

THE STATE OF THE WORLD'S HUMAN RIGHTS

APRIL 2024



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Amnesty International is impartial. We take no position on issues of sovereignty, territorial disputes or international political or legal arrangements that might be adopted to implement the right to self-determination. Given this and our interest in highlighting state accountability, we organize our information on human rights in the world primarily according to the division of states that are accountable for the human rights situation on their territory.

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This report documents key human rights developments at a national and regional level during 2023, as well as presenting a global analysis of ongoing critical human rights challenges. It includes entries on countries or territories whose human rights situation Amnesty International has monitored during 2023.

The absence of a particular country or territory does not imply that no human rights violations of concern to Amnesty International took place there during the year. Nor is the length of a country entry any basis for a comparison of the extent and depth of Amnesty International's concerns there. This report does not cover extensively the use of the death penalty as Amnesty International issues a separate annual global report on death sentences and executions.

IMPUNITY

There was little progress in the investigation and prosecution of human rights violations and war crimes perpetrated during the internal armed conflict between 1960 and 1996. A bill that would grant amnesty for those suspected of criminal responsibility for these crimes advanced in Congress. It was still pending approval at the end of the year.

WOMEN'S AND GIRLS' RIGHTS

Levels of violence against women and girls remained high. Local organizations reported difficulties in accessing justice for women survivors of gender-based violence.

The CEDAW Committee raised concerns about the criminalization of abortion in Guatemala, where it was only permitted if the life of the pregnant woman was at risk, and the limited access to safe abortion and post-abortion services. High rates of child pregnancy remained of particular concern. Between January and October, the Observatory on Sexual and Reproductive Health recorded 52,878 births to girls and young women aged between 10 and 19.

LGBTI PEOPLE'S RIGHTS

LGBTI people faced high levels of violence and discrimination. According to the National LGBTIQ+ Human Rights Observatory, at least 34 people were killed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity during the year. Same-sex marriage remained illegal.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' RIGHTS

Indigenous Peoples continued to demand that their rights to their lands be recognized. In a context of insecure land tenure, violent evictions were reported. Ancestral authorities and those who defend land and territory faced unfounded criminal charges.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

The National Climate Change Fund, created in 2022, was still not operating by the end of the year.

The authorities warned that droughts and floods, linked to the impacts of El Niño and

aggravated by climate change, could exacerbate malnutrition.

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1. "Guatemala: Peaceful protesters face imminent risks", 12 October
 2. "Guatemala: Prisoner of conscience Virginia Laparra has now been arbitrarily detained in prison for one year", 23 February
 3. "Guatemala: Freedom for Claudia González", 12 September (Spanish only)

GUINEA

Republic of Guinea

Access to the main social networks was disrupted, and news websites, radio and television were targeted. All demonstrations continued to be banned except those in favour of the transitional authorities. Security forces killed demonstrators and arbitrarily arrested journalists. Four people were convicted in the M'Mah Sylla case. The authorities launched legal proceedings on marine pollution.

BACKGROUND

The trial of former head of state Moussa Dadis Camara and several former senior security officials for their role in the 28 September 2009 massacre – during which 157 people were killed by defence and security forces and more than 100 were victims of sexual violence – resumed on 13 November, nine days after an armed commando attacked Conakry prison and released four of the main defendants, including Moussa Dadis Camara. All were caught except for Claude Pivi, former minister of presidential security. Following an explosion at the country's main fuel depot in Conakry on the night of 17/18 December – killing 24 people and injuring more than 450 – the resulting fuel shortage led to an increase in the cost of living, school and university closures and frequent power cuts.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 31 October, the ECOWAS Court of Justice ruled that Guinea had violated the rights to freedom of expression and of information by

restricting access to the internet and to social media in 2020.

Access to the main social networks remained disrupted since 24 November, with no official explanation from the authorities. Access to social networks and news websites was previously disrupted from 17 May during anti-government protests, and restored around a week later. On 30 November, Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, minister of post, telecommunications and digital economy, stated that “the internet is not a right”. He had acknowledged the previous disruption to the internet, but attributed it to a technical problem with an undersea cable. The news website Guineematin.com was inaccessible from 15 August to 5 November, with no reason given. The High Authority of Communication wrote to Canal + Guinée on 6 and 9 December to ask them to stop broadcasting Djoma FM and TV, Espace FM and TV and Évasion FM and TV for “national security reasons”. Another distributor, StarTimes, announced the withdrawal of Djoma TV, Espace TV and Évasion TV for the same reasons.

FREEDOM OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

A blanket ban on all political gatherings in Guinea remained in place since May 2022. In Conakry, however, although gatherings called by the opposition Living Forces of Guinea coalition were prohibited, several rallies in support of the head of state were allowed to go ahead.

On 1 June, the Kankan court of first instance sentenced two women to six months’ imprisonment – four months suspended – and a fine of GNF 1 million (around EUR 110) each, and seven women to a six months’ suspended sentence and a fine of GNF 500,000 (around EUR 55). All nine were convicted of “criminal participation in an assembly”, after marching on 24 May to demand the return to power of former president Alpha Condé.

