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Guinea security forces used 'excessive force' in election protests

Amnesty International calls on the Guinean authorities to investigate reports that police used excessive force to quell election protests in the capital Conakry during the past week, leaving one person dead, about 60 injured and more than 100 detained.

Government forces intervened in demonstrations by supporters of rival political parties after the country's presidential run-off was postponed for the third time on Friday. Security forces fired indiscriminately at unarmed civilians, beat protesters and ransacked homes.

"This ruthless and reckless reaction to the protests is the latest example of violence by Guinea's security forces, whose brutality habitually goes unpunished," said Gaëtan Mootoo, Amnesty International's Guinea researcher.

"The authorities must investigate reports of torture and ill-treatment by its forces and charge or release all those detained, while ensuring that no more lives are claimed by the police's heavy-handedness as the uncertainty over elections continues."

Amnesty International understands that at least 15 people were shot by security forces. One person, Ibrahim Khalil Bangourah, is confirmed to have died as a result of his injuries.

Former prime minister Cellou Dalein Diallo, who took 43% of votes in the first round of the election in June, takes on opposition leader Alpha Condé, who won 18% of the vote, in the presidential run-off.

However, the final round of the election - set to be the country's first democratic poll after 52 years of authoritarian rule - has now been delayed three times due to what the country's electoral commission termed "technical difficulties"; reportedly a lack of voting facilities.

The latest cancellation sparked two days of clashes between followers of Conde and Diallo, although calm appeared to be restored by Sunday as a government ban on demonstrations was observed by party supporters.

Eyewitnesses told Amnesty International that police had undressed and beaten several protesters in clashes across Conakry.

"I was sitting and eating with my relatives when the security forces arrived in the yard, threw away the plates and beat us - three of us were taken to the police station," one released detainee told Amnesty International.

Prominent human rights activist Aliou Barry, president of the Observatory for the Defence of Human Rights, was beaten after trying to speak out against the beatings of other protesters on Saturday.

Amnesty International has called for reform of Guinea's security forces for years, especially since the

“Bloody Monday” massacre of 28 September 2009. On that day and in the following days, security forces killed more than 150 people and raped more than 40 women during and following protests against the decision by the head of state, Dadis Camara, to stand in the presidential elections.

More than 1,500 people were wounded and many people went missing or were detained. Many perpetrators of the massacre remain in positions of authority, protected from prosecution.

Since 2004, arms or training have been provided to Guinea's security forces from China, France, Germany, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa and the USA.