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Integrated Stabilization Mission
in Mali



MINUSMA

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au Mali

HUMAN RIGHTS AND PROTECTION DIVISION

Note on Trends of Human Rights Violations and Abuses in Mali

1 April – 30 June 2020

August 2020

Introduction

1. This note follows the previous one on trends of human rights violations and abuses between 1 January and 31 March 2020 and is issued in the context of Security Council Resolution 2480 requesting the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) to monitor human rights violations and abuses throughout the country, assist in investigations and report publicly on the results of its investigations.¹
2. It provides a contextual analysis of the human rights situation between 1 April and 30 June 2020 and a general overview of trends of human rights violations and abuses documented by the MINUSMA Human Rights and Protection Division (hereinafter the Division or HRPD) during the period under review. The information contained in this note has been collected in accordance with the methodology of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and in pursuance of the monitoring and investigation strategy put in place by the Division in the current context of the Covid-19 pandemic.² They are based on documented and verified facts as well as on regular observation, fact-finding and in-depth investigation missions conducted by teams from human rights offices in Gao, Kidal, Ménaka, Mopti, Timbuktu, and Bamako, which covers the District of Bamako and the regions of Kayes, Koulikoro, Ségou, and Sikasso, as well as the thematic units of the Division based in Bamako. Despite the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and with the support of the MINUSMA Force and UNPOL, the Division conducted three (3) special investigation and fact-finding missions in Djongue Ouro (Fakala Commune, Djenne cercle, region of Mopti) on 8 May 2020; in Sikasso (Sikasso commune, cercle, and region) from 18 to 20 May 2020; and in Binedama (Diankabou commune, Koro *cercle*, region of Mopti) on 17 June 2020).
3. The facts and information contained in this note have been formally shared with the civil, military and judicial authorities, both regional and national. Official communications were addressed respectively to the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Justice and Human Rights, Defence and Veterans Affairs as well as to the General Staff of the Armed Forces to support the efforts of the Malian State to conduct investigations and bring to justice the alleged perpetrators of violations and abuses contained herein. Finally,

¹ On 29 June 29, the Security Council adopted a new resolution (2531) which strengthens the human rights mandate of MINUSMA and requests it « *to improve its communication efforts to raise awareness on its mandate and its role, as well as to underscore the role and responsibilities of the Malian authorities to protect civilians and implement the Agreement* ».

² As part of this strategy, the Division strengthened its mobile investigation team and its collaboration with its network of focal points throughout the country. It also strengthened its techniques for remote human rights monitoring and investigation, the early warning mechanism in the event of an incident through its human rights call centre and the deployment of fact-finding missions taking into account health measures.

MINUSMA sent a communication to the Government of Burkina Faso concerning the allegations of summary executions involving Burkinabe troops on Malian territory as part of military and counterterrorism operations.

I. General context

4. Between 1 April and 30 June 2020, the human rights situation, made fragile by growing insecurity and the Covid-19 pandemic, remained worrying and without improvement, both in the central regions (Mopti and Ségou) and in those of the north (Gao, Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu).
5. This quarter was marked by a volatile security context characterized by a significant number of asymmetric attacks and ambushes by groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Eddine, Katiba Macina, Jama'at nusrat al -Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), Al Mourabitoune and other similar groups (hereinafter AQIM and other similar groups) targeting Malian Defence and Security Forces (MDSF), and on some occasions leading to deadly violence against civilian populations in the regions of Gao, Menaka and Timbuktu and in those of Mopti and Ségou. The Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS) and JNIM regularly clashed in the regions of Gao, Mopti and Menaka resulting in the killing of several civilians. In the tri-border area, more specifically in the Liptako-Gourma region, there has been an upsurge in terrorist attacks and an increase in military and counterterrorism operations led by international forces.
6. These attacks illustrate the non-respect by armed groups operating in Mali for the call made by the Secretary-General of the United Nations on 23 March 2020 for the cessation of hostilities in order to give civilians respite, allow all actors to focus on the response to Covid-19 and facilitate an adequate humanitarian response.
7. The MDSF carried out numerous military and security operations in both central and northern regions, some of which resulted in human rights violations in Mopti and Ségou regions. These are mainly extrajudicial executions and enforced or involuntary disappearances of members of the Fulani and Bella communities in Mopti and Ségou regions. Some of these operations carried out by the MDSF were sometimes akin to reprisal operations against the civilian population. This was the case, for example, with the operation carried out by elements of the Malian Armed Forces on 6 June in the village of Massabougou (see details below in paragraph 37).
8. During this period, violence across communal lines continued in Mopti region, punctuated by armed attacks by Fulani and Dogon militias and self-defence groups. There has been an

