

# UNHCR POSITION ON RETURNS TO MALI – Update III

January 2022

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Map of Mali



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Introduction

1. This position supersedes and replaces UNHCR’s *Position on Returns to Mali – Update II* from July 2019.<sup>1</sup> It is based on information available up until 11 January 2022, unless otherwise stated.
2. The security situation in Mali has continued to deteriorate in 2020 and 2021, due to violence by extremist Islamist groups, communal tensions, military operations, criminality as well as political instability, causing a record high in displacement<sup>2</sup> and a worsening humanitarian situation.<sup>3</sup> Two coups in the space of nine months, in August 2020 and May 2021, have further destabilized the country and

<sup>1</sup> UNHCR, *Position on Returns to Mali – Update II*, July 2019, [www.refworld.org/docid/5d35ce9a4.html](http://www.refworld.org/docid/5d35ce9a4.html).

<sup>2</sup> “Ainsi du 1<sup>er</sup> janvier 2018 au 31 mai 2021, une augmentation de 348 282 personnes déplacées internes a été constatée, suite à la dégradation de la situation sécuritaire dans le pays”. International Organization for Migration (IOM), *Rapport sur les déplacements (Juillet 2021)*, 2 September 2021, <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/mali-%E2%80%94-rapport-sur-les-d%C3%A9placements-juillet-2021>, p. 5. See also, Care International, *Mali Sees Highest Levels of Displacement in its Recent History Due to a Dangerous Combination of Conflict and Climate Change*, 3 November 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-sees-highest-levels-displacement-its-recent-history-due-dangerous-combination>.

<sup>3</sup> “The civilian population continues to bear the brunt of the combined effects of the political instability, delays in the implementation of the Agreement and the conflict in the tri-border area between Burkina Faso, Mali and the Niger, to the detriment of their security and livelihood, as well as to humanitarian access.” UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), p. 4. See also, Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Mali: Senior UN Official Calls for Holistic Approach to Tackle Security and Human Rights Crisis*, 9 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html).

undermined state institutions.<sup>4</sup>

3. In August 2021, the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali stated that the deterioration of the security situation had “reached a critical threshold” and warned that “rapidly spreading violence [...] [was] threatening the State’s very survival.”<sup>5</sup>

## Political Developments

4. On 15 May 2015, the Government of Mali signed the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali (hereafter the Agreement) with the “Coordination des mouvements de l’Azawad” (CMA), an alliance of armed groups, and with the Platform, a loose coalition of pro-government militias.<sup>6</sup> The Agreement aimed to create a roadmap to establish a governance system that would take into account local characteristics and reconstruct national unity while respecting territorial integrity and cultural diversity.<sup>7</sup> However, little progress in implementing the Agreement has been achieved, including during 2020 and 2021.<sup>8</sup> The Center for Strategic and International Studies noted that the Agreement only addresses a “slice” of Mali’s ongoing insecurity, and has “failed—in its original form and subsequent roadmaps—to address mounting Islamist violence, lethal ethnic tension, and persistent insecurity in Mali’s central regions.”<sup>9</sup> Importantly, the Agreement did not include as parties any extremist Islamist groups, such as the Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) or the Al Qaeda-affiliate Jama’at Nusrat Al Islam Wal Muslimin (JNIM).<sup>10</sup>
5. On 30 April 2020, the Constitutional Court controversially decided to overturn the results of the legislative elections for 31 seats, out of 147 seats in total.<sup>11</sup> This decision sparked protests across Mali, culminating in the formation of the *Mouvement du 5 juin–Rassemblement des forces patriotiques* (M5-RFP).<sup>12</sup> Protests continued throughout June and July 2020,<sup>13</sup> with protestors calling for the resignation

<sup>4</sup> International Crisis Group (ICG), *Saving Momentum for Change in Mali’s Transition*, 21 September 2021, [www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/304-transition-au-mali-preserver-laspiration-au-changement](https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/304-transition-au-mali-preserver-laspiration-au-changement).

<sup>5</sup> UN, *Mali Violence Threatens Country’s Survival, Warns UN Human Rights Expert*, 6 August 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097272>.

<sup>6</sup> UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 22 January 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 31 January 2018, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/N1802709-1.pdf>. On 13 April 2021 Sidi Brahim Ould Sidatt, the president of the CMA, was assassinated, which was characterized as an “enormous loss” to the implementation of the Agreement. UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), p. 3.

<sup>7</sup> UN Security Council, *Identical Letters Dated 19 May 2015 from the Chargé d’affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Mali to the United Nations Addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council*, 22 May 2015, S/2015/364, <https://undocs.org/S/2015/364>, and UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 20 August 2015 from the Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 21 August 2015, S/2015/364/Add.1, <https://undocs.org/en/S/2015/364/Add.1>.

<sup>8</sup> “Minimal progress toward implementation of the agreement occurred in 2020 because of the sociopolitical crisis, the Aug. 18 coup d’état, the establishment of the Transition, and the COVID-19 pandemic. [...] Five years after its signature, however, the agreement remains far from achieving its objectives and the peace process is not yet irreversible. [...] On numerous occasions, the United Nations Security Council has deplored the parties’ lack of action and the slow pace of implementation, a fact the parties themselves have acknowledged. The government and the two other signatories, the Coordination of Azawad Movements (CMA) and the Platform, have at times stalled the implementation process, increasing obstacles and imposing delays that contributed to the deterioration of the overall security situation and the related crisis in governance.” The Carter Center, *Report of the Independent Observer: Observations on the Implementation of the Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, Resulting from the Algiers Process*, December 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/wlre.pdf>, p. 1. See also, UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 2; UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 June 2021, S/2021/519, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S\\_2021\\_519\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S_2021_519_E.pdf), para. 2; Anadolu Agency, *Algiers Peace Agreement Rides Wave of Uncertainty in Mali*, 21 May 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/algiers-peace-agreement-rides-wave-of-uncertainty-in-mali/2249646](http://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/algiers-peace-agreement-rides-wave-of-uncertainty-in-mali/2249646); ICG, *Mali’s Algiers Peace Agreement, Five Years On: An Uneasy Calm*, 24 June 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-s-algiers-peace-agreement-five-years-uneasy-calm>.

<sup>9</sup> Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), *Why Mali Needs a New Peace Deal*, 15 April 2020, [www.csis.org/analysis/why-mali-needs-new-peace-deal](http://www.csis.org/analysis/why-mali-needs-new-peace-deal). See also, Anadolu Agency, *Algiers Peace Agreement Rides Wave of Uncertainty in Mali*, 21 May 2021, [www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/algiers-peace-agreement-rides-wave-of-uncertainty-in-mali/2249646](http://www.aa.com.tr/en/africa/algiers-peace-agreement-rides-wave-of-uncertainty-in-mali/2249646).

<sup>10</sup> ICG, *Mali’s Algiers Peace Agreement, Five Years On: An Uneasy Calm*, 24 June 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-s-algiers-peace-agreement-five-years-uneasy-calm>.

<sup>11</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 29 September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S\\_2020\\_952\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S_2020_952_E.pdf), para. 4. See also, BBC, *Thousands of Protesters Call for Resignation of Mali President*, 19 June 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53117095](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53117095).

<sup>12</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 29 September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S\\_2020\\_952\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S_2020_952_E.pdf), para. 4. See also, The New Humanitarian, *What’s Behind the Mass Protests in Mali?*, 10 July 2020, [www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/07/10/Mali-protests-Keita-Dicko](http://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2020/07/10/Mali-protests-Keita-Dicko).

<sup>13</sup> Notably, there were large protests on 19 June 2020 and 10 July 2020. The latter lasted three days; clashes between protestors and security forces in Bamako led to 14 civilian deaths, over 100 injuries and the arrests of several of the M5-RFP leaders. UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 29 September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S\\_2020\\_952\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S_2020_952_E.pdf), paras 4-5. During the protests, security forces and law enforcement sometimes responded with force. Amnesty International documented “excessive and lethal use of force by law

of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta.<sup>14</sup> On 18 August 2020, a group of soldiers and military officers took control of Bamako, arrested the president and senior members of government and took them to the military camp in Kati.<sup>15</sup> The president resigned that night.<sup>16</sup> The following day the formation of the *Comité national pour le salut du peuple* (CNSP), led by Colonel Assimi Goïta, was announced;<sup>17</sup> a transitional government was formed on 5 October 2020.<sup>18</sup>

6. On 24 May 2021, after a cabinet reshuffle by the transitional government which removed two CNSP members from ministerial positions, the military arrested the transitional president and prime minister, who resigned two days later.<sup>19</sup> Colonel Assimi Goïta was then appointed as the interim president by the Supreme Court,<sup>20</sup> and he subsequently appointed the leader of M5-RFP, Choguel Kokalla Maïga, as the prime minister.<sup>21</sup> Legislative and presidential elections had been scheduled for 27 February 2022,<sup>22</sup> but following the National Refoundation Conference (*Assises Nationales de la Refondation*) in January 2022 the transitional government proposed to extend the transition period and to delay the election by between six months and five years.<sup>23</sup> In response, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed economic sanctions, closed borders and recalled their ambassadors for consultations.<sup>24</sup>

## Security Situation in Mali

7. The security situation in Mali has continued to deteriorate across the country and particularly in the northern and central regions.<sup>25</sup> Violence affecting Mali includes intercommunity violence, sporadic violence by armed groups who were party to the 2015 Agreement, banditry and escalating conflict caused by Islamist extremist armed groups.<sup>26</sup>

enforcement” in Sikasso and Kayes, as well as at least four individuals killed during the August 2020 coup. Amnesty International, *Killed, Wounded and Forgotten? Accountability for the Killings during Demonstrations and the Coup in Mali*, April 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2050065/AFR3737482021ENGLISH.PDF](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2050065/AFR3737482021ENGLISH.PDF), p. 6.

<sup>14</sup> Reuters, *Mali Protests Resume as Thousands Call for President to Resign*, 11 August 2020, [www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-politics-idUSKCN2572IC](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mali-politics-idUSKCN2572IC); France 24, *Mali's Opposition Renews Calls for President Keita to Resign*, 30 July 2020, [www.france24.com/en/20200730-mali-ibrahim-boubacar-keita-boubou-cisse-ecowas](http://www.france24.com/en/20200730-mali-ibrahim-boubacar-keita-boubou-cisse-ecowas).

<sup>15</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 29 September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S\\_2020\\_952\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S_2020_952_E.pdf), para. 9.

