

**Committee:** Social, Cultural & Humanitarian (GA3)

**Issue:** The Situation of human rights in Mali

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## INTRODUCTION

Mali, or the Republic of Mali, is an African country with a population of 19.08 million according to the World Bank in 2018.<sup>1</sup>The country neighbors Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Senegal and Guinea. It was colonized by the French in 1892 and it became an independent state in 1960. The main languages are French, Bambara, Berber and Arabic.

Ever since 2012, Mali has been in a conflict situation. The events began in northern Mali when terrorists from Libya raided the country after Libya's collapse. In 2017, attacks by Islamists, targeting civilians, increased dramatically. However, the state of Mali did not handle the situation correctly, which resulted in a worsening of the situation and in dozens of summary executions. The humanitarian crisis quickly deteriorated in 2018 when groups supporting Islam began attacking innocent civilians. To help deescalate the situation, the army started committing atrocities during their counterterrorism operations, thus making the situation worse.

This major humanitarian crisis is currently affecting more than 3.7 million people, 1.6 million of whom are children. At the same time, this conflict has caused severe environmental damage, which, as a result, influences negatively the lives of thousands of people, while also putting at risk future generations. Even though there are more than 14,000 MINUSMA (The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali [which was established by the Security Council in the area to help with the transition area and to stabilize]) trying to deescalate the situation, the crisis is far from over and the people are still at risk. Thousands of people have been displaced in their own country or

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<sup>1</sup> "Population, Total - Mali | Data." Data.Worldbank.Org, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.TOTL?locations=ML&display=graph>

have sought refuge in others. Many schools and health centers have closed down and have left the children and the people of Mali helpless and in need of urgent help.



Figure 1: A Map of Mali and the neighboring countries<sup>2</sup>

## DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

### Counter-terrorism

Actions taken to prevent or combat terrorist acts (could include military techniques, but also legislation, law enforcement or governmental policies)

### Intercommunal violence<sup>3</sup>

Intercommunal violence means the violence that exists or occurs between two or more communities.

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<sup>2</sup> Bbc.co.uk, 2020,

[https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/340/cpsprodpb/B4DE/production/106520364\\_5d2fe51a-4b44-48b1-a0e8-74eca6868303.gif](https://ichef.bbci.co.uk/news/340/cpsprodpb/B4DE/production/106520364_5d2fe51a-4b44-48b1-a0e8-74eca6868303.gif)

<sup>3</sup> "Intercommunal." The Free Dictionary,

<https://www.thefreedictionary.com/intercommunal>

### **Internationally Displaced Person (IDP)<sup>4</sup>**

"persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

### **Extrajudicial Killing<sup>5</sup>**

Extrajudicial killing has the meaning of the killing of an individual by the government or separate people without any legal process.

### **Azawad<sup>6</sup>**

An area in northern Mali that was conquered by an ethnic minority, the Tuaregs, and was made into a self-proclaimed state.

### **Al – Qaeda<sup>7</sup>**

Al-Qaeda is an Islamist organization that was founded in the 1980s. In 1996, they reestablished their headquarters in Afghanistan and became part of the Taliban.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **History of Mali**

The Republic of Mali was a French colony from 1892 until 1960. They were appointed a governor and were part of a wider area, called French Sudan. The Sudanese Republic (as it was renamed in 1958, gained autonomy within the region. The formation of the federation of Mali in 1959 led to its 1960 independence status. Modibo Keita became

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<sup>4</sup> "UNHCR | Emergency Handbook." Unhcr.Org, 2020, <https://emergency.unhcr.org/entry/44826/idp-definition>

<sup>5</sup> Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions – the scope of the mandate of the special rapporteur, 2001, <https://www.abo.fi/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/2001-Luopajarvi-Extrajudicial-summary-or-arbitrary-executions.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> "Azawad." Nationalia, <https://www.nationalia.info/profile/7/azawaf>

<sup>7</sup> "Al-Qaeda | History, Meaning, Terrorist Attacks, & Facts." Encyclopedia Britannica, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/al-Qaeda>

the president of the country and started establishing the independent nation of Mali. The Mali Federation, according to Britannica, was a “short-lived union between the autonomous territories of the Sudanese Republic and Senegal in West Africa. The Federation took effect on April 4, 1959, achieved complete independence in 1960, and was dissolved by Senegal’s secession later that year.”

