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INQUIRY REPORT

«TURNING THE PAGE» HOPES FOR MEDIA FREEDOM IN NIGER AND GUINEA

**REPORTERS
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FOR PRESS FREEDOM

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In Guinea, the National Transition Council (CNT) led by Gen. Sékouba Konaté held the first free and transparent election in the country's history in 2010. It was won by long-time opposition leader, Alpha Condé. In Niger, a military coup on 18 February 2010 ended President Mamadou Tandja's attempts to stay in office beyond the end of his term and opened the way for a transition under the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD). It resulted in Mahamadou Issoufou's election in early 2011.

Reporters Without Borders, which visited Guinea from 22 to 27 May and Niger from 26 to 30 June, found that the democratic transition in both countries was accompanied by a marked increase in media freedom and strong hopes of an improvement in the situation of the media and journalists. It was these hopes that Reporters Without Borders wanted to evaluate.

In Conakry, the Reporters Without Borders delegation was received by officials from the ministry of communication and ministry of territorial administration and decentralization, by justice minister Christian Sow and by government secretary-general Fodé Kissi Camara.

The delegation also met the college of the National Communication Council (CNC), supreme court president Mamadou Sylla, National Transition Council president Hadja Rabiataou Sera Diallo, a representative of the opposition Union of Guinea Democratic Forces (UFDG), as well as leading media figures and several journalists' associations including the Guinean Association of Independent Press Editors (AGEPI), the Union of Guinean Free Radio and TV Stations (URTELGUI) and the Guinean Association of Online Media (AGUIPEL).

In Niamey, Reporters Without Borders met Prime Minister Brigi Rafini, communication minister Salifou Labo Bouché,

justice minister Marou Amadou, Gen. Salou Djibo, who headed the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSRD) and was president during the transition, and several Niamey-based foreign diplomats.

The Reporters Without Borders delegation also met with representatives of the opposition National Movement for a Development Society (MNSD), the National Communication Monitoring Centre (ONC), which is a regulatory body, the Niger Independent Monitoring Centre for Media Ethics and Conduct (ONIMED), which is self-regulatory, and the Press Club (Maison de la Presse). They also visited the Institute for Training in Information and Communication Techniques (IFTIC) and most of the Niamey-based media.



A NEWSSTAND IN NIAMEY COPYRIGHT: RSF

FREE AND DIVERSE MEDIA LANDSCAPES

Guinea currently has more than 30 newspapers, a similar number of privately-owned radio stations, two privately-owned TV stations and more than 50 websites. These media are not just concentrated in the capital Conakry. They are also based in the interior.

Radio, which has benefited from a recent reduction in restrictions on licences, is the most popular form of media in Guinea, as it is in many African countries. Phone-in programmes such as *Espace FM's* "Les Grandes Gueules" (Big Mouths), *Nostalgie's* "Zone Libre" (Free Zone), *Soleil FM's* "La Grogne" (Discontent), *Familia's* "Société Débat" (Debating Society) and *Sabari FM's* "Défoulez-vous" (Let off Steam) have a lot of listeners.

In Niger, where restrictions were loosened two decades ago, the media are very diverse. The country has around 50 weekly and monthly publications that circulate above all in urban areas, around 30 radio stations, seven TV stations (two state-owned, five privately-owned) and around 120 community radio stations. Online media, on the other hand, are still virtually non-existent.

The media are fairly outspoken in both countries. In Niger, as much space is given to expressing opinions as reporting the facts. The print media, especially satirical publications such as the influential *Lynx* in Guinea and *La Griffie* in Niger contain a great deal of criticism and even caricature.

But the economic environment continues to be tough for the media. In Niger, only one newspaper, the state-owned daily *Le Sahel*, has the resources to publish on a daily basis. Virtually no journalist has a work contract and there is no minimum salary.

Finally, the Guinean media are riven by ethnic divisions. Hasane Kaba, the president of the Guinean Association of Independent Press Editors (AGEPI), said: "Here, you start reading an article at the bottom. You look at the signature. Who wrote it? What ethnic group does he belong to?" This has no equivalent in Niger.

