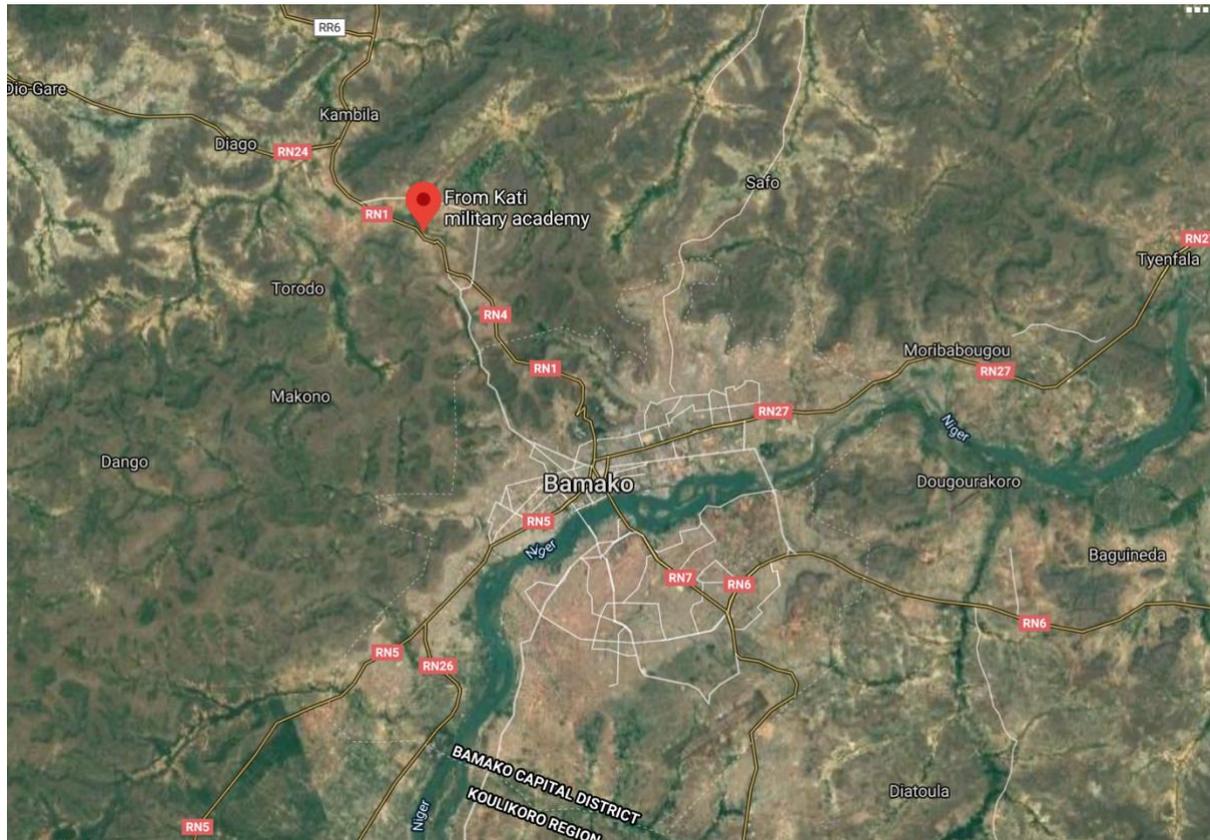


Security Advisory: Malian President Resigns after Military Mutiny



Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita resigned late on Tuesday 18 August, hours after mutinying soldiers seized him following months of mass protests against alleged corruption and the country's worsening security situation. The president's resignation was met with jubilation by anti-government demonstrators on Wednesday, with leaders of the military coup stating that they would enact a political transition and hold elections within a "reasonable time."

President Resigns

In a brief address on national broadcaster ORTM at around midnight, Keita announced his decision to step down, stating that his resignation, which comes three years before his final term was due to end, was effective immediately. He also announced the dissolution of the Malian government and the National Assembly. Keita made the address from the military base in Kati, just outside Bamako, where the military mutiny began. He, along with Prime Minister Boubou Cisse, were arrested earlier in the day by the mutineers.

On Wednesday morning, the soldiers behind the coup, who are calling themselves the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), appeared on state television in military fatigues, pledging to stabilize the country. Colonel Major Ismail Wague, Mali Air Force's deputy chief of staff and a spokesperson for CNSP, announced, "we are not holding on to power, but we are holding on to the stability of the country," adding "this will allow us to organize within an agreed reasonable timeframe, general elections to equip Mali with strong institutions, which are able to better manage our everyday lives and restore confidence between the government and the governed." Colonel Wague further announced that as of Wednesday 19 August, all air and land borders would be closed "until further notice" and a national curfew would be imposed from 21:00 - 05:00 local time. He also extended an invitation to opposition groups for talks leading to new elections.

