



SAHEL PEACE INITIATIVE (SPI) - INITIATIVE DU SAHEL POUR LA PAIX

Regional Forum for Advocacy and Resource Mobilization for Peace

Bamako | March 26-27, 2026

APPEAL FROM RELIGIOUS AND TRADITIONAL LEADERS OF BURKINA FASO, IVORY COAST, GHANA, MALI AND NIGER FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL COHESION IN THE SAHEL AND WEST AFRICA THROUGH THE SAHEL PEACE INITIATIVE

(Bamako, March 27, 2026)

A deep and persistent multidimensional crisis

The crisis that has gripped the Sahel and the West African sub-region for over a decade is multidimensional and fueled by numerous factors. It is simultaneously a security, humanitarian, socio-political, geopolitical, and, inevitably, economic crisis. It finds fertile ground in the structural economic vulnerability of the population, the erosion of the frameworks for transmitting values that foster social cohesion, and the deficiencies in the functioning of the state (poor governance leading, among other things, to corruption, social and economic inequalities). Conflicts over access to natural resources, conflicts between communities, the instrumentalization of cultural, religious and socio-political identities.

Initially confined to the central Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger), this crisis has now spread to the coastal countries of the Gulf of Guinea, exposing previously stable regions to new forms of violence. In the central Sahel, in particular, the crisis continues to manifest itself in, among other things, attacks on people and their property: targeted assassinations and kidnappings, the closure of numerous schools and health services, the destruction of thousands of homes belonging to community leaders, mass displacement of populations, and other serious human rights violations, including freedom of conscience, speech, and religion.

Considering all the above, we, religious and traditional leaders of Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Mali and Niger, issue this appeal:

To the perpetrators of the attacks and massacres, to put an end to them in the name of respect for life, which is a sacred gift from God that no one can dispose of, regardless of their feelings, ambition, ethnic, cultural, political or religious affiliation.

Public authorities must make the protection of populations and their integral human development their absolute priority, promoting through concrete actions exemplary governance imbued with social justice, integrity, accountability, and the pursuit of the common good, beyond their legitimate aspirations to sovereignty in the current context of global geopolitical reconfiguration. To this end, their multifaceted support for the efforts of religious and traditional leaders in building peace and social cohesion is eagerly awaited, because where their administrative legitimacy struggles to reach hearts and minds, the moral authority of these leaders can open doors. To address the security crisis, cross-border and regional cooperation is essential, as no country is strong enough to confront it alone.

The Sahel Peace Initiative (SPI) is an instrument for peace in the Sahel and West African countries. It needs support to carry out other initiatives and mobilize religious and traditional leaders for collective action in favor of the common good.

To the leaders of customary and religious communities, to use their moral authority in an interreligious approach to educate in respect for human dignity, to preserve religious freedom, the human and spiritual values common to all men, created by God, and to promote interreligious dialogue based on goodwill and the pursuit of peace through mutual understanding, prayer, speeches and actions imbued with respect and oriented towards the pursuit of the common good.

International actors are called upon to play a positive role in the current geopolitical reconfiguration of the world, by respecting the right of peoples to self-determination and the use of their local natural resources for their own development, by supporting states to address transnational challenges (nuclear proliferation, climate change, migration crises, poverty, insecurity, etc.), by ending unjust agreements that hinder the development of countries, by ending the proliferation of weapons and by ceasing the creation and fueling of conflicts.

To our technical and financial partners, we urge you to support all peace initiatives. Peace requires resources, real, concrete, patient, consistent, and sustainable investment. Support peace efforts. It means strengthening prevention, supporting

social cohesion, supporting mediation, listening, local resilience, and rebuilding trust at the local and international level.

To the diplomatic missions in our respective countries, to promote sincere cooperation, mindful of the interests of the people and respectful of International Law.

To the men and women of the media, to choose each day the story that enlightens and builds trust between men and women in our societies, rather than the scoop that ignites passions, and to get involved in networks committed to SPI and to transform the view of the Sahel and West Africa.

To local and community organizations, to become more aware of their role as watchdogs and sentinels within communities, and to address situations of distress early on, keeping the flame of hope burning bright where many see no way out. May they always be salt and leaven in the dough, and commit to relying first and foremost on themselves!

To families , the basic and future cells of society, to fully play their role as promoters of life and human values.

To fathers , called to be with their wives the pillars of the family, to work towards respecting the dignity of all, to be open to collaboration with all components of the family unit, and to transmit to future generations the values of peace, social cohesion and the fear of God.

To women , who often carry the essentials silently, hold families together, carry memory, sustain life, sometimes prevent the human fabric from tearing completely apart, to play a balancing role, to promote peace and social cohesion through their ability to listen, to reconcile and to create bonds.

To young people , urge them not to be negatively influenced by social media, nor to be recruited by armed or terrorist groups, and to become fully aware that they are not condemned to inherit only the crises of our region. They are important actors in the society of tomorrow, called upon to become clear-sighted builders of a more just and fraternal future.

To the actors of non-state organizations and to all people of goodwill, to support the initiatives, for a reconciled world in justice and true peace.

To the populations victimized by violence, to the families who have lost loved ones, to the people who bear the scars of violence, to take courage, to remain dignified and to keep confidence without giving in to hatred or revenge despite adversity and all the factors that incite despair.

Peace being a gift from God but also the fruit of human effort, we, religious, traditional, and customary leaders gathered in Bamako on March 26 and 27, 2026, around the theme "**Peace in the Sahel and West Africa: A Call from Religious and Traditional Leaders for Social Cohesion through Collective Action!**", reaffirm our commitment to collaborate with all people of goodwill. This is so that all forms of violence may cease and their root causes may be eradicated. In this march for the reconquest of peace in the Sahel, West Africa, and beyond, which we support with our prayers, the commitment and contribution of all will be invaluable and decisive!

We implore God's blessing upon the countries of the Sahel, upon West Africa, and upon the entire world.

Signed:

**Representative of the Muslim
Community**

Sheikh Dr. Hazic Hussein ZAKARIA,
Ghana

**Representative of the
Traditional Chieftaincy**

His Majesty Ousmane DICKO,
Emir of Liptako, Burkina Faso

**Representative of the Protestant
Community**

Reverend Dr. Nouh Ag Infa YATTARA,
General Delegate of AGEMPEM, Mali

**Representative of the Catholic
Community**

Philippe Cardinal OUEDRAOGO,
Archbishop Emeritus of Ouagadougou,
Burkina Faso

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