

**GUINEA: "THEY
RIPPED OFF MY
CLOTHES WITH THEIR
KNIVES AND LEFT ME
COMPLETELY NAKED"**

VOICES OF WOMEN AND
GIRLS VICTIMS OF SEXUAL
VIOLENCE

**AMNESTY
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VOICES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

"They ripped off my clothes with their knives and left me completely naked"

Women victim of rape on 28 September 2009

The following are a selection of testimonies given to Amnesty International in November and December 2009 by women and young girls victims of rape and sexual violence in Guinea during the 28 September 2009 demonstration and the days that followed.

They are presented here as part of Amnesty International's campaign to obtain comprehensive medical care, justice, and social and economic support for rape survivors. All details which might identify them have been changed to protect the identities of the women whose testimonies appear in this report. Further information on human rights violations committed by security forces on 28 September 2009 and the days that followed is provided in Amnesty International's report, Guinea: "You did not want the military, so now we are going to teach you a lesson", the events of the 28 September 2009 in Conakry stadium (AI Index: AFR 29/001/2010), published simultaneously in February 2010.

"Another 'red beret' pointed his gun at my head."

Hawa

"I went to join the demonstration in the stadium. After Jean Marie Doré arrived, teargas grenades were thrown, the 'red berets' (uniform of the Presidential Guard) arrived, they opened fire on the crowd in different parts of the stadium. Mamadou, a shopkeeper in Madina, was hit in the chest by a bullet and fell backwards towards me. I bent over his body to pull his shirt away from the bullet wound but he had stopped breathing. Another person was also killed in front of me.

I tried to climb onto a wall but a 'red beret' saw me and hit me with his truncheon while another one shot me in the legs. Three of them took me towards the toilets, dragging me along the ground. One of them raped me while another 'red beret' pointed his gun at my head

and said: 'So you do not want Dadis, we are going to kill you, you bastard'. After raping me, they left me there and I crawled towards the showers, where I saw bodies lined up. There were at least 46 bodies, women, men and children. The face of one woman gave me a fright, her mouth and eyes were wide open. I covered her face with her skirt. I saw a boy I knew and asked him if he had his mobile phone with him so we could call someone from a political party. I asked this boy whether he thought it would be best to lie down next to the bodies and pretend to be dead. Towards 5.30pm, the Red Cross came to collect the bodies. The Red Cross officers told us not to be frightened. I found it difficult to walk and I was bleeding from the vagina. The Red Cross insisted on taking me to the hospital but I was ashamed of being raped and I did not go there immediately. I was completely naked and I just wanted to find my children. The next day, my sister went with me to the health centre. Since all this happened, I bleed regularly and I have pain in my lower stomach and vagina.

I told my husband what had happened to me, but I did not tell him that three soldiers had raped me. He shouted at me and told me to leave the house and return to my parents. He said that he had not asked me to go to the stadium and that it was up to me to get the medicines I needed on my own. My uncles and sisters lent me the money to cover the medical costs. I asked them to say nothing to my husband's other wife. Since 28 September, nothing has happened between me and my husband and I have regular pain and bleeding. I no longer live in the same home as my husband's other wife and my husband shuttles between our two houses. My husband knows about my political engagement, he encouraged me to participate but he is angry with me because the soldiers touched my private parts. I can't get to sleep when I think about what has happened to me. I wake up regularly towards one o'clock in the morning and I see images of the 28th passing before my eyes."

"I have never seen a film like this in all my life."

Bintou

That day, I walked a long way in order to be at the stadium by 10am. There were a lot of people in front of the gate and they were chanting 'Viva democracy, Viva Freedom'. A minister asked the people to go home but they said they had come to hear their leaders.

Finally, after some discussion, we were allowed into the stadium. All the leaders were present, except for Jean-Marie Doré, who was late. When he arrived, teargas grenades were thrown at the demonstrators. People tried to see what was happening. We were surprised to see the 'red berets' appear in closed ranks, they opened fire on the crowd in every direction. It was like a war film, although I have never seen a film like this in all my life. Someone told me to hide and so I hid underneath the seats. I heard the bullets whistle by.

