



WEST AFRICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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PRESS STATEMENT ISSUED ON THE VIOLATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER IN GUINEA BISSAU AND THE REPUBLIC OF BENIN

THE EMERGING WAVE OF MILITARY INCURSIONS INTO GOVERNANCE AND VIOLATION OF CONSTITUTIONAL ORDER IN WEST AFRICA; WABA CONDEMNS THE COUP D'ÉTAT IN GUINEA-BISSAU AND THE ATTEMPTED COUP IN REPUBLIC OF BENIN.

The West African Bar Association (WABA) has observed with great concern the rising cases of breach of democratic governance in the West African sub-region over the last few weeks. These unlawful disruptions of democratic governance represent a grave violation of the rule of law, an assault on constitutional authority, and a dangerous threat to regional stability.

A. Guinea Bissau:

The Guinea-Bissau situation is indeed of special concern as it must be noted that WABA had earlier in the year intervened in the undemocratic tendencies exhibited by President Umaro Sissoco Embaló, the erstwhile President of Guinea-Bissau with a strong condemnation of his anti-democratic tendencies. WABA issued a statement condemning autocratic rulership style and demanded for the institution of a transitional process and elections. Consequent upon the clamour by WABA and other notable institutions especially ECOWAS, the transitional process was put in place and the consequent general elections were held on 23rd of November, 2025.

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Sadly, while the results collations exercise was ongoing and has reached advanced stage, the military suddenly struck.

The so-called coup has been widely criticized and described as surreptitiously orchestrated, especially in view of the fact that President Embaló personally announced the coup and had a briefing with the media after the alleged coup, especially in view of the fact that the election exercise was widely reported to be peaceful.

WABA reiterates that any power seizure or attempt to seize power through unconstitutional means is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated under any circumstances. The legal profession across West Africa stands firmly against actions that threaten democracy, undermine democratic institutions, threaten fundamental rights, and disrupt the peace and security of our sub-region.

WABA demands the following:

- The immediate and unconditional restoration of the democratic structures and full respect for the Constitution of Guinea-Bissau.
- The immediate release of the election results and inauguration of the new government.
- The protection of all political actors, civilians, and members of the legal community, ensuring that no harm comes to individuals exercising their lawful duties or political rights.
- The immediate and unconditional release of all unlawfully arrested citizens, including members of the public, legal practitioners, civil society, politicians (including candidates in the election), electoral officers and journalists.
- Swift and coordinated action by ECOWAS, the African Union, and the international community to apply diplomatic, political, and, where necessary, targeted sanctions to ensure a prompt return to constitutional order.
- The safeguarding of judicial independence and fundamental human rights, including freedom of expression, due process, and access to justice throughout the period of crisis.

WABA further urges the perpetrators of this unconstitutional act to immediately cease all hostilities, engage in dialogue, and return authority to civilian leadership.

B. Republic of Benin

WABA received with profound concern the report of yet another military coup d'etat (albeit failed attempt) within the West African sub-region. The troubling development occurred at a time the region was still dealing with the unfortunate situation in Guinea Bissau. The attempted unconstitutional change of government in the Republic of Benin is most condemnable and outrightly unacceptable. WABA therefore, condemns any effort, actual or attempted to subvert democratic order, undermine constitutional authority, or destabilize peace within the West African sub-region.

Coups and other forms of unconstitutional power grabs remain grave threats to the rule of law, democratic growth, regional stability, and the fundamental rights of citizens. WABA reiterates its long-standing position that democratic governance, accountability, and respect for constitutionalism are indispensable pillars for sustainable development and justice across West Africa.

Gratefully, the mission of the coup plotters was effectively thwarted by the patriotic officers of the Benionise Army, who were kinetically resourced and supported by the Nigerian Air Force who ensured the fleeing coupists were neutralised. WABA thereby salutes the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, particularly President Bola Ahmed Tinubu for issuing the order to provide military assistance for the Republic of Benin in accordance with the ECOWAS Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. The decisive and timely support provided to the Republic of Benin helped to prevent the escalation of the attempted coup and restored normalcy. Nigeria's intervention reflects a steadfast commitment to regional security cooperation, the defense of democratic institutions, and the obligations shared under ECOWAS protocols.

The Association also commends all regional and international partners who contributed to safeguarding constitutional order in the Republic of Benin during this critical moment.

WABA calls on:

- Authorities in the Republic of Benin should ensure a transparent investigation, adherence to due process, and protection of human rights in handling all matters related to the incident.
- ECOWAS leadership should remain vigilant and continue strengthening collective security mechanisms against anti-democratic threats.
- Citizens across West Africa stand firmly against unconstitutional acts and support peaceful, democratic processes.

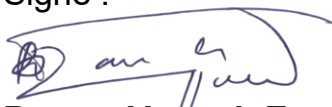
Conclusion

WABA remains committed to defending the rule of law, promoting democratic stability, and upholding the rights of all peoples within the West African region. We stand ready to support any lawful and peaceful process aimed at restoring democratic governance in Guinea-Bissau.

WABA will continue to monitor the situation in Guinea-Bissau closely and work with regional and international partners to defend the rule of law, protect human rights, and uphold the principles of democratic governance across West Africa.

Signed:

Signé :



Bornor Varmah Esq.
Acting President



Adesina Adegbite FICMC, MCI Arb
General Secretary