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EASO

Country of Origin Information Report

Mali

Country Focus



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Dr [Bruce Whitehouse](#), Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Global Studies Program in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology of Lehigh University, PA, researcher, and author of numerous publications on the country and the region -, reviewed this report.

It must be noted that the review carried out by the mentioned departments, experts or organisations contributes to the overall quality of the report, but does not necessarily imply their formal endorsement of the final report, which is the full responsibility of EASO.

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Disclaimer

This report was written according to the EASO COI Report Methodology (2012).¹ The report is based on carefully selected sources of information. All sources used are referenced.

The information contained in this report has been researched, evaluated and analysed with utmost care. However, this document does not claim to be exhaustive. If a particular event, person or organisation is not mentioned in the report, this does not mean that the event has not taken place or that the person or organisation does not exist. Any event taking place after the finalisation of this report is not included.

Furthermore, this report is not conclusive as to the determination or merit of any particular application for international protection. Terminology used should not be regarded as indicative of a particular legal position.

'Refugee', 'risk' and similar terminology are used as generic terminology and not in the legal sense as applied in the EU Asylum Acquis, the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees.

Neither EASO nor any person acting on its behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained in this report.

The target users are asylum caseworkers, COI researchers, policymakers, and decision-making authorities.

The drafting of this report (including reviewing) was finalised on 19 September 2018. Any event taking place after this date is not included in this report. More information on the reference period for this report can be found in the [Methodology](#) section of the [Introduction](#).

¹ The EASO methodology is largely based on the Common EU Guidelines for processing Country of Origin Information (COI), 2008, and can be downloaded from the EASO website: <http://www.easo.europa.eu>.

Glossary and abbreviations

ACRT	<i>Alliance des communautés de la région de Tombouctou</i> [Alliance of Communities of the Timbuktu Region]
ADEMA	<i>Alliance pour la Démocratie en Mali</i> [Alliance for Democracy in Mali]
AFISMA	African-led International Support Mission to Mali
AMB	Al-Mulathamun Battalion/ al-Murabitun
AQIM	Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb
CMA	<i>Coalition des Mouvements de l’Azawad</i> [Coordination of Azawad Movements]
CM-FPR.1	<i>Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance n°1</i> [Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance #1]
CM-FPR.2	<i>Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance n°2</i> [Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance #2]
CPA	<i>Coalition du peuple pour l’Azawad</i> [Coalition of the people for Azawad]
CODEM	<i>Convergence pour le Développement du Mali</i> [Convergence for the Development of Mali]
CNDH	<i>Commission Nationale Des Droits De L’Homme</i> [National Commission for Human Rights]
CNID	<i>Congrès national d’initiative démocratique</i> [National Congress for Democratic Initiative]
CRA	<i>Centre de réflexion et d’action</i> [Centre for reflection and action]
CSPRE	Comité stratégique de pilotage de la réforme de l’Etat (Strategic Steering Committee for State Reform)
DNAPES	<i>Direction National de l’Administration Pénitentiaire et de l’Education Surveillée</i> [National Directorate of Penitentiary Administration and Supervised Education]
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EUCAP	European Union Capacity Building Mission
EUTM	European Union Training Mission
FACO	<i>Force armée contre l’occupation</i> [Armed force against occupation]
FAMa	<i>Forces Armées Maliennes</i> [Malian Armed Forces]
FARE	<i>Forces Alternatives pour le Renouveau et l’Emergence</i> [Alternative Forces for Renewal and Emergence]
FARK	<i>Front d’action pour la région de Kayes</i> [Action Front for the Kayes region]
FLM	<i>Front de libération du Macina</i> (Macina Liberation Front)
FLN	<i>Forces de libération du Nord</i> [Front for the Liberation of the North]
FLNA	<i>Front de libération nationale de l’Azawad</i> [National Liberation Front of

	Azawad]
FPA	<i>Front populaire de l’Azawad</i> [Popular Front of Azawad]
GATIA	<i>Groupe Autodéfense Touareg Imghad et Alliés</i> [Tuareg Imghad self-defense group and allies]
GSPC	<i>Groupe Salafiste Pour la Prédication et le Combat</i> [Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat]. Another name for AQIM
HCUA	<i>Haut conseil pour l’unité de l’Azawad</i> [High Council for the Unity of Azawad]
ICC	International Criminal Court
IDLO	International Development Law Organization
IDPs	Internally displaced persons
ISSAT	International Security Sector Advisory Team
JCPE	<i>Justices de paix à compétence étendue</i> [Justices of the peace with extended powers]
JNIM	<i>Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin</i> [Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims]
MAA.1	<i>Mouvement Arabe de l’Azawad</i> [Arab Movement of Azawad], former FLNA
MAA.2	<i>Mouvement Arabe de l’Azawad</i> [Arab Movement of Azawad]
MDAC	<i>Ministère de la Défense et des Anciens Combattants</i> [Ministry of Armed Forces and Former Combatants]
MIA	<i>Mouvement islamique de l’Azawad</i> [Islamic Movement of Azawad]
MINUSMA	<i>Mission multidimensionnelle intégrée des Nations unies pour la stabilisation au Mali</i> [United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali]
MNA	<i>Mouvement National de l’Azawad</i> [National Movement of Azawad]
MNLA	<i>Mouvement National de Libération de l’Azawad</i> [National Movement of Liberation of Azawad]
MoAF	Ministry of Armed Forces and Former Combatants
MoI	Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection
MPLA	<i>Mouvement Populaire pour la Libération de l’Azawad</i> [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad]
MPSA	<i>Mouvement populaire pour le salut de l’Azawad</i> [Popular movement for the salvation of Azawad]
MSA	<i>Mouvement pour le salut de l’Azawad</i> [Movement for the salvation of Azawad]
MTNM	<i>Mouvement Touareg du Nord Mali</i> [Tuareg movement of northern Mali]
MUJAO	<i>Mouvement pour l’Unité et le Jihad en Afrique de l’Ouest</i> [Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa]
NP	National Police (<i>La Police Nationale</i>)
PARENA	<i>Parti pour la renaissance nationale</i> [National Renaissance Party]
PKO	peacekeeping operation

RPM	<i>Rassemblement pour le Mali</i> [Rally for Mali]
SADI	<i>Solidarité Africaine pour la Démocratie et l'Indépendance</i> [African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence]
URD	<i>Union pour la République et la Démocratie</i> [Union for Republic and Democracy]
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNESCO	United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
URD	<i>Union pour la République et la Démocratie</i> [Republic and Democracy Union]
US DoS	United States Department of State

Introduction

This report was written in the framework of the [2018 EASO Operating Plan to Italy](#), Measure IT 3.0: Support to the National Asylum Commission and Territorial Commissions.² The French OFPRA welcomed a COI specialist from Italy in their headquarters in Paris, where a dedicated French COI specialist supported the Italian COI unit in drafting a report on selected topics on Mali. The co-drafters of this report are mentioned in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.

Methodology

Defining the terms of reference

In a country focus report, EASO aims to provide information focusing on selected topics of particular relevance for international protection status determination (refugee status and subsidiary protection), in this case for Malian applicants. It is not meant to be a general description of the human rights situation in the country, nor a comprehensive overview of all topics at stake in international protection status determination.

The terms of reference (ToR) were based on a list of information needs provided by Italian asylum authorities, a systematic review of queries from Italian territorial commissions and courts processing applications for international protection from Malian applicants in 2017, as well as input from the EASO COI specialist network on West Africa. ToR were finalised during a meeting held in February 2018 with the drafters, and can be found in annex to this report under [Terms of Reference](#).

The above-mentioned input suggested that a significant number of Malian applications for international protection in Italy originate from the southern part of the country, namely from Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou and Sikasso, leading to the option, during the definition of ToR, to highlight the southern regions in this report. It was also agreed that the situation in the south of Mali would not be clear without an overview of the north and central areas. For that reason, the information related to those regions available in this report should be seen as background information.

Collecting information

The information is mostly the result of desk research of public, specialised paper-based and electronic sources until 19 September 2018 and was supplemented with information collected from field work in Mali conducted by OFPRA's COI specialist (see [Quality Control](#)).

The information has largely been retrieved from open sources, namely international and Mali NGOs, think tanks, media and academic research, both during the deployment of the IT researcher to OFPRA (1-21 February 2018), and during several rounds of peer -and external reviews that further contributed to the information collection process (see [Quality Control](#)). All consulted sources are listed in the bibliography.

For data on violent incidents, the datasets from the organisation Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) have been used. ACLED collects information about incidents of violence and protests in developing states, including Mali. In a database, ACLED indicates the kind of violence, the actors, the location, the course of events and the number of fatalities (deaths). ACLED collects its information from local, regional, national and continental media sources, as well as from international media sources such as Agence France Presse (AFP) and

² EASO, Operating Plan Agreed by EASO and Italy, 15 December 2017, [url](#)

Associated Press (AP). ³The database is publicly available and is continuously updated. ⁴ Additional sources have been researched to the extent possible to corroborate the ACLED findings.

It should be borne in mind that ACLED data may not always be accurate. In the northern areas of the country or frontline areas inaccessible to regular media reporting, there may be underreporting of incidents, whereas, in areas with large media coverage and presence of international forces and national armed forces, overreporting may occur.

According to ACLED's codebook (in which their methodology is explained), for incidents where the original source has reported that several or many were killed, ACLED codes the number of fatalities as 10. ⁵ This method has a significant impact on overall numbers of fatalities reported.

ACLED registers civilian deaths under the category 'violence against civilians', defined as follows:

'deliberate violent acts perpetrated by an organized political group such as a rebel, militia or government force against unarmed non-combatants. These conflict events harm or kill civilians, and are the sole act in which civilians are an actor (...). "Violence against civilians" also includes inflicting significant harm (e.g. bombing, shooting, torture, rape, mutilation etc) or accosting victims (e.g. kidnapping and disappearances). It does not include incidents in which people are not physically harmed (e.g. looting or burning, destruction of sacred spaces, and forced displacement).' ⁶

Fatalities are counted only once. For example, in ACLED's Codebook it is stated:

'If summarized fatalities are reported, but events occur across several days or in multiple locations simultaneously, the total number is divided and that fraction is recorded for each day of the event (if over 1). If an odd number, the proportion of fatalities is divided by assigning the first day the additional fatality and distributed as evenly as possible. No information for number of harmed people is recorded in any other space besides the notes column, if available.' ⁷

In this report, the ACLED data are regarded merely as estimates and indications of trends in violence.

In [Table 1](#), an overview of violent incidents and the corresponding fatalities is presented in the period 1 September 2017 until 30 August 2018. In addition, the table presents two subsets of data: on violent incidents and fatalities by ACLED that are the result of violence reported as 'violence against civilians', and on incidents and fatalities that are the result of 'remote violence' (violence in which the actor is not present, such as car bombs, improvised explosive devices (IEDs)), 'battle-no change of territory' (a battle in which the government requires control of territory), 'riots/protests' and 'strategic development' (activity by rebel groups/militia/governments that does not involve active fighting but is within the context of the war/dispute). ⁸

Quality control

In order to ensure that the authors respected the EASO COI Report Methodology, a review was carried out by COI specialists from the countries listed as reviewers in the [Acknowledgements](#) section, and by EASO. In addition, a review of the report was carried out by researcher/academic Bruce Whitehouse. EASO performed the final quality review and editing of the text.

³ ACLED, Codebook, 2017, [url](#), pp. 20-21

⁴ ACLED, Realtime Data (2017-2018), n.d., [url](#)

⁵ ACLED, Codebook, 2017, [url](#), p. 20

⁶ ACLED, Codebook, 2017, [url](#), p. 20

⁷ ACLED, Codebook, 2017, [url](#), p. 20

⁸ ACLED, Codebook, 2017, [url](#), pp. 8-9

The quality control process led to further research and the inclusion of some additional information up to 19 September 2018, in response to feedback received during the respective reviews. All comments made by the reviewers were taken into consideration and most of them were implemented in the final draft of this report.

Structure of the report

This report is divided into three main chapters: the first provides general background information on topics like geography, population, religion or political history, and includes an overview of the main actors in the crisis in northern Mali, as well as an overview of the current political situation in the country. The second chapter describes Mali's state structure, including its administration, judiciary, and security forces. The last chapter is dedicated to the country's security situation in the southern regions, namely Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou and Sikasso.

Map



Map 1: Mali, March 2013, ©United Nations ⁹

⁹ UN, Map no. 4231 rev. 3, March 2013, [url](#)

1. Background information

1.1 Geography

Mali, a member of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), is large country of 1 240 000 km² landlocked and bordered by seven countries: Senegal, Mauritania, Algeria, Niger, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.¹⁰

The territory that forms today's Mali has been the centre of the 'great Western empires' of Ghana (Soninke, between current Mali, Senegal and Mauritania)¹¹, Mali (Maninka, between current Mali and Guinea)¹², and the Songhay Empire (in the Gao and Timbuktu regions, between current Mali and Niger).¹³ This 'golden age', that refers to the period between the eighth to the sixteenth centuries, constitutes the main historical reference for most of Mali's ethnic groups today.¹⁴

Until recently, Mali was geographically and economically divided between the north and the south (south and south-west). Dating back from before independence, the south of Mali was often referred to as the 'useful Mali', while the rural and arid north lived in extreme poverty and was seen as relying on various trafficking activities (drugs, cars, weapons and migrants). The concept of 'useful Mali' continued after the country's independence.¹⁵ The main cultivated areas of the country are south of the Niger River.¹⁶ Cotton production, one of Mali's main exports¹⁷, is largely grown in the regions of Sikasso, Ségou, Koulikoro and Kayes.¹⁸ Millet, sorghum, or peanuts, for example are also produced in the region, due to most favourable weather conditions.¹⁹

1.2 Population, ethnic groups, languages

1.2.1 Population and ethnic groups

2017 estimates indicate Mali has a population of 18.5 million persons.²⁰ Data from 2012 and 2013 indicates that around 34.1 % of the population were Bambara. Rough estimates on other ethnic groups include the Fulani or Peul (14.7 %), the Sarakole (10.8 %), the Senufo-Minyanka (10.5 %), the Dogon (8.9 %), the Malinke (8.7 %), the Bobo (2.9 %), the Songhai (1.6 %), the

¹⁰ Imperato, P. J., and Imperato, G. H., Historical Dictionary of Mali, 2008; Maïga, I., An ka Mali don, 1993, p. 74; ECOWAS, Mali, basic information, n.d., [url](#)

¹¹ Person, Y., L'Empire du Ghana, n.d., [url](#)

¹² Leymarie, P. and Perret, T., Les 100 clés de l'Afrique, 2006, p. 308; Cisse, Y. T. and Kamissoko, W., La grande geste du Mali, des origines à la fondation de l'Empire, 1988, p. 78, 96, 192-193, 280-283

¹³ Leymarie, P. and Perret, T., Les 100 clés de l'Afrique, 2006, p. 308; Fierro, A., Songhaï ou Songhay Empire, n.d., [url](#); Imperato, P. J. and Imperato, G. H., Historical Dictionary of Mali, 2008, p. 345

¹⁴ Skattum, I., Mali: In Defence of Cultural and Linguistic Pluralism, 2008, [url](#), pp. 98-121

¹⁵ Perret, T., Mali: une crise au Sahel, 2014, p. 93; Panon, X., Dans les coulisses de la diplomatie française, 2015; Thibaud, B. and Francois, A., Systèmes de production et durabilité dans les pays du Sud, 2010

¹⁶ Groupe URD, The difficult handling of a complex crisis in Northern Mali, February 2015, [url](#), p. 13

¹⁷ FAO, Mali, Country Fact Sheet on Food and Agriculture Policy Trends, July 2017, [url](#), p. 2

¹⁸ Camara, M., Atouts et limites de la filière coton au Mali, 2015, [url](#), p. 17

¹⁹ Camara, M., Atouts et limites de la filière coton au Mali, 2015, [url](#), pp. 13, 20, 152, 195; Groupe URD, The difficult handling of a complex crisis in Northern Mali, February 2015, [url](#), p. 13

²⁰ UNFPA, World Population Dashboard - Mali, 2017, [url](#)

Tuareg (between 9 %-10 %²¹), and other smaller communities such as the Bozo-Somono, the Khassonke or the Arab (Maure).²²

Pastoralist and nomadic groups live in the Sahel²³ and the Sahara²⁴ regions of northern Mali.²⁵ The Sudanic zone²⁶ is the agricultural region. More than half of the population is rural, living in small villages surrounded by cultivated lands, mainly along the Niger River and the Senegal River.²⁷

Relevant to several conflicts in Mali are the Tuareg. They are a nomadic people that can be found, among other places, in northern Mali. The name Tuareg was probably an invention of the nineteenth century to facilitate the categorisation of the many different nomadic tribes of the southern Sahara. The Tuareg are not a single community with the same set of values and beliefs. The loyalty to their tribe has always been more important than the loyalty towards the Tuareg as a whole. The importance of religion can also vary among the different tribes.²⁸

