

Burkina Faso forces end restaurant attack; 18 dead, toll likely to rise

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Ouagadougou: The spokesman for the Burkina Faso government said that the country's special forces have ended an attack by suspected Islamic extremists on an upscale Turkish restaurant in the West African country's capital, Ouagadougou.

The attack brought back painful memories of the January 2016 attack on another cafe that left 30 people dead.
Photo: Reuters

“At this moment our forces have neutralized two terrorists and the number of casualties, still provisional, is 18 dead and several wounded,” communications minister and government spokesman Remy Danguinou told journalists on Monday morning.

He said the dead are “mainly children and women” and the toll could rise because several people were wounded by the gunfire.

At least three members of Burkina Faso's security forces were wounded during the assault, which lasted for nearly seven hours, said capt. Guy Ye, spokesman of the security forces.

The assailants arrived at the restaurant on motorcycles and then began shooting randomly at the crowds dining Sunday evening, he said. Security forces arrived at the scene with armoured vehicles after reports of shots being fired near Aziz Istanbul.

This is the second such attack on a restaurant popular with foreigners in the last two years.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the violence, which continued throughout the early hours of Monday. Gunfire could be heard almost seven hours after the attack began.

In addition to those killed, eight others were wounded, Danguinou told journalists. The victims came from several different nationalities, he said. At least one of the dead was French and another was Turkish.

The attack brought back painful memories of the January 2016 attack at another cafe that left 30 people dead.

Burkina Faso, a landlocked nation in West Africa, is one of the poorest countries in the world. It shares a northern border with Mali, which has long battled Islamic extremists.

In the 2016 attack, the attackers were of foreign origin, according to Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, which claimed responsibility for those killings along with the jihadi group known as Al Mourabitoun. But the terror threat in Burkina Faso is increasingly home-grown, experts say.

The northern border region is now the home of a local preacher, Ibrahim Malam Dicko, who has claimed responsibility for recent deadly attacks against troops and civilians. His association, Ansarul Islam, is now considered a terrorist group by Burkina Faso's government.

- AP