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Guinea

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2005](#)

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Guinea is a constitutional republic in which effective power is concentrated in a strong presidency. President Lansana Conte has ruled this country of approximately 9.2 million persons since 1984, first as head of a military junta and, since 1994, as a civilian president. Despite openly acknowledged health problems, the president ran for re-election in December 2003, winning against a candidate who was virtually unknown. All major opposition parties boycotted the election, criticized by international observers as neither free nor fair. The civilian authorities generally did not maintain effective control of the security forces.

The government's human rights record improved as it implemented political and macroeconomic reforms begun in 2004 with the appointment of Prime Minister Cellou Dalein Diallo although serious problems remained. Some international donors withheld foreign aid pending progress on reforms, including with regard to human rights. High inflation, severe power blackouts, and water shortages led to increased hardship for most citizens. Lack of health care services and basic infrastructure combined with endemic poverty caused systemic pressures on daily life. The following human rights problems were reported:

- restrictions on the right of citizens to change their government
- unlawful killings by security forces
- beatings and abuse of civilians, particularly detainees, by security forces
- inhumane and life-threatening prison conditions
- impunity
- arbitrary arrest and prolonged pretrial detention
- executive influence in the judiciary
- infringements on citizens' privacy rights
- infringements on freedom of speech, the press, assembly, association, and movement government corruption
- violence and societal discrimination against women, prostitution of young girls, and female genital mutilation (FGM)
- trafficking of persons
- ethnic discrimination
- antiunion discrimination
- child labor

The government took significant steps to improve freedom of the press through a media liberalization decree clearing the way for private radio and television broadcasting in the country. The government agreed to some electoral reforms proposed by political parties as part of an open dialogue, including an autonomous electoral commission, a single ballot listing all political parties, free and equitable access to radio and television during the campaign period, transparent ballot boxes, and the liberty to travel and campaign without government intervention. Freedom of movement and assembly increased, although to a lesser extent than in the previous year, including peaceful rallies and campaign trips across the country by political opposition leaders.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed political killings; however, security forces killed five persons during the year, and there were reports of deaths in custody due to torture, abuse, and neglect.

On November 24, 2 students and a 65-year old woman were killed by police during a student demonstration in Telimele. The officer was not punished.

On July 10, a gendarme officer killed a 19-year-old student in Conakry during a student strike at Ratoma Junior High School. The officer was not punished, and no investigation occurred by year's end.

In December 2004 a member of the military killed a school boy in Fria following a strike by employees of an aluminum company. No charges

were filed. The government often considered killings by security forces to be "professional accidents" and instead, of prosecution or sanction, transferred the perpetrator to another district.

There were no developments in the following 2004 reported killings by security forces: the February beating to death of a man detained for burglary, the May police shooting and killing of two taxi drivers, or the October killing of a man by the Anti-Gang Brigade.

There were no developments in the reported 2003 killings by police.

Government authorities continued to block efforts by human rights groups and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to investigate political killings that took place in the 1970s under then President Sekou Toure.

Many victims of crime feared that they might never receive justice because of judicial corruption and at times resorted to vigilante violence. In September a Conakry homeowner and his neighbors caught and beat to death a suspected burglar.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits such practices; however, both civilian and military security forces beat and otherwise abused civilians. There also were reports that security forces used torture and beatings to extract confessions and employed other forms of brutality, including holding prisoners incommunicado without charges under inhumane conditions.

Students who were arrested in 2004 during a strike at the University of Conakry claimed to have been tortured in prison.

Police and members of the antigang brigade beat a journalist attempting to report on social and labor issues (see sections 2.a. and 6.b.).

Police injured several persons while using force to disperse demonstrations during the year (see section 2.b.).

No action was taken against security forces responsible for reported abuses in 2003.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions remained inhumane and life threatening. Neglect, mismanagement, and lack of resources were prevalent. The basic diet for prisoners was inadequate, and most inmates relied on supplemental assistance from families or friends to maintain their health. Guards often demanded bribes in exchange for allowing delivery of food to those incarcerated. Approximately 100 children, who were either born in prison or had no alternative means of care, lived permanently in the Conakry jail with their mothers. No provisions were made for the children's food, clothing, education, or medical care. The government did little to address prison conditions. National and international NGOs continued programs to improve the health of critically malnourished inmates.

Standards of sanitation remained poor, which resulted in several dozen deaths due to malnutrition and disease. Toilets did not function, and prisoners slept and ate in the same space where they relieved themselves. During the year there were reports that persons died due to lack of medical attention and poor conditions. On January 23, an imam arrested after the January assassination attempt on President Conte died in prison as a result of poor medical treatment and dangerous and unsanitary conditions.

Some prisoners reported sleeping on their knees because their cells were so small. Prisoners reported that guards threatened, beat, and harassed them, and some reported being denied food and a place to lie down. For example, one prisoner lost his sight due to beatings. A student imprisoned on assault and battery charges was paralyzed. Prison guards were suspected of torture in both incidents; however, no investigation took place by year's end. Some prisoners wielded more power than the guards, offering more sanitary cells and conditions to new prisoners who were able to pay.

Efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) helped improve conditions with several prison rehabilitation projects in the country. In the overcrowded N'Zerekore prison, ICRC established access to clean water and constructed a secured area to allow prisoners to go outside.

On May 15, 63 prisoners escaped from the main prison in downtown Conakry; of these, 6 were military detainees. The facility was built in 1950 to hold 200 prisoners but at the time of the escape, 836 inmates were listed. An official in the Ministry of Justice reported that the prison may have held two thousand prisoners. At year's end one of the military prisoners remained at large.

On December 25, four prisoners escaped from prison in Kankan. The following day three of the prisoners were rearrested and the fourth was still at large at year's end.

In most prisons, men and women were held separately, but juveniles generally were held with adults, and first-time offenders were not separated from common criminals. There were credible reports from prisoners that guards harassed and sexually assaulted female inmates.

An unknown number of boys below the age of 14 were also held in the Conakry prison with no legal representation. One boy had been detained for eight years on a petty shoplifting charge. An international NGO reported the prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among incarcerated minor boys to be as high as 50 percent, suggesting sexual abuse. Local and international NGOs were providing some food and legal representation to these boys.

