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GUINEA: ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES IN 2024

ESCALATION AND IMPUNITY

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Context

Since the military junta took power in Guinea on September 5, 2021, led by Mamadi DOUMBOUYA, the country's political and social situation has been marked by a concerning stalemate. Civil society and the most representative political parties have been systematically excluded from any sincere and inclusive dialogue framework. A consultation framework established by the government was rejected by the Forces Vives de Guinée, which view the process as biased and unrepresentative. Additionally, an agreement between the military government and ECOWAS, setting the end of the transition for December 2024, was unilaterally concluded without consulting the main stakeholders.

Despite these official commitments, the military continues to wield power authoritatively, delaying the restoration of a democratic constitutional order. In response, the Forces Vives de Guinée, a coalition of

NGOs, unions, and political parties, have organized numerous peaceful protests demanding respect for human rights and a swift return to civilian governance. These mobilizations have been brutally repressed by defense and security forces, resulting in the deaths of 63 civilians. To date, no serious investigation has been conducted to determine responsibility.

Several NGOs, including Tournons La Page (TLP), Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and ACAT France, have denounced this bloody repression. However, the situation remains alarming, as evidenced by the enforced disappearances of two TLP members: Oumar SYLLA, known as "Foniké Menguè," Coordinator of the National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (FNDC), and Mamadou Billo BAH, Head of Mobilization for the FNDC and Coordinator of TLP-Guinea, since July 9, 2024.

Enforced disappearances of two prominent guinean civil society members

During the night of July 9-10, 2024, Oumar SYLLA and Mamadou Billo BAH were abducted from Oumar SYLLA's home without an arrest warrant by a group of heavily armed and hooded soldiers, some in civilian clothes. They were reportedly taken to the Central Directorate of Judicial Investigations of the Gendarmerie and then to a military camp on the island of Kassa. At that time, the two activists had begun an awareness campaign concerning the transition deadline, scheduled for December 2024, and were calling for peaceful mobilization against press freedom violations and the high cost of living. These enforced disappearances, denounced by the

FNDC National Coordination, sent shockwaves through political actors and civil society organizations.

A direct witness, Mohamed Cissé, also captured with the two activists but later released, testified on social media about the inhumane treatment he suffered alongside Oumar SYLLA and Mamadou Billo BAH^[1]. This testimony, coupled with the absence of a serious investigation and the authorities' reluctance to cooperate, fuels a climate of anxiety and anger among the missing persons' relatives and human rights organizations.



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EN AFRIQUE COMME AILLEURS.
PAS DE DÉMOCRATIE SANS ALTERNANCE

ADVOCACY NOTE - JANUARY 2025

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1. [1] "Témoignage Mohamed Cisse codétenu de Foniké Mangué et Billo Bah", FNDC TV. Août 2024. < <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8F82CDhRRTg> >

Enforced disappearance is recognized as a crime against humanity under Article 7 of the Rome Statute. In Guinea, it is also criminalized under Article 225 of the 2016 Penal Code. Nevertheless, despite damning testimonies pointing to the security forces' responsibility, the Attorney General claims no arrests have taken place^[2], while a few days later, the government spokesman stated that *"adults have the right to disappear voluntarily"*^[3]. In September 2024, the Minister Secretary General at the Presidency downplayed the severity of the disappearances, declaring: *"Disappearances and murders happen in every country in the world... I doubt our country ranks the lowest in terms of security"*^[4].

A communication from the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances was

sent to the Guinean government in September 2024. Despite a 60-day response deadline, the government remained silent, intensifying international criticism. In December 2024, the Minister of Justice and Human Rights declared that Guinea is facing a *"new form of crime"*, suggesting that enforced disappearances like those of Oumar SYLLA and Mamadou Billo BAH would not be the army's responsibility^[5]. The multiple statements by the authorities attempting to absolve the Guinean army of dissident voices' disappearances are accompanied by a total lack of progress in investigating these disappearances.

The enforced disappearances of Oumar SYLLA and Mamadou Billo BAH, who had previously been imprisoned and released, demonstrate an intensification of repression against voices critical of the military junta.

Systemic and growing violations against dissident voices

In June 2024, Sadiba KOULIBALY, former Chief of Staff of the Guinean army and former number two in the ruling junta, died in detention. According to military justice, his death was linked to *"significant psychotrauma and prolonged stress."* This death raises serious questions about the detention conditions of political figures under the military regime.^[6]

In October 2024, Saadou NIMAGA, former secretary-general of a ministry under Alpha CONDÉ's presidency, was abducted by four individuals in civilian clothes outside a hotel in downtown Conakry. According to his relatives, who fear for their safety, no information has been provided since the incident. ^[7]



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[2] "Journée internationale des disparus : en Guinée, où sont Foniké Mengué et Billo Bah", RFI. 31/08/2024. < <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20240831-journ%C3%A9e-internationale-disparus-guin%C3%A9-pour-une-enqu%C3%Aate-sur-l-enl%C3%A8vement-de-fonik%C3%A9-mengu%C3%A8-et-billo-bah> >

[3] "Enlèvement de Foniké Mengué et Billo Bah : « Les adultes ont aussi le droit de disparaître volontairement », banalise Ousmane Gaoual Diallo", Guinée matin. 25/07/2024. < <https://guineematin.com/2024/07/25/enlevement-de-fonike-mengue-et-billo-bah-les-adultes-ont-aussi-le-droit-de-disparaitre-volontairement-banalise-ousmane-gaoual-diallo/> >

