

## AFRICA RISK CONSULTING

### Guinea Monthly Briefing November 2024

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#### Guinea Summary 25 November 2024

**Prime Minister Oury Bah's advisor Saïkou Oumar Baldé confirms Guinea's transition to civilian rule, originally set for 31 December, will not be completed on time. Tensions rise between Guinea and Liberia as information emerges concerning a plot, allegedly hatched in Liberia, to unseat General Mamadi Doumbouya's (2021-present) junta. Chinese steel producer Baoshan Iron & Steel (Baosteel) confirms that Simandou is on schedule for completion by the end of 2025. Communities affected by the project are demanding better and more adequate compensation for damages sustained. Guinea and Turkey are set to deepen their relationship after signing 14 cooperation agreements on 6 November.**

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#### Domestic tensions mount as the junta continues to crack down

**Saïkou Oumar Baldé**, an advisor to Prime Minister **Oury Bah** told **French** world service radio **RFI** and local media on 18 November that the transition to civilian rule, originally planned to be completed by 31 December, will continue. Baldé said that a reliable voters' register was needed first and there was insufficient time to have this completed before the end of the year:

*"We cannot organise elections if we don't have a voters' register. The last time we did this we had the most controversial voters' register in the history of the Republic of Guinea."*<sup>1</sup>

The advisor cited double or triple entries and problems with the correct dates of birth on the register.<sup>2</sup> In November, a **United Nations** mission visited the country to find out what Guinea's "electoral needs" were, but its report is not expected to be timely enough to facilitate a credible poll before the end of the year.<sup>3</sup>

Baldé made his remarks as a working group, led by **Conseil national de la transition (CNT)** (national transitional council) president **Dansa Kourouma** was touring the country, tasked with explaining the new constitution to the Guinean electorate. Kourouma and two others have been working on the constitution since June.<sup>4</sup> The message was reinforced by youth and sports minister **Bogola Haba**, who told an audience in the important **Guinée Forestière** town of **Kissidougou (Faranah Region)** that there should be no more talk of a transition but of rebuilding the state as envisioned by junta leader General **Mamadi Doumbouya** (2021-present).<sup>5</sup> The impression is growing that Doumbouya is planning to run for president, even though the **charte de transition** (transition charter) forbids members of the ruling junta, the **Comité national du rassemblement pour le développement (CNRD)**, to run for office.<sup>6</sup>

The former ruling party, **Rassemblement du peuple de Guinée (RPG)**, insists that there will be no transition after 31 December.<sup>7</sup> However, the influence the party – or any other of the formerly prominent political actors - can wield in the current military-dominated political landscape is limited. A poignant illustration of their currently subordinate position came in the form of a 29 October announcement by territorial administration and decentralisation minister **Ibrahim Kalil Condé** to

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<sup>1</sup> Visionguinee.info, 18 Nov 2024

<sup>2</sup> Visionguinee.info, 19 Nov 2024

<sup>3</sup> Guineenews.com, 4 Nov 2024

<sup>4</sup> L'Indépendant, 12 Nov 2024

<sup>5</sup> Visionguinee.info, 24 November 2024

<sup>6</sup> Charte de la Transition, Article 46, Conakry, 21 Sep 2021

<sup>7</sup> Le Lynx, 18 Nov 2024

the effect that 53 political parties were being dissolved, 54 temporarily suspended and another 60 placed under observation, in order to ensure that they “*stay within the confines of the rules*”.<sup>8</sup>

Meanwhile, junta action against pro-democracy activists and media continues. The junta ban all political gatherings in May, but it has also pursued media and above all pro-democracy activists, most notably **Oumar Sylla** (also known as **Foniké Menguè**) and **Mamadou Billo Bah**, leaders of the pro-democracy coalition **Front national pour la défense de la constitution (FNDC)**.<sup>9</sup> The two men have repeatedly demanded that the junta keep its promises and guarantee the return to constitutional rule, but unknown armed men abducted them on 9 July. They have not been seen since.

The latest international organisation to ask for information on the two men is **France-based Action des chrétiens pour l’abolition de la torture (ACAT)** (action by Christians for the abolition of torture), while the FNDC in France has launched court cases with the same objective, which is to have the Guinean authorities provide clarity about their whereabouts.<sup>10</sup> However, the latter deny having anything to do with disappearance of the two men and a judicial inquiry that was supposed to have been launched at the Conakry court of appeal has been without any tangible result.<sup>11</sup>

### Guinea and Liberia attempt to defuse tensions

On 12 November, the **Liberian** authorities extradited a presumed Guinean national, **Ibrahima Khalil Cherif**, to their Guinean counterparts under circumstances that have not been fully clarified.<sup>12</sup> Cherif’s lawyer, **Kanina Ja’neh**, a former Liberian supreme court judge, told local media that his client had been forcibly taken from his cell in **Monrovia Central Prison** (Liberia), that he is a Liberian citizen and that both his arrest and extradition lacked any legal basis.<sup>13</sup> Other critics also claim that while there are legal mechanisms in place to deal with such matters, including those that exist under the **Mano River Union**, of which both countries (plus **Côte d’Ivoire** and **Sierra Leone**) are members, these were not followed.<sup>14</sup>

