

SECURITY ADVICE: Ivory Coast 3 September 2017



SECURITY ADVISORY

- Ninety-six inmates have escaped from a Katiola Prison.
- A gendarmerie post in Songon has been attacked. The assailants seized a number of weapons.

Between 0500 and 0600 GMT on Sunday 3 September, 96 inmates escaped from a Katiola prison in the Ivory Coast. The inmates escaped by going through the roof of their cells to get to other cells. They then reportedly took advantage of workers who were leaving the facility, in order to break the main gate and flee.

A local judicial source says the escapees were followers of Coulibaly Yacouba. Yacouba, also known as "Yacou le Chinois" ("Yacou the Chinese") was killed in February 2016 during an attempted jail break from Ivory Coast's main detention centre in Abidjan. During the escape, ten people, including one guard, were killed, and a further 21 others were injured.

This is the latest in a string of prison breaks in recent weeks. On 8 August, five prisoners escaped from a jail in Gagnoa in southern Ivory Coast. The mayor in Gagnoa said four prison guards and one civilian were arrested on suspicion of aiding the prisoners in their escape. Days later, on 10 August, twenty people escaped from holding cells at the Abidjan courthouse. The escapes clashed with police. Later, seven prison officials were arrested.

Separately, at 2100 (local time) on 2 September, at least five individuals, hooded and heavily armed with AK 47 machine guns, targeted a gendarmerie station in Songon (20km of Abidjan on the road of Dabou) to steal weapons. Security forces exchanged fire with the assailants for more than 20 minutes. The assailants were able to seize several weapons, including automatic Kalashnikovs, before disappearing into the wild, according to witnesses.

GUIDANCE:

In light of the large number of escaped inmates, there is likely to be a greater security presence, including an increased number of traffic and vehicle checkpoints in the areas surrounding Katiola. Camps or offices within 30-75 kilometres should be aware of illegal trespass and be careful around security of vehicles, residences and offices.

MS Risk advises travellers and expatriates in Ivory Coast to remain vigilant throughout the country. Exercise situational awareness Katiola, and Abidijan, as well as previously affected areas including Bouake, Korhogo, Odiene, Adiake, Daloa, Bouafle, Man and San Pedro. Should a disturbance erupt near you, MS Risk advises quickly leaving the area, and if possible, returning to your accommodation or local office and remain there until the situation stabilizes. Monitor local developments and follow guidance and directives as issued by local authorities.