[4] "Général Amara Camara : "Des assassinats et des disparitions, il y en a dans tous les pays", Guinée 360. 07/09/2024. < <https://www.guinee360.com/07/09/2024/general-amara-camara-des-assassinats-et-des-disparitions-il-y-en-a-dans-tous-les-pays/> >

[5] "Enlèvements de Foniké, Billo Bah et Cie : "Des malfrats se camouflent dans des tenues et on dit que ce sont des militaires", selon le ministre de la justice", Vision Guinée. 21/12/2024. < <https://www.visionguinee.info/enlevements-de-fonike-billo-bah-et-cie-des-malfrats-se-camoufflent-dans-des-tenues-et-on-dit-que-ce-sont-des-militaires-selon-le-ministre-de-la-justice/> >

[6] "Guinée : un général, ancien numéro deux de la junte, meurt en détention", Le Monde. 26/06/2024. < https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2024/06/26/guinee-un-general-ancien-numero-deux-de-la-junte-meurt-en-detention_6243892_3212.html >

[7] "En Guinée, nouvelle disparition mystérieuse sous la junte de Mamadi Doumbouya", Le Monde. 25/10/2024. < https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2024/10/25/en-guinee-nouvelle-disparition-mysterieuse-sous-la-junte-de-mamadi-doumbouya_6359537_3212.html >

On December 1, 2024, a tournament organized in support of Mamadi DOUMBOUYA at a stadium in N'zérékoré turned into a tragedy. The official death toll stands at 56, but local human rights organizations report 135 victims, while the Superior Council of the Forest Diaspora suggests the number could reach 300 [8] [9]. Faced with these accusations, the military power seems to be trying to cover up the matter.

On December 3, 2024, Habib Marouane CAMARA, a renowned journalist and editorialist, was abducted in Lambanyi, a suburb of Conakry, by Gendarmerie agents,

according to testimonies from his relatives[10]. Three weeks after his disappearance, his family and lawyers remain without news, once again illustrating the escalation of press freedom violations in Guinea.

On December 26, 2024, Aliou BAH, president of the Liberal Democratic Movement (MoDeL), was prevented from leaving the country by Guinean authorities. On January 7, he was sentenced to two years in prison for "offense and defamation" against the junta leader[11]. This act constitutes a blatant obstruction of freedom of movement and reflects a growing climate of repression.



Aliou BAH



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[8] "Guinée. Les autorités doivent mener une enquête indépendante et impartiale sur les incidents dramatiques survenus au stade de Nzérékoré et le comportement des forces de l'ordre" Amnesty International. 12/12/2024. <<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2024/12/guinee-les-autorites-doivent-mener-une-enquete-independante-et-impartiale-sur-les-incidents-dramatiques-survenus-au-stade-de-nzerekore-et-le-comportement-des-forces-de-lordre/>>

[9] "N'Zérékoré : Le Conseil Supérieur de la Diaspora Forestière évoque environ 300 morts", Espace FM Guinée. 03/12/2024. <<https://www.espacefmguinee.info/nzerekore-le-conseil-superieur-de-la-diaspora-forestiere-deploire-environ-300-morts/?amp>>

[10] "Guinée: l'épouse d'Habib Marouane Camara en appelle au chef de l'État suite à l'enlèvement du journaliste", RFI. 16/12/2024. <<https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20241216-guin%C3%A9e-l-%C3%A9pouse-d-habib-marouane-camara-en-appelle-au-chef-de-l-%C3%A9tat-suite-%C3%A0-l-enl%C3%A8vement-du-journaliste>>

[11] "En Guinée, un opposant condamné à deux ans de prison pour « offense et diffamation » envers le chef de la junte", Le Monde. 07/01/2025. <https://www.lemonde.fr/afrique/article/2025/01/07/en-guinee-un-opposant-condamne-a-deux-ans-de-priso-pour-offense-et-diffamation-envers-le-chef-de-la-junte_6486760_3212.html>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1 TO THE GUINEAN GOVERNMENT

Immediate release of detainees :

- Unconditionally release Oumar SYLLA and Mamadou Billo BAH ;

Creation of an independent investigative commission :

- Establish a national commission that includes representatives from civil society and international organizations to investigate enforced disappearances ;

Reopening of civic spaces :

- Reactivate all independent media outlets that have been shut down and lift restrictions on peaceful protests, ensuring their safety through a neutral force ;

Adoption of a clear transition timetable :

- Publish a detailed roadmap outlining steps towards credible, transparent, and peaceful elections with fixed deadlines approved by ECOWAS and neutral observers.

2 TO GUINEA'S BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL PARTNERS

Strengthening diplomatic pressure :

- Bilateral partners must demand immediate action to put an end to human rights violations through regular meetings with the authorities.

Targeted sanctions :

- Identify those responsible for violations and adopt individual sanctions (visa restrictions, asset freezes).

Technical and financial support :

- Provide assistance for the implementation of human rights monitoring mechanisms ;
- Support local civil society efforts in documentation and advocacy with dedicated funding.

3 TO GUINEAN CIVIL SOCIETY

Coordination and mobilization :

- Create a unified platform bringing together major organizations to synchronize actions and enhance visibility ;
- Continue citizen initiatives like the "Red Thursdays" to raise public awareness and increase internal pressure.

Citizen observation and monitoring :

- Establish a citizen observatory to monitor the implementation of commitments made by the authorities ;
- Document and publicize all human rights violations to maintain pressure on the government.

International advocacy :

- Regularly draft and submit detailed reports to the United Nations, ECOWAS, and human rights organizations.



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