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AI – Amnesty International

## Guinea: Death toll rises as repression of opposition protests worsens

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- **At least 18 deaths since January in the context of demonstrations; including three by firearms over the last two weeks**
- **Verified video and images show members of an elite military unit at a protest site**
- **Car of opposition leader hit by a projectile**

As Guinea is facing a new round of political demonstrations, the authorities must take all necessary measures to protect the right to peaceful assembly and ensure that no more lives are lost because of violence from all sides, including the deadly excesses of security forces, Amnesty International said today.

Since the beginning of 2018, at least 18 people have died in the context of demonstrations, including three individuals who were shot by firearms allegedly fired by security forces on 16, 23 and 30 October in the capital Conakry.

Through its Digital Verification Corps, a network of volunteers trained in social media verification, Amnesty International has verified videos and images showing members of the ‘Berets Rouges’, an elite military unit that has been linked to previous human rights violations including unlawful killings and sexual violence, carrying rifles alongside police at a 15 October demonstration.

“Over the past year, protests in Guinea have been marked by appalling violence from all sides, including excessive use of force by the security forces, and the deployment of a military unit notorious for human rights violations risks further inflaming the situation,” said François Patuel, Amnesty International West Africa Researcher.

“With Guinea’s opposition planning more demonstrations in the coming days, the authorities should take all necessary measures to ensure the situation does not spiral out of control. They must send a clear message to all security forces that unnecessary and excessive use of force will not be tolerated.”

More than 150 people died after members of the ‘Berets Rouges’ opened fire during a protest (<https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/36000/afr290012010en.pdf>) at the Conakry Stadium on 28 September 2009. During the incident, over 100 women were raped, more than 1500 people were wounded, and many others went missing.

Amnesty International is calling on authorities to start investigating anyone suspected of having committed human rights violations in the context of the demonstrations, including those in command, and ensuring they are not deployed while the investigation and any subsequent criminal proceedings are being conducted.

Since local elections on 4 February 2018, opposition groups have been protesting what they view as a fraudulent result, and have been calling for regular demonstrations and “ville morte” protests in which opposition parties called for citizens to stay at home.

Many of these demonstrations have led to deadly clashes (<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2018/03/guinea-ensure-security-forces-show-restraint/>) between protestors and the security forces. Acts of violence have been reported on both sides, with some protestors throwing rocks, leading to members of the security forces being injured. The security forces have often responded with excessive and indiscriminate use of force against protestors, which has involved tear gas, batons and live ammunition.

The authorities must ensure that the use of force by law enforcement during protests is avoided and only used in exceptional circumstances. Acts of sporadic violence should not be used by the authorities as a pretext to disperse a protest and impede peaceful protestors to continue the demonstration. Security forces must never use firearms to disperse a demonstration, however violent it turns.

In recent days, the situation has flared up again as opposition groups accused the authorities for having violated an agreement reached in August on the installation of local elected representatives after the contested elections.

On 30 October, opposition groups reported the death of a 30 year-old man from gunshot wounds in the neighborhood of Bambeto in Conakry.

On 23 October, a protester was shot in the neighborhood of Cosa in the same city. According to a police spokesperson, he died from a stray bullet to the chest. On the same day, the car of opposition leader Cellou Dalein Diallo was hit by a projectile. Videos verified by Amnesty International show the security forces shooting a large amount of teargas canisters at vehicles cramped with opposition activists while they were trying to leave the demonstration site.

Amnesty International is calling for a thorough, impartial and effective investigation into the allegations that Cellou Dalein Diallo was targeted for being an outspoken critic of the government.

On 16 October, a man died from gunshot injuries when security forces dispersed a protest in Conakry. Amnesty International received videos and images of a demonstration on 15 October, and was able to verify the presence of at least two members of the ‘Berets Rouges’ alongside elements of the security forces taunting the protestors.

Regional and international human rights law and standards clearly state that, as a general rule, the military should not be used to police assemblies unless strictly necessary in exceptional circumstances.

The Guinean authorities have repeatedly committed to ensuring that members of the military armed forces would no longer be deployed to police demonstrations.

On 22 October, the Military Chief of Staff issued a statement reiterating that military officers are banned from carrying weapons out of their barracks and that members of the armed forces are not involved in policing demonstrations.

“The government should follow through on past commitments to stop using the military to police demonstrations,” said François Patuel.

“The risks of further human rights violations are too high for the authorities to continue with business as usual.”

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**ecoi.net summary:**

At least 18 people killed in crackdown on opposition protests since January 2018



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