

Military Rule in Mali

August 24, 2020

Mali awoke to a new chapter in its troubled history after **rebel military leaders forced President Boubacar Keita from office**, prompting its West African neighbours to threaten border closures and sanctions against the coup leaders. Mr. Keita, embattled by months of protests over economic stagnation, corruption and a brutal Islamist insurgency, said he had resigned to avoid bloodshed.

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Jubilant crowds had cheered the rebels as they arrived in Bamako, where they detained Mr. Keita along with Prime Minister Boubou Cisse. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres demanded the **immediate and unconditional release of both men as diplomats in New York said the Security Council would hold emergency talks**. The coup leaders appeared on television overnight to pledge a political transition and new elections within a reasonable time.

There were **no reports of casualties during the military takeover but the coup leaders announced a curfew and border closures, in effect sealing off the country**. French President Emmanuel Macron was among the first to condemn the mutiny, his office saying that he still supported mediation efforts by other West African states. **Mali is the cornerstone of French-led efforts to roll back jihadists in the Sahel, and its neighbours are anxious to avoid the country sliding into chaos**.

Colonel Wague of Mali airforce said **all past agreements would be respected, including Mali's support for anti-jihadist missions in the region. MINUSMA (the UN force in Mali), (France's) Barkhane force, the G5 Sahel, Takuba (a European special-forces initiative)** remain our partners, he said. 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, he said. Mali has several **jihadi groups in its northern deserts and there are fears they could take advantage of the coup**. They did so following the previous military takeover in 2012.

Further, the military government that seized power in Mali wants a **military-led transitional body to rule the country for three years** and has agreed to release deposed President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. This **transition will be directed by a body led by a soldier, who will also be head of state**. The coup followed months of protests calling for Keita to resign as public discontent with the government grew about the country's **brutal rebellion and collapsing economy**. While it met international condemnation, thousands of opposition supporters celebrated the president's removal in the streets of Bamako. **The 15-nation Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), weary of prolonged instability in Mali and the potential for similar power grabs in the region, has taken a hard line on the coup**. It suspended Mali from its decision-making institutions, shut borders and halted financial flows with the country.