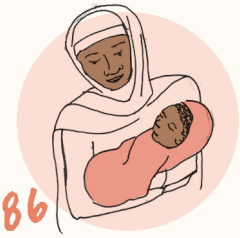
PeaceWomen Across the Globe
FriedensFrauen Weltweit
نساء من أجل السلام عبر العالم
Femmes de Paix Autour du Monde
Женщины мира за мир на земле
Mujeres de Paz en el Mundo
Mulheres pela Paz ao redor do Mundo
Donne di Pace nel Mondo
ピースウーマン―国境を越え平和をつくる女たち
全球和平妇女



1986

Born in Bamako, Mali and raised by her mother, the first female politician of Douentza.



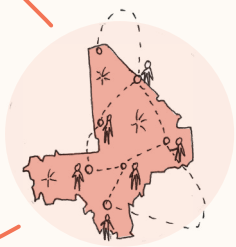
2005

After achieving her baccalaureate, Aminata studies in Morocco.



2012

The war starts in Mali, and Douentza, her mother's village, becomes the epicentre. Aminata uses Facebook to denounce the massacres.



2013-2023

She joins KISAL*, an organisation that collects and relays information throughout the country on human rights violations and war atrocities.



2014

Aminata is appointed director of KISAL* in Mali.



2014

She marries and later has three children.



2023

Aminata speaks about the situation in Mali at the UN Security Council. She faces threats to her life and is forced to flee Mali, leaving her children behind.



2023 onwards

Today, she lives in Europe with her children, where she works as vice-president of KISAL International.

*KISAL monitors and sends out alerts on human rights violations by the armed groups against pastoralist communities in the Sahel.



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CONTEXT

Several armed groups operate in Mali, each with different objectives, ideologies and areas of influence. They are divided into three main categories: jihadist groups, self-defence groups, and rebel movements. The war's consequences are devastating: thousands of civilian and military deaths, millions of refugees and displaced people, massacres, kidnappings, and thousands of children out of school.

MEET THE NETWORK

Aminata

Memories of Douentza village – where it all started

Aminata grew up in Mali's capital Bamako with her two older sisters and her mother. She has profound memories of the holidays she spent with her grandparents in Douentza, where her mother's family comes from. After the 800 km ride there, she spent every holiday with her family, sharing joyful moments and developing emotional bonds with the local people.

In 2012, those childhood memories were changed forever. While Aminata was living peacefully in Bamako, the war started in Mali. Her family and loved ones in Douentza started to share what they were going through in the village that was at the epicentre of the conflict. It is in a zone contested by both the government and diverse jihadist groups. From this point on, there was no turning back for Aminata.

From a Facebook page to mobilising more than a hundred informants throughout Mali

Aminata started to denounce human rights violations, forced disappearances, and massacres of the population on her own Facebook page. Facts, figures and testimonies were based on her conversations and contacts in the communities facing the conflict. As her page gained momentum, she caught the attention of the former president of KISAL Mali and agreed to join the organisation. "Because alone I could do nothing, I realised we had to unite our efforts." The following years, KISAL set up "community relays" in all the conflict zones, especially where pastoral people (the Peuls) walk with their livestock. The Peuls' constant movement makes them and their livestock vulnerable for targeted attacks. Those years were very hard on Aminata's mental and physical health. "The phone would ring constantly; every day I was listening to cases of burned villages, disappeared people, arbitrary arrests. I felt so helpless, but mostly, I did not understand what was happening as I had never experienced such a war. It was impossible for me to imagine that it would happen in my own country." There were days where she was very sad and some days when she would rage against these injustices. But she was always ready to shout, to whoever was ready to hear: **"We are not going to win this war by killing, nor by closing our eyes. Look and listen to what is happening."** All of this while she was having and raising three children.

Telling the truth all the way to the UN Security Council

KISAL's primary role is to call out abuses and to relay verified information on human rights violations. The organisation shares detailed reports with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the media. In Mali, they were soon labelled troublemakers for relaying information which was deemed taboo. Many see KISAL on the side of the jihadists and as standing against Mali because information must not be passed to outsiders "in times of war."

Aminata recalls tragic episodes from those years, like the Ogossago massacre in 2019, where self-defence militias killed at least 130 civilians, including children and elderly. She also remembers the massacre of men gathering for a wedding in Bounti in 2021 – for which the French military operation "Forces Barkhanes" were held responsible. In addition to the people killed in all these attacks, many did not reach the hospital in time as ambulances were often targeted. But there are also small victories, such as getting an 11-year-old child arrested by the military and in need of care released. The child was released from the police station thanks to KISAL's intervention with the Ministry of Justice. All the people KISAL and their partners were able to get released from prison were then able to access health care.

In 2023, Japan was presiding the UN Security Council and asked Aminata to speak as a Malian civil society member. She did it remotely, from the MINUSMA office in Bamako. **"In my speech, there was nothing new—it was the same as I always used to say on Twitter. But this time, it made a lot of noise and the military junta in power took it very badly."**

Aminata took refuge in the MINUSMA office and left the country a few days later, leaving her loved ones behind; her youngest child was only three years old.

"Looking back, I should have stayed. Even if it meant being thrown in jail."

Aminata has never been able to return home. One of her biggest regrets? "I should have stayed; I would have preferred prison to exile. Because in exile, I have abandoned my people – and this makes me feel very guilty." While she was still in Mali, the conflict was only in the north and in the centre of the country. Still she felt she should have spoken more about peace and social cohesion, of the human consequences of the war. "War has no limit. It means loss of lives, physical and traumatic wounds, family separation, the tearing of the social fabric, without mentioning the displacements and the economic consequences."

Her only hope today resides in dialogue. "There must be a real dialogue with people who have lost everything. They are ready to discuss, to forgive and to make peace today. This dialogue should also include the military and the authorities because soldiers die every day on the battlefield. It is time to put an end to this war. We must first listen to each other, before understanding each other. I think the jihadists are ready for this, if we make the first move. The war breaks my heart each time I hear people tell me their stories, and nothing is worth it. We have nothing to lose by trying to set up dialogue."

Aminata's ultimate dream is to go back home, and that her children can go on holiday to their grandparents and create fond memories of Douentza village.

Aminata is a member of the Feminists Connecting for Peace network.

For more information please visit: 1000peacewomen.org/en

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