



Africa Information & Monitoring Services

Mali: Reporting on Major News Developments 14 February 2022

The following report highlights major news developments in politics and security in Mali on 14 February. This report focuses on a draft bill saying that Junta leader Assimi Goita will not be allowed to run for president and an editorial saying that the Prime Minister is not helping the transitional leaders. Malian justice opened a case to look into an alleged telephone conversation involving Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara and former Malian Prime Minister Boubou Cisse. On the economic front, an article said that Muslims may suffer price hikes as Ramadan closes in. On the military scene, two soldiers and five terrorists died in clashes in the Timbuktu region. This report includes background information to add context where needed.

POLITICS

Mali Draft Bill Prevents Junta Leader From Standing for President

The head of the Malian junta, Colonel Assimi Goita, will not be able to stand as a candidate in the future presidential election that aims to restore civilian rule over the country, according to a bill presented on 12 February. The text, however, remains vague on the date of the elections.¹

Background: The issue of elections and return to civilian rule already engaged Mali in a showdown with the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). As a consequence, Mali has been enduring a number of economic and diplomatic sanctions since 9 January.

Justice To Investigate Boubou Cisse's and Alassane Ouattara's Alleged Telephone Call

The Malian judiciary on 11 February opened an investigation for "undermining Mali's internal and external security" after a taped telephone conversation allegedly involving Ivorian President Alassane Ouattara and former Malian Prime Minister Boubou Cisse went viral on social media. In the conversation that still awaits authentication, both personalities seem to enjoy the economic difficulties that Mali is going through. Cisse allegedly said: "Despite everything they want people to believe, the situation remains difficult for them... It will be extremely difficult to last another three to four weeks financially," while words attributed to Ouattara are that the Malian authorities are "naive, idiots, and ignorant," and "Russia is the 11th economic power and cannot help them apart from making promises and sending old materials."²

¹ <https://information.tv5monde.com/afrique/mali-assimi-goita-ne-pourra-pas-briguer-la-future-presidence-selon-un-projet-de-loi-de-la>

² <https://www.maliweb.net/societe/justice/presume-entretien-telephonique-entre-boubou-cisse-et-alassane-ouattara-la-justice-malienne-ouvre-une-enquete-pour-atteinte-a-la-surete-interieure-et-exterieure-du-mali-2964722.html>

Editorial Says Junta 'Hostage' of Prime Minister's Political Movement

In a 14 February editorial in Le Pouce reprinted on Maliweb.net website, journalist Tieoko Traore urged Colonel Assimi Goita to strive to create the largest consensus. To attain that, the editorial said that there is urgent need to get rid of Prime Minister Choguel Maiga who has embarked in "self-promotion, adversity, provocation, all out contradiction and, above all, thoughtless brutal separation" from historical partners. The writer said that this is making "Mali to sink deeper in the crisis and does not serve the interests of the country." The writer finally urged the junta to free itself from the "bad counselling" of Prime Minister Maiga, describing him as a "crisis-maker."

Background: Prime Minister Choguel Maiga has been very outspoken since the ECOWAS took sanctions against Mali and the French Foreign Affairs minister made some unpleasant comments on Mali. But many think he is going too far and appears to fight for his own interests.

ECONOMY

Article Expresses Worries as Ramadan Approaches Amid ECOWAS Sanctions

A 14 February article in Le Pouce says that while the Ramadan, a key period in the Muslim calendar, approaches, prices continue to grow due to the impact of ECOWAS sanctions. The article first criticized the authorities for not anticipating the ECOWAS sanctions and not taking any steps to curb the hike in prices of commodities, and asked whether Malian Muslims should prepare to enter Ramadan with uncertainty?³

Background: Mali's population is officially 94 percent Muslim and most of the products used to make food during the fasting period, including sugar, milk, flour, and many more, are imported. Meanwhile, borders are closed in pursuance of sanctions.

SECURITY

Five Militants, Two Soldiers Died in Clashes in Niafunke

An outpost of the Malian Armed Forces repelled an attack by a terrorist group on the night of 12 to 13 February in Niafunke, a small town on the Niger River, located at 250 km southwest of Timbuktu. Two soldiers and five militants were killed. In the sweeping operation that followed, soldiers arrested a suspect and handed him over to the gendarmerie.⁴

Prominent Cleric Says Describes France as Strategic Partner on Security Front



Imam Mahmoud Dicko, a renowned Muslim leader and president of the Coordination of Movements, Associations, and Sympathizers, told journalists in Mauritania that "It is not forbidden to have state-to-state military cooperation, as with the United States and Russia, but the partnerships must be assumed and clarified. We must not, however, forget that our strategic security partner is France." Dicko made the statement when journalists asked him his opinion on the military

³ <https://www.maliweb.net/economie/ramadan-et-sanctions-de-la-cedeao-faut-il-sinquieter-2964634.html>

⁴ <https://www.maliweb.net/economie/ramadan-et-sanctions-de-la-cedeao-faut-il-sinquieter-2964634.html>

partnership between Mali and Russia via the Wagner paramilitary company. Dicko was taking part into the Abu Dhabi Forum for Peace organized on 8-10 February.⁵

Background: Mali has been in tense diplomatic relationships with the ECOWAS and France over an electoral calendar. Besides, many are demanding the departure of French troops and a more solid military cooperation with Russia. Imam Mahmoud Dicko enjoys a spiritual aura that makes him a superstar every time he travels.

⁵ <http://news.abamako.com/h/266172.html>
