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By Global News Service

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Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger Form Alliance of Sahel States to Advance Collective Defense

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Note to Editors: This is a selection of news wire reports that have been edited to be relevant for audiences for the next two weeks. You are welcome to select and publish individual items or the whole stack.

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[NEWS ITEM TEXT]

Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger Form Alliance of Sahel States to Advance Collective Defense

[331 words]

In an advancement towards mutual cooperation, the governments of Burkina Faso, Mali, and Niger have formed the Alliance of Sahel States (AES). The move was finalized with the signing of the Liptako-Gourma Charter, named after the tri-border region shared by the three countries, in Mali's capital Bamako on September 16.

The formation of the AES comes at a critical time in the Sahel region of West Africa. Mali has witnessed a resurgence of [attacks](#) by ethnic Tuareg rebels in its northern region, alongside violence by other armed groups. An armed insurgency by Tuareg rebels over a decade ago led to France's military intervention in Mali in 2013 under Operation Serval.

Over the next few years, the [attacks spread](#) to other parts of the Sahel, including Niger and Burkina Faso, with armed groups controlling an estimated 40 percent of the latter's territory. Meanwhile, France expanded its military operations in the region with Operation Barkhane in 2014.

As violence continued to grow even after almost a decade of intervention, France failed to achieve its stated counter-insurgency objectives and generated [civilian casualties](#) as a result of its airstrikes. This fueled protests against the presence of French troops in Mali. Against this backdrop of popular anger, the country witnessed two coups, in 2020 and 2021, finally bringing to power its current leadership headed by Colonel Assimi Goïta.

Burkina Faso would soon follow with a [coup](#) in January 2022 conducted in the wake of anti-French demonstrations. The same year, France announced the withdrawal of troops from Mali after Bamako ended its defense accords with Paris.

In January 2023, Burkina Faso ordered the [expulsion](#) of French troops from its soil.

Both countries were suspended and sanctioned by the regional Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Confronted by a precarious security situation and punitive measures by their regional neighbors, Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea (which had also undergone a military coup in 2021) began taking [comprehensive measures](#) to boost [cooperation](#) on a range of matters, especially defense.

Nigerian University Students Protest Fee Hike Amid Soaring Cost of Living

[236 words]

Against the backdrop of a soaring cost-of-living crisis in Nigeria, students at the University of Lagos (UNILAG) held another protest this week to demand the withdrawal of a major hike in mandatory fees for both new and already enrolled students in undergraduate courses.

Several public universities across Nigeria have increased fees by [100 percent](#) to [300 percent](#). At UNILAG, it is even worse. While the charges vary across courses, students at UNILAG have alleged that the new rates would amount to a hike as high as [over 600 percent](#) at that specific university.

While previous tuition fees had ranged from around ₦26,000 (\$33.1) to ₦76,000 (\$96.8) [per year](#), the [new hikes](#) would see the highest fees go up to ₦240,250 (\$306.2). For medical students, the fee was raised from ₦19,000 (\$24.2) to ₦190,250 (\$242.4).

On September 6, dozens of students held a protest outside the university campus amid a heavy deployment of police. The protesters were forcibly dispersed using tear gas. The action was organized by the Students' Solidarity Group Against Fee Hike and supported by the National Association of Nigerian Students (NANS).

In a statement ahead of the protest, NANS [stated](#) that they had to hold the action after UNILAG authorities failed to abide by agreements that had been reached at a meeting held on August 2, including a commitment to withdraw the fee hikes.

Six Months of War Between Sudan's Security Forces Has Cost Thousands of Lives and Displaced Millions

[238 words]

[Over 5.3 million](#) have been displaced in the war between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), which entered the sixth month on September 15.

Over a million have fled to the neighboring countries of Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, and South Sudan, while more than 4.1 million have been internally displaced to “3,855 locations across all of Sudan's 18 states,” [according](#) to the International Organization for Migration.

Six states—River Nile, followed by South Darfur, East Darfur, Northern State, Sennar, and North Darfur—are hosting the highest number of these internally displaced persons (IDPs).

Before the fighting broke out between the different arms of the security forces which had together seized power in a military coup in October 2021, Sudan already had 3.2 million IDPs from previous civil wars. The five months of fighting between SAF and RSF has internally displaced over four million more, which puts the country's total at about 7.1 million IDPs.

Sudan's total number of IDPs “eclipses other war-affected countries with massive internal displacement, the next highest being Syria with 6.6 million people, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) at 6.1 million people, and Ukraine at 5.1 million people,” the UN [reported](#). “Sudan is now the country with the highest number of internally displaced

people on earth... including an estimated 3.5 [million] children,” Save the Children International [said](#) on September 11.

U.S. Autoworkers Go on Strike, Call on All Workers to “Stand up!”

[239 words]

On September 15, 13,000 of the approximately 146,000 UAW members who work at the Big Three auto companies walked off the job in three assembly plants in Michigan, Ohio, and Missouri. This partial strike, which could build to 146,000 strong in gradual waves, depending on when an agreement is reached, is part of the UAW’s new strategy—the “stand-up” strike.

The UAW describes the stand-up strike as “[our generation’s answer to the movement that built our union, the Sit-Down Strikes of 1937](#),” harkening back to the UAW’s militant history in the 30s and 40s that set the standard for the entire U.S. working class by winning demands such as [COLA](#).

While the UAW is not striking at all plants and parts distribution centers at once across the country, “[that option is still on the table](#),” according to the union.

By not striking at all Big Three locations at once, the UAW ensures that as negotiations continue, they do not give up all their leverage at once. The union can keep escalating, as slowly or as quickly as it wants.

“Strikes are the most powerful tool a union has. They are also in many ways the final tool,” [wrote](#) David Kamper of the Economic Policy Institute on Twitter. “So, what [the stand-up strike] is doing is taking the process of going on strike, and instead of making it a single moment of total conflict, stretching it out.”