

# Çava?

**The Newsletter of Friends of Guinea**  
Advocacy, Information, and Networking for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea



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## Advocacy Report

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*Friends of Guinea is preparing an auction of Guinean cloth to raise funds to support projects in Guinea. We have had encouraging responses to our appeal for donations. Two people have already volunteered to bring cloth back from Guinea, and one PCV parent has offered to donate cloth she already has. If you know of someone who has Guinean fabric they might be willing to donate or to sell for bonne prix, have them contact me.*

*The following account shows how Guineans living in the U.S. can be affected by actions taken by the U.S. government to protect itself post-9/11.*

On April 7 the *New York Times* reported that a sixteen-year-old Guinean girl living in New York City had been arrested and placed in federal detention on immigration charges two weeks earlier. The girl, whose name has not been released, is publicly known only as "T." She was arrested along with a sixteen-year-old Bangladeshi girl known as "A," as part of what one observer characterized as "a so-called terror investigation" that had "gotten out of hand." Both girls have lived in the U.S. most of their lives, but without documented immigration status. They were detained at a federal prison in Leesport, Pennsylvania, where their families reported difficulty in communicating with them.

The *Times* cited a government document that said the FBI believed the girls posed "an imminent threat to the security of the United States based upon evidence that they plan to be suicide bombers." The Homeland Security Administration would confirm only that both girls had been detained on

"administrative immigration violations." The FBI declined to talk to the *Times* about the case, but law enforcement officials speaking to the Associated Press on condition of anonymity confirmed the content of the document cited by the newspaper while suggesting that it "may have exaggerated the threat." One of the officials said investigators feared the girls might be recruited in the future as suicide bombers by a suspect currently under investigation, and "decided to detain the pair before they could become involved."

The two girls' detention was the subject of a lead editorial in the *Times*, and was reported in several other newspapers as well. The paper reported that the Bangladeshi girl's parents had complained to police when the girl defied their authority. Later they tried to withdraw their complaint but the police continued their investigation. They investigated the family's home, searched the girl's belongings, and found a high-school essay concerning suicide and Islamic law on her computer. Although the essay argued that suicide is against Islamic law, they arrested the girl, after interrogating her concerning her political beliefs.

The reason authorities arrested the Guinean girl has remained somewhat of a mystery. A report in the *Nation* magazine said that investigators suspected the girls of conspiring together at a mosque they attended, but their families said they never met before their arrests. The Guinean, "T," was a popular student at Heritage High School in East Harlem, where she had run for class president and come in second. Teachers and students at her school were outraged at her arrest and the government allegations against her, according to the *Times*.

A weblog was created by the girls' supporters at <http://detainthis.blogspot.com>, chronicling their

What is...

# ÇaVa?

ÇaVa is the quarterly newsletter of Friends of Guinea and seeks to maintain contact and community among members as well as inform them of the official activities of the organization.

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case in detail and coordinating vigils and support actions on their behalf. More information regarding the two girls' arrest and detainment may be found there, including links to press reports and audio clips from NPR and KPFF Los Angeles.

The two girls' release was first reported May 9 by WNYC in New York. They were never charged with any offenses related to the terrorism allegations made against them. The Guinean girl was allowed to remain in New York but still faces deportation proceedings. On May 12 she was reported to have returned to her school. According to WNYC the Bangladeshi girl was ordered to leave the country along with her parents. The AP reported that she departed on May 10 with her mother and two brothers.

The U.S. government has refused to discuss the details of the case, or give any further evidence as to why the girls were detained. No information has been released to the public, to the girls, or to the attorneys involved in their defense. Immigration cases are not subject to the legal rules that govern criminal and civil court proceedings.

The girls' supporters insist that they are innocent. Human rights advocates demanded an apology from the government in a press conference May 12 on the steps of New York City Hall. "We're concerned about the veil of secrecy that has surrounded this case," said Mauri Saalakhani of the Peace and Justice Foundation. "We're concerned about the injustice that has been done to the girls and their families."

## News from the Ground

Woody Colahan (Maci, '93-'96), Newsletter Editor  
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### Bad Days for Journalists

Lansana Sarr, reporter for the Guinean government daily *Horoya*, was beaten and detained by police when he attempted to cover a demonstration on February 14 by employees of the Hotel Camayenne, who were seeking compensation for being laid off after the sale of the hotel. According to a report by the West African Media Foundation in Ghana, he attempted to photograph police attacking protesters when he was himself assaulted and then arrested, and had his cellphone and camera confiscated. After his release the same day, police refused to return his camera unless he allowed them to destroy any photographs they chose.

