

Mali government falls amid protests against Franco-German occupation

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On April 18, the Malian government collapsed as Prime Minister Soumeylou Boubèye Maïga submitted the resignation of his government to President Ibrahim Boubacar Keïta (IBK). This followed weeks of protests against the Franco-German occupation of Mali in the aftermath of the horrific ethnic massacre of 170 Peuls on March 23 in the village of Ogossagou.

The French puppet regime in Mali, one of the world's poorest countries, also faces growing strikes by workers. Anger is mounting among workers against the plunder of state finances organized under the auspices of Paris and Berlin. Strikes have been ongoing for months among public school teachers, who are demanding payment of housing bonuses and back wages, and by rail workers mounting strikes and hunger strikes to demand back wages.

On April 5, 50,000 people (30,000 according to Malian police) marched on Independence Avenue in the capital, Bamako, to denounce the Franco-German occupation of the country, launched in 2013, and the corruption of the French puppet regime led by Keïta, known as IBK. The protest was called by representatives of the Peul ethnicity targeted by the Ogossagou massacre, civil society organizations and Islamic preachers, including the former president of the Islamic High Commission of Mali (HCIM), Imam Mahmoud Dicko.

In Bamako, protesters held aloft handmade signs proclaiming, "France is a terrorist state with mercenaries and drones," "No to France's genocide in Mali" and "Go home, don't plunder our natural resources." They chanted, "Down with IBK." There were calls for the implementation of Muslim sharia law and also for Russian assistance against the French and German troops occupying Mali.

"We are sick and tired of this regime. Our children,

husbands, and our parents are dying due to the misgovernment of the country by IBK and his clan," Mariam Fomba told AFP. Fomba, whose husband was killed in the war in Mali, said she wanted to "throw out IBK."

Before that, on March 30, hundreds of people had attended a protest outside Montparnasse train station in Paris, marching to the Malian embassy to denounce the massacre. Mimo Dia, the organizer of the Paris protest, criticized the complicity of the French puppet regime with the ethnic-Dogon Dan Nan Ambassagou militia that is widely suspected to have carried out the Ogossagou massacre.

Dia said, "Dogons and Peuls have always existed. Even today, amid the massacre, Peul and Dogon villages coexist and don't care about the conflict. So, it's not a problem with the Dogons. It's a political problem. The Malian army has outsourced Malian security to the Dogons. That has to stop. It's why we want one very simple thing: to disband all the militias in Mali ... including Dan Nan Ambassagou, and the Malian authorities complicit with them. They should all be caught and tried decently, so that justice can be done."

These protests fuelled growing discussion of a possible vote of a motion of censure targeting the Maïga government by the Malian National Assembly, which was ultimately submitted on April 17 by parliamentarians of opposition parties and of IBK's Rally for Mali (RPM).

On the morning of April 18, Maïga was engaged in desperate, back-channel talks with the RPM and opposition parties in an attempt to assemble a majority to oppose the censure motion. A few hours before debate on the motion of censure was about to begin, however, Maïga threw in the towel and handed in his

letter of resignation to the Malian president's office.

Maïga's resignation offers nothing to workers and oppressed toilers in Mali, however, and will only intensify the class struggle in Mali and across the region. President Keïta's choice of Boubou Cissé to replace Maïga on April 22 points to his role as a lackey of imperialism and finance capital. Cissé, an unelected economist and political independent, had just been overseeing as finance minister the non-payment of wages to public sector workers. Trained in Germany, the Persian Gulf and France, Cissé worked at the World Bank before returning to Mali amid the French invasion to take ministerial portfolios in mining and then in finance.

Growing anti-war protests and class struggles in Mali are part of a broad upsurge of mass political opposition and class struggles around the world. From militant strikes among American teachers and Mexican *maquiladora* workers, to the "yellow vest" protests in France and civil servants and plantation workers strikes in the Indian subcontinent, a mood of intransigent opposition to the ruling elites is growing. In Africa, mass protests demanding the fall of dictatorships in Algeria and Sudan are unfolding among waves of teachers strikes across the continent.

In France's former colonial empire, including Mali, this brings workers into confrontation with the eruption of European militarism since the last great class struggles in the region: the revolutionary uprisings that toppled imperialist-backed dictators in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011.

After the uprising in Egypt began, the NATO powers went to war in Libya and destroyed Colonel Muammar Gaddafi's regime, which Paris saw as a longstanding obstacle. Gaddafi's overthrow and murder plunged not only Libya but the entire Sahel into civil war. Militias fleeing Libya arrived in Mali and chased the Malian army out of the north of the country—the pretext Paris seized upon to invade the country in January 2013. With the complicity of regimes in the region, including Algiers, which opened its airspace to French bombers, a war began that has now lasted six years.

In addition to France, the United States, Canada and—since 2015—Germany have sent troops to Mali. With over 1,000 troops, the Mali war is Berlin's largest overseas deployment since it ended the demilitarization of its foreign policy that followed the fall of the Nazi

regime. Events have put paid to imperialist claims that these deployments aim to protect the Malian population from Islamist militias.

The war has displaced hundreds of thousands of people and cost thousands of lives. Bamako receives \$1 billion per year in aid funds but—concentrated on helping NATO troops fight its own population—has overseen a collapse in living standards and public services, to the point that now teachers' and rail workers' salaries are not even paid.

Despite this expenditure on war, French-led occupation forces have not succeeded in crushing military opposition to their presence and the puppet regime in Bamako. Eleven Malian soldiers were killed in an attack at 5 a.m. April 21 at a military station in Guiré, near Mali's border with Mauritania. The attacking militia left behind 15 dead, according to the Malian government.

One French military doctor died in Mali in a bomb attack on his vehicle, AFP reported.



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