

### **Northern Malians Protest Strict Islamic Law**

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Residents in Mali's northern Timbuktu region are protesting Islamists who are trying to impose strict Islamic law in the region.

Witnesses in the town of Goundam say the protest erupted after Islamists from the militant group Ansar Dine beat a woman for not wearing a headscarf Friday. They say an infant the woman was holding was hurt in the attack.

Witnesses tell VOA the demonstrators surrounded a local mosque to prevent the militants from attending Friday prayers.

They say the militants shot in the air during the demonstrations to try to disperse the crowd. One resident told VOA the situation was calmer but tense by Friday evening.

Goundam lies in the zone that was seized by Tuareg separatists and Islamic militants in late March and is now completely controlled by Islamic groups, including Ansar Dine.

Ansar Dine says it wants to impose a strict interpretation of Islamic law throughout Mali. In recent weeks, the group has destroyed ancient Muslim shrines in Timbuktu it says are sacrilegious.