

# **Statement by the African Commission on the Present Human Rights Situation in Mali**

The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (the Commission) has been closely monitoring the human rights situation in the north of the Republic of Mali since the beginning of 2012. The Commission is deeply concerned by the increased fighting as terrorist groups advance towards the south.

The Commission is concerned by the continuous occupation of the north of Mali by terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQMI), Ansar Dine and the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), which commit massive human rights violations with impunity against civilian populations.

The Commission notes with concern the recent increase in the movement of people fleeing areas of fighting to the interior and out of the country as a result of the worsening security and humanitarian situation caused by fighting.

The Commission condemns the illegal occupation of parts of northern Mali by the various armed groups, and strongly condemns all human rights violations committed in Mali and all attempts at the Balkanization of the country which undermine the country's territorial integrity, national unity and social cohesion, as well as the peace of the populations.

The Commission commends the efforts of ECOWAS and the international community to stop rebels from advancing, fight terrorist groups and recover the northern territory of Mali.

The Commission underscores that human rights must be respected at all times, and calls on all the parties to the conflict to fully respect international humanitarian law and protect civilian populations and their property.

The Commission urges the Malian Armed Forces, military intervention forces and the armed groups to take the necessary measures to ensure that human rights are protected, including the right to life and physical integrity, the right to human dignity, and the right to freedom of the people guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international and regional human rights instruments.

The Commission calls for the facilitation of the work of humanitarian organisations assisting the Malian populations, and expects to see available and safe humanitarian corridors providing access to internally displaced persons.

The Commission encourages Mali's neighbours to continue to welcome refugees arriving in their territories and to provide them the necessary protection and assistance.

The Commission welcomes the decision by the International Criminal Court to investigate crimes committed in the north of Mali by all the parties to the conflict. The Commission underscores that such crimes cannot go unpunished and calls on all the parties to work with the ICC towards bringing the perpetrators of serious crimes to justice.

The Commission calls on the African Union and the international community to continue their efforts to find a solution to the crisis in Mali towards restoring peace, the territorial integrity and political stability of the Republic of Mali.

The Commission reiterates its resolutions ACHPR/RES.209 (EXT.OS/XI) 2012 and ACHPR/RES.217 on the human rights situation in the north of Mali and Resolution ACHPR/RES.210 (EXT.OS/XI) 2012 on refugees and internally displaced persons fleeing the conflict in the north of Mali.