

Catherine Ashton
High Representative of the Union for
Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice President of the European Commission

Brussels, 11 June 2012

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



European Institutions Office

Our ref: B1218

Dear Baroness Ashton,

EU MUST DEMAND END TO HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN LAW VIOLATIONS IN MALI

Mali is facing its worst crisis since its independence in 1960, which has thrown into question both the integrity of its territory and almost 20 years of political stability. The entire north of the country has been taken over by armed groups. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced by fighting there, creating a humanitarian crisis in southern Mali and neighbouring countries. Amnesty International's latest report, *Mali: Five Months of Crisis: Armed Rebellion and Military Coup* (available [here](#)), exposes widespread human rights violations by all parties to the conflict, including arbitrary detention, sexual violence and extra-judicial executions.

The report reveals that the Malian authorities arbitrarily arrested and detained opponents of the military coup. In its fight against the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the Malian army indiscriminately attacked civilians in violation of international humanitarian law. Malian soldiers beat and extra-judicially executed unarmed people accused of spying for the MNLA. Similarly, armed groups have summarily executed Malian soldiers taken prisoner. Women and girls were raped, sometimes collectively and children have been enlisted as child soldiers by the armed Tuareg and Islamist groups who took control of the north of the country. We are also concerned at accounts of pressure from members of Ansar Eddin and AQIM on people to change their behaviour, in accordance with their fundamentalist interpretation of Islam, accompanied by intimidation and physical violence, including deliberate and arbitrary killings.

This situation exacerbated the humanitarian crisis in the Sahel owing to the food shortage currently affecting 15 million people. In early May, there were some 130,000 internally displaced people (IDP) in Mali and about 190,000 refugees in neighbouring countries (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania, and Niger). Without coordinated action to defend human rights, respect for international humanitarian law and help for displaced people and refugees, the entire sub-region risks being destabilised by the triple effect of political instability, armed conflict in the north and the food crisis which affects the entire Sahel.

Given the above, we welcome the Council of the European Union's conclusions on Mali on 23 April, and encourage the EU, in accordance with its Guidelines on International Humanitarian Law, to call again on all parties to fulfil their obligations under international humanitarian law. More specifically, we ask the EU to:

- Call on all parties to the conflict immediately to end attacks on civilians and to take all necessary measures to protect civilians and combatants captured during the conflict
- Urge all parties immediately to end all human rights abuses, including arbitrary and incommunicado detentions, sexual violence, torture, extra-judicial executions, and the use of child soldiers
- Support the work of UN agencies, which face a serious humanitarian crisis affecting tens of thousands of IDPs in Mali and refugees in all other affected countries in the sub-region

We look forward to your response and stand ready to provide any further information you may require.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J Beger
Director

rue de Trèves 35, B-1040 Brussels, Belgium Tel. +32-2-502.14.99 - Fax +32-2-502.56.86

E-mail : AmnestyIntl@amnesty.eu - Web site : www.amnesty.eu

Cc:

Nicholas James Westcott, EEAS Managing Director for Africa
Rolf Timans, EEAS Acting Director for Human Rights and Democracy
Manuel Lopez Blanco, EEAS Director for West and Central Africa
Sean Doyle, EEAS, Head of Division for West Africa
Richard Zink, Head of the EU Delegation to Mali
Fiona Lunny, Chairperson of the Council Working Group on Africa