

Submission by Society for Threatened Peoples

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Mali

1. More than 200,000 people were displaced by fighting in Northern Mali since the uprising of Tuareg in January 2012. The unrest in Northern Mali and the military coup in March 2012 have caused widespread human rights violations by the army and official security forces and by rebel movements. Mali has experienced one of the worst human rights disasters since the brutal crackdown against Tuareg rebels two decades ago. The fighting led to important restrictions on humanitarian access which has caused more misery and internal displacement creating a massive humanitarian crisis in West Africa.

Desperate human rights situation in Northern Mali

2. All armed forces involved in the unrest in Northern Mali have been committing human rights violations since January 2012. The fighting has caused widespread looting, sexual violence and extrajudicial executions by the radical Islamist movement Ansar Dine, Arab militias and the Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA). Some of these militia fighters seem to be child soldiers according to the testimony of civilians. Many of the sexual abuses committed by MNLA fighters on the civilian population in occupied cities were based on a lack of discipline and obvious command structures. Several women and girls testified to human rights researchers that they deliberately were abducted and raped by MNLA fighters. Many victims of rape are getting no medical care and are refusing to testify for fear of being stigmatised. Several churches, hospitals and aid agencies were looted by rebel fighters. Medical staff at hospitals in Timbuktu and Gao and civilians who fled the violence in cities occupied by Arab militias, Ansar Dine and MNLA reported that government buildings, banks, schools and residences of important state representatives especially were targeted for looting, but that hospitals were not spared. International humanitarian law prohibits any mistreatment and abuses of the civilian population in armed conflict. In some areas schools and libraries were burned, only Islamic schools were spared from destruction. Most perpetrators of these human rights violations have not been punished by their commanders.
3. The radical Ansar Dine movement was responsible for imposing Sharia law and for the destruction of bars and hotels. In some areas they have banned the use of cigarettes and destroyed stock of cigarettes. In other cases Ansar Dine fighters limited the free movement of women, imposed new dress codes, closed down schools and they are searching for a separation between sexes in the public. Furthermore they imposed the Sharia law with its cruel and inhuman punishments. They ordered the flagging of civilians and the amputation of the hand of a MNLA

fighter who refused to pay for a purchase in a shop in Kidal. In Gao a civilian was denounced for drinking alcohol and was flagged dozens of times with a baton. Ansar Dine intends to prohibit books which are perceived as being critical to Islam. On the other hand Ansar Dine was committed to impose law and order, to prevent human rights abuses and arbitrary acts by other militias and rebel movements. Actively Ansar Dine became involved in stopping sexual abuses and rapes of civilians. But the patrols, introduced by Ansar Dine to ensure law and order, furthermore checked the indecent behaviour of the civilian population. The deliberate desecration of Islamic mausoleums and destruction of at least eight of sixteen traditional tombs listed as UNESCO-World Heritage Sites in June 2012 amounts to a crime of war.

4. The Malian army has committed massive human rights violations against Tuareg in the conflict zone. In February and March 2012 helicopters of the Malian armed forces bombed Tuareg camps in the Kidal area in order to quell the uprising of the indigenous population. At least twelve people were injured on February 22, when a helicopter bombed a Tuareg camp near Kidal. Arbitrary detentions and extrajudicial executions of unarmed Tuareg by Malian army were reported from different areas in Northern Mali. Some of the arrested Tuaregs were held incommunicado in unofficial detention centres. All victims of these human rights violations were accused by the security forces of supporting the rebels. These assumptions only were based on the ethnic identity of the Tuareg.
5. The government of Mali has failed to ensure the protection of ethnic Tuareg in the capital Bamako and neighbouring cities after the start of the rebellion in Northern Mali. Hundreds of Tuaregs were chased off their homes, their shops were destroyed by furious non-Tuaregs who wanted to take revenge for the attacks of military camps by Tuareg rebels. Most ethnic Tuaregs had to leave the capital area because the security forces were unable and unwilling to ensure their protection.
6. Furthermore human rights violations have been committed by two Songhay self-defence militias which were built up to preserve and protect the interests of the non-Tuareg population in Northern Mali. They have assaulted Tuareg civilians in camps in the Gao area harassing and beating them. At least eleven Tuaregs were killed in the attacks. No protection for the Tuareg has been provided by Mali police and security forces. Lack of protection and impunity indicate that the government of Mali seems to tolerate the violence directed against Tuareg civilians.

All conflict parties should be urged to respect basic human rights and international humanitarian law. Especially the protection of the civilian population against sexual abuse and looting and humanitarian access to the conflict zone should be ensured by all conflict parties.

Military junta denies basic human rights

7. At least eight prominent politicians and military officials have been imprisoned by the military junta after the military coup in March 2012. Among those arbitrarily arrested were Kassoum Tapo, the former president of the bar association, and Tieman Coulibaly, a member of the party Union for Democracy and Development.

The detainees were taken to a military camp and held incommunicado. Some 50 soldiers have been held illegally for more than two months in military camps. The soldiers were arrested during a counter-coup on April 30. Some of the arrested were charged with endangering state security and have been tortured in custody. Their prison conditions are particularly inhuman. The government of Mali should stop the torture and immediately transfer the prisoners to legally recognized prison centres.