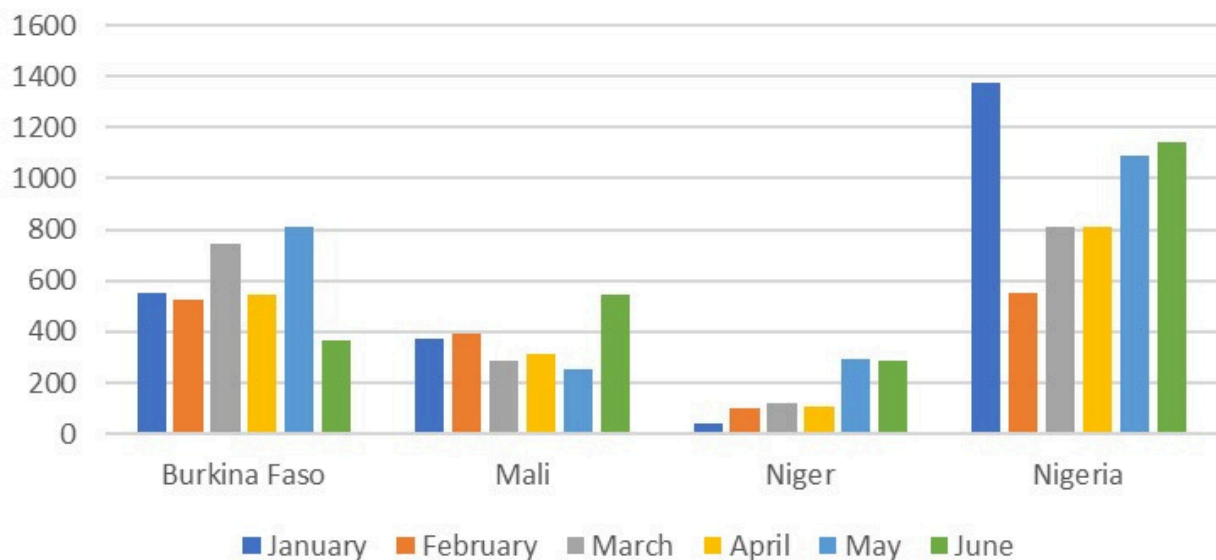


Figure 4: Monthly Trends of Fatalities in West Some Africa Countries January-June 2025



High Impact Countries

Nigeria

Nigeria accounted for 44.5% of the total regional fatalities, with 5,768 deaths recorded between January and June 2025, highlighting its centrality to the insecurity challenge in West Africa. Conflict dynamics in Nigeria remain multidimensional and geographically dispersed, spanning jihadist violence in the northeast, banditry in the northwest, and secessionist agitation in the southeast. A striking trend is the January peak, with 1,374 fatalities, nearly 24% of Nigeria's half-year total, driven by intensified the Islamic State's West Africa Province (ISWAP) raids in the north-eastern states and North Central Nigeria. Although fatalities declined in February (554 deaths), a 60% drop from the January figure of 1,374, they surged again in May (1,086 deaths) and in June (1,140 fatalities), indicating a rebound in violence.⁵ Incidents were widespread, with Borno (1,504 deaths) and Zamfara (1,034 deaths) emerging as the deadliest states, followed closely by Katsina (618 deaths), Benue (617 deaths), Plateau (298 deaths), Niger (212 deaths), Bauchi (111 deaths), and Anambra (108 deaths).⁶

By contrast, Gombe recorded only 2 fatalities from 5 incidents, while Ekiti witnessed 8 incidents but no fatalities, underscoring regional disparities in conflict intensity.⁷ In Benue state, attacks on the 10, 17, 24, and 25 May left at least 80 people dead in Kwande, Agatu and Gwer West areas.⁸ The attack in Yelwata community in Guma Local Government Area on 13 June led to the deaths of more than 200 people.⁹ In Plateau state, gunmen killed at least 29 people in Barkin Ladi, Riyom, Bokkos and Bassa areas on 5, 13-14 and 27 May. In Taraba state, gunmen killed at least 40 people in the Karim Lamido area on 23 May.¹⁰ In the South East zone, gunmen shot dead at least 30 travellers along Okigwe-Owerri highway in Imo state on 8 May; police blamed the attack on separatist group, Indigenous People of Biafra, and its armed wing, Eastern Security Network.¹¹

There is an observable shift in tactics, as armed groups increasingly resort to mass abductions, soft-target attacks, and coordinated assaults on military installations. In particular, attacks resulted in 1,952 fatalities, armed clashes caused 3,029 deaths, air drone attack 557, and abductions surged to 306 recorded incidents, signifying a strategic pivot among bandits from looting to hostage economics.¹²

^[5] CDD-WestAfrica - [West Africa Security Tracker January 2025](#)

^[6] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/conflict-data>

^[7] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/conflict-data>

^[8] International Crisis Watch: [Tracking Conflict Worldwide](#)

^[9] Genocide Watch: [Fulani Jihadists Massacre Over 200 Christians In Nigeria](#)

^[10] International Crisis Watch: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-trends-and-june-alerts-2025>

^[11] International Centre for Transitional Justice: [Amnesty International Says at Least 30 Dead in Separatist Attack in Southeastern Nigeria](#)

^[12] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/conflict-data>

Although, security operations, intelligence coordination remained fragmented, which allowed insurgent groups to exploit weak spots in surveillance, particularly across rural and forested zones. The high operational tempo of armed actors, combined with state overstretch, has deepened public distrust and fueled a sense of impunity.

Figure 5: Conflict in Nigeria Across Geopolitical Zones (January-June 2025)

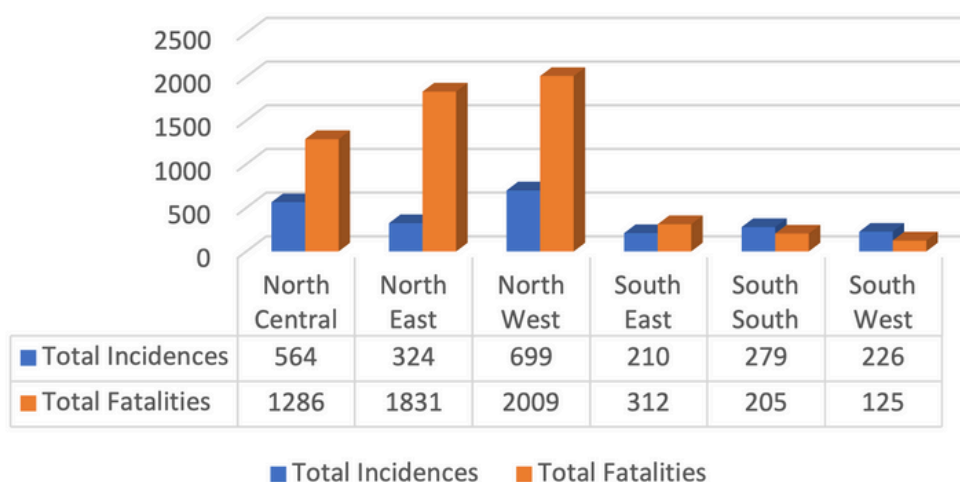
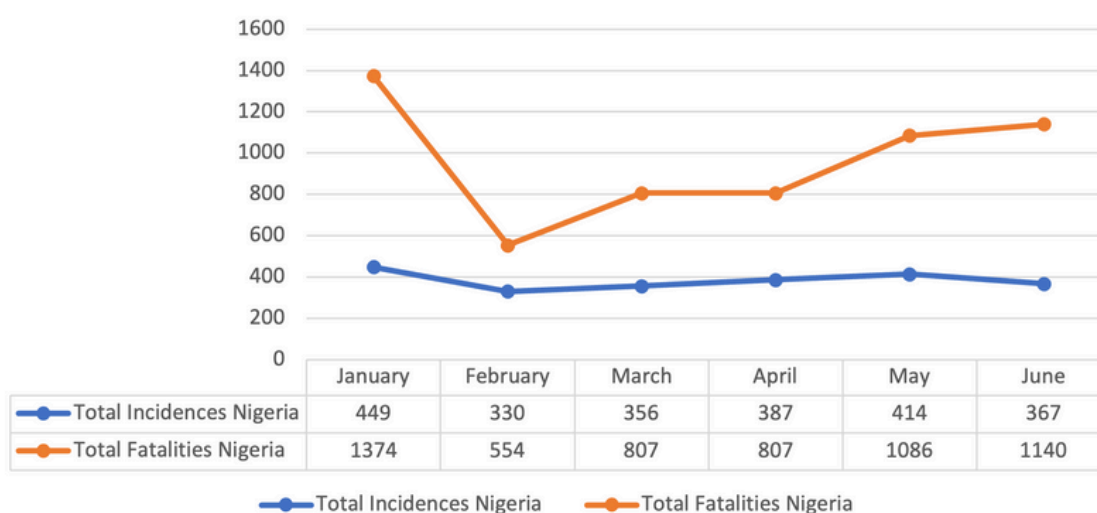


