

The MLNA's Fight for a Secular State of Azawad

By: Anna Mahjar Barducci*

On April 6, 2012, the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) seceded from Mali unilaterally and declared an independent State of Azawad. The MNLA is a secular Tuareg¹ movement whose goal is the establishment of a secular state in Azawad that will respect the rights of all ethnic groups in the region (Tuareg, Moors², Songhai and Peul).

The MLNA has declared itself a partner of the West in the war on terrorism. However, despite its secular and pro-Western character, immediately after the secession the MNLA became the target of a smear campaign by international media,³ which tried to paint it as an Islamist movement. The campaign served the interest of the Malian government and of neighboring countries, which want to delegitimize the MNLA's struggle in order to avoid recognition of the State of Azawad.

MLNA Seizes Two Historic Opportunities

The MNLA seceded from Mali by taking advantage of two historic opportunities. One was provided by the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. Desperately struggling for his survival, Gaddafi armed the Tuareg population in northern Mali, hoping they would help him quell the uprising against him. However, instead of turning their weapons against the Libyan rebels, the Tuaregs used them to take control of their own country. They were assisted by Tuaregs who immigrated to Libya in the 1960s and 1980s in search for a better life and joined the Libyan army, who defected from the tyrant's army and came to the aid of their brothers in Azawad.

The second historic opportunity was the March 21, 2012 coup in Mali itself, which created a vacuum of power in the country.⁴ The MLNA took advantage of this situation to declare Azawad's independence. Since then, it has been fighting to maintain this independence in the face of numerous dangers, including opposition from Mali and neighboring countries, as well as from terrorist organizations trying to take over the region.

Azawad – General Information:

Azawad is a region larger than France, which comprises about 60% of Mali's territory (see map below). Despite its vast size, the population is only about 1.5 million, divided into several ethnic groups, mainly Tuareg (who claim to comprise the majority), Songhai (claimed by Mali to be the majority), Moors, and Fulani. The climate is desert or semi-desert. The northern part of the country is part of the Saharan belt. Seeing less than 150 mm of rainfall annually, it is mostly completely non-arable. Hence, the population is mostly concentrated in the southern regions, which are somewhat wetter and are also irrigated by the Niger river. The main cities are Gao (Azawad's transitional capital), Timbuktu and Kidal.



The following table gives some general information on the region:

Name of the Country	Azawad
Declaration of independence	April 6, 2012
Area	800,000 sq km
Population	Approx. 1,500,000 ⁵
Transitional capital	Gao
Ethnic groups	Tuareg, Songhai, Moors/Arabs, Peul (Fulani), and some presence of Bozo, Dogon, Bambara and other.
Languages	Tamasheq (the Tuareg language), French, Arabic , Songhai , Fula .
Religion	Muslims (the majority), Christians, Animists

The Formation of the MNLA

The MNLA, which defines itself as a democratic and secular movement, was founded in October 2011 and launched its struggle against Mali in January 17, 2012, with an attack on the town of Menaka in south-eastern Azawad.⁶ It declared independence four months later, after conquering the entire territory of Azawad. The movement absorbed young activists from the National Movement for Azawad (MNA), founded in 2010 to further the cause of Azawad's independence. The latter movement aspired to achieve this goal by non-violent political means, namely through a referendum in the region to determine whether it should declare its independence. Mali naturally opposed this initiative, and jailed some of the movement's leaders.



MNLA logo

Mali's Decades-Long Neglect, Mismanagement of Azawad Motivates Tuaregs' Bid for Independence

The borders of Mali, which gained its independence from France in 1960, were determined by the French colonialists, who included Azawad in its territory despite the very different character of Azawad's population. Since then, the Malian governments have largely neglected Azawad, concentrating their development efforts in the south of the country. For example, during the

extended reign of President Moussa Traoré, who presided over a repressive one-party regime from 1968 and 1991, almost no economic development took place in Azawad. Moreover, Mali's administration of the region has reportedly been based on alliances with corrupt local elites and on deals with Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQIM).



Flag of Azawad

The leading Tuareg media outlet Toumast Press described Mali's neglect of its northern regions.⁷ "Besides the flag of Mali, no other insignia of the Malian government is visible [in Azawad]. Security of persons and property is non-existent. Populations are not protected when they are hit by natural disasters. The government's [absence] is complete. In 2010, during the drought in Azawad, UNICEF pointed out the state of malnutrition in Mali. [Then]-Malian president Amadou Toumani Toure protested against the report, stating that there [was] no malnutrition in the country. He said that some people in Azawad need to change their eating habits, because they were limiting themselves to eat[ing] only three dates a day. What ordinary people, if given the choice, would only eat three dates a day?"

