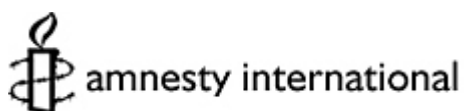


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Amnesty International Annual Report 2012 - Mali

Head of state: **Amadou Toumani Touré**

Head of government: **Mariam Kaïdama Cissé Sidibé (replaced Modibo Sidibé in April)**

Death penalty: **abolitionist in practice**

Population: **15.8 million**

Life expectancy: **51.4 years**

Under-5 mortality: **191.1 per 1,000**

Adult literacy: **26.2 per cent**

Mali joined neighbouring countries in operations against al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). Of the seven hostages abducted by the group in 2010, three were released. One person was killed and five others abducted. The National Human Rights Commission recommended that the government abolish the death penalty. Ten people were sentenced to death.

Background

In May, officials from four neighbouring sub-Saharan countries, including Niger and Mauritania, met in the capital, Bamako, to strengthen co-operation against AQIM. Mali and Mauritania carried out joint military operations on the border against an alleged AQIM base; several people, including Mauritanian soldiers, were killed in June.

In October, the Special Representative of the UN for West Africa expressed concerns about the security threat posed by the return of combatants from Libya to northern Mali.

In December, the National Assembly adopted the new version of the Family Code, which perpetuates discrimination against women.

National Human Rights Commission

In March, the National Human Rights Commission published its first report. It recommended adoption of the bill supporting abolition of the death penalty, approved by the government in 2007. The report urged that the government prohibit female genital mutilation, and that prison conditions be improved and measures taken to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

Deaths after military exercise

In October, five trainee officers died at the Malian Armed Forces Military School in Koulikoro after a traditional endurance test. Three senior military officers and several training staff members were arrested. The Ministry of Defence ordered an investigation.

Abuses by armed groups

In January, two people were injured after a member of AQIM, a Tunisian national, exploded a gas bottle outside the French embassy in Bamako.

In January, two French nationals abducted by AQIM in Niamey, the capital of Niger, died during a failed rescue operation on the Malian border.

In February, three people abducted in Niger in September 2010 were released after payment of a ransom. Four others remained held in northern Mali by AQIM.

In March, Hamma Ould Mohamed Yahya, abducted by AQIM in 2010, was released.

In November, five people were abducted by AQIM and one other person was killed. Two French nationals were abducted from their hotel in Hombori. During the same month nationals from the Netherlands, South Africa and Sweden were abducted in Tombouctou. One German hostage was killed while trying to resist.

Death penalty

Ten people were sentenced to death. Among them were Mariam Sidibé, who was sentenced in July for the murder in 2008 of Mariam Traoré, her co-wife; and Bachir Simoun, a Tunisian national, who was sentenced in November for causing an explosion outside the French embassy in Bamako. On 15 December, Bachir Simoun was pardoned by President Touré after Tunisian President Marzouki requested that he be returned to his country of origin.

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