

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
PRESS RELEASE**

AI Index: PRE 01/352/2009
08 October 2009

Guinea: Call for suspension of military and police weapons transfers

Amnesty International today called on all states to suspend international supplies of military and police weaponry, munitions and other equipment that could be used to commit human rights violations by Guinean security forces.

The organisation is also calling for an international commission of inquiry to investigate the human rights violations carried out last week in Conakry, in which more than 150 people are thought to have been killed.

“The transfer of such supplies should stop until the Guinean government has taken steps to prevent these violations from recurring, and has brought to justice those responsible for the brutal attacks last week,” said Erwin van der Borgh, Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme.

The call came as new information emerges about international supplies of South African and French weapons and equipment used by Guinean police and security forces during the past week.

On 6 October Amnesty International raised the issue of irresponsible arms supplies to Guinea at a meeting in the United Nations for delegates of the UN General Assembly. Brian Wood, Amnesty International's Control Arms Manager, said: “Arms transfers of the kind we see used for grave human rights violations in Guinea and elsewhere could all be prevented if the UN negotiations can establish an effective Arms Trade Treaty, with a legally-binding human rights risk assessment rule.”

Amnesty International is calling on this month's UN General Assembly to begin without delay a process of formal negotiations for an international Arms Trade Treaty with a strong rule on human rights. Press photos of Guinean police officers taken in Conakry on 1 October show them carrying what appear to be 56mm 'Cougar' grenade launchers.

These grenade launchers, made in France, are designed to fire tear gas and kinetic impact grenades also produced by the same French manufacturer.

Guinean security forces were also photographed on 1 October patrolling Conakry in a Mamba armoured personnel carrier (APC). Ten Mamba APCs were sold to Guinea in 2003 by a South Africa-based subsidiary of a UK company, whose spokesperson stated at that time that these vehicles would be used for “border control” in Guinea. Amnesty International has documented the use of Mamba vehicles in Conakry in January 2007 to drive into crowds of peaceful demonstrators while firing at them.

Amnesty International has received information from the French government in the last week indicating that it has authorised the supply of tear gas and other anti-riot grenades to Guinean security forces in recent years, despite Guinean security forces having used these kinds of munitions in persistent serious human rights

violations since 1998. Demonstrators and eyewitnesses described to Amnesty International the use of tear gas grenades, alongside live small arms ammunition, against demonstrators gathered in Conakry stadium on 28 September..

France exported 500 unspecified anti-riot grenades to the Guinean Ministry of Interior during 2006, and in 2008 issued a further pre-export authorisation [agrément préalable] for the sale to the Guinean Ministry of Interior of stun grenades and 56mm GM-2L tear gas grenades, specifically designed for the launchers seen with Guinean security forces in recent days.

It is not known whether this latest sale has yet received final export authorisation. On 29 September, the French government announced the suspension of military cooperation with Guinea. Amnesty International welcomes this suspension, and urges France and other states to ensure that the suspension includes the supply of military and police weapons, munitions and equipment.

“These kinds of munitions have been persistently used in serious human rights violations – including unlawful killings, the grossly excessive use of force, and sexual violence – during a decade of violent repression by Guinean security forces,” said Erwin van der Borgh.

Notes to editors:

- Limited information exists about supplies of small arms ammunition to Guinea's security forces. Markings of spent small arms ammunition cartridges recovered in Guinea in December 2007 indicate that they were produced in China (in 1994), in the USA (in 1977), and in Russia (in 1975 and 1978). Their supply routes to Guinea are unknown.
- France, Portugal and Spain have reported to the UN 'COMTRADE' Customs database that between 2006 and 2008 they made over \$5 million of exports to Guinea in commodity categories covering ammunition and cartridges. It is difficult, however, to verify this data; or to determine from this data alone what kinds of ammunition have been exported, and to which end-users (either private or governmental). France has insisted that it has not authorised the supply of 'lethal' ammunition to Guinea since 2004.

-