"Health systems are rare in Azawad. Thus, infant mortality rate is among the highest in the world. Simple diseases are incurable. Countless people die in total anonymity, [often on the way to] the hospital in the Gao region. The education system is in no better shape... Employment opportunities are also non-existent. The only positions the state offers are occupied by employees from the south of the country, thousands of miles away from Azawad."

The peace processes that followed previous Tuareg rebellions against the Mali government, in 1995 and 2009, brought no change in Azawad's situation. All these factors motivate most MNLA members to distrust Mali and regard full independence (rather than autonomy, for example) as the only solution. The political leadership of the MNLA has stated that the movement will not settle for less than independence. In a June 30, 2012 interview, MNLA Coordinator for Diplomatic Action in Europe Mossa Ag Attaher said: "Azawad's independence is irrevocable... It is a fact... We would like to reassure the public in Azawad, as well as Azawad's friends and supporters, that the sole objective of our struggle is to allow the people of Azawad to take their destiny into their own hands and to have their own administration and justice [systems]. Whoever does not share this objective has no place within the MNLA..."⁸



MNLA fighters. Sixth from the right is Colonel Intallah Ag Assayid, an MNLA commander in the Gao region

Azawad's Economy

Though poor, and rendered even poorer by Mali's neglect and mismanagement, the state of Azawad is economically viable. The following gives a brief overview of the region's resources:

Mineral Wealth:

Azawad has been reported to contain mineral wealth, including oil and uranium, and several foreign countries have invested in exploring for these resources in the region.⁹ According to the Australian mining company Oklo Uranium Limited, there are widespread elevated uranium levels in the northeastern Kidal region and numerous uranium targets in an area covering 19,930 square kilometers. Uranium potential in the Samit deposit, Gao region alone is believed to be 200 tones. The region is rich of mineral deposits and economically important metals. For further details, see Appendix III.

Agriculture

As stated, the northern part of the country is largely non-arable. Agriculture is more developed along the Niger River, though the country has a whole has suffered from drought and increasing desertification.

Livestock

Sheep, goats, and camels are raised.¹⁰

Fishing

The Niger River is an important source of fish; however, due to drought and diversion of river water for agriculture, fish production is declining.

Tourism

With fascinating sites like the ancient city of Timbuktu, as well as unique wildlife and landscapes, Azawad has tourism potential that goes unrealized due to the political and security instability in the region. Moreover, Islamist terrorist organizations like Boko Haram are engaged in vandalizing and destroying the country's historical heritage.

Who Are The Tuareg People?

The Tuareg (who also call themselves Imazighen, meaning "Free People") belong to the Berber people, the indigenous people of North Africa who lived in these lands before the Arab invasions in the 7th century. Berbers live in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Mauritania, Niger and Azawad.

The Tuareg are Muslim, practicing a moderate-mystical brand of Islam which combines Islamic traditions with pre-Islamic Berber ones. They shun Islamist extremism, seeing it as a means of eradicating their unique culture and "Arabizing" their societies.



On the left: Fathi ben Khalifa, president of the World Amazigh Congress

On the right: Hamma Ag Mahmoud, MNLA political bureau member and CTEA director of foreign affairs

The Berber population in North Africa and in the diaspora (in France alone there are almost 2 million Berbers) backs the MNLA in its fight for independence. They feel that, after years of oppression under colonialism and under Arab and African regimes, the Berber people should have their own state where they can be free. The MNLA, however, stresses that its struggle is for all the Azawadi people, not just the Tuareg. Indeed, though the MNLA consists mostly of Tuaregs, among its members are also Songhai and Moors.

The Forces Opposing the MNLA

Following the declaration of independence on April 6, the MNLA found itself surrounded by many enemies. First there are jihadist organizations, which aim to instate an Islamic regime in Azawad and use the country as a base for their operations. These include Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM); the Monotheism Movement for Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO; Arabic: "Jama'at Al-Tawhid Wal-Jihad Fi Gharbi Afriqya"); the Tuareg Islamist organization Ansar Al-Din, and the Nigerian group Boko Haram.

