

Freedom in the World 2024 - Guinea

Overview

Guinea experienced a transition to civilian rule in 2010, following a 2008 military coup and decades of authoritarian governance. Ethnic division, corruption, a crackdown on dissent, and the abuse of civilians by security forces marked the subsequent decade. A section of the armed forces, the Special Forces (GFS), staged the third military coup since independence in September 2021, and coup leaders have since delayed a return to civilian rule, incarcerated critics, and brutally repressed protesters.

Key Developments in 2023

- On the last day of the year, transition president Mamady Doumbouya, the head of the military junta, announced that a constitutional referendum would be held on an unspecified date in 2024. Discussions about the new constitution held during the year were confined to groups loyal to the junta.
- In February, Doumbouya put in place a committee to oversee the political transition process; government ministers largely dominate the committee. Nevertheless, at year's end, serious questions remained about the junta's plans to hand over power to a newly elected president in January 2025.
- In May and September, the Living Forces of Guinea (FVG) coalition of political parties and civil society groups led protests—which had been banned by the junta-led government in 2022—calling for a return to civilian rule. The demonstrations resulted in tens of deaths and scores of injuries and arrests at the hands of the security forces.
- In November, armed men stormed a prison in Conakry, the capital, and freed Moussa Dadis Camara—who had led a military junta from 2008–10—and three associates, all of whom had been standing trial since September 2022 in connection with a 2009 massacre in a stadium that killed more than 150 people. One of the men, former minister of presidential security Claude Pivi, remained at large at year's end.

Political Rights

A Electoral Process

A1 0-4 pts

Was the current head of government or other chief national authority elected through free and fair elections?

0 / 4

In September 2021, military commanders led by Lieutenant Colonel Mamady Doumbouya overthrew the government of President Alpha Condé and subsequently suspended the 2020 constitution. Doumbouya was sworn in as interim president in October 2021. He will remain in power until at least January 2025, under an agreement reached with mediators from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in October 2022. The junta introduced a transitional charter that established the National Committee of Reconciliation and Development (CNRD),

headed by Doumbouya, as a transitional governing body. CNRD members are prohibited from contesting future elections, but the junta has not specified which individuals are in the CNRD.

According to the transitional charter, the interim president appoints all members of the executive. In August 2022, Doumbouya appointed Bernard Goumou as prime minister.

A2 0-4 pts

Were the current national legislative representatives elected through free and fair elections?

0 / 4

The junta's transitional charter specifies the establishment of the 81-member National Transitional Council (CNT), which is responsible for drafting a new constitution. Members of the Condé administration were barred from participating in the CNT. President Doumbouya appointed CNT members from political parties, the security forces, the trade union movement, the business sector, and civil society. The CNT is led by Dansa Kourouma, a relative of Doumbouya, long-term civil society functionary, and former Condé supporter. The major opposition parties have no representation in the CNT, as they boycotted the 2020 legislative elections, and the CNT follows the lead of the interim government.

In May and June 2023, the CNT held consultations on the principles of the new constitution. These were boycotted by the FVG, a coalition of civil society groups, labor unions, and political parties including the banned opposition National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (FNDC), Condé's Rally of the Guinean People (RPG), and former prime minister Cellou Dalein Diallo's Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG). The FVG and all relevant political parties remained opposed to participating in the CNT's consultations during 2023.

A3 0-4 pts

Are the electoral laws and framework fair, and are they implemented impartially by the relevant election management bodies?

0 / 4

Guinea's previous electoral framework and administrative bodies facilitated credible elections, though there were sometimes disputes over the composition of the electoral bodies and electoral outcomes.

The 2020 constitution, which was approved in a referendum held concurrently with that year's parliamentary elections, instituted six-year terms for the president, up from five years under the previous charter. The junta that seized power in September 2021 suspended the 2020 constitution, the previous electoral laws, and the Independent National Electoral Commission.

After tense and protracted negotiations with ECOWAS, the junta agreed in October 2022 to hold the next round of elections by January 2025 and outlined 10 milestones that it wanted to achieve during the transition process. In February 2023, President Doumbouya established a committee to oversee the political transition, which was dominated by government ministers. There was no progress during the year regarding a new electoral law, the electoral register, and the procedures governing any future election.

In late December 2023, the junta announced that it would hold a constitutional referendum on an unspecified date in 2024.

B Political Pluralism and Participation

B1 0-4 pts

Do the people have the right to organize in different political parties or other competitive political groupings of their choice, and is the system free of undue obstacles to the rise and fall of these competing parties or groupings?

