

Which language would you like to use this site in?

CLOSE

ENGLISH

ESPAÑOL

FRANÇAIS

العربية



© JOHN WESSELS/AFP via Getty Images

October 27, 2023

Guinea: Unnecessary use of force against peaceful rally must not go unpunished

The Guinean authorities must conduct a swift and independent investigation to identify those responsible for the violent repression of a peaceful rally on 16 October that left three journalists injured, said Amnesty International.

Thirteen journalists were arbitrarily arrested during the event in the capital, Conakry, staged by media professionals to demand the lifting of restrictions on access to certain news websites. They were released the same day after being charged with “participation in an illegal assembly on the public highway” and are awaiting a court appearance. Amnesty International is calling for the charges to be

dropped immediately considering in particular that the blanket ban of demonstrations imposed by the authorities since May 2022 is itself unnecessary and disproportionate, thus violating the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly.

In comments made about the crackdown during a cabinet meeting on 19 October, Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, Minister of Posts, Telecommunications and the Digital Economy, said “a police intervention can always lead to minor injuries”.

“Security forces can, it seems, repress a peaceful demonstration without any restraint. This speaks volumes about the impunity that reigns in Guinea today, and about the transitional regime’s attitude toward its human rights commitments,” said Samira Daoud, Amnesty International’s Regional Director for West and Central Africa office.

The organization has collected testimonies from several participants in the peaceful assembly, which are supported by videos recorded on the day.

According to these testimonies, at around 8:30 a.m., around fifteen police and gendarmerie vehicles surrounded the rally at the Port Autonome de Conakry. The journalists were able to continue their march as far as ‘Cité chemin de fer’, where the rally was violently dispersed.

Ibrahima Foulamory Bah, a journalist at the media outlet [Lecourrierdeconakry.com](https://www.lecourrierdeconakry.com), told Amnesty International: “Officers started firing tear gas at us. Despite everything, the Secretary General of the SPPG (Syndicat des Professionnels de la Presse de Guinée) wanted to make his statement, and that’s when we were brutally dispersed.”

Journalist Mariama Bhoie Barry was hit in the elbow with a tear gas cannister, as shown in a video she recorded herself. In the 2-minute video, analyzed by the organization, a member of the security forces fires at the journalist, who was filming a group of around ten officers, including the officer who fired the tear gas launcher. The rest of the video shows the journalist being violently arrested and then taken away in a police vehicle.

Mariama Bhoye Barry told Amnesty International: “He deliberately targeted me. Since the officers were hostile to my filming, they asked me to move back.”

There was no reason to use tear gas against the peaceful protesters. Tear gas should only be used in cases of widespread violence against persons and never shot directly at persons. Such tense, head-high tear-gas fire at such close range was neither necessary nor proportionate.

“Since 2019, we have regularly collected testimonies of protesters seriously injured by tear gas cannisters. The persistence of such practices, intentional according to several victims, underlines the urgency need to address the issue of impunity within the defense and security forces,” said Samira Daoud.

Ibrahima Foulamory Bah was severely beaten when he tried to intervene between the security forces and Mariama Bhoye Barry. “I was hit with truncheons, particularly on my ribs and neck. I was knocked unconscious after a policeman hit me on the back of the neck,” he said.

A third journalist, Mariam Sall, was injured after being hit on the neck with a truncheon and violently loaded into a vehicle.

The 13 journalists were arrested at around 9:00 a.m. and taken to the Kaloum (Conakry) central police station and then to the Kaloum court of first instance. They were not released until around 5:00 p.m. During their eight hours of detention and questioning, no medical care was provided to the three injured persons, despite multiple requests, in violation of their rights.

After medical examinations, it was found that Ibrahima Foulamory Bah had suffered a broken neck bone requiring four weeks’ immobilization. Mariam Sall’s injuries also left her incapacitated for several weeks, and Mariama Bhoye Barry must take painkillers.

“These repeated and unpunished unlawful use of force should alert the relevant special mechanisms of the UN and the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, which should maintain a close attention to the situation in the country not least as the political transition enters its final year in 2024, according to the

timetable agreed between the Guinean authorities and ECOWAS,” said Samira Daoud.

NEWSPRESS RELEASEAFRICA
GUINEA
WEST AND CENTRAL AFRICA
PRESS RELEASE

CENSORSHIP AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION
PROTESTS AND DEMONSTRATIONS

Related Content

COUNTRY
Guinea

NEWS
Guinea: Act now to ensure greater support and assistance for survivors of sexual violence

CAMPAIGNS

**Advisory opinion of the
Court requesting the
abrogation of vagrancy laws**

RESEARCH

The Repression Trade

NEWS

**Guinea: Amnesty
International calls for
charges to be dropped
against 13 journalists who
took part in a peaceful rally**