<sup>16</sup> Al Jazeera, *Mali's Keita Resigns as President after Military Coup*, 19 August 2020, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/19/malis-keita-resigns-as-president-after-military-coup](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/8/19/malis-keita-resigns-as-president-after-military-coup); The Africa Report, *Mali: President Keita Resigns in TV Broadcast after his Arrest*, 19 August 2020, [www.theafricareport.com/38179/mali-president-keita-resigns-in-tv-broadcast-after-his-arrest/](http://www.theafricareport.com/38179/mali-president-keita-resigns-in-tv-broadcast-after-his-arrest/); BBC, *Mali Coup: President Quits after Soldiers Mutiny*, 19 August 2020, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53830348](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53830348).

<sup>17</sup> While the protest movement did not directly cause the coup, “M5-RFP welcomed the ousting of the President and indicated its readiness to discuss with CNSP modalities for the establishment of a political transition.” Additionally, M5-RFP organized a rally in celebration on 21 August 2020. UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 29 September 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S\\_2020\\_952\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2038717/S_2020_952_E.pdf), paras 10-11.

<sup>18</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 28 December 2020, S/2020/1281, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048839.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048839.html), paras 3-9.

<sup>19</sup> Al Jazeera, *What Next for Mali after Second Coup within a Year?*, 29 May 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/29/what-next-after-malis-coup](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/5/29/what-next-after-malis-coup); The Conversation, *Inside Mali's Coup within a Coup*, 26 May 2021, <https://theconversation.com/inside-malis-coup-within-a-coup-161621>.

<sup>20</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 June 2021, S/2021/519, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S\\_2021\\_519\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S_2021_519_E.pdf), para. 8.

<sup>21</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 9. “Under regional pressure, Goïta has promised elections in February 2022 in which he will not be a candidate, but observers question his commitment.” Congressional Research Service (CRS), *Crisis in Mali*, 14 July 2021, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10116.pdf>, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Al Jazeera, *Mali Opposition Rejects Election Delay in New Transition Plan*, 3 January 2022, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/3/mali-opposition-rejects-election-delay-in-new-transition-plan](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/3/mali-opposition-rejects-election-delay-in-new-transition-plan); Al Jazeera, *Mali Proposes Five-Year Election Delay to West African Bloc*, 1 January 2022, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/1/mali-proposes-five-year-election-delay-west-african-bloc-ecowas](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/1/1/mali-proposes-five-year-election-delay-west-african-bloc-ecowas); Jeune Afrique, *Mali : les Assises de la refondation recommandent une prolongation de la transition*, 31 December 2021, [www.jeuneafrique.com/1288219/politique/mali-les-assises-de-la-refondation-recommandent-une-prolongation-de-la-transition/](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/1288219/politique/mali-les-assises-de-la-refondation-recommandent-une-prolongation-de-la-transition/).

<sup>24</sup> ECOWAS, *Final Communiqué: 4th Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government on the Political Situation in Mali*, 9 January 2022, [www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Final-Communique-on-Summit-on-Mali-Eng-080122.pdf](http://www.ecowas.int/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Final-Communique-on-Summit-on-Mali-Eng-080122.pdf); Reuters, *West African Nations Sever Links with Mali over Election Delay*, 10 January 2022, [www.reuters.com/world/africa/mali-eyes-elections-four-years-west-african-bloc-mulls-sanctions-2022-01-09/](http://www.reuters.com/world/africa/mali-eyes-elections-four-years-west-african-bloc-mulls-sanctions-2022-01-09/).

<sup>25</sup> UN, *Mali Violence Threatens Country's Survival, Warns UN Human Rights Expert*, 6 August 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/08/1097272>. See also, UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, paras 32-37.

<sup>26</sup> In the first six months of 2021, “terrorist elements were allegedly responsible for 82 killings, while signatory and nonsignatory armed groups to the Algiers Accord, including the Platform of Northern Militias (Platform) and the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA), were allegedly responsible for at least 18 deaths.” US Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mali*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html). See also, UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022,

8. Between 1 April and 30 June 2021, MINUSMA documented 527 civilians killed, injured, or kidnapped/missing, which was a 25 per cent increase from the first quarter of 2021.<sup>27</sup> While the violence was documented in Douentza, Djenne, Bandiagara, Niono, Mopti, Ségou, Koro, Gao and Ansongo, MINUSMA also cautioned that the absence of documentation in some *cercles*, such as Youwarou and Tenenkou, is likely due to the fact that the government and MINUSMA do not have access to these areas as they are under the control of extremist Islamist groups.<sup>28</sup> Between 1 January 2020 and 1 January 2022, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) documented 2,003 incidents of battles, violence against civilians or explosions/remote violence, causing over 4,700 fatalities, and affecting every region of Mali.<sup>29</sup>
9. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that the period April-June 2021 saw a “steep rise” compared to the period January-March 2021 in the number of abductions, committed “largely by community-based armed groups and militias in central Mali, notably the Da Na Ambassagou militia, and also by armed groups such as [JNIM]”.<sup>30</sup> Ongoing attacks in the centre of Mali increase the fragility of communities and negatively affect their access to livelihoods, services and humanitarian aid.<sup>31</sup>
10. French forces remain present in Mali but have been re-organized, leaving their northernmost posts.<sup>32</sup> In June 2021, expressing concern for the “continued deterioration of the political, security and humanitarian situation in Mali”, the UN Security Council extended the mandate of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) until 30 June 2022.<sup>33</sup>
11. In late December 2014, five states of the Sahel region, namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger (in this context often referred to as the G5 Sahel), established an institutional framework for coordinating and monitoring regional cooperation on development and security policies.<sup>34</sup> In July 2017, the G5 Sahel heads of State formalized in Bamako the launch of a joint cross-border force to pool their efforts in the fight against security threats in the Sahel.<sup>35</sup> Its first operation took place in November 2017 involving the armies of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger.<sup>36</sup> With MINUSMA support, the joint force

S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, paras 49-50; UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 26 March 2021, S/2021/299, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2048837/S\\_2021\\_299\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2048837/S_2021_299_E.pdf), para. 51; UN General Assembly, *Situation of Human Rights in Mali*, 3 February 2021, A/HRC/46/68, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_68\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A_HRC_46_68_E.pdf), para. 33.

<sup>27</sup> “Entre avril et juin, au moins 527 civils ont été tués, blessés ou enlevés/disparus, soit une augmentation globale de plus de 25% par rapport au premier trimestre (421).” Additionally: “Au cours du second trimestre, les groupes tels que JNIM et autres groupes similaires ont causé le plus d’actes de violence à l’encontre des civils.elon les informations collectées par la DDHP, ils ont été responsables de 54 % des personnes tuées, blessées et enlevées.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l’homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 7.

<sup>28</sup> “L’absence de violence physique contre les civils dans certains cercles du centre du Mali, en particulier ceux de Youwarou et Tenenkou, tient au fait qu’ils sont soit sous le joug du JNIM ou ont signé des accords locaux dits de « non-agression ou réconciliation » avec les représentants de ce même groupe. En raison de contraintes diverses, les autorités maliennes et la MINUSMA n’ont pas pu avoir accès à ces zones depuis des mois.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l’homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 9. See also, Protection Cluster, *Mali: Cartographie des violations de protection (Octobre 2021)*, 2 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2063560/mali-incidents\\_protection\\_rapport\\_octobre\\_2021.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2063560/mali-incidents_protection_rapport_octobre_2021.pdf).

<sup>29</sup> This data is available for export on their website. They documented incidents in Bamako (10), Gao (361), Kayes (30), Kidal (80), Koulikoro (34), Menaka (91), Mopti (924), Ségou (243), Sikasso (61) and Timbuktu (169). ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 11 January 2022, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

<sup>30</sup> “During the first six months of 2021, MINUSMA documented at least 328 abductions (307 men, 11 boys, nine women and one girl), significantly more than the 187 cases documented during 2020 and a four-fold increase on abductions in 2019.” OHCHR, *Mali: Rampant Impunity for Human Rights Violations Poses Grave Risk for Protection of Civilians— Bachelet*, 29 June 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2054761.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2054761.html). See also, Institute for Security Studies, *Abductions: The Hidden Face of Mali’s Crisis*, 8 September 2021, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/abductions-the-hidden-face-of-malis-crisis>.

<sup>31</sup> UNICEF, *Mali Humanitarian Situation Report No. 8, 29 September 2021*, [www.unicef.org/media/107841/file/Mali%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report,%20August%202021.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/107841/file/Mali%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report,%20August%202021.pdf), p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> France 24, *France Hits Back at Claim It Is ‘Abandoning’ Mali by Withdrawing Troops*, 28 September 2021, [www.france24.com/en/africa/20210928-france-hits-back-at-claim-it-is-abandoning-mali](http://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210928-france-hits-back-at-claim-it-is-abandoning-mali).

<sup>33</sup> UN Security Council, *Resolution 2584 (2021)*, 29 June 2021, S/RES/2584 (2021), [https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2584\(2021\)](https://undocs.org/en/S/RES/2584(2021)), para. 17.

<sup>34</sup> *Convention portant création du G5 Sahel*, 19 December 2014, [www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/Africa/Convention\\_creation\\_G5\\_Sahel.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/Africa/Convention_creation_G5_Sahel.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> G5 Sahel Secretariat Permanent, *Résolution n° 00-01/2017 relative à la création d’une force conjointe du G5 Sahel*, 28 April 2017, [www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/images\\_Docs\\_Resolutions\\_force\\_conjointe\\_05\\_02\\_20171.pdf](http://www.g5sahel.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/images_Docs_Resolutions_force_conjointe_05_02_20171.pdf). Despite the creation of this force, violence has continued to rise across the region. Between January and November 2021, “armed Islamist groups have killed over 800 civilians in attacks in Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger.” HRW, *Sahel: Top UN Rights Official Visits Burkina Faso, Niger*, 1 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2064722.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2064722.html).

<sup>36</sup> Reuters, *G5 Sahel Launches Military Operation in African Scrublands*, 2 November 2017, [www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-security/g5-sahel-launches-military-operation-in-african-scrublands-idUSKBN1D21VS](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-security/g5-sahel-launches-military-operation-in-african-scrublands-idUSKBN1D21VS).

continues to play “a critical role” in responding to the increasingly fragile security situation.<sup>37</sup>

### Communal Violence and Self-Defence Groups

12. While the Dogon and Fulani (also called “Peuhl”) ethnic groups<sup>38</sup> have traditionally feuded over access to land,<sup>39</sup> since 2016 the formation of self-defence militias and the association of the Fulani with Jihadists had led to an increase in communal violence and retaliatory attacks,<sup>40</sup> including several civilian massacres.<sup>41</sup> The communal violence in central Mali has multiple causes and exacerbating factors, including land disputes aggravated by the effects of climate change;<sup>42</sup> ethnic tensions; political exclusion and economic decline; violence by extremist Islamist groups; and the vacuum of state services, influence and authority.<sup>43</sup>
13. The central regions continue to experience significant communal violence and violence from community-based militias, notably in the Mopti and Segou regions.<sup>44</sup> On 14 February 2020 a Dogon militia attacked the village of Ogossagou and killed 35 Fulani villagers.<sup>45</sup> In March 2019, over 160

<sup>37</sup> UN Security Council, *Joint Force of the Group of Five for the Sahel: Report of the Secretary-General*, 2 November 2020, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/1074>, para. 52.

