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Government security forces increasingly crack down on opposition-led protests against the government's failure to respect the 8 August political agreement. Union des Forces Republicaines (UFR) leader Sidiya Toure resigns as high representative of the president. Chinese-Guinean mining consortium Société Minière de Boke (SMB) signs three agreements worth \$3 billion with the Guinean government to develop and exploit bauxite mines in Boke region in north-west Guinea.

Security forces continue to crack down on opposition-led protests

Guinean authorities are increasingly resorting to violence in the wake of frequent protests related to the on-going socio-political crisis. The opposition has cited the presidential coalition's failure to honour the 8 August political agreement as the main reason for its continuous demonstrations. The possibility of President **Alpha Conde** (2010-present) seeking a third presidential term has also spurred opposition calls for regular protests.

Security forces broke up a peaceful march organised by the opposition **Union des Forces Démocratique de Guinée (UFDG)** in the **Conakry** district of **Ratoma** on 22 November, and stopped the convoy of UFDG leader **Cellou Dalein Diallo** on his way to the march.¹ The previous night, police arrested seven UFDG members and accused them of carrying out "*political sensitisation campaigns*" without authorisation.² Following the disrupted protests, Diallo repeated that protests will continue until the government fully respects the political agreement of 8 August.³ In terms of this agreement, the government was to divide the councils whose results were disputed following the 4 February communal elections between the ruling **Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen Arc-en-ciel (RPG Arc-en-ciel)** and the UFDG (see *ARC Guinea Briefing August 2018*).⁴ In addition, it promised that victims of election and political-related violence would receive financial compensation and the government would look into the possible release of imprisoned opposition supporters.⁵ However, the RPG Arc-en-ciel did not adhere to these directives, which led to the installation of councillors whom the UFDG believes are not supposed to hold such positions (see *ARC Guinea Briefing October 2018*).⁶ Diallo called for the removal of municipal councillors whom he said had been illegally installed, and for access to justice for victims of protest-related violence.⁷ Diallo also called for the demilitarisation of the Ratoma district.⁸

The defence ministry refuted allegations on 24 November of security forces using disproportionate force against protestors.⁹ The ministry also denied its involvement in the death of two young

¹ Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

² Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

³ Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

⁵ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

⁶ Jeune Afrique, 16 Oct 2018

⁷ Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

⁸ Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

⁹ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

protestors on 7 November, citing lack of evidence.¹⁰ However, witnesses claimed that they had seen soldiers wearing red berets kill the two individuals.¹¹ The defence ministry justified the recurring protests as a reason to increase the presence of security forces, including the deployment of mixed patrols consisting of police officers, gendarmes and soldiers.¹² The ministry said that sending mixed patrols was in order to combat criminality.¹³

Civil society organisation **Balai Citoyen** is against the police directorate and defence ministry's decision to send out mixed patrols, saying the constitution does not permit the use of soldiers for the maintenance of public order.¹⁴ Balai Citoyen claims the presence of more security forces may trigger further violent incidents.¹⁵ The defence ministry responded that the highest-ranking gendarme or police officer available, rather than soldiers, would be in charge of mixed patrol units.¹⁶ Despite these explanations, **Alseny Sall**, head of programmes at the **Organisation Guinéenne de Defense des Droits de l'Homme (OGDDH)** (Guinean organisation for the defence of human rights), expressed concern that mixed patrols were only sent to areas with a notable presence of opposition supporters.¹⁷ Alseny Sall described this deployment as "*illegal and inopportune*".¹⁸ The director of information and public relations at the defence ministry, **Elhadj Cellou Camara**, said that exceptional situations, such as a threat to national security, necessitated the use of soldiers for public order maintenance.¹⁹ Camara denied that security forces were only being sent to opposition strongholds and reminded the general public that mixed patrols would be sent out if demonstrations broke out.²⁰

Police used tear gas to disrupt demonstrators who took to the streets again on 29 November. The **Femmes de l'Opposition Reublicain** (women of the republican opposition), had announced on 26 November that they would stage a demonstration against the increasing number of politically related deaths.²¹ Since 2011, an estimated 103 persons in Guinea have died as a result of political violence.²² In the wake of another violent protest, UFDG vice president **Fode Ousso Fofana** told opposition supporters the party would organise similar action again.²³ The UFDG announced plans on 6 December to hold a march on 13 December.²⁴ In the meantime, the opposition **Bloc Liberal (BL)** decided on 7 December to undertake a four-day hunger strike in response to the continuous repression of opposition supporters by security forces.²⁵

Guinea has also been rocked by a teachers' strike since 3 October.²⁶ Teachers have been protesting for higher salaries and the government has repeatedly arrested them during their protest action.²⁷ Similar protest action took place in July with demonstrations against increased fuel prices (see *ARC Briefing Guinea August 2018*). Violent incidents between opposition supporters and security forces are likely to continue if the government fails to address the opposition's concerns. This will further reduce the possibility of holding legislative elections, originally scheduled to take place in 2016. These

¹⁰ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹¹ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹² RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹³ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹⁴ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹⁵ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹⁶ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹⁷ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹⁸ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

¹⁹ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

²⁰ RFI, 24 Nov 2018

²¹ Aminata.com, 26 Nov 2018

²² Aminata.com, 28 Nov 2018

²³ Aminata.com, 2 Dec 2018

²⁴ Aminata.com, 6 Dec 2018

²⁵ RFI, 7 Dec 2018

²⁶ Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

²⁷ Aminata.com, 22 Nov 2018

have not been organised due to the ongoing political impasse between the opposition and the presidential coalition.

