

Burkina Faso: 18 dead in terror attack at Ouagadougou

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Two gunmen allegedly linked to the Islamic State organisation killed 18 and wounded 7 in an attack on the Istanbul restaurant, which is commonly frequented by foreigners in the capital of Burkina Faso, Ouagadougou. This attack is a consequence of the war for regime change carried out by NATO and its Islamist allies in Libya six years ago, which has spread since across the Sahel.

There were at least seven Burkinabès and eight foreigners among the dead, said Foreign Minister Alpha Barry. “Besides the seven Burkinabès, there was a Frenchman, a Canadian, a Senegalese, a Nigerian, a Turk, and two Kuwaitis,” Barry stated, adding that there were also “three victims who have yet to be identified.”

No organisation has claimed responsibility for the attack, but press reports stressed that the modus operandi recalled that of the attack on the Capuccino café last year, only 200 metres away from the Istanbul restaurant. That attack claimed 29 lives and was claimed by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

A *gendarmérie* (military police) official told AFP that “according to multiple witnesses, at least two assailants arrived on a motorcycle around 9 p.m. with Kalashnikov rifles and opened fire on the Istanbul restaurant.” The restaurant, situated on a major thoroughfare, Kwame Nkrumah Avenue, is well known for serving a largely expatriate clientele.

Both gunmen were shot and killed. “The two assailants were young, wearing jeans and armed with Kalashnikovs,” said the police official. The captain and spokesman for the *gendarmérie*, Guy-Hervé Yé, told *Le Monde* that “they hid in the building [where the Istanbul café is located] and as the security forces thought they might have hostages, this dragged out the intervention, which terminated around 4 a.m., when

both men were neutralised at the back of the building.”

Burkina Faso’s president, Marc Christian Kaboré, said he “condemned with the greatest firmness the repugnant attack which has bloodied Ouagadougou,” insisting that “Burkina Faso will rise up from this test, because its valiant people will resist terrorism without any concessions.”

In a communiqué, Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, the former colonial power, condemned the “terrorist attack.” The Elysée presidential palace added that “French and Burkina authorities remained in close contact throughout the night,” and Macron and Kaboré spoke Monday morning. The French president wrote that Macron “stressed his solidarity in the new tragedy facing Burkina Faso and reiterated his determination to deepen” ties between the two countries.

France Info editorialist Anthony Bellanger wrote that Burkina Faso’s ex-president, Blaise Compaoré, had established a sort of non-aggression pact with the jihadist groups in the region. “They had tables and hotel rooms available to them in Ouagadougou, and negotiations for the release of hostages, for instance, often took place in Burkina Faso. In exchange, the rule was: no attacks. It was not a big secret, everyone knew it in the region. But ...no more Compaoré, no more sanctuary for terrorists, no more suites reserved at hotels in the capital, and the jihadists began striking at the heart of Burkina Faso.”

Bellanger added, “In January 2016, a few days after the installation of the new government, they killed 30 people in the same place as the current attack. The message was clear at the time and it is clear today, as the trial in absentia of Blaise Compaoré just opened in April.”

France’s so-called war on terror in Mali and the broader Sahel region is a pile of lies. While the

Socialist Party (PS) government of President François Hollande invoked humanitarian reasons to launch the Mali war, sending thousands of soldiers to fight jihadist militias leaving Libya, France's ally in Burkina Faso was serving as a sanctuary for negotiations with the Islamist militias without any overt criticism emerging of Compaoré's regime.

The Mali war was one of the devastating consequences of the regime-change war NATO waged in Libya in 2011. The fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime spread war across the region. Starting in January 2012, the Tuareg-nationalist National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) militia launched an insurrection against the Malian state, taking over parts of northern Mali. After a March 2012 coup in the Malian capital of Bamako, they were able to profit from the chaos in the Malian army and take over the cities of Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal.

Starting in January 2013, Paris sent waves of troops to the region with the support of Washington. Operation Serval, the French invasion of Mali, served as the spearhead of a major expansion of French militarism in its former colonies in West Africa. In exchange for French "aid" to stabilise northern Mali and fight various rebel militias, Paris demanded and received the right to deploy its troops throughout the country. Its aim is to re-establish the colonial order first established by French imperialism in the region at the end of the nineteenth century.

Compaoré, who had ruled with French support for decades, was forced to abandon power in 2014 at France's request after opposition parties' calls for demonstrations unleashed mass protests and riots. The protests were called against Compaoré's attempt to amend the constitution to run for a fifth term in office. The opposition was horrified, however, when a protest call designed to strengthen its position in the political establishment provoked a broader response. It rapidly sought to re-establish control of the situation, negotiating an accord with elements of the Compaoré regime.

Compaoré fell as the Islamic State militia was preparing a series of deadly terror attacks in Paris in 2015, and the various Islamist militias subsequently lost the support they had enjoyed in Burkina Faso. The attacks now carried out by the Islamist forces are the bloody consequences of these reactionary manoeuvres

of French imperialism and its neocolonial client states in Africa.



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