increase in attacks by Fulani militias and self-defence groups against villages and hamlets inhabited by members of the Dogon community. This violence in the context of inter-community tensions has caused a forced displacement of the civilian populations to large towns and villages considered safe, thus exacerbating an already critical humanitarian situation in certain areas. In addition, attacks against humanitarian organisations have increased exponentially³ in the regions of Mopti, Ségou, Gao and Ménaka, making the delivery of humanitarian assistance difficult for the displaced populations. The attacks with improvised explosive device (IED) or mine against two bridges located on the RN15 national road linking Sévaré to Bandiagara in Mopti region by unidentified armed individuals made this access even more difficult.

9. The security situation has further deteriorated in the southern regions (Kayes, Koulikoro and Sikasso) due to increasingly frequent attacks by JNIM against police and gendarmerie stations.
10. The context was also marked by movements challenging the final results of the legislative elections held on 29 March and 19 April 2020. This was characterised by the organisation of anti-government demonstrations, particularly in Bamako, Mopti, Kayes, and Sikasso, some of which demanded the invalidation of the disputed results of the legislative elections, with others demanding the resignation of the President of the Republic and the dissolution of the National Assembly and the Constitutional Court. These demonstrations turned violent, sometimes leading to clashes between demonstrators and MDSF and the destruction of public property. As part of the monitoring of these protests, the Division documented human rights violations.

II. General trends of human rights violations and abuses

11. Between 1 April and 30 June 2020, MINUSMA recorded a total of 458 security incidents in the regions of Mopti (214), Gao (81), Timbuktu (70), Menaka (39), District of Bamako (25), Ségou (12), Kidal (8), Sikasso (6), and Kayes (3). Of the 458 incidents recorded, 267 had a direct impact on human rights and international humanitarian law and led to the killing of 323 people, including 23 children and 11 women.
12. In total, HRPD documented 632 human rights violations and abuses, resulting in the killing of 323 people, including 23 children and 11 women. This represents a 5.65% increase in comparison with violations and abuses documented in the previous quarter (1 January to 31

³ According to OCHA, at least 1000 attacks against humanitarian NGOs were documented during the period under review.

March 2020), a period during which the Division recorded 598 human rights violations and abuses, including the killing of at least 380 people.

13. Of the 632 human rights violations and abuses, the Division documented 126 human rights violations attributed to the MDSF, while 50 violations were attributed to the Burkinabe forces. Extremist groups such as Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), Ansar Eddine, Katiba Macina, Jama'at nusrat al-Islam wal Muslimin (JNIM), Al Mourabitoune and other similar groups were responsible for 123 human rights abuses. The signatory armed groups were responsible for 63 human rights abuses, while community-based armed groups and militias and other self-defense groups perpetrated 232 human rights abuses. Finally, unidentified armed groups perpetrated 38 human rights abuses.

