

# Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/mali-black-week-for-freedom-of-15-06-2012,42798.html>

Africa - Mali

Descent into hell

## Black week for freedom of information in post-coup Mali

15 June 2012

Reporters Without Borders condemns the slow death of freedom of information in Mali. In the past few days, a newspaper editor has been arrested for the second time in a month, soldiers raided a TV station to prevent it from broadcasting an interview with a Tuarag chief, and a French journalist was prevented from travelling to the breakaway north.

"We call on everyone, the international community and Malian journalists, to take action to get State Security to release newspaper editor **Habi Baby** immediately and unconditionally," Reporters Without Borders said.

"The past week has confirmed the tendency since the 22 March coup for news and information to be added to the victims of the chaos in which Mali has been plunged. As the political crisis drags on, a new state of affairs is taking hold: investigative reporting is being blocked, red lines are being drawn, taboo subjects are being imposed and journalists are being barred from entire regions. The Malian army has become an enemy of freedom of information."

Reporters Without Borders urges the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union to take note of the extent of the decline in the ability of journalists to operate freely in Mali, a country that used to be a model of respect for media freedom.

### **Newspaper editor arrested for second time in a month**

Soldiers arrested Habi Baby, the editor of the newspaper *Caravane*, on 12 June, exactly a month after his arrest by State Security, the Malian government's intelligence agency. They went to his Bamako home at around 8:30 p.m. and took him away to an unknown location.



Habi Baby

His latest arrest came one day after the monthly *Aujourd'hui-La Résistance* published an article by Baby in which he gave a detailed description of his previous arrest. He said State Security claimed he had been "promoted to minister of Azawad," the northern part of the country now controlled by various rebel groups. He described the claim as "false" and attributed it to his Arab origins.

After criticizing State Security's activities, his article ended with condemnation of the conditions in which prisoners are held. "We have to talk about it," he wrote. "Horrible things go on in these secret locations – isolated cells, terrifying dark corridors in which you hear awful screams and calls for help."

### **Privately-owned TV station censored**

Around 30 uniformed soldiers stormed into the Bamako headquarters of privately-owned *Africable TV* at around 1 p.m. on 12 June to prevent it from broadcasting an interview by reporter **Abdoulaye Barry** with Mohamed Lemine Ould Ahmed, assistant general-secretary of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), which has proclaimed northern Mali's independence.

The interview, carried out during an MNLA political meeting in neighbouring Mauritania, was to have been broadcast at 8:30 p.m. during *Africable TV*'s "Champ contre Champ" programme.

"This was a very clear threat against us," *Africable TV* news director Sékou Tangara told Reporters Without Borders. "The soldiers accused us of attacking them repeatedly in our programmes, although they are just one aspect of the Malian political and institutional life that we cover."

The soldiers also criticized "The Sunday Debate," a programme in which politicians of various colours are invited to discuss recent developments. Various sources said they thought the military officers who staged the March coup were behind the raid. Although they handed over to a civilian government in mid-April, they still wield a lot of influence in Bamako.

*Africable TV* decided not to broadcast the interview "to avoid any unnecessary risk by exposing our work colleagues," Tangara added. "We have to comply with their demands as long as the crisis continues."

Reporters Without Borders is concerned about Barry, the reporter who carried out the interview. According to *Agence France-Presse*, he had to go into hiding because soldiers were looking for him. This is the third time soldiers have raided *Africable TV* in order to impose demands and trample on media freedom since President Amadou Toumani Touré's overthrow in March.

### **French TV reporter intercepted 480 km from Bamako**

The black week for media freedom in Mali began with the arrest of **Liseron Boudoul**, a French journalist working for the French commercial TV channel *TF1*. Officials in Bamako said she was prevented from travelling to northern Mali "for security reasons" last weekend and flew home after being brought back to Bamako.

"We stopped Ms. Liseron Boudoul at San [480 km north of Bamako]," a Malian police officer told *Agence France-Presse*. "She said she was on her way to a refugee camp but, as far as we were concerned, she was heading north into the hands of the armed groups. We brought her back to Bamako against her will. After being questioned, she returned to France on Sunday evening."

*TF1* said she went to Mali with the intention of doing several reports about refugee camps and humanitarian aid.

Read recent Reporters Without Borders press releases on Mali:

- 23 May 2012 - [Three weeks of media freedom violations in Mali](#)
- 12 April 2012 - [Concern for journalists, serious setback for media freedom](#)
- 22 March 2012 - [Whether staging mutiny or coup, soldiers shut down news media](#)

Photo : malian soldiers in Bamako ( AFP / Issouf Sanogo )

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