

NIGER

Attacks on education continued in Niger in 2022 and 2023, particularly in Tillabéri region, although fewer attacks were identified than during the previous reporting period. Some attacks on schools and on students, teachers, and education personnel involved the use of explosive weapons. The military use of schools continued, and GCPEA identified attacks on higher education, as well as one incident of sexual violence.

CONTEXT

During the reporting period, conflict continued between armed groups and Nigerien armed forces in Diffa region in the southeast, and in Tahoua and Tillabéri regions in the west.¹ In July 2023, military officials led a coup against President Mohamed Bazoum, subsequently forming the National Council for the Safeguarding of the Homeland and assuming control of the government.²

Non-state armed groups continued to conduct attacks, including against civilians and to displace them, particularly in Tillabéri region, in 2022 and 2023.³ The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin operated in the west of the country,⁴ and Boko Haram and affiliated or splinter groups operated primarily in the southeast.⁵ ISGS activity decreased in early 2022.⁶ The UN verified 127 grave violations against children in Diffa region in 2022, including recruitment and killing of children.⁷

Nigerien security forces increased counterinsurgency operations in 2023, and attacks on civilians decreased, as reported by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED).⁸ In August 2023, armed groups allegedly attacked Nigerien armed forces in Tillabéri region, resulting in 17 soldier fatalities and 24 injured, according to International Crisis Group and news reports.⁹ That same month, intercommunal violence broke out in Tillabéri region, resulting in approximately 40 civilian fatalities.¹⁰

Niger's humanitarian situation deteriorated during the reporting period. The UN reported that 4.3 million people needed humanitarian assistance, including 2.4 million children.¹¹ Climate disasters such as droughts and floods further compounded the humanitarian situation.¹² In October 2023, the UN reported that floods impacted around 161,000 people, primarily in Maradi, Tillabéri, Tahoua, and Zinder regions.¹³

Insecurity continued to impact education during the 2022-2023 reporting period.¹⁴ In 2023, more than 900 schools were closed due to insecurity in Niger, with more than 850 in Tillabéri region alone, impacting more than 73,000 children, including over 35,000 girls, throughout the country.¹⁵ Additional barriers to education included child marriage, which disproportionately affected girls, as well as inadequate funding for payment of teachers or purchasing equipment and the closure of learning space due to access challenges.¹⁶

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified at least 13 attacks on schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period, most of which damaged or destroyed the school. Attacks involved the use of explosive weapons, arson, looting, and the destruction of learning materials. This marks a decrease as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA recorded at least 11 attacks in 2021 and 29 attacks in 2020.¹⁷

GCPEA identified three attacks on schools in 2022:

- On February 2, 2022, an unexploded ordnance that was found in a school was deactivated in Ouallam town and commune in Tillabéri region, as reported by ACLED and local media outlet *Mourya*.¹⁸
- On April 6, 2022, an arson attack was carried out on a school in Banteri village, Torodi commune, Tillabéri region.¹⁹
- On September 5, 2022, in Mossi Paga village, Torodi commune, Tillabéri region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly looted a school and burned school materials.²⁰

GCPEA identified at least ten attacks on schools in 2023.²¹ For example, The UN reported that four schools were burned by non-state armed groups in Diffa region in July 2023, impacting the education of 500 children.²² The Protection Cluster recorded 15 attacks on schools, students, and staff between January and July 2023, particularly affecting Tillabéri and Diffa regions; members of armed groups reportedly burned schools and teaching materials, ordered the closure of schools, and threatened teaching staff.²³ Since GCPEA was unable to determine how many of these were attacks on schools rather than attacks on school students and staff, the Cluster count was not included in the total number of attacks on schools for the report, to avoid double counting. Incidents collected by GCPEA included:

- On March 8, 2023, in Famale village, Dessa commune, Tillabéri region, an arson attack was carried out on a secondary school.²⁴
- On April 25, 2023, an explosive device was reportedly detonated in Bandio village, Gotheye commune, Tillabéri region, destroying a school.²⁵
- On November 29, 2023, an improvised explosive device detonated at the Secondary Education Complex in Chetirmari village and commune, Diffa region, damaging classrooms.²⁶

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

In 2022 and 2023, GCPEA identified six attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel. Such incidents appeared to have decreased as compared to the previous reporting period. GCPEA identified at least seven incidents in 2021 and at least ten in 2020.²⁷

GCPEA identified four attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel in 2022.²⁸ For example:

- On April 7, 2022, suspected members of an armed group allegedly abducted a primary school teacher in Banteri village, Torodi commune, Tillabéri region, as reported by ACLED and local media *Air Info*.²⁹ This attack was the day after members of an armed group allegedly burned a school in the village, as detailed above.
- On June 23, 2022, an IED reportedly detonated near a road in Niakatire village, Torodi commune, Tillabéri region, when an education official traveling in a military convoy passed through the village. No injuries were reported.³⁰
- On June 24, 2022, in Tahoua commune, Tahoua region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly fired shots at the vehicle of an education official traveling between Keita and Tahoua towns, damaging the vehicle, according to ACLED and local media *Actu Niger*.³¹
- GCPEA identified two incidents of attacks on school students and staff in 2023:
- On April 26, 2023, at Dan Kassawa Technical High School in Maradi town and region, police used teargas to disperse a student protest, and stormed the school, as reported by ACLED and local media *Actu Niger*.³²
- Around October 30, 2023, members of an armed group kidnapped two teachers from Bankata school in Makalondi, Torodi region.³³

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified two cases of the military use of schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period, a similar rate to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least one such incident.³⁴

GCPEA identified one incident in 2022. As reported by Médecins Sans Frontières, and media outlets, in February 2022, alleged members of an armed group used a school in Nachambé hamlet, Maradi region; shelling by Nigerian armed forces subsequently struck in the vicinity of the hamlet. Four children were killed in the airstrike, although it was not possible to establish whether or not they were at, or on the way to or from, school.³⁵

GCPEA identified one incident of the military use of a school in 2023. On March 4, 2023, alleged members of a non-state armed group reportedly used a school in N'guiram village, Diffa region.³⁶

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AT, OR ON THE WAY TO OR FROM, SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY

GCPEA received one report of an incident of sexual violence during the 2022-2023 reporting period. No such incidents were identified in the previous reporting period.³⁷ On October 27, 2023, in connection with the incident detailed above, members of an armed group perpetrated sexual violence against two female teachers at Bankata school in Makalondi commune, Torodi region.³⁸

ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

GCPEA identified two incidents of attacks on higher education during the 2022-2023 reporting period. In the

prior reporting period, GCPEA did not identify any such incidents.³⁹ Incidents involved the use of excessive force against protesting students.

GCPEA identified two incidents of attacks on higher education students in 2022:

- On October 17, 2022, in Zinder city and region, police reportedly used teargas to disperse a crowd of students from the André Salifou University of Zinder protesting unpaid scholarships and poor infrastructure. Several students allegedly suffered injuries, and at least three required medical treatment, as reported by ACLED and local media *Actu Niger*.⁴⁰
- On October 22, 2022, in Maradi town and region, students from the Dan Dicko Dankoulodo University of Maradi were protesting the relocation of the pharmacy faculty to Niamey when police intervened using force and teargas, injuring a number of students, as well as arresting some students, according to ACLED and *Actu Niger*.⁴¹

GCPEA did not identify any attacks on higher education in 2023.

ENDNOTES

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