



Genocide Watch  
The Alliance Against Genocide

## Genocide Emergency: Mali August 2020

Genocide Watch is issuing a Genocide Emergency for Mali. Insurgents and security forces have killed thousands of civilians and created a catastrophic [humanitarian crisis](#) that is [internally displacing](#) hundreds of thousands of Malians.

The roots of the current conflict are [linked to](#) the 2011 Libyan Civil War. Ethnic Tuareg, members of a minority group in northern Mali that have historically faced intense Malian [government persecution](#), joined the fighting to support Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. When NATO-backed rebels overthrew Gaddafi in 2011, mercenary [Tuareg fighters returned](#) to northern Mali and brought with them a flood of heavy weapons.

After the fall of Gaddafi, a small number of Tuaregs then revived a long-standing [separatist movement](#). The Tuareg separatists, under the banner of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), joined in a tacit alliance with armed Islamist groups in northern Mali. Alongside Ansar Dine, al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and the Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO), the MNLA led an insurgency against the Malian government in January 2012.

In April 2012, military officials orchestrated a [coup d'état](#) to oust Mali's democratically elected leader, Amadou Toumani Touré in April 2012. The MNLA insurgent coalition seized control of northern Mali aiming to establish a state based on their unique ethnic identity. However, the secular, nationalist goals of the Tuareg MNLA clashed with the jihadists vision to implement a strict interpretation of [sharia](#) across the region. By June, the Islamists fully co-opted the movement and [pushed out](#) the Tuareg MNLA.

In a controversial French-led military intervention in 2013, government forces regained control over northern Mali. The [intervention expelled](#) the Islamists from their strongholds in the north and in doing so, unintentionally scattered the fundamentalists across central and southern Mali, where jihadist violence is currently [gripping the region](#).

Since 2015, jihadist attacks in central Mali have [spiked dramatically](#). Fundamentalists have recruited militants primarily from the *Peules*/Fulani ethnic group, stoking a regional conflict that has directly instigated ethnic violence. In response to the increasing Islamist attacks, various Malian ethnic groups have formed [self-defense militias](#), which has created a tit-for-tat cycle of attacks against neighboring ethnic groups. *Dan Na Ambassagou*, a Dogon ethnic self-defense militia, has committed executions of hundreds of *Peules*/Fulani civilians.

Despite the presence of a [UN peacekeeping mission](#) since 2013 and a French-led counterterrorism force in operation since 2014, the security situation in central Mali has continued to deteriorate. In 2019, fundamentalists killed 4,000 people across Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger. In the first six months of 2020 alone, the [UN reported](#) 589 civilians killed by various armed groups in central Mali.

Genocide Watch recognizes the alarming situation in Mali as **Stage 9: Extermination**.

To prevent further bloodshed in Mali, Genocide Watch recommends:

- The United Nations peacekeeping force in Mali (MINUSMA), the French-led counterterrorism force (Operation Barkane), and the regional G5 Sahel Joint Forces review their tactical plan to ensure that they are not providing proxy support to security forces and allied militia members who are themselves committing mass atrocities across Mali.
- The Malian government provide increased protection to villages in central Mali to reduce the need for self-defense militias and break the cycle of vigilantism.
- The Malian government work with local spiritual and community leaders to foster dialogue between ethnic groups and deescalate ethnic tensions through education and outreach aimed at alleviating the root causes of the violence.
- NGOs and other international actors increase humanitarian assistance to Mali and provide economic opportunities to individuals tempted to otherwise join armed Islamist groups.