

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Guinea Monthly Briefing May 2020

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#### Guinea Summary 22 May 2020

*President Alpha Condé (2010-present) announces the extension of the national state of emergency for an additional month but lifts the lockdown, except in the Greater Conakry region. Protests against the state of emergency and general confinement claim the lives of several Guineans. United States (US)-based NGO Human Rights Watch and US-based think tank, the African Center for Strategic Studies, decry the deteriorating human rights situation in Guinea. Foreign partners, cabinet members and the opposition criticise prime minister Ibrahima Kassory Fofana's 3,000 billion GNF (\$314.9m) economic and social support package.*

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#### Guinea maintains state of emergency but eases lockdown ...

President **Alpha Condé** (2010-present) announced on 15 May the extension of **Guinea's** national state of emergency to limit the spread of **Covid-19** until 15 June.<sup>1</sup> The extension of the state of emergency, which commenced on 27 March, is the second, following a similar decision on 13 April.<sup>2</sup> However, President Condé said the government would lift the nationwide lockdown, except in the **Greater Conakry** (Grand Conakry) region, comprising the capital Conakry and the **Dubreka** and **Coyah** prefectures.<sup>3</sup> Guinea has seen a relatively low mortality rate and has succeeded in limiting the spread of the pandemic, with most cases found in Greater Conakry. At time of writing, Guinea had registered 3,067 Covid-19 cases, 1,575 recoveries and 18 deaths since confirmation of the pandemic in the country on 14 March.<sup>4</sup>

The easing of lockdown in the rest of the country now permits assemblies of 20-30 people, subject to revision.<sup>5</sup> Nationally, curfew hours will run from 10pm to 5am.<sup>6</sup> President Condé said wearing of protective masks in public remains compulsory – 2 million reusable masks are being produced in Guinea and will be distributed for free.<sup>7</sup>

President Condé thanked health personnel, security forces, technical and financial partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) non-governmental organisations (NGOs), public and private sector actors as well as the general public for their efforts to combat the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>8</sup> Condé acknowledged the contributions of the **Agence Nationale de la Sécurité Sanitaire (ANSS)** (national health security agency) and **Conseil Scientifique de Riposte (CSR)** (scientific response council) which are respectively coordinating and informing government with respect to their Covid-19 health response initiatives.<sup>9</sup> Condé said laboratories in Guinea were performing 350 tests per day and that testing capacity would increase to 1,000 daily.<sup>10</sup> President Condé concluded his address by pledging to provide financial assistance to families whose relatives had died abroad as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>2</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>3</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>4</sup> Guineenews.org, 22 May 2020

<sup>5</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>6</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>7</sup> Vision Guinee, 17 May 2020

<sup>8</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>9</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>10</sup> Guineenews.org, 15 May 2020

<sup>11</sup> Vision Guinee, 17 May 2020

### ... as lockdown protests turn deadly ...

Protests against the national state of emergency and general confinement have led to the death of several Guineans.<sup>12</sup> Government authorities reported on 12 May that six individuals had died, contradicting hospital sources that indicated there were seven deaths.<sup>13</sup> Protests began on 12 May in **Friguiadi (Coyah Prefecture)** on the basis of allegations that security forces were maltreating residents during the confinement.<sup>14</sup> Security forces fired on demonstrators and killed five people.<sup>15</sup> Similar demonstrations in Dubreka, on the outskirts of Conakry, on the same day led to the death of one individual while anti-lockdown related violence in the mining town of **Kamsar** led to the destruction of the mayor's residence.<sup>16</sup>

Territorial and administration minister **General Bourema Condé** accused protesters of committing acts of public disorder and condemned such behaviour during the holy month of **Ramadan** and the on-going health crisis.<sup>17</sup> Condé called on the public to adhere to government instructions throughout the confinement and said that perpetrators of violence would be held accountable under the law.<sup>18</sup>

Local civil society and opposition groups as well as international NGOs claim the government is using the Covid-19 health crisis to track and harass opposition supporters. **United States (US)**-based NGO **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** released a report on 29 April in which it alleged that Guinean authorities were utilising Covid-19 restrictions to arrest, oppress and exact violence against supporters of the **Front Nationale pour la Défense de la Constitution (FNDC)**.<sup>19</sup> The FNDC is a collective of opposition parties and civil society organisations that opposed the constitutional referendum in March. HRW called on the government to cease harassing these individuals under the pretext of enforcing Covid-19 restrictive laws and to monitor the activity of security forces to ensure the respect of human rights.<sup>20</sup> Security and civil protection minister **Albert Damantang Camara** denied the HRW claims that the government was committing human rights abuses and stated that security forces acted in compliance with the law.<sup>21</sup> Camara accused HRW of not bringing attention to unlawful acts perpetrated by opposition groups and threatened to stop collaboration with HRW if it persists with one-sided situation reports.<sup>22</sup>