Pretrial detainees were not separated from convicted prisoners, and the prison system often was unable to track pretrial detainees after arrest. Prisoners of political importance usually were held in the main prison in Conakry with the general prison population but were held in separate cells.

The government permitted prison visits by the ICRC and other local humanitarian and religious organizations, which offered medical care and food for those in severe need. The ICRC reported that it was allowed regular access to all 33 official detention facilities and 2,500 prisoners during the year. The ICRC continued to initiate partnership programs with prison and security authorities to improve prison conditions. A former prisoner reported that without this assistance, those who did not have families or friends would have starved to death.

On February 5, UN Development Program (UNDP) and local NGOs organized a day of charity for prisoners. The government did not interfere as volunteers went into Conakry's main prison to clean the facilities and provide food, medicines, and clothing to prisoners.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention; however, security forces regularly used arbitrary arrest and detention.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The gendarmerie, a part of the Ministry of Defense, and the national police, under the Ministry of Security, share responsibility for internal security and sometimes played an oppressive role in the daily lives of citizens. The Code of Penal Procedure permits only the gendarmerie to make arrests, but the army, the Presidential Guard (Red Berets), and the state police often detained persons as well. A quasi-police unit called the Anti-Crime Brigade (BAC), created to fight criminal gangs and bandits, operated in Conakry and in most major regions and prefectures. In practice administrative controls over the police were ineffective, and security forces rarely followed the penal code. Many citizens viewed the security forces as corrupt, ineffective, and even dangerous. Police ignored legal procedures and extorted money from citizens at roadblocks (see section 2.d.). There were no reported judicial proceedings against officers suspected of committing abuses. National and international NGOs conducted seminars to train security forces on human rights issues and conflict resolution techniques.

The penal code stipulates that the arrest of persons in their home is illegal between 4:30 p.m. and 6 a.m.; nevertheless, midnight arrests took place. The penal code also requires that the government issue a warrant before an arrest can be made and that detainees be charged before a magistrate within 72 hours. In practice many detainees were incarcerated for longer periods before being charged. After being charged, the accused may be held until the conclusion of the case, including a period of appeal. Authorities frequently did not respect the provision of the law that provides for access by attorneys to their clients. Although the law proscribes incommunicado detention, at times it occurred in practice. Release on bail was at the discretion of the magistrate who had jurisdiction.

Arrest and Detention

The government detained approximately 60 civilians and military officers for suspected involvement in the January 19 assassination attempt on President Conte. Antoine G'Bokolon Soromou, former mayor of Lola, was suspected to have organized the attack. Soromou left the country, and his whereabouts were unknown. Mohamed Lamine Diallo (also known as Benn Pepito, a journalist for the private weekly newspaper *La Lance*, was released on February 19 after three days in custody. At year's end both Soromou and Diallo were in self-imposed exile. Police arrested Mohamed Diane and Paul Yomba Kourouma, both affiliated with the political opposition party Rally of the People of Guinea (RPG). Diane was released the same day and Kourouma released two days later.

On February 25, the military police placed Colonel Mamadou "Toto" Camara under house arrest and accused him of being involved in the January assassination attempt of the president. Police released him on July 20. Camara was detained in March 2004 along with former mayor and prominent member of the UFR opposition party Rougui Barry and another UFR member for being involved in efforts to subvert the government. Charges against the two party officials were later dismissed.

Gendarmes detained an unknown number of active and ex-military personnel for unspecified reasons. Credible human rights sources reported that these detainees were not allowed to receive visits by family members, and their treatment was not monitored by independent agents. In violation of the law, an unknown number of prisoners were held on army bases where virtually all contact was forbidden.

Police detained members of political opposition parties during the year. The government acknowledged the existence of several temporary political detainees. Opposition parties estimated that there were approximately 200 political detainees, and the majority of their arrests occurred during the campaign period and on election day. At years end no charges had been filed against these persons. In practice political detentions rarely exceeded a few days, and these persons were generally extended more protections than other detainees because of the attention to their cases by NGOs and the media. In high profile detentions, the persons were often held separately from other detainees and prisoners, and access to them was unrestricted.

Prolonged pretrial detention was a problem. At times detainees remained in prison for more than two years without trial. For example, at years end seven military officers who were arrested in December 2003 for suspected coup plotting were still in prison awaiting trial. By one account, at Conakry central prison only 313 of the 627 persons in detention had been tried, while 314 were in investigative detention. Two

prisoners, Abdoulaye Camara and Mohamed Diasy reportedly served nine years at the central prison without judgment or sentencing. The men were held in a cramped section of the prison where they were prevented from moving freely. At least one of them has suffered permanent paralysis as a result of prison conditions. Police arrested the men in March 1996 in connection with a burglary.

Unlike in previous years, there were no reports of a parallel and covert system of justice run by unidentified uniformed personnel who conducted midnight arrests, detained suspects, and used torture in secret prisons to obtain confessions before transferring detainees to prosecutors.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

Although the law provides for the judiciary's independence, judicial authorities routinely deferred to executive authorities in politically sensitive cases. Magistrates were civil servants with no assurance of tenure. Because of corruption and nepotism in the judiciary, relatives of influential members of the government often were, in effect, above the law. Judges often did not act independently, and their verdicts were subject to outside interference. The judicial system was plagued by numerous problems, including a shortage of qualified lawyers and magistrates and an outdated and restrictive penal code.

On August 1, President Conte appointed Lamine Sidibe as chief justice of the Supreme Court. Sidibe also served in this position from 1992 to 1999, during which time he officially validated Conte's victory in the disputed 1993 and 1998 presidential elections.

The judiciary includes courts of first instance, two courts of appeal, and the Supreme Court, which is the court of final appeal. In practice the two courts of appeal for Kankan and Conakry that handle serious crimes barely functioned due to lack of resources and organizational problems, and many prisoners were detained for lengthy periods without trial (see section 1.d.).

