

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Guinea Summary 23 January 2025

Junta leader Mamadi Doumbouya (2021-present) promises to fix a date for the constitutional referendum but does not give any further specifics. Junta repression of the opposition continues into 2025 with demonstrators shot dead in the capital Conakry and opposition politicians jailed. The Chinese state-owned State Power Investment Corporation of China (SPIC) signs a contract with the government for the construction of an alumina refinery that should be operational in 2027. South Africa-based telecommunications company MTN exits Guinea.

Doumbouya promises a date for a referendum

During his **New Year's** address to the nation, junta leader General **Mamadi Doumbouya** (2021-present) announced that he would issue a decree that would fix the date for a constitutional referendum but only after a panel of experts once again studied the proposed new constitution.¹ The political opposition and civil society have indicated that it is no longer satisfied with the annual return of unfulfilled promises - civil society activist **Lamarana Bah**, noted:

"I remember that in 2021, 2023 and even in 2023 he has made the same...promises, which he has not respected... We are tired of those promises."²

No date is available for any of the polls that would follow a constitutional referendum, nor is their order known. Government spokesperson **Ousmane Gaoual Diallo** told **Radio France Internationale (RFI)** that a referendum may be held in May, a position he would only be able to maintain with the explicit consent of Doumbouya.³ However, whether that consent existed at the time is unknown. During the same interview, Gaoual Diallo said that Doumbouya should be a presidential candidate but again, gave no date for the presidential election. Since by the junta and its government's own admission, very little administrative and logistical infrastructure is in place to make this happen, polls are unlikely in 2025.⁴

Among the missing items is a reliable voters register. Doumbouya hinted at this when he mentioned the necessity of a census prior to a referendum or any election.⁵ Guineans are required to vote where they are registered but large-scale internal migration ensures that it is virtually impossible to tell who lives where and thus polls of this nature take long to prepare.

In the meantime, 54 political parties remain suspended, pending examination regarding the issue of compliance with existing laws, as confirmed by territorial administration and decentralisation minister **Ibrahima Kalil Condé**.⁶ All parties must prove before the judicial authorities that they comply and in the meantime, no foreign entity is allowed to work with any of them.⁷ All major parties that have played a role, either in government or in opposition, are among them, including the former ruling **Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée (RPG)** of deposed president **Alpha Condé** (2010-2021), the **Union ds forces démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)** of former prime minister **Cellou**

¹ Lejour.info, 31 Dec 2024; Kaloumpresse, 1 Jan 2025

² Ledjely.com, 7 Jan 2025

³ RFI, 9 Jan 2025

⁴ Trtafrika.com, 10 Jan 2025; Kaloumpresse, 1 Jan 2025

⁵ Kaloumpresse, 1 Jan 2025

⁶ Guineenews, 9 Jan 2025

⁷ Le Monde, 10 Jan 2025

Dalein Diallo and the **Union des forces républicaines (UFR)** of former prime minister **Sidya Touré**. All party leaders are currently in exile.

Junta maintains its repression of dissent into 2025

Civil society and political organisation **Forces vives** declared on 25 December that it would no longer recognise the transition as legitimate, announcing new demonstrations starting 6 January. The government ban these on 5 January, but the rallies went ahead and skirmishes took place between demonstrators and the security forces in **Conakry** and other urban centres.⁸ The Forces vives later announced that the repression had left three young men dead in the Guinean capital.⁹

One day after the demonstrations, a court in Conakry sentenced opposition politician **Aliou Bah** to two years in prison for insulting the head of state.¹⁰ The charges stem back to a meeting Bah addressed on 30 November 2024 during which gave his assessment of the junta's flagship project, the future **Simandou** iron ore mine, its associated infrastructure plus the **Simandou 2040** development project attached to it.¹¹ In his New Year address, Doumbouya claimed that the project had already created 33,000 jobs, a claim that cannot be independently verified.¹²

In his November speech, Bah dismissed all claims the junta had made concerning Simandou. Among his critiques was what he denounced as the opaque recruitment process for project-related jobs and junta lies about the multifunctional nature of the so-called **Trans Guinea Railway**, the 650km connection between the future iron ore mines and the yet to be constructed seaport near **Forécariah**. The railway was supposed to be used for the transport of iron ore, people and merchandise but Bah claimed that the projected railway track bypasses urban centres like **Mamou** and **Kindia**, thus depriving these populations of rail transport.

Bah alleged that plans for this port have been discreetly abandoned and that off-ramps and barges will be used to get the iron ore out. He also said that households who saw their fields and homes damaged as a result of mine-related infrastructure projects have not been properly compensated. Since Simandou is Doumbouya's personal flagship project, the response to Bah's comments was predictably swift and the sentencing harsh. UFDG leader Diallo qualified the sentencing as "*absurd*".¹³

State Power Investment Corporation of China (SPIC) to build an alumina refinery

Chinese state-owned **State Power Investment Corporation of China (SPIC)** signed a contract with mines and geology minister **Bouna Sylla** on 23 December 2024 to build an alumina refinery that it says will begin production towards the end of 2027.¹⁴ SPIC is the successor company to **China Power Investment Corporation**, after a merger with the **State Nuclear Power Technology Corporation**, which built two major hydro-electric dams in Guinea under Condé. SPIC currently exports about three million tonnes of bauxite per annum and has been active in Guinea since 2021.¹⁵ The new plant will have an annual capacity of 1.2 million tonnes.

