

## Niger Country Report 2024 By Brooklyn Quallen

Niger remains one of the poorest countries in the world. Poverty has led to internal insecurity, including armed banditry. Jihadists gained a foothold by providing some anti-bandit protection. But Fulani jihadist terrorism against the Djerma has included numerous genocidal massacres.

Since obtaining independence from France in 1960, Niger has had five coups d'état and four military juntas. Niger's seventh constitution in 2010 established a multiparty system. President Mohamed Bazoum of the Nigerien Party for Democracy and Socialism was deposed by another [military coup](#) on [July 23, 2023](#).

The military junta alleges that Bazoum committed "[high treason](#)." It has [detained him in the presidential palace](#). The junta shut down parliament and restricted civil liberties. General Abdourahamane Tchian, who led the coup, says Niger will return to democracy in [three years](#). [Military regimes never give up power except by military coup or popular uprisings.]

The main jihadist organization in Niger is the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), a branch of ISIS that dominates the Tillabéri region in the west. Its Islamist ideology does not attract rural villagers, but the ISGS provides some protection from bandits. However, ISGS's use of [zakat](#), a forced taxation practice, causes resentment in Nigerien villagers against ISGS forces. Attempts to collect [zakat](#) is the justification ISGS always gives for its massacres of civilian villages.

On [January 2, 2021](#), at least 100 civilians were killed in attacks on two villages. On [March 15, 2021](#), 58 were killed. On [March 21](#), the deadliest attack on civilians in Niger's history claimed the lives of 137 citizens. Since 2021, jihadist attacks have occurred almost monthly in the south and west. They have killed hundreds of civilians and Nigerien troops.

ISGS recruits its fighters from close to the Malian border, so [they mostly come from the Fulani ethnic group](#) that lives there. The Djerma occupy the Tillabéri region, where they have a long history of conflicts with the Fulani over resources and land. ISGS has conducted many ethnic massacres against Djerma civilians. Among Djerma, there is a [perception](#) that all Fulani are terrorists. In retaliation, Djerma have organized ethnic militias that target Fulani.

Niger's responses to both the terrorist attacks and the ethnic tensions that underpin them have been ineffective. The state does not have the capacity to maintain control of the Tillabéri region, so ISGS has been able to grow almost unchecked. Where counterterrorism operations have taken place, the Nigerien military has been accused of grave [human rights abuses](#), including extrajudicial killings of Djerma civilians. Efforts to promote multi-ethnic harmony have been ineffective.

The 2023 coup has destabilized the security situation even further. On [August 16, 2023](#), insurgents attacked the Nigerien army in the Tillabéri region, killing 17 soldiers and wounding 24.

The Bazoum government invited French, US, and German forces to help fight terrorism. [The military junta has now forced US](#), French, and German soldiers to leave Niger. The resulting [security vacuum](#) has been filled by Russian mercenaries.

Due to the genocidal massacres of the Djerma by Fulani jihadists, Genocide Watch recognizes Niger as being at **Stage 6: Polarization** and **Stage 8: Persecution**.

### Genocide Watch recommends:

- The Nigerien junta must immediately release President Bazoum and restore democracy and constitutional order.
- With AU and international assistance, Niger must reestablish its control in its Tillabéri region.
- Niger should expel Russian mercenaries and allow NATO to reestablish its anti-terrorist base in Agadez.
- Niger must stop banditry and ISGS forced taxation. Niger's army needs help to defeat ISGS and Fulani jihadism.
- Niger must implement initiatives to promote ethnic cooperation, economic development, and the rule of law.