Figure 6: Trend of Total Incidences and Fatalities in Nigeria (January-June 2025)

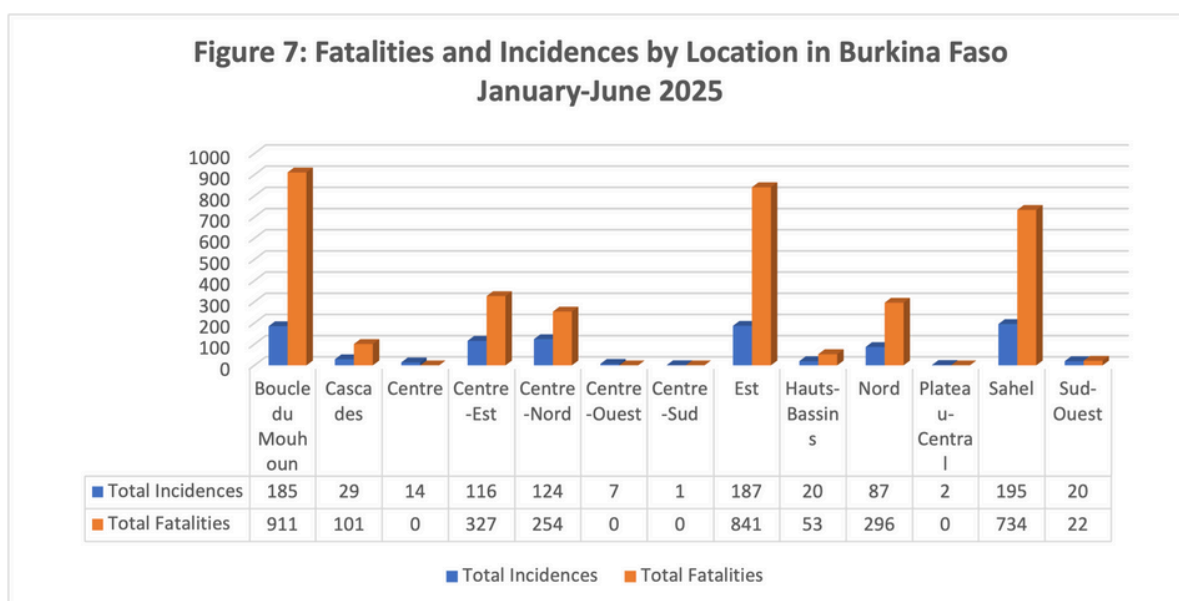


Burkina Faso

Burkina Faso remains the second most affected country in the region, accounting for 3,539 fatalities, or 27.3% of all regional deaths during the first semester of 2025. Fatalities peaked in May with 808 recorded deaths, following 743 in March,

underscoring the persistent deterioration of the security environment. Violence was most concentrated in Boucle du Mouhoun, Est, and the Sahel regions. Although June recorded a relatively sharp drop to 367 fatalities, this decline may reflect a temporary lull in insurgent activity. Jihadist militants escalated their campaign by launching a wave of large-scale assaults on military positions while shifting tactics to seize secondary towns. On 6 May, al-Qaeda-affiliated Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) raided the Lanfiera military camp in Boucle du Mouhoun region, reportedly killing dozens. On 11 May, JNIM overran the Sollé military camp in the North region, killing at least 60 soldiers. In mid-May, they carried out coordinated large-scale assaults on Djibo (Sahel region) and Diapaga (Est region), targeting both military and civilian infrastructure.¹³

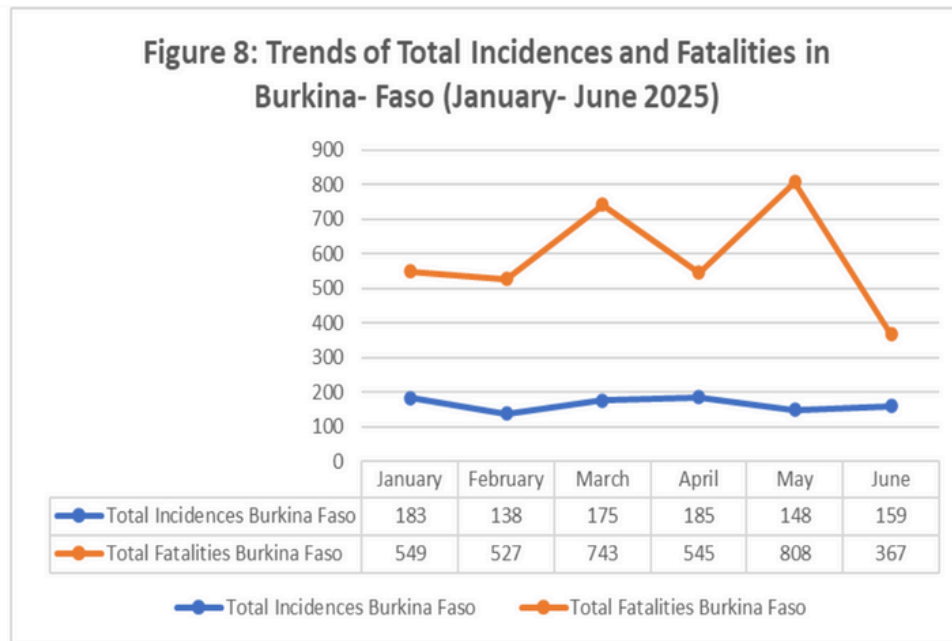
These raids reportedly killed at least 200 soldiers and civilian auxiliaries (VDPs), along with hundreds of civilians, resulting in the temporary capture of both towns.¹⁴ While government forces quickly redeployed to Djibo after JNIM's withdrawal, the military remains highly vulnerable due to inadequate air support and equipment. Diapaga, meanwhile, remained under JNIM control through late May. The deteriorating security situation has also strained local defence forces. At the same time, security operations have been marred by allegations of state-perpetrated atrocities, including reports of over 100 civilians killed in Seno Province in May.¹⁵ Such incidents further erode public trust in counterinsurgency efforts, leaving state legitimacy under severe threat in key provinces where citizens increasingly view both insurgents and government forces as sources of insecurity.



^[13] International Crisis Watch: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-trends-and-june-alerts-2025>

^[14] International Crisis Watch: [crisiswatch-may-2025-africa.pdf](https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-2025-africa.pdf)

^[15] Genocide Watch: [Burkina Faso army accused of massacring over 100 civilians](https://www.genocidewatch.org/burkina-faso-army-accused-of-massacring-over-100-civilians)



Mali

Mali recorded 2,157 fatalities (16.6% of the regional total), ranking as the third most-affected country in West Africa. The conflict has grown increasingly complex, particularly in the central and northern regions. Fatalities remained relatively steady between January and April, fluctuating from 288 to 393, before a sharp surge in June with 543 deaths, signalling a renewed offensive phase. A major concern is the growing reliance on drone and air strikes, which caused at least 344 civilian casualties, including children in Danguere Tomana.¹⁶

This escalation reflects Mali's post-UN peacekeeping era, where bilateral security partnerships and Wagner-style deployments have replaced multilateral coordination.¹⁷ Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) maintained its tempo of violence, launching targeted raids on Dozo militias and state outposts, especially in Mopti, which recorded 728 deaths. The absence of robust international oversight has widened accountability gaps, increasing civilian harm and limiting humanitarian access. The political landscape was equally tense. On 3 May, hundreds of demonstrators gathered in Bamako in the largest protest since the 2021 coup, rejecting recommendations from a government-sponsored consultation to dissolve political parties and extend transitional leader Gen. Assimi Goïta's mandate with a renewable five-year presidency.¹⁸ Security forces cordoned off the protest area to prevent clashes with pro-military youths.

