

ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report analyses the humanitarian consequences of a marked escalation in violence against civilians in Niger's western regions in 2025, reflected in both an increase in the number of incidents and a sharp rise in fatalities in events coded as violence against civilians. Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) recorded approximately 712 fatalities in such events in 2025, compared to 312 in 2023 and 333 in 2024, an increase of over 120% from 2023 (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026). This escalation has been particularly pronounced in the western regions of Tillabéri and Tahoua – particularly in Tillabéri's rural border departments of Bankilaré, Gothèye, Say, Téra, and Torodi – bordering Mali and Burkina Faso, with increasing spillover into parts of Dosso.

This report examines how increasing violence against civilians has disrupted service provision and civilian mobility, contributing to multisector humanitarian impacts. The analysis addresses the implications for civilian protection and displacement dynamics, as well as for food security, education, health needs, and humanitarian access in conflict-affected areas.

This analysis was prompted by a convergence of trends observed in 2025 that distinguished the current situation from previous years: quantitative increases in civilian harm and documented protection incidents reported by humanitarian responders alongside the simultaneous contraction of the humanitarian operational presence amid stricter enforcement of regulatory compliance measures. In mid-November 2025, only around 135 organisations remained authorised to operate nationally, compared to more than 300 international and over 3,000 national NGOs previously registered (RFI 17/11/2025). While these regulatory measures apply nationwide, their operational impact appears particularly acute in insecure western regions, where the intensity of violence is highest, suggesting a geographic overlap between areas experiencing escalating civilian harm and those facing a reduced humanitarian presence.

Taken together, high sustained levels of violence and reduced operational presence may be contributing to the narrowing of the protection space in western Niger, including reduced monitoring capacity, fewer community-based protection activities, and more limited referral pathways for affected populations. This assessment is based on reported operational disruptions and incident trends throughout 2025.

Methodology

This analysis draws on secondary data from humanitarian responders (including ACLED event datasets), media outlets, and research institutions published between January 2023 and December 2025. Developments during 2025 are the primary analytical focus, as this year marked a significant escalation in both the frequency of violence against civilians and aggregate fatalities compared to 2023 and 2024.

ACAPS used ACLED data to assess the number of events coded as violence against civilians, total fatalities recorded in those events, and changes to average fatalities per event in order to identify shifts in intensity and trends over time. This was followed by a comparative analysis with 2023 and 2024 to contextualise developments observed in 2025 and assess whether patterns represented continuation or escalation. Then, a review of qualitative reporting from humanitarian responders, protection monitoring mechanisms, media sources, and research institutions helped to interpret conflict drivers, armed group dynamics, service disruption, displacement patterns, and humanitarian access constraints. ACAPS triangulated both quantitative and qualitative evidence across multiple sources to enhance consistency and reliability.

Given access constraints and insecurity in parts of western Niger, reporting may be affected by undercounting and geographic bias, particularly in remote rural border areas. Where possible, trends have been cross-checked across datasets to mitigate these limitations.

Limitations and information gaps

Access to many parts of western Niger remains severely constrained as a result of insecurity, administrative restrictions, and a limited humanitarian presence. While these constraints are largely longstanding in conflict-affected border areas, reporting limitations appear to have intensified in some locations in 2025 amid rising violence and reduced operational presence. Most available reports rely on evidence from a limited number of accessible sites, primarily urban centres and departmental capitals, which may not fully represent conditions in more remote or insecure rural areas. These access challenges restrict regular data collection and create significant information gaps, particularly regarding protection incidents and associated risks, displacement dynamics, and education disruptions.

Information gaps are especially acute in northern Tillabéri and western Tahoua, where few assessments have been conducted since early 2024. Reporting coverage in Dosso appears relatively stronger, although still uneven in rural areas. ACLED data on civilian targeting likely undercounts incidents in these regions, as restricted communications and limited humanitarian access hinder systematic reporting from remote localities. Although underreporting may affect absolute fatality counts, year-on-year comparisons are based on consistent coding categories; as such, the increase observed in 2025 is likely conservative. Up-to-date data on nutrition, health service functionality, and market access is also scarce, with sectoral information gaps most pronounced in conflict-affected western departments, constraining a full understanding of needs and response coverage.

Estimates on the size and composition of non-state armed groups (NSAGs), recruitment practices, and local governance dynamics also remain difficult to verify, limiting precise assessment of territorial control, governance reach, and patterns of civilian compliance or coercion. These limitations mean that findings should be interpreted as indicative instead of exhaustive, particularly in the most remote and insecure areas of northern Tillabéri and western Tahoua.

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KEY MESSAGES

- Violence against civilians in western Niger escalated in 2025, with fatalities in events coded as violence against civilians increasing by over 120% compared to 2023, making Tillabéri the deadliest region in the Central Sahel in 2025 in terms of fatalities recorded in such events, with civilian harm concentrated along key border corridors linking Téra and Torodi to northern Mali and areas bordering Burkina Faso (ACLED 13/01/2026; Protection Cluster 17/12/2025; CIVIC 24/01/2024).
- Civilians face recurrent killings, abductions, and village burnings by Islamic State Sahel Province (ISSP) and Jama'at Nasr Al Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), which remain the primary drivers of civilian fatalities, as well as casualties resulting from state military operations, driving large-scale displacement – with over 330,000 people displaced across Tillabéri's conflict-affected departments – and heightened protection risks in the rural communes of Dosso, Tahoua, and Tillabéri (EGMONT 17/04/2025; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025; ADF 05/08/2025).
- The suspension or dissolution of national and international NGOs has reduced the number of authorised organisations to around 135 nationwide, compared to more than 300 international and over 3,000 national NGOs previously registered, reducing the humanitarian presence and protection capacity in areas most affected by violence and narrowing space for assistance, protection monitoring, and community-based protection mechanisms (La Nouvelle Tribune 11/01/2026; Air Info 10/01/2026).
- Conflict-related displacement and restricted access to land and markets are undermining rural livelihoods in western regions, with recurrent climate shocks acting as aggravating factors, contributing to persistent food insecurity and elevated acute malnutrition (FEWS NET 03/02/2026; IPC 08/01/2026).
- Over the coming months, continued NSAG activity, constrained state protection, and a reduced humanitarian footprint are likely to sustain high levels of civilian harm and unmet humanitarian needs, with protection and food security facing the greatest risk of sustained deterioration in remote rural areas of western Niger.

