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Elections in Mali

2018 Presidential Election

Frequently Asked Questions

Africa

International Foundation for Electoral Systems

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Frequently Asked Questions

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Disclosure:
These FAQs reflect decisions made by the Malian elections authorities as of July 20, 2018 to the best of our knowledge. This document does not represent any IFES policy or technical recommendations.

When is Election Day?

The presidential election is scheduled to be held on July 29, 2018. Campaigning for the first round of elections began on July 7 and will end on July 27. If necessary, a runoff will be held on August 12.

Why are the elections important?

The upcoming election will be the fifth democratic presidential election since the introduction of multiparty politics. Although Mali gained independence in 1960, it remained a one-party state until 1991. A series of anti-government protests led to a military coup and the creation of an interim government called the Transitional Committee for the Salvation of the People. The 2002 elections marked the first transition from one democratically-elected president to another.

The 2018 elections in Mali will be a key component of maintaining political stability in the country, given that Northern Mali has been embroiled in conflict since 2012. Despite the signing of the Bamako Agreement in 2015, conflict is ongoing and insecurity in the region has continued to grow.

What is the election management body? What are its powers?

The Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) is Mali's election management body. It is responsible for supervising and monitoring referendums and presidential, legislative and commune elections. The CENI is not a permanent body. It is constituted afresh before each election and is dissolved three months after the final polling results have been announced. The Ministry of Territorial Administration safeguards all documents and materials for the incoming CENI.

The CENI is comprised of 15 members. Of these members:

- Ten are nominated by political parties according to an equitable distribution among majority and opposition parties;
- One is nominated by religious denominations;
- One is nominated by the Independent Union of Magistrates;
- One is nominated by the Bar Council;
- One is nominated by the Human Rights Defense Association; and
- One is nominated by the Women's Association Umbrella Body.

The 15 members nominated by the various bodies and appointed by a decree of the Council of Ministers elect an executive chairperson. All decisions are made by a majority vote of members present. The terms of service and remuneration are set in a decree of the Council of Ministers.

The CENI conducts supervision and monitoring operations, including:

- Establishment or exceptional revision of electoral rolls for general elections or referendums;
- Preparation and management of the electoral register;
- Preparation, printing and distribution of voter cards;
- Provision of election materials and documents;

- Management of national and international observers;
- Conduct of the election;
- Rescue operations proxy voting;
- Voting; and
- Reconciliation of ballots, vote counting, transmission of records and centralization and announcement of results.

In addition to the CENI, there are two other important entities involved in election administration: the General Elections Directorate (GDE) and the Ministry of Territorial Administration.

The GDE was created in 2000 by Law No. 00-058. The GDE is headed by a director general and deputy director general, both of whom are full-time appointees of the president. The structure of the GDE is comprised of the Office of the Electoral Register and Documentation, Office of Public Financing and Political Parties, and Financial Management and Personnel Unit. The GDE assists the CENI with the following:

- Development and management of the voter register (more commonly known in Mali as the “electoral file”);
- Preparation and printing of voters' cards;
- Management of public financing of political parties; and
- Other tasks requested by the CENI as needed.

The Ministry of Territorial Administration is also responsible for some of the tasks related to the supervision and monitoring of election operations, including:

- Technical and practical preparations for all elections and referendums;
- Organization of the referendum and elections;
- Development of procedures and operations for polling;
- Centralization and announcement of provisional results of polls;
- Provision of polling documentation to the Constitutional Court; and
- Centralization and preservation of municipal election documentation.

Who are citizens voting for on Election Day?

Malian citizens will elect the president in the upcoming poll. In a final decision issued on July 4, 2018, the country's Constitutional Court accepted 24 presidential candidates. Incumbent Ibrahima Boubacar Keita, who took office in 2013, and opposition frontrunner and former Finance Minister Soumaila Cisse are expected to be the main candidates. Other candidates include former Prime Minister Cheick Mohamed Abdoulaye Souad – known as Modibo Diarra – and former Ministers Choguel Choguel Kokala Maiga, Mountaha Tall, and Mohamed Ali Bathily. Harouna Sankara, a religious leader from embattled central Mali, and business woman Djeneba N'Diaye are also allowed to run.

Who can vote in Mali's 2018 presidential election?

To be eligible to vote, one must be a Malian citizen, at least 18 years of age, registered on electoral lists, and maintain the capacity to exercise full civil and political rights. In other words, they must not have been sentenced by a judge such that they lose their civil or political rights.

Electoral lists are permanent and created from biometric databases of birth, marriage and death records and include photos and fingerprints. The National Identification Number (NINA) is a unique number attributed to each voter based on this biometric data. Electoral lists are updated annually from October 1 to December 31 in each municipality, embassy and consulate by an administrative committee. The administrative committees consist of members appointed by the government and political parties.

Voting is an individual act. Upon entering the polling station, the voter shows the NINA identity card, which is the only identification document admissible at a polling station. Citizens who are registered on electoral lists and do not possess NINA cards are not permitted to vote.

How many registered voters are there?

A recent audit of the voter register revealed that there are currently 8,461,000 registered voters in Mali. This is a marked increase from the 2013 electoral cycle, during which the number of registered voters totaled 6,829,696.

What electoral system will be used in Mali's 2018 presidential elections?

The Malian presidential elections use a two-round system. The president is elected for a five-year term, renewable once, by an absolute majority through direct universal suffrage. If there is no absolute majority in the first round, the candidate who receives the absolute majority in the second round will be the winner. A second round is organized for the two candidates who receive the most votes in the first round but failed to receive an absolute majority.

What is the structure of the government?

The government in Mali consists of the executive branch, legislative branch and judiciary. The executive branch is comprised of the president, who is the chief of state (Constitution Article 29), and the presidentially-appointed prime minister, who is the head of government (Constitution Article 36). The legislative branch is a unicameral Parliament, and thus consists only of the National Assembly (Constitution Article 59). The judicial branch consists of the Supreme Court and all other courts and tribunals (Constitution Article 81).

Where will voters cast their ballots?

There are 23,041 polling stations established for the 2018 elections in Mali.

Who can observe during Election Day? How can they get accreditation?

Article 14 of Mali's electoral law states that the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) is mandated to oversee both domestic and international electoral observation. Organizations wishing to

observe elections must apply to the CENI for accreditation. Once observers receive accreditation, entities such as the General Elections Directorate and the Ministry of Territorial Administration provide observers with information on the electoral process.

When will official results be announced?

For presidential elections, there are two stages to the results announcement process. First, the Ministry of Territorial Administration makes provisional announcements. Second, the Constitutional Court releases the official results.

How will election disputes be adjudicated?

The Constitutional Court is responsible for resolving any cases regarding the contested validity of elections. These contestations may be brought forth by a voter, candidate, political party, or delegate of the government (Constitution Article 87). Requests for annulment of the elections may also be brought before the Supreme Court; such contestations must be filed within five days of the announcement of results. The Supreme Court must reach a decision no more than two months after the request has been filed (Electoral Act Chapter VIII, Article 188).

Resources

- [Constitution](#)
- [Electoral Act](#) (French)