

# THE NEWSPAPER THE KEY

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## I CANNOT NOT THANK YOU!

We, The Key Newspaper hereby acknowledge that we are eternally grateful for the U.S. Embassy Mauritania. The Editor in Chief made the following statement for us:  
« I have embarked upon my training journey virtually as a Mandela Washington Fellow. This fellowship is actually a top-notch one. I cannot find the exact words to say how excellent it is. We shall be trained well by a very qualified and competent team. At the end of the fellowship, we're going to be influential leaders thanks to the U.S. Embassy. I just want to say to the U.S. Embassy here, I cannot not thank you. You're going to change many lives of the Mauritians for the better. Thank you for this incredible mission. On behalf of Mauritians, we owe you an immense amount of gratitude that we shall pay you back. Thank you once again for making this opportunity available here for the Mauritians.»



Abdrrehim Lekh'Deyem  
2022 Mandela Washington Fellow

## A Special Interview: Lemrabet Sidi Mahmoud Eleyatt



### “The Modern Mauritania and the Prospects of Infrastructure”



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## President of Nouakchott Region elected President of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A)



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## USAID TO INVEST 7\$ MILLION IN MAURITANIAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The chargée d'affaires Inger Tangborn and the Secretary-General of the Islamic Affairs Ministry M. Beitallah Ould Lasoud chaired the launch of a new project for Mauritanian Youth Development on May 20 at Mauricenter Hotel. Here is a brief summary of what happened. Read P3




## Ask an American

# “America is the Land of Immigrants” What is your perspective on that as an American?

America is indeed a land of immigrants, though this statement comes with some significant qualifications. First, it is important to note that not all Americans are descended from immigrants. There are millions of Native Americans whose ancestral history in what is now the United States predates the arrival of European colonists by millennia. Second, most Black Americans are descended from slaves who were forcefully brought to the United States during the 18th and 19th centuries. It is hard to call this “immigration,” but it nonetheless involved large groups crossing an ocean and settling in the United States. Traditional notions of immigration are most applicable to white, Hispanic, and Asian Americans, whose ancestors traveled by land or sea in search of economic opportunity, political asylum, or any other number of reasons.

Immigration is intrinsic to American culture and society and a short column in this newspaper is far from sufficient for elaborating on all the ways that the United States has been shaped by immigration. One notable expression of the United States’ immigrant identity, however, is the lack of adoption of a national language. Despite English being the language of government and business, and being



## Ask an American

**H**ello! My name is Alex, and I am a college student and ESL teacher in the United States. Each month I will answer your questions about learning English and about life in the United States. Send your questions of less than 100 words to [keynewspaper21@gmail.com](mailto:keynewspaper21@gmail.com) to have your question printed and answered here in The Key.

spoken by the majority of Americans, there is no federal requiring the use of English in any aspect of daily life. In many immigrant neighborhoods, one is likely to hear languages other than English predominating.

Most Americans take great pride in both

being the descendants of immigrants and being a country seen as “the city on a hill,” beckoning immigrants with the promise of safety and a better life. The United States as it is today was built by immigrants, either at their hands or on their backs.

