

Clarifying facts on Mali appearing in the Toronto Star

Friday 1 March 2013, by [ANNIS Roger](#) (Date first published: 27 February 2013).

Vancouver BC
Feb. 27, 2013

Hello Toronto Star editor,

Olivia Ward writes in her column today [\[1\]](#):

"Civilians have suffered most in the conflict in which more than 430,000 people have been displaced, and more than 170,000 have fled to equally poor neighbouring countries. It's the second of two rapid-fire crises, Gressly said [David Gressly, the UN humanitarian co-ordinator for the Sahel region], with the conflict coming on the heels of a major drought that left people all across the country food-deprived, including 500,000 in the north."

I'm afraid this is incomplete on three counts, and therefore misleading to readers. One, there is a third factor that is by far the most important contributor to the crisis in Mali and is not mentioned by Ms. Ward. That is the war the Mali army was prosecuting against what were nominally its own citizens in the north of the country. The war was aimed at crushing the national rights aspirations of the Tuareg people and other national minorities in the north. They won certain national rights over the course of the past 15 years, codified, notably, in the Bourem Accords of 1995 with the Mali government. There have been other agreements reached between Mali and the Tuareg, including as late as 2011.

The Mali government and army proved unwilling to live with any agreements (as is the case equally with the army and government of Niger). That goes, too, for the U.S., France and the other big powers in the region, including Canada. The Mali army was decisively defeated by the Tuareg in 2011/12.

Two, the big majority of the refugees cited by Ms. Ward are the victims *of the Mali government and army military offensive of recent years [combined with their inaction and that of their big power allies on the drought crisis]*, not the French intervention launched on January 11 of this year and not the intervention of the Islamic fundamentalist forces in 2012.

Three, the human rights violations committed by the Mali and French armies are a grave concern and must factor into any analysis for the sake of balance and accuracy. Ms. Ward reported on one part of this story in her article of Feb. 2, 2013 [\[2\]](#). Before and since then, all of the major human rights organizations in the world—Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, FIDA and the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights of the UN—have reported grave violations of human rights by the Mali government and army.

The MNLA political movement of the Tuareg people has launched a formal complaint before the International Criminal Court, accusing the Mali army of war crimes. It says that several hundred innocents have been killed in reprisals by the army. Thousands more have been driven into refugee

camps, including, as *The Telegraph* (UK) reported on Feb. 10 [3], the Tuareg and Arab populations of Timbuktu. If news reports are accurate, hundreds of people have died in military conflicts with the French and Chad(!) armies.

The MNLA has condemned France for refusing to accept the demand that the Mali army be prevented from re-entering the north of the country in the wake of the French invasion. The MNLA is coordinating with the France invaders in repelling assaults and terrorist acts by fundamentalist forces in certain areas of the north but it denies that it is in any kind of partnership or that it accedes to France's military presence in Mali. It has called for a UN peacekeeping force in northern Mali and the withdrawal of the Mali army.

Here are several information sources on Mali that I can recommend:

* My latest article: On ESSF (article 27940), [No peace or reconciliation in France-controlled Mali](http://www.rogerannis.com/no-peace-or-reconciliation-in-france-controlled-mali/), <http://www.rogerannis.com/no-peace-or-reconciliation-in-france-controlled-mali/>

* A chronology of Mali history: <http://www.rogerannis.com/chronology-of-mali-history/>

* The main news website (in French) of the MNLA and Tuareg people: <http://toumastpress.com/>

Sincerely,

Roger Annis

Footnotes

[1] http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/02/26/mali_conflict_not_a_shortterm_issue_un_aid_official_warns.html

[2] http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2013/02/01/mali_islamists_say_theyve_been_tortured_by_military_in_custody.html See on ESSF (article 27751), [Mali's civilians face human rights abuses from both sides](#).

[3] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/mali/9859300/Timbuktus-Arabs-flee-as-Mali-faces-challenge-to-create-lasting-peace.html> See on ESSF (article 27836), [Timbuktu's Arabs flee as Mali faces challenge to create lasting peace](#).