

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Guinea Monthly Briefing March 2017

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#### Guinea Summary 25 March 2017

*The Fédération Syndicale des Professionnels de l'Éducation (FSPE) and Syndicat Libre des Enseignants-Chercheurs de Guinée (SLECG) education workers' unions end a two-week strike. However, spontaneous protests occur in capital Conakry over the following two days, leaving seven dead and over 30 injured. President Alpha Condé (2010-present) sacks and replaces the primary education minister, civil service minister and environment minister. Ejected opposition Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée's (UFDG) party vice president, Amadou Bah Oury, receives a favourable ruling at the Dixinn (Conakry Region) Tribunal de Première Instance (court of first instance) to reinstate him. The UFDG rejects the Dixinn court ruling and appoints former Banque Centrale de la République de Guinée (BCRG) (central bank), Ibrahima Chérif Bah, vice president of the party. A delegation of businesses from China visits Guinea to discuss public-private partnership (PPP) opportunities, including the possible establishment of a special economic zone (SEZ).*

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#### Teachers' unions strike deal with government, amid violent protests

The **Fédération Syndicale des Professionnels de l'Éducation (FSPE)** and **Syndicat Libre des Enseignants-Chercheurs de Guinée (SLECG)** education workers' unions on 19 February came to an agreement with government to end a two-week strike that began on 6 February.<sup>1</sup> The agreement appeared to be final, however, the unions continued to claim that the government would not meet several of their demands.<sup>2</sup> The unions demanded a change in the wage brackets of educators, a return to the previous minimum pension contribution system, and a lump sum upon retirement.<sup>3</sup> The government met the majority of these claims, though the application of these appeared to cause some discontent.<sup>4</sup>

The following day, on 20 February, protests began in capital **Conakry**, as demonstrators set fire to vehicles and erected barricades across major roads in the neighbourhoods of **Simbaya**, **Kassa** and **Kipé**.<sup>5</sup> A total of five people died, and 30 more were injured, according to government spokesperson **Albert Damantang Camara**. Press sources confirmed that all fatalities were shot and several others suffered bullet wounds.<sup>6</sup>

The cause of the violence is difficult to isolate. The education unions denied inciting protest, especially as protestors took to the streets so soon after their agreement with government.<sup>7</sup> However, in press sources protestors expressed their dissatisfaction with the government's slow response in negotiations and that schools remained closed, despite an end to strike action.<sup>8</sup> The government released a statement through Camara on 20 February declaring the protests were illegal, as they were not declared and therefore prohibited.<sup>9</sup> However, protests resumed on 21 February, leading to the

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<sup>1</sup> RFI, 20 Feb 2017.

<sup>2</sup> RFI, 20 Feb 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Guinée 24, 19 Feb 2017.

<sup>4</sup> Guinée 24, 19 Feb 2017.

<sup>5</sup> RFI, 20 Feb 2017.

<sup>6</sup> AFP, 21 Feb 2017.

<sup>7</sup> RFI, 20 Feb 2017.

<sup>8</sup> RFI, 20 Feb 2017.

<sup>9</sup> AFP, 21 Feb 2017.

death of another two protestors.<sup>10</sup> The government re-opened schools on 22 February.<sup>11</sup> It faces criticism for how it handled the situation.<sup>12</sup> The justice ministry has opened an enquiry into the protests, to determine the perpetrators of the shootings.<sup>13</sup>

There remains the risk of further protests. The protestors claim that the government has made no effort to resolve the issue of education in Guinea but instead blames the protestors for the deaths.<sup>14</sup> The strength of Guinea's unions in the education sector makes reform more difficult for government, as strike action often leads to violence. The education unions on several occasions in 2016 threatened to strike indefinitely.<sup>15</sup>

### ... and Condé sacks three ministers

President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present) on 27 February sacked three ministers:<sup>16</sup>

- **Christine Sagno**, environment minister, replaced with **Aïssatou Baldé**;
- **Sékou Kourouma**, civil service minister, replaced with **Billy Nankouma Doumbouya**; and
- **Dr Ibrahima Kourouma**, primary education minister, replaced with **Ibrahima Kalil Konaté**.

