

TO: The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton  
Secretary of State of the United States of America  
United States Department of State  
2201 C St. N.W., Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations  
Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Howard L. Berman  
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

FROM: The Movement of Guinean Women in the United States  
The Commission of Guinean *Forces Vives* in the United States  
Alliance Guinea

DATE: October 26, 2009

RE: Request for U.S. Government Support and Intervention in the Republic of Guinea

Dear Secretary Clinton, Chairman Kerry, Chairman Berman, Honorable Members of Congress:

We, women of Guinea together with other members of Guinean civil society and friends of Guinea residing in the United States, come to the State Department, Foreign Relations and Affairs Committees, Members of Congress and President Obama to seek your help for the women, men and children of Guinea in our quest for peace, justice, and democracy.

As you well know, on September 28, 2009 the military junta ruling Guinea opened fire on tens of thousands of unarmed protestors, killing at least 160 and wounding as many as 1700 or more through bullets, beatings and knifings. Most horrific and shocking for us was the brutal raping of women in the streets, sometimes using rifles and other implements. In a culture that honors women as the core of our families and society, this level of brutality had never been seen before and could scarcely be imagined. It is an indicator of the junta's sheer disregard for humanity and the fact that they will stop at nothing to remain in power, regardless of the fact that the Guinean population is united against them. And as the continued targeted arrests and threats against opposition leaders, activists and journalists in the capital city of Conakry demonstrate, it is clear that while the junta remains in power there will be absolutely no hope for human rights, peace, and prosperity.

We are grateful for the serious attention the State Department and Obama Administration has already shown to Guinea following the atrocities of September 28. Your outrage in particular, Secretary Clinton, was a very welcome show of solidarity and we were heartened by your declaration that the junta "cannot remain in power [and] that they must turn back to the people the right to choose their own leaders." Furthermore, we salute the State Department's pledge to monitor "the extralegal actions of the military and government and work with [the United States'] international partners" (Ian Kelly, 9/29/09) on Guinea and the recent White House statement supporting embargos and

targeted sanctions by the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and African Union, the United Nations Commission of Inquiry investigating the violence, and calling for “the establishment of a transitional authority that can lead the country toward credible elections” (The White House, 10/17/09).

We understand from these categorical statements that the United States stands behind the Guinean people. Our march and this letter today aim to demonstrate our gratitude for this position, increase awareness of the grave situation, and to respectfully ask for your further assistance in accelerating and ensuring a peaceful transition to civilian rule and the respect of human rights in Guinea. The atrocities committed on September 28 by the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD) junta, as horrific as they may be, are only the latest example in a long history of dictatorship and impunity in Guinea, and our previous calls for assistance have often gone unheard. Further international support and intervention is needed now for the following reasons:

1. There is a risk that the honorable positions taken so far by the international community will be insufficient to rid Guinea of the brutal military junta and put an end to five decades of dictatorship in the country. In a normal context, the unanimous positions of the African Union, European Union, United States and United Nations would have been enough to force Captain Moussa Dadis Camara, the chief of junta, to respect his promise not to stand in elections and to return government to civilian rule. Unfortunately, the CNDD shows no sign of respecting African Union ultimatums and is deploying delay tactics while armed men in Conakry are carrying out nighttime attacks on opposition and civil society leaders and witnesses to the September 28 atrocities. The core of the junta was recruited and trained by the previous regime and maintained by the current one for its own benefit. Many of the members of the current military were perpetrators of previous human rights violations, including the killing of students in 2006, the massacre of peaceful protesters in January and February 2007, and the executions of striking police officers in 2008. There is compelling evidence that Dadis and the minister in charge of presidential security were involved in these previous crimes as well. Furthermore, the Guinean army is infested with drug traffickers and the junta is using the drug trafficking money to survive – violating international resolutions and insulating themselves from certain sanctions. They are digging in and will not relinquish power easily.
2. If the international community does not fully address the situation, Guinea will rapidly turn from an island of relative stability to a failed, narco-state likely to engulf the entire sub-region in protracted conflict. The risk is particularly high given the recruitment into the Guinean army of thousands of mercenaries from former Liberian rebel groups and other ex-combatants from the volatile Forest region in Guinea, which neighbors Liberia, Sierra Leone and Côte d’Ivoire. The integration of these foreign and unregularized elements into the military further indicates and acerbates the factions and mistrust within the Guinean army, adding to the attempts by Dadis to ethnicize the conflict in order to divide and conquer the Guinean people. All together, this situation could quickly degenerate into civil war, ethnic violence, refugee crises and serious cross-border conflict in an already fragile sub-region.
3. Lack of immediate international action in such situations in Africa and around the world has always sent messages of impunity to other despotic leaders and created fear in future generations. Decisive action is needed now to demonstrate that statements like “never again” are backed up by concrete, early intervention.