Ansar Al-Din

This group was founded in March 2012 by Tuareg leader Iyad Ag Ghaly. This charismatic and opportunistic leader became an Islamist in the 1990s under the influence of Pakistani preachers

from the global Muslim *da'wa* organization Tablighi Jamaat, which at the time had representatives in Kidal.¹¹ Before becoming an Islamist he was a prominent leader of the Tuareg resistance movement, but he was also known for striking deals with the Malian government when it suited him. In 2007, he even served as an advisor to the Malian consul in Saudi Arabia. In this period he also formed ties with the Salafist Group for Call and Combat (GSPC) – believed to be a creation of the Algerian Department of Intelligence and Security (DRS)¹² – which later became AQIM.

When the MNLA was formed, Ag Ghaly was sent to negotiate with it on behalf of the Malian government, negotiations which failed due to the MLNA's refusal to relinquish its demand for independence. Seeing an opportunity, Ag Ghaly tried to become one of the MLNA's leaders, but the movement rejected him for his fickleness and for his Islamist views. At the time he also tried to become leader of the prominent Ifoghas tribe, to which he belongs, but was again turned down. Frustrated, he established Ansar Al-Din in March 2012.

According to estimates, Ag Ghaly does not seek Azawad's independence, but ultimately means to strike a profitable deal with Mali, as he has done in the past.



*Ansar Al-Din leader Iyad Ag Ghaly*¹³

In mid-May 2012, the secretary-general of the MNLA, Bilal Ag Cherif, tried to strike a deal with Ag Ghaly and Ansar Din, apparently in hopes of extracting the MLNA from its financial difficulties and avoiding violence between the two Tuareg organizations. The MNLA and Ansar Al-Din signed a preliminary memorandum of understanding. This document was to be finalized into an agreement in late May, but disagreements on the issue of the *shari'a* prevented this. MNLA political bureau member Hamma Ag Mahmoud explained that the final agreement could not be signed because the two sides' views on the future of Azawad were too different: "Today we put an end to this agreement. Ansar Al-Din wants to fully implement the *shari'a*, and we are a secular movement..."¹⁴



MNLA Secretary-General Bilal Ag Cherif

Al-Qaeda In The Islamic Maghreb (AQIM)

Less surprising than its negotiations with the MLNA are Ansar Al-Din's connections to the other jihad organizations, MUJAO and especially AQIM. In fact, there are increasing indications that Ansar Al-Din is becoming a proxy of AQIM. The latter organization finds Ag Ghaly useful because, being a Tuareg, he lends legitimacy to the its presence in Azawad, and because his fighters know how to fight in Azawad's hostile desert regions. Moreover, AQIM probably hoped that Ag Ghaly might help it to negotiate with the MLNA, due to his ties with this movement. Ultimately, however, AQIM's goal is to disband the MNLA and gain control of Azawad. Unlike Ansar Al-Din, it has no interest in negotiating with Mali, nor is it particularly interested in Azawad's independence. It wants the country to become a no man's land, a strategic area in Africa in which it can expand its activities.

MUJAO

The Monotheism Movement for Jihad in West Africa (MUJAO) is a Gao-based splinter group of AQIM that is engaged mainly in drug trafficking and kidnapping. The group members are militants from Gao (Songhai and Moors) as well as non-Azawadis from Algeria and Niger. Its leader is Hamad Ould Mohamed Khairou, a Mauritanian national who was previously a member of AQIM. Another MUJAO leader is the Songhai Ali Maiga, who is also head of Gao's religious police.¹⁵



Hamad Ould Mohamed Khairou

Boko Haram

Members of the Nigerian group Boko Haram are also present in Gao. The Malian newspaper *Essor* recently interviewed Boko Haram's commander in Azawad, a Nigerian in his thirties known as Abu Moussa, who was accompanied by a fighter called "Saharawi."¹⁶ Abu Moussa explained that the organization has no interest in Azawad's independence, but rather aims to enforce the *shari'a* in Mali as a whole: "Boko Haram's presence in the North of Mali [i.e., in Azawad] is religiously justified. We came to give assistance to our brothers, who took up weapons in order to enforce *shari'a* law in Mali. Contrary to the other [groups], we do not defend democracy or the partition of Mali, but we [defend] Islam, which doesn't put up borders between Muslims. We are against democracy and against the partition of Mali. We are here to guide the people towards the path of Allah, nothing else."



According to *Essor*, Boko Haram has around 300 fighters in Azawad, who are being trained in the use of explosives. The paper also states that the group is using Azawad as a "support base" in its war on the Nigerian government.¹⁷

The Battle of Gao between the MLNA and the Jihad Organizations



Members of the State of Azawad Transitional Council (CTEA)¹⁸

On June 27, 2012, the headquarters of the MNLA-led Transitional Council of the State of Azawad (CTEA, established on June 7, see APPENDIX II) was attacked in Gao by AQIM, MUJAO and Boko Haram, who managed to expel it from strategic parts of Azawad, forcing it to reassess its political and military plans.