Trial Procedures

The penal code provides for the presumption of innocence of accused persons, the independence of judges, the equality of citizens before the law, the right of the accused to counsel, and the right to appeal a judicial decision; however, these rights were not consistently observed in practice. Although in principle the government is responsible for funding legal defense costs in serious criminal cases, in practice it rarely disbursed funds for this purpose. The attorney for the defense frequently received no payment.

Trials were public, and juries were used for criminal cases. Defendants had the right to be present and to consult with an attorney in a timely manner. Defendants were allowed to confront and question prosecution witnesses and present witnesses on their behalf. The prosecution prepared a case file, including testimonies and evidence, and provided a copy for the defense.

Many citizens wary of judicial corruption preferred to rely on traditional systems of justice at the village or urban neighborhood level. Litigants presented their civil cases before a village chief, a neighborhood leader, or a council of "wise men." The dividing line between the formal and informal justice systems was vague, and authorities may refer a case from the formal to the traditional system to ensure compliance by all parties. Similarly, if a case cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of all parties in the traditional system, it may be referred to the formal system for adjudication. The traditional system discriminated against women in that evidence given by women carried less weight (see section 5).

A military tribunal prepares and adjudicates charges against accused military personnel, to whom the penal code does not apply. Civilians were not subject to military tribunals.

The state security court is comprised of magistrates directly appointed by the president, and the verdict is open to appeal only on a point of law, not for the re-examination of evidence.

Political Prisoners

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law provides for the inviolability of the home and requires judicial search warrants; however, police and paramilitary police often ignored legal procedures in the pursuit of criminals. For example, after the January presidential assassination attempt, police went door-to-door in the Enco 5 neighborhood, searching homes and private vehicles, and detaining private citizens on suspicion of involvement.

Although the belief that security forces monitor the mail no longer exists, many believed that they monitored electronic communications. Local businesses, including foreign companies, often complained that public officials and authorities intimidated and harassed them.

In some instances the government coerced membership in political organizations by conferring preferential treatment on those who were members of the majority Party of Unity and Progress (PUP). For example, the government demoted and reassigned a government employee, who was the local representative of the UPG opposition party, to another region because of his active political affiliation.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The law provides for freedom of expression, subject to certain limitations. Although the government made substantial progress in ensuring these freedoms, journalists still faced government harassment. On August 20, President Conte signed a media liberalization decree that cleared the way for private radio and television broadcasting. The decree limited ownership of media by political parties and religious institutions but did not restrict programming on political and religious subjects.

The government prohibited talk or chants in public that it considered seditious; established defamation and slander as criminal offenses; and prohibited communications that insulted the president, incited violence, discrimination, or hatred; or disturbed the public peace or security. Sanctions include fines, revocation of press cards, imprisonment, and banishment.

On January 31, in Conakry, security forces destroyed the stalls belonging to market women who insulted the president as his motorcade passed.

In August, President Conte appointed Boubacar Yaccine Diallo, an independent journalist and newspaper editor, as chairman of the National Communications Council (CNC). The CNC was expected to play a pivotal oversight role in the new privately owned broadcast media. Diallo initiated programs to increase professionalism in journalistic practice and implemented a requirement that journalists must meet higher professional standards to obtain press credentials.

The government published an official newspaper, the daily *Horoya*, and continued to operate official television and radio stations. The state-owned media provided extensive and mostly favorable coverage of the government and ruling party; however, government media increased coverage of opposition activities and were more critical of the government officials on the local level.

Private newspapers openly criticized the president and the government. Ten private newspapers were published weekly in Conakry, and up to 10 other publications appeared sporadically, although technical difficulties and high operating costs impeded regular publication. One newspaper, *L'Espoir*, was affiliated with the governing political party, and several other newspapers openly supported opposition parties. Other newspapers offered news and criticism of both the government and the opposition. In September the government announced financial subsidies of approximately \$100 thousand (450 thousand francs) to private newspapers. The Guinean Association of Independent Editors received the funds and divided them among the various private press organizations.

Foreign publications, some of which criticized the government on a regular basis, were available both in print and electronic format. Despite the limited reach of the print media due to low literacy rates and high prices of newspapers, the government continued occasionally to criticize and harass print journalists.

In August the government authorized private radio and television broadcasting. However, at year's end the government continued to own and operate all domestic broadcast media including radio, which was the most important source of information for the public. During the year 2 additional rural and community radio stations were opened bringing the total number to 12. License applications for private radio and television stations were not filed by year's end. Many citizens listened regularly to foreign-origin short wave radio. The government did not restrict access to or distribution of foreign television programming via satellite or cable; however, relatively few citizens could afford these services.

On February 14, police beat Lansana Sarr, a journalist at *Horoya*, and Satigui Kaba, a journalist from *Le Lynx*, as they attempted to report on a labor dispute. Sarr was detained for five hours (see section 6.b.). The municipal police were suspended for one week for their actions.

In July the police briefly detained Youlaké and Youssouf Boundou from the online newspaper *Guinée News*, after they asked questions regarding a French national with close ties to President Conte.

On November 2, police arrested Louis Esperant Celestin, editor of *Guinea Actuelle*, because of an article he published about the prime minister. Police released Celestin the next day following intervention by President Conte.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that the CNC suspended newspapers activities. In April the Ministry of Security refused to allow the magazine *Jeune Afrique L'intelligent* permission to distribute a weekly edition that featured a story reporting on President Conte's ill health. President Conte ordered the ban lifted 24 hours later, and the magazine became freely available to the public.

There were no government restrictions on the Internet.

The Ministry of National Education and Scientific Research exercised limited control over academic freedom through its influence on faculty hiring and control over the curriculum. In general, teachers were not subject to classroom censorship.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The law restricts freedom of assembly; however, unlike in previous years, the government did not exercise its power to restrict unwanted political activity. For example, the government authorized opposition political rallies more liberally than in the previous year. The penal code

bans any meeting that has an ethnic or racial character or any gathering "whose nature threatens national unity." The government requires a 72-working-hour advance notification of public gatherings; otherwise the events are considered illegal. The government no longer required political party leaders to provide advance notification of their attendance at funerals, weddings, or any other gathering with a large number of citizens.

