

URGENT ACTION

OPPOSITION ACTIVISTS ARRESTED AHEAD OF ELECTION

Several opposition figures in Guinea have been arbitrarily arrested ahead of the 11 October presidential elections. This includes union leader Jean Dougou Guilavogui and at least 35 other political opponents, who were arrested following a violent episode in Koundara, northern Guinea. Some of the detainees were not involved in the violence and actively called for peace.

Jean Dougou Guilavogui, a union leader and retired member of the armed forces, was arrested in Conakry on 19 September and detained without being brought before judicial authorities until his indictment on 25 September. His extended detention is contrary to international and Guinean law. While in their custody, police officers openly questioned his union involvement and the public support he gave to an opposition party. On 29 September, a criminal investigation was opened against him for contempt to the Head of State and to the army. Amnesty International considers him a prisoner of conscience since he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression. Jean Dougou Guilavogui suffers from a heart condition and has not had access to adequate medical treatment during his time in detention.

At least **35 opposition activists** were also arrested on 20 September, following clashes between opposition militants, Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea (Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée, UFDG) and supporters of the party in power, Rally of the Guinean People (Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée, RPG), in the town of Koundara in northern Guinea. Two houses were looted and burned and several people were injured, including a 15-year-old child who was hit by a stone in the eye. According to testimonies collected by Amnesty International, several of those arrested did not take part in the violence and called upon the rest of the activists to remain calm. The opposition members were charged with arson, destruction of public buildings and intentional injury, and are being held at the central prison in Boké, located some 250 km from their place of arrest, far from their families, and without access to lawyers. Some of them, suffering from illnesses, do not have access to the medical treatment they need.

Please write immediately in French, English or your own language:

- Calling on the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release Jean Dougou Guilavogui as he is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for exercising his right to freedom of expression, and the opposition activists arrested in Koundara who did not use nor advocate violence;
- Urging them to immediately ensure that all of those detained are provided with appropriate medical treatment and care, in accordance with their wishes;
- Reminding them that they must guarantee the human rights of all, regardless of their political opinions, and protect against arbitrary arrests in the pre-electoral period and thereafter, including by repealing the provisions of the penal code which criminalize defamation and contempt to the President of the Republic and to public officials.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 17 NOVEMBER 2015 TO:

President of the Republic of Guinea:

Alpha Condé
Présidence de la République
Conakry, Guinée
Email: info@presidence.gov.gn
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice

M. Cheick Sako
Ministère de la Justice
BP 06, Conakry, Guinée
Email: gouvgn@gmail.com
Salutation: Dear Minister

And copies to:

Minister of Human Rights and Public Freedoms
Kalifa Gassama Diaby
Ministères des Droits de l'Homme et des Libertés Publiques
BP 564, Conakry, Guinée
Email: gouvgn@gmail.com

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Just days before national elections in Guinea, the rights to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly are under serious threat. Presidential elections are due to be held on 11 October, and local elections in 2016.

Since the announcement of the electoral calendar in March, at least six people have died and hundreds have been wounded, including members of the police force and the gendarmerie, during clashes between protestors and security forces linked to upcoming elections in Conakry and other cities. According to information obtained by Amnesty International, approximately 357 people have died and thousands have been wounded during demonstrations over the last decade in Guinea.

On 2 June, a bill on maintaining public order was passed by the National Assembly, defining how and when force can and cannot be used to police protests. While welcoming measures to define the roles and responsibilities of Guinea's security forces, Amnesty International warned that the new law – still to be approved by the President – contains significant gaps that could result in the right to peaceful assembly not being fully respected, protected and fulfilled. Crucially, the law would not allow for spontaneous assemblies, while security forces also retain powers to disperse groups of otherwise peaceful protestors if just one person is believed to be carrying or concealing a weapon. However, such clauses could still be used as grounds for banning or repressing peaceful protest.

The National Assembly also passed a separate bill in the same session on 2 June, approving measures that would introduce penalties of up to five years' imprisonment and hefty fines for insulting, slandering, offending or publishing 'false news' about the President and other public officials. These measures are a wholly unjustified restriction of freedom of expression that could be used to criminalize dissent and the President must refuse to assent to this law.

On 1 June the High Communication Authority, the media regulatory body of Guinea, delivered decision N°08/SC/P banning certain journalistic genres, including chronicles and editorials, until the conclusion of the electoral process, a clear violation of the right to freedom of expression. Following the mobilization of Guinean media organizations, the High Communication Authority clarified in a statement dated 4 June that the decision was to be read as an invitation to "demonstrate professionalism and responsibility" in the use of chronicles, commentaries and other journalistic genres.

Eight candidates, including the outgoing President, are campaigning in the presidential election on 11 October 2015 in Guinea. In a report published last month, Amnesty International called upon political stakeholders and security forces to fully respect the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to ensure that excessive force is not used against protestors and other citizens during the election period and thereafter (for more information, see: *Guinea: Preventing the excessive use of force and respecting freedom of peaceful assembly in the run-up to the 2015 elections and beyond – A call to action*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr29/2160/2015/en/>).

Name: Jean Dougou Guilavogui and at least 35 other opposition activists
Gender m/f: m

UA: 221/15 Index: AFR 29/2604/2015 Issue Date: 6 October 2015