

Answer to Question

The Gabon Coup

(Translated)

Question:

On 30/8/2023, a group of officers from the army, presidential guard, and security forces in Gabon announced the seizure of power, and placed Gabonese President Ali Bongo under house arrest, hours after the Electoral Commission announced that he had won a third term. It announced the cancellation of elections, the dissolution of state institutions, and the closure of borders until further notice. It was announced that the Commander of the Presidential Guard, Ngima, was appointed as interim president of the country. What is the secret of this coup? What is its relationship to the international conflict in the region?

Answer:

In order to clarify the answer to this coup, we review the following matters:

1- Gabon is a country located in central West Africa overlooking the Atlantic Ocean. It was occupied by French colonialists in 1885 and gave it formal independence in 1960. Note that there is a military base in Gabon in the capital, Libreville, where there are about 1000 French soldiers who supervise the protection of French interests in the country and ensure sustained French influence there. The population of this country is small; about 2.3 million people, according to the 2022 census, with respect to the country's area of about 270 thousand square kilometers, the percentage of Muslims is small, as statistics indicate, including the ousted president and the new interim president, as this percentage amounts to between 10 and 12%, the majority of whom live in the capital, Libreville. It is a country rich in natural resources, as it is considered the second producer in the world of manganese, which is used in the manufacture of steel, iron and batteries, in addition to the presence of gold, diamonds and uranium in large quantities, and it has huge reserves of oil and gas.

That is why it is a member of OPEC. The bulk of this wealth is held by French companies, which number about 110 companies there, according to data from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs on its website, including the French mining company Eramet, which extracts manganese, and the French energy company Total, which extracts oil and gas. Gabon, like Niger, Mali, Senegal and Chad, is one of the fourteen countries that have their currencies linked to the French currency under the name of the African franc, which is linked to the euro, as it is in the interest of France and the European Union, and its income is transferred to the French Central Bank, forming the French reserve of currencies, then France gives it crumbs. This is how its population became of poor people, and France steals their wealth. People in these countries are demanding that this connection be broken, the money be transferred to the banks of their African countries, and the wealth be distributed to them.

2- The ousted President Ali Bongo assumed power in sham elections in 2009, after the death of his father, Omar Bongo, who led the country for about 41 years. The son inherited the subordination to France from his father, and he announced his victory in the 2016 elections. He is not entitled to run for a third term according to the constitution in Gabon. However, he agreed with the other parties to run in the elections, and these parties agreed to that. The results of the elections that took place on 26/8/2023 showed that Ali Bongo won by 64.27%. On the day these results were announced, a group of officers from the Presidential Guard, the army, and security carried out a coup against the president and placed him under house arrest. The group said in its first statement, which was read by an officer with the rank of colonel from the presidential palace

on the Gabon 24 Channel: “We are the defense and security forces gathered within the transitional phase committee and the restoration of institutions, we decided, in the name of the Gabonese people, to defend peace by ending the existing regime. To this end, the presidential elections that took place on 26/8/2023, as well as their results, were cancelled.”

Announcing the end of the existing regime, the officers’ spokesman announced, “Noureddine Bongo, the president’s son and close advisor, was arrested, in addition to the head of his office and his deputy, a number of his advisors, the presidential spokesman, and two other most important men from the ruling Gabonese Democratic Party, led by President Ali Bongo, on charges of High Treason against state institutions, embezzlement of public funds, international financial embezzlement within an organized gang, forgery of the president’s signature, corruption, and drug trafficking.” It appears that the coup was planned by all the military forces in the country, and if we know that the military sector is controlled by France, the finger of blame points to it.