<sup>38</sup> Most communal violence has occurred in the area southeast of Mopti town, including in the *cercles* of Koro, Bankass, Bandiagara and Douentza (nearly 60% of conflict-related deaths occurred in this area during 2019). While other ethnic groups live in Mopti, such as the Bozo and the Bambara, the primary conflicts and violence have been between, or perpetrated by, Dogon-affiliated militias, Fulani self-defence groups, and extremist Islamist groups. See ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), pp. 1, 3-6, 10. See also, UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, para. 25.

<sup>39</sup> These tensions can be traced to historic causes, development policies that focus on agriculture rather than pastoralism, the effects of climate change and deepening economic divides. ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), pp. 5-9. See also, African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD), *Climate Change and Violent Conflict in Mali*, 10 June 2021, [www.accord.org.za/analysis/climate-change-and-violent-conflict-in-mali/](http://www.accord.org.za/analysis/climate-change-and-violent-conflict-in-mali/); International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Mali's Invisible Front Line: Climate Change in a Conflict Zone*, 18 February 2021, [www.icrc.org/en/document/mali-invisible-front-line-climate-change-conflict-zone](http://www.icrc.org/en/document/mali-invisible-front-line-climate-change-conflict-zone).

<sup>40</sup> “[I]ntercommunal violence resulted in more than 350 civilian deaths as a result of 98 separate attacks in the first six months of the year [2020]. The data further revealed that Fulani self-defence groups were responsible for 81 attacks that resulted in the deaths of at least 250 Dogons, while Dogon and Dozo self-defence groups were responsible for 17 attacks resulting in the deaths of nearly 100 Fulanis.” US Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mali*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html). In addition to cycles of violence that see militias from one community carry out attacks in retaliation for attacks against them by other communities, the Dogon have retaliated against Fulani communities for attacks carried out by extremist Islamists. Notably, this has also spread the conflict as persons displaced within the region foment division in their host communities. “In retaliation for jihadist attacks upon Dogon, Dana Ambassagou militiamen have attacked Fulani civilians whom they accuse of supporting and protecting the jihadists, the majority of whom are of Fulani ethnicity.” ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), p. 3, see also p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> “The agricultural Bambara and Dogon and pastoral Peuhl communities have long had disputes over access to water and land, though they were usually resolved without bloodletting. Since 2015, however, the number of deadly communal incidents, underscored by efforts by the Malian government to combat increased violence by Islamist armed groups, has risen steadily. In 2018, this violence reached alarming levels.” Human Rights Watch (HRW), *“We Used to Be Brothers”: Self-Defense Group Abuses in Central Mali*, 7 December 2018, [www.hrw.org/report/2018/12/07/we-used-be-brothers/self-defense-group-abuses-central-mali](http://www.hrw.org/report/2018/12/07/we-used-be-brothers/self-defense-group-abuses-central-mali). An attack in March 2019 by Dogon fighters on a Fulani village left 150 civilians dead, and another attack in the same village almost a year later killed 35 additional persons. HRW, *Mali: Army, UN Fail to Stop Massacre*, 18 March 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/18/mali-army-un-fail-stop-massacre](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/03/18/mali-army-un-fail-stop-massacre). See also, ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/293-enrayer-la-communautarisation-de-la-violence-au-centre-du-mali](http://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/293-enrayer-la-communautarisation-de-la-violence-au-centre-du-mali).

<sup>42</sup> Norwegian Institute of International Affairs and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *Climate, Peace and Security Fact Sheet: Mali*, May 2021, [https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/210526%20Final%20Mali%20Climate%20Peace%20Security%20Fact%20Sheet\\_EN.pdf](https://sipri.org/sites/default/files/210526%20Final%20Mali%20Climate%20Peace%20Security%20Fact%20Sheet_EN.pdf). See also, SIPRI, *Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Mali*, 20 April 2021, [www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/sipripp60.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/sipripp60.pdf), pp. 20-21; Al Jazeera, *Mali Needs Climate Solutions, Not More Troops*, 31 March 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/31/mali-needs-climate-solutions-not-more-troops](http://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/31/mali-needs-climate-solutions-not-more-troops).

<sup>43</sup> ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/293-enrayer-la-communautarisation-de-la-violence-au-centre-du-mali](http://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/sahel/mali/293-enrayer-la-communautarisation-de-la-violence-au-centre-du-mali), pp. 3-10. See also, T.A. Benjaminsen and B. Ba, *Fulani-Dogon Killings in Mali: Farmer-Herder Conflicts as Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, 14(1) *African Security* (2021) 4-26, [www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/19392206.2021.1925035](http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/epub/10.1080/19392206.2021.1925035).

<sup>44</sup> “Le centre du Mali a aussi continué d’enregistrer des violences locales impliquant des milices et groupes d’autodéfense à base communautaire Peul, Dogon et Bambara, déchirant davantage le tissu social.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l’homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2059320/note\\_trimestrielle\\_avril-juin\\_2021-30\\_aout\\_2021.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2059320/note_trimestrielle_avril-juin_2021-30_aout_2021.pdf), para. 3, see also para. 11. “The escalating violence by militant groups and ethnic-based militias in the centre of Mali continued to obstruct implementation of the Agreement. [...] The Malian Dogon militia Dan Na Ambassagou continued to escalate its attacks on civilians, including on members of Dogon communities involved in inter-communal dialogues.” UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), paras 29, 31.

<sup>45</sup> “Au terme de cette mission d’enquête, la MINUSMA est en mesure de conclure que le 14 février 2020 vers 5h du matin, plusieurs dizaines d’individus, dont certains identifiés comme des chasseurs traditionnels, appuyés par des hommes en tenue militaire et des membres présumés de la communauté dogon, ont conduit une attaque vraisemblablement planifiée et ciblant la partie du village d’Ogossagou habitée par les membres de la communauté peule. Les assaillants, munis de fusils automatiques, de fusils traditionnels de chasse et de machettes, ont exécuté au moins 35 personnes toutes membres de la communauté peule, dont une (1) femme, trois (3) garçons, et deux (2) filles, et blessé au moins trois (3) autres. A ce jour, au moins 19 personnes dont cinq (5) enfants sont toujours portées disparues depuis l’attaque.” MINUSMA, *Conclusions de la mission*

persons had been killed in the same village by Dogon hunters; Dana Ambassagou (“the hunters who trust in God”), the most prominent Dogon self-defence militia, was accused of perpetrating the attack, but has denied responsibility.<sup>46</sup> In July 2021, the leader of Dana Ambassagou announced that “all Fulani residents in areas under his control must declare their presence to the dozos [Dogon hunters] or risk being assumed jihadists and killed as a result.”<sup>47</sup>

14. The Fulani have occasionally formed their own local self-defence groups, with the support of extremist Islamist groups; these groups have also attacked Dogon villages and have fought together with extremist Islamist groups.<sup>48</sup> Local ceasefires, while sometimes effective in temporarily reducing communal violence, have also been used by armed groups and militias as tools of control, and have rarely achieved long-term effects.<sup>49</sup>
15. In the Kayes region, communal violence related to descent-based slavery has seen a “dramatic rise” in 2021.<sup>50</sup> Between 1 January 2021 and 29 October 2021, 77 persons were injured, and one person was killed, in violent attacks against persons who are considered ‘slaves’ by certain communities in Kayes due to their parentage.<sup>51</sup> On 28 September 2021, a group of people from this caste were celebrating

*d'enquête spéciale sur les graves atteintes aux droits de l'homme commises à Ogossagou le 14 février 2020*, 18 March 2020, <https://minusma.unmissions.org/conclusions-de-la-mission-d%E2%80%99enqu%C3%AAtE-sp%C3%A9ciale-sur-les-graves-atteintes-aux-droits-de-l%E2%80%99homme-commises>.

<sup>46</sup> HRW, *When Will There be Justice for Mali Massacre?*, 22 March 2021, [www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/22/when-will-there-be-justice-mali-massacre](http://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/22/when-will-there-be-justice-mali-massacre); ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), pp. 1, 14.

<sup>47</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 43. Additionally, in the first quarter of 2021 MINUSMA documented attacks by Dana Ambassagou against Dogon civilians who had participated in peace agreements with the Fulani and were thus considered traitors. MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et abus de droits de l'homme au Mali: 1er janvier – 31 mars*, May 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2053131.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2053131.html), para. 43. “The UN and others have also reported on Dozo abuses in Ségou since late 2020, including the kidnapping of numerous villagers for ransom, killing of community leaders who refuse to join their ranks, and the alleged gang rape of a woman.” HRW, *Civilians in Mali's Ségou Region at Risk*, 1 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063555.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063555.html).

<sup>48</sup> “These Fulani armed groups are also often considered responsible for attacks upon Dogon civilians. Since 2019, their development has coincided with a significant increase in large-scale attacks upon Dogon villages. In other words, the non-jihadist armed groups recruiting among the Fulani are less structured and constitute a lesser force than jihadists or the Dana Ambassagou movement.” ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), p. 15. From 1 January to 31 March 2021: “Les milices et groupes armés peuls ont mené sept attaques ayant occasionné 18 morts tandis que les groupes armés dogons ont perpétré six attaques qui ont conduit au meurtre de six civils. [...] A titre illustratif, sept hommes, ont été tués par des éléments armés peuls, le 26 janvier 2021 au cours de l'attaque du village dogon Tinteri dans la région de Bandiagara.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et abus de droits de l'homme au Mali: 1er janvier – 31 mars*, May 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2053131.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2053131.html), paras 39, 42.

