

# Mali facing 'alarming' rise in rights violations, warns UN expert

In Mali, a senior United Nations rights expert on Wednesday described an "alarming" deterioration of the security, human rights and humanitarian situation in northern and eastern areas of the country.

Alioune Tine's comments follow two deadly attacks in recent days on international forces in Mali, including one suicide bombing in Gao, that left at least two civilians dead and more than 15 injured.

In Menaka, to the east, more than 120 people were also allegedly murdered in a three-week period in April and May, he said in a statement, noting that that violent extremists had taken advantage of the lack of basic services "to exploit communities and pit them against each other".

Some attacks have been attributed to armed groups including the Azawad Salvation Movement (MSA) and the Touareg IMGHAD Self-Defense Group and Allies (GATIA), the UN expert noted.

Amid ongoing insecurity, which has been characterized by kidnappings and targeted killings, according to the Senegalese expert, communities have been displaced and more than 650 schools have been forced to close in central and northern regions, affecting nearly 200,000 children.

There have also been an increasing number of allegations of "serious human rights violations" against the Malian armed forces, Mr. Tine said, echoing concerns about anti-terrorist operations "that do not respect international human rights standards".

In an appeal to the Government of Mali to bring the perpetrators of rights abuses to justice, Mr. Tine underlined the "very limited State presence", adding that in some central areas there is "none at all".

The [Independent Expert](#) – who visited the country at the end of June – also commended the country's Prime Minister for reaffirming that the Government will not tolerate any wrongdoing against civilians.

Turning to the humanitarian emergency in the central region and warning that it "is getting worse", the UN expert said that 4.1 million people need food aid.

The number of people suffering from severe acute malnutrition in 2018 is also set to increase from 163,000 to well over a quarter of a million – including more than 11,000 children under five – he added.

Moderate acute malnutrition is a massive and chronic problem too, with numbers expected to increase from 470,000 to 582,000, including more than 45,000 pregnant and breastfeeding women.

“This is an emergency to which we cannot close our eyes,” Mr. Tine said, before appealing to armed groups to respect humanitarian workers as they carry out their work.

Ahead of Presidential elections at the end of this month, he urged all those engaged in it “to ban hate speech and calls to violence” during campaigning which begins in three days.

The rights expert also stressed the need to respect freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of access to the media, and appealed for the forthcoming presidential election to be “truly free, transparent and peaceful”, and to meet international standards.

Mr. Tine – who took office as Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali on 1 May – will present his [report](#) to the Human Rights Council in March next year.

Among its findings, it’s expected to include an appraisal of a UN Security Council resolution agreed last year which established a targeted sanctions regime on the country.