MEDIA FREEDOM DURING TRANSITION PERIODS

Gen. Sékouba Konaté's accession to the presidency in Guinea in December 2009 and the military coup in Niger on 18 February 2010 ended periods of dictatorship and political anarchy. The transitions led by the National Transition Council (CNT) in Guinea and the Supreme Council for the Restoration of Democracy (CSR) in Niger were favourable for media freedom.

NEW LAWS DECRIMINALIZING MEDIA OFFENCES

In both countries, legislation was overhauled, giving rise to new laws protecting media freedom, redefining the powers of media regulatory bodies and how their members are appointed, and guaranteeing access to government-held information. The new laws also reflected the principle of the decriminalization of media offences.

In a forward to a collection of media and communication laws in Niger that was published by the National Communication Monitoring Centre, Abdourahamane Ousmane, the centre’s current president and former head of the Niger Press Club, described the CSRD-led transition as “revolutionary” and stressed the importance of the legal and institutional reforms that it had carried out.

“The first pillar of this [legal and institutional] edifice was without doubt the National Conference on the Media held in March 2010, before most of the transition institutions had been created,” Ousmane wrote. “The participants in the National Conference on the Media approved a draft text that later served as the basis for Order No. 2010-035 on media freedom that was

adopted on 4 June 2010. This took Niger directly into the era of decriminalization of media offences.”

This order scrapped prison sentences for journalists in cases of defamation or publication of wrong information, replacing them with fairer and more appropriate penalties, and introduced the principle of self-regulation.

Meanwhile, Order No. 2010-18 of 15 April 2010 on the composition, powers and functioning of the National Communication Monitoring Centre (ONC) created this new entity as a regulatory body to replace the High Council for Communication (CSC).

And finally, Order No. 2011-22 of 23 February 2011 on the Charter of Access to Public Information and Administrative Documents completed the legislative arsenal adopted during the transition. The aim of this law was to improve transparency and the public’s access to information held by the state. It should help to change attitudes of both state officials who want to keep everything secret, and journalists who tend to wait for information to land in their lap.

In both countries, the transitions began at a dark time for media freedom.

In Guinea, President Lansana Conté’s death on 22 December 2008 allowed an army captain, Moussa Dadis Camara, to seize power in a coup and hold on to it for 12 months. No one has forgotten how soldiers opened fire to disperse a demonstration by opposition activists in a Conakry soccer stadium on 28 September 2009, leaving hundreds dead and thousands wounded.

Journalists who witnessed the bloodshed were arrested, beaten and in some case threatened with death. Soldiers loyal to Capt. Dadis went after journalists who were regarded as “traitors” and accused of “selling out Guinea” for reporting what had happened. A number of journalists, both those who were the correspondents of foreign media and those working for local media, especially online media, had to flee the country.

In Niger, the latter stages of President Mamadou Tandja’s rule were also marked by many media freedom violations. Several journalists had to endure spells in prison and some media, such as the Niamey-based media group *Dounia* and Agadez-based radio *Sahara FM*, were harassed and in some cases suspended



THE 28 SEPTEMBER STADIUM IN CONAKRY COPYRIGHT: RSF

by the High Council for Communication (CSC), the regulatory body then run by the Tandja loyalist Daouda Diallo.



GEN. SANGARÉ, THE HEAD OF THE ELECTORAL COMMISSION, ANNOUNCING THE SECOND ROUND RESULTS AT THE CONAKRY PRESS CLUB COPYRIGHT: AFP/ISSOUF SANOGO

Monitoring Centre (ONC), which played a key role in ensuring that the election campaign was conducted in an orderly manner in the media.

ONC resolutions 002/2011 and 003/2011 of 12 January 2011 established how the free messages of candidates and political parties should be produced, programmed and disseminated. Particular attention was paid to the training of journalists covering the elections. Conferences and training modules on journalists' duties were organized between the first and second round campaigns in parallel with those offered by the Press Club.

