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## **Mali: End attacks and detention of peaceful protesters amid military coup**

Opponents of Mali's new leadership have been attacked and injured during a peaceful protest on Thursday, prompting Amnesty International to urge an investigation into the incident.

The news comes in the wake of a military coup that last week toppled Mali's President Amadou Toumani Touré.

The protesters were calling for the reinstatement of the country's constitution when they were attacked by a group of people in plainclothes during a rally inside the labour exchange in Mali's capital Bamako. It is the second attack on opponents of the military junta in just four days.

"It is deeply disturbing that Mali's new military leaders have said nothing about the violence taking place under their noses, despite two attacks on protesters in four days," said Salvatore Saguès, Amnesty International's West Africa researcher.

"The military leadership should ensure that this sort of harassment against people peacefully expressing their opinions is investigated and the perpetrators brought to justice."

Among the protesters were six senior politicians who were arrested and taken to a military camp outside the city. They were later released.

One of the witnesses, former Minister of Justice Hamidou Diabaté, told Amnesty International: "We were talking peacefully when people began to throw stones at us and beat some of us with sticks. They were shouting slogans in favour of the coup."

Several people suffered serious head injuries, including Moussa Diakité, a member of parliament for the Alliance for Democracy in Mali (ADEMA) and Mahamane Rakibou Touré, Secretary General of the Union for Democracy and Development (UDD).

Amnesty International is also concerned about the continued detention of ten Malian politicians and government officials in the immediate aftermath of the coup.

Among the ten are three members of the country's former government as well as members of Mali's opposition parties.

On Thursday, delegates from Amnesty International Mali visited the detainees at the Kati military camp, some 15 km (9.3 miles) outside Bamako, where some of them have begun a hunger strike in protest at their detention.

"The detainees told our delegation that they didn't know why they were being held for a week and that

they were forbidden any contact with their relatives or lawyers” said Salvatore Saguès.

“These arbitrary detentions go against international standards, and also contravene Malian law, which does not allow for anyone to be detained for more than 48 hours without charge. They should be released immediately.”

Amid widespread international condemnation of the coup, the newly formed National Committee for the Re-establishment of Democracy and the Restoration of the State (CNRDR), led by coup leader Captain Amadou Sanogo, has adopted a series of new constitutional articles meant to replace the suspended constitution until presidential elections take place. No election date has been announced yet.

The coup was led by soldiers opposed to the way President Touré’s government had been handling a Tuareg insurgency in the north of the country.

A delegation from ECOWAS (The Economic Community of West African States), which has suspended Mali following the coup and called for the reinstatement of the ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré, cancelled their visit to Mali on Thursday, after demonstrators on the tarmac of the Bamako airport condemned the intervention of this regional body.