During the colonial times, France granted a special status to the Tuareg chiefdoms through the establishment of a system of governance close to the British indirect rule. French administration, willing to avoid revolts, was not interested in ruling the vast desert and uneconomic part of the country.²⁹

Soninke are the majority in the western region. They live in Mali, Senegal and Mauritania, in the Senegal River valley. The men have a very ancient tradition of migration, while the women remain at home working hard to sustain a living.³⁰ Climate changes and droughts have driven Soninke people to leave their land and search for work abroad³¹, firstly in other countries in Africa, then in Europe.³²

90 % of the Malian population lives in the south.³³ Sources agree that being the majority, southerners did not prioritise the development of the north. Low motivation and lack of resources encouraged the authorities to concentrate their efforts on the south. This has perpetuated the isolation of the north and increased the difficulties to control it. Poverty has also resulted in significant corruption of some political leaders and military officers. The profits derived from complicity with traffickers of all kinds, and even with the hostage takers, have led some community leaders and officials to perpetuate the absence of the rule of law in the northern region.³⁴

²¹ Grégoire, E., *Islamistes et rebelles touaregs maliens*, 2013, [url](#); Modica, B., *Les Touaregs au Mali et au Niger*, 4 November 2015, [url](#)

²² CIA World Factbook, Mali, last updated 9 February 2018, [url](#); Tabouret-Keller, A., *Le nom des langues I., Les enjeux de la nomination des langues*, 1997, pp. 5-20; Calame-Griaule, G. and Brasseur, G., *Les établissements humains au Mali*, 1969, p. 246; Gallais, J., *Signification du groupe ethnique au Mali*, May-August 1962, [url](#), pp. 106-129; HRW, *Mali: Abuses Spread South*, 19 February 2016, [url](#)

²³ Conversation (The), *Sahel region, Africa*, 28 February 2017, [url](#)

²⁴ OECD, *An Atlas of the Sahara-sahel*, 19 December 2014, [url](#)

²⁵ Codrington, S., *Planet Geography*, 2005, p. 260

²⁶ Mali is divided into three climatic zones: the Sudanic, the Sahelian and the Saharan zones. The Sudanic corresponds to the south and represents 16% of the territory (700 to 1,000 mm of annual precipitation); the Sahelian in the Centre and West, accounting for 44% of the territory (200 to 400 mm precipitation) and the Saharan in the North, with 40% of the territory (little or no rain). UN and ICC, *Mali, An Investment Guide to Mali*, October 2006, [url](#)

²⁷ Encyclopædia Britannica, Mali, n.d., [url](#)

²⁸ Morgan, A., *What do the Tuareg want?*, 9 January 2014, [url](#)

²⁹ Grégoire, E., *Islamistes et rebelles touaregs maliens*, 2013, [url](#)

³⁰ Manchuelle, F., *Les diasporas des travailleurs soninké (1848-1960)*, 1 January 2004, pp. 328-329

³¹ Gonin, P. and Lassailly-Jacob, V., *Les réfugiés de l'environnement, Une nouvelle catégorie de migrants forcés?*, 2002, [url](#), pp. 139-160

³² Barou, J., *Les Soninké d'hier à demain*, 1990, [url](#), p. 10

³³ CIA Factbook, Mali, *Economy overview*, 24 January 2018, [url](#)

³⁴ Ngassam, R. N., *Mali - Azawad, zone de non-droit*, September 2016, [url](#); Chena, S. and Tisseron, A., *Rupture d'équilibres au Mali*, 2013, [url](#), para. 12, 14, 15, 16

47 % of the Malian population is under 15 and 53 % is under 18. On average, youths remain economically dependent until 26, and the economic support ratio in 2014 was of 43 people working to support 100 people including themselves.³⁵

The rate of school enrolment has continuously increased up to 57.3 % in 2015. This means that more than 4 out of 10 children aged from 7 to 12 were not attending the first cycle of basic education in 2015. The literacy rate is higher in urban areas (57.2 %) than in rural areas (30.1 %).³⁶

Migratory movements

Since the 1970s, the inhabitants of the western region of Mali have relied more on the diaspora to finance development than on the state: social services and infrastructure have been funded by migrants and are still maintained by the remittances they send.³⁷

In the 1970-1980s severe droughts hit the northern Mali, forcing thousands of Tuaregs to go into exile (namely to neighbouring countries, Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso).³⁸

Since the 1990s, the Tuareg-Fulani hostility has taken on a new dimension in a context of environmental degradation.³⁹ Conflicts between nomadic herders and farmers arose from competition over increasingly scarce natural resources (conversion of pastures to rice fields) and ethnic / cultural antagonisms.⁴⁰

Additionally, since the advent of democracy in 1992, land disputes and identity tensions have taken a more violent dimension because of the remoteness of the central state and the feeling of abandonment of populations living far from the capital, neglected by development projects mainly concentrated in the south and west of the country.⁴¹

The 'connectivity' and 'cross-border relationships' characterise the 'smooth space' of the Sahara desert and a weak state unable to control the territory where smuggling and trafficking are the rule⁴²; northern regions of Mali have been the most affected by illegal trafficking: cars, weapons, drugs, cigarettes and migrants⁴³. Hostage taking or kidnapping has become a financial funding source for the activities of criminal organisations in the Sahel.⁴⁴ Traffickers have now much more armed protection, GPS and money than the few personal posted in the 119 border posts of Mali.⁴⁵ Political and economic fragility of Mali is compounded by the presence of Jihadist groups linked to Al-Qaeda in the north.⁴⁶

In Mali, a complex system of alliances between tribes and families (*sanankuya*) ensured peace and cordial understanding between communities.⁴⁷ Traditional mechanisms of conflict

³⁵ Mali, Feuille de route nationale: Tirer pleinement profit du dividende démographique en investissant massivement dans la jeunesse, June 2017, [url](#)

³⁶ Mali, INSM, Enquête modulaire et permanente auprès des ménages, August 2015, [url](#)

³⁷ Fouchard, A., Dans la région de Kayes, au Mali, les habitants comptent sur la diaspora, pas sur l'Etat, 23 May 2017, [url](#); Boulanger, C. and Mary, K., Les Maliens en France et aux États-Unis, 2011, url, pp. 17-28; Meynial, C., Mali: les héros de la diaspora, 3 February 2018, [url](#)

³⁸ Morgan, A.ndy, Les clés de la guerre dans le Nord, 8 April 2012, [url](#)

³⁹ Raineri, Luca, The Peul-Fulani community and conflict in northern Mali, January 2015, [url](#), p. 9

⁴⁰ International Crisis Group, Central Mali, An Uprising in the Making?, 6 June 2016, [url](#); Daniel, S., Mali: conflits éleveurs/agriculteurs, 12 September 2016, [url](#); Guichaoua, Yvan and Ba-Konare, Dougoukolo A.O., Djihad, révolte et auto-défense au centre du Mali, 12 October 2016, [url](#); Moseley, William G., et al, La décentralisation et les conflits entre agriculteurs et éleveurs dans le delta intérieur du Niger, 2002, [url](#), pp. 101-118

⁴¹ Thiam, A., Centre du Mali: enjeux et dangers d'une crise négligée, March 2017, [url](#), pp. 20-22, 36, 40, 48; GEMDEV and Université du Mali, Mali-France, Regards sur une histoire partagée, 1 November 2005, [url](#), p. 311

⁴² Strazzari, F., Azawad and the rights of passage, January 2015, [url](#), pp. 2, 4

⁴³ Ngassam, R. N., Mali - Azawad, zone de non-droit, September 2016, [url](#), para. 30

⁴⁴ Ngassam, R. N., Mali - Azawad, zone de non-droit, September 2016, [url](#), para. 33

⁴⁵ Strazzari, F., Azawad and the rights of passage, January 2015, [url](#), p. 3

⁴⁶ L'Express, Mali: des djihadistes d'Ansar ed-Dine tués dans une opération française, 15 February 2018, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Canut, C. et Smith, E., Pactes, alliances et plaisanteries, pratiques local, discours global, 2006, [url](#), pp. 22-23

management seem however to be steadily declining, although modern justice is also not perceived as more effective by the population.⁴⁸

1.2.2 Languages

According to Mali's constitution, French is the country's official language. According to Marianne Opheim, educational researcher at Oslo University, only 5 to 10 % of the population master the French language (typically someone who studied, lives in urban centres and works as a civil servant, teacher or politician)⁴⁹, whereas Bambara [*bamanankan*⁵⁰] is the main language for around 40 % of the population and the lingua franca understood by about 80 % of Malians.⁵¹

The Bambara language, dominant in the south and in the urban environment, is in constant evolution, except in the north, where Songhai and Tuareg resist to this domination.⁵²

1.3 Political history

The great western empires period was followed by internal wars and the formation of smaller states, most often ethnically based, such as the Bambara kingdom (in the Ségou region)⁵³, the Fulani kingdom of Macina (in the Mopti region)⁵⁴ and the Wasulu Empire (Maninka, between current Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia).⁵⁵ The country was colonised by France in the late nineteenth century under the name of Soudan Français.⁵⁶ It became independent on 22 September 1960.⁵⁷

The first republic of Mali was a socialist non-aligned country until the military coup in 1968.⁵⁸ President Modibo Keita refused to extend this organisation because it opposed the socialist nature of his regime which intended, on the contrary, to directly administer the whole country and to break the power of the feudal chieftaincies.⁵⁹

Each regime experienced a Tuareg rebellion, claiming for better living conditions, better integration in the development policies⁶⁰ and more autonomy in the ruling of northern regions they call Azawad, referring to a historical region of 800 000 km² above the ancient city of Timbuktu, comprising Gao and Kidal. Since the 1990s, Azawad is the keyword of the Tuareg political claim for independence. The Tuaregs, who claim autonomy for Azawad, are the majority in the region of Kidal, but not in that of Gao and Timbuktu, which they believe belongs to them.⁶¹

⁴⁸ Interpeace and IMRAP, Portraits croisés, Analyse locale des dynamiques de conflit et de résilience dans la zone de Koro-Bankass, Juin 2017, [url](#)

⁴⁹ Opheim, M., Les filles et l'école au Mali, 2000, [url](#), pp. 153-154

⁵⁰ Ethnologue, Bamanankan, n.d., [url](#)

⁵¹ Opheim, M., Les filles et l'école au Mali, 2000, [url](#), fn. 3, p. 154

⁵² Dumestre, G., La dynamique des langues au Mali, 1994, section 3-12; Canut, C., Dynamique plurilingue et imaginaire linguistique au Mali, 1996, [url](#), pp. 55-76

⁵³ Fierro, A., Kaarta, Encyclopaedia Universalis, n.d., [url](#); Imperato, P. J. and Imperato, G. H., Historical Dictionary of Mali, 2008, p. 348

⁵⁴ Piauxt, M., Afrique noire (culture et société), religions, n.d., [url](#); Fierro, A., Kaarta, n.d., [url](#); Imperato, P. J. and Imperato, G. H., Historical Dictionary of Mali, 2008, p. 351

⁵⁵ Ajayi, J. F. A., General History of Africa, Vol. VI: Africa in the nineteenth Century until the 1880s, 1989; Gann, L. H. and Duigan, P., The History and politics of colonialism 1870-1914, 1969

⁵⁶ Imperato, P. J. and Imperato, G. H., Historical Dictionary of Mali, 2008; Niane, D. T., L'Afrique du Xlle au XVe siècle, 2000

⁵⁷ Imperato, P. J. and Imperato, G. H., Historical Dictionary of Mali, 2008, p. 357; Konate, D., Travail de mémoire et construction nationale au Mali, 2006; Boilley, P. et al., Mali, Encyclopaedia Universalis, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁸ Boilley, P. et al., Mali, Encyclopaedia Universalis, n.d., [url](#)

⁵⁹ Grégoire, E., Islamistes et rebelles touaregs maliens, 2013, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Morgan, A., Les clés de la guerre dans le Nord, 8 April 2012, [url](#); Bernus, E., Etre Touareg au Mali, [url](#), p. 26; GRIPCI, Le conflit touareg au Mali et au Niger, 2002, [url](#)

⁶¹ Tagnan, R. A., Au Mali, pas de statut juridique et politique pour l'Azawad, 3 April 2017, [url](#)

The first Tuareg rebellion occurred between 1962 and 1963 to claim for the preservation of the role of the Tuareg chieftaincy, but it had been suppressed violently by the authorities and many Tuareg fled the country to escape the massacres of the Malian army.⁶²

According to the former French diplomat Laurent Bigot [currently independent consultant], Tuareg demands are similar as those of other ethnic groups who 'suffer in the same way from corruption that plagues the Malian administration at all level and the lack of development', underlining that Tuareg are not the majority of the population, even in the northern regions of Mali.⁶³

Many Tuareg went to Libya in the 1970s where they received military training by the regime of Gadhafi. They formed the Islamic Legion between 1972 and 1985. When they returned to Mali, they not only brought their military knowhow, but also a radical interpretation of Islam.⁶⁴ On 27 June 1990, a gendarmerie post was attacked in Menaka (north) by the *Mouvement Populaire pour la Libération de l'Azawad* (MPLA) [Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad], a rebel group led by Iyad Ag Ghaly.⁶⁵

In 1990, poverty and democratic aspirations were spreading in the country and the population was calling for a multiparty regime.⁶⁶ With the help of Algerian mediation, a peace agreement was signed in January 1991 in Tamanrasset (Algeria), between the Malian government and the MPLA. Some fighters were integrated in the Malian national armed forces. The MPLA was then dissolved.⁶⁷

On 26 March 1991, two months after the signature of the agreement that largely weakened the power of the government⁶⁸, a coup overthrew President Moussa Traoré, and General Amadou Toumani Touré organised democratic elections in 1992.⁶⁹

After two democratic mandates of Alpha Oumar Konaré (1992-1997 and 1997-2002), Amadou Toumani Touré came back as a civilian to run as president for the 2002 elections and became the second president of the Republic of Mali.⁷⁰

In 2006-2007, a new Tuareg rebellion occurred in the north of Mali. Together with the political claims, Tuareg were fighting to take control over the city of Kidal, a key passage for drug traffickers. This rebellion paved the way to the 2012 multidimensional crisis:⁷¹

- In January 2012, the northern part of the country was occupied by Islamist armed groups. Some Tuareg independent activists joined these terrorist groups.
- In March, a military coup weakened the rule of law and strengthened the rebellion.
- On 6 April 2012, the Tuareg rebellion through the *Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA) [National Movement of Liberation of Azawad] voice, unilaterally

⁶² Boilley, P., *Les Touaregs Kel Adagh, Dépendances et révolte*, Collection Hommes et Sociétés, 1999, pp. 348-350

⁶³ Bigot, L., *Les défis du Sahel: Focus sur la crise au Mali* [online video], 22 June 2012, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Douglas-Bowers, D., *The Crisis in Mali: A Historical Perspective on the Tuareg People*, 1 February 2013, [url](#)

⁶⁵ Roger, B., *Mali: retour sur le régime de Moussa Traoré en dix dates*, 25 March 2016, [url](#); Boilley, P. et al., *Mali*, Encyclopaedia Universalis, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁶ Roger, B., *Mali: retour sur le régime de Moussa Traoré en dix dates*, 25 March 2016, [url](#); Boilley, P. et al., *Mali*, Encyclopaedia Universalis, n.d., [url](#)

⁶⁷ Sahel and West Africa Club, *Cahiers de l'Afrique de l'Ouest, Un atlas du Sahara-Sahel*, 19 december 2014, p. 184; *Mali, Accord sur la cessation des hostilités*, 6 January 1991, [url](#)

⁶⁸ Grégoire, E., *Islamistes et rebelles touaregs maliens: alliances, rivalités et ruptures*, 2013, [url](#)

⁶⁹ Roger, B., *Mali: retour sur le régime de Moussa Traoré en dix dates*, 25 March 2016, [url](#)

⁷⁰ Perret, T., *Medias et démocratie au Mali, Le journalisme dans son milieu*, 2005, [url](#), pp. 18-32; Boilley, P., *Présidentielles maliennes: l'enracinement démocratique?*, 2002, [url](#), pp.171-182

⁷¹ Strazzari, F., *Azawad and the rights of passage*, January 2015, [url](#); Musilli, P. and Smith, P., *The lawless roads: an overview of turbulence across the Sahel*, 10 June 2013, [url](#)

declared the independence of the state of Azawad.⁷² After that, the jihadi groups (MUJAO, Ansar al-Din) joined in and marginalised the MNLA.⁷³

Terror attacks and general insecurity led hundreds of thousands of civilians to flee the fighting areas and move to the south of Mali or to neighbouring countries.⁷⁴

For more on actors in northern Mali, see [1.5 Actors of the crisis in northern Mali](#).