The ONC always operated in the most transparent and participatory manner. It was always ready to dialogue with the political parties about the various electoral propaganda formats that were proposed. The order in which electoral messages were carried by the state-owned media was determined by a lottery held in the presence of representatives of the candidates and parties participating in the election.

INCIDENTS

In Guinea, a climate of fear created by post-election violence paralyzed many news media for several days until the proclamation of a state of emergency restored calm.

Several dozen supporters of losing presidential candidate Cellou Dallein Diallo and his party, the UFDG, gathered outside the headquarters of the *Sabari FM - Le Diplomate* group in the Conakry district of Cosa at around 9 a.m. on 15 November 2010, one week after the election, and threatened to ransack it, accusing its management and journalists of supporting the election's declared winner, Alpha Condé.

At the same time, they clashed with members of the special election security units in the district, where most of the inhabitants are members of the Fula ethnic group and Diallo supporters. They finally called off their plan to ransack the media group's headquarters after mediation by the building's owner. Most journalists in Conakry meanwhile stayed indoors for fear of being targeted by political activists or the security forces

The only incident during Niger's transition was the arrest of Moussa Aksar, the editor of the biweekly *L'Événement*, on the morning of 20 September 2010. He was questioned by

cine Diallo, who was his media adviser during the transition, wrote: «A pragmatic defence minister who became interim president, Gen. Sékouba Konaté is the perfect embodiment of the new, resolutely democratic generation of African statesmen.» Now the African Union’s High Representative for the creation of a standby force, Konaté will go down in history as the person who organized Guinea’s first free election and promulgated new media laws, including one decriminalizing media offences.

DO THE CURRENT PRESIDENTS HAVE THE SAME INTEREST?

In Guinea, several matters have been put on hold, raising questions about the desire of President Alpha Condé and his government to consolidate media freedom.

None of the three key laws promulgated by Gen. Konaté in June and December 2010 – one on media freedom, one creating the High Communication Authority (HAC) and one on access to information – has so far been published in the official gazette or implemented.

Reporters Without Borders tried to understand the factors preventing the implementation of these laws. It seems that the blockage is due to a drafting error in one case, an administrative procedural error in another and, above all, to political and judicial resistance.

The law creating the High Communication Authority says one of its members is appointed by the speaker of the national assembly but, as Guinea has not yet held parliamentary elections, there is no national assembly speaker. The law should have included a transitional provision such as: “In the absence of a national assembly, the president of the National Transition Council appoints a member to the HAC.” Without such a transitional provision, there is indeed an obstacle to the law’s implementation.

Implementation of the law on media freedom has been held up by an administrative procedural error. Supreme court president Mamadou Sylla says his court did not approve the law before it was promulgated. As it is an organic law, the supreme court should have first confirmed that it complies with the national constitution.

The National Transition Council (CNT), which drafted the law, insists that it did what it was supposed to do by sending it to the government secretariat, and that the secretariat should have submitted it to the supreme court for verification of its constitutionality. It was sent to the secretariat at the same time as the constitution and the electoral law, both of which we approved by the supreme court. Why wasn’t the law on media freedom approved?

When questioned by Reporters Without Borders, government secretary-general Fodé KISSI Camara kicked the ball deep into touch, referring not only to an alleged delay in the release of the text of these laws but also to technical and budgetary constraints on their publication in the official gazette and the need for a vote on the finance bill and the prime minister’s appearance before the national assembly before work can begin.

The supreme court president, on the other hand, was confident when asked in May what chance there was of seeing these laws finally published in the official gazette and implemented. “We cannot do without this step forward. I give you my assurance that this will be done quickly.” But by late July, nothing had been done.

In short, everything suggests that the Guinean authorities choose and apply laws at their convenience. As a result, some observers and media sector figures are becoming disillusioned and are beginning to think that these new laws have no chance of being implemented by the current government.

The lack of political will has been compounded by a cruel display of ignorance of these laws at the highest level. At the start of 2011, President Alpha Condé wanted to appoint his sister Martine Condé, who had been his media spokesperson during the campaign, to head the media regulatory authority. He initially named her as the head of the HAC, thereby in practice recognizing this new body’s existence. It was only when he was told that the president does not appoint the head of the HAC – who is elected by his or her peers – that he backtracked and confirmed his sister as head of the CNC, the former regulatory body.

