

Mali Clashes: More than a Dozen Feared Dead

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Officials have released a statement that because of clashes in Mali, more than a dozen are feared dead because of ethnic group Tuareg attacks near the border of Niger. Security officials in the city of Gao stated that sixteen people were killed on Saturday in the middle of clashes. African director for International Federation for Human rights Florent Geel confirmed that sixteen were killed, but was waiting on more information.

These were not the first clashes occurring in Mali. In the beginning of November, three people were killed in the middle of clashes between the Tuareg separatist group and the army of Mali.

The conflict in Northern Mali has been caused by several insurgent groups attacking the Malian government in want of autonomy. The groups are demanding that Northern Mali be independent from the rest of the country. The organization working for this cause is the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad, which wants this area for the Tuareg people.

Last year, former president of Mali Amadou Toumani Toure was impeached for mishandling the situation just before the new presidential elections. The three major cities in Northern Mali—Kidal, Gao and Timbuktu—were taken over by rebel insurgent groups in the midst of the instability.

The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad was originally backed by Islamist movements such as Ansar Dine, but this changed when Ansar Dine tried to implement strict Islamic laws on everyone in Northern Mali. This caused the two groups to turn on each other, creating a bigger rift and ultimately leading to Mali clashes that leave more than a dozen feared dead.

A peace treaty was signed last June between the government and The National Movement for Liberation of Azawad was signed, but the rebel group pulled out of the agreement last minute. They claimed that the government had disrespected them and had not committed to the truce.

Since then, many attacks have resulted in an unfortunately large number of deaths in the area, and the situation has yet to die down. In fact, people outside of the situation are beginning to be affected.

Three weeks ago, two French journalists, Ghislain Dupont and sound technician Claude Verlon were attacked by the rebel groups in Northern Mali. The two were in Kidal for an interview with a spokesman from the Tuareg group (The National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad) but never made it. They were kidnapped in front of his house and then killed.

The rebels who have caused the situation in Northern Mali have not been addressed by Malian government, and there is no promise of resolve. In the midst of clashes in Mali, more than a dozen feared dead is nothing compared to the amount of murders committed there in the past. The death reports came in as Malians went out to vote in legislative officials meant to complete a transition into constitutional rule. No further information about these deaths has been released, and no one has yet been brought to justice.