Military officers in Gabon seized power on Wednesday and put President Ali Bongo under house arrest, stepping in minutes after the Central African state's election body announced he had won a third term.

The officers, who said they represented the armed forces, declared on television that the election results were cancelled, borders closed and state institutions dissolved, after a tense vote that was set to extend the Bongo family's more than half century in power.

One of the officers, Brice Oligui Nguema, who in a video appeared to be hailed as their leader, told French newspaper Le Monde that he and other generals would meet on Wednesday to select someone to head the transitional government.

Hundreds of people in the streets of the Gabonese capital Libreville celebrated the military's intervention, while the African Union and France, Gabon's former colonial ruler which has troops stationed there, condemned the coup.

If successful, the Gabon coup would be the eighth in West and Central Africa since 2020. The latest one, in Niger, was in July. Military officers have also seized power in Mali, Guinea, Burkina Faso and Chad, erasing democratic gains since the 1990s and raising fear among foreign powers that have strategic interests in the region.