In January the minister of territorial administration provided written instructions to governors and prefects to allow peaceful meetings and demonstrations organized by opposition political parties, and the government generally observed this in practice. However, during the December election period security forces arrested and injured opposition party supporters. Police arrested several opposition party supporters in several towns, and security forces injured several persons.

On December 15, police stopped a vehicle with supporters of Sidya Toure's Union of Republican Forces (UFR) party. They were arrested, beaten, and released the same day.

On December 18, the day of the elections, supporters of the RPG party clashed with police and security personnel in several cities. In Kouroussa security forces fired on a crowd and wounded three persons. No arrests were made, and an investigation of the incident was ongoing at year's end. In Kissidougou 24 persons were injured, including 11 women, when security forces clashed with party supporters. There was no investigation and no arrests. On election day, there were arrests during political demonstrations. In Siguiri 19 persons were arrested and detained for 10 days, in Mandiana 6 persons were arrested and detained for a week, in Kerouane 39 persons were arrested and held for 2 days, and in Beyla 1 person was arrested and released 2 days later. On December 18 in Conakry, a Union for Renewal and Progress (UPR) candidate was arrested and released three hours later.

The law permits local authorities to cancel a demonstration or meeting if they believe it poses a threat to public order. They may hold event organizers criminally liable if violence or destruction of property ensues. The new governor of Conakry does not require written permission from his office for public meetings of all associations, NGOs, groups, cooperatives, and political parties. The government generally respected rights of assembly by opposition parties. Police did not interfere with groups traveling to rallies or assembled to support opposition leaders. For example, on July 5, more than 20 thousand supporters assembled to greet Alpha Condé, leader of the opposition party RPG, who returned to the country after 2 years in France.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports of a street march ban by the government.

In October 12 school children were injured when students clashed with police in Dalaba.

During the year protests continued in the country, although fewer than in the previous year. Some demonstrations were broken up using force. On November 24, security forces fired on a crowd during a student demonstration in Telimele. Three persons were killed, including two students and a 65-year-old woman, and four persons were seriously injured. Many persons were arrested and later released.

The country experienced several demonstrations to protest rising food and fuel prices, some of which were broken up by force. For example, on June 29, law enforcement officials clashed with approximately 500 young persons protesting the lack of basic services such as electricity and water. Police fired shots in the air and used tear gas to disperse the crowd. No injuries were reported and no arrests were made.

On September 8, in the northern town of Kouroussa, military guards opened fire on demonstrators who demanded to know the whereabouts of approximately \$40 thousand (150 million francs) in development assistance given by a mining company operating in the area. Military guards seriously injured 2 persons and arrested 15, who were released the same day.

No action was taken against security forces that killed or injured persons while forcibly dispersing demonstrations in 2004.

Freedom of Association

The law provides for freedom of association; however, the government infringed on this right in practice. The government imposed cumbersome requirements to obtain official recognition for public social, cultural, religious, or political associations. Most of the restrictions focused on political associations as opposed to nonpolitical associations. For example, political parties had to provide information on their founding members and produce internal statutes and political platforms consistent with the constitution before the government recognized them.

In July and August, Sidya Toure, president of the opposition party UFR visited 30 party federations throughout the country without hindrance by government officials. Simultaneously, RPG leader Alpha Conde made a similar trip to several regions of the country without government interference.

c. Freedom of Religion

The law provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respected these rights in practice.

The Ministry of the Islamic League represented the country's Sunni Muslim majority, which comprised 85 percent of the population. Government support of the powerful ministry led some non-Muslims to complain that the government used its influence to favor Muslims over non-Muslims, although non-Muslims were represented in the cabinet, administrative bureaucracy, and the armed forces. The ministry oversees the choice of imams and prevented certain individuals who they believed were extremists or who did not support the ministry's

positions from becoming imams. The ministry also monitored the messages broadcast in Friday prayer services by drafting and distributing the weekly sermons. The government refrained from appointing non-Muslims to important administrative positions in certain parts of the country in deference to the particularly strong social dominance of Islam in these regions.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Relations among the various religions generally were amicable; however, in some parts of the country, Islam's dominance created strong social pressure that discouraged non-Muslims from practicing their religion openly.

The Koniankes complained that the music from a Guerze baptism ceremony disturbed prayers at a nearby mosque. Police injured 10 persons and detained approximately 50 persons.

There were few Jewish persons in the country, and there were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

For a more detailed discussion, see the 2005 [International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights; however, authorities at times infringed on them. The government requires all citizens to carry national identification cards, which they must present on demand at security checkpoints.

There was a noticeable decrease in the practice of police and security forces detaining persons at military roadblocks to extort money. At year's end only one roadblock remained in Conakry, on the road leading out of town. Some roadblocks remained in rural areas and in the Forest Region close to international borders.

Unlike in the previous year, the government did not ban opposition leaders from leaving the country.

The law does not prohibit forced exile, but the government did not use it.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

Although during the year the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Organization of Migration, and the government reported that all IDPs were reintegrated, the Norwegian Refugee Council's February report indicated many IDPs did not return to their former homes. Throughout the year the IDP Consultative Forum distributed return and reintegration packages, but in some cases theft increased in IDP camps where these packages were delivered.

Protection of Refugees

The law provides for the granting of asylum or refugee status to persons in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, and the government has established a system of providing protection to refugees through an advisor on territorial issues within the Ministry of Territorial Administration. In practice the government did not always provide protection against *refoulement*, the return of persons to a country where they feared persecution, and did not always grant refugee status or asylum. The government cooperated with the office of the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

Many positive developments in the area of refugee repatriation occurred during the year. The UNHCR accommodated all refugees desiring voluntary return from the country. In January the UNCHR visited the country and offered financial support for the rehabilitation of communities severely affected after 16 years of hosting refugees.

The country has been a place of refuge for asylum seekers from the neighboring countries of conflict, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Guinea Bissau. At year's end the National Bureau for Refugee Coordination estimated that the total refugee population left in the country was 63,264 persons; the vast majority reportedly were Liberians. The government agreed to facilitate the integration of approximately two thousand citizens of Sierra Leone who had chosen to remain in the country.

