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Mamadou Saidou Bah, bodyguard of the opposition **Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)** leader **Cellou Dalein Diallo**, dies while under provisional detention. The government claims he died from illness while UFDG members blame the conditions in which the government holds detainees. A Global Witness report alleges that **Phil Edmonds** and **Andrew Groves**, through their company **Sable Mining Africa Ltd**, bribed Guinean officials in order to acquire its **Mount Nimba** mining concession. A small community from the northern town of **Kantédou-Balandou** and the Malian town of **Niawouléni** leads to clashes between villagers, leading to six deaths, in an area with a history of mining related violence.

Opposition bodyguard dies in detention

Mamadou Saidou Bah, bodyguard of the opposition **Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)** party leader **Cellou Dalein Diallo**, died on 10 May while under provisional detention.¹ State prosecutor **Sydy Souleymane Ndiaye** claims this was a natural death related to illness:

*"[Doctors] found that Bah suffered from cervical pains, severe headaches and persistent fever... Despite all efforts, Bah died from the aforementioned conditions."*²

The UFDG, on the other hand, has accused the government of repressive detention methods and human rights violations, referring to President **Alpha Condé's** (2010-present) "*despotic regime*".³ In a statement, the UFDG said,

*"[Condé] continues to violate, kill, and oppress peaceful citizens with the utmost impunity, in the absence of any recourse. This is the due to the lack of a free and independent justice system."*⁴

UFDG leader Diallo stated that he feels his party's members are politically targeted:

*"I am bruised and saddened because of this death, one too many for which I again blame Condé. We are up to 73 deaths in our party [because of] security forces' savage repression since the [he] took power in 2010."*⁵

Bah's family members, including his wife, also hold the president responsible for his death.⁶

Police arrested Bah, together with 19 other UFDG supporters, reportedly in relation to the death of journalist **El Hadj Mohamed Diallo** in February (see *ARC Briefing Guinea February 2016*).⁷ The government charged Bah and the other suspects with "*assassination, complicity in assassination, voluntary knocks and injuries, and non-assistance to a person in danger*".⁸ One of Bah's lawyers, **Alsény Diallo**, had said three other indicted suspects were ill and, a week before Bah's death, requested provisional leave for health treatment, which the lawyer claims was initially denied.⁹ On 6 May,

¹ Le Jour Guinée, 19 May 2016.

² Africaguinée, 11 May 2016.

³ www.ufdgoline.org

⁴ www.ufdgoline.org

⁵ VOA, 19 May 2016.

⁶ VOA, 19 May 2016.

⁷ Jeune Afrique, 11 May 2016.

⁸ Jeune Afrique, 11 May 2016.

⁹ Jeune Afrique, 11 May 2016.

Ndiaye authorised external hospitalisation for the four detainees including Bah.¹⁰ **Aboubacar Sylla**, another of Bah's lawyers, condemned irregularities that occur in legal procedures against UFDG supporters:

*"I'd like to point out that whenever it has to do with UFDG judiciary cases, concerning the institution, its officials and supporters, unfortunately... we witness things that you could call 'jurisprudential abnormality'."*¹¹

One of the UFDG's lawyers, **Foromou Haba**, likened the **Maison Centrale** prison, where the suspects are held, to a concentration camp:

*"Today the Maison Centrale is a concentration camp by configuration, by its overpopulation; this is because the people in charge of administering the centre are lacking means. The state is responsible for everything that happens there, because there are all means to monitor it... It is the state's indifference in the treatment of its detainees, which considers them already as guilty, that leads to the degradation of the health of our clients in general. Bah in particular alerted them of his ill health as soon as he entered the facility. They had even complained that the facilities were unhygienic, damaged and unfit for use."*¹²