^[16] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/regions/africa/all-analysis-africa>

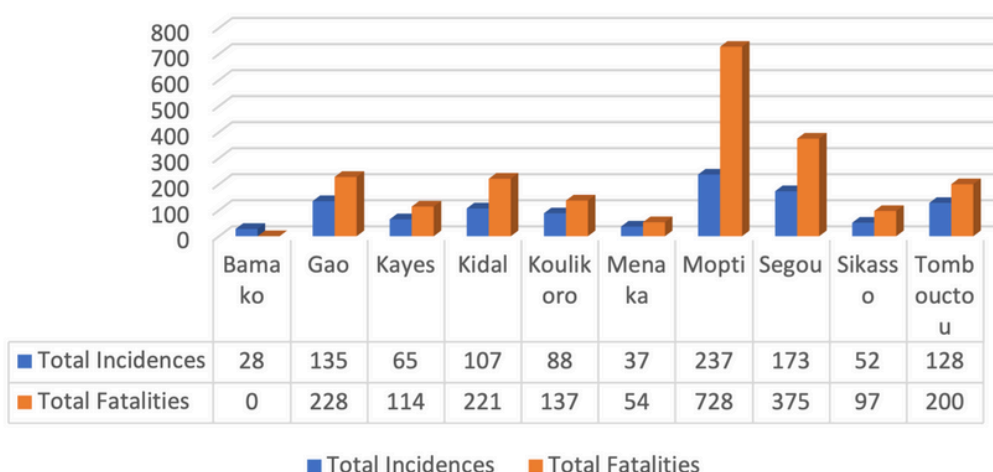
^[17] Accord: Conflict & Resilience Monitor: [The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali \(MINUSMA\) was established in April 2013 by UN Security Council Resolution 2100 and formally withdrawn in December 2023, following the Malian government's request for its departure.](#)

^[18] International Crisis Group: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-trends-and-june-alerts-2025>

Ahead of another demonstration planned for 9 May, the government suspended all political activities on 7 May “until further notice,” forcing organisers to cancel.¹⁹ The following day, unidentified men abducted opposition leaders Abba Alhassane and El Bachir Thiam, both participants in the earlier protests; their whereabouts remained unknown by late May.²⁰ On 13 May, Goïta further deepened the crackdown by formally dissolving all political parties.

Meanwhile, violence persisted across central and northern Mali. In the Mopti region, JNIM attacked the Dioura military camp on 23 May, temporarily occupying it and killing 41 soldiers. Residents of Diafarabe town accused the army of executing at least 20 Fulani men arrested at a livestock market on 12 May; JNIM quickly condemned the alleged massacre and threatened reprisals, while the army announced an investigation. In the Ségou region, JNIM ambushed a merchant truck leaving Sofara market on 13 May, killing 12 civilians.²¹ Expanding further southwest, the group struck a gold mining site in Narena (Koulikouro region) on 12 May, leaving three civilians dead. In the north, the Azawad Liberation Front claimed a 9 May drone strike on Malian forces and their Russian allies in Léré (Timbuktu region), causing material damage.

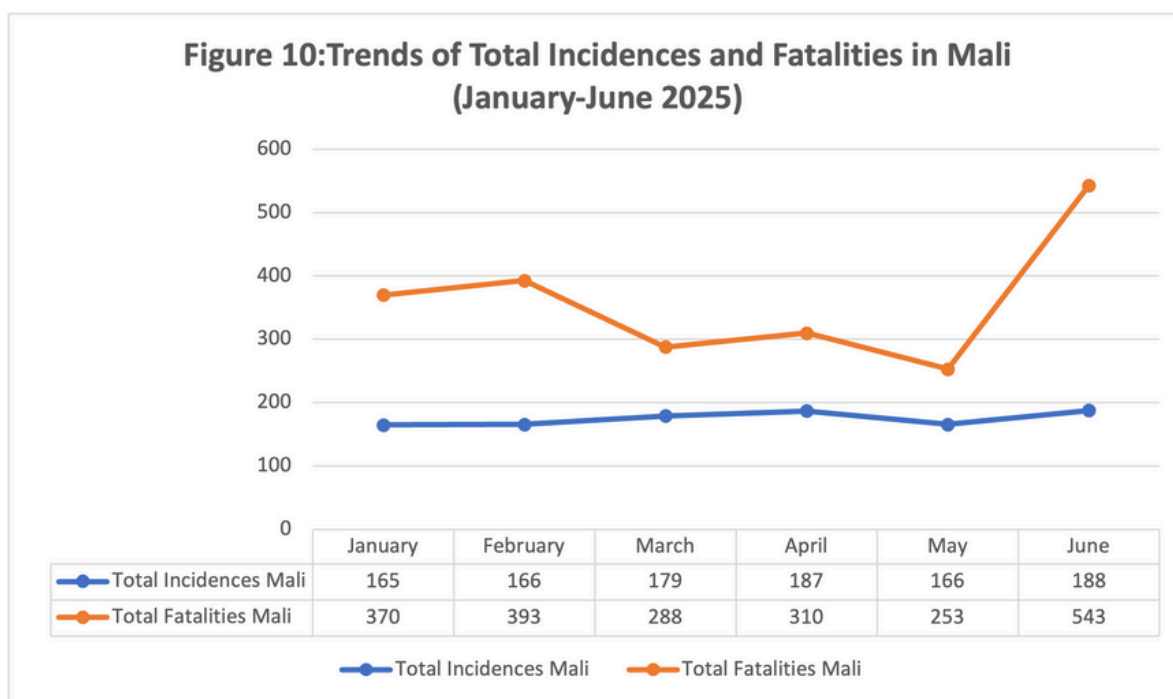
Figure 9: Fatalities and Incidences by Location in Mali (January- June 2025)



^[19] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: May 2025](#)

^[20] Human Right Watch: [Mali Opposition Politicians Feared Forcibly Disappeared](#)

^[21] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/regions/africa/all-analysis-africa>



Niger Republic

Niger experienced 947 deaths across 472 incidents, making up 7.3% of total regional fatalities. The most violent regions were Tillabéri (635 deaths) and Dosso (130 deaths), which were directly impacted by cross-border jihadist activities from Mali and Burkina Faso. Notably, May recorded 290 deaths, and June's 285 fatalities marked a sharp deterioration, more than tripling the fatalities recorded in April, which was 105 deaths.²² This spike accounted for 16.3% of all regional fatalities in May, Niger's highest for the first half of 2025. One of the most disturbing events was the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), an ISIL affiliate mosque massacre in Fambita in April that led to 44 deaths, exemplifying the growing trend of attacks on communal and religious gatherings.²³ Despite ongoing military operations, the state's capacity to effectively contain insecurity remains limited. On the one hand, security forces face personnel constraints, with insufficient troop numbers, inadequate training, and overstretched deployments across multiple fronts.

On the other hand, regional political isolation, particularly following the suspension of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger from ECOWAS and strained relations with international partners, has reduced access to external support, intelligence-sharing, and coordinated regional responses. The continued fragmentation of security along the borderlands further compounds these challenges. It increases the mobility of armed actors across porous frontiers and exposes civilians to unpredictable attacks, while simultaneously weakening Niger's ability to participate meaningfully in regional coordination mechanisms.

^[22] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: April 2025](#)

^[23] UN News Global Perspective Human Stories: Niger: [Mosque attack which killed 44 should be 'wake-up call', says rights chief](#)

Figure 11: Fatalities and Incidences by Location in Niger (January-June 2025)

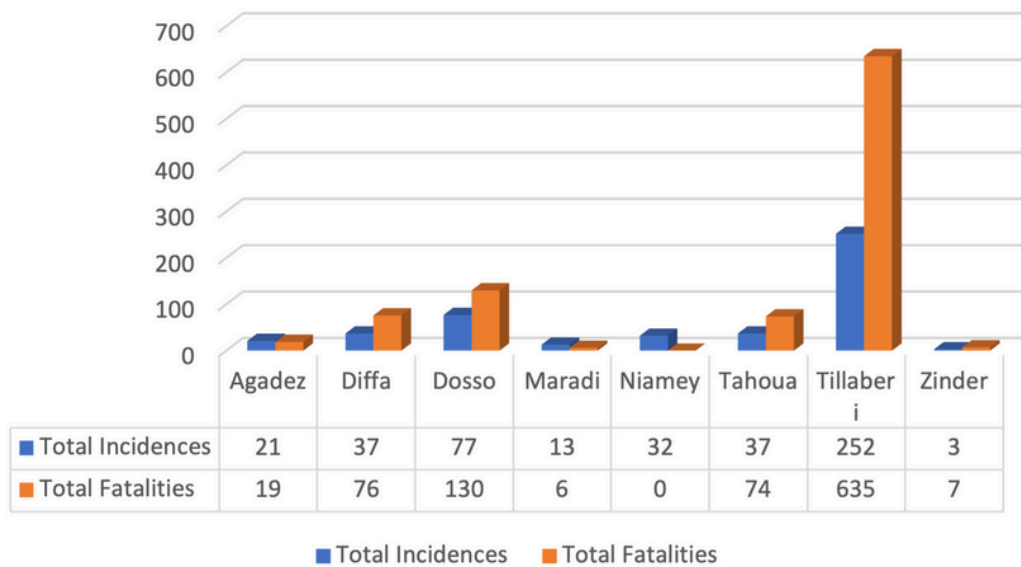


Figure 12: Trends of Total Incidences and Fatalities in Niger (January-June 2025)