<sup>49</sup> For example, a peace agreement brokered by an extremist Islamist group in Koro included conditions such as “to expel Dan An Ambassagou; a ban on arms; introduction of sharia-based family laws and taxes; a ban on any contact with the Malian state and army; and respect for customary agreements governing the use of land and resources”. Danish Institute for International Studies, *When Jihadists Broker Peace*, 20 January 2021, [www.diis.dk/en/research/when-jihadists-broker-peace](http://www.diis.dk/en/research/when-jihadists-broker-peace). See also, ICG, *Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 10 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf), p. 13; OHCHR, *Mali: Senior UN Official Calls for Holistic Approach to Tackle Security and Human Rights Crisis*, 9 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html). “Even when they do lead to ceasefires, the lulls in fighting tend to be short-lived. Finally, most agreements exclude jihadists or include them only indirectly. The rare local agreements, like those of Baye and Ouenkoro, which include jihadists – albeit indirectly – seem to have succeeded in reducing the violence at least temporarily, unlike the agreements that exclude them.” ICG, *Reversing Central Mali's Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), p. 20. In central Mopti, “[extremist Islamist groups] posed as a mediator between Fulani and Dogon communities to undermine the influence of the ethnic Dogon-majority militia Dan Na Ambassagou and the presence of state forces in the region.” ACLED, *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*, 17 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>. See also, MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l'homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril – 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 4; Reuters, *Where State Is Weak, Mali Militants Broker Talks between Rival Clans*, 28 August 2020, [www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-islamists-mali-insight-idUSKBN2500LA](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-africa-islamists-mali-insight-idUSKBN2500LA).

<sup>50</sup> UN, *Rights Experts Condemn 'Dramatic Rise' in Attacks on So-Called Slaves in Mali*, 19 July 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/07/1096082>. See also, OHCHR, *Mali: End to Impunity for Barbaric Attacks on "Slaves" Long Overdue—UN Experts*, 29 October 2021, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27730&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27730&LangID=E); The Africa Report, *Mali: 'There Is No Specific Law Criminalising Descent-Based Slavery'*, 18 October 2021, [www.theafricareport.com/136835/mali-there-is-no-specific-law-criminalising-descent-based-slavery/](http://www.theafricareport.com/136835/mali-there-is-no-specific-law-criminalising-descent-based-slavery/); OHCHR, *Mali: UN Experts Condemn Increased Attacks on 'Descent-Based Slaves', Deplore Government's Failure to Act*, 19 July 2021, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27324&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27324&LangID=E).

<sup>51</sup> Kayes “has been the site of [eight] attacks since January [2021], in which one person was killed, at least 77 injured and more than 3,000 ‘slaves’ displaced.” OHCHR, *Mali: End to Impunity for Barbaric Attacks on "Slaves" Long Overdue—UN Experts*, 29 October 2021, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27730&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27730&LangID=E). “Twice as many people – mostly so-called ‘descent-based slaves’ – have been injured this year [as of July 2021] as in 2020.” OHCHR, *Mali: UN Experts Condemn Increased Attacks on 'Descent-Based Slaves', Deplore Government's Failure to Act*, 19 July 2021, [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27324&LangID=E](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27324&LangID=E). For the second quarter of 2021: “Enfin, un autre type de violence impliquant des acteurs privés dits « pro-esclavagistes » a continué à être documenté dans la région de Kayes. Au cours de la période considérée, au moins 51 personnes considérées comme « esclaves » ont été blessées alors qu'elles tentaient de participer à des réunions publiques ou de se rendre au marché local.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l'homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril – 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 24. See also, The Africa Report, *Mali:*

Mali's independence day when a group brutally attacked their gathering, bound them hand and foot and publicly humiliated them.<sup>52</sup>

### *Extremist Islamist Groups*

16. In the centre and northern regions of Mali, extremist Islamist groups continue to operate and control territory.<sup>53</sup> Groups active in Mali include JNIM,<sup>54</sup> ISGS,<sup>55</sup> and Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM).<sup>56</sup> During 2020 and 2021, JNIM and ISGS have continued to attack each other, state forces, international forces, local militias and civilians.<sup>57</sup> During the second quarter of 2021, extremist Islamist groups were responsible for 54 per cent of the violence against civilians documented by MINUSMA, including in Mopti, Gao, Menaka, but also in the southern region of Sikasso.<sup>58</sup> JNIM is reported to have strengthened its presence in the southern regions of Ségou and Sikasso.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the US Department of State observed that attacks by extremist groups and criminal elements continued to reach beyond the northern regions to the central regions of Mopti and Ségou and to the western region of Kayes.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>52</sup> 'There Is No Specific Law Criminalising Descent-Based Slavery', 18 October 2021, [www.theafricareport.com/136835/mali-there-is-no-specific-law-criminalising-descent-based-slavery/](http://www.theafricareport.com/136835/mali-there-is-no-specific-law-criminalising-descent-based-slavery/).

<sup>53</sup> France 24, 'Slaves Won't Have a Party in our Village': Attack Reveals Mali's Brutal, Ongoing Caste System, 14 October 2021, <https://observers.france24.com/en/africa/20211014-mali-descent-based-slavery-attack-party>. Following "robust advocacy efforts" by the UN in the Kayes region, the perpetrators of the attack were arrested on 1 November 2021 and remained in detention as of 4 January 2022. UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, para. 54.

<sup>54</sup> "Dans les régions du centre et du nord, les actions des groupes tels que Jama'at nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), l'Etat Islamique dans le Grand Sahara (EIGS) et d'autres groupes similaires (ci-après JNIM et autres groupes similaires) se sont poursuivies. En particulier, l'emprise territoriale du JNIM s'est accentuée au centre du Mali, avec un glissement notable de leurs activités en direction de Ségou et Sikasso, le long de la frontière avec le Burkina Faso." MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l'homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 3. "In the northern regions, the situation has been marked by the activity of violent extremist groups, including the Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims and Islamic State in the Greater Sahara." UN General Assembly, *Report of the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Mali*, 3 February 2021, A/HRC/46/68, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_68\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A_HRC_46_68_E.pdf), para. 8. "An official from Ségou [in central Mali] reported that of the region's seven local administrative areas, five were 'occupied' by JNIM fighters who have chased away teachers and health workers, and are contributing to food insecurity by attacking and killing farmers and besieging and blockading villages." HRW, *Civilians in Mali's Ségou Region at Risk*, 1 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063555.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063555.html). See also, US Department of State, *Country Report on Terrorism 2020: Mali*, 16 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2065417.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2065417.html). For a map which shows the territory controlled or contested by JNIM, without reference to other extremist Islamist groups, see ICG, *Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 10 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf), p. 32.

<sup>55</sup> JNIM was formed out of four other groups, and some reports still refer to sub-organizations, such as Katiba Macina or Ansar Dine. See CSIS, *Examining Extremism: Jama'at Nasr al-Islam wal Muslimin*, 15 July 2021, [www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin](http://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-jamaat-nasr-al-islam-wal-muslimin). JNIM is the "largest jihadist force in the central Sahel." Additionally: "Since March 2017, when JNIM formed, its attacks have resulted in more than 2,254 deaths in Mali, accounting for nearly one quarter of all the conflict-related fatalities in the country (9,119)." ICG, *Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 10 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) is also referred to by its French name and acronym, l'Etat Islamique dans le Grand Sahara (EIGS). CSIS, *Examining Extremism: Islamic State in the Greater Sahara*, 22 July 2021, [www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-islamic-state-greater-sahara](http://www.csis.org/blogs/examining-extremism/examining-extremism-islamic-state-greater-sahara). The leader of ISGS was killed by a targeted French drone strike in September 2021. France 24, *Sahrawi: The Top Sahel Jihadist Killed in French 'Opportunistic Hit'*, 16 September 2021, [www.france24.com/en/africa/20210916-the-assassinated-abou-walid-al-sahrawi-france-s-major-enemy-in-the-sahel](http://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210916-the-assassinated-abou-walid-al-sahrawi-france-s-major-enemy-in-the-sahel). See also, US Department of State, *Country Report on Terrorism: ISIS-Greater Sahara*, 16 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2065688.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2065688.html).

<sup>57</sup> AQIM was weakened during 2020 when its leader was killed. Jamestown Foundation, *One Year After the Death of Abdelmalek Droukdel AQIM Falls into Obscurity*, 7 May 2021, <https://jamestown.org/program/briefs-349/>; Middle East Institute, *The Last Emir?: AQIM's Decline in the Sahel*, 7 December 2020, [www.mei.edu/publications/last-emir-aqims-decline-sahel](http://www.mei.edu/publications/last-emir-aqims-decline-sahel).

<sup>58</sup> ACLED, *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*, 17 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>.

<sup>59</sup> MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l'homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 13.

<sup>60</sup> MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l'homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 3. "JNIM has strengthened its positions in Sikasso Region, where jihadist militant activity has surged." ACLED, *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*, 17 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>. "[I]ncident trends indicate a continued shift from the centre to the south of the country, with an increase noted in attacks by unidentified armed individuals or members of violent extremist and terrorist groups in Koutiala, San and Sikasso, as well as increased communal tension affecting in particular the Diabali and Dogofri communes in Niono district, Ségou Region." UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, para. 33.

<sup>61</sup> US Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mali*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html). See also, Al Jazeera, *Several Soldiers Killed in Central Mali Attack*, 6 October 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/6/several-soldiers-killed-in-central-mali-attack-2](http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/10/6/several-soldiers-killed-in-central-mali-attack-2); Institute for Security Studies, *How Western Mali Could Become a Gold Mine for Terrorists*, 1 April 2021, <https://issafrica.org/iss-today/how-western-mali-could-become-a-gold-mine-for-terrorists>. "Depuis octobre 2020 il y a une évolution du nombre d'incidents attribués aux GANE dans les régions de Kayes, Koulikoro et Sikasso. Il y a eu progressivement 25 incidents en 2019, puis 65 incidents en 2020 et 73 incidents août 2021, montrant l'extension du conflit armé dans les localités du nord et du centre du pays." OCHA, *Analyse de l'accès humanitaire au Mali*, 16 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065781/mli\\_rpt\\_humaccess\\_juillet-septembre\\_2021.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065781/mli_rpt_humaccess_juillet-septembre_2021.pdf), p. 3.



17. On 4 December 2021, militants attacked a civilian bus, then set it on fire, killing 31 people.<sup>61</sup> On 9 August 2021, members from an extremist Islamist group attacked three villages in northern Mali, killing more than 40 civilians.<sup>62</sup> In September 2021, extremist Islamist fighters attacked an army outpost, fought with Dogon militias, and attacked civilians in a village in Ségou region.<sup>63</sup> In October, JNIM attacked “a mining convoy escorted by gendarmerie and special antiterrorist forces between Sebaougou in the Kayes region, and Kwala in the Koulikoro region, killing several soldiers, wounding others, and leaving substantial material damage.”<sup>64</sup> From 1 January 2021 to 1 January 2022, ACLED documented battles, violence against civilians and explosive/remote violence by JNIM and associated groups in every region besides Bamako.<sup>65</sup> ISGS was comparably less active during 2021 and mostly in Gao region.<sup>66</sup>
18. As of October 2021, extremist Islamist groups remained “the main threat to civilians” in Gao and Timbuktu regions; gained ground in Menaka, including by controlling the major roads; and were actively attacking militias, MINUSMA forces, security forces and civilians in Mopti and Ségou regions.<sup>67</sup>

### Absence of State Presence and Institutions

19. Across Mali, state officials are often unable to carry out their duties due to insecurity, which paralyzes state institutions and undermines state legitimacy.<sup>68</sup> In portions of north and central Mali, there is limited state presence, including security forces and public services.<sup>69</sup> In the central regions, state institutions are viewed as ineffective and state services as inadequate, increasing reliance on traditional and communal authorities.<sup>70</sup> In October 2021, according to the UN Secretary-General, the “re-establishment of State presence and authority in central Mali remained challenging.”<sup>71</sup>

<sup>61</sup> BBC, *Mali: Dozens of Civilians Killed after Militants Attack Bus*, 4 December 2021, [www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59528860](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-59528860).

