

# BENIN: LEGISLATIVE ELECTION SOMEWHAT REINFORCES DEMOCRATIC LEGITIMACY



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## Event

The Autonomous National Electoral Commission released preliminary results, stating that the two parties backing President Patrice Talon (Progressive Union and Republican Bloc) won 81 seats following the legislative elections held on 8 January. The only participating opposition party, the Democrats, is supposed to have won 28 seats, but this result was rejected by the opposition and will be contested in court. The Democrats are a relatively new party and receive support from former President Thomas Boni Yayi, President Talon's opponent. During the previous legislative vote, all opposition parties were disqualified from participating, which is why no opposition members are seated in the National Assembly today. These results will therefore somewhat bolster the democratic legitimacy of the ruling coalition.

## Impact

Benin used to be a beacon of democracy and stability in West Africa. However, political and social tensions are rising due to the growing concentration of power in President Talon's hands since he took office in 2016. This has led to civil protests and international pressure over human rights violations and the treatment of political opponents. In the run-up to the 2019 legislative votes, opposition parties were blocked from participating over their alleged failure to comply with new electoral rules. Some protests are expected in the coming weeks pending the court's decision on the electoral outcome, but they should be nothing compared to the nationwide and violent anti-government protests of 2019. Even though the January 2023 vote does improve the parliamentary legitimacy given the presence of opposition members, the ruling coalition still holds a strong majority and will face little challenges until the presidential elections in 2026. Benin's MLT political risk is classified in category 5/7. The outlook is tilted to the downside as debt ratios have taken a leap due to accelerated external borrowing since 2020. Moreover, security risks are on the rise with neighbouring jihadist insurgencies spilling over into northern Benin.

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