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The Guinean opposition and the presidential majority reach agreement over the disputed February local election results. Security officials crack down on protests against an increase in fuel prices. Opposition and civil society groups protest the non-transparent granting of a contract concession at the Port Autonome de Conakry to Turkey-based Albayrak.

Opposition and presidential majority reach agreement over local election dispute

Guinea has moved a step closer towards resolving the political impasse over the February local elections and the reality of holding legislative elections in September. The ruling **Rassemblement du Peuple Guinéen Arc-en-ciel (RPG Arc-en-ciel)** and the opposition **Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)** reached consensus on 8 August.¹ Violent protests and civil disobedience movements have engulfed Guinea over the past six months over disputed election results.² The agreement averted, at the last minute, street protests that the UFDG had scheduled for 9 August.³ RPG Arc-en-ciel president **Amadou Damaro Camara** said the opposition would resume participation in the inter-Guinean dialogue process as a result.⁴

UFDG leader **Cellou Dalein Diallo** had called for street protests to resume on 9 August because of the government's failure to apply certain elements of the **Accord Politique** (political agreement) of 12 October 2016 (see *ARC Briefing Guinea July 2018*).⁵ The opposition **Union des forces républicaines (UFR)** supported the decision to protest, despite a government ban on all protests until further notice.⁶ President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present) had promised in April to ensure implementation of the October agreement.⁷ However, the government did not address compensation of opposition supporters who were victims of politically motivated and elections-related violence in February.⁸ It had also not released imprisoned opposition figures and restructured the **Commission Electorale Nationale Indépendante (CENI)** (independent national electoral commission).⁹ The opposition suspended its participation in the inter-Guinean dialogue in June, after Diallo accused the government of acting in bad faith (see *ARC Briefing Guinea June 2018*). Diallo also claimed that President Condé does not want a change of power to occur in 2020.¹⁰

The RPG-Arc-en-ciel delegation met with the UFDG on 8 August. The delegation included territorial administration minister General **Bourema Condé** (also head of the inter-Guinean dialogue committee), minister of state and personal presidential adviser **Tibou Camara** (crisis facilitator), and parliamentary group leader **Amadou Damaro Camara**.¹¹ During the meeting, the opposition raised

¹ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

² RFI, 10 Aug 2018

³ Aminata.com, 4 Aug 2018

⁴ RFI, 10 Aug 2018

⁵ Aminata.com, 4 Aug 2018

⁶ Aminata.com, 5 Aug 2018

⁷ Aminata.com, 4 Aug 2018

⁸ Aminata.com, 4 Aug 2018

⁹ Aminata.com, 4 Aug 2018

¹⁰ Aminata.com, 4 Aug 2018

¹¹ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

concerns about the results of the 4 February local elections that CENI had published.¹² The opposition contested the results of 12 out of 342 localities, which CENI had validated.¹³ The RPG-ARC-en-ciel agreed to give control of the town of **Kindia** to the UFDG and will allow the UFDG to designate 26 heads of districts and neighbourhoods.¹⁴ The opposition will also nominate the mayors of seven rural councils.¹⁵ The UFDG has agreed to leave the town of **Dubreka** in control of the RPG Arc-en-ciel, while the results in Conakry remained unchanged.¹⁶

With respect to the compensation of victims of elections and political-related violence, the RPG Arc-en-ciel representatives stated that the 2018 Finance Law has set aside funds for their assistance.¹⁷ The RPG Arc-en-ciel also promised to take steps towards resolving the issue of opposition detainees.¹⁸ UFDG member of parliament (MP) **Ousmane Gaoual** says the relevant institutions validated the election results even though there had been legal violations that the opposition had noticed.¹⁹ Gaoual said the compromise was thus a victory for the rule of law.²⁰ Adamou Camara described the agreement as “*a bad compromise, but ...better than a good battle*”.²¹ UFR president **Sidiya Toure** criticised the agreement and doubted it would last, as previous agreements between both parties have failed to materialise.²²