1.4 Religion

The 2009 census indicates that nearly 95 % of the population is Muslim; 3 % is Christian and 2 % has traditional beliefs.⁷⁵ These statistics indicate that only 2 % claim not to be Muslim or Christian but most people who adhere either to Islam or Christianity practice traditional beliefs to some extent.⁷⁶

The *Tijâniyyah* is the main Muslim religious brotherhood⁷⁷ in Mali, but the *Qadiriyyah* is very important in the central region among the Fulani people, an inheritance from the Macina Empire whose legitimacy was grounded in the *Qadiriyyah*.⁷⁸

Although religious freedom is guaranteed by the constitution, and Mali is a secular state on paper, religion occupies an increasingly significant part of Malian public space.⁷⁹ There is an overlap between religion and politics, illustrated by the political and social role of important Muslim scholars, such as Mahmoud Dicko, President of Mali's High Islamic Council, especially since the 2009 debate about the Family Code.⁸⁰

Fear among the population whether the country is turning into an 'Islamic State' led several religious leaders, Christian and Muslims, to condemn fundamentalism and jihadism⁸¹ Anti-Wahhabis rhetoric emerged in 2012, leading to the stigmatisation of all movements opposed to Sufism as being terrorist / jihadist.⁸²

1.5 Actors of the crisis in northern Mali

The Malian state and loyalist militias are committed to defend the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Mali and to preserve national unity. Since the 2012 crisis, the number of armed groups has increased with each negotiation round, rising contradictory requests and making

⁷² Ngassam, R. N., Mali - Azawad, zone de non-droit, September 2016, [url](#)

⁷³ L'Événement, Rebelles touaregs: "Pourquoi nous reprenons les armes...", 5 April 2012, [url](#); Guidere, M., Ansar Dine est le véritable maître du Nord-Mali, 28 June 2012, [url](#); France24, La ville de Gao est tombée aux mains des islamistes, 28 June 2012, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Thiam, A., Centre du Mali: enjeux et dangers d'une crise négligée, March 2017, [url](#), p. 7

⁷⁵ Mali, Ministère de l'Économie, du Plan et de l'Intégration, DNSI, Mali, recensement général de la population et de l'habitat, 2009, [url](#); US DoS, International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, 2017, [url](#)

⁷⁶ Dasre, A. and Hertrich, V., Comment aborder les pratiques religieuses en Afrique Subsaharienne?, 2017, [url](#)

⁷⁷ In principle Islam does not recognise spiritual hierarchy. Yet Muslim mysticism, or Sufism, since the 12th century, organised itself into associations under the authority of a spiritual master leading a common ritual. In Arabic, these religious brotherhood are called *t'ariqā/t'uruq*, i.e. 'way' or 'road to Allah'. Members of the *t'ariqā* are called *ikhwān*, which means 'brothers'. Hamès, C., Cheikh Hamallah ou Qu'est-ce qu'une confrérie islamique (Tarîqa)?, 1983, [url](#), pp. 67-83; Triaus, J. L., Robinson, D., La tijâniyya: une confrérie musulmane à la conquête de l'Afrique, 2000, pp. 9-36

⁷⁸ Tobie, A., Le centre du Mali: violences et instrumentalisation croisées, December 2017, [url](#); Imperato, Pascal James and Imperato, Gavin H., Tijaniya brotherhood, 25 April 2008, pp. 292-293

⁷⁹ Coulibaly, M. and Hatløy, A., Religious issues and ethnicity in Southern Mali, 2015, [url](#)

⁸⁰ Sommerfelt, T. and Jesnes, K., Laïcité in Southern Mali: Current public discussions on secularism and religious freedom, 2015, [url](#)

⁸¹ US DoS, International Religious Freedom Report for 2016, 2017, [url](#)

⁸² Sommerfelt, T. and Jesnes, K., Laïcité in Southern Mali: Current public discussions on secularism and religious freedom, 2015, [url](#)

peace every time more difficult to reach. From two [MNLA and the *Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad* – HCUA (High Council for the Unity of Azawad)], they are now eight associated with the Peace process, in two different coalitions: the *Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad* (CMA) [Coordination of Azawad Movements] (former rebellion, anti-Bamako) and the Platform (pro-Bamako).

Gathered under the Platform [loyalist militias] are the following armed groups in Mali: ⁸³

- *Groupe autodéfense touareg Imghad et alliés* (GATIA): [Tuareg Imghad self-defence group and allies], led by El Hadj Ag Gamou;
- *Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance n°1* (CM-FPR.1): [Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance #1] is a coalition of mainly Songhai self-defence militias such as Ganda-Koy, Ganda-Izo, *Forces de libération du Nord* (FLN) [Front for the Liberation of the North]; CM-FPR.1 is opposed to CM-FPR.2 which is part of the CMA, opposed to Bamako; ⁸⁴
- *Alliance des communautés de la région de Tombouctou* (ACRT): [Alliance of Communities of the Timbuktu Region], the *Force armée contre l'occupation* (FACO) [Armed force against occupation], the *Centre de réflexion et d'action* (CRA) [Centre for reflection and action] ⁸⁵ and other groups such as the loyalist MAA.2 (opposed to MAA.1) are part of the CMFPR; ⁽⁸⁶⁾
- *Mouvement populaire pour le salut de l'Azawad* (MPSA): [Popular movement for the salvation of Azawad] was created in August 2014 from a split of the MAA. ⁸⁷

Ethnically based insurgent groups considered as non-terrorist rebel armed groups by Bamako, associated in the Peace Process as the CMA (Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad): ⁸⁸

- *Mouvement national pour la libération de l'Azawad* (MNLA): [National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad] is a secular Tuareg rebel organisation which merged with Ansar Dine in 2012. ⁸⁹ Its leader is Bilal Ag Cherif. The movement first fought for the independence of the northern Azawad region in 2012 but after several blowbacks, the group lost its importance and start claiming for autonomy in 2013. ⁹⁰ MNLA resulted from the merging of the *Mouvement national de l'Azawad* (MNA) [National Movement of Azawad] and the *Mouvement Touareg du Nord Mali* (MTNM) [Tuareg movement of northern Mali]; ⁹¹
- *Haut conseil pour l'unité de l'Azawad* (HCUA) [High Council for the Unity of Azawad]; ⁹²
- *Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad* (MAA.1) [Arab Movement of Azawad], former *Front de libération nationale de l'Azawad* (FLNA) [National Liberation Front of Azawad]. ⁹³

⁸³ Maïga, I., Armed groups in Mali: Beyond the labels, June 2016, [url](#), p. 6; Bamada.net, 12 principaux groupes armés au Mali...qui sont les vrais maîtres?, 22 May 2015, [url](#); Boutellis, Arthur and Zahar, Marie-Joëlle, A Process in Search of Peace, June 2017, [url](#), p. 11

⁸⁴ Bamada.net, 12 principaux groupes armés au Mali...qui sont les vrais maîtres?, 22 May 2015, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Jeune Afrique, Mali: formation de groupes d'autodéfense pour "libérer" le Nord, 22 July 2012, [url](#); McGregor, A., Mali's Ganda Iso Militia Splits Over Support for Tuareg Rebel Group, 21 February 2014, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Boutellis, A. and Zahar, M., A Process in Search of Peace, June 2017, [url](#), pp. 4-5

⁸⁷ Bamada.net, 12 principaux groupes armés au Mali... qui sont les vrais maîtres?, 22 May 2015, [url](#)

⁸⁸ RFI, Mali: les mouvements de l'Azawad créent une coordination militaire, 29 October 2014, [url](#)

⁸⁹ Tracking Terrorism, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), 2018, [url](#)

⁹⁰ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#)

⁹¹ Plantade, Y., La nouvelle géopolitique post-Kadhafi explique les problèmes actuels au Mali, 12 March 2012, [url](#)

⁹² Nord-Sud Journal, Alghabass Ag Intalla: "les combattants qui s'engagent savent qu'ils peuvent mourir au combat, Ce ne sont pas des chômeurs que nous envoyons pour toucher un salaire", 16 February 2017, [url](#); Moulaye, Z., Les défis et enjeux sécuritaires dans l'espace sahélo-saharien, la perspective du Mali, 2016, [url](#)

⁹³ Bache, D., Mali: signature de l'accord de paix, sans les principaux groupes rebelles, 16 May 2015, [url](#); Nord-Sud Journal, Alghabass Ag Intalla: "les combattants qui s'engagent savent qu'ils peuvent mourir au combat, Ce ne sont pas des chômeurs que nous envoyons pour toucher un salaire", 16 February 2017, [url](#)

Other groups are or have been partially linked to the CMA:

- *Mouvement islamique de l'Azawad* (MIA) [Islamic Movement of Azawad] ⁹⁴
- *Coalition du peuple pour l'Azawad* (CPA) [Coalition of the people for Azawad] ⁹⁵
- *Coordination des mouvements et forces patriotiques de résistance n°2* (CM-FPR.2) [Coordination of Patriotic Movements and Forces of the Resistance #2], a split from the CMFPR ⁹⁶
- *Mouvement pour le salut de l'Azawad* (MSA) [Movement for the salvation of Azawad]
- *Front populaire de l'Azawad* (FPA) [Popular Front of Azawad] quitted the CMA in November 2014. ⁹⁷

Jihadi terrorist armed groups that cannot be included in the Peace process. ⁹⁸

Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), other known names: *Groupe Salafiste Pour la Predication et le Combat* (GSPC) [Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat - Salafist Group for Call and Combat]; *Tanzim al-Qa'ida fi Bilad al-Maghrib al-Islamiya*. ⁹⁹

AQIM is mostly composed of Algerians and Mauritians that have been complicit to kidnappings in northern Mali since 2003. The structure of the leadership is unclear but it is generally believed that Abdel Malek Droukdel aka Abu Musab Abdel Wadoud is the group's leader. ¹⁰⁰

Before 2006, the group was known as the *Groupe salafiste pour la prédication et le combat* until it changed its name into *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb* ¹⁰¹ after joining Al-Qaeda officially. ¹⁰²

Ethnic Arabs and Tuareg later joined the group, as did people from Senegal and Niger. AQIM could gain in popularity by working together with Ansar Dine. ¹⁰³ It is mostly regionally focused but has gained an openly anti-Western stance and rhetoric. It has declared its aspirations to overthrow African regimes that it considers to be 'apostates' in order to create an Islamic State. ¹⁰⁴

Ansar Dine

Other known names: Ansar Dine; Ansar al-Din; Ançar Dine; Ansar ul-Din; Ansar Eddine; Defenders of the Faith. ¹⁰⁵

Ansar Dine is a religiously motivated group that is composed of ethnic Tuareg and Berbers. The group was established in 2011 and recognised as a foreign terrorist organisation in

⁹⁴ RFI, Mali: le MNLA accueille avec méfiance la création du MIA, scission d'Ansar Dine, 25 January 2013, [url](#)

⁹⁵ Sangare, B., Négociations avec les groupes rebelles armés: Médiateurs antinomiques pour négociations compliquées?, 24 February 2014, [url](#)

⁹⁶ Bamada.net, 12 principaux groupes armés au Mali... qui sont les vrais maîtres?, 22 May 2015, [url](#)

⁹⁷ Le Potentiel, Mali: Démission du FPA de la coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad: Le MNLA plus que jamais seul, 5 December 2014, [url](#)

⁹⁸ FIDH, Mali: Terrorism and impunity jeopardize the fragile peace agreement, 11 May 2017, [url](#); Macé, C., Mali : les groupes armés du Nord enterrent la hache de guerre, 22 September 2017, [url](#); Boisbouvier, C., Me Baber Gamo (Mali): 'Les accords d'Alger marchent bien, c'est un processus', 13 July 2017, [url](#)

⁹⁹ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Bossard, L., Terrorisme saharo sahélien en Afrique de l'Ouest, April 2016, pp. 67-71

¹⁰² US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#)

¹⁰⁴ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Ansar al-Dine (AAD), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

March 2012.¹⁰⁶ The group is led by Iyad Ag Ghali although it is an umbrella organisation of Al-Qaeda.¹⁰⁷

The organisation took over the north of Mali in cooperation with AQIM and MUJAO after the coup of 2012.¹⁰⁸ It enforced a fundamental interpretation of the Sharia and destroyed several UNESCO World Heritage sites in regions under its control.¹⁰⁹

French and African forces could force Ansar Dine out of many population centres after 2013. Iyad Ag Ghali seems to remain under their control however.¹¹⁰

Ansar Dine recruits its members on a local basis in the hope to establish a longer lasting presence in the regions under their control. The goal of this organisation is to establish a fundamentalist interpretation of the Sharia in the whole of the Muslim world. Ansar Dine's influence does however not extend further than northern Mali.¹¹¹

Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO) [Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa], created in 2011, is a splinter group from AQIM with which it is still cooperating.¹¹²

It has very similar goals to Ansar Dine in that it strives to establish the Sharia as a ruling principle in the Muslim World. Contrary to this group, it does not recruit local Malians. It is believed that the group is financed by drug traffickers of the Gao Region. It has mostly been involved with fighting separatist groups in northern Mali like the MNLA.¹¹³

Al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB) / al-Murabitun

Other known names: al-Mulathamun Brigade; al-Muwaqqi'un bil-Dima; Those Signed in Blood Battalion; Signatories in Blood; Those who Sign in Blood; Witnesses in Blood; Signed-in-Blood Battalion; Masked Men Brigade; Khaled Abu al-Abbas Brigade; al-Mulathamun Masked Ones Brigade; al-Murabitun; The Sentinels.¹¹⁴

AMB was founded in 2012 by Mokhtar Belmokhtar from Algeria¹¹⁵ after he split with AQIM. AMB and MUJAO merged in 2013 to become al-Murabitun.¹¹⁶

Al-Murabitun was responsible for taking hostages at the Radisson Blu Hotel in November 2015 as well as for attacks on Sevare in August 2015 and La Terrasse in Bamako in March 2015. It is believed that Al-Murabitun was still cooperating with AQIM. The group is not very popular among locals because of its goal to create a Caliphate with a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam.¹¹⁷

The Al-Mulathamun Battalion and MUJAO merged in 2013 to become al-Murabitun. The organisation re-merged with AQIM in late 2015.¹¹⁸

¹⁰⁶ US DoS, Country Report on Terrorism 2015, Chapter 6, Ansar al-Dine, 2 June 2016, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#)

¹⁰⁸ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Ansar al-Dine (AAD), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Ansar al-Dine (AAD), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹¹¹ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#), p. 8

¹¹² Boutellis, Arthur and Zahar, Marie-Joëlle, A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement, June 2017, [url](#)

¹¹³ Welsh, M. Y., Making sense of Mali's armed groups, 17 January 2013, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹¹⁵ BBC, BBC Profile, Al-Murabitoun, 16 January 2016, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ BBC, BBC Profile, Al-Murabitoun, 16 January 2016, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ US DoS, Country Reports on Terrorism 2016, Foreign Terrorist Organizations: Al-Mulathamun Battalion (AMB), 19 July 2017, [url](#)

Front de Libération du Macina (FLM) [Liberation Front of Macina] or Katiba Ansar Dine Macina first appeared in February 2015. It is based in the Mopti region.¹¹⁹ Hamadoun Koufa, who controls the organisation, is a preacher and poet, as well as a member of the Dawa sect. The group consists mostly of ethnic Fulani or Peul.¹²⁰

The FLM has been allied officially to AQIM, Ansar Dine and al-Murabitun since March 2017.¹²¹

Katiba Khalid Ibn Walid – Ansar Dine of the South claimed the responsibility for the attacks in Misséni and Fakola (south, Ivoirian border) in June 2015. Its leader, Souleymane Keïta, was arrested in March 2016.¹²²

Like Ansar Dine Macina, Ansar Dine of the South are linked to Iyad Ag Ghali. Its founding members are former members of the Islamic police in Tombouctou dating back to when the city was ruled by AQIM and Ansar Dine.¹²³

1.6 Current political situation

Secessionist rebels and terrorist groups took control of the northern regions of Mali just after the army staged a coup in Bamako, in March 2012. Between 2012 and 2013, the country was divided into two parts: the north where various terrorist groups inspired by (or based on) Islamic fundamentalism ruled by acts of terrorism, and the south, under the central authority of the Malian state. The town of Mopti in the central delta of the Niger River formed the border line that separated these two zones.¹²⁴

With Mali being the most affected country in the Sahel by jihadist mobilisation, the UN adopted the Resolution 2085 on 20 December 2012, to authorise the creation of an international force under African leadership: the African-led International Support Mission to Mali (AFISMA).¹²⁵