A. Increase in attacks by extremist groups

14. Attacks by groups such as AQIM and other similar groups continued to be perpetrated during the period under review. Thus, between 1 April and 30 June 2020, MINUSMA documented 63 attacks perpetrated by extremist groups both in the northern regions (Gao (13), Ménaka (5), Timbuktu (10)) and in those of the center (Mopti (33) and Ségou (2)).⁴
15. In total, these groups were responsible for 123 human rights abuses nationwide, causing the killing of 43 people (including four children and two women), representing a percentage of 19.46% of the total of all human rights violations and abuses documented. These figures represent a 19.41% increase in comparison with the previous quarter.⁵
16. Human rights abuses attributed to extremist groups included 43 killings, 25 abductions, 55 abuses of the right to physical integrity, three attacks on schools, six attacks on health centres, 14 attacks on humanitarians and/or denial of humanitarian access in the regions of Mopti (4), Ménaka (4), Timbuktu (3), Gao (2), and Ségou (1), as well as 173 attacks against MINUSMA. These extremist groups were also responsible for intimidation and threats, for example by imposing the wearing of veils on women in violation of religious freedom in the regions of Timbuktu and Mopti. Thus, in the village of Dianké (Niafouké cercle, Timbuktu region), they threatened and intimidated several unveiled women. In Binedama, all the women were forced to wear a veil, which indicates an increase in violence against women in the name of religion in those areas.

⁴ These data do not include attacks by unidentified armed groups.

⁵ Between 1 January and 31 March 2020, extremist groups were responsible for 103 human rights abuses that resulted in the killing of 39 people.

17. Between May and June, the Division also documented at least six cases of conflict-related sexual violence imputed to extremist armed elements in Douentza cercle, Mopti region.⁶
18. Lastly, between 1 April and 30 June 2020, the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) recorded 45 improvised explosive device (IED) attacks targeting the MDSF and international forces, killing at least 16 civilians and the injury of 114 others. These incidents were recorded in the regions of Mopti (24), Ségou (2), Gao (5), Ménaka (2), Kidal (11) and Timbuktu (1).

B. The involvement of signatory armed groups in human rights abuses

19. Security incidents involving signatory armed groups continued during the reporting period and resulted in a total of 63 human rights abuses.
20. Indeed, the signatory and non-signatory armed groups, in particular the Coordination of movements of Azawad (CMA)⁷ and the Platform of movements of 14 June of Algiers (Platform)⁸ were responsible for 63 human rights abuses during the second quarter unlike the previous quarter when they were involved in 69 human rights abuses. These abuses included, among other things, four killings, 18 abuses of the right to physical integrity, five abductions, 33 illegal detentions and three cases of ill-treatment.
21. In Gao region, the CMA and the Platform were responsible for eight human rights abuses, including one killing and seven abuses of the right to physical integrity.
22. In Menaka region, the Movement for the Salvation of Azawad-Daoussahak (MSA-D) was involved in 14 human rights abuses. These abuses consisted of three killings, three abductions, eight abuses of the right to physical integrity and six attacks on humanitarian organisations. The Azawad Arab Movement (MAA) was responsible for one abduction and one abuse of the right to physical integrity.

⁶ These cases were documented in the villages of Daba, Karsani, N-nene, Sondogo, Hore-Wendou in Djaptodji commune (administrative centre N'Gouma) in Douentza cercle.

⁷ The CMA is composed of the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA), the High Council for the Unity of Azawad (HCUA), the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA-CMA) and a wing of the Coordination of Patriotic Resistance Fronts and Movements (CMFPR-2).

⁸ The Platform, for its part, is made up of the Imghad Touareg and Allied Self-Defense Group (GATIA), the Coordination of Patriotic Resistance Fronts and Movements (CM-FPR - formed by the groups Ganda Koy, Ganda Izo and the Forces for Liberation of the Northern Regions of Mali) and the dissident faction of the Arab Movement of Azawad (MAA-Platform).