The attack followed the assassination of Idrissa Oumarou Maïga, a Songhai city councilman in Gao.¹⁹ The Malian media and Islamist groups blamed the MNLA for the assassination. The latter believed that MUJAO and AQIM had arranged it in order to spark ethnic conflict between the black Songhai population and the Tuareg-led MNLA, thereby weakening the MNLA politically and military, so that the jihadi organizations could take control of Gao and destabilize all of Azawad. Such a destabilization of the region, the MNLA claimed, would serve the interests of Algeria and Mali, which want to prevent Azawad from being officially recognized by the international community.

The battle convinced the MNLA that not Ansar Al-Din but rather AQIM is in control of the situation, and that no agreement could be reached with Ag Ghaly, who is now a proxy of AQIM.

The Role of Algeria and Qatar

In addition to its struggle against the jihad organizations, the MLNA is facing opposition from various countries, especially from Algeria and Qatar. Algeria fears that the establishment of Azawad – an independent state in North Africa with a Berber majority – may spark a rebellion by the Berber Kabyles in its own territory, and may also be a threat to its interests in the Sahara. In fact, according to the Tuareg media, the Algerian army has been training the MUJAO militants,²⁰ and an Ansar Al-Din delegation was received in Algiers by Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika.²¹ It was also reported that MNLA fighters wounded in the Gao battle were refused medical treatment at a hospital in Tinzawatene, just across the border in Algeria. According to the report, the Algerian authorities stated they would only treat Ansar Al-Din fighters, not MNLA fighters.²²

The Kabyle news agency siwel.info claims that Algeria is financing jihad groups in Azawad, and so is Qatar.²³ On June 25, AFP reported that four members of the Qatari Red Crescent were seen in Gao under the protection of MUJAO, and on June 27, locals reported that vehicles bearing the Qatari Red Crescent were seen alongside MUJAO forces.²⁴

The Conference in Burkina Faso

Following the Battle of Gao, on July 23-24, 2012, the MNLA convened in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso, to review its internal organization. The conference was initiated by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) mediator, Burkina Faso Minister of Foreign Affairs Djibril Bassole, and facilitated by the Swiss federal government. The conference had two objectives: to allow the MNLA to review its internal organization, to restructure itself and to adapt itself to the new situation in terms of Azawad's needs and the expectations of the international community, and to form a commission for drafting political platforms with a view to future negotiations with ECOWAS, the international community, and also with Mali.²⁵ It should be noted that ECOWAS, which basically opposes an independent Azawad but also opposes AQIM, and is not happy with Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, the leader of the recent Mali coup, seems to be unsure how to handle the Azawad situation.

The Malian Government

Following the March 21 coup in Mali, the country fell into a political void. On August 20, 2012, Mali's interim president, Dioncounda Traore – whom ECOWAS supports – approved a new transitional government. However, the formation of this new government doesn't represent a change in terms of the Azawad situation, since, just like previous Malian governments, it opposes the independence of Azawad out of hand and will do anything to avoid secession.

As mentioned, ECOWAS does not support coup leader Captain Sanogo, whom it perceives as a threat for the political stability of the region, and the West, mainly the U.S. and France, share its view. However, Captain Sanogo is now the strong man in Mali, and he has appointed his own men to the security-related ministries, whereas pro-ECOWAS ministers have been removed from the government.

It is important to note that, for the first time in its history, Mali has a Ministry of Religious Affairs, which could be a sign of growing Islamist influence. The Malian Islamic High Council (*Haut Conseil Islamique*) has actually met on several occasions with representatives of Ansar Al-Din, MUJAO, and AQIM, with the alleged goal of transforming Mali into an Islamic state²⁶.

As for the Malian army, it seems to be incapable of suppressing the Tuareg uprising on its own, since its soldiers do not have the skill to fight in Azawad's extreme desert conditions. Moreover, they have no emotional ties to the region and are not motivated to fight.

Conclusion

For now, the MNLA is managing to survive thanks to the weaknesses and conflicting interests of its enemies. Since these weaknesses and conflicts are not likely to disappear any time soon, the MLNA may have a fighting chance.

Moreover, the MNLA is a genuine force. Unlike the Malian soldiers, its soldiers are expert desert warriors and are willing to fight Al-Qaeda and to sacrifice for their homeland. But without weapons and without money, it is unclear how long they can survive. Ansar Al-Din, much richer than the MLNA, is recruiting Tuaregs to its own ranks. Hence, there is a danger that some forces in the MNLA will continue to push for an agreement with this Islamist movement, in order to preserve the status quo.

