

# MALI

## @Ethnic conflict and killings of civilians

### 1. Introduction

In recent months northern Mali has seen an escalation in the inter-ethnic violence which started with a Tuareg uprising in 1990. Attacks and killings by political armed bands -mostly composed of the minority Tuareg and Moorish communities - have been followed by reprisal killings of civilians from these ethnic groups by the armed forces, who are predominantly from the majority black population. Revenge killings of civilians by both sides have increased and a vigilante group has also been responsible for civilian deaths.

There is a cycle of violence which is being conducted in violation of basic humanitarian norms and is accompanied not just by murder but also by unlawful killings by the armed forces - human rights violations which it is the responsibility of the government and the army high command to condemn and prevent.

In the worst incidents, at least 50 civilians - mostly Moors, an Arabic-speaking community of Arab/Berber descent - were killed by soldiers in **Timbuktu** (Tombouctou) and surrounding areas in mid-June 1994; on 25 July a Moorish armed group shot dead at least 40 civilians in the village of **Bamba**.

Since February 1994 Tuareg and Moorish armed groups, in attacks on northern towns and villages, are alleged to have been responsible for the deliberate and arbitrary killings of more than 80 civilians - about 70 during July alone. Increasingly, those killed appear to have been targeted because of their ethnic origin or in reprisal for extrajudicial executions by government forces.

Since April 1994 government forces are reported to have extrajudicially executed at least 130 civilians - and possibly many more - in reprisal for attacks by political armed groups. The victims, from the Tuareg and Moorish communities, appear to have been targeted on the basis of their ethnic origin.

In response to attacks by armed groups and the perceived failure of the government to protect black communities in the north, vigilante organizations have been formed within the majority black population, one of which has reportedly been responsible for killing at least 20 and

possibly more than 40 Tuareg and Moorish civilians. It is also reported to have been involved in some extrajudicial executions committed by the armed forces.

President Alpha Oumar Konaré and some Tuareg leaders have condemned the killings in general terms, and the security forces have arrested some members of armed groups suspected of involvement. However, the authorities have not arrested any members of the armed forces nor initiated prosecutions against any suspects. No independent investigation into the killings has been carried out. A black vigilante group called for Tuareg rebels to be put to death. In June the leader of a Moorish armed group said that he would revenge the killings of innocent civilians and also suggested that the leaders of the armed groups had little control over the fighters carrying out the attacks.

## **2. Amnesty International's concerns**

Amnesty International is a worldwide voluntary movement that is independent of any government, political grouping, ideology, economic interest or religious creed. It seeks the release of all prisoners of conscience, that is, men and women imprisoned anywhere for their beliefs or because of their ethnic origin, sex, colour or language, who have not used or advocated violence. Amnesty International works for the fair and prompt trial of all political prisoners. It unconditionally opposes the death penalty, torture and other cruel treatment of prisoners in all cases, as well as extrajudicial executions and "disappearances".

Since September 1991 Amnesty International has extended its work against human rights violations to include abuses by opposition groups as well as government forces. Such abuses include hostage-taking, torture and killings of prisoners and other deliberate and arbitrary killings<sup>1</sup>, for example, killings of civilians carried out solely by reason of the victims' ethnic origin, sex, colour, language, religion or political views. It excludes a range of killings in armed conflict which may occur as a consequence of an attack on a military objective, such as killings in the course of clashes between violent opposing forces, killings in cross-fire, or attacks in general on military and security personnel<sup>2</sup>.

Information about political killings in Mali - about who has carried out killings and in what circumstances - has been difficult to obtain and to verify. However, on the basis of the reports

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<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International uses the term "extrajudicial executions" to describe unlawful killings by government forces, whereas killings by politically-motivated armed groups which are clear violations of internationally recognized humanitarian principles are described as "deliberate and arbitrary killings".