The RPG Arc-en-ciel has also agreed to an audit of the electoral register as requested by the opposition.²³ The **European Union (EU)**, **Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)** and **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** will conduct the audit, which aims to establish a credible voters list.²⁴ In June, one of the grounds on which the opposition withdrew from the inter-Guinean dialogue was because President Condé reportedly did not want the EU and the UNDP to be involved in the audit process (see *ARC Briefing Guinea June 2018*). **Mamady Kaba** is head of the audit’s technical committee and will present the findings.²⁵ The audit began on 8 August and will take 25 days, with the possibility of an extension.²⁶ The technical committee will transfer the final results and recommendations to the evaluation committee headed by **Salif Kebe** and CENI.²⁷ The revision of the electoral list still needs to take place before the legislative elections can take place. A date for the elections has yet to be set.²⁸

Guinea appears to be slowly emerging from the political impasse that began in 2016 but escalated after the February local elections. The opposition and ruling party have made significant progress since June towards implementing the main points of the October 2016 accord. Parliament passed the law to reform CENI in July (see *ARC Briefing Guinea July 2018*). The electoral list audit is another important step. While expressing differing opinions, the opposition and ruling party leaders have shown willingness to engage and pursue dialogue as well as make compromises. This is conducive to future cooperation and will eventually lead to the hosting of legislative elections. The electoral reforms yield a greater chance of free and fair elections, which will improve Guinea’s democratic standing and strengthen its political and social stability.

¹² Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

¹³ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

¹⁴ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

¹⁵ RFI, 10 Aug 2018

¹⁶ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

¹⁷ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

¹⁸ Jeune Afrique, 9 Aug 2018

¹⁹ RFI, 10 Aug 2018

²⁰ RFI, 10 Aug 2018

²¹ RFI, 10 Aug 2018

²² RFI, 10 Aug 2018

²³ RFI, 9 Aug 2018

²⁴ RFI, 9 Aug 2018

²⁵ RFI, 9 Aug 2018

²⁶ RFI, 9 Aug 2018

²⁷ RFI, 9 Aug 2018

²⁸ RFI, 9 Aug 2018

Security authorities crack down on fuel price protests

Local civil society group **Forces Sociales de Guinée (FSG)** went ahead with demonstrations against a government-enacted 25% fuel price increase on 22 July despite a ban on protest action.²⁹ **Conakry Region** governor General **Mthurin Bangoura** issued a communiqué on 21 July prohibiting any protest action in the region, in response to the FSG's planned protests.³⁰ The government had not backed down from its fuel price increase despite protests that the **Confédération Nationale des Travailleurs de Guinée (CNTG)** organised in opposition to the price increase (see *ARC Briefing Guinea July 2018*).

Security forces intervened and arrested six demonstrators. National director of police intervention units, General **Befoe Camara**, justified police intervention on the grounds of maintaining law and order.³¹ **Conseil National des Organisations de la Société Civile Guinéen (CNOSC-G)** (national council of Guinean civil society organisations) president **Dansa Kourouma** denounced the police action as a violation of constitutional rights.³² Kourouma warned that protesters would apply other strategies if legal ones are not permitted.³³ CNTG secretary general **Mamadou Mansare** stated that dialogue was no longer an option as a result of the police crackdown on protesters.³⁴ Mansare also said demonstrations will continue until the government reduces fuel prices.³⁵ Mansare recommends that the government take steps to raise the tax on alcohol and tobacco products to raise revenue rather than removing the fuel subsidy.³⁶

The protests have drawn mixed reaction. Labour inspector general **Alya Camara** criticised the increasingly hardline approach of the union leaders.³⁷ However, national unity and citizenship minister **Gassama Diaby** described the ban on protests as a step back for democracy.³⁸ Diaby called the move a violation of the constitution, which guarantees freedom of expression.³⁹ Diaby said he would do his utmost to bring the opposing sides together and create a sense of mutual understanding and ensure government authority is respected.⁴⁰ Political analyst **Ibrahima Diallo** suggests that all stakeholders come together to find a solution that is in the best interest of the nation and ensures stability.⁴¹ UFDG vice president **Fode Oussou Fofana** blames the ongoing crisis on poor governance and suggests the government should present a detailed explanation of the gas price structure and the reason for the increase.⁴² The FSG, for its part, has promised to intensify its civil disobedience campaign.⁴³

