

Under the High Patronage of His Majesty King Mohammed VI



XIX WORLD WATER CONGRESS
International Water Resources Association (IWRA)
Marrakech, Morocco | 1-5 December 2025

Kingdom of Morocco



Ministry of
Equipment and Water

Access to water in insecure areas of the Sahel: the case of northern Mali

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The context



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The humanitarian crisis in Mali remains exacerbated by multifaceted insecurity, ongoing conflicts, and climatic shocks such as droughts and floods, as well as public health emergencies and recurrent epidemics. This situation unfolds within a broader context of structural vulnerabilities characterized by insufficient investment, limited presence of state institutions, chronic poverty, and a fragile socio-economic environment.



THE INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN WATER ACCESS AND INSECURITY



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From a security perspective, hostilities between non-state armed groups (NSAGs), ongoing military operations, intercommunal conflicts, the widespread presence of improvised explosive devices (IEDs), attacks on critical infrastructure such as bridges, roads, and communication towers, as well as direct threats against civilians, collectively pose serious protection risks to the civilian population. These factors severely restrict access to livelihoods and essential social services, particularly access to safe water.



DIFFICULTIES IN ACCESSING SAFE DRINKING WATER



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In many parts of Africa, a woman may travel more than 10 kilometers each day to collect and transport up to 60 liters of water.

Under extreme conditions, the burden of water collection can occupy women throughout the entire day, and sometimes even extend into the night.

This situation can be explained by several interrelated factors, including:

L'organisation de la société sur la base d'une répartition des rôles et des responsabilités entre les hommes et les femmes;

Un point d'approvisionnement (puits, forage...) très éloigné;

La pauvreté;

Des équipements ne répondant pas à leurs besoins;

Une exclusion des femmes au niveau des prises de décision;

La raréfaction des ressources en eau liée au changement climatique.



ACCESS TO WATER FOR PASTORAL ACTIVITIES AND LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT HAS ALSO BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY CONSTRAINED



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The inaccessibility of grazing areas for livestock:
The prevailing security situation has significantly restricted human movement. Out of fear of reprisals, herders have been forced to reduce their mobility, leaving their animals without adequate access to pasture and feed resources.



THE BLOCKADE AGAINST POPULATIONS



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JNIM regularly imposes blockades in the northern and central regions to isolate civilian populations and attempt to weaken the Malian State.

In several areas, particularly in the center, armed groups also enforce restrictions on population movement as a form of reprisal following intensified military operations.

The imposition of such blockades continues to serve as a means of pressure against the civilian population and acts as a form of retaliation in cases where residents refuse to pay taxes to armed groups or are suspected of cooperating with the Malian Armed Forces (FAMa).

These measures significantly restrict the population's access to humanitarian assistance and essential social services.





VIOLATIONS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

“Warfare shall be conducted with due regard to the protection of the natural environment against widespread, long-term and severe damage.

This protection includes the prohibition of employing methods or means of warfare that are intended, or may be expected, to cause such damage to the natural environment, thereby prejudicing the health or survival of the population.”

(Article 55 of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions)

Paragraph 2 is even more explicit:

“Attacks against the natural environment by way of reprisals are prohibited.”

Furthermore, Security Council Resolution 2417 (2018) recognizes the impact of armed conflict on food security.

Additional relevant Security Council resolutions also address the theme of the consequences of armed conflicts on civilian access to water, highlighting the protection of essential natural resources during hostilities.





THE POTENTIAL SUPPORT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The issue of water also appears in Security Council resolutions through the thematic focus on the consequences of armed conflict on civilian access to water. The underlying approach consists of viewing the difficulties in accessing water during armed conflict as a factor that exacerbates collective security challenges. From this perspective, impediments to water access may be considered among the grounds justifying Security Council intervention. This approach can be observed in Security Council Resolution 2014 (2011), adopted on 21 October 2011, concerning the situation in Yemen.





THE GENERALISATION OF THE PROBLEM

At the time of this communication, the problem has spread across the entire territory, armed groups are trying to impose a blockade on fuel transport, and this situation is significantly affecting water supply in both cities and rural areas.





Conclusion

In conclusion, water, peace, and security are essentially interconnected.

This is why agreements and preventive measures aimed at fostering the cooperative management of water resources are essential to sustaining lasting peace.



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AIMABLE ATTENTION**



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Thank you!

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