<sup>62</sup> France 24, *Suspected Jihadists Kill Scores of Villagers in Northern Mali*, 9 August 2021, [www.france24.com/en/africa/20210809-suspected-jihadists-kill-dozens-of-civilians-in-northern-mali-village-attacks](http://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210809-suspected-jihadists-kill-dozens-of-civilians-in-northern-mali-village-attacks). ICG later reported that the death toll was as high as 51 civilians, mostly women and children. ICG, *Crisis Watch: Mali*, August 2021, [www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/september-alerts-and-august-trends-2021](http://www.crisisgroup.org/crisiswatch/september-alerts-and-august-trends-2021).

<sup>63</sup> ICG, *Crisis Watch: Mali*, September 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CrisisWatch%20Print%20\\_%20Crisis%20Group\\_15.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CrisisWatch%20Print%20_%20Crisis%20Group_15.pdf), p. 6.

<sup>64</sup> ACLED, *Regional Overview: Africa (25 September-1 October 2021)*, 6 October 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061648.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061648.html).

<sup>65</sup> Namely, Gao, Kayes, Kidal, Koulikoro, Menaka, Mopti, Ségou, Sikasso and Timbuktu. ACLED documented 538 incidents where JNIM was involved. The majority of attacks occurred in Mopti. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 11 January 2022, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

<sup>66</sup> ACLED recorded 65 incidents of battles, violence against civilians and remote violence/explosions where ISGS was involved. However, ACLED also recorded 152 incidents where the actors could not be identified. ACLED, *Data Export Tool*, accessed 11 January 2022, <https://acleddata.com/data-export-tool/>.

<sup>67</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), paras 43-46, 56-57.

<sup>68</sup> “As at 30 April, 18 out of 131 civil administrators (14 per cent) were physically deployed to their duty stations in northern regions, including in Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Taoudenni and Timbuktu. Overall, 5 out of 24 prefects (20 per cent) and 9 out of 102 sub-prefects (9 per cent) were present at their duty stations, a decrease compared with the previous reporting period. The absence of State officials in the regions has created a security vacuum as armed movements continue to act as the sole security providers, further hampering the effective restoration of State authority.” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 June 2021, S/2021/519, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S\\_2021\\_519\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S_2021_519_E.pdf), para. 21. See also, UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, para. 29. “More generally, the Malian state has never been sufficiently present in peripheral rural areas, including in the zone exondée [an area in the Niger river basin that is not submerged by the river’s annual floods]. There are not enough public services, such as schools, clinics and courts, to meet local needs. Moreover, local populations do not place much trust in state actors and institutions, viewing them as predatory and corrupt. [...] In rural areas where the state is passive if not entirely absent, various armed groups are expanding their authority in the areas of security, justice and even taxation.” ICG, *Reversing Central Mali’s Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041373.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2041373.html), p. 9.

<sup>69</sup> “Today, state actors remain absent from much of the north—and, increasingly, from central Mali, which is outside the scope of the accord.” CRS, *Crisis in Mali*, 14 July 2021, <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/row/IF10116.pdf>, p. 2. “Due to a weak physical presence in the two central regions, state legal institutions do not exercise all of their sovereign functions, leaving the initiative to traditional, local institutions.” Additionally: “[T]he state’s retreat in parts of the north and the centre of the country has created a security vacuum.” SIPRI, *The Challenges of Governance, Development and Security in the Central Regions of Mali*, March 2020, [www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/sipriinsight2004.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/sipriinsight2004.pdf), pp. 8, 14. From 1 June to 1 October 2021, some police officers were redeployed to the central regions; however, no “judicial authorities were redeployed to the centre owing to continued insecurity and lack or weakness of State administrative services in the concerned areas.” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 33.

<sup>70</sup> SIPRI, *The Challenges of Governance, Development and Security in the Central Regions of Mali*, March 2020, [www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/sipriinsight2004.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/sipriinsight2004.pdf), pp. 4-6.

<sup>71</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 50. In November 2021, OHCHR noted that expanding insecurity, an increase in displacement and further school closures have happened “amid a further withdrawal of state authorities’ presence and control in [north and central Mali].” OHCHR, *Mali: Senior UN Official Calls for Holistic Approach to Tackle Security and Human Rights Crisis*, 9 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html).

20. Large areas are controlled by extremist Islamist groups or by local militias, who institute their own forms of law, order and quasi-state authority.<sup>72</sup> In areas controlled by extremist Islamist groups, people are forced to pay taxes to these groups and adhere to strict interpretations of Islamic principles, norms and values, with harsh penalties for disobedience.<sup>73</sup> Islamist extremist groups have forced women to wear veils, prohibited the sale of pork and alcohol, and closed schools that “taught any curriculum not based on Islam, replacing them with Quranic schools teaching a strict interpretation of Islam”.<sup>74</sup>

## Human Rights Situation

21. According to the UN Secretary-General in October 2021, the “human rights situation [has] continued to worsen”.<sup>75</sup> Between 1 October 2021 and 4 January 2022, MINUSMA documented 324 human rights violations and abuses,<sup>76</sup> a decrease from the previous reporting period (1 June to 1 October 2021), where MINUSMA had documented a significant increase of 725 human rights violations and abuses, with most violations perpetrated by local militias or extremist Islamist groups.<sup>77</sup> Impunity for human rights violations remains the norm,<sup>78</sup> and is exacerbated by weak state presence in the north and centre of Mali.<sup>79</sup> The International Commission of Inquiry for Mali, which submitted its final report in December

<sup>72</sup> “Deadly intercommunal violence persists, while violent extremist groups continue to expand their control over communities and replace the role of the State in the provision of security, justice and education services.” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 June 2021, S/2021/519, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S\\_2021\\_519\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S_2021_519_E.pdf), para. 93, see also para. 65. See also, ICG, *Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 10 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf), pp. 7-10. “Dana Ambassagou finances its activities mostly with the taxes and ransoms [...] and very likely also by looting [...]. Beyond its mission to protect, the movement provides a rudimentary form of governance, meeting out local justice and sometimes distributing humanitarian aid.” ICG, *Reversing Central Mali’s Descent into Communal Violence*, 9 November 2020, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2041373/293-reversing-central-malis-descent.pdf), p. 13.

<sup>73</sup> “Se substituant aux autorités locales, les éléments armés de ces groupes ont forcé les habitants à payer un impôt sur le bétail, les commerces et les récoltes (la zakat). Ils ont aussi imposé aux femmes et aux filles de porter le voile, au risque d’être flagellées en cas de refus ou leur ont interdit de participer à tout programme à vocation informative.” MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et atteintes aux droits de l’homme et au droit international humanitaire au Mali: 1er avril - 30 juin 2021*, August 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2059320.html), para. 19. MINUSMA noted in their first quarter report for 2021 that extremist Islamist groups forced schools in Timbuktu to teach Arabic and to separate boys and girls in classrooms. MINUSMA, *Note sur les tendances des violations et abus de droits de l’homme au Mali: 1er janvier – 30 mars*, May 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2053131.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2053131.html), para. 27. “Demands by extremists for illegal taxes and the imposition of their own interpretation of sharia law (sometimes achieved through coercive means such as abductions) are rampant, especially in Douentza, Gao and Ménaka Regions, as well S/2021/519 8/20 21-06729 as the adjoining southern parts of Timbuktu Region. Extremists also continue to expand operations into the southern San and Sikasso Regions.” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 June 2021, S/2021/519, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S\\_2021\\_519\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S_2021_519_E.pdf), para. 43. See also, ICG, *Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 10 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf), p. 7; UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 56.

<sup>74</sup> ICG, *Mali: Enabling Dialogue with the Jihadist Coalition JNIM*, 10 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065073/306-mali-jnim.pdf), p. 7; US Department of State, *2020 Report on International Religious Freedom: Mali*, 12 May 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2051660.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2051660.html).

<sup>75</sup> “Issues of particular concern included an increase in killings, abductions, cases of violations against children, conflict-related sexual violence and concerns around slavery. In some instances, counter-terrorism or military operations conducted by national or regional forces also had an adverse impact on human rights.” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 61. See also, US Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mali*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html).

<sup>76</sup> “The human rights situation remained worrisome in the country, including in areas that were previously the least affected by violence. [...] [the violations and abuses] comprised extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (16), other killings (84), injuring (94), abductions or enforced disappearances (60), torture or ill-treatment (1) and illegal arrests and detentions, in particular prolonged detentions and violations of due process guarantees in terrorism-related cases (69), as well as instances of death threats and intimidation, besieging of civilian populations, property destruction and looting, cattle raiding and forced displacement. Central Mali remained the epicentre of violence”. UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, paras 47-49.

<sup>77</sup> “These included extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (17), other killings (198), injuries (176), abductions and enforced or involuntary disappearances (210), torture or ill-treatment (5), illegal arrests and detentions, including notably prolonged detentions and violations of due process guarantees in terrorism-related cases (119), instances of death threats and intimidation, destruction and looting of civilian property and forced displacement of civilians. Most of these violations and abuses were documented in central Mali, including in the Regions of Bandiagara (105), Douentza (82), Mopti (68) and Ségou (89). Violations and abuses were also documented in the Regions of Bougouni (20), Gao (121), Kayes (42), Kidal (3), Koulikoro (6), Koutiala (3), Ménaka (31), Nara (2), Sikasso (1) and Timbuktu (28), as well as in Bamako (124). These violations or abuses were perpetrated by national forces (36), regional forces (4), signatory and compliant armed groups (6), community-based armed groups and militias (171), and extremist armed groups (389).” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 62. See also, OHCHR, *Mali: Senior UN Official Calls for Holistic Approach to Tackle Security and Human Rights Crisis*, 9 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html).