<sup>2</sup> See Amnesty International, *"Disappearances" and Political Killings*, Amsterdam 1994 (AI Index: ACT 33/01/94)

so far received, Amnesty International is concerned at the substantial number of extrajudicial executions by government forces - at least 130 in 1994. The organization is calling on the Malian Government to take urgent and effective measures to halt extrajudicial executions and to declare publicly that they will not be tolerated under any circumstances. The government has not brought to justice any troops responsible for the extrajudicial execution of civilians in recent years and Amnesty International is concerned that soldiers are effectively free to commit human rights violations with impunity. It urges the government to establish an independent and public judicial inquiry into extrajudicial executions by the armed forces, which will publish its findings and recommendations, with a view to bringing to justice those found responsible.

Amnesty International is also concerned at the growing incidence of deliberate and arbitrary killings by political armed groups. The organization is calling on the leaders of all the armed factions to condemn such killings publicly and to put an immediate end to deliberate and arbitrary killings by the forces under their command.

### **3. Background**

In April 1992 a peace agreement was signed between the government and the *Mouvements et fronts unifiés de l'Azawad* (MFUA), the Unified Movements and Fronts of Azawad, a coalition of four Tuareg and Moorish armed factions:

- ! *Armée révolutionnaire de libération de l'Azawad* (ARLA),  
Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad;
- ! *Front islamique arabe de l'Azawad* (FIAA), Arab Islamic Front of Azawad;
- ! *Front populaire de libération de l'Azawad* (FPLA),  
Popular Front for the Liberation of Azawad;
- ! *Mouvement populaire de l'Azawad* (MPA), Azawad People's Movement.

This accord brought an end to nearly two years of armed rebellion in which Tuareg insurgents sought more autonomy for "Azawad"; this large, mostly desert area of northern Mali includes parts of neighbouring Niger, where there has also been conflict between armed Tuareg groups and government forces in recent years. During 1990 and 1991 armed Tuareg groups in Mali killed civilians as well as government officials and troops, and the army carried out extrajudicial executions of civilians in reprisal. Government officials and international aid and development organizations were forced to leave the region because of the high level of attacks, and state administration in many parts of the north effectively collapsed. The 1992 peace accord provided for the integration of former Tuareg rebels into the army and government employment, the dismantling of Tuareg military bases and the return of thousands of refugees from neighbouring countries.

However, attacks by armed groups continued after the peace agreement, mostly with the aim of stealing vehicles, livestock, arms and ammunition. Between April and September 1992 about 60 people, mostly civilians, were reportedly killed either in attacks by armed groups or in reprisals against members of the Tuareg and Moorish communities by the army and local people; in October 1992 the government said that there had been 120 attacks by armed groups since April. In 1993 there were reports of refugees returning from Mauritania being extrajudicially executed by soldiers, and late in the year of renewed attacks by Tuareg armed groups and the killing of soldiers.

After the 1992 peace accord, the perpetrators of the continued attacks were described as "armed bandits" by the government, the MFUA and the news media in Mali, and it was unclear who they were and whether their motivation was political or criminal. They appeared mostly to be armed Tuareg groups who were not signatories to the peace accord. However, since early in 1994, when clashes between the MFUA's constituent factions resulted in several deaths, there have been increasing reports that they were dissident members or factions of the MFUA, including former rebels integrated into the Malian armed forces (known as *intégrés*), although no faction has actually repudiated the peace pact. Such Tuareg groups were dissatisfied with the slow implementation of the pact, which has been hampered by the government's lack of resources, Mali being one of the world's poorest countries. Although nearly 650 former Tuareg rebels were integrated into the army following the accord, there were problems: *intégrés* complained of being left with inadequate resources in northern garrisons and not being given senior officer posts; on the other hand, there was resentment within the army and other northern ethnic communities at their own lack of resources and at the number of government posts being given to former rebels while attacks continued. Few of the 160,000 refugees in neighbouring Mauritania, Algeria and Burkina Faso have returned to Mali because of the continuing unrest and the lack of resources to assist their return.

