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Africa : Guinea

REPUBLIC OF GUINEA

Head of state: Lansana Conté

Head of government: Cellou Dalein Diallo

Death penalty: retentionist

International Criminal Court: ratified

UN Women's Convention: ratified

Optional Protocol to UN Women's Convention: not signed

Overview - Covering events from January - December 2005

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Guinea

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Several people were arrested following an attempt to assassinate the head of state in January. Police used excessive force to disperse a protest march. Freedom of expression remained under threat. Death sentences continued to be imposed; no executions were reported.

Background

In January, an unidentified group wearing military uniforms attempted to assassinate President Conté. The authorities said that the attackers escaped after gunshots were fired at a presidential convoy. Several people, including military officers, were arrested.

In September, following clashes between different ethnic groups in Nzérékoré that left several people injured, the authorities imposed a curfew and arrested at least 20 people.

The opposition, which had boycotted presidential elections in 2003, took part in local elections in December 2005. The ruling Party for Union and Progress won most urban districts and rural development communities. Opposition parties accused the authorities of rigging the polls.

Excessive use of force

In November, police allegedly used excessive force against high-school students during a protest march over a lack of teachers in Télémélé, 250km north of the capital Conakry. Two students were killed and a third person who was shot died later in hospital.

Detention without trial

Around 11 military officers, including Amadou Diallo and Alama Condé, held since November 2003 on suspicion of plotting to overthrow President Conté, were still in detention without charge or trial at the end of the year. It was learned during 2005 that Moussa Touré, a military officer arrested in 2003, had died in detention in September 2004 and had been denied medical care.

Attacks on freedom of expression

In August, the authorities ended the state monopoly on broadcasting. A new law allows private citizens and organizations to broadcast, but not political parties or religious movements. Freedom of expression continued to be curtailed, with journalists, lawyers and others who criticized state representatives at risk of beatings, arrests and imprisonment.

- Sotigtui Kaba, a journalist with *Le Lynx* newspaper, was beaten in February while covering a protest march by truck drivers who were demanding better working conditions.
- Mohamed Lamine Diallo, known as Ben Pepito, editor-in-chief of the weekly *La Lance*, was detained for three days in February on unknown charges. He had been investigating the case of Antoine Soromou, a member of the opposition, who had been detained for more than two weeks in January.
- In November, Louis Espérant Célestin, editor of *Guinée Actuelle* newspaper, was detained for more than 48 hours after he published an article about Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo that was considered defamatory.

Death penalty

In August the Minister of Security signalled a tougher approach to crime and announced that "whoever kills deliberately will also be killed". A wide range of offences, including murder, carry a mandatory death sentence; execution is by firing squad.

- In August a diamond merchant, Malick Condé, and a policeman, Cléophae Lamah, were sentenced to death for murder. They said they would appeal. Two co-defendants were sentenced to four years' imprisonment.

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