3- On the other hand, after his deposition, President Ali Bongo sent a message via social media online from his home with a look of concern, saying, “I, Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon, send a message to all our friends around the world to ask them to raise their voices regarding the people who arrested me and my family.” (Sky News Arabia, 30/8/2023). No party cared about him, neither France, nor America, nor the African Union, and no one contacted him, as happened with Nigerien President Mohamed Bazoum. Rather, the French newspapers paid attention to the coup leader, as if they were working to polish him and give him legitimacy to carry out the coup. On 30/8/2023, the French newspaper Le Monde quoted the coup leader and commander of the Republican Guard in Gabon, Brice Oligui Nguema, saying, “President Ali Bongo violated the constitution, and has no right to run for a third term, and the method of voting itself was not good, so the army decided to assume its responsibilities...Ali Bongo has become a retired head of state and enjoys all his rights as any citizen.” It is worth noting that the Commander of the Presidential Guard, Nguema, was close to President Ali Bongo, who is his cousin. He was also close to his father, Omar Bongo, and worked as a special advisor to him until his death.

He returned to the country after working as a military advisor in his country’s embassy in Senegal and Morocco after Ali Bongo suffered a stroke in October 2018, which sidelined him for about 10 months. He had been deported abroad for two years, and then he was returned and appointed head of the Presidential Guard, which means that party he is linked to wanted him to return to prepare for the stage after the semi-paralyzed president. The opposition presidential candidate, Albert Ondo Ossa, said in a statement to the French channel TV5 Bond on 31/8/2023: “We must put things in context. First, it is not about a military coup, but rather a palace revolution. Oligui Nguema is Ali Bongo’s cousin... The Bongo camp has reached the conviction that Ali Bongo must be removed in order to preserve the Bongo regime... Oligui Nguema followed, and behind him stands the Bongo family, which controls power.”

4- As for the official French position, on 30/8/2023, the BBC reported the statements of French officials, (French Prime Minister Elizabeth Borne said, “Paris is closely following the situation in Gabon.” A source in the Elysee said, “Paris clearly denounces the Gabon coup, and President Macron did not communicate with President Bongo, and France hopes for a quick return to constitutional order in Gabon, but it does not interfere in the internal political affairs of this country. The solution is not through a military coup, but by free and fair elections that guarantee the aspirations of the Gabonese people.” Although this position appears to condemn the coup, it is a supportive position, and the condemnation came in line with public opinion against military coups.

Because the actions of the French President confirm that the denunciation is not serious. He did not communicate with the ousted president as he did with the Nigerien president. He did not personally denounce the coup, nor did he threaten or demand intervention as he did toward Niger. He considered the matter internal and did not require intervention. This is different from his

attempt to interfere in the internal affairs of Niger, refusing to recognize the coup plotters there, and rejecting their request for the French ambassador to leave Niger. Macron's statement that the solution is through free and fair elections, provides justification for the coup plotters and support for them. It is likely that France was behind this coup, especially since Gabon is a vital resource for it. On 31/8/2023, French Monte Carlo quoted Caroline Rossi, director of the Institute of International and Strategic Relations in Paris, as saying, "France without Gabon is a car without gasoline, and Gabon without France is a car without a driver."

5- The European Union's position confirms that France was behind this coup. European Union foreign policy official Josep Borrell said on the sidelines of the 27th European Union foreign ministers' meeting in Toledo, Spain, on 31/8/2023, saying: ("It is not possible to compare what is happening in Gabon to what is happening in Niger," considering that the military in Libreville intervened after the victory of ousted President Ali Bongo in elections marred by irregularities. He added, "Military coups are not the solution, but we must not forget that elections full of irregularities took place in Gabon. A fraudulent vote could be considered an institutional civil coup." He said, "There are military and other institutional coups." He added, "There is no plan to evacuate citizens of European Union countries from the African country." (Asharq Al-Awsat, Al-Mayadeen 31/8/2023)).

He justifies the coup that took place in Gabon, and even supports it, as there was fraud previously yet he had never protested against it before! It appears that the European official did not know the nature of the coup at first, and that is why he said immediately after the coup, "The Union ministers will discuss the situation in Gabon, and what is happening in West Africa is a big problem for Europe. If this (the coup) is confirmed, it will be another military coup that increases the unrest in the entire region." (Al Jazeera, 30/8/2023). But when he met a day later with European Union ministers, including the French Foreign Minister, he learned the truth; that this coup was for Europe's favour, and would not increase its unrest! So he stood up and changed his statements!

