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COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY DOCUMENTS

GUINEA

5 FEBRUARY 2009

UK Border Agency
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

Contents

	Page
1. HYPERLINK \L "PREFACE" PREFACE	4
2. HYPERLINK \L "BASICINFORMATION" BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON GUINEA	5
HYPERLINK \I "Geography" Geography	5
HYPERLINK \I "Map" Map	6
HYPERLINK \I "RecentHistory" Recent history	7
HYPERLINK \I "recent" Recent events and political developments	7
HYPERLINK \I "Economy" Economy	8
HYPERLINK \I "HumanRights" Human Rights	9
HYPERLINK \I "corruption" Corruption	10
HYPERLINK \I "trafficking1" Trafficking	11
HYPERLINK \I "Drugtrafficking" Drug trafficking	11
HYPERLINK \I "FGM" Female genital mutilation (FGM)	12
HYPERLINK \I "Extentpractised" Extent practised	12
HYPERLINK \I "legalposition" Legal Position	12
HYPERLINK \I "protection" Protection	12
HYPERLINK \I "freedomofassociation" Freedom of association and assembly	13
HYPERLINK \I "freedomofreligion1" Freedom of religion	13
HYPERLINK \I "freedomofspeechandmedia" Freedom of speech and media	14
3. HYPERLINK \L "INDEXTOKEYDOCS" INDEX TO KEY SOURCE DOCUMENTS	15
HYPERLINK \I "KayFactsandGeography" Key facts and geography	15
HYPERLINK \I "Map" Map	16
HYPERLINK \I "History" History	16
HYPERLINK \I "PoliticsandRecentEvents" Politics and recent developments	16
HYPERLINK \I "HumanRightsGeneral" Human Rights – general	19
HYPERLINK \I "HumanRightsSpecificIssues" Human Rights – specific issues	20
HYPERLINK \I "Arrestanddetention" Arrest and detention – legal rights	20
HYPERLINK \I "Children" Children	20
HYPERLINK \I "Citizenshipandnationality" Citizenship and nationality	21
HYPERLINK \I "corruption1" Corruption	21
HYPERLINK \I "Crime" Crime	22
HYPERLINK \I "Deathpenalty" Death Penalty	22
HYPERLINK \I "disability" Disability	22
HYPERLINK \I "employmetrights" Employment rights	22
HYPERLINK \I "EthnicGroups" Ethnic groups	22
HYPERLINK \I "exitprocedures" Exit-entry procedures	23
HYPERLINK \I "forcedeviction" Forced eviction	23
HYPERLINK \I "foreignrefugees" Foreign refugees	23
HYPERLINK \I "freedomofmovement" Freedom of movement	23
HYPERLINK \I "FreedomofReligion" Freedom of religion	23
HYPERLINK \I "Media" Freedom of speech and media	24
HYPERLINK \I "HumanInsits" Human Rights institutions, organisations and activists	24
HYPERLINK \I "HIVAIDS" HIV/AIDS	24
HYPERLINK \I "InternallyDisplacedPersons" Internally displaced persons (IDPs)	25

HYPERLINK \l "Judiciary"	Judiciary	25
HYPERLINK \l "LBT"	Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons	25
HYPERLINK \l "Medical"	Medical issues	26
HYPERLINK \l "Military"	Military service	26
HYPERLINK \l "Politicalaffiliation"	Political affiliation	26
HYPERLINK \l "PrisonConditions"	Prison conditions	27
HYPERLINK \l "SecurityForces"	Security forces	27
HYPERLINK \l "Terrorism"	Terrorism	28
HYPERLINK \l "trafficking"	Trafficking	28
HYPERLINK \l "Women"	Women	28

4. HYPERLINK \l "REFTOSOURCES" REFERENCES TO SOURCE MATERIAL 30

Preface

i This Country of Origin Information Key Documents (COI Key Documents) on Guinea has been produced by COI Service, UK Border Agency (UKBA), for use by officials involved in the asylum/human rights determination process. It provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum/human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. The COI Key Documents includes information available up to 23 January 2009. It was issued on 5 February 2009.

ii The COI Key Documents is an indexed list of key reports, papers and articles produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources. It does not contain any UKBA opinion or policy.

iii For UK Border Agency users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant web link has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.

iv As noted above, the documents identified concentrate mainly on human rights issues. By way of introduction, brief background information on Guinea is also provided. Please note, this background material is not intended to provide a summary of the material contained in the documents listed.

v This COI Key Documents and the documents listed are publicly disclosable.

vi Any comments regarding this COI Key Documents or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to COI Service as below.