At my side was a woman who I had got to know on the march in the morning. The 'red berets' threw themselves on her, there were five of them. They held her down while others ripped off her clothes with a bayonet. Then they took it in turns to rape her. Afterwards, a 'red beret' thrust a gun into her vagina several times and another one fired a bullet into her vagina. The bullet was fired by the last 'red beret' to rape her.

An old man with a white beard who was standing near to the victim and was watching the

macabre scene, cried out 'Allah Akbar'. A 'red beret' shot him and he fell to the ground.

The 'red berets' came to look for me afterwards. There were more than five of them, they stole my phone. They pushed me around and hit and kicked me. I thought they were going to kill me and I started crying. A 'red beret' ripped my clothes off using his bayonet. The others held me by the hands and feet and they took it in turns to rape me. They then led me towards a lorry. More than 20 naked women were already in it. If the women cried or shouted in the lorry as we were driving along, they were beaten and some also received blows to the vagina.

The 'red berets' chose the youngest and prettiest women and drove us to Ratoma health centre. I thought it was so we could get medical treatment. We got out of the vehicle and waited. Thirty minutes later, a black vehicle arrived. 'Red berets' got out of the vehicle and started to pick out some of the girls. The chosen girls were blindfolded with black handkerchiefs and the vehicle then drove off. We got out of the vehicle at a private house and were taken to separate rooms. I was offered coffee but I refused to drink it. They threatened to kill me so I drank it and immediately fell asleep. It felt like I was asleep for a long time. I do not know what they did to me. I felt bad all over when I got up. When I woke up, hooded men raped me three times a day in groups of four. While they had their way with me, another filmed the scene with his mobile phone. These rapes took place in a tense atmosphere. They insulted me: 'We are going to throw you in the sea. You call for freedom and democracy but you don't even know what democracy is'.

Very early in the morning of 2 October, the 'red berets' asked us where we lived and a vehicle took us to our respective neighbourhoods. We were wearing very little when they left us in the vicinity of our neighbourhoods.

"They helped themselves to me as though they were at a buffet."

Fatou

I didn't say anything to my husband. He might leave me if he finds out about it and find another woman somewhere else. He will think I have got HIV because the men who did that to me are irresponsible and dirty. I am ashamed, my husband would no longer trust me. If anyone knew what happened to me, I would feel naked. I have thought about committing suicide but I told myself that there is no one to look after my children and I wouldn't want them to find themselves in the street. I detest myself and I feel like a show-time prostitute who sleeps with men. They walked all over me. It is better for me to keep quiet. My vagina still hurts. It feels like it's burning. I told my husband that I have been ill. I have still not been to see my gynaecologist because he knows my husband well. I find it very hard to discuss such an intimate issue and would not like to talk about it with anybody at all

When I was in the stadium, teargas grenades were thrown. It was as though a cloud had covered the sky. At the same time, there was the sound of bullets. I tried to escape by climbing a wall. I saw a woman struggling, they had taken her trousers and pants off. Two 'red berets' were holding her down on the ground, she was crying, she said 'leave me alone,

do not kill me, I beg you'. They hit her on the head and body, another 'red beret' put a gun in her vagina and pulled the trigger. I saw blood.

A 'red beret' got hold of me by my trouser belt. He said 'if you do not do as I say, I will do the same to you', pointing at the girl who was on the ground. He pulled me as though he was pulling a trolley, while I held back. He took me to a lorry covered by a tarpaulin.. There were other women in the lorry but I did not have time to count them. There were 'red berets' in the lorry, the women were crying but when they screamed, the 'red berets' threatened them with their guns. The lorry drove for a long time. A few women, around six, were forced to get down when it stopped the first time. Me and eight others were forced to get down when it stopped for a second time. We were put in separate rooms. I was offered food but I refused it. I was given a glass of liquid that looked like water. Seven 'red berets' came into the room one at a time and asked me to drink the liquid. One of them pointed his gun at my forehead and said 'drink it or I will kill you'. Obviously, I drank it. I had the impression I could see several people in the room. I can't remember anything else and I fell asleep. When I woke up, I no longer had any clothes on, I was completely naked. I felt sore everywhere, I felt tired, my voice was hoarse, my vagina hurt and it felt like someone had put pepper on my genitals. My loins hurt and I felt very tired.