And without the MNLA, who will fight AQIM and prevent it from transforming Azawad into a stage for its operations, from which it can operate in coordination with Al-Shabab Al-Mujahideen in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria? That would be the worst possible result in terms of the war on terror.

Appendix I: Open Letter by MNLA Coordinator for Diplomatic Action in Europe Mossa Ag Attaher (Toumast Press, May 31, 2012)



MNLA Coordinator for Diplomatic Action in Europe Mossa Ag Attaher is a harsh opponent to any negotiation between the MNLA and Ansar Al-Din

Some MNLA Members Aim To Maintain the Status Quo

"I address myself primarily to the Azawadi young people, who believe in the MNLA's legitimate struggle for the liberation of Azawad and the creation of an independent and democratic state that respects its [various] components, [whether] ethnic or religious.

"Fellow fighters, first of all, I would like to express to you the honor and the pleasure that I had in giving the best of myself for our struggle, our hope, our dignity and the independence of Azawad... I believed, and I still believe, that a new and better world is possible thanks to the young people, who are aware of their role and responsibilities in a world that gives us no alternative except resistance and flawless commitment.

"Some [of you] know me well enough to know that I gave everything for the MNLA, through militancy and totally disinterested engagement, [especially] in the most difficult moments for [our] movement, when only a few openly declared [their allegiance to the MNLA]. Almost alone, I carried out a diplomatic campaign on the international level, and was the target of threats and intimidation by partisans of a 'single and indivisible Mali'... There was also a tendency to turncoat, to evade, to renounce, to betray, etc...

"My self-sacrifice and my commitment... are not the topic [of this open letter]; [therefore] I will not [continue on this topic] any longer, in order to avoid [being accused] of having intentions unrelated to reality or bizarre ulterior motives that are part of a certain predatory political subculture. [This political subculture] tolerates no disagreement or conflicting debates, and immediately spreads anathema, falsehood and manipulation, demonizing all opposing voices, all free spirits, and all criticism. Its ultimate aim is to maintain the status quo – which unfortunately will transform an authentic political movement that bears the hopes of a people and of a project

with defined ideals and strong convictions – into a political apparatus in which career plans and promotions are based on [illegitimate] allegiances. [Such activity is] unworthy of a democratic and modern movement which, unfortunately, is in the process of being dangerously dissolved, due to the game conceived by Arab-Islamist and obscurantist regimes!

"If we do not act quickly, our movement's founding values and ideas will give way to unworthy and indefensible disavowals. One example of this is the identity issue – which received multiple insults during the recent discussions in Gao – and the principle of secularism, which was trampled by an unprecedented religious offensive, against the backdrop of an escalation of mass proselytizing that evoked no memorable action."

Ansar Al-Din Wants an Islamic State

"Have you any idea how difficult it was for me to explain to our partners and to the Azawadi public the reasons for the delay in announcing [the formation] of the Azawadi government? First, I decided that there was a need for consultation that would be open to all elements of Azawad. I [also] rightly answered that we must try to avoid hasty mistakes. But how can we explain to Azawadi people, to the friends of Azawad, and to the tireless militants of the MNLA that forming the government of Azawad is taking as long as liberating it?

"Are we really responsible for our decisions? Or are we – without [fully] understanding the extent and the gravity [of what is happening] – having our military and fighting forces replaced by external forces, which are allergic to any form of independence of our country, so that we may follow obscure plans not our own? We did not rid ourselves of [the old] colonialism just to create a new one!

"In the protocol of accord [the MOU] – if it can be called that – there is no concern for the freedom of Azawadi people. This accord extols the virtues of 'an Islamic state meant to implement Islamic legislation in all domains of life, based on the Koran and on the Sunna' – in a word, the *shari'a*!

"On the other hand, the merger dictated by Ansar Al-Din and its mentors was 'in the superior interest of Islam and of Muslims in Azawad,' not in the interest of all Azawadi people regardless of religious denomination. Though we are a people with a Muslim majority, it is [nevertheless] important to recall that there are Christian Azawadis in Gao and in Timbuktu, and that [we must show] them tolerance and respect, in line with our thousand-year-old cultural values.

"The content of this accord is indefensible, and ends at Point 9 with the following stipulation: 'Any disagreement with one of the fundamental principles of the [Islamic] religion nullifies this agreement. This will be developed in the constitution at a later stage.'"

