

Guinean citizens general strike for democracy, 2007

- [\(mainly or initiated by\) people of color](#) [1]

Timing

January 10,
2007

to:

February 26,
2007

Location and Goals

Country:

Guinea

Location City/State/Province:

Mostly in Conakry

[View Location on Map](#)

Goals:

The protestors demanded the resignation of Guinean president Lansana Conté, economic reforms including improved wages and retirement benefits, the re-imprisonment of two prominent business executives on corruption charges, Conté's withdrawal of his decision to reinstate the Minister of Transportation, and the appointment of a new prime minister accepted by the unions.

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 013. Deputations
- 038. Marches
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 048. Protest meetings
- 117. General strike

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

- 117. General strike

Methods in 4th segment:

- 003. Declarations by organizations and institutions
- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support

Methods in 5th segment:

- 005. Declarations of indictment and intention
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials

Methods in 6th segment:

- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 117. General strike
- 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials
- 145. General administrative noncooperation

Segment Length:

Approximately 8 days

Classifications

Classification:

Change

Cluster:

Democracy

Economic Justice

Group characterization:

- Guinean labor and trade union workers
- civilians
- political opposition parties

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:

The United Trade Union of Guinean Workers (USTG) and its leader Ibrahima Fofana; The National Confederation of Guinean Workers (leader Sérah Diallo); the National Organization of Free Unions of Guinea (leader Yamadou Touré)

Partners:

Two main political opposition parties: Rally for the Guinean People, the Union of Republican Forces

External allies:

the National Council of Civil Society Organizations, a group of NGOs; Civic Alliance, a newly formed coalition group

Involvement of social elites:

Towards the end of the strike, the National Assembly including party members of Conté's own party, Party of Unity and Progress, also supported the protestors. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) delegation led by the former Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida and the ECOWAS Secretariat President Ibn Chambas joined towards the end of the strike as mediators.

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

- Union leaders – social elite leaders

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

Groups in 4th Segment:

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

- National Assembly
- Party of Unity and Progress (Conté's party) members

Segment Length:

Approximately 8 days

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:

President Lansana Conté

Nonviolent responses of opponent:

Not Known

Campaigner violence:

Some demonstrators rioted on the streets after Conté appointed Eugene Camara as the new Guinean Prime Minister

Repressive Violence:

The government arrested leaders and protestors and fired live ammunition and tear gas into the crowds, killing many of the demonstrators.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:

2 points out of 6 points

Survival:

1 point out of 1 points

Growth:

3 points out of 3 points

Total points:

6 out of 10 points

Notes on outcomes:

At the end of the first general strike, Conté agreed to nominate a new prime minister with new delegated

executive powers. Conté also agreed to new price controls for rice and fuel, in addition to a one-year ban on food and fuel exportation. By the end of the second general strike, President Conté appointed a new prime minister accepted by the Unions and the opposition parties: Lansana Kouyaté. Conté himself, however, did not step down. Furthermore, Conté removed Kouyaté in March 2008.

The organizations leading the strike survived until the appointment of Kouyaté.

the general strike grew to be a nationwide campaign.

In 1984, the Guinean President Lansana Conté first seized power through a coup, and after that won three elections. In 2006, Transparency International ranked Guinea as the most corrupt country in Africa. Also in 2006, labor and trade union alliances launched two general strikes, protesting the economic misery in Guinea and the government in general.

Many Guinean people grew uneasy with Conté becoming increasingly erratic, referring to his unexpected and chaotic cabinet reshuffles. People demanded that Conté improve wages and retirement benefits. When Conté ordered the release of two prominent business executives—Mamadou Sylla, the head of the Organization of Employers, and Fodé Soumah, vice-governor of the Central Bank from 1994 to 2004—from jail on corruption charges, the public consensus demanded that the two prisoners be returned to jail.

Called by the United Trade Union of Guinean Workers (USTG), the first part of 2007 Guinean General Strike began on January 10, 2007 and ended on January 27. Guinea's Trade Unions and opposition parties called on President Conté to resign, accusing him of mismanaging the economy, abusing his authority, and being unfit to rule, since Conté was in his 70s and suffering from diabetes. In addition to the demands mentioned above, the workers also demanded that Conté withdraw his decision to reinstate the Minister of Transportation.

