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By Editor Workers World

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Workers' World Statement: No to the US/French supported invasion of Niger!

"When Africa becomes economically free and politically united, the monopolists will come face to face with their own working class in their own countries, and a new struggle will arise within which the liquidation and collapse of imperialism will be complete."

– Kwame Nkrumah, *Neocolonialism, the Last Stage of Imperialism*

6 August was the deadline set by the Economic Community of West African States for the current government of Niger, headed by Abdourahamane Tchiani, to abdicate power or face possible military intervention by ECOWAS forces. For the time being, ECOWAS has postponed its intervention. Tchiani came to power through a military coup, which has been condemned by imperialist powers such as the United States and France, which have an interest in maintaining a foothold in Niger.

The demonstrations in Niger support the new government, in addition to attacking the French embassy, a symbol of brutal French colonialism and the exploitation of the Nigerien people. (Niger refers to the people of Niger; Nigerian refers to the people of Nigeria.)



Thousands of Nigerians demand the withdrawal of French and other foreign troops from Niamey, Niger, on August 3. (Photo: Anadolu Agency)

Niger is a target of imperialism for many reasons. Among its natural resources is uranium, which supplies up to a third of France's entire electricity grid. However, Niger remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with most of its more than 27 million people without access to their own electricity. Niger is also of strategic importance to the U.S. military as a hub for its drones in Central Africa, used to maintain U.S. influence in the region, as well as to assist in French military interventions.

In addition to the 1,500 French troops, there are more than 1,000 U.S. troops stationed in Niger, which the U.S. government is now refusing to withdraw, despite the suspension of U.S.-Niger security agreements and the evacuation of several European countries. The US military machine is entrenched, hoping to restore pro-imperialist rule by any means necessary.

Sanctions have already been applied against Niger, but a military option remains on the table, whereby the United States and France will be able to use ECOWAS security forces as proxies. France has given its full support to an ECOWAS intervention, although many African countries have been reluctant to participate. Algeria, Burkina Faso, Guinea and Mali – all former French colonies – are among the countries that have come out in support of Niger in the face of imperialist threats.

African opposition to the invasion of Niger

The governments of Burkina Faso and Mali issued a joint statement stating that any attempt at military intervention to remove Tchiani would be taken as a declaration of war against their two countries:

"The transitional governments of Burkina Faso and Mali, One: have expressed their fraternal solidarity of the peoples of Mali and Burkina Faso with their brothers in Niger who have decided of their own free will to take the reins of their destiny and assume their sovereignty. Two: They denounce the persistence of regional organizations in applying sanctions that aggravate the suffering of the population and endanger the Pan-Africanist spirit. Third: Reject the application of these illegal, illegitimate and inhumane sanctions against the Nigerien people and authorities: Any military intervention against Niger would amount to a declaration of war against Burkina Faso and Mali," the statement read. (africanews.com, 1 August)

Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, who is also the current Chairman of ECOWAS, has authorized the deployment of Nigerian soldiers against Niger, who would constitute the bulk of ECOWAS forces. However, the Nigerien Senate voted against this deployment.

The refusal of other neighboring countries to participate in the US- and French-backed invasion of ECOWAS, as well as the indecisiveness of the population of the countries whose leaders advocated the invasion to carry it out, shows major fractures in imperialist dominance over West Africa after hundreds of years of colonialism.

Niger was one of the last remaining friendly governments of the U.S. empire in the Sahel region. The governments of Mali and Burkina Faso, put in power by a series of earlier coups, severed ties with French colonialism and expelled French troops. Since then, ECOWAS has established its own military presence to try to prevent anti-colonial coups within ECOWAS member States, without the direct involvement of United States or French troops.

Some of the new African governments are working with the Wagner Group — Russian-based mercenary forces — to control and suppress local groups affiliated with the Islamic State. These ISIS-like armed groups have been a security concern for countries in the region since NATO aggression destroyed Libya in 2011 and destabilized the region. US

and French imperialism have used the existence of these groups as a pretext for military intervention.

The Workers' World Party affirms the right of the people of Niger to take the destiny of their country into their own hands. We oppose any military invasion, sanction or meddling in African politics backed by the United States or France. We support the expulsion of all U.S. and French troops and the dismantling of U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM).

We support the right of African nations to establish economic and security relations on their own terms with other countries, including Russia and China, rather than being forced into a position of subjugation as a neo-colony by imperialist powers such as the United States or France.

We oppose any plan by the United States, France or NATO to launch another major proxy war. Such a war would wreak havoc in the region in its attempt to maintain economic dominance and the perpetual super-exploitation of the African people.