

War in Mali: Three reports of reprisals by Mali, French armies

Saturday 23 February 2013, by [GEORGIEVA Kristalina](#), [Human Rights Watch](#), [IRVINE Eve](#) (Date first published: 22 February 2013).

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Timbuktu: Revenge in the shadows in northern Mali

France 24, Feb. 22, 2013

The fabled city of Timbuktu, in north-western Mali, was occupied by armed Islamist groups for almost a year. At the end of January, French and Malian soldiers retook control of the city. Since then, its people have been enjoying the taste of freedom again. But the light-skinned Arab and Tuareg communities are accused of complicity with the extremists and have already suffered revenge attacks. Our reporters Alexandra Renard, Eve Irvine and Chady Chlela went to Timbuktu. (Watch a 16-minute, video news report in English from Timbuktu at the link below.)

[Breaking news: The Tuareg political movement MNLA has announced on Feb. 22 that it has placed before the International Criminal Court a complaint of war crimes committed by the Mali army and the Mali governing regime [1]. It says hundreds of innocents have been killed in northern Mali since France launched 'Operation Serval' on Jan. 11, 2013.—Roger Annis]

By Eve IRVINE

A crowd gathers outside the home of Ali Kabbadi, a 70-year-old herdsman and shopkeeper. Women are weeping. A young son doesn't know who to turn to. His father was arrested and no one knows where he has been taken.

Neighbours say that men wearing green military uniforms driving a pick-up arrived early in the morning and forced Ali onto their truck.

"A military truck pulled up and they went straight into Ali's house. They didn't ask any questions, nor did they give him a chance to speak. He was so afraid he struggled to walk so they just pushed him violently onto the truck. Ali had nothing to do with the terrorists; if they came by he would be the one to tell them that he wanted to be left in peace. Seriously... if we could just come together as a people and stage a peaceful process to put an end to this confusion", says a young woman who lives nearby.

Another man, a neighbour of Ali who came to defend the herdsman, was also bundled into the truck.

Around the corner it's a similar scene. Two brothers, Danna and Mohammed Ould Dahmamma were

both forced onto the same pick-up and taken away.

Mohammed's 13-year-old son, Boucar, says they almost took him too. "They came and took my Dad away. Just like that, without any explanation. They wanted to take me too but in the end they told me to stay," he says.

The Malian army denies that any of their men were involved in the arrests and say they do not have any of the men in question in detention.

In Timbuktu today, the departure of the radical Islamists has left several ethnic groups living in fear. Many assume they collaborated with the extremists who reigned over the town for almost 10 months.

In their bid to take control of towns in northern Mali, the radical Islamist groups Aqmi, Ansar Dine and Mujao allied themselves with another rebel movement, one calling for the autonomy of the north of the country, a region they call the Azawad. This rebel group was made up of a number of light-skinned Tuaregs and Arabs.

At the start of February, locals said that only three out of Timbuktu's 500 Arab families were still living in the town. The majority having fled to refugee camps in neighbouring countries. Ali, Danna and Mohammed had refused to run, insisting that they had nothing to hide and saw no reason to leave their homes.

A week later, they were taken from their homes. The men are still missing.

* <http://www.france24.com/en/20130222-reporters-mali-Timbuktu-jihadist-al-Qaida-war-france24>

Human Rights Watch demand soldiers be prosecuted for abuses in Mali

Published on France 24, Feb 22, 2013

Human Rights Watch called on Mali's government Thursday to track down and prosecute soldiers accused of committing atrocities including torture and summary executions in the war against Islamic extremists. Malian authorities should "urgently investigate and prosecute soldiers responsible for torture, summary executions, and enforced disappearances of suspected Islamist rebels and alleged collaborators," the New York-based organisation said in a statement.

HRW said its investigations had found that since mid-January, when the French-led offensive against armed Islamists in Mali's desert began, Malian troops had carried out abuses against members of the Tuareg, Arab and Fula communities. "The Malian government needs to act now to put a stop to these abuses by their soldiers and appropriately punish those responsible," HRW added. "Mali's international partners should bolster accountability efforts and civilian protection in the north to help prevent further abuses."

Corinne Dufka, a senior researcher in HRW's Africa Division, cited the case of two young Fulas accused of being fighters for the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), one of the Islamist groups that occupied north Mali for some 10 months. "Soldiers forced the men into an army vehicle and drove them to the outskirts of the village... Some minutes later, villagers heard

several gunshots... The two men have not been heard from since.”

In another case in February, soldiers allegedly detained a 43-year-old Tuareg man. “He was severely beaten, burned on his abdomen and genitals with cigarettes, partially strangled and then forced to ingest through his nose a toxic substance that severely burned his oesophagus,” Dufka added.

The war in northern Mali — an area larger than France — has sent 22,000 civilians fleeing, mostly pale-skinned Tuaregs and Arabs who say they are afraid of reprisals by the Malian army, HRW said.

The organisation called on Malian authorities “to address abuses by the military and address urgent civilian protection needs within the current security vacuum.” The restoration of security in northern Mali should mean that everybody is protected, whatever their ethnic background, Dufka said.

* <http://www.france24.com/en/20130221-mali-human-rights-watch-demands-action-atrocities>

Kristalina Georgieva, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid, speaks on Mali

Video interview of 11 minutes on France 24, Feb. 21, 2013:

<http://www.france24.com/en/20130221-interview-kristalina-georgieva-european-commissioner-humanitarian-aid-mali-food-security>

Kristalina Georgieva, who has recently come back from Mali, speaks to Marc Perelman about the need to stabilise the country’s food security situation. Already struggling to cope with several droughts, Malians now face political instability, ethnic tensions and a continuing Islamist threat that have worsened the food crisis.

P.S.

* <http://www.rogerannis.com/timbuktu-revenge-in-the-shadows-in-northern-mali/>

Footnotes

[1] <http://www.mnlamov.net/actualites/34-actualites/259-communique-nd-54-plainte-a-la-cour-penale-internationale-contre-le-mali.html>