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GUINEA

REPUBLIC OF GUINEA

Head of state: Lansana Conté

Head of government: Cellou Dalein Diallo, until April

Death penalty: retentionist

International Criminal Court: ratified

In February and in June, the security forces used excessive force against civilian demonstrators, resulting in multiple deaths and injuries. Torture and ill-treatment of protestors and of detainees were reported. Seven military personnel remained held without trial. Nine people were sentenced to death.

Background

In April, a few hours after a major cabinet reshuffle by Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo was announced, a decree suspending him for "serious wrongdoing" was read on national radio and television. Guinea's ailing president, Lansana Conté, gave no further information and the post of prime minister was abolished by decree in May.

Excessive use of force

On at least three occasions in February and in June, the security forces used excessive force against demonstrators and students. The security forces reportedly used tear gas, beat students with police batons and fired live ammunition. No independent investigation was launched into the resulting deaths.

In February, at least two people were killed and several injured in Gueckedou, in the southeast, when police clashed with demonstrators protesting at the appointment of a mayor belonging to the Progress and Unity Party (Parti de l'unité et du progrès, PUP), the ruling party. Opposition parties accused officials of fraud during the December local elections.

In June, unarmed students demonstrated in major cities including Labé and Conakry after learning that their exams would not be supervised because of a nationwide strike over price rises for basic commodities. In clashes with security forces, more than 10 students were killed. The Minister of Internal Affairs put the official death toll at 11. According to hospital sources, 18 people were killed and more than 80 injured.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and the African Union President Alpha Oumar Konaré expressed concern that the security forces had used excessive force against unarmed demonstrators. However, despite national and international pressure, no independent inquiry appeared to have been opened.

Torture and ill-treatment

There were consistent reports of beatings and other ill-treatment of demonstrators during the protest marches in February and June. Dozens of demonstrators were injured during attempts by the security forces to disperse them.

A military officer arrested in 2005 was tortured and ill-treated on Kassa Island. He was locked in a tiny cell nicknamed "Vietnam", less than a cubic metre in size. Unable to stand or extend his legs, he was forced to crouch for 72 hours and given nothing but breadcrumbs to eat. He was later taken aboard a small inflatable boat, bound, thrown into the water and dragged by his hands at speed for half an hour.

Detention without trial

Seven soldiers and military officers, including Naroumba Kante, Djan Foula Kamara and Mamady Condé, held since 2003 on suspicion of plotting to overthrow President Conté, were still detained in Conakry Central Prison. They had not been charged by the end of 2006. The detainees' families wrote to the authorities requesting visitation rights and a prompt, fair trial. They received no reply.

Releases of military officers

Between March and July, four military officers, including Mamy Pé and Kabinet Kaba, were released without charge. They had been arrested following an attempt to assassinate President Conté in January 2005. They were held on Kassa Island, where access to detainees is extremely difficult.

Death penalty

In September, the Assize court sentenced nine people to death for the murder of a local politician in May. No executions were reported.

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