

Teenager lashed 100 times in Timbuktu for having child out of wedlock

By Mike Pflanz, West Africa Correspondent

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An 18-year-old pregnant woman and her boyfriend were both lashed 100 times by Islamists in Timbuktu in Mali as punishment for "having a child out of wedlock".



Militiaman from the Ansar Dine Islamic group sit on a vehicle in Gao in northeastern Mali Photo: REUTERS

The sentence was carried out on the orders of Ansar Dine, a militant Muslim organisation that has seized territory in the desert north of the West African country.

"People were watching it was like a show," said Mohamed Ould Babby, a local official.

"I was there, I saw the youths arriving at the square, I saw them being whipped, it is the first time I have seen something like that." The woman, who was three months pregnant, has another child with her partner but the couple is not married.

According to Ansar Dine's strict interpretation of Islamic laws, that means the pair have committed the crime of "fornication", which is punishable with 100 lashes.

An Islamic police official in the town said six other women who had had children outside of marriage would soon be "punished by Islamic law".

People living in Timbuktu, the ancient city in Mali's southern Sahara desert, have reported that the Islamists have ordered women to wear full veils, whipped smokers and destroyed shopkeepers' stocks of cigarettes.

Ansar Dine took control of northern Mali, with help from Tuareg rebels, when army officers mutinied in the capital, Bamako, and ousted the democratically-elected government.