

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 198/91 Extrajudicial executions/Legal concern

11 June 1991

MALI: **Elmehdi Ag Amahadjoudj, pharmacist**
Mohamed Attaher, livestock dealer
Attiyoub Cissé, state nurse in Niafounké
Achoucrou Ag Hamsa, head of the Kel Intabaremt II clan
Alhousseiny Ag Mohamed Elmehdi, community leader
Aly Ould Taleb, Mauritanian trader

and some 30 others

At least 36 civilians are reported to have been killed by the army in northern Mali in late May 1991 in reprisal for attacks by Tuareg opponents of the government on towns and villages in the area. It appears that most of those killed were traders and community leaders from the Tuareg ethnic group who were not involved in the armed attacks and were executed extrajudicially solely because of their ethnic origin.

The government has sent a commission of inquiry to gather information about the killings but the terms of reference of this inquiry are not clear, for example whether it is independent of the authorities or may publish its findings. Amnesty International is calling on the Malian authorities to establish an independent and open judicial inquiry into the killings which will make public its findings and recommendations, and to bring to justice promptly those responsible for killings and other human rights violations. Amnesty International is also urging the government to denounce publicly such killings and to ensure that its security forces do not extrajudicially execute or detain anybody on account of their ethnic origins, however severe the provocation.

In April and May 1991, groups of armed Tuareg rebels attacked and looted towns and villages in northern and central Mali, killing a number of government officials and civilians. In retaliation, there were attacks by the local population on Tuareg people and property. On 20 May 1991, more than 35 men, mostly Tuareg and including four Moors, were reported to have been extrajudicially executed by soldiers in or near Léré, over 250 kilometres southwest of Timbuktu. Some appear to have been shot after being arrested by government forces and taken to a military camp near Léré. Others were reportedly shot at their encampments near Léré, including Alhousseiny Ag Mohamed Elmehdi, a community leader, and his eight brothers, at the Barhmissa well, 12 kilometres from Léré. According to information received by Amnesty International, those killed were accused of complicity with Tuareg rebels but had not been given any form of trial. These killings were apparently in reprisal for an earlier rebel attack on Goundam, 50 kilometres southwest of Timbuktu; on 29 May 1991, a Defence Ministry official said that 12 people had been killed in rebel attacks on Goundam and that other attacks by armed groups had resulted in 30 deaths. Over 30 Tuareg are reported to have been detained, incommunicado and without charge or trial, at a military camp in Timbuktu and it is not clear whether they have yet been transferred to civilian custody or charged. Previous political detainees have been subjected to torture or ill-treatment by the military in the past.

Similar Tuareg rebel attacks and army reprisals occurred in mid-1990. At least 55 Tuareg civilians were reported to have been extrajudicially executed in July and August 1990, and others detained without charge or trial. In January 1991, a peace accord was signed at Tamanrasset in Algeria by the Malian government and two rebel groups seeking autonomy for the Tuareg and other peoples of northern Mali and surrounding areas - the *Mouvement populaire de l'Azaouad* (MPA), Azawad People's Movement, and the *Front islamique arabe de l'Azaouad* (FIAA), Azawad Arab Islamic Front. However, the *Front populaire de libération de l'Azaouad* (FPLA), Azawad People's Liberation Front, apparently a dissident

group, said in May 1991 that the Malian government had breached the Tamanrasset accord by not withdrawing the army from the north and claimed responsibility for the recent attacks.

On 26 March 1991, the government of General Moussa Traoré, who had ruled Mali since seizing power in 1968, was overthrown by armed forces officers. As well as the actions against the Tuareg in 1990, his government had been responsible for many human rights violations against pro-democracy activists in recent months. The new government, the *Comité de transition pour le salut du peuple*, Transition Committee for the Salvation of the People, quickly appointed both military and civilian ministers to rule the country until elections in a few months time. In late May and early June 1991, former President Traoré, his wife and over 30 former government ministers and officials, who have been detained since the coup, were brought before the Supreme Court and charged with criminal offences, including complicity to murder, corruption and illicit enrichment.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telegrams/telexes/faxes and airmail letters:

- expressing concern at reports of the extrajudicial execution of Elmehdi Ag Amahadjoudj, Mohamed Attaher, Attiyoub Cissé, Achoucrou Ag Hamsa, Alhousseiny Ag Mohamed Elmehdi, Aly Ould Taleb and at least 30 other people by the security forces in or near Léré;
- seeking clarification of reports that at least 30 Tuareg remain in detention without charge or trial at a military camp in Timbuktu;
- while welcoming the appointment of a commission of inquiry to gather information about the killings, seeking information about its exact terms of reference, for example, whether it and whether it may publish its findings;
- calling on the government to establish an independent and open judicial inquiry into the killings which will make public its findings and recommendations, and to bring to justice promptly those responsible for killings and other human rights violations;
- urging the government to denounce publicly such killings and to ensure that its security forces do not extrajudicially execute or detain anybody on account of their ethnic origins, however severe the provocation;
- appealing for the immediate release of any prisoners of conscience - prisoners who have not used or advocated violence and who are held solely because of their political views or ethnic origin - and for the immediate release of any detainees who are not to be charged promptly with a recognizably criminal offence and formally remanded in custody.

APPEALS TO:

Monsieur le Lieutenant-Colonel Amadou Toumani Touré
 Chef de l'Etat
 Comité de transition pour le salut du peuple
 La Présidence
 B.P. 1463, Bamako, Mali

**Telegrams: Comité de transition,
 Bamako, Mali**
Faxes: +223 22 3980
Telexes: 2521 PREMALI MJ

Monsieur Soumana Sacko
 Premier Ministre
 Le cabinet du Premier Ministre
 Bamako, Mali

**Telegrams: Premier Ministre,
 Bamako, Mali**

Monsieur le Lieutenant-Colonel Tiécoura Doumbia
 Ministre de la Défense nationale et de la Sûreté nationale
 Ministère de la Défense nationale
 B.P. 215, Bamako, Mali

**Telegrams: Ministre Defense,
Bamako, Mali**

Monsieur le Commandant Lamine Diabira
Ministre de l'Administration territoriale
Ministère de l'Administration territoriale
Bamako, Mali

**Telegrams: Ministre Administration
territoriale, Bamako, Mali**

COPIES TO:

Son Excellence
Monsieur le Chef d'escadron Souleymane Sidibé
Ministre des Affaires étrangères
Ministère des Affaires étrangères
Koulouba
Bamako, Mali

Faxes: +223 22 5226

Les Echos, BP 2043, Bamako, Mali
Aurore, BP 3150, Bamako, Mali
L'Essor, BP 141, Bamako, Mali
Le Cafard Libéré, BP 7292, Dakar, Senegal

and to diplomatic representatives of Mali in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 23 July 1991.