

INSIGHT REPORT

African elections in 2024: Security implications and calendar

FEBRUARY 2024



KEY JUDGEMENTS

- Senegal's presidential election on 25 February will require awareness for incountry workforce of potential flashpoints and a monitoring of potential unrest by managers.
- The self-declared independent state of
 Somaliland will hold a presidential election on
 13 November, which we expect will generate
 a high level of disruption.
- South Sudan is due to hold a presidential election in December, requiring managers to prepare for the possible event that a shelterin-place order is needed.
- Planning and preparations are required ahead of numerous other elections to mitigate exposure to risks.



OVERVIEW

Many of Africa's 2024 elections will have an impact on the security situation of host countries. This insight report is intended to provide an overview of the security implications for each of the continent's presidential, parliamentary and general elections due to take place this year. Provided with each is an overview of our assessment of the likely security impact in that country and a summary of advice for the level of preparedness needed to manage and mitigate the associated risks.

Level of disruption	Transport disruption	Violence risk	Risk to stability and evacuation planning
Low	Localised transport disruption can be expected around election-related rallies and other gatherings.	There is a low risk of violence. The police may forcibly disperse demonstrations, posing incidental risks to bystanders.	Elections will pose only a limited risk to stability. Any wider ramifications that may require an evacuation of in- country workforce are likely to play out with sufficient time to complete the necessary planning.
Medium	Rallies and protests may cause localised disruption, with potential for other consequences such as demonstrators blocking major highways.	In addition to the risk outlined above, targeted incidences of violence, including assassinations and arson attacks, may also play out around an election.	Although unlikely, an evacuation of in-country workforce may be necessary at short notice in the event of a significant deterioration of the security environment.
High	In addition to the disruption outlined above, the authorities may impose travel restrictions such as curfews or border closures.	Fractious politics may deepen ethnic or sectarian divides, with the possibility of widespread or uncontrolled violence.	An election has a clear potential to destabilise the country, requiring evacuation plans to be drawn up in advance. Restrictions on inbound travel are advisable ahead of the election.

Breakdown of assessed risk levels





2024 African election calendar

	Month	Elections	Level of disruption anticipated
Q1	January	14 January: Comoros presidential election	N/A
	February	25 February: Senegal presidential election	Medium
		Mali: If Mali is to hold to its commitments made as part of its transition plan, a presidential election should be held by February. This is unlikely, however, as indications were made in September 2023 that the election would be postponed indefinitely.	Low
Q2	Мау	Between May and September: South Africa general election	Low
	June	22 June: Mauritania presidential election	Low
Q3	July	15 July: Rwanda presidential and parliamentary elections	Low
		Before July: Burkina Faso presidential election	Low
	September	Before 15 September: Tunisia presidential election	Low
Q4	October	October 9 October: Mozambique general election	
		Botswana general election	Low
		Before 20 October: Chad legislative and presidential elections	Medium
	November	Mauritius general election	Medium
		Namibia general election	Low
		13 November: Somaliland presidential election	High
	December	South Sudan presidential election	High
		7 December: Ghana general election	Low
		Before 12 December: Algeria presidential election	Low
		Before 29 December: Guinea-Bissau presidential election	Medium





African presidential, general and legislative elections due in 2024





ELECTIONS

Q1 elections - Senegal and Mali

Senegal: Presidential election

Date: 25 February

Level of disruption expected: Medium

Key dates:

- 4-23 February Campaign period
- 25 February Polling day
- 27 February Release of the provisional results by department
- 1 March Deadline for the release of the national results

Context: The election follows large-scale protests over the possible candidacy of incumbent president Macky Sall, as well as that of opposition figure Ousmane Sonko. Sall's government has been accused of jailing political opponents, banning protests and suspending access to mobile internet in recent months. However, the president said he does not intend to run in the upcoming election. Meanwhile, Sonko has been linked to legal controversies that his supporters view as politically motivated. Although protest activity has decreased in recent months, several factors could heighten tensions and cause the situation to flare up. For example, several disqualified candidates have filed appeals with the supreme court that are likely to be dismissed, which would further exacerbate political tensions.

