

JOINT STATEMENT

Stop the Authoritarian Drift in Mali - For the Defence of Democracy, Fundamental Freedoms, and the Rule of Law !

Citizen movements, civil society organisations, and political forces in West Africa are rising up strongly against the gradual death of Malian democracy. We refuse to remain silent in the face of an authoritarian drift that continues to deny the people of Mali their sovereign rights, voice and power.

Tuesday, 29 April will remain a dark day in Mali's political history. The conclusions of the "consultation of civil society forces for the revision of the political parties' charter" have endorsed the dissolution of all political parties and made it more difficult to create new ones in the future, requiring a deposit of 100,000,000 FCFA.

These discussions began on 28 April 2025 at the International Conference Centre of Bamako (CICB). They involved the participation of traditional and religious authorities. The majority of political parties and civil society organisations in Mali boycotted the event and denounced it in a press conference as a staged event aimed at erasing them and ending the multi-party system established after the fall of General Moussa Traoré's military dictatorship in 1991.

Another key recommendation is to make General Goïta the legitimate President of the Republic with "a renewable five-year mandate starting this year." This decision is justified by the need to allow the military in power to continue managing the state; to maintain current institutions until the country is pacified... In doing

so, the head of the Malian junta joins his counterparts from the Sahel States Alliance (AES) in entrenching themselves in power behind the back of the people. In March, Niger also made General Abdourahamane Tiani the President of the Republic for a renewable five-year term. As for the transition in Burkina Faso, it was extended by five years in March 2024.

Since the military took power in Mali, freedoms of association have been undermined. Last year at this time, the activities of political parties and associations across the national territory were suspended by a presidential decree for “the safeguarding of public order.” The suspension was lifted in July 2024.

Regarding freedom of expression, the transitional authorities have increased restrictive measures and the silencing of critical voices and popular actions. Ras Bath and Rose Vie Chère are symbols of this repression and are the most well-known prisoners of conscience in Mali today. The former is a radio host and activist, while the latter is an influencer. Although they do not know each other, their fates illustrate the judicial abuses under the Malian Transition. Arrested on 13 March 2023 for “undermining the credit of the state,” they were detained for two years without a final judgment. They have become symbols of the repression of critical voices.

Press freedom has also fallen victim to this authoritarian spiral: suspension of independent and international media, prohibition of covering political activities, constant censorship and arrest of journalists, and restrictions on access to information. These repeated violations are blatant breaches of fundamental rights, depriving Malian citizens of the essential right to free, diverse, and independent information.

We, the organisations signing this declaration, remind that the dissolution of political parties, carried out outside any legal judicial

framework, violates several articles of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). In fact, we demand:

- **The immediate cessation of arbitrary decisions to dissolve political parties**, which undermine citizen sovereignty, democratic pluralism and freedom of association, guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and other international conventions;
- **The restoration of illegally dissolved political parties**;
- **The protection of civic spaces against any form of repression**, intimidation, or unjustified restriction, whether physical, legal, or digital;
- **The effective involvement of regional and international institutions**, notably the **African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights**, to firmly condemn these authoritarian drifts and take concrete measures.

In the face of the systematic repression of dissenting voices, we call for the mobilisation of all citizens, media, intellectuals, artists, academics, and opinion leaders passionate about justice and democratic freedoms to stand up for democracy, freedom of expression, and the rule of law in Mali.

In conclusion, we reaffirm our unwavering solidarity and support for political leaders, pro-democracy activists, political actors, and civil society players in Mali, who courageously work to defend fundamental rights and civil liberties in a repressive context.

Dakar, the 2 May 2025

Signatories

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- Génération Engagée
- Edward Francis Small Centre for Rights and Justice, The Gambia
- Y'en a Marre Movement, Sénégal
- Popular Front, Bissau Guinea
- West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network (WADEMOS)
- CDD Ghana
- Association Villageois 2.0
- Institut Tamberma pour la Gouvernance (ITG)
- Front Citoyen Togo Debout
- Tournons La Page Togo
- Novation Internationale
- Tamberma Institute for Governance (TIG)
- Tijani Abdulkareem, Transition Monitoring Group, Nigeria.
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