On 10 January 2013, the small city of Konna, near Mopti was taken by a coalition of terrorist groups (AQMI, Mujao, Ansar Dine, MNLA).¹²⁶ Worried that they could reach Bamako swiftly, the interim Malian government call for French military assistance and France launched the Serval Operation¹²⁷ on 11 January 2013 -before AFISMA- to stop the progression of the terrorist groups toward the capital and assist the Malian national armed forces. The terrorist groups withdrew from urban centres but they were able to hide in the rural areas in northern and central Mali.¹²⁸

¹¹⁹ Boutellis, A. and Zahar, M., A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement, June 2017, [url](#)

¹²⁰ Carayol, R., Mali: le Front de libération du Macina, un nouveau Boko Haram?, 25 August 2015, [url](#)

¹²¹ Boutellis, A. and Zahar, M., A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement, June 2017, [url](#)

¹²² Le Monde, Un important chef djihadiste aurait été arrêté au Mali, 31 March 2016, [url](#); Powelton, F., Mali : arrestation du plus important chef djihadiste du sud du pays, 1 April 2016, [url](#)

¹²³ Le Monde, Deux groupes djihadistes progressent dans le centre et le sud du Mali, 23 September 2015, [url](#); RFI, Qui sont les groupes jihadistes actifs au centre et au sud du Mali?, 8 September 2015, [url](#); Maïga, I., Armed groups in Mali: Beyond the labels, June 2016, [url](#), p. 8

¹²⁴ France, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Présentation du Mali, 5 January 2018, [url](#); Kone, D., Rebellions Touarègues: Les trous d'air de l'histoire du Mali, 6 December 2013, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Central Mali, An Uprising in the Making?, 6 June 2016, [url](#); Tamboura, S., Mopti-Ségou: La rébellion gagne le sud, 2015, [url](#); Jouve, A., Forces et groupes armés au Mali: qui est qui?, 24 March 2016, [url](#); L'Express, Le Mali coupé en deux: que veulent les Touareg?, 3 April 2012, [url](#)

¹²⁵ UN Security Council, Resolution 2085, 20 December 2012, [url](#); Boutellis, A. and Zahar, M., A Process in Search of Peace: Lessons from the Inter-Malian Agreement, June 2017, [url](#), p. 10

¹²⁶ RFI, Mali: les islamistes sont entrés dans Konna, 10 January 2013, [url](#); Maliweb.net, Attaque de Konna: C'était, il y a un an!, 9 January 2014, [url](#)

¹²⁷ In July 2014, the military operation Serval became operation Barkhane, based in Chad, with 3 000 French troops. La Dépêche, Le Petit Bleu, L'opération Serval devient Barkhane, 14 July 2014, [url](#)

¹²⁸ Libération, La France au Mali, les ambiguïtés d'une intervention, 15 January 2013, [url](#); Financial Times, The West has let negligence in the Sahel turn into a nightmare, 20 January 2013, [url](#); Le Temps, Opinions, Charbonneau, Bruno, Guerre au Mali: que cache le consensus?, 17 January 2013, [url](#); Le Temps, Opinions, Arcand, Jean-Louis, Ce qui attend la France au Mali, après les frappes, 22 January 2013, [url](#)

Beside the Serval intervention, led by the French army, the African-led International Support Mission to Mali was created in January 2013 before becoming the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in July 2013.¹²⁹ After operations Serval and Epervier, France launched the Barkhane Operation to fight against Djihadi armed groups in the whole Sahel, in August 2014. The headquarter is in Ndjamen (Chad).¹³⁰

Under pressure from the international community and hoping to restore peace and stability, Mali held presidential elections in July 2013 under protection of UN troops.¹³¹ Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta was elected President.¹³² Governmental stability was not achieved, a fact which is illustrated by the succession of prime ministers in Mali – five since 2013.¹³³

The first Peace Agreement was signed in Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in 2013, between the Malian government and the MNLA but the fighting between rebels and the army / loyalist militias (GATIA and Ganda militias) / MINUSMA did not stop in the north.¹³⁴

In 2015, after years of talks, the Algiers Peace Agreement was signed between the Malian government, GATIA, CMA and CM-FPR¹³⁵, categorised as non-terrorist armed groups¹³⁶, even though collusion is denounced by Barkhane between those groups and the terrorist armed groups.¹³⁷

Sources indicate that the situation in the north remains unstable.¹³⁸ There are still clashes between the CMA (former rebellion) and the GATIA (member of the Platform, pro-Bamako). The implementation of the 2015 agreement for peace and reconciliation has made little progress since it was signed, especially with regard to disarmament. However, the signatory movements agreed to a ceasefire on 20 September 2017, together with a timeline for its implementation. They were then received by President Keïta, who seemed to be seeking political success as the election deadline approaches (July 2018). The dialogue has led to significant symbolic advances such as the return of the governor to Kidal (from where he was expelled in 2014) and GATIA to Takelot (30 km south of Kidal), previously under the control of the CMA.¹³⁹

Attacks against MINUSMA have resulted in the death of 146 soldiers of the peacekeeping operation between March 2013 and October 2017.¹⁴⁰ Terrorist groups use their ability to carry out coordinated attacks as a way to declare their opposition to the progress of the peace

¹²⁹ Tounkara, A., Hiérarchisation ethnique et extrémisme violent au centre du Mali Vers une nouvelle rébellion dans un contexte d'insécurité généralisée, 4 July 2017, [url](#); RFI, Mali: la Cédéao souhaite que la Misma se transforme en mission de paix, 1 March 2013, [url](#); Poulin, T., Historique de l'opération MISMA, Réseau de recherche sur les Opérations de Paix, 3 April 2013, [url](#)

¹³⁰ BBC, Sahel-Armées: Barkhane succède à Serval, 13 July 2014, [url](#); Les Echos, L'opération Serval est "terminée" au Mali, place à l'opération Barkhane, 13 July 2014, [url](#)

¹³¹ New York Times (The), Mali Holds Elections After Year of Turmoil, 28 July 2013, [url](#); Guardian (The), Mali elections: high turnout reported in presidential vote, 28 July 2013, [url](#)

¹³² France, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Présentation du Mali, 5 January 2018, [url](#)

¹³³ France, Ministère de l'Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Présentation du Mali, 5 January 2018, [url](#)

¹³⁴ RFI, Chassé de Kidal, le gouvernement malien décrète un cessez-le-feu, 22 May 2014, [url](#); Libération, AFP, Au Mali, Kidal et Ménaka sous contrôle des rebelles, 22 May 2014, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Libération, Interview to Pierre Boilley, La situation au Mali a empiré, 3 June 2015, [url](#); RFI, L'accord de paix pour le nord du Mali officiellement ratifié, 20 June 2015, [url](#)

¹³⁶ Tobie, A., Beyond the peace agreement: How can civil society contribute to peace in Mali?, 14 November 2016, [url](#); Maïga, I., Armed groups in Mali: Beyond the labels, June 2016, [url](#), p. 6

¹³⁷ E. Night Watch, Les groupes armés signataires (GAS), une façade politique aux organisations terroristes?, 6 December 2017, [url](#); RFI, Forces et groupes armés au Mali: qui est qui?, 24 March 2016, [url](#)

¹³⁸ Le Monde, Analyse, Châtelot, Christophe, Au Mali, l'impossible paix ?, 15 March 2017, [url](#); Le Monde, Analyse, Remy, Jean-Philippe, Accords de paix d'Alger: une dernière chance pour le Mali, 1 March 2015, [url](#); Le Point, AFP, Mali: un "accord de paix et de réconciliation" signé à Alger, 1 March 2015, [url](#); RFI, Mali: les défis de la mise en œuvre de l'accord de paix, 21 June 2015, [url](#)

¹³⁹ FIDH, Mali: Terrorism and impunity jeopardize the fragile peace agreement, 11 May 2017, [url](#); Libération, Mali: les groupes armés du Nord enterrent la hache de guerre, 22 September 2017, [url](#); RFI, Interview with Me Baber Gamo (Mali): "Les accords d'Alger marchent bien, c'est un processus", 13 July 2017, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ UN, Fiche d'information sur les opérations de maintien de la paix en cours, 31 October 2017, [url](#)

agreement. They have been redeploying to the centre of the country, where communal clashes and the absence of the state gives them room to manoeuvre.¹⁴¹

The deterioration of trust between populations and state institutions especially in the central and northern regions, where impunity prevails with regard to the exactions of the police, makes Mali appear to be a failed state that cannot offer its citizens with public services and protection.¹⁴²

All of this endangers the reconciliation process for the restoration of lasting peace and the rule of law.¹⁴³

2. State structure

2.1 Administrative structure

Mali is divided into *régions* [regions], plus the Bamako District.¹⁴⁴ Until 2012, the country was divided into eight regions: Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao and Kidal.¹⁴⁵

The government's administrative re-organisation initiated in 2012 intended to further decentralise the state's administration.¹⁴⁶ According to Mali's legislation adopted that year, the country is divided into the Bamako District and 19 administrative regions: Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal, plus Taoudénit, Ménaka, Nioro, Kita, Doila, Nara, Bougouni, Koutiala, San, Douentza and Bandiagara.¹⁴⁷

In practice, however, only the eight original regions plus Taoudénit and Ménaka are currently operational, with the latter two having the respective governors nominated in 2016.¹⁴⁸

The ten regions are further divided into *cercles* (and further into *arrondissements* and *communes*)¹⁴⁹ and carry out differentiated administrative competences at a decentralised level.¹⁵⁰ Below is a summary of regions and *cercles* (after 19 January 2016):

Region	Cercles
Kayes	Bafoulabé, Diéma, Kayes, Kéniéba, Kita, Nioro du Sahel, Yélimané
Koulikoro	Banamba, Dioïla, Kangaba, Kati, Kolokani, Koulikoro, Nara
Sikasso	Bougouni, Kadiolo, Koutiala, Kolondiéba, Sikasso, Yanfolila, Yorosso
Ségou	Barouéli, Bla, Macina, Niono, San, Ségou, Tominian
Mopti	Bandiagara, Bankass, Djenné, Douentza, Koro, Mopti, Ténenkou,

¹⁴¹ HRW, Mali: Abuses Spread South. Islamist Armed Groups' Atrocities, Army Responses Generate Fear, 19 February 2016, [url](#); FIDH, Mali: Terrorism and impunity jeopardize the fragile peace agreement, 11 May 2017, [url](#)

¹⁴² Tobie, A., Beyond the peace agreement: How can civil society contribute to peace in Mali?, 14 November 2016, [url](#)

¹⁴³ FIDH-AMDH, Face à la crise, faire le choix de la justice, December 2017, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ Mali, Loi 017 et 018, Journal Officiel n°10, 53^{ème} année, 2 March 2012, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ Mali, Ministère de la Décentralisation et de la Réforme de l'Etat, Cercles, [2016], [url](#)

¹⁴⁶ Maliactu.net, Mali: Le Mali compte désormais dix régions, 23 January 2016, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ Mali, Loi 017 et 018, Journal Officiel n°10, 53^{ème} année, 2 March 2012, [url](#); L'Essor, Mali: Décentralisation: Régions : la nouvelle organisation en marche?, 6 February 2018, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Mali, Ministère de la Décentralisation et de la Réforme de l'Etat, Cercles, [2016], [url](#); Malinet, Réforme administrative au Mali: Le nombre des régions passe à 10, [2016], [url](#); Mali, Loi 017 et 018, Journal Officiel n°10, 53^{ème} année, 2 March 2012, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Mali, Loi 017 et 018, Journal Officiel n°10, 53^{ème} année, Cercles, 2 March 2012, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ Bamako.com, Nouvelles Circonscriptions Administratives: De quoi le Premier Ministre a-t-il peur pour ne pas nommer les Gouverneurs des 10 autres nouvelles Régions du Mali?, 17 March 2016, [url](#)

	Youwarou
Tombouctou	Diré, Goundam, Gourma-Rharous, Niafunké, Tombouctou
Gao	Ansongo, Bourem, Gao, Ménaka
Kidal	Abeïbara, Kidal, Tessalit, Tin-Essako
Taoudéni	Foum Alba, Achouratt, Al-Ourche, Boudje-Béha
Menaka	Ménaka, Andéramboukane, Inékar, Tidermène ¹⁵¹

Bamako is the capital of Mali, and its administrative centre. It is located on the banks of the Niger river. The city is part of the Bamako District, further divided into six *communes*. Official Malian data indicates over 3 million people live in Bamako, many of which are young migrants from other regions of Mali and from neighbouring countries. ¹⁵²

Adam Sangaré is the Mayor of Bamako Capital District since 6 July 2007. ¹⁵³

Regions have a key role in the country's regional administration: they are in charge of the social, economic and cultural development in their territory, and coordinate actions for development both of the local authorities and of the central government. Other functions of the regions are related to technical education, health, communications and energy. ¹⁵⁴

National defense, justice (legislation, courts' and tribunals' organisation), diplomacy, currency, direction and coordination of development policies are areas under the authority of the central government. ¹⁵⁵

2.2 Constitution and state structure

The 1992 Constitution of the Republic of Mali provides for the separation of powers, dividing them into the executive (*le Gouvernement*), legislative (*l'Assemblée nationale*) and judicial (*la Cour suprême et les autres cours et tribunaux*) branches. ¹⁵⁶

However, sources indicate that checks and balances are weak due to the highly centralised nature of the system and the effective roles the President exerts over all three branches ¹⁵⁷, including the judiciary. ¹⁵⁸ One source indicates that the influence on the judiciary is not direct, but exerted through the power of appointing the highest positions in the judicial organs, namely judges in the Supreme Court, the Superior Council of the Magistracy and the Constitutional Court. ¹⁵⁹

¹⁵¹ Mali, Ministère de la Décentralisation et de la Réforme de l'Etat, Cercles, [2016], [url](#)

¹⁵² Mali, Site officiel de la Mairie du District de Bamako, District de Bamako, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵³ Mali, Site officiel de la Mairie du District de Bamako, District de Bamako, Présentation de Monsieur le Maire, n.d., [url](#); Jeune Afrique, Adama Sangaré, maire de Bamako: "Il faut consolider la base de l'Adéma à travers le Mali", 21 November 2017, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ United Cities and Local Governments & OECD, Main subnational governments responsibilities, October 2016, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ UK Aid, Corade and CRS, Governance at the grassroots, An Analysis Of Local Government Structures In The Sahel Regions Of Niger, Burkina Faso, And Mali, Mali, August 2014, [url](#), p.6

¹⁵⁶ Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index BTI 2018 Mali, 2018, [url](#); US Aid, Democracy, Human Rights, And Governance Assessment Of Mali Final Report, June 2014, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Global Integrity, Mali, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ IDLO, Clingendael, A Crisis Of Confidence, Competence And Capacity: Programming Advice For Strengthening Mali's Penal Chain, November 2015, [url](#), p. 20

A referendum on constitutional amendments was postponed sine die, after intense mobilisation from the opposition, that raised suspicions that this was a move to reinforce the powers of the executive.¹⁶⁰

2.2.1 Executive

President

According to the Constitution, the president is the head of state, commander in chief of the armed forces, and presides over the *Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature* [Superior Council of the Judiciary/Higher Council of the Magistracy].¹⁶¹ The president is elected by popular vote by absolute majority; if the candidate does not cast an absolute majority in the first round, a second round will be organised. The president can serve up to two five-year terms.¹⁶²

Ibrahim Boubacar Keita has been the President of Mali since September 2013.¹⁶³

The last Presidential elections were held in 2018 in two rounds (29 July 2018 and 12 August 2018). Ibrahim Boubacar Keita won the second round by a majority of 67.17 %. His opponent, Soumaila Cissé obtained 32.83 % of the votes.¹⁶⁴

A few days before the first round of elections in July 2018, Cissé raised issues on the electoral register process and the risk of fraud.¹⁶⁵

The president nominates (and dismisses) the prime minister and government members, under the prime minister's proposal.¹⁶⁶ The president presides to the *Conseil des Ministres* [Council of Ministers].¹⁶⁷

Government

The executive power in Mali is exercised by the government, through the prime minister, who acts as head of government. In that role, he directs and coordinates all governmental activity, and ensures the execution of the laws. The prime minister is responsible for the execution of the national defense policy.¹⁶⁸

The Ministers and Prime Minister together form the Cabinet. The Cabinet of the Prime Minister is the body collectively responsible before the National Assembly (Article 54 of the Constitution) with regard to its programme or on a declaration of the general policy of the Cabinet (Article 78 of the Constitution).¹⁶⁹

Oversight of the government is exerted by the Parliament, through Committees of enquiry and missions to government departments. Parliamentarians can address members of the government both orally in the parliament and in writing.¹⁷⁰

Other government institutions are *Le Haut Conseil des Collectivités territoriales* [High Council of Territorial Collectivities]. This body is responsible for 'studying and giving a reasoned opinion