Toure resigns as high representative of the president

Guinea's on-going political crisis has prompted opposition **Union des Forces Republicaines (UFR)** leader **Sidiya Toure** to resign from his position as the high representative of the president of the republic.²⁸ Toure's resignation signals the end of the alliance which the UFR had established in February with the RPG Arc-en-ciel to contest communal elections.²⁹ Because Toure no longer has a position with government, he is likely to return to political activity as a full-fledged opposition member. Toure, who is a former prime minister, was initially appointed as the high representative of the president of the republic in January 2016.³⁰ However, in a post on social media site **Twitter** on 11 December, Toure said his role did not enable him to provide solutions to Guinea's crisis and hope to the Guinean people.³¹ Toure described his disappointment at being unable to influence the current state of affairs, especially with respect to the imprisonment of opposition supporters after the 4 February communal elections, an act he condemned.³² Toure also claimed that President Conde did not take into account any of the advice he provided in the areas of agriculture, health, and energy provision.³³

Toure's resignation follows that of former citizenship and national unity minister **Khalifa Gassama Diaby**, who left his position on 14 November.³⁴ Gassama Diaby had also expressed his dismay at the government's inaction, particularly with respect to the ongoing socio-political crisis, which has become increasingly violent since February.³⁵ Toure appears to be trying to disassociate himself from the accusations of poor governance against Conde and his government.³⁶ Toure heads Guinea's third largest political party and may be trying to position himself and his party as a moderate electoral alternative to the presidential coalition and the UFDG-led opposition.³⁷ Toure had already stated that the UFR would present candidate lists for the upcoming legislative elections.³⁸

The successive resignations highlight the growing discontent around President Conde's handling of the ongoing socio-political crisis as well the possibility of his seeking a third presidential term. However, it is unlikely that there will be any significant departure of members of the ruling RPG Arc-en-ciel who are in government.

Mining consortium signs agreements worth \$3 billion with Guinean government

Chinese-Guinean mining consortium **Société Minière de Boké (SMB)** signed three agreements worth \$3 billion with the Guinean government on 26 November to develop and exploit bauxite mines in north-west Guinea.³⁹ As a result of these agreements, Guinea will receive significant investments and infrastructure upgrades as well as an increase in bauxite production in this area.⁴⁰ SMB is a subsidiary of **Singapore**-based **SMB Winning**, which was established in 2015.⁴¹ The recently signed agreements include the construction of a 135 km railway line from **Boffa** to **Boké**, which is expected

²⁸ Jeune Afrique, 12 Dec 2018

²⁹ Jeune Afrique, 12 Dec 2018

³⁰ DW, 11 Dec 2018

³¹ RFI, 11 Dec 2018

³² RFI, 11 Dec 2018

³³ Fasozine, 12 Dec 2018

³⁴ Jeune Afrique, 16 Nov 2018

³⁵ Jeune Afrique, 16 Nov 2018

³⁶ Le Pays, 12 Dec 2018

³⁷ Jeune Afrique, 12 Dec 2018

³⁸ Jeune Afrique, 12 Dec 2018

³⁹ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴⁰ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴¹ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

to create 10,000 jobs during its construction from 2019 to 2022.⁴² The government initially announced construction of this railway in December 2017.⁴³

The agreements also provide for the production and exploitation of new bauxite mines in the neighbouring **Telimele** prefecture as well as the construction of an alumina refinery in the **Boké Special Economic Zone**.⁴⁴ The alumina refinery will have an annual production capacity of 1 million tonnes, and its construction will necessitate an investment of \$700m - \$900m.⁴⁵ SMB chairman **Fadi Wanzi** said the alumina plant will create added value, and the project will improve Guinea's commercial development and facilitate its drive towards industrialisation.⁴⁶ Mines and geology minister **Abdoulaye Magassouba** said the conventions represent

"...the president's desire to locally transform local resources and make the mining sector a pillar of development and a stimulus for economic integration".⁴⁷

In a further sign of SMB's desire to cement its strong position in Guinea's mining sector, President Condé inaugurated a 16.5km road linking Boké to the port of **Katougouma** and funded by SMB to the tune of \$7m, on 22 November.⁴⁸ An operation centre commissioned on the same day in **Kasmar** sub-prefecture will control shipping traffic for vessels transporting bauxite.⁴⁹