6- There is popular rejection of France in Gabon and in other African countries. French President Macron had visited several African countries a few months ago, where he saw a curse on French colonialism and a rejection of France. Macron arrived in Gabon on 2/3/ 2023, and people attacked him and accused him of supporting the Bongo regime and its corruption. Macron acknowledged the existence of growing dissatisfaction with France and requested building a new balanced, reciprocal and responsible relationship with Africa. People, especially the younger generation, see the presence of French forces under the pretext of fighting terrorism as an embodiment of a colonial legacy and call for a new independence. It appears that France carried out this coup to preserve its influence and interests in light of the coups that took place in the region in Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger... and wants to strengthen its influence with a military commander similar to the coup leaders in those countries, to be of their kind as a coup military commander and stand against them on behalf of France and to preserve their interests, or perhaps he might infiltrate among them to confuse them after they allied themselves against France and its attempts to intervene. Note that Ali Bongo is ill and suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed for 10 months. It is rumored that he does not fully enjoy his mental and physical abilities, so France wants to replace him as another agent from the same family. It appears that his circle that was arrested by the coup plotters are the ones who control affairs, led by his son Nouredine Bongo. They are accused by the people, and thus the coup plotters are able to deceive the people and appear loyal.

7- As for the American position towards the Gabon coup, the Al Jazeera site on 30/8/2023 quoted the White House spokesman as saying, "We are following closely, what is happening is a matter of concern. We will continue to focus on working with our African partners and the people of the continent to help support democracy." The site quoted the statements of the American

representative to the United Nations, Linda Thomas Greenlenfeld, where she said, "The United States condemns the coup in Gabon and any attempts by the military to seize power by force... Members of the Security Council are being consulted regarding the coup in Gabon, and we will not take action before verifying what is happening." An American military official told Al Jazeera, "The American administration is aware of the developments in Gabon and is monitoring closely, and it does not have a military presence in Gabon except for the forces charged with protecting its embassy there." US State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said: ("The United States is deeply concerned by evolving events in Gabon. We remain strongly opposed to military seizures or unconstitutional transfers of power." (BBC 30/8/2023)).

This is in contrast to America's position regarding Niger, which we detailed in the Answer to Question we issued on 15/8/2023. The reality in Gabon, where France controls all political, economic, and military circles, has not been able to be accessed by America until now, and it is different in Niger, where it was able to access it through Mohamed Bazoum and his predecessor, Mohamed Issoufou, since the 2010 coup. The coup leader in Gabon, Nguema, graduated from a military college in Meknes, Morocco, away from American influence, and returned to work as a special advisor to the late President Omar Bongo until his death. He and the ousted President Ali Bongo are cousins, as was reported. However, it does not appear that the opposition and its candidate are among its supporters or agents. Rather, it appears that he is in the circle of French agents. America did not announce its support for the opposition candidate, Albert Ondo Ossa, but rather demanded support for democracy and strongly condemned the coup.

8- Thus, we see in Gabon, as in all dependent countries in Africa and Asia, that the agents who rant about democracy, freedom, nationalism, and patriotism are securing the interests of the colonial countries in exchange for gaining power or remaining in it. They do not care about being servants of the colonizer, nor that the wealth of their countries are plundered by the companies of the colonial countries. They are satisfied with obtaining a commission from these companies that plunder their country's wealth and leave their people suffering from poverty, hunger and disease. Rather, they resort to imposing taxes on their citizens to support their budget, which they quickly empty on their extravagance. There is no salvation for the people in Gabon and elsewhere except by overthrowing these agents and sweeping them out of the political circle and from all circles, then having sincere belief in the Creator of the universe, Allah AlQawi Al Aziz (All Powerful and Mighty) and implementing His law in the state of truth and justice, the Khilafah Rashidah (rightly-guided Caliphate), then the people of Gabon will live in security, safety, goodness and peace, and so will everyone who lives under the shade of Islam, the Deen of truth, guidance and mercy.

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ وَشِفَاءٌ لِمَا فِي الصُّدُورِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

“O mankind, there has come to you instruction from your Lord and healing for what is in the breasts and guidance and mercy for the believers” [Yunus: 57]

20 Safar Al Khair 1445 AH

5/9/2023 CE