1 /
4

More than 150 political parties were officially recognized as of December 2021, with most having clear ethnic or regional bases of support. Article 6 of the transitional charter establishes the right for political parties to freely form. In practice, the operations of political parties are restricted under the junta.

In May 2022, the junta banned all political demonstrations “as long as public order cannot be guaranteed,” and its officials reminded the population of the ban throughout 2023. This initial ban and the reminders targeted the activities of the FVG, which accused the junta of authoritarian practices. The FVG led protests in May and September 2023 calling for a return to civilian rule and an end to the demonstration ban. At least 11 people were killed by security forces during the protests, and scores more were injured.

B2 0-4 pts

Is there a realistic opportunity for the opposition to increase its support or gain power through elections?

1 /
4

The interim government rules through violence and intimidation. Because the political reconstruction process is controlled by President Doumbouya and his junta, the opposition appears to stand only a very limited chance of increasing support or gaining power through elections. The date of the next election, and the rules governing the party formation process and the elections themselves, have yet to be determined.

In 2023, security forces frequently attacked rallies and protests organized by the FVG, making it more difficult for opposition parties to mobilize their supporters.

B3 0-4 pts

Are the people’s political choices free from domination by forces that are external to the political sphere, or by political forces that employ extrapolitical means?

1 /
4

Previously, Condé’s administration had reduced the influence of the military in politics, but the Special Forces (GFS) claimed power in 2021 and Doumbouya, the officer who led the GFS and the coup, became the interim president. During the May 2023 consultations about the new constitution, the military proposed limiting the number of political parties to three.

Ethnic loyalty played an outsized role in the political choices of voters and party leaders under Condé. Rather than organizing around policy platforms or political ideologies and trying to attract new supporters, each party tacitly pledged allegiance to its respective ethnic group, contributing to the threat of mutual hostility and violence. There has been no indication that political parties follow a different logic of appealing to voters since the 2021 coup.

There is widespread speculation that foreign-owned mining interests in Guinea, including Russian and Turkish operations, backed Condé and now back Doumbouya because they view him as best positioned to protect their interests.

B4 0-4 pts

Do various segments of the population (including ethnic, racial, religious, gender, LGBT+, and other relevant groups) have full political rights and electoral opportunities?

2 /
4

Women and members of ethnic and religious minority groups have full political rights under the law, but ethnic divisions and gender bias limit their participation in practice. Under a law passed in 2019, women must constitute 50 percent of electoral lists. Female representation in the National Assembly stood at only 16.7 percent prior to the 2021 coup.

The transitional charter included a 30 percent gender quota for the CNT, which is implemented in practice. Members of the LGBT+ community are poorly represented in political life.

Official reports about the ethnic composition of state institutions and organizations do not exist. In the past, all major groups, such as the Fulani, Malinké, and Soussou, could rely on some extent of political representation. Many of the smaller communities that combined make up around 15 percent of the population are underrepresented or lack meaningful political representation.

C Functioning of Government

C1 0-4 pts

Do the freely elected head of government and national legislative representatives determine the policies of the government?

0 / 4

An unelected junta-led government has ruled the country since the military coup of September 2021.

C2 0-4 pts

Are safeguards against official corruption strong and effective?

1 / 4

The 2021 coup further undermined the underfunded and understaffed National Anti-Corruption Agency. In December 2021, transition president Doumbouya announced the creation of a special anticorruption court (CRIEF). Throughout 2022 and 2023, the CRIEF summoned previously high-ranking members and administrators of the Condé era and placed them under arrest for embezzlement, including former prime minister Ibrahima Kassory Fofana and former Constitutional Court president Mohamed Lamine Bangoura. Fofana's trial was ongoing throughout 2023. The criminal investigations are viewed as at least partly politically motivated, as they allow Doumbouya to weaken long-standing segments of Guinea's civilian political elite.

C3 0-4 pts

Does the government operate with openness and transparency?

1 / 4

Government operations are generally opaque, although the Condé administration had made some progress regarding budget transparency. A 2010 access to information law was never implemented, and the National Assembly voted in favor of a new version in 2020.

The interim government lacks transparency with regard to the transition back to civilian rule and discussions about the new constitution. The CNT, which is boycotted by opposition forces, allows carefully selected interest groups to provide general input about the goals of the new constitution and does not communicate its discussions to the broader public. The government does debate the annual budget; however, it provides little information about what data has gone into the budget or future spending priorities.

