

# Guinean Coup Leaders Respond to Suspensions from ECOWAS and AU

National Committee for Reconciliation and Development proposes conference to discuss political future of the West African state.

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*A delegation from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a 15-member regional grouping made up of heads of governments, visited the capital of Conakry, Guinea on September 10, just two days after a decision was made at an extraordinary virtual meeting to suspend the military junta from participation in the organs and functions of the organization.*

On September 5, the Guinean Special Forces led by **Lt. Col. Mamady Doumbouya** launched an attack on the institutions of authority in Conakry later arresting **President Alpha Conde** and announcing to the world over national television that a National Committee for Reconciliation and Development (CNRD) had taken charge of the country.

ECOWAS and the 55-member states African Union (AU) are obligated to oppose and sanction any military seizure of power. Both ECOWAS and the AU can break relations with a coup regime in addition to imposing sanctions and other measures.

In efforts to fulfill its obligations, ECOWAS deployed its representatives to Conakry for discussions with Doumbouya and his cohorts. Issues surrounding the return to civilian rule, the release of ousted President Conde and the restoration of the constitution, were high on the agenda.

Inquiries regarding the health status of the overthrown Conde indicated that the ECOWAS delegation had met with the former president and described him as being in good health, although no specific details were forthcoming. The ECOWAS officials also said that the CNRD relayed to them that the former president would be released from detention soon.

Conde had drawn the ire of many people within Guinea when he altered the national constitution to seek a third term of office during 2020. There were widespread protests against the revision of the constitution when dozens of people were killed and hundreds more detained. Several leading figures in the protests of 2020 have been released from

detention by the CNRD.

After winning another term of office which saw the opposition parties refusing to participate, discontent obviously grew within the mineral rich country. Conde had pledged to expand the mining operations of the bauxite and iron ore firms. Guinea has the largest known deposits of these valuable mineral resources. Yet the people remain impoverished and underdeveloped indicating that there is widespread corruption within the government and its economic partners.

Although ECOWAS and the AU have suspended the memberships of Guinea, there has not been any announcements that sanctions would be imposed. The effectiveness of such sanctions may be questionable based upon the actual structural orientation of the national economy which receives revenue from the contracts and mining operations of the foreign firms which dominate the extractive sectors.

The western region of the country lies on the Atlantic Coast allowing trade to continue with external states and interests. Three of the major rivers in West Africa, the Gambia, Niger and Senegal rise in Guinea. The land mass borders Guinea-Bissau in the northwest, Senegal to the north, Mali in the northeast, Ivory Coast to the southeast and Liberia and Sierra Leone in the south, making the enforcement of sanctions extremely difficult considering the military and economic resources available to ECOWAS and the AU.

Some observers have pointed to the contradictory posture of ECOWAS and the AU noting the failure of both institutions to raise criticisms, let alone suspensions or sanctions, against Conde and his Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) ruling party, when they arranged for the extension of the tenure of the ousted president in 2020. A similar situation occurred in Ivory Coast when the French-installed (2011) President Alassane Ouattara arranged to seek office for another period determined by the leader and his party in 2020. Unrest in Ivory Coast in opposition to Ouattara never prompted ECOWAS and the AU to suspend the country from membership.

In an [interview by Al Jazeera](#) with Adama Gaye, the former information director for ECOWAS, the official emphasized that:

“They have been sleeping on the wheels of the organization instead of really being proactive in addressing the challenges inside its member states. Its 15 member states have been really complacent with those that have been breaking the law within their countries from Conde to Ouattara ... all of the problems at the end of the day they lead to the current situation we are seeing in Guinea, and somehow ECOWAS is coming like [the] doctor after death.”

### **CNRD Proposes National Conference to Form Another Government**

Obviously in response to the suspension by ECOWAS and the AU, the CNRD military junta announced on September 14 that it was convening a four-day national conference involving opposition parties, civil society organizations and mining interests to discuss the political future of the country. Reports from various news agencies covering events in Conakry say that several opposition leaders have voiced support for the coup makers claiming that the putsch was justified due to the ousted president’s policies and behavior.

The political parties represented at the heavily guarded People’s Palace on September 14

blamed the fate of the ousted president on his refusal to relinquish power in 2020. This public show of support for the CNRD may not be enough to persuade the international community including ECOWAS, AU and the United Nations to accept the rule of military leaders as a legitimate government inside the country.

Members of Conde's RPG party were quoted as saying they were deliberating over whether to participate in the conference organized by the CNRD. Other parties cited in the media, and there are many, have not taken a position against the concept of military rule, particularly within a state whose government has maintained close links with the imperialist countries since the advent of the first military coup by Col. Lansana Conte after the death of the founding President Ahmed Sekou Toure in 1984.

In an [article published by the Associated Press](#), it summed up the attitude of one opposition figure in this manner:

"Sidya Toure, leader of the Union of Republican Forces party, said conditions already appear to have improved since the military takeover. He recalled how security forces had 'tried to kidnap me in my home' during Conde's regime. We can see it all around the town in Conakry, absolutely the change amongst the military and policemen,' he said. 'I think we are going in the right way for the moment.'"

### **The Role of Imperialism in Military Coups in the Recent Period**

All of the states that have experienced military coups from 2012 to the present in Mali, Chad and Guinea have maintained close ties with the United States Pentagon and the French Ministry of the Armed Forces. Doumbouya was a long-time member of the French Foreign Legion and has participated in operations alongside the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

On the day of the September 5 military seizure of power, there were AFRICOM troops reportedly seen in the capital of Conakry. Al Jazeera in an article published on September 10 verified these claims.

#### **According to the article:**

"The United States embassy in Conakry on Friday (September 10) stated that Guinea should 'immediately restore democracy'. On Thursday (September 9), the U.S. denied involvement after a video emerged of U.S. soldiers in a crowd of jubilant Guineans as the coup unfolded on Sunday (September 5). The U.S. State Department said a small U.S. team had been involved in a joint military training exercise outside Conakry. 'Given the changing security situation, it was decided that the team would be relocated to the U.S. embassy in Conakry. Guinean security forces provided an escort to Conakry to ensure the safe passage of the team,' the department said."

This same situation holds true for Mali and Chad as it relates to the defense training by AFRICOM and France. Both imperialist states conduct routine military maneuvers known as Operation Flintlock along with Operation Barkhane organized by Washington and Paris respectively. Ostensibly the U.S. and France are in Africa to support governments in their struggles against Islamist insurgencies.

However, the U.S. and France have extensive economic interests in West Africa and this factor cannot be ignored when assessing their military presence within the ECOWAS region and the continent as a whole. Even with the interventions by France and the U.S., the

overall security situation in West Africa has worsened over the last decade. The deteriorating economies marked by the unequal distribution of wealth and social instability in African nations are clearly illustrated by events in Guinea, Mali, Chad, Ivory Coast and other states which are aligned with world capitalism.

The questions of national and regional security cannot be separated from the political orientation of the state. As long as the western-influenced political parties and mass organizations remain dominant, there cannot be the necessary latitude to exert genuine independence from the legacies of colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism.

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