



August 2, 2023

**STOP ECOWAS' AGGRESSION AGAINST NIGER**

The Socialist Movement of Ghana calls on ECOWAS Heads of State to withdraw their threat of military action to reinstate former President Mohamed Bazoum of Niger.

**War benefits nobody in West Africa**

The ECOWAS threat is a strategic mistake. Predictably, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali have indicated that they will treat any attack on Niger as an attack on their countries and respond accordingly. In other words, ECOWAS' adventurism has already split the sub-Region and could overnight escalate the political crisis in Niger to an existential crisis for the entire sub-Region - destroying millions of lives and hamper production of goods and services with severe ramifications for the entire continent.

Military intervention cannot solve Niger's crisis. Bazoum's overthrow is only one minor expression of Niger's crisis. The real crisis is underdevelopment. Despite its fabulous gold, hydrocarbons and uranium resources, Niger is one of the poorest countries on earth. This is because France has plundered the country ruthlessly for over a century using bankrupt local elites to repress dissent and to play ethnic and religious communities off against each other and frustrate popular organisation. Niger's neo-colonial crisis deepened when NATO destroyed Libya in 2011, encouraging hardened Islamist fighters from Central Asia to infiltrate and destabilise the Sahel-Sahara region and militarizing and "Islamizing" existing communal problems. This created a pretext for renewed Western intervention in the sub-Region – as saviours. Nigeriens have responded magnificently to the long-term crisis with popular struggles for social justice, development, and dignity. Organised Labour, the Gender movement, Youth organizations, intellectuals, and the religious establishment have challenged the status quo for many years and been ruthlessly repressed by the Nigerien State led, most recently, by Bazoum and backed by France. A military intervention will not wash away this history or the complex web of social conflict it has created. ECOWAS guns will not assist Nigeriens to clarify and determine how they will organise and pursue national development. Guns will only deepen the underlying crisis of foreign exploitation and underdevelopment that Niger suffers. ECOWAS military action will deepen Nigeriens' suffering and set their economic and social development back even further.

An ECOWAS military intervention will also not advance the long-term well-being of other West Africans. Niger's story differs only by degree from that of the rest of the subregion. West Africa remains one of the poorest and most troubled regions in the world. Every suffering war will bring to Niger will be replicated and amplified throughout the sub-region with unforetold consequences. The signals from Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea suggest that the integrity of ECOWAS itself is at risk. An ECOWAS war also enables Jihadi forces to strengthen their military and ideological campaign across the Region.

A war will also have national level consequences as well. For example, it is unlikely that ECOWAS soldiers will want to risk their lives to restore another bankrupt political regime. Military deployment will be the straw that breaks the back of the camel of "stability" in many West African countries. It could provoke mutinies, and accelerate, rather than halt, the wave of coups d'etat the region is experiencing;



## **War Benefits Imperialism!**

The real beneficiaries of an ECOWAS attack on Niger are Western Imperialist forces. France is struggling to sustain generations of the cruel plunder and oppression that West Africans have rejected. Without Nigerien uranium French electricity costs will rise significantly plunging that country into deeper crisis. EU dependency on Russian uranium (which it has not so far dared to impose sanctions on) will increase. Of course the EU is fully subordinate to the United States, in its aggression against strategic rivals China and Russia. As it can no longer compete commercially the US seeks to exclude these countries' access to African resources through military force in alliance with backward socio-political elites. The US has established military bases across all West Africa including for example the infamous "Niger Air Base 201" near Agadez which is the largest military drone base in the world nominally owned by the Nigerien military but completely controlled by the US and capable of launching attacks across the entire region. On the one hand, developments in Niger threaten US hegemonic interests. But on the other hand Niger presents an opportunity for the US to consolidate its control over West Africa's military. Imperialism will therefore press for military intervention.

ECOWAS governments lack the ability to manage even domestic insurgencies. ECOWAS can only contemplate a Niger expedition because "NATO" will resource and run it. ECOWAS states will in fact contribute only two elements to any military operations. First ECOWAS provides a fig leaf - the media illusion that this is a "legitimate" democratic West Africa intervention to restore democracy (and not just another US or French invasion of a struggling Third World country). Second, ECOWAS provides cannon-fodder – expendable African soldiers that save the US Government from having to account for the deaths of thousands of Americans. In all material strategic and operational respects this will be an invasion to re-establish colonial rule in West Africa.

## **What is ECOWAS Leadership's agenda?**

Why are ECOWAS Heads of State shamelessly fronting for US and French imperialism? ECOWAS leaders are willing to front Imperialist conquest because they are desperate and trapped in neo-colonialism. Our leaders are firm accomplices in foreign exploitation and oppression. Our leaders have not for example raised concern about the squalor, lack of basic amenities, or exposure of children to deadly radiation that French capital imposes on the inhabitants of uranium mining towns. Our leaders have not protested the numbers of innocent citizens killed by US and French troops in their so-called counter-insurgency operations. Rather our leaders have forced through laws granting US troops full immunity for crimes committed on our soils – essentially ceding our sovereignty to foreign militaries. Our leaders have fully supported dishonourable ploys to amend national constitutions to extend term limits to shield themselves from accountability. Our leaders have for years ignored or perpetrated arbitrary arrests and detention without charge or trial in violation of our constitutions. Our leaders have collapsed our national economies with unpayable debts, fiscal indiscipline, profligate spending, and accelerated transfer of wealth to the colonial metropolises. Having plunged us into crisis our leaders have fled back cap-in-hand to the IMF for bailouts conditioned on deepening the policy measures responsible for our suffering in the first place – austerity measures that grind working people into the dust and accelerate outflows of the wealth from our resources and labour. West Africans are no longer impressed by the theatre of periodic elections. West Africans know that these are simply exercises in ego, empty promises, vote-buying, rigging, elite violence, and whitewashing by pliant, partisan judiciaries. Our



## **SOCIALIST MOVEMENT OF GHANA (SMG)**

leaders own bankruptcy - is the source of the wave of revolts and military take-overs across the sub-region.

Following their mismanagement and abuse of their citizens' fundamental development and human rights, the gathering in Abuja that threatened Niger with invasion was really a bunch of scared men, who having lost all moral or political legitimacy now seek to use military force to protect their privileged positions. "ECOWAS Heads of State" do not speak for West Africa. They cannot commit our youth to fight and die in the defence of hollow legalistic "constitutionalism" and elite vanity.

The Socialist Movement of Ghana (SMG) rejects the positions of ECOWAS Heads of State. And we will campaign against any ECOWAS mobilisation for war on Niger. We call on all progressive organizations and forces in West Africa and especially the West African Peoples Organisation (WAPO) to also condemn the recklessness of West African leaders and work to stop any such mobilisation.

What West Africa needs is to stop the Islamic insurgency in the region and hold our leaders accountable for the mess they have created and sustainably end the growing hunger facing our people.

West Africa does not need war and our people are tired of our neo-colonial leaders and their machinations.

Kwesi Pratt jnr

General Secretary