¹⁶⁰ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, Mali, 2018 [url](#)

¹⁶¹ Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, art. 29, 44, 45, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁶² Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, 14 February 1992, art. 33 [url](#)

¹⁶³ BBC, Mali's new President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita sworn in, 4 September 2013 ([url](#))

¹⁶⁴ Mali, MATCL, 2eme Tour de l'Election Presidentielle, Resultats Provisiores Complets, 15 August 2018, [url](#); Mali, Cour Constitutionnelle, Arrêt N°2018-04/Cc-Ep Du 20 Août 2018 Portant Proclamation Des Resultats Definitifs Du Second Tour De L'election Du President De La Republique Bamako 20 August 2018, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ RFI, Mali: la présidentielle agitée par les accusations de fichier électoral parallèle, 22 July 2018, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, art. 38, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁶⁷ Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, art. 39, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, art. 53-55, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ Globalex, Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Constitution The Government, November/December 2016, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ IPU, Mali Assemblée Nationale, Parliamentary Oversight, Accountability and oversight over the actions of the Government administration, n.d., [url](#)

about any policy concerning local and regional development.’¹⁷¹ Since it represents the communities, it cannot be dissolved. Its mission is connected with the implementation of the decentralisation process and to that purpose it carries out participatory interventions in local and regional issues.¹⁷²

Additionally, *Le Conseil Economique, Social et Culturel* (Economic, Social and Cultural Council) is a body responsible for economic, social and cultural development¹⁷³ and takes part in any commission of national interest that is concerned with social and cultural issues.¹⁷⁴

In December 2017, Abdoulaye Idrissa Maiga and his government resigned.¹⁷⁵ President Keïta nominated Soumeylou Boubèye Maiga for the post.¹⁷⁶ Soumeylou is the fifth prime minister under Keïta’s presidency.¹⁷⁷ The new government’s team counts on 36 ministers.¹⁷⁸

2.2.2 Legislative

The legislative power in Mali is exerted by the *Assemblée Nationale* [National Assembly], the unicameral parliament of Mali. The National Assembly has 147 members, directly elected for a five years’ term. 13 are women. The current president of the National Assembly is Issaka Sidibé.¹⁷⁹

The voting is carried out by a majority system in single-seat constituencies in two rounds. The minimum age required for voting is 18 years; to be eligible, candidates have to have domicile in Mali for at least one year, be 21 years of age or over, and have Malian citizenship.¹⁸⁰

The last general elections took place on 24 November and 15 December 2013. The next elections are expected to be held in November-December 2018. The largest parliamentary force following the results of last elections was the *Rassemblement pour le Mali* (RPM) [Rally for Mali], President Ibrahim Bubacar Keita’s party, which won 66 seats. Parties supporting the President, including the *Alliance pour la Démocratie en Mali* (ADEMA) took as a whole 115 out of 147 seats in the National Assembly. The election results by party were:¹⁸¹

Abbreviation	Party	Result
RPM	<i>Rassemblement pour le Mali</i> [Rally for Mali]	66 seats
URD	<i>Union pour la République et la Démocratie</i> [Republic and Democracy Union]	17 seats (led by Soumaila Cissé)
ADEMA	<i>Alliance pour la Démocratie en Mali</i> [Alliance for Democracy in Mali]	16 seats
FARE	<i>Forces Alternatives pour le Renouveau et l'Emergence</i> [Alternative Forces for Renewal and Emergence]	6 seats
CODEM	<i>Convergence pour le Développement du Mali</i> [Convergence for Mali’s]	5 seats

¹⁷¹ Mali, Portail Officiel de l’Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, Titre Xi Des Collectivites Territoriales, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁷² Mali, Portail Officiel du Gouvernement du Mali, Les institutions, Le Haut Conseil des Collectivités du Mali, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷³ Mali, Portail Officiel de l’Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, Titre II, De l’État et de la souveraineté, art. 25, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁷⁴ Mali, Portail Officiel du Gouvernement du Mali, Les institutions Le Conseil Economique, Social et Culturel, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ Maliactu, Mali: démission surprise du Premier ministre et du gouvernement (officiel), 29 December 2017, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Le Monde, Un nouveau premier ministre nommé au Mali, 30 December 2017, [url](#)

¹⁷⁷ Maliactu, Mali: démission surprise du Premier ministre et du gouvernement (officiel), 29 December 2017, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Atlasinfo, Mali: le nouveau Premier ministre forme son gouvernement, 31 December 2017, [url](#); France 24, Le nouveau gouvernement du Mali a été formé, 31 December 2017, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ IPU, Mali Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly), General Information, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ IPU, Mali Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly), Electoral System, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸¹ IPU, Mali Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly), Last elections, n.d., [url](#)

	Development]	
SADI	<i>Solidarité Africaine pour la Démocratie et l'Indépendance</i> [African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence]	5 seats
CNID	<i>Congrès national d'initiative démocratique</i> [Democratic Initiative National Congress of Mali]	4 seats
Independents		4 seats
PARENA	<i>Parti pour la renaissance nationale</i> [National Renaissance Party]	3 seats

The next parliamentary elections are foreseen to be held in November-December 2018.¹⁸²

2.2.3 Judiciary

Mali's justice system is one of 'legal pluralism', where multiple legal systems coexist, both in civil and criminal cases. The 1992 Constitution allows for legislation from multiple systems (including traditional or customary), provided that they did not conflict with the Constitution itself.¹⁸³

In the framework of the Malian legal system, formal actors of justice (lawyers, judges) coexist with 'informal' or customary providers of justice, namely *qadis*, imams, village chiefs, family heads and elders.¹⁸⁴

One source states that Malian people living in urban areas usually resort to state actors of justice, whereas in rural areas people prefer to settle through customary justice actors.¹⁸⁵ The source adds that these are more present where the state does not exist, therefore the village chief represents only real authority.¹⁸⁶

Researchers found that the main challenges to an efficient justice system in Mali are its complicated structure; the general use of the French language; and the costs to reach it and use it, especially for rural populations. Additionally, an overall lack of information on procedures and laws hampers Malian citizens' access to formal justice in the country.¹⁸⁷ In a 2015 survey, 60 % of the respondents indicated dissatisfaction with the Malian justice system.¹⁸⁸

State law

The state legal system of Mali is inherited from codes of French law. Subsequently of the independence from France, other laws were enacted to harmonise legal provisions to the Malian environment. However the French civil rules were still maintained.¹⁸⁹

The Constitution guarantees judicial independence in Mali.¹⁹⁰ Magistrates are subjected only to the law and the President of the Republic assisted by the Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature [Supreme Judicial Council] guarantees their independence.¹⁹¹ Mali is the only sub-Saharan

¹⁸² IPU, Mali Assemblée Nationale (National Assembly), Last elections, n.d., [url](#)

¹⁸³ GlobaLex, Guide to Legal Research in Mali, State and Customary Law: Legal pluralism, November/December 2016, [url](#); Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁸⁴ Clingendael, Under the microscope: Customary justice systems in northern Mali, 26 July 2017, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ GlobaLex, Guide to Legal Research in Mali, State and Customary Law: Legal pluralism, November/December 2016, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, [url](#), p. 36

¹⁸⁷ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, [url](#), p. 57

¹⁸⁸ IDLO, Clingendael, A Crisis Of Confidence, Competence And Capacity, November 2015, [url](#), p. 16

¹⁸⁹ GlobalSecurity.org, Mali Government, [2017], [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, art. 81, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ GlobaLex, Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Judicial Power, November/December 2016, [url](#)

country that has a specific code of judicial ethics for the magistrates, the *Code de Deontologie* [Deontological code], where judicial diligence is considered an ethical duty.¹⁹²

Although checks and balances of powers are provided for by the Malian Constitution and the law, some sources state that the executive exerts influence over the judicial system¹⁹³ and over the other branches of government.¹⁹⁴

Customary law

Research indicates that the implementation of customary justice in Mali varies significantly along regional, ethnic and religious parameters/lines: the actors of customary justice do not follow a common legal basis or common traditions so that similar cases can be differently approached and judgements be different.¹⁹⁵

Interviews conducted in Bamako and Mopti during research showed that Malians often prefer to seek justice from customary leaders as these tend to preserve societal cohesion and make more efforts in trying to find compromising solutions.¹⁹⁶

There are several providers of customary justice in Mali, namely family elders, religious leaders (*Cadi or Qadi*), traditional communicators or local government actors.¹⁹⁷

Cadis decides on disputes and play extrajudicial roles, such as mediators and managers of public works.¹⁹⁸ Some *Cadi* in the north of Mali also take decisions on criminal matters, even though to a limited extent.¹⁹⁹

The traditional justice mechanisms are easily accessible, not expensive, and familiar.²⁰⁰

However, the system often lacks neutrality and transparency, leaving people unaware of their civil rights. Women generally have a lower status in the family, so they have less power of negotiation compared to men, particularly with their husbands. Customary justice is affected by corruption and politicisation, even though to a lesser extent than state justice authorities.²⁰¹

Courts

According to the Constitution of Mali, the judiciary power is exerted by the *Cour Suprême* [Supreme Court] and other courts and tribunals.²⁰²

In 2011, the Law on Judicial Organisation established the following judicial institutions²⁰³:

- *La Cour Supreme* [Supreme Court]²⁰⁴;
- *Le Cour constitutionnelle* [Constitutional Court]²⁰⁵;

¹⁹² Law Library of Congress (The), Malian Rules of Judicial Ethics: A Comparative Study, September 2014, [url](#), p. 4; Global Integrity, Mali, 2018, [url](#), para. 3

¹⁹³ US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Mali, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2018, Mali, Functioning of government, 2018, [url](#); Global Integrity, Mali, 2018, [url](#); IDLO, Clingendael, A Crisis Of Confidence, Competence And Capacity: Programming Advice For Strengthening Mali's Penal Chain, November 2015, [url](#), p. 20

¹⁹⁵ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, [url](#), p. 35

¹⁹⁶ Clingendael, Under the microscope: Customary justice systems in northern Mali, July 2017, [url](#); US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Mali, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

¹⁹⁷ Clingendael, Under the microscope: Customary justice systems in northern Mali, July 2017, [url](#), p. 36.

¹⁹⁸ Clingendael, Under the microscope: Customary justice systems in northern Mali, July 2017, [url](#), pag. 15

¹⁹⁹ MINUSMA and HRD/OHCHR, Rapport sur la situation des droits de l'homme au Mali du 1er novembre 2013 au 31 mai 2014, 20 March 2015, [url](#), p. 34

²⁰⁰ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, [url](#), p. 37

²⁰¹ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, [url](#), p. 37

²⁰² Mali, Portail Officiel de l'Administration Malienne, La constitution du Mali, art. 81, 14 February 1992, [url](#)

²⁰³ Mali, Loi N° 2011-037/du 15 juil 2011, Portant Organisation Judiciaire, 15 July 2011, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ The Supreme Court ensures the unity of national law, is the highest court of appeal for civil, criminal and administrative law cases. LegiGlobe, Mali Constitution et système institutionnel, May 2015, [url](#); GlobaLex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Judicial Power: The Judiciary, November/December 2016, [url](#)

- *La Haute Cour de justice* [High Court of Justice] ²⁰⁶;
- *6 Cours d'Appel* [Courts of Appeal] ²⁰⁷;
- *Les Cours of Assises* [Courts of Assizes] ²⁰⁸;
- *6 Cours Administratives d'Appel* [Administrative Appeal Courts];
- *17 Tribunaux de Grande Instance* [Grand Courts];
- *41 Tribunaux d'Instance* [District Courts];
- *12 Tribunaux du Travail* [Labour Courts];
- *Tribunaux de Commerce* [Commercial Courts];
- *6 Tribunaux Administratifs* [Administrative Courts];
- *12 Tribunaux pour Enfants* [Juvenile Courts];
- *Tribunaux militaires* [Military Courts]. ²⁰⁹

In 2016 there were three operational courts of appeal and three more were expected to be working in the coming years. ²¹⁰

The 2011 judicial reform abolished the *Justices de Paix à Compétence Etendue* (JPCE) [Justices of the peace with extended powers], being replaced by District courts. In practice, some justices of the peace are said to be still active; although under the law they do not exist any longer, they are able to reach people when the Grand Court and the relating district are far away from their community. ²¹¹

Territorial distribution of the jurisdictions

Judges and lawyers are unevenly distributed across Mali. There are around 630 judges and 334 lawyers available for a total population of 15 million inhabitants; most judicial bodies are based in Bamako, making access to justice difficult for the rural population. ²¹²

The Supreme Court, The Constitutional Court and the High Court of Justice are in Bamako. ²¹³

Below is the 2011 territorial distribution of jurisdictions in Mali:

Court	Region	City/Place
<i>Cour d'Appel</i> [Court of Appeal]	Bamako District, Kayes, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Gao	
<i>Cour Administrative d'Appel</i> [Administrative Court of Appeal]	Bamako District, Kayes, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Gao	

²⁰⁵ GlobaLex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Constitutional Court (Art. 85 -94 Constitution), November/December 2016, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ LegiGlobe, Mali, Organisation judiciaire, 28 May 2015, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ There are six Courts of Appeal. They receive appeals deriving from judgements of Grand Courts, District Courts, Commercial Courts, Labor Courts and Juvenile Courts. LegiGlobe, Mali, Organisation judiciaire, 28 May 2015, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ Criminal cases are judged in first and last instance by specific judicial bodies of the Courts of Appeal "*le Cour d'Assises*" [Courts of Assizes]. The Courts of Assizes are seated in non permanent sessions, one for each Court of Appeal. Specialized Cours of Assizes are competent for judging criminal cases involving minors. LegiGlobe, Mali, Organisation judiciaire, 28 May 2015, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ Globalex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, Judicial Organisation, November/December 2016, [url](#)

²¹⁰ GlobaLex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Judicial Power: The Judiciary, November/December 2016, [url](#)

²¹¹ LegiGlobe, Mali, Organisation judiciaire, 28 May 2015, [url](#); GlobaLex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Judicial Power: The Judiciary, November/December 2016, [url](#)

²¹² Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index BTI 2018, Mali, Rule of Law, 2018, [url](#), p. 11

²¹³ Mali, Tribunal de Commerce de Niamey, Organization Judiciaire du Mali, n.d., [url](#); Mali, La Cour Constitutionnelle, [url](#); GlobaLex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, The Judicial Power: The Judiciary, November/December 2016, [url](#)

<i>Tribunal de Grande Instance</i> [Grand Court]	Six communes of Bamako District, Kayes, Koulikoro, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal, Kati, Koutiala
<i>Tribunal d'Instance</i> [District Court]	Yelimane, Diema, Nioro du Sahel, Bafoulabe, Kenieba, Toukoto, Nara Ouelessebougou, Kangaba, Kolokani, Banamba, Fana, Doila, Bougouni, Yanfolila, Kadiolo, Kignan, Kolondieba, Yoroosso, Kimparana, San, Tominian, Bla, Markala, Niono; Macina, Baraoueli, Bandiagara, Bankass, Djenne, Koro, Teninkou, Douentza, Youwarou, Diré, Goudam, Gouma-Rharous, Niafunke, Ansongo, Bourem, Menaka
<i>Tribunal de Commerce</i> [Commercial Court]	Bamako District, Kayes, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Gao
<i>Tribunal Administratif</i> [Administrative Court]	Bamako District, Kayes, Sikasso, Ségou, Mopti, Gao
<i>Tribunal du Travail</i> [Labour Court]	Bamako District, Kayes, Kita, Koulikoro, Kati, Sikasso, Koutiala, Ségou, Mopti, Tombouctou, Gao, Kidal
<i>Tribunal pour Enfants</i> [Juvenile Court]	Where a Grand Court or District Court exists; one court for Bamako District ²¹⁴

Military Courts are in Kayes, Bamako and Mopti. ²¹⁵

Le Pôle judiciaire spécialisé contre le terrorisme et le banditisme transfrontalière [the Specialised Judicial Unit in the Fight Against Terrorism and Transnational Crime] acts within the *Tribunal de Grande Instance de la Commune VI* [Grand Court of Commune V] of the District of Bamako. ²¹⁶

Availability and efficiency of the judiciary

The functioning of the justice system in Mali has been affected by the security situation in the country since 2012, especially in the north, leading to a 'fragile' stability. ²¹⁷

Different sources report low efficiency ²¹⁸, corruption ²¹⁹, lack of resources (human and material) ²²⁰, as hindrances to the functioning of the Malian judicial system.