Only two days later did the Liberian authorities confirm that Cherif had been extradited and another presumed Guinean citizen, **Zayzay Fassou Touré**, had also been arrested. Cherif was suspected of being the principal financier of a recruitment drive for what the Liberian justice minister **Jerolinmek Piah** called “*subversive action*” in Guinea and that he was acting based on information provided by Guinea and **International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol)**.<sup>15</sup> By contrast, the Guinean authorities said nothing about any possible extradition<sup>16</sup>. To reduce any possible tensions between the two countries resulting from these developments, Liberian and Guinean armed forces were reported to prepare joint border patrols in Liberia’s **Lofa County**, which borders Guinée Forestière, where violent incursions took place at the beginning of this century<sup>17</sup>.

Kourouma first mentioned Cherif’s name in connection with a destabilising plot against Guinea in September, which supposedly involved former president **Alpha Condé** (2010-2021) giving Cherif \$150,000 for recruitment purposes.<sup>18</sup> Bah later repeated the accusation in October without giving further details.<sup>19</sup> Whether or not these claims are true remains difficult to verify but they have caused unease in Liberia. The claims are fuelling fears that the junta’s refusal to respect its own timetable of return to civilian rule could trigger subversive cross-border action with the participation of individuals who were previously involved in the Liberian civil wars of the 1990s and early 2000s,

<sup>8</sup> BBC Afrique, 30 Oct 2024; The Conversation, 13 Nov 2024

<sup>9</sup> Deutsche Welle, 15 May 2022

<sup>10</sup> RFI, 18 Nov 2024

<sup>11</sup> RFI, 18 Nov 2024

<sup>12</sup> FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 10 Nov 2024

<sup>13</sup> FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 10 Nov 2024; Liberian Observer, 11 Nov 2024

<sup>14</sup> FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 18 Nov 2024

<sup>15</sup> Guineenews.org, 14 Nov 2024; Guinee360.com, 15 Nov 2024

<sup>16</sup> Africaguinee.com, 12 Nov 2024

<sup>17</sup> FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 19 Nov 2024

<sup>18</sup> Guinee360.com, 19 Sep 2024

<sup>19</sup> Visionguinee.info, 5 Oct 2024; Conakryinfos.com, 7 Oct 2024; FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 11 Nov 2024

which spilt over into Guinea. The attitude and actions of the Doumbouya government have also been viewed as intimidation, which may have a detrimental effect on bilateral relations and regional stability.<sup>20</sup>

### Baosteel confirms Simandou mine and infrastructure will be completed end 2025

China-based **Baoshan Iron & Steel (Baosteel)**, the largest steel producer in the world by volume and subsidiary of **China Baowu Steel Group Corp., Ltd. (Baowu)**, confirmed on 30 October that the **Simandou** iron ore mine was on course to have its first shipment by the end of 2025, slightly earlier than previously projected.<sup>21</sup> The company became a major player in Simandou's northern block (Blocks 1 and 2) in June, when it took an undisclosed stake (reported by some to be 51%) in the **Singapore-backed Winning Consortium Simandou (WCS)**.<sup>22</sup>

Baowu also took a stake in the infrastructure projects associated with the mine, namely the multi-user railway and deep seaport. In both projects, Baowu is now a key player, explicitly emphasised by Doumbouya's visit to the Baowu headquarters in September. Baowu also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with **Australia-based Arrow Minerals** on 22 October for potential iron ore gate sales that will give Arrow access to Simandou's infrastructure facilities. Arrow Minerals holds a concession in an area adjacent to Simandou north.<sup>23</sup>

Government spokesman and secretary general to the presidency, General **Amara Camara** was on a tour of Guinée Forestière on 17 November, where Simandou is located., during which he told local communities that the future of Guinea depends on Simandou and that the project has created opportunities for local entrepreneurs, which they should seize.<sup>24</sup> However, the mine and infrastructure development projects affect local communities in different ways. While the participating consortia (led by WSC and **Australia's Rio Tinto Simfer**) have compensation mechanisms in place, outcomes remain largely unsatisfactory. In 2023, the nongovernmental organisation (NOG) **Action Mines Guinée** helped establish civilian-led monitoring committees that issue three-monthly reports on social and environmental damage sustained because of the engineering works.

