

The State of the World's Human Rights; Guinea 2023

Background

The trial of former head of state Moussa Dadis Camara and several former senior security officials for their role in the 28 September 2009 massacre – during which 157 people were killed by defence and security forces and more than 100 were victims of sexual violence – resumed on 13 November, nine days after an armed commando attacked Conakry prison and released four of the main defendants, including Moussa Dadis Camara. All were caught except for Claude Pivi, former minister of presidential security. Following an explosion at the country's main fuel depot in Conakry on the night of 17/18 December – killing 24 people and injuring more than 450 – the resulting fuel shortage led to an increase in the cost of living, school and university closures and frequent power cuts.

Freedom of expression

On 31 October, the ECOWAS Court of Justice ruled that Guinea had violated the rights to freedom of expression and of information by restricting access to the internet and to social media in 2020.

Access to the main social networks remained disrupted since 24 November, with no official explanation from the authorities. Access to social networks and news websites was previously disrupted from 17 May during anti-government protests, and restored around a week later. On 30 November, Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, minister of post, telecommunications and digital economy, stated that “the internet is not a right”. He had acknowledged the previous disruption to the internet, but attributed it to a technical problem with an undersea cable. The news website Guineematin.com was inaccessible from 15 August to 5 November, with no reason given. The High Authority of Communication wrote to Canal + Guinée on 6 and 9 December to ask them to stop broadcasting Djoma FM and TV, Espace FM and TV and Évasion FM and TV for “national security reasons”. Another distributor, StarTimes, announced the withdrawal of Djoma TV, Espace TV and Évasion TV for the same reasons.

Freedom of peaceful assembly

A blanket ban on all political gatherings in Guinea remained in place since May 2022. In Conakry, however, although gatherings called by the opposition Living Forces of Guinea coalition were prohibited, several rallies in support of the head of state were allowed to go ahead.

On 1 June, the Kankan court of first instance sentenced two women to six months' imprisonment – four months suspended – and a fine of GNF 1 million (around EUR 110) each, and seven women to a six months' suspended sentence and a fine of GNF 500,000 (around EUR 55). All nine were convicted of “criminal participation in an assembly”, after marching on 24 May to demand the return to power of former president Alpha Condé.

Following violent protests on the night of 27-28 March in Kankan against the lack of electricity, during which an image of the president was burnt, on 13 April the city's court of first instance sentenced 15 people to imprisonment of between four and 18 months, including on charges of unauthorized assembly.

Unlawful killings

According to civil society organizations, media and political parties, since 5 September 2021 at least 37 people had been killed by defence and security forces during protests.

One person was killed in Wonkifong, Kindia region on 16 April during an anti-drugs operation by the security forces. Several people were wounded in Boffa, Boké region on 19 September when the military allegedly shot at people who had blocked roads to protest against the lack of electricity.

On 27 March, the Dixinn court of first instance in Conakry sentenced a senior officer of the gendarmerie to 10 years' imprisonment and ordered him to pay GNF 100 million (around EUR 11,000) in damages for the murder of a 19-year-old man on 1 June 2022 in Hamdallaye, Conakry during a demonstration against the increase in the price of petrol.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

Oumar Sylla and Ibrahima Diallo of the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution and Saikou Yaya Barry of the Union of Republican Forces were provisionally released on 10 May after more than 10 months' arbitrary detention. They had been accused of "criminal participation in an assembly, complicity in the destruction of public and private buildings, intentional assault and battery, arson and looting" for mobilizing to demand the restoration of the constitutional order. On 13 June, the Dixinn court of first instance in Conakry acquitted Oumar Sylla and Ibrahima Diallo.

On 16 October, 13 journalists were violently and arbitrarily arrested in Kaloum, Conakry, taken to the central police station and then indicted at the court of first instance. They had been taking part in a peaceful demonstration organized by the Guinean Union of Press Professionals to demand that the authorities lift restrictions on access to certain news websites.¹ They were released the same day after being charged with "participating in an illegal assembly on a public highway".

Sexual and gender-based violence

On 4 April, four men were sentenced by the court of first instance in Mafanco, Conakry to between one and 20 years' imprisonment for the rape and other abuses leading to the death of M'Mah Sylla on 20 November 2021. The perpetrators were also ordered to pay GNF 1 billion (around EUR 110,000) in damages to the victim's father.

On 18 October, the UN agencies in Guinea called on the authorities to fulfil their obligations to combat violence against women and girls, following the death of a nine-year-old girl after being raped in Dubréka, Kindia region four days earlier.

Right to a healthy environment

In March, the president officially relaunched work on the Simandou iron ore mine, planned to include the construction of a railway and a port, despite concerns by civil society organizations about the consequences on local residents' economic and social rights, and impacts on climate change. After 500 fishermen complained of skin rashes, Guinean authorities carried out an inspection on 14 April and found large areas of pollution 74km off the coast of Conakry. On 19 June, the Ministry of Justice asked the Court for the Repression of Economic and Financial Offences to initiate legal proceedings against "suspected ore carriers, individuals or legal entities that own, use or are responsible for the said ships", for "alleged acts of marine pollution causing skin rashes among small-scale fishermen and environmental damage".
