

# Guinea: Rights at Risk as Promised Transition Derails

Crackdown on Opposition, Dissent, Media; Delayed Return to Constitutional Rule



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Poster of Gen. Mamady Doumbouya in Conakry's streets, Guinea, September 2024 © 2024 Human Rights Watch

- The military authorities in [Guinea](#) have cracked down on the opposition, media, and peaceful dissent, and have failed to keep their promises to restore civilian rule by December 2024.
- When Gen. Mamady Doumbouya overthrew his autocratic predecessor, Alpha Condé, he pledged to rebuild the state, respect human rights, and deliver justice. But his government has largely continued killing, intimidating, and silencing critics.
- Guinean authorities should respect people's right to demonstrate peacefully and express themselves freely; rein in the security forces and hold them to account.

(Nairobi) – The military authorities in [Guinea](#) have cracked down on the opposition, media, and peaceful dissent since taking power in a [September 2021 coup](#), and have failed to keep their promises to restore civilian rule by December 2024, Human Rights Watch said today.

Security forces have used excessive force, including tear gas and gunfire, to disperse those who defied the ongoing ban on protests imposed in May 2022 by the National Committee for Reconciliation and Development (Comité national du rassemblement et du développement, CNRD), the junta headed by Gen. Mamady Doumbouya. The crackdown has led to the death of dozens of protesters and other residents of Conakry, Guinea's capital, since January 2024. During the same period, the junta [suspended](#) at least six independent media outlets, arbitrarily [arrested](#) at least ten journalists, and [disappeared and allegedly tortured](#) two prominent political activists.

“When Gen. Mamady Doumbouya overthrew his autocratic predecessor, Alpha Condé, he pledged to rebuild the state, respect human rights, and deliver justice,” said [Ilaria Allegrozzi](#), senior Sahel researcher at Human Rights Watch. “Yet for the last two years, his government has largely carried on where Condé left off, killing, intimidating, and silencing critics, and torturing and disappearing those suspected of working with the political opposition.”

Human Rights Watch interviewed 30 people in person in Conakry, between September 22 and 28, including representatives of United Nations agencies and the international community, national and international human rights organizations, journalists, members of the political opposition, and victims of human rights abuses, and met with the Guinean minister of justice and human rights. From October 10 to 31, Human Rights Watch also interviewed by telephone 27 witnesses to rights abuses. Human Rights Watch reviewed government statements, and analyzed medical and forensic records, legal documents, photographs, and video footage shared directly with its researchers to corroborate victim and witness accounts.

Human Rights Watch wrote to the justice minister on November 5, sharing research findings and requesting responses to specific questions. The justice minister did not respond to Human Rights Watch.

The National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (Front national pour la défense de la Constitution, FNDC), a prominent coalition of Guinean civil society groups and opposition parties, has been [calling](#) for the restoration of democratic rule following the military coup. The coalition and Guinean human rights organizations consulted by Human Rights Watch said that up to 59 people, including at least 5 children, have died during protests since June 2022, mainly in Conakry. Some were protesters, while others were ordinary citizens who found themselves in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Human Rights Watch research indicates that security forces used lethal force leading to the deaths of at least nine people, including one woman and four children ages 9 to 17, during protests in Conakry between January and September 2024. Only one of them took part in the protests. Protesters also assaulted the police and gendarmes, throwing rocks and other objects, and blocked roads.

Human Rights Watch has extensively [documented](#) that while security force members have allegedly shot and [killed](#) dozens of demonstrators since 2019, authorities have consistently failed to investigate deaths and other abuses during political protests and prosecute those allegedly responsible. The [recently](#) concluded trial of crimes committed as part of the [September 28, 2009](#) massacre is an important step towards justice. Guinean human rights activists told Human Rights Watch, however, that it is important to ensure that the trial is not a one-time justice effort, but rather the beginning of further investigations and prosecutions for human rights abuses in the country.

Human Rights Watch has also documented enforced disappearances by the junta to silence dissent and the political opposition. On July 9, Guinean security forces [allegedly tortured and forcibly disappeared](#) Oumar Sylla, known as Foniké Menguè, and Mamadou Billo Bah, two prominent opposition members. Authorities [have not acknowledged](#) their detention or responded to their lawyer's requests for their whereabouts.

