



JOINT STATEMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AGAINST THE CONFISCATION OF VOTES IN GUINEA-BISSAU

This is not a coup; it is a confiscation of the popular will !

On 26 November 2025, a group of officers identifying themselves as the " High Military Command for the Restoration of Order" declared that, after holding a meeting the previous day at the Palace of the Republic with the outgoing president Umaro Sissoco Mballo, they had taken " full control" of the country. The objective was clearly to prevent the proclamation of the election results that declared independent candidate Fernando Dias the winner of these electoral contests, having won seven (7) of the nine (9) regions of the country.

After a mock coup, during which President Mballo himself called the press to inform them of the military takeover, the "mutineers" suspended national institutions, took control of the offices of the National Commission that was preparing to announce the results of the elections held on 23 November, and proceeded to arrest the main opposition candidate, the Secretary-General of the PAIGC, who had been barred from participating in the presidential election, and officials from the Electoral Commission. General Horta N'TAM, Chief of Staff of the Army, was chosen to lead the new military "junta" as the new Head of State,

and the Minister of Finance was appointed as the Prime Minister of the political transition, which is supposed to last only one year.

This latest intervention by the Army in the functioning of Guinean institutions is a deliberate and unacceptable attack against the sovereignty of the Bissau-Guinean people. How can a president who has lost an election make arrangements with military leaders to seize power simply to avoid handing over power to those whom the citizens have chosen to determine their fate? How can we accept that election results, which have been deemed free, transparent, and fair by electoral observers from ECOWAS and the African Union, cannot be proclaimed simply because the loser refuses to concede power to the winner?

What happened in Bissau this week is not a "coup d'état," but a gross staging to steal an election. And ECOWAS and the African Union must, by all means, refuse to normalise this manner of trampling on the freely expressed will of millions of Guinean citizens. The truth is that since Mr Umaro Sissoco Embaló came to power on 27 February 2020, Guinea-Bissau has been living under a dictatorship that does not speak its name: arbitrary dissolutions of Parliament, unconstitutional replacement of the President of the Supreme Court, personal selection of election dates, etc. This troubling trend has now reached its peak: a president who ignores the voice of the ballot box, a manipulated military command, and citizens held hostage by the ambitions of one man and an insatiable system.

ECOWAS and the African Union can no longer ignore these developments. Too many crises have been tolerated, and too many elections have been confiscated in West Africa and on the continent. We, members of African civil society, call on ECOWAS and the African Union to:

- **Immediately proclaim the results of the vote of 23 November 2025**, and take all measures to ensure the immediate accession to power of the declared winner of the elections;
- **Order an immediate return to constitutional order and call all political and social actors in Guinea-Bissau** to an inclusive national dialogue under international supervision, along with the release of all political prisoners;
- **Order an independent international investigation into the violence against human rights defenders, journalists, and other political actors**, as well as the invasion of the PAIGC headquarters, to identify and severely sanction those responsible;

We stand resolutely with the Bissau-Guinean people. We refuse to accept silence, fear, and arbitrariness in the face of these attacks against democracy on the continent. Fundamental freedoms are non-negotiable, and the peoples of West Africa will no longer tolerate the annulment of a vote by the will of a single individual.

Dakar, 30 November 2025

Signatories:

- Alioune Tine, Founder of Afrikajom Center (Senegal)
- Salieu Taal, Activist and former President of the Bar Association (Gambia)
- Madi Jobarteh, Human rights advocate (Gambia)
- Pr Penda Mbow, historian and president of MJC (Senegal)
- Paul Amegakpo, Governance expert, Tamberma Institute (Togo)
- Hardi Yakubu, Coordinator of the Africans Rising movement
- Ibrahima Kane, Human rights activist (Senegal)
- Abdou Aziz Cissé, Activist and human rights advocate (Senegal)
- Armando Lona, Popular Front
- Bubacar Ture, President of the Guinean Human Rights League