Mali's prime minister hits out at neo-colonialist France in UN speech

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Mali's Prime Minister Choguel Maiga attends a meeting with the United Nations Security Council delegation   (File photo by Reuters)

United Nations, September 26 (RHC)-- Mali has censured France over its deteriorating security situation, accusing Paris of having stabbed the impoverished, though minerals-rich, Sahel country in the back with the withdrawal of French troops.

Colonel Abdoulaye Maiga, the new acting prime minister of Mali, made the remarks in a speech at the 77th session of the United nations General Assembly in New York on Saturday. French leaders "have disowned universal moral values and betrayed the rich history of the Lumieres philosophers and turned themselves into a junta in the service of obscurantism," Maiga said.

He also denounced the former colonial power for "neocolonialist, condescending, paternalist and vengeful policies" such as sanctions on the junta in Mali, which has seen two military coups since 2020. "Move on from the colonial past and hear the anger, the frustration, the rejection that is coming up from the African cities and countryside, and understand that this movement is inexorable," Maiga said. "Your intimidations and subversive actions have only swelled the ranks of Africans concerned with preserving their dignity."
 He also slammed what he called France's "unilateral decision" to relocate its remaining troops to neighboring Niger amid deteriorating relations with Mali's two-time coup leader, Colonel Assimi Goita.

In February, France announced that it will withdraw thousands of troops from Mali due to a breakdown in relations with the country. According to Western press reports, the arrival of Russian paramilitary forces in Mali at the invitation of the provisional military government in Bamako was a key factor in France's decision to withdraw its occupation forces.

France's military occupation of Mali began in 2013 to allegedly counter militants that Paris claimed were linked to the al-Qaeda and Daesh terrorist groups. Accordingly, the French government deployed thousands of soldiers to purportedly prevent separatist forces from reaching Bamako.

The war caused several thousand deaths and more than a million people to flee their homes. There have been two military coups in roughly a year, amid growing demonstrations against France's military presence.

France has been a former colonizer in Africa, and, after years of outright colonization, still seeks control over countries spread over more than 12 territories and treats their people as second-class citizens. It has had more than 50 military interventions in Africa since 1960, when many of its former colonies gained nominal independence.

Although France remains the only Western country with a significant military presence in the Sahel, its relationship with its former African colonies has grown increasingly tense in recent months. This has led to an evident increase in anti-French sentiment.

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