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Amnesty International Report 2014/15

Republic of Guinea

Head of state: Alpha Condé

Head of government: Mohamed Said Fofana

One of the largest Ebola Virus Disease outbreaks since the virus was discovered in 1976 hit the country; many essential provisions remained lacking. Security forces regularly used excessive force against civilians. Journalists were subjected to intimidation. Concerns about poor and inhumane conditions of detention, and torture and other ill-treatment of detainees, were highlighted by the UN Committee against Torture and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). At the end of the year, a preliminary examination by the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC) remained open from 2009.

Background

One of the worst Ebola outbreaks emerged in Guinea, quickly spreading to neighbouring countries. By the end of the year, more than 1,700 people had died, including at least 70 health workers.

Legislative elections took place in September 2013 after repeated delays. Violence between members of opposing political parties erupted both before and after the elections. International observers reported voting irregularities. The Supreme Court validated the results nearly two months later, resulting in protests and allegations of fraud. Prime Minister Fofana was reappointed in January 2014 and a new government

was installed. The National Assembly convened for the first time in 2014 under President Kory Kondiano.

International scrutiny

The UN Committee against Torture and the OHCHR reviewed Guinea's human rights record. The OHCHR reported that detainees and prisoners were held in squalid and overcrowded facilities that fell far short of international standards. In some cases minors were detained with adults and there were no prisons specifically for women. The OHCHR also documented 11 cases of death in detention due to lack of medical care. The Committee raised concerns about recent cases of torture, as well as detention conditions, confessions extracted under torture, and impunity for perpetrators of torture.

Excessive use of force

Security forces (police and the gendarmerie) continued to use excessive force against civilians in the capital, Conakry, and other towns, as well as in the southeastern forest region of Guinée Forestière.

In March, security forces in Guinée Forestière dispersed a peaceful demonstration of women with tear gas, batons and gunshots. The women were protesting against the hiring policy of a palm oil and rubber production company.

Four people were reportedly shot dead in March during a demonstration in Diécké. They included a student, Mathieu Maomy. No investigation had been opened by the end of the year.

Torture and other ill-treatment

Torture and other ill-treatment were widespread in detention centres throughout 2013 and 2014, resulting in at least one death in custody. Security forces continued to act with impunity.

The UN Committee against Torture recommended in its Concluding Observations that Guinea should conduct thorough, independent and impartial investigations without delay into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment. In addition the Committee urged Guinea to eliminate the practice of female genital mutilation. The OHCHR documented cases of torture in the regions of Haute Guinée and Guinée Forestière, and urged the

government to adopt a law prohibiting torture and to investigate torture in detention facilities.

Deaths in custody

In February, Tafsir Sylla died in hospital from his injuries after being beaten by police while resisting arrest in Fria. He had been arrested along with three others for consuming Indian hemp. The following day, hundreds of people protested by attacking the police station, the mayor's office and the local prison, resulting in the escape of at least 20 prisoners.

Freedom of expression

There were continued restrictions on press freedom and journalists were targeted.

In September, police in Guinée Forestière confiscated the cameras of journalists and human rights defenders who were investigating the killings of eight men who had been attacked by the local population during an Ebola awareness campaign. The cameras were returned the following day with all the material deleted.

Impunity

Investigations continued into the massacre in the Grand Stade de Conakry on 28 September 2009, when security forces killed more than 100 peaceful demonstrators and injured at least 1,500 others. Dozens of women were raped and others disappeared. Moussa Dadis Camara, then head of the military junta, was questioned in Burkina Faso in July.

No progress was made towards bringing to trial gendarmes and police officers suspected of criminal responsibility for torturing detainees in 2011 and 2012. Between 2011 and the end of 2014, in Conakry and Fria, only seven officers were summoned to court by an investigating judge. They all failed to appear at their hearing, despite the legal obligation to do so.

International justice

Since 2009 Guinea has remained under preliminary investigation by the Prosecutor of the ICC for crimes committed on 28 September 2009 and in the aftermath of the massacre. The Office of the Prosecutor concluded that there were reasonable grounds

to believe that these amounted to crimes against humanity, including murder, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, persecution and enforced disappearances. A delegation from the Office of the Prosecutor visited Guinea in February 2014 and noted that investigations had advanced, but not sufficiently. In June, Sékouba Konaté, then Minister of Defence, submitted a list of suspects to the ICC Prosecutor.

Right to health – Ebola outbreak

Delayed responses by the government and the international community reportedly contributed to the rapid spread of the epidemic. Although Ebola response committees were eventually organized to co-ordinate provision of care and communication, many essential resources remained lacking.

In September, during an awareness-raising campaign by humanitarian workers in Womey, N'Zérékoré region, eight members of the delegation, including health workers, a journalist and members of a local radio station, were killed by villagers who suspected them of carrying the virus. Also in September, two members of the Guinean Red Cross were forced to flee the town of Forécariah when people threw rocks at their vehicle after the corpse of a woman which the health workers were carrying fell from a body bag.

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