The editor of the leading private weekly newspaper *La Lance*, Mohamed Lamine Diallo, also known by his pen name Benn Pépito, was arrested by security forces at his home in Conakry on February 16 and held in detention for three days during which he said he was questioned about his relationship with opposition politician Antoine Bokolou Soromou. Soromou, a former mayor of Lola and leader of the National Alliance for Development was jailed along with Alpha Condé from 1998 to 2000 on charges of plotting to overthrow the government. He was arrested again on January 6 and released on January 13, then disappeared following the January 19 attack on President Conté's motorcade. Pépito had followed the Soromou saga closely and had written several articles about government harassment of the politician and his eventual disappearance. Paul Yomba Korouma, a lawyer who had been acting for Soromou, was arrested within hours of Pépito and released together with him, apparently after personal intervention by Prime Minister Cellou Diallo with Lansana Conté.

Prior to their release, the local press had decided to launch a campaign against security minister Moussa Sampil, with all the weekly newspapers displaying a full-page photo of the minister with the legend, "enemy of journalists." Reporters Without Borders backed the initiative.

On February 24 Sotigui Kaba, a reporter for the Le Lynx-La Lance media group, was attacked, whipped and beaten by police with rifle butts and truncheons while covering another demonstration, this time by drivers for a transport and earth-moving company in Matoto. He was then stripped naked, and

his notebook, press card and identity card were confiscated.

Following these incidents, the International Federation of Journalists issued a statement calling on the international community to “tell President Conté in no uncertain terms that his dictatorial rule must come to an end.” Reporters Without Borders also denounced the “archaic and brutal methods of the Guinean police,” calling on Lansana Conté to take measures to prevent such incidents from taking place in the future.

### **Moussa Sampil and Two Other Ministers Ousted**

On March 8 a cabinet reshuffle was decreed by Lansana Conté, in a move that was widely seen as the work of Prime Minister Cellou Diallo, named to his post last December. Ahmed Tidiane Souare, a finance Ministry official, replaced Alpha Mady Soumah as Minister of Mines and Geology while Foreign Affairs Minister Mamady Conde was replaced by Fatoumata Kaba, formerly Guinea's ambassador to Nigeria. However the real surprise was Security Minister Moussa Sampil's demotion to a post in the Justice Ministry, and his replacement by Ousmane Camara. This was the second time Sampil had been fired from the job of Security Minister. While Camara is also a Conté loyalist, he does not share Sampil's reputation as a vicious foe of all political opposition.

The move was seen as opening the way to restarting political dialogue. “The black sheep have gone,” said opposition coalition spokesman Mamadou Ba. “Their departure gives hope for the opposition to renew dialogue with the ruling authorities and tomorrow we will go to meet them.”

Following the assassination attempt on Conté in January, Sampil ordered police to arrest dozens of people including prominent journalists and lawyers. However he was unable to find the culprits behind the attack. One detainee, a Muslim cleric, died in custody and all the others were later released. This was thought by some observers to have weakened his position in the government. Others thought that Sampil may have been seen by the ailing Conté as too powerful and a possible threat.

New Mines Minister Souaré has been described as “a key confidant” of Prime Minister Diallo. His promotion was seen as a message that the government is serious about reform. Shortly after taking office, Souaré announced that the government was revising a proposed contract with Global Alumina before submitting it to the parliament for

# **Friends of Guinea**

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for Guinea and Peace Corps Guinea**

Friends of Guinea is a non-profit organization made up of former and currently serving Guinea Peace Corps Volunteers, Guineans inside and outside of Guinea, and others interested in promoting the cause of Guinean development in the world at large. We are a country-of-service affiliate of the National Peace Corps Association. Dues are \$15 annually for individuals, and \$23 for families.

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ratification. He told Reuters that deputies had expressed reservations about the deal for the construction of a \$2 billion refinery. It was also challenged by Alcoa Inc. and Alcan Inc., which control CBG, Guinea's biggest bauxite mining company.

### **Clash on Ivorian Border**

On April 7 Guinea's army clashed with fighters of an Ivory Coast rebel group known as the New Forces in a remote border hamlet named Tounkarata, leaving one rebel dead and one injured, according to Reuters. A New Forces spokesman in the Ivory Coast town of Man said the Guinean patrol had been attacked on Ivorian territory because rebels mistook it for part of the Ivorian government forces. Rumors are common that Ivorian President Gbagbo plans to attack the rebels from the rear by infiltrating forces across the Guinean border. The next day, however, a rebel spokesman reached in Bouaké by IRIN denied that New Forces elements had been involved in the clashes with Guineans. “We have no reason to attack Guinea,” he said, but added that undisciplined bands of rebel deserters might have

## Peace Corps Posters Available

As an RPCV you can request Peace Corps tear-card posters in local libraries, community centers, and colleges. They are of heavy paper stock and have the Peace Corps' 800 number on tear off strips along the bottom. For copies email the marketing department at [psa@peacecorps.gov](mailto:psa@peacecorps.gov) with your name, address, and quantity of posters you would like to distribute.

attacked the Guinean unit. The IRIN report cited frequent clashes between "rival warlords within the rebel movement" around Man.