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Website: [HYPERLINK "http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html" http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/rds/country_reports.html)

ADVISORY PANEL ON COUNTRY INFORMATION

xi The independent Advisory Panel on Country Information (APCI) was established in 2003 to make recommendations to the Home Secretary about the content of the UKBA's country of origin information material. The APCI reviewed a number of UKBA's reports and published its findings on its website at [HYPERLINK "http://www.apci.org.uk"](http://www.apci.org.uk)

www.apci.org.uk. Since October 2008, the work of the APCI has been taken forward by the Chief Inspector of UKBA.

[HYPERLINK \l "Contents" Return to Contents](#)

2. Background information about Guinea

Full Country Name: The Republic of Guinea

Area: 245,857 sq. km

Population: 9,806,509 (July 2008 est.)

Capital City: Conakry

People and languages: The main ethnic groups in Guinea are the Peuhl 40%, Malinke 30%, Soussou 20%, and smaller ethnic groups 10%.

French is the official language; note - each ethnic group has its own language

Religion(s): Muslim 85%, Christian 8%, indigenous beliefs 7%

Currency: Guinean Franc (GNF)

Major political parties and leaders: The main political parties are:

National Union for Progress or UPN [Mamadou Bhoie BARRY]; National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), (the ruling party following a coup) [Capt Moussa Dadis Camara]; People's Party of Guinea or PPG [Charles Pascal TOLNO]; Rally for the Guinean People or RPG [Alpha CONDE]; Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea or UFDG [Cellou Dalein DIALLO]; Union of Republican Forces or UFR [Sidya TOURE]; Union for Progress of Guinea or UPG [Jean-Marie DORE, secretary-general]; Union for Progress and Renewal or UPR [Ousmane BAH]

Head of State (following a coup): Capt Moussa Dadis Camara

Prime Minister: Kabine Komara

Membership of international groupings/organisations: United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Development Bank (AFDB), Mano River Union (MRU). (Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) World Factbook, 22 January 2009) [1a]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

GEOGRAPHY

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), Country Profile: Guinea, updated 8 July 2008 noted:

“Guinea is situated on the West Coast of Africa. It borders Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The country can broadly be divided into 4 zones: a narrow coastal belt, north-western hill region, central savannah which is source of the river Niger and the south-eastern rain forest.” [4a]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

MAP

HYPERLINK \I "CONTENTS" HYPERLINK \I "CONTENTS" Return to Contents
HYPERLINK \I "ReftoSources" Go to sources

RECENT HISTORY

The CIA World Factbook, updated 22 January 2009, noted:

“Guinea has had only two presidents since gaining its independence from France in 1958. Lansana Conte came to power in 1984 when the military seized the government after the death of the first president, Sekou Toure. Guinea did not hold democratic elections until 1993 when General Conte (head of the military government) was elected president of the civilian government. He was re-elected in 1998 and again in 2003, though all the polls have been marred by irregularities. Guinea has maintained its internal stability despite spill over effects from conflict in Sierra Leone and Liberia. As those countries have rebuilt, Guinea's own vulnerability to political and economic crisis has increased. Declining economic conditions and popular dissatisfaction with corruption and bad governance prompted two massive strikes in 2006; a third nationwide strike in early 2007 sparked violent protests in many Guinean cities and prompted two weeks of martial law. To appease the unions and end the unrest, Conte named a new prime minister in March 2007.” [1a]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

RECENT EVENTS AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The BBC reported on 23 December 2008 of the death of President Lansana Conte after 24 years in power. He died the previous day, 22 December 2008 at age 74, after a lengthy illness. The BBC News reported that the army had taken control, announcing that it had dissolved the government and suspended the constitution. [7e] Both the BBC and the Guardian reported that the President ruled the West African nation with an iron fist since taking power in a 1984 coup. “He was one of the last members of a dwindling group of so-called ‘African Big Men’ who came to power by the gun and resisted the democratic tide sweeping the continent. (BBC 23 December 2008) [7d] (The Guardian, 23 December 2008) [50a]