Following violent protests on the night of 27-28 March in Kankan against the lack of electricity, during which an image of the president was burnt, on 13 April the city’s

court of first instance sentenced 15 people to imprisonment of between four and 18 months, including on charges of unauthorized assembly.

UNLAWFUL KILLINGS

According to civil society organizations, media and political parties, since 5 September 2021 at least 37 people had been killed by defence and security forces during protests.

One person was killed in Wonkifong, Kindia region on 16 April during an anti-drugs operation by the security forces. Several people were wounded in Boffa, Boké region on 19 September when the military allegedly shot at people who had blocked roads to protest against the lack of electricity.

On 27 March, the Dixinn court of first instance in Conakry sentenced a senior officer of the gendarmerie to 10 years’ imprisonment and ordered him to pay GNF 100 million (around EUR 11,000) in damages for the murder of a 19-year-old man on 1 June 2022 in Hamdallaye, Conakry during a demonstration against the increase in the price of petrol.

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND DETENTIONS

Oumar Sylla and Ibrahima Diallo of the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution and Saikou Yaya Barry of the Union of Republican Forces were provisionally released on 10 May after more than 10 months’ arbitrary detention. They had been accused of “criminal participation in an assembly, complicity in the destruction of public and private buildings, intentional assault and battery, arson and looting” for mobilizing to demand the restoration of the constitutional order. On 13 June, the Dixinn court of first instance in Conakry acquitted Oumar Sylla and Ibrahima Diallo.

On 16 October, 13 journalists were violently and arbitrarily arrested in Kaloum, Conakry, taken to the central police station and then indicted at the court of first instance. They had been taking part in a peaceful demonstration organized by the Guinean Union of Press Professionals to demand that

the authorities lift restrictions on access to certain news websites.¹ They were released the same day after being charged with “participating in an illegal assembly on a public highway”.

SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

On 4 April, four men were sentenced by the court of first instance in Mafanco, Conakry to between one and 20 years’ imprisonment for the rape and other abuses leading to the death of M’Mah Sylla on 20 November 2021. The perpetrators were also ordered to pay GNF 1 billion (around EUR 110,000) in damages to the victim’s father.

On 18 October, the UN agencies in Guinea called on the authorities to fulfil their obligations to combat violence against women and girls, following the death of a nine-year-old girl after being raped in Dubréka, Kindia region four days earlier.

RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

In March, the president officially relaunched work on the Simandou iron ore mine, planned to include the construction of a railway and a port, despite concerns by civil society organizations about the consequences on local residents’ economic and social rights, and impacts on climate change. After 500 fishermen complained of skin rashes, Guinean authorities carried out an inspection on 14 April and found large areas of pollution 74km off the coast of Conakry. On 19 June, the Ministry of Justice asked the Court for the Repression of Economic and Financial Offences to initiate legal proceedings against “suspected ore carriers, individuals or legal entities that own, use or are responsible for the said ships”, for “alleged acts of marine pollution causing skin rashes among small-scale fishermen and environmental damage”.

1. “Guinea: Amnesty International calls for charges to be dropped against 13 journalists who took part in a peaceful rally”, 19 October

HAITI

Republic of Haiti

Hunger and lack of essential goods and services were widespread. Gang violence including killings, abductions and sexual violence remained unpunished. Judges, prosecutors, journalists and human rights defenders were at risk. Hundreds of thousands of people remained internally displaced or fled the country, while the USA and the Dominican Republic offered Haitians limited access to international protection and expelled thousands of them.

BACKGROUND

Criminal groups were present throughout the country and exercised considerable influence over important areas of the country, including the capital, Port-au-Prince, and its metropolitan area.

In October, the UN Security Council approved the deployment of a multinational security support mission in Haiti, a measure requested by the Haitian government. The mission was going to be led by Kenyan law enforcement, which had a record of excessive and unnecessary use of force, including lethal force.¹

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

The scarcity of essential goods and services continued throughout the year. In July, the World Food Programme announced that it would have to stop providing food assistance to 100,000 people due to budget cuts, despite the fact that half of the population (4.9 million people) were unable to source food daily. Despite a slight reduction in expected hunger levels announced by the government and UN agencies, millions continued to lack sufficient food, and environmental changes and climate shocks affected food production.

Health services were insufficient and had reduced capacity due to economic constraints and violence that had caused

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Each year, Amnesty International documents the state of the world's human rights. Our research reveals that, across the world, authorities continue to assault universal freedoms. States and armed groups are breaking and bending the rules of war and racism lies at the heart of some armed conflicts and the responses to them. Economic crises, climate change and environmental degradation have disproportionately affected marginalized communities. Human rights defenders campaigning for the rights of these communities are targeted as part of a wider repression of dissent. The backlash has intensified against the rights of women and girls and LGBTI people. Incitement to hatred and other harmful content posted online against some racialized groups have increased. Meanwhile, advances in artificial intelligence are used to limit freedoms and violate human rights.

This report documents human rights concerns during 2023 in 155 countries, connecting issues at global and regional levels and looking forward to the implications for the future. It calls for action and shows what steps governments and others can take to meet these challenges and improve people's lives across the world. It makes essential reading for government leaders, policymakers, advocates, activists and anyone interested in human rights.

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