

**FORUM:** The Joint Defense Council of the Arab League

**ISSUE:** How to wage an effective fight against AQIM and its direct associates?

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## Introduction:

The globe has been hit in a row by certain large terrorist groups and the results on a social, political and economic level are intolerable. AQIM (Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb) is such a jihadist militant group which is part of Al Qaeda in the North Africa. The Security Council of UN has declared AQIM as a terrorist organization because it is directly or indirectly engaged in preparing, planning, assisting in or fostering the doing of a terrorist act.

AQIM's terrorist acts began during the Algerian Civil War in the early 1990s. Since then, AQIM's members have been involved in various terrorist hits, abductions and drug and human trafficking across Europe and Africa. The threats by AQIM's presence may cause mayhem worldwide and have recently been under investigation by many experts, especially ever since AQIM tried to occupy the ungoverned northern Mali. Consequently, clarifying the extent of assistance other countries are willing to provide in order to righten the situation in North Africa is of vital importance.

## Definition of key terms:

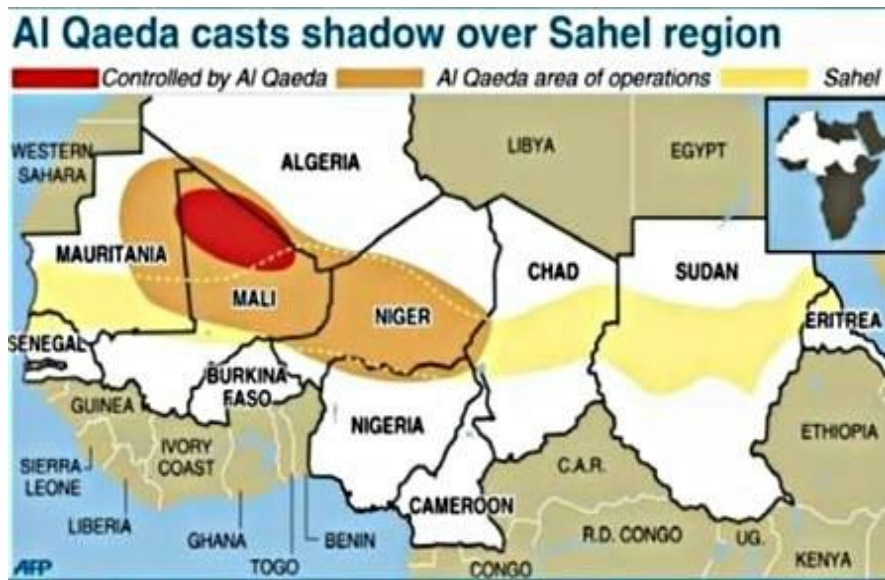
**Terrorism:** The calculated use of unlawful violence or threat of unlawful violence to inculcate fear intended to coerce or intimidate governments or societies in the pursuit of goals that are generally political, religious, or ideological. Kindly note that the three key elements within the definition of terrorism: violence, fear and intimidation.

**Human rights:** A right is a freedom of some kind. It is something to which you are entitled by virtue of being human. Human rights are based on the principle of respect for the individual. Their fundamental assumption is that each person is a moral and rational being who deserves to be treated with dignity. They are called "human rights" because they are universal. Whereas nations or specialized groups enjoy specific rights that apply only to them, human rights are the rights to which everyone is entitled —no matter who they are or where they live— simply because they are alive.

**Peacemaking:** The ability to practice preventive diplomacy and to employ and support mediation in order to head off potential crises at an early stage.

## Countries involved:

All, especially the countries of North Africa and the countries of South-West Europe.



*The most affected areas by AQIM*

## General overview:

### 1) Background:

AQIM has its origins in the 1990s Armed Islamic Group or French Groupe Islamique Arme (GIA). The GIA was a group of insurgents which started its brutal actions during the Algerian Civil War. Specifically, it was in 1992 when Algeria's military blocked a second round of elections because the Islamic part gained power and there was the fear that democracy would collapse. GIA members were involved in many terrorist acts in Algeria and they also hijacked the Air France Flight 8969 in 1994.



Several GIA commanders broke away from GIA and created the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (SGPC) aiming to shape a new image and to gain the full

support of the Algerian civilian population. At the beginning, they managed to continue the rebellion without cruelty, but the cooperation between the government and France led the group to blight. For this reason, in their attempt to survive SGPC eventually aligned with Al Qaeda in 2000s. Eventually, they took back its proponents and raised funds. The union was not publicly acknowledged until 11<sup>th</sup> September 2006, when Ayman al Zawahiri (Al Qaeda's second-in-command) officially announced the alliance. Then, SGPC was rebranded as "Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb" (AQIM).