<sup>78</sup> France 24, *UN Rights Chief Slams ‘Rampant Impunity’ in Mali, Warns of Security Risk*, 29 June 2021, [www.france24.com/en/africa/20210629-un-rights-chief-slams-rampant-impunity-in-mali-warns-of-security-risk](http://www.france24.com/en/africa/20210629-un-rights-chief-slams-rampant-impunity-in-mali-warns-of-security-risk); US Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mali*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html); HRW, *When Will There be Justice for Mali Massacre?*, 22 March 2021, [www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/22/when-will-there-be-justice-mali-massacre](http://www.hrw.org/news/2021/03/22/when-will-there-be-justice-mali-massacre); UN General Assembly, *Situation of Human Rights in Mali*, 3 February 2021, A/HRC/46/68, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_68\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A_HRC_46_68_E.pdf), paras 17-31.

<sup>79</sup> “The Independent Expert recognizes that Mali is facing various constraints that may be contributing to this climate of impunity. The justice system is barely functional in some regions of central and northern Mali, mainly because of the lack of security, which hinders the deployment of judicial authorities and the proper functioning of courts and tribunals.” However, the Independent Expert also noted that trials had occurred in central Mali, and therefore this was not an excuse for persistent impunity. UN General Assembly, *Situation of Human Rights in Mali*, 3 February 2021, A/HRC/46/68, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_68\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A_HRC_46_68_E.pdf), para. 26.

2020, noted that despite numerous calls to end impunity, “the perpetrators of the vast majority of the atrocities committed in Mali since the start of the conflict remain unpunished and continue to enjoy total impunity.”<sup>80</sup>

22. The ongoing conflict has had devastating effects on children; children have been recruited and used in combat, killed, subjected to gender-based violence (GBV), abducted, subjected to forced labour, trafficked and otherwise harmed by the lack of access to education, healthcare and humanitarian aid.<sup>81</sup> The UN documented 809 grave violations against 535 children during 2020.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, at least 6,000 boys, including children younger than ten years old, work in gold mining in Gao province, “under deplorable environmental and working conditions, where they are vulnerable to economic exploitation, trafficking and use by armed groups.”<sup>83</sup> Some children are trafficked from Burkina Faso and Niger to the mines, where they must pay back a third person for their transport and their food.<sup>84</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic, the ongoing conflict and the severe humanitarian situation have “led to an increase in trafficking in children, forced labour and forced recruitment by armed groups in Mali.”<sup>85</sup> Armed groups have attacked schools, abducted and killed education personnel, and used schools for military purposes, affecting children’s access to education.<sup>86</sup>
23. Gender-based violence is pervasive.<sup>87</sup> The UN documented 1,300 cases of GBV in Mopti region alone between April and September 2021.<sup>88</sup> Many incidents are likely not reported due to “the limited mobility of women and girls in remote areas, social stigma and the victims’ fear of retaliation.”<sup>89</sup> Between

<sup>80</sup> The Commission argued that efforts to end impunity could help curb cycles of retaliatory violence, and are indeed a “prerequisite for lasting peace and for addressing the root causes of the Malian conflict.” Additionally: “The Commission’s investigations also show that ongoing impunity in Mali is one of the factors fuelling the serious inter-community violence that has been taking place in the central part of Mali since 2015 and which has worsened considerably since 2018. In the Commission’s view, if the still sporadic violence that it documented between the Fulani, Dogon and Bambara communities in 2016 and 2017 had been dealt with seriously and credibly by the judicial authorities at the time of the events, that would have helped to limit the proliferation of self-defence groups and to stem the tide of violence between the communities.” UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 17 December 2020 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 29 January 2021, S/2020/1332, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/1332>, para. 1043.

<sup>81</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, para. 51; UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), paras 69-70; US Department of Labor, *2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Mali*, 29 September 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061942.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061942.html); UN Security Council, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 6 May 2021, S/2021/437, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2058874/A\\_75\\_873\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2058874/A_75_873_E.pdf), paras 106-114; UN General Assembly, *Situation of Human Rights in Mali*, 3 February 2021, A/HRC/46/68, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_68\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A_HRC_46_68_E.pdf), paras 55-56. “Les enfants sont profondément affectés par la crise. Ils figurent parmi les premières victimes avec des atteintes graves et répétées à leurs droits ainsi qu’une dégradation de leur état physique, émotionnel et psychologique.” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 22.

<sup>82</sup> The total number includes 394 boys, 135 girls, and 6 children of unknown sex. UN Security Council, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General*, 6 May 2021, S/2021/437, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2058874/A\\_75\\_873\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2058874/A_75_873_E.pdf), para. 106.

<sup>83</sup> This number was reported as of July 2020. However, the Panel of Experts noted that the number of workers in general had doubled by February 2021, so the number of children may in fact be higher. A visit in January 2021 found children younger than 10 years old working in the mines. The mining sites are often controlled by armed groups and factions, with the Malian security forces having little or no access. UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), pp. 3-4, see also paras 140-145. See also, US Department of Labor, *2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Mali*, 29 September 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061942.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061942.html).

<sup>84</sup> “According to credible sources, some children, especially those arriving from Burkina Faso and the Niger, work on credit to repay a third person for their transport and their food, and some work unpaid for days, or even for the full duration of their time at the mines. Children are also solicited for small jobs by elements of the armed groups securing the sites. The presence of ISGS and JNIM elements exposes them to the risks of their recruitment by these groups.” UN Security Council, UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), para. 144.

<sup>85</sup> UN General Assembly, *Situation of Human Rights in Mali*, 3 February 2021, A/HRC/46/68, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A\\_HRC\\_46\\_68\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2046480/A_HRC_46_68_E.pdf), para. 56. “During the reporting period, there was an increase in child trafficking, forced child labor, and forced recruitment of children by non-state armed groups in Mali due to insecurity and the COVID-19 pandemic.” US Department of Labor, *2020 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor: Mali*, 29 September 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061942.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2061942.html).

<sup>86</sup> HRW, *Attacks on Students, Teachers, and Schools Surge in Africa’s Sahel*, 8 September 2020, [www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/08/attacks-students-teachers-and-schools-surge-africas-sahel](http://www.hrw.org/news/2020/09/08/attacks-students-teachers-and-schools-surge-africas-sahel). There has been an “upward trend of school closures from 1,344 in January 2021 to 1,595 schools in June, affecting some 478,500 students.” OHCHR, *Mali: Senior UN Official Calls for Holistic Approach to Tackle Security and Human Rights Crisis*, 9 November 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2063740.html).

<sup>87</sup> UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), para. 122.

<sup>88</sup> “In the central regions of Mali, 1,300 cases of gender-based violence were recorded during the past six months, including 186 cases of rape, with the most cases recorded in Mopti.” UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 60.

<sup>89</sup> UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), para. 122. “Following the coup

January and December 2020, there were 6,605 cases of GBV reported via the information monitoring system.<sup>90</sup> The humanitarian crisis, as well as the ongoing conflict, continue to make women and girls more vulnerable to GBV.<sup>91</sup>

24. Security forces have been accused of human rights abuses including extrajudicial executions, forced disappearances and inhumane treatment of detainees, notably during counterterrorism operations in the Mopti region.<sup>92</sup> State security forces killed more civilians than extremist Islamist groups during 2020.<sup>93</sup> In the first six months of 2021, MINUSMA documented 213 violations of human rights by state actors, almost four times the amount documented during the last six months of 2020.<sup>94</sup> According to the US Department of State, most abuses “appeared to target Fulani, Tuareg, and Arab individuals and were believed to be either in reprisal for attacks attributed to armed groups associated with those ethnicities or as a result of increased counterterrorism operations.”<sup>95</sup>
25. The International Commission of Inquiry concluded in its final report that extremist Islamist groups, local militias and government security forces have likely committed war crimes since the beginning of the conflict.<sup>96</sup>

## Humanitarian Situation

26. The violence in Mali has exacerbated an already dire humanitarian situation.<sup>97</sup> There were an estimated 6.3 million people in need of humanitarian assistance in 2021.<sup>98</sup> The deteriorating security situation,

d'état of 18 August, there was a spike in the number of cases of conflict-related sexual violence, despite underreporting owing to stigma, insecurity and the constraints placed on humanitarian access, compounded by pandemic-related restrictions.” UN Security Council, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, 30 March 2021, S/2021/312, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2049397/S\\_2021\\_312\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2049397/S_2021_312_E.pdf), para. 38. OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 11.

<sup>90</sup> “De janvier à décembre 2020, 6 605 cas ont été rapportés par le système de gestion de l'information sur les VBG (GBVIMS). Les personnes survivantes sont à 99% des femmes avec une proportion élevée de filles de moins de 18 ans (58%). Les violences sexuelles demeurent le type de VBG le plus répandu avec 39% des cas des VBG répertoriés.” OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 23.

<sup>91</sup> “Une étude de UNFPA34 révèle que selon les données de GBVIMS de janvier à avril 2020, 1 199 cas de VBG ont été rapportés par les acteurs GBVIMS au Mali contre 1 071 cas rapporté à la même période en 2019, soit une augmentation de 11%. On note aussi une augmentation des cas de VBG de 35% entre avril 2019 et avril 2020. Ces données reflètent la corrélation entre la survenue d'une crise humanitaire et l'augmentation des VBG.” OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 42. “In 2020, Mali experienced political upheaval and escalating security concerns, which exacerbated trends of conflict-related sexual violence, in particular in the northern and central regions. [...] Moreover, the proliferation of illicit small arms and a surge of intercommunal violence propelled civilian displacement, making women and girls more vulnerable to trafficking.” UN Security Council, *Conflict-Related Sexual Violence*, 30 March 2021, S/2021/312, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2049397/S\\_2021\\_312\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2049397/S_2021_312_E.pdf), para. 38.

<sup>92</sup> “Malian soldiers have allegedly killed at least 34 villagers, forcibly disappeared at least 16 people, and severely mistreated detainees during counterterrorism operations in Mali's central Mopti region”. HRW, *Mali: Killings, 'Disappearances' in Military Operations*, 20 April 2021, [www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/20/mali-killings-disappearances-military-operations](http://www.hrw.org/news/2021/04/20/mali-killings-disappearances-military-operations). See also, HRW, *Mali: Alleged 'Disappearances,' Executions by Security Forces*, 22 October 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2062738.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2062738.html); Le Monde, *Les forces de sécurité maliennes accusées de 101 exécutions extrajudiciaires par l'ONU*, 2 May 2020, [www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/05/02/les-forces-de-securite-maliennes-accusees-de-101-executions-extrajudiciaires-par-l-onu\\_6038477\\_3212.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2020/05/02/les-forces-de-securite-maliennes-accusees-de-101-executions-extrajudiciaires-par-l-onu_6038477_3212.html).

<sup>93</sup> “In 2020, Malian state forces killed more civilians than jihadist militant groups and committed more human rights abuses in three of the four quarters of the year, as shown by ACLED and United Nations data, respectively”. ACLED, *Sahel 2021: Communal Wars, Broken Ceasefires, and Shifting Frontlines*, 17 June 2021, <https://acleddata.com/2021/06/17/sahel-2021-communal-wars-broken-ceasefires-and-shifting-frontlines/>.

