

## Muslim and Christian clerics unite for peace in Mali

Various religious denominations have called for "a mobilization for peace and stability" in Mali, which has been weakened by two military coups in the space of just nine months



*A MINUSMA soldier in Timbuktu, Mali in September 2016. (Photo by Sebastien Rieussec/AFP)*

### **Lucie Sarr, Mali, *La Croix International*, 2 September 2021**

Muslim and Christian clerics in Mali have joined voices and are urging their country's leaders to work for peace and national cohesion.

They did so on August 30 at the end of a weekend meeting in Bamako, the capital of the landlocked West African nation that has been grappling with instability after successive military coups in August 2020 and this past May.

The clerics issued their statement three days after Mali's Prime Minister Choguel Maïga held talks with the country's various political actors on key issues of the moment.

These include security, the length of the transition period (which is supposed to end in February 2022), the establishment of a single electoral management body, and future meetings of the Refoundation, a sort of forum that should bring together all the "forces" in the country.

### **Coups d'état**

Mali, where 90% of the country's estimated 20.3 million people are Muslim, has been mired in a form of socio-political instability for over a year.

A coup de force was led by the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP) in late May.

This military junta, which had seized power from former President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita on the night of August 18-19, 2020, arrested President Bah Ndaw and his prime minister Moctar Ouane on May 24.

Colonel Assimi Goïta, the instigator of this latest coup on May 24, proclaimed himself transitional president and appointed Maïga, an opponent of Keita, as prime minister.

## **Religious denominations**

During the August 30 meeting, Mali's religious denominations were represented by the Catholic archbishop of Bamako, Cardinal Jean Zerbo, Imam Cherif Ousmane Madani Haidara, president of the High Islamic Council of Mali, and Reverend Nouh Ah Infa Yattara, general delegate of the Association des Groupements d'Eglises et Mission Protestantes Evangéliques au Mali (AGEMPEM).

"We, the religious of Mali, Christians and Muslims, are worried about the current situation in the country," said the clerics in their final statement.

They noted that living conditions are deteriorating everywhere, even in the capital Bamako where nearly 3 million people reside.

The religious leaders also expressed concern about the security situation throughout the country, which has been exposed to jihadist attacks since 2012.

"If insecurity reaches such a level in a country, it is just cause for real concern," they said.

"That is why religious people have stood up, that is why we are making this statement," the faith leaders continued.

"It's necessary for those who are currently leading our country to react, and for those who aspire to lead to understand this as well."