²¹⁴ Mali, Loi N° 2011-038 du 15 juillet 2011 portant création de juridictions, 15 July 2011, [url](#)

²¹⁵ LegiGlobe, Mali, Organisation judiciaire, 28 May 2015, [url](#)

²¹⁶ LegiGlobe, Mali, Organisation judiciaire, 28 May 2015, [url](#); Maliactu.net, Mali: Communiqué du Conseil des Ministres du Mercredi 14 Octobre 2015, 14 October 2015, [url](#)

²¹⁷ Transparency International, Mali: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption, 19 October 2017, [url](#), p. 2

²¹⁸ Freedom House, Freedom in the World 2016, Mali, 2016, [url](#)

²¹⁹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index BTI 2018 Mali, 2018, [url](#), p. 11; US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Mali, 3 March 2017, [url](#); Transparency International, Mali: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption, 19 October 2017, [url](#)

A study by the Anti-Corruption Resource Centre, an inter-governmental research centre based in Norway, indicates that the judiciary in Mali is permeable to corruption and insufficiently independent ‘to pursue politicised cases’.²²¹

One source states that Malian people living in urban areas usually resort to state actors of justice, whereas in rural areas people prefer to settle through customary justice actors,²²² as the latter are present where the state is not, are informal and reconciliation-oriented.²²³

Researchers indicate that some of the main challenges to an efficient justice system in Mali are: its complicated structure; the general use of the French language; the costs to reach it and use it, especially for rural populations, and ‘endemic corruption’. Additionally, an overall lack of information on procedures and laws hampers most Malian citizens’ access to formal justice in the country.²²⁴

A survey conducted by the World Bank Group on the public perception of the Malian justice system revealed that citizens consider judges and magistrates, business executives and the police as those most involved in corruption.²²⁵

As a reaction to the malfunctioning of the judiciary, some sources report on a potential resurfacing of a ‘lynching culture’ in Mali, with citizens taking justice in their hands.²²⁶

The practice known as ‘article 320’, takes its name from the price of one litre of gasoline (CFA 300 francs), and a box of matches (CFA 20 francs), in 1991. The perpetrators would douse the suspect in petrol and strike a match.²²⁷

Mob justice has grown in recent years, with ‘dozens of people [...] brutally killed’, for crimes like motorbike theft. According to one source, the authorities have not charged any perpetrators, and there is no case law available from Malian criminal courts. The source argues that at times, the police can be targeted by ‘article 320’ if the perpetrators perceive the police as trying to rescue their original target, or if the police force tries to bring the perpetrator to justice.²²⁸

For more information on extrajudicial conflict resolution, see [2.3.2 Availability, accessibility and efficiency of the police forces](#).

Justice against impunity

Sources agree that the Malian government is making efforts to prosecute abuses committed during the 2012-13 conflict, although not those committed by the armed forces.²²⁹

²²⁰ Bertelsmann Stiftung, Transformation Index BTI 2018 Mali, 2018, [url](#), p. 11

²²¹ Transparency International, Mali: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption, 19 October 2017, [url](#)

²²² GlobaLex, Update: Guide to Legal Research in Mali, State and Customary Law: Legal pluralism, November/December 2016, [url](#)

²²³ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, October 2015, [url](#), p. 36

²²⁴ Clingendael, Beyond dichotomy: recognising and reconciling legal pluralism in Mali, October 2015, [url](#), p. 57

²²⁵ Transparency International, Mali: Overview of corruption and anti-corruption, 19 October 2017, [url](#); Afrobarometer, In Mali, citizens’ access to justice compromised by perceived bias, corruption, complexity, in The Afrobarometer Dispatch No. 166, 19 October 2017, [url](#), pp. 2, 5

²²⁶ Kansaye, B., Mob justice in West Africa: The enforcement of the so-called “Article320” in Mali, May 2018, [url](#); Bamada.net, Justice Populaire Au Mali: Le Syndrome De L’Article 320 Gagne De Nouveau Les Rues De Bamako, 4 May 2016, [url](#)

²²⁷ Kansaye, B., Mob justice in West Africa: The enforcement of the so-called “Article320” in Mali, May 2018, [url](#); Bamada.net, Justice Populaire Au Mali: Le Syndrome De L’Article 320 Gagne De Nouveau Les Rues De Bamako, 4 May 2016, [url](#)

²²⁸ Kansaye, B., Mob justice in West Africa: The enforcement of the so-called “Article320” in Mali, May 2018, [url](#); Bamada.net, Justice Populaire Au Mali: Le Syndrome De L’Article 320 Gagne De Nouveau Les Rues De Bamako, 4 May 2016, [url](#)

²²⁹ FIDH and AMDH Mali, Choosing justice in the face of crisis, December 2017, [url](#), p. 5; HRW, World report 2018, Mali, Events of 2017, 2018, [url](#)

Human rights organisations have noted the proceedings against two relevant figures in the 2012-13 conflict: the former leader of the military junta, Amadou Haya Sanogo, and the Islamic commissioner of Gao, Aliou Mahamane Touré.²³⁰ The prosecution of Al Hassan, chief of the Islamic police in Timbuktu in 2012-2013, was transferred to the International Criminal Court (ICC), where he stands accused of war crimes and other serious gender-based crimes.²³¹

On December 2016, the Ministry of Justice announced the creation of a special investigations group within the Specialized Judicial Unit for the fight against terrorism and transnational crime to deal with serious crime. The group is not yet fully operational.²³²

The Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali reported to the UN Security Council on February and March 2018 that no relevant progress was observed in the judiciary as regards the fight against impunity for which the Malian government had committed itself under the Peace and Reconciliation Agreement. Except for the sentencing of Aliou Mahamane Touré and the conviction of Ahmad Al Mahdi Al Faqi, (member of the Islamic police of Timbuktu in 2012) for the destruction of monuments in the Timbuktu region, most abuses and violations of human rights and international humanitarian law have not yet been prosecuted.²³³

Detention and prisons

The *Direction Nationale de l'Administration Pénitentiaire et de l'Education Surveillée* (DNAPES) [National Directorate of Penitentiary Administration and Supervised Education], under the Ministry of Justice, is responsible for the prisons and detention centres in Mali, including the monitoring of conditions in those facilities.²³⁴ According to ISSAT, 'it is unclear whether it [DNAPES] is effective or even active.'²³⁵

There are 59 [another source mentions 54²³⁶] prisons and detention centres in Mali, including four agricultural penitentiaries (Kénieroba, Baguinéda, Tana and Konséguela), where end-of-sentence prisoners receive reintegration skills.²³⁷

Overcrowding was mentioned by several sources as one of the main issues in the penitentiary system in Mali. As an example, the Central Prison in Bamako was designed for 400 prisoners, and held 1 964 persons in 2017.²³⁸

Human Rights Watch states that the slowness of the Malian judicial system contributes to prison overcrowding, since detainees are kept in extended pretrial detention.²³⁹

Poor condition of the detention facilities²⁴⁰ and difficulties in reintegrating ex-prisoners²⁴¹ were reported. Human Rights Watch indicates that in 2017, the Malian government made 'some effort [...] to rehabilitate and improve prison conditions'.²⁴²

Prisoners are generally separated by gender²⁴³. ISSAT however indicates that the Malian Centre on Women and Children and the Ministry of Women, Children and the Family reported that out

²³⁰ FIDH and AMDH Mali, Choosing justice in the face of crisis, December 2017, [url](#)

²³¹ FIDH, Mali, Al Hassan to the ICC: a milestone for justice, 3 April 2018, [url](#)

²³² HRW, World report 2018, Mali, Events of 2017, 2018, [url](#)

²³³ UN HRC, Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali, 2 February 2018, [url](#), pp. 6-7

²³⁴ ICPR, World Prison Brief, Mali, [2014], [url](#); US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Mali, 20 April, [url](#)

²³⁵ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²³⁶ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²³⁷ LegiGlobe, Mali, 28 May 2015, [url](#)

²³⁸ LegiGlobe, Mali, 28 May 2015, [url](#); US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Mali, 20 April, [url](#)

²³⁹ HRW, World report 2018, Mali, Events of 2017, 2018, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ LegiGlobe, Mali, 28 May 2015, [url](#); US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Mali, 20 April, [url](#)

²⁴¹ LegiGlobe, Mali, 28 May 2015, [url](#)

²⁴² HRW, World report 2018, Mali, Events of 2017, 2018, [url](#)

²⁴³ US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Mali, 20 April, [url](#)

of 54 detentions centres, 41 had no dedicated sections for minors, although it is prescribed by national legislation.²⁴⁴

The *Commission Nationale Des Droits De L'Homme* (CNDH) [National Commission for Human Rights] is the Malian independent authority responsible for protecting and promoting human rights, and preventing acts or torture and other punishment or cruel, inhumane and degrading treatments, and it can visit - regularly and unannounced - detention centres and prisons and reporting and recommending actions to the competent authorities.²⁴⁵

Despite that capacity, the US DoS reports that the CNDH only conducted visits on a regular basis to Bamako's Central Prison, not outside the capital. Its last visit to a military detention centre occurred in 2012. According to the US DoS, in 2016 the CNDH reported the death in prison of 27 inmates due to unhealthy prison conditions.²⁴⁶

Amnesty International reported the existence of an unofficial place of detention in Bamako, known as *Sécurité d'Etat* [State Security], where no inspections are carried out, nor are lawyers and family members allowed to meet with detainees. Detainees include persons accused of terrorism and suspected members or sympathisers of armed groups.²⁴⁷

2.3 Security forces, army, police

The Malian security sector includes various bodies; their tasks are controlled and overseen by civilian authorities and legal provisions are available in order to prevent violations by the actors of the security sector.²⁴⁸

The executive branch holds the power to govern the actions of all armed forces; it exerts control at all levels and expresses guidelines and priorities. The president of the republic is the commander-in-chief of the armed forces and presides over the National Defense Council, that provides general guidance for national defense, and over the Committee for National Defense, that gives military guidance for national defence.²⁴⁹

The president is the supreme commander of the armed forces; the prime minister is responsible for the implementation of the defense policy.²⁵⁰

2.3.1 Forces Armées Maliennes (FAMa) [Malian Armed Forces]

The Malian Armed Forces (FAMa) are responsible for the defence of the country. During times of peace, the FAMa support the maintenance of public order.²⁵¹

The FAMa include the *Armée de Terre* [Land Force] and the *Armée de l'Air* [Air Force]. The *Gendarmerie Nationale* [National Gendarmerie] and the *Garde Nationale* [National Guard] are also part of the FAMa, all under the authority of the *Ministère de la Defense et des Anciens Combattants* (MDAC) [Ministry of Armed Forces and Former Combatants].²⁵²

²⁴⁴ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ Mali, Loi N°2016-036 Portant la Creation De La Commission Nationale Des Droits De L'homme, 7 July 2016, [url](#); Juriafrica, The Human Rights Commission Was Established in Mali, 19 March 2017, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Mali, 20 April 2018, [url](#)

²⁴⁷ Amnesty International, Mali, Des Exactions Perpétrées Dans Un Contexte D'instabilité Croissante, January 2018, [url](#), p. 10

²⁴⁸ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ Mali, Forces Armées Maliennes, Site Officiel, n.d., [url](#); ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); defenceWeb, Mali Military, 8 August 2013, [url](#)

²⁵¹ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background Note, Defence, last update 20 July 2018, [url](#)

²⁵² Mali, Ministère De La Defense Et Des Anciens Combattants, n.d., [url](#)

The operational control of the National Guard and the National Gendarmerie is shared between the MDAC and the *Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile* [Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection].²⁵³

In 2015, the Active Malian Armed Forces consisted of a staff of 15 800 personnel.²⁵⁴

The 2015 *Loi l'orientation et de la programmation militaire* [Military Orientation and Programming Law] foresaw the modernisation of the FAMA and the enrolment of 10 000 volunteers, increasing the number of FAMA to 20 000 by 2019.²⁵⁵

In 2017, 5 000 new soldiers joined the Malian army²⁵⁶ and another 5 000 were recruited in 2018.²⁵⁷

2.3.2 Internal security

Internal security and public order in Mali is maintained by the following bodies and institutions:

- *La Police Nationale* [National Police - NP];
- *La Police Judiciaire* [Judicial Police];
- *La Garde Nationale* [National Guard];
- *La Gendarmerie Nationale* [National Gendarmerie];
- *La Direction Générale de la Sécurité d'Etat* [General Directorate of State Security], the government's intelligence service.²⁵⁸

National Police

The National Police is a civilian force under the authority of the *Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile* [Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection].²⁵⁹

The NP is mandated to protect people and property, identify and record criminal offenses, gather evidence, and find and arrest perpetrators; it can also seek and gather intelligence to inform government decision-making.²⁶⁰ The NP operates in urban areas.²⁶¹

The NP can also participate in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions, and in protection and civil defense actions.²⁶²

It includes three main corps of civil servants: the police commissioners, the police inspectors and the police *sous-officiers*.²⁶³ The NP employs over 6 000 individuals, 700 of whom are women.²⁶⁴

²⁵³ Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵⁴ World Bank, Mali, Armed forces personnel, 2015, [url](#)

²⁵⁵ GlobalSecurity, Mali Army, n.d., [url](#)

²⁵⁶ Maliactu.net: Armée: 5000 nouvelles recrues en 2017, 10 May 2017, [url](#)

²⁵⁷ Mali, Forces Armées Maliennes, Official Website, n.d., [url](#); Malijet, Armée: nouvelle phase de recrutement en 2018, 22 January 2018, [url](#); Mali, Forces Armées Maliennes, Listes des Candidats Admissibles au Concours de Recrutement de L'armée, [2018], [url](#)

²⁵⁸ Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile Organisation, n.d., [url](#); ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁵⁹ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); Mali, Police Nationale du Mali, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶⁰ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Police Nationale, Mission, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶¹ US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

²⁶² Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Police Nationale, Mission, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶³ Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Police Nationale, Mission, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶⁴ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Police Nationale, Mission, n.d., [url](#)

Judicial Police

The Judicial Police is part of the National Police and is mandated to report violations of criminal law, gather evidence, track down suspects and supporting investigating authorities after a case is opened. The Judicial Police is administratively under the MoI while they are directed by the public prosecutor.²⁶⁵

National Guard

The National Guard is a military force responsible for providing security to Malian institutions and political and administrative authorities, prison service, keeping public safety and order, and the surveillance of Mali's territory.²⁶⁶ According to the US DoS 2017 report, it has 'specialised border security units, which were largely ineffective'.²⁶⁷

The National Guard also has special units on camel – the meharist units (or Camel Corps) - to patrol exclusively the desert in the north of Mali. These units gather intelligence and patrol border areas. The National Guard also participates in peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance missions.²⁶⁸

Administratively it falls under the authority of the MDAC, and when deployed responds to the Ministry of Internal Security and Civil Protection.²⁶⁹

National Gendarmerie

The National Gendarmerie is a military formation that keeps internal security and order; it participates in the defence of the territory, and peace and humanitarian assistance missions.²⁷⁰

It shares responsibilities with the National Police and the National Guard, including gathering intelligence and protecting private property²⁷¹, mainly in rural environment.²⁷²

It falls under the authority of the Ministry of Security and Civil Protection and the Ministry of Armed Forces.²⁷³ 2015 data indicates 4 000 staff members, 100 of whom are women.²⁷⁴

According to ISSAT, since the 2012 crisis in the north of Mali, the government has deployed an additional 2 026 gendarmes and police officers to the region, where only 469 were present before the coup.²⁷⁵

The General Directorate of State Security investigates any criminal case, and can temporarily detain people at the discretion of its Director General, mainly in terrorism and national security cases.²⁷⁶

Efficiency and integrity of the security forces

ISSAT states that Mali's internal security apparatus has always suffered from lack of resources, low pay and inadequate training. Especially in the north of Mali, the security services are insufficiently established, with low concentration of infrastructure and staff. Cross-border crime

²⁶⁵ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁶⁶ Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Garde Nationale, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶⁷ US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2017, Mali, 20 April, [url](#)

²⁶⁸ Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Garde Nationale, n.d., [url](#)

²⁶⁹ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁷⁰ Mali, Ministère de la Sécurité et de la Protection Civile, La Gendarmerie Nationale, Mission, n.d., [url](#); ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁷¹ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁷² US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Mali, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

²⁷³ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁷⁴ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Mali, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

²⁷⁵ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁷⁶ US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, Mali, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

is difficult to monitor due to porous borders, and the influx of illegal transfers of small arms, human trafficking and trade of illicit drugs has been difficult to address. Police officers and gendarmes have been accused of extortion and bribery at checkpoints.²⁷⁷ There are reports of gender-based violence (GBV) by security forces.²⁷⁸ For more on GBV, see [3.1.2 Social and political violence](#).