The military authorities have [jammed](#) and [suspended](#) media outlets, threatened, and arbitrarily [arrested](#) journalists.

On September 18, the foreign affairs minister, Morissanda Kouyaté, [announced](#) that, contrary to a 24-month transition timetable [agreed](#) between the junta and the regional bloc of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in December 2022, the presidential election would not take place at the end of 2024, but in 2025. Kouyaté confirmed that a referendum to adopt a new [Constitution](#) to replace [the transitional charter](#) and potentially pave the way for Doumbouya's participation in the presidential election would still be held at the end of 2024. However, at the time of publication, no date had yet been set for the promised referendum. Several CNRD and government members, including its spokesperson, Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, have publicly [expressed](#) their support for Doumbouya to run for president in the next election.

Members of the [opposition](#) and civil society have [raised](#) concerns about the absence of a clear electoral timeline and breaches of the transitional charter. On November 12, a coalition of Guinean opposition groups and civil society organizations, known as Living Forces of Guinea (Forces Vives de Guinée, FVG), [called](#) on the junta to leave by January 1, 2025, and for the return to constitutional rule.

A civil society activist told Human Rights Watch in September that “the junta’s increasing intolerance for the opposition and its broken promises to organize free and fair elections before the end of the year are a recipe for disaster,” and that “the government should stop the repression or risk escalating an already tense political environment, leading to violence.”

On October 29, the territorial administration and decentralization minister [dissolved](#) 53 political parties, suspended 54 others for 3 months, and placed 67 more under observation, giving them 3 months to provide the ministry with required information. The decision came after the publication of a “political parties’ evaluation” report by the minister citing non-compliance with the law, including parties’ lack of valid licenses and transparent financial accounts.

Among the parties under observation are three prominent opposition parties, including the Rally of the Guinean People (Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée, RPG) headed by former president Condé, the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée, UFDG) headed by Cellou Dalein Diallo, and the Union of republican forces (Union des forces républicaines, UFR) headed by former Prime Minister Sidya Touré. The opposition [contends](#) that the decision aims at excluding key political figures from the elections.

As Guinea is a party to the [African Union Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance](#), the authorities should cease targeting opposition politicians and civil society activists, and ensure a swift return to democratic rule, Human Rights Watch said.

The [Guidelines for the Policing of Assemblies by Law Enforcement Officials in Africa](#) of the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, and the [UN Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials](#) provide that law enforcement officers may use force only when strictly necessary and to the extent required to achieve a legitimate policing objective.

“As the transition period comes to an end and the risk of unrest grows, Guinean authorities should respect people’s right to demonstrate peacefully and express themselves freely,” Allegrozzi said. “They should also rein in the security forces, investigate those implicated in present and past abuses, and hold them to account, while political leaders should instruct their supporters to refrain from using violence.”

**For further details and accounts from witnesses, please see below.**

## **Excessive Use of Force in 2024**

### *January*

On January 8, at around noon, security forces used tear gas and gunfire to disperse people who had gathered in Conakry’s Hamdallaye neighborhood to protest power cuts. They injured Amadou Oury Diallo, a 17-year-old student, who died of his injuries on January 11. Relatives and witnesses said Diallo was not among the protesters.

“There were dozens of young people, some were violent and threw rocks at the gendarmes,” said a witness. “Then, I heard gunfire and saw the crowd dispersing.”

“He was unconscious,” said the victim’s relative, 31, who rushed to the Sino-Guinean hospital where Diallo was taken for surgery the same day. “The doctor told me that he received a bullet right in the head.”

Human Rights Watch reviewed Diallo’s medical records, a January 12 letter from a family member seeking the return of Diallo’s body, and his death certificate issued by the hospital.

On January 9, at about 5 p.m., gendarmes also shot Amadou Korka Diallo (hereafter Korka), 18, and injured another young man, who Human Rights Watch interviewed, during an opposition-led protest against fuel shortages in Conakry’s Hamdallaye neighborhood.

