

MALI

PRESIDENT TRAORE ANNOUNCES CLEMENCY FOR DETAINED STUDENTS

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[Speech by Malian President Traore at a public information meeting held at the sports stadium in Bamako on 29 March--recorded]

[Excerpts] Executive members of the party, members of the Executive Bureau of the Mali National Women's Association, party officials in the district of Bamako, members of the National Executive Bureau of the Malian Workers' Union, members of the Mali employees federation, imams of the mosques in the Bamako district, representatives of the Catholic and Protestant churches in Bamako: In the name of the Central Executive Bureau and the government, I thank you for the support given to the party and its secretary general at the time of the student unrest that our country has experienced for many months. In Bamako in particular, this unrest took the form of disorder and vandalism contrary to the tradition of our people, a tradition of respect and dignity.

I would once again like to stress and confirm the essential points contained in the circular of 3 March 1980 so that you will be correctly informed about the situation and so that you will be better armed against [word indistinct] selfishness, against those who are never satisfied and the enemies of our people, both inside and outside of our country. The student unrest is, in reality, a manifestation of the desire of the opponents of the party to challenge the options of the people through certain students. The student unrest is the result of underground maneuvers aimed at destabilizing the regime and the institutions that our people have democratically set up. Otherwise, how could it be that the student unrest continued in spite of the efforts made by the party and the government to satisfy almost all the initial demands which were used as excuses for [words indistinct]? How else can one understand the incessant questioning of the accords concluded between the students and democratic organizations?

The party and the government even went beyond the initial demands of the students by paying them their allowances for the period in November and December when they had been sent home. At this period, when the nation faces a difficult financial situation, the government accorded priority to the payment of the allowances at the expense of the salaries of workers, who are heads of families. Despite these efforts, the student unrest continued under different forms and reached a stage of indignation never before seen in our country. Students attempted to demonstrate in front of the Hotel de l'Amitie, where other heads of state who are attending the conference of the Sahelian countries were residing.

Offenses punishable by law were committed by the schoolchildren and students detained by peace officers.

During your demonstrations of support for the party, you asked and hoped that the party and its secretary general would take measures of clemency toward those who deliberately committed extremely serious offenses. I have been saying that clemency is not an article that can be bought or sold. Clemency is freely granted. Forgiveness exists, even in politics. When one is mature, one should be able to forgive people. I agree. [applause] I agree to grant the clemency that you have called for and hoped for. Consequently all the students and schoolchildren arrested during the agitations within the last few weeks will be released and authorized to continue their studies under the same conditions as their comrades. The three teachers arrested at the same time will also be released and placed at the disposal of the national education minister. [applause] This measure of clemency (?could also be seen) in the two preceeding ones-- the reopening of secondary schools and institutions of higher learning in January 1980, and the payment of allowances for the period of November and December 1979.

I put you face to face with your responsibilities, because it is the duty of cadres and citizens to defend the institutions that they have set up democratically. If tomorrow, in defiance of the clemency granted, schoolchildren and students refuse to attend classes, look for excuses to resume their agitation, to burn vehicles, to destroy monuments, ransack shops, to attack people's security, to implant disorder, what will you do as political cadres, as people responsible for democratic organizations, as religious authority, as parents? What will you do if tomorrow the people who are never satisfied attack the country's institutions? What will you do if certain selfish people, disappointed in their ambitions and working in complicity with foreign information agencies, spread false news and [word indistinct] our people and our institutions?

I invite you to reflect on these questions and take effective measures. I am appealing particularly to the authorities of democratic organizations to double their efforts and show initiative. It is not only a matter of declaring your support for the party and its secretary general. I appeal to parents and religious authorities to fully accomplish their task and their responsibilities. I invite them, in the interest of the country, to be vigilant, to fight to curb quickly all demonstrations likley to disturb people. On my part, I reiterate my unflinching determination to keep to my oath, to always serve my country and its people, to give order and dignity. [applause] I appeal for patriotism in the army and I am convinced that it will always serve the people with democracy, order, and dignity.

Finally, I would like to remind you that the Malian People's Democratic Union, UDPM, being a constitutional party, is open to all citizens who desire to contribute to national reconstruction. All Malians who accept the democratic game, that is the free choice of the leaders of the country, have a place in the UDPM. Henceforth, all the militants of the party have to combat all actions contrary to the good traditions of our people. The UDPM, being the people's hope has to survive and triumph. Thank you.