

Police troops stop Equatorial Guinea protests

[afrol News](#), 24 March - After banning the planned mass protests in Equatorial Guinea, government sent out massive police forces to prevent the opposition from taking to the streets yesterday.

Equatorial Guinea's main cities - the capital Malabo and the mainland's main city Bata - yesterday were dominated by heavily armed police troops to prevent any possible gathering of persons opposing the repressive regime of lifetime President Teodoro Obiang Nguema, who is also the current chairman of the African Union (AU).

The Popular Union (UP) opposition party last week had announced protest marches in Malabo and Bata for yesterday, 23 March, at ten o'clock in the morning. But following massive pressure, the UP on Tuesday, the day before the protests, called off the manifestations.

UP leaders had called on Equatoguineans to take to the streets to demand the "reintroduction of basic liberties" and "improved social conditions." According to the opposition party, a formal application to organise a protest march had been presented city authorities in Malabo and Bata.

On Tuesday, Equatoguinean Interior Minister Clemente Engonga Nguema Onguene, gave the official answer himself, telling the UP that the demonstrations had been banned. The Minister in a meeting with UP representative Daniel Darío Martínez Ayecaba made it clear that if the party disobeyed government orders, they would be imprisoned.

Minister Engonga also told the UP delegation that President Obiang invited the leaders of all legalised political parties today, Thursday. According to local sources, the leadership of the UP and of the CPDS - Equatorial Guinea's main opposition party - have agreed to meet the President, despite a total lack of agenda for the meeting.

Meanwhile, Malabo is seen a wide presence of heavily armed police troops, with several sources reporting of tanks patrolling the streets. Especially Nigeria Street, where the planned protests were to start, was said to be off limit for by-passers.

Also in Bata, on the mainland, local sources since Sunday have reported of "abnormal police activities", with troops patrolling the streets using anti-riot equipment, including helmets and shields.

According to the Association of Democratic Solidarity with Equatorial Guinea (Asodegue), police troops had expected supporters of the CPDS opposition to take to the streets on Sunday



Clemente Engonga Nguema Onguene, Interior Minister of Equatorial Guinea

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20 March. The party had asked permission to hold meetings in both Bata and Malabo - which was turned down by authorities.

As there were no demonstrations on Sunday, police in Bata according to local sources got nervous about a possible protest on Monday, further increasing their presence. The nervous mood among security troops in Equatorial Guinea keeps on, as the latest rumour is that the CPDS is planning a major protest march before the end of the month. The CPDS leadership has not commented this rumour.

Equatorial Guinea remains one of Africa's worst dictatorships, with President Obiang ruling the country since he killed his uncle, President Macias Nguema after a 1979 coup. All values in this oil rich Central African country are in the hands of the ruling family.

*By staff writers*

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