CRISIS OVERVIEW

In 2025, the Tillabéri region became the deadliest region in the Central Sahel in terms of total conflict-related fatalities documented across all ACLED event types, recording over 1,200 conflict-related deaths in 2025. This comparison is based on consistent ACLED coding categories across Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger. Events coded as violence against civilians accounted for more than half of recorded fatalities in the region, underscoring that civilian harm has become a central feature of the crisis instead of a peripheral impact. Civilians in rural border departments face recurrent attacks, displacement, and restricted movement, while the humanitarian presence and protection capacity are contracting in areas most affected by violence. Compared to pre-2020 patterns, when large-scale civilian targeting was less frequent in Tillabéri, the scale and regularity of attacks on civilians have increased markedly. Within Niger, civilian targeting has been largely concentrated in the western border departments of Tillabéri, particularly Bankilaré, Gothèye, Say, Téra, and Torodi, with more incidents in 2025 than 2023–2024 (ACLED 13/01/2026; Protection Cluster 17/12/2025; CIVIC 24/01/2024).

Since early 2025, civilians across western Niger have continued to face widespread NSAG attacks – primarily by ISSP and JNIM – in a context shaped by long-standing cross-border spillover of armed group activity from Mali and Burkina Faso (ICG 28/05/2021; ADF 05/08/2025; HRW 10/09/2025). These dynamics involve the same armed groups operating across porous borders, extending violence into Niger's rural border areas. Violence remains concentrated in the region of Tillabéri, with incidents increasingly reported in the adjacent rural and peri-rural areas of Dosso and parts of Tahoua. ACLED event-type analysis indicates that since around 2021, armed group tactics in Tillabéri have progressively shifted from primarily targeting state forces to more frequent direct targeting of civilians, including abductions, unlawful killings, intimidation, and the burning and looting of villages, driving large-scale displacement and worsening humanitarian needs (Protection Cluster 11/07/2025; ACLED accessed 08/01/2026). In 2025, ACLED analysis suggested that ISSP had become the main driver of total recorded fatalities in Tillabéri, followed by state forces and JNIM, reflecting both NSAG violence and security force operations in contested areas as opposed to primarily fighting between NSAGs (ACLED 13/01/2026; Protection Cluster 17/12/2025).

While reported attack patterns have varied over time, levels of civilian harm have remained high since 2023. ACLED recorded approximately 712 fatalities in events coded as violence against civilians in 2025, compared with around 312 in 2023 and 333 in 2024, an increase of over 120% from 2023 (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026). Protection monitoring suggests that this is not only a continuation of long-standing insecurity but a marked escalation in western Niger (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025). In Tillabéri, the Protection Cluster reports a sharp rise in key incident types between 2024–2025, including an increase in homicides, improvised explosive device attacks, and assaults on key routes such as Torodi–Makalondi and Ouro Gueladjo–Tamou, which have disrupted civilian movement and service access. This intensification comes on top of a longer-term shift documented by earlier ACLED-based analysis, which found that armed groups in Tillabéri have progressively redirected violence from state forces toward civilians since 2021 (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025; CIVIC 24/01/2024).

Violence against civilians has been attributed to both NSAG activity and state military operations. Human Rights Watch documented at least 127 summary executions carried out by ISSP between March–June 2025, including killings in several villages across the Tillabéri region, representing a significant share of documented civilian killings during that period (HRW 10/09/2025). JNIM has been linked to patterns of intimidation, coercion, and attacks along roads and border corridors, exposing civilians to indirect harm through ambushes and explosive devices (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026; Protection Cluster 11/07/2025). State operations have also resulted in civilian casualties, including a reported airstrike on a weekly market in Kourfeye, Tillabéri, on 22 September that killed around 40 civilians; at the time of writing, no publicly available findings from an official investigation had been reported (RFI 25/09/2025).

Displacement levels remain high as a result of continued insecurity. By 31 December 2025, Niger was hosting around 943,000 forcibly displaced people, including nearly 459,600 IDPs, around 436,000 refugees and asylum seekers, and nearly 47,400 other people of concern (UNHCR accessed 09/03/2026). Tillabéri continues to host the largest share of IDPs nationally, followed by Tahoua (UNHCR accessed 09/03/2026; Protection Cluster 11/07/2025).

Essential services remain under severe strain. By December 2025, approximately 779 schools had been reported closed nationwide as a result of insecurity, affecting more than 66,000 children and 1,700 teachers, with a disproportionate share of closures located in conflict-affected western regions (UNICEF 08/12/2025). Health

services across western Niger continue to face staff shortages, supply disruptions, and access constraints amid insecurity and disease outbreaks (UNICEF 08/12/2025; UNFPA 24/09/2025).

These protection concerns are unfolding as humanitarian capacity in western Niger is being reduced. In early 2025, the Government of Niger ordered the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to cease operations, ending 35 years of continuous assistance to more than two million people in regions including Tillabéri and Tahoua, including protection monitoring, detention visits, and health and WASH support activities (ICRC 05/06/2025). In November–December 2025, the Ministry of Interior then suspended the operations of a large number of national and international NGOs and associations, allowing only about 140 organisations out of more than 300 international NGOs and several thousand national associations to continue working pending new compliance requirements. These organisations include both humanitarian and development responders. On 7 January 2026, Nigerien authorities announced the dissolution of several hundred NGOs and development associations for allegedly failing to meet legal requirements on financial transparency. While the exact breakdown by type of organisation is still unclear, the decision raises concerns about the continuity of aid operations in western regions (La Nouvelle Tribune 11/01/2026; Air Info 10/01/2026).

DRIVERS AND AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Cross-border spillover

Armed violence in western Niger has developed within a wider conflict system spanning Mali and Burkina Faso, characterised by shared armed groups, cross-border logistical routes, recruitment networks, and overlapping territorial influence, involving the same NSAGs – primarily ISSP and JNIM – operating across porous borders. Cross-border spillover has shaped insecurity in Tillabéri since at least 2014, with a marked intensification in the frequency and lethality of incidents after 2021, further escalation in 2025, and the gradual expansion into Tahoua and, more recently, rural communes of Dosso (EGMONT 17/04/2025; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025; ADF 05/08/2025; SIPRI 18/05/2020). This spillover reflects the expansion of NSAG operations from neighbouring conflict-affected regions into Niger’s rural border areas, as opposed to the emergence of a fully distinct conflict dynamic, although local factors increasingly shape patterns of violence.