Once completed, it will only be the second alumina refinery in Guinea, next to the plant at **Fria**, which is more than 60 years old and has been under management of **Russia's RusAl** since 2002.¹⁶ That plant has a maximum capacity of 700,000 tonnes per annum and currently produces 600,000 tonnes. A substantial number of different bauxite mining companies have submitted proposals to successive governments since the 1990s to build refineries but none have ever been realised, in part because the

⁸ Guineenews.org, 6 Jan 2025

⁹ Guineematin.com, 8 Jan 2025; Visionguinee.info, 9 Jan 2025

¹⁰ RFI, 10 Jan 2025

¹¹ The speech can be accessed through YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CNhm_R4vweg

¹² Kaloumpresse, 1 Jan 2025

¹³ Guineenews.org, 7 Jan 2025

¹⁴ Visionguinee, 30 Dec 2024; Guineenews.org, 30 Dec 2024; dabafinance.com, 6 Jan 2025

¹⁵ mining-technology.com, 3 Jan 2025; projetafriquechine, 7 Jan 2025

¹⁶ mining.com, 2 Jan 2025

electricity required for making such plants work was never available until the 2010s. SPIC will build its own 250MW power plant next to the planned refinery.¹⁷

A current price, alumina fetches approximately eight times more per tonne - over \$600 as opposed to \$74 - than bauxite.¹⁸ The junta understands that Guinea stands to gain from having companies invest in the production of this half fabricate. In April 2022, Doumbouya told bauxite companies that he expected concrete time-tabled plans for the construction of refineries. When few were offered, he decided to put pressure on those who had promised to build them and ensure that the companies kept their promises. In November for example, the junta blocked bauxite exports by the **Emirati-owned Guinea Aluminium Company** to make it speed up its refinery project, the non-binding contract for which had been signed in June 2024.¹⁹

MTN sells subsidiary to the Guinean government

South African based telecommunications company **MTN** completed the sale of its Guinean operations to the government on 30 December 2024, as part of an ongoing operation to streamline and optimise the company's performance.²⁰ MTN had been active in Guinea since 2007 but MTN CEO **Ralph Mupita** noted that the market is "subscale" and unable to fund its own growth.²¹ At the time of its departure, MTN was the second largest operator in Guinea with three million subscribers and 24% of the market, well behind **French-owned Orange** at nearly 70% but well before the much smaller **Cellcom**.²² Nevertheless, together with neighbouring **Guinea Bissau**, from where it departed earlier in 2024, Guinea represented less than 2% of MTN's overall revenue.²³

There were also other reasons for MTN's departure, particularly its run-ins with various administrations, specifically over payments of taxes and levies. It happened in 2011 and again in January 2024, when Guinea's regulatory authorities closed the company offices in Conakry. Now it is the state, which bought 75% of MTN shares for the symbolic sum of 1 Guinean franc, that will have to settle these outstanding payments and essentially find a way to pay itself.²⁴ Local media has referred the sale as a nationalisation and consider the acquisition of MTN a full-on nationalisation that will benefit local business operators.²⁵

Planner

Jan - Mar 2025 **(Guinea)** Decree expected to fix the date for the constitutional referendum
 TBC **Guinea** Constitutional referendum expected
 TBC **Guinea** Presidential elections
 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** Start of exploitation at the **Simandou** iron ore project

Chronology

20 Jan 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Mining Weekly*. Government approves **Australia-**headquartered **Predictive Discovery's** environment and social-impact assessment for its **Bankan** gold project;
 16 Jan 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *AP News*. Coalition group **Forces Vives de Guinée** calls for its members to withdraw from the transitional legislative body following the junta missing its deadline to return to democratic rule

¹⁷ mining.com, 2 Jan 2025; mining-technology.com, 3 Jan 2025

¹⁸ London Metal Exchange website, 22 Jan 2025

¹⁹ mining-technology.com, 3 Jan 2025; mining.com, 2 Jan 2025

²⁰ datacenterdynamics.com, 6 Jan 2024

²¹ datacenterdynamics.com, 6 Jan 2024

²² Business & Finance International, 30 Dec 2024

²³ datacenterdynamics.com, 6 Jan 2024

²⁴ Business & Finance International, 30 Dec 2024; africaguinee.com, 4 Jan 2025

²⁵ emergencegn.net, 2 Jan 2025

11 Jan 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. Guinea lifts the suspension of the issuance of approvals to NGOs and associations

6 Jan 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** *VOA*. Opposition protests in Conakry calling for a return to democratic rule disrupt transport and trade

31 Dec 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africanews*. Junta leader General **Mamady Doumbouya** in his **New Year's** address says there will be a return to constitutional order in 2025

30 Dec 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *MTN. South Africa*-headquartered **MTN** confirms it has sold its Guinean subsidiary, **MNT Guinea-Conakry**, to the Guinean government

26 Dec 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *RFI*. Opposition and civil society groups say they will no longer recognise the transitional government after 31 December

19 Dec 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *APA News*. **United States** assistant secretary of state for **Africa, Molly Phee**, expresses disappointment over the delay in the transition in Guinea

18 Dec 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *News Central*. A court sentences former defence minister **Mohamed Diane**, who served between 2015 and 2021, to five years in prison for embezzlement, illicit enrichment, money laundering and corruption of public officials;

14 Dec 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africanews*. A junta spokesperson officially confirms that conditions for the transitional period to end have not been met and that the transition will extend beyond the end of this year, sparking outrage from opposition groups;

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