23. In Timbuktu region, the Congress for Justice in Azawad (CJA-Gargando) and the CMA respectively committed two human rights abuses including one abuse of the right to physical integrity and one abduction.
24. Regarding Kidal region, the Coordination of Movements of Azawad (CMA) has been gradually substituting the State as a *de facto* authority. On 22 May 2020, Mr. Bilal AG ACHERIF, the then president of the CMA, made the decision to “pardon” 21 people that the CMA was illegally detaining at the Kidal prison.⁹ Under international human rights law, detention by the CMA is illegal, as the administration of justice is the exclusive prerogative of the Malian State. Moreover, during the period under review, elements of the CMA repeatedly hampered the free movement of personnel and even a MINUSMA vehicle patrol, which was prevented from entering Kidal town under pretext of avoiding the spread of Covid-19.
25. Lastly, the Division gathered information concerning the exploitation of children in the gold mines controlled by the CMA in Kidal.¹⁰ In addition, as part of the “*Tagaste*” operation to strengthen security in Kidal town, the Division received reports of cases of children under the age of 18 tasked with the responsibility for controlling/managing the checkpoints established to that end.
26. In total, during the reporting period, the CMA was responsible for 33 unlawful detentions, one abuse of the right to physical integrity and three cases of ill-treatment.
27. Lastly, during the reporting period, 38 human rights abuses were attributed to unidentified armed groups in the regions of Mopti, Ségou, Sikasso, and Timbuktu. These included six killings, 11 abductions and 21 abuses of the right to physical integrity.

C. The intensification of armed violence in the context of inter-community tensions

28. The period under review was marked by a high number of armed attacks between members of the Fulani and Dogon communities, mainly in Mopti region. A total of 63 armed attacks were documented and resulted in the killing of 172 people compared to the previous quarter when 35 attacks resulting in the killing of 180 people were documented.

⁹ The detention of these 21 individuals and the decision of the President of the CMA to “pardon” the 21 people raises the question of compliance with international law of decisions taken by the CMA in matters of security and administration of justice, in particular the sentences pronounced by the commission of the *cadis* of Kidal.

¹⁰ There are allegations of an incident on 22 June at one of the gold mines that allegedly killed four children.

29. Armed groups or militias made up of members of the Fulani community were responsible for at least 53 attacks that claimed the lives of 145 members of the Dogon community, notably in Koro, Bankass and Bandiagara *cercles*. By way of illustration, between 26 May and 9 June, armed elements from the Fulani community carried out 13 distinct armed attacks against the predominantly Dogon-inhabited villages of Am, Damasongo, Endeme, Gama (Koro *cercle*), Allaye Kokolo, Balaguina, Djamnati, Koundou, Tillé (two attacks), Tin-Tam (Bandiagara *cercle*), Senetomoni and hamlet of Taama in the village of Wogon (Bankass *cercle*), which led to the killing of at least 54 civilians (38 men, 13 children and three women) and injured several others. As part of these attacks, members of these community groups and militias intentionally executed civilians, set fire to dwellings, granaries and food storage sheds, and looted property.
30. The *dozos* (traditional hunters) carried out 10 attacks, which killed 27 members of the Fulani community. The most emblematic of these attacks remains that on the village of Djongue Ouro (Fakala commune, Djenne *cercle*, Mopti region) on 5 May 2020, which led to the killing of 18 civilians.
31. In total, militias and other self-defense armed groups, including Da Nan Ambassagou, traditional *dozo* hunters and Fulani self-defense armed groups were responsible for 232 human rights abuses, including 172 killings, 21 abuses of the right to physical integrity, and 39 abductions. These figures constitute 43% of all human rights violations and abuses documented and represent a 6.4% increase in comparison with the data collected during the first quarter of 2020.¹¹
32. Lastly, it should be noted that the violence between militias and self-defense armed groups caused the internal displacement of several people, particularly in Bandiagara, Bankass, Koro, and Douentza *cercles*.¹²

D. Violations committed by the MDSF and international forces in the context of military and security operations

33. During the period under review, the Division noted an increase in serious human rights violations by MDSF, particularly in Douentza and Koro *cercles* in Mopti region, and Niono

¹¹ During the previous quarter, militias and self-defence groups were responsible for 218 human rights abuses that resulted in the deaths of 183 civilians.