The injured man said:

*The protest was almost over, but there were still some 30 to 50 young people facing the security forces. A gendarmerie pick-up stopped by the roadside, a gendarme got out and shot Korka. Gendarmes also fired tear gas to prevent us from rescuing him. Then, the gendarme shot two more times, one of the bullets hit me in the right arm.*

Human Rights Watch analyzed and geolocated a 13-second video sent directly to researchers. The video shows a gendarmerie pick-up truck stopping at the end of a street. Korka is lying on the ground, propping himself up on one arm, approximately 40 meters away from the pick-up truck. Moments later, a canister can be seen arcing through the air from the direction of the pick-up truck over Korka’s head. It lands on the ground between Korka and the person filming and releases smoke consistent with tear gas. As the truck drives off, a gunshot can be heard and Korka immediately falls to the ground. Human Rights Watch also analyzed another 9-second video showing people carrying Korka, who is bleeding.





[Click to expand Image](#)

Screenshots taken from a 13-second video shows a gendarmerie pick-up truck near Amadou Korka Diallo. A few seconds later a canister is deployed from the direction of the truck, landing near Korka and smoke consistent with tear gas is released. At the end of the video, a gunshot is heard and Korka falls to the ground. © Screenshots: Source: Private (2024)

One of Korka's relatives said:

*He was shot twice, in the abdomen and in the chest. He was first taken to a small health center, but the doctor advised taking him to Jean Paul II hospital. From there he was taken to Donka hospital, where he died.*

Human Rights Watch reviewed two photographs showing Korka's gunshot wound in the abdomen, consistent with witness accounts, a photograph of Korka's body at the morgue, and Korka's medical records and death certificate, stating that he died a "violent death by firearm," at 7.55 p.m. on January 9, 2024.

*February*

On February 19, at about 1 p.m., security forces used force, including tear gas and gunfire, to disperse people who had gathered in Conakry's Nassouroulaye neighborhood to protest power cuts, killing Mamadou Alhadji Diallo, 30. "Uniformed men dressed in blue, most likely gendarmes, were confronting youth who threw stones at them," said a witness. "Diallo was there to calm down the youth when security forces fired. I heard two gunshots, the second one hit Diallo in the head." National media also [reported](#) Diallo's death.

The same day, between 3 and 4 p.m., gendarmes opened fire on protesters throwing rocks at them and at other people in Conakry's Hamdallaye neighborhood, killing Abdoulaye Djibril Diallo (hereafter Djibril), 16, and injuring another boy, also 16, who Human Rights Watch interviewed.

The injured boy said:

*We were there to see what was going on, when gendarmes inside a pick-up truck started shooting. I was hit in the right foot ... and Djibril [was hit] in the chest.*

Human Rights Watch spoke to another witness, a family member of the victim, and reviewed a photograph showing Djibril's body and the gunshot wound, consistent with the witness' accounts. On February 24, the United Nations agency for children (UNICEF) [issued](#) a communiqué deploring Djibril's death, exhorting "all parties to protect children" during demonstrations, and calling on authorities to identify and punish those responsible for his death.

On February 26, as several unions in Guinea had called for a general strike starting the same day to protest the arbitrary detention of Sékou Jamal Pendessa, a prominent media freedom activist and the secretary-general of the Union of Press Professionals of Guinea (Syndicat des professionnels de la presse de Guinée), people took to the streets in several neighborhoods in Conakry, throwing rocks at security forces and blocking roads. [National](#) and [international](#) media reported that two people died and more than a dozen were [injured](#). Human Rights Watch documented the death of Ibrahima Toure, 19, and Mamady Keita, 17, who were not protesting, respectively in Conakry's Hamdallaye and Sonfonia neighborhoods.

An 18-year-old man who witnessed the incident involving Toure said:

*It was between 10 and 11 a.m. when Toure and I arrived in Hamdallaye together.... Toure said he needed to buy soap and would soon come back. I stopped near the Hamdallaye pharmacy where a gendarmerie pick-up was stationed, and some 20 angry youth were throwing rocks at the gendarmes. I knew some of these young people and I intervened, I told them to stop because it could turn bad, but they continued. Sometime later, a pick-up truck with gendarmes coming from Bambeto's neighborhood drove toward us and gendarmes started shooting. It was by this time that Toure was coming back and was shot. [...] I attempted to rescue him, but a gendarme who was close to me said: 'If you move, I'll shoot.'*

Human Rights Watch reviewed a February 29 autopsy report, which stated that Toure died following “a hemorrhagic shock” caused by a gunshot wound. National media also [reported](#) Toure's death.

