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AND TOLERANT SOCIETY

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION KEY INFORMATION DOCUMENTS

GUINEA

13 APRIL 2006

RDS- IND

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN INFORMATION SERVICE

Contents

	Paragraphs
1. INTRODUCTION.....	1.01
2. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT GUINEA	2.01
3. INDEX TO KEY SOURCE DOCUMENTS	3.01
4. LIST OF SOURCE DOCUMENTS (WITH ELECTRONIC ACCESS).....	4.01

1. Introduction

This Country of Origin Information Service Key Documents was produced by the RDS of the Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The COI Key Documents identifies general background information about Guinea from a variety of recognised sources. The material identified concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom and is not intended to be exhaustive. None of the documents identified contain any Home Office opinion or policy.

The COI Key Documents provides a signpost to the source material, most of which is readily available in the public domain. For Home Office users, the COI Key Documents provides direct electronic access to each source referred to in the document, via a link on the source numbers in the index and list of sources. For the benefit of external users, the relevant weblink has also been included, together with the date that the link was accessed.

As noted above, the source documents identified concentrate mainly on key human rights issues. For background, some basic information about Guinea, extracted from the Country Profile on the Foreign and Commonwealth Office's website (<http://www.fco.gov.uk>) is also provided below.

2. Basic information

Full Country Name: The Republic of Guinea

Area: 245,860 square kilometers

Population: 8.5 million (July 2002 est.)

Capital City: Conakry (population: 1.1 million)

People and languages: The main ethnic groups in Guinea are the Peulh, the Malinke and the Susu (Soussou). The south-eastern forest region is inhabited by the Kissi, Loma and Kpelle peoples. French is the official language. Eight languages are taught in Guinea's schools: Basari, Pular, Kissi, Koniagi, Kpelle, Loma, Malinke and Susu.

Religion(s): Muslim, Christian and traditional beliefs.

Currency: Guinean Franc (GNF)

Major political parties: The main political parties are:

Parti de l'Unité et du Progrès (PUP) (in power)

Union pour le Progrès de la Guinée (UPG);

Union pour le Progrès et le Renouveau (UPR);

Union des Forces Républicaines (UFR);

Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG).

Head of State: President General Lansana Conté

Prime Minister: Cellou Daliel Diallo

Membership of international groupings/organisations: United Nations (UN), African Union (AU), Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), African Development Bank (AFDB), Mano River Union (MRU). [1]

Geography

Guinea is situated on the west coast of Africa. It borders Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The country can broadly be divided into four zones: a narrow coastal belt, north-western hill region, central savannah, which is the source of the river Niger, and the south-eastern rain forest. [1]

History

Guinea is a former French colony. It became independent in October 1958, two years earlier than the other French African colonies, because it rejected de Gaulle's offer of membership of the French Community (a short lived structure which gave France's colonies limited autonomy within the French empire). Guinea was the only country of the French African Empire to reject de Gaulle's proposal, and the country's historic "Non" led to it being abandoned by France which immediately cut all ties. This reinforced a proud sense of independent nationhood in Guinea which still resonates today.

Sekou Touré, who became the first President, ruled as an autocrat and suppressed opposition, often on the pretext of defending the country against destabilisation by foreign powers. Cut off by France, Touré isolated Guinea from Western influence and allied himself with the Soviet bloc. Hundreds of thousands of Guineans went into exile.

[Return to Contents](#)

Touré died in 1984, and was succeeded by General Lasana Conté following a bloodless coup. Conté's moves to initiate a more open style of government were welcomed by the population. However an attempted coup in July 1985 brought the regime's authoritarian instincts to the fore - thousands were arrested and dozens executed. Conté soon reverted to the oppressive methods of the Sekou Touré years. [1]

Politics and recent events

In 1991 public pressure forced the introduction of a new constitution providing for the introduction of multiparty politics. The new constitution also put a limit of two terms of seven years on the Presidential tenure. The 114-member legislature has a five-year term. However due to acrimonious and violent disputes around the organising of elections, the first elections under the new dispensation were delayed - presidential polls were not held until December 1993 and parliamentary elections not until June 1995. They were won by Conté and his Parti d'Unite et de Progres (PUP). The opposition claimed that both the campaigns and the ballots were biased or fraudulent in favour of the regime.

In February 1996 a coup attempt and mutiny by hundreds of soldiers shook the regime. Conté was reportedly held hostage for a short time before acceding to demands for higher military salaries. Once order was restored hundreds of officers were arrested, many of whom remained in detention for two years until 96 defendants were finally tried in February 1998, of whom 38 were convicted.

The country's second presidential election was held in December 1998. Conté won 56.1 Percent of the 71.4 percent turn out, although both figures were contested by the opposition. The key opposition leader, Alpha Conde of the Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG), was arrested shortly after the elections, and charged at the end of December with plotting against state security. His trial did not start until May 2000. He was convicted and sentenced to 5 years in prison, but released in May 2001 following a presidential pardon.

