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Guinea: Evidence of new arrests, harassment and illegal detentions by security forces

Guinea's security forces are continuing to arrest and harass activists and others, following a massacre during a political protest on 28 September, Amnesty International found during a recent visit to Guinea.

Mouctar Diallo, vice-president of Guinea's national human rights commission, was arrested on Thursday 26 November. Amnesty International discovered that Diallo is being detained in military Camp Alpha Yaya, for "endangering the security of the state".

The Amnesty International delegation, that returned from Guinea on Tuesday, also found cases of over 40 people who attended the rally and whose whereabouts are still unknown. This includes dead bodies that were identified in photographs and film footage taken at the stadium but were not subsequently found at any of Conakry's hospitals, morgues, mosques or military camps including Camp Alpha Yaya Diallo.

The whereabouts of others who attended the rally is now unknown. Amnesty International fears that they may have been killed or subjected to enforced disappearance.

The official death toll from the protest at Conakry's stadium is given as 58 people but human rights organizations report that at least 157 people died.

Amnesty International has also uncovered fresh evidence about disturbing levels of sexual violence during the massacre.

Over 30 women told Amnesty International they were raped during the events of 28 September. Medical records gathered from Conakry's Donka hospital indicate that at least 32 female participants in the rally showed evidence of being raped.

One woman recalled seeing her friend attacked by five members of the 'red berets' – the Presidential Guard: "They ripped off her clothes with a bayonet, pinned her to the ground and raped her. They then fired a bullet into her vagina."

Several women interviewed by the delegation said they had been arrested by "red berets" soldiers at the demonstration and then held for over five days, during which time they were drugged, beaten and repeatedly raped while being filmed with mobile telephones.

"A climate of fear continues in Guinea. The authorities can no longer turn a blind eye to the human rights violations committed by its security forces," said Gaetan Mootoo of Amnesty International.

“The authorities must fully support the efforts of the UN’s International Commission of Inquiry and ensure the perpetrators of these crimes are brought to justice.”

Amnesty international discovered that the security forces are also clamping down on any potential internal dissent within the military.

The delegation learned that eight military officers have been arrested since the events of 28 September and remain in detention on Ile de Kassa, an island outside of Conakry.

International military assistance

Amnesty International has gathered information about international military assistance and training provided to specific units of Guinea's regular military and security forces involved in the 28 September violence, and is concerned that such assistance may have ignored and failed to address the past human violations committed by these units.

The assistance includes combat training provided by the government of China since at least 2006 to members of battalions within the Presidential Guard. Technical assistance in the training and organisation of up to 4000 new recruits of the Gendarmerie Nationale was also provided since 2008 by the government of France. Members of both the “red berets” and Gendarmerie Nationale units were present at Conakry stadium on 28 September. France has suspended military cooperation with Guinea since 28 September.

Amnesty International also saw 60 Kalashnikov-type cartridge cases gathered from Conakry stadium and two other locations in Conakry – in Kosa and Ratoma - following the 28 September violence. Nearly 20 per cent of these appear to have been manufactured in 2006 and 2008, indicating recent ammunition supplies to Guinea’s security forces despite repeated unlawful killings and the excessive use of force since 1998.

“The 28 September massacre and its aftermath is the latest example of a decade-long record of human rights violations by the security forces.” said Gaetan Mootoo. “Governments must immediately stop any support given to the Guinea security forces that could facilitate further violations.”

Amnesty International has also learned that the Guinean government has recently approached the government of Morocco for assistance in restructuring their armed forces. Any programme of security sector reform must be transparent and address impunity for past violations and operationalize human rights law.

Training camps for militia group members

The delegation found evidence of militia groups operating alongside governments forces but outside formal military and police structures. Many demonstrators present at the stadium provided consistent accounts of the presence of significant numbers of civilian-dressed men working with the security forces, armed with knives and other weapons.

The organisation has received information about the recruitment and training up to two thousand young men in two camps to the south-east of Conakry, as well as reports of organised gatherings and recruitment of youths in the Kaporu suburb of Conakry itself. This activity appears to have begun around August 2009 and is now being carried out partly by foreign trainers in the camps outside Conakry.

ENDS/

Notes to editors

The Amnesty International delegation visited Guinea between 15– 30 November 2009.

The Amnesty International delegation met with the Guinea Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice to raise concerns about the events of 28 September and recent developments, including the irregular militia training by foreign instructors. Both said they are waiting for the conclusion of the national Commission of Enquiry.

To request an interview with a member of the Amnesty International mission that visited Guinea please contact +44 20 7413 5566 or email: press@amnesty.org