On 15 May 1994, in Algiers, the MFUA signed a further agreement with the Malian Government, that the number of former rebels to be integrated into the army and other security and government services would increase to over 2,000. Both government supporters and opposition political parties criticized the government for making what were seen as further concessions to the MFUA while attacks were increasing in the north. In April 1994 a self-defence group - the *Mouvement patriotique malien Ghanda Koy* (Ghanda Koy), the Malian Patriotic Movement/Masters of the Land - gained support for action in response to the perceived failure of the government to protect the majority black population against attack and to maintain basic administration in the north. Ghanda Koy draws most of its support from the Sonrhaï ethnic group and some members of the security forces. It is led by a former army officer and has reportedly been responsible for the reprisal killing of civilians. In an undated document entitled *La Voix du Nord* (Voice of the North), it called for rebels/armed bandits to be put to death and for "nomads" to be driven out of northern towns and villages, although a statement in May 1994 was more conciliatory, saying Ghanda Koy would not harm "peaceful civilians".

Other community groups in the north - including new groups such as *Lafia* in the Peul (Fula) community and *Mouvement pour l'éveil du monde Belah* (Movement for the Awakening of the Belah People) among the Belah - denounced the new peace accord on the grounds that it favoured the minority Tuareg and Moorish communities at the expense of other marginalized ethnic groups in the north. There have been some revenge killings and assaults on Tuareg civilians by mobs. It has been alleged that members of the armed forces may have initiated or have been involved in some such incidents, for example at **Diré** on 10 May 1994 when five Tuareg were killed in reprisal for the theft of a vehicle by an armed group. In demonstrations against Tuareg attacks in late July and early August 1994, one person was killed and others injured in attacks on Tuareg and Moorish civilians in Mopti and the capital, Bamako.

In May and June 1994 the government increased the number of soldiers deployed in the north, and civilian governors in the northern provinces were replaced by military personnel. On 30 June government and MFUA representatives, meeting in Tamanrasset, Algeria, reaffirmed their commitment to peace. However, attacks and killings continued and many *intégrés* deserted, returning to former rebel bases and leaving only members of the MPA faction within the national army. On 8 August government troops in Kidal, Mopti and Bamako went on strike over pay arrears for frontline troops, calling on the government to investigate the embezzlement of resources allocated for soldiers serving in the north and to destroy rebel camps.

#### **4. Extrajudicial executions by government forces**

Since April 1994 the security forces have carried out attacks on Tuareg and Moorish civilians, in which it is feared that at least 130 people may have been extrajudicially executed solely because of their ethnic origin. Usually these appeared to be in reprisal for earlier attacks by armed Tuareg groups.

Some estimates put the number of those extrajudicially executed by soldiers as high as 600, although many of the allegations are difficult to verify or are disputed. According to the MFUA 176 people were killed by government forces between 10 and 14 June 1994 alone.

In the following incidents, it appears that extrajudicial executions by government forces did occur:

**! 21 April 1994, Ménaka:** between four and 12 Tuareg civilians were reported to have been extrajudicially executed by the armed forces in reprisal for the killing of two soldiers the day before. On 20 April two army corporals had been shot dead and other soldiers wounded in a dispute with Tuareg *intégrés* who subsequently fled their military unit after stealing weapons and vehicles. On 21 April the army attacked Tuareg and Moorish homes in Ménaka with machine-guns, rockets and grenades. Four civilians were shot

dead, including an elderly woman, and 12 were wounded, including three women and two children. The inhabitants were forced to flee the town, without being able to take water with them despite the high temperatures: seven women apparently died from thirst and shock while hiding in the bush, one in an advanced state of pregnancy. A joint army/MFUA commission of inquiry later investigated the incident and transferred the troops involved to other barracks, but none of those responsible were brought to justice.

! **12 June 1994, Ménaka-Andéramboukane road:** soldiers reportedly extrajudicially executed at least 22 Tuareg and Moorish civilians including **Ablil Ag Mohamed**, a herdsman, and **Abdallah Ould Ibrahim**, a trader. The army said that 22 *intégrés* from the FIAA, FPLA and ARLA armed factions had been killed in an attack on Andéramboukane on 12 June in which four soldiers had been wounded. However, other sources said that the army had attacked encampments on the Ménaka-Andéramboukane road, killing 22 civilians in reprisal. The bodies were buried in mass graves and were reported to include two elderly Moors among them. However, the manner of their death was not reported and it is not known whether any autopsy or official investigation into the circumstances of their deaths was undertaken.