¹² As of 30 June 2020, the Regional Directorate of Social Development and Solidarity Economy had identified at least 102,430 displaced persons in Mopti region.

cercle in Ségou region. Most of these violations were carried out by land forces and national guard units.

34. The Division thus documented, between 1 April and 30 June, 126 human rights violations by MDSF, including 94 summary, arbitrary and extrajudicial executions, eight cases of enforced or involuntary disappearances, and 24 violations of the right to physical integrity throughout the national territory. The most emblematic cases remain those of Yangassadiou on 3 June, and Binedama on 5 June, in Mopti region, as well as that of the village of Massabougou on 6 June, in Ségou region.
35. Indeed, on 3 June, around 9 a.m., a convoy of elements of the Malian Armed Forces (a unit of the national guard based in Mondoro) made up of ten vehicles and accompanied by traditional hunters from Mondoro, attacked, in the midst of the weekly fair, the village of Yangassadiou (Mondoro commune, Douentza *cercle*), located about 257 km east of the city of Mopti. The elements then surrounded the village, arrested several people, as well as summarily and extrajudicially executed at least 15 civilian men, all members of the Fulani and Bella communities.
36. On 5 June, at around 11 am, a military convoy of around 30 vehicles stormed the village of Binedama (Diankabou commune, Koro *cercle*), located about 120 km north of the town of Mopti. Elements of the Malian Armed Forces accompanied by a group of traditional hunters then indiscriminately opened fire on the villagers (civilians), killing 37 people (including three women and three children).¹³ Some of the victims (three) were burned to death when their homes were intentionally set on fire. Huts and granaries were also set on fire.
37. On 6 June, at around 11 a.m., elements of the Malian Armed Forces in several military vehicles led a raid on the village of Massabougou (Dogofry commune, Niono *cercle*) during the course of which they searched houses and arrested nine villagers whom they summarily executed near the village cemetery. According to credible sources, the raid was carried out by elements of the Malian Armed Forces sent on patrol following an armed attack on a military post in the village of Sarakala (located 35 km northeast of the town of Ségou) by unidentified armed elements around 3 a.m. on the same day.
38. HRPD remains concerned about the increase in these operations carried out with the support of *dozo* hunters and resulting in the execution of numerous civilians and the destruction of property.

¹³ The Division conducted a fact-finding mission to Binedama on 17 June 2020. The findings of this mission will be made public at a later date.

39. Furthermore, it is worth pointing out that following the attacks on Yangassadiou and Binedema, on 7 June, the Government of Mali issued a statement acknowledging the murder of at least 43 people, including women and children in the two villages and the burning of several houses in Binedama. The government condemned the incidents and stated it had “instructed the military hierarchy to establish the facts immediately”. In addition, the Government declared that “if it turns out that these executions are the work of elements of the national army, penalties proportional to the seriousness of the acts will be imposed by the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces”, and that “all responsibilities will be established and the culprits will be brought to justice”.
40. With regards to international forces,¹⁴ HRPD monitoring has brought to light the involvement of elements of the Burkina Faso Defence and Security Forces (DSF) in human rights violations committed on Malian territory. Indeed, in the context of security and counterterrorism operations, elements of the Burkina Faso DSF were responsible for 50 arbitrary executions between 26 and 28 May 2020 on Malian territory, particularly in the village of Boulekessi and the surrounding camps.¹⁵

E. Human rights violations in the context of the repression of public demonstrations

41. The period under review was also marked by the second round of legislative elections on 19 April 2020 and by post-electoral violence following the proclamation of the final results of the legislative election.
42. In Sikasso, protests challenging the final results of the legislative election turned violent. Thus, from 30 April to 7 May 2020, thousands of young people demonstrated by blocking the national roads RN7 (Bamako-Sikasso) and RN11 (Sikasso-Côte d'Ivoire). The intervention of security forces to re-establish traffic on the main roads led to clashes between demonstrators and the police, which resulted in the death of a protester.
43. In Kayes, on the night of 11 May 2020, the killing of an 18-year-old man sparked a demonstration in which three (3) other people were killed by the police. This situation generated a lot of tension in the city, which prompted the Government to dispatch a high-level

¹⁴ Nigerien authorities announced the opening of an investigation into the allegations of extrajudicial executions that were attributed to Nigerien defence and security forces in the previous quarterly note on trends of human rights violations and abuses covering the period from 1 January to 31 March 2020.