The latest covers the June to August period and notes 29 complaints affecting close to 2,800 individuals. The issues raised range from damage to homes, destruction of fields and crops, water and soil pollution. Only four outstanding issues have been correctly dealt with, according to the complainants. Action Mines Guinée recommends more robust compensation systems, more transparency and a more proactive role for the Guinean state in ensuring companies keep to the social and environmental commitments they have made.<sup>25</sup>

### Guinea and Turkey sign a series of 14 cooperation agreements

**Turkish** and Guinean authorities met on 6 November to sign a series of cooperation agreements, indicating that relations between them have not been impacted by the coup that removed Condé from power in September 2021 and the fact that Condé has taken up residence in Turkey. At the signing on 6 November of 14 new agreements between the two countries, Turkish foreign minister **Özdemir Çoçak** praised Guinea's progress in the past few years, an obvious reference to the coup:

*"We not only consider Guinea an important actor but also as one of Africa's rising values. Thanks to our reciprocal investments, the links between our countries are becoming progressively stronger."<sup>26</sup>*

<sup>20</sup> FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 18 Nov 2024; FrontPage Africa, Monrovia, Liberia, 19 Nov 2024

<sup>21</sup> Offshore Engineer Energy News (online version), 30 Oct 2024; GMK Centre, 4 Nov 2024

<sup>22</sup> Africabusinessplus.com, 18 October 2024; Africa Intelligence, 8 Sep 2023

<sup>23</sup> Mining Technology, 21 Oct 2024; Agence Ecofin, 22 Oct 2024

<sup>24</sup> L'Indépendant, 19 Nov 2024; Guinee360.com, 19 Nov 2024

<sup>25</sup> Le Lynx, 14 Nov 2024; Action Mines Guinée report, September 2024: Les impacts du projet Simandou sure les communautés

<sup>26</sup> Ledjely.com, 7 Nov 2024

Guinea's foreign affairs minister **Morissanda Kouyaté** also mentioned the good relations between their respective heads of state and added:

*"[These projects] will facilitate partnerships between Guinean and Turkish enterprises...these accords will mark a decisive step for the future of our cooperation. But the biggest part remains to be done, which is the work on the ground."*<sup>27</sup>

The agreements cover a wide range of areas, including agriculture, mining, energy, education and tourism. Guinea opened its embassy in **Ankara** (Turkey) in 2013. A reliable leader for the development of business relationships, **Turkish Airlines** started services into Conakry in 2017. However, the volume of commercial exchanges remains small, at \$136.7m in 2021.

Turkish commercial activity is mainly in the domain of construction and services, including doing management work in the **Port Autonome de Conakry**.<sup>28</sup> A joint economic commission was established in 1997 but did not meet until 2002. Since then, the commission has met three times, while the two current presidents Doumbouya and **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan** (2014-present) have committed themselves to further strengthening and revitalising the relationship.<sup>29</sup> As far back as 2021, the then defence minister **Mohamed Diané** met the Turkish ambassador in Conakry to discuss the possible acquisition of Turkish material, quite possibly the popular **Bayraktar** drones, but no evidence has emerged that these have been acquired.<sup>30</sup> These new agreements may add new momentum to the relationship between the two and ties could continue to grow, which would most likely spill into the defence sector.

## Planner

2024 **Guinea** Constitutional referendum expected

TBC **Guinea** Presidential elections

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

## Chronology

20 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *APA News*. Guinea and the **Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)** inaugurate the **National Coordination Center for the Early Warning and Response Mechanism to Security Risks**;

18 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinea*. Prime minister **Bah Oury**'s advisor, **Saïkou Oumar Baldé**, says the transition will not end on 31 December;

18 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinea*. Prime minister **Bah Oury** announces plans to build new ports and railway infrastructure to connect the **TransGuinea** railway to **Côte d'Ivoire**;

11 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa Guinea*. Ministers gather at a three-day seminar during which prime minister **Bah Oury** will assess their performance and discuss the implementation of current government programmes;

9 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Africa.com*. Energy, hydraulics and hydrocarbons minister **Abdourahim Barry** attends **Africa Energy Week (AEW)** in **Cape Town (South Africa)** and presents Guinea's mining and hydrocarbons strategy during a technical session;

7 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinea*. Foreign affairs minister **Morissanda Kouyaté** and the **Turkish** family and social services minister **Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş** sign 14 cooperation agreements in the tourism, agriculture, mining, energy, social affairs and sports sectors;

<sup>27</sup> Ledjely.com, 7 Nov 2024

<sup>28</sup> Information supplied by the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs; no publication date given

<sup>29</sup> Le Lynx, 7 Nov 2024

<sup>30</sup> Guineenews.org, 5 May 2021

7 Nov 2024 **Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)** *Agence Ecofin*. **Nioko Resources Corporation**, a company owned by Ouagadougou-based **Coris Invest Group**, the holding company of Burkinabe businessman **Idrissa Nassa**, wants to acquire two gold mines in **Mali** and **Guinea**;

5 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Vision Guinee*. Prime minister **Bah Oury** arrives in **Ethiopia** to take part the **World Without Hunger Conference**;

1 Nov 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Jeune Afrique*. Colonel **Mamadi Doumbouya** promotes several army officers to the rank of general and himself to the rank of army general;

30 Oct 2024 **Conakry (Guinea)** *Engineering News*. **China**-headquartered **Baoshan Iron and Steel** says it expects the **Simandou** iron ore project, whose production capacity of 120 million metric tons makes it the world's largest mine for high grade iron-ore, to complete construction and mine its first cargo by the end of 2025;

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