In 2016, the International Crisis Group noted that although the government took measures to secure central Mali, violence was spreading; as a reaction, communities were arming themselves and militias were becoming stronger.²⁷⁹

In June 2018, Malian security forces were responsible for the extrajudicial killing of 15 Fulani civilians in central Mali.²⁸⁰

A 2015 survey shows that 65 % of the interviewees were dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied with the efficiency of the police and gendarmerie. Only 10 % responded they had contacted the police to report a crime. 60 % of the respondents were dissatisfied with the Malian justice system.²⁸¹

In January 2015, the EU Capacity Building Mission (EUCAP) was established in Mali to assist the internal security forces with reasserting the government's authority over the whole of the country. In January 2017 the Council of the European Union extended the EUCAP mission until January 2019.²⁸²

Domestic violence is an issue. Despite some governmental measures, there is no reliable data, and ISSAT indicates that the police has been reluctant to intervene in such cases.²⁸³

Tensions between the population and the army persists since the time of the authoritarian rule. Underpayment, lack of training, and unsuccessful battles against the terrorist groups undermined the legitimacy and the image of the Malian army. Furthermore, the security forces patrolling and intervening to stop community tensions and protect civilians were also accused of targeting specific ethnic groups and committing serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, torture, and arbitrary arrest.²⁸⁴

Suspecting nomadic Fulani populations of complicity with jihadi groups, FAMa troops have increasingly been accused of abuse against Fulani civilians.²⁸⁵ Over 70 cases of torture or ill treatment of suspected Islamist rebels were reported and violations have been documented by Human Rights Watch during the 2013 offensive to take back the north. Very few cases were investigated and none of the allegedly responsible persons was prosecuted.²⁸⁶

Mali's army is reported to be overstuffed but it is not possible to know to what extent due to a phenomenon of absenteeism. In the lower ranks, soldiers are often ill-equipped with military equipment from different countries and not well trained.²⁸⁷

²⁷⁷ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#)

²⁷⁸ UN, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mali, [April 2018], [url](#)

²⁷⁹ International Crisis Group, Central Mali: An Uprising in the Making?, 6 July 2016, [url](#)

²⁸⁰ ECFR, Mali's impunity problem and growing security crisis, 28 June 2018, [url](#)

²⁸¹ IDLO, Clingendael, A Crisis Of Confidence, Competence And Capacity: Programming Advice For Strengthening Mali's Penal Chain, November 2015, [url](#), p. 16

²⁸² EUCAP Sahel Mali, About us and our mandate, n.d., [url](#)

²⁸³ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); US DoS, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2016, 3 March 2017, [url](#)

²⁸⁴ ISSAT, Mali SSR Background note, 7 December 2017, [url](#); HRW, World report 2018, Mali, Events of 2017, 2018, [url](#)

²⁸⁵ Centre FrancoPaix en résolution des conflits et missions de paix, Insecurity, the Breakdown of Social Trust, and Armed Actor Governance in Central and Northern Mali, August 2017, [url](#), p. 13

²⁸⁶ HRW, Collapse, Conflict And Atrocity In Mali, May 2014, [url](#), p. 2

²⁸⁷ Global Security, Mali Army / Forces Armées Maliennes, n.d., [url](#)

3. Southern regions (Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou and Sikasso)

Until 2015, all sources consulted divided Mali between north and south, and the city of Mopti as the informal border zone. Between 2016 and 2017, the figures of conflict events reported by ACLED increased in Mopti, making it the region with the highest percentage of such events in the whole country.²⁸⁸

If earlier assessments indicated that the 2012 crisis was restricted to the north of Mali, the conflict events in the Mopti region between 2012 and 2017 have made it a region of concern, with the involvement of jihadist fighters in local issues and community conflicts.²⁸⁹

However, there is no stable and defined front line, and there are no identified actors. Until 2015, no accurate analysis explained the phenomenon of violence targeting traditional authorities, security forces, individuals and even schools developing in the region.²⁹⁰

The FLM - led by the radical preacher Amadou Koufa [also referred to as Amadou Kouffa or Hamadoun Kouffa]²⁹¹ and integrated in the global jihadist movement - has operated in central and western regions of Mali.²⁹²

This group targeted representatives of the state authorities or traditional leaders specifically. It also claimed to be responsible for the attacks in Sévaré in August 2015 and in Bamako in November 2015. These terrorist attacks were also claimed by Al-Murabitun.²⁹³

3.1 Levels of violence

The security situation in the northern and central regions of Mali has led to vast internal displacement.²⁹⁴ August 2018 UNHCR data indicates 69 993 persons were internally displaced in Mali,²⁹⁵ and 139 842 Malian refugees were in Niger, Mauritania and Burkina Faso.²⁹⁶

The peak number was reached in June 2013 with 353 455 internally displaced persons (IDPs). With the progressive pacification of the northern regions, the number of IDPs decreased slowly.²⁹⁷ Until 2015, 25 % of the internally displaced went to Bamako²⁹⁸, but very few of them returned to their homes. April 2015 was the lowest level of IDPs.²⁹⁹ According to UN OCHA 'more than 10,000 people were displaced in the Ségou and Mopti regions further to an intercommunity conflict recorded in February 2017 in the administrative districts of Macina and Niono (Ségou

²⁸⁸ ACLED, Mali, March 2017 Update, March 2017, [url](#)

²⁸⁹ Tobie, A., Le centre du Mali : violences et instrumentalisation croisées, December 2017, [url](#), p. 1; ACLED, Mali, March 2017 Update, March 2017, [url](#)

²⁹⁰ Tobie, A., Le centre du Mali : violences et instrumentalisation croisées, December 2017, [url](#), p. 5

²⁹¹ International Crisis Group, Central Mali, An Uprising in the Making?, 6 June 2016, [url](#); Reuters, Mali's Islamist conflict spreads as new militant group emerges, 19 August 2015, [url](#); Tobie, A., Le centre du Mali : violences et instrumentalisation croisées, December 2017, [url](#)

²⁹² International Crisis Group, Central Mali, An Uprising in the Making?, 6 June 2016, [url](#)

²⁹³ Switzerland, ODM, Note Mali: Situation sécuritaire, 14 March 2016, [url](#); Reuters, Mali's Islamist conflict spreads as new militant group emerges, 19 August 2015, [url](#); International Crisis Group, Central Mali, An Uprising in the Making?, 6 June 2016, [url](#); Tobie, A., Le centre du Mali : violences et instrumentalisation croisées, December 2017, [url](#); Maïga, I., Armed groups in Mali: Beyond the labels, June 2016, [url](#), p. 7

²⁹⁴ Slate Afrique, Les déplacés invisibles de Bamako, 26 October 2012, [url](#)

²⁹⁵ UNHCR, Operational Portal, Mali, IDPs, 31 August 2018, [url](#)

²⁹⁶ UNHCR, Operational Portal, Refugee situation: Mali situation, 31 August 2018, [url](#)

²⁹⁷ Mali, DNDS, Matrice de Suivi des déplacements (DTM), January 2018, [url](#)

²⁹⁸ Bertrand, M., Du District au "grand Bamako" (Mali): réserves foncières en tension, gouvernance contestée, 19 December 2015, [url](#); Slate Afrique, Les déplacés invisibles de Bamako, 26 October 2012, [url](#)

²⁹⁹ Mali, DNDS, Matrice de Suivi des déplacements (DTM), January 2018, [url](#)

region) [...] In 2017, the Ségou region hosted the largest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the country.³⁰⁰ In January 2018, there are still 47 706 IDPs and Tombouctou hosts the majority of them.³⁰¹

The densely populated city of Bamako, with two million inhabitants is now experiencing an inexorable rise of urban violence. According to UN Security Council 'armed banditry continued to constitute the most significant threat to civilians.'³⁰²

In rural areas, traditional community-based conflict resolving mechanisms have been weakened since the 2012 crisis.³⁰³ The ongoing war exacerbated community tensions and led to ease exploitation of frustrations by any local leader or armed group.³⁰⁴ The preventive aspect of traditional conflict management mechanisms is no longer efficient. That explains the emergence of 'hybrid' actors in the Mopti region, such as Ginna Dogon and Takital Pulakuu, who 'mobilize both traditional and liberal-democratic registers'.³⁰⁵

Inter-community conflicts have led to numerous human rights violations.³⁰⁶ Like in central Mali, the security forces indulge in unrestrained and indiscriminate use of force to maintain law and order in the southern part of the country.³⁰⁷

In 2016, the violence reached a worrying level: according to the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues 'more than 385 attacks killed at least 332 people, including 207 civilians in the north and center of the country'³⁰⁸, in a combination of terrorist attacks, targeted killings and inter-community conflicts. This goes with other human rights violations such as torture, kidnapping, arbitrary detention and extortion of all kinds, amounting to at least 630 cases. These figures rose to double since 2015.³⁰⁹

3.1.1 Terrorism

The violence from the northern regions is spreading to the central and south of Mali and affecting civilians. In 2015, terrorist groups killed at least 44 civilians all over the territory of Mali, including Bamako and Sévaré (near Mopti). Since 2015, Islamist armed groups attacked army bases, police and gendarmerie posts, as well as civilian targets, including in central and southern Mali. In Bamako, a nightclub (La Terrasse)³¹⁰ and a luxury hotel (Radisson Blu)³¹¹ were targeted, as was the army garrison town of Sévaré, and the one of the Ségou region.³¹²

³⁰⁰ UNOCHA, Mali: population movements related to armed conflict and intercommunity violence, March 2017, [url](#)

³⁰¹ Mali, DND, Matrice de Suivi des déplacements (DTM), January 2018, [url](#); USAID, Mali, complex emergency fact sheet #1, 14 September 2017, [url](#)

³⁰² UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Mali, 31 May 2016, [url](#), p. 5

³⁰³ Sidibe, B., Résolution traditionnelle des conflits au Mali, 6 June 2008, [url](#); Allegrozzi, I. and Ford, E., Reconstruire la mosaïque, Perspectives pour de meilleures relations sociales après le conflit armé au Nord du Mali, October 2013, [url](#)

⁽³⁰⁴⁾ Interpeace and IMRAP, Portraits croisés, Analyse locale des dynamiques de conflit et de résilience dans la zone de Koro-Bankass, Région de Mopti, June 2017, [url](#), pp. 39-45; Sangare, B., Le Centre du Mali: épice du djihadisme?, 20 May 2016, [url](#)

³⁰⁵ Bagayoko, N. and Kone, F. R., Les mécanismes traditionnels de gestion des conflits en Afrique subsaharienne, June 2017, [url](#)

³⁰⁶ HRW, Mali: Abuses Spread South, Islamist Armed Groups' Atrocities, Army Responses Generate Fear, 19 February 2016, [url](#); Bamada.net, Conflits intercommunautaires: revisiter les mécanismes traditionnels de règlement, 18 May 2016, [url](#)

³⁰⁷ UACDDDD, Communiqué de presse, 27 December 2017, [url](#); UACDDDD, Communiqué de presse, 22 December 2017, [url](#); mali7.net, Violence-injustice: La justice populaire se déchaîne à Bamako, 14 August 2017, [url](#); maliactu.net, Mali: forces de l'ordre-population: Pourquoi tant de violences ?, 5 February 2018, [url](#)

³⁰⁸ FIDH-AMDH, Mali, Terrorism and Impunity Jeopardize the Fragile Peace Agreement, May 2017, [url](#)

³⁰⁹ Le Monde Afrique, Les violences au Mali ont atteint un niveau inquiétant en 2016, 13 January 2017, [url](#); maliactu.net, Mali: forces de l'ordre-population: Pourquoi tant de violences ?, 5 February 2018, [url](#)

³¹⁰ L'Express, Mali: ce que l'on sait de l'attaque d'un restaurant à Bamako qui a fait 5 morts, 7 March 2015, [url](#); BBC, Mali bar attack kills five in Bamako, 7 March 2015, [url](#)

³¹¹ RFI, Un an après l'attaque, le Radisson de Bamako affiche complet, 20 November 2016, [url](#)

³¹² HRW, Mali: Abuses Spread South, 19 February 2016, [url](#)

The terrorist groups responsible for the attacks in the south ‘include Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Dine, Al-Murabitoun, and the Macina Liberation Front (Front du libération du Macina, or FLM), which emerged in January 2015’.³¹³

In March 2017, a new terrorist group emerged, the Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM) [Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims].³¹⁴ This group is al-Qaeda’s affiliate in Mali and Western Africa, and is the result of the merger between Ansar Dine, Al-Murabitoun, and AQIM, all Al-Qaeda affiliates in West Africa. Additionally, the Macina Liberation Front was also ‘absorbed’, contributing to JNIM’s ‘credentials and territorial control’ in central Mali. The group is led by Iyad Ag Ghaly, leader of Mali’s Tuareg uprising, who has publicly pledged allegiance to Al-Qaeda.³¹⁵

The group is mainly active in Mali, but also in Niger and Burkina Faso³¹⁶ (where they claimed the 2 March 2018 attacks on the French Embassy and army headquarters³¹⁷). They oppose France in particular, who has been in the country since 2012; but also France’s western partners and all countries involved in UN missions. The group ‘seeks to incite the West African Muslim community to “remove oppression” and expel non-Muslim “occupiers”’ and declared their tactics to be “combat action against security forces, rather than attacks on the population”.³¹⁸

Chronology of main events

Since the launch of operation Serval in 2013, the terrorist threat has increased in the southern regions.³¹⁹

Between 1 September 2017 and 30 August 2018, ACLED³²⁰ registered around 26 security incidents in the southern regions of Mali (Bamako, Kayes, Koulikouro, Ségou and Sikasso), which resulted in approximately 100 fatalities.³²¹

Table 1 presents the number of security incidents per region and the number of estimated deaths. The table also gives the number of incidents and fatalities of incidents categorised as ‘violence against civilians’.

Table 1

Region	Totals		Violence against civilians	
	No. Incidents	No. Fatalities	No. Incidents	No. Fatalities
Bamako	1	1	0	0
Kayes	2	2	0	0
Koulikouro	6	11	3	3
Ségou	15	81	5	16
Sikasso	2	5	0	0
TOTAL	26	100	8	19

Source: ACLED³²²

³¹³ HRW, Mali: Abuses Spread South, 19 February 2016, [url](#)

³¹⁴ Fair Observer, The Al-Qaeda Affiliates Merger in Mali, 28 March 2017, [url](#)

³¹⁵ CSIS, Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), 5 September 2018, [url](#)

³¹⁶ CSIS, Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), 5 September 2018, [url](#)

³¹⁷ Long War Journal, Al Qaeda branch in Mali claims Burkina Faso attacks, 3 March 2018, [url](#)

³¹⁸ CSIS, Jama’at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), 5 September 2018, [url](#)

³¹⁹ RFI, Bamako frappée au cœur: une première depuis l’opération Serval, 7 March 2015, [url](#)

³²⁰ For more information on this source, refer to the Introduction of this report.

³²¹ ACLED, Real Time data (1 September 2017 – 30 August 2018), [url](#)

³²² ACLED, Real Time data (1 September 2017 – 30 August 2018), [url](#)

According to this table, most of the incidents in the reference period in the southern regions of Mali occurred in Ségou. In contrast, very few incidents were registered in Bamako, Kayes, Koulikouro or Sikasso. Out of the 26 security incidents, 8 can be classified as ‘violence against civilians’, resulting in 19 fatalities. Most of these incidents and fatalities occurred in Ségou, where 5 incidents were recorded as violence against civilians, resulting in 16 fatalities. The incidents classified otherwise mainly concerned battles between JNIM and the Dozo militias, or JNIM and the military or police forces.³²³

During the same reference period but in the northern regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu, there was a total to 288 incidents (with around 634 fatalities), of which 70 security incidents are classified as ‘violence against civilians’, resulting in 162 fatalities.³²⁴

On 15 August 2018, Dozo militia members abducted two civilians in the area of Kalala, one was released against ransom while the other remains missing.