A 25-year-old man who witnessed Keita's death, the same day, said:

*Police and gendarmes were deployed on the main road, where youths were protesting [...], but a pick-up truck of the gendarmerie entered the neighborhood, and they started shooting. There were four to five gunshots. Mamady was hit. I rushed to help him, and with other people we took him to a local health center. But the case was too serious, so we attempted to transfer him to Donka hospital, but he died on the way.*

“I saw the body at the hospital,” a relative of Keita said. “The bullet hit him in the back and passed through the thorax.”

REPUBLIQUE DE GUINEE  
MINISTERE DE LA SANTE ET DE L'HYG  
CENTRE HOSPITALO - UNIVERSITAIRE

HOPITAL NATIONAL D  
DECLARATION DE D

N° ..... 525

SERVICE DE: ..... Urgen

Mr ou Mme : ..... F. F. F.

Fils (le) de : .....

Et de .....

Profession : ..... E. E. E.

S/P DE : ....., Préfecture

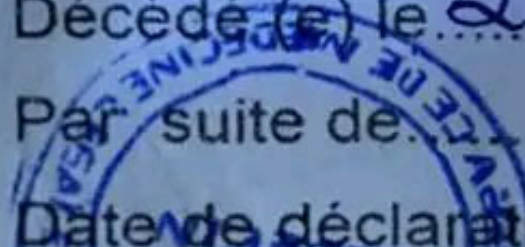
Quartier : ..... Sonjour, Commune

Entré (e) à l'Hôpital le : ..... 26/02

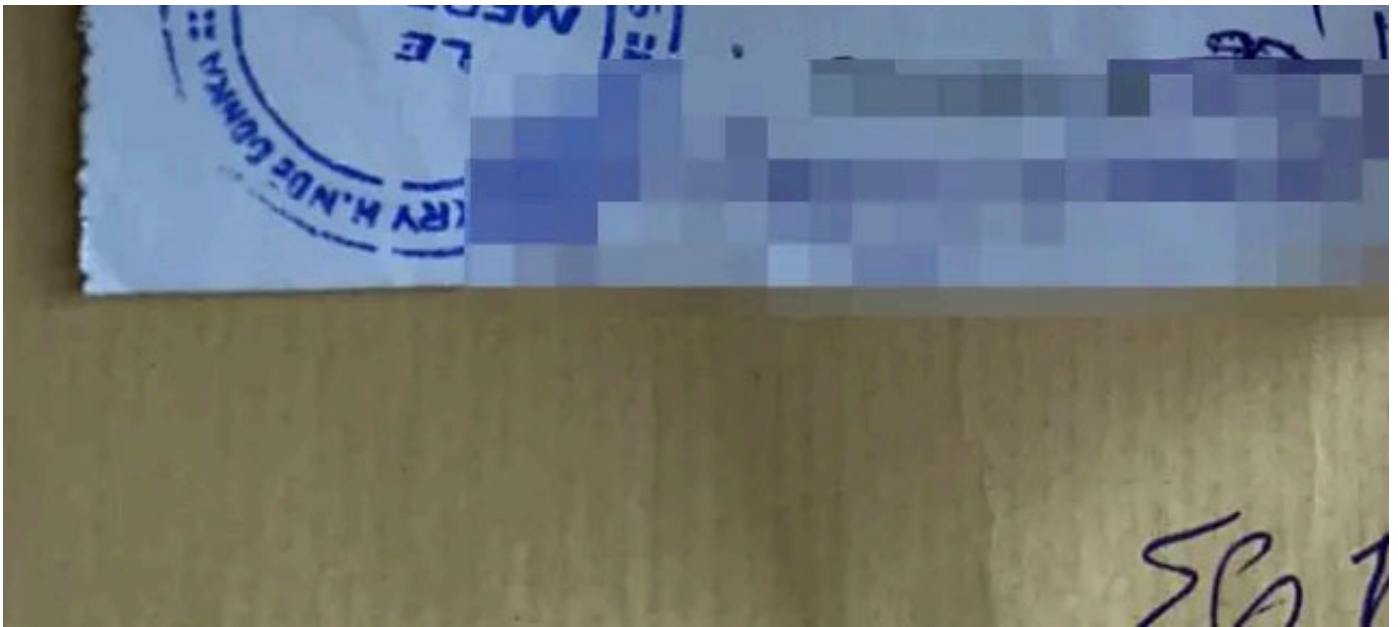
Décédé (e) le : ..... 26/02/24 à

Par suite de : ..... Mort violent

Date de déclaration : ..... 26/02







[Click to expand Image](#)

Mamady Keïta's death certificate indicating he died a "violent death." Keïta died following a union-led demonstration on September 26, 2024, in Conakry's Sonfonia neighborhood, during which security forces used excessive force. © 2024 Private

Human Rights Watch reviewed a March 1 court document asking hospital staff to return Keïta's body to his family, as well as Keïta's death certificate, issued by the hospital, stating he died of a "violent death." International media also [reported](#) Keïta's death.

