

Summary

Several factors, including attacks on farmers and a high inflation, have created a food crisis for over 25 million Nigerians, stirring up discontent across the country. In response to this and other problems, influential trade unions NLC and TUC have held nationwide strikes and protests multiple times in the past months and are likely to do so again with increasing intensity. As the food crisis and accompanying popular unrest remain unabated, an increase of crime, both petty and violent, become increasingly probable, also in Lagos and Abuja.

Recent events and developments

On August 7, 2023, Save the Children reported that more than 25 million Nigerians were estimated to be victims of a food crisis – the highest such number in recent years. Not only rural areas are affected by this crisis, but also large cities such as Lagos and Abuja. While attacks on farmers and climate change are cited as important reasons, inflation also plays a crucial role this year. President Bola Tinubu's decisions to float the Naira, the national currency, and abolish a national fuel subsidy, are quoted as significant factors for the growing inflation, which is now above 24%. For two of Nigeria's most influential trade unions, the NLC and TUC, the fuel subsidy removal has become a target to aim broader social discontent at, with multiple nationwide strikes and protests occurring since the measure was introduced in June. On September 5 and 6, the NLC held a nationwide warning strike, threatening to continue indefinitely if adequate palliative measures for the nation's poorest were not introduced by September 21. Significantly, the unions' discourse has shifted from a focus on the fuel subsidy to broader rhetoric of discontent on behalf of the poor over the past months, suggesting that discontent grows among Nigerians as the cost-of-living increases.

Impact assessment

Whereas earlier threats of indefinite strikes by the unions have in the past months been prevented by dialogue with the government, such conversations have recently not been able to stymie shorter strikes. Occurring approximately once a month, it is likely that such strikes will continue to occur, with a probable increase in intensity due to the deepening food crisis. Academic research suggests that there is a connection between food shortages and an increase in violence. As violence in Nigeria often occurs with a financial motivation, the rising cost and decreasing availability of food may drive regular civilians towards criminal acts as they see no other manner of putting food on the table. Such acts may include riots, petty theft, (non)violent robberies, and kidnapping for ransom. The latter, however, remains more likely in rural areas, outside of larger cities such as Lagos and Abuja. Finally, decreasing accessibility of food may also cause existing conflicts to exacerbate. Most significantly, farmer-herder clashes in rural areas throughout Nigeria may intensify as these rivalries often center on the production of food.

Advice from Forth Global

- Make sure all employees travelling to Nigeria undertake a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Avoid travel by road when traveling between cities. If impossible to do so, plan journeys ahead with adequate security detail check the state of roads and allow for extra time to reach your destination.
- Monitor local news and liaise with local contacts to be informed of relevant developments.
- Advise staff to avoid all kinds of demonstrations.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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