



Mali

The **Wayamo Foundation** and **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung** retrace the key events in the search for accountability for the crimes committed in Mali. In January 2012, the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), an armed group of Tuareg fighters, formed an alliance with Ansar Eddine and other designated terror groups to launch a third independence movement. The coalition quickly defeated Malian armed forces in the north and took control over large parts of the region, including population centres in Timbuktu, Gao, Kidal and Ménaka.

The occupiers established rule in the region, based on extremist interpretations of Sharia law. By July 2012, these terrorist groups had broken with and expelled the MNLA. The year of occupation that followed was characterised by grave human rights violations, including extrajudicial executions, mutilations, and the destruction of heritage sites. Sexual violence against women and children was systematic and widespread, and included acts of sexual slavery, forced marriages, gang rapes, and the use of rape as a punishment.

-  **Domestic accountability** timeline of events
-  **International accountability** timeline of events



BEFORE
1960
–
2012

Conflict cycles

Mali has experienced cycles of civil conflict and periods of repressive rule, going back to the period before independence from France in 1960. These periods of conflict included two rebellions by Tuareg groups in the north, in 1963 and 1990, both of which met with a heavy-handed response from Malian forces. Although a peace agreement in 1996 formally ended the Second Tuareg Rebellion, stability never returned to the northern region. Tuareg armed groups remained active, eventually forming an alliance with designated terrorist groups from the wider region.

16 AUG. 2000
Mali ratifies the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court

JAN. – APR. 2012
Conflict in the north
Fighting breaks out between Malian government forces and armed groups, allied with Islamic terrorist groups. By April of 2012, the Mouvement national de libération de l'Azawad (MNLA), a group fighting for an independent Tuareg state, captures much of northern Mali.

MAR. –
APR.
2012



2012 Malian coup d'état

On 22 March 2012 Malian soldiers, led by Amadou Sanogo stage a coup, removing President Amadou Toumani Touré from power after setbacks in the conflict against separatist groups. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mediates between the groups, leading to a resignation of Touré on 8 April 2012. Dioncounda Traoré assumes the presidency with a mandate to hold new elections.

Combattants du MNLA © Magharebia, Wikimedia

30 APR. – 1 MAY 2012
Fighting breaks out in Bamako

Pro-junta forces in Mali take control of the main anti-junta military base after two days of fighting in the capital, Bamako. Members of the "Red Berets" (presidential guard unit) are abducted by forces loyal to Sanogo.

14 MAY 2012
ECOWAS threatens to reimpose sanctions

13 JUL. 2012
Mali self-refers to the ICC
The government of Mali self-refers the situation in its territory to the ICC, declaring that the judiciary has withdrawn from the north and is thus unable to address war crimes committed during the 2012-2013 conflict and occupation.

MAY – DEC. 2012
President beaten up by protesters
Interim President Dioncounda Traoré was taken to hospital with a head wound after being attacked by pro-military demonstrators on 14 May 2012. Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra resigns after his army arrest by soldiers on 10 December 2012.

APR. 2012 – JAN. 2013
Occupation of Timbuktu and other cities in the north
In the months that follow, MNLA loses control of most of the territory to its former allies, the Islamic groups Al-Qaida au Maghreb islamique (AQIM), Ansar Eddine and Mouvement pour l'unicité et le jihad en Afrique de l'Ouest (MUJAO). AQIM and Ansar Eddine occupy Timbuktu and MUJAO occupies Gao. Under their rule, widespread human rights violations are committed including extrajudicial executions, torture and systematic rape and forced marriages, particularly targeting children.

16 JAN. 2013
ICC Prosecutor opens investigation in Mali

JAN. – MAY 2013
French forces recapture the north
French forces and their allies expel AQIM and Ansar Eddine from Timbuktu in January and recapture the north by May during Operation Serval.

MAR. 2013
Public Prosecutor opens the case against Iyad Ag Ghali and 29 others

Mali's Public Prosecutor opens a case concerning the crimes committed during the occupation of the north in 2012-2013, including a procedure against Iyad Ag Ghali, the leader of the terrorist movement Ansar Eddine, and 29 others. The case includes former president of the Islamic court in Timbuktu, Alfousseyni Ag aka "Houka Houka".

25
APR.
2013

MINUSMA established by UN

In April, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) is established to support the transition to peace.

