

Deadly Mali attack to be investigated by UN rights experts

An attack on a village in central Mali earlier this week in which at least 37 civilians died, is to be investigated with the help of United Nations human rights experts, the UN stabilization mission in the country ([MINUSMA](#)), announced on Thursday.

Women and children were among those killed in Koulogon Peul on Tuesday, according to MINUSMA. It has called for justice for the victims, whose deaths come amid escalating intercommunal clashes, fuelled in part by decades-old disputes over land and cattle by pastoralists across the whole Sahel region and by extremist armed groups.

“I strongly condemn these attacks against civilians in the village of Koulogon Peul and call for the perpetrators to be held accountable,” said Joanne Adamson, MINUSMA Deputy Special Representative.

“It is becoming more and more important to bring an end to violence in the regions of Mopti and Segou. We need to intensify our efforts to find judicial and political solutions,” she insisted.

According to MINUSMA, the latest incident saw unidentified armed assailants attack Koulogon Peul village in Mali’s central Mopti region, at around 5am on New Year’s Day. In addition to those killed and wounded in their homes, houses and granaries were also destroyed on purpose, it said in a statement.

The assailants wore traditional hunting outfits associated with the Dozos people, MINUSMA also reported.

After welcoming the rapid deployment of Malian troops to the site of the attack and the decision to open a police inquiry, the Mission’s communiqué added that “in the coming days”, it will deploy a human rights team to support the probe.

“This work will make it possible to carry out an investigation in the zone where the attack took place”, the MINUSMA statement continued, noting that it would also help to complete evidence-gathering, establish the reasons for the killings and apportion responsibility.

The attack is the latest episode of violence involving self-defence militias and armed groups in Mali, where extremists took over the north of the country in 2012.

Although the French military succeeded in forcing them back, the jihadists have maintained support in communities in the north and centre, causing a significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the last 12 months.

Overall, some 7.2 million people living in Mali's 50 administrative districts, or "cercles", have been affected by insecurity, drought and flooding.

Among them, 3.2 million require humanitarian assistance, according to the UN [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs](#) (OCHA), and four regions have acute malnutrition levels above the 10 per cent alert threshold: Gao, Menaka, Segou and Timbuktu.

For the situation in Mali to improve, the effective implementation of the peace agreement in the north needs to happen, OCHA said in its [2019 Global Humanitarian Overview](#), along with the restoration of law and basic services throughout the country, and the protection of civilians by national and international forces.