

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Guinea Summary 27 October 2023

*Syndicat de la presse privée de Guinée (SPPG) (private press union of Guinea) holds a demonstration on 16 October against the restrictions imposed on the news website **Guinée Matin** since August. Police arrest 14 journalists, drawing international condemnation. Conseil National de la Transition (CNT) (national transitional council) on 25 October adopts draft laws related to the *Identification des Personnes physiques* (identification of natural persons) and *Régime de l'Etat civil* (civil status regime), marking a key step in the process of returning to constitutional rule. Aluminium Corp of China (Chalco) on 18 October notifies 806 employees that most of them would be temporarily dismissed as of 23 October for three months, with potential to extend. Chalco says it has lost three months of work this year due to strikes, sometimes called by employees, unions or project-affected populations, resulting in approximate losses of \$185,000, leading to this action.*

Attack and arrests of journalists draw condemnation

Syndicat de la presse privée de Guinée (SPPG) (private press union of Guinea) held a demonstration on 16 October against the restrictions imposed on the news website **Guinée Matin** since August. SPPG noted that since mid-August, **Guinée Matin** has been inaccessible without a VPN with no explanation for this.¹ While organised as a peaceful demonstration, police arrested 14 journalists, including SPPG officials, on charges of “*criminal participation in an illegal assembly*”.² Reports of violence by joint police/gendarmerie forces during the demonstrations was also reported, including reports of tear gas used to disperse the crowds. A video shot by **Espace TV** journalist **Mariama Bhoie Barry** and published on **Guinée Matin** showed how police and gendarmerie insulted, beat and shot tear gas at Barry and other journalists who were reporting on the demonstration.³ Although the ruling military junta banned demonstrations in 2022, the prefecture where the demonstration took place, **Kaloum**, did not ban the demonstration.

The journalists were released from police custody later on 16 October and taken to the Kaloum first instance court immediately to hear the charges against them. The SPPG has called for the court to drop charges against the journalists and condemned the violence that took place on 16 October.⁴ The journalists are set to appear in court again but no date has been set.

United Kingdom-headquartered **Amnesty International** called on the government on 19 October to ensure that the charges were dropped against the journalists and to lift restrictions on certain news sites.⁵ The **United States**-headquartered **Committee to Project Journalists (CPJ)** on 26 October called on the government to not only drop the charges and lift restrictions, but to identify the police officers responsible for arresting and assaulting those who demonstrated.⁶ Communications ministry spokesperson **Azoka Bah** told the CPJ that the government was not responsible for the blocking of the news sites but did not indicate who is, or if the ministry is investigating the limitation on press freedom.

¹ Jeune Afrique, 16 Oct 2023

² Jeune Afrique, 16 Oct 2023

³ CPJ, 26 Oct 2023

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 18 Oct 2023

⁵ Amnesty International, 19 Oct 2023

⁶ CDP, 26 Oct 2023

Opposition **Union des forces républicaines (UFR)** leader **Sidya Touré** also condemned the attack, posting on social media:

“We fought in 2005 to make press freedom a reality in Guinea. There cannot be true democracy without a free press. The violence committed this Monday against journalists, followed by the arrest of 14 of them, is a step backwards.”⁷

Media outlets launched a boycott in May of the press and internet restrictions imposed by authorities. International internet media watchdog **NetBlocks** backed these allegations, reporting on 17 May that the government was restricting social media platforms **Facebook**, **WhatsApp**, **Instagram** and **TikTok** among others. Guinea has a robust media landscape; however, under former president **Alpha Condé** (2010-2021) authorities often tried to censor media outlets that criticised the government or Condé. In the wake of the September 2021 coup, the **Comité national du rassemblement pour le développement (CNRD)** met with France-headquartered **Reporters sans Frontières** and said it would defend press freedoms as enshrined in the constitution. However, in practice the junta is failing to uphold this.⁸

Key step in transition achieved

The **Conseil National de la Transition (CNT)** (national transitional council) on 25 October adopted draft laws related to the **Identification des Personnes physiques** (identification of natural persons) and **Régime de l’Etat civil** (civil status regime), marking a key step in the process of returning to constitutional rule.⁹ Key changes from the first law include protecting personal data of citizens, allowing for better data collection from both local citizens and foreign residents, the allocation of identification numbers, and determining the nominative, personal and biometric identification processes of natural persons in Guinea. Key changes for the second law include modernising the civil status system, creating additional centres for the declaration of civil status and identification, allowing for the digitalisation of civil status documents and covering rules for governing the civil status of Guineans and foreigners.¹⁰

The real-life value add of these systems will be seen in education. Currently, many areas of Guinea do not have schools, despite available funds, due to a lack of reliable statistics on the number of school-age children.