"I Completely Reject The Protocol Agreement... Between Certain Members Of MNLA And Ansar Al-Din"

"We have made enormous sacrifices, and we have heroically liberated our territory. We lost brave men in this combat, and we saw, once again, our parents take the road to exile.

"Exploiting the blood of our martyrs for religious purposes is, pure and simple, a betrayal of [our] ideals, which have always led us and in the name of which our brave martyrs died. Our sisters, our mothers, our scholars, and also our friends expect great things of us, and we cannot deceive them, or, worse, betray them.

"In the name of these hopes, out of respect for the oath of allegiance that I took when I joined the MNLA, in the name of the honor that my parents handed down to me, and in the name of the esteem that many of you have shown me, I completely reject the [protocol] agreement signed May 26 between certain members of the MNLA and Ansar Al-Din. I believe that the implementation of the shari'a, and the 'Arabization' of our people, constitute a grave violation of our culture and our identity, and a shameful loss of the gains of the revolution.

"I will remain within the MNLA, but I will redouble vigilance, and will, together with credible and sincere members of the MNLA, resist. And we will not lower our weapons until the day the worthy daughters and sons of Azawad will again find their dignity – which was trampled for 50 years by Mali and is now being trampled by radical Islamists, who are on the payroll of invisible hands...

"Finally, I call on the youth of my native Azawad, on the young executives of my country, and on the freedom fighters, men and women, to join the resisters within the MNLA and to fight the corrupt and all those who are ready to sell their soul to the devil.

"Azawadis, 'let us swim and swim until our day comes, and if we perish in the ocean of the liberation of our nation, then our resistance will be a lesson to future worlds,' as the late Mohamed Ali Ag Attaher would say.

"Azawad or death! We shall triumph.

"Mossa Ag Attaher."

APPENDIX II: List of Members of the State of Azawad Transitional Council (TCSA), MNLA Official Website (mnlamov.net, June 9, 2012)

1	President	Bilal Ag Cherif
2	Vice-President	Mahamadou Djeri Maiga
3	Secretary of the Presidency	Mahmoud Ag Aghali
4	Chargé of Foreign Relations and of International Cooperation	S.E. Hama Ag Mahmoud
5	Chargé of National Defense	Colonel Mohamed Ag Najim

6	Chargé of the Administration of the Territory	Alla Ag Elmehdi
7	Chargé of National Security	Colonel Hassane Ag Fagaga
8	Chargé of Economy and Finances	Altanata Ag Ebalagh
9	Chargé of Information	Mossa Ag Assarid
10	Chargé of Justice	Saïd Ben Bella
11	Chargé of Trade and Transports	Bilal Ag Ousmane
12	Chargé of Orientation and of Islamic Teaching	Abdallah Ag Albackaye
13	Chargé of Mines, Energy and Water	Ahmed Mohamed Ag Guidi
14	Chargé of Communications and New Technologies	Mohamed Lamine Ould Ahmed
15	Chargé of Azawadians Living Abroad, Human Rights and Humanitarian Activities	Ibrahim Ag Mohamed Assaleh
16	Chargé of Health and Social Affairs	Habitika Ag Assamado
17	Chargé of Education	Monsieur Abdoukarim Ag Matafa
18	Chargé of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Fisheries	Ghabdi Ag Mohamed Ibrahim
19	Chargé of Social Cohesion, Conflict Resolution and of the Rehabilitation of the Customary Authority	Mohamed Ousmane Ag Mohamedoune
20	Chargé of Youth and Sports	Mohamed Zeyni Aguisa Maiga
21	Chargé of Culture, Craft Industry and Tourism	Aroudeyni Ag Hamatou
22	Chargé of Environment	Baye Ag Dicknane
23	Chargé of Women Advancement, of Child care and of Family	Nina Wallet Intalou
24	Chargé of Public Estate, Land Tenure and Urbanism	Akli Iknane Ag Souleymane
25	Chargé of Public Employment and Training	Abdoulaye Seydou Dicko

26	Chargé of Veterans, Martyrs and War Victims	Youssef Ag Acheick
27	Chargé of Planning and Statistics	Assarid Ag Mohamed
28	TCSA Spokesperson	Hama Ag Sidahmed

APPENDIX III: Deposits and Mineralizations Identified in Azawad, (bgs.ac.uk, October 8, 2007)

Ansongo (town in the Gao region)

Fafa: Other lead-zinc occurrences are 40 km to the southeast of Ansongo.