### What are the criteria for marriage for most Americans?

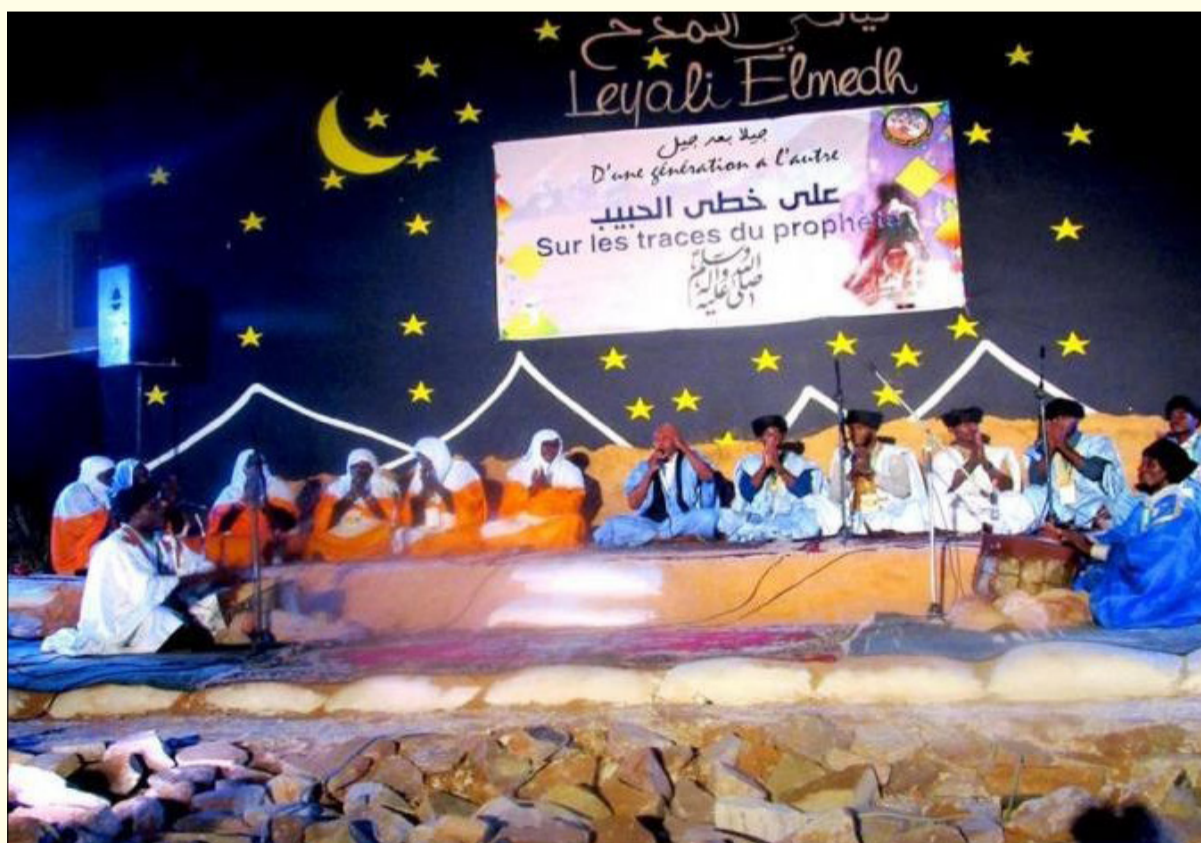
The United States is an incredibly diverse country with an equally diverse society and culture. It is therefore difficult to generalize about the social criteria for marriage. Officially, there is no criteria for marriage in the United States. Two partners – of any gender since 2015 – must simply fill out a marriage certificate at a local government building. After that, they are considered married in the eyes of the law. Unofficially, however, various social norms prevail regarding the criteria for being considered capable of marriage. Generally, these include being of age, having completed one’s education, being emotionally mature, and other criteria based on one’s culture. An example of a cultural norm is the approval of one or both spouses’ parents. There are also often religious criteria that determine when, how, and to whom someone can be married. Another key criterion is that at least one spouse is capable of providing for both the other spouse and any potential children that they might have.

## Teranim Festival:

### Preserving Elmedih as part of Mauritanian folklore

The festival TERANIM is an annual ceremony that takes place in the capital of Mauritania Nouakchott; it usually lasts for five days during the holy month of Ramadhan through which the practice of El-Medih, the praise of the prophet Mohamed Peace be upon him, is the common ground that brings all people together. This year, TERANIM celebrates its ninth edition under the title of “Cheikh Hacen Bembari” after a young Mauritanian activist who passed away recently as a recognition of his great interventions and contributions to the cultural field. Many local singers from different Mauritanian cities gather to celebrate these devoted and amazing moments that combine religious, cultural, and entertaining aspects. The main aim of such an event according to the president of the festival, Mr. Mohamed Ali old Belal, is to both preserve Mauritanian folklore and revive it after being ignored by the previous authorities for a long time.

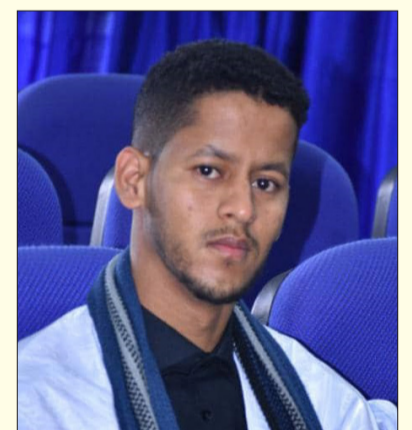
TERANIM ceremony took part for the first time in 2014 and it came out as a response to the neglect of the beauty of Mauritanian culture, including folklore, folktales, and folk songs. The latter was performed by former slaves as a way of expressing themselves after a long



daunting journey on farms. El-Medih on the other hand was very common in the old traditional Mauritanian society; people in the past had the habit of gathering at night after El Maghrib prayer to sing songs praising the prophet PBUH and thanking God for the harvest. Teranim institution organized such events deliberately during the holy month of Ramadhan as a symbol of

peace and giving. This year, they chose epics nights in Islamic history, for instance, the 17th of Ramadhan for its remarks on the battle of Bader al-kubra, which distinguishes between justice and injustice, truth and falsehood. This memory has an echo in the Islamic imagination that cannot be neglected by El-medah, the praise, whose aesthetic praise revolves around the courage,

valor, and nobility of the Prophet PBUH in his Ghazawat and battles. The event was an opportunity for discovering young talents who came from all over Mauritanian cities, including Atar, Chinguit, Wadane, Boutilimit, and Kiffa. Among the activities were some lectures on spiritual music run by specialized teachers and doctors as well as a Memorial Day dedicated to the



young talented guy responsible for Media in Teranim, who died recently.