“The BBC reported further the following day, 24 December 2008, that a junior army officer, Capt Moussa Dadis Camara who led the coup had declared himself the ‘president of the republic’. “ (BBC, 23 December 2008) [7f]

The BBC country profile, last updated 1 January 2009 notes:

“Captain Moussa Dadis Camara emerged as the leader of the group of army officers who seized power in a bloodless coup after the death of long-serving President Lansana Conte in December 2008. ... The ousted government initially opposed the coup, but with many Guineans - disgruntled by almost a quarter of a century of misrule - appearing to back the army's move, most former ministers soon pledged loyalty to Capt Camara. The junta set up a new ruling body, the 32-member National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD), to replace the government and other institutions, and pledged to rid the country of corruption and to improve living standards.” [7a]

“Though Capt Camara declared himself ‘president of the republic’ the day after the coup, he also maintained that he had no intention of clinging to power and would hold elections after a two-year transitional period, at the end of 2010. Furthermore: “Mr Komara was appointed as prime minister by

Guinea's military junta at the end of 2008, a week after the coup that followed the death of President Lansana Conte." [7a]

IRIN News reported on 12 January 2009 that: "The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has joined the African Union in condemning the military takeover in Guinea, suspending Guinea from ECOWAS until the military junta restores constitutional order.

At a special ECOWAS meeting on 10 January leaders called on the military junta to establish a transitional body composed of civilian and military members which will lead the country to free, fair and transparent elections in 2009. ECOWAS's move came days after officials with the European Union met with just-appointed Prime Minister Kabiné Komara, similarly calling for a multi-stakeholder body, led by a civilian, to set up elections." [6i]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "ReftoSources" Go to sources](#)

ECONOMY

GDP: \$10.96 billion (2007 est.) (CIA World Factbook, 22 January 2009) [1a]

GDP per head: \$421 (2004)

Annual Growth: 1.5% (2007 est)

Inflation: 23% (2007 est)

Major Industries: Minerals (bauxite; iron ore)

Major trading partners: Exports: South Korea, European Union, Russia, United States, Cameroon. Imports: European Union, Cote d'Ivoire, China.

Exchange rate: £1 =8800 GNF (March 2008); (The FCO Country Profile: Guinea, updated 8 July 2008) [4a] 11,768 Guinean Franc = 1 Pound Sterling (23 March 2007)

Major trading partners: Exports: South Korea, European Union, Russia, Ukraine, United States, Cameroon. Imports: European Union, Cote d'Ivoire, China. (FCO Country Profile: Guinea, 8 July 2008) [4a]

The US State Department (USSD Report 2007) Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2007, dated 11 March 2008, noted that:

Guinea, "Richly endowed with minerals, possesses over 25 billion metric tons (MT) of bauxite - and perhaps up to one half of the world's reserves. In addition, Guinea's mineral wealth includes more than 4 billion tons of high-grade iron ore, significant diamond and gold deposits, and undetermined quantities of uranium. Guinea has considerable potential for growth in the agricultural and fishing sectors. Soil, water, and climatic conditions provide opportunities for large-scale irrigated farming and agro industry. Possibilities for investment and commercial activities exist in all these areas, but Guinea's poorly developed infrastructure and rampant corruption continue to present obstacles to large-scale investment projects." [2c]

The CIA World Factbook, updated 22 January 2009, recorded:

"Guinea possesses major mineral, hydropower, and agricultural resources, yet remains an underdeveloped nation. The country has almost half of the world's bauxite reserves and is the second-largest bauxite producer. The mining sector accounts for over 70% of exports. Long-run improvements in government fiscal arrangements, literacy, and the legal framework are needed if the country is to

move out of poverty. Investor confidence has been sapped by rampant corruption, a lack of electricity and other infrastructure, a lack of skilled workers, and the political uncertainty due to the failing health of President Lansana CONTE. Guinea is trying to reengage with the IMF and World Bank, which cut off most assistance in 2003, and is working closely with technical advisors from the U.S. Treasury Department, the World Bank and IMF, seeking to return to a fully funded program. Growth rose slightly in 2006-07, primarily due to increases in global demand and commodity prices on world markets, but the standard of living fell. The Guinea franc depreciated sharply as the prices for basic necessities like food and fuel rose beyond the reach of most Guineans. Dissatisfaction with economic conditions prompted nationwide strikes in February and June 2006.” [1a]

HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents
HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources

HUMAN RIGHTS

The USSD Report 2007, dated 11 March 2008, summarised the human rights situation in Guinea as follows:

“Serious human rights abuses occurred during the year, particularly during the January-February general strike when security forces killed and injured people. Security forces tortured and abused detainees to extract confessions, and killed, beat, and abused civilians, especially during mass demonstrations. Prison conditions were inhumane and life-threatening. Impunity of alleged perpetrators of killings and abuse remained a problem. There were arbitrary arrests, prolonged pretrial detention, and incommunicado detention. The judiciary was subject to corruption and outside influence. The government infringed on citizens' privacy rights and restricted freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association, and freedom of movement although these restrictions were less evident than in previous years. While the press is generally free and does openly criticize, there were instances of government infringement. Violence and societal discrimination against women, prostitution of young girls, and female genital mutilation (FGM) were problems. Trafficking in persons, ethnic discrimination, government targeting of labor leaders, forced labor, including by children, and child labor occurred.” [2a]

The FCO Country Profile for Guinea, updated 8 July 2008, added:

“Guinea's human rights record is poor, and always has been. During the regime of Sekou Toure, many people were tortured in prison or executed after show trials. Those responsible have yet to face justice. Under President Conte, human rights abuses continue, although the situation is far better than under Sekou Toure's regime. Petty corruption by the security forces and detention without trial are the main concerns. A number of accusations of human rights abuse have been levelled at the country's security forces concerning their conduct during the troubles of January 2007, including by respected international Human Rights Organisations. No action has been taken by the Guinean Government to establish the facts or pursue justice. Although there is a growing independent print media, journalists are often arrested after writing stories critical of the regime. Until July 2006, all broadcast media [were] state owned. A private radio station has now started broadcasting.” [4a]

Freedom House noted in Freedom in the World 2008: Guinea (covering events in 2007), that: “Several statutes restrict freedoms of association and assembly in apparent contravention of the constitution;

the government may ban any gathering that 'threatens national unity'. Nevertheless, human rights groups and many other nongovernmental organizations operate openly.

"While nominally independent, the judicial system remains affected by corruption, nepotism, ethnic bias, and political interference, and lacks resources and trained personnel. Arbitrary arrests and detention are common, and persistent maltreatment and torture of detainees have been reported. Prison conditions are harsh and sometimes life threatening. Security forces commit abuses, including extrajudicial execution, with impunity. Human Rights Watch reported that during a crackdown on the antigovernment demonstrations in early 2007, 'security forces fired directly into crowds of unarmed demonstrators, frequently before having exhausted non-lethal means of crowd control, and also gunned down demonstrators trying to flee to safety', leaving at least 129 people dead and nearly 2,000 wounded." [21a]

While Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its World Report 2009 covering events in 2008 recorded:

"By the end of 2008, hope that nationwide protests in 2007 would improve governance and respect for human rights was replaced by growing concern over the human rights fall-out from Guinea's emergence as a major drug-trafficking hub. The chronic problems of endemic corruption, a fractious and abusive military, the rise of drug trafficking and the involvement of state agents in it, threaten to further erode the rule of law and the government's ability to meet the basic needs of its citizens.

Meanwhile, chronic state-sponsored violence by members of the security services, including torture, assault, and extortion, continues. Ordinary Guineans have scant hope for redress, as the government has taken no steps to tackle impunity for abuses committed by security forces. The National Commission of Inquiry, created to investigate the killings and abuses by security forces during the January and February 2007 strikes, is not yet operational due to inadequate government support. However, the newly appointed prime minister supported the creation of a National Observatory for Human Rights, which shows some promise if allowed to function independently." 5a]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)
[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

CORRUPTION

USAID reported on 29 May 2008 that although Guinea is classified as one of the poorest countries in the world, it has abundant natural resources such as bauxite, iron, gold, and diamonds. Corruption, the report stated, is one of the main reasons for the disparity between the country's natural wealth and the poverty of its population.

