

**West Africa This Week – A weekly highlight on political, security, socio-political and health happenings across the West African region**

**Burkina Faso and Mali – 18<sup>th</sup> July to 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2022**

**BURKINA FASO**

**Political Dynamics**

Former ruling party reawakens

The National Political Bureau of the People's Movement for Progress (Mouvement du peuple pour le progress – MPP), held its first ordinary session<sup>1</sup> this year on July 16 at the Palais de la Jeunesse et de la Culture in Ouagadougou. During the session, the deteriorating security situation of the country and the increased number of IDPs were some of the focal areas of discussion. While renewing its unwavering support for the Defense and Security Forces (FDS) and the Volunteers for the Defense of the Fatherland (VDP) in the fight against insecurity, MPP invited its supporters to unite and work together for the strengthening and revival of the Party. The party is expected to take all appropriate measures to strengthen unity and cohesion and revitalize the life of the Party's statutory structures at all organizational levels of the MPP, through field trips.

**Risks on Security and Socio-political Dynamics**

CODEL set to continue electoral education

The Convention of Civil Society Organizations for the Observation of Elections (CODEL) launched its project of "citizen watch and monitoring for good electoral governance in Burkina Faso", on July 21 in Ouagadougou. The project, which stems from the disruption to democratic processes by the coup d'état of January 24, will be implemented over a period of three (03) months for awareness creation among the population on the various recommendations of observation missions in future elections. It will also serve as an opportunity to call on the authorities to clean up the electoral process for better governance in Burkina Faso<sup>2</sup>.

Project activities will be carried out mainly in the central region, particularly in Ouagadougou. The flagship activities include a capitalization meeting on the recommendations resulting from the 2015 and 2020 electoral observations, a forum on electoral corruption and the illicit financing of political parties, advocacy and communications on electoral reforms.

Barkhane in Ouagadougou

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<sup>1</sup> For the full report of the session and the party's activities before and during the coup, please see <https://burkina24.com/2022/07/21/chute-de-roch-kabore-les-militants-du-mpp-attendaient-des-actions-vigoureuses-et-dissuasives-de-la-direction-politique-nationale-du-parti/>

<sup>2</sup> More details can be found at <https://burkina24.com/2022/07/21/la-rupture-du-processus-electoral-est-un-frein-brutal-au-cheminement-du-burkina-faso-souleymane-ouedraogo-membre-de-la-codel/>

At a press briefing<sup>3</sup> organized by the Commander of the Barkhane Force, General Laurent Michon on July 21 in Ouagadougou, to mark the end of his mission in the Sahel, the Commander presented the results and prospects of the French military system in the Sahel region. Commenting on the withdrawal of Takuba and the Barkhane troop in Mali, he distanced the decision from the presence of Wagner but rather linked it to goodwill and hope for the political stability of the region.

## MALI

### Political Dynamics

ECOWAS Mediator praises the transition process

The ECOWAS Mediator, former Nigerian President Goodluck JONATHAN, was in Bamako from July 20 to 21 to monitor and evaluate the Transition process. During his 48-hour stay, he met with the Malian authorities and members of the local Transition monitoring committee<sup>4</sup>.

It would be recalled that the noteworthy progress made by the transition government enhanced the recent lifting of economic and financial sanctions by ECOWAS and WAEMU. However, ECOWAS had upheld other sanctions such as Mali's suspension from decision-making institutions, until a peaceful return to constitutional order was attained.

Mandated to continue exchanges with Malian authorities, the Mediator noted the resumption of economic activities in post-sanction Mali upon his arrival at the airport. He acknowledged the progress made by the authorities and hoped that it will be maintained for the organization of the elections to allow the democratically elected government to take the reins of the country.

The case of the 49 Ivorian soldiers in Mali

Following the arrest of 49 Ivorian soldiers on arrival in Mali, explanations from the Ivorian end linked the arrested soldiers to a UN procedure allowing peacekeeping contingents to call on external contractors for logistical support, the National Support Elements (NSE). However, the Malian authorities regarded the soldiers as mercenaries, and have consequently suspended all rotations of the military and police contingents of the United Nations Mission in Mali (UNMIS), including those already scheduled, the foreign ministry said in a statement. The suspension is effective until the organisation of a meeting to facilitate the coordination and regulation of the rotation of these contingents. As a result, 8 soldiers of the German army who had reserved their flights for July 14 were prevented from leaving Malian territory<sup>5</sup>.

