

Answer to Question

Question: Military Sources in Niger announced on Thursday, 18th February that soldiers led by Major Adam Haroun staged military coup against President Mohammed Tanja and declared that the president and members of government have been detained at a place in the vicinity of the presidential palace in the capital Niamey. They also announced the suspension of the constitution and dissolution of governmental establishments. Is this military coup similar to others coups in the past in Niger which have been due to local conflicts between the influential French agents in this former French colony, or is it a reflection of international conflict? May Allah reward you!

Answer: Yes, indeed this military coup has taken place as you have mentioned, and they have declared formation of a 'Higher Council of Restoration of Democracy' under the chairmanship of Salou Jeebo, the commander of the Support Unit in Niamey which includes heavy armours like battle tanks. The Council stated: "The government stands dissolved, and the 'Higher Council of Restoration of Democracy' advises the people that general matters have been delegated to the directors general of various ministries and provinces. [Reuters/AFP: 19.02.2010].

To better understand the event, we present the following indicators:

1. The French news agency A.F.P announced that an unnamed French official had earlier informed it: "A military coup is imminent in Niger and that Tanja is not in a very good position." The A.F.P added that this French diplomat mentioned to it that: "The Presidential Guard participated in the coup." He explained: "We are aware that a division of the armed forces opposed to Tanja and have imposed themselves in violation of the constitutional directives, but we believe that they are a handful minority." He said: "There has been a history of military coup in this country, but we did not believe that it would be staged with such speed." The Prime Minister of Niger Ali Bako Goumami had on Wednesday, i.e. a day prior to the coup called an important meeting of the cabinet of ministers.
2. This indicates that France was not expecting this military coup against its agent Mohammed Tanja to take place this quickly although it was aware about the presence of such military soldiers but it presumed that they were an ineffective minority who are not in a position to stage a coup. France was undertaking negotiations with them in an attempt to resolve the situation in order to avoid a coup, but it did nevertheless take place. Also the Niger government was aware of the challenge to it and it, along with its supporter France wanted to solve the issues that threatened it. But the soldiers surprised both the Niger government as well as France.
3. France had expressed its displeasure over the coup and it was executed despite this. The French Foreign Ministry spokesman said: "France condemns any unconstitutional takeover of authority and calls for dialogue between the rebels and the president." [Free American Channel: 19.02.2010]. This statement of the French spokesman reiterates that France was opposed to the rebels and wants dialogue to restore the deposed president, which implies that the coup was staged against France.
4. The French news agency A.F.P on 19th February, 2010 quoted an unnamed American official in Washington saying: "Indeed he [Tanja] has no one to blame for the coup but himself." A.F.P and other news agencies also carried another report on the same day that the US State Department spokesman Phillip Crowley had stated: "This is difficult situation, President Tanja was trying to

extend his term. And clearly this prompted today's events." He said: "We believe this emphasises that Niger should work to hold elections and form a new government."

5. The statements of the US official not named by the French news agency and the statements of the US State Department Spokesman indicate that the coup is acceptable to the US and it holds the deposed president Tanja responsible for it. This was implied in the reference to Tanja's attempt to extend his term by three years through a referendum held last August to effect changes in the constitution. The opposition forces had then opposed the move and the political situation in the country had become tense. Tanja had been elected twice after the coup carried out by troops led by Brigadier Dawood Malaam Wanki in 1999. The constitution of Niger does not allow a third term for a candidate and hence it was amended. He had dissolved the Constitutional Court because it did not ratify the amendment which allowed him a third term or extend his term of office. Similarly, Tanja had dissolved the parliament on 26th May, last after which parliamentary elections were held in November last which were won by the opposition.

America's reference to the extension of term is to lay responsibility on the president and thereby justify the military coup. Also the US State Department Spokesman did not call for either restoration of the deposed president nor for dialogue between the rebels and the deposed president. Instead he called for holding of fresh elections and forming a new government. All this indicates that the US is behind the coup.

6. It is known that Niger is an Islamic country and a majority of its people are Muslims. It was a French colony under its direct rule and was given nominal independence in the year 1960, but the French influence continued there in all spheres. Even today there are 1500 French to protect its nuclear interests, since Niger is the third largest producer of Uranium in the world and it is the French companies that have invested in Uranium production. This is why the US is eyeing it with greed in order to exercise control over it and remove French influence there as well as in other African nations, most of which are Islamic and are rich in many natural resources that provide raw materials of various types as well as energy resources. This is why it has been the bone of contention for the greedy European and American colonialists.
7. Due to Niger's importance as a Uranium producer, especially since it is financed by the French companies, it is unlikely that Americans will gain access there so easily and France is not likely to abandon its colony without resisting the US. Hence the next few days are going to witness a hot international conflict in this Muslim land which is different to what Niger has hitherto witnessed between various French agents.

6th Rabe' ul Awwal, 1431 A.H

20th February, 2010 C.E