## 2) AQIM's Members and Leaders:

It is crucial to pinpoint both the hierarchy and the networks within AQIM. AQIM is made up of several hundred members and a main leader who is called "emir". Most leaders have been trained in Afghanistan as members of groups known as "Afghan-Arabs". Abdelmalek Droukdel has been AQIM's leader since 2004. He is a trained engineer and explosives expert who fought in Afghanistan and had relationships with GIA in Algeria. Droukdel has declared France as their main enemy. Abdelhamid Abou Zeid is a former AQIM leader who also contributed to its violent evolution. The trained members of AQIM are organized in smaller independent groups. Each group has its targets and acts autonomously trying to motivate the public to their radical Islamic ideas, but they all join a common network when they prepare a major terrorist or criminal attack.



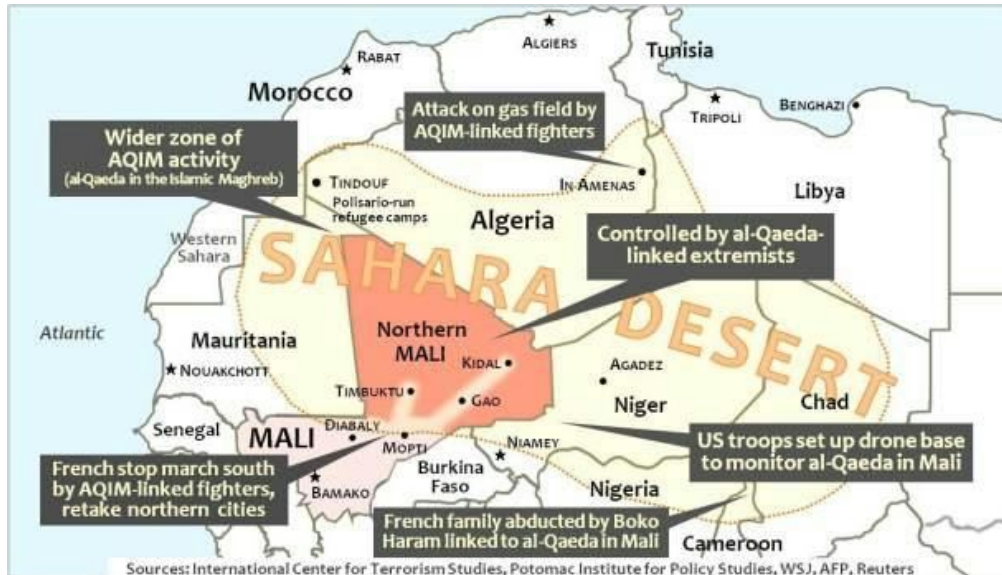
*Abdelmalek Droukdel, AQIM's leader*

## 3) AQIM's Purposes and Targets:

Being a military jihadist organization, AQIM intends to create a global state to be governed by the Islamic Law. For this reason, they oppose to all elected governments and want to topple them and also hinder all western influence.

In North Africa, their targets are the countries where people are not governed by the Islamic Law such as Algeria, Libya, Niger, Mali, Mauritania, etc. In Europe, their main target is France and incidentally Spain. Their conflict with France is predictable

because in 1990s the French military was an obstacle for some GIA terrorist acts and also because in 2012 France intervened in Mali. Other potential targets in Europe can be Italy, Portugal, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Germany because some members of AQIM have been arrested there. Of course, as AQIM is part of Al Qaeda, the United States of America is another important enemy of AQIM.



#### 4) AQIM's Illegal Activities and Funding:

In order to meet its purposes AQIM commits various terrorist acts. AQIM members avoid fighting face to face with the military and usually prefer assassinating people, bombing, or conducting raids. To date, the group's most serious attack has been the bombing of the UN office in Algeria in 2007, when dozens of people lost their lives.

Apart from terrorist acts, AQIM commit abductions, human smuggling, drug and arm trafficking. The ransom from kidnappings is their main source of funds. So far, they have kidnapped tourists and journalists from western countries making North Africa a dangerous and unattractive travel destination. The kidnappings also help them for prisoners' exchange. Drug trafficking provides them extra money because North Africa is a major traders' stopover station between Latin America and Europe.

Lastly, like many other terrorist groups, AQIM is also supported and even financed by local charities and front companies.



## Possible solutions:

Combatting terrorism and specifically AQIM is imperative. This can only be achieved if all countries co-operate with the United Nations Organization. Only together can they manage to control the expansion of terrorism. One solution is the military intervention in the affected areas occupied by terrorists. For example, the French military intervened in 2012 attempting to save people from AQIM in Mali, which used to be a French colony. However, it is open to debate whether such a solution is appropriate as it takes a huge toll in human lives. Doubtless, deflating the threat sustainably and resolving the issue diplomatically is preferable.



*France intervenes in Mali*

Moreover, the police should regularly patrol the affected areas in order to avert abductions. Lastly, States need to strictly investigate and control the funding of terrorist groups by identifying drug channels and illegal front companies.

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