ISSP and JNIM have expanded their presence into western Niger’s border communes by instrumentalising local grievances, including disputes over land and pasture, perceptions of marginalisation, weak governance structures, and tensions linked to pastoral mobility, exploiting porous frontiers and limited state protection in rural areas, which primarily reflects capacity and deployment constraints instead of a complete withdrawal of services, and establishing control through coercive practices, including taxation, movement restrictions, and intimidation of civilians (CIVIC 24/01/2024; IEMED 01/2021; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025). In these rural border areas, limited and intermittent state presence primarily affects civilian protection, not basic service provision, leaving communities exposed to NSAG coercion, reprisals, and movement restrictions. The progressive expansion of ISSP and JNIM from conflict-affected regions in Mali and Burkina Faso into these border departments has coincided with Tillabéri recording the highest number of total conflict-related fatalities across all ACLED event types among regions in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger in 2025, based on comparable coding categories and timeframes. This dynamic has contributed to, instead of being solely driven by, the escalation of violence against civilians in western Niger in 2025 (ACLED 13/01/2026; CIVIC 24/01/2024).

Post-coup security shifts and partnership changes

Several analyses indicate that Niger’s July 2023 coup contributed to security priority and operational capacity shifts, including reorientation of deployments, consolidation of internal control, adjustments in border security posture, and reduced cooperation with Western military partners in areas such as intelligence sharing, air surveillance, training, and logistical support (ADF 05/08/2025; IPIS 03/12/2024; The Soufan Center 05/06/2025).

Available reporting, primarily expert assessments and incident trend analysis, suggests that these changes constrained the State’s ability to project a sustained presence in remote western communes, affecting mobility, logistics, and sustained rural patrol capacity (ADF 05/08/2025; IPIS 03/12/2024; The Soufan Center 05/06/2025). These constraints appear to have persisted into 2025, with no clear evidence of recovery in territorial reach in the most remote border departments. The withdrawal of French and US forces and the arrival of Russian military advisers through the Africa Corps – a security structure providing military assistance in several Sahelian countries – within the broader consolidation of the Alliance of Sahel States have reconfigured Niger’s external security partnerships. Available reporting does not yet demonstrate the clear effects of this reconfiguration on the scale or geographic distribution of violence, but it has altered the broader security environment in which state forces and NSAGs operate, including patterns of deployment, deterrence, and engagement in rural areas (ASA 19/08/2025; Critical Threats 26/06/2025; VOA 05/05/2024). These changes appear to have reduced the effective reach of state forces in some remote western communes. Analyses suggest that changes in deterrence posture and force mobility may have facilitated renewed NSAG activity in certain areas, although this is but one contributing factor among others, including NSAG strategy, cross-border dynamics, and local governance conditions (Africa Center for Strategic Studies 07/04/2025; Vision of Humanity 15/04/2025; SCR 30/07/2025; ADF 28/10/2025).

Distinct NSAG governance and tactical approaches

NSAGs operating in western Niger employ partially overlapping but distinct approaches to territorial control, civilian governance, and violence, increasing civilian exposure through both direct attacks and the coercive regulation of daily life. ISSP activity in particular has been associated with a high proportion of civilian-targeting incidents in Tillabéri in 2025, including attacks on villages, markets, and transport corridors, and the use of tactics such as improvised explosive devices and indirect fire, patterns that have intensified compared to pre-2023 reporting (ACLED 04/09/2025; Critical Threats 26/06/2025; HRW 10/09/2025). In areas under its influence – particularly in rural communes of Gothèye, Téra, and Torodi – ISSP imposes behavioural regulations, extracts taxes, regulates markets, and conducts dawa (religious outreach and indoctrination activities used to consolidate ideological control and compliance) (ACLED 04/09/2025; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025).

JNIM, while also perpetrating violence against civilians and imposing restrictive social norms in some areas, has combined coercion with selective engagement with key stakeholders, including community leaders and economic intermediaries, to secure influence and mobility. This approach can reduce immediate large-scale violence in certain localities while embedding longer-term control through taxation, mediation roles, and integration into smuggling routes and cross-border trade networks, particularly in southern and southwestern areas bordering Benin (BBC 07/07/2025; Soufan Center 05/06/2025; ACLED 27/03/2025 and 11/12/2025). These approaches expose civilians – particularly traders, pastoralists, displaced households, and populations living along key routes – to both direct violence and indirect harm through taxation, intimidation, road insecurity, and movement restrictions, contributing to sustained protection risks across western Niger.