The government provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 UN convention or its 1967 protocol and provided it to approximately 45 persons of different West African nationalities.

There were also reports of rape, assaults, and forced prostitution in refugee areas. The American Refugee Committee reported that a woman was raped in front of her children by perpetrators from the host community. Tension continued between host communities and refugee populations because of disparities in living standards. Economic decline in the country exacerbated situations where refugees received basic services and opportunities unavailable to citizens.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The law provides for a popularly elected president and national assembly; however, the government restricted citizens' ability to exercise this right. Political reforms resulted in some improvements during the year.

Elections and Political Participation

Despite openly acknowledged health problems, the president ran for reelection in December 2003, winning against a candidate who was virtually unknown. All major opposition parties boycotted the election, criticized by international observers as neither free nor fair. Although the municipal and local council elections were originally scheduled for June, they were held on December 18. The government held nationwide elections, and 16 of 46 registered political parties, including all the major opposition parties, participated. According to official results, President Conte's ruling PUP garnered approximately 80 percent of the vote with certified victories in 31 of 38 municipalities and 241 of 303 local councils. The PUP and associated parties held 91 of the 114 seats in the National Assembly.

The local electoral process was characterized by both improvements over past practice as well as serious flaws. Positive developments included freer campaigning, a single ballot listing all parties, transparent ballot boxes, political parties represented at the polling stations, media coverage of events, and free access for national observers. However, the turnout was low, and there were significant irregularities and bias by officials towards the ruling party before and during the vote. These included government revision of voter rolls with limited oversight, exclusion of up to 50 percent of the opposition candidate lists, unequal provision and distribution of voter registration cards and identity documents, and susceptibility to cheating in the district-level vote consolidations.

The government invited participation by the electoral commission, opposition parties and civil society in the electoral process. In practice it retained control of most registration and election procedures, including the casting and counting of votes. Despite pressure from opposition parties to change the constitution to enable an independent electoral commission to have full responsibility for organizing all aspects of elections and reporting the results of the vote, the government retained responsibility for organizing the elections, with the electoral commission validating the final results.

With few local exceptions, the National Autonomous Electoral Commission was ineffective. Political parties were unsuccessful in gaining judicial relief in some cases of alleged malfeasance.

The government engaged in a formal dialogue with opposition and non-opposition political parties, agreed to some demands for reform, and ceased restrictions on the travel of opposition leaders and the holding of rallies upcountry (see section 2.b.).

The law allows the president to run for an unlimited number of seven-year terms. There were 46 legally recognized political parties; deputies of 5 different parties were represented in the National Assembly. Only 1 opposition political party, the UPR, which had 20 seats, participated in the 114-member National Assembly. All of the other parties represented in the National Assembly joined the PUP government party alliance. Government employees are required to campaign for the ruling party in each election.

The president continued to hold the power to appoint governors, prefects, and sub prefects to administer regions, prefectures and sub prefectures, respectively. Most of these officials were members of the PUP or parties allied with it. Local governments generally had limited autonomy. Although they had some financial resources with which to fund local programs, most of their funds were controlled by the central government.

Prefects and other local officials who were members of opposition parties found that higher-level officials effectively blocked their authority. In some cases, they were forced to join the ruling PUP party or lose their jobs. Those who continued their allegiance to opposition parties were relocated to different prefectures far from their home communities. To prevent risking their livelihood, others chose to remain uninvolved in politics.

Elected and appointed government officials continued to be disproportionately male. There were 20 female deputies in the 114-member National Assembly. Six women held seats in the 26-member cabinet. There were few women at senior levels below minister, and there were no women in the senior ranks of the armed forces. Women generally played a minor role in the leadership of the major political parties; however, Assiatou Bah was vice president of the UPR. The RPG named Fatou Bangoura to the post of political secretary.

Members of the three main ethnic groups (Soussou, Malinke, and Peuhl) as well as all smaller groups in the country (Gerze, Toma, Kisse, Koniake, and Mano) served in the National Assembly. The cabinet and armed forces leadership included representatives of all major ethnic groups. However, a disproportionate number of senior military officers were Soussou, the president's ethnic group.

Government Corruption and Transparency

Corruption remained widespread throughout society, including in the executive, legislative, and judicial branches. The president holds powers to overrule legislative decisions and did so in practice. Connection to the president or his powerful associates sometimes conferred exemptions from taxes and other fiscal obligations. Public funds were diverted for private use or for illegitimate public uses, such as buying expensive vehicles for government workers. Land sales and business contracts lacked transparency.

The government and the World Bank published a critical report on corruption in the country during the year. Using polling data gathered in 2003, the report identified government agencies widely viewed as corrupt by citizens. It also identified how corruption affected everything from commercial transactions to judicial decision to civil service promotions. The report was released as part of a two-day conference on corruption and was then presented during similar meetings throughout the country. Businessmen, government workers, and average citizens were among the hundreds of persons surveyed in the study.

The Commission to Combat Corruption within the Ministry of Economic and Financial Control is located within the Office of the President. A public complaints bureau to report corruption was located on the premises of the commission in Conakry, but communication and coordination between the commission and the Ministry of Justice remained weak. There was much discussion of corruption in the media, but

little action was taken during the year. One highly publicized corruption investigation involved prominent businessman Mamadou Sylla and allegations that he had defrauded the government over a period of several years through business transactions between his company, Futurlec, and the government. During the year the prime minister ordered an audit into those transactions, which revealed Sylla owed millions of dollars to the government because of over billing, double billing, and other suspect accounting procedures. Sylla refused to open his company's books to the auditor, and he denounced the result. Before any action could be taken, political allies of Sylla ordered a second audit, which found that it was the government that owed Sylla several million dollars. The issue remained unresolved at year's end.

There is no law providing free access to government information. Most government information is not available to the public, and there is no mechanism to request it formally. The government did provide free official information in the government-run press or through limited publications.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

A number of local and international NGOs generally operated without government restriction, investigating and publishing their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were cooperative and responsive to their views; however, some local organizations alleged that government officials tried to intimidate them and that they often met resistance when trying to investigate abuses or engage in civil education.