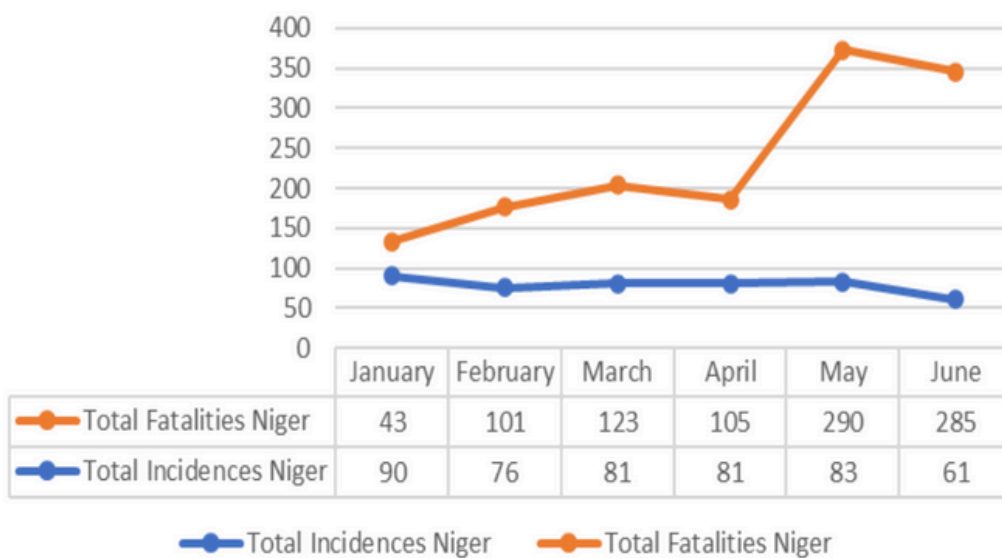
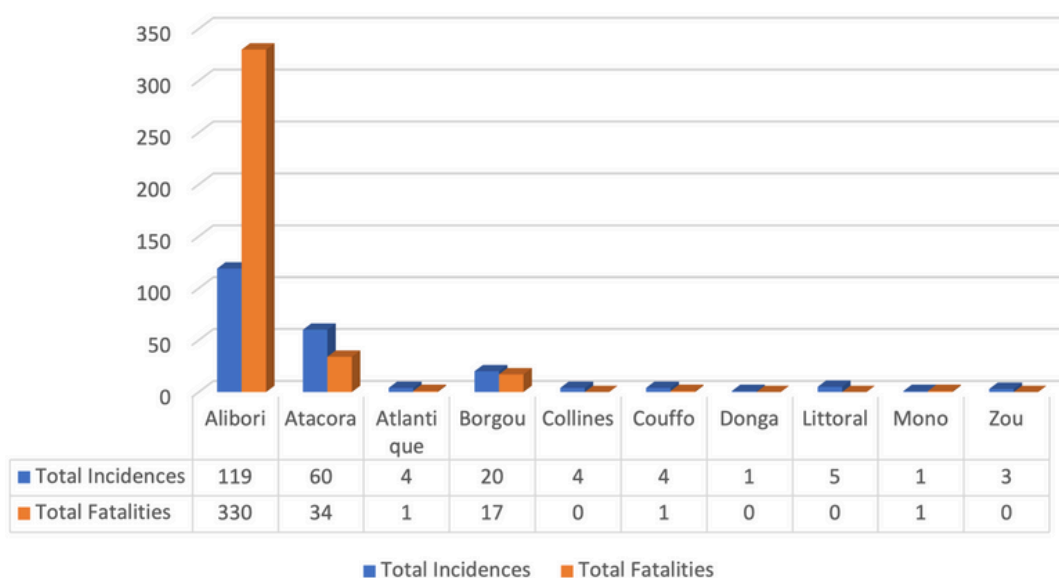


Figure 13: Fatalities and Incidences by Location location in Benin (January- June 2025)



Benin Republic

Benin, once seen as a peripheral actor in regional conflicts, has now emerged as a frontline spillover zone, particularly in Alibori, which alone accounted for 330 of the 384 fatalities in the country.²⁴ The sharpest monthly surge occurred in April, leading to 104 deaths, up from just 26 in March, indicating a geographic diffusion of Sahelian violence.²⁵ This escalation is closely tied to cross-border incursions by Jama'at Nusrat ul-Islam wa al-Muslimin (JNIM) fighters retreating from pressure in Burkina Faso and Niger.²⁶ Though fatalities declined in June to 40, the security outlook remains fragile. State crackdowns in May reportedly killed 45 militants, but such operations have also triggered resentment in local communities due to collateral damage and arbitrary arrests.²⁷ Militants appear to have shifted strategy, from high-casualty attacks in April to frequent, low-intensity raids in May, 52 incidents, a tactical adaptation likely aimed at maintaining control without drawing heavy military retaliation.²⁸ On 9 May, suspected fighters from the al-Qaeda-affiliated (JNIM) attacked a police post in Guilmaro town (Atakora department), seizing weapons and freeing prisoners.²⁹ Meanwhile, on 31 May, Niger's President Gen. Abdourahmane Tiani announced that the border with Benin would remain closed indefinitely, citing the presence of "destabilising French troops" on Beninese territory.

^[24] ACAPS: Benin: [Conflict in Alibori and Atacora](#)

^[25] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: April 2025](#)

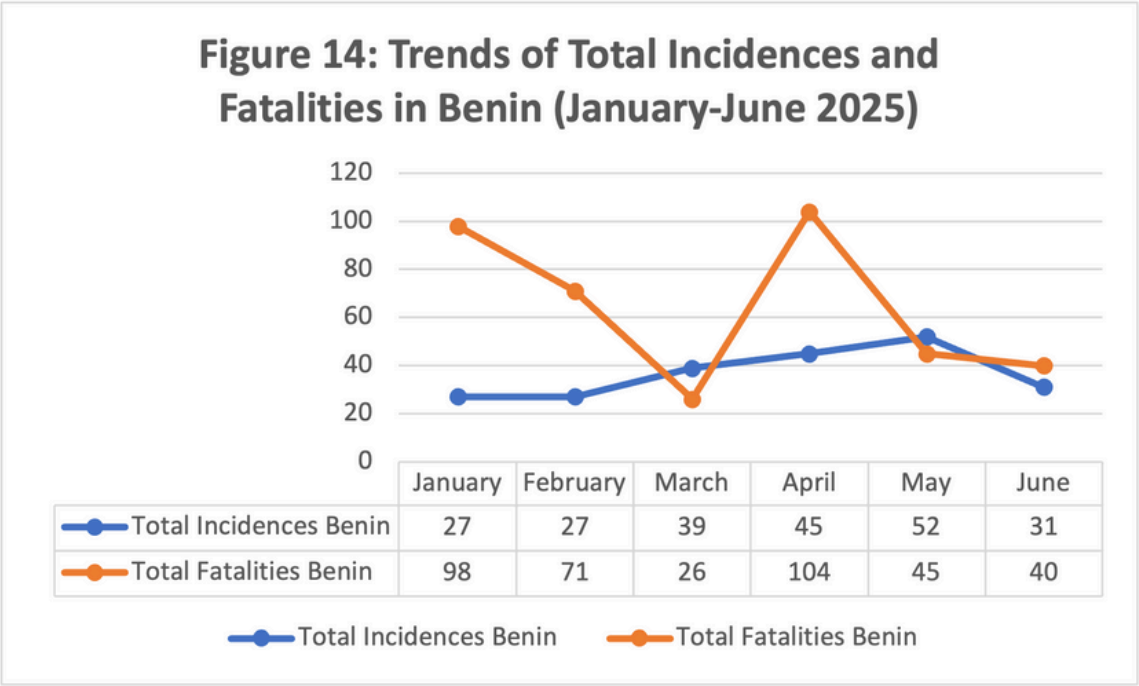
^[26] Critical Threat: [Africa File, April 24, 2025: JNIM's Growing Pressure on Benin; Turkey to Somalia; Salafi-Jihadi Cells Continue to Grow Across Nigeria](#)

^[27] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: May 2025](#)

^[28] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: May 2025](#)

^[29] Crisis Watch: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-trends-and-june-alerts-2025>