In January 2018, two Malian customs officials were killed by jihadists in Toubakoro (*cercle* de Banamba, Koulikoro), 200 km north of Bamako.³²⁵

On 19 October 2017, the gendarmerie commander in Guire (*Cercle* of Nara, Koulikoro) was abducted and his driver found dead. JNIM claimed the attack on 20 October 2018.³²⁶

On 9 October 2017, militants executed an alleged informer in Boudjiguire (*Cercle* of Nara, Koulikoro); on 14 October, Bamako military killed four militants, suspected of perpetrating the attack.³²⁷

On 6 October 2017, the Church of the Douna-Pen was ransacked and burned by armed men.³²⁸

On 18 June 2017, AQIM attacked the touristic Kangaba camping hotel in Yirimadio, near Bamako. Four civilians and a soldier were killed.³²⁹

During 2017, soldiers killed and buried at least 15 people suspected of terrorism in common graves, while more than 25 were subjected to forced disappearance. Dozens of other suspects were subjected to severe ill treatment during interrogations.³³⁰

3.1.2 Social and political violence

Political violence is not common in Mali. Election campaigns or parliamentary debates can give rise to abusive language or insults, but no physical violence had been reported until the murder attempt of chronicler Madou Kanté (Maréchal Madou) in July 2017. The web activist broadcasted Madou-ka-Journal where he often denounced corruption and nepotism in Mali. He was shot and wounded in his car. Also Master Soumy, a member of the platform *An tè A bana* - whose members fight against the project to revise the constitution, was threatened because of his positions.³³¹

³²³ ACLED, Real Time data (1 September 2017 – 30 August 2018), [url](#)

³²⁴ ACLED, Real Time data (1 September 2017 – 30 August 2018), [url](#)

³²⁵ VOA, Deux douaniers tués au nord de Bamako au Mali, 24 January 2018, [url](#); L’Express, Près de 40 tués en 24 heures dans des attaques au Mali, 25 January 2018, [url](#)

³²⁶ Bamada.net, Cercle De Nara: Des Blessés Suite À Une Tentative D’enlèvement Du Préfet, 10 December 2017, [url](#)

³²⁷ Qatar Tribune, Soldiers kill four suspected militants in Central Mali, says military statement, 14 October 2017, [url](#)

³²⁸ Afrikinfos, Koro: L’église de Douna-pen saccagée et brûlée par des hommes armés!, 6 October 2017, [url](#)

³²⁹ La Dépêche, Mali: 5 tués dans l’attentat près de Bamako, revendiqué par une alliance liée à Al-Qaïda, 19 June 2017, [url](#); Le Monde Afrique, Au Mali, l’"attaque djihadiste" a fait au moins cinq victimes, 19 June 2017, [url](#); Le Point Afrique, Mali: ce que l’on sait de l’attaque du campement Kangaba, 20 June 2017, [url](#)

³³⁰ HRW, World report 2018, Mali, Events of 2017, 2018, [url](#)

³³¹ Bamako.com, Violence politique au Mali: Ne pas franchir le Rubicon, 26 July 2017, [url](#); Maliactu, Mali : "Madou ka journal", un web-activiste échappe à une tentative d’assassinat, 25 July 2017, [url](#); Le Républicain, La Plateforme an tè a Banna-Touche pas à ma constitution lance un ultimatum au président IBK, 10 August 2017, [url](#)

During the first round of the Malian presidential elections held on 29 July 2018, small incidents with no victims occurred in several locations in the north, mainly in the regions of Kidal and Tombouctou, where there is limited or no state presence.³³²

The second round of presidential elections took place on 12 August 2018; despite some heavy security presence, again only minor incidents were reported (including shut down of polling stations or destruction of election material by gunman).³³³ The EU Election Observation Mission to the Presidential Mali Elections 2018 indicates that the elections were generally calm, despite the incidents in the centre and north of the country.³³⁴ One source indicates that no post-election violence was reported.³³⁵

Mohamed Youssouf Bathily, also known as Ras Bath and nicknamed ‘the supreme guide’ by his followers, is a Malian radio broadcaster that continuously denounces politicians and demands the departure of President Keïta. His statements have earned him prosecution for ‘inciting disobedience’. He was released on the 27 November 2017 after a lengthy procedure.³³⁶

Students have always been involved in politics (even before the uprising of 1991 against the dictatorship), in which they played a central role.³³⁷ Clashes occurred in the University of Bamako or on the streets, in strikes or demonstrations (on the rate of scholarship fees, the payment of scholarship or corruption of teachers). The students union is also a place of potential confrontation.³³⁸

Daily violence is reported in the Malian newspapers. Domestic violence and rape are common; rape is punishable by 5 to 20 years in prison, but it remains a cultural taboo and very few victims report it. The association Wildaf-Mali, the local branch of Women in Law and Development in Africa, revealed that about 300 women are raped each year in Mali and this phenomenon has increased in the wake of the 2012 crisis.³³⁹

In 2016, Amnesty International reported repetitive violations of human rights in the Sikasso region such as sexual violence, rape, tortures.³⁴⁰ In 2017, MINUSMA ‘documented 16 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, most of which concerned women and girls travelling by public transportation on the axis connecting key regions of Gao, Timbuktu, Ménaka, Mopti and the Niger border.’ Perpetrators included members of the HCUA, the CMFPR 2, the MSA and the Malian Defense and Security forces.³⁴¹

In urban areas, hip hop is a widespread culture³⁴², and rap has become a popular form of expression among youth. For years, it was mainly a political way of expression, but with the Western influence, mainly from the USA, violence has appeared on the rap scene.³⁴³ Elders

³³² Studio Tamani, Violences le jour du scrutin: «644 électeurs n’ont pas voté», [url](#); Guardian (The), Mali votes in runoff election amid heavy security presence, 12 August 2018, [url](#)

³³³ Guardian (The), Mali votes in runoff election amid heavy security presence, 12 August 2018, [url](#); Washington Post, Mali’s elections saw some Islamist militant violence, Here’s what these patterns suggest, 7 September 2018, [url](#)

³³⁴ EU, MOE UE Mali 2018, Déclaration préliminaire de la MOE UE Mali, 14 August 2018, [url](#)

³³⁵ Guardian (The), Mali votes in runoff election amid heavy security presence, 12 August 2018, [url](#)

³³⁶ Le Monde, Qui est Ras Bath, l’agitateur vedette du Mali?, 16 February 2018, [url](#); RFI, Mali: l’activiste «Ras Bath» relaxé, 28 November 2017, [url](#); MaliNet, Urgent: Faute de preuve contre Ras Bath, le parquet abandonne les poursuites, December 2017, [url](#)

³³⁷ Maliactu.net, Mali: Le syndicalisme dans le monde enseignant: Appel à l’Union et à l’Unité, 15 September 2014, [url](#); Sy, O., Reconstruire l’Afrique: vers une nouvelle gouvernance fondée sur les dynamiques locales, 2009, pp. 34-35

³³⁸ Maliactu.net, Mali: Violence continue à l’Université de Bamako: L’étudiant en 2^{ème} année Allemand tué à coups de couteau, 25 January 2017, [url](#); Bamada.net, Université malienne: Un corps malade!, 3 February 2018, [url](#)

³³⁹ Le Monde Afrique, Le Mali sous le choc d’une vidéo de viol collectif, 9 February 2018, [url](#)

³⁴⁰ Amnesty International, Sikasso: présentation de restitution des enquêtes relatives aux violations des droits de l’homme, 4 January 2017, [url](#)

³⁴¹ UN, Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sexual Violence in Conflict, Mali, [April 2018], [url](#)

³⁴² Urban Dictionary, Hip Hop, 14 May 2015, [url](#)

³⁴³ Le pays, Mali: Quand le rap explose et dérape..., 21 January 2014, [url](#)

describe the new generation of rappers as encouraging youth to debauchery, alcoholism and violence.³⁴⁴ Rap rival groups fight in the capital city of Bamako, especially in night clubs.³⁴⁵ Rap singer Issa Diabaté, also known as Iba Montana, has recently made a video clip to advertise violence and drugs where he rants at the crowd brandishing a machete.³⁴⁶ The mayor of the fourth municipality of Bamako has forbidden him to perform ‘to preserve peace and avoid any disturbance to the public order’.³⁴⁷

In rural areas, inter-community conflicts now affect almost the entire country and the state seems unable to maintain peace and order. Most of the time the Fulani community – widespread all over the country – is involved: against Tuareg in the north, against Dogon or Bambara³⁴⁸ in the centre, against Soninké or Malinké in the west and against Bambara in the south.³⁴⁹ Most of the time, Fulanis appeared not to be the aggressors by the large numbers of victims in their ranks.³⁵⁰

The situation of the Fulani community is at stake as they are the largest ethnic minority in Mali, but feel marginalised by the state and threatened by other ethnic communities, for example the Tuaregs. The perceived lack of security amongst the Fulani prompt them to establish self-defense groups. The fact that young Fulani men seem to be over-represented in armed groups (also in jihadi groups) may also be a consequence of marginalisation and perceived lack of security. Fulanis and Tuaregs have always been in competition for the exploitation of pastoral resources and the theft of livestock in central and northern Mali.³⁵¹

In the western part of Mali, the *Front d’action pour la région de Kayes* (FARK) [Action Front for the Kayes region] was created in 2016 to defend the interests of the population of the eight circles of the Kayes region. This apolitical association advocates for the economic and social development of the region, underlining its difference with armed groups from other regions.³⁵²

In 2016, the population in the southern part of Mali was less satisfied with the government policy than the northern population. The highest rates of dissatisfaction were recorded in Kayes (60.1 %), Bamako (70 %) and Kidal (74.2 %), while in the Gao and Ménaka regions, people were rather satisfied (63 % and 75 % respectively) with the actions of the government.³⁵³ The feeling of general impunity was shared by more than 75 % of the Malian citizens.³⁵⁴

The 2018 presidential elections were won by Ibrahim Boubacar Keita.³⁵⁵ His opponent, Soumaila Cissé raised issues of election fraud.³⁵⁶ For more on the president and elections, [see 2.2.1 Executive - President.](#)

³⁴⁴ MaliPremier, Alcool, Sexe et Violence: Le Rap doit-il être interdit au Mali?, 19 January 2018, [url](#)

³⁴⁵ RHHM.Net, Affrontement violent entre les groupes de Gaspi et de King KJ, 8 January 2017, [url](#)

³⁴⁶ Les Observateurs, France24, Iba Montana, le rappeur malien armé qui séduit les jeunes et inquiète les autorités, 25 January 2018, [url](#)

³⁴⁷ Maliactu.net, Mali: Iba Montana pire que GASPI: Un réel danger pour la jeunesse malienne, 27 December 2017, [url](#); Maliactu.net, C’est la mairie de la Commune IV qui a donné le ton de sanction contre le jeune rappeur Issa Diabaté alias Iba Montana, 11 January 2018, [url](#)

³⁴⁸ RFI, Mali: violents affrontements communautaires dans la région de Ségou, 23 March 2017, [url](#)

³⁴⁹ Maliactu.net, Mali: Nord, centre et ouest du Mali: L’Etat submergé par des violences communautaires, 5 June 2016, [url](#)

³⁵⁰ Sangare, B., Le Centre du Mali: épicerie du djihadisme?, 20 May 2016, [url](#)

³⁵¹ International Crisis Group, Central Mali, An Uprising in the Making?, 6 June 2016, [url](#); Sangare, Boukary, Le Centre du Mali: épicerie du djihadisme?, 20 May 2016, [url](#)

³⁵² Info-Matin, Mali: Développement de la région de Kayes: le FARK hausse le ton, 14 January 2018, [url](#)

³⁵³ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Mali-mètre: Que pensent les Maliens, March 2017, [url](#), pp. 8-9

³⁵⁴ Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, Mali-mètre: Que pensent les Maliens, March 2017, [url](#), p. 34

³⁵⁵ Mali, MATCL, 2eme Tour de l’Election Presidentielle, Resultats Provisiores Complets, 15 August 2018, [url](#); Mali, Cour Constitutionnelle, Arrêt N°2018-04/Cc-Ep Du 20 Août 2018 Portant Proclamation Des Resultats Definitifs Du Second Tour De L’election Du President De La Republique Bamako, 20 August 2018, [url](#)

³⁵⁶ RFI Afrique, Mali: la présidentielle agitée par les accusations de fichier électoral parallèle, 22 July 2018, [url](#)

Chronology of main events

During the first round of presidential elections in Mali held on 29 July 2018, no incidents were recorded in the southern areas of Kayes, Sikasso, Koulikoro, Mopti, Gao and Bamako. Incidents with no victims occurred in several locations in the north, mainly in the regions of Kidal and Tombouctou, where there is limited or no state presence.³⁵⁷

The second round of presidential elections took place on 12 August 2018; despite some heavy security presence, only small incidents were reported (including shut down of polling stations or destruction of election material by gunman).³⁵⁸ The EU Election Observation Mission to the Presidential Mali Elections 2018 indicates that the elections were generally calm, despite the incidents in the centre and north of the country.³⁵⁹ One source indicates that no post-election violence was reported.³⁶⁰

In June 2018, following a dispute among mining workers and the mining company (Somilo) in Kéniéba (Kayes), protesters attacked public buildings, the 'préfecture', and the houses of the mayor and of his two deputies. The protests were a reaction to the 'discriminatory' hiring criteria by the mining company. Official reporting indicates one person was killed during the protests.³⁶¹

In February 2018, two youth associations competing for representation on the National Youth Council clashed in Kéniéba (Kayes), resulting in the death of 15 people.³⁶²

In February 2018, four suspects were arrested in Bamako after the sexual assault of a 14-year-old girl. They published a video of their crime. They have been imprisoned in the central prison of Bamako awaiting trial.³⁶³

In December 2017, the Konsiga population - a village near Kayes in western Mali -, blocked the entrances of the town hall demanding the departure of the mayor, whom they consider not to be legitimately elected. Violent clashes took place between protesters and security forces. Eight demonstrators and five members of the security forces were wounded.³⁶⁴

In December 2017, students fought each other to join the *Association des élèves et étudiants du Mali* [Students' Association of Mali]. A student died and two others were injured.³⁶⁵

In December 2017, three farmers from Zéméssou village (San circle) were killed by the Malian security forces and eight were arrested and imprisoned because of an ongoing land dispute that has lasted since 2011, opposing the central state to the community.³⁶⁶

On 10 August 2017, a police sergeant named Aboubacar Konaté was beaten up in Bamako by a crowd after having insulted a woman who rejected his advances.³⁶⁷

³⁵⁷ Studio Tamani, Violences le jour du scrutin: «644 électeurs n'ont pas voté», [url](#); Guardian (The), Mali votes in runoff election amid heavy security presence, 12 August 2018, [url](#)

³⁵⁸ Guardian (The), Mali votes in runoff election amid heavy security presence, 12 August 2018, [url](#); Washington Post, Mali's elections saw some Islamist militant violence, Here's what these patterns suggest, 7 September 2018, [url](#)

³⁵⁹ EU, MOE UE Mali 2018, Déclaration préliminaire de la MOE UE Mali, 14 August 2018, [url](#)

³⁶⁰ Guardian (The), Mali votes in runoff election amid heavy security presence, 12 August 2018, [url](#)

³⁶¹ Intellivoire.net, Mali: Randgold indique que le gouvernement se penche sur la violence près de sa mine, 12 June 2018, [url](#); RFI, Mali: tensions et violences dans le sud du pays à Kéniéba, 12 June 2018, [url](#)

³⁶² KayesInfo.net, La ville de Kenieba a été le théâtre de scènes de violences, 19 February 2018, [url](#)

³⁶³ Le Monde Afrique, Le Mali sous le choc d'une vidéo de viol collectif, 9 February 2018, [url](#); Jeune Afrique, Vidéo d'un viol collectif au Mali: une enquête est ouverte, 0 February 2018, [url](#); RFI, La vidéo d'un viol collectif secoue le Mali, 7 February 2018, [url](#); Maliactu.net, Mali: Viol collectif: Le présumés coupables déférés hier à la Maison centrale d'arrêt, 16 February 2018, [url](#)

³⁶⁴ RFI, Mali : troubles et violences à Konsiga, dans la région de Kayes, 16 December 2017, [url](#)

³⁶⁵ AfricaNews, Affrontements meurtriers à l'université de Bamako, au Mali, 20 December 2017, [url](#); TV5 Monde, Mali : affrontements dans une faculté de Bamako, 20 December 2017, [url](#)

³⁶⁶ UACDDDD, Communiqué de presse, 27 December 2017, [url](#); UACDDDD, Communiqué de presse, 22 December 2017, [url](#)

³⁶⁷ Mali7.net, Violence-injustice: La justice populaire se déchaîne à Bamako, 14 August 2017, [url](#)

In July 2017, two robbers were burned by a crowd in the Bamako market.³⁶⁸

In June 2017, conflicts between Fulani and Dogon communities erupted in Koro, in the Mopti region, near the border of Burkina Faso. The army reported 31 people dead (27 Fulani and 4 Dogon) and 9 injured.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁸ Mali7.net, Violence-injustice: La justice populaire se déchaîne à Bamako, 14 August 2017, [url](#)

³⁶⁹ Jeune Afrique, Mali: une trentaine de morts dans des violences entre Peuls et Dogons dans le centre du pays, 20 June 2017, [url](#)

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Terms of Reference

EASO Mali Country Focus

Including Southern areas/regions of Mali

Terms of Reference

40 pages, excluding bibliography

1. Background information – Southern areas/regions

1.1 Social/Ethnic background/languages/...

1.2 Religious

1.3 Political history and current situation

2. State authority

2.1 Administration

2.1.1 Structure (formal and informal)

2.2 Security forces

2.2.1 Police

2.2.2 Army

2.3 Judiciary

2.3.1 Courts (formal and informal)

2.3.2 Prisons

(under state authority, all topics should take into account availability and accessibility)

3. North and central areas/regions

3.1 Levels of violence

3.2 Chronology of main events

4. Southern areas/regions

3.1 Levels of violence

3.2 Chronology of main events



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