Global Witness report accuses Sable Mining of bribing government officials

NGO **Global Witness** published a report on 11 May alleging that **Phil Edmonds** and **Andrew Groves' Sable Mining Africa Ltd.** bribed Guinean and **Liberian** officials in order to acquire mining concessions.¹³ The publication of the report highlights the high corruption risks in the Guinean mining sector. Global Witness' report, *The Deceivers*, alleges that Edmonds and Groves "*fleec[ed] millions from investors as they carved out an African business empire with bribery and dirty tricks*".¹⁴ Edmonds and Groves headed several companies listed on the **Alternative Investment Market (AIM)** at the **London Stock Exchange (LSE)**, and have an extensive investment portfolio across the African continent.¹⁵ The report alleges that Sable Mining backed Condé's presidential campaign, courted Condé's son, **Alpha Mohamed Condé**, and "*[paid] millions to one of his close friends to advance their business with bribery*".¹⁶ In Liberia, Global Witness alleges that Sable paid "*hundreds of thousands of dollars*" to government officials. Sable claims that if bribery occurred in Guinea, it was without their knowledge.¹⁷

Global Witness claims to have acquired a set of leaked e-mails and documents that appear to show that Sable was worried that a change of government ahead of the 2010 presidential election could increase the price of bribes.¹⁸ Sable was reportedly concerned about its ability to maintain its **Mount Nimba** mine.¹⁹ In one thread, Sable's then Guinea agent, **Aboubacar Sampil**, allegedly stated,

*"...once we get there on a plane with [the] presi[dent], the future head of the country, and two 'big-shots' from a big western company, trust me, prices will inflate like crazy. Folks in the admin will try to get a lot, lot more for each step, leading to a minimum of about \$500,000 not including the [presumably mining] minister's share."*²⁰

¹⁰ Jeune Afrique, 11 May 2016.

¹¹ RFI, 11 May 2016.

¹² Source, interview with ARC analyst, Conakry

¹³ www.globalwitness.org

¹⁴ www.globalwitness.org

¹⁵ www.globalwitness.org

¹⁶ www.globalwitness.org

¹⁷ www.globalwitness.org

¹⁸ www.globalwitness.org

¹⁹ www.globalwitness.org

²⁰ www.globalwitness.org

Sable allegedly tried to become close with Condé's son, Alpha Mohamed Condé, so that his father, on becoming president, would protect Sable's interests.²¹ Global Witness claims that Sable paid for Condé's flights, arranged meetings with Liberian ministers and heads of **South African** intelligence, and offered a loan for a helicopter.²² The same leaked e-mails appear to quote Mohamed Condé as saying,

*"[w]e look forward to bringing this political collaboration to life. It will make my dad all the more comfortable to support our business partnerships and trust us as a team to be solution providers for many of the challenges he will face."*²³

Global Witness also alleges that the exploration area that the government granted to Sable's Mount Nimba mine in 2012 overlapped with the **Mount Nimba Strict Nature Reserve** – a **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)** World Heritage Site.²⁴ Environment minister **Samady Touré** had at the time expressed his concern to the mining ministry that this would "*contravene commitments made by our government to the international community*".²⁵ Recordings appear to show that Sable paid for the renovation of the local prefect's house, as well as 11 motorcycles and pick-up trucks for local environmental and mining officials.²⁶

Groves and Edmonds responded to Global Witness' allegations in a letter addressed to the NGO on 22 April and made public on the Global Witness website.²⁷ It clarified that:

- Edmonds stepped down from Sable's board in October 2014, and had no continuing involvement in the company;
- Sable considers the contents and tone of the report "*inflammatory and prejudiced*";
- Sable questions the legitimacy of testimonies from **Vivek Solanki** and **Heine van Niekerk**;
- Sable accuses Global Witness of wanting to "*increase [its] own profile in the media... both obnoxious and morally abhorrent*", and "*attempting to corrupt the mainstream media in the process*".²⁸

In a separate letter Sable alleged that unidentified third parties are seeking to undermine the Guinean government: "*[The] third party has actively contacted multiple publications to achieve these objectives*".²⁹ Sable refused to address the substantial contents of the report, alleging that the media is not evenhanded in its coverage of the company.