In November 2001 Conté put to referendum a change in the constitution to rescind the two term limit on presidential office. According to the official result 98.4 percent of voters endorsed the change, on the basis of a 87.2 percent turnout. This allowed Conté to run for a third term in the December 2003 elections, which he won with 95percent of the vote, the main opposition leaders having boycotted the poll.

The political situation remains deadlocked. The opposition have formed a coalition (the Front Républicaine pour l'alternance démocratique, FRAD) to coordinate their push for reform. They do not regard the national assembly as legitimate, as they contest the validity of elections held in June 2002. The opposition also claim that the security forces prevent them from carrying out normal political activities. Talks between government and opposition have not resolved these issues. The political atmosphere worsened further in January 2005 when an apparent coup attempt against Conté was followed by a wave of arrests of soldiers, journalists and politicians. [1]

On January 19, 2005, President Conté's motorcade was fired upon by unknown assailants. Two bodyguards were wounded but the President was not harmed. Comparatively peaceful and orderly local elections were held on December 18, 2005, with the ruling PUP winning 31 of 38 municipalities and 241 of 303 local councils. [2c]

Basic Economic Facts

GDP: US\$ 4.0 billion (2004 est)

GDP per head: US\$ 383 (2002.)

Annual Growth: 1.5 Percent (2004)

Inflation: 23 per cent (2004)

Exchange rate: £1 = approximately 6,500 GNF

Major trading partners: Exports: South Korea, European Union, Russia, United States, Cameroon. Imports: European Union, Cote d'Ivoire, China.

Guinea's economy is in what the Finance Minister called in February 2005 a "severe crisis". The economy is debilitated by corruption and mismanagement. It runs huge budget deficits. Increases in inflation in 2004 and the suspension of aid from the main donors (IMF, African Development Bank and European Union) have contributed to the government's serious financial problems.

Despite this Guinea remains attractive to international mining companies due to its extensive mineral resources, including 30Percent of the world's known bauxite reserves of very high grade ore. It is the world's largest exporter of bauxite. It also has large iron ore deposits. Mining provides nearly 80 Percent of Guinea's foreign exchange earnings. Several Canadian, Russian and multinational companies are currently involved in bauxite mining. The Canadian company, Global Alumina, has signed an agreement with the government to build a US\$2 billion aluminium refinery. One of the largest investment projects in West Africa, it is due to come on stream in 2008. This project will provide added value to exports. [1]

Human Rights

Guinea's human rights record is poor, and always has been. During the regime of Sekou Toure, many people were tortured in prison or executed after show trials. Those responsible have yet to face justice. Under President Conté, human rights abuses continue. Petty corruption by the security forces and detention without trial are the main concerns. During the fighting in south-eastern Guinea in 2001 against rebels forces from Liberia and Sierra Leone, there were numerous credible reports of human rights abuses by the security forces. Although there is a growing independent print media, journalists are often arrested after writing stories critical of the regime. All broadcast media are state owned. [1]

Health

Basic Health Facts:

Life expectancy at birth m/f (years): M- 51.0; F- 53.0

Healthy life expectancy at birth m/f (years, 2002): M- 43.9; F- 45.6

Child mortality m/f (per 1000): M-165; F-154

Adult mortality m/f (per 1000): M-403; F-342 [9a]

[Return to Contents](#)

3. Index to key source documents

[Go to list of source documents](#)

<p>Key facts and geography</p>	<p>[1] Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profiles – Guinea, dated 28 July 2005</p> <p>[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea, dated 8 March 2006</p> <p>[2c] US Dept of State: Background Note – Guinea, dated January 2006</p> <p>[4] CIA World Factbook – Guinea – updated 1 November 2005</p> <p>[6a] BBC News Country Profile – Guinea, dated 12 January 2006</p> <p>[10] Map of Guinea – Multimap accessed 15 December 2005</p>
<p>History</p>	<p>[1] Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profiles – Guinea updated 28 July 2005</p> <p>[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea issued 28 February 2005</p> <p>[2c] US Dept of State: Background Note – Guinea, issued October 2005</p> <p>[6a] BBC News Country Profile – Guinea – 11 October 2005</p> <p>[6b] BBC Timeline – Guinea – 7 December 2005</p>
<p>Politics and recent events</p>	<p>[1] Foreign and Commonwealth Office Country Profiles – Guinea updated 21 July 2005</p> <p>[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea issued 28 February 2005</p> <p>[2c] US Dept of State: Background Note – Guinea, issued October 2005</p> <p>[6a] BBC News Country Profile – Guinea– 11 October 2005</p> <p>[6b] BBC Timeline – Guinea – 7 December 2005</p>
<p>Human Rights general:</p>	<p>[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea- issued 28 February 2005</p> <p>[3a] Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea- Covering January – December 2004</p> <p>[3b] Amnesty International – Abolitionist and Retentionist Countries: Abolitionist for All Crimes – last updated 27 September 2005</p> <p>[5] Human Rights Watch - Human Rights Overview 2005 (Guinea)</p>

