



OSAC Country Security Report

Mali

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This report is intended to supplement the U.S. Department of State Mali Travel Advisory and [Mali Country Information Page](#).

Embassy & Consulate Contact Information

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OSAC Country Chapter(s)

An OSAC Country Chapter is active in Mali. The Regional Security Officer is available to meet with U.S. private-sector representatives and provide information on the current security situation in country.

To reach the Mali Country Council, email OSACBamako@state.gov. Contact [OSAC's Africa team](#) with any questions.

Mali Travel Advisory

The current U.S. Department of State [Travel Advisory](#) at the date of this report's publication assesses Mali at Level 4, indicating that travelers should not travel to Mali due to crime, terrorism, and kidnapping.

Crime

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bamako as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for crime directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Crime "C" Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Mali, indicating that there may be widespread violent crime and/or organized crime present in the country, and/or that local law enforcement may have limited ability to respond to serious crimes.

Violent extremist organizations and criminal groups operating in Mali continue to act as spoilers to the peace process and threaten those seeking to return government authority or deliver humanitarian services. Inter-ethnic conflict impacts all regions of Mali and acts as a driver of crime and insecurity. Criminals and terrorists in Mali seek to target foreigners, often for

kidnapping for ransom schemes, in addition to their continued efforts to undermine the national government control across the country.

Mali's long-standing problems of unemployment, food insecurity, and long-term economic underdevelopment persist. Mali is far from being able to combat the economic drivers that lead individuals to banditry, which is still one of the largest disruptive forces against private organizations operating in the north.

Although most crimes in Bamako are of a nonviolent and opportunistic nature, criminals can be violent and are often armed. Most reported incidents targeted unaccompanied individuals in the early morning or late-night hours. Home invasions, armed robberies, and carjacking are among the most common violent crimes reported. Bandits routinely set up roadblocks on major routes outside of Bamako to stop vehicles to steal belongings; several motorists have died in such robberies. There are periodic reports of nighttime robberies of commercial establishments (e.g., restaurants, convenience stores, small businesses) in Bamako; these tend to spike before major holidays. Residential break-ins are less common. Maintain proper locks and solid doors and consider employing residential guards 24 hours per day.

Like in many capital cities, marketplaces and popular public areas in downtown Bamako are gathering places for criminals and prostitutes. Be vigilant and exercise caution in these areas at night.

Crime continues to increase outside of Bamako, affecting many NGOs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, many NGOs had to suspend operations in parts of central Mali because of increased crime. Following the withdrawal of French forces from Mali in early to mid-2022, many private sector organizations reported increases in violent crime, especially in central and northern Mali. Thieves and carjackers routinely target NGOs in the center and the north. Terrorist actors used a stolen NGO vehicle as a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device (VBIED) in the attack on the UN camp in Timbuktu in 2018. Criminals have beaten and tied up NGO workers during vehicle thefts, as well as kidnapping them for ransom. Terrorists and bandits routinely warn NGOs not to work in certain villages and steal supplies donated to the local population.

Practice the same personal security precautions in Bamako as you would in any large city. Be vigilant and always maintain awareness in crowded areas such as markets. Be aware of anyone who jostles you, even if it appears innocent. This is often a ploy used by pickpockets, including children, to distract you. Do not carry, let alone display, large sums of money. Do not carry anything in your wallet that you cannot replace easily.

Due to the vigilantism which often occurs when criminals are apprehended in Mali, it is best to avoid the large crowds that may gather at the scene of a crime, a vehicle accident, or any altercation.

Avoid wandering around in remote areas of the city alone, particularly at night. Travel in groups and stay in illuminated areas as much as possible. Avoid travel at night on foot since the roads are often poorly illuminated, increasing the chance of being struck by a vehicle or motorbike.

Thefts from hotel rooms are common. Do not leave anything of value in your room and ensure the hotel room doors stay locked while sleeping. Given a history of terrorist attacks against soft targets like hotels in Mali, consider carrying your own doorstop to secure your hotel room while sleeping.

