

Catherine Ashton

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

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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EU MUST ACT TO PROMOTE HUMAN RIGHTS IN ALL ITS ENGAGEMENT IN MALI

Dear Baroness Ashton,

For nearly two years now, Mali has been facing the most serious crisis in its recent history. In rapid succession, there has been an armed insurrection that has undermined the integrity of its territory, and a military coup which ended nearly two decades of institutional stability. The country's recent legislative elections may bring greater stability and democracy. It is now time to resolve the human rights crisis resulting from the military conflict and political deadlock.

The European Union (EU) is currently extensively engaged in Mali with a comprehensive response to the fragile political, security, humanitarian and human rights situation, as per the 2011 Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel. Concrete steps include the EU Training Mission (EUTM), humanitarian aid, and work under the Instrument for Stability, including on law enforcement and justice services. Today, in the spirit of coherence advanced by the Sahel Strategy, the EU and its member states are challenged to ensure that human rights are at the forefront of all action in Mali, translating legal and policy commitments, including the EU guidelines and the Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights, into concrete, coherent action.

Amnesty International's latest report, "[Mali: An Agenda for Human Rights](#)", documents how the last two years of crisis have led to serious human rights violations committed by both Malian security forces and various armed groups that have controlled the northern half of the country for nearly eight months. The army, the police and the Malian *gendarmerie* (military police) are responsible for extrajudicial executions, enforced disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrests and detention. Armed groups have committed unlawful killings, sexual violence, mutilation and stoning, and have recruited and used child soldiers.

The Malian authorities are primarily responsible for the implementation of international obligations regarding human rights and the investigation of all violations and abuses committed by security forces and armed groups. The new authorities must restore public confidence in national security forces by sending a clear signal that they are determined to fight impunity, and the international community must actively support these efforts. It is on this one condition that Mali can hopefully turn this painful page in its history. Yet the government is not the only actor in charge of rebuilding the rule of law—international efforts on the ground include the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) and regional bodies such as the African Union (AU), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the EU.

In view of its comprehensive response to the crisis in Mali, the EU has a crucial role to play in ensuring that human rights remain central to all international engagement in the country. Amnesty International urgently calls upon the EU and its member states active in Mali to:

- Take clear and public positions on human rights concerns in Mali, in particular on torture and other violations of international human rights and humanitarian law, in line with all relevant EU human rights
- Undertake all EU action in Mali with a coherent approach foregrounding due respect for human rights in line with the Sahel strategy and commitments in the Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Democracy and Human Rights.
- Alert, through the EUTM and all other EU bodies in Mali, the Malian government, Malian armed forces and all other armed groups to the absolute prohibition of torture and other ill-treatment and pro-actively follow up on reported instances of torture and ill-treatment, in line with the EU guidelines on torture.
- Ensure that the EUTM and all other EU and member state bodies in Mali stress the importance of respecting human rights and humanitarian law in all their actions. All work on security and counter-terrorism, as well as all collaboration with Malian government and armed forces, including the EUTM, must be conducted with due diligence regarding human rights.
- Any breaches of international human rights and humanitarian law by Malian authorities, armed forces and other armed groups—as well as potentially by EU member states such as France—must be investigated and perpetrators prosecuted.

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

Yours sincerely,

Dr Nicolas J. Beger
Director

Cc:

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