

PRESS RELEASE

July 30, 2023.

NIGER COUP: WADEMOS NETWORK SUPPORTS ECOWAS' RESOLUTE STANCE AGAINST THE UNCONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE IN GOVERNMENT

The West Africa Democracy Solidarity Network deeply regrets the unfortunate development in Niger with the unconstitutional takeover of power through a coup d'état by security forces in the country, making it the fifth successful coup since the country's independence in 1960.

The WADEMOS Network considers the coup d'état an assault on the sovereignty and stability of the country and a reversal of the gains made in deepening and promoting democracy in Niger, considering that the country held its first democratic transition of power since its independence in 2021.

As a Network of civil society organizations in the ECOWAS sub-region, we are appalled by the coup and consider it both illegitimate and a threat to regional security and efforts to restore democracy in all countries in West Africa following the suspension of Guinea, Burkina Faso, and Mali from ECOWAS. WADEMOS therefore finds the coup in Niger an unwarranted disruption that will only worsen the plight of the people of Niger and the ECOWAS sub-region. This troubling incident adds a new avenue of distress to the pile of challenges confronting the ECOWAS region and comes at a time when democracy in the ECOWAS region is already facing severe and dire threats.

Indeed, the action of the military is unjustifiable, and the evidence in Mali and Burkina Faso does not support the military's assertion that the worsening security situation in the Sahel is the basis for the takeover. Recent reports by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch reveal severe human rights violations and rising insecurity in Burkina Faso and Mali following the coups in these countries.

To this end, WADEMOS strongly condemns the coup in Niger and urges the military regime to hand over power to the constitutionally elected government, support the democratization process in Niger, and the fight against insecurity driven by the activities of terrorists and violent extremists in the Sahel.

The Network further takes cognizance of the decisions taken at the Extraordinary Summit of the ECOWAS Authority of Heads of State and Government on the political situation in Niger. We support ECOWAS and urge them to remain resolute in their resistance to this latest assault on constitutional democracy in Niger. While commending ECOWAS for its swift response to the events in Niger, we implore ECOWAS, as a matter of urgency, to expedite its review of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance and the Early Warning Systems to enhance regional response to peace and security and the decline of democracy in the region.

The WADEMOS Network expresses solidarity with the people of Niger and calls on the international community, particularly the United Nations, African Union, and all relevant pro-democracy actors and institutions, to work together and coordinate their interventions to

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ensure the coup does not survive to add on to the already troubling experience of unconstitutional changes in government in West Africa.

We call on the putschists to respect the Constitution of Niger, which upholds the ballot box as the sole mechanism for changing or affirming the authority and legitimacy of governments. We finally call on the military to respect the relevant ECOWAS and AU protocols and frameworks to ensure the peaceful and timely return of democracy in Niger.

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About WADEMOS Network

WADEMOS is a non-partisan, independent, civil society-led transnational democracy solidarity network. The WADEMOS Network consists of over 35 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) located in 15 countries in West Africa. The WADEMOS Network mobilizes, coordinates, and leverages the collective power of civil society and other pro-democracy actors, resources, and opportunities within the West African Region to advance, defend, and reinvigorate democracy and promote democratic norms and reforms in the sub-region.

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