

PRESS RELEASE

Amnesty International Says Mali Experiencing Worst Human Rights Crisis in Half Century

mercredi 27 février 2013, par [Amnesty International](#) (Date de rédaction antérieure : 16 mai 2012).

(New York) — Amnesty International said today that Mali is in a human rights crisis not seen in 50 years. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by fighting in northern Mali and dozens are being jailed arbitrarily, killed and sexually assaulted including raped. The organization found evidence that child soldiers are being used by the Tuareg armed group.

In a new report, « Mali : Five Months of Crisis, Armed Rebellion and Military Coup, » Amnesty International reports human rights violations against the backdrop of food shortages affecting 15 million people in the Sahel region.

« After two decades of relative stability and peace, Mali is now facing its worst crisis since independence in 1960, » said Gaetan Mootoo, Amnesty International's West Africa researcher, who has just returned from the country after three weeks. « The entire north of the country has been taken over by armed groups who are running riot. Tens of thousands of people have fled the region, creating a humanitarian crisis in southern Mali and in neighboring countries. »

Amnesty International delegates visited the Malian capital Bamako and four refugee sites in Niger, about 125 miles north of the capital Niamey.

According to testimonies, women and girls were raped, sometimes collectively, by armed men including members of the Tuareg armed group Azawad National Liberation Movement particularly in Menaka and Gao.

« I was on the way to a friend's house around 8pm with one of my classmates, » a 19-year-old female student, who fled to Bamako, told Amnesty International. « On the way, a motorcycle carrying two Tamasheq [Tuareg] and a car full of armed men and captured women, stopped beside us. They began to tell us that we should go with them to the camp because they needed women. We refused. One of the Tamasheks then made me go into an empty house. I told him I was menstruating. He ordered me to show him. I showed him the blood. He said 'What's that ?' and raped me. »

All parties to the conflict are believed to be committing human rights violations and abuses.

Malian soldiers beat and then executed three unarmed people accused of spying for the Azawad Movement in Sevare (390 kilometres north of Bamako) on April 18. Other suspects are being held in locations not registered as places of detention, such as the General Directorate of Public Security.

Similarly, Malian soldiers taken prisoner by armed groups have been ill-treated and summarily executed. Two Malian soldiers who had been taken prisoner in January before being released as part of an exchange described how some soldiers had been tortured and abused. Some had their throats slit.

Amnesty International found evidence of the presence of child soldiers within the ranks of the armed Tuareg and Islamist groups, which took control of the north of the country.

Amnesty International said members of the Ansar Eddin armed group are pressuring people through violence, including killings, and intimidation to change their behavior in accordance with their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.

Amnesty International is calling all parties to the conflict to respect international humanitarian law and to take the necessary measures to protect civilians and combatants captured during the conflict. The organization calls upon Malian authorities to put an end to the harassment of those who campaign peacefully for the return of the rule of law.

Amnesty International also calls on the armed groups that have taken control of the north to stop recruiting child soldiers and sexually assaulting women and girls.

The organization also urges the Malian authorities and armed groups to allow United Nations and other humanitarian agencies unrestricted access, particularly in northern Mali, to refugees and internally displaced people.

« Without coordinated action to protect human rights, uphold international humanitarian law and the assistance of displaced and refugee populations, the entire sub-region risks destabilisation through the effects of political instability, armed conflict in the north and the food crisis which affects the whole of the Sahel, » Mootoo said.

Amnesty International is a Nobel Peace Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with more than 3 million supporters, activists and volunteers in more than 150 countries campaigning for human rights worldwide. The organization investigates and exposes abuses, educates and mobilizes the public, and works to protect people wherever justice, freedom, truth and dignity are denied.

P.-S.

* <http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/news-item/mali-s-worst-human-rights-situation-in-50-years>