

Mali holds presidential election amid ongoing French intervention

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The results of the first round of the presidential election held on July 28 in Mali, under occupation by French and UN troops, show ex-prime minister Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta of the Rally for Mali (RPM) party in the lead, with 39.79 percent of the vote.

In second place, ex-finance minister Soumaïla Cissé obtained 19.7 percent, while third-placed Dramane Dembélé of the biggest political formation in Mali, the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (Adéma) received 9.6 percent. Fourth placed Modibo Sidibé, another ex-prime minister, got 4.9 percent. The other 23 candidates shared the remaining votes.

The election was organized in order to provide a pseudo-democratic rationale for France's invasion and occupation of Mali. At only 48.98 percent, the low voter turnout reflected broad popular hostility to the French war and to an election held under French occupation, voters' fear of continuing violence, and the fact that the election was scheduled during the Ramadan holidays.

The second round run-off election between Keïta and Cissé is scheduled for August 11. Dembélé has now declared his support for Keïta, bucking his own party's preference for Cissé, while Sidibé has declared for Cissé.

Legislator Oumar Mariko, who founded the party African Solidarity for Democracy and Independence (SADI) supported by France's New Anti-capitalist Party (NPA), came in sixth place. Mariko has transferred his support to Keïta, Paris' preferred candidate, for the August 11 runoff. This illustrates how pseudo-left forces in France like the NPA help provide political cover for the French war in Mali, promoting various politicians friendly to French imperialism.

Particularly in the north, election organisers faced

widespread accusations of fraud and ballot rigging. Tiébilé Dramé, the “peace negotiator” between Bamako in the south and the northern opposition forces, withdrew his candidacy on July 17, accusing the interim government set up by France of not respecting democratic procedures. “Electoral law has been violated, because as of June 25 no list of electors has been established in Kidal (the major city of the Tuareg rebellion),” he said.

Dramé also exclaimed that to maintain the polling day of July 28, as demanded by France, “was to deprive many Malians of their [voting] rights.”

Government sources announced only 12.4 percent participation in Kidal, one of the major towns in northern Mali, where the election was held under armed guard by UN forces. One local Malian official in Kidal explained that the UN presence in Kidal discouraged voting, telling *Jeune Afrique*: “They do not like it when troops search them in public and remove their turbans. This means that many stayed home” during the elections.

In a country of only 15 million people, fully 403,532 blank votes were cast, and half a million displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries were unable to participate. Of the 50,000 Malian refugees in Burkina Faso—of whom 3,500 were registered to vote—only 50 did so.

In France where 200,000 Malians reside, only 29,000 had received voting registration, and there were barely one hundred recorded votes. Information as to the voting locations was unavailable.

The election in Mali is a fraud, offering no choice to Malian workers and peasants who can place no confidence in any of the candidates to defend their democratic rights.

While none of the candidates oppose French

imperialism's intervention, Paris has given its preference to Keïta. He is one of the leading figures of the Socialist International organisation to which the ruling French Socialist Party(PS) belongs. The First Secretary of the French Socialist Party, Harlem Désir, met Keïta in Paris on June 10 to discuss the “democratic transition”.

Keïta has even sought to defend Captain Amadou Haya Sanogo, who led the military coup overthrowing the last government in March 2012, which in turn provoked the civil war with the Tuareg and Jihadists that Paris used as a pretext to invade Mali. Keïta pleaded on *France24* that there has been “too much exaggeration concerning Captain Sanogo”.

The PS government's promotion of Keïta, who is himself defending Sanogo, exposes the fraudulent character of French imperialism's claims that intervened to promote democracy in Mali. Instead, it is seeking to groom local forces to function as its neo-colonial representatives in Mali.

In the on-going war, 4,300 French troops backed by 6,000 largely African UN troops are fighting to re-establish the control of the central government in Bamako over northern Mali, which was taken over by a joint uprising of ethnic Tuareg and jihadist militias. Underlying French imperialism's neo-colonial intervention to defend its puppet regime in Bamako are its extensive economic and strategic interests in West Africa.

The Areva nuclear energy company's mine at Arlit in neighbouring Niger was attacked last May 23, causing lost production of €27 million. The attack was claimed by the Movement for the Jihad and Unity of West Africa (Mujao).

France intends to maintain at least a thousand troops in Mali and has purchased 12 drone aircraft from the US to target Jihadist forces at large in the north and terrorize the population in general.



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