The Rally for the Guinean People and the Union of Republican Forces—the two main opposition parties in the nation—together with the National Council of Civil Society Organizations (a group of NGOs), and Civic Alliance, a newly formed coalition group, all supported the strike.

Workers stayed at home and shut down businesses. In response, the government threatened to fire the strikers. The government also banned rallies, but the youth and workers rallied on the streets nonetheless. Soon, the laborers of bauxite mines, including the mine of Compagnie des Bauxites de Guinee (CBG)—the second leading bauxite producer in the world—halted working and stopped production from the mine, seriously damaging the economy. The strikers came together to hold protest meetings and marches.

Also during the first strike, Conté ordered the police to disperse the protesters with tear gas. During the month of January, the government banned the strikers from television and all but one radio station. Many coordinated their activities through SMS messages. On January 19, police and troops opened fire on thousands of demonstrators, killing two people. On January 22, the largest protest day, an estimated 30,000 demonstrators marched on the National Assembly of Guinea, but the police blocked them at the 8 November Bridge and opened fire, killing at least 30 and injuring over a hundred demonstrators.

On January 23, the Presidential troops arrested the three most prominent trade unionists: Rabiadou Sérah Diallo of the National Confederation of Guinean Workers, Ibrahima Fofana of the USTG, and Yamadou Touré of the National Organization of Free Unions of Guinea

On January 24, Conté met with union leaders, Guinean Supreme Court members, and religious leaders in an attempt to negotiate. By January 25, Guinea's Health Ministry had reported the deaths of 59 protesters.

On January 27, Fofana announced the end of the 18-day strike after Conté agreed to nominate a new prime minister with delegated executive powers, carrying the title of "head of government" and exercising some powers previously held by the Guinea president. Conté would still remain in power. The government also agreed to new price controls for rice and fuel, in addition to a one-year ban on food and fuel exportation. .

On February 6, however, the unions issued an ultimatum that said they would resume the strike unless Conté appointed a new prime minister by February 12. On February 9, Conté nominated Eugene Camara, the Guinean Minister of State for Presidential Affairs, for the prime minister position. The opposition parties and the unionists rejected the appointment of Camara who was considered to be a close associate of Conté. Calling Camara's nomination a violation of the agreement to name an independent, consensus prime minister, protestors and civilians held demonstrations and riots around Guinea's capital Conakry and across Guinea.

On February 11, Fofana declared that the union now demanded the dismissal of the entire government, including the president.

On February 12, the demonstrators resumed the strike. That same day, Conté declared announced a "state of siege" and declared martial law. The government limited almost all media from appearing. Radio stations were forcibly closed, and the government only permitted the music-only station, Nostalgic FM, to remain on air. Television Guinnee restricted its broadcasting to government and army statements. Furthermore, the government ordered that all Internet cafes shut down. Only four of Guinean Internet Service Providers could stay online. Newspapers ran only the content permitted by military commanders.

On February 13, the government enforced a curfew for all hours except from 4 to 8pm, and reported that Conakry was under control. Soon Camara changed the hours from noon to 6pm. On February 23, the National Assembly supported the protests by rejecting Conté's extension of the "state of siege" declaration. By this point even the Party of Unity and Progress, Conté's party, rejected Conté's decision.

Meanwhile, an Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) delegation, led by the former Nigerian President Ibrahim Babangida and the ECOWAS Secretariat President Ibn Chambas, arrived in Guinea to mediate a negotiation talk.

On February 26, Conté named Lansana Kouyaté as the new prime minister from a list approved by union leaders, and the union leaders declared the end of the strike. On February 27, the strikers returned to work following a day of commemoration for all the victims of repression during the strike. On March 1st, 2007, Kouyaté was sworn in.

A year later, in March 2008, Conté removed Lansana Kouyaté and replaced him with former Minister of Mines and an associate Ahmed Tidiane Souare.

Research Notes

Influences:

In 2006, labor and trade union alliances launched two unsuccessful general strikes, protesting the economic

misery of Guinea (1)

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Additional Notes:

Edited by M.R. (17/05/2011)

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