Islamist Gunmen Storm Mali Luxury Hotel Take 170 Hostage

November 20, 2015

By [Jaime Williams](http://www.thetimesgazette.com/author/jaime-williams/)

The Times Gazette

http://www.thetimesgazette.com/islamist-gunman-storm-mali-luxury-hotel-take-170-hostage/9421/

Gunmen attacked a luxury hotel in the capital of Mali Friday, killing three people while taking over 170 hostages. Bamako serves as the logistics hub for the French military forces that are helping to fight Islamist insurgents. No person or group claimed responsibility for this attack and the identities as well as affiliations of the attackers was still not clear.

No direct links were drawn by authorities to the attacks last week in Paris. However, Mali, home to Timbuktu the world-renowned ancient city, has been the hub for the effort supported by the French to drive back rebels that at one time controlled large areas of the vast nation that stretches from desert regions that border Algeria to West Africa.

An army commander for the Malian military said 10 or more gunmen stormed the Bamako Radisson Blu Hotel shouting out Allahu Akbar or God is great, in Arabic. They then fired on guards and started taking their hostages.

Close to 20 hostages were able to escape, including some members of a crew from Turkish Airlines, said officials.

There is no clear number for those that have been killed or injured in the hotel assault. A military official from Mali said three were confirmed dead, but did not give out any further information.

However, an international news agency has said that two of the dead were Malian and one was French.

The hotel was surrounded by security forces. At the time of the assault, the hotel had been hosting a number of foreigners including envoys from the UN involved in the peace talks in Mali.

In a post on its Internet site, Rezifor Hotel Group, the operator of the hotel in Bamako, said of the hostages, 30 were staff at the hotel. The other hostages, approximately 140 were guests.

A journalist from Mali who was inside a building close to the hotel said that gunmen asked the hostages to recite a declaration of faith used by Muslims called the shahada. Those who did were freed.

Some of the people freed, including both foreigners and Malians did not have any clothes on when taken to a nearby police station.