

'Favour dialogue' over violence, UN chief urges all parties following clashes in Mali's capital

The [United Nations Secretary-General](#) António Guterres called for “calm and restraint” on Saturday, following violent clashes between demonstrators and riot police in Mali's capital Bamako.

According to news reports, police used tear gas to break up opposition supporters who had planned to march through the capital, calling for more transparency, ahead of presidential elections due to take place next month.

The UN chief was in Mali earlier in the week for a two-day visit, to recognize the determination and sacrifice of [UN peacekeepers](#) in what is currently the most dangerous mission to serve as a 'blue helmet'.

In that light, Mr. Guterres said in a statement issued via his Spokesperson that he was encouraged “by the progress registered in the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation. He wishes for this positive dynamic to continue with the holding of elections in a peaceful climate.”

The Secretary-General expressed regret at the fact that Mali's government had imposed a ban on demonstrations by opposition parties, stressing that “inclusive political dialogue” was essential, as was the “protection of fundamental human rights and freedom of expression to peaceful demonstrations, including in the context of the ongoing state of emergency.”

Mali declared a state of emergency in 2015 after a terrorist attack in the capital, and fighting between rival armed groups, government forces, and extremists that carried out a failed coup in 2012, have destabilized much of the north and east of the country.

Following his successful visit to Mali this week, which included a meeting with parties to the fragile ceasefire agreement signed three years ago, the UN chief said that the UN stood ready “to support a peaceful resolution of all the parties' grievances.”