Civil Liberties

D Freedom of Expression and Belief

D1 0-4 pts

Are there free and independent media? | 1 / 4

The transitional charter commits to freedom and independence of the media, but in practice media freedom remains restricted. Since the September 2021 coup, critical journalists have faced arbitrary arrests, intimidation, questioning, and censorship by the security forces. In October 2023, 13 journalists were arrested during a peaceful protest in Conakry organized by the Syndicate of Press Professionals of Guinea (SPPG) calling for authorities to unblock the website of news outlet *Guinee Matin*. Police assaulted and fired tear gas at the protesters as well as journalists who were covering the protest, injuring at least three.

Conakry's new rulers have frequently called on the High Authority of Communication (HAC), the media regulator, to issue suspensions against outlets that provided critical coverage. In December 2023, the HAC ordered the suspension of three privately owned radio and television outlets—*Djoma*, *Evasion*, and *Espace*—purportedly on “national security” grounds. Radio broadcasts by the three outlets and a fourth, privately owned FIM, had been blocked since November. The outlets had covered the escape of the detainees in 2009 stadium massacre trial earlier that month.

In addition, individual units of the military have visited the offices of newspapers and radio stations that produced critical reports, and intimidated journalists. The junta has further managed to skew media coverage in favor of the transitional authorities by selectively offering financial support.

The government frequently restricts the use of the internet and social media, most recently in December 2023. Journalists claim that the government is monitoring their online communication channels, including email and social media. Many journalists now practice self-censorship to protect themselves from government intimidation.

Previous laws permitting criminal defamation and prosecutions under broad cybersecurity measures remain on the books.

D2 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to practice and express their religious faith or nonbelief in public and private?

3 / 4

Religious rights are generally respected in practice by the transitional government. Some non-Muslim government workers have reported occasional discrimination. People who convert from Islam to Christianity sometimes encounter pressure from their community. During 2023, religious leaders played an important role in mediating political and social conflicts.

D3 0-4 pts

Is there academic freedom, and is the educational system free from extensive political indoctrination?

3 / 4

Academic freedom has historically been subject to political restrictions under authoritarian regimes. The problem was less severe under the 2010–21 civilian government, though self-censorship still reduced the vibrancy of academic discourse. The aftermath of the 2021 coup has neither worsened nor improved the relationship between academic freedom and executive power.

D4 0-4 pts

Are individuals free to express their personal views on political or other sensitive topics without fear of surveillance or retribution?

2 /
4

Ethnic tensions and laws restricting freedom of expression may deter open debate in some circumstances. The junta does not formally control private discussions. However, the junta continues to govern through exclusion, and state-led repression and violence against dissenting voices has triggered widespread hesitation to express personal views for fears of surveillance or retribution.

E Associational and Organizational Rights

E1 0-4 pts

Is there freedom of assembly? 1 / 4

Article 34 establishes the freedom of assembly in the transitional charter, but in May 2022 a decree by the military junta banned demonstrations that have the potential to disturb public order. The junta used the decree to outlaw any demonstration that is critical of the government.

Peaceful protests against the government continued to take place throughout 2023, such as those organized by the FVG and the journalists' syndicate, but participants increasingly faced violence and the threat of arrest. The FVG led protests in May and September calling for a return to civilian rule. The demonstrations resulted in several deaths and scores of injuries and arrests at the hands of the security forces.

E2 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for nongovernmental organizations, particularly those that are engaged in human rights– and governance-related work?

1 /
4

Civil society is weak, subject to periodic interference and intimidation, and internally divided by ethnic and personality-based loyalties. Nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers and activists have faced threats, harassment, and imprisonment. Guinean NGOs also suffer from poor access to funding, leadership struggles, the restriction of civic space, and security concerns.

Civil society is represented in the CNT under the September 2021 transitional charter. Many such groups in the CNT are said to be supportive of President Doumbouya. Organizations that criticize the arbitrary arrest of regime opponents frequently face intimidation attempts and are often labeled as political opportunists by the government or the CNT leadership.

E3 0-4 pts

Is there freedom for trade unions and similar professional or labor organizations? 2 / 4

Although workers are allowed to form trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively, they must provide 10 days' notice before striking, and strikes are banned in broadly defined essential services. In practice, unions are relatively active and constitute the core of civil society. The Condé (2010–21) and the Doumbouya (since 2021) administrations have attempted to divide unions seen as posing a potential threat to the authority of the government. Several unions are represented in the CNT.

F Rule of Law

F1 0-4 pts

Is there an independent judiciary? | 1 / 4

The judicial system remains subject to political influence and corruption and is generally understaffed and lacks transparency. The judiciary suffers from a lack of resources and personnel.

Shortly after overthrowing Condé, junta leader Doumbouya ordered the return of cars and properties from judges who approved Conde's third term. Apart from the creation of a new anticorruption court, there has been no substantial reform of the judiciary since the 2021 coup. Many civil society activists have alleged that the courts are being pressured by the junta in the trials of prominent figures within the FVG.

