



## **29<sup>th</sup> session of the Universal Periodic Review – Mali**

### **Introduction**

1. Mali should continue to affirm the sanctity of life on the part of all human beings, including the unborn, and why it should resist calls to liberalize access to abortion due to the fact that there is no international human right to abortion. It should also address the issue of high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity, as well as the need for the government of Mali to protect Christians and other religious minorities from persecution.

### **Abortion, Maternal Health, Religious Freedom**

2. Abortion is illegal in Mali under Article 170 of the Penal Code and no exceptions to this law are expressly stated, although general principles of criminal law appear to allow for an abortion to be carried out where doing so is deemed necessary to save the life of the pregnant mother.
3. The medical infrastructure in Mali is in dire need of improvement, with an inadequate number of trained health professionals and unsanitary, poorly-equipped health facilities. Increasingly high rates of maternal mortality (MMR) have less to do with the legality of abortion *per se* than with an inability to access obstetric care, lack of information, and lack of health workers. Given the maternal health crisis in the country, Mali must rather focus its efforts and resources on improving conditions for pregnant women, women undergoing childbirth, and postpartum women, especially those living in remote or rural areas. Particularly, increasing investments with the aim of achieving universal coverage constitutes only the first step in ensuring that Mali's extremely high MMR be reduced to the greatest extent possible.
4. The vast majority of the population of Mali adheres to Islam, with a small minority of Christians and animists. The state is officially secular and provides for freedom of religion, a right which it generally respects. Nevertheless, as recently reported by Open Doors, Christians have worryingly been on the receiving end of religious repression and persecution as a result of Islamic radicalism and violence.

### **Recommendations**

5. ADF International suggests the following recommendations be made to Mali:
  - a. Affirm that there is no international human right to abortion and that the right to life applies from conception until natural death, and as such that the unborn child has the right to protection of his or her life at all points;
  - b. Resist calls to liberalize abortion, and instead implement laws aimed at protecting the right to life of the unborn;
  - c. Recognize that the legalization of abortion, in a country with high levels of maternal mortality and morbidity and with severe problems with access to proper health-care, will not make pregnancy and childbirth any safer;

- d. Improve health care infrastructure, access to emergency obstetric care, midwife training, and resources devoted to maternal health;
- e. Focus on safely getting mothers and babies through pregnancy and childbirth, with special attention paid to improving health-care access for women from poor and/or rural backgrounds; and
- f. Protect and promote the rights of all persons in Mali to freedom from torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, freedom from arbitrary detention, and freedom of religious or belief, and eliminate all persecution and repression perpetrated by terrorist and extremist organizations seeking to violate those rights with impunity.