However, before the expected meeting could even ensue, the Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of the United Nations in Mali was invited by the Malian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on July 20, to be notified that after the discussions between both teams, a series of biased

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<sup>3</sup> <https://burkina24.com/2022/07/21/la-decision-de-partir-du-mali-nest-pas-liee-a-larrivee-de-wagner-general-laurent-michon/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://maliactu.net/goodluck-jonathan-a-bamako-se-rejouit-des-efforts-consentis/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://maliactu.net/8-soldats-allemands-ne-peuvent-pas-quitter-le-mali-en-raison-de-la-suspension-des-rotations-au-sein-de-la-minusma/>

and unacceptable publications on Twitter by the Spokesperson of MINUSMA, Olivier Salgado, (as stated by the Malian authorities) has led to new developments regarding the case. In a Communiqué<sup>6</sup> by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs dated July 20, Mr. Olivier Salgado was given 72 hours to leave Mali having not been able to present proof of the assertions contained in his tweet, or make the necessary correction demanded by the Malian authorities. Olivier Salgado, a UN diplomat and spokesperson for MINUSMA is the third individual (excluding the Barkhane and Takuba forces) to be declared persona non grata in Mali. Others before him are Hamidou Bolly the ECOWAS representative in Mali, and Joël Meyer, the French Ambassador to Mali.

Monitoring the reactions of Malians on Twitter to this decision by the government, it appears the decision is welcomed with pride and relief for majority. MINUSMA also acknowledged and regretted the decision, while reiterating to continue to work towards the implementation of its mandate in support of peace and security in Mali<sup>7</sup>.

Clarifications on all current military operations demanded

Given the inconsistencies surrounding the “49 Ivorian mercenaries” case, the Malian authorities decided to clarify all the military operations in progress in the country, starting with MINUSMA operations. Thus, after the suspension which took effect from July 14, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation requested a coordination meeting between the Malian structures concerned and the MINUSMA to facilitate the coordination and regulation of the rotation of contingents operating within the MINUSMA. And so, on July 12, the Malian government addressed a correspondence to MINUSMA asking for all the necessary documents on its contingents and contractors or co-contractors in Mali; the clarification of the legal or contractual links between the Ivorian soldiers concerned, Sahel Aviation Service and the German contingent of MINUSMA; as well as an update on the numbers of the National Support Elements, together with the precision of their places of deployment and the missions entrusted to them<sup>8</sup>.

MINUSMA provides clarifications

On July 22, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilisation Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) transmitted the information requested by the Malian authorities as follows:

1) Clarification on the legal or contractual links between the Ivorian military personnel who arrived in Bamako on 10 July 2022, Sahel Aviation Service and the German contingent of MINUSMA

MINUSMA notes that the Ivorian elements were deployed to Sénou (Bamako) to provide security at the German NSE base in Sénou, instead of Timbuktu where the Ivorian contingent of MINUSMA is based. It appears that certain procedures were not followed

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<sup>6</sup> The communiqué can be found here <https://t.co/SasAXMWbmg>

<sup>7</sup> <https://minusma.unmissions.org/la-minusma-regrette-l%E2%80%99exoulsion-de-son-porte-parole-par-le-gouvernement-malien>

<sup>8</sup> <https://maliactu.net/minusma-bamako-veut-clarifier-toutes-les-operations-militaires-en-cours/>

and the Mission is trying to better understand how these malfunctions could have occurred in order to avoid their recurrence in the future.

2) Contractual, sub-contractual relationship between the German contingent and third parties

MINUSMA is not aware of any contract between Germany and third parties for the protection of the German base in NSE. Measures have already been taken to strengthen the management of NSE

3) Number and location of NSE in MINUSMA

UN policies allow TCCs and PCCs to deploy NSEs to provide services to their contingents in a national capacity

Each contingent is responsible for informing MINUSMA on a monthly basis of the number of its national support elements deployed. According to the contingents' declarations, as of June 2022, the total number of NSEs in Mali is 609, including 471 supporting the German contingent, 33 Bangladeshis, 7 Cambodians, 5 Chadians, 60 British, 4 Sri Lankans, and 29 Swedes.

