



Africa Information & Monitoring Services

Mali: Reporting on Major News Developments 8-9 March 2022

The following report highlights major news developments in politics and security in Mali on 8-9 March. In this report, Mauritania accuses Mali of crimes against its nationals, the UN mission opens an investigation after the discovery of 35 charred bodies, the Defense Minister and the Air Force Chief travel to Russia, traditional hunters in Bandiagara supports army actions, and Turkey condemns 4 March terrorist attack. On the economic front, an increase in fuel price is looming. Security ward, the Army says it has killed nine terrorists, including foreign combatants. This report includes background information to add context where needed.

POLITICS

Mauritania Accuses Mali of 'Crimes' Against Its Nationals

Mauritanian Foreign Affairs Minister on 8 March protested what he considered "repeated crimes" that the Malian army has conducted against its Mauritanian nationals established or crossing Mali. As a matter of fact, three dozen Mauritanians have been missing in Mali over the last two weeks. And the Mauritanian side argued that all its addresses to the Malian Government for clarifications never received a response.¹

Background: Audio recording of witnesses streaming on social media tend to indicate the involvement of Malian troops in the forced disappearance of Mauritanians on Malian soil.

UN Mission Opens Investigation Into Issue of 35 Charred Bodies

The UN Mission in Mali has dispatched a team on the ground to investigate the causes and possible authors of the killing of 35 people whose bodies were discovered last week in the rural commune of Diabaly, 399 kilometers north of Bamako in the Niono circle, Segou region. Suspicions are mainly on terrorists and Malian forces.²



Abamako.com

Background: A video circulating on social media showed dozens of badly burned bodies that were blindfolded and had their hands bound together. Some of them appeared to have holes in the back of their heads. The Malian government on 5 March denied allegations that the army was involved in those killings.

¹ https://www.seneweb.com/news/Afrique/la-mauritanie-accuse-l-armee-malie_n_373217.html

² <http://news.abamako.com/h/267307.html>

Defense Minister, Air Force Chief Travel to Russia

Two senior Malian military officials, namely Colonel Sadio Camara, the Defense Minister and Colonel Alou Boi Diarra, the Chief of Staff of the Air Force, traveled discreetly to Russia, military sources said on 8 March. While war is raging between Russia and Ukraine, the visit aims to "take stock of military equipment Russia delivered to the Malian forces over the last months and to discuss the delivery of additional equipment," one of the two military officials said on condition of anonymity.³

Traditional Hunters in Bandiagara Express Support for Army

The brotherhood of traditional hunters in Dandoly 10 kilometers from Bandiagara held its national forum on 5 March. On the occasion, hundreds of hunters who gathered in Dandoly from various places of Mali said were delighted by the courage and determination that Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) display on the ground and that they approved and supported the offensive of the national army against terrorists. Dana Ambassagou, one of the organizers of the gathering, said via his secretary: "We hereby salute the courage and commitment of the FAMA and the authorities who run the country. We urge them to continue in the same vein to rout our common enemy which is terrorism."⁴



Malijet.com

Turkey Condemns 4 March Terrorist Attack

The Turkish Foreign Affairs Ministry on 7 March released a communique to condemn a terrorist attack that cost the lives of soldiers and civilians in central Mali on 4 March. The Ministry expressed its sadness at the hearing of the bad news, presented its condolences to the bereaved families, and wished quick recovery to the wounded.⁵

ECONOMY

Article Says Increase in Fuel Price Looms

A 7 March article in Maliactu.net said that an increase in the price of fuel is looming as a shortage of fuel is observed at many gas stations, including prominent ones. According to several sources, these gas stations only received half of their usual cargo. Another observation is that the major importers of hydrocarbons have been selling practically all at a loss for some time because they could not align their prices with the world price. Besides they did not receive any compensation in terms of customs taxes. Therefore, it is likely that the price may increase in the next days, especially if negotiations between the transitional authorities and the ECOWAS fail and Mali continues to be sidelined by the regional organization.⁶



³ <https://malijet.com/actualite-politique-au-mali/flash-info/267571-deux-hauts-responsables-militaires-maliens-se-rendent-en-russie.html>

⁴ https://malijet.com/la_societe_maliennne_aujourd'hui/267576-dandoly-dans-la-r%C3%A9gion-de-bandiagara-les-chasseurs-saluent-1%E2%80%99off.html

⁵ <https://www.maliweb.net/insecurite/la-turquie-condamne-lattaque-terroriste-au-mali-2967688.html>

⁶ <https://maliactu.net/apres-la-hausse-en-fleche-des-prix-une-penurie-de-carburant-dans-lair/>

SECURITY

Army Kills Nine Terrorists in Gao Region

The General Staff of the Malian Armed Forces (FAMA) via a press release, announced that "the FAMA on 7 March repelled an attack by the Armed Terrorist Groups on troops based in N'Tahaka in the Gao Region." This air-land response resulted in a provisional toll of nine dead on the attackers' side and two killed. The General Staff assures that the Malian forces continue to search the sector to find out the bases of these terrorists.⁷



Maliweb.net

Improvised Explosive Device Kills Two Peacekeepers Near Mopti

Two UN peacekeepers were killed and four were wounded on 7 March when their vehicle hit an Improvised Explosive Device in the north of Mopti, MINUSMA Spokesperson Olivier Salgado reported in a tweet. Sources on condition of anonymity said that the dead peacekeepers are Egyptians.⁸

Background: Created in 2013 to support the Malian political process, the 13,000-soldiers strong MINUSMA has become the deadliest UN Mission in the world.

Commentary Worries Return of Fear, Uncertainty in Central Region

In the aftermaths of the 4 March attack that resulted in heavy casualties in the ranks of the army, journalist A. Keita of Le Temoïn expressed fears that the assurance stirred by the recent victories of the armed forces on terrorist groups may die down and be replaced by uncertainty in the central region of the country. The latest attack took the lives of 27 soldiers in just one day, including the loss of equipment. Besides, scattered pockets of resistance that cut some villages from supply routes, summary executions have also been made in the same region, causing more panic. All this, the writer said, can negatively impact the psychology of the civilian populations in the area and make the entire region to sink back into security uncertainty with regard to security.⁹

⁷ <https://www.maliweb.net/insecurite/attaque-de-ntahaka-9-terroristes-neutralises-dans-la-riposte-de-larmee-2967697.html>

⁸ <https://www.maliweb.net/insecurite/mali-deux-casques-bleus-tues-par-un-engin-explosif-improvisé-2967637.html>

⁹ <https://www.maliweb.net/insecurite/attaque-contre-les-fama-au-centre-mali-la-terreur-va-t-elle-reprendre-le-dessus-2967602.html>