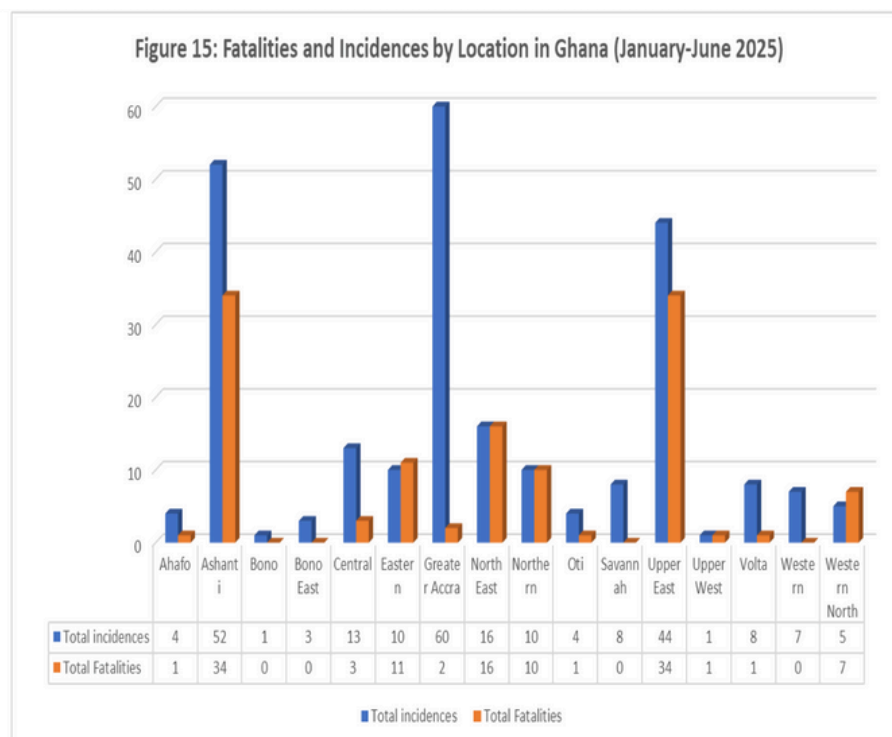
While Benin’s government has increased border security and engaged in military coordination with its neighbours, gaps in community-based intelligence and early warning systems continue to hinder pre-emptive action. The expansion of abductions and road ambushes suggests that Benin is now fully enmeshed in the regional security crisis.



Spillover and Emerging Conflict Zones

Ghana

Ghana had 122 fatalities accounting for 0.9% of the region's fatalities during the first half of 2025, across 248 incidents (4.2%). Despite its traditional reputation for stability, Ghana is facing persistent communal and political violence, particularly in the north.³⁰ Violence peaked in January (32 deaths) and March (29 deaths), primarily driven by the long-standing Bawku chieftaincy conflict, which spilt over into the Upper East and North East regions.³¹ Additional hotspots emerged in Ashanti, where mob justice and vigilante violence over theft allegations led to multiple deaths. Land disputes in areas such as Kunbuni and Adoagyiri, coupled with growing inter-ethnic tensions, have exacerbated local instability. Emerging concerns include potential jihadist infiltration from Burkina Faso into northern border districts, with reports of fuel smuggling and reconnaissance activity in towns such as Karimama.³² Security forces have also faced public backlash for excessive use of force, notably during fatal military interventions in Kumasi and Accra, respectively in March and May.³³ These developments underscore the fragility of Ghana's internal cohesion and the growing risk of regional contagion.

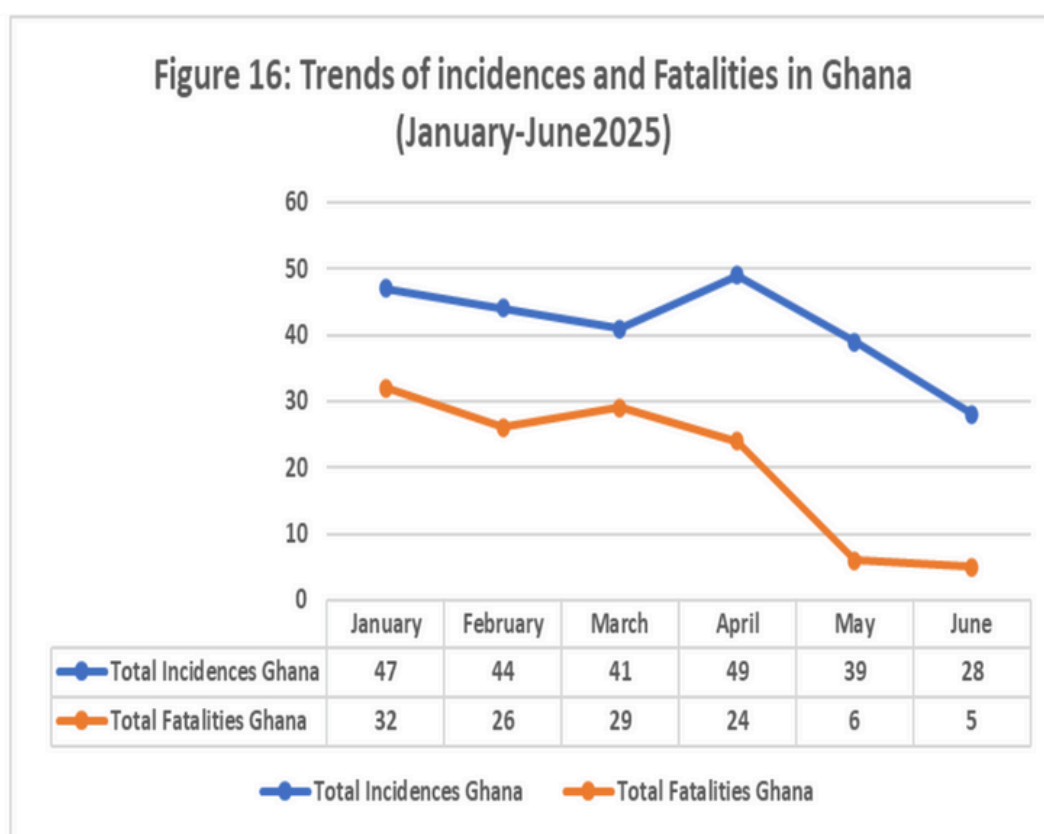


^[30] Journal of Sociological Research: [Exploring Indigenous Approaches to Conflict Resolution: The Case of the Bawku Conflict in Ghana](#)

^[31] ReliefWeb: [ACLEL Regional Overview Africa: March 2025](#)

^[32] ACLED 2025: [New frontlines: Jihadist expansion is reshaping the Benin, Niger, and Nigeria borderlands](#)

^[33] JoyNews: [7 soldiers remanded over civilian deaths in Kumasi](#)



Togo

Togo had 21 fatalities accounting for 0.16% of the region's fatalities during the first half of 2025, across 26 incidents (0.44%). Although not a traditional hotspot for large-scale violence, Togo has experienced a gradual increase in conflict incidents, particularly along its northern corridor bordering Burkina Faso. The violence was concentrated mainly in the Savanes and Kara regions.³⁴ Fatalities, though relatively low, stemmed from suspected jihadist attacks, armed raids on security posts, and clashes in rural border communities. The uptick in cross-border infiltration reflects the spillover effect of Sahelian militant expansion, with some attacks mirroring tactics employed by Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) in Burkina Faso and Niger.

In parallel with these security challenges, April 2024 brought significant political changes. Following constitutional reforms that introduced a parliamentary system, long-time President Faure Gnassingbé was sworn in on 3 May as President of the Council of Ministers, a new role that holds the country's highest executive authority.³⁵ The transition, which has no fixed term limit for this office, has generated public debate and demonstrations in Lomé, underscoring the intersection between governance shifts and broader national stability.³⁶ Military deployments, village

^[34] Afriquexxi: "No Peace, No Bread": Northern Togo in the Grip of a Three-year State of Emergency.

^[35] Togo First: Faure Gnassingbé Becomes First President of Togo's Council Under New Constitution

^[36] International Crisis Watch: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-trends-and-june-alerts-2025>

evacuations, and civilian displacement highlight the humanitarian implications of insecurity in northern Togo. The government's ability to contain violence and manage emerging risks will likely depend on cross-border coordination, local governance capacity, and the balancing of political reforms with measures to strengthen social resilience.

