



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
LEGAL AID BOARD

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Human rights information following the September 2009 riots

A report by the *International Crisis Group* states:

“The killing of at least 160 participants in a peaceful demonstration, the rape of many women protestors, and the arrest of political leaders by security forces in Conakry on 28 September 2009 showed starkly the dangers that continued military rule poses to Guinea’s stability and to a region where three fragile countries are only just recovering from civil wars. The military junta, the National Council for Democracy and Development (Conseil national pour la démocratie et le développement, CNDD), is denying its evident responsibility and playing for time by offering what it calls a “national union government” to opposition parties. But with the mood on the streets hardening against the junta, worse trouble is likely unless combined domestic and international pressure is applied to force the soldiers from power “ (International Crisis Group, (16 October 2009), *Guinea: Military Rule Must End*,p.1).

This report also states:

“The international community swiftly condemned the 28 September killings and called for an international investigation into the events and the immediate release of political party leaders.¹¹ The UN Security Council reiterated its call for Dadis Camara and the CNDD to respect their prior commitment not to stand in the elections. The president of the ECOWAS Commission, Mohammed Ibn Chambas, called the incidents “unacceptable”, while the presidents of neighbouring Senegal, Liberia and Sierra Leone expressed serious concern. The French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner referred to “outrageous” events and urged for an intervention force to protect citizens against the military. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton expressed deep outrage and called for appropriate action to be taken against the junta.¹² On 2 October ECOWAS designated President Compaoré of Burkina Faso to mediate the crisis. The majority of Guineans expressed shock and dismay over the killings and sexual abuse. Domestic human rights organisations described the incidents as horrific” (ibid,p.3).

A *Human Rights Watch* report states:

“Guinean authorities should immediately free all those detained without charge following the bloody crackdown on an opposition rally on September 28, 2009, or charge them with a specific criminal offense followed by a fair trial, Human Rights Watch said today. The group also supported the call by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to establish an international commission of inquiry into the violence, in which an estimated 150 or more demonstrators were killed. “The depth of impunity enjoyed by Guinea’s security

forces was on full display this week," said Corinne Dufka, senior West Africa researcher at Human Rights Watch" (Human Rights Watch, (4 October 2009), *Guinea: Free or Charge Detainees*).

A timeline published in 2009 by *IRIN News* includes the following:

“19 October 2009 - UN Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios leaves Guinea for Burkina Faso to talk with mediator Blaise Compaore, after 18 October meetings with junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara and other members of the Guinean government as well as representatives of civil society

17 October 2009 - Junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara fails to meet an African Union deadline to announce formally he would not run in presidential elections; Camara says he would ask mediator, Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaore, to examine the issue of Guinea's political future

17 October 2009 - West African leaders at an emergency meeting of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) impose an arms embargo on Guinea

16 October 2009 - UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announces he will set up an international inquiry into the 28 September military crackdown on demonstrators

15 October 2009 - Information Minister Justin Morel Jr becomes the third minister to resign from the Guinea government, after Agriculture Minister Abdourahmane Sano and Labour Minister Alpha Diallo

14 October 2009 - International Criminal Court prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo, confirms that the situation in Guinea is under preliminary examination by his office" (*IRIN News*, (20 October 2009), *Guinea: Timeline since independence*).

The *Agence-France-Presse* states: "Guinea's army was accused Thursday of getting rid of many bodies from a bloody crackdown on an anti-junta rally, but the authorities stuck by their toll of 56 dead" (*Agence-France-Presse*, (1 October 2009), *Guinea's junta accused of hiding bodies after crackdown*).

IRIN News notes:

"Guineans strain to find the words to describe the violence they saw on 28 September when soldiers opened fire on demonstrators, stabbing people with bayonets and gang-raping women and girls. Hundreds of Guineans have been unable to collect the remains of their loved ones, as soldiers blocked entry to morgues and – residents say – loaded up bodies in trucks and took them away. Residents of the capital Conakry said tension was high on 2 October, as the junta held a ceremony to bury the bodies of the 57 people it says died, most "by asphyxiation" in a stampede. One man searching for his brother went to the morgue where the corpses were brought out; he said the stench from

decomposing bodies was overwhelming” (IRIN, (2 October 2009), *Guinea: "The barbarity we saw cannot be described"*).

