

Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM)



OVERVIEW

AS OF MAY 2026

Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wal-Muslimin (JNIM) is a Salafi violent extremist organization that aligns itself with al-Qa'ida's global violent extremist ideology and exploits local divisions and grievances to grow its support in West Africa. It formed in March 2017, when four Mali-based extremist groups—Ansar al-Din, al-Murabitun, the Macina Liberation Front (MLF), and the Sahara Emirate subgroup of al-Qa'ida in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)—announced that they had merged, formalizing cooperation among them. The leader of JNIM, Iyad ag Ghali, pledged the group's allegiance to the amir of AQIM, to the amir of al-Qa'ida, and to the leader of the Taliban.

JNIM seeks to build a Salafi-Islamist state in West Africa and to expel Western influences from the region. Ghali has stated that JNIM's strategy is to expand its presence across West Africa and train militants to fight against the group's enemies while appeasing local communities by giving them material resources and signing local agreements.

JNIM exploits a lack of economic opportunities as well as ethnic and social divisions among the populace in northern and central Mali and neighboring regions to facilitate recruitment and build its influence. It funds itself by ransoming captives, taxing locals, smuggling weapons, and extorting human and drug traffickers.

Operating Area

Primarily based in Mali and Burkina Faso; active across much of West Africa, including parts of Niger, Nigeria, and coastal West Africa

Terrorist Group Designation

The US State Department designated JNIM as a foreign terrorist organization in 2018. In 2013 the US designated Ghali as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist.

Members

At least 6,000

Tactics And Targets

JNIM regularly attacks local security forces and their foreign military partners in West Africa as well as local and foreign civilians in the region. It exploits a lack of economic opportunities as well as ethnic and social divisions among the populace in northern and central Mali and neighboring regions to facilitate recruitment and build its influence. It funds itself by ransoming captives, taxing locals, smuggling weapons, and extorting human and drug traffickers. JNIM was the world's second deadliest terror group in 2025, accounting for more than 1,200 deaths across four countries, according to the Institute for Economics and Peace.



Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM) *(continued)*

OVERVIEW *(continued)*

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KEY LEADERS



Iyad ag Ghali

Amir; has led the group since its formation



Amadou Kouffa

A deputy to Ghali; founding member of JNIM; founder and amir of MLF



Jafar Dicko

JNIM deputy leader in Burkina Faso

NOTABLE ATTACKS

25 April 2026

Malian military facilities throughout Mali

JNIM and the Front for the Liberation of Azawad, a Tuareg separatist group, conduct coordinated attacks across Mali. They capture Kidal and target military locations in and around Bamako and several other cities in northern and central Mali.

September-November 2025

Malian fuel import blockade

JNIM persistently attacks Malian fuel import convoys, causing widespread fuel shortages in Bamako and throughout the country.



Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM) *(continued)*

NOTABLE ATTACKS *(continued)*

26 September 2025

Emirati hostage, Bamako, Mali

JNIM kidnaps a member of the UAE royal family near Bamako. It later releases him for a ransom.

11 May 2025

Djibo city, Burkina Faso

JNIM operatives seize control of the regional capital in northern Burkina Faso for approximately 9 hours and kill dozens of soldiers and civilians.

17 September 2024

Military facilities, Bamako, Mali

JNIM operatives attack several military facilities in and around the city and at Mobido Keita International Airport.

24 August 2024

Barsalogho town, Sangatenga province, Mali

Dozens of JNIM operatives kill at least 130 civilians and wound 200 more in Barsalogho town, Sanmatenga province.