! **12-29 June 1994, Timbuktu:** army commandos (known as *bérets rouges*) are reported to have summarily executed at least 50 civilians, mostly Moors, apparently in reprisal for attacks by *intégrés* on Léré, Gourma-Rharous, Andéramboukane and Timbuktu. The victims included **Sidi Amar Ould Ely**, aged 58, Director of the *Centre de documentation et de recherches "Ahmed Baba"*, a research institute, who was arrested on 13 June, and **Bagna Baba Boumama**, a businessman in his 40s, arrested at his home on 14 June; their bodies were among at least 13 left outside the Hotel Azalaï on 14 June. **Baba Koutam**, aged 67, a businessman and leading member of the community, was arrested on 22 June by about 20 *bérets rouges* at the home of the Cadi (Islamic judge) of Timbuktu, where he was severely beaten and kicked; his body was abandoned on the road to the airport, his limbs broken and throat cut. On 26 June **Mohamed Sidi Boubacar Cheick**, aged 45, former teacher and President of the Chamber of Agriculture, was cut down with a machete in front of his wife and children and dragged down the stairs from his home by his feet; his body was also left on the airport road.

In the case of both Baba Koutam and Mohamed Sidi Boubacar Cheick, a member of Ghanda Koy, the vigilante group, reportedly first threatened the victims and demanded bribes not to kill them, then led the *bérets rouges* to their homes and actively participated in the killings. He was reported to have been arrested subsequently by the gendarmerie in Timbuktu, but it is not known whether he or others are to be prosecuted before the courts. A government inquiry was reportedly established in July but its findings and recommendations are not known.

**14 July 1994, Nampala**, near the Mauritanian border: after an earlier attack on civilians on the Nampala-Niono road (see page 9 below), the army is alleged to have extrajudicially executed about 17 civilians. The government said the army had pursued and killed 17 rebels after the attack.

**17 July 1994, Gossi**, south of Gourma-Rharous: the army is reported to have extrajudicially executed 17 civilians from Taoudénit in Gossi. This followed earlier reported killings of three Tuareg by the army in Gossi on about 3 July and of five Belah by armed men near Gossi on 8 July.

There were reports of widespread army killings in the Timbuktu area in June 1994 and hundreds of civilians fled to Mauritania and Algeria, some reportedly dying of hunger and thirst on the way. However, most reports were difficult to confirm and some appear to have been exaggerated or incorrect:

! **16-19 June 1994, Ber**, near Timbuktu: reports that the army had extrajudicially executed as many as 150 Tuareg, most from the Kel Antassar clan, in the village of Ber and that the village had been razed to the ground were later shown to be inaccurate in various respects. The government said that the village had not been razed and on 3 August a newspaper published a letter from the village chief in which he refuted the report as completely untrue. On 16 June 1994 **Mahaha Ag Mohamed**, a teacher, and seven others fleeing the area, were reported to have been extrajudicially executed by soldiers near Ber and to have been buried nearby at Tejehart; it was alleged that a named army officer held responsible for the killings had been subsequently transferred to Bamako.

## **5. Deliberate and arbitrary killings by political armed groups**

Many recent deaths in the north have resulted from clashes between rival armed groups and between armed groups and government forces. However, Tuareg armed groups and Ghanda Koy are also reported to have been responsible for the deliberate and arbitrary killing of about 100 civilians in total.

Tuareg and Moorish armed groups are alleged to have killed more than 80 civilians - about 70 during July 1994 alone - mostly because of their ethnic origin or in reprisal for extrajudicial executions by government forces. One estimate in August 1994 suggested that nearly 200 people had been killed during June and July 1994 in attacks by Tuareg; however, this figure appeared to include people killed by members of the security forces and Ghanda Koy.

The vigilante group Ghanda Koy has reportedly been responsible for killing at least 20 and possibly more than 40 Tuareg and Moorish civilians.

**a) Tuareg and Moorish armed groups**

During the course of attacks on military posts and convoys, in which they have killed soldiers, Tuareg and Moorish armed groups have targeted government employees and civilians, mostly because of their ethnic origin. The extent of these abuses is difficult to establish as information is often contradictory, with few details available on those killed. However, Amnesty International has received documented reports of more than 80 cases in which civilians are believed to have been deliberately and arbitrarily killed.