### **The conflict since 2012**

The conflict in Mali commenced in 2012 and it is still ongoing. In 2012, because of the downfall of Libya, some Muslim extremist groups started a rebellion in Mali, while also creating civil unrest. After the fall of Gadhafi in Libya in 2011, the parties that fought to bring him down refused to have fair elections and give up their power. Therefore, the militias and armed brigades were the ones who had power over Libya. An ethnic minority called the Tuaregs, in a rebellion in 2012, because of discontent towards the Malian government and state, drove the national Malian army away from northern Mali and renamed the area they claimed as the “Azawad”. Mali has faced four other rebellions led by the Tuaregs in the north, since it gained its independence from France in 1960. This defeat was attributed to the fact that the army was undertrained and underequipped. The Libyan forces that gained power after the fall of Gadhafi, took part in the uprising by hijacking it through profits that they made through illicit trade.

After the death of the Tuareg’s leader, the people of Azawad faced many social and economic struggles that also led to the state being taken over by jihadists. Since the situation was not handled appropriately, the jihadists were able to overthrow the president at the time and gain control. There are currently four main groups operating in the area of Sahel in Mali, namely the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Boko Haram, Jamaat Nusrat and Ansar ISLAM.

After the formation of the “Azawad” state, the Malian soldiers felt humiliated and blamed the then president of Mali, President Touré, for not handling the situation right, as well as other problems such as drug trafficking, Islamist extremists and more. Thus, a military coup followed, which gave the Tuareg rebels who had then been formed by Islamist jihadists Ansar ed-Din, to gain more military control in the northern area of Mali.

## Operation Serval

To help the Malian people, but also because the area had been a French colony until 1960, France intervened in the crisis and sent troops to regain control of the areas that were affected by the jihadists. The operation was named “Operation Serval” and the president of France at the time said that the operation complied with International Law. The goal of the French army was to fight terrorists and stabilize the situation. Even though the results at first looked promising, stabilization and tranquility in the area did not last permanently.



<sup>8</sup>Tuareg Rebels declaring the independence of Azawad

## Human Right Issues

### Internally Displaced Persons

The situation greatly affected the innocent civilians who were living in the specific area of Mali, and it created a humanitarian crisis. There are over 140,000 refugees that have fled to neighboring countries in order to avoid the conflict. What is more, as of August 2020, after the coup d'état, there are over 700,000 people who are internally displaced. The IDPs are

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<sup>8</sup> “Tuareg Rebels Declare the Independence of Azawad, North of Mali.” Apr.2012, <https://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/04/06/205763.html>

facing numerous problems, such as being constantly exposed to the dangers of the conflict, not having food, sanitation, water or shelter. The areas which have seen a large amount of displacement are usually under-developed and have poor infrastructure, so it is difficult for humanitarian aid organizations to reach them and provide help to the people in need. Furthermore, outside of the main towns, people are facing problems such as epidemics, extreme weather conditions which could lead to flooding during high rain season and extreme food insecurities. Because of the current coronavirus pandemic, the situation has become even more extreme and the people are suffering even more. Food insecurities have grown more than before, humanitarian aid organizations are unable to provide help and people are getting sick from coronavirus without having the necessary healthcare to cope with it.

### Children

More than 3.9 million are in urgent need of assistance with almost a third of them being children and a lot of them being women. This means that they are unable to go to school, get access to basic healthcare, sanitation, food and water. Because they are unable to go to school, a huge number of children are left uneducated and without basic knowledge. They are left unattended and they face a number of difficulties. Almost 1,260 schools have closed down, leaving 378,000 without proper education due to the recent coronavirus pandemic, 3.6 million children are affected by school closure. Also, there is a great risk of abduction and sexual and physical attacks, because the people are in such a fragile state. Moreover, according to the UNHCR<sup>9</sup>, more than 7,500 refugee children would face risks because of the lack of education and protection provided to them and the mortality rate for infants under the age of 5, which is currently 143 per 1,000 births, will keep increasing because of the lack of access to basic healthcare.

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<sup>9</sup> Mali situation (Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso), UNHCR, [www.unhcr.org](https://www.unhcr.org/50a9f82316.pdf), <https://www.unhcr.org/50a9f82316.pdf>