What role does the president reserve for the local media in the process of change that he is promising Guinea? No one knows. Alpha Condé is perceived as distant and even contemptuous towards the national media. He has given no sign which

contradicts his reputation and would reassure journalists.

In Niger, on the other hand, President Mahamadou Issoufou has already demonstrated his respect for the media and has publicly undertaken to defend press freedom.

On 5 March of this year, while a candidate for the second round of the presidential election, he signed the Declaration of Table Mountain, a document promoting the freedom and independence of the media that was adopted in Cape Town, South Africa, in June 2007. When asked by several organizations including Reporters Without Borders to sign this statement again as president, he said he supported it and expressed his desire to be an “advocate” of media freedom with his African counterparts.

He reaffirmed his commitment to promoting media freedom to a room full of journalists from the state and privately-owned media, and foreign reporters on his 100th day in office on 16 July: “The work that the media does is important. It enables me to adapt as regards my management of the government. The press plays a democratic watchdog role in the country.”

In a detailed statement of the government’s programme exactly one month before that, on 16 June, Issoufou’s prime minister, Brigi Rafini, reserved a significant place for media freedom. He wrote: “As regards freedom of opinion and expression, I can assure you that the government will take the appropriate measures to guarantee: respect for the law decriminalizing press offences; state financial support for independent press organs; professionalization of the sector and defence of the ethics and conduct of journalists; provision of a quality public service by the state-owned media and an improvement in the way they are managed.”

On 5 May, one month after he was sworn in, President Issoufou received the president and vice-president of the National Communication Monitoring Centre (ONC), who requested that the Access to Information Charter be published in the official gazette. It was done on 23 May. Compliance has to begin within six months of that date.

Finally, Niger’s communication ministry is currently working on a draft collective convention for the media and an order regulating advertising in the media.

TODAY’S AND TOMORROW’S CHALLENGES

CONFIRMING THE PROGRESS

In Guinea, Reporters Without Borders noted that the authorities often cite the “social fabric’s fragility” as grounds for their distrust of the media and occasional repressive measures. Some media have indeed become more radical since the presidential election. “I see disturbing signs beginning to emerge,” justice minister Christian Sow said.

In Niger, the decriminalization of media offences needs to be reinforced. But, since its adoption in June 2010, there has unfortunately been an increase in articles of a defamatory nature and smears. “We have encouraged freedom of expression and freedom of speech but the quality of the press has declined,” justice minister Marou Amadou lamented.

“Decriminalization does not mean the freedom to defame, to say or write anything and attack people with impunity,” Reporters Without Borders points out. “Decriminalization is an achievement that must be defended, but it must also be accompanied by responsibility.” In this respect, Reporters Without Borders hails the creation of the Niger Independent Monitoring Centre for Media Ethics and Conduct (ONIMED), a self-regulatory body in which journalists themselves act as a tribunal that hears complaints against the media, investigates them and reminds their fellow journalists of the rules of professional ethics and conduct.

The authorities that Reporters Without Borders met in Niger were nonetheless reassuring, insisting that they had no desire to question the law. Instead they stressed the need to train journalists and reinforce their professionalism. “The perspectives for media freedom are good but media quality and professionalism have still to be achieved,” the justice minister said.

PREVENT NEW MEDIA FREEDOM VIOLATIONS

In Guinea, the CNC’s many warnings to the media in recent months are seen as a threat to the profession. Some fear that the CNC wants to bring certain media into line. The head of the CNC denies this and says it wants above all to protect them. But, after temporarily suspending radio *Familia* in February for “disturbing the public order,” the CNC issued a war-

ning to radio *Espace FM* in early April for “repeated violations of ethics and professional conduct in its programme *Les Grandes Gueules*.” The following week it issued a warning to *Soleil FM* and then, on 21 July, two days after an attack on President Condé’s private residence with heavy weapons, it issued “an appeal to the media, both state and privately-owned, to abstain from any comment that could add oil to the flames during this very sensitive period in our history.”