Although Teranim plays a major role in promoting peace and love between different Mauritanian communities, provides an environment for entertainment and highlights the significance of diversity in the development of the country, and brings together people from various ethnicities, backgrounds, and regions, it still lacks official recognition and support from the authorities. Since 2014 Teranim institution has been organizing these events based on what donors, such as national leaders, and social media users give out as a support for this cultural event. Nevertheless, people in charge of this institution keep demanding support from the government because the event is meant not only to preserve Mauritanian cultural heritage but also to represent it to the world.

## President of Nouakchott Region elected President of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A)



The President of Nouakchott Region, Mrs. Fatimetou Mint Abdel Maleck, was elected President of the Organization of United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-A) during the meeting of its General Assembly held on May 19, 2022, in Kisumu, Kenya.

Fatimetou Mint Abdel is considered to be the first-ever Mauritanian to hold such a position as well as the first woman to preside over such a prominent organization that has more than 16 thousand local authorities as members.

This event is considered as a resounding victory in Mauritanian city diplomacy thanks to the excellent and outstanding performance of the President of Nouakchott Region.

The President made the following statement:

«There is a serious lack of decentralization and a weak rooting of the local development model. But, let me assure you that when we are optimistic and everyone participates, we will be able to meet all the challenges.»

## USAID TO INVEST 7\$ MILLION IN MAURITANIAN YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

The chargée d'affaires Inger Tangborn and the Secretary-General of the Islamic Affairs Ministry M. Beitalah Ould Lassoud chaired the launch of a new project for Mauritanian Youth Development on May 20 at Mauricenter Hotel. Here is a brief summary of what happened.

Tamkeen is implemented by USAID's partner, FHI 360, and under the guidance of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania. Tamkeen encourages social and civic change by placing young Mauritaniawns at the forefront of promoting pro-social alternatives to violent conflict. It does so by doing three types of interventions.

The first is to build networks of youth and community groups. The second is to create safe spaces for youth to interact and learn leadership skills. The last is to combat the isolating effects and vulnerability to the risks created by disinformation, especially those that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated over the past two years.

The Tamkeen project aims to positively impact Mauritanian youth by giving them leadership and life skills so they can support themselves independently. Tamkeen will boost young Mauritanian's self-confidence and encourage them



to get involved in decision-making processes in communities, with local government, and in their homes. Among its various targets, Tamkeen will work with 100 youth leaders to create 13 youth community centers, reaching thousands of youth throughout Mauritania. Tamkeen will be active in eight regions: Adrar, Hodh el Chargui, Hodh el Gharbi, Guidimakha, Assaba, Trarza, Tiris Zemmour, and the capital, Nouakchott.

Additional information:

USAID is the lead U.S. Government agency that works to end extreme global poverty and enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential. To learn

more about USAID, visit [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov).

FHI 360 is a non-profit human development organization dedicated to improving lives in lasting ways by advancing integrated, locally driven solutions. Their staff includes experts in health, education, nutrition, environment, economic development, civil society, gender, youth, research, technology, communication, and social marketing — creating a unique mix of capabilities to address today's interrelated development challenges. FHI 360 serves more than 60 countries and all U.S. states and territories. For more information, please visit [www.fhi360.org](http://www.fhi360.org)

## World Press Freedom Day in Mauritania :

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The President of the Republic tweets:

«On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, I congratulate all members of this noble profession as we are all aware of its important role as a constructive and stabilizing factor. We are here today to emphasize the importance of the continuous efforts to promote and improve it.

Here is an excerpt of the Minister of Culture Speech

Minister of Culture, Youth, Sports and Relations with Parliament Mr. Khetar Ould Sheibani.

«The ministry that I'm assigned with, is continuing to implement the recommendations of the National Media Reform Commission in consultation with media actors. In addition, it is focusing on expanding the control space through an expanded amendment of the law made by the High Authority for Press and Audiovisual, which gives it extensive additional powers that include controlling all media components such as digital and social media. «

He added : «In the course of the legal framework of the reform itself, the sector has prepared the Professional Journalist Act which defines the

rights and duties of this kind of journalists, and it regulates the arrangements for granting the Press Card in the best circumstances. Furthermore, it also reviews the Public Support for Private Journalism Act which has increased its cover with an amount that's about 138 million old Ouguiyas.»

He also stated that, the ministry is working on cooperation with other government agencies to provide the most important requirements for the construction of a Press House, where an amount of 130 million old Ouguiyas has been allocated as well as a plot of land 2000 square meters in the capital's most prestigious neighborhoods for this particular purpose.» He pointed out that « We hope to provide an effective institutional framework in the areas of training, professionalism, integration of reform efforts and media promotion.»