<sup>94</sup> “[MINUSMA] also recorded a sharp rise in violations by State actors during the same period. Some 213 incidents were recorded, compared to 53 between August and December 2020. Most, or 155, were carried out by the Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF), including extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions of 44 civilians.” UN News, *Malian Authorities Urged to 'Break the Cycle of Impunity' for Human Rights Violations*, 29 June 2021, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/06/1094982>.

<sup>95</sup> US Department of State, *2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mali*, 30 March 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048168.html).

<sup>96</sup> Specifically, the Commission found that, between 1 January 2012 and 19 January 2018, extremist Islamist groups had committed crimes against humanity and war crimes; state forces had committed war crimes; signatory armed groups had committed war crimes; international forces had committed serious human rights violations and at least one violation of international humanitarian law, and Da Na Ambassador (the Dogon militia) had committed murders constituting crimes against humanity and war crimes. UN Security Council, *Letter Dated 17 December 2020 from the Secretary-General Addressed to the President of the Security Council*, 29 January 2021, S/2020/1332, <https://undocs.org/S/2020/1332>, para. 1040.

<sup>97</sup> “En 2021, le contexte humanitaire continue de s'aggraver en raison des effets immédiats des conflits et des multiples formes de violence, notamment les conflits inter et intracommunautaires, l'activisme des groupes armés non étatiques (GANE), la criminalité et le banditisme, l'insécurité constante a exacerbé la vulnérabilité de la population et les difficultés d'accès humanitaire.” OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 8.

<sup>98</sup> OCHA, *Global Humanitarian Overview 2022: Mali*, accessed 11 January 2022, <https://gho.unocha.org/mali>. See also, OCHA, *Mali: Plan de réponse humanitaire (janvier – décembre 2021)*, 31 March 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/plan\\_de\\_reponse\\_humanitaire\\_-\\_mali\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/plan_de_reponse_humanitaire_-_mali_2021.pdf), pp. 5, 17. This is almost one-third of the population of Mali. People in Need, *Building Resilience to Conflict and Climate Change in Mali*, 30 July 2021, [www.peopleinneed.net/building-resilience-mali-7889gp](http://www.peopleinneed.net/building-resilience-mali-7889gp).

environmental degradation and socio-economic challenges linked to COVID-19 have restricted and negatively impacted access to basic services such as food, health, water, sanitation, shelter and education.<sup>99</sup>

27. Mali is additionally affected by climate change-induced shocks,<sup>100</sup> which have intensified conflict over scarce resources<sup>101</sup> and contributed to an increase in humanitarian needs.<sup>102</sup> During 2020, seasonal flooding affected 80,760 people, damaged 6,478 houses, and destroyed 7,030 tons of food and 274 hectares of crops.<sup>103</sup> The World Food Programme (WFP) estimated that 1.3 million people were food insecure in Mali during the period from June to August 2021.<sup>104</sup> As of October 2021, one in four children suffered from chronic malnutrition, and one in 10 children under 5 years of age were acutely malnourished.<sup>105</sup>
28. Restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic led to worsened living conditions, decreased food security and healthcare access, as well as a disruption of agriculture and farming.<sup>106</sup> The World Bank estimated that Mali's GDP contracted by 2 per cent in 2020 as a result; the number of people living in poverty was estimated to have risen from 42.3 per cent to 47.3 per cent.<sup>107</sup>
29. In northern and central Mali, barriers to humanitarian access include logistical challenges, intentional interference from armed groups and insecurity including during military operations.<sup>108</sup> Incidents

<sup>99</sup> "La situation humanitaire demeure préoccupante avec la juxtaposition des conflits, l'insécurité multiforme et les aléas climatiques (inondations et sécheresses). Ces chocs se superposent à la pandémie de la COVID-19 qui continue d'exacerber les vulnérabilités préexistantes avec des conséquences socioéconomiques néfastes à court, moyen et long terme, exacerbant les besoins humanitaires." OCHA, *Mali : Plan de réponse humanitaire (janvier – décembre 2021)*, 31 March 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/plan\\_de\\_reponse\\_humanitaire\\_-\\_mali\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/plan_de_reponse_humanitaire_-_mali_2021.pdf), p. 7. See also, FAO, *Mali – Humanitarian Response Plan 2021*, 11 March 2021, [www.fao.org/3/cb3480en/cb3480en.pdf](http://www.fao.org/3/cb3480en/cb3480en.pdf), p. 1.

<sup>100</sup> "The Inner Niger Delta, which stretches over central and southern Mali, has been particularly affected by climate change, as rainfall has diminished by 30 percent over the past 50 years and there has been a mean annual temperature increase of 0.8 degrees Celsius. The alternation of droughts and floods has diminished crop yields and affected herding and fishing." Al Jazeera, *Mali Needs Climate Solutions, Not More Troops*, 31 March 2021, [www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/31/mali-needs-climate-solutions-not-more-troops](http://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/3/31/mali-needs-climate-solutions-not-more-troops).

<sup>101</sup> Resource scarcity contributes to insecurity in the context of other structural factors, such as "an extensive increase in rice cultivation at the expense of pastoral land and the uneven presence of the state after the democratization and decentralization reforms of the 1990s, as well as 'corruption and rent-seeking by government officials'". Additionally, since livelihoods are often determined by ethnicity, conflicts over resources take on an ethnic dimension. SIPRI, *Climate-related Security Risks and Peacebuilding in Mali*, 20 April 2021, [www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/sipripp60.pdf](http://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/sipripp60.pdf), p. 20.

<sup>102</sup> ICRC, *Changement climatique au Mali : le désert engloutit le lac Faguibine, la population poussée à l'exode*, 28 September 2021, [www.icrcnewsroom.org/story/fr/1968/mali-climate-change-transforms-lake-faguibine-into-desert-exiling-population](http://www.icrcnewsroom.org/story/fr/1968/mali-climate-change-transforms-lake-faguibine-into-desert-exiling-population); Foreign Policy, *How Climate Change Drives Conflict in Mali*, April 28 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/04/28/climate-change-weather-conflict-security-mali/>. "The pandemic, the persistent and growing insecurity in the Centre spreading southwards, and the effects of climate change and poverty have continued to increase humanitarian needs. These factors have weakened the protection of civilians, limited the access civilians have to basic social services, increased the prevalence of food insecurity and malnutrition, and caused massive population movements." UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 26 March 2021, S/2021/299, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2048837/S\\_2021\\_299\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2048837/S_2021_299_E.pdf), para. 70.

<sup>103</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 28 December 2020, S/2020/1281, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048839.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2048839.html), para. 83. See also, UNHCR, *UNHCR Assisting Displaced Families Affected by Floods in the Sahel*, 28 September 2020, [www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/9/5f6b79f44/unhcr-assisting-displaced-families-affected-floods-sahel.html](http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2020/9/5f6b79f44/unhcr-assisting-displaced-families-affected-floods-sahel.html).

<sup>104</sup> WFP, *Mali: Country Brief (July – August 2021)*, 23 September 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/WFP%20Mali%20Country%20Brief%2C%20July%20-%20August%202021.pdf>, p. 1.

<sup>105</sup> "Approximately 1,307,073 people are expected to face food insecurity in 2021, an increase of 36 per cent compared with November 2020. Around 30 per cent of the population is facing severe food insecurity in Bankass and Bandiagara in Mopti Region." UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 June 2021, S/2021/519, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S\\_2021\\_519\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2053490/S_2021_519_E.pdf), para. 74.

<sup>106</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 78.

<sup>107</sup> Peace Direct, *Mali's Security Context Exacerbated by COVID-19*, 11 September 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/report/mali/mali-s-security-context-exacerbated-covid-19>. See also, The Borgen Project, *Impact of COVID-19 on Mali*, 23 October 2021, <https://borgenproject.org/tag/the-feed-the-future-initiative/>; V. Theriault, D. Tschirley and M. Maredia, *The Effects of COVID-19 on Food Security in Urban and Rural Mali*, 30 August 2021, [www.canr.msu.edu/prci/publications/Policy-Research-Notes/PRCI\\_PRN\\_04.pdf](http://www.canr.msu.edu/prci/publications/Policy-Research-Notes/PRCI_PRN_04.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> World Bank, *Mali Economic Update: Protecting the Vulnerable During the Recovery*, 10 June 2021, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/36063/Mali-Economic-Update-Protecting-the-Vulnerable-during-the-Recovery-Spring-2021.pdf>, pp. 9, 11.

<sup>108</sup> "Increasing constraints on humanitarian access are a major concern, especially in areas lacking basic social services and infrastructure." UNICEF, *Humanitarian Action for Children: Mali*, 8 December 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2022-HAC-Mali.pdf>, p. 2. "[There are] increasing constraints on humanitarian access, especially in areas where there is already a shortage and sometimes a complete absence of basic social services and infrastructure. In addition to logistical access constraints (linked to landlocked areas and the winter rainy season making roads/access routes impassable), access is particularly limited in areas affected by hostilities between armed groups or military operations, as well as widespread insecurity linked to the risk of robberies and criminality which has increased drastically in the centre and north in recent months." UNICEF, *Mali: Humanitarian Situation Report N° 8*, 31 August 2021, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNICEF%20Mali%20Humanitarian%20Situation%20Report%20Mali%2C%20August%2021.pdf>, p. 2. The UN Secretary-General noted that humanitarian access and protection of civilians were restricted by "the activities of armed groups, the presence of improvised explosive devices or mines and the security vacuum". UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 1 October 2021, S/2021/844, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S\\_2021\\_844\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2062055/S_2021_844_E.pdf), para. 77. See also, OCHA, *Analyse de l'accès*

targeting and affecting humanitarian organizations increased during 2020 as compared to 2019 in northern and central Mali, notably in Mopti, Gao and Ménaka regions.<sup>109</sup>

## Refugees and Internal Displacement

30. The number of persons displaced by conflict and violence in Mali almost doubled between December 2019 and September 2021, from 207,751 internally displaced persons (IDPs) to 401,736 IDPs, spread across all regions of Mali.<sup>110</sup> During 2020, 71 per cent of displacements were caused by communal conflict.<sup>111</sup> According to the Displacement Tracking Mechanism (DTM) from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 82 per cent of surveyed IDPs in July 2021 reported armed conflict as the principal reason for their displacement.<sup>112</sup> Displacement disproportionately affects women and children.<sup>113</sup> IDPs face particular vulnerabilities that are heightened in the context of COVID-19, including increased gender-based violence and lack of access to education, basic services and livelihoods.<sup>114</sup> Conflict and violence hinders humanitarian access and the provision of services to the majority of IDPs, who are located in the regions of Gao, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu.<sup>115</sup>
31. As of 31 October 2021, there were 158,958 Malian refugees in neighbouring countries, including 72,816 Malian refugees in Mauritania, 61,373 in Niger, and 24,538 in Burkina Faso.<sup>116</sup>
32. As of 30 November 2021, Mali hosted 48,992 refugees from Niger, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Congo, and the Syrian Arab Republic.<sup>117</sup>

*humanitaire au Mali*, 16 December 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065781/mli\\_rpt\\_humaccess\\_juillet-septembre\\_2021.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2065781/mli_rpt_humaccess_juillet-septembre_2021.pdf), pp. 4, 6; UN Security Council, *Final Report of the Panel of Experts Established Pursuant to Security Council Resolution 2374 (2017) and Renewed by Resolution 2541 (2020) Concerning Mali*, 6 August 2021, S/2021/714, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2058497.html), paras 155-156.

