



PRESS RELEASE

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## **Guinea - One year after their enforced disappearance, Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah must be found: three international NGOs demand truth and transparency about their disappearance**

PARIS - JULY 9, 2025

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One year ago, on July 9, 2024, two emblematic figures of Guinean civil society, Oumar Sylla, known as Foniké Menguè, and Mamadou Billo Bah, respectively coordinators of the National Front for the Defense of the Constitution (FNDC) and the Tournons La Page movement (TLP-Guinea), were kidnapped without a warrant, in front of witnesses, by armed and hooded men identified as belonging to the Special Forces and the National Gendarmerie Intervention Group (GIGN), at Oumar Sylla's home in Conakry. The next day, only Mohamed Cissé, another member of the FNDC, was released. He then publicly testified about the torture and transfer of the two activists to the island of Fotoba, a former colonial penal colony used as an informal detention centre.

Since July 9, 2024, Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah have not been seen again. To date, the Guinean authorities have not provided any tangible evidence of their fate. The investigation announced by the prosecutor of the Conakry Court of Appeal on July 17, 2024 has yielded no results.

There is a real fear that this investigation has in fact never begun. The Guinean government's continued silence on the case fuels suspicions of a state-orchestrated enforced disappearance. Despite official statements about the opening of an investigation, no concrete action has been taken. The families, lawyers, witnesses to the abduction and human rights defenders who investigated the case were never interviewed. Neither the testimonies of Mohamed Cissé, nor the revelations of investigative journalist Thomas Dietrich - who identified members of the forces involved, some trained by France - have been taken into account by the Guinean judicial authorities.

On 28 November 2024, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Mary Lawlor, made public a letter addressed to the Guinean government, demanding answers on this enforced disappearance. To date, no official response has been given, as with other communications from other UN mechanisms to the Guinean government on this case.

The context of this disappearance is marked by increased repression in Guinea since the coup d'état of September 5, 2021, which brought Colonel Mamadi Doumbouya to power.

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The latter, now a general and president of the transition, has gradually established an authoritarian regime under the guise of a pseudo-transition, increasing enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests and prosecutions of critical voices. The two activists had long been targeted for their peaceful commitment against the authoritarian excesses of the established powers.

The disappearance of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah is a flagrant violation of Guinea's international commitments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. It is part of a context of increasing repression of citizen engagement, which the international community cannot continue to ignore.

In the face of persistent impunity, we, civil society organizations, call for the establishment of an independent and impartial investigation, including an international component, under the aegis of the United Nations or the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR). Despite the promises of an investigation, no progress has been made. Families and human rights defenders have not been heard, and evidence has been ignored.

We, the signatories of this appeal, urge France, the European Union and the United Nations to take concrete and immediate action in the face of the alarming situation in Guinea.

### **To France and the European Union :**

The French government has been questioned several times over its security ties with Guinea's ruling military junta. In a context where several Guinean officials, trained by France, are accused of acts of torture and kidnapping, it is imperative to act.

We therefore call for :

- To support the opening of an international investigation, in particular within the United Nations bodies (OHCHR, Working Group on Enforced Disappearances) or the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR).
- To suspend all security and military cooperation with the Guinean defense and security forces involved in this case, as long as the perpetrators and those responsible for the disappearance of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah are not identified, prosecuted and punished.
- To make any budgetary aid to Guinea conditional on clear guarantees on the respect of fundamental rights in the country.

### **At the United Nations :**

We also demand:

- To mandate an international fact-finding mission to Guinea regarding cases of enforced disappearances.
- To include the cases of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah on the agenda of the Human Rights Council every year, so that a public debate can be held with the Guinean authorities.

### **To the Government of Guinea :**

We demand:

- To immediately reveal the fate of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, to release those reported who are still arbitrarily detained or to bring them before an independent judge.
- Guarantee the protection of human rights defenders and end the repression of citizens' movements.

One year after the kidnapping of Oumar Sylla and Mamadou Billo Bah, the silence has become unbearable. The truth must come out, justice must be done. Together, let us make our voices heard so that these demands are taken into account and that human rights are respected in Guinea.

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**List of signatory organizations :**

1. ACAT-France (Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture)
2. TLP (Tournons La Page)
3. Human Rights Foundation

**Press contact :**

Dimitri Partouche: Communication Officer - [communication@acatfrance.fr](mailto:communication@acatfrance.fr)