Ouatagouna-Labbézanga: Copper mineralisation is located 140 km southeast of Ansongo

Tassiga: 30 km to the southeast of Ansongo, the deposit has a magnesite reserve.

Tondibi Agaula and Ofalikin: Manganese mineralization occurs 20 km and 60 km to the southeast and southwest of Ansongo

Tessalit (town in the Kidal region)

In Darset: 30 km south of Tessalit, with estimated reserve of 4 t of gold.

Tessalit: Lead-zinc mineralization has been identified 10 km north

Timetrine: Rare earth minerals can be found 80 km west of Tessalit.

Tilemsi (town in the Timbuktu region)

Samit: Uranium mineralization is 120 km northeast of Gao.

Tamaguilelt: A phosphate deposit is located 80 km northeast of the city of Bourem with a production of 18,000 t.

Precious stones consist of the following and can be found in:

L'Adrar des Ifoghas (in the Kidal region): pegmatite and metamorphosing minerals

Le Gourma (in the Gao region): garnet and corindons

Hombori Douentza Zone (Douentza Cercle, former Malian Mopti region): quartz and carbonates

Other mineral resources:

Rock Salt: Estimated potential of 53 million tons in Taoudenni (Timbuktu region)

Diatomite: Estimated potential of 65 million tons in Daouna Behri (Timbuktu region)

Lignite: Potential estimated at 1.3 million tons, indications found in Bourem (Gao region)

Bitumen schist: Potential estimated at 870 million tons, indications found in Agamor and Almoustrat (Gao region)

Kaolin: Potential reserves located in Gao

Copper: indications found in Ouatagouna (Gao region)

Gypsum: indications found in Taoudenit (a remote salt mining center in the desert. Timbuktu region)

Calcareous rock deposits: found in Bah El Heri (North of Goundam, Timbuktu region)

Azawad's Petroleum potential

Exploration for oil and gas started in the Azawad area in 2005. There is particular interest in the Taoudenit basin, the Gao Graben, the Tamesna basin and the Nara Trough.²⁷



The Taoudenit basin, the Gao Graben, the Tamesna basin and the Nara Trough

*Anna Mahjar-Barducci, a Moroccan-Italian journalist and author, Director for North African Studies at MEMRI. She studied in Pakistan and Tunisia (and Italy). She is the president of the Rome-based "Liberal and Democratic Arabs" Association. She is the author of two books - "Italo-Marocchina" (Diabasis, 2009, Italy) and "Pakistan Express" (Lindau, 2011, Italy; Wydawnictwo-Sic, 2012, Poland)

¹ The Tuareg (also known as the Kel Tamasheq, meaning 'speakers of the Tamasheq language') are Berbers who live in the Saharan interior of North Africa.

² The term "Moors" (*maures* in French) refers to Arabic speakers, many of whom define themselves as Arabs. Most Moor tribes reside in Azawad and Mauritania. They can be fair-skinned (*bidân*) or dark-skinned.

³ Reports in the international media about Azawad either lack primary source materials or are deliberately ignoring them, as part of what seems to be regional as well as Western opposition to the creation of the new State of Azawad, despite the fact that the MNLA is a pro-Western, secular movement that fights terrorism.

⁴ The coup was led by a military officer, Captain Amadou Sanogo, who seized the leadership of the country from President Amadou Toumani Touré.

⁵ Accurate figures are hard to obtain due to the nomadic character of the population. A Malian census from gives the population of Azawad as 1,293,449. However, according to Tuareg sources, the population is closer to 1,500,000.

⁶ It should be noted that this was not the first Tuareg rebellion in Mali. It was preceded by Tuareg rebellions in 1963, in the 1990s and again in 2006.

⁷ Toumastpress.com, November 21, 2011. The original English has been lightly edited for clarity.

⁸ For more excerpts from the interview, see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 4887, [MNL A Coordinator For Diplomatic Action In Europe Mossa Ag Attaher: Secularism Is The Foundation Of Our Combat In Azawad](#), August 16, 2012.

A Coordinator For Diplomatic Action In Europe Mossa Ag Attaher: Secularism Is The Foundation Of Our Combat In Azawad <http://www.memri.org/report/en/print6592.htm>

⁹ According to the Australian mining company Oklo Uranium Limited, there are widespread elevated uranium levels in the northeastern Kidal region and numerous uranium targets in an area covering 19,930 square kilometers. AFP, February 2, 2008. Uranium potential in the Samit deposit in the Gao region alone is believed to be 200 tons. [Jpmali.com](http://jpmali.com), November 2011.