#### July

On July 30, at about 4 p.m., a policeman shot Mamadou Baïlo Diallo, 27, in the head, in Conakry's Koloma neighborhood. Two witnesses and a relative of the victim said that security forces were heavily deployed across the capital that day because of civil society-led demonstrations to protest the disappearances of FNDC political activists Foniké Menguè and Mamadou Billo Bah, but that Diallo was not among the protesters.

A 25-year-old witness said:

*We were not taking part in the protests. [...] A policeman came out of nowhere and when we saw him, we instinctively ran away, so he shot at us, at less than 20 meters, and hit Baïlo, who fell. I kept running. When the policeman left, I turned around, I looked for a biker to rescue Baïlo, and we took him to the Sino-Guinean hospital around 4 p.m. [...] He was already dead. The bullet had hit him in the back of the neck [...] The body was later taken to the morgue of the Ignace Deen hospital.*

Human Rights Watch reviewed a photograph of Diallo's gunshot wound, consistent with witness accounts. On July 31, Cécé Roger Kolie, the deputy prosecutor of Conakry's Dixinn first instance court, requested an autopsy to determine the cause of his death described as "suspicious death by firearm." Guinean media also [reported](#) on Diallo's death.

#### August

On August 15, security forces used lethal force to disperse people who had gathered in Conakry's Sonfonia neighborhood to protest power cuts. Ibrahima Sadio Diallo, 9, was hit by a bullet and died on the spot. Human Rights Watch was not able to speak with any witness to his death but reviewed [media reports](#) about the incident and spoke to the victim's relatives, who saw the body.

A family member of the victim said:

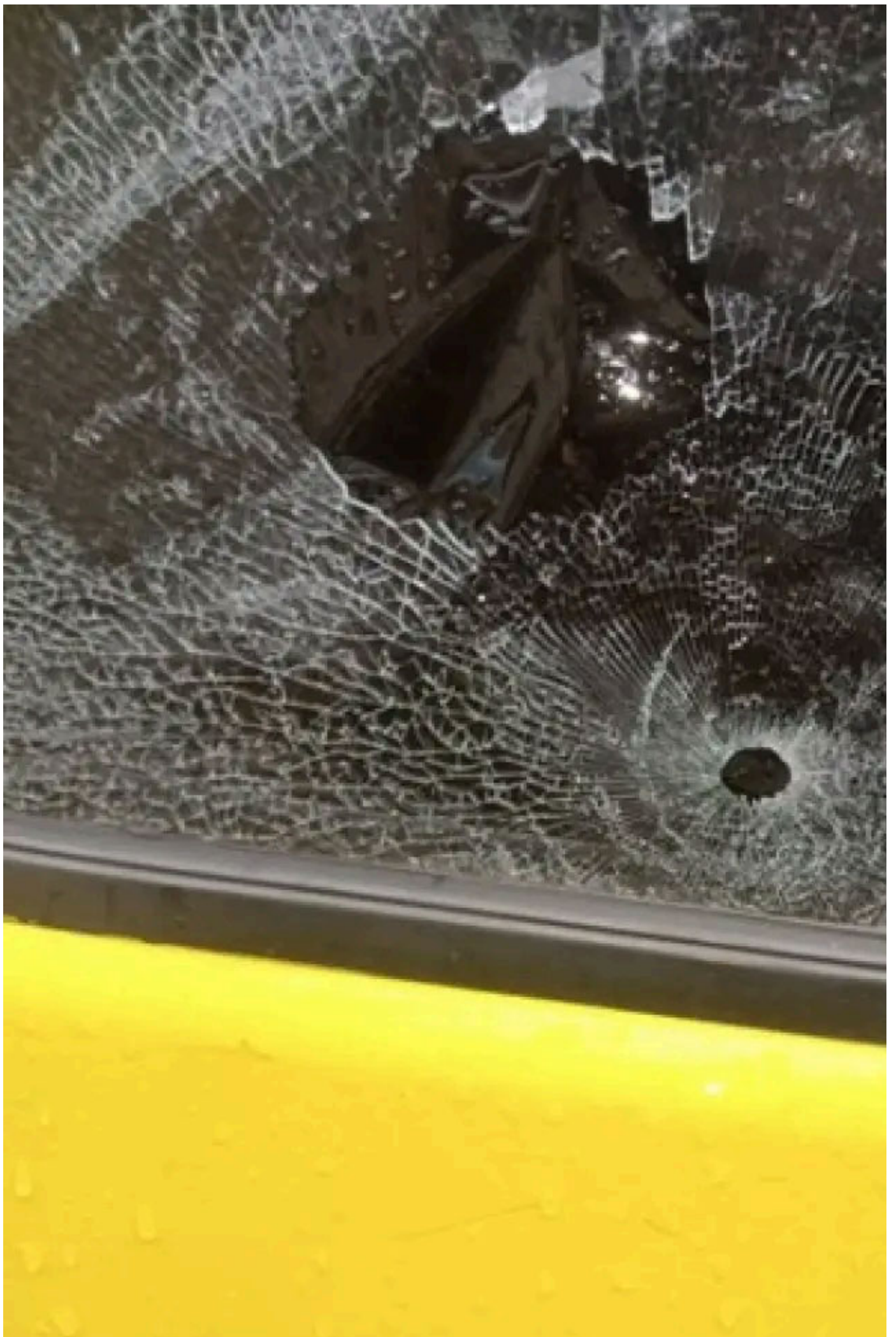
*He was returning from Koranic school at about 5 p.m., when the security forces opened fire, according to those who saw what happened. He was taken to a local health center, but he was already dead. I went into the health center, saw the body, and the bullet wound in the head [...] We buried him the next day.*

