

“FORGET ABOUT DEMOCRACY”

FONDEMOS' VIEW:



Burkina junta chief, Captain Ibrahim Traoré, January 22, 2026

On 2 April 2026, Captain Ibrahim Traoré declared in Burkina Faso that “people must forget about democracy”.

Whilst Paul Biya in Cameroon and Teodoro Nguema Obiang in Equatorial Guinea organise elections devoid of substance, “*democratic fictions*” as journalist Ousmane Ndiaye describes them in his work *L’Afrique contre la démocratie*,

Burkina Faso has abandoned even the pretence. **The regime no longer feigns respect for democratic form.**

The declaration is audacious: having dissolved political parties and dismantled electoral institutions, the head of the military junta now demands that citizens abandon the very idea of participating in power.

Why does he permit himself to be so forthright? Is he betting that Burkinabés, exhausted by decades of security failures, have lost faith in democracy itself?

By brandishing democracy as a “*colonial import*”, he offers the people a discourse that appears liberating: to reject Western legacy, to invent their own path, a national “*revolution*”.

But according to historian Achille Mbembe, **to speak of a “crisis of democracy” in Africa is a misunderstanding, since substantive**

democracy, measured by the quality of democratic life in daily practice, by the possibility of deliberation and resistance, has never truly existed there. What Traoré rejects is therefore not a living democracy, but the very requirement to hold power accountable, to investigate violations and to try those responsible.

Revolutionary discourse thus becomes a pretext for transforming the absence of democracy into a national choice.

As WATHI, the think-tank founded by Gilles Yabi, observes, the military juntas of the Sahel are chiefly concerned with preventing the emergence of strong civil societies. They wish to exercise power without answering to anyone - a strategy shared, in different forms, by the continent's civilian regimes that maintain the appearance of elections.