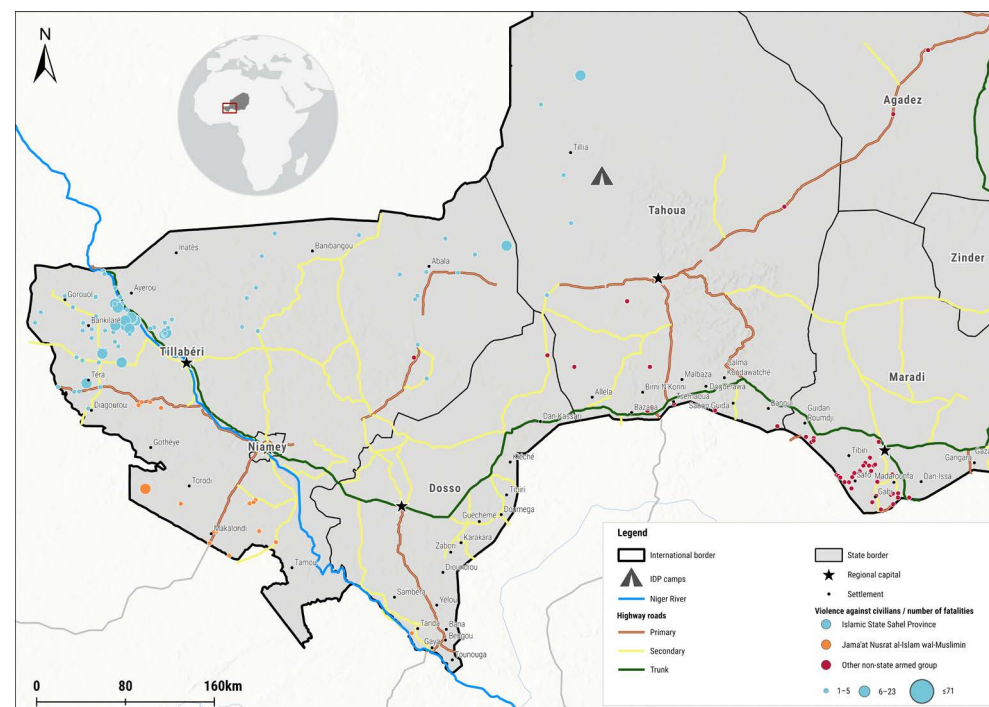
Low resilience and climate shocks

Chronic poverty limits basic service coverage, and dependence on rainfed agriculture and pastoralism reduces households' capacity to absorb and recover from shocks, particularly in western Niger's rural areas of Tillabéri and Tahoua (ISS 03/03/2026; UNFPA 24/09/2025). In this context, violence and displacement rapidly translate into deteriorations in food security, protection conditions, and access to health and education services, as households have few financial, livelihood, and

social buffers. These structural vulnerabilities do not drive the conflict itself but significantly amplify its humanitarian impacts, increasing the severity and duration of displacement, food insecurity, and protection risks once violence occurs (OCHA 11/07/2025).

Niger is highly exposed to recurrent climate hazards, including drought, floods, and erratic rainfall, which disproportionately affect agriculture and pastoral livelihoods, including in conflict-affected western regions (KAIPTC 2023; IRC 17/08/2023). In Tillabéri and parts of Tahoua, these hazards compound insecurity, particularly during seasonal lean periods and flood seasons, when households face simultaneous constraints on mobility, asset protection, and agricultural recovery (FAO 18/12/2025; OCHA 08/12/2025).

Map 1. Violence against civilians in western Niger in 2023

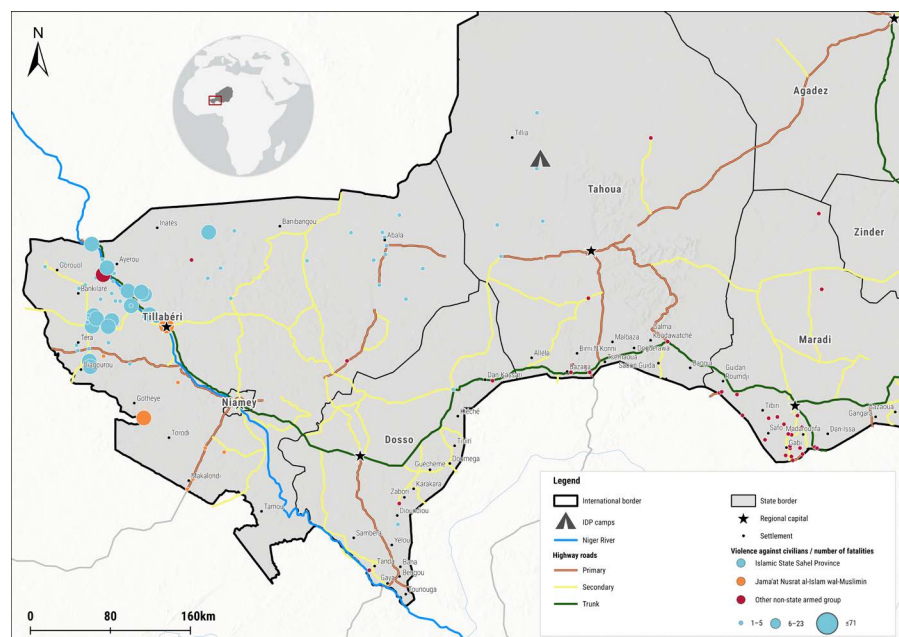


Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED accessed (08/01/2026)

Seasonal floods and irregular rainfall damage crops, housing, roads, and water infrastructure; disrupt planting cycles; and degrade soils. In pastoral areas, fodder shortages and degraded rangelands – aggravated by insecurity-related constraints on mobility – increase pressure on natural resources and can heighten local tensions over land and pasture access, although available reporting does not indicate that such tensions are a primary driver of the 2025 escalation (KAIPTC 2023; ACF 27/08/2025). In 2025, flooding affected tens of thousands of people and caused significant damage to agricultural land and productive assets, further weakening livelihoods already disrupted by conflict and displacement (FAO 18/12/2025; OCHA 08/12/2025; FEWS NET 29/08/2025).

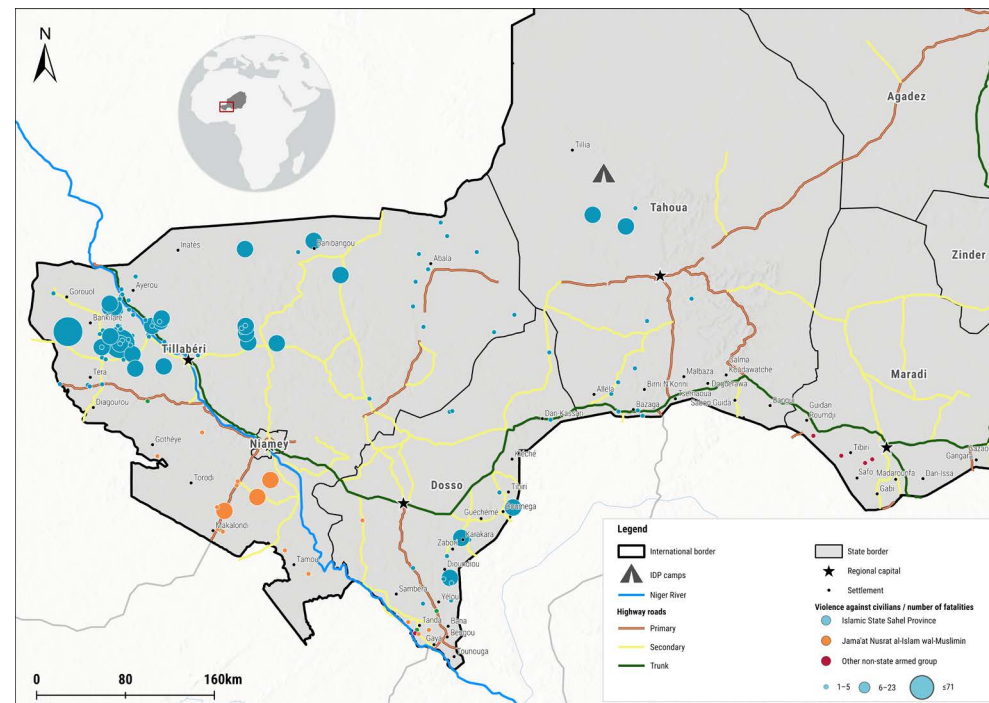
The overlap of conflict-related insecurity and recurrent climate shocks increases the risk of food insecurity and displacement in western Niger, particularly where insecurity limits preparedness, response, and recovery efforts. Instead of driving violence directly, climatic pressures intensify humanitarian needs and strain coping mechanisms in areas already affected by armed conflict, contributing to more severe and prolonged humanitarian conditions (OCHA 08/12/2025; GDA 02/08/2024).