¹⁵ The victims were executed in the localities of Peoukouye (3 km North of Boulekessi), Kouroudoli (10 km east of Boulekessi), Kouna (7 km south-east of Boulekessi), and Hanfasou in Gossi *cercle* in Timbuktu region.

delegation to the site, who promised to shed light on the circumstances of the killing of the demonstrators while calling for calm.

44. However, to date, HRPD has no information on the actions taken by the Malian authorities, particularly judicial authorities, following the killing of these individuals in the context of these demonstrations.
45. Since then, protests have grown and demonstrations have multiplied, particularly in Bamako. Thus, two other anti-government demonstrations were organised on 5 and 19 June 2020, both in Bamako and in other regions of the country. These demonstrations, supervised by the MDSF went smoothly.¹⁶

F. Malian Government's responses

46. The new resolution in paragraph 14 introduces a new reference urging the Malian authorities to *“fight against impunity for violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law in Central Mali, by bringing to justice the individuals accused of perpetrating the massacres that killed hundreds of civilians in 2019 and 2020 and by holding the corresponding trials”*.
47. This emphasis on the fight against impunity in Mali will be a marker of the Division's next priorities. To date, the Malian Government's response to human rights abuses and violations committed on the territory remains largely insufficient. Indeed, the judicial system is minimally functional in certain regions of the centre and the north. This situation is compounded by the deterioration of the security context as well as the absence of the State in some localities. Added to this is the slowness in the conduct of judicial investigations and the holding of trials.
48. MINUSMA welcomes, however, some progress that has been made in the context of judicial investigations into some human rights violations involving the MDSF. Indeed, following the publication of the previous quarterly note on trends of human rights violations and abuses, MINUSMA noted the willingness of the Malian Government to fight against impunity, in particular with the signing of prosecution orders by the Minister of Defence and Veterans

¹⁶ At the time of writing, MINUSMA through its Human Rights and Protection Division had deployed a special fact-finding mission to shed light on allegations of human rights violations and other human rights abuses that occurred during the demonstrations of 10, 11, 12 and 13 July 2020 organised by the Mouvement du 5 Juin-Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques (M5-RFP) in Bamako as well as in the regions of Kayes , Koulikoro, Sikasso, Mopti, Ségou and Timbuktu.

Affairs following HRPD's advocacy concerning several cases relating to human rights violations by to the Malian Armed Forces. MINUSMA calls on the Malian authorities to step up their efforts in the fight against impunity by conducting the relevant trials, as urged by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2531 (2020).

49. Regarding the Covid-19 pandemic, in response to the call by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on 25 March 2020, encouraging States to decongest places of detention by releasing individuals imprisoned for minor offenses, on 8 April, the President of the Republic pardoned 1,400 detainees.

III. Annex

Between 1 April and 30 June 2020, the human rights situation, made fragile by growing insecurity and the Covid-19 pandemic, remained worrying and without improvement, both in the central regions (Mopti and Ségou) and in those of the north (Gao, Kidal, Ménaka and Timbuktu). During the period under review, HRPD documented 632 human rights violations and abuses resulting in the killing of 323 people, including 23 children and 11 women.

