

SEPTEMBER 28 COALITION FOR JUSTICE & DEMOCRACY IN GUINEA

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Mr. Ban Ki-moon  
Secretary-General  
United Nations Headquarters  
760 United Nations Plaza  
New York, New York 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

We, the September 28 Coalition for Justice and Democracy in Guinea, come to the United Nations today to in order to bring attention to the atrocities committed on September 28 in the Guinean capital of Conakry and to seek your help. The international community's strong commitment is indispensable to ensure that these events will be investigated to the full extent of the law, perpetrators are held accountable, and the Guinean people receive the critical assistance necessary for a peaceful transition from military rule to the country's first democratically elected, civil government.

On September 28 when the military junta ruling Guinea opened fire on tens of thousands of unarmed pro-democracy demonstrators in the capital city Conakry, killing at least 157 and wounding as many as 1700, it was clear that after 51 years of oppressive military rule the situation had reached a breaking point. Most horrific and shocking was the brutal raping of our sisters, mothers, aunts and daughters in the streets – sometimes with the use of rifles, sticks and other implements. In a culture that honors women as the core of families and society, such heinous acts had never before been seen in Guinea and could scarcely be imagined. Experts who have conducted investigations into the violence, including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, conclude that the events demonstrate systematic targeting of civilians in a way that may constitute crimes against humanity.

Furthermore, the continued arrests, harassment, illegal detentions and even killings of activists, journalists, and opposition leaders in Guinea leave no doubt of the junta's sheer disregard for human rights and democracy. Last week's assassination attempt on junta leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara by his aide-de-camp – triggered in large part by the international investigation into the September 28 atrocities – and the ensuing volatility in the country makes it apparent that international community action is essential if there is to be any chance for justice, peace, and freedom in Guinea.

We applaud the United Nations for its condemnation of the September 28 atrocities and we were heartened by your statement that same day urging “national authorities and ... security forces... to uphold the rule of law, including respect for basic human rights” and for “all stakeholders in Guinea to commit to a peaceful, consensual transitional process in the country through the early holding of credible and transparent elections” – including calling for “the National Council for Democracy and Development (CNDD) to respect its earlier commitments not to participate in the elections” (Statement of the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, September 28, 2009). We also appreciate your leadership, Mr. Secretary-General, in authorizing the establishment of the international Commission of Inquiry to investigate the crimes committed that day “with a view to determining the accountability of those involved” (ibid, October 16, 2009).

We understand from these statements that the United Nations recognizes the need to seek justice for the human rights violations committed and for a new, civilian government to be established through free and fair elections. However, the atrocities committed on September 28 by the CNDD, as horrific as they may be, are only the latest example in a long history of dictatorship and impunity in Guinea, and previous calls for justice

and assistance have often gone unheard. Further concrete action by the international community is needed immediately for the following reasons:

1. With international investigation comes the responsibility to ensure that findings will lead to concrete measures to hold those responsible accountable for their actions and to help protect witnesses and other members of the population at risk of a backlash from those in power trying to protect themselves. 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.
2. As demonstrated by last week’s attempt to assassinate CNDD leader Captain Dadis Camara and the deep rifts and conflicts it revealed and exacerbated between different factions in the Guinean military, the environment in Guinea is highly volatile. If the international community does not fully address this situation, the country is at serious risk of becoming a failed, narco-state degenerating into civil war and ethnic violence, engulfing the already fragile sub-region in a protracted conflict with cross-border refugee crises. The risk is particularly high given the junta’s strategy of recruiting 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, and attempts to ethnicize the conflict in order to divide and conquer. The use of additional mercenaries from South Africa further destabilizes the situation.
3. 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 outrageous \$7 billion mining deal between the junta and a Chinese company announced just days after the massacre and other Chinese, Russian and North American mining interests are positioned to be only the latest investments destined for the procurement of arms and mercenaries rather than for the welfare of the people.
4. The brutal violence in Guinea has caused serious trauma amongst the population, and the use of sexual violence in particular as a tool for political oppression risks paralyzing democracy movements in Guinea and beyond and simply cannot be tolerated.

For all of these reasons and in the name of human dignity and freedom, we respectfully request that the United Nations take the following immediate actions:

*To ensure justice and accountability:*

1. Provide all necessary resources and authority to the international Commission of Inquiry to continue investigating the crimes of September 28, 2009 to the fullest extent of the law, identifying the perpetrators and the chain of responsibility and helping to collect evidence of their culpability;
2. Extend the mandate of the Commission of Inquiry to include previous human rights abuses committed by authorities in Guinea such as the killings of students and other citizens in 2006 and 2007, the assassinations of police officers in 2008 and rape and other crimes committed by the army since December 23, 2008;
3. Provide protection and security to witnesses who have or will participate in the Commission of Inquiry’s investigation without relying on the CNDD security forces to do so;

4. Work with the International Criminal Court by providing detailed investigation findings as needed to indict and prosecute any suspected perpetrators of crimes against humanity;
5. Demand the immediate liberation of all people – including opposition party members, human rights activists, protestors, journalists, and witnesses – arrested and detained illegally, and the return of all bodies and any living victims disappeared on September 28.

*To minimize future violence while transitioning to democratically elected civilian rule:*

1. Assist the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union in finding alternative mediators to replace or work with President Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso in order to establish a civilian-led transition body without the CNDD, a critical step in organizing free and fair elections and restoring constitutional order;
2. Reinforce the implementation of sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes on of key members of the CNDD and their allies;
3. Establish a complete and immediate ban on international military training assistance and arms and ammunition provision to Guinean security forces, including by UN Security Council members, until at which time constitutional order is restored and systematic security sector reform conducted;
4. 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;
5. Assist ECOWAS and any other international entities involved to ensure transparency in security sector reform, including accountability for previous human rights violations and the application of human rights law;
6. Call for 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;
7. Assist ECOWAS and the African Union in establishing, through financial, technical and political assistance, an international security detail during the transition period in order to protect the civilian population and safely usher the country to and through democratic elections.

Guinea is sitting on a precipice. In order that the ultimate sacrifices made by our sisters and brothers on September 28 not be in vain, the time to act is now. The leadership of the United Nations is desperately needed to ensure that, with relatively small steps, we use this window of opportunity to undertake decisive concerted action for justice to be served and democracy to take hold. The alternative of neglect is likely to result in further unspeakable brutality. Let us look back in another year's time and say we made the right choice.

SEPTEMBER 28 COALITION FOR JUSTICE AND DEMOCRACY:  
The Commission for Guinean *Forces Vives* in the United States  
Alliance Guinea  
The Amadou Diallo Foundation