

August 12, 2012

Maliens Rally for Return of Peace, Order

by VOA News

Tens of thousands of protesters crowded the stadium of Mali's capital Bamako Sunday to demand government action to re-establish control in the country's north and restore peace in the western African nation.

Many Malians accuse the interim leadership of internal bickering which they say has enabled Islamists groups in the north to take hold. Meanwhile, those groups are seeking to impose strict Islamic laws in the areas they have occupied. Last week they caused outrage by amputating a hand of a suspected thief.

The West African bloc ECOWAS has said it is ready to deploy about 3,000 troops to help restore legitimate rule in northern Mali.

The country's interim President Dioncounda Traore has said he will make the request once a unity government is formed.

Mali's interim Prime Minister Cheick Modibo Diarra took over in April to lead the country until a more representative government can be elected. But he refuses to step down and has been accused of blocking the move to form a unity government.