Ivory Coast

Ivory Coast recorded 12 fatalities (0.1% of regional total) across 116 incidents (2%), with unrest driven mainly by political tensions and disputes over natural resources. The month of May saw the highest number of incidents (35), coinciding with protests following the disqualification of opposition candidate Tidjane Thiam of the PDCI-RDA from the upcoming presidential race. Urban grievances also featured prominently, particularly in Abidjan, where clashes erupted between traders and municipal authorities over evictions. In the Zanzan districts, conflict at a gold mining site in Kiendi left three people dead, underscoring the growing volatility around natural resource extraction zones.³⁷

With the October 2025 elections approaching, political uncertainty and elite rivalry remain key drivers of unrest, compounded by the risk of Sahelian spillover near the northern border with Burkina Faso, where reports of JNIM activity raise concerns of infiltration. Pre-electoral tensions intensified as opposition parties mobilised in the streets. On 3–4 May, the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) rallied several thousand supporters in Abidjan after a court ruling in April ordered the removal of Tidjane Thiam from the electoral register, citing the loss of his Ivorian nationality. On 31 May, the Coalition for Peaceful Change in Côte d'Ivoire, comprising the PDCI, Pascal Affi N'Guessan's Ivorian Popular Front, Simone Gbagbo's Movement of Capable Generations, and Charles Blé Goudé's Pan-African Congress for Justice and Equality of Peoples, organised a large protest in Abidjan, demanding electoral roll revisions and reforms to the electoral commission. In parallel, internal divisions surfaced within the PDCI. On 26 May, former minister Jean-Louis Billon reaffirmed his intention to run as the party's presidential candidate, despite the leadership having confirmed Thiam as its nominee the previous month.³⁸ Against this backdrop, President Alassane Ouattara, facing speculation about his own re-election plans, sought to reassure the public. On 22 May, he declared that "measures are being taken to ensure peace and stability" and urged Ivorians to prioritise national interest.

^[37] ACLED 2025: <https://acleddata.com/regions/africa/all-analysis-africa>

^[38] International Crisis Watch: <https://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/may-trends-and-june-alerts-2025>

Guinea

Guinea witnessed eight fatalities (0.06%) across 133 incidents (2.3%). The unrest was predominantly political, reflecting deepening frustration with the junta led by General Doumbouya. Peaks in incidents were recorded in March (24) and May (21), centred in Conakry and Kankan.³⁹ The crackdown on opposition figures, including the arrest of Aliou Bah, has triggered repeated street protests. In Kankan, protests by workers at Chinese-operated mining sites reflected rising socioeconomic tensions.

Meanwhile, communal violence also flared in Koma Yeneta, where a farmer-herder conflict left several dead in May. Guinea's border regions are showing signs of volatility as well, particularly in Nzérékoré, where clashes with Malian herders have increased. These incidents point to fragile inter-community relations and the potential for transnational conflict spillover if not carefully managed.

Senegal

Although Senegal registered only six fatalities (0.05%), it recorded 98 incidents (1.7%), indicating a growing frequency of unrest. The most active month was May (24 incidents), driven by labour protests, feminist movements, and grievances over economic conditions. Protests were concentrated in Dakar, where coordinated May Day marches brought together unions and civil society groups. In Casamance, low-level conflict linked to the Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance (MFDC) separatist movement persisted, with sporadic clashes despite ongoing peace talks.⁴⁰ Governance-related disputes such as complaints about electricity blackouts, land disputes in Mlomp, and police brutality have contributed to mounting public dissatisfaction. Meanwhile, youth mobilisation ahead of the 2027 elections presents a double-edged sword: it could foster democratic engagement or, if suppressed, deepen existing fractures.

^[39] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: May 2025](#)

^[40] Mouvement des forces démocratiques de Casamance: [\(MFDC\)](#).

Relatively Peaceful

Mauritania

Mauritania recorded 153 incidents over the six months, none of which resulted in fatalities, underscoring its continued classification as relatively peaceful. However, the intensity of civic mobilisation has grown. Protests in Nouakchott, Nouadhibou, Atar, and Kaedi were largely driven by students, judicial staff, nurses, port workers, and anti-slavery activists. While May saw a decline from April's peak of 53 protest incidents, the thematic focus sharpened around issues such as youth inclusion, service delivery, labour rights, and regional inequality.⁴¹ The government's heavy-handed response to some protests, especially student-led demonstrations, points to a tightening of civic space. Despite the absence of lethal violence, the volume and persistence of unrest reflect rising dissatisfaction with governance, particularly in underserved interior regions.

Cape Verde

Cape Verde reported 22 incidents over a six-month period, all of which were non-lethal. Most unrest stemmed from judicial and labour-related grievances. Magistrates staged recurring protests in Praia, Mindelo, and other cities, demanding long-overdue statutory reforms. In May, pilots from Cape Verde Airlines joined the demonstrations, citing poor working conditions, while municipal disputes over road and water infrastructure led to localised demonstrations. Although there is no evidence of organised violence, the geographic spread and institutional diversity of protest actors suggest that citizen trust in state responsiveness is gradually weakening. Cape Verde remains peaceful but shows early signs of institutional strain.

Gambia

The Gambia recorded only six incidents from January to June 2025, with no fatalities. However, protests in Banjul and Serrekunda in May reflected public anger over governance issues. Youth-led groups like Gambians Against Looted Assets (GALA) mobilised against the state's management of Yahya Jammeh's seized assets, leading to over two dozen arrests, including journalists. Though low in frequency, the securitised response to dissent and the concentration of protest activity around transparency and accountability issues indicate a potential for unrest if public grievances continue to be mishandled.

^[41] CDD-West Africa: [West Africa Security Tracker: May 2025](#)

Guinea-Bissau

Guinea-Bissau reported nine incidents during the reporting period, with no fatalities. Most were minor protests over local service delivery and administrative grievances. While the country remained calm compared to regional hotspots, its weak institutional frameworks and history of political instability make it susceptible to sudden shifts in its internal security profile. Although there were no lethal outcomes, the small number of incidents, coupled with limited state capacity, underscores the importance of preventative governance and local conflict resolution mechanisms.

Liberia

May marked a notable shift with the killing of Badu Abulie, a Burkinabe national who was cooking in the Dewoblee forest near the Nimba border, followed by a violent confrontation in Gbarma Town (Gbarpolu), where over 500 traditionalists detained government officials enforcing educational reforms.⁴² These incidents highlighted the limitations of state authority, particularly in rural areas governed by customary institutions. Despite the country's prior classification as peaceful, the rise in politically charged and inter-communal unrest points to a fragile balance that could quickly deteriorate without targeted intervention and institutional strengthening.

Sierra Leone

Sierra Leone recorded 15 incidents and five fatalities between January and June 2025. A targeted killing in May over a land dispute in Waterloo, alongside troop deployment to Yenga amid tensions with Guinea, signals a modest uptick in instability. Communal violence linked to traditional societies and youth riots in Freetown also emerged, reflecting latent pressures under the surface. While the incident count remains relatively low, the nature of unrest, especially involving land and traditional authority, suggests the need for vigilance, particularly as border tensions and urban discontent gain traction.

^[42] AllAfrica: [Liberia: Senator Alarms Security Threats](#)

Patterns of Violence in West Africa

Between January and June 2025, West Africa recorded 5,903 violent incidents resulting in at least 12,964 fatalities. The scale, scope, and complexity of this violence point to a region where armed conflict has become not only entrenched but increasingly normalised. The data reveals both a deepening of long-standing crises in Sahelian states and the emergence of new pressures on countries once considered relatively stable. The security picture for the first half of the year reflects a combination of insurgent offensives, state-led counterinsurgency campaigns, communal conflict, organised crime, and civil unrest, each interacting with and amplifying the other.

Nigeria remained the most impacted country in absolute terms, recording over 2,300 incidents and 5,768 fatalities, representing more than 44% of all deaths in West Africa over the period. The violence was geographically concentrated in the Northeast, Northwest, and Middle Belt, but it also had spillover effects into other parts of the country. Insurgent groups such as Boko Haram (JAS) and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) maintained operational capability, staging raids, ambushes, and bomb attacks. Armed banditry and militia violence continued to ravage rural communities, particularly in Zamfara, Katsina, and Benue states. The Nigerian state responded with an intensive military campaign, including over 200 air and drone strikes in the six months. While these operations inflicted significant militant casualties and destroyed insurgent infrastructure, they also raised concerns over civilian harm and collateral damage. The lethality of incidents increased compared to previous quarters, underscoring a security environment in which both state and non-state actors are deploying more destructive tactics.

