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Trend Arrow ↑

Guinea received an upward trend arrow due to steady improvements in religious freedom, open and free private discussion, the activities of local and international nongovernmental organizations, and the climate for small businesses and private enterprise.

2013 Scores

Status: Partly Free
Freedom Rating: 5.0
Civil Liberties: 5
Political Rights: 5

Overview

The scheduling of Guinea's next legislative elections continued to be delayed throughout 2012, and no official date had been set by year's end. In September, the National Transitional Council, the country's interim parliament, approved new legislation governing the composition of the National Electoral Commission. While security forces continued to violently suppress demonstrations during the year,

small improvements were seen in the environment for nongovernmental organizations, religious groups, and private enterprise.

Guinea gained independence from France in 1958 and grew increasingly impoverished under the repressive, one-party rule of President Ahmed Sékou Touré. After Touré's death in 1984, a military junta led by Lieutenant Colonel Lansana Conté abolished all political parties and the constitution and began a program of economic liberalization.

Conté won the country's first multiparty presidential election in 1993 that international observers said was deeply flawed. Presidential and legislative elections over the next 12 years were similarly marred by serious irregularities and resulted in victories for Conté and the ruling party.

Security forces killed more than 130 people during nationwide antigovernment demonstrations in 2007, and martial law was declared. Conté died in December 2008, and Captain Moussa Dadis Camara quickly led a successful military coup, promising to hold elections in two years. Following signs that Camara might renege on a promise not to run in the 2010 presidential election, opposition forces organized a massive rally in September 2009. Security forces viciously suppressed the demonstration, killing more than 150 people and raping and beating hundreds of others. The international community condemned the crackdown and imposed sanctions on the regime. In December, the commander of the presidential guard shot and seriously injured Camara.

While Camara recuperated, his deputy, General Sékouba Konaté, became interim president and negotiated an accord with Camara that established conditions for the upcoming presidential election. Prodemocracy leader Jean-Marie Doré, who was named interim prime minister in January 2010, was charged with leading a power-sharing government and facilitating a return to civilian rule. The accord also created a broad-based, 155-member interim parliament, the National Transitional Council (CNT). In February 2010, the International Criminal Court (ICC) found that the September 2009 massacre was a crime against humanity, and called on Guinea to try the perpetrators or allow the ICC to do so.

After no candidate garnered more than 50 percent of the vote in the June 2013 presidential election, longtime opposition leader Alpha Condé of the Rally of the Guinean People (RPG) defeated former Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (UFDG), 52.5 percent to 47.5 percent, in the November runoff. Most domestic and international observers validated the election, and Diallo eventually accepted the results. Meanwhile, violence and voter

intimidation in Guinea's eastern region resulted in the displacement of thousands of ethnic Peul supporters of Diallo.

Condé had a fraught relationship with the military, parts of which had difficulty accepting their diminished status under a civilian government. In July 2011, former army officers led an unsuccessful assassination attempt; some 50 soldiers and civilians were arrested for the attack, including former members of Konaté's presidential guard.

Parliamentary elections scheduled for December 2011 were repeatedly postponed in 2011 and 2012 due to disagreements among political leaders over issues including the composition of the National Electoral Commission (CENI). In September 2012, the president of CENI resigned, and the CNT adopted a new law imposing seven-year term limits for CENI members and mandating that a specific number of members be from civil society – including the chairman – and the political opposition. Condé reshuffled his cabinet in October, dismissing the remaining members of the military serving in the government and creating the country's first cabinet post devoted to human rights issues. In December, CENI announced a timetable for holding the legislative elections in May 2013, though no official date had been set by year's end.

One person was killed during riots between the Peul and Malinké ethnic groups in Conakry in September. Tensions between the two groups have been high since the 2010 election, in which voting took place largely along ethnic lines, and Condé continued in 2012 to face accusations of awarding government posts to members of his ethnic Malinké group.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties

Guinea is not an electoral democracy. The president is elected by popular vote for up to two five-year terms. The legislature was dissolved in 2008, and replaced in 2010 by an appointed 155-member National Transitional Council. Legislative elections originally scheduled for December 29, 2011, have been postponed repeatedly; as of the end of 2012, no official date had been set. The 2010 constitution reinforces democratic rights, including explicitly outlining the legal status of the prime minister and establishing a number of bodies such as CENI, a national human rights body, and a constitutional court.