Guinean forces were later reported to be interrogating seventeen prisoners captured in the clash, one of whom was reported to be a French citizen named Bodinar Claver. They were being held in a military camp in N'Zerekoré, and Guinean officials believed them to be members of a dissident New Forces faction led by Ibrahim Coulibaly, opposed to New Forces leader Guillaume Soro, who is in the custody of the French government after he was accused of plotting a military coup in Ivory Coast while in France. A military source told AFP that the incident was very inconvenient for the Guinean side, which wanted to avoid by all means possible becoming involved in an internal Ivorian conflict. He said Guinean authorities had reinforced the border with several hundred heavily armed troops.

### Charles Taylor Targeting Lansana Conté

David Crane, the chief prosecutor at Sierra Leone's special war crimes court who has long campaigned to have Taylor brought before his tribunal, said the former warlord was behind January's attempt on Conté's life and was planning another attempt in the near future. In a statement emailed to Reuters, Crane said: "My office has information from multiple sources indicating that in early January, Charles Taylor ordered the assassination of Guinean President Lansana Conté." He said Taylor wanted to kill Conté to avenge the Guinean leader's support of Liberia's main rebel group, LURD, which forced Taylor to step down and flee his country in August 2003. "After the failed attempt to kill Conté on January 19, these same sources have reported that the effort will soon be repeated," according to Crane.

Meanwhile the "Association of Liberian Refugees in Guinea" has called on both the United States and the Nigerian governments to bring the former Liberian President to trial for crimes against humanity.

### Magazine Siezed

Minister of Interior, Kiridi Bangoura, on April 24th, 2005, ordered the temporary seizure of the April 24 edition of the weekly magazine, JA l'Intelligent, which carried a story and commentary on the health of the President, General Lansana Conté. The magazine had a front page article entitled "Guinea: the End," and a commentary headed "Eaten up with sickness, President Conté still hangs on to power and the country is dying." The magazine was allowed to appear on the newsstands on April 27 when the ban was lifted. As in previous similar cases, the seizure of the magazine quickly gave rise to a flourishing street trade in illicit photocopies of the offending article.

## Email Newsletter Available

If you prefer not to have this paper version of *ÇaVa?* cluttering up your mailbox, or if you don't want your membership in Friends of Guinea to promote deforestation, or if you just want to save us the price of a stamp, you may elect to receive this newsletter by email. The email version is formatted in HTML, and includes a link to a .pdf version of the paper newsletter that is posted on the Web and contains all the formatting of the original. Or you can receive both the paper and electronic version, and have the best of both worlds. Email [membership@friendsofguinea.org](mailto:membership@friendsofguinea.org) and let us know of your preference, and we'll make a note of it.

## Le Griot Nous Dit...

**Claire Lea** reports: "I attended the Festival International in Lafayette, Louisiana in late April, which was an impressive array of music, food and spirits. It was a great escape. All RPCVs should consider checking it out, because it brings in a lot of West African musicians. I ran into **Jesse Fleisher** on the street while I was eating a po-boy and drinking a hurricane. He's been back for a month, traveling by Greyhound, doing great, and was attending an RPCV Gabon's wedding."



## 2005 Gender Conferences Photo Album

Most FOG members probably know that the Gender Conferences are the main project Friends of Guinea supports every year. Here are some photos from the 2005 Boké Girls' Conference. More photos can be seen on the web at <http://share.shutterfly.com/osi.jsp?i=EeANm7Ni4aN27jw>.



# Membership Report

*Stephanie Chasteen (Wawaya, '97-'99)*

*membership@friendsofguinea.org*

Where are you? We've lost contact with the following members. If anybody has their current contact information, could you please pass it along to us? On jaaraama!

Susan Appe  
Peter Bellisle  
Kristofer Bowmaster  
Evan Corjhanson  
Pranav Desai  
Jason Dewland  
Deborah Diallo  
Simon Bernhard  
Dr. Caemmerer

Melissa Fallone  
Melanie Forquer  
Lisa Marie Fraser  
Alan Frishman  
Michael Furst  
Jane Haines  
Hermione Hampton  
Mattie Harms  
Sally Hickerson

Todd Johansen  
Jeffrey Katz  
James Korzep  
Michelle Morgan  
Matthew Murrie  
Lila Nichols  
Cindy Noa  
Janine Olin  
Mary Sayre

Julie Shultz  
Bryce Smedley  
William Verzani  
Susan Waters  
Wes Wrightson  
Erik Zimmerman



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