*"Sable has been unfairly treated and misrepresented in the past and nothing in your [Global Witness'] recent conduct or correspondence suggests to us that Global Witness has any intention to treat Sable or the individuals concerned in a fair and reasonable manner."*³⁰

Mines minister **Abdoulaye Magassouba** and justice minister **Cheick Sacko** have both said the government will examine Sable's activities.³¹ Government spokesperson **Damantang Albert Camara** claims that the government will work with Global Witness to gather evidence for a judicial investigation into the allegations:

*"The priority is to get together all the evidence alleged in the report. After that we will decide the next step. Condé wants to manage the mining sector transparently."*³²

²¹ www.globalwitness.org

²² www.globalwitness.org

²³ www.globalwitness.org

²⁴ www.globalwitness.org

²⁵ www.globalwitness.org

²⁶ www.globalwitness.org

²⁷ www.globalwitness.org

²⁸ www.globalwitness.org

²⁹ www.globalwitness.org

³⁰ www.globalwitness.org

³¹ Reuters, 20 May 2016.

³² Reuters, 20 May 2016.

President Condé has rejected the allegations in the report, claiming that he has “*nothing to hide*” and that none of his family member is involved in bribery.³³

“No family member of mine is implicated in anything corrupt. If my wife brings me a report, the next day, I divorce... Seeing as they can’t touch me, they attack my son, but this does not affect me... This makes me laugh. I am not obsessed by NGOs, they can write what they wish.”³⁴

This is not the first time that there have been allegations of corruption in the mining sector in Guinea. In its lawsuit against **Brazil-based Vale**, **United Kingdom (UK)-based BSG Resources (BSGR)** and its founder **Beny Steinmetz** over the **Simandou North** iron ore concessions, UK-based **Rio Tinto Plc** alleged that bribery might have been standard practice in obtaining concessions (see *ARC Briefing Guinea November 2015*).³⁵

Inflammatory intercommunity tension at the Mali border

A small community from the northern town of **Kantédou-Balandou** and the **Malian** town of **Niawouleni** clashed on 5 May. Tensions in the region are longstanding.³⁶ The two groups reportedly fought over a plot of land that was thought to have gold deposits. The clashes resulted in the death of six people and fourteen injured.³⁷ The porous nature of the border between the two countries has led to escalation of the conflict. Government spokesperson Camara said the government had instructed local authorities to increase security measures in order to reduce the potential for continued violence.³⁸

Outbreaks of violence at the Mali-Guinea border are not new. Two people died in intercommunity clashes in December 2015, and four in June of the same year.³⁹ The violence is often related to speculative mining prospects. The government’s response shows that it is relatively unconcerned with the issue, perhaps because of the remoteness and sparse population of the area.

Implications

Bah’s death in detention highlights the potential for mistreatment of detained suspects, who, in this case, are in opposition to the government. If the UFDG’s figures of deaths in detention of opposition members since Condé’s accession to power are accurate, it would support their claim that detainees are held in severely inadequate conditions. Furthermore, it could support opposition allegations that Condé is actively persecuting their members.

If the Global Witness allegations are true, it would further increase corruption concerns in the mining sector following the investigation into BSGR’s acquisition of **Rio Tinto**’s concession in 2010 (see *ARC Briefing Guinea November 2015* and *February 2016*). This could trigger further investigations into other concessions granted during and before Condé’s term in power.

The tension at the Mali border is longstanding, and the regularity of the violence indicates government failures to contain it. The government’s limited response may show that it does not see much risk for an increase in violence beyond isolated incidents.

³³ Bloomberg, 16 May 2016.

³⁴ Jeune Afrique, 17 May 2016.

³⁵ www.riotinto.com/media/media-releases-237_10305.aspx

³⁶ Africaguinée, 5 May 2016.

³⁷ Source, journalist, Conakry

³⁸ Africaguinée, 5 May 2016.

³⁹ Multiple sources: Africaguinée, 22 Dec 2015; L’indépendant, 9 Jun 2015.

About Africa Risk Consulting:

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