¹⁰ <http://globaledge.msu.edu/countries/mali/economy>.

¹¹ Iyad Ag Ghaly (also spelled as Iyad Ag Ghali), is the founder and leader of the Islamist movement Ansar Al-Din. Before becoming an Islamist he was the leader of the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MPLA), and in June 1990 he directed several attacks against the Malian Army. In 1991 he signed an agreement with the Malian army which sparked controversy within the MPLA and caused it to split. Ag Ghaly remained the leader of one of the four splinter groups, though he was rumored to have ties with the Malian government and the Algerian military intelligence. In 2006, he was involved in the 2006 Tuareg uprising against the Malian Army. Despite this, in 2007 he became a consular advisor to the Malian consul in Saudi Arabia.

Ag Ghaly reportedly became religious under the influence of Pakistani preachers from the Tablighi Jamaat movement, who were present in Kidal in the late 1990s and early 2000s. (Though known to have pacifist views, Tablighi Jamaat has been linked to numerous terrorism investigations). In 2011, he offered himself as Secretary General of the MNLA but was rejected. He then proposed himself as political head of the Ifoghas tribe, but was again unsuccessful. In late 2011 he founded the Islamist movement Ansar Al-Din. See <http://thinkafricapress.com/mali/causes-uprising-northern-mali-tuareg>

¹² Mohammed Samraoui, a former colonel from the Algerian army, who defected to Germany in 1996, describes in his 2003 book *Chronique des années de sang* ("Chronicles of the Bloody Years") how in the spring of 1992, the Algerian army's upper echelon decided that the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which had won the first round of elections, constituted a threat to their own power and should be eliminated. The fight against the Islamists was also an opportunity to get rid of other "enemies" of the Algerian regime, such as human rights activists and Kabylie's Amazigh (Berber) leaders, who were also accused of being on the "payroll of France." As an example of the hysteria that prevailed in the army during those years, Samraoui reports Gen. Smail Lamari, head of the counter-intelligence division of the DRS, as having said: "I am ready to kill three million Algerians, if that is what it takes to maintain the order that the Islamists are threatening." In this context, the DRS became involved in the creation of GIA, which committed the most atrocious crimes in the country's history. In 1992, the media reported on Moh Leveille, who headed GIA, as one of the most dangerous Islamist terrorists. Samraoui recounts that he personally met Moh, who served as the first "emir" of GIA, which was "created in the DRS." Samraoui wrote: "Moh was an agent of the secret service, 'fabricated' to become their Islamist puppet and to commit terrorist attacks to terrorize the population. He was finally killed by the same security forces... in 1992. He was just one of the many 'DRS emirs' to be placed at the head of GIA and removed once their mission was accomplished." Mohammed Samraoui, *Chronique des années de sang*, Editions Denoël, 2003, pp. 162-168.

¹³ Image source: <http://toumastpress.com>.

¹⁴ Rfi.fr, June 1, 2012. For more on the agreement, see MEMRI Inquiry and Analysis No. 848, [The MLNA's Fight For A Secular State Of Azawad](#), June 19, 2012.

¹⁵ Essor (Mali), June 28, 2012

¹⁶ This fighter's name suggests that he is a member of the Polisario, which is known to have ties with MUJAO. The porosity of the Polisario to MUJAO fighters was previously manifested in the 2011 kidnapping in the Tindouf camps of three European aid workers, who have been released on ransom nine months later.

¹⁷ Essor (Mali), June 28, 2012

¹⁸ Image source: <http://www.tamazgha.fr>

¹⁹ Idrissa Oumarou Maïga was city councilman for the rural community of Gounzoureye in the Gao region, and a member of the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (Alliance pour la Démocratie au Mali, Adéma), the party of Malian interim president Dioncounda Traore. He was a teacher and school principal in Gao.

²⁰ Toumast Press (Azawad), June 28, 2012

²¹ Le Matin DZ (Algeria), June 25, 2012

²² Toumast Press (Azawad), July 2, 2012.

²³ Siwel.info, June 3, 2012.

²⁴ Toumast Press (Azawad), June 28, 2012

²⁵ Toumastpress.com, July 30, 2012. For more on the conference, see MEMRI Special Dispatch No. 4887, [MNLA Coordinator For Diplomatic Action In Europe Mossa Ag Attaher: Secularism Is The Foundation Of Our Combat In Azawad](#), June 16, 2012.

²⁶ Toumast Press (Azawad), Facebook page

²⁷ <http://thinksecurityafrica.org/oilgas/oil-and-gas-in-mali/>.