

Mali

Attacks on education continued in Mali, including attacks on schools and the military use of schools. One attack on higher education was identified.

Context

Armed conflict continued in Mali during the 2024-2025 reporting period, including fighting between armed groups and government security forces supported by other security personnel.¹ Malian armed forces conducted military operations against non-state armed groups during the reporting period, including Islamic State in the Greater Sahara (ISGS), also known as Islamic State Sahel Province, and Al Qaeda-linked Group for the Support of Islam and Muslims (Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam wa al-Muslimeen, or JNIM), which attacked military and civilians.² Most regions experienced conflict-related violence in 2025, according to the UN.³ JNIM consolidated its control in central Mali, while expanding south and westward, towards the capital, Bamako, and the border with Senegal, as reported by the UN.⁴ In September 2025, as reported by Human Rights Watch and the *BBC*, JNIM cut off fuel and other supplies, including food, to the country from Senegal and Mauritania, which was part of a strategy to impose a blockade of Bamako.⁵

During the reporting period, the Malian government made several decisions reshaping the country's involvement with international mechanisms. Mali, together with Burkina Faso and Niger, held the first summit of the Alliance of Sahel States in July 2024, after the three countries announced their intent to withdraw from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), which was finalized in January 2025.⁶ In May 2025, a presidential decree ordered the dissolution of all political parties.⁷ Mali, along with Burkina Faso and Niger, announced in September 2025 that it would withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC).⁸

Grave violations against children continued during the reporting period, and the number of children killed, maimed, and abducted increased in 2024, according to the UN.⁹ Incidents involving explosive weapons, including explosive remnants of war, increased in the second half of 2024, with 52 incidents recorded between July and September, which reportedly killed 57 civilians and injured 89 people.¹⁰ Amnesty International reported that the army conducted a number of drone strikes in 2024 that killed and injured civilians, including two in March that killed at least 27 civilians, of which 18 were children.¹¹ The UN reported 1,155 human rights violations in January 2025, a more than 45 percent decrease compared to the previous month.¹² This change was reportedly due to a combination of increased security operations by the military, as well as peace and reconciliation activ-

ities, but also in part due to a decrease in reporting in some areas that were under the control of armed groups.¹³ However, violations increased throughout 2025, with 6,252 reported in May 2025, with the Timbuktu region particularly affected.¹⁴ The UN reported that drone strikes and attacks using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) by armed groups increased in 2025.¹⁵

The UN reported that 7.1 million people needed humanitarian aid in 2024, including 3.8 million children.¹⁶ The Global Protection Cluster reported that armed groups carried out indiscriminate attacks, impacting civilians, and schools and hospitals, as well as sieges or blockades, cutting off civilians from services and aid, including food.¹⁷

Insecurity continued to impact access to education during the reporting period. The UN reported that the number of schools that were non-operational because of insecurity increased by 25 percent in 2024, with 2,017 schools non-operational at the start of the school year, impacting more than 600,000 children and 12,000 teachers.¹⁸ This figure continued to increase, and by December 2025, the UN reported that 2,307 schools were non-operational to insecurity, impacting over 690,000 students and 13,800 teachers.¹⁹ In addition, school reopening in 2024 was delayed by one month because of unprecedented heavy rainfall and flooding, which were exacerbated by climate change.²⁰ The UN reported in October 2024 that flooding had damaged 168 schools, and that 175 schools were sheltering IDPs.²¹ Authorities ordered schools and universities to close for two weeks in October and November 2025 after JNIM cut off fuel supplies.²² All schools in Bamako officially reopened in November, although the blockade continued.²³

Attacks on schools

GCPEA identified at least 23 attacks on schools during the reporting period. This was a decrease compared to 13 attacks in 2023 and around 80 in 2022.²⁴ GCPEA was not able to establish whether the lower number was attributable to a decrease in attacks or a decrease in reporting.

GCPEA identified ten attacks on schools in 2024.²⁵ Separately, the UN reported 50 incidents of attack or military use of schools and hospitals in 2024, predominantly in Segou region, although this was not included in GCPEA's count since it was not clear how many incidents met GCPEA criteria.²⁶ Examples of attacks included:

- On January 13, 2024, in Koula village, Koulikoro region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly set fire to a building of Koula school, as reported by ACLED.²⁷
- On March 22, 2024, in Douna village, Mopti region, an airstrike reportedly struck a Koranic school, as reported by ACLED and international media *RFI*.²⁸ At least 14 people were killed, including ten children, as well as at least eight more injured. *RFI* also reported that the injured students were taken to the hospital, and that many children were from the Dogon ethnic group.