MINUSMA commander honours fallen Burkinabè Peacekeepers on 9 July 2015 in Bamako © UN Photo

21 MAY 2013
Mali establishes Specialised Judicial Unit for the Fight Against Terrorism
Malian authorities pass a law amending the Code of Criminal Procedures and creating a Specialised Judicial Unit for the Fight Against Terrorism and Transnational Crimes within the Tribunal de Grande Instance de Commune IV of the District of Bamako. The Specialised Judicial Unit's jurisdiction, defined in Article 609-1 of the Law of 2013, covers all of Mali. It can investigate offences related to terrorism, financing of terrorism, money laundering, drug trafficking, weapons and ammunition, and human trafficking and related practices when these crimes are transnational in nature.

AUG.
2013

Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta elected president

The first post-coup presidential elections are held on 28 July 2013, with a second round run-off held on 11 August.

Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta addresses the EU Parliament in 2013 © European Union - European Parliament

AUG. 2014
Release of Ag Alfousseyni "Houka Houka" and others

High ranking members of armed groups are released from detention in effort to advance the peace process and to secure the release of French hostages.

10 OCT. 2014
Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi arrested

Al Mahdi, head of Hesba, a command structure of the AQIM aligned group Ansar Eddine, is arrested in Niger.

12 NOV. 2014
FIDH & AMDH File Sexual Violence Case

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Association Malienne des Droits de l'Homme (AMDH) file a complaint for crimes against humanity and war crimes on behalf of 80 women and girl victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence committed during the occupation of northern Mali in 2012 and 2013. Despite the goodwill of the investigative judge, the investigation is stalled because of the lack of cooperation from the authorities and insecurity in the region where investigations would be conducted.

JAN. 2015
Specialised Judicial Unit assumes its duties

FEB. – JUN. 2015
Government and separatist groups sign "Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali Resulting from the Algiers Process"

In May & June 2015, arrest warrants against Iyad Ag Ghali + 29 others are lifted. At least 50 alleged perpetrators of crimes against humanity or war crimes who had been arrested are released. Despite these actions, the peace process also establishes a framework for peace and justice, including trials for international crimes and a truth commission.

6 MAR. 2015
Timbuktu occupation victims file complaint

FIDH files a complaint on behalf of 33 victims of international crimes committed during the occupation of Timbuktu and its region by armed groups in 2012 and 2013. This complaint concerns 15 alleged perpetrators of crimes against humanity and war crimes. The proceedings are suspended due to the lack of political and judicial will.

APR. – MAY 2015
General Amadou Sanogo & 17 co-defendants tried for abduction and killing of 21 Red Berets

The first domestic trial for international crimes opens. The Indictments Chamber of the Bamako Court of Appeals indicts General Amadou Haya Sanogo and 17 others for the murder of 21 Red Berets during an attempted counter-coup. The Chamber refers them to the Assize Court to be tried for kidnapping and murder, where the Court orders a new medical examination of bodies found in the Diago mass grave, because the first one had not been conducted in accordance with the procedures provided for under Malian law. This delays the trial.

18 SEP. 2015
ICC issues arrest warrant against Al Mahdi

26 SEP. 2015
Niger surrenders Al Mahdi to the ICC

30
SEP.
2015



Al Mahdi appears before the ICC

Al Mahdi makes his first appearance before an ICC judge, where he confirms his identity and is informed of the charges against him. Pre-Trial Chamber confirms a single war crime charge against Al Mahdi, charging him with intentionally directing attacks against religious and historic monuments in Timbuktu, June 20-July 10, 2012.

Al Mahdi on trial at the ICC © ICC

2016
CVJR Truth Commission

Mali's truth commission begins its ambitious mandate to investigate and report on crimes committed from the period of 1960 through 2015 (later extended to include the period until 2019).

1 MAR. 2016
Al Mahdi tells court he plans to plead guilty to the charges, setting a precedent in handling of guilty pleas before the ICC

AUG. 2016
Police chief convicted on terrorism charges

Aliou Mahamar Touré, the chief of the Islamic police during the occupation of Gao, is convicted on terrorism charges for crimes against the State. He was not charged with war crimes or torture, despite being accused of multiple acts of mutilation.

22 – 24 AUG. 2016
Al Mahdi trial

Al Mahdi pleads guilty to the war crime of destroying historical and religious monuments. The prosecution presents its evidence and three witnesses are called.

