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Mali: The Association of Malian Students (Association des élèves et étudiants du Mali, AEEM), including its leaders and activities; whether there was a strike in March 2001 that resulted in the cancellation of the academic year and the arrest of AEEM members (2001-June 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

The Association of Malian Students (Association des élèves et étudiants du Mali, AEEM) was founded on 27 October 1990 (AEEM 17 June 2004; Site Media Mali 25 Mar. 2003; Viky.net 27 Dec. 2002). In describing the democratic process in Mali on the Website for the Bordeaux Institute of Political Science (Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux), Chachia Nezha wrote that the demands of the AEEM-regarded as the most dissenting union movement-were the reason that Moussa Traoré's dictatorship was overthrown in 1991 (Institut d'études politiques de Bordeaux n.d.). Those demands almost compromised the 1998-1999 academic year (ibid.).

The AEEM secretary-general provided the following information during a 16 June 2004 telephone interview.

Founded in October 1990, the AEEM's main objective is to defend the interests of Malian students and to improve their quality of life. The association is organized as follows:

At the national level, in descending order, there is a congress (or general assembly) of members, which meets once a year and which is the AEEM's highest authority; a steering committee made up of representatives from local committees (three from each local committee); a national office, which acts as an executive branch of the association and which consists of 22 members elected by the congress and headed by the secretary-general.

At the local level, all schools and universities in major cities have local committees, while schools in the regions have branches.

In March 2001, the AEEM organized a general strike to demand payment of student bursaries and computer materials. The strike lasted for about a month before classes resumed. The academic year was not cancelled, nor were any arrests made in its aftermath. However, during the strike, the national office was divided into two factions, one led by Mamadou Niare and the other by Moussa Guildo. The information provided by the AEEM representative could not be corroborated by the other sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

A 29 March 2004 Malian press summary indicated that Dr. Oumar Mariko was the AEEM's first secretary-general and that Hamidou Bocoum is its current leader (MaliWeb 29 Mar. 2004). On 27 December 2002, Viky.net reported that Mamadou Niare was the AEEM secretary-general.

According to many observers, the AEEM is no longer a real union and still has traces of [translation] "corruption" and [translation] "politization" (Maliweb 29 Mar. 2004). According to the AEEM leader, the association is mainly concerned about paying student bursaries to as many students as possible, reducing dissertation costs, building classrooms, implementing computerization, and recruiting good teachers in large numbers (ibid.).

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 for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

Association des élèves et étudiants du Mali (AEEM), Bamako. 17 June 2004. Telephone interview with the secretary-general.

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Publications : *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent*, *Keesing's Record of World Events*, Resource Centre country file, *West Africa*.

Internet sites, including : Africatime, AllAfrica, Amnesty International, FIDH, HRW, ReliefWeb.

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