The Position of the Mauritanian Association of Professional Journalists

The Mauritanian Association of Professional Journalists demanded that «The Mauritanian authorities should move forward and take quick steps to Professionalize the journalistic field, expressing that, they're very convinced with that, the Press shall be empowered so that journalists will be able to perform their work effectively. This will only happen when some laws are enacted. For examples, having the right to access information, more freedom and encouraging them. This will result a more serious professional journalism.

They also affirmed that “the professional journalism will play its leading role in information, education and raising awareness whenever the state creates conducive conditions for it.

Firstly, to make information available accurately and transparently.”

The Assembly called on «the Mauritanian Government to nullify the controversial law of symbols, further coordination and consultation

in the future with the right authorities as well as the civic engagement organizations when it comes to updating and reviewing any legislative framework relevant to journalistic work and freedoms in the country in general.»

The Assembly added, «We commemorate World Press Freedom Day in our country this year, where the focus is on the improvement of the field of journalism in Mauritania. It shall result remarkable steps taken by the public authorities. To cheer you up here, Mauritania has gotten advanced with two points regarding Reporters Without Borders (RSF) for the Freedom of press «

The Association continued «Despite this, Mauritanian journalists fear that the authorities will enact the controversial law of symbols, which is a setback for freedoms in the country, where repression is legislated and the work of the press on the field is restricted.

“Here is an excerpt of The President of the High Press and Audiovisual Authority Speech”

“I appreciate your outstanding performance as well as your dedication to pursuing the pinnacle of freedom and fulfilling your responsibility: This can only be matched by awareness of the magnitude of the challenges you face, despite the sacrifices and stakes that you must gain, despite the difficulties, and the concern to keep up with your legitimate aspirations to overcome the difficulties to ensure an excellent improvement of the Media landscape.”

He added, “I am pleased that our celebration this year is taking place to embody the important transformation of the media landscape in our country. We have started to reap what we have sowed regarding the profession of journalism after the reform process launched by the public authorities as a result of creating a committee for the Reform of the Media Sector,

whose recommendations were adopted by the Government.

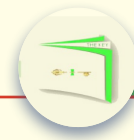
“After the service decree of the Electronic Journalism was issued and the increase in financial resources for public support to the private press, the Council of Ministers recently approved the bill, amending some of the arrangements of the act that was created by the High Authority for the Press and Audiovisual, which will indeed enable the expansion of powers, consolidation of freedoms, control and strengthening of the representative dimension of the press body and of the opposition spectrum of the leadership body of the High Authority.”

He added: “The remaining bills and decrees that the authorities have completed and consulted on, such as the Professional Journalist Bill, the Public Support Law, the Press Card Decree and the Press House Committee, are counted on to contribute to further expanding the space for freedoms, improving outputs and improving social access.”

«El Houssein Medbourne adds, as a part of this reform locomotive, the High Authority will continue to catch up with this transformation in its various tracks, in order to enable the reform to be carried out in a way that strengthens, controls, expands the circle of freedoms, secures and develops media content and ensures the emergence of a multi-professional press, which enshrines the citizen's right to multiple and qualitative information and ensures the entry into force of various political and community actors.

«The completion of these correctional stations will represent a paradigm shift in the field of media practice in Mauritania.»

The President of the High Authority finished his speech by calling on «male and female journalists to embody ethics, freedoms and responsibility of the field of media .»



## A Special Interview with The Key: Lemrabet Sidi Mahmoud Eleyatt

# “The Modern Mauritania and

**T**he Key Newspaper interviewed one of the most considered Mauritanian Influentials in the field of infrastructures, Urban Development and Construction Industry on Saturday April 23, 2022. He spoke to us about the constraints that hold back from coming out with excellent results of an infrastructure. Here is how the interview went.

**The Key: May you present yourself to us in a few words?**

**Lemrabet Sidi Mahmoud Eleyatt:** Thank you very much for inviting me to this interview. I hope that I'm going to live up to the expectations that you have in me. To answer your question, Lemrabet Sidi Mahmoud Eleyatt is a simple man. I am an engineer; I have an expertise in infrastructure, roads and bridges. I have worked in projects Management for a long time. I'm currently running many engineering firms. In addition, I have founded my own Engineering Laboratory that's called Mizan Labs. Hopefully, you've heard about it. Regarding, my studies, I took my primary school studies and secondary school ones in Nouakchott. Then, I was granted a scholarship to Jordan; I was placed in the Engineering Faculty of the Prestigious Jordan University of Science and Technology. When I finished my studies abroad, I returned back to Mauritania and started working in my field. Later on, I got some other degrees: of them, a master's degree in Civil Engineering and a master's degree in Business Administration from the university of poitiers in France.

