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24 July 2003

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Mali: Whether Islamic fundamentalist groups, such as Al-Qaida, are using forced or voluntary recruitment with the aim of training the recruits for a jihad
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

No information on whether Islamic fundamentalist groups in Mali are using forced or voluntary recruitment for a jihad could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, the following information may be of some interest.

According to a press release from the council of ministers that was published on 11 October 2001 and quoted in *L'Afrique Express* on 15 October 2001, following the attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, the Malian government [translation] "'endorse[d] anti-terrorist actions' in the hope that these actions will save 'the lives of innocent civilians.'" Furthermore, a reliable source in Bamako is reported to have told Agence France Presse (AFP) that:

[translation]

the Malian authorities are "keeping a close watch" on the activities of an Islamic religious movement, until now almost unknown in Africa, called "Dogha," located in the northernmost region of Mali. ... Of Pakistani-Afghan persuasion, the "Dogha" Islamic religious movement has as its "principal dogma" the enforcement of a "hardline" type of Islam ... "[U]nder the guise of food and financial aid brought by the Pakistanis and Afghans, this religious movement recruits (its followers) mainly among groups with the highest unemployment rates in northern Mali" (18 May 2003).

AFP also reported that the "Dogha" is found in the Kidal region bordering Algeria, where Malian security officers are seeking [translation] "the Algerian 'terrorist and smuggler' Moktar Belmoktar, whose name has often been mentioned in connection with the group of European tourists who disappeared in the Algerian Sahara, part of which has already been liberated" (18 May 2003).

Another article from AFP, published on 10 May 2003, reported that members of the Algerian security services arrived in Mali [translation] "looking for the leader of the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (Groupe salfiste pour la prédication et le combat, GSPC), an Algerian group of armed Islamists affiliated with Osama bin Laden's Al-Qaida terrorist group." AFP added that Mali had apparently deployed [translation] "hundreds of troops [along the Algerian border] to search for the 31 tourists who disappeared" in the area (10 May 2003).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

L'Afrique Express. 15 October 2001. No. 237. "Afrique : Attentants aux USA. Du côté de l'Afrique. La rue ne parle pas de la même voix que le sommet." <<http://www.afrique-express.com>> [Accessed 24 July 2003]

Agence France Presse (AFP). 18 May 2003. "Les autorités maliennes 'surveillent de très près' un courant religieux." (NEXIS)

_____. 10 May 2003. "Les services de sécurité algériens au Mali à la recherche d'un chef du GSPC." (NEXIS)

Additional Sources Consulted

Africa Confidential

Afrique/Asie

Amnesty International. Annual Reports

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Religious Freedom Report 2002

Jeune Afrique

Keesing's Record of World Events

New African

Resource Centre country file. Mali.

Internet sites, including :

All Africa.com

Africa News

Human Rights Watch

Search engine:

Google

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