Chart 1: Human rights violations and abuses documented from 1 April to 30 June 2020

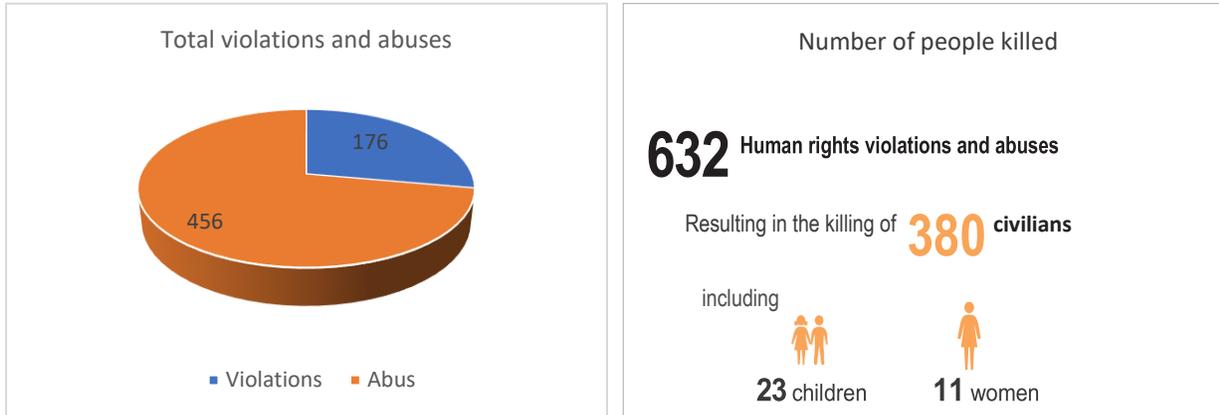


Chart 2: Number of violations and abuses by region

