



## COUNTRY PROFILE

## FOR INFORMATION

### *GUINEA*

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#### **General Information**

The Republic of Guinea is located in West Africa, also referred to as Guinea-Conakry to distinguish it from Guinea-Bissau and Equatorial Guinea. The country was formerly known as French Guinea when France occupied it from the 1890s until independence in 1958. Today, the population is around 11,747,383 with its largest and most populous city being the capital, Conakry. There are over two dozen ethnic groups, with the three largest being: Peuhl 40%, Malinke 30%, Soussou 20%, and other smaller groups 10%. Guinea is a predominately Islamic country, making up 85% of the population, followed by Christianity at around 8% and the remaining 7% belonging to indigenous beliefs. The country is a multiparty republic with a semi-authoritarian executive. The country struggled between a coup and military dictatorship until the country held its first democratic elections appointing Alpha Condé as president in December 2010. A military junta took control of the country in December 2008 following the death of President Lansana Conté, who held power since his coup 24 years earlier. The democratization occurring is an ongoing domestic challenge and a post-independence struggle. The politics in Guinea centers on ethnic dimensions, with the opposition coalition supported by members of the Peuhl and the government supported by the Malinke. President Condé's position has sparked ethnic tension because he comes from the Malinke ethnic group, which makes up about 30% of the population and the defeated candidate Cellou Dalein Diallo is of the majority Peuhl group.

Guinea has major mineral, hydropower, solar power, and agricultural resources, making it potentially one of Africa's richest countries due to its mineral wealth however its people are amongst the poorest in West Africa. The poverty rate has increased and is almost at 60% and extreme poverty encroaching 20%. Gold, bauxite, alumina, and diamonds are Guinea's main mineral exports, with their bauxite reserves being the largest in the world. The biggest threat to their economy is political instability, the Ebola epidemic, and low international commodity prices – faced with poorly developed infrastructure and rampant corruption creating obstacles to large-scale investment projects. Economic growth is dependent on resource extraction and the IMF claims its wealth has been decreasing, indicating that investments have been insufficient to offset mineral rents. The largest gold mining operation in Guinea is a joint venture between the government and Ashanti Goldfields. Guinea has large iron ore reserves that Rio Tinto owns majority of, with a \$6 billion project. In September 2011, the government adopted a new mining code setting up a commission to review agreements during the end of dictatorship in 2008 to Condé's current presidency, as a step towards transparency and good governance. Guinea's National Transitional Council approved this new mining code that includes several key "best practices". This new code is a step for Guinea to break from the past by making the mining sector accountable to the people of Guinea. The code was amended in 2013 after engaging with

stakeholders, working with both the IMF and Revenue Watch. The amended code matches international norms and is aimed to attract investors in a challenging global economic context.

### **Security Environment Overview**

One transnational security concern is Guinea as a source, transit, and destination for men, women, and children subjected to forced labour and sex trafficking. Young women are forced into domestic and commercial sexual exploitation and young men are forced to beg and work as miners, street vendors, and shoe shiners. Human rights violations by security forces have declined, but concerns over the excessive use of force and unprofessional conduct resulting in several deaths have been reported. The security forces have been implicated in numerous acts of extortion, bribe-taking, theft, banditry, and rape. Security forces also lack political neutrality as recruitment and promotions have ethnic and partisan bias. This has resulted into incidents such as racial slurs and failure to provide equal protection to citizens of all ethnic and religious groups and people who support opposition parties. Local authorities are poorly equipped and trained, having little or no emergency response capabilities to effectively respond to issues. NGO's such as COGINA, based in Geneva, have provided technical assistance on security sector governance, police reform, and community oriented policing. They provide technical assistance to the government to assist the country's 2012-2015 Strategy and Plan of Action on Security Sector Reform.

Guinea is one of the most severely affected countries by the 2014 Ebola epidemic in the West African region. Ebola has become a security issue as fear has led to unrest and attacks on health workers and treatment centers. In one attack, a mob murdered eight health workers and journalists. The Ebola crisis has deteriorated the right to basic healthcare and caused a substantial economic downturn. The Canadian government advises against non-essential travel to the country due to Ebola related concerns, as the current security situation remains volatile due to political, social, and economic tensions in the country. Foreigners are typically well received in Guinea but the main concern is criminals, thieves, beggars, and corrupt officials perceiving visitors as lucrative targets. Guinea shares borders with several countries, including: Guinea-Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Côte d'Ivoire. The instability in neighbouring countries and domestic crime is of concern. Specific attention and caution should be paid around the borders of Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire where there is cross-border military and rebel activity. Inter-ethnic violence has sparked around the second largest city of N'Zérékoré, so cautiousness around such communities is recommended. Political deadlock coupled with lack of effective public services has led to violent incidents causing death and injuries in the past months. Conakry has been experiencing fuel and water shortages in recent months. Another security concern is pirate attacks in coastal waters, so precautions on or near water is advised.