#### September

On September 4, at around noon, Aissatou Traore, a 35-year-old mother of four who was in the back seat of a taxi, was lethally hit by a live bullet allegedly fired by Guinean security forces at T8 roundabout in Conakry's Sonfonia neighborhood. [National media](#) and the victim's relatives said that security forces were deployed in Sonfonia to disperse protesters who had responded to a call by the [Living Forces of Guinea](#), a coalition of civil society actors and political parties, to take to the streets to end the political transition.

A friend of the victim said:

*I rushed to the scene, shortly after Aissatou had been shot. When I arrived at T8, I noticed a heavy deployment of security forces, there were gendarmes, policemen, and soldiers. But ... she had already been taken to a local health center [...] I went there, and she had died. I identified the body.*





[Click to expand Image](#)

*Photo of the broken window of the taxi where Aissatou Traore was shot, in Conakry's Sonfonia neighborhood, September 4, 2024. © 2024 Private*

Human Rights Watch reviewed two photographs showing the taxi window destroyed by the bullet, five photographs showing Traore's wound, consistent with witness accounts and medical records, and a 1-minute and 16 second video showing medical staff explaining that the bullet hit Traore's right shoulder blade, went through her rib cage, and exited before entering her left arm.

Human Rights Watch also reviewed a September 13 document signed by deputy prosecutor Kadiatou Rolou Guilao asking Traore's family to bury the body. The document cites a report by forensic doctor Hassane Bah, who carried out an autopsy of Traore's body, describing her wounds.

### **Lack of Accountability for Security Forces Violence During Protests**

Among the families of the nine victims whose cases Human Rights Watch documented, only the family of Aissatou Traore filed a complaint. Some said they do not trust the Guinean judicial system, others that they feared reprisals.

"When we went to the court to request the authorization to bury the body, they told us to never file a complaint," said a close friend of one of the victims. "They said that all [the families of] those killed on the Hamdallaye road should never file a complaint."

"A complaint? Well, the family didn't want to," said a friend of one of the victims. "It's not that we didn't want to do that, but before which authority?" asked the family. "We do not trust the justice [system]. As soon as you file a complaint, you are automatically threatened ... as soon as you dare to denounce, the junta erases you."