On 3 April, the security forces prevented several media from covering unsuccessful presidential candidate Cellou Dallein Diallo’s arrival in Conakry. Journalists with *Gangan FM* and *Gangan TV* were especially targeted. “You people from *Gangan*, we are going to deal with you,” a policeman told them.

At around 2 p.m. on 30 May, a dozen red berets – some in civilian dress, some in uniforms and brandishing guns – raided the premises of the *L’Indépendant - Le Démocrate* group, which is owned by Aboubacar Sylla, who was communication minister during the transition. They said they were looking for the editor, Mamadou Dian Baldé. “We have questions to ask him and accounts to settle,” one said, referring to a story published four days earlier that was headlined “Pay increases, soldiers are rubbing their hands.” In the editor’s absence, they threatened to seize everyone and take them “to the camp.” They eventually changed their minds and left.

The incident shows that the old repressive reflexes have not completely disappeared, not in the military at least, and that the safety of media personnel is not fully assured, despite CNC president Martine Condé’s insistence, during a meeting with Reporters Without Borders, that: “We have succeeded in calming the security forces down. They will not raid news media anymore.”

The CNC suspended the privately-owned weekly *Le Défi* for two months on 11 June for “violating ethics and professional conduct” in an editorial headlined “National Unity: Facinet Touré’s madness” in which the newspaper’s editor, Bah Thierno Mamadou, demanded Gen. Facinet Touré’s dismissal from the post of national mediator for accusing the Fula in May of having an economic monopoly and saying they should be subjected to political discrimination.

This suspension violated *Le Défi*’s right to comment on statements by a senior government official.

The media’s problems are not concentrated only in Conakry. In N’Zérékoré, in Forested Guinea, two *Radio Liberté FM* journa-



THE 25 AUGUST PALACE IN CONAKRY, HEADQUARTERS OF THE NATIONAL COMMUNICATION COUNCIL
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lists, Théodore Loua and Daniel Lama, were held for 24 hours in mid-January on the orders of the city’s prosecutor, Gnokoro Camara. Former *Radio Liberté FM* reporter Emmanuel Toumany Camara was briefly detained on 13 June by the city’s governor, Mohamed Ismaël Traoré.

In Niger, there have been no significant incidents. In the past year, a dozen complaints have nonetheless been submitted to ONIMED by individuals who believe they have been defamed. The attitude of some newspapers such as *Le Courrier* and *Le Visionnaire* disturb certain journalists, who think they are violating professional conduct by attacking well-known figures without being able to produce evidence of their accusations. As a result, the executive bureau of the Niger Association of Independent Press Publishers (ANEPI) provisionally suspended the membership of *Le Visionnaire*’s publisher on 16 July.

REGULATING AND STRENGTHENING THE MEDIA

In Niger, two entities are responsible for media regulation: the National Communication Monitoring Centre (ONC), which is a regulatory body, and the Niger Independent Monitoring Centre for Media Ethics and Conduct (ONIMED), which is self-regulatory.

Created in April 2010, the ONC has 13 members, of whom three are state representatives and the rest are from the media and civil society. It has had a track record of acting in an independent and transparent manner. It is soon to be replaced by a new High Council for Communication (CSC), which will have 15 members (three state representatives and 12 from civil society). The CSC's president will be elected internally instead of being appointed by the president of the country.

ONIMED was sworn in May 2010 in order to respond to the irresponsibility of certain journalists after the decriminalization of media offences. Self-regulation was introduced as an accompaniment to decriminalization. ONIMED has had to handle 12 complaints in the first 13 months of its existence. If plaintiffs submit a case to ONIMED, they cannot file a lawsuit before the courts afterwards. People who think they have been defamed seem to have a great deal of confidence in ONIMED and prefer to take their cases to this self-regulatory body rather than filing legal actions.

Alongside the ONC and ONIMED, the Niger Press Club (*Maison de la Presse*) is also trying to contribute to the improvement of the media sector. One of its initiatives was to issue an appeal on 15 September 2010 for an end to the payment of "bonuses" to journalists by outsiders, arguing that such practices harm independent and professional journalism, especially as some newspapers seem to depend totally on these bonuses.