While so far, there has been no official comment from Mali's opposition leaders, the M5-RFP coalition, which has been behind the recent mass protests, signalled on Tuesday support for the mutineers' action, with spokesman Nouhoum Togo stated that it was "not a military coup but a popular insurrection."

The president's arrest and resignation have been condemned by France, the United States, the United Nations, the African Union and regional bloc ECOWAS. The UN Security Council has scheduled a closed meeting on Wednesday afternoon to discuss the current situation in Mali, where the UN has a 15,600-strong peacekeeping mission. A delegation of west African heads of state is also expected to arrive in Mali on Wednesday.

Keita's downfall echoes that of his predecessor, Amadou Toumani Toure, who was forced out of the presidency in a coup in 2012. The 2012 coup, which also erupted at Kati military camp, hastened the fall of the northern region of the country to armed groups, some of which had ties to al-Qaeda. While a French-led military operation overthrew the fighters, militants have regrouped, and in recent years, have expanded their areas of operation into the central region of Mali. The ongoing violence, in which armed groups have increasingly stoked ethnic tensions amongst the local populations in Mali, has resulted in a spill over, with neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger increasingly seeing attacks and violence erupt within their borders. The Mali crisis is also increasingly threatening the stability of the wider Sahel region and has created a humanitarian crisis.

Months of Unrest

Tuesday's political upheaval follows months of unrest in Mali that began in the wake of disputed legislative elections held earlier this year. It also comes as support for Keita has significantly declined amidst growing criticism of his government's handling of the spiralling security situation in the central and northern regions of the country.

- **26 March** - Veteran opposition leader Soumaila Cisse was abducted by unidentified gunmen along with six members of his team while campaigning for the parliamentary elections.
- **29 March** - The first round of the long-delayed parliamentary election was held despite the threat of COVID-19 and security fears concerning possible attacks by armed groups.
- **19 April** - The second round of the election was held though it was disrupted by a number of incidents that prevented some voters from casting their ballots.
- **30 April** - Mali's Constitutional Court overturned the results for 31 seats and handed Keita's party 10 additional parliamentary seats, making it the largest bloc. The move sparked protests in several cities.
- **30 May** - The main opposition parties and civil society groups formed a new opposite alliance, known as the Movement of June 5 - Rally of Patriotic Forces (M5-RFP). The alliance called for a demonstration to demand the president's resignation.
- **5 June** - Thousands of people, led by influential Muslim leader Mahmoud Dicko, took to the streets of Bamako, condemning what they said was the president's mishandling of the ongoing security crisis.
- **11 June** - Keita re-appointed Boubou Cisse as prime minister and tasked him with forming a new government.
- **19 June** - The M5-RFP organized further protests and reiterated its demands for Keita to step down.
- **Early July** - Keita indicated that he would carry out political reforms in a bid to appease his opponents, however these were all rejected, with the protest movement's leaders continuing to call for parliament to be dissolved.
- **10 July** - Mass protests turned violent, with at least 14 people killed in three days of clashes between security forces and protesters.
- **18 July** - International mediators attempted to defuse tensions in Mali. However after several meetings with an ECOWAS delegation, led by former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, the M5-RFP movement stated that the president's departure was a "red line" for the mediators.

- **27 July** - ECOWAS called for the swift creation of a unity government in Mali, warning of sanctions against those standing in the way. The plan however was rejected by the opposition, who maintained that the president must resign.
- **10 August** - Keita swore in nine new judges to the Constitutional Court in a move that was part of an ECOWAS suggestion aimed at resolving tensions.
- **11 August** - After a pause, anti-government protests resumed, with demonstrators ignoring pleas from regional mediators for calm.
- **12 August** - Malian security forces fired tear gas and used water cannon to disperse hundreds of protesters camped out at a square in Bamako.
- **17 August** - The opposition announced that it would stage daily protests culminating in a mass rally in Bamako at the end of the week.
- **18 August** - Keita and Prime Minister Cisse are detained by soldiers who had earlier staged a mutiny at a military base in Kati. Opposition protesters gathered at a square in Bamako to show support for the soldiers. Regional and international powers condemned the move, calling on troops to return to the barracks.
- **19 August (midnight)** - Keita announced his resignation as the country's president.