Burkina Faso, the second deadliest country in the region, recorded 987 incidents and more than 3,500 fatalities, resulting in one of the highest fatality-to-incident ratios in West Africa. A combination of mass-casualty insurgent attacks, territorial takeovers, and retaliatory state operations drives the security crisis. Armed clashes, ambushes, and raids on rural settlements have become routine in the east and north, with Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) intensifying their campaigns. Several incidents saw militants overtaking territory and setting up checkpoints, further eroding state control in peripheral regions. The Burkinabe military has attempted to respond with combined operations involving the Volunteer Defence Forces (VDP) and has increasingly relied on drone surveillance and strikes. However, credible reports of mass civilian killings by state forces in provinces such as Yagha and Komandjari highlight how government actions can intensify the crisis, fueling cycles of violence, deepening communal divisions, and driving large-scale displacement.⁴³

^[43] The Guardian: [Burkina Faso soldiers massacred 223 civilians in one day, finds rights group](#)

Mali recorded 1,050 incidents resulting in more than 2,100 fatalities, with Mopti and Tombouctou remaining the epicentre of violence. The conflict here is characterised by multi-actor warfare involving the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA), Wagner Group operatives, local militias, and jihadist factions. Armed clashes remain frequent, while more than 60 air and drone strikes in the first half of 2025 underscore the state's growing reliance on aerial tactics. This trend accelerated after the withdrawal of French forces in 2022 and the departure of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in December 2023, but it also reflects broader constraints on ground operations and the government's strategic shift toward airpower. The insurgency has shown tactical adaptation, using remote explosives and complex ambushes against both state and militia convoys. Beyond the central and northern regions, violence has spread southward into Sikasso and Koulikoro, areas historically less affected by insurgent activity. The result is an expanding conflict footprint that threatens to overwhelm Mali's already stretched security apparatus.

Niger experienced 472 incidents and 947 fatalities, a smaller proportion of total events but with an apparent rise in lethality. The Tillaberi region, at the junction of Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger, remained the central hotspot. The massacre at Fambita mosque during Friday prayers, which left more than 40 civilians dead, was one of the deadliest incidents in the first half of the year. Joint Nigerien-Burkinabe-Malian military operations targeted insurgent bases and illicit mining sites, reflecting a strategic focus on disrupting extremist financing networks. Nevertheless, ISWAP and ISSP fighters retained the capacity to stage high-impact attacks, including vehicle-borne suicide bombings and complex assaults on military positions.

Ghana recorded 246 incidents and 121 fatalities; a marked increase compared to earlier years. Much of the violence stemmed from intercommunal clashes linked to land disputes, chieftaincy rivalries, and resource competition in the north. The Bawku crisis continued to spill into surrounding districts, with both targeted shootings and market attacks. In the Western North region, disputes over illegal timber logging escalated into lethal armed confrontations. Mob violence, lynchings, and vigilante actions were recurrent, indicating deep public distrust in the police and judicial systems.

Benin saw 221 incidents and 92 fatalities, most concentrated in the northern departments of Alibori, Atacora, and Borgou. Militant incursions from Burkina Faso and Niger, combined with localised communal disputes, create a volatile security mix. State responses included targeted operations against suspected militants, but reports of civilian casualties in counterterrorism raids risk undermining public trust. Smaller-scale but persistent violence was recorded in Liberia (3 deaths), Ivory Coast (3 deaths), and other coastal states, underscoring that instability is no longer solely a Sahelian phenomenon.

Across the region, armed clashes were the most lethal form of violence, causing over 7,100 deaths, more than half of the regional total. Attacks on civilians accounted for over 3,600 deaths, with victims often targeted in markets, villages, and places of worship. Air and drone strikes killed at least 1,100 people, a figure that reflects both the growing militarisation of counterinsurgency and the risks of civilian harm in aerial campaigns. Remote explosives and IEDs were widely used in Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, while mob violence caused dozens of fatalities across multiple states.

Civilians remain at the centre of the crisis, bearing the brunt of both deliberate targeting by non-state armed groups and collateral damage from state-led offensives. Entire communities have been displaced, agricultural livelihoods disrupted, and local economies hollowed out. The spread of insecurity toward the coastal states, particularly Benin, Ghana, and Côte d'Ivoire, highlights the growing interconnectedness of West African conflicts, driven by porous borders, arms trafficking, and the movement of fighters between theatres.

The first half of 2025 reveals a security environment where violence is not only widespread but increasingly normalised. State responses remain fragmented and overly militarised, with few recorded peace negotiations, disarmament initiatives, or community reconciliation programmes. The absence of such measures suggests that the region is on a trajectory toward protracted and possibly expanding conflict. Without an integrated approach that combines military pressure with governance reform, socio-economic development, and grassroots peacebuilding, both Sahelian and coastal West African states risk more profound destabilisation in the months ahead.

Key Actors Driving Security Crises in West Africa

From January to June 2025, the security crises across West Africa were shaped by a complex mix of insurgent groups, state militaries, local militias, and criminal or political actors. The fatalities data show that a relatively small set of key actors is responsible for the vast majority of deaths, reflecting entrenched conflict dynamics and the overlapping nature of political violence in the region.

Militant Islamist groups remained the most lethal actors in the Sahel, led by Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP). In Burkina Faso alone, JNIM was responsible for an estimated 2,370 fatalities, often through high-intensity armed clashes, large-scale assaults on rural communities, and ambushes on military convoys. In Mali, JNIM caused over 900 deaths, while also operating across Niger's Tillaberi and Tahoua regions, where it killed at least 161 people. ISSP was similarly deadly, causing over 545 deaths in Niger, 168 in Mali, and 38 in Burkina Faso. These groups increasingly operated in overlapping zones, at times coordinating offensives or alternating attacks to stretch security forces thin. In Nigeria's northeast, Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) and Boko Haram (JAS) together accounted for nearly 1,000 fatalities, with ISWAP alone responsible for 297 deaths and its Lake Chad faction, often in joint operations with Boko Haram, linked to over 350 deaths.

State security forces were also among the highest fatality-causing actors, reflecting the heavy militarisation of counterinsurgency campaigns in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin. Military troops of Nigeria caused over 2,000 fatalities in engagements with non-state armed groups, representing the single largest toll by a national military in the dataset. According to ACLED Data, the armed forces of Burkina Faso caused over 1,050 fatalities. In contrast, Malian troops were linked to more than 930 deaths, often in joint operations with foreign allies such as the Wagner Group, which itself caused at least 31 fatalities. Niger's armed forces were responsible for 150 deaths, with most occurring in counterterrorism operations in the west. Reports from multiple Sahelian states point to civilian harm in these operations, raising questions about adherence to human rights standards and the long-term strategic costs of such approaches.

Local and communal militias played a significant role in driving insecurity, particularly in Nigeria. Fulani Ethnic Militia caused 546 deaths, while communal militias in Katsina, Zamfara, Plateau, and other states collectively accounted for hundreds more. These militias often operate in cycles of attack and reprisal, deepening intercommunal divisions and undermining state authority. In Mali, Dan Na Ambassagou and Dozo militias contributed to fatalities in central regions, while in Ghana, Bawku and other local militias were implicated in communal violence resulting in dozens of deaths.

Criminal and cult-based groups also featured prominently in Nigeria's violence profile. Black Axe, Icelanders, Supreme Vikings Confraternity (SVC), and other cult gangs were linked to multiple killings, reflecting an enduring nexus between organised crime and political violence in urban areas. In several coastal states, such actors intersect with political party-linked militias, complicating efforts to distinguish between criminal, political, and insurgent violence.

Urban unrest actors, such as protesters and rioters, generated fewer fatalities overall but remained politically significant. Fatalities linked to protests were particularly notable in Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Nigeria, where security force crackdowns sometimes turned demonstrations into lethal confrontations. Rioters caused fatalities in Ghana, Nigeria, and several smaller states, often in the context of political disputes, economic grievances, or intercommunal tensions.

The data underscores that West Africa's security crises are sustained by a combination of high-capacity insurgent organisations, heavily armed state militaries, resilient local militias, and a dense network of armed non-state actors with political, ethnic, or criminal motivations. The interactions among these actors, whether in confrontation, tacit coexistence, or shifting alliances, continue to drive instability and humanitarian crises across both Sahelian and coastal West African states. Without addressing the underlying political grievances, governance deficits, and resource competition that enable these actors to thrive, the cycle of violence is likely to persist or escalate.

Strategic Developments

In the first half of 2025, West African governments, military and civilian alike, undertook a series of policy decisions, security deployments, and structural reforms in response to the region's deteriorating security landscape. These developments were driven by the expanding threat of jihadist insurgency, internal political instability, and increasing cross-border violence. The strategic actions varied across countries, reflecting the unique security pressures and political contexts each faced.

In Nigeria, the government implemented sweeping counterinsurgency measures in the North East and North West to curb the activities of Boko Haram, ISWAP, and criminal bandits. In April, the appointment of Major General Abdulsalam Abubakar as the new theatre commander marked a leadership shift in counterterrorism operations. The military intensified airstrikes on militant hideouts in Zamfara, Gwoza, and Damboa, while also deploying troops to Benue and Plateau to address surging communal violence. Additionally, Nigeria suspended its visa-on-arrival policy from May 1 to tighten border security and stem the flow of undocumented migrants, which were believed to pose criminal and terror risks. To reinforce legal frameworks, Nigeria hosted a national workshop with the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), validating a new National Implementation Action Plan under UN Resolution 1540 designed to prevent non-state actors from acquiring weapons of mass destruction. A separate national vaccination campaign was also launched in response to a meningitis outbreak, showing an expanded view of security that included public health.