2017
–
AUG.
2019



The Special Unit on Terrorism opens 162 cases

Around 120 counter-terrorism judicial proceedings begin in 2017, but these result in almost no trials. This comes after around a dozen sentences were handed down by the Mopti Criminal Court in April 2016 in the absence of the accused. The most important cases are still under investigation.

Touareg independence fighters © Magharebia, Flickr

27 SEP. 2016
Al Mahdi found guilty and sentenced to nine years of imprisonment

17 AUG. 2017
ICC Trial Chamber issues a reparations order against Al Mahdi

He is determined to be liable for € 2.7 million in expenses for individual and collective reparations for the community of Timbuktu.

2018
Military investigations

From 2018, the military also begins opening investigations into alleged extrajudicial killings by the Malian security forces. At least three incidents are under investigation: the extrajudicial killing of 12 suspects near Diourra in April, 12 men in Boulikessi in May, and 25 suspects near Nantaka in June.

27 MAR. 2018
Arrest warrant issued for Al Hassan Ag Abdoul Aziz
Al Hassan was a member of Ansar Eddine and chief of the Islamic police during the occupation of Timbuktu by armed groups, between 1 April 2012 and 28 January 2013.

31 MAR. 2018
Mali government surrenders Al Hassan to the ICC

2019
Trials related to inter-communal attacks on Koro, Bankass and Bandiagara

Suspects accused of leading 2019 attacks on Koro, Bankass and Bandiagara go to trial at the Mopti Court d'assises. Of the 60 accused, 44 are convicted, however only two are convicted of murder.

8-17 JUL. 2019
Charges against Al Hassan are confirmed

In a confidential decision, the Pre-Trial Chamber I confirms charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity against Al Hassan. He is accused of crimes including torture, rape, sexual slavery including forced marriages, and other war crimes.

MAY 2019
Specialised Judicial Unit investigates Ogossagou inter-communal massacre

Investigation into the March 23 massacre of 160 Fulani herders in Ogossagou, more than half of them children, leads to ten arrests.

14-15 JUL. 2020
Al Hassan trial opens in The Hague

ICC prosecutor lays out charges, describing the Islamic Police, their crimes against the people of Timbuktu and the threat they still pose for civilians and security. The statement focuses in on gender-based crimes of this Islamic Police.

24 JUL. 2019
A law is passed extending the jurisdiction of the Specialized Unit to include war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.

OCT. 2019
Specialised Judicial Unit investigates Sobane Da inter-communal massacre
The prosecutor for the Specialised Judicial Unit opens an investigation into the massacre of at least 95 Dogon in Sobane Da on June 2019. As of October 2019, nine suspects are placed in pre-trial detention.

15 APR. 2019
Investigation into inter-communal attacks Koulogon

The High Court of Mopti opens of an investigation into the January 1 massacre of 37 people in Koulogon. Twelve are suspected in connection with the killings, and eight of them later released.

DEC. 2019
Four Dogon men convicted of inter-communal attacks on Bankass Cercle

2020
New legislation drafted on witness protection

In an effort to address gaps in witness and victim protection, two draft bills on the protection of witnesses were prepared by Malian civil society organizations and proposed to the authorities. One of these bills particularly concerns gender-based violence, including protections for victims of sexual violence. A third bill concerning protection of "human rights defenders" was initiated by the Ministry of Justice and was before the National Assembly in late 2020.

18 AUG. 2020
President Keïta resigns after coup d'état

25
SEP.
2020

Bah Ndaw becomes President of Mali
Seventy-year-old Colonel Bah Ndaw, a former Minister of Defence under Ibrahim Keïta, assumes the presidency until interim elections scheduled in 18 months time. Colonel Assimi Goïta, the leader of the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), which staged the August coup, is appointed vice president.

15
MAR.
2021



Charges against General Sanogo are dropped

The Bamako Assize Court orders the end of the trial against the general and his co-accused, who were on trial for the assassination of 21 soldiers in 2012.

Amadou Haya Sanogo © 2016, Kassim Traoré, Wikimedia

24 MAY 2021
Assimi Goïta leads coup against Bah Ndaw

The Malian Army, led by Vice President Assimi Goïta, arrests President Bah Ndaw who resigns from custody. Goïta becomes interim President on 7 June 2021. It is the country's third coup d'état in ten years.