

## How to define ‘rebellion’?

- *This personal position was originally expressed in Danish by Jørgen Olsen, coordinator of the Danish member association of Emmaus, Genvej til Udvikling (= GtU = Short Cut to Development) + member of the World Council for Political Actions and International Solidarity of Emmaus International*
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- *Translated into English by Eduardo Bermejo Chamorro and Gitte Vejlgard*

It is grotesque the way that Danish media use the word “rebellion” when they talk about the AQIM or the MUJOA, which a year ago had occupied half of Mali and still makes travelling through a large part of West Africa insecure.

If you know a little French, you can follow the progress in Mali and the surrounding areas at [www.tamoudre.org](http://www.tamoudre.org). Jacqueline Dupuis of the Tamoudré’ administrative council has regular telephone contact with people of the three biggest towns in the Kidal region, at the north of the country: Tessalit, Aguelhoc and Kidal. And some of the impressions of these conversations are published at the homepage under the title “Nouvelles de là-bas”. They date back from 3 November and are declarations of a group of women divided between the three towns. I have tried to translate them from French, taking into consideration that the statements were expressed in the Tuareg language and recorded in French by a distorting recorder. For the sake of the women’s safety, Dupuis cannot publish their names. The original text can be found at:  
<http://www.tamoudre.org/nouvelles/2621.html>

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*We want to express our rage and sadness for the death of the journalists Ghislaine Dupont and Claude Verlon from Radio France International, who both had very close connection to Africa. We had hoped that we were seeing the beginning of new peaceful relations, but peace has proven to be a mere illusion. It has exploded in our hands, just when we were beginning to breathe more freely.*

*No, it’s not the Tuaregs who have carried out this outrageous action. We decline despair; we want to take our kids to school and fight those ignoramuses that accumulate capital by smuggling or drug trafficking.*

*We managed to start a school in Kidal, which was organized by people with low academic levels. People, however, who were tired of waiting for miracles from the outside, but after this sad morning, we have to close the school again and wait for better times.*

*We reiterate our sadness and rage, and attempt to recover our dignity.*

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With the words, “those ignoramuses that accumulate capital by smuggling or drug trafficking” the women in the region of Kidal refer to AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Magreb), which, beside Ansar Eddine (Faith defenders), dominated Kidal and the Timbuktu region during the majority of 2012 and part of 2013. When the AQIM and A.E. penetrated into a large part of the Mopti region, a coalition of French and West

African countries intervened to help the government of Mali recover those regions. But there are still members of the AQIM, A.E. and MUJOA hidden in the towns and mountains in Mali and Niger and having contacts in the north of Burkina Faso. During the mentioned periods, MUJOA= Movement for Oneness and Jihad in West Africa occupied the biggest town of Northern Mali, Gao, as well as the region of the same name.

It is difficult to spot any difference between AQIM and MUJOA. Both call themselves Islamic and both gain capital by smuggling - from the port of Lagos, Nigeria, to ports around the Mediterranean Sea - and trading with drugs, tobacco or by taking hostages, and none of them have that many people among them that are born or raised in Mali. That last-mentioned makes the Danish media's way of classifying AQMI and MUJO as "rebels" very absurd. The most recent example is found in connection with the murder of the French journalists. The least that you should expect before those words are put in to use must be that an organization, no matter the size, is composed mainly by people who origin from the area for which they fight or nearby.

Ansar Eddine has an Islamic agenda as radical as that of AQIM and MUJOA, and is, for instance, responsible for the destruction of a series of cultural heritage sites in Timbuktu, but, at the same time, they have dissociated from smuggling drugs and cigarettes although they get their weapons from AQIM. Ansar Eddine has members that come from the area, although their number is limited.

Other actors are the HCUA, the High Council for the Unity of Azawad as well as the groups MNLA, National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad and MAA, Arab Movement of Azawad. Both groups that, up until now, are still armed. The members of Ansar Eddine, HCUA and MNLA are Tuaregs. The MAA represents, as the name says, the Arab minority of the region. The HCUA wants to promote the Azawad interests (Azawad = regions of Gao, Kidal and Timbuktu) using pacific means only and puts a pressure on the MNLA.

At the main column at [www.tamoudre.org](http://www.tamoudre.org) you may read that the MNLA, according to a settlement with the HCUA and the MAA, has promised to evacuate the Kidal radio station as well as the government offices of the same town on 14 November. The UN representative, Bert Koenders, and the government of the capital Bamako, represented by the reconciliation minister, await the specific measures, holding their breaths anxiously, not least in the light of the upcoming parliamentary elections in Mali on 24 November .

MLNA was the movement, which, in January 2012, rose up against the central government in Bamako. However, in the months that followed, AQIM, Ansar Eddine and MUJAO outpaced the revolt. The MNLA is the 'classical' revolutionary movement with local support, primarily from the areas dominated by the Tuaregs in the region of Kidal. A support that it is quite impossible to specify in percentages and in a region where the alphabetisation percentage is below 10 percent, and where many people live the nomadic way.

MNLA and previous similar organisations have given rise to armed rebellions when they, legitimated or not, felt that the government of Bamako did not live up to its

commitments. Just now, the MNLA shows signs of being willing to respect the agreements and give peace another chance.

It makes sense to call the MNLA “rebels”; but AQIM and MUJOA consist of Algerians, Moroccans, Libyans, Mauritians, Nigerians and many other nationalities, and almost none of them are from Mali. Therefore, it is absurd as well as an expression of superficial and inadequate journalism to label these latter rebels for what concerns Mali.