U.S. Embassy personnel are prohibited from visiting venues such as concerts, nightclubs, movie theaters, sporting events, and other similar events/locations (e.g. the Grand Marche). Embassy personnel are permitted to eat in at restaurants with notification to the Regional Security Office. Nightclubs, bars, and crowded markets are often targeted by pickpockets. Robberies commonly occur in isolated areas, e.g., parks and trails. All travel outside of Bamako is prohibited for U.S. Embassy personnel unless coordinated in advance for official business. There is very little police presence outside of Bamako. Violent crime outside of Bamako is common.

Avoid the northern and central parts of the country due to terrorist and criminal activities, the threat of kidnapping, and ongoing military operations. Much of Mali's northern and central regions—and increasingly parts of the southern region—are ungoverned space where extremist groups and criminal organizations operate with impunity.

Kidnapping Threat

The U.S. Department of State has included a Kidnapping “K” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Mali, indicating that criminal or terrorist individuals or groups have threatened to and/or have seized or detained and threatened to kill, injure, or continue to detain individuals in order to compel a third party (including a governmental organization) to do or abstain from doing something as a condition of release.

Kidnapping poses a real and pervasive threat in Mali, particularly in Mali’s northern and central regions. In May 2022, an Italian couple and their son were kidnapped by JNIM militants from their home in Koutiala, southeast of Bamako. A French journalist was taken hostage in May 2021 in Gao. NGOs and faith-based organizations have recently been targeted for kidnapping and murder by violent extremist organizations. A U.S. hostage was taken hostage in Niger in 2016 and released in March 2023. In May 2019, French Special Forces rescued four hostages, including one U.S. citizen, on the border between Mali and Burkina Faso. A German priest was kidnapped from outside his residence in Bamako in November 2022.

Terrorism

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bamako as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for terrorism directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

The U.S. Department of State has included a Terrorism “T” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Mali, indicating that terrorist attacks have occurred and/or specific threats against civilians, groups, or other targets may exist.

Terrorist activities have continuously increased in Mali for the last decade, and continue to target civilians, Mali's Armed Forces (FAMa), international peacekeepers, and international military forces. Terrorist groups active in Mali include ISIS in the Greater Sahara (ISIS-GS) and Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) - the umbrella group that formed after the merger of the Sahara Branch of al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), al-Mourabitoun, Ansar al-Dine, and the Macina Liberation Front. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data project (ACLED), these groups were responsible for 887 attacks in Mali in 2023 with the majority occurring in Mopti and Segou.

On September 17, JNIM conducted a terrorist attack inside of Bamako city limits following an increase in JNIM activity in the surrounding Koulikoro region throughout 2024. At 0500 local time, militants from JNIM, primarily leveraging direct fire weapons, conducted a simultaneous, complex attack on the Faladie gendarmie training school and Malian military Air Base 101 located in Modibo Keita International Airport (BKO). Militants reportedly held control of the airport for multiple hours before combined Malian forces were able to repel the attack. International media placed the death toll at 70, largely comprised of gendarme cadets and FAMa soldiers. This attack represented the first terrorist attack in Bamako in nearly a decade following the 2015 JNIM attack at the Raddison Blu Hotel.

The Government of Mali scrapped the 2015 Algiers Peace Accord between the Government of Mali and two coalitions of armed groups on January 25, 2024, following the withdrawal of MINUSMA peacekeepers. Terrorist groups increased their attacks, particularly against the FAMa. Terrorism, insecurity, scarce resources, and a lack of accountability or effective governance resulted in a significant increase in intercommunal violence, particularly in central Mali. The conflict zone has continued to press further south, with JNIM claimed attacks in Sikasso, Kayes, and Koulikoro increasing into 2023 and 2024. Efforts to secure north and central Mali in 2022 were hampered by the limited availability of trained FAMa members and increasingly sophisticated and coordinated terrorist attacks against military installations. Terrorists took advantage of long-standing intercommunal and ethnic tensions to significantly increase their violence against civilians.

