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Guinea

Guinea: The great leap backward

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While voices around the world are being raised against the kidnapping of Foniké Menguè and Mamadou Billo Bah in Guinea, the French authorities remain silent in the face of the putschists' abuses. Three years after the coup d'état, General Mamadi Doumbouya, a former corporal in the Foreign Legion, is moving away from his promise to return power to civilians. The leniency he is receiving is unlikely to change his mind.

Indulgence for good putschists

Interviewed on RFI, Bruno Fuchs, a French Member deputy who has written two reports on Africa and the French-speaking world and is the brand new chair of the French National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, described the Macron government's state of mind towards the coup plotters: 'We have a junta that we now believe is determined to return to constitutional order'. Above all, there is a desire to legalise the coup d'état with the plan for a new constitution and an election, which will obviously bring Doumbouya to power.

In an interview in July, again on RFI, Ousmane Gaoual Diallo, spokesman for the junta, let the cat out of the bag: 'the military did not come to power to say: "we'll organise the election, then we'll push for the other guy to be installed"'. The Élysée doesn't seem to mind, as long as Guinea doesn't join the anti-French camp in Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger.

Poverty and repression

Although the coup d'état was initially well received, putting an end to the regime of Alpha Condé, who was preparing for a third term in office, the people were soon disillusioned. The economic situation has deteriorated to the point where more than 10% of the population is currently suffering from a food crisis, compared with just 2.6% in 2021. Simandou, the world's largest bauxite mine, which has not yet been exploited, is the result of highly opaque negotiations between the junta and the Anglo-Australian multinational Rio Tinto. The critical media are censored and the main oppositionists are in exile, if not kidnapped. This is the case for Foniké Menguè and Mamadou Billo Bah, leaders of the National Front for the Defence of the Constitution (FNDC). Kidnapped three months ago and tortured in the military camp on the island of Kassa, their families and friends have had no further news. A former senior official in the mining ministry, Sadou Nimaga, was also recently abducted.

Demonstrations are banned and repressed. According to Amnesty International, 47 people have been killed. While the government has quickly lost popular support - 72% of Guineans consider the situation in their country to be bad - there were also rifts within the army, leading to the settling of scores, the dismissal of officers, such as the head of military security Ismael Keïta, and the arrest and death of Colonel Célestin Bilivogui and the junta's number two, General Sadiba Koulibaly. This is the junta's very own way of undertaking the 'return to constitutional order'.

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