The fuel price saga is heading into a second month and shows a growing rift between the government, trade unions and civil society. The government has said it can no longer support fuel subsidies (see *ARC Briefing Guinea July 2018*). However, the unions and civil society appear adamant in their demands. The government's use of force to prevent protests from taking place is counter-productive as it will only make those who are against the decision take a more radical stance on the issue. If the government maintains the price hike, it would be wise to put alternative measures in place to

²⁹ Aminata.com, 23 Jul 2018

³⁰ Aminata.com, 22 Jul 2018

³¹ Aminata.com, 23 Jul 2018

³² Aminata.com, 23 Jul 2018

³³ Aminata.com, 23 Jul 2018

³⁴ Aminata.com, 24 Jul 2018

³⁵ Aminata.com, 23 Jul 2018

³⁶ Vision Guinee, 2 Aug 2018

³⁷ RFI, 24 Jul 2018

³⁸ Aminata.com, 27 Jul 2018

³⁹ Aminata.com, 27 Jul 2018

⁴⁰ Aminata.com, 27 Jul 2018

⁴¹ Aminata.com, 30 July 2018

⁴² Vision Guinee, 2 Aug 2018

⁴³ Aminata.com, 3 Aug 2018

alleviate the effect of the increase on the population. Failure to address popular demands will result in continued protests.

Controversy over contract concession over control of Port Autonome de Conakry

The government has signed a 25-year concession contract with **Turkey-based Albayrak** for the rehabilitation, extension, management, exploitation and maintenance of the **Port Autonome de Conakry**.⁴⁴ The transport ministry predicts the move will see Port Autonome de Conakry revenue increase from \$4.5m in 2017) to \$13m in 2018 and improve overall profitability.⁴⁵ Albayrak is expected to invest \$200m in the first two years of the contract and a further \$500m thereafter.⁴⁶

The **Bureau Syndicale du Port Autonome de Conakry (BSPAC)** (union for the autonomous port of Conakry) expressed its discontent with the decision.⁴⁷ According to BSPAC president **Sory Magassouba**, the contract attribution did not follow standard procedure and took place behind closed doors.⁴⁸ Magassouba accused the government of signing a contract in which Albayrak will not pay port taxes, customs duties or value added tax for 10 years.⁴⁹ Magassouba claimed that Guinean workers will be laid off and that Guinea has only 18% ownership in the port in terms of the agreement.⁵⁰

Magassouba called on port workers to strike from 13 August.⁵¹ President Conde met with union leaders on 11 August to hear their concerns about the contract concession and future of port workers.⁵² Despite the meeting, strike action at the Conakry port began on 13 August.⁵³ BSPAC secretary general **Cheick Toure** called for the cancellation of the contract, fearing it will affect the 715 direct jobs at the port and 9,000 indirect jobs generated by port activity.⁵⁴ CNTG secretary general Mamadou Mansare repeated that the government needs to set aside the contract before negotiations to end the strike can begin.⁵⁵

UFDG leader Cellou Dalein Diallo did not criticise the decision to bring in a private partner to manage the Conakry port.⁵⁶ However, he did criticise the government's approach to awarding the contract, stating it should have undertaken an initial performance evaluation of the port.⁵⁷ Diallo said the selection process should have been more transparent and based on company competence rather than "*personal relations*".⁵⁸ This was in apparent reference to the reported close relationship between President Conde and Turkish president **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** (2014-present).⁵⁹

Transport minister **Aboubacar Sylla** presented a 178-page document on 16 August that outlines the terms of the contract between the Guinean government and Albayrak.⁶⁰ The document stipulates the contract concession will run for 25 years and that 95% of the workforce will be Guinean, while no workers will be laid off.⁶¹ Sylla insists the state's interests were protected in the course of contract