4. Continued investments in Guinea's rich mineral wealth could further bolster the junta's strength and buffer the CNDD from other sanctions. Guinea is thought to have the world's largest reserves of bauxite and also has considerable gold, diamond and iron deposits. The recent, outrageous \$7 billion deal between the junta and a Chinese company investing in mining infrastructure across Guinea is just the latest investment initiative that will most likely never reach the Guinean people but rather will be used to procure additional arms and mercenaries to be used against the people.
5. The scourge of violence in Guinea is mentally traumatizing for women, men and children not just in Guinea but across the globe, especially for those of African descent. The use of sexual violence in particular as a tool for political oppression can paralyze democracy movements and simply cannot be tolerated.
6. Guinea is an example *par excellence* of the kind of need for governance and institutional reform called for by President Obama in his speech on Africa in Ghana on July 11, 2009 – and of the ties that bind the United States together with countries like Guinea. As President Obama declared, “Your [African] prosperity can expand America's prosperity. Your health and security can contribute to the world's health and security. And the strength of your democracy can help advance human rights for people everywhere.” Guinea's tragedies and hopes are everyone's tragedies and hopes, and the tragedies of September 28 demonstrate all too clearly the truth of President Obama's statement that “Africa doesn't need strongmen, it needs strong institutions.” President Obama's pledge to help Africa in building these institutions have never been needed more than they are now in Guinea.

For all of these reasons and in the name of human dignity and freedom, we respectfully request that the State Department, Congress, and Obama Administration:

1. Reinforce the actions of ECOWAS and, likely, the European Union by imposing additional American sanctions, including a U.S. travel ban and freeze of American-based assets of key members of the CNDD and their government, business and civil society allies – and by working with non-African Union countries such as Morocco to impose their own asset freezes and sanctions to close the loopholes that will otherwise enable the CNDD to continue to operate;
2. Lend additional support, including intelligence and financial assistance as needed, to the United Nations Commission of Inquiry to investigate not only the massacre of September 28, 2009 but also the assassinations of police officers in 2008 and the killings of 2006 and January and February 2007, as well as other crimes committed by the army since December 23, 2008;
3. Demand that the ECOWAS mediator, President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, require in his recommended transition plan that Dadis respect the International Contact Group and African Union's demands to step down and replace the CNDD with a new civilian transitional authority in charge of organizing free and fair elections;
4. Call for North American mining companies invested in Guinean mining interests to stop all payments to the junta and freeze all extraction activities, desisting from investment until a legitimate, civilian government is established;

5. Continue to demand the immediate liberation of all people – including opposition party members, human rights activists, protestors, journalists, and witnesses – detained illegally;
6. Use all possible means to stop Libyan leader Colonel Mouammar Kaddafi from supporting the military junta and instead to conform to the position of the international community;
7. Demand the banning of arms depots in residential neighborhoods and the closure of all non-conventional detention centers such as those in Kassa and Camp Koundara and of training camps for special militias in Kaporo and Kalia – all of which constitute serious threats to law and order;
8. Prepare for contingencies and if all other means fail, assist in supporting, through financial, technical and political assistance, an international security detail to accompany the international Commission of Inquiry in Guinea in order to protect the civilian population and safely usher the country to and through democratic elections; and
9. Make Guinea a priority on your agenda and continue to coordinate your efforts with those of the United Nations, African Union, ECOWAS, the New Partnership for Africa's Development and the rest of the International Contact Group in putting a stop to the violence in Guinea.

Guinea is sitting on a precipice. In order for the ultimate sacrifices made by our sisters and brothers on September 28 not to be in vain, the time to act is now. In many ways, Guinea has never been so united. The leadership of the United States is desperately needed to ensure that, with relatively small steps, we use this window of opportunity to transition to democratic, civilian rule. The alternative is unthinkable.

In one or five years' time, let us all look back to this moment and say that we took the path of decisive concerted action to peace and democracy in Guinea and the sub-region. We – women, men and friends of Guinea – are confident that by bringing our concern to you, we will succeed in finding a lasting solution to achieve this shared goal.

With sincere appreciation,

The Movement of Guinean Women in the United States

The Commission for Guinean *Forces Vives* in the United States

Alliance Guinea, a coalition of over 800 friends of Guinea in the U.S. and around the world