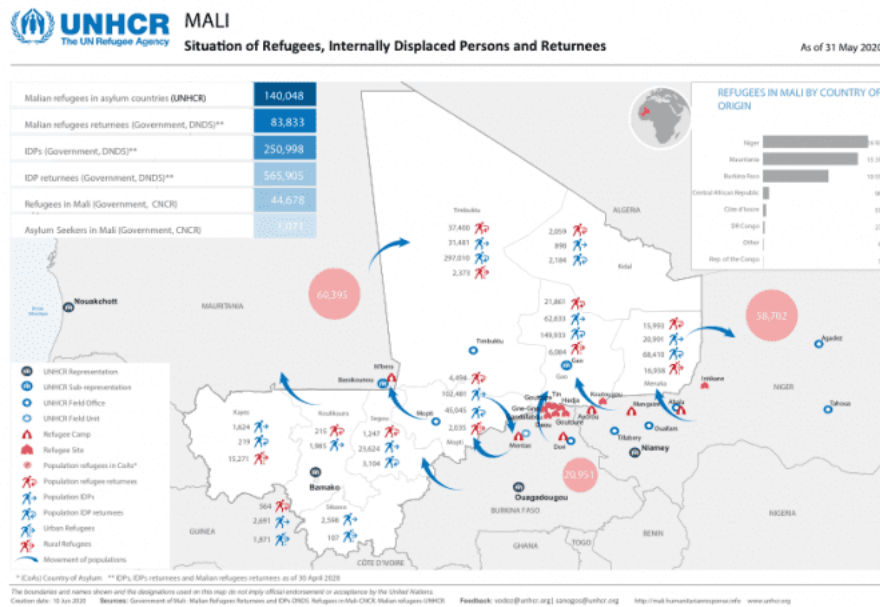


Figure 3: Map showing the situation fo refugees, IDPs and returnees in Mali

### Attacks

Because of the lack of security, since the jihadists have been raiding many areas of Mali, it is extremely difficult for human rights groups and companies to provide any sort of help to the people in need. Also, the outbreak of attacks between the Fulani and Dogon villages led to the deaths of thousands of innocent civilians, making 2019 the deadliest year since the beginning of the conflict in 2012. After the coup d'état in August 2020, several civilians and soldiers were killed in central Mali making the situation even more unstable and there are fears that the recent violence could further destabilize the region.



<sup>10</sup>Malian women and children suffering as a result of the crisis.

## **MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED**

### **Mali**

Mali is the country that has been the most affected by the crisis, exactly because it is taking place in the country.

### **France**

Mali was colonized by France from 1898 until 1960. After that, it gained its independent status. However, it is only logical that the French would intervene in a crisis, which is what they did. They sent troops to help de-escalate the situation while also trying to gain control of the country and regain power from the rebel forces. The result of France's intervention was the recapture of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu and the killing of Al-Qaeda officials. France's motive was to remain in the area long term by also providing assistance in restoring stability. At first, the operation seemed to be successful, with the stabilization slowly taking place. However, the Mali fault lines remained and the Tuareg rebels still tried to fight off the Mali troops and the French army. The intervention though, had effects in the neighboring countries and Africa as well. They have seemed to achieve short term success, such as to prevent the takeover of Bamako, an area of Mali, by extremist Islamist groups but on the other hand, the political alliances that keep shifting complicate the situation even more.

### **The African Union**

The African Union has contributed to alleviating the humanitarian crisis and tried to help by sending in military personnel, with the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA), which is an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

### **European Union (EU)**

The European Union, along with other countries, such as Burkina Faso, Mauritania, Chad and Niger, have sent troops to support the government and reclaim the areas taken by the jihadists. Furthermore, the EU has been a major donor in Mali and it has donated more

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<sup>10</sup> Entermedia.Net, 2020,

<https://global.unitednations.entermediadb.net/assets/mediadb/services/module/asset/downloads/preset/assets/2012/04/14754/image1170x530cropped.jpg>



than €350 million<sup>11</sup> since 2012. The intervention has led to the regaining of control of key areas of northern Mali. The European Union was an important factor in order to hold diplomatic peace talks between the two sides and maintain stability as much as possible.

### **African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA)**

In December 2012, the United Nation’s Security Council decided that they would send the African force AFISMA. They would help to strengthen Mali’s defense and security forces while also being in cooperation with the European Union and other groups that would be in support of the Mali forces. The outcome was that the forces were able to overrun some important areas in Mali.

### **TIMELINE OF EVENTS**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of Event</b>
1898	Mali becomes a French colony
1959	The Mali federation is formed by Mali and Senegal
1960	Mali gains its independent status, with president Modibo Keita.
1977	The first president, after Mali’s independence in 1960, Modibo Keita, dies in prison. His death triggers civil unrest throughout the country.
2012	The Islamist groups, mainly from Libya, capture many towns and the French military intervenes and regains control of the towns.
March 2012	The national army’s frustration leads to a coup against the central government
December 2012	The UN Security Council decides on the deployment of the AFISMA (African Forces) in Mali, to strengthen the security and defense of the Malian forces.
2018	The former president, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, begins his second term

<sup>11</sup> Pat. “Mali.” European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations – European Commissions, 3 Oct. 2013, [https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/mali\\_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20is%20a%20major,i n%20the%203%20neighbouring%20countries.](https://ec.europa.eu/echo/where/africa/mali_en#:~:text=The%20EU%20is%20a%20major,i n%20the%203%20neighbouring%20countries.)

	as president.
2019	The prime minister of Mali, Soumeylou Boubeye, resigns because of the violence that keeps becoming more evident and extreme.
January 2019	An Al-Qaeda affiliated group (JNIM), carries out a series of attacks against the UN peacekeepers and soldiers.

## UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

### United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSIMA)



<sup>12</sup> UN soldier at the MINUSIMA mission.

The United Nations Security Council, in a resolution that was drafted and passed in 2013, created the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSIMA), to help support the political process and stabilize Mali. Since it was decided, the main incentive of MINUSIMA has been to protect the civilians that are currently in danger and ensure the human rights that are not being violated.

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<sup>12</sup> Unmissions.Org, 2016,

[https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/styles/full\\_width\\_image/public/field/image/16-12-17-tchadian\\_patrol\\_in\\_kidal0076\\_0.jpg?itok=dJS6azVR](https://minusma.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/styles/full_width_image/public/field/image/16-12-17-tchadian_patrol_in_kidal0076_0.jpg?itok=dJS6azVR)

### **United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS),**

The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) exists to assist people who are unable to access basic needs. It delivers to areas that are in crisis and it grants access to all human entities. Since Mali is in urgent need of help, the UNHAS has secured access for aid workers.

### **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)**

Since Mali is a member of both the United Nations and the African Union, it has also agreed to support the Universal Declaration Of Human Rights. The people of Mali are able to invoke their rights through various United Nations bodies. For example, they may use the UNESCO procedure, which would allow them to discuss their human rights violations and find solutions to them.

## **PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE**

### **French Intervention**

Mali was a French colony up until 1960. After that, it gained its independent status and has been acting without being controlled by France. However, after it had suffered from jihadist attacks, France decided to help its former colony by sending troops and aid in order to reclaim the parts of the country that had been raided by the Al-Qaeda linked group. First of all, the UN Security Council resolution that was facilitated by France, authorized ECOWAS- led AFISMA forces to be deployed in the area. Apart from that, they made several strikes against the Islamist rebels in order to prevent them from taking key states such as Bamako.

### **Agreement of Peace and Reconciliation<sup>13</sup>**

Even though it has not been implemented yet, the agreement for peace and reconciliation has the potential of becoming a viable solution to the crisis. The main incentive is to conduct peaceful talks and discussions between the government and the armed groups in order to reach a deal that would bring an end to the crisis and to the suffering of the Malian people. In 2018, certain efforts were made to hold talks and the result was a direct dialogue between the two groups and discussions on the demands of the

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<sup>13</sup> PA-X, Peace agreement Access Tool, [www.peaceagreements.org](http://www.peaceagreements.org), "Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process", [https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/EN-ML\\_150620\\_Accord-pour-la-paix-et-la-reconciliation-au-Mali\\_Issu-du-Processus-d'Alger.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/pdfs/EN-ML_150620_Accord-pour-la-paix-et-la-reconciliation-au-Mali_Issu-du-Processus-d'Alger.pdf)

armed groups. The two groups that were taking part in the discussion decided to take measures on establishing peace and national reconciliation, improving governance and the distribution of powers. The security part of the issue did not see a huge difference since the implementation of the agreement requires improvement. However, in the political sphere, the results are shown to be encouraging since there has been more open political dialogue.

## **POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS**

The Malian crisis is a complicated one that requires talks and a tremendous amount of cooperation from the international community. The agreement for peace and reconciliation, if conducted correctly, could prove to be successful. Since the UN and the international community are willing to help and contribute to the stabilization of the country, the funding and supervising of the discussions to reach an agreement essentially benefitting both sides would be of great help. If both sides could be heard and no tensions were involved, then it could be a viable solution to the problem.

At the same time, the UNESCO procedure (104)<sup>14</sup> would allow the countries and organizations involved to further discuss the issue and the human rights violations taking place in the country peacefully, while also trying to find viable solutions to them. The procedure is specialized on the protection of human rights. The people of Mali may use the UNESCO procedure that would allow them to discuss their human rights violations and find solutions to them.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://plus.google.com/+UNESCO>. "Protection of Human Rights : Procedure 104." UNESCO, 18 Jul. 2019, <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/procedure104>

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