Sixteen killed in Burkina Faso in suspected jihadist attack

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Suspected jihadists killed 16 villagers in northern Burkina Faso on Monday in an incident highlighting the increased presence of Sahel-based Islamists in the area, local and security sources said.

The gunmen came to Pobe-Mengao, about 200 km (160 miles) north of the capital Ouagadougou, threatening to take way children and telling villagers to help them buy weapons, a security source told Reuters.

When they refused, they were shot dead, the sources said. A security source told Reuters that the death toll had reached 16.

An Islamist insurgency with links to Islamic State and al Qaeda has crossed into Burkina Faso this year from neighboring Mali, igniting ethnic and religious tensions, especially in northern regions.

Attacks by Islamist militants as well as clashes between herding and farming communities have surged since, killing hundreds of civilians and soldiers in a country that used to be a pocket of relative calm in the Sahel.

The government did not immediately comment on the killings.