**Activity 3.1 Case Study Scenario 4 – Mali: Retaliatory Attacks, February 2017**

**Background**

In January 2012, the Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) launched a rebellion seeking to gain independence for northern Mali. In March, the military launched a coup against then-President Amadou Toumani Touré in protest of what they viewed as the government’s inadequate response to the rebellion. MNLA and Islamist armed groups took advantage of the chaos to claim most of the North.[[1]](#footnote-1)

In 2013, these groups sought to increase their territory, triggering a French-led military intervention. The French operation largely ended the MNLA’s occupation in the North and, in 2015, a peace deal was signed by the Malian government and two coalitions of armed groups.[[2]](#footnote-2)

The uprising and violence in the North drew focus to that area of the country, which led to a diminished state presence in central Mali. Jihadists took advantage of this to secure safe havens and recruit locals who were frustrated with ongoing poverty, public sector corruption, inadequate security and the lack of investigations and justice for communal violence and criminality.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Throughout 2015 and 2016 these jihadist groups progressively increased their presence in central Mali where they executed civilians and government officials and committed other abuses. Their presence, and recruitment of local residents, inflamed and exploited tensions among the Fulani, Bambara and Dogon ethnic groups.[[4]](#footnote-4) The sedentary Bambara and pastoral Fulani communities have a history of disputes. However the growth of armed groups in the area has resulted in increased violence and casualties when these clashes occur.

**February 2017 violence**

On 11 February 2017 near the town of Ke-Macina in the Ségou region, alleged Fulani Islamist fighters killed a Bambara shopkeeper known for his opposition to the growing radical influence in the area. This sparked retaliatory attacks on houses mostly inhabited by members of the Fulani ethnic group, killing at least 20 people.

On 19 February, in another attack allegedly in retaliation for the 11 February attack, unidentified men summarily executed nine civilians in Niono, Ségou region.

Both Fulani and Bambara witnesses reported that villagers were terrified as large groups of armed men had been seen driving around on motorcycles and vehicles in their villages in central Mali.[[5]](#footnote-5)

Following that incident, at least 16 more people, including civilians and members of armed groups, were killed in an escalating series of tit-for-tat attacks. As a result of these incidents, at least 9,000 civilians in the Mopti and Ségou regions were displaced.[[6]](#footnote-6)

1. HRW 2013 World Report <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2013/country-chapters/mali> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. IRIN News, ‘Trouble in the Heart of Mali’ <http://www.irinnews.org/analysis/2016/06/30/trouble-heart-mali> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. HRW, ‘Mali: Spate of Killings by Armed Groups’ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/05/mali-spate-killings-armed-groups>; <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/mali> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. HRW, ‘Mali: Spate of Killings by Armed Groups’ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/05/mali-spate-killings-armed-groups> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. HRW, ‘Mali: Spate of Killings by Armed Groups’ <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/04/05/mali-spate-killings-armed-groups> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [(SG Report March 2017)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2017/271) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)