

AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

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Guinea Summary 25 January 2024

A fuel explosion at the Kaloum fuel depot in Conakry's Kalou district on 18 December kills 24 people, injures 241 others and damages at least 800 buildings. Junta leader Mamady Doumbouya (2021-present) announces during his end-of-year speech that the transitional government will organise a constitutional referendum during 2024, a key step in meeting its goal of holding elections by January 2025. The presidency confirms on 2 January that the security and intelligence services foiled an attempted coup by a group of soldiers and civilians, led by Captain Abdoulaye Cissé, a former member of the Bataillon Autonome des Troupes Aéroportées (BATA), an elite unit of the armed forces.

Explosion rocks Kaloum fuel depot

A fuel explosion at the **Kaloum** fuel depot in **Conakry's** Kalou district on 18 December killed 24 people, injured 241 others and damaged at least 800 buildings. Security minister **Bachir Diallo** established a crisis unit in the wake of the explosion, with the government closing schools and asking workers to stay home until the fire could be brought under control.¹ The immediate blaze was controlled by the afternoon of 18 December; however, it took until 27 December for the fire to be completely extinguished.² Junta leader Colonel **Mamady Doumbouya** (2021-present) announced on 20 December three days of national mourning. The cause of the explosion is unknown and investigations are ongoing.

The government also announced that service stations would be temporarily closed to avoid speculation. By 21 December, diesel was available for consumers; however, gasoline supplies remained suspended, which led to clashes between security forces and people demanding gasoline at various stations in Conakry.³ Most **Guineans** use gasoline and not diesel. By 23 December, the government had re-established gasoline distribution; however, it was rationed at 25 litres per vehicle and five litres per motorcycle and tricycle. Trucks carrying gasoline were also forced to travel with escorts.⁴

Economy minister **Moussa Cissé** met with **Côte d'Ivoire's** mines, oil and energy minister, **Mamadou Sangafowa Coulibaly**, on 27 December to discuss the explosion and its impacts on Guinea's supplies. Following the meeting, it was announced that Côte d'Ivoire would deliver 50 million litres of gasoline per month to Guinea, which has a monthly demand of 70 million litres, for an unspecified period.⁵ Prime minister **Bernard Gomou** confirmed on 10 January that diesel supplies had resumed through an agreement between Guinea, **Sierra Leone** and a private company that was helping to facilitate the supply. However, gasoline is still being rationed, which is negatively impacting various sectors of the economy, with reports indicating that the price of transporting food has tripled since the explosion.⁶ The government has not indicated when it expects fuel supplies to resume as normal and when rationing will end, two issues that could fuel more discontent among citizens and continue to negatively impact and slow down economic activity. In fact, the government has already amended its

¹ Jeune Afrique, 19 Dec 2023

² Jeune Afrique, 27 Dec 2023

³ Jeune Afrique, 22 Dec 2023

⁴ Jeune Afrique, 27 Dec 2023

⁵ Africa Guinee, 28 Dec 2023

⁶ Africa Guinee, 10 Jan 2024

2024 budget to reflect a drop in revenues of 446.11 billion GNF (\$51.83m) as a direct impact of the explosion. The government is also seeking financial assistance to deal with the fallout of the explosion, appealing to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** for emergency funding.⁷

Doumbouya says new constitution will be ready this year

During his end-of-year speech on 31 December, Colonel Doumbouya announced that the transitional government would organise a constitutional referendum during 2024, a key step in meeting its goal of holding elections by January 2025. Doumbouya said the government will appoint new officials to lead municipal councils, as the current officials' terms expire in the first quarter of 2024. These officials were elected in 2018 and are largely from former president **Alpha Condé's** (2010-2021)

Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée (RPG) and former prime minister **Cellou Dalein Diallo's** **Union des forces démocratiques de Guinée (UFDG)** parties and have been openly critical of the junta in their positions.⁸

During a 15 January interministerial council meeting, Gomou reiterated Doumbouya's announcement, noting that 2024 will focus on the political aspects of the transition and respecting the ten points of the transitional timeline that would culminate in elections in January 2025. In October 2023, the **Conseil National de la Transition (CNT)** (national transitional council) adopted draft laws related to the **Identification des Personnes physiques** (identification of natural persons) and **Régime de l'Etat civil** (civil status regime) (see *ARC Briefing Guinea Oct 2023*). This was a key step in the process of returning to constitutional rule.⁹ **Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)** secretary general **Louise Mushikiwabo** visited Guinea on 8 January to meet with Doumbouya on the transitional timeline, commenting afterwards that "work is progressing well".¹⁰ She added that the OIF has sent six experts to assist Guinea in the transition.

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.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** told local media outlet **Africa Guinee** on 16 January that the law on data protection for the RAVEC should be promulgated by the end of January after which the census can officially begin.¹³ Writing of the preliminary draft of the constitution began in August, and local media have reported that it is now in its finalisation phase. It will first be sent to other institutions and stakeholders for comment before being made public.¹⁴ It was announced on 21 January that a series of meetings between Doumbouya, Gomou and stakeholders who participated in dialogue in 2023 is planned for January, adding substance to the reports that the draft constitution is reaching its final phases.