Security implications: Regular protests in urban centres, particularly in the capital Dakar and the southern Casamance region, have accompanied prior controversies surrounding Sall's possible candidacy and Sonko's potential ineligibility. A further perceived crackdown on the opposition could fuel protest activity, while a heavy-handed approach from the police could pose incidental risks to bystanders. Any related casualties may trigger countrywide protests, as seen during previous bouts of unrest linked to Sonko's legal battles. While we do not currently anticipate any restrictions on inbound travel to Senegal during the election period, this may change in the event of renewed and sustained protests and associated unrest as campaigning begins.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Managers should ensure in-country workforce during this period are aware of sensitive dates and potential flashpoints for unrest and that they monitor developments though local media and contacts to keep apprised of related protests in their area. Gatherings will likely be well attended and cause significant travel disruption, particularly in Dakar, which already suffers from severe traffic congestion. Workforce should return to a secure location at the first sign of unrest and prepare for potential internet shutdowns during protests.





Mali: Legislative and presidential elections

Date: If Mali holds to its commitments made at an ECOWAS summit in 2022 as part of its transition plan, a presidential election should be held by February. However, the country already missed its goal of holding legislative elections between October and November 2023. This followed statements made by the government in September 2023 indicating that elections had been postponed indefinitely due to technical reasons.

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates/triggers: An announcement that Goita intends to form a political party or run for president could trigger protests. However, such gatherings would likely garner low attendance due to the broad popular support Goita enjoys. Additionally, a formal announcement of an indefinite postponement of the elections or the choosing of a distant date could likewise spark protests in the capital Bamako. The holding of local elections will signify the re-starting of the electoral process, likely to be followed by legislative and presidential elections.

Context: Mali will be electing its first president since coups in 2020 and 2021 placed power in the hands of the military. Parliamentary elections will also decide the future of the country's political landscape. Much will hinge on the role the military plays in the elections, which the ruling junta has not yet addressed.

Security implications: The build-up to the elections will largely determine their overall impact on the security environment. The candidacy of transitional president Assimi Goita has the potential to generate controversy and protests. Allegations of impropriety by parties during the elections could also spark demonstrations.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Any increase in protests should be accompanied by preparations for a possible stand-fast order in Bamako. Previous protests in 2019-20 were well attended and highly disruptive, and plans should be made with consideration of a possible repeat of this scenario.

Q2 elections - South Africa and Mauritania

South Africa: General election

Date: Expected between May and September

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates: Not yet known



Context: The ruling African National Congress (ANC) party stands to have its share of the vote drop below 50% for the first time in its history. This comes amid mounting public dissatisfaction with rising crime, power outages and an overall decline in public infrastructure and the economy. Despite this, a divided and significantly weaker opposition will grant the ANC the majority share of the vote, retaining its seat at the helm of government but with reduced powers to drive policy over the coming years.

Security implications: The security environment will remain broadly stable throughout the election period. Unions and other civil activist groups will increasingly demonstrate in urban centres to lobby for their respective agendas. Such protests will primarily cause localised traffic disruption and carry low risks of unrest. Political rallies will pass off similarly and be accompanied by a heightened police presence. There will nonetheless be a rise in targeted political violence and killings, particularly in Kwazulu-Natal province, where competition within and between the ANC and opposition parties from the province has often turned violent. This will pose incidental risks to bystanders.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Establish a communications protocol to update workforce on any planned protests and rallies. Advise them to plan routes avoiding such gatherings as a precaution and to minimise disruption to itineraries. Voting day will likely be declared a public holiday. Managers should anticipate and account for associated disruption.

Mauritania: Presidential election

Date: 22 June

Level of disruption expected: Low



Key dates/triggers: The release of the provisional results, expected around 25 June, is the most likely date for any protests.

Context: Incumbent president Mohamed Ould Ghazouani caused some surprise when he called for snap parliamentary elections in 2023. His El Insaf party won those comfortably, and the 2024 presidential election will see him face off against Biram Dah Abeid of the Sawab party and other candidates. Ould Ghazouani, who won the prior election in 2019 with 52% of the vote, is likely to secure another term as president.