"As the country moves towards parliamentary elections, corruption in the government has become a major concern. Most Guineans are convinced that the country cannot progress as long as corruption continues to dominate the way business is conducted by the Government of Guinea. Over 80 participants at a USAID-financed anti-corruption seminar made this clear as they applauded a speaker who stated, 'A government in which the law is not applied and the public order is not respected, is not a good government. A government that will not guarantee individual freedom and rights is not a good government'." [19b]

TRAFFICKING

The US State Department, Trafficking in Persons Report 2008, dated 4 June 2008, stated the following concerning trafficking in Guinea:

“Guinea is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children trafficked for the purposes of forced labor and sexual exploitation. The majority of victims are children, and internal trafficking is more prevalent than transnational trafficking. Within the country, girls are trafficked primarily for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation, while boys are trafficked for forced agricultural labor, and as forced beggars, street vendors, shoe shiners, and laborers in gold and diamond mines. Some Guinean men are also trafficked for agricultural labor within Guinea. Transnationally, girls from Mali, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Guinea-Bissau are trafficked to Guinea for domestic servitude and likely also for sexual exploitation. Guinean women and girls are trafficked to Nigeria, Cote d’Ivoire, Benin, Senegal, Greece, and Spain for domestic servitude and sexual exploitation. Chinese women are trafficked to Guinea for commercial sexual exploitation by Chinese men living in Guinea. Networks also traffic women from Nigeria, India, and Greece through Guinea to the Maghreb countries to Europe, notably Italy, Ukraine, Switzerland, and France.” [1e]

The report added that:

“The Government of Guinea does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking; however, it is making significant efforts to do so, despite limited resources. Nevertheless, Guinea is placed on Tier 2 Watch List for its failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to eliminate trafficking over the previous year. Guinea demonstrated minimal law enforcement efforts for a second year in a row, while protection efforts diminished over last year.” [1e]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

DRUG TRAFFICKING

IRIN News reported on 10 October 2008 that:

Guinea had become a major drug-trafficking hub and the trade there is now potentially more dangerous than in Guinea-Bissau. The increased scrutiny by the government in Guinea-Bissau, has forced the international drug traffickers from the countries such as Colombia, Venezuela, Nigeria and Spain, to move their trade up the coast to Guinea, according to Antonio Mazzitelli, regional representative of the UN Office on Crime and Crime.

“Though the amount of drugs trafficked through Guinea is unclear, OCAD’s new head, Sakho Moussa Camara, told IRIN over 1,000kg were seized in Guinea in 2007. He said the office has seized 7,499kg of drugs between 19 August and 15 September 2008.” [6a]

FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION (FGM)

EXTENT PRACTISED

The USSD Report 2007, dated 11 March 2008, noted:

“FGM was practised widely in all regions and among all religious and ethnic groups. FGM was performed on girls between the ages of four and 17. According to a 2005 Demographic and Health Survey (DHS), FGM prevalence was 96 per cent nationwide, a slight decline from the 99 per cent prevalence rate reported in ... 1999 ... A growing number of men and women opposed FGM and urban, educated families increasingly opted to perform only a slight, symbolic incision. ... Efforts by NGOs to persuade communities to abandon FGM resulted in thousands of families immediately ending the practice. The NGO TOSTAN was successful in bringing together communities that traditionally intermarry to combat FGM.” [2a] (section 5)

GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit GmbH) reported in its country information report on FGM in Guinea, November 2007, that:

“In Guinea, the most widespread form of FGM is Type II, followed by Type I (mostly with total removal of the clitoris) and Type IV. Type III is found primarily in Moyenne Guinée, Guinée Forstière and Conakry, where infibulation accounts for slightly more than ten per cent of all excisions... The only change that can be seen is that mothers are tending to wait longer before subjecting their daughters to the practice and that it is increasingly being performed by health professionals.” [51a]

LEGAL POSITION

The GTZ report also stated that: “A 2001-2010 national action plan to campaign against FGM has now been developed in coordination with the Ministry for Social Affairs, development agencies and national NGOs... There is currently no national structure to coordinate FGM related activities in the country.” [51a]

The USSD Report 2007, dated 11 March 2008 noted: “FGM is illegal and carries a penalty of three months in prison and a fine of approximately \$26.” [2a] (section 5)