Various government officials continued to block private efforts to memorialize victims of the Sekou Toure regime that ruled the country from independence until 1984. The Association of Victims of Camp Boiro was forbidden to establish a museum focusing on human rights in the former location of the prison where political detainees were tortured and killed.

The government cooperated with both the UNHCR and the ICRC. Unlike in previous years, there were no accusations that the government was complicit in abuses of Liberian refugees through its support of the Liberians United For Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) rebels. In previous years LURD rebels had been accused of forced recruitment of Liberian refugees as well as infiltration of refugee camps such as Kouankan.

A human rights office within the Ministry of Defense, the Office of International Humanitarian Rights, in conjunction with the ICRC, conducted human rights seminars during the year to teach military and security personnel about human rights recognized by international and regional agreements.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

The law states that all persons are equal before the law regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, language, beliefs, political opinions, philosophy, or creed; however, the government did not enforce these provisions uniformly. Violence and discrimination against women, FGM, trafficking in persons, and discrimination against ethnic minorities were problems.

Women

Domestic violence against women was common, although estimates differed as to the extent of the problem. Due to fear of stigmatization and reprisal, women rarely reported abuse except at the point of divorce. Wife beating is not addressed specifically within the law. Assault in general carries a penalty of up to 2 years in prison and a fine from \$11 to \$44 (50 thousand to 200 thousand francs). If the assault is premeditated the prison time increases from 2 to 5 years in prison and a fine of \$22 to \$66 (100 thousand to 300 thousand) and constitutes grounds for divorce under civil law; however, police rarely intervened in domestic disputes, and few perpetrators were punished.

On October 17, M'Baliala Soumah died as a result of injuries she sustained from a beating by her husband. He was arrested and was in prison awaiting trial at year's end.

Although rape is a criminal offense, in practice spousal rape is neither punished nor regarded as a criminal offense. Social beliefs prevented most rape victims from reporting incidents of rape. Local NGOs and government representatives reported that sexual assault increased during the year. According to a doctor at the central public hospital in Conakry, victims of sexual assault constituted 20 percent of all cases in hospital. Many of these assaults were perpetrated by a person the victim knew and often took place at school; more than half the victims were young girls. Several local NGOs worked to increase public awareness of the nature of these crimes and promote increased reporting. The authorities were reluctant to pursue criminal investigations of alleged sexual crimes.

FGM was practiced widely in all regions and among all religious and ethnic groups, and the country had one of the highest rates of FGM in the world. FGM is illegal and carries a penalty of three months in prison and a fine of approximately \$22 (100,000 francs), although there were no prosecutions during the year. Senior officials and both the official and private press spoke against the practice. FGM was performed on girls between the ages of 4 and 17, but exact figures on this procedure were difficult to establish. The Coordinating Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting Women's and Children's Health (CPTAFE), a local NGO dedicated to eradicating FGM and ritual scarring, cited a continuing decline in the percentage of women and girls subjected to the worst forms of FGM. The CPTAFE estimated 60 and 65 percent of girls were subjected to FGM.

Infibulation, the most dangerous form of FGM, was still performed in the Forest Region but less frequently than in previous years. Despite diseases resulting from crude and unsanitary surgical instruments and deaths resulting from the practice, the tradition continued, seriously affecting many women's lives. FGM also increased the risk of HIV infection, since unsterilized instruments were shared among participants.

The government continued efforts to educate health workers on the dangers of this procedure, and it supported the CPTAFE's efforts. The CPTAFE reported high rates of infant mortality and maternal mortality due to FGM. The government continued its plan to eradicate FGM, and government ministers, health officials, and the media discussed FGM more frequently, but there were no statistics evaluating the success of the program.

A growing number of men and women opposed FGM. Urban, educated families were opting increasingly to perform only a slight symbolic incision on a girl's genitals rather than the complete procedure. During the year the CPTAFE held large public ceremonies celebrating the "laying down of the excision knife," in which some traditional practitioners of FGM pledged to discontinue the practice; however, most of those who performed FGM opposed its eradication since the practice was lucrative. CPTAFE stressed the health consequences of excision while supporting the customary observance of the transition to womanhood through traditional dances and songs.

Although the government made regular statements in the media against sexual harassment, it is not against the law. Although women working in the formal sector in urban areas complained of frequent sexual harassment, it was not penalized by employers.

The law provides for equal treatment of men and women. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Women's Promotion worked to advance such equality; however, women faced discrimination throughout society. Women faced discrimination particularly in rural areas where opportunities were limited by custom and the demands of childrearing and subsistence farming. Women were not denied access to land, credit, or businesses, but inheritance laws favor male heirs over female heirs. Government officials acknowledged that polygyny was a common practice. Divorce laws generally tended to favor men in awarding custody and dividing communal assets. Legal evidence given by women carries less weight than testimony by men, in accordance with Islamic precepts and customary law. The government affirmed the principle of equal pay for equal work, although in practice women received lower pay than men.

On August 27, the government sponsored a seminar on women and microcredit to commemorate National Women's Day.

Children

The law provides that the government should support children's rights and welfare, and the government allocated and spent a significant percentage of the budget on primary education. The minister of youth and the Ministry of Social Affairs were tasked by the president to defend women's and children's rights, and a permanent committee dedicated to defending the rights of the child, with members chosen from different ministries, NGOs, and other sectors, continued to work.

Government policy provides for tuition-free, compulsory primary school education for six years, but enrollment rates were low due to additional school fees and lax enforcement of laws mandating school attendance. Approximately 63 percent of all eligible students were enrolled in primary school, with a higher percentage of eligible boys enrolled compared with eligible girls. Gender equity was one of the main goals of the government plan, Education for All. The increase in girls' school enrollment was a result of several government programs to increase access to school and to promote girls' education. The net primary enrollment rate (NER) was the ratio of official school-age children enrolled in primary school to the total population of children of official primary school age, as defined by the national education system. The total NER for the 2004–2005 school year was 63 percent. For girls, the NER was 60 percent.