Deliberate and arbitrary killings of civilians were reportedly carried out by Tuareg armed groups in the following cases:

! **25 February 1994, Nara**, near the Mauritanian border: three government employees were reportedly killed by members of one of the MFUA factions, the *Armée révolutionnaire de libération de l'Azawad* (ARLA), Revolutionary Army for the Liberation of Azawad.

! **13 May 1994, Gao**: there were conflicting accounts of an incident in which, after a mob killed two Tuareg *intégrés* on suspicion of stealing a vehicle, armed Tuareg later shot dead several civilians in a crowd at the hospital, whether in reprisal or in self-defence was unclear. It was also reported that Tuareg fighters subsequently killed several civilians in Gao, including a tailor, **Morou Boubacar**, and the wife and two children of Mohamed El Yéhia, who was wounded in the attack.

! **1 July 1994, Tenenkou**, near Mopti: an armed Tuareg group reportedly killed nine people, including seven civilians, in attacks on administrative offices, the gendarmerie and a health centre.

In July 1994 a Moorish armed group, the *Front islamique arabe de l'Azawad* (FIAA), Arab Islamic Front of Azawad, reportedly carried out several attacks on civilians, killing at least 60 people. On 24 July the leader of the FIAA, Zahaby Ould Sidi Mohamed, said that he would revenge the killings of innocent civilians and that attacks would only cease if the army stopped killing civilians, but also suggested that the leaders of the armed groups had little control over the fighters carrying out the attacks.

The following attacks have been attributed to the FIAA:

! **30 May 1994, Fafa**, southeast of Ansongo: in reprisal for killings by Ghanda Koy at Tacharan (see page 10 below), FIAA members of the joint government/MFUA Ceasefire

Commission were reported to have ill-treated several civilians while questioning them about the location of a Ghanda Koy training camp. They were alleged to have subsequently killed three people and injured 10 others, including civilians, at the Ghanda Koy camp and to have abducted three people, including retired teacher **Kader Diallo**. In July one MFUA leader said that it had been a clash between armed factions.

! **8 June 1994, Niafunké**, southwest of Timbuktu: about 50 armed men reportedly attacked a military camp and the prison, and killed four people at the prison - a military guard, his wife and child, and another civilian. The government attributed responsibility for these attacks to a dissident faction of the MFUA; the FIAA later acknowledged that its members were responsible for the Niafunké killings.

! **14 July 1994, Nampala-Niono road**, near the Mauritanian border: armed men reportedly killed between 18 and 25 civilians by firing indiscriminately on market traders travelling in a lorry. Those killed included 25-year-old **Moulaye Diakité**, the driver, and his younger brother.

! **25 July 1994, Bamba**, near Gourma-Rharous: FIAA *intégrés* were reported to have killed at least 40 civilians by firing indiscriminately at villagers at the weekly market. The chief of Tahan village and others from neighbouring communities were among those killed. Although the government released casualty figures of 40 killed and 13 injured, the chief of Bamba village later said that 103 people had been killed, 28 injured and 29 had disappeared. It was said to have been the tenth and most serious rebel attack on Bamba since 1990.

## **b) Ghanda Koy**

Between May and June 1994 members of the *Mouvement patriotique malien Ghanda Koy* (Ghanda Koy), the Malian Patriotic Movement/Masters of the Land, are reported to have been responsible for killing at least 20 and possibly more than 40 Tuareg and Moorish civilians. Little information was available about most of these attacks, some of which were attributed to members of the security forces as well as to Ghanda Koy. There appears to have been cooperation between the army and Ghanda Koy in some killings, most notably in Timbuktu in June.

Ghanda Koy is not known to have claimed or admitted responsibility for killings, but the following incidents were reported by several sources:

! **26-27 May 1994, Tacharan**, near Ansongo: two men in uniform, believed to be deserters from the gendarmerie and army who had joined Ghanda Koy, opened fire from a boat on the Niger river on herdsmen, killing nine of them. Ghanda Koy were also

reported to have killed four civilians in **Fia** near Bourem and 13 civilians in the village of **Tessit**, southwest of Ansongo, at around this time.