Map 2. Violence against civilians in western Niger in 2024



Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED accessed (08/01/2026)

Map 3. Violence against civilians in western Niger in 2025



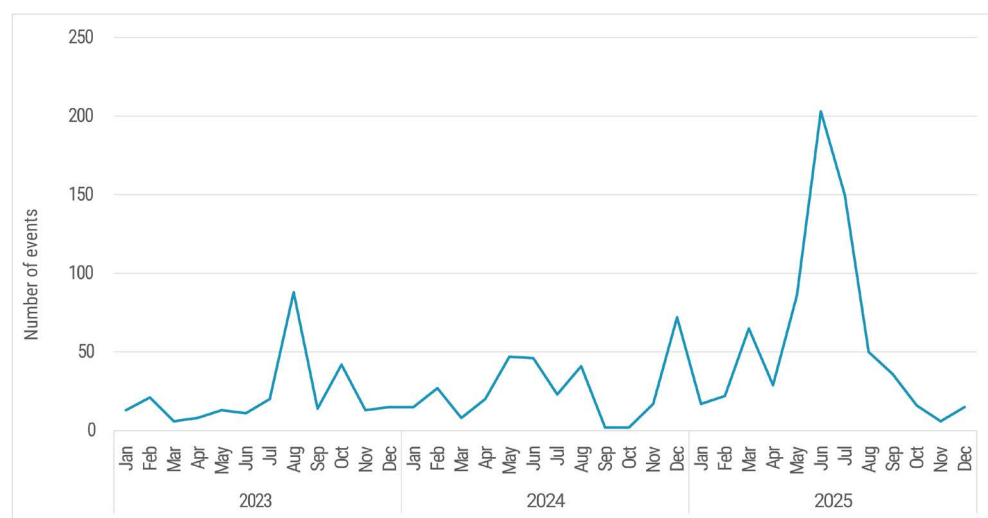
Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED accessed (08/01/2026)

HUMANITARIAN IMPACTS

Protection

Direct attacks on civilians continue to generate severe and cumulative protection consequences in western Niger, particularly in the conflict-affected border departments of Tillabéri. Beyond immediate fatalities, recurrent killings, abductions, forced recruitment, and destruction of villages have resulted in repeated displacement, family separation, movement restrictions, and loss of civilian infrastructure essential to livelihoods and service access (Protection Cluster 11/07/2025; CIVIC 24/01/2024). State military operations have also resulted in civilian harm. While reported incidents remain fewer than those attributed to NSAGs, airstrikes and security operations affecting civilian areas have contributed to fear and mistrust among communities in contested regions, reinforcing an overall environment of insecurity (RFI 25/09/2025; HRW 10/09/2025).

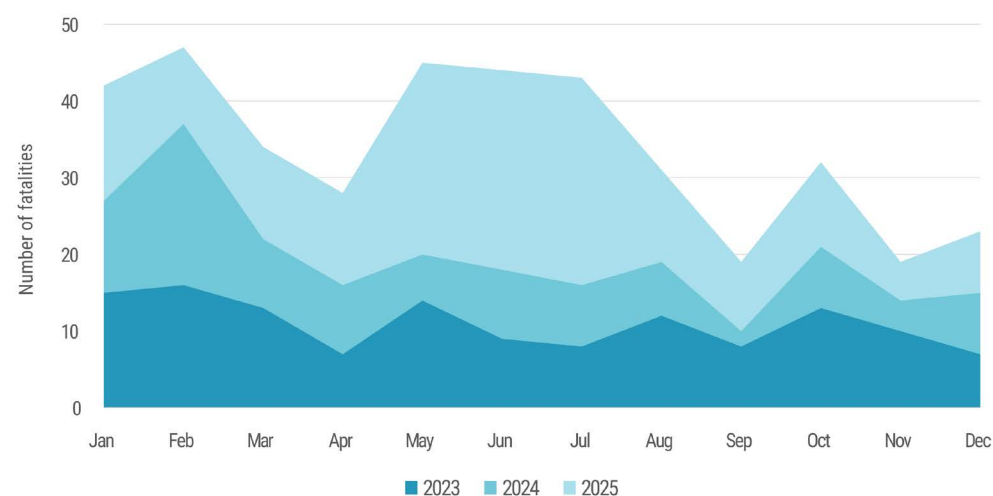
Figure 1. Reported violence against civilian events in Niger (monthly comparison, 2023–2025)



Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED accessed (08/01/2026)

ACLED data indicates that fatalities from events coded as violence against civilians reached 712 recorded civilian deaths in 2025, compared to approximately 312 in 2023 and around 333 in 2024 – an increase of more than 120% from 2023 – marking the highest reported level in at least three years (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026). The majority of these fatalities occurred in Tillabéri, which accounted for the largest share of nationally reported civilian-targeting events, with spillover into rural areas of Dosso and parts of Tahoua.

Figure 2. Civilian fatalities from violence against civilian events in Niger (monthly comparison, 2023–2025)



Source: ACAPS using data from ACLED accessed (08/01/2026)

Reports indicate that entire communities perceived as collaborating with the Nigerien army face heightened risk of targeted killings, abductions, and collective punishment in contested areas. Available reporting suggests that such targeting is framed primarily in political and security terms – linked to alleged cooperation with state forces – as opposed to explicitly ethnic mobilisation, although local identity dynamics may shape patterns of suspicion and retaliation in certain communes (HRW 10/09/2025).

