

## Summary

Rumors of an attempted mutiny and general division amongst the military in Burkina Faso are threatening to throw the country into further instability. Its military regime has come under scrutiny after one of the deadliest attacks organized by extremist group JNIM has taken place on June 11. In Djibo thousands have gone out to demonstrate, expressing their dissatisfaction with the government and the insecurity they are experiencing. A Doctors Without Borders office has been targeted in an armed attack.

## Recent events and developments

Extremist activity has culminated in one of the deadliest attacks on the military on June 11 in Mansila town, near the border with Niger. Over 100 casualties have been reported. Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM), an armed group affiliated with al-Qaeda, has claimed responsibility for the attack. It has been speculated in the media that the Mansila attack has fueled divisions within the military leading to an attempted mutiny. A day after the attack, a rocket hit the state television headquarters in the capital Ouagadougou, close to the presidential residence. Military sources have stated this was linked to the rumored mutiny. Although President Capt. Traoré has denied these allegations, concerns regarding internal tensions remain. Traoré came to power in 2022 promising to eliminate terrorist groups from the country. In reality, both JNIM and the Islamic State Sahel Province group have expanded their controlled territories and the number of casualties has more than doubled in 2023 compared to 2022. The precarious security situation combined with the military's failure to efficiently combat armed terrorist groups has led to feelings of dissatisfaction amongst the population. On July 20 thousands of people in Djibo, located in northern Soum province, have gathered in protest against insecurity and the government's lack of action regarding the ongoing blockade imposed on their town two years ago by terrorist groups. Also in Djibo, on July 17, a Doctors Without Borders office has been targeted by gunfire during an attack.

## Impact assessment

Burkina Faso is experiencing a growing security crisis. Recent events have undermined the military junta's control and its ability to fend off internal threats. As a result, civil unrest and demonstrations are on the rise. In the future this can potentially degenerate into more violent protests and riots, potentially also in Ouagadougou. In turn, this would likely be met with severe push backs, both from groups like JNIM and from the military forces which have been accused of executing over 200 civilians earlier this year by Human Rights Watch. The ongoing hostilities pose a risk for staff present in the country, as illustrated by the case of NGO Doctors Without Border (MSF) coming under attack. Moreover, there is evidence of both JNIM and IS Sahel recurring to kidnapping in neighboring countries. If the situation in Burkina Faso further deteriorates, the practice may become widely used there as well, posing an elevated risk for representatives of Western organizations. Demonstrations of a different kind are already taking place in the capital as on June 28 a large number of protesters have gathered in front of the French embassy expressing anti-French and anti-Western sentiments. This elevates the risk of harassment and potential altercations for staff arriving from Western countries. Furthermore, in the event that a military coup does take place, this may cause further instability with the potential of internal conflicts arising. Ouagadougou is likely to be targeted as it houses media and government institutions, the incident involving the state broadcaster serving as a precedent.

## Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to Burkina Faso receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Employees should avoid all protests and other public gatherings.
- Closely monitor the local and international media for updates on the political situation and potential demonstrations.
- Advise staff to avoid expressing all personal opinions on the government and security situation.

## Customized advice

Please contact us for specific advice:

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