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Gabon's military coup threatens to end Bongo dynasty after more than 50 years in power



Sources: Free Info [Photo: Street celebrations of the coup d'état in Gabon]

The coup d'état carried out by a group of Gabonese military shortly after the announcement of the official results of the presidential elections, which gave victory again to the president, Ali Bongo, threatens to end the family dynasty started by his father, Omar Bongo, more than 50 years ago, amid growing popular unrest over the crisis and repeated allegations of electoral fraud in the elections held during the last few years. Decades.

The military, which has announced the creation of the Committee for the Transition and Restoration of Institutions (CTRI), have assured that their objective is to "defend peace by putting an end to the current regime", without for the moment there being a pronouncement of **the authorities and** with Bongo in unknown whereabouts.

Thus, they have stressed that all institutions have been dissolved and borders have been closed "until further notice" in Response to the announcement of "false" results of the elections, in the that Bongo would have collected 64.27 percent of the vote, ahead of the main opposition candidate, Albert Ondo Ossa, who has obtained **30.77% of the support**.

The announcement of the results took place one day after than the opposition coalition Alternancia 2023, which appointed Ondo Ossa as Candidate, pointed to the existence of **"very favorable" trends in the counting of votes** and called on the president to organize "a peaceful transfer of power."

Authorities **had imposed a curfew on Saturday and suspended internet access** citing security concerns, while halting the broadcast of French media outlets Radio France Internationale, TV5 Monde and France 24, pointing to a "lack of objectivity" in their coverage of the electoral process, amid doubts about the possible transparency of the voting process.

Wednesday's coup, if successful, would also be the **eighth coup in former French colonies in Africa in the last three years**. while so far they have focused on the Sahel region, where the Increase in attacks by jihadist groups has increased The malaise of the population and the military around the Response of the elected authorities and the former metropolis to the time to deal with the threat.

In the case of Gabon, **the country - which has about 2.7 million inhabitants - achieved independence from France in 1960**. after becoming part of Equatorial Africa five decades earlier French, a federation created by Paris for its colonial possessions in Central Africa which included the territories of present-day Gabon, Republic of Congo, Central African Republic (CAR) and Chad. After the independence, **the first elections took place in 1961** and led to the appointment of Leon M'Ba as Prime Minister and subsequently president after the country's two parties agree on a unified list of candidates.

While the coalition between **M'Ba's Gabonese Democratic Bloc and the Gabonese Democratic and Social Union** functioned during the early years, tensions increased in 1963 and rebounded after a reduction in the number of candidates and disability of the second party to obtain candidates who fulfilled the requirements established by legislation to participate in elections.

In this context, **the Army carried out a bloodless coup in 1964** that it resulted in the cessation of M'Ba, although French troops returned to him Just one day later to power, in which he remained until his death in 1967, a fact that allowed its then vice president, Omar Bongo, assume power.

Omar Bongo's rise to power

Bongo, born Albert-Bernard Bongo – changed name after convert to Islam in Libya in 1973 – and father of the current president, declared the following year that the country would become a State of single party and created its own formation, the Democratic Party. Gabonese, at the head of which he won re-election in 1975, 1979, 1986, 1993 (**the first under a multi-party system**), 1999 and 2005.

Bongo's tenure was marked by a **personalistic style**, accentuated after the elimination in 1975 of the post of vice president and the The fact that he was appointed to head numerous portfolios – including the of Defense, Information and Interior, among others – throughout various Sections of his 42 years at the helm of the African country.

It also had to deal with an increase in criticism of its management since the late seventies because of the **economic crisis and the lack of progress in the democratization of the country**. The tensions led the authorities to announce in September that 1990 the dismantling of two coup attempts.

However, **Bongo managed to stay in power thanks to the support of France**, country with which he maintained good relations – including his release by Part of French paratroopers after being arrested by military during the coup d'état of 1964–, and the relevance of its oil and uranium exports.

Bongo's term came to an end in 2009 following his death in a clinic in Barcelona where he was being treated for cancer intestinal, death that also took place amid tensions with France on a court's decision to freeze its bank accounts in the framework of an investigation against him.

Succession and allegations of fraud

After his death, the country organized a **presidential election that was won by Ali Bongo** – one of his 30 children – although the opposition denounced that the vote It had been manipulated to ensure a monarchical succession.

Ali Bongo, a former funk singer and regarded as a 'spoiled child' by his father, He was involved from the beginning in a series of controversies that They even include his place of birth. Bongo was born in 1959 in Brazzaville, capital of the present-day Republic of the Congo, although it has had that come to the step on several occasions of speculations about his alleged adoption in Nigeria during the Biafran War.

Prior to his ascension to the Gabonese presidency, Bongo served as foreign minister for **three years and defence minister for another ten years**, as part of a political rise that quickly positioned him as the favourite to succeed his father.

Accusations against the tactics of the authorities during Electoral processes continued in the following elections, held in 2016, in which the main opposition candidate, Jean Ping rejected the results and pointed to massive fraud in the province of Upper Ogooué, one of Bongo's strongholds, in which the **president won 95 percent of the vote with a turnout of 99.9 percent**, which allowed him to win re-election with just 6,000 votes more than his rival.

These accusations of fraud have been repeated after the Elections this Saturday and have been cited by the military coup as one of the reasons for the coup d'état, which is also framed in the growing **accusations of corruption against Bongo**, criticized by civil organizations for having turned the country into a kleptocracy.

Criticism of Bongo and his ability to manage the country have been on the rise since 2018, when he suffered a stroke during a trip to Saudi Arabia that removed him from public life for about a year – during which time he was convalescing in Morocco – **with calls for him to hand over power that were rejected by his government.**

Just a few months later, a group of soldiers staged an attempted coup d'état, although the Government managed to contain it, something it hopes to do also on this occasion to consolidate Bongo for **another seven-year term that would raise to more than 60 the period of mandate of his family** at the head of the African country.

Source: https://www.infolibre.es/internacional/golpe-militar-gabon-amenaza-poner-dinastia-bongo-50-anos_1_1578614.html