Much work remains for the Malian security services to be capable of controlling extremist and criminal organizations inside the country. Large swaths of northern and central Mali remain largely cut off from effective state control, as do portions of Mali's south. The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) first deployed in Mali in 2013 to help stabilize the country after the outbreak of separatist and terrorist conflict in 2012. However, MINUSMA withdrew from Mali and ended its mandate in December 2023.

In June 2022, Mali withdrew from the G5 Sahel, a regional counterterrorism force comprised of troops from Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Burkina Faso, and Chad. In mid-2022, French forces ended Operation Barkhane, an integrated counterterrorism mission for the Sahel region, amid deteriorating relations with Mali's transition government. In place of these regional partnerships, the transition government has increasingly relied on Russian private military company Wagner Group for counterterrorism support since late 2021. Wagner forces, along

with FAMA troops, have been accused of human rights abuses, including summary executions, torture, rape, pillaging, arbitrary detentions, and enforced disappearances. As of publication of this report, the transition government's partnership with Wagner Group has not produced any notable progress in the fight against terrorist groups operating in Mali.

Mali has been cooperative in working with the United States to prevent acts of terrorism against U.S. citizens.

Political Violence and Civil Unrest

The U.S. Department of State has assessed Bamako as being a **CRITICAL**-threat location for political violence directed at or affecting official U.S. government interests.

Civil unrest can develop quickly without prior notice, often interrupting logistics and services. Avoid demonstration activity, as even those planned to remain peaceful have the potential to turn violent.

Elections/Political Stability

In August 2020, following months of political instability and violent protests, mutineers staged a coup d'état and overthrew the rule of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita (IBK). Elements of Mali's National Guard received the support of some members of the Malian Special Forces (BAFs) in their efforts to overthrow the government and imprison IBK and Prime Minister Boubou Cisse. On the evening of the coup, IBK resigned and dissolved the legislature.

In the immediate aftermath of the coup, the transitional National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP) government was created. In September 2020, leaders of CNSP were inaugurated, including President Bah N'Daw and Vice President Assimi Goïta, to lead a stated 18-month transition period. In January 2021, CNSP leadership confirmed that parliamentary elections would be held in November 2021 and presidential elections would be held in February 2022.

Under significant international pressure, the transition government dissolved the CNSP in late January 2021.

In May 2021, forces loyal to Vice President Goïta arrested President N'Daw and several ministers, initiating a military takeover of the civilian government. The Constitutional Court determined that Vice President Goïta should carry out all the duties, attributes, and privileges of the transition president since the position of president was vacant (regardless of the circumstances surrounding the vacancy). Goïta was inaugurated as transition president of Mali on June 7, 2021 and agreed to organize elections within the same timeframe agreed to by former transition President N'Daw.

In January 2022, the transition government announced a plan to hold elections and transition to civilian government in 2026, nearly five years later than the original election plan negotiated

with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). ECOWAS and the West Africa Economic Monetary Union (WAEMU) responded with extensive economic and political sanctions against Mali. In mid-2022, the transition government vowed to hold elections by February 2024, leading ECOWAS and WAEMU to lift the sanctions imposed earlier that year. Despite international pressure from ECOWAS and several bilateral partners, the transition government has made very limited progress toward preparing for elections. In September 2023, the transition government announced an election postponement for February 2024, citing technical reasons.

In response to the February 2024 election deadline passing, Mali suspended all political activity from April to July. The suspension, which was initially announced as an indefinite ban, included preventing members of political parties from organizing in public and private settings. The suspension also prevented all media from broadcasting and publishing on the activities of political parties and associations.

In November 2024, junta leader Col Goïta removed Prime Minister Choguel Kokalla Maïga from power following a series of negative comments about the junta government's commitment to transition.

Protests & Demonstrations

Periodic street demonstrations occur throughout Mali. Although some are planned and peaceful, demonstrations can occur spontaneously and turn violent. The majority of these are contained by security forces, but U.S. citizens should avoid street demonstrations and maintain security awareness at all times.

Demonstrations in support of the transition government, in support of Russian involvement in Mali, and against French presence and influence in Mali are common. Transition government authorities and/or Russian actors have been accused of financially incentivizing demonstrators to participate in protests.

