

Macron says French envoy to stay in Niger despite ultimatum



Paris, August 28 (RHC)-- France's ambassador to Niger will stay in the Sahel country despite pressure to leave from leaders of a recent coup, President Emmanuel Macron has said.

On Monday, he also reiterated France's support to Niger's overthrown President Mohamed Bazoum, whose decision not to resign Macron called courageous. Macron also said Paris would support any military action by The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in Niger.

The French leader, who was speaking during a major foreign policy speech to ambassadors gathered in Paris, confirmed that French envoy Sylvain Itte was listening in from Niger's capital Niamey despite being given a 48-hour deadline to leave the country last Friday.

"France and its diplomats have faced particularly difficult situations in some countries in recent months, from Sudan, where France has been exemplary, to Niger at this very moment and I applaud your colleague and your colleagues who are listening from their posts," he said.

Bazoum was toppled on July 26 and has been detained along with his family at the presidential palace in a coup that has been condemned by France and most of Niger's neighbors. ECOWAS has been trying to negotiate with the leaders of the coup but has said it is ready to deploy troops to restore constitutional order if diplomatic efforts fail.

On Friday, Niger's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that French ambassador Itte had 48 hours to leave, saying he had refused to meet with the new rulers and citing French government actions that were "contrary to the interests of Niger".

Macron insisted that France would not change its position in condemning the coup and offering support to Bazoum, stressing he had been democratically elected.

"I think our policy is the right one. It's based on the courage of President Bazoum, and on the commitments of our ambassador on the ground who is remaining despite all the pressure, despite all the declarations made by the illegitimate authorities," said Macron.

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