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OPEN LETTER

PROTECTING TRANSLATORS AND INTERPRETERS WORLDWIDE



August 2022

Ms. Christine Lambrecht, Federal Minister of Defense
Ms. Annalena Baerbock, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs
Ms. Nancy Faeser, Federal Minister of the Interior and Community



Re: A Beacon of Light for Interpreters in Mali

Dear Ministers,

The undersigned representatives of the international and German language community, together with their humanitarian partners, are deeply concerned about the safety of our colleagues in Mali. Engaged locally to provide a critical service as civilian interpreters/cultural liaisons for German troops of the UN MINUSMA mission, they worked at great personal risk to themselves and their families. Now, with the withdrawal of French peacekeepers and the seemingly imminent withdrawal of your country's soldiers, this risk rises exponentially as regional volatility and security challenges mount.



Local insurgent groups affiliated with al-Qaeda and Islamic State are active in central and northern Mali. With the majority of your troop contingent based in Gao, leaving the local personnel behind would endanger their lives. We understand that your country is currently employing 59 interpreters/ Locally Employed Civilians (LECs - Ortskräfte). To guarantee their safety, we urge you to extract all of them and their families prior to full withdrawal.



It is imperative that the chaotic exit from Afghanistan not be repeated; a speaker of the Bundeswehr operational command has expressed a similar sentiment. The lives of all LECs must be protected. Moreover, we believe that exhibiting duty of care, coupled with an actionable plan for resettlement, will serve as a beacon to other MINUSMA troop-contributing countries.



Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Maya Hess, President, Red T

Jennifer Fearnside-Bitsios, President, International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC)

Linda Fitchett, Chair, AIIC Conflict Zone Group

Alison Rodriguez, President, International Federation of Translators (FIT)

Aurora Humarán, President, International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI)



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Angela Sasso, President, Critical Link International (CLI)

Christopher Stone, President, World Association of Sign Language Interpreters (WASLI)

Bart Defrancq, President, Conférence Internationale Permanente d'Instituts Universitaires de Traducteurs et Interprètes (CIUTI)



fit-ift.org
Paris

Sue-Ann Harding, President, and Cristina Marinetti, Chair of the Executive Council, International Association of Translation and Intercultural Studies (IATIS)

Lucio Bagnulo, Head of Translation and Language Strategy, Language Resource Centre, International Secretariat, Amnesty International

Romana Cacchioli, Executive Director, PEN International

Urtzi Urrutikoetxea, Chair, Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, PEN International

Genny Brusegan Conte, President, European Forum of Sign Language Interpreters (EFSLI)

Daniela Perillo, President, European Legal Interpreters and Translators Association (EULITA)



iapti.org
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Lieven Buysse, President, European Network for Public Service Interpreting and Translation (ENPSIT)

Anne Berres, Regional Secretary, AIIC Deutschland

Norma Kessler, President, Bundesverband der Dolmetscher und Übersetzer e.V. (BDÜ)

John O'Shea, Chair, FIT Europe

Marcus Grotian, Chair, Patenschaftsnetzwerk Afghanische Ortskräfte e.V.

Josef Haslinger, President, and Claudia Guderian, Secretary, PEN-Zentrum Deutschland

Günter Burkhardt, Executive Director, PRO ASYL



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