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Freedom of the Press 2010 - Guinea

Status: Not Free

Legal Environment: 24

Political Environment: 30

Economic Environment: 17

Total Score: 71

Survey Edition	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Total Score, Status	73,NF	67,NF	67,NF	66,NF	66,NF

- Guinea's military junta, led by Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, took several regressive steps that further restricted press freedom following a violent military crackdown on September 28, in which more than 150 protesters at the Conakry Stadium were killed. The demonstrators had gathered to protest Camara's plans to participate in a presidential election scheduled for January 2010.
- Camara had come to power in a bloodless coup in December 2008 after the death of Lansana Conte, Guinea's president for 24 years. The junta, known as the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), abolished civilian government institutions and the constitution.
- Guinea's constitution had previously guaranteed freedom of the press, but this right was widely abused in practice. Restrictive legislation designated defamation and slander as criminal offenses and permitted the authorities to censor publications.
- Unlike in previous years, the National Council for Communications (CNC) did not suspend any newspapers or radio operating licenses in 2009. However, on August 31, the CNC banned all live political content on radio and television. The ban was lifted on September 9 after meetings between the CNC, media representatives, and the minister of communications.
- Journalists criticized the October appointment of Cheikh Fantamady Conde as information and culture minister, as he allegedly intended to maintain tight control over Radio Television Guinea (RTG) and other government-run media.
- Intimidation of journalists occurred throughout 2009. A Conakry radio station journalist was attacked by members of the Presidential Guard in March while covering a confrontation between a group of young demonstrators and the armed forces. In May, Moise Sidibe, a reporter for *L'Independent* and an outspoken critic of the CNDD, was arrested with several members of his family and detained at the military camp Alpha Yaya in Conakry. Security forces detained Amara Camara, editor of *Le Confidentiel*, for two days in August after he challenged comments made by the head of the Ministry of High Crimes and Anti-Drugs, Moussa Tiegboro Camara, related to drug problems in a Conakry neighborhood. Also in August, the director of the private Radio Nostalgie FM, Hajaar Souhel, was arrested, though he was released later the same day. In November, the military police summoned Talibe Barry, editor of *L'Independent* press group, for questioning related to an article on a missing soldier.
- Optimism regarding an improved media environment in 2008 was shattered in the wake of the September 2009 massacre. Several journalists reported being assaulted and having their equipment seized or damaged in the crackdown on the stadium protest. Six French journalists from France 2 and France 24 who were travelling to Guinea to cover the aftermath of the incident were denied entry in October because they lacked "a formal

invitation." In November, Reporters Without Borders claimed that a government source had disclosed a military plot targeting the Lynx-Lance press group and its journalists as part of an effort to quash support for the opposition.

- Following the September military crackdown, Guinean authorities launched a massive campaign against journalists who had "betrayed" Guinea to the international community by covering the massacre. Several journalists who worked for the international press or online media fled the country due to death threats, while others practiced increased self-censorship.
- Private media outlets were generally excluded from government meetings, leaving government-owned outlets to provide the only coverage. The opposition's activities did not receive coverage on national television. Private media workers who attempted to attend government meetings were targeted by security forces, and those who spoke out against the authorities faced arrest, harassment, and mistreatment, among other punishments. The junta also attempted to bribe the press in 2009, offering monetary compensation and tax breaks.
- Thirteen private weekly newspapers publish regularly in Conakry, while numerous others publish only occasionally due to economic and technical difficulties. The country's only daily, the *Horoya*, is state run. Many new newspapers began publishing in 2008. However, widespread corruption and a lack of ownership transparency continued to plague the private press.
- Radio is the most important news medium in the country. In addition to a state-owned radio station, 21 private stations operate mostly in urban areas, and 12 rural and community stations broadcast in the rest of the country. The state-owned RTG continues to be the only television broadcaster.
- The government does not directly restrict access to the internet, but use of the medium remains very limited, largely because of illiteracy, a lack of access points, and the high cost of access. The share of the population estimated to have access to the internet in 2009 was slightly less than 1 percent.

Topics: Freedom of information, Freedom of expression,

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