



# MALI'S 2020 COUP HOW DID WE GET HERE?

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## MALI'S 2020 COUP: HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Mali has been facing a serious socio-political crisis that has threatened to tear the country apart since March when the constitutional court overturned 31 provisional parliamentary election results, many in favour of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's (IBKs) party. The overturn exacerbated pre-existing political tension across the country and led citizens to protest.

The main opposition group M5-RFP, the June 5 movement – a Rassemblement des Forces Patriotiques du Mali, a coalition of civil

society and other opposition groups have repeatedly called for the resignation of President IBK since the formation in June 2002. They blame Keita for Mali's chronic corruption, economic instability, and for failing to adequately address the eight-year-long jihadist conflict in the north. A protest led by M5-RFP figurehead Imam Mahmoud Dicko in July, resulted in the death of two people and dozens of injuries as violent clashes broke out between law enforcement officials and protesters, who blocked off streets and attacked the parliament building.

## ECOWAS CALLS FOR A UNITY GOVERNMENT IN MALI

In a bid to solve Mali's political crisis ECOWAS pressured Keita to agree to a 6-member government that would be tasked with solving the country's issues. The new government was expected to resolve ongoing tension between the president and M5-RFP. The regional body warned of sanctions to be imposed on those who opposed the resolution. ECOWAS, also called for a partial rerun of the parliamentary election and asked the 31 parliamentary members and the speaker of the national assembly to resign.

However, the regional bloc was unsuccessful in gaining widespread support for this deal, particularly from the opposition group. In fact, the coalition indicated their lack of trust in ECOWAS to resolve the issue and maintained their core demand; that President Keita must step down before they would consider a deal.

## MALI'S COUP D'ÉTAT

A coup, which began on the morning of Tuesday 18 August, in the army base in Kati about 15 km from Bamako, forced the resignation of Mali's president and the dissolution of the National Assembly. IBK's resignation was televised just hours after armed soldiers arrested and detained him, along with the prime minister and ministers of foreign affairs, finance and defence all at gunpoint.

The coup, which coincided with the opposition plans to resume protests calling for IBK's resignation, was welcomed in an atmosphere of popular jubilation on the streets of Bamako. Several videos making rounds on the internet showed citizens celebrating with the rebellious soldiers.

Headed by Col Sadio Camara, Col Malick Diaw, and Gen Cheick Fanta Mady Dembele, the mutinying soldiers who now refer to themselves as the Comité national pour le Salut du Peuple (CNSP) (National Committee for the Salvation of the People) have closed Mali's borders and instituted a nighttime curfew until further notice. Spokesperson of the self-acclaimed CNSP, Ismael Wague, has announced that the military do not intend to hold on to power. The military's intention, he stated in a public address, was to ensure a smooth "civil political transition" with general elections conducted within a "reasonable time frame" to allow Mali to "equip itself with strong institutions capable of managing daily lives and restoring trust between governments and governed".

## UNCERTAINTIES REIGNS IN MALI

Mali was already struggling to control jihadist attacks and communal violence. It will now face a new period of uncertainty. Although, the military has promised a political transition it is not clear if they will do so according to the Malian constitution which stipulates that the election of a new President must take place at least twenty-one days and at most forty days after official confirmation of the vacancy of the office of the presidency. It is also not clear

when and how the transitional government will be constituted.

Article 36 of the Malian constitution stipulates that if the President of the Republic is temporarily prevented from fulfilling his functions, his powers are temporarily exercised by the Prime Minister. In the event of vacancy for any reason or of absolute impediment the functions of the President of the Republic are

exercised by the President of the National Assembly. However, upon his resignation, President IBK also dissolved the National Assembly, which leaves Mali facing a constitutional crisis.

The junta leaders say all international agreements will still be respected and international forces, including the UN mission in Mali and G5 Sahel, will remain in place "for the restoration of stability". The coup leaders also remain "committed to the Algiers process" - a 2015 peace agreement between the Malian

government and armed groups in the north of the country. But ECOWAS, the African Union, neighbouring states and international partners have all condemned the coup and called for a rapid return to constitutional order and the immediate release of Keita and other detainees. ECOWAS has closed regional borders with Mali, excluded the country from its internal decision-making bodies, suspend all financial exchanges between its 15 members and is pushing for sanctions against all parties involved in the coup.

## WHAT IS NEXT?

***There are big questions about what might happen next.***

- How rapidly can the military transmute into transitional government that has greater legitimacy than the one it just ousted?
- Is there going to be a negotiation between the putschist and ECOWAS to restore order in the country?
- How will Mali restart its democratic process?
- And how will ECOWAS ensure strict compliance to her Protocol on Democracy and Good governance and also ensure the putschist do not benefit from their putsch as General Sanogo and his cohorts did in 2012?
- What will be the regional implication

considering the 2012 Coup also saw similar coup occur in Guinea Conakry?

In 2012, Mali experienced a mutiny that resulted in a coup d'etat that ousted then-President Amadou Toumani Toure (ATT) and contributed to the fall of northern Mali into the hands of jihadi militants. Military officers' discontent about lack of weaponry to defend the country and effective leadership in curbing the ethnic-Tuareg rebellion were responsible for that coup. A transition was midwived by ECOWAS within a month with coup leader handing over government on April 8th 2012 (March 12-April 8,2012). A transitional government ruled and conducted within a year. An election which brought IBK into office in September 2013.

This current crisis could impact not only on the security situation in Mali, but that of its neighbours. It will likely slow down any attempt to stabilise the country and will exacerbate the security situation in the volatile north and central areas. Meanwhile, the flow of Malians across the borders in search of shelter and food into neighboring countries is expected to increase, due to the conflict and the economy

worsening further. The sanctions imposed in particular by Cote D Ivoire will have immense effect on the citizenry coupled with ECOWAS closure of her borders. The same challenges that blighted IBK's government, are now problems to be solved by Mali's new, and hopefully temporary, leaders.

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