Security implications: Following the presidential election in 2019, protests were held in the capital Nouakchott and the police raided the headquarters of Abeid's party and another candidate amid allegations of a flawed vote. A nationwide internet outage also occurred, lasting for more than 48 hours. Following 2023's election, limited protests took place amid allegations of voting having been made difficult in areas known to be opposition strongholds. However, these gatherings did not garner significant support nor cause notable disruption.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Managers should be ready to respond to any unrest in the days following the election. This should include plans for workforce to adjust itineraries or work from home in the event of widespread unrest.





Q3 elections – Rwanda, Burkina Faso and Tunisia

Rwanda: Presidential and parliamentary elections

Date: 15 July

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates: Not yet known

Context: Incumbent president Paul Kagame and his Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) party will seek to extend their decades-long control of the country for a fourth term. Following the passage in 2015 of constitutional amendments permitting Kagame to rule until 2034, he won re-election in 2017 with more than 98% of the vote. Rwandan authorities have been continually accused of human rights violations, including the restriction of civil liberties and suppression of political dissent. There is little indication that opposition parties, several of which have allegedly experienced harassment and intimidation, will be able to unseat the RPF from power.

Security implications: Spontaneous protests are unlikely to erupt due to a pervasive security force presence and surveillance culture, with intelligence agencies and police forces retaining tight control of the security environment. Furthermore, the detention of various opposition members and leaders has reduced the likelihood of a united social movement emerging. Heightened security measures, such as checkpoints and roadblocks, can be expected throughout the electoral period across urban centres and around key sites, including government buildings and party offices.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Review escalation plans in anticipation of the highly unlikely scenario of a significant deterioration of the security environment. Ensure in-country workforce have access to verified sources of information, including International SOS alerts, and reliable communication devices.

Burkina Faso: Presidential election

Date: Officially by July

Level of disruption expected: Low



Key dates/triggers: The formal announcement of an indefinite postponement

of the transition could trigger protests in the capital Ouagadougou. This, in turn, could prompt forcible dispersal measures by the security forces and counter-demonstrations by government supporters.

Context: The government is officially committed to a transition with elections by July. However, statements from transitional president Ibrahim Traore suggest that no elections will be possible until the nation's territory is secured. Should the government move forward with holding elections, they would be the first since Burkina Faso experienced two military coups in 2022.



Security implications: The indefinite delay of elections could potentially serve as a rallying cry for the opposition. However, Traore's government enjoys a strong degree of popular support, and public opinion is broadly in favour of his security first, elections later approach.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Monitor election-related developments due to the potential for unrest and related disruption.

Tunisia: Presidential election

Date: Before 15 September

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates/triggers: Not yet known



Context: Given that Tunisia's 2022 constitutional referendum approved greater powers for the president, this election will see a lot of power at stake. Whether or not political opponents challenge incumbent president Kais Saied will be a key indicator of how the election will develop from a security perspective. Opponents from historically major parties remain jailed, providing for an electoral landscape without much likelihood of a challenge at the ballot, though with some potential for unrest.

Security implications: Prior elections for local government and a new constitution proved to be largely uncontroversial and were accompanied by relatively minor protests. Any future election-related protests are most likely to be centred on traditional hotspots around the capital Tunis's Avenue Habib Bourguiba. The police may forcibly disperse demonstrators in the capital. Although unlikely, protests have the potential to draw large numbers and generate major transport disruption.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Those with operations in central areas of Tunis should closely monitor developments in the lead-up to the election. Signs of growing protest disruptiveness should be responded to with additional caution and the provision of associated advice to workforce in affected areas.