Anti-U.S./Anti-Western Sentiment

Anti-French sentiment is pervasive in Mali, and demonstrations have targeted French institutions and symbols, including after the departure of French forces in mid-2022. Anti-MINUSMA sentiment was also common and manifests in demonstrations across Mali. U.S. interests are sometimes conflated with those of other Western entities active in Mali. Travelers should be sensitive to the negative public sentiments towards France.

Law Enforcement

The general number for Police (Emergency) services is **8000-1115**. Operators are likely to only speak Bambara and/or French.

The National Police has responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order in urban areas and supports the armed forces in internal military operations. The National Gendarmerie has responsibility in rural areas, including a specialized border security unit. The National Guard and the Malian Armed Forces occasionally perform law enforcement duties in areas where police and gendarmes were absent. The National Police reports to the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection and the Ministry of Defense. The Malian Armed Forces, the National Gendarmerie, and the National Guard fall administratively under the Ministry of Defense. Operational control of the National Guard and National Gendarmerie is shared between the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection. The country's intelligence service has authority to investigate any case and temporarily detain persons at the discretion of its director general, who reports directly to the president. Civilian authorities did not always maintain effective control over civilian and military security forces. There were reports members of the security forces committed numerous abuses.

Police Response

Although willing to assist and provide service, police receive poor training and pay and lack resources to combat crime effectively. Police and emergency responders have requested money in return for providing what U.S. nationals view as routine police services. Legitimate police security checks are frequent, usually composed of two or more police officers, and located at main intersections or near bridges. Calls to police stations for urgent assistance have often generated responses that no officers are available or that there is no gasoline for response vehicles. If the police do respond, many lack investigative skills to solve the most basic crimes or to identify and arrest suspects.

The Malian government considers the reform of Mali's security sector a key policy priority and has initiated - with support from the international community - significant efforts to reform and rebuild Mali's security forces. Support from the international community focuses on improving Police, Gendarme, and National Guard performance, capability, and institutional capacity. This support ranges from equipment provisions to national security strategic planning and crisis response development.

Travelers with Special Considerations

For [specific traveler concerns](#) in Mali, review the local laws and circumstances on the Department of State's Country Information Page.

- [Women Travelers](#)
- [LGB Travelers](#)
- [Travelers with Disabilities](#)
- [Student Travelers](#)
- [Faith-Based Travelers](#)

Rule of Law, Arbitrary Detention, Official Harassment, Corruption, & Transparency

The U.S. Department of State has not included a Risk of Wrongful Detention “D” Indicator on the Travel Advisory for Mali.

Mali’s justice system suffers from a lack of resources, personnel, and professionalism, as well as a preponderance of systemic corruption. Corruption in all sectors of the administration is widespread. Authorities do not hold police accountable for corruption. Officials, police, and gendarmes frequently extort bribes. Pre-trial detention rates are high, prisons are overcrowded, and impunity is rampant. Numerous groups active in Mali have been accused of arbitrarily detaining individuals – including the country’s security forces, signatory armed groups, and terrorist organizations.

Cybersecurity

Most cyber incidents that take place in Mali are financial crimes and were likely perpetrated by criminal actors both inside and outside the country. There is limited capacity to counteract low-level cyber criminality.

Import/Export Restrictions

Given the complexity of Mali’s social and economic customs, U.S. organizations are strongly encouraged to establish local contacts. Rampant corruption, onerous bureaucracy, and several years of political instability mitigate the beneficial effects of laws and procedures encouraging investment in Mali.

In practice, it is difficult and time consuming to conduct business without paying bribes in Mali. This can leave U.S. companies at a disadvantage, as they must comply with the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. Enforcement of the law in Mali is irregular and inefficient. It is crucial that businesses understand that bribery is common and that they prepare themselves to appropriately address and deflect bribery attempts.

A country-specific listing of items/goods prohibited from being exported to the country or that are otherwise restricted is available from the U.S. International Trade Agency [website](#).

Additional resources and reports can be found in the [OSAC Traveler Toolkit](#).