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**Contribution of Reporters Without Borders (a non-governmental organisation
with special consultative status) about press freedom in GUINEA**

Overview of press freedom situation

Since the military authorities, led by Capt. Moussa Dadis Camara, took control of the state on 23 December 2008, the situation of press freedom did not improve. The recent political instability in Guinea makes the situation even worse.

There was a hope for an improvement with a pacific and democratic transition from the junta to some elected authorities at the beginning of 2010 but since Dadis Camara said that he could be a candidate, this is more than uncertain.

Widely referred to as a “massacre” and as a “bloodbath,” the 28 September events have been unanimously condemned in the international community. Since the repression of the opposition demonstration, the press freedom situation is getting worse from day to day, the climate has become extremely menacing.

Even if the head of the military junta, Capt. Dadis Camara, has said that he was sorry for what happened, there was no improvement. The army is trying to control the media by using violence and threats. All of the country’s journalists – print media, radio, TV and website reporters – are now threatened.

On 28 September, many journalists have been violented. Mouctar Bah, the Conakry correspondent of *Agence France-Presse* and *Radio France Internationale*, and Amadou Diallo, the *BBC*’s correspondent are some of them. After being threatened, insulted and roughed up by drunk soldiers while covering the violent dispersal demonstration, they are now reportedly wanted by the military authorities. Moreover, the soldiers have every time stolen and broken their working materials.

According to Mouctar Bah, many other were roughed including an FM Liberté reporter and Ba Mamadou, who works for the satirical newspaper *Le Lynx*. There is no doubt that these journalists were not the only victims of the repression.

All the journalists who covered the 28 September events are now under severe pressure from the military authority. Several journalists with other news media have been accused of “giving information to foreigners”. Our organisation collected many testimonies which show that many journalists are receiving death threats by telephone and by e-mail.

A few days after the demonstration, the staff of one privately-owned radio station, some of whom have received explicit threats from soldiers close to Camara, were barricaded inside the station and were producing just minimum programming.

Apparently, now the reporters have to choose between being with the junta or against them and being their target. It seems like the red berets want a revenge after the bad reputation they get from all the images and the articles that the journalists did about the recent events.

Some journalists are withholding their by-lines from their reports while others have fled their homes and sometimes even have left the country, with the aim of hiding themselves and their family.

When Burkina Faso President Blaise Compaoré flew to Conakry on 5 October as a would-be mediator in the crisis, journalists from privately-owned media were denied access to the airport area where visiting dignitaries arrive. Some of the journalists were roughed up in front of the minister in charge of presidential security. Only state media journalists and the Burkina Faso media were admitted.

The latest disturbing escalation in the Guinean military’s clampdown, consisted in denying entry to foreign reporters. As the authorities in Conakry are clearly unhappy with the way the international media are covering events in Guinea they have apparently decided to stop allowing them into the country. After physically mistreating then threatening local journalists and keeping them under surveillance, the Guinean military have begun a new phase in their handling of undesired witnesses.

Three French journalists employed by the French international TV news station *France 24* were refused entry at Conakry airport on the evening of 17 October and were put on the first flight back to Paris.

Three journalists employed by the French public TV station *France 2* were denied entry the same day on their arrival from the Senegalese capital of Dakar and were forced to take the first flight back to Senegal. Patrick Forestier, a French reporter employed by the magazine *Paris Match*, was denied entry on 15 October.

Nowadays there is no more foreign journalists in Guinea.

Recommendations

Journalists have been playing a vital role in informing Guineans and the international community about the tragic events in Conakry. Reporters Without Borders strongly condemns the actions of the Guinean soldiers who carried out a massacre and who are now hunting down the witnesses. The situation is grave and the safety of the reporters is in danger.

All of the actors involved in resolving the crisis should take these threats very seriously and should be aware that there could be more atrocities if nothing is done to ensure that Guinea’s journalists are protected.


Reporters Without Borders is afraid that the only important concern of the international community is the 28 September repression, but as we have demonstrated above, journalists are clearly the target of military abuses. Therefore, we urge the UN assistant secretary-general Haile Menkerios not to limit his investigation to the 28 September violence but to include the issue of press freedom and the treatment of journalists.

A resolution of the Guinean crisis requires protecting not just civilians in general but also journalists in particular. The ECOWAS, the European Union and the entire international community must deal with this issue. They have to force the Guinea's military leader, Capt. Dadis Camara, to make his troops see reason, to make him respect his commitment and to make him protect all the journalists.

The information in this report was gathered and checked by Reporters Without Borders, which has a network of correspondents in 130 countries and partner organisations in about 20.

There are countries where journalists can spend years in prison because of a word or a photo that offends. Reporters Without Borders has been working tirelessly to defend press freedom since 1985 because it believes that imprisoning or killing a journalist eliminates a vital witness and threatens everyone's right to be kept informed.

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