Q2 elections – Mozambique, Botswana, Chad, Mauritius, Namibia, Somaliland, South Sudan, Ghana, Algeria and Guinea Bissau

Mozambique: General election

Date: 9 October

Level of disruption expected: Medium

Key dates: March - Frelimo will elect a new party leader



Context: The ruling Frelimo party is seeking to secure a seventh consecutive win against the main opposition Renamo. Frelimo's political and institutional dominance will ensure a win for the party. However, the outcome of the vote will likely be contested by Renamo, which has disputed most previous elections. Renamo is liable to level early allegations of electoral interference, raising political tensions in the months leading up to and following the vote. If credible evidence of election interference emerges, the constitutional council will likely call for a rerun, prolonging the election period and related tensions.

Security implications: We expect regular well-attended, opposition-led protests surrounding the election. These will mostly occur in the capital Maputo and urban centres in Nampula province and other parts of central Mozambique, where Renamo enjoys popular support. All opposition protests carry a credible risk of forcible dispersal by the security forces. Protest risks will peak following the announcement of the results, likely coinciding with inflammatory statements from political figures. This may include occasional calls for a return to conflict, though such a development remains very unlikely. Anticipated social media outages and heavy security force deployments in urban centres will prevent a significant deterioration of the security environment and contribute towards an eventual return to business-as-usual conditions.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Closely monitor for any indications that the security forces are either unable to contain protests or that Renamo is increasingly willing to pursue conflict. Be prepared to implement increased security precautions in response.

Botswana: General election

Date: Expected in October

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates/triggers: Not yet known

Context: Voting will be held to elect local councils and the National Assembly, which will in turn elect the president. We expect the main opposition Umbrella for Democratic Change (UDC) and opposition Botswana Congress for Party to launch a noteworthy challenge against the ruling Botswana Democratic Party (BDP) amid a moderate decline in the latter's popularity in recent years. However, the BDP will likely benefit from divisions within opposition camps to secure a majority of parliamentary seats. This would maintain the BDP's uninterrupted rule post-independence and secure a second term for incumbent president Mokgweetsi Masisi.



Security implications: We expect the election to pass off peacefully. Although political tensions will increase surrounding the vote, this is unlikely to have a significant impact on the security environment. Political rallies will nonetheless cause localised disruption. If the UDC wins the vote, traffic disruption from well-attended public gatherings and an increased police presence can be expected in urban centres. Any electoral challenges are likely to be raised to the hight court, with a low probability of related unrest.

Preparedness awareness for managers: The authorities will likely declare voting day and subsequent days as public holidays. Managers should anticipate and account for associated disruption.

Chad: Legislative and presidential elections

Date: By 20 October, though early indicators suggest the elections may take place prior to the start of the rainy season in May.

Level of disruption expected: Medium

Key dates/triggers: The candidacy of transitional president Mahamat Deby

in the election could trigger protests. Deby has received the nomination of his father's Patriotic Salvation Movement party, which he has yet to accept, and which could spark protests if he does. Additionally, allegations of fraudulent activity in the election or a result viewed as suspicious by the public could also generate protests. Such gatherings are most likely to occur in the capital Ndjamena and in southern towns and cities such as Doba, Bebedjia, Moundou (all Logone Oriental region) and Koumra (Mandoul region).

Context: Following the death of long-serving president Idriss Deby (in office 1990–2021) and a constitutional referendum in 2023, Chad's election will chart the next chapter in its political transition. The new constitution has placed a great deal of power in the hands of the president, meaning a lot is at stake. Regional and ethnic tensions between northern ethnic groups such as the Zaghawa and Toubou, to which the president belongs, and southern groups, which form a larger proportion of the nation's population, may play out around the election.

Security implications: Protests against the prolongation of the transition period in 2022 were violently broken up, evidencing heightened tensions and the potential for a similar scenario surrounding the upcoming election. Since then, however, a leading opposition figure has been appointed as prime minister, marking a detente between the government and opposition.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Work from home may be necessary in Ndjamena on days when disruptive protests are expected to take place. Reaction to Deby's candidacy will be a key barometer of public opinion and should dictate necessary preparedness levels. If no protests occur, then a lesser level of preparedness will be needed when the elections arrive.





Mauritius: General election

Date: Expected in November

Level of disruption expected: Medium

Key dates/triggers: Not yet known.