⁴⁴ Vision Guinee, 13 Aug 2018

⁴⁵ Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁴⁶ Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁴⁷ Vision Guinee, 13 Aug 2018

⁴⁸ Vision Guinee, 13 Aug 2018

⁴⁹ Vision Guinee, 13 Aug 2018

⁵⁰ Vision Guinee, 13 Aug 2018

⁵¹ Vision Guinee, 13 Aug 2018

⁵² Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁵³ Vision Guinee, 14 Aug 2018

⁵⁴ Vision Guinee, 14 Aug 2018

⁵⁵ Vision Guinee, 15 Aug 2018

⁵⁶ Vision Guinee, 16 Aug 2018

⁵⁷ Vision Guinee, 16 Aug 2018

⁵⁸ Vision Guinee, 16 Aug 2018

⁵⁹ Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁶⁰ Vision Guinee, 17 Aug 2018

⁶¹ Vision Guinee, 19 Aug 2018

negotiations.⁶² Sylla noted the government brought in an expert from the **African Development Bank** to ensure the contract optimally benefits Guinea.⁶³ Sylla also noted that the contract concession gives the private partner operating rights of the port and not ownership.⁶⁴ Albayrak will be responsible for engagements vis-à-vis the Guinean government.⁶⁵

Sylla justified the contract with Albayrak, stating the need to improve the port's competitiveness. Currently the Port Autonome de Conakry handles 9m tonnes of cargo per year.⁶⁶ This is in contrast to its **West African** counterparts **Dakar** (16m tonnes) and **Abidjan** (21m tonnes).⁶⁷ Sylla insists the port upgrade requires capital that only a private partner could provide.⁶⁸ Despite these explanations, Mansare says protests will continue until the government addresses the CNTG's grievances.⁶⁹

This is the second time in 2018 that the opposition and civil society organisations have accused Guinean authorities of not following proper procedure with respect to contract attribution at the Port Autonome de Conakry. In April, **France's Office central de lutte contre la corruption et les infractions financières et fiscales (OCLCIFI)** (office against corruption and financial and fiscal crimes) launched an investigation into **Vincent Bolloré**.⁷⁰ Bolloré is head of France-based **Bolloré Groupe**, which operates the container terminal of the Port Autonome de Conakry. The charges were based on allegations that the operating contract was granted on the basis of Bolloré's personal relationship with President Conde (see *ARC Briefing Guinea April 2018*). The persistent emergence of alleged corrupt practices in the awarding of contracts might serve as a deterrent to possible investors, as it an issue that has manifested itself in other key domains of the economy. As a result, Guinea may lose opportunities to regional counterparts such as Cote d'Ivoire and Senegal, which are less affected by such issues.

Planner

Sept 2018 (**Guinea**) Government to hold legislative elections (exact date to be determined)
 Oct 2018 (**Guinea**) Guinea celebrates 60 years of independence

Chronology

8 Aug 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Agence Ecofin*. **Guernsey**-registered **Alufer Mining Limited** begins production at the **Bel Air** bauxite mine;
 8 Aug 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Aminata.com*. Government and opposition agree to end dispute over February local election results;
 8 Aug 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)** *RFI*. **European Union, Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie** and **United Nations Development Programme** will carry out electoral list audit;
 30 Jul 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)**. *Vision Guinee*, **Société de Raffinage Guineenne SA** and **Switzerland**-based **Brahms Oil Refineries** rekindle steps to construct oil refinery in **Kamsar**;
 21 Jul 2018 **Conakry (Guinea)**. *Aminata.com*. Conakry Region governor bans protests in relation to increase in fuel prices;

⁶² Vision Guinee, 17 Aug 2018

⁶³ Vision Guinee, 17 Aug 2018

⁶⁴ Vision Guinee, 16 Aug 2018

⁶⁵ Vision Guinee, 16 Aug 2018

⁶⁶ Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁶⁷ Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁶⁸ Jeune Afrique, 20 Aug 2018

⁶⁹ Vision Guinee, 19 Aug 2018

⁷⁰ Reuters, 24 Apr 2018