Burkina Faso adopted more localised and adaptive military strategies to counter the expanding influence of jihadist groups. Security forces implemented visibility-enhancing measures, such as banning tall crops near military positions in Yatenga to reduce ambush risks during the rainy season, but also pursued structural strengthening. Between March and June 2025, the junta initiated a significant recruitment drive that added approximately 14,000 new soldiers, alongside the creation of Rapid Intervention Battalions (BIRs) to improve mobility and response capacity. To upgrade its operational capabilities, the government also acquired advanced Chinese-made systems, including armoured fire-support vehicles, gun-mortars, and SR5 multiple rocket launch systems as part of a broader effort to modernise the army and restore strategic advantage.⁴⁴

Alongside operational responses, the government sought to foster national unity through symbolic initiatives, including the inauguration of a mausoleum for Thomas Sankara to rally public sentiment during a period of acute crisis. Nevertheless, persistent drone strikes and mass attacks underscored ongoing challenges in

^[44] ACOSNEWSNET: [Burkina : L'armée recrute 500 Militaires Du Rang, du 02 au 29 juin 2025](#)

containing insurgent advances. Amid mounting security pressures and growing dissent, transitional authorities sought to consolidate control. Pro-government messaging increased on social media in support of Captain Ibrahim Traoré, while concerns lingered over the fate of soldiers reported missing since April. Reports in the French daily *Le Monde* on 6 May suggested that regional reinforcements had been requested from Chad following tensions linked to an alleged coup plot. At the diplomatic level, the government pursued efforts to reduce isolation and expand international partnerships. On 9 May, Traoré met Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow, where both leaders pledged to deepen bilateral cooperation. This was followed by a visit from the Director General of Iranian Police to Ouagadougou on 11 May to discuss security collaboration.⁴⁵ On 12 May, Burkina Faso's ambassador to Iran, Mohammad Kabore, met his Afghan counterpart, Maulvi Fazl Mohammad Haqqani, in Tehran, a move that sparked speculation about efforts to open dialogue with armed non-state actors through intermediary states.⁴⁶

In Mali, authorities announced a \$1.1 billion national security plan for 2025–2026, which includes the recruitment of 24,000 soldiers to enhance territorial control and strengthen state presence in contested areas.⁴⁷ Security operations have intensified in central and northern regions, combining air and ground campaigns against armed groups. In a landmark judicial initiative, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger unveiled plans to establish a Sahelian Criminal and Human Rights Court alongside a regional high-security prison. These institutions are framed as mechanisms to combat impunity and harmonise justice systems, while also reinforcing the Alliance of Sahel States' drive for legal and security autonomy. Meanwhile, tensions persist between Malian authorities and Barrick Mining over the Loulo and Gounkoto gold mines. On 8 May, the government requested the Bamako Commercial Court to place the mines under provisional administration, with a ruling scheduled for 2 June.

In Niger, authorities launched Operation Nalewa Dole to safeguard key oil installations in the Diffa region, underscoring a security strategy increasingly tied to resource protection.⁴⁸ In Agadez, over 600 people were arrested in sweeping anti-terrorism operations targeting insurgent logistics networks. Additionally, Niger implemented controversial measures, such as motorcycle bans and the suspension of NGOs, including the Red Cross, in certain areas, citing security concerns. While these steps aimed to disrupt militant mobility and logistics, they also generated humanitarian consequences. Niger also hosted a national workshop in partnership with the UNODC to operationalise its National Strategy for the Prevention and Countering of Violent Extremism. On 1 May, President Gen. Abdourahmane Tiani signed a decree appointing 189 members of the Consultative Council of the

[45] Президент России: [Meeting with President of Burkina Faso Ibrahim Traore](#)

[46] APNews: [The Taliban and Burkina Faso ambassadors pledge new trade and mining cooperation](#)

[47] Ecofin Agency: [Mali to Recruit 24,000 Soldiers Under New Security Plan](#)

[48] TRT Global: [Niger withdraws from Lake Chad Multinational Joint Task Force](#)

Refoundation, which will serve as an advisory legislative body during the five-year transitional period. The council is largely composed of staunch supporters of the military regime, while political parties dissolved in March have no representation.

Benin Republic, in response to escalating violence in its northern regions, signed a security cooperation agreement with the United States focused on intelligence-sharing and joint counterterrorism operations. This marked a significant step in its defence diplomacy, as the country faced cross-border raids from Burkina Faso-based militants. The government redeployed troops to the tri-border area and conducted patrols around Parc W after militants killed 54 soldiers in April. In May, non-military interventions were also evident; security officials issued direct warnings to local leaders suspected of cooperating with militants, while displacements and cattle raids in Atacora underscored the urgency of state responses.

Togo undertook constitutional reforms in May that shifted the balance of power in favour of the presidency, ostensibly to enhance central authority. While these amendments sparked nationwide protests, the government maintained its posture, deploying security personnel to manage demonstrations and safeguard public buildings. Earlier in the year, Togo had already increased military presence along its northern border, particularly in the Savanes region, in anticipation of spillover from Burkina Faso and Niger.

While Ghana did not implement major structural reforms during the period, its responses were primarily community-based. Security patrols were increased in the Upper East and Ashanti regions in reaction to recurrent chieftaincy violence and vigilante justice. The Ghanaian government opted for intermittent interventions such as curfews and peace dialogues rather than sweeping legislative or constitutional changes.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the government discussed enhancing security cooperation with partners. Authorities in Abidjan have been working to strengthen military capacity in response to regional security concerns. On 15 May, Jeune Afrique reported that the government held talks in late April with the head of U.S. Africa Command, Gen. Michael Langley, on expanding military cooperation. Additionally, on 9 May, the government signed a military cooperation agreement with Morocco, which is now Côte d'Ivoire's second-largest military training partner after France.

In Guinea, the government initiated a compensation process for victims of the September 2009 incident in Conakry, where security forces killed around 150 protesters. The move, launched on 13 May, follows the 2024 conviction of former President Dadis Camara, who was sentenced to 20 years in prison for crimes against humanity but later granted a presidential pardon in March. The compensation effort is seen as part of the authorities' broader attempt to address the concerns of victims

and maintain public trust following the trial. Several relatively peaceful countries, such as Mauritania, Cape Verde, Gambia, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, and Sierra Leone, undertook minimal or no new strategic reforms during this period. However, Mauritania hosted a high-level counterterrorism training exercise in April, focused on safeguarding hydrocarbon and maritime infrastructure, reflecting a forward-looking approach to emerging threats.

Across the region, one common thread in state responses was the emphasis on military-centric solutions ranging from recruitment drives to airstrikes and legal realignments. However, these strategies were often implemented in the absence of robust community engagement, humanitarian coordination, or inclusive political dialogue. The six-month period thus highlighted not only the resilience of state responses but also the structural fragility of regional security systems. In many instances, reforms and operations achieved tactical successes but fell short of sustainable conflict resolution.

Conclusion

The first half of 2025 has underscored the depth, complexity, and persistence of insecurity across West Africa, revealing both the entrenched nature of long-standing conflicts and the alarming spread of violence into previously stable areas. Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger remain the epicentre of instability, yet the ripple effects are increasingly evident in coastal and relatively peaceful states. The data paints a picture of a region caught in a cycle where high-capacity insurgent groups, heavily militarised state responses, local militias, and criminal networks feed into one another, sustaining violence and eroding governance.

While governments have pursued strategic reforms, intensified counterinsurgency operations, and sought new security partnerships, these measures remain heavily skewed toward short-term military gains, often at the expense of civilian protection, community trust, and inclusive governance. The limited integration of political dialogue, socio-economic interventions, and reconciliation mechanisms risks deepening grievances and prolonging instability. The regional security crisis is not merely a product of battlefield dynamics; it is also rooted in governance deficits, porous borders, and unresolved socio-political tensions. Without a coordinated, multidimensional approach that combines robust security measures with governance reforms, community engagement, and sustainable development, West Africa risks entering the second half of the year on a trajectory of further fragmentation and volatility. The urgency for comprehensive, preventive, and cooperative action has never been greater.

About CDD-West Africa

The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD-West Africa) was established in 1997 as an independent, not-for-profit research, training, advocacy, and capacity-building organisation. Its mission is to drive democracy, security, and development in West Africa by bridging policymakers, civil society, and academia through research and strategic analysis.

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