Context: The election will be dominated by political coalitions led by the ruling Militant Socialist Movement and the main opposition Labour Party. We expect the election to be highly charged. This is due to an increase in inequality and crime in recent years, as well as anti-government sentiment partly linked to the contentious 2019 general election, in which the opposition called for the government's resignation over allegations of electoral fraud and corruption.

Security implications: There will be an increase in well-attended opposition-led protests surrounding the vote. Most gatherings will be peaceful, occurring in central parts of the capital Port Louis, and cause significant road disruption. Heavy security force deployments will accompany protests. Reports of harassment of opposition figures, government critics and journalists will increase the likelihood of low-level unrest at such events. Any allegations of electoral interference would likely be raised to the supreme court and prolong protest risks until a ruling is made.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Establish a communications protocol to update workforce on any planned protests. Advise them to plan routes avoiding such gatherings to minimise disruption to itineraries.

Namibia: General election

Date: Expected in November

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates/triggers: None.

Context: We expect the election to be Namibia's most-tightly contested vote, launching the most notable challenge to the decades-long political dominance of the ruling South-West African People's Organisation (SWAPO). Although SWAPO's presidential candidate, Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah, is likely to win the presidency and become the country's first female president, the party stands to lose its parliamentary majority. This comes amid a notable decline in SWAPO's popularity tied to corruption allegations and slowed economic growth, marked by rising unemployment and inequality.

Security implications: The security environment will remain broadly stable surrounding the vote. However, there will be an increase in protests and low-level unrest at political rallies, including scuffles between rival supporters. We expect an increased police deployment in major urban centres to contain unrest. While gatherings will primarily cause traffic disruption, the police are liable to use tear gas to disperse unruly crowds.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Establish a communications protocol to update workforce on any planned protests and rallies. Advise them to plan routes avoiding such gatherings as a precaution and to minimise disruption to itineraries.









Somaliland: Presidential election

Date: 13 November

Level of disruption expected: High

Key dates/triggers: Not yet known.

Context: The presidential election follows a two-year delay due to financial and technical constraints and disagreements with opposition parties over election procedures. The vote also comes amid an ongoing conflict in the contested regions of Sool and Sanaag and a diplomatic dispute involving Somaliland, Somalia and Ethiopia over a contentious port deal and Ethiopia's potential formal recognition of Somaliland. If left unresolved, these issues will contribute to instability surrounding the vote. Incumbent president Muse Bihi Abdi is expected to face off against candidates from the opposition Waddani and Justice and Welfare parties.

Security implications: There will be an increase in well-attended opposition-led protests surrounding the vote. Most gatherings will be peaceful, occurring in central parts of the capital Port Louis, and cause significant road disruption. Heavy security force deployments will accompany protests. Reports of harassment of opposition figures, government critics and journalists will increase the likelihood of low-level unrest at such events. Any allegations of electoral interference would likely be raised to the supreme court and prolong protest risks until a ruling is made.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Update escalation plans to account for a variety of scenarios given the volatility surrounding the vote. Be prepared to adjust inbound travel policies at short notice and ensure incountry workforce are briefed on applicable measures in the event of a deterioration of the security environment.

South Sudan: Presidential election

Date: Tentatively scheduled in December

Level of disruption expected: High

Key dates/triggers: Not yet known.

Context: South Sudan is preparing to hold its first presidential election since gaining independence in 2011. Voting day, originally planned for 2018, has been delayed numerous times. Despite reassurances from the government, it seems unlikely the country will be ready to hold an election by December. Major prerequisites still need to be implemented before credible elections can occur. Incumbent president Salva Kiir, who has confirmed his candidacy, will likely be facing his long-standing rival, first vice-president Riek Machar, in the polls.

Security implications: The security environment in South Sudan remains volatile and the partially implemented peace agreement signed in 2018 is fragile. Any real or perceived irregularities or the abandonment of the electoral process could drive popular discontent and result in social and political unrest. This, in turn, could worsen ongoing localised conflicts and increase the risks of a coup by political rivals, further deteriorating the security environment.









