

Weak Arms Controls Aided Guinea Massacre

Photo: Guinean police arrest a protester on September 28, 2009©AFP - Seylou

A report into the massacre at Conakry in Guinea has found that weak arms control standards in Europe and Africa contributed to the events of last September, when 156 people were killed or disappeared, and at least 109 women were subjected to sexual violence.

[*The report*](#), published by Amnesty International documents a brutal sequence of executions, public rape, and torture, which began on 28 September, 2009, “Bloody Monday”, at a rally in the national stadium opposing the ruling military junta. An International Criminal Court inquiry has found that it is likely that crimes against humanity were committed during the crackdown.

Amnesty’s investigation reveals how weapons and security equipment from South Africa and France were used during the event. Mike Lewis of [*Amnesty*](#) said “a decade-long failure” of states to assess the risks of supplying arms to Guinea’s security forces had contributed to the massacre. “They fired tear gas grenades at the peaceful crowd trapped in Conakry stadium - grenades authorised by the French government for export to Guinea 13 times through to 2008, and without being reported publicly. And we recovered spent Kalashnikov bullet casings from the stadium that appear to have been manufactured in 2006 and 2008 - indicating relatively recent supply.”

Reacting to the report, Dr Cherif Karamo, coordinator of West Africa Network for Peacebuilding, called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. “We have to fight so justice can be found and that the responsible people face trial at the International Criminal Court, because impunity fuels human right violations. The way the defence and security forces act tarnishes Guinea’s image, and an immediate return to constitutional order is necessary. The reform of the army and the judiciary is a national priority.”

Mr Lewis said the events in Conakry underlined the importance of working towards an Arms Trade Treaty, with robust, legally-binding standards. “The international community must make it a universal legal principle that arms or MSP (Military Service Providers) training will not be transferred internationally if there is a substantial risk that they will be used in serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law, or in persistent patterns of armed violence. This is what the Arms Trade Treaty should do, and we are calling on states to propose and support this principle within the ATT negotiations which begin in July.”