SMB commenced mining activities in Guinea in 2015 and has seen bauxite production increase from 12 million tonnes (2016) to 31 million tonnes (2017).⁵⁰ SMB intends to double this figure thanks to the discovery of mining deposits in localities of **Santou** and **Houda** in Telimele prefecture.⁵¹ SMB estimates an additional 10 million tonnes will be produced when production begins in 2022, with a subsequent rise to 20 million tonnes (2023) and 30 million tonnes by 2024.⁵² The delivery of bauxite ore from these new production areas to the river port of **Dapilon** in **Kolaboni** prefecture will require the construction of certain infrastructure.⁵³ This includes six bridges and two tunnels, requiring an investment of \$1.2 billion.⁵⁴ Technical studies for the project were slated to begin in late 2018, construction to commence in 2019 and operations to start in 2022.⁵⁵

SMB's announcement of impending investments demonstrates the increasing attractiveness of Guinea's bauxite sector, particularly for Chinese firms. China is the world's largest producer of aluminum, which is made from bauxite.⁵⁶ Guinea currently possesses one third of the world's bauxite resources and recently surpassed **Brazil** as the third largest producer of the mineral.⁵⁷ The Boké region reportedly holds 25 billion tonnes of bauxite reserves.⁵⁸ The Chinese preference for Guinean bauxite has also been influenced by the termination of bauxite exports from **Indonesia** and **Malaysia** to China since 2014 and 2015 respectively.⁵⁹ The ban by Indonesia was instituted in order to spur

⁴² Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴³ Jeune Afrique, 4 Dec 2017

⁴⁴ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴⁵ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴⁶ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴⁷ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁴⁸ Agence Ecofin, 22 Nov 2018

⁴⁹ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵⁰ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵¹ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵² Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵³ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵⁴ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵⁵ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁵⁶ Jeune Afrique, 14 Mar 2018

⁵⁷ Jeune Afrique, 14 Mar 2018

⁵⁸ Jeune Afrique, 14 Mar 2018

⁵⁹ Jeune Afrique, 14 Mar 2018

higher value smelting industries⁶⁰ while Malaysia applied the prohibition to force miners to meet environmental standards.⁶¹

However, there are several possible challenges to SMB's deeper engagement in this sector.⁶² SMB suspended mining activities in April 2017 due to protests against the lack of access to basic social services in the region, despite the robust mining activity taking place there.⁶³ According to SMB, the renewed engagement will see the development of infrastructure and the development of jobs, which will not only benefit the mining sector but also have an impact on agriculture and general commerce.⁶⁴ However the alumina refinery will require significant energy and access will be highly dependent on the commissioning of the **Souapiti Hydroelectric Dam**.⁶⁵

Firms without Chinese ties have also manifested interest in the Guinean bauxite sector. **Netherlands-based Metalcorp Group** signed an agreement with the Guinean government on 26 April to invest \$1.6 billion in Metalcorp subsidiary, **Société des Bauxites de Guinée (SBG)** (see *ARC Guinea Briefing May 2018*).⁶⁶ Guinea has seen a 33% increase in bauxite production since 2016 due to high prices.⁶⁷ It is estimated that investments in the aluminium and bauxite sub-sectors could reach \$7.5 billion from 2017-2020 on the back of a 5% increase in global demand for these commodities.⁶⁸ These investments will provide Guinea with much needed investment, which will stimulate job creation and generate revenue that the government can use for socio-economic projects to improve the lives of Guineans. For potential investors, these engagements demonstrate that Guinea is an investment destination with significant potential, particularly in the mining domain.

Planner

2019 (**Guinea**) Government to hold legislative elections (date to be determined)

Chronology

13 Dec 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Agence Ecofin*. The **Agence Française de Développement (AFD)** pledges to provide Guinea with \$500m in development assistance;

12 Dec 2018 **Paris (France)** *RFI*. France-based **Groupe Bolloré** begins court examination at the **Tribunal de Paris** (Paris tribunal) on allegations of using undue influence and corruption to obtain concession contracts at the ports of **Lome (Togo)** and **Conakry (Guinea)**;

11 Dec 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *RFI*. Leader of the opposition **Union des Forces Republicaines (UFR)** leader **Sidiya Toure** resigns as the higher representative of the president of the republic;

26 Nov 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. **Chinese-Guinean consortium Société Minière de Boke (SMB)** signs three agreements worth \$3 billion with the Guinean government to develop and exploit bauxite mines as well as build infrastructure in **Boké** region;

22 Nov 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Aminata.com*. Guinean security forces break up opposition led demonstrations against the non-application of the 8 August political agreement;

⁶⁰ Reuters, 12 Jan 2017

⁶¹ Reuters, 6 Jul 2017

⁶² Jeune Afrique, 14 Mar 2018

⁶³ Jeune Afrique, 14 Mar 2018

⁶⁴ Jeune Afrique, 26 Nov 2018

⁶⁵ Jeune Afrique, 4 Dec 2017

⁶⁶ Jeune Afrique, 2 May 2018

⁶⁷ Jeune Afrique, 2 May 2018

⁶⁸ Jeune Afrique, 2 May 2018

