

**Mali: Islamist and Tuareg rebels clash in north**  
**By BBC News Africa**  
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At least 20 people are reported to have been killed in heavy fighting between Tuareg-led rebels and Islamist fighters in the northern Malian town of Gao.

The fighting follows a day of protest after a local official was killed on Monday.

Residents in Gao said heavy weapons were being used in Wednesday's clashes.

A doctor in Gao told the BBC that most people killed and injured seemed to be armed but a number of civilians had also been caught in the fighting.

Tensions have increased between the Islamists and the secular Tuareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) since they both advanced together through northern Mali after the government was overthrown on 22 March.

BBC West Africa correspondent Thomas Fessy says they proved unable to reach an agreement after they took control of the region, prompting fears of renewed violence between the different factions.

Last month the secular MNLA agreed to Islamist demands to have Islamic Sharia law imposed across northern Mali.

More than 300,000 people have fled northern Mali since the rebels took the territory in the days following the 22 March coup.

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