Child abuse, particularly sexual assault was a problem. Girls between the age of 11 and 15 years were most vulnerable and represented 55 percent of the victims. In February a teacher raped a nine year-old-girl in Sangoyah. The teacher's salary was reduced by 20 percent with this amount being paid to care for the victim. The perpetrator pled guilty, was released from prison, and returned to his teaching job.

FGM was performed commonly on girls (see section 5, Women).

The legal age for marriage is 21 years for men and 17 years for women. Although there were no official reports of underage marriage, it allegedly was a problem. Parents contracted marriages for girls as young as 11 years of age in the Forest Region. The CPTAFE, in conjunction with the government, local journalists, and international NGOs, continued to promote an education campaign to discourage underage marriage and reported lower rates than in previous years. According to CPTAFE, some families that sanctioned early marriages nevertheless kept their married daughters in the family home until they had at least completed secondary school.

There were reports that girls were trafficked for prostitution and other labor (see section 5, Trafficking).

The International Rescue Committee and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that children living in foster families often did not receive adequate food, shelter, and clothing and were compelled to work in the streets, sometimes as prostitutes, for their subsistence.

Trafficking in Persons

Although the law prohibits trafficking in persons, the country was a source, transit, and destination point for trafficking. The law carries a penalty of 5 to 10 years' imprisonment and confiscation of any money or property received as a result of trafficking activities.

The Interministerial Committee to Combat Trafficking in Persons was created by the government to better coordinate their antitrafficking efforts. It comprised representatives from the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Promotion of Women, and the ministries of children, justice, security, and tourism. The committee held several educational seminars during the year and on November 14 held a roundtable to evaluate progress made on the 2004 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Persons. The roundtable report concluded that significant progress was made in prevention, data collection, and awareness.

Efforts to draft and ratify antitrafficking legislation were underway along with programs to strengthen law enforcement capacity. However, while certain projects focused on victim protection, lack of funding prevented more effective work, particularly repatriation, accompaniment, and case follow-up.

There has only been one alleged trafficking case turned over to the Ministry of Justice. In April a Malian woman, accused of trafficking in 2004, was deported rather than prosecuted. There were no developments in the 2004 case of a Sierra Leonean child trafficking ring.

On June 16, the government signed a bilateral agreement with Mali to combat child trafficking. On July 27, the government signed a multilateral agreement with nine nations in the region to increase cooperation, harmonize antitrafficking legislation, and exchange information.

Some NGOs reported that women, men, and children were trafficked within the country, as well as internationally, for the sex trade and illegal labor. Trafficking in persons from rural areas, mainly from the poorest areas in Upper Guinea, to urban centers was more common than international trafficking. As NGOs and the government increasingly recognized trafficking within the country, more emphasis was placed on this practice in the December launch of a national awareness campaign by UNICEF to combat trafficking. Accurate statistics were difficult to obtain because victims did not report the crime.

Some children were trafficked for forced labor in agriculture and diamond mining camps and for household work in Conakry. NGOs claimed that the country was frequently a transit route for a West African trafficking network, because fraudulent passports can be easily obtained and no visas are required for local nationals to travel to certain North Africa countries. From these nations, children were then sent to destinations in Europe.

Girls under the age of 14 were involved in prostitution. The government did not take action when prostitution of minors was brought to its attention, and it did not actively monitor child or adult prostitution.

The ICRC reported that trafficking of children was a problem among repatriates from Sierra Leone and Liberia, some of whom hoped to gain advantage from reunification projects intended to reconstitute families separated through war.

Persons with Disabilities

The law does not prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in employment, education, access to health care, or in the provision of other state services. In practice there were no official reports of societal or governmental discrimination against person with disabilities. The government had not mandated accessibility for persons with disabilities, and buildings and vehicles remained inaccessible. Few persons with disabilities worked in the formal sector. Some worked in the informal sector in small family-run businesses, and many lived by begging on the streets.

In April the government, in cooperation with an international donor, launched a national civic education program that included persons with disabilities as well as persons with HIV/AIDS. One of the programs for persons with disabilities was staged at the School for the Deaf of Conakry. The program, in American Sign Language, explained concepts of citizenship, nationality, and equal participation.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The country's population was ethnically and regionally diverse. The Peuhls were the largest ethnic groups (approximately 40 percent of the population), followed by the Malinke (approximately 30 percent), and the Soussou (approximately 20 percent). There were several smaller ethnic groups in the Forest Region. Each group spoke a distinct primary language and was concentrated in a distinct region: the Soussou in lower Guinea, the Peuhl in middle Guinea, and the Malinke in upper Guinea. Conakry and other large urban areas such as Kankan and the Forest Region were ethnically heterogeneous.

While the law prohibits racial or ethnic discrimination, ethnic identification was strong.

Mutual suspicion, both inside and outside the government, affected relations across ethnic lines. Widespread societal ethnic discrimination by members of all major ethnic groups was evident in private sector hiring patterns, in the ethnic segregation of urban neighborhoods, and in the relatively low levels of interethnic marriage. The proportion of public sector positions occupied by Soussous, particularly at senior levels, was widely perceived as exceeding their share of the national population.

The ruling PUP party, although generally supported by Soussous, transcended ethnic boundaries more effectively than the major opposition parties, which have readily identifiable ethnic and regional bases. The UPR's main base was the Peuhls, while the RPG's main base was the Malinke. Soussou preeminence in the public sector and Malinke migration into the traditional homelands of smaller ethnic groups in the Forest Region were sources of local political tensions that sometimes erupted into violence.

On July 21, a Peuhl living in Kankan shot and killed a young Malinke, mistaking him for a robber. Malinke youth pillaged stores owned by a Peuhl business person, and tensions between the two communities increased. Security forces established order in the area without the use of extreme force.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Discrimination against homosexuals is not prohibited by law, and there are no discriminatory laws based on sexual orientation. There were no reports of either the police or government agents perpetrating violence against persons with HIV/AIDS or homosexuals. Although there were deep social, religious, and cultural taboos against homosexuality, there were no official reports of discrimination against homosexuals.