Between January–December 2025, more than 650 protection incidents affecting around 1,300 individuals – including injured, abducted, or otherwise affected people – were documented in Tillabéri by protection monitoring responders. These figures derive from Protection Cluster monitoring systems and represent a dataset distinct from ACLED event coding, reflecting reported protection cases only, not recorded violent events (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025).

By December 2025, more than 330,000 people had been displaced in Tillabéri's Bankilaré, Gothèye, Say, Téra, and Torodi departments. This figure reflects cumulative displacement (not exclusively new) in 2025, underscoring the protracted nature of insecurity in these areas (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025). Protection responders report increasing instances of repeated or secondary displacement as communities flee successive waves of conflict, further undermining stability and access to services (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025).

Children living in areas affected by continued conflict face elevated risks of abduction, family separation, and recruitment by NSAGs, alongside other grave violations linked to insecurity and displacement, including restrictions on movement that limit access to education and basic services, where such remain operational (Protection Cluster 16/09/2025 and 17/12/2025; UNICEF 12/08/2025). While comprehensive trend data remains limited as a result of access constraints, protection responders indicate that recruitment risks remained persistent in 2025, particularly in rural border communes, where thousands of children require family tracing, reunification, or temporary care arrangements, reflecting the sustained separation risks associated with displacement (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025).

Gender-based violence is a major concern in conflict-affected areas, particularly for displaced and host-community women and girls. Protection responders report risks of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and child, early, and forced marriage linked to insecurity and displacement (Sliverman et al. 05/06/2023; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025; UNFPA 24/09/2025). While comprehensive incidence data is limited, service providers report that insecurity and displacement are restricting access to medical, legal, and psychosocial support, particularly in rural Tillabéri, where insecurity and the limited humanitarian presence constrain response capacity (UNFPA 24/09/2025).

Protection responders also report growing housing, land, and property concerns linked to the destruction of villages during armed attacks, loss of housing during displacement, and difficulties reclaiming land upon return. In both displacement sites and host communities, conflict-affected IDPs face increasing risk of eviction and insecure tenure. These eviction risks appear to stem from both conflict-related displacement pressures and broader urban planning and land administration measures implemented by state authorities, including eviction processes initiated at the request of private landowners or justified on grounds of public utility for urban development projects (Protection Cluster 17/12/2025).

Food security and livelihoods

Food insecurity is most severe among conflict-affected households in the agricultural and agropastoral zones of Tillabéri, northwest Tahoua, and parts of Dosso, where repeated displacement, restricted access to fields, and disrupted markets have eroded assets and left families dependent on markets despite low purchasing power. FEWS NET projects Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of food insecurity to persist in Tillabéri and northwest Tahoua, with some households in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), particularly among displaced and very poor households in conflict-affected communes (FEWS NET 27/02/2026). Conflict-related insecurity remains a key driver of food insecurity in western Niger, as violence against civilians, displacement, and road insecurity limit access to land, markets, and internal and cross-border food supply routes linking Niger with Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Nigeria (FEWS NET 13/11/2025). While the overall number of security incidents in 2025 increased nationally by around 18%, the rise was uneven: incidents rose by 23% in Tillabéri and by more than 200% in Dosso, indicating geographic expansion instead of uniform escalation (FEWS NET 27/02/2026). This expansion into Dosso and northwest Tahoua has exposed new livelihood zones to insecurity and contributed to higher civilian casualties and displacement pressures (FEWS NET 13/11/2025).

Repeated attacks, road insecurity, and population movements have forced households to abandon agricultural land, lose livestock, and suspend income-generating activities. Available reporting indicates successive localised production shortfalls in conflict-affected departments, particularly in Tillabéri, where cultivated areas have been reduced as a result of insecurity, contributing to increased dependence on markets (FEWS NET 13/11/2025, 16/01/2026, and 27/02/2026). In the

conflict-affected departments of Tillabéri, northwest Tahoua, and parts of Dosso, insecurity has also disrupted the functioning of and access to markets, hindering both internal and cross-border food product flows and constraining household purchasing power (FEWS NET 13/11/2025 and 03/02/2026). Climatic shocks – particularly floods – have further compounded these impacts by damaging crops and productive assets and contributing to market disruptions (FAO 04/06/2025; FEWS NET 29/08/2025).

At the national level, Cadre Harmonisé analysis projected that around 2.22 million people (8% of the analysed population) faced IPC 3 or above levels of food insecurity during the June–August 2025 lean season, including more than 115,000 people in IPC 4 (FAO 04/06/2025). National improvements compared to 2024 have been largely driven by favourable harvest conditions in non-conflict areas and do not reflect sustained improvements in western conflict-affected regions, where, by February 2026, both IPC 3 and IPC 4 outcomes still persisted (FEWS NET 27/02/2026). IPC 3 levels of food insecurity are expected to remain across much of Tillabéri and northwest Tahoua throughout 2026, with some households in IPC 4, particularly among displaced populations whose assets have been eroded over multiple years of insecurity (FEWS NET 03/02/2026 and 27/02/2026).

Conflict-related displacement, loss of livelihoods, and restricted access to food and essential services are also key drivers of acute malnutrition. Insecurity and repeated displacement limit household food consumption, dietary diversity, and access to health, nutrition, and WASH services, particularly in conflict-affected areas of Tillabéri and Tahoua (IPC 08/01/2026). Around 1.6 million children aged 6–59 months are projected to suffer acute malnutrition between August 2025 and July 2026, including approximately 410,000 cases of severe acute malnutrition, alongside an estimated 306,000 pregnant and lactating women with acute malnutrition (IPC 08/01/2026). Although national figures suggest a relative improvement compared with earlier years, IPC analysis highlights significant information gaps and indicates that malnutrition risks are likely to remain elevated or increase in conflict-affected and remote western areas, consistent with broader access and reporting constraints in these regions (IPC 08/01/2026).