**The Key: Can you tell us about your career?**

**Lemrabet:** Thank you for this question. I had many opportunities to work abroad. However, that's not what my family wanted. Thus, I decided to work here in my country. So, I started working here in my country and I was very lucky to come across many opportunities that could make me successful as some people would characterize success today. In other words, I had some opportunities that could help me to have much better financial resources. Yet, I chose the other opportunities that were just about training in my field of studies. Thanks to Those training, I have become who I am today. Moreover, I was very pleased with the fact that I was trained by some international expert engineers. I made sure to have training first in infrastructure so that I can be qualified to do the job that I was seeking out. As a result, those training shaped me. To be honest, what mattered to me at that point of time of my career, is



only experience since it's the best teacher. Thereafter, I instituted my Engineering Laboratory.

**The Key: Is architecture in Mauritania meeting the standards of the international architecture?**

**Lemrabet:** Architecture in Mauritania

is still actually not at the level where it should be. We are not abiding by the regulations of it. I hope that we're going to surpass this very soon. To give you an example at what's happening here. Of the regulations is that, when you have a plot of land, you should only build the half of it, the other half you leave as a space between you and your neighbour. Ano-

ther example, you should reach out or hire an architect to create the design for you to meet all of the standards. These documents do exist, but I think that they were edited in 2007 if my mind is not failing me. To be more specific, Nouakchott City is still at a very low level as far as building plans are concerned. To make a disclaimer here, I'm not saying this to distort. But rather, out of love. I want to see my country better in everything including architecture. Nouakchott City has no general urban development plans. Every time the country recruits a new committee, they don't execute the project due to a number of reasons. Of them: some documents exist, but they are not acted upon, and to be fair, some documents don't exist so far.

**The Key: You've earlier mentioned that, you have instituted your own Engineering Laboratory. Would you mind if you tell us about it?**

**Lemrabet:** Mizan Labs is specifically instituted for public works. It guarantees the quality of the infrastructure. Thus, it shall help to take the country to the level that we all aspire to reach.

**The Key: Is there any importance of cooperation between the public sector and the private one?**

**Lemrabet:** Indeed, it's important. The public sector usually asks for that. Hence, it's important. To give you an example, sometimes a private company has a project to work on that benefits the country. The government asks for a partnership. However, sometimes the project needs more funding, some establishments don't make partnership, for the project might need more funding and the profit could be less. Thus, the government makes the partnership to help.



# the Prospects of Infrastructure”

**The Key: What about control over the infrastructure?**

**Lemrabet:** It's crucial especially when it comes to the private sector. The establishments and the government should monitor that in this case. As a result, this will guarantee meeting the standards of architecture.

**The Key: What do you have to say about Transparency between the private sector and the public one?**

**Lemrabet:** This is a good question. Transparency does exist; it is excellent between them. Nonetheless, we're still having a problem with the implementation. There must be an act that penalizes or rewards. When someone commits something wrong, they should be penalized and vice versa. This will move us to a better situation. I've met some colleagues who work in some other countries, they got astonished with the good quality of the procurement processes that are made here by the government. In a nutshell, the government should reward as much as penalize.

**The Key: This is a serious question, why do the roads get destroyed so rapidly?**

**Lemrabet:** The roads as a project are very costly. They require more finance. As a result, sometimes some low quality equipment are used. Furthermore, a short time is set to have the roads ready. As a consequence, they get damaged in a very short period of time. Besides, a lack of regular maintenance when the project is at its pinnacle is what made the roads collapse. Also, Fortunately, ENER was dismissed, and a new one called ETER replaced it. But, the government has to if not must afford all of the financial required needs as well as training well the employees. Regarding the roads, they have been fortified, yet without maintenance the situation will always be worse. With regard to the transaction contracts with firms, this is a very important part. The road quality at some point, the firm plays a great importance since it was constructed by it. If the firm that was contracted with is qualified, the road will come out at a good quality as well as the timeframe that was set will be respected. Hence, here comes the importance of choosing the right company. It's not only about choosing the qualified company, for sometimes the company is occupied with another project that they're still working on. We need to avoid such inconvenience. It's all about being strict with the ones that have been entrusted with a project to execute. The sad fact of the matter, they are not very serious with the penalty. I have seen one case where the head of the transaction committee was called upon. I couldn't get the main reasons behind that. Nevertheless, it's the



only one that I've seen, and I've been in this field for a long time. To tackle this problem, there are a handful of Ministers that are related to this. For example, the ministry of Hydraulics and Sanitation, the ministry of equipment and transport, the ministry of external affairs and the ministry of water. It's very easy when we combine our efforts and balance them to have the best result. That also should include the buildings of the government. Thus, we can have fancy buildings. There are some buildings of the state that misrepresent the authority of it.

