

## Summary

The political situation in Mali has recently deteriorated as the ruling military junta under President Goïta has dissolved several political groups, suspended all political organization and activities, and implemented media censorship for reasons of public order. Opposition and media organizations in the country have banded together to oppose the ban on political activity and have appealed to the Supreme Court to lift the measures, which proved to be ineffective as it declared itself "incompetent". With no possibility of legal recourse, civil unrest is very likely.

### Recent events and developments

The political situation in Mali has recently deteriorated. The country is led by a military junta that took power through a coup d'état in 2021 and set up a transitional government. Among its failure to curb jihadist violence in the country, the junta promised to organize elections within 24 months. Nevertheless, the elections have been postponed in February 2024, citing "technical issues" as the main reason. The opposition demanded for the elections to take place, prompting the military junta to crack down on opposition organizations and activists. On March 6 and 13, the junta dissolved the Coordination of Movements, Associations and Sympathizers group as well as the Association of Malian Students respectively. On April 1, 80 oppositional parties and groups issued joint statements demanding the organization of elections. After mounting pressure from the opposition, the junta responded on April 10 by suspending all political activities "until further notice" for reasons of public order. Furthermore, a ban on the reporting of political activities by the media was also instituted. The harsh crackdown on political freedoms has been met with resistance from political and media organizations. The media organization Maison de le Press said it rejected the decree and will continue to report while Malian political groups appealed the decree in the Supreme court. The Supreme Court, however, refused to deal with the case, declaring itself "incompetent". In response to the measures, some members of the opposition called for civil disobedience.

### Impact assessment

The current measures curbing political activism and the freedom of the media to report on political activities have already increased tensions in the country. After the refusal of the Supreme Court to deal with the case, tensions may run even higher as the opposition organizations will have no other avenue of legal recourse to challenge the transitional government's censorious measures. Civil disobedience is therefore very likely and has already been called for by members of the opposition. Such a reaction may come in the forms of protests and riots and is likely to occur in Bamako, as it is the seat of the Supreme Court and the junta. Previous instances of protests that turned violent occurred in Mali during the reign of the previous government. In July 2020, protests in several cities, including Bamako, erupted due to the people's dissatisfaction with the government of President Keita as it was accused of corruption, failure to deal with jihadist violence, and a weak economy. The protests evolved into a three-day riot as civilians clashed with security forces who fired live rounds, resulting in the death of four and injury of 70 protestors. As the circumstances were similar to the current situation, measures curbing political organization are likely to inflame national fervour for change in a similar way. The junta might respond to these protests through the use of force just as the previous government did. The Malian armed forces have been repeatedly accused of deliberately attacking and executing civilians, such as in the case of the recent Moura massacre, and might be deployed should protests erupt.

### Advice from Forth Global

- Ensure that all employees travelling to Mali receive a three-day HEAT training prior to deployment.
- Ensure that contingency and security plans are up-to-date and that staff are aware of them.
- Closely monitor the local and international media for updates on a potential escalation and its impact on the situation in Mali.
- Employees should refrain from sharing their opinion on internal Malian politics in public.

### Customized advice

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