The sacking of Sékou Kourouma and Ibrahima Kourouma demonstrates the government's response to the violence from 21-22 February (see above). Several press sources accuse the ministers of mismanaging the negotiations, appeasing the unions, and reacting too slowly to the unions' initial demands.<sup>17</sup> Minor opposition party members, such as **Jean Marc Teliano**, leader of the **Rassemblement pour le Développement Intégré de la Guinée (RDIG)** said that the government should open an inquiry and prosecute the outgoing ministers,

*"One must not simply be satisfied with their sacking, these ministers must be prosecuted. Everybody saw the result of their work."*<sup>18</sup>

Member of ethnic Peul-based major opposition party, the **Union des Forces Démocratiques de Guinée's (UFDG) Fodé Oussou Fofana**, said that the ministers' sacking revealed Condé had made bad appointments in the first place,

*"Ministers are not chosen on the basis of their competency, rather for their militancy at the heart of the [ruling] **Rassemblement du Peuple de Guinée (RPG) Arc-en-ciel** parliamentary bloc."*<sup>19</sup>

There is no evidence to suggest that Sagno's sacking was related to the teacher's unions strike and consequent protests. Reportedly, Sagno's actions to mitigate the environmental impact of foreign mining companies had annoyed Condé. The president has appointed Baldé who reportedly has a more business friendly mind-set.<sup>20</sup>

The protests illustrate Guinea's capacity for social instability. Accusing the government of mismanaging the education workers' strike appears legitimate, when considering the resulting death toll. Condé, in the wake of the protests, had an obligation to show responsiveness to public discontent, and the sacking of the ministers appeared the easiest route to take to achieve this. More importantly, the reopening of schools appears to have placated unions and other protestors.

<sup>10</sup> Koaci, 22 Feb 2017.

<sup>11</sup> BBC, 22 Feb 2017.

<sup>12</sup> BBC, 22 Feb 2017.

<sup>13</sup> Aminata, 22 Feb 2017.

<sup>14</sup> RFI, 9 Mar 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Le Pays, 24 Oct 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Guinée Matin, 27 Feb 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Multiple sources: Guinée News, 27 Feb 2017; Jeune Afrique, 27 Feb 2017.

<sup>18</sup> Africa Guinée, 28 Feb 2017.

<sup>19</sup> Africa Guinée, 28 Feb 2017.

<sup>20</sup> Guinée News, 27 Feb 2017.

## Bah Oury wins court case, as UFDG officially appoints new vice president

The **Dixinn (Conakry Region) Tribunal de Première Instance** (court of first instance), ruled on 3 March in favour of UFDG vice president **Amadou Bah Oury**, the UFDG's founder, that his sacking from the party was illegitimate.<sup>21</sup> UFDG leader **Cellou Dalein Diallo** had alleged that Bah Oury had sought to destabilise the party, and excluded Bah Oury in February 2016, following the death of journalist **El Hadj Mohamed Diallo** (see *ARC Briefing Guinea February 2016*). Bah Oury, after his exclusion, sought legal action against Cellou Diallo in June 2016, alleging that he had made slanderous comments against him. The tribunal extended the date of the ruling five times. The most recent ruling was expected to take place on 24 February, over a year after Cellou Diallo excluded Bah Oury from the party.<sup>22</sup> The ruling technically reinstates Bah Oury as vice president of the UFDG.

However, Cellou Diallo refuses to accept the ruling, as his lawyers allege that the decision in favour of Bah Oury is irregular,

*"How can we understand that at the heart of the same court, the president of the court deems that the sanctions against **Mamadou Barry** [another UFDG member accused of inciting violence] gets a ruling that is compliant with statutes and internal regulation of the party, while at the same court, a judge can deem that the sanction against Bah Oury is not compliant with statutes. This is a judiciary with two different weights of measurement."*<sup>23</sup>

Another of Cellou Diallo's lawyers claims that Condé was behind the favourable ruling for Bah Oury,

*"This decision was determined by the ruling power. Why not let independent and free judges sovereignly evaluate the dossiers that are put before them? Why must we dictate their decision?"*<sup>24</sup>

Cellou Diallo's lawyers on 6 March announced that they will prosecute the Dixinn tribunal judge, **Ibrahima Kalil Diakité**, at the **Conseil Supérieur de la Magistrature** (supreme council of the judiciary).<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, they will seek to repeal the decision in favour of Bah Oury at the **Cour d'Appel** (court of appeal).<sup>26</sup> The UFDG also appointed a new vice president on 16 March, former governor of the **Banque Centrale de la République de Guinée (BCRG)** (central bank), **Ibrahima Chérif Bah**, despite Bah Oury's legal reinstatement.<sup>27</sup> The UFDG kept the position vacant from February 2016, when Cellou Diallo excluded Bah Oury from the party.<sup>28</sup> Local commentators view this as a strategic move to keep Bah Oury excluded,

*"I don't know how Bah Oury expects to regain his position. The party's leadership will do anything to keep him out. Chérif Bah's appointment is just another example of their hatred for him. Plus, I have my doubts about the UFDG's actions concerning the court ruling. It seems like they want the public to believe their story about Bah Oury acting as an agent of Condé's so much that they will do anything to maintain it, even if this means accusing judges of unfair rulings, illegally excluding a vice president and appointing a new one."*<sup>29</sup>

Tension at the heart of the main UFDG opposition party continues to test the unity of Condé's opponents. The UFDG will seek to resolve its leadership struggles within the next year, in order to position itself to pose a significant challenge to the RPG in the 2018 local elections.