**The Key: Any solutions?**

**Lemrabet:** It's very simple. Any company that has been contracted with and doesn't execute the project within the timeframe that was set as well using excellent materials and equipment should be on the blacklist.



**The Key: What about Sanitation here in Nouakchott?**

**Lemrabet:** Sanitation is an urban development problem. We have a problem with population density; it's very low as well as the hydrological specificity. The ground water creates a problem in the drainage channels. For example, when you want to have 1 kilometre drainage in Nouakchott, it costs an arm and a leg. If you were to accomplish that in a city where the ground water is far away, 1 kilometre will equate to 20 kilometres. Hence, the solution is to increase theurbandensity. In addition, trying to accomplish the basic needs then we can move to widening the city.

**The Key: What do you think about the performance of the government as an expert engineer?**

**Lemrabet:** The current government has a great will to achieve the president's

platform, but this requires a lot, it requires a double effort. However, that doesn't mean it's impossible. To wrap up, it requires just to make an agenda for one year. Then, divide it into tasks and be very strict about the accomplishments of those tasks of their timeframe.

**The Key: What about the housing?**

**Lemrabet:** We have what we call collective housing. We need to have the right understanding of it. This is the high time to house collectively not like in the olden days where someone pitches a tent and can be seeing the other one. When we house collectively, that shall solve the problem of sanitation by increasing the urban density.

**The Key: What do you think about Mauritania after a decade regarding architecture?**

**Lemrabet:** It depends on what I've stated before. But, to reiterate, the government should come up with a strategy that will change the mentalities of collective housing and many other social matters. This can only done by the government in order to come out with effective goals.

**The Key: Have they embarked upon that?**

**Lemrabet:** I'm sorry to disappoint you. No, they haven't. Everybody is still housing individually. The government should give some samples about that. And Everybody shall welcome the idea. It shall cost less even the tall building itself. In lieu of paying your expenses individually, they will be paid collectively. We need to if not have to reach this level of architecture.

**The Key: As a final question, what do you think about The Key Newspaper?**

**Lemrabet:** In my opinion, it's an excellent idea. I want to thank you for this innovation. There are many companies and firms here in Mauritania that use English since it's the international language. Everyone should learn English today. I know that we are a francophone country not an anglophone one. But, to give you an example, I myself was selected for many tasks just because I can deliver my ideas in English. Add to that When I come across a problem or let me say an issue, I find all of the required information and data in English. To conclude, when I heard about the Key, I rejoiced because this is a project that I always wanted to have in the country. I congratulate you once again on such an outstanding project.

**The Key: Thank you very much Mr. Lemrabet Sidi Mahmoud Eleyatt for your precious time.**

# Mali Withdraws; what is next for G4 Sahel?

**T**he decision to cancel the military cooperation agreement with France came following rising tensions and the escalation of accusations between Mali's ruling military junta and French authorities; the expulsion of the French ambassador to Bamako; accusations of French espionage in Mali; and the plundering of financial wealth. Bamako's decision to consider the French military represents a dangerous step in the transformation of Franco-Malian relations and the future of the French and international military presence in the Sahel. This change is particularly acute for the UN's MINUSMA peacekeeping mission, which suddenly found itself isolated and lacking air cover.

## The French Reaction

The spokeswoman for French Foreign Affairs said in a written statement that, «Following French reporting on the May 2nd the unilateral decision of the transitional Malian authorities to annul these agreements, France considers this decision unjustified and formally denies any violation of the bilateral legal framework that could be attributed to Operation Barkhane.

Mali's ruling military council announced that it was revoking the status-of-forces agreement establishing the legal framework for the presence of France's Operation Barkhane and European Takuba forces in Mali, as well as a separate 2014 defense cooperation agreement between Mali and France.

Government spokesman Colonel Abdoulaye Maïga invoked France's «unilateral position» in suspending joint operations with Malian forces in June 2021 and announced in February - «without any consultation with the Malian side» - the withdrawal of Barkhane and Takuba forces, as well as the «multiple violations» of Malian airspace by French aircraft, despite the establishment of a large exclusion zone over the country.

The junta last week also accused the French military of «espionage» and «sabotage» after the French Chief of Staff released videos taken by a drone near the base of Gossi, in central Mali, which France handed over last April. The footage shows Russian mercenaries burying bodies in order to accuse France of war crimes.

Paris has ruled out any interruptions to Barkhane's sensitive withdrawal timetable, which was announced in February and is supposed to last for six months. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has asserted that it will «continue the orderly withdrawal of its military presence in Mali in accordance with the commitments made to its partners and in coordination and respectful dialogue with the Malian Armed Forces.»

Paris has also asserted that it is «wary of any attempt to manipulate information» and «reaffirms its determination to ensure the safety of its soldiers and the European soldiers who participated alongside them during this disengagement phase.»

