



JAMA'AT NUSRAT AL-ISLAM WAL-MUSLIMIN (JNIM)

PROFILE

JNIM is a Salafi-Jihadist group based in Mali, with operations extending into Burkina Faso and parts of Niger, and growing influence in northern Benin, Ghana, Ivory Coast, and Togo. Formed in 2017 as a coalition of jihadist factions in the Sahel, it positions itself as a defender against foreign intervention and an alternative to the region's governments, which it denounces as corrupt, pro-Western “puppet regimes.” While its constituent factions have specific local agendas, they are unified by a shared Salafi-Jihadist ideology and a commitment to expelling Western influence from West Africa. Since France's military withdrawal from the region in 2022, JNIM has intensified its activities, exploiting the security vacuum to expand its influence and solidify control over strategic areas. As of late 2025, the group is on the brink of toppling the Malian junta.

OPERATIONAL DYNAMICS

- **Financing:** Taxation of locals; extortion of transit routes under their control; artisanal gold mining; livestock theft; weapons smuggling; kidnappings-for-ransom; reportedly facilitates drug/human trafficking
- **Recruitment Tactics:** Exploits economic hardships and social tensions; employs “hearts and minds” approach, looking to position itself as a legitimate government alternative; reportedly uses proceeds from criminal activities to incentivize locals to join
- **Terror Tactics/ Weaponry:** Executes hit-and-run attacks; kidnaps government personnel and civilians; carries out mass-casualty attacks on civilian targets; besieges towns and controls major roads; employs SVBIEDs, IEDs, RPGs, small arms, and heavy machine guns
- **Control Tactics:** Functions as a parallel governance structure, offering basic services; controls NGO activities to gatekeep access to essential resources; imposes social regulations (e.g., dress codes, gender segregation) based on its strict interpretation of Islamic law; economic warfare strategy, including a fuel blockade which has been effective

GOALS/ TARGETS

1. Establish a Salafi-Islamist state in West Africa governed by Sharia law
2. Eradicate Western influence (initially focused on French military, now targeting broader Western presence since France's 2022 withdrawal)

Targets: State security forces, UN peacekeepers, government personnel and infrastructure, civilians, tourists, rival militant groups (e.g. ISSP & ISWAP)

STRUCTURE

Size: ~6,000+ fighters (estimates vary)

Structure: Coalition of four key groups (Ansar al-Dine, Macina Liberation Front, al-Mourabitoun, and a faction of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb); operates in three tiers: (1) central leadership, (2) regional commanders, (3) semi-autonomous local commanders

Leaders: Iyad ag Ghali (Emir), Amadou Kouffa (Senior Leader), Qutaybah Abu al-Numan al-Shanqiti (Sharia Judge)

Allies: Pledged allegiance to both al-Qaeda and the Taliban in 2017; past operational coordination with Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) until 2019

THREAT ANALYSIS

JNIM is one of the most notorious and violent armed groups in the Sahel, responsible for thousands of deaths in the past two years alone. Its emphasis on representing diverse communities has helped it extend influence across ethnically and geographically varied areas. Though its factions may not always operate in unison, this fragmentation does not lessen their overall impact. As JNIM advances toward central Mali and the capital, Bamako, and targets state institutions and security forces, it poses a serious threat to governance, weakening the state's ability to maintain control and deliver services. This will likely worsen the humanitarian crisis, displace more people, and deprive millions of essential resources, further destabilizing the region. JNIM is officially considered a terrorist group by the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Australia.

RECENT & NOTABLE ATTACKS

- October 2025: JNIM conducts its first-ever attack in Nigeria (in Kwara State) and continues its fuel blockade in Mali, where the government in Bamako is threatened by the jihadists' encirclement strategy.
- Summer 2025: JNIM launches coordinated attacks across western and central Mali, shifting to a strategy of economic warfare and demonstrating more sophisticated politico-military capabilities.
- May 2025: JNIM launched a large-scale assault in a military base in Djibo, Burkina Faso, overrunning the area and destroying infrastructure.
- September 2024: JNIM carried out two coordinated attacks in Bamako, Mali, targeting a military training center and an airbase in an effort to undermine the legitimacy of Mali's military junta. Over 70 people, including both military personnel and civilians, were killed, while more than 200 others were injured. The attack also caused extensive damage to infrastructure and disrupted air travel.
- August 2024: JNIM militants ambushed soldiers and civilians in Barsalogo, Burkina Faso. Riding motorcycles, they opened fire on unarmed villagers, who had been instructed by the military to dig a trench network to defend the town from jihadists. This massacre, the deadliest in the country's history, claimed the lives of up to 600 people and left hundreds more wounded.
- July 2024: In a joint operation with Tuareg rebels, JNIM ambushed a Wagner Group convoy in Tinzawaten, near Mali's border with Algeria, aiming to disrupt Russian mercenary activities in the region. Using improvised explosive devices and vehicles mounted with weapons, they killed approximately 50 Wagner personnel and dozens of Malian soldiers.
- June 2024: JNIM gunmen launched a deadly assault on a military base in Mansila, Burkina Faso, killing over 100 soldiers and leaving many others missing. The attack led to significant military losses and forced hundreds of civilians to flee, worsening the already severe displacement crisis.
- May 2024: JNIM attacked a displaced persons camp in Goubéré, northern Burkina Faso, killing at least 80 people, including 72 civilians and 8 members of the Volunteers for the Defense of the Homeland, a civilian defense group working alongside the military to combat jihadist violence.
- January 2024: JNIM fighters, armed with assault rifles and heavy machine guns, attacked the Dogon villages of Ogotia and Ouémbe in central Mali. Over 30 residents were killed, more than 350 homes destroyed, and approximately 2,000 people displaced. These villages were specifically targeted due to the presence of local militias allied with the Malian government in the fight against extremist groups.
- September 2023: JNIM launched several high-profile attacks as part of a broader offensive against Malian military and Wagner Group operations in northern Mali. The most significant incident occurred when militants fired three rockets at a riverboat near Abakoira, killing more than 49 civilians.
- April 2023: JNIM executed a complex attack near a military base in Sevare, Mali, where both Malian forces and Wagner Group mercenaries were stationed. Militants detonated vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices near the camp, killing 10 civilians and injuring 61 others. The attack also impacted areas close to a UN peacekeeping mission (MINUSMA) base.

***THIS IS NOT A COMPREHENSIVE LIST**