

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/mali-whether-staging-mutiny-or-coup-22-03-2012,42176.html>

Africa - Mali

State TV occupied

Whether staging mutiny or coup, soldiers shut down news media

22 March 2012

Reporters Without Borders condemns the occupation of the headquarters of the state radio and TV broadcaster *ORTM* by renegade soldiers since yesterday and the interruption of broadcasting by many other radio and TV stations as a result of an apparent military coup against President Amadou Toumani Touré.

"Whether this is a real coup or just a mutiny, we are appalled that soldiers have occupied the state broadcaster and taken control of its broadcasts," Reporters Without Borders said. "As it is often the case in such circumstances, control of news and information is primordial and the media are among the mutineers' first targets.

"The state media are now broadcasting the same message over and over, while the privately-owned broadcast media were suspended to prevent independent coverage of what is going on. All the journalists who cannot go to work have our support, and our thoughts go out to the people of Mali, who have been deprived of so many sources of information."

Soldiers overran *ORTM* at around 4 p.m. yesterday, firing into the air inside the complex and forcing all the personnel to leave. At around 4 a.m. today, they broadcast a communiqué announcing a curfew and the dissolution of state institutions. This communiqué has been broadcast repeatedly on state radio and TV ever since.

Broadcasting by all the privately-owned radio stations in Bamako was suspended yesterday. Some of them, such as *Radio Kledu* (101.2 FM) and *Radio Kayira* (104.4 FM), resumed broadcasting this morning. Transmission of the regional TV channel *Africable* has been suspended since yesterday.

A Malian print media journalist told Reporters Without Borders: "The situation is very confused and I think that today will be decisive. It is a problem within the military. Some soldiers are driving around the city firing in the air. No one knows what to believe. President Touré has not said anything."

The only reaction from the president has been to post a Tweet last night saying: "There has been no coup d'état in Mali. It is just a mutiny."

The mutineering soldiers have criticized the lack of resources available to the armed forces to combat the National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad (MNLA) and other Tuareg and Islamist rebel groups in the north of the country that have been staging armed actions for several months.

A presidential election was due to be held on 29 April.

Photo : Military men in streets of Bamako (Habibou Kouyate / AFP)

You can download those documents on our website :

- Military men in the streets of Bamako, (JPEG - 54.3 kb)
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