

He had been investigating, among other things, the activities of vigilante Islamist groups. His possible enforced disappearance was believed to be linked to his work as a journalist.

## EXCESSIVE USE OF FORCE

The government did not confirm whether it was investigating police officers who had used unnecessary force against youths peacefully attending a private music festival in April. Police ransacked their belongings, held 79 youths in handcuffs overnight and ill-treated some of them. One participant said she was kicked hard in the back by a policeman and another was sprayed with pepper spray without any provocation.

## IMPUNITY

No police or army officers were brought to justice for beating and injuring dozens of members and leaders of the Maldivian Democratic Party in February 2012.

# MALI

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## Republic of Mali

Head of state: **Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta**

Head of government: **Moussa Mara (replaced Oumar Tatam Ly in April)**

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**Internal armed conflict continued to create a climate of persistent insecurity, particularly in the north of the country. Armed groups committed abuses including abductions and killings. The authorities were slow to take action against those who committed human rights violations during the 2012 conflict.**

## BACKGROUND

Although a peace agreement was signed between the Malian government and several armed groups in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in June 2013, the north of the country

remained unstable, with parts of it beyond the control of the Malian authorities.

Violent clashes continued to erupt between armed groups and the Malian army in Kidal in May, in which at least 41 people, including eight civilians, were killed. Peace discussions continued in Algeria between the Malian government and armed groups, but outbreaks of violence persisted. There were repeated incidents of rocket attacks, mines and explosive devices in the north injuring and killing Malian and international military personnel. Between May and September, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) was repeatedly attacked by armed groups. In October, nine Nigerian UN peacekeepers were killed when their convoy was ambushed by an armed group between the towns of Menaka and Ansongo in the Gao region of northeastern Mali.

In March, the National Assembly approved a law creating a commission for truth, justice and reconciliation. It also created a high court of justice to try officials suspected of treason and crimes during their terms in office.

Issaka Sidibé was elected President of the National Assembly in January. In April, Prime Minister Oumar Tatam Ly resigned and President Keïta named Moussa Mara the new Prime Minister.

## ABUSES BY ARMED GROUPS

Investigations continued into the killings of two Radio France Internationale journalists, Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon, after they were abducted in Kidal in November 2013. Both the French and Malian authorities opened judicial inquiries.

Five Malian staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were taken hostage in February and held until April. The armed group Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa claimed responsibility for the abductions.

In May, members of armed groups deliberately killed eight male civilians, including six government officials, at the

Governor's office in Kidal, northern Mali. They also took 30 people hostage including government employees from the Governor's office, some of whom were beaten. The hostages were released on their third day of captivity after negotiations with UN peacekeeping forces.<sup>1</sup>

In September, five men from the Tuareg tribe were abducted by an armed group in the market in Zouéra, a town situated 80km north of the city of Timbuktu. Four were released a few days later but Hama Ag-Sidi Ahmed was beheaded. His head was found suspended at the marketplace in Zouéra; his decapitated body was found under a tree in the centre of the town.

Serge Lazarevic, a French hostage abducted in November 2011 in Hombori, Mopti region, was released in November.

Three people from the same family were reportedly abducted near the town of Menaka in December.

## IMPUNITY

The government began to tackle the issue of impunity and made some progress, notably in the case of the enforced disappearance of more than 20 soldiers in April 2012. An investigation into these disappearances began in March. A total of 28 people were arrested during the year, including General Amadou Sanogo, leader of the military junta that ruled Mali for part of 2012, and General Ibrahim Dahirou Dembélé, former Chief of Staff. All were charged with murder and complicity in kidnapping.

Few prosecutions were brought in connection with other cases of enforced disappearances and there were long delays in bringing to justice those responsible for committing human rights violations in the context of the conflict. Some cases, notably the disappearance of 11 men in Timbuktu in February 2013, were yet to be investigated.

## CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children accused of being members of armed groups in the conflict continued to be

imprisoned alongside adults without access to family or legal counsel.<sup>2</sup> In mid-2014, at least seven children were detained in the capital, Bamako, alongside adults, without protection measures for children in custody. Most were charged with being members of armed groups and with the illegal possession of firearms and ammunitions. Four were released in August but other children remained in detention.

## DEATHS IN CUSTODY

At least seven people arrested in connection with the conflict died in custody between January 2012 and the end of 2014. At least two such detainees died in custody in Bamako during 2014 due to lack of medical care; Mohamed Ag Sana died in March and Ismagel Ag Achkou in May.

## DEATH PENALTY

No executions had been carried out in Mali for several decades, but death sentences continued to be imposed. In August, Bassidiki Touré, Souleymane Diarra, Soumaila Dembélé and Almamy Traoré were sentenced to death for robbery and complicity. Sounkodjan Diarra was sentenced to death for premeditated murder. His co-accused was sentenced to life imprisonment.

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1. Mali: All parties to the conflict must put an end to ongoing human rights violations (AFR 37/001/2014)

[www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR37/001/2014/en](http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR37/001/2014/en)

2. Mali: Children still paying a high price in ongoing conflict (Press release)

[www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/mali-children-still-paying-high-price-ongoing-conflict-2014-08-20](http://www.amnesty.org/en/for-media/press-releases/mali-children-still-paying-high-price-ongoing-conflict-2014-08-20)