

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AFR 37/007/2013
4 November 2013

Mali : Amnesty International condemns the murder of two RFI journalists

Amnesty International condemns in the strongest terms the brutal murder of Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon, two journalists from Radio France International (RFI) in Mali. They were both abducted by unidentified armed men, on Saturday 2nd November 2013, in Kidal (1500 km North East from Bamako) and killed in cold blood a few minutes after their abduction. The organisation hopes that a proper investigation will be carried out by authorities and the alleged perpetrators be brought to justice.

Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon arrived in Kidal on October 29th 2013 on an airplane of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali. On Saturday 2nd of October 2013, the two journalists went to Ambeiri Ag Rhissa's house, who is a representative of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), to interview him. The MNLA is a Tuareg armed opposition group that is at the center of the armed rebellion which began in northern Mali in January 2012.

The two journalists were kidnapped at the end of the interview by several unidentified armed men. Their dead bodies were found a few minutes later riddled with bullets.

French and Malian authorities have announced that an investigation has been opened.

Background information

The killings took place against a backdrop of increased insecurity in the north. This region, which has been almost completely controlled by the French and Malian armies since February 2013, has seen a resurgence of attacks by armed opposition groups in September and October 2013.

The Kidal region is particularly prone to recurring insecurity. This region, despite the presence of the French army (Serval Operation) and MINUSMA, is beyond the full control of the Malian government and is partially controlled by Tuareg rival groups.

The June 2013 Ouagadougou Agreement, signed in particular by the Malian government and the MNLA, provides for the cantonment of armed groups, "the deployment of elements of the National Gendarmerie and Police in the Kidal region, including Kidal" and for "the progressive deployment of the Malian Army in Kidal, in close cooperation with the MISMA / MINUSMA and Serval operation". These deployments have so far not taken place in the town of Kidal and armed men continue to move freely in this town.