A letter sent to the United Nations



by the Mali and obtained by AFP condemned the «repeated and deliberate violations of national airspace by foreign aircraft, in particular French forces, aimed at espionage, intimidation and sabotage.»

## The UN's Position

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned May 5th that Mali could collapse if the international organization withdraws its peacekeeping forces from the African country.

Guterres proposed a solution based on the establishment of an African military mission with a robust mandate from the United Nations Security Council.

The Security Council is expected to consider the renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which was established in 2013 and currently has some 13 troops and thousands of police and civilian personnel, in June. According to Guterres' statement, «The reality is that without MINUSMA, there is enormous risk that the country will collapse. I do not propose to end this mission because I think the consequences will be serious,» he added, stressing that what is needed in Mali now is «not a peacekeeping force but a powerful force for peace and counter-terrorism.»

The Secretary-General stressed that «this powerful force must be formed by members

of the African Union, but with a Chapter VII mandate and mandatory funding from the Security Council. Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations permits the use of armed force in the event of a threat to international peace and security. MINUSMA currently faces criticism for its limited mandate, with many African leaders calling for this mandate to be strengthened. According to AFP, the Security Council will consider the renewal of the mission in light of the dramatic changes that have taken place in the country since the Council renewed its annual mandate last year.

In that time, French and European forces decided to withdraw from the country at the same time that hundreds of Russian military personnel arrived. According to Bamako, these men are trainers for the armed forces. Paris and its allies, however, contend that they are mercenaries from the paramilitary Wagner Group.

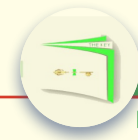
The one constant in the context of all these changes is the persistence of terrorist attacks, political unrest, and weakened institutional structures in Mali and the Sahel states in general.

## Russian Protection

Some analysts believe that Mali's ruling military council may sign an agreement on cooperation and security protection with Russia on the pretext of securing the country against the threat of terrorist groups. Russia, bogged down in the Ukrainian War, has shown interest in closing the vacuum left by French and Western forces in Mali and the broader Sahel Region as a way to diminish traditional French influence and build strategic depth in its international struggle with the West.



■ El Arby O. El Arby  
 Journalist Specializing in Sahel Affairs



## Regions of the United States:

### The West

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**T**he United States is a massive, diverse country spanning the entirety of the North American continent and touching four different seas. Owing to this geographic breadth and the country's rich history, the United States is made up of many unique geographic and cultural regions. For the next few months, I will be writing about the most well-known of these regions here in *The Key*. Each month, I will discuss the geography, history, and culture of one region. This month's focus will be the Western United States, commonly known as "the West."

#### Geography

The West is the largest region of the United States, covering an area almost five times that of Mauritania and is approximately equivalent in size to the entire Maghreb. The region is made up of thirteen states, stretching from the Rocky Mountain states of Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and New Mexico to the Pacific Ocean. Also included in our definition of the West are Alaska and Hawaii. Alaska, the largest American state, is entirely separated from the rest of the "Lower 48" states, and the only land route there travels through Canada. Hawaii is a chain of Pacific Islands in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Both states are notable for the strong presence of native culture, resulting from their geographic isolation and relatively recent incorporation into the United States.

Owing to its significant size, the West is incredibly geographically diverse. For the sake of simplicity, however, the region can be split into five broad geographic zones: mountains, desert, woodlands, coast, and the geographic extremes.

The easternmost part of the West is marked by the impressive Rocky Mountains, a mountain chain stretching from Canada in the north to New Mexico in the South. They form a massive buffer between the fertile Midwest and the more barren Western interior. Many of the United States' most famous national parks, such as Yosemite and Yellowstone, are located within the Rocky Mountains.

To the west of the Rocky Mountains lays a vast dry area formed by a number of deserts that stretches from Utah to California. The natural symbol of this area is the cactus, a desert plant that comes in a wide variety of shapes and sizes but is most notable for its ubiquitous thorns. The deserts of the West take a variety of forms, with some covered in low brush and subject to occasion rain and others being among the driest on earth. Some of these deserts even imitate the appearance of the Sahara.

Between these deserts and the Pacific Ocean sits the coastal zone, located in California. this subregion is

marked by a Mediterranean climate, with hot, dry summers and mild winters. To the north, in Northern California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, is a large, forested area with frequent rain and a cool climate year-round. This area also has a large number of tall mountains.

Alaska and Hawaii have geographies entirely different from the rest of the West. Alaska is comprised of vast fjords similar to those in Norway, subarctic plains, and finally the Arctic. Interspersed throughout are some of the tallest mountains in North America. Hawaii is made up of volcanic tropical islands, with palm trees, pineapple plantations, and rainforests. These vast differences in geography across the region are reflected in the West's diverse history and culture.