US-based think tank, the **Africa Center for Strategic Studies**, published a report on 28 April in which it outlined the increasing use of violence against political opponents, the deteriorating human rights situation in Guinea and deliberate weakening of democratic institutions by President Condé's government.<sup>23</sup> The report highlighted that from October to February, in the lead up to the 22 March constitutional referendum and legislative election, 32 FNDC supporters were killed during protests against President Condé's plan to change the constitution. Election-related violence in Conakry reportedly claimed the lives of 12 individuals<sup>24</sup> and in **Nzérékoré** 22 people were reportedly killed during inter-communal violence that took place on election day.<sup>25</sup> The FNDC's **France**-based lawyers, **William Bourdon** and **Vincent Brengarth**, filed a 51-page complaint to the **Office of the Chief Prosecutor at the International Criminal Court (ICC)** at **The Hague (Netherlands)** on 29 April alleging that President Condé's government has committed "*crimes against humanity*".<sup>26</sup> The

<sup>12</sup> Aminata.com, 12 May 2020

<sup>13</sup> Guineenews.org, 13 May 2020

<sup>14</sup> RFI, 13 May 2020

<sup>15</sup> RFI, 13 May 2020

<sup>16</sup> RFI, 13 May 2020

<sup>17</sup> Guineenews.org, 13 May 2020

<sup>18</sup> Guineenews.org, 13 May 2020

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch, 29 Apr 2020

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch, 29 Apr 2020

<sup>21</sup> Guineenews.org, 8 May 2020

<sup>22</sup> Guineenews.org, 8 May 2020

<sup>23</sup> African Center for Strategic Studies, 28 Apr 2020

<sup>24</sup> Guineenews.org, 2 Apr 2020

<sup>25</sup> RFI, 29 Mar 2020

<sup>26</sup> Financial Afrik, 3 May 2020

document outlines actions that Guinean authorities have allegedly taken against the FNDC. Justice minister **Mohamed Fofana** said the government could only respond to this complaint when the ICC has formally informed them.<sup>27</sup>

Socio-political tensions in Guinea could further erode political stability. President Condé enacted a new constitution on 7 April, which removes Articles 41-45 of the 2010 constitution regulating the actions of the public security forces and creates the possibility of security force violence.<sup>28</sup>

### ... and controversy erupts over government's Covid-19 support package

Guinea's Covid-19 response has attracted widespread criticism from financial and technical partners, members of government and the opposition. Prime minister **Ibrahima Kassory Fofana** presented Guinea's 3,000 billion GNF (\$314.9m) economic and support package on 6 April (see *ARC Briefing Guinea April 2020*), which outlined the following measures:

- Postponement of all taxes for the tourism and hotel sector for three months;
- State to pay arrears owed to tourism and hotel industry;
- Electricity and water bill payments suspended for tourism and hotel activities;
- Bank repayments to be suspended and suspension of Value Added Tax (VAT) payments, without incurring penalties.<sup>29</sup>

General support provisions for businesses include:

- The exemption of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) from taxes and duties for three months;
- Reduction of the VAT reimbursement timeframe to two weeks;
- Acceleration of internal debt payment to businesses by government;
- Cancellation of late penalty payments for public contracts;
- Public contract arrears which were financed by bank loans to be settled;
- Creation of 50 billion GNF (\$5.2m) guarantee fund to assist SMEs with bank loans;
- An amount of 20 billion GNF (\$2.1m) to support specific economic interest groups.<sup>30</sup>

In particular, controversy has emerged over the government's calculation of the amount it needs to finance electricity and water bills over three months as part of its response plan. The **World Bank** had pledged to contribute towards this, and specifically the payment of electricity bills through the **Programme Regionale d'Énergie (PRE)** (regional energy programme).<sup>31</sup> The World Bank's Guinea representation office expressed its concern to Kassory Fofana in a letter dated 20 April – which was leaked to the press – about the amount the government's estimates it needs to pay these bills.<sup>32</sup> State-owned water company **Société des Eaux de Guinée (SEG)** estimated the three-month water bill would be \$2m, while the electricity bill was projected to require \$46m for the same period.<sup>33</sup> However, the World Bank calculated the amount needed for the electricity bills at \$1m or, in a worst-case scenario, \$3m.<sup>34</sup> Kassory Fofana blamed the energy ministry, saying it had sent the prime minister's office the electricity calculation figure, while the energy ministry said the national electricity company, **Électricité de Guinée (EDG)**, had given it incorrect information.<sup>35</sup> The EDG acknowledged the amount was overstated but denied responsibility for the issue.<sup>36</sup> Opposition **Parti**

