

Guinea Bissau NGOs joint statement

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On the impact of the April 12 coup d'état on vulnerable communities

A group of concerned Guinean nongovernmental organizations met on May 9, 2012 to evaluate and anticipate the situation of the most vulnerable communities and to address challenges that have impeded national actors and parts of the international community which seek to lead an effective restoration of peace, security, respect for the civil and political rights of citizens, and the resumption of Constitutional law in Guinea-Bissau.

GUINEAN NGOS CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

The nonfunctioning state apparatus and its public institutions will provoke a situation of increased levels of poverty and vulnerability in both rural and urban communities. Of particular concern are unpaid public workers' salaries, difficulties in front of the cashew nut harvest, (which is the principle source of the country's revenue and the majority source of income for rural communities), the suspension of important international development aid projects with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the near complete decline of economic life.

The paralysis of public schools and other teaching establishments has been aggravated by the coup. This paralysis seriously compromises the current academic year, now facing cancellation.

Because of its timing — at the beginning of the agricultural year and the cashew season, this coup very seriously threatens food security, community health and the economy of rural communities. Moreover, because of the number of people who have fled from the capital to the interior, there will be less nutritious food and well water in reserve and the risk of epidemics will increase. Cholera, for example, is already reported in neighbouring countries.

High inflation on basic staples — due to paralyzed economic circuits, limited supply and circulation of these goods, the shortage of money of the market and the consequent tendency towards price speculation will mean serious deprivation in the most vulnerable families. It will also result in the growth of unrest and revolt in youth groups that are not yet very visible because of the ban on protests (this ban itself acknowledges present seeds of violence and devastating impacts.)

The absence of state power in the whole country invites increased pillaging of our resources. Borders are increasingly permeable, as routine monitoring of our territorial waters has stopped. We are especially concerned about the intensification of drug trafficking and other illegal businesses.

The deprivation of political and civil rights in Guinea Bissau (including the right to information, expression, and demonstration) and ongoing political persecutions are generating a climate of suspicion and fear. These attitudes have hindered efforts to create unity and find effective solutions to the challenges the country faces.

Efforts to build policies both domestically and in the diaspora and the international community delay and circumvent the return to Constitutional law required by Guineans. This will lead to a prolongation of the impasse that effects peace, security and democracy in Guinea-Bissau.

Ferocious special interests disputes risk turning Guinea-Bissau into a battlefield for geo strategy and economic influence which covers and invalidates true national interests and will lead Guinea-Bissau to serve as a no-man's land where others carry out business that is illegal in their countries

The justifications given for another coup have been baseless, or at least no credible evidence has been made public. Those directly and indirectly involved in the coup d'état are the principal negotiators. They have excluded the actors and bodies legitimated by the law and the ballot box, which expresses the only will that should be sacred to all—the will of the people.

THE NGOS CALL FOR THE FOLLOWING:

To guarantee the restoration of constitutional order and the reinstatement of the democratically elected government and interim President of the Republic.

To resume and safeguard the interrupted presidential electoral process, as recommended by the United Nations Security Council.

To uphold the right to freedom of expression and demonstrations in safe conditions.

To restore the process of dialogue to democratically elected authorities, legitimate state institutions, all involved international organizations, political parties, and civil society.

The undersigned Guinean NGOs commit themselves to the following:

To reinforce the work of local communities, so that they can become the main protagonist in the definition of their positions, in defense of their interest and civil rights, and to strengthen their social and economic productive capacity (which the undersigned NGOs push for).

To promote debate on a local level, especially involving community groups and associations, in order to share better information, awareness and implementation to build social cohesion and to safeguard social peace and the common good.

To reinforce local populations' capacity to critically analyze and propose solutions with respect to their position in the situation the country is experiencing. (This presumes the legitimate and democratic right to express opinions and demonstrate.)

To advance information and communication campaigns along with our partners and the international community, with particular attention to the closest regional level, to raise concerns, points of view, and ideas from local populations.

To promote a robust national debate on the necessity, and the role of, the Armed Forces in the future of Guinea-Bissau's legitimate democracy and rule of law.

Bissau

May 10, 2012