F2 0-4 pts

Does due process prevail in civil and criminal matters? | 1 / 4

The junta released political detainees imprisoned by Condé. Since the 2021 coup, the junta's security forces have carried out their own arbitrary arrests and detentions. Due process is upheld unevenly in the state justice system, and many disputes are settled informally through traditional justice systems; these systems also apply due process unevenly, and decisions are not subject to appeal procedures. Citizens have the right to appeal against the state administration; however, most either lack the financial means to do so, or the courts take too long to respond to their appeals. Most of the incarcerated population consists of people in prolonged pretrial detention.

The trial of former junta leader Camara and other alleged perpetrators of the 2009 Conakry stadium massacre began in September 2022 on Doumbouya's orders, and was ongoing as of year-end 2023. The victims were not guaranteed protection for testimony against the accused perpetrators during the proceedings, which were being monitored by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Media coverage of the trial was shown on television without restriction.

In November 2023, armed men stormed a prison in Conakry and freed Camara and three associates who were standing trial, killing nine people, including two civilians. Camara and two others were recaptured shortly after the incident. However, former minister of presidential security Claude Pivi, a key figure in the trial, remained at large at year's end, and some witnesses reportedly feared testifying as a result.

F3 0-4 pts

Is there protection from the illegitimate use of physical force and freedom from war and insurgencies? | 1 / 4

Security forces have engaged in arbitrary arrests, torture, the killing of protesters, and other forms of physical violence with apparent impunity.

Prisons are characterized by severe overcrowding, malnutrition, and poor medical care and sanitation. Violent crime is frequent, especially in the suburbs of Conakry, but is less prevalent in rural areas.

F4 0-4 pts

Do laws, policies, and practices guarantee equal treatment of various segments of the population? | 1 / 4

Women face pervasive societal discrimination and disadvantages in both the formal and traditional justice systems. Various ethnic groups engage in mutual discrimination with respect to hiring and other matters. Antidiscrimination laws do not protect LGBT+ people. Same-sex sexual activity is a

criminal offense that can be punished with up to three years in prison. Although this law is rarely enforced, LGBT+ people have been arrested on lesser charges in connection with their identity.

G Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights

G1 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy freedom of movement, including the ability to change their place of residence, employment, or education?

2 /
4

Rampant crime and the lack of employment opportunities remain important informal impediments to freedom of movement and the ability to seek new employment. Individuals occupying prominent positions within the FVG opposition alliance have experienced temporary detentions when traveling through the country's interior.

G2 0-4 pts

Are individuals able to exercise the right to own property and establish private businesses without undue interference from state or nonstate actors?

2 /
4

In principle there are avenues to document property rights and ownership, and following recent reforms, property registration processes have become faster and less expensive. However, the legal and administrative system responsible for enforcing ownership rights is ineffective. Many have been forced into the informal sector as a result of weak enforcement of property rights and high levels of corruption. In the aftermath of the 2021 coup, the junta expropriated a number of properties in the capital.

Women face gender-based disadvantages in laws and practices governing inheritance and property rights.

G3 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy personal social freedoms, including choice of marriage partner and size of family, protection from domestic violence, and control over appearance?

1 /
4

Rape and domestic violence are common but underreported due to fears of stigmatization, and no specific legislation addresses domestic abuse. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is common despite a legal ban; in 2021, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that 95 percent of girls and women aged 15 to 49 had undergone the practice. The 2016 criminal code set the legal age for marriage at 18, but early and forced marriages have remained common. A civil marriage is required by the civil code prior to a traditional or religious marriage ceremony, but enforcement of this requirement is rare.

In 2019, the parliament amended the civil code to make monogamy the general regime of marriage, except when there is "explicit agreement" on polygamy from the first wife. However, Islamic leaders have expressed displeasure with the law, and it is rarely enforced in practice.

G4 0-4 pts

Do individuals enjoy equality of opportunity and freedom from economic exploitation?

1 /
4

Workers in the informal sectors do not enjoy work-related protections. Income generated from the exploitation of the mining sector benefits those with economic and political power. In some mining areas, child labor is a major problem.

The 2016 criminal code specifically criminalized trafficking in persons and debt bondage, but reduced the minimum penalties for such crimes, and enforcement has been weak. Women and children are sometimes trafficked for sexual exploitation to other parts of West Africa, Europe, the Middle East, and the United States. The military coup of September 2021 diverted attention and administrative capacity away from existing programs to combat child labor and human trafficking.