<sup>21</sup> Guinée 360, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>22</sup> Africa Guinée, 22 Feb 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Guinée 360, 7 Mar 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Guinée 360, 7 Mar 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Guinée Matin, 6 Mar 2017.

<sup>26</sup> Guinée 360, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>27</sup> Guinée News, 16 Mar 2017.

<sup>28</sup> Guinée News, 16 Mar 2017.

<sup>29</sup> Source, journalist, Conakry

## Chinese delegation discusses establishment of a special economic zone

A **Chinese** delegation of businesses visited Guinea on 3 March for roundtable discussions concerning potential investment opportunities, in particular public-private partnerships (PPPs) and the possible establishment of a free trade zone.<sup>30</sup> **Sun Xiushun**, CEO of the China-based bulk shipping services company, the **Winning International Group**, led the delegation.<sup>31</sup> Investment minister **Ibrahima Kassory Fofana** and CEO of the **Agence de Promotion des Investissements Privés (APIP-Guinée)**, **Guillaume Curtis**, represented the government.<sup>32</sup> The parties discussed opportunities to collaborate on projects to provide supporting infrastructure and services to mining companies operating predominantly in the **Boké Region**.<sup>33</sup> One aspect of this would include a special economic zone (SEZ), for secondary industry, with favourable tax, rental and electricity rates.<sup>34</sup> Fofana said the SEZ could provide as many as 200,000 jobs in the next 15-20 years, with the launch of major mining projects in the region – including the **Simandou** iron ore mine, which **United Kingdom (UK)**-based **Rio Tinto Plc** is currently in the process of transferring to China state-owned **Aluminum Corporation of China (Chinalco)** (see *ARC Briefing Guinea December 2016*). Reportedly several of Chinalco's subsidiaries attended the discussions.<sup>35</sup> Xiushun confirmed that the initial focus of potential investment would be constructing the SEZ and agriculture projects.<sup>36</sup>

Condé, following the delegation visit, approved the **Malapouyah** bauxite concession for the **Société Minière de Boké (SMB)**, which Winning Group subsidiary **Winning Shipping Ltd** co-owns.<sup>37</sup> Condé is also close to approving a bauxite concession to **SPIC Aluminium & Electric Power Co Ltd**, a consortium made up of **SPIC Ningxia Energy & Aluminium Co Ltd** and **SPIC Aluminium International Trading Co Ltd**, all subsidiaries of the Chinese state-owned **State Power Investment Corp (SPIC)**.<sup>38</sup> SPIC Aluminium & Electric Power will reportedly take over the **China Power Investment Corp (CPIC)**'s subsidiaries and investments in **Boffa Prefecture** (Boké Region).<sup>39</sup> SPIC Aluminium & Electric Corp also signed a memorandum of understanding with the China-based and state-funded private equity group, the **China-Africa Development Fund**, which will help provide the SPIC with finances to expand its investments in Guinea.<sup>40</sup> The CPIC had signed a \$6 billion alumina refinery agreement in 2012, but progress on the project stalled and has not yet launched.<sup>41</sup> There has been no communication on the launch dates of the refinery, SEZ or other Chinese mining operations in the region.

The recent meetings between Chinese and Guinean officials highlight the level of strategic economic interest in Guinea, as the world's largest producer and consumer of aluminium. Chinese investors appear to wish to expand operations in Boké region, and even provide accompanying infrastructure in order to facilitate exports of mining products. The establishment of the SEZ would encourage industrial and construction companies to invest.

<sup>30</sup> Guinée News, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>31</sup> Guinée News, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>32</sup> Guinée News, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>33</sup> Guinée News, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>34</sup> Guinée News, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>35</sup> Source, journalist, Conakry

<sup>36</sup> Guinée News, 4 Mar 2017.

<sup>37</sup> Decree No.064, 13 Mar 2017.

<sup>38</sup> Source, mining journalist, Conakry

<sup>39</sup> Source, mining journalist, Conakry

<sup>40</sup> Source, mining journalist, Conakry

<sup>41</sup> Reuters, 21 Dec 2012.

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### About Africa Risk Consulting:

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