Market access remains constrained and purchasing power has declined in conflict-affected departments, as insecurity reduces trade flows and income opportunities. In areas where agricultural activities have been prevented by insecurity, households are increasingly dependent on markets despite low purchasing power relative to food prices (FEWS NET 13/11/2025; WFP 26/07/2025). By August 2025, national cereal

prices had fallen back to more typical levels compared with August 2024, but prices in several insecure western areas – including parts of Tillabéri and Tahoua – remained elevated relative to the national average because of their remoteness from production zones and persistent insecurity (WFP 06/10/2025). While overall national cereal production in 2024 was estimated at around 16% above the five-year average, this aggregate masks significant localised shortfalls in conflict-affected western areas, including Tillabéri, where insecurity reduced cultivated areas and limited harvests (FAO 04/06/2025; FEWS NET 27/02/2026).

NSAGs further erode household resources through coercive taxation and extortion practices, including forced zakat collection, looting, and threats of violence – particularly associated with ISSP and JNIM in rural border communes – which reduce the assets and income that families can allocate to food (Protection Cluster 11/07/2025; HRW 10/09/2025). These pressures are compounded by reductions, suspensions, or scaling back of food and cash assistance in insecure areas. Available reporting indicates that assistance reductions are both funding-driven – with 2025 food assistance plans funded at roughly one-third of required levels – and access-driven, as insecurity restricts delivery and continuity in conflict-affected western departments, weakening the coping capacity of the most food-insecure households in affected regions (WFP 26/07/2025; FEWS NET 16/01/2026 and 27/02/2026).

Education

Prolonged school closures in conflict-affected areas of western Niger have left tens of thousands of children without access to education, increasing their exposure to protection risks, particularly child labour, the early and forced marriage of girls, and heightened vulnerability to NSAG recruitment or coercion (OCHA 11/07/2025; Protection Cluster 11/07/2025; UNICEF 12/08/2025). By December 2025, around 779 schools had been reported closed nationwide because of insecurity, affecting more than 66,000 children and around 1,700 teachers (UNICEF 08/12/2025). Tillabéri accounts for the largest concentration of closures nationally, followed by Tahoua, with western regions consistently representing a significant share of affected schools, although precise subnational breakdowns remain limited in publicly available reporting. Efforts to maintain learning in affected areas remain constrained by insecurity, forced displacement, and funding limitations, particularly in remote communities (Education Cluster 09/09/2025; UNICEF 12/08/2025).

Although comparable year-on-year data on school closures remains limited, prolonged closures since at least 2021 in Tillabéri's worst-affected communes indicate cumulative deterioration, as opposed to short-term disruption, as schools have remained closed across multiple academic cycles (OCHA 11/07/2025; UNICEF 12/08/2025). Prolonged disruption has eroded catch-up education prospects. Humanitarian reporting indicates that significant numbers of teachers have relocated from conflict-affected zones over the past several years, although precise figures are unavailable, reducing the system's capacity to absorb returning students.

Out-of-school children face heightened protection risks. While available evidence does not confirm a quantified increase in 2025 compared to previous years, protection responders have reported sustained and elevated risk levels in highly affected communes, including early and forced marriage and child recruitment by NSAGs, as a continuing concern in conflict-affected areas (Protection Cluster 11/07/2025; UNICEF 12/08/2025). Comprehensive incident data remains limited, however, as a result of access constraints.

Health and WASH

Conflict-related insecurity, staff displacement, and supply shortages continue to undermine health service delivery and availability in western Niger. Although nationwide facility functionality data remains incomplete, humanitarian reporting indicates that health service disruptions persisted in 2025 in conflict-affected communes of Tillabéri and Tahoua. Access to care is particularly limited in these regions, where attacks and threats against health workers, road insecurity, and movement restrictions disrupt the functioning of health facilities and referral pathways (UNICEF 12/08/2025; OCHA 11/07/2025; Insecurity Insight/SHCC 19/05/2025).

Health service functionality remains uneven, particularly in conflict-affected areas, where insecurity, medicine shortages, and damaged infrastructure continue to disrupt service delivery (Health Cluster 21/01/2025; UNICEF 12/08/2025 and 08/12/2025). Between January–June 2025, vaccination campaigns vaccinated around 332,000 children against measles and around 809,000 people against meningitis. Conflict-affected communes in Tillabéri and Tahoua remained difficult to access, however, contributing to coverage gaps in these regions, although precise regional vaccination coverage figures have not been publicly disaggregated. Available reporting does not indicate significant improvement in access in these communes compared to 2024 (UNICEF 12/08/2025).

Malaria cases increased nationally by around 17% in the first half of 2025, reflecting broader pressure on the health system amid recurrent outbreaks of malaria, measles, and cholera (UNICEF 12/08/2025). Conflict-affected western regions face compounded risk, as insecurity limits timely diagnosis and treatment during peak transmission periods, particularly affecting children under five, pregnant women, and displaced populations who face barriers accessing facilities. Insecurity on roads, limited medical supplies, and reduced facility functionality heighten risks of severe cases and preventable mortality in these areas (UNICEF 12/08/2025; Health Cluster 21/01/2025).

Access to safe water and sanitation remains limited in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Tillabéri and Tahoua, where forced displacement, insecurity, and climate-related shocks place additional strain on already fragile WASH systems (UNICEF 12/08/2025; OCHA 11/07/2025; Laouali et al. 12/2025). Displacement sites and host communities with large numbers of IDPs represent primary pressure points, as overcrowding and limited infrastructure increase exposure to waterborne disease. Between January–June 2025, WASH interventions supported by UNICEF provided safe water to around 44,000 people in these regions (UNICEF 12/08/2025). While this represents critical support, it covered only a fraction of the needs identified in conflict-affected western departments, where hundreds of thousands of displaced people and host communities face water access constraints. Progress on emergency latrine construction has remained limited, primarily because of access constraints and funding limitations in insecure communes, slowing improvements in sanitation coverage (UNICEF 12/08/2025; UNFPA 24/09/2025).

HUMANITARIAN CONSTRAINTS

Humanitarian operations in western Niger, particularly in Dosso, Tahoua, and Tillabéri, continued to face severe access constraints throughout 2025, driven primarily by insecurity and an increasingly restrictive operating environment. Armed attacks and insecurity along key routes – including in the Bagaroua area of Tahoua – continued to limit humanitarian mobility. In November 2025, armed incidents in Tahoua’s Bagaroua area led humanitarian responders to temporarily suspend activities because of security risks, while armed assaults on vehicles in Dosso and Tillabéri illustrated the persistent threats faced by humanitarian staff and transport routes (OCHA 28/04/2025 and 04/11/2025). These conditions restrict road movement, delay deliveries, and limit the ability to reach remote and conflict-affected communities, reducing the regularity and predictability of assistance, particularly for protection, food assistance, and basic health services in high-need areas.