The adoption of these two laws allows the second stage of the transition timeline, the **recensement administratif à vocation d’Etat-civil (RAVEC)** (administrative census for civil status purposes), to begin. Once the RAVEC is complete, the electoral register can be established, the third step in the timeline of return to civilian rule.¹¹ The remaining steps include:

- Developing a new constitution;
- Organising a referendum vote on the constitution;
- Developing new laws;
- Organisation of local and municipal elections;
- Organisation of legislative elections;
- Establishment of necessary institutions;
- Organisation of the presidential election.¹²

Government spokesperson **Ousmane Gaoual Diallo** outlined the status of the transition to civilian rule during an interview with French media outlet **RFI** on 29 September. Diallo affirmed that the transition would end, as planned, at the end of 2024, allowing for presidential elections to take

⁷ Media Guinee, 17 Oct 2023

⁸ RSF, accessed 27 Oct 2023

⁹ Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

¹⁰ Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

¹¹ Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

¹² Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

place.¹³ Diallo also underscored that the transition timeline, which was negotiated with the regional bloc, the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)**, was being adhered to and that every month the committee monitoring the transition meets with ECOWAS, **European Union (EU)** and **G5** representatives to discuss the pace of the transition. Diallo confirmed *“there are no major obstacles that indicate that the deadlines will not be met”*.¹⁴

Chalco slims down operations

Aluminium Corp of China (Chalco) on 18 October notified 806 employees that most of them would be temporarily dismissed as of 23 October for three months, with potential to extend, leaving just 25 local workers and 17 Chinese workers to carry out maintenance and security operations at its bauxite project in **Boffa**. Chalco said it has lost three months of work this year due to strikes, sometimes called by employees, unions or project-affected populations, resulting in approximate losses of \$185,000.¹⁵ Interim community relations superintendent **Alhassane Diallo** confirmed that the company has not even produced 11 million tonnes in 2023, far short of its 18 million tonnes target.

The issues facing Chalco are many. Workers have claimed they are being underpaid, with some asking for up to an 800% increase, while Chalco maintains that not only does it pay its workers fairly, but also provides them with food supplies every quarter and ensures that they are registered at two hospitals and with a Chinese clinic.¹⁶ The Boffa community blames the company for various service delivery failures, which Chalco says unions and weeks recognise as not being the case.

Chalco also turned blame onto the government, noting that there has been no mayor or leadership for the community in two years, claiming that this is the source of the service delivery issues. Although finally only five employees were let go from the company, Chalco noted that this was due to their contracts ending and not being renewed.¹⁷ Whichever way Chalco positions itself, these community issues have existed since 2019 when the communities already complained of poor compensation for their land and non-employment of residents in the area.¹⁸

¹³ RFI, 29 Sep 2023

¹⁴ RFI, 29 Sep 2023

¹⁵ Jeune Afrique, 26 Oct 2023

¹⁶ Jeune Afrique, 26 Oct 2023

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 26 Oct 2023

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 26 Oct 2023

Planner

Dec 2024 - Jan 2025 **Guinea** Presidential elections

31 Mar 2025 **Conakry (Guinea)** Start of exploitation at the **Simandou** iron ore project;

Chronology

24 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Media Guinee*. **Burkina Faso** is reportedly set to open an embassy in Guinea in the coming week after securing a location and appointing an ambassador;

24 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Foreign affairs minister **Morissada Kouyaté** meets with several **European Union** representatives who affirm that Guinea remains an “essential country in a stable region”;

24 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *EU Sanctions*. **European Union** renews sanctions against Guinea for one year until 27 October 2024. The current sanctions consist of asset freezes and travel bans on five individuals;

23 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. **Cour de répression des infractions économiques et financières (CRIEF)** prosecutor **Aly Touré** says that up to 34 financial officials have been banned from travelling amid an investigation into embezzlement;

20 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *North Africa Post*. **India** says it will export rice to seven countries including Guinea after banning exports in July to help meet the needs of its domestic market. Guinea imports approximately 600,000 tonnes of rice per year and is heavily reliant on imports from India;

18 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Discovery Morocco*. Guinea expresses its support for **Morocco’s** autonomy plan for **Western Sahara**;

16 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** court orders the release of three former ministers who served under **Alpha Condé – Ibrahima Kassory Fofana, Mohamed Diané, and Oyé Guilavogui** – who have been incarcerated since 2021 awaiting trial on charges of embezzlement of public funds, illicit enrichment, corruption and money laundering;

11 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. **Mauritania’s** foreign affairs minister, **Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug**, meets with several ministers to discuss deepening cooperation between Guinea and Mauritania;

10 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Intelligence*. Mines minister **Moussa Magassouba** approves the sale of **Société des bauxites de Guinée (SBG)** to local mining company **Kouroussa Mining**;

9 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. **Moucar Bah**, correspondent for **French** media house **Radio France Internationale (RFI)** at the time of the 2009 stadium massacre, delivers his testimony in the massacre’s trial as a key witness;

6 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guinee News*. Guinea launches the **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**-funded **Project for the Prevention of Risks and Opportunities for Human Trafficking and Exploitation in Communities and Municipalities (PROTECT)**;

3 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Media Guinee*. Government aligns itself with the **French** announcement of a ban on burqas in schools, which translates locally to 41,000 girls dropping out of school over the ban;

2 Oct 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Agence Ecofin*. Colonel **Mamady Doumbouya** outlines in his speech to commemorate Guinea’s 65th anniversary of independence that the transition will

focus on promoting good governance, transparency and increasing investment in several sectors;

28 Sep 2023 **Conakry (Guinea) AFP**. International organisations including the **United Nations, European Union, United Kingdom, United States** and regional bloc **Economic Community of West African States** praise the progress Guinea has made in its 2009 stadium massacre trial, stating that the opening of the trial last year was a significant step towards ending a painful chapter in Guinea's history;

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