The 2013 election was controversial, as it was delayed several times. In 2012, there were complaints over the government's arbitrary arrest of opposition supporters and Condé was accused of altering the polls in his favour. On March 5, 2013, the UN human rights office expressed concern over the unrest that resulted in numerous deaths and injuries and called on authorities to protect civilian and parties to refrain from violence. Reports state that demonstrators were attacking people based on ethnicity. It is anticipated that demonstrations will

occur and intensify in the lead up to the presidential elections scheduled for October 11, 2015. The electoral commission in March broke a 2013 agreement to have local elections before presidential elections, which caused an outbreak of protests. The opposition wants local elections to be held earlier because they are worried that the current mayors are too close to the ruling party, which means fraud and corrupt acts will take place during the presidential election. Hence, the timing of this election is said to be an abuse of Condé to maintain his power and authority. The opposition parties are trying to pressure the government to hold local elections before the presidential vote, however the Condé government denies that delaying local polls will have an impact on free and fair elections.

On September 28, 2009, a massacre took place in a public stadium by security forces as they opened fire on tens of thousands of opposition supporters at a peaceful gathering. More than 150 people were killed, some 100 women were raped, and several hundred were injured. This case of the 2009 massacre exemplifies the insecurity surrounding elections in the country, coupled with the ineffective security forces, posing a threat in the lead up to the October 2015 presidential elections. This election tension is reflective of the state fragility surrounding nepotism and corruption in business-state relations, and the oversized and abusive military and police forces. The lack of rule of law affects the country's management of their well-endowed mineral resources. Additionally, conflicts between the state and business are frequent in Guinea, and companies have little incentive to note corruption because they profit from the current fragile system of the country.

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### **Mapping of Stakeholders**

The following are stakeholders of interest that can provide valuable information:

#### **Government**

- *Note: many governmental websites, like the official website for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is down due to the country's political situation.*
- The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights can be a good source for understanding the country's policy and existing measures that attempt to ensure civilian rights in mining zones/communities.
- The Ministry of Energy and Hydraulics can be a good contact to find out more about the extractive industries and their relationship with companies, government, and communities.

#### **NGO**

- The Forum of NGOs for Sustainable Development (FONGDD) is a platform for dialogue between national and international NGOs in Guinea. The goal is to synergize their actions and messages in a space of exchange to influence public decision-making through collective position towards current issues and challenges.
- The African Commission of Health and Human Rights Promoters is a pan-African initiative to promote human rights as a whole, with an emphasis on the right to health. This could be a great source to see where concerns fall for health impacts on mining communities and the implications on human rights.

- The Organisation Guinéenne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen (OGDH) promotes and defends the human rights of all people in Guinea. This organization hosts training workshops and seminars to educate the public on human rights.
- The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) promotes the rights and wellbeing of children and women recognizing the importance of early childhood development. They focus on disadvantaged children living in fragile contexts and those affected by rapid urbanization and environmental degradation.
- Lien De Brouckere is a Consultant on Mining, Communities and Human Rights in Guinea for the American Bar Association Rule of Law Association and at One Earth Foundation. She is an expert in developing toolkits and practical guidance for civil society organizations and community facilitators to support equitable, rights-compatible and peaceful resource extraction.

### **Private Sector**

- Guinea Alumina Corporation (GAC) is a mining development company, and a subsidiary of Emirates Global Aluminum (a merge of Dubai Aluminum Company and Emirates Aluminum Company Limited). They pledge themselves to sustainable development in their projects, which would be of interest in CSR initiatives in the region.
- Alcoa is a metals engineering and manufacturing pioneering the aluminum industry. The company dedicates itself to ethics and compliance approach with an organization responsible for the development and implementation of Ethics and Compliance Program. This would be of interest to see how their CSR works and its effectiveness in Guinea.
- Holcim Ltd. is one of the world's leading building materials company that operates in Guinea. They emphasize sustainable development at an economic, ecological, and social level. This would be another point of interest to study CSR practices in Guinea.

For more information please contact;

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