Relations between humanitarian responders and the authorities have also become more strained. In early 2025, the expulsion of the ICRC marked a significant shift, ending more than 35 years of continuous presence in Niger and affecting ICRC assistance and protection services for over two million people nationally, including in conflict-affected western regions such as Tillabéri and Tahoua (ICRC 05/06/2025; DW 02/07/2025). In mid-November 2025, the Ministry of Interior suspended a large number of national and international NGOs that had not published their 2024 financial statements, leaving only around 135 organisations – approximately 60 international and 75 national – authorised to operate. Previously, more than 300 international and over 3,000 national NGOs had been registered (RFI 17/11/2025).

On 7 January 2026, Niger’s Ministry of Interior announced the dissolution of several hundred NGOs and development associations for allegedly failing to comply with regulatory requirements on financial transparency, affecting both national and international organisations. While the exact breakdown by type of organisation remains unclear, this large-scale measure risks disrupting the continuity of humanitarian and development activities, particularly in western regions where needs are high and operational alternatives are limited (La Nouvelle Tribune 11/01/2026; Air Info 10/01/2026). Although the reporting requirement was not new, its stricter enforcement resulted in a sharp contraction of the operational humanitarian presence. The duration of this contraction remains uncertain, pending possible

compliance or regulatory clarification, but it has reduced the number of authorised responders operating nationwide in the short term.

These regulatory measures, combined with insecurity-related access constraints, have disrupted operational continuity and increased reliance on a smaller number of authorised responders, potentially straining response capacity in insecure and remote western areas. Other organisations have reported operational disruptions linked to the evolving regulatory environment, though available reporting remains partial and does not comprehensively quantify the overall impact (RFI 17/11/2025; DW 02/07/2025).

OUTLOOK

Conflict dynamics in western Niger are expected to remain volatile through mid-2026. This projection is based on continued high levels of civilian harm documented in 2024–2025, the geographic spread of violence across Tillabéri and parts of Dosso and Tahoua, and persistent access constraints affecting both civilians and humanitarian responders (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025). Armed groups and state forces are likely to continue conducting attacks across western regions, sustaining high risks to civilians and humanitarian personnel. In the absence of significant improvements in rural civilian protection coverage or negotiated humanitarian access arrangements, levels of civilian harm are likely to remain broadly comparable to those observed in 2024–2025.

Both ISSP and JNIM are likely to remain active threats in western Niger. ACLED reporting indicates that ISSP remained a major driver of civilian fatalities in Tillabéri in 2024–2025, with incidents increasingly affecting parts of Dosso and Tahoua. JNIM has continued to operate along cross-border corridors linking Niger with Benin, Burkina Faso, and Mali (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026; SCR 30/07/2025). While available reporting does not confirm formal territorial control patterns, the frequency and distribution of incidents suggest sustained operational activity in these areas. Armed groups are likely to continue targeting security forces, ambushing supply routes, and exerting violent pressure on civilian communities perceived as aligned with state authorities. Seasonal variations may influence mobility patterns, but violence along border corridors and rural road networks is likely to persist. Tense relations between ISSP and communities – linked to the enforcement of governance rules,

coercive taxation, and punitive attacks against those perceived as collaborating with state forces – appear persistent instead of episodic (HRW 10/09/2025; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025; ACLED 04/09/2025). Large-scale killings, village raids, and punitive attacks may continue in some highly affected areas, although patterns and intensity are likely to vary geographically. JNIM's continued presence suggests continued risks of ambushes and targeted violence in border areas, even if reporting did not indicate a clear upward or downward trend in threat level in late 2025 (ACLED accessed 08/01/2026; SCR 30/07/2025; Protection Cluster 16/09/2025; Soufan Center 05/06/2025).

The broader geopolitical context also warrants monitoring. Since the 2023 coup and throughout 2024–2025, changes in military partnerships – including the withdrawal of Western forces and increased domestic security mobilisation – have altered the security environment but not shown a measurable reduction in violence in western Niger (UNIDIR/ISS 13/05/2024; AJ 28/12/2025). These shifts may continue to reshape state–armed group interactions and regional power balances in border areas, potentially affecting deterrence dynamics, but without clear evidence of improved civilian protection outcomes.

Humanitarian conditions in western Niger are likely to remain unchanged in early to mid-2026, with a greater likelihood of stagnation at high levels of need than any improvement. Conflict-related displacement, continued insecurity, and restricted access to land and markets are expected to sustain IPC 3 levels of food insecurity across much of Tillabéri and parts of Tahoua and Dosso. According to projections, some of Tillabéri's highly conflict-affected departments face a risk of IPC 4 outcomes if access constraints or assistance shortfalls persist (FEWS NET 27/02/2026).

As coping capacity erodes, households are likely to resort to coping strategies with potentially harmful effects, such as reducing food consumption, selling productive assets, or withdrawing children from school, increasing exposure to child labour, child marriage, and other protection risks (Protection Cluster 16/09/2025). Health and WASH needs are also likely to increase, driven both by continued access constraints and the risk of recurrent disease outbreaks in displacement-affected areas (UNICEF 12/08/2025).

Humanitarian access constraints are unlikely to ease through mid-2026. Persistent insecurity on key roads in parts of Dosso, Tahoua, and Tillabéri, combined with recent administrative restrictions and the expulsion of the ICRC, is likely to continue limiting

operational coverage and the availability of specialised protection, health, and emergency services in high-need areas (RFI 17/11/2025; ICRC 05/06/2025; DW 02/07/2025). The reduction in the number of authorised organisations remains recent, and available reporting does not indicate a full reversal of these measures. As a result, programme implementation delays and reduced service continuity may persist in the short to medium term. Overall, the combination of sustained armed-group activity, continued threats to civilians, limited improvements in rural protection coverage, and restricted humanitarian access points to a risk of continued deterioration of humanitarian and protection conditions in western Niger through the first half of 2026.