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**BENIN: President Macron should demand the release of Reckya Madougou and Joel Aivo**

**President Macron in Benin should demand the release of Reckya Madougou and Joel Aivo**

By Juan Sanchez Gil

The European Times (22.07.2022) – <https://bit.ly/3RN6zVT> – On the eve of President Emmanuel Macron's visit to Benin, the Brussels-based NGO *Human Rights Without Frontiers* urged the French President to demand the release of two famous opposition leaders, Reckya Madougou and Joël Aivo, respectively sentenced to 20 years and 10 years in prison.

This month, *Human Rights Without Frontiers* (HRWF) has filed a **report** with the United Nations Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Benin, in which the organisation outlined its concerns over human rights abuses in Benin, with particular regard to the continued detention of opposition figures Reckya Madougou and Joël Aivo and the fact that they were not included in a list of 17 detainees due to be temporarily released after a 13 June 2022 meeting between President Patrice Talon and Thomas Boni Yayi, former President of Benin (2006-2016).

The submission by HRWF included details about the case of **Reckya Madougou** who was sentenced at the end of 2021 to 20 years in prison for allegedly financing terrorism. She had been arrested in March 2021 accused of wiring thousands of dollars to a military officer for the purpose of killing unnamed authorities. Her candidacy had earlier been rejected by the electoral commission. HRWF went on to detail that Ms Madougou was the leader of the opposition party, *Les Démocrates*, and a presidential candidate. HRWF's statement also described Ms Madougou's civil society campaign – "Don't touch my constitution" – that rallied against leaders seeking to extend their rule under the guise of constitutional reform. The movement spread across West Africa, gaining her a high profile.

The HRWF report to the UPR also gave details about the case of **Joël Aivo** and his December 2021 sentencing by the controversial Economic Crime and Terrorism Court (CRIET) to 10 years in prison for plotting against the state and laundering

money. HRWF explained in their submission that Mr Aivo is a law professor who challenged Talon in the 2021 election. He was held for eight months ahead of sentencing and pleaded not guilty to the charges of plotting against the state and money laundering.

HRWF has been monitoring the backsliding that has been taking place around human rights in Benin since 2016. ***"We were especially dismayed to see that Reckya Madougou and Joël Aivo were not on the June 2022 list of 17 detainees to be temporarily released. Ms Madougou and Mr Aivo should be fully released immediately. The persecution and detention of opposition figures has no place in a democracy and we are concerned for the welfare of these two politicians. President Macron must use his visit to Benin to demand that President Patrice Talon release them,"*** Willy Fautré, director of Human Rights Without Frontiers told The European Times.

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