In Guinea, the future of media regulation is unfortunately unclear because of the uncertainty surrounding the chances of seeing the High Communication Authority (HAC) established to replace the National Communication Council (CNC).

STATE MEDIA OR PUBLIC SERVICE MEDIA?

During elections campaigns, the state-owned media are subject to strict rules requiring equal treatment for each candidate. *Radio Télévision Guinéenne (RTG)* in Guinea and the *Office de Radiodiffusion et Télévision du Niger (ORTN)* in Niger complied with the rules and were praised for their fair and balanced coverage during the election campaigns. An *ORTN* employee in Niamey told Reporters Without Borders "We did not get a single phone call or any pressure of any form whatsoever during the transition."

In Guinea, problems are resurfacing. Three journalists, Marie-Louise Sanoussi, Siré Dieng and Ibrahima Ahmed Barry, were relieved of their positions as *RTG* news presenters at the start of May. They received only verbal notification of this. Reporters Without Borders wrote to *RTG* director-general Mamadou Dia on 1 June requesting an explanation but has so far received no reply. The word in Conakry is that they were sanctioned for their supposed support for the pro-Diallo opposition party, the UFDG, and that the decision to sideline them was taken at the highest government level.

Coverage of the country's various political movements is still very unequal. *RTG* has covered some UFDG news conferences but it did not mention Diallo's return to Guinea. *RTG* does not cover news conferences by Aboubacar Sylla, the head of the opposition Union of Forces for Change (UFC). Some people are expressing concern that the station is becoming a government tool.

Use of local languages also deserves particular attention as it indicates the degree of openness to the entire society. In May, the local languages used by President Condé in his speeches and statements were limited to Susu and Mandinka. They were not translated into Fula.



AHMED BARRY, A JOURNALIST WHO LOST HIS JOB AS AN *RTG* NEWS PRESENTER COPYRIGHT: RSF

In Niger, on the other hand, an *ORTN* representative recognized that “problems inherited from the past” continued but said that instructions had been given to abstain from flattering government leaders and to cover opposition activities. Several representatives of the opposition *MNSD* acknowledged to *Reporters Without Borders* that their party was not the victim of unfair or unequal treatment.

RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF NEW MEDIA

New media are developing fast in Guinea. The country has many bloggers, around 50 websites (with the most serious including *Guineenews.com*, *Aminata.com*, *Tamtamguinee.com*, *Mediaguinee.com*, *Africaguinee.com* and *Infoguinee.com*) and an online media association, *AGUIPEL*. Online media professionals and *AGUIPEL* agree that efforts need to be focussed on legislation covering the sector and training for online journalists.

Niger, on the other hand, has just a few websites. A web portal run by the Press Club, *Medianiger.info*, allowed Internet users to follow the electoral process in real time.

IMPROVING THE ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The biggest problem for the media in both Niger and Guinea continues to be their economic frailty. Improving the economic environment in which they operate would allow them to shore up their viability and independence and to combat corruption.

In Niger, the government provides a direct subsidy to the media through a press assistance fund with the aim of enabling them to acquire modern equipment. It may also provide indirect subsidies in the form of tax waivers on newspaper, electricity, fuel and so on. A 2009 media assistance fund was distributed in 2011. It amounted to 200 million CFA francs (300 000 euros). Thirty-five news media were beneficiaries, on the basis of transparent criteria established by the *ONC*. These criteria could nonetheless be improved. A media group with media in the provinces is paid for only one of its media although it has needs in both Niamey and the provinces.

Reporters Without Borders also invited Niger’s prime minister to rescind a letter signed by one of his predecessors, Hama Amadou, banning state advertising in the privately-owned media.

In Guinea, the most important newspapers get nearly all the advertising. Some publications barely raise any income from advertising. The lack of a professional distribution network for print media also limits their circulation in the interior and restricts sales.