Timeline of Tuesday's Events

- At around 09:00 on Tuesday, soldiers at the military base in Kati took weapons from the armoury at the barracks and detained senior military officers. Intense gunfire was heard at the military camp. The move was supported by anti-government protesters, with some setting fire to a building that belongs to Mali's justice minister in Bamako.
- At around 09:30, gunshots were heard in the military camp of the national guard in N'tomikorobougou.
- By 10:15, shooting at Kati camp has stopped, however the entrance to the camp remained blocked. In Bamako, soldiers were seen throughout the city, many taking up positions at administrative buildings.
- After taking over the Kati camp, the mutineers marched on the capital, where they were cheered by crowds who had gathered to demand president Keita reigns.
- On Tuesday afternoon, the mutineers stormed the president's residence and arrested him and Prime Minister Boubou Cisse, who was also there. The president's son, the speaker of the National Assembly, the foreign and finance minister were also reported to be amongst other officials detained.
- Unconfirmed reports stated that the officials are currently being held at the Kati military base. There has so far been no immediate reports of any casualties during the unrest.

Masterminds of Coup

The masterminds behind Tuesday's coup include the deputy head of a military camp and a French-trained general.

- **Col Malick Diaw** - Deputy head of the Kati camp where the mutiny began. There is minimal information available about him apart from reports that he recently returned from training in Russia. Unconfirmed reports have indicated that he is the one to have asked the president of Mali to leave power before 1400 GMT.
- **Col Sadio Camaa** - A former director of the Kati military academy. Mali Tribune website has reported that he was born in 1979 in Kati and graduated from Koulikoro military academy with top honours. He was then deployed to northern Mali where he served until 2012 under Gen El Hadj Gamou. Col Camara later became the director of Kati military academy, a position that he held until January 2020 when he left the country for Russia for military training. Newspaper Mali Tribune has reported that he returned to Bamako earlier this month to take his one-month leave.

- **Gen Cheick Fanta Mady Dembele** - Director general of the Alioune Blondin Beye peacekeeping institution. He was promoted to brigadier general in May 2018 and assumed leadership of the peacekeeping institution in December 2018. He had previously been in charge of conflict management and strategic planning at the African Union Peace and Security Commission in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. He is a graduate of Saint-Cyr military academy in France and also graduated from the General Staff College of Koulikoro, Mali. He holds a degree in history from the University of Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne and also holds a master's degree in civil engineering and graduated from the German Federal Army University in Munich.

MS RISK ADVISORY: The security situation in Mali remains fluid and could deteriorate quickly and with minimal warning. As of 19 August, all air and land borders have been closed until further notice and a national curfew is in place between 21:00 - 05:00 local time. Anyone currently in or around Kati is advised to avoid the area while those currently in Bamako are advised to remain indoors due to the ongoing tensions. You should avoid the Kati area and the Monument de l'Indépendance in Bamako and continue to exercise vigilance while in Mali. Avoid all protests and large gatherings as they may turn violent at short notice. Review your personal security plans and keep a low profile. Be aware of your surroundings at all times and monitor the local media for updates.

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24 HR CONTACT INFORMATION:

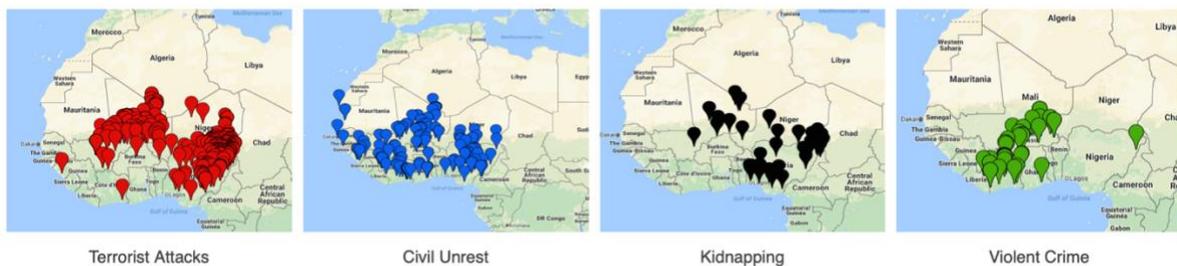
Email: operations@msrisk.com

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CONTACT INFORMATION:

For more information about D-Risk as well as monthly subscription packages

Contact: sales@d-riskalert.com

Website: <https://www.d-riskalert.com>



South Suite, Ragnall House, 18 Peel Road
Douglas, Isle of Man, IM1 4LZ

24 hr Global Contact: +44 207 754 3555

www.msrisk.com

Directors

S.J. Bingham, P.A. Crompton, P.O.J. Tracy

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