PROTECTION

‘Female Genital Mutilation – A Guide to Laws and Policies Worldwide’ stated that no one has ever been criminally prosecuted for FC/FGM. (Zed) [25a] And the USSD Report 2007 noted that there were no prosecutions during the year [2006]. [2a] (section 5)

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)
[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY

The USSD Report 2007, dated 11 March 2008, stated that:

“The law restricts freedom of assembly, and police use of excessive force during the year resulted in the deaths of numerous demonstrators, including women and children, as well as hundreds of injuries. The penal code bans any meeting that has an ethnic or racial character or any gathering ‘whose nature threatens national unity’. The government requires a 72-working-hour advance notification of public gatherings. The law permits local authorities to cancel a demonstration or meeting if they believe it poses a threat to public order. Authorities may also hold event organizers criminally liable if violence or destruction of property ensues.” [2a] (section 2b)

The report added: “Security forces used tear gas, physical force, and firearms to disperse crowds of demonstrators and arrested numerous other demonstrators. The government took no punitive action against security force members.” [2a] (section 2b)

While Freedom House, in its Freedom in the World 2008 for Guinea, stated:

“Several statutes restrict freedoms of association and assembly in apparent contravention of the constitution; the government may ban any gathering that threatens national unity’. Nevertheless, human rights groups and many other nongovernmental organizations operate openly. The constitution provides for the right to form and join unions. Several labor confederations compete and have the right to bargain collectively. An eight-day general strike in 2006 resulted in rioting and alleged human rights abuses by the authorities, and ended with an agreement on wages and prices for basic goods. Trade unions demonstrated immense political influence in early 2007, when nationwide strikes led Conte to assign some executive powers to a newly appointed prime minister.” [21a]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

FREEDOM OF RELIGION

The USSD International Religious Freedom Report 2008, released 19 September 2008, recorded that: The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and that the Government generally respected religious freedom in practice. [2b]

However, “Some non-Muslims claimed that the Government continued to use its influence to favor Muslims over non-Muslims. For example, the universities close on Friday so Muslim students can go to mosque, but schedule classes on Sunday, preventing Christian students from attending mass. The Secretariat General facilitated a pilgrimage to Mecca for the Muslim community, but did not provide any similar service to the Christian community.” [2b]

The report also noted:

“There were no reports of societal abuses or discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. However, in some parts of the country, strong cultural, social, and economic pressure discouraged conversion from Islam. For example, the missionary community reported that a man's conversion from Islam to Christianity led to relatives taking his children and community rejection.” [2b]

FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND MEDIA

The USSD Report 2007, dated 11 March 2008, noted that: “The constitution and law provide for freedom of expression; however, the government did not respect these rights in practice. The

government closed radio stations and harassed and intimidated journalists, particularly during the January-February general strike. Some radio journalists practiced self-censorship.” [2a] (Section 2a)

The Committee to Protect Journalists’ (CPJ) report dated 5 February 2008 noted that there were attacks on newly opened private radio stations, threats to journalists and printing publications were stopped.

“More than 130 people were killed, mostly by government security forces, during protests that were unprecedented in size and popular support. The unrest was quelled in late February when President Lansana Conté agreed to appoint as prime minister Lansana Kouyaté, a respected diplomat who was backed by local trade unions. Kouyaté’s appointment marked a departure from Conté’s brutal and often capricious rule, and local journalists reported a decrease in harassment and censorship in its aftermath. Still, the president, who rarely appears in public and reportedly suffers from diabetes and other ailments, maintained de facto control over segments of Guinea’s economy and political apparatus, and it remained unclear whether the transition would lead to long-term improvements for the Guinean press.” [9a]

[HYPERLINK \l "contents" Return to contents](#)

[HYPERLINK \l "Sources"Go to sources](#)

3. Index to key source documents

(KB users - click source number to access document directly)

KEY FACTS AND GEOGRAPHY

□[1a]

[2a]

[2c]

[2e]

[4a]

[7a]

[31a]

[32a]

[32b]

[38a]

[39a]

[40a]

[47a] □ Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),
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Department of International Development, (DFID)

Country profile: Guinea, last updated 19 April 2007

[HYPERLINK "http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/africa/guinea.asp"](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/countries/africa/guinea.asp)
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PAGE iii

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