

Summary

From late December to January, Islamic State-affiliated militants such as Al-Shabaab have intensified their attacks in northern Cabo Delgado province. At least 14 attacks took place in Mocimboa de Praia, Macomia and Muidumbe district, resulting in dozens of deaths and kidnappings. The security situation has continued to deteriorate due to the government's financial and political struggle and the withdrawal of the Southern African Development Community Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM) peacekeeping force, planned to be completed by July 2024. The capital of Cabo Delgado, Pemba has been targeted in recent months as well as the N380 highway.

Recent events and developments

Despite recent counter-insurgency efforts, Islamic State-affiliated Ansar Al Sunna, locally known as Al-Shabaab (distinct from Somali Al-Shabaab) continues to target northern Mozambique, in particular the region of Cabo Delgado and slowly moving towards central Mozambique. On 30 January Al-Shabaab ambushed a joint patrol of Mozambican military forces and local militia around Nahavara in the district of Mecufi, Cabo Delgado. The attack, killing eight soldiers, capture of arms and ammunition as well as torching of military vehicles was claimed by Al-Shabaab. Also, on 30 January, the group attacked Makwaya in Mecufi, Cabo Delgado, kidnapping civilians and burning houses. The number of casualties remains unknown. On 27 January one person was killed near Pemba in an attack by Al-Shabaab. They claimed the attack and killing of a Christian. Also, on the 27 of January they killed one farmer in southern Cabo Delgado, Pulo, while two other farmers were captured.

The mandate of the SAMIM peacekeeping mission is set to expire by July 2024, leaving a security vacuum to be filled by the Mozambican Armed Defense Forces (FADM). On another note, although there are no fixed procedures in place, president Nyusi is expected to hold a vote in March to select the next party president. Likely to cause civil unrest as seen in October 2023 during local elections which resulted in the deaths of civilians and police officers during protests.

Impact assessment

The FADM will be faced with a challenging task in countering the increasing threat of terror attacks throughout northern Mozambique with the looming withdrawal of SAMIM. The abandonment of the strategic village of Mucojo, effectively handing the insurgents unbridled access to the Macomia coast in the North-East of Mozambique has decreased the positive outlook for the future state of safety and security. With the withdrawal planned to be completed by July 2024 Al-Shabaab is likely to capitalize on the withdrawal to continue pushing southwards by focusing their efforts on central Mozambique to the provinces of Nampula and Niassa. Foreigners may become collateral in the increase in the frequency of attacks and increase of territory gained and are advised to avoid the northern region of Cabo Delgado. Although the risk of Terror attacks in the capital of Maputo, remain lower than in the northern provinces of Mozambique, there still remains the risk of protests turning violent, knife crime or petty theft.

Public discontent with the authorities, attacks and radicalization in the northern region are on the rise. While there is a higher security presence in the cities, Al-Shabaab is exploiting the rural areas, using accusations against the Mozambican government as motives for recruitment. The capital of Cabo Delgado, Pemba has recently been targeted for attacks and this trend is likely to continue.

Advice from Forth Global

- Refrain from unnecessary travel to Cabo Delgado due to ongoing violence and increased security dangers.
- Ensure emergency plans and security procedures are set up, and that on-site employees are familiar with protocols, and emergency contacts.
- Advise Northern Mozambique staff to be extra cautious around public areas and Western cultural symbols.
- Stay in touch with local employees and liaise with local security contacts for current updates.

Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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