STATUS AND TRAINING OF JOURNALISTS

In both Guinea and Niger, media personnel suffer from a lack of extended training. In Niger, the *Institute for Training in Information and Communication Techniques (IFTIC)* has trained most of the journalists working in the media. It is a recognized school that attracts students from neighbouring countries such as *Burkina Faso*. The *Press Club* also offers courses for working journalists and specific modules in, for example, election coverage.



IFTIC - NIGER COPYRIGHT: RSF

Considerable thought needs to be given to the status of journalists, who must be protected against their frequent exploitation by media owners. A collective agreement that provides for a work contract and decent pay for every working journalist could help to improve their status.

In Conakry, for example, *Reporters Without Borders* learned that *Aboubacar Sylla*, who heads the opposition *Union of Forces for Change (UFC)* and who was Gen. *Konaté’s* information minister, recently hired several young journalists to help launch his radio station, *Planète FM*. He gave none of them a contract and he got rid of them all overnight once the station had been launched. The sector would be much improved if news media were obliged to become real media companies and media owners began acting like proper business owners.

CONCLUSIONS

The current status of the transitions in Guinea and Niger, in mid-2011, is very different. But although both countries held remarkably calm, free and democratic elections, in neither case can the future be predicted with confidence.

In Guinea, the transition is not over and the fragility of the current situation is worrying. The wait for parliamentary elections in a climate of tension between the government and opposition, deep disagreement about the need for a new voter census, and the attack with heavy weapons on the president’s private residence on 19 July are fuelling concern that all the progress could be reversed.

France reiterated its support for President Condé after the attack but added: “It is currently important to consolidate Guinea’s democracy, which requires a calm political dialogue in which everyone is respected, and the holding of parliamentary elections in the near future.”

Reporters Without Borders therefore continues to be very cautious if not concerned about future developments in Guinea.

In Niger, the achievements have been much more positive and the transition has been completed. But there are still problems to be overcome, especially as regards public security and development, and democracy needs to be consolidated in a lasting manner. The current calm is due in part to the lack of overt political competition and it is only with time that it will be possible to know if Niger can be a regional model of democracy and respect for media freedom.

Nonetheless, thanks to the approval of new media laws and the sharp decline in abuses against journalists, the democratic transitions have raised considerable hopes about the prospects for media freedom in both countries. In Guinea, everything still needs to be done. In Niger, everything still needs to be consolidated.

IN THE LIGHT OF THE CURRENT MEDIA FREEDOM SITUATION IN NIGER AND GUINEA, REPORTERS WITHOUT BORDERS RECOMMENDS...

IN GUINEA

President Alpha Condé should publicly undertake to guarantee media freedom and respect for media diversity.

Government secretary-general Fodé Kissi Camara should without delay submit the three 2010 laws to the supreme court so that it can verify their compliance with the constitution and thereby allow their publication in the official gazette.

The government should ensure that *Radio Télévision Guinéenne (RTG)* continues to be a public service media that is accessible to all political parties and reflects all aspects of Guinean society. And should launch a debate about the status of journalists in Guinea.

The ministry of territorial administration and decentralization should defend the physical safety of journalists – both those from the state and privately-owned media – and should ensure that the security forces are aware of the need to respect journalists, especially when they are covering elections.

Journalists' associations should collectively demand an improvement in their work conditions and status, and should defend their interests with more energy.

Bilateral and multilateral partners should continue the efforts to assist the Guinean media that began during the 2010 elections.

IN NIGER

The most senior state officials should continue their efforts to promote media freedom and should confirm their commitment to doing this.

President Mahamadou Issoufou should again sign the "Declaration of Table Mountain," this time as elected president.

The government should envisage measures likely to improve the economic environment for the media (such as an increase in media assistance funds and more state advertising for the privately-owned media); and should establish major courses in journalism and communication by, for example, reinforcing the IFTIC and creating a specific course at the University of Niamey.

The regulatory and self-regulatory bodies (ONC and ONIMED) should continue their role of promoting media freedom and improving the media sector.

Journalists should act in a more responsible manner by never forgetting their duties as news reporters.

The international community should provide structural support for institutions such as the Press Club (Maison de la Presse



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