The *Agence-France-Presse* states:

“Brief scuffles broke out Friday near Conakry's main mosque where several dozen bodies of victims shot dead by Guinea's junta forces at a demonstration were put on display. In a show of public anger after military ruler Captain Moussa Dadis Camara proposed talks with the opposition, youths threw stones at gendarmerie police posted round the mosque. Police riposted by firing tear gas, witnesses said. Several thousand people had gathered after a religious official made an appeal for families to come and identify the dead from Monday's shootings in a stadium where tens of thousands of opposition supporters were packed” (Agence-France-Presse, (2 October 2009), *Scuffles break out at new Guinea anti-junta demo*).

A news story by *Reuters* notes

“A dispute broke out at the head of Guinea's military government late on Wednesday after a junta leader sought to arrest a military officer for his part in the mass killings of anti-government protesters last month. The incident at junta leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara's headquarters in the capital Conakry is the latest sign of rifts within the leadership and came just hours after France for the first time suggested Camara could be implicated in the deaths (Reuters, (08 October 2009), *Tensions in Guinea junta as isolation grows*).

The *UN News Service* reports:

“The top United Nations human rights official voiced concern today over the risks to Guineans if the world body launches an investigation into the killing of at least 150 people last month when security forces opened fire on an opposition rally in the West African nation and raped some of the women protesters. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay is considering how to assist with an investigation, and make sure that it is credible, in view of the security and political situation on the ground, her spokesperson Rupert Colville told reporters in Geneva” (UN News Service, (9 October 2009), *Guinea: UN official fears for witnesses' safety in probe into killing of protesters*).

BBC News reports:

“The International Criminal Court (ICC) has opened an investigation into the Guinean military's brutal suppression of an anti-government protest. The Hague court says it is deciding whether the events of 28 September amount to crimes against humanity. The prosecutors say there is evidence that women were "abused or otherwise brutalised" during the crackdown” (BBC News, (15 October 2009), *ICC investigates Guinea 'abuses'*).

A news story by *Reuters* states:

“Guinea's ruling military junta, facing rising international pressure and mounting internal dissent after a bloody crackdown on protesters last month, has lifted its ban on public demonstrations. The concession to the opposition comes amid a chorus of international condemnation of the leadership in the West African mining powerhouse after gunmen used live rounds against anti-government protesters in a stadium on Sept. 28” (Reuters, (16 October 2009), *As pressure builds, Guinea junta lifts protest ban*).

The *UN News Service* reports:

“Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced today that he will set up an international commission of inquiry to probe last month’s violent crackdown on unarmed demonstrators in Guinea that led to the deaths of at least 150 people and the rape of many others. The commission will investigate the crackdown by security forces on 28 September in the Guinean capital, Conakry, “with a view to determining the accountability of those involved,” according to a statement issued by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson” (UN News Service, (16 October 2009), *Ban unveils plan for international inquiry into violent crackdown in Guinea*).

A statement by the *UN Secretary General* says:

“The Secretary-General remains deeply concerned by the tense situation in Guinea following the violent crackdown, which he had strongly condemned, on unarmed civilians on 28 September in Conakry. This crackdown resulted in many deaths and injuries, and allegedly in gross violations of human rights, including rape” (UN Security Council, (16 October 2009), *Secretary-General sends inquiry mission to Guinea after ‘violent crackdown’*).

The *UN News Service* notes:

“Plans moved ahead today for an international commission of inquiry into last month’s violent crackdown on unarmed demonstrators in Guinea, in which at least 150 people were killed and many others raped, as a senior United Nations political official continued his talks in the region” (UN News Service, (19 October 2009), *Guinea: UN advances plans for international probe into deadly crackdown*).

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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