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## **Jihadists demand crippling religious tax from Christians**

[Aid to the Church in Need](#) (31.10.2024) - **Extremists in Mali have forced Christians in yet another village to pay extortionate amounts in *jizya* Islamic tax, amid signs that the jihadists are ramping up their persecution against the Church.**

Islamist militant groups which have seized large swathes of the country, have imposed the *jizya* Islamic tax of 25,000 CFA francs (£32) on those more than 18 years of age in the Christian village Douna-Pen in Mopti Region.

**Some only earn 50,000 CFA francs (£64) a month in what is one of the world's poorest countries.**

A source – who wished to remain anonymous for security reasons – told Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need (ACN) that the payment was required for Christians to practise their religion in the region.

**The source added that those unable or unwilling to pay have been threatened with the closure of their churches.**

Islamists previously imposed the *jizya* tax in Dougouténé commune – and Douna-Pen residents told ACN that they fear that more Christian communities will be forced to pay the tax.

An anonymous source said: “We are supposed to be living in a secular state, where such practices should not take place, but unfortunately this is becoming our new reality. “If the authorities do not act, the population will pay taxes directly into the coffers of the terrorists, who act under the flag of jihadism in the Republic of Mali.”

The source added: “We know that the country is large and that the same is happening in other places, but if we don't do something in this area soon, the consequences will be disastrous.

**“Here, people are butchered like rats.”**

The ACN contact explained that this latest case of financial extortion is just one example of the persecution afflicting Christians in the region, and physical attacks are also common – adding that problems are made worse by a lack of basic infrastructure, such as roads and water supply systems, and schools closing due to growing insecurity.

**The source said that there is a concern that these forced payments will lead to deep divisions within the population, eroding trust in the government and exacerbating instability.**

The source concluded: “This is the cry of a citizen who still believes in the Republic of Mali and in its leaders – we need immediate action to avoid a religious conflict from taking hold of this country.

“May God help us.”

Christians make up 2.35 percent of Mali’s 20 million population, according to ACN’s *Religious Freedom in the World Report 2023*.

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