



## Joint statement

[Guinea-Bissau] West african CSOs, denounce constitutional manipulations and alert on the political crisis

On 23 February, the President of Guinea-Bissau, Umaro Sissoco Embaló, decreed that the [presidential and legislative elections](#) would take place on 23 November, contrary to the initially announced date of 30 November. This decision comes amidst ongoing disputes regarding the end of President Embaló's mandate, which the opposition contends expired on 27 February,

as it began on 27 February 2020. On the same day, they called for the “ [total paralysis](#)” of the country.

To complicate matters further, on 3 March, the President declared his [candidacy](#) after having previously stated he did not wish to seek a second term. On 7 March, he convened the political parties of the country for a [consultation](#) to attempt to find a way out of the crisis. The meeting was boycotted by the main opposition coalition, the Inclusive Popular Alliance. Leading this coalition are two former Prime Ministers, namely Domingos Simões Pereira and Nuno Gomes Nabiam.

## A Presidency Marked by political instability

As a reminder, since the election of [Umaro Sissoco Embaló](#), Guinea-Bissau has faced numerous political and institutional crises. This began the day after the [presidential election in November 2019](#). The candidate from the African Party for the Independence of Guinea and Cape Verde (PAIGC), and the main opponent of the current President, [Domingo Simões Pereira](#), refused to acknowledge the victory of his adversary, who was declared elected by the national electoral commission. He lodged an appeal with the Supreme Court, which took several months to rule in favour of his rival on 4 September 2020. However, in the meantime, before the Supreme Court validated the election, Mr Embaló had been sworn in for a five-year term on [27 February 2020](#).

On 1 February 2022, the President narrowly escaped an [attempted coup](#) before declaring during a phone call with the press that “everything was under control.” On 16 May 2022, the President announced the [dissolution of the National People's Assembly](#) and called for early elections on 18 December 2022, later postponing them to 4 June 2023.

These 2023 legislative elections were won by [the main opposition coalition](#) led by the PAIGC. However, during the night of 30 November to 1 December 2023, significant unrest erupted between elements of the national guard, an army unit, and government forces, resulting in [two deaths](#) and six serious injuries. The President described these disturbances as a “coup attempt” and, in response, dissolved parliament again on [4 December 2023](#), scheduling early legislative elections for 24 November 2024. Ultimately, these elections

were postponed indefinitely by a presidential decree for [technical and financial reasons](#).

## A Democracy and fundamental freedoms under threat: African CSOs speak out

We, west African civil society organisations and for the most part members of the West African Democratic Solidarity Network ([WADEMOS](#)), as a network committed to democratic values and the rule of law, vehemently condemn all constitutional and institutional manipulations in Guinea-Bissau and elsewhere in the region aimed solely at remaining in power. Any act of democratic governance must be conducted in accordance with the Bissau-Guinean constitution of 15 May 2020.

The expulsion on the night of 1st March of the mediation mission from the Economic Community of West African States ([ECOWAS](#)), which was meant to meet with all stakeholders, does not facilitate a positive resolution to this ongoing crisis in Guinea-Bissau. We firmly condemn this act by President Embaló, which violates the Ecowas Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance.

Despite this abrupt end, the delegation expresses its growing concern regarding the political situation in the country and urges “all interested parties and all citizens to maintain calm and preserve peace and stability in the country.”

Regarding freedom of expression, the [2024 report](#) from Reporters Without Borders (RSF) ranks Guinea-Bissau at 92nd rank, down from 78th in 2023. This regression over one year illustrates the deterioration of press freedom in the country, largely linked to political pressures faced by media professionals. On 20th November 2024, journalists Carabulai Cassama from Capital FM and Turé da Silva suffered [police violence](#).

As elections approach, which are often times of political tension, media professionals frequently become targets from all sides. We African CSOs remind the authorities of Guinea-Bissau to respect press freedom and to establish all necessary conditions for journalists to effectively carry out their information duties.

In addition to the actions of ECOWAS, we invite the African Union Commission to take up the situation in Guinea-Bissau and to dispatch a fact-finding and mediation mission in accordance with its mandate.

In conclusion, we therefore call upon all stakeholders, including political actors and civil society, to come together at the negotiating table to dialogue and find a favourable resolution to the crisis, solely for the benefit of the Bissau-Guinean people and for the wider interest and stability of the West Africa community.

Signed in Dakar on 17/03/2025

Signatories:

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Afrikajom Center

Wademos

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