<sup>109</sup> "Le nombre d'incidents ayant touché les organisations humanitaires a augmenté de 10% en 2020 par rapport à 2019, et a atteint un total de 212 incidents avec Mopti et Gao rapportant la moitié du chiffre total, suivis de Ménaka". OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 25.

<sup>110</sup> "Les années 2018, 2019 et 2020 ont été marquées par la recrudescence des violences dans les régions du Centre et du Nord. Suite à ces violences nous avons assisté à une forte augmentation du nombre de PDI, de 38 172 PDI identifiées en décembre 2017 pour atteindre 401 736 individus en septembre 2021." Global Protection Cluster, *Mali : Rapport sur les mouvements de populations (septembre 2021)*, 21 October 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport\\_cmp\\_septembre\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport_cmp_septembre_2021.pdf), p. 3, see also p. 2. "[I]nternal displacement almost quadrupled in two years, exceeding 400,000 [...] of whom 64 per cent were children and 55 per cent were women and girls. This increase can be explained by the worsening security situation in the Ségou, Mopti and Timbuktu Regions." UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 4 January 2022, S/2021/1117, <https://undocs.org/S/2021/1117>, para. 57.

<sup>111</sup> UN Security Council, *Situation in Mali: Report of the Secretary-General*, 26 March 2021, S/2021/299, [www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2048837/S\\_2021\\_299\\_E.pdf](http://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2048837/S_2021_299_E.pdf), para. 70.

<sup>112</sup> "Au cours de cette évaluation, plus de trois quarts des réponses (84%) montrent que les conflits armés ont été les principales raisons de la majorité des PDI d'avoir quitté leur lieu d'origine. Les tensions intercommunautaires (43% des réponses) étaient également une autre raison de déplacement des PDI." IOM, *Mali – rapport sur les déplacements (juillet 2021)*, 2 September 2021, <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/mali-%E2%80%94-rapport-sur-les-d%C3%A9placements-juillet-2021?close=true>, p. 22. "In 2020, most of the new displacements took place in the Mopti, Ségou, Gao and Tombouctou regions. They largely resulted from armed conflict, military operations and intercommunal clashes." Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), *Mali: Displacement associated with Conflict and Violence*, May 2021, [www.ecoi.net/en/document/2051972.html](http://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2051972.html).

<sup>113</sup> "Concernant le profil démographique des personnes déplacées, 55 % sont des femmes et 51% de la totalité représentent la population active. De plus, 41% des chefs de ménages PDI sont des femmes, 62% sont des enfants de moins de 18 ans et 2% sont des personnes âgées de plus de 60 ans." OCHA, *Aperçu des besoins humanitaires 2021: Mali*, 2 March 2021, [www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli\\_hno\\_2021\\_mali\\_v4.pdf](http://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/mli_hno_2021_mali_v4.pdf), p. 22. See also, Global Protection Cluster, *Mali : Rapport sur les mouvements de populations (septembre 2021)*, 21 October 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport\\_cmp\\_septembre\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport_cmp_septembre_2021.pdf), p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> See, for example, IOM, *Mali – rapport sur les déplacements (juillet 2021)*, 2 September 2021, <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/mali-%E2%80%94-rapport-sur-les-d%C3%A9placements-juillet-2021?close=true>, p. 29; IDMC, *Mali*, accessed 23 November 2021, [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/mali](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/mali); IOM, *Mali Crisis Response Plan 2021*, 29 January 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021\\_Mali\\_Crisis\\_Response\\_Plan\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/2021_Mali_Crisis_Response_Plan_2021.pdf); Plan International, *Central Sahel Facing Crisis as Violence against Girls Continues to Rise*, 11 December 2020, <https://plan-international.org/news/2020-12-11-central-sahel-facing-crisis-violence-against-girls-continues-rise>; Danish Institute for International Studies, *Internally Displaced People in Mali's Capital City*, 8 December 2020, [www.diiis.dk/en/research/internally-displaced-people-in-malis-capital-city](http://www.diiis.dk/en/research/internally-displaced-people-in-malis-capital-city); UNHCR, *Impact of COVID-19 on the Protection of Displaced and Stateless Populations – West and Central Africa*, 15 April 2020, <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/75706.pdf>, p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> "It is common for IDPs not to receive humanitarian assistance for many weeks or months at a time. This is particularly true in the municipalities of Niono (Ségou region), Douentza (Mopti region) and Koro (Mopti region) where 49 out of 169 sites hosting IDPs did not receive any type of assistance for over 3 months in late 2020. The regions of Mopti, Gao, and Ménaka, some of the ones hosting the largest number of IDPs, continue to report the highest number of incidents against humanitarian organizations." IDMC, *Mali*, accessed 26 October 2021, [www.internal-displacement.org/countries/mali](http://www.internal-displacement.org/countries/mali).

<sup>116</sup> UNHCR, *Mali: Situation Situation of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Returnee*, 27 December 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90233>. See also, UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal*, undated, <https://data2.unhcr.org/fr/countries/>.

<sup>117</sup> UNHCR, *Operational Data Portal: Mali*, accessed 10 January 2022, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/mli>.

## International Protection Needs and Non-Return Advisory

33. UNHCR considers that persons fleeing the ongoing conflict in Mali are likely to be in need of international refugee protection in accordance with Article 1(2) of the 1969 OAU Convention.<sup>118</sup> In addition, persons fleeing the conflict in Mali may also meet the 1951 Convention criteria for refugee status.<sup>119</sup> Depending on the profile and individual circumstances of the case, exclusion considerations may need to be considered.<sup>120</sup>
34. In light of the deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation, UNHCR calls on States not to forcibly return to Mali any person originating from the following regions:<sup>121</sup> Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Mopti, Ségou, Taoudenni and Timbuktu. In addition, in relation to the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso, UNHCR calls on States not to forcibly return any person originating from the following *cercles*: Diema (Kayes region), Banamba, Kolokani and Nara (Koulikoro region), and Kolondiéba, Koutiala, Sikasso, Yanfolila and Yorosso (Sikasso region).
35. UNHCR does not consider it appropriate for States to deny international protection to persons originating from any of the regions and *cercles* listed above on the basis of an internal flight or relocation alternative in the capital district of Bamako or in any of the remaining *cercles* in the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso — which are also affected by communal and extremist violence as well as military operations and security incidents — unless that person has close and strong links to the proposed location of return. Any such proposed return would require careful consideration of the individual circumstances of the case.<sup>122</sup>
36. The bar on forcible return serves as a minimum standard and needs to remain in place until such time as the security, rule of law, and the human rights situation in Mali has significantly improved to permit a safe and dignified return of those determined not to be in need of international protection.

## Voluntary Returns

37. UNHCR and the Government of Mali have entered into tripartite agreements on voluntary repatriation with Burkina Faso (2015), Mauritania (2016) and Niger (2014). By 30 September 2021 more than 83,000 refugees from Mali had returned, including those who self-organized their return.<sup>123</sup>
38. UNHCR recognizes individuals' fundamental human right to return to their country of origin. UNHCR calls on all actors to take the necessary steps to enable Malians to effectively exercise their right to apply for international protection. Where voluntary repatriation or any other form of voluntary return is being offered to Malian nationals, appropriate counselling on access to asylum should also be available. Any assistance provided by UNHCR to refugees to return to Mali aims to support those refugees who, being fully informed of the situation in their places of origin or an alternative area of their choice, choose voluntarily to return. Any action by UNHCR to support voluntary repatriation to Mali, including efforts aimed at sustainable reintegration for returnees and IDPs, should not be construed as an assessment by UNHCR of the safety and other aspects of the situation in the country for individuals who have sought

<sup>118</sup> Organization of African Unity, *Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa* ("OAU Convention"), 10 September 1969, 1001 UN, Treaty Series 45, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b36018.html).

<sup>119</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 189, p. 137, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3be01b964.html) and UN General Assembly, *Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 31 January 1967, UN, Treaty Series, Vol. 606, p. 267, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b3ae4.html).

<sup>120</sup> UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 5: Application of the Exclusion Clauses: Article 1F of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees*, 4 September 2003, HCR/GIP/03/05, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f5857684.html).

<sup>121</sup> In 2012 Law No. 2012-017 was adopted to increase the number of regions from eight to 19. The creation of the first two of the new regions, Taoudenni (formerly part of Timbuktu region) and Ménaka (formerly part of Gao region) was implemented in 2016. Republic of Mali, *Loi No 2012-017 du 02 MARS 2012 portant création de circonscriptions administratives en République du Mali*, *Journal officiel de la République du Mali*, 2 March 2012, p. 364; Mali Jet, *Régionalisation: Deux Nouvelles régions créées au Mali*, 21 January 2016, [http://malijet.com/la\\_societe\\_maliennne\\_aujourd'hui/144815-regionalisation-deux-nouvelles-regions-creees-au-mali.html](http://malijet.com/la_societe_maliennne_aujourd'hui/144815-regionalisation-deux-nouvelles-regions-creees-au-mali.html).

<sup>122</sup> UNHCR, *Guidelines on International Protection No. 4: "Internal Flight or Relocation Alternative" Within the Context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 23 July 2003, HCR/GIP/03/04, [www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f2791a44.html](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3f2791a44.html).

<sup>123</sup> UNHCR et al., *Mali : Rapport sur les mouvements de populations (septembre 2021)*, 21 October 2021, [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport\\_cmp\\_septembre\\_2021.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rapport_cmp_septembre_2021.pdf), p. 4. See also, UNHCR, *Mali: Situation Situation of Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons and Returnee*, 30 November 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/90233>.

international protection in countries of asylum. Voluntary repatriation and forced return are processes of a fundamentally different character, engaging different responsibilities on the parts of the various actors involved.

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