The main political parties are the RPG and the UFDG. There are more than 130 registered parties, most of which have clear ethnic or regional bases. In October 2012, 44 political parties merged with the RPG to form the RPG-Arc-en-Ciel coalition.

Corruption is a serious problem, and many government activities are shrouded in secrecy. Despite its rich natural resources – Guinea is the

world's largest exporter of bauxite, an aluminum ore – the majority of the population lives in poverty. In May 2012, nine government employees were arrested while attempting to embezzle approximately \$1.94 million from the Central Bank; they remained in detention at year's end. In November, treasury director Aissatou Boiro, who was investigating the Central Bank plot, was shot to death by unidentified men in uniform; two suspects were arrested in December. Guinea was ranked 154 out of 176 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2012 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The 2010 constitution guarantees media freedom. In June 2010, the CNT passed two new media laws, one of which decriminalized press offenses and more clearly defined defamation provisions, while the other provided for the creation of a new media regulatory body. These laws had not been implemented by the end of 2012. There are more than 200 newspapers in the country, though most have small circulations. While the state controls the national radio station and the only television broadcaster, there are more than 30 radio stations, including 16 community radio stations. In August, the government shut down private radio station Liberté FM, reportedly to prevent it from reporting on opposition-led protests in Conakry; it was allowed to resume broadcasting the following day after pressure from press freedom groups and opposition leaders. In December, a program on radio Planète FM was temporarily suspended by the National Communication Council, and a warning was issued to another station, Espace FM, due to what critics charged was the outspoken nature of political discussions on the two stations. Journalists were harassed and assaulted in 2012, including while covering public demonstrations. Due to the high illiteracy rate, most of the population accesses information via radio, while internet access remains limited to urban areas.

Religious rights are respected in practice, although there have been rare cases of discrimination against non-Muslims in government employment, as well as restrictions on Muslims' freedom to convert to other religions. Academic freedom has been hampered to some degree by government influence over hiring and curriculum content. Free private discussion, limited under previous authoritarian governments, continued to improve in 2012.

Respect for freedom of assembly is enshrined in the constitution but repressed in practice. In May and September 2012, security forces violently dispersed opposition supporters protesting ongoing delays in holding parliamentary elections, resulting in dozens of injuries and arrests. Security forces dispersed further protests in April and August with tear gas. In September, police fired tear gas at protestors calling for the departure of a South African company hired to redo the country's voter registry and which was regarded as potentially biased in favor of the Condé administration. Freedom of association is generally respected, and there were no reports of government harassment of human rights activists

in 2012. Although workers are allowed to form trade unions, strike, and bargain collectively, they must provide a 10-day notice before striking, and strikes are banned in broadly-defined essential services.

The judicial system demonstrated a modest degree of independence beginning in 2010. The government made modest efforts in 2012 to bring to justice perpetrators of human rights violations over the last several years. A panel of magistrates was empowered to investigate the September 2009 massacre, and Lieutenant-Colonel Moussa Tiégboro Camara and Colonel Abdoulaye Chérif Diaby were indicted in February and September, respectively, for their involvement. At year's end, Tiégboro continued as the head of an office to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, while Diaby remained in the country as a civilian. However, courts are severely understaffed and underfunded, and security forces continued to engage in arbitrary arrests, torture of detainees, and extrajudicial execution with impunity. Prison conditions remain harsh and sometimes life threatening.

A new centralized Agency for the Promotion of Private Investments was established in December 2011 to improve the country's business environment by making the registration process faster and less expensive. The agency continued to promote business reforms in 2012.

While the law prohibits discrimination based on race or ethnicity, discrimination by the country's three major ethnic groups – the Peuhl, Malinké, and Soussou – in employment and place of residence is common. Ethnic clashes between the Peul and the Malinké continued in 2012, including during the September riots.

Societal discrimination against women is common. While women have legal access to land, credit, and business, inheritance laws and the traditional justice system favor men. Rape and sexual harassment are prevalent but underreported due to fears of stigmatization. Security personnel openly raped over one hundred women during the 2007 and 2009 crackdowns. Advocacy groups are working to eradicate the illegal but nearly ubiquitous practice of female genital mutilation. Although the government made efforts to combat human trafficking in 2012, fewer than a quarter of those cases investigated were ultimately submitted to the courts.

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