

Contact:

Jeremy Keenan

jeremykeenan@hotmail.com

Press Release

For immediate release

A New Phase in the War on Terror? A Report by Professor Jeremy Keenan

This report explores some of the assumptions that have been made about the situation in Mali and any links with the *In Amenas* attack.

The report deals with the *In Amenas* attack before turning to the situation in Mali, highlighting especially the links between Algeria's secret police, the DRS (Département du Renseignement et de la Sécurité) and the Islamist terrorists who had taken over northern Mali and who have been blamed for the *In Amenas* attack.

In the report Professor Keenan addresses the question of possible DRS complicity in the *In Amenas* attack and further asks whether the *In Amenas* attack was an 'inside job'. To this end it explores a) the nature of the plant's internal security arrangements; b) the relevancy of a major labour dispute with drivers (and possibly other workers) at the plant; and c) the relationship between the owner of the SARL BATT transport company and Abdelhamid about Zaïd, the effective head of AQIM in the Sahara-Sahel region.

The report also looks at the issue raised by an anonymous French intelligence source, of whether the *In Amenas* attack was a replication of the murder of the Tibhirine monks in 1996:

"According to this source, the In Amenas incident may have been another 'false operation' between the DRS and terrorists that 'went wrong'. The supposed plan was that MBM would arrange for the seizure of hostages, rather in the manner in which the Tibhirine monks were taken, and that they would be 'rescued' by the Algerian army. The idea was to prove to the international community not only that Algeria was correct in warning that military intervention in Mali would trigger terrorist reprisals, but that Algeria was a capable and essential partner of the West in the war against terrorism and the war being waged by France in Mali."

International State Crime Initiative (ISCI)

The Dickson Poon School of Law

Somerset House East Wing, King's College London, Strand, London WC2R 2LS, United Kingdom

www.statecrime.org

The report argues that there is no conclusive evidence to indicate that the *In Amenas* attack is not linked to events in Mali.

“William Hague, the British Foreign Secretary, said that he believed the In Amenas attack was unrelated to the situation in northern Mali and especially Britain’s provision of material assistance to French forces operating in Mali. However, the meagre resources of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), along with the ideologically constrained and ill-directed priorities of Britain’s intelligence services are such that they are unable to provide the Foreign Secretary with sufficient information to make such a bald and possibly misleading statement.”

The report concludes:

“Several Western governments and their media have heralded the In Amenas terrorist attack as marking a new phase in their global war on terror. They might be correct, but what they are more likely to find themselves having to face is something rather different, namely questions about what their intelligence services, notably those of the US and UK, have actually been doing in North Africa over the last few years.”

##Ends##

Notes to editors

Professor Jeremy Keenan is a Professorial Research Associate at the Department of Anthropology and Sociology at The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London. His research expertise and interests cover respectively the Sahara/Tuareg, militarization of Africa, Africa general, and longitudinal studies of genocides, victims and survivors.

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