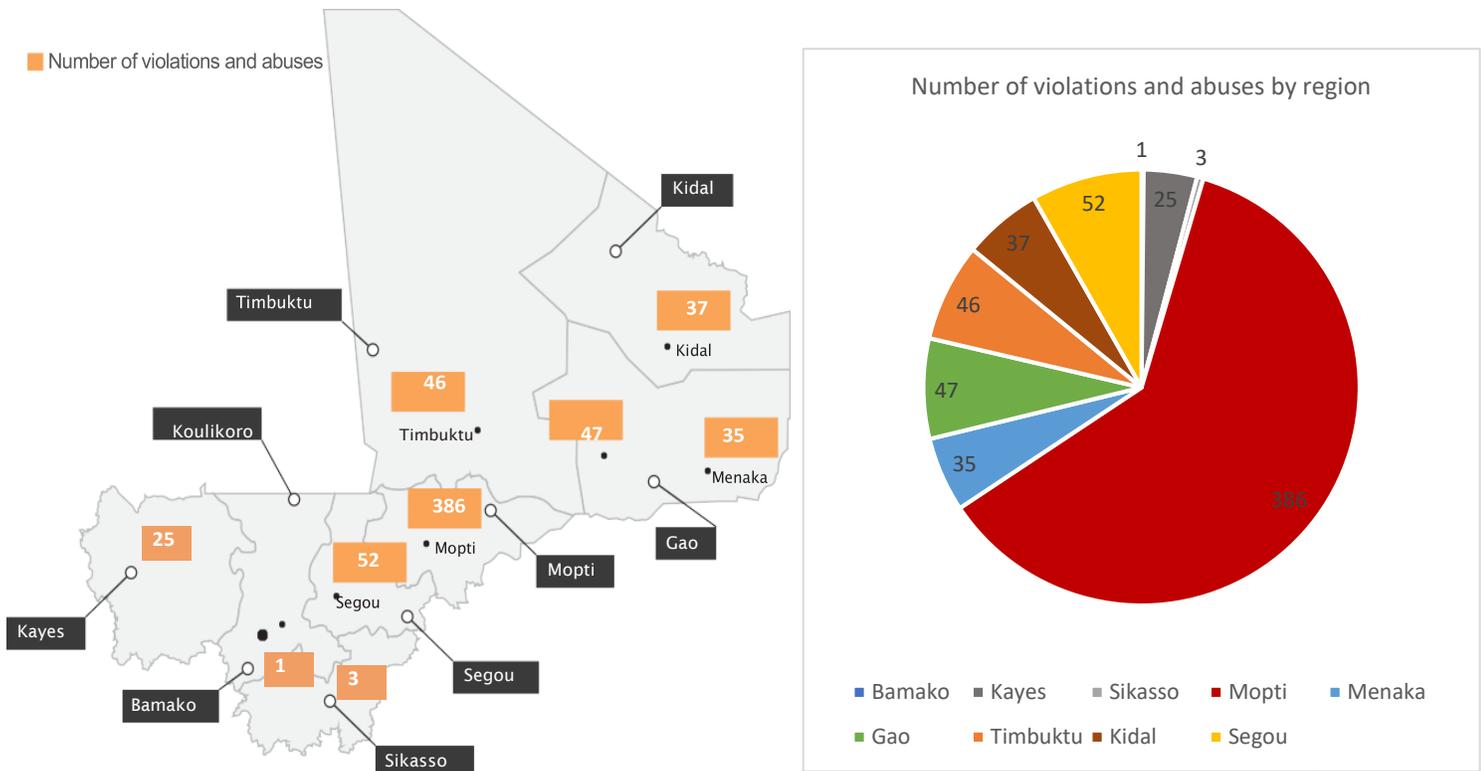


Chart 3: Human rights violations and abuses by perpetrator

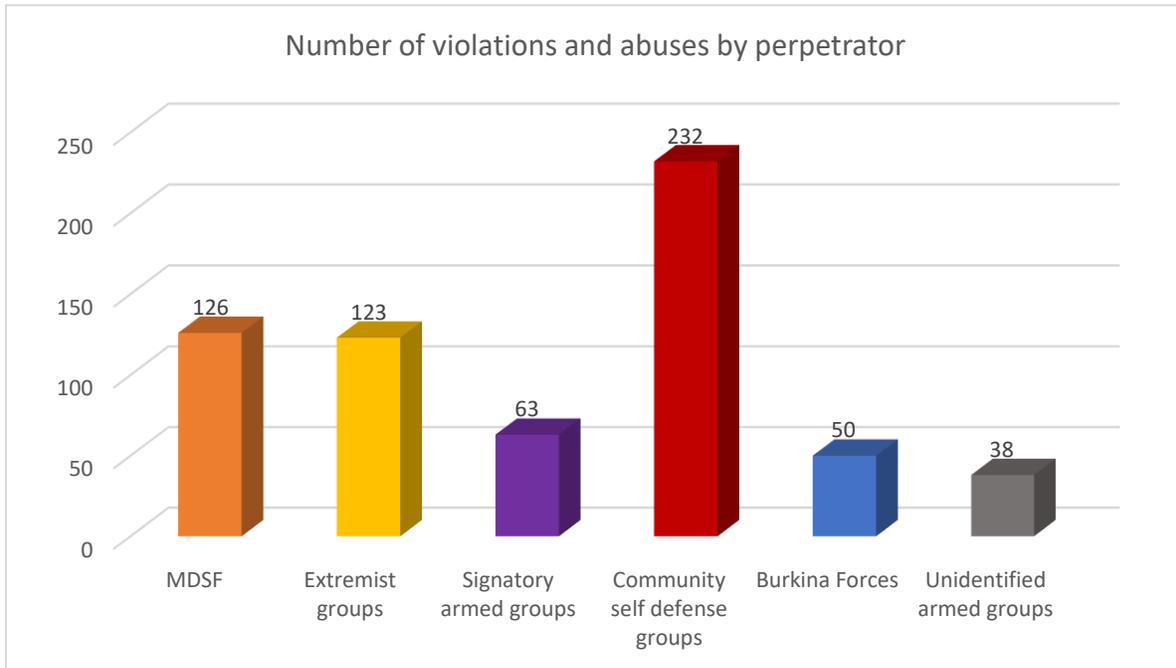


Chart 4: Human rights violations and abuses by category