	<p>[8a] UNHCHR – When going home is not an option: Local Integration in Guinea</p> <p>[8b] UNHCHR – Helping refugees flourish in Guinea</p>
<p>Human Rights – specific issues:</p> <p>(In addition to general reports above, information on the following issues is provided in the documents listed below)</p>	
Children	[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea issued 28 February 2005
Ethnic Groups	<p>[3a] Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea - Covering January – December 2004</p> <p>[5] Human Rights Watch - Human Rights Overview 2005 (Guinea)</p>
Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons	[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea issued 28 February 2005
Judiciary	[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea issued 28 February 2005
Media	[7a] CPJ – Cases 2005 – Guinea
Medical	<p>[9a] World Health Organisation (WHO) – Profile on Guinea</p> <p>[9b] World Health Organisation – Project Mental Health Atlas 2005</p> <p>[9c] WHO – International Digest of Health Legislation – Law of Guinea</p>
Military	[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea dated 8 March 2006
Police and security services	<p>[3a] Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea - Covering January – December 2004</p> <p>[5] Human Rights Watch - Human Rights Overview 2005 (Guinea)</p>
Political activists	<p>[3a] Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea - Covering January – December 2004</p> <p>[5] Human Rights Watch - Human Rights Overview 2005 (Guinea)</p> <p>[3a] Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea - Covering January – December 2004</p> <p>[5] Human Rights Watch - Human Rights Overview 2005 (Guinea)</p>
Prison Conditions	<p>3a] Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea - Covering January – December 2004</p> <p>[5] Human Rights Watch - Human Rights Overview 2005 (Guinea)</p>

Religion	[2b] US Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom 2005 - Guinea dated 28 February 2005
Women	[2a] US Dept of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea dated 8 March 2006

[Return to Contents](#)

4. List of source material

The Home Office is not responsible for the content of external websites.

Numbering of the source documents below is not always consecutive because some older sources have been removed in the course of updating this document.

- [1] **Foreign & Commonwealth Office**
Country Profiles – Guinea - Dated 28 July 2005
<http://www.fco.gov.uk/servlet/Front?pagename=OpenMarket/Xcelerate/ShowPage&c=Page&cid=1007029394365&a=KCountryProfile&aid=1019744949880> Accessed 12 April, 2006
- [2] **US Department of State**
- a US Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Guinea- Dated 8 March 2006
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2005/61573.htm> Accessed 12 April 2006
- b US Department of State Report on International Religious Freedom 2005 - Guinea - Dated 28 February 2005
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41607.htm> Accessed 12 April 2006
- c US Department of State Background Note: Guinea – Dated January 2006
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2824.htm> Accessed 12 April 2006
- [3] **Amnesty International**
- a Amnesty International Annual Report 2005 – Guinea - Covering January - December 2004 <http://web.amnesty.org/report2005/gin-summary-eng> Accessed 12 April 2006
- b Amnesty International – Abolitionist and Retentionist Countries: Abolitionist for All Crimes – Dated 11 April 2006
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/deathpenalty-countries-eng> Accessed 12 April 2006
- [4] **Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)**
CIA World Factbook – Guinea – Dated 29 March 2006
<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/qv.html> Accessed 12 April 2006
- [5] **Human Rights Watch**
Human Rights Overview (Guinea)
<http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=africa&c=guinea> Accessed 12 April 2006
- [6] **BBC News**
- a BBC News Country Profile – Guinea – Dated 12 January 2006
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1032311.stm Accessed 12 April 2006

- b BBC Timeline – Guinea – Dated 21 March 2006
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/country_profiles/1032515.stm Accessed 12 April 2006
- [7] **Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ)**
a CPJ – Cases 2005 – Guinea - Dated 23 February 2005
http://www.cpj.org/cases05/africa_cases05/guinea.html Accessed 12 April 2006
- [8] **UNHCR**
a When going home is not an option: local integration in Guinea – Dated 20 July 2005 <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=42de5cbf4&page=news> Accessed 12 April 2006
b Helping refugees flourish in Guinea- Dated 24 May 2005
<http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=42934a954&page=news> Accessed 12 April 2006
- [9] **World Health Organisation**
a Profile on Guinea – Dated 2006 <http://www.who.int/countries/gin/en/> Accessed 12 April 2006
b Mental Health Atlas – Dated 2005
http://www.who.int/mental_health/evidence/atlas/ Accessed 12 April 2006
c International Digest of Health Legislation – Law of Guinea- Dated 19 June 1997 <http://www3.who.int/idhl-rils/frame.cfm?language=english> Accessed 12 April 2006
- [10] **Multimap – Map of Guinea**
<http://uk.multimap.com/index/GV.htm> Accessed 12 April 2006

[Return to Contents](#)