#### History

The history of the West is best summarized by a quote: "Go west, young man, and grow up with the country." While there is debate about who first uttered this line, it is the best encapsulation of the American spirit that led to the settlement of the West in the 19th century. The West was then – and remains today – seen as a place where fortunes can be made and life is better.

Before the delving into the West's history, it is important to note – as with very other region of the United States – that the history of the West stretches back thousands of years. Numerous Native Americans civilizations rose and fell in the time before European settlement, and the remains of these societies – both cultural and archeological – can still be found in many places there. One of the most fascinating, in my opinion, are the Tlingit, a people from Alaska most famous for constructing massive carved wooden pillars called totem poles that portray people and animals.

What is now the Western United States remained sparsely settled by Westerners until the 20th century. The first to inhabit the region were the Spanish, who moved into the area from their colony in present-day Mexico. Spanish settlement, however, remained insignificant.

The first major step toward European settlement of the West was the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1803-1806, which crossed from St. Louis, Missouri, to the Pacific Ocean. The purpose of the expedition was to survey the recently-purchased Louisiana Territory, which President Thomas Jefferson had purchased from France.

The expedition opened the doors to American expansion Westward. Both before – and to an even greater extent, after this expedition – Americans perceived it as their God-given destiny to expand West and inhabit the entirety of the space between the two Atlantic and the Pacific, a belief known as "manifest destiny."

As such, throughout the 19th century, thousands of Americans living east of the Mississippi River packed up their possessions and moved

West in search of fortune and new lives. This exodus of Americans traveling Westward followed what is now referred to as the "Oregon Trail." One particularly strong motivation for those heading west was the discovery of gold in California in 1849. Thousands of prospectors flooded into the state hoping to make their fortune on the gold lying beneath California's soil.

This flood of new settlers, however, usually only aimed for the California, tending to avoid desert states such as Arizona and Nevada. Those who did settle there did so in small towns where the power of the state was often weak. These settlements would become the backdrop for the Wild West dramas that Hollywood made famous. Immigration to these areas continued slowly until the 20th century, when – aided by air conditioners and automobiles that alleviated the hot, dry climate and vast distances between towns – increased numbers of Americans moved to the desert states. Although some areas remain sparsely inhabited, the area now hosts a number of large cities, such as Phoenix, Arizona, the fourth largest city in the United States.

#### Culture

The culture of the West is exceptionally diverse, ranging from Native culture in the Arctic Circle to the vibrant metropolitanism of cities like Los Angeles, and everything in between.

Away from the coasts, in the dry interior of the West, rural life remains much the same as it has for the last hundred years – with the notable exception in the end of the Wild West's lawlessness. Cowboys still exist in this part of the country, though this simply means that they herd cattle for a living. The culture in this part of the West is characterized by a strong political and social conservatism. People value their traditions very strongly and take great pride in them. An example of this can be seen in men's attire. Men in the Western interior often wear cowboy hats and cowboy boots, even if they are a cowboy.

In the Southwest, a subregion of the West, and in Southern California, a significant portion of the population is of Hispanic descent. In and around Los Angeles, for example, almost half the population speaks Spanish at home. These Spanish-speakers are from – or are the descendants of those from – Latin America. This has had a significant impact on overall culture of the region, as these Hispanic Americans have brought with them many of their habits and traditions from Latin America. An example of this is the quinceañera, a celebration held to mark a girl's fifteenth birthday. Despite not be common among non-Hispanic Americans, this tradition remains an important one for Hispanic families as a rite of passage into adulthood. Hispanic food, particular Mexican food, has also been impactful, and is one of the most common cuisines eaten in the region among every ethnic group.

As mentioned previously, many states in the West have large Native American populations. Many Native American tribes live on "reservations," which are essentially sovereign territories under Native control. Native Americans living on these reservations maintain a traditional lifestyle that includes, among other things, eating traditional foods, speaking their tribal language, and celebrating specific tribal holidays. In the Alaskan Arctic, for example, some tribes continue to practice artisanal whaling.

Finally, there is the West that so many of us see on television. While much of what Hollywood shows is far from reality, there is certainly a kernel of truth in the West – especially California – shown in popular culture. Californians, for example, are known for being more relaxed and liberal than Americans in the rest of the country. The constantly warm weather and lack of seasons also gives Californian culture a detached, timeless quality that appeals to many Americans.

The Western United States, like every other region in the United States, contains within it an innumerable number of other, smaller subregions. Every state there has a unique identity shaped by a unique history. Nevertheless, the West serves as a sort of cultural common ground for the rest of the United States. Trends in entertainment, food, technology, and fashion all emanate outward from the West to the rest to the United States. Despite being the last part of the United States to be settled, it is in many ways the most influential today. It is a region marked by extremes of geography and culture that can serve as an excellent first stop for anyone hoping to learn more about the United States.

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