INTERNATIONAL SOS

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Preparedness awareness for managers: Establish a communications protocol to update workforce on any planned protests and rallies. Advise them to plan routes avoiding such gatherings as a precaution and to minimise disruption to itineraries.

Ghana: Presidential and parliamentary elections

Date: 7 December

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates/triggers: Not yet known.

Context: Incumbent president Nana Akufo-Addu will step down after completing the constitutionally allowed two terms. His vice-president, Mahamudu Bawumia, will be representing the ruling New Patriotic Party. The elections are taking place against the backdrop of a significant economic crisis, and former president John Mahama (in office 2012-17) of the opposition National Democratic Congress will seek to capitalise on the government's poor economic record to return to power.

Security implications: We expect protests over high inflation and perceived poor governance to increase in the lead-up to the election, particularly in the capital Accra and possibly other urban centres such as Kumasi (Ashanti region). The presidential poll is likely to be tightly contested, which could fuel instances of political unrest. The police have a proven capacity to contain political disturbances, which usually only involve party activists. However, a reported proliferation of illicit small arms in Ghana also increases the risks involved in political confrontations.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Establish a communications protocol to update workforce on any planned protests. Advise them to plan routes avoiding such gatherings to minimise disruption to itineraries.

Algeria: Presidential election

Date: Before 12 December

Level of disruption expected: Low

Key dates/triggers: 16 February marks the anniversary of the start of the Hirak protests. This will be a key indicator of social disquiet ahead of the election,

campaigning for which will begin in September. Algeria uses a two-round system for voting in its presidential elections. In this system, if the first round is close then a second round of voting will take place two to three weeks afterwards.

Context: The election will see incumbent president Abdelmajid Tebboune seek another term. The prior presidential election in 2019 took place against the backdrop of widespread protests and social discontent over the legacy and intentions of then-president Abdelaziz Bouteflika (in office 1999–2019) to seek a fifth term in office. Since then, however, protests have decreased significantly amid reforms, prosecutions of those accused of corruption under Bouteflika's government and increased spending on social programmes. We expect Tebboune to comfortably secure a second term as president.









Security implications: Protests are possible in urban centres in the north of the country. These have the potential to block key roads in central areas. Turnout at protests is likely to be severely diminished compared with those in 2019, with the Hirak protest movement having lost momentum since then. No substantial protests have taken place since 2021. Although progress has been made to quell the protest movement, several of the underlying causes remain unaddressed and there remains potential for its re-emergence.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Managers responsible for a presence in Algeria should monitor the emergence of any protest movements in the coming months. Signs of a resurgence of the Hirak movement should be accompanied by planning for related disruption during the election.

Guinea Bissau: Presidential election

Date: By 29 December

Level of disruption expected: Medium



Key dates/triggers: Voting in a first-round election is likely to take place around one month ahead of a second-round run-off, indicating that the first round of voting will probably occur in November.

Context: Guinea Bissau will elect a president for another five-year term. The last election in 2019 was closely fought between incumbent president Umaro Sissoco Embalo of the Madem G15 and Domingos Simoes Pereira of the previously ruling PAIGC. A two-round system is used, meaning the democratic process is likely to last several weeks from campaigning to the announcement of the result. The close result in the previous election suggests a likelihood of heightened tensions during the campaign period.

Security implications: Politics in Guinea Bissau can be volatile, with the armed forces playing a large role. Following 2019's election, Pereira refused to accept defeat and organised an alternative swearing-in ceremony after the parliament and supreme court declined to approve an official one. The security implications of the upcoming election are likely to continue into 2025 amid the potential for the disputation of the outcome. Protests against alleged electoral fraud are possible surrounding the release of the results. The armed forces are liable to intervene in politics, resulting in possible short-notice travel restrictions in the capital Bissau and airspace closures. Gunfire witnessed in the capital following the dissolution of the national assembly in December 2023 underlines the uncertainty and fragility of the overall situation.

Preparedness awareness for managers: Once dates are announced for the election, non-essential travel should be scheduled to take place ahead of first-round voting, where possible. In-country workforce should be prepared to stand fast in the event of unrest or military intervention, with ample supplies to last at least five days, if necessary.





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