MINUSMA has not been informed of the presence and number of NSE from Côte d'Ivoire. However, by cross-checking internal documents, MINUSMA estimates the Ivorian detachment to be 50 men and women.

MINUSMA has initiated a census of NSE in all its contingents, in order to obtain accurate figures. The Mission will share the findings of its verification once it is complete.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali thanks the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Republic of Mali for its kind cooperation and takes this opportunity to renew the assurances of its highest consideration<sup>9</sup>.

This new statement is clearly an indication that MINUSMA/United Nations has retraced its steps in the case of the 49 soldiers arrested on Sunday July 10, 2022, in Mali. From the statement, there were indeed malfunctions in the procedure, as contrary to the Ivorian statement on the case, this Note Verbale from MINUSMA clarifies that "the 49 Ivorian soldiers arrested in Bamako are not national elements supporting the Minusma contingents" but, by cross-checking internal documents, MINUSMA estimates that the Ivorian detachment amounts to 50 men and women. Although MINUSMA has informed the Malian authorities "to have initiated a census of the NSE in all its contingents, in order to obtain its verifications once they are established", could the Malian reasons behind the arrest of the 49 Ivorian soldiers be viable?

Demands for the departure of MINUSMA from Mali

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<sup>9</sup> As found on the Note Verbale

The Yèrèwolo Movement is demanding the departure of MINUSMA from Mali before September 22. This was announced during a press conference and followed up with a letter of dismissal delivered to the UN Mission at its headquarters in Sènou on July 20<sup>10</sup>.

Members of the Movement are taking this action on the basis that MINUSMA has become "an occupying force which revives and maintains fear, ethnic divisions and mistrust between communities in Mali"; that the MINUSMA mandate has been completely devoid of its content which was to "support the authorities of the Malian transition to stabilize the situation in the main agglomerations, in particular in the north of Mali, and, in this context, ward off threats and actively take steps to prevent the return of armed elements to the area"; and the Malians consider reports of the MINUSMA biased.

What implications would this action yield, given that the legitimate Malian authorities had renewed the mandate of the Minusma, albeit the recent suspension of activities?

### **Risks on Security and Socio-political Dynamics**

Transition president's residence camp suffered armed attacks

The military camp of Soundiata Keita located in Kati where Transitional President Colonel Assimi Goïta and the Minister of Defense also reside was attacked on July 22<sup>11</sup>. Heavy weapon fire accompanied by detonations was reportedly heard as early as 5 am but the situation had since been controlled by the Malian armed forces. Kati houses the largest military base in Mali and this is the first time it is being the target of a terrorist attack. In a statement by the Armed Forces published on Twitter ([https://twitter.com/FAMa\\_DIRPA/status/1550458437263400960/photo/1](https://twitter.com/FAMa_DIRPA/status/1550458437263400960/photo/1)), two vehicles packed with explosives were found while the military took control of the situation. Consequently, 7 terrorists were neutralised, 8 arrested while on FAMa's end, 1 soldier died and 6 wounded, including 1 civilian. Prior to this attack, a police base on Kolokani had been attacked and two Malian soldiers killed, an army checkpoint had also been attacked and at least six people killed.

World Bank to resume operations in Mali

With the lifting of the ECOWAS and WAEMU sanctions against Mali, Mali's Ministry of Economy and Finance has announced on its Twitter platform<sup>12</sup> the lifting of the suspension of disbursements relating to projects and programmes financed by the World Bank in Mali. World Bank, like other international organizations, had taken measures through economic and financial sanctions against Mali in 2021 after two coups in less than a year. Nevertheless, with the lifting of the sanctions, World Bank will resume financial operations in Mali.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://maliactu.net/contre-toute-evidence-et-toute-logique/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://burkina24.com/2022/07/22/mali-une-attaque-armee-au-camp-militaire-de-kati/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://t.co/dPuVpA8wln>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The international communities and organizations should be encouraged to support the efforts of the Sahel government in fighting against terrorism.

ECOWAS Member States should be enjoined to work together, promoting dialogue as the best option for conflict resolution, to further strengthen peaceful cohabitation in the region.