In its November 5 letter, Human Rights Watch asked the authorities whether there were investigations into security forces members involved in human rights violations since 2021, including those documented in this report. The authorities did not respond to the letter.

Traore's family reported the crime to the prosecutor of the Dubreka first instance court in Conakry, on September 5. The same day, speaking to the media, Prime Minister Bah Oury [condemned](#) "the fact that yesterday a lady was hit by a bullet at the T8," and noted that "two weeks ago, a child in the same area was hit by a bullet." He [added](#) that "We cannot tolerate that every time, in the context of maintaining order, there are deaths. Investigations must be pursued without complacency. Justice must be carried out to the end." However, three months later, there has been no progress in the investigation of Traore's death, the victim's relatives said.

"Here there is no investigation," said a friend of Traore. "Our leaders glorify the crimes; they don't want to make heads fall so they prefer to side with the perpetrators rather than with the victims."

### **Positive Steps Towards Accountability**

Human Rights Watch has reported on the recently concluded [trial](#) in Conakry of crimes during the [massacre of September 28, 2009](#), when security forces killed more than 150 peaceful demonstrators and raped scores of women. The Guinean court [convicted](#) eight people, including the former self-proclaimed president, Moussa Dadis Camara, of crimes against humanity, acquitted four others, and ordered reparations. The verdict has been appealed, and proceedings remain pending against other individuals accused of involvement.

### **Enforced Disappearances**

During a meeting with Human Rights Watch in Conakry on September 26, the justice minister said that "a new wind is blowing in the country," since the CNRD took power, that "politically motivated arrests have decreased by 60 percent compared to 2021," that "authorities have the attention and vision over the human rights question in the country," and that allegations of disappearances of the two FNDC political opponents "remain a mystery to us."

About two months after the disappearance of the two FNDC activists, on September 25, the body of Col. Celestin Bilivogui, who had [disappeared](#) in November 2023 after security forces arrested him at his office in Conakry, was [presented](#) to his wife at the morgue of the Ignace Deen hospital in Conakry. Days after his disappearance, Doumbouya [issued](#) a decree dismissing Bilivogui from the army for "gross misconduct." The decree did not provide other reasons for the dismissal, but [media](#) reported that it was linked to the November 4, 2023 prison [break](#) of Col. Claude Pivi who had been [charged](#) with complicity in murder, rape, and torture, among others in the trial for the [2009 stadium massacre](#). According to Pivi's lawyers, the Guinean security forces arbitrarily arrested and detained his spouse after his prison break. She was [released](#) about ten months later, on September 23, without charges when Pivi was [apprehended](#) and returned to custody.

### **Crackdown on Media and Journalists**

The junta has severely restricted media freedom. The military authorities have [jammed](#) and suspended media outlets, threatened, and arbitrarily arrested journalists, many of whom said they are self-censoring amid fear of reprisals. "I can't say what I think anymore. I can't report freely," said a journalist at a national news website called Guinée Matin. "Journalists feel like they have a burden of lead on their shoulders. It's like being in prison."



On May 21, the authorities [withdrew](#) the licenses of four private radio stations and two private TV channels known for their outspoken reporting, for “non-compliance with the content of their specifications.”

“They want to break the opposition,” a member of an international organization in Guinea told Human Rights Watch. “By suspending the activities of these media outlets, the junta is depriving the opposition of its ability to mobilize, rally its supporters, and circulate its messages.”

On January 18, ahead of a press union-led protest against the [jamming](#) of several radio stations in November 2023, as well as the [suspension](#) of three TV channels in December 2023, security forces besieged the House of the Press (Maison de la presse), an independent media organization in Conakry, trapping at least 30 journalists inside for several hours, and arrested at least nine other journalists. The nine were released that evening without charges.

The same day, security forces arbitrarily [arrested](#) Pendessa. After three days of detention at a gendarmerie post, Pendessa was presented before a court in Conakry, and [charged](#) with “unlawful participation in public demonstration and disturbing public order.” On February 23, he was [sentenced](#) to six months in prison, of which three were on parole, and his lawyers filed an appeal after which the sentence was reduced to one month.

“My time in detention was tough,” Pendessa, who was held at the Conakry central prison, told Human Rights Watch. “I was in a room with up to 87 people, we slept on the floor, one mattress for two people, head to foot, in deplorable hygiene conditions.”

Pendessa was [released](#) on February 28.