They said: 'We are going to exterminate you Fulani, you were told not to go to the stadium or to the station. If you tell anyone what has happened here, we will come and kill your entire family'. They gave me sandwiches to eat. They helped themselves to me as though they were at a buffet. They would not stop, and several of them raped me. I was not given the chance to say no. I did not see the other women or girls, I only heard their screams and cries. It must have been 2 October in the early morning when I was blindfolded and forced to get into a vehicle. They asked me where I live and they dropped me off there towards 5.30am. When I got down from the lorry, they took the blindfold off. I was wearing just a T-shirt. A woman who was on her way to market asked me what I was doing there but I did not reply her. She took off her skirt and wrapped it round my waist and said to me: 'go home or people will be looking at you'.

"The soldiers chose some women from among those who were waiting there."

Mariatou

That day, there were a lot of very enthusiastic young people around. I followed them and the crowd got bigger as we went along. I could see police officers at the stadium, in front of the terraces. The gate was closed. After discussions with the political leaders, one of the police officers opened the gate. We went inside and settled down in the stands and on the pitch.

Barely two minutes after the arrival of Jean Marie Doré, teargas grenades were thrown at the demonstrators. We heard the sound of gunshots, many soldiers wearing 'red berets' were coming through the main gate. As soon as they had come through the gate, they opened fire on the crowd. I saw people fall to the ground as they were hit by bullets. The 'red berets' opened fire on anyone trying to escape. People were running everywhere in order to find a way out. I stepped on people as I ran away. There was a dense crowd in front of one of the gates. I ran and was swallowed up by the crowd. There was pushing and shoving and some

people fell to the ground. A 'red beret' tried to pull me towards him but I resisted. People tried to get out through a gate but it was electrified. It was like being in a trap between the electrified gate and the 'red berets' who were shooting or stabbing people. I was able to get to one of the exits and tried to get into a Red Cross vehicle but it was full of dead bodies and wounded people.

The soldier grabbed me and put me under a military tarpaulin. There were wounded people there, we were no more than 15 women. The vehicle took us to Ratoma Hospital, where we were brutally forced to get down and kicked. We had scarcely arrived at the hospital when a Land Cruiser pulled up and parked. The soldiers chose some women from among those who were waiting there. We were forced to get into the Land Cruiser and blindfolded. I do not know in what direction we drove off. We arrived at a private house, where some 'red berets' had already arrived. We were taken to separate rooms. I screamed and they slapped me. I was locked into a room, I heard other women crying out, I refused the food that was offered to me. They gave me coffee and then I don't know what happened, I must have lost consciousness. It must have been a few hours later when I woke up. My eyesight was blurred, I felt that something was wrong with me, I felt a burning on my genitals, my loins ached and I could feel my vagina was swollen. I heard several languages being spoken: sousous, French and especially English. I felt very vulnerable and I could not resist the assaults carried out by the hooded men. They took turns to rape me several times a day. During this whole period, they regularly slapped and hit me. On 2 October, they put us in a vehicle and threw us out in the neighbourhoods where we said we lived.

"Someone in the stadium gave me their veil to cover myself with."

Animatou

I was at the stadium. I was sitting on the terraces, below the platform where the leaders were sitting. After the teargas grenades were thrown, everybody started to run. Two 'red berets' ran after me and caught me. I fell to the ground and they ripped off my clothes with their knives and left me completely naked. Then two of them raped me. After that, I was unable to walk normally. Someone in the stadium gave me their veil to cover myself with. I left the stadium but behind the stadium another 'red beret' caught me, dragged me to the ground and raped me again.

After that, I was able to get away from the stadium. I have no idea how I managed that. Then someone from the neighbourhood near the stadium helped me to get to the university. The people who lived next door to me hid me, washed me and dressed me. I finally returned home towards 8pm.

Several days later, I went to Himbaya clinic. They gave me a prescription. I did not want to go to Donka hospital because I was afraid. I heard that the soldiers were looking for raped women there.

The doctor took a blood sample to do an AIDS test but I have not yet received the results. I have been to see him three times. I have still not told my husband that I have been raped.

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