
Guinea warned of sanctions as death toll climbs

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Reuters reported that the African Union threatened Guinea's military junta with sanctions as the death toll climbed from a crackdown by security on opponents of military ruler Captain Moussa Dadis Camara.

The toll from Monday's violence climbed as eyewitnesses counted dozens more corpses on top of at least 58 bodies seen in a hospital in the capital Conakry after soldiers fired live rounds at protesters to halt a rally at a local stadium. The clashes in the world's top bauxite exporting country were the worst since Mr Camara seized power in a 2008 coup and followed months of wrangling between Mr Camara and his rivals.

The African Union called on Mr Camara to confirm he would honor a pledge not to stand in a presidential election due in January and so allow transition to civilian rule.

Mr Ban Ki-moon UN Secretary General former colonial power France condemned the killings which eyewitnesses said were unprovoked and indiscriminate.

Mr Souleymane Bah Guinean human rights activist said that "Soldiers were firing at people and those who tried to get out were caught and finished off with bayonets.

Mr Bah said that he had seen dozens of lifeless bodies in the stadium after soldiers dispersed the crowd and confirmed widespread reports of abuses by soldiers. He said that "I saw soldiers strip women naked, spread their legs and stamp on their privates with their boots."

Mr Camara has yet to make a formal announcement on whether he will stand for the election but diplomats have said he has spoken in private of his plans to be candidate.

Mr Cellou Dalein Diallo leader of major opposition group the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea and several other politicians were arrested by the security forces.

Mr Camara seized power after President Mr Lansana Conte died in December 2008. He enjoyed initial support from a population hungry for change after decades of Conte's rule left the mineral-rich nation in disarray. However, increasingly erratic behavior including crackdowns on former backers in the military attacks on mining companies the country is so dependent on and the likelihood he will stand in a poll due in 2010, have fuelled instability.

Mining firms like UC RUSAL and Rio Tinto have not indicated they are ready to leave Guinea despite a series of disputes but officials said that government revenues from mineral exports will fall dramatically in 2010 putting the budget under strain.

(Sourced from Reuters)

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