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# Türk concerned about media repression in Guinea, urges prompt change of course

29 December 2023

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**GENEVA (29 December 2023)** – UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk today expressed concern about increased repression of n

freedom in the Republic of Guinea and urged the transitional authorities there to change course.

“Journalists have been harassed and intimidated, assaulted and arrested, equipment seized and dismantled, broadcast transmissions blocked, and media channels jammed, suspended or shut down. Access to several social media sites has been blocked and access to the internet restricted,” said Türk.

“These measures fail to comply with the strict requirements of international human rights law. They must be promptly halted and the right to freedom of expression and opinion fully upheld.”

On 6 December, the media regulator ordered *Canal+*, a French pay-TV provider, to stop airing radio and TV content from privately-owned broadcaster *Djoma*, and three days later ordered it to suspend content from two other privately-owned broadcasters, *Evasion* and *Espace*, citing security imperatives.

Two months earlier, on 16 October, security forces detained at least 13 journalists who had gathered in Conakry to protest censorship and call for the lifting of restrictions that had been placed on the *Guinée Matin* news website in August. They were released the same day but criminal proceedings against them remain ongoing.

The restrictions began in May, coinciding with opposition-led demonstrations against perceived authoritarianism on the part of the transitional authorities and slow progress in the transition to a constitutional order.

Access to the *Guinée Matin* and *Africa Guinée* websites was restricted in May, and the transmissions of two privately-owned radio stations – *Fim FM* and *Djoma FM* – jammed. Also in May, transmitters belonging to independent media group *Afric Vision* were dismantled and seized, and two reporters for *Guinée Info* and *Guinée 114* websites were stopped by soldiers who insulted them, threatened to slash the back tyre of their motorbike, and struck one of them on the head. In a further incident in

May, staff of *Fim FM* and *Djoma FM* radio stations were summoned by the Guinean media regulator and reprimanded over perceived critical utterances made on air during a discussion about the opposition protests.

Social media sites, including Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and TikTok, have been blocked since at least 24 November, according to the Open Observatory of Network Interference (OONI), and internet access has been restricted for several months.

The transitional authorities have cited national security imperatives as justification for imposing the restrictions on media and online communication platforms. However, to be consistent with Guinea's international human rights obligations, any restrictions on freedom of expression must be lawful, necessary and proportionate.

"These largely excessive restrictions on fundamental freedoms are only serving to shrink civic space and roll back respect for human rights at a time when they most need to be nurtured and upheld in Guinea," said the High Commissioner. "I strongly urge the transitional authorities in Guinea to take all necessary steps to immediately correct this worrying situation."

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