<sup>27</sup> Guineenews.org, 1 May 2020

<sup>28</sup> African Center for Strategic Studies, 28 Apr 2020

<sup>29</sup> Guineenews.org, 6 Apr 2020

<sup>30</sup> Guineenews.org, 6 Apr 2020

<sup>31</sup> Financial Afrik, 1 May 2020

<sup>32</sup> Financial Afrik, 1 May 2020

<sup>33</sup> Jeune Afrique, 30 Apr 2020

<sup>34</sup> Financial Afrik, 1 May 2020

<sup>35</sup> Jeune Afrique, 30 Apr 2020

<sup>36</sup> Jeune Afrique, 30 Apr 2020

**des Democraties pour l'Espoir (PADES)** president **Ousmane Kaba** described the miscalculation as “a deliberate attempt at massive fraud of public funds”.<sup>37</sup>

The World Bank also said the response plan underestimated the impact of the health crisis on the economy, which the government said would lead to a loss of 0.7% of gross domestic product (GDP).<sup>38</sup> Kassory Fofana said the government’s economic impact predictions were accurate and made on the basis of credible and realistic macroeconomic assumptions, noting that “no government or institution can predict with certainty the overall impact which this health crisis will have on economic activity”.<sup>39</sup> Kassory Fofana said the government would make adjustments on a bi-monthly basis, depending on the development of the economic and health situation.<sup>40</sup> Kassory Fofana cited institutions such as the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and **Organisation for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD)**, which have revised their Covid-19 related projections several times since the start of the crisis.<sup>41</sup>

Kassory Fofana has also had to deal with criticism of the response plan within his own cabinet. Planning and economic development minister **Mama Kory Diallo** reportedly sent a confidential letter on 4 April to President Condé underscoring the lack of clarity with respect to how long the plan would be implemented and the amount of support to be given to economic interest groups (EIGs), as well as concern over large tax breaks to the private sector.<sup>42</sup> Kassory Fofana clarified that the plan would run from April until December, in the event the crisis ends in 2020, and said the **Banque Centrale de la République de Guinée (BCRG)** (Guinean central bank) and the finance ministry were still evaluating the amount of support provided to EIGs.<sup>43</sup> Guinea-based legal advisory firm **Sylla & Partners** said the government needs to provide greater tax support to firms for a full year and give more attention small and informal sector businesses.<sup>44</sup>

It is still unclear whether the government’s response plan will mitigate the effects of the slowdown in economic activity. While the electricity price calculation appears to be a genuine mistake, a loss in stakeholder confidence is ill affordable at a time when the government needs significant assistance to fund its support initiatives.

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<sup>37</sup> Guineenews.org, 27 Apr 2020

<sup>38</sup> Financial Afrik, 1 May 2020

<sup>39</sup> Vision Guinee, 26 Apr 2020

<sup>40</sup> Financial Afrik, 1 May 2020

<sup>41</sup> Guineenews.org, 26 Apr 2020

<sup>42</sup> Vision Guinee, 5 May 2020

<sup>43</sup> Vision Guinee, 26 Apr 2020

<sup>44</sup> Sylla & Partners, 13 May 2020

## Planner

(Date TBA due to Covid-19) **Conakry (Guinea)** Transform Africa Conference;  
 Oct 2020 **(Guinea)** Presidential elections (date to be determined)

## Chronology

22 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. Guinean international artist **Mory Kante** passes away in Conakry at the age of 70 years old;

17 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. President **Alpha Condé** says the government will provide assistance to families who have lost relatives abroad due to the **Covid-19** pandemic;

16 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *RFI*. Security and civil protection minister **Albert Damantang Camara** denies allegations by the **International Federation of Human Rights (IFHR)** that the government is using the national confinement and related restrictions to track and harass opposition members;

15 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guineenews.org*. President **Alpha Conde** announces the end of the nationwide confinement except to Greater Conakry and extends the national state of emergency by 30 days;

13 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Al Jazeera*. Guinean security forces kill six protesters who were demonstrating against the ongoing confinement;

12 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guineenews.org*. President **Alpha Conde** acks energy minister **Taliby Sylla** from government as a result of recurring power cuts across the country;

11 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guineenews.org*. The **European Union (EU)** has donated €2.5m (\$2.7m) towards Guinea's **Covid-19** response efforts;

8 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guineenews.org*. Security and civil protection minister **Albert Damantang Camara** expresses disapproval of reports by **United States**-based NGO **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** accusing the Guinean government and security forces of perpetrating human rights abuses against opposition groups;

1 May 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guineenews.org*. Lawyers for the **Front National pour la Defense de la Constitution (FNDC)** (national front for the defence of the constitution) file a complaint at the **International Criminal Court (ICC)** against President **Alpha Conde** for human rights violations;

29 Apr 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Guineenews.org*. The **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)** provides a \$12.8m grant to the Guinean government towards improving economic governance and strengthening the local health system;

29 Apr 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Human Rights Watch*. **United States**-based NGO **Human Rights Watch (HRW)** calls on the Guinean government to respect human rights while the country continues to confront the **Covid-19** outbreak;

27 Apr 2020 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. A **World Bank** internal note accuses the Guinean government of providing an inflated figure of 456 billion GNF (\$47.6m) to cover electricity bills over the next three months, saying the actual cost for the timeframe is \$1m;

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