

# Malian jihadist on trial at ICC over Timbuktu destruction, crimes against humanity

From [Girls](#) were allegedly forced to marry militants.

The charges cover a period when Islamic fundamentalists exploited an ethnic Tuareg uprising in 2012 to take over cities in Mali's volatile north. Prosecutors at the tribunal in The Hague will give their opening statement against the man they described in pre-trial hearings as having "terrorised" local residents. The defence and the legal representatives of alleged victims will deliver their statements at a later date when evidence is presented to the court.

Jihadists who swept into Timbuktu, dubbed the "Pearl of the Desert", considered the shrines there to be idolatrous and wrecked them with pickaxes and bulldozers.

ICC prosecutors said there were "substantial grounds" to convict Al Hassan for "crimes against humanity... torture, rape, sexual slavery (and) other inhumane acts including, inter alia, forced marriages, persecution and war crimes." "Al Hassan played an essential and undeniable role in the system of persecution established by the armed groups... in Timbuktu," ICC chief prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said last year. The jihadist police imposed draconian measures on the city's residents who lived in constant fear of "despicable" violence and repression, prosecutors said.