⁷ Africa Guinee, 9 Jan 2024

⁸ Jeune Afrique, 1 Jan 2024

⁹ Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

¹⁰ Vision Guinee, 8 Jan 2024

¹¹ Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

¹² Africa Guinee, 25 Oct 2023

¹³ Africa Guinee, 16 Jan 2024

¹⁴ Africa Guinee, 23 Jan 2024

Presidency confirms 2022 coup plot

The presidency confirmed on 2 January that the security and intelligence services had foiled an attempted countercoup by a group of soldiers and civilians, led by Captain **Abdoulaye Cissé** a former member of the **Bataillon Autonome des Troupes Aéroportées (BATA)**, an elite unit of the armed forces. The presidency added that the group had already been pardoned. It was not specified in the announcement when the coup attempt had occurred; however, local reports indicate that Cissé, who previously served as a guard of the late General **Lansana Conté** who seized power in 1984, was arrested in June 2022 for unknown reasons. His now revealed accomplice, Commander **Aly Camara**, was arrested at the same time but in a different location.¹⁵ Both were also formally removed from the armed forces in October 2023 for “*misconduct*”.

Opposition **Union des Démocrates pour la Renaissance de la Guinée (UDRG)** leader **Bah Oury** welcomed Doumbouya’s decision to pardon the soldiers, adding:

“It is an approach, a reality totally different from anything we had known in the past or at the risk of being killed, eliminated in the most discreet way possible.”¹⁶

However, other political leaders including Diallo, expressed doubt over the coup. Diallo expressed his belief that the coup was fake and created to help the leadership prolong the transition. However, the fact that the countercoup attempt happened in 2022 but was only revealed at a later stage, and handled discreetly, does not align with Diallo’s opinion.

Planner

2024 **Guinea** Constitutional referendum

Jan 2025 **Guinea** Presidential elections

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

Chronology

24 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. The presidency confirms that Colonel **Mamadi Doumbouya** will visit **Rwanda** on 25 January to meet with President **Paul Kagame**;

23 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. Junta leader Colonel **Mamadi Doumbouya** announces that he will hand over leadership of the special forces group, an elite unit of the armed forces that overthrew former president **Alpha Condé** under Doumbouya’s command, to **Mouctar Kaba**;

22 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. Junta leader Colonel **Mamadi Doumbouya** expresses frustration with the attitude of some of his ministers, inviting them to retake their oaths before him and ensure that they perform their roles;

19 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *APA News*. Police arrest at least nine journalists who were protesting for the restoration of access to social media networks and for certain media airwaves to be unjammed;

19 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Police confirm six people died after being trampled in celebrations following Guinea’s victory over **Gambia** in the ongoing **Africa Cup of Nations** tournament, calling on citizens to show restraint;

18 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. **Conseil national de la transition (CNT)** adopts a bill creating new municipalities in Conakry and its outskirts, expanding the number from five to 12;

¹⁵ Africa Guinee, 3 Jan 2024

¹⁶ Africa Guinee, 3 Jan 2024

16 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** dispatches emissaries to Guinea to hand over a \$100,000 donation to help the country deal with the fallout of the explosion at the **Kaloum** oil depot, emphasising that Guinea remains a key country in the region;

15 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *North Africa Post*. Authorities arrest **French** journalist **Thomas Dietrich** for unknown reasons. Dietrich was in Guinea to investigate state-run fuel company **Société Nationale des Pétroles (SONAP)** following the explosion at the **Kaloum** national depot;

8 Jan 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Financial Times*. **South Africa**-based telecommunication operator **MTN**'s exit from Guinea is underway after the **Autorité de Régulation des Postes et Télécommunications (ARPT)** closed the operator's headquarters, accusing it of non-payment of taxes, fees and licence fees;

29 Dec 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. **United Nations** high commissioner for human rights, **Volker Türk**, expresses concern over the increased repression of the media in Guinea, urging the transitional government to change tact;

27 Dec 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. **Conseil national de la transition (CNT)** adopts the **Loi des finances initiale (LFI) 2024** (initial finance law), with revenue budgeted at 29.94 trillion GNF (\$3.47 billion) against an expenditure budget of 38.03 trillion GNF (\$4.41 billion);

22 Dec 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. The government's decision to continue restricting access to social networks despite the far-reaching impacts of the **Kaloum** oil depot explosion draws criticism, with the **Organisation guinéenne de défense des droits de l'homme et du Citoyen (OGDH)** (Guinean organisation for the defence of human and citizens' rights) calling on authorities to re-establish access;

15 Dec 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. International nongovernmental organisation **Reporters sans Frontières (RSF)** asks authorities to "urgently" put an end to restrictive measures taken against private media, calling them attacks on press freedom;

14 Dec 2023 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinee*. Government spokesperson **Ousmane Gaoual Diallo** announces government will invest \$60m in improving internet access with support from the **World Bank**.

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