There have been reports that various hospitals in the country have refused to treat patients with AIDS; hospital workers feared contracting the disease.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law provides for the right of employees, except for military and paramilitary personnel, to form and join independent labor unions, and this right was respected in practice. The labor code requires elected worker representatives for any enterprise employing 25 or more salaried workers. Approximately 160 thousand workers were reported as unionized, although there were inadequate labor statistics. Approximately 52 thousand were government workers and thus automatically members of the National Federation of Guinean Workers, the government union. The largest independent union, Union of Workers of Guinea, claimed 66 thousand members, 20 thousand of which were women. During the year five unions remained active.

Although the law prohibits antiunion discrimination at regional and prefecture levels, unionized labor faced strong opposition from government officials. Union officials were selected on the basis of nepotism and patronage; these individuals were not sensitized to the rights of workers and often viewed unions as an enemy of the government. As a result union members in the interior of the country faced harassment and interference from many governors and prefects. Union activities in Conakry faced less harassment and interference. Individual workers threatened with dismissal or other sanctions have the right to a hearing before management with a union representative present and, if necessary, to take the complaint to the Conakry Labor Court, which convened weekly to hear such cases. In the interior, civil courts heard labor cases.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Under the labor code, representative workers' unions or union groups may organize in the workplace and negotiate with employers or employer organizations, and workers exercised this right in practice. The law protects the right to bargain collectively concerning wages and salaries without government interference, and employers established rules and hours of work in consultation with union delegates. There are no export processing zones.

The law grants salaried workers, including public sector civilian employees, the right to strike 10 days after their representative union makes known its intention to strike, but strikes were sometimes met with intimidation from security forces and, as a result, often did not take place. In addition, the law prohibits strikes in sectors providing "essential services," which include hospitals, radio and television, army, police, communications, and transport services. There were reports that government officials offered better positions and political posts to members of labor unions in exchange for ceasing strike activities.

On February 7, commercial drivers went on strike to protest roadblocks set up after the attempted assassination of President Conte. Police arrested nine drivers and released them after they paid a fine. On February 14, police from the Anti-Gang Brigade responded to a call from a local hotel operator. The police beat the workers who were demanding severance payments from the employer.

In July the government pressured two leaders of the teachers' union coalition to retire. One instructor had three years of eligibility remaining and the other had nine years. With support from the union, they did not retire by year's end.

Some internationally funded NGOs experienced labor disputes with local employees that were often contrived. There were documented accounts of government officials who sought bribes from, harassed, or otherwise threatened expatriate officials for these alleged labor infractions.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

Although the law specifically prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children, there were reports that such practices occurred (see sections 5 and 6.d.).

The law prohibits the exploitation of vulnerable persons for unpaid or underpaid labor. Violations carried a penalty of 6 months to 5 years imprisonment and a fine of approximately \$11 to \$85 (50 thousand to 382,500 francs). The government did not enforce this provision in practice.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The general labor code has specific provisions that pertain to child labor; however, child labor was a serious problem. By law the minimum age for employment is 16 years. Apprentices may start to work at 14 years of age. Workers and apprentices under the age of 18 were not permitted to work at night, for more than 10 consecutive hours, or on Sundays. The labor code also stipulates that the minister of labor and social affairs maintain a list of occupations in which women and youth under the age of 18 cannot be employed. In practice enforcement by ministry inspectors was limited to large firms in the modern sector of the economy.

Overall, approximately 48 percent of children under age 15 were employed, accounting for approximately 20 percent of the total working population and 26 percent of agricultural workers. Child labor in factories was not prevalent because of the low level of manufacturing. Working children were mostly in the informal sector areas of subsistence farming, small-scale commerce, and mining.

Girls as young as age 14 engaged in prostitution (see section 5). The worst forms of child labor were found in the artisanal mining sector, where children hauled granite and sand for little or no money.

Many young Muslim children sent to live with a Koranic master for instruction in Arabic, Islam, and the Koran worked for the teacher as payment. Children often were sent from rural areas to Conakry to live with family members while they attended school. If the host family was unwilling or unable to pay school fees, the children sold water or shined shoes on the streets, and the host family took the money in exchange for their room and board or simply used the child as a cheap source of domestic labor (see section 5).

There were reports that forced and compulsory child labor occurred (see section 5).

The government has spoken out against child labor but lacked the resources, enforcement mechanisms, and legislative will to combat the problem. As a result child laborers did not have access to education or health care and suffered from chronic malnutrition, traumatic stress, and depression.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The labor code allows the government to set a minimum hourly wage; however, the government has not exercised this provision nor does it promote a standard wage. Prevailing wages often did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family.

The labor code mandates that regular work should not exceed 10-hour days or 48-hour weeks, and it also mandates a period of at least 24 consecutive hours of rest each week, usually on Sunday. Every salaried worker has the legal right to an annual paid vacation, accumulated at the rate of at least two workdays per month of work. There also were provisions in the law for overtime and night wages, which were fixed percentages of the regular wage. In practice the authorities enforced these rules only in the relatively small modern urban sector. Little evidence showed that the government monitored employers' work practices or sanctioned them for failure to follow the law.

Worker conditions were worse in the private sector, excluding banking, insurance, and other similar institutions. Employees often were fired if they joined a union (see section 6.a.).

The teachers' union reported that working conditions were deplorable. Teacher wages were extremely low and not always paid on time, if they were paid at all. In some cases teachers went six months or more without salaries. Local Ministry of Finance employees charged with administering teacher pay allegedly withheld the salaries and used the funds for personal business. Some teachers lived in abject poverty, reporting to work without shoes and even the minimum requirements to do their jobs.

The labor code contains general provisions regarding occupational safety and health, but the government has not elaborated a set of practical workplace health and safety standards. Moreover, it has not issued any ministerial orders laying out the specific requirements for certain occupations and for certain methods of work that are called for in the labor code. The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs is responsible for enforcing labor standards, and its inspectors are empowered to suspend work immediately in situations hazardous to health. Enforcement efforts were sporadic. Labor inspectors acknowledged that they did not have adequate resources to cover even Conakry, much less the entire country.

Under the labor code, workers have the right to refuse to work under unsafe conditions without penalty; however, many workers feared retaliation should they refuse to work under unsafe conditions.

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