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Mali

# An embargo against the Malian people

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**The two African regional bodies, ECOWAS (Economic Community of West African States) and WAEMU (West African Economic and Monetary Union), a grouping of countries that use the CFA franc as their currency, have decided to introduce sanctions against Mali. The reason given was the junta's decision to extend the transition period by five years. The ECOWAS position is strongly supported, if not provoked, by France, which intends to continue to dictate its will on the course of the war in the Sahel.**

Following massive popular mobilizations against the government, Malian army officers had deposed President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta in August 2020. They had set up a first government and then, after having dismissed it, took over the reins of the transitional government directly. Initially the junta committed itself to organising elections on 27 February this year. With the holding of the national conference on refoundation, it decided to extend the transition by five years.

## Ball of hypocrites

The sanctions against Mali are extremely harsh: closure of borders, ban on all transactions, freezing of Malian state assets in all West African banking institutions. While officially these measures do not apply to basic necessities and fuel, their shortages are likely to be felt quickly because of the lack of available cash. In short, the aim is to economically suffocate one of the poorest countries in the world with all the dramatic consequences for the population.

Such measures had already been taken against the Gbagbo government in support of Alassane Ouattara during the 2010 electoral crisis in Côte d'Ivoire, at the instigation of France.

Among the great democrats of the ECOWAS, we find the Senegalese president Macky Sall who, a few months ago, opened fire against demonstrators with a toll of 13 dead including a 12 year old child, the Nigerian Mohamed Bazoum who has just imprisoned two journalists denouncing drug trafficking, The Ivorian Ouattara, who has run for a third term in office despite the Constitution, Faure Gnassingbé, who is in his fourth term as head of Togo, and the Beninese Patrice Talon, who has thrown his two main opponents, Frédéric Joël Aïvo and Réckyatou Madougou, into prison on charges of terrorism.

While there is strong criticism of the military junta in Mali, civil society and political parties condemn the embargo on their country. They rightly point out that democracy is not just the organization of elections. Everyone agrees on the need for profound reforms. Especially since Mali has already gone through this experience in 2012. At the time, France and ECOWAS imposed an electoral process that did not resolve the situation in the country. France as the orchestrator of the embargo

Many believe that France is at the helm in establishing the embargo as it did in 2012. It presented a motion to the UN Council to support the embargo, which was vetoed by Russia and China. The same zeal is used to convince the European Union to support the sanctions. Another example of this relentlessness: Air France, which was boarding passengers to Bamako on Wednesday 12 January, had to cancel operations immediately under the injunction of the French authorities, leaving dozens of passengers stranded at Roissy airport. On the other hand, French military flights continue, and are not even authorised by the Malian regulatory authority to enter the country's airspace.

## An embargo against the Malian people

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Le Drian, a pitiful representative of Françafrique, denigrates the Malian junta as a gravedigger of democracy, but remains silent when Macron is the first Western head of state to meet the Saudi leader Mohammed Ben Salmane involved in the despicable murder of journalist Jamal Khashoggi. Equally silent when his mentor ostensibly supports the military coup in Chad carried out by the son of the late dictator Idriss Déby.

Whatever the outcome of this crisis, the gamble of ECOWAS and the French government is lost. The tens of thousands of Malians who took to the streets against the sanctions reinforce the position of the junta, which is cleverly playing on the defence of the country. This popular mobilization is helping to strengthen resentment against France's imperialist policy. At least Macron's arrogance will have served its purpose.

*20 January 2022*

*PS:*

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