- On October 1, 2024, an airstrike reportedly hit a school in Inakarot village, Kidal region, as reported by ACLED.²⁹

GCPEA identified at least 13 attacks on schools in 2025, which led to the closure of at least 75 schools, affecting over 12,000 students.³⁰

For example:

- On January 7, 2025, in Koumbia commune, Yorosso district, Sikasso region, suspected members of an armed group reportedly ordered the closure of four schools in Zangasso, Tana, Venekuy, and Linkuy, according to local media *Studio Tamani*.³¹
- On March 4, 2025, in Macina district, Segou region, members of an armed group reportedly entered two schools and demanded they be closed.³² Students preparing for exams were relocated.
- In October 2025, suspected members of an armed group reportedly ordered the closure of 60 schools.³³
- On November 21, 2025, in Fangasso town, Tominian district, Segou region, an armed group allegedly closed the schools, as reported by ACLED.³⁴

Attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel

GCPEA identified at least 16 attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel during the reporting period, an increase as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified four attacks in 2023 and seven in 2022.³⁵

GCPEA identified ten attacks on school students, teachers, and other education personnel in 2024, which killed at least 15 teachers and students, and injured at least eight more.³⁶

- On January 3, 2024, in Tielan village, Segou region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly abducted two teachers, as reported by ACLED and local media.³⁷ By January 10, the teachers had reportedly been released.
- On August 15, 2024, in Arabebe village, Timbuktu region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly abducted and killed two headteachers, as reported by international media *Anadolu Agency*.³⁸
- Between November 10 and 14, 2025, an armed group allegedly ordered teachers and students to leave the school in the villages of Badoumbera and Kérouané in Banamba district, Koulikoro region, as reported by ACLED and local media.³⁹

GCPEA identified at least six attacks in 2025.⁴⁰ For example:

- On March 4, 2025, in Mourdiah village, Koulikoro region, suspected members of an armed group allegedly attacked three Koranic students and killed one of them, while the other two escaped, as reported by ACLED.⁴¹
- Between late February and mid-March, for a period of at least two weeks, suspected members of an armed group reportedly threatened teachers in Sidibéla town, Kayes region, with some teachers fleeing the town, as reported by local media *Studio Tamani*.⁴²
- On November 20, 2025, in Yangasso town, Bla district, Segou region, suspected members of an armed group reportedly ordered teachers to leave schools, after which the schools were closed, as reported by ACLED.⁴³

Military use of schools and universities

Sporadic reports of the military use of schools and universities continued at a similar rate in the 2024-2025 reporting period, when GCPEA identified one report of military use. *Education under Attack 2024* included three incidents of military use in 2022 and no incidents in 2023.⁴⁴ As mentioned above, the UN reported 50 incidents of attack or military use of schools and hospitals in 2024, predominantly in Segou region, although this was not included in GCPEA's count since it was not clear how many incidents met GCPEA criteria.⁴⁵

GCPEA identified one incident of military use in 2024. On January 2, 2024, in Ménaka town and region, a number of armed groups allegedly engaged in armed clashes, including airstrikes; at the time, armed forces were reportedly based near a school, and responded to the attacks in the town, as reported by ACLED and local media *Mali24*.⁴⁶ Two schoolchildren were reportedly killed, although GCPEA was unable to establish whether they were at, or on the way to or from, school at the time.

At the time of writing, GCPEA had not identified any cases of military use in 2025.

Attacks on higher education

GCPEA identified one attack on higher education students during the 2024-2025 reporting period; no such attacks were reported in the previous reporting period.

On March 7, 2024, police reportedly used tear gas and arrested 14 students from the teacher training institute in Kita, Kayes region, who were protesting, calling for payment of their scholarships, as reported by ACLED.⁴⁷ The students had reportedly blocked a road and damaged property.

At the time of writing, GCPEA had not identified any attacks on higher education in 2025.