**! 13 June 1994, Gao:** armed men, believed to be members of Ghanda Koy, abducted at least two civilians, one of whom was subsequently killed, whether by the abductors or by soldiers in cross-fire was not clear. The army then arrested about eight, and disarmed over 70, suspected members of Ghanda Koy in Gao, but later apparently released the detainees without charge under pressure from the local populace.

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### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP PREVENT THE KILLINGS

#### **1. Send appeals, preferably in French, to the Malian authorities, with copies for publication to the news media below:**

! expressing concern at reports of extrajudicial executions by government forces of at least 130 civilians - and possibly many more - mostly from the Tuareg, Moorish and Arab communities, solely on the basis of their ethnic origin;

! calling on the government to take urgent and effective measures to halt such killings and to declare publicly that they will not be tolerated under any circumstances;

! urging the government to establish an independent and open judicial inquiry into the reports of extrajudicial executions by the armed forces, which will make public its findings and recommendations, with a view to bringing to justice promptly those responsible.

**Addresses:** - Monsieur Alpha Oumar Konaré, Président de la République, La Présidence, BP 1463, Bamako, Mali

- Monsieur Dioncounda Traoré, Ministre de la Défense, Ministère de la Défense, BP 215, Bamako, Mali

- Lieutenant-Colonel Siriman Keïta, Chef d'Etat-major de l'Armée de terre, Ministère de la Défense, BP 215, Bamako, Mali

- Monsieur Ibrahim Boubakar Keïta, Premier Ministre, Cabinet du Premier Ministre, BP 97, Bamako, Mali

#### **2. Send appeals, preferably in French, to the MFUA, with copies to the news media, and send open appeals to all the armed groups for publication in the news media below:**

! expressing concern at reports of the deliberate and arbitrary killing of at least 100 civilians - and possibly more - mostly targeted because of their ethnic origin, by all political armed groups;

! stressing that international standards prohibit the killing of non-combatants in all circumstances -no-one should ever be killed because of their ethnic or racial origin or in reprisal for other killings;

! calling on the leaders of all the armed factions to condemn such killings publicly and to put an immediate end to deliberate and arbitrary killings by the forces under their command.

**Address:** Monsieur Abderrahman Galla, Coordinateur général, *Mouvements et fronts unifiés de l'Azawad* (MFUA), s/c Commissariat au nord, Bamako, Mali

**News media addresses:** Agence malienne de presse et de publicité, BP 141, Bamako, Mali; *L'Essor*, BP 141, Bamako, Mali; Radiodiffusion-télévision du Mali, BP 171, Bamako, Mali; *Aurore*, BP 3150, Bamako, Mali; *Les Echos*, BP 2043, Bamako, Mali; *Le Nouvel Horizon*, BP 942, Bamako, Mali; *L'Observateur*, BP 1238, Bamako, Mali; *Le Républicain*, BP 1484, Bamako, Mali; *Réveil*, BP 3243, Bamako, Mali; *La Roue*, Rue 28x23, Quinzambougou, Bamako, Mali; *Le Scorpion*, BP 1258, Bamako, Mali; *L'Union*, BP 1868, Bamako, Mali

*Le Berger*, BP 2581, Bobo Dioulasso, Burkina Faso; *L'Observateur Paalga*, 01 BP 584, Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso; *Sidwaya*, 5 rue du Marché, 01 BP 507, Ouagadougou 01, Burkina Faso; *L'Hebdo libéré*, 7 rue Ahcène, 1600 Alger, Algeria; *Liberté*, 37 rue Ben M'Hidi, Alger, Algeria; *El Moudjahid*, 20 rue de la Liberté, Alger, Algeria; *Eveil Hebdo*, BP 587, Nouakchott, Mauritania; *Mauritanie Nouvelles*, BP 3901, Nouakchott, Mauritania; *Le Républicain*, BP 12015, Niamey, Niger; *Wal Fadjri*, BP 576, Dakar, Sénégal

