

## JOINT STATEMENT

Citizens' movements, activists, and African civil society actors are sounding the alarm over the manhunt of Bubacar Turé, President of the Guinea-Bissau League for Human Rights (LGDH) !

On the morning of Saturday, 12 April, Bubacar Turé's residence in Bissau was stormed by a group of six security agents. They entered the home without a search warrant or the family's consent, claiming to be searching for the President of the LGDH for reasons still unknown. The search was systematic, including the bathrooms, plunging the family, especially the children, into a deep state of panic.

This act is part of a series of attacks perpetrated by the authoritarian regime in Bissau against human rights defenders and dissenting voices. It is a blatant attempt to silence those who denounce the numerous human rights violations in the country.

We firmly condemn this persecution and hold the regime of President Umaro Sissoco Embaló responsible for the life, physical integrity, and security of Bubacar Turé, who has been subjected to repeated intimidation, particularly since his revelations about serious violations in the national health system, involving suspicious patient deaths at the national hospital Simão Mendes. It is the responsibility of the Public Prosecutor's Office to launch a serious investigation into these allegations. Instead, the regime has opted for repression and terror, sending security forces to raid the home of a key civil society actor.

This new attack aims to silence critical voices that denounce the gradual destruction of democratic institutions in the country. It also occurs in a context where democracy is being obstructed.

## Alarming Political Context

As a reminder, on 23 February, President Embaló decreed that the presidential and legislative elections would take place on [23 November](#), contradicting the initial date of 30 November. This decision comes amid strong protests regarding the end of his term. The opposition believes that it expired on 27 February 2025, exactly five years after his controversial inauguration on 27 February 2020.

Since Umaro Sissoco Embaló's election, Guinea-Bissau has experienced persistent political and institutional instability. Following the disputed outcome of the presidential election in [November 2019](#), PAIGC candidate Domingo Simões Pereira rejected the results proclaimed by the Electoral Commission and filed an appeal with the Supreme Court. The latter only confirmed the victory of his opponent on 4 September 2020, while Embaló had already been sworn in in February.

On 16 May 2022, President Embaló dissolved the National People's Assembly, calling for early legislative elections in December 2022, before postponing them to 4 June 2023. These elections were won by the opposition coalition led by the PAIGC. However, during the night of 30 November to 1 December 2023, alleged violent clashes occurred between the national guard and other military units and the police, resulting in two deaths and six serious injuries.

The president, using the context as a pretext, described these events as an attempted coup d'état, then dissolved the parliament again on [4 December](#), announcing early legislative elections for 24 November 2024. These were ultimately postponed indefinitely by decree, citing reasons described as "[technical and financial](#)."

It is noteworthy that in October 2023, the Supreme Court of Justice was invaded by armed men with covered faces, "forcing" the legal president of this body to resign through his vice-president. Following the dissolution of Parliament, security forces invaded its premises, preventing its functioning. The expulsion, on the night of 1 March, of the [ECOWAS](#) fact-finding mission, which was to meet with all stakeholders,

illustrates President Embaló's refusal to engage in dialogue and constitutes a flagrant violation of the ECOWAS Additional Protocol on Democracy, Elections, and Good Governance.

## **Violations of Fundamental Freedoms**

The freedom to protest is [completely restricted](#) in Guinea-Bissau. On 18 May 2024, a peaceful demonstration called by the Popular Front was brutally suppressed, and around 93 people, including 14 women and 2 journalists, were arrested and tortured, including the coordinator of this movement.

Regarding freedom of expression, a concerning regression is also observed. According to the 2024 Reporters Without Borders report, Guinea-Bissau has fallen to [92nd place](#) in the global press freedom ranking, down from 78th in 2023. This deterioration is primarily due to political pressures exerted on journalists. On 20 November 2024, Carabulai Cassama (Capital FM) and Turé da Silva were [violently assaulted](#) by the police.

As elections approach, which are moments of political tension, media professionals are often targeted by all parties. We remind the Bissau-Guinean authorities to respect press freedom and to establish all necessary conditions for journalists to carry out their information-gathering mission effectively.

In light of all the above, we, citizens' movements and civil society actors, call on ECOWAS, the African Union, and the African and international public opinion to mobilise against the ongoing authoritarian drift in Guinea-Bissau.

We reaffirm our solidarity and unconditional support for pro-democracy activists in Guinea-Bissau. Their commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms is admirable and crucial in a context of increasing repression.

*Signed in Dakar on 14th April 2025*

### Signatories

- AfricTivitses
- Afrikajom Center
- Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice, The Gambia
- Guinea-Bissau League for Human Rights (LGDH)
- Tamberma Institute for Governance (ITG)
- Popular Front
- Guinea-Bissau League for Human Rights
- Miguilan
- National Network of Human Rights Defenders
- ALTERNAG
- West African Solidarity Network (WADEMOS)
- Concerned Nigerians for the protection of human rights
- Yiaga Africa

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