

## Guinea-Bissau Delegation visits Birmingham

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CWAS was pleased to join with the School of Political Science and International Studies (POLSIS) and the Amilcar Cabral Institute of Political and Economic Research to host a high profile delegation from Guinea-Bissau. The visitors included Raimundo Pereira and Manuel Nhamajo, respectively President and Vice- President of the Guinea-Bissau National Popular Assembly.

Following a tour of the University campus, the delegation visited the Danford Collection of African Art, where they were greeted by the Head of the College of Arts and Law, Professor Michael Whitby. The visit culminated in a panel discussion on 'The State in Africa: Crisis or Consolidation? The View from Guinea-Bissau', which was opened by CWAS' Senior Honorary Research Fellow, [Dr Paulo Farias \(/staff/profiles/dasa/fernando-paulo.aspx\)](/staff/profiles/dasa/fernando-paulo.aspx). Raimundo Pereira and Manuel Nhamajo addressed a large audience of CWAS students, interested participants from across the University, and members of the Bissau-Guinean diaspora. The visitors outlined the recent history of this small West African state which achieved independence in 1974, following a prolonged and bitter struggle against the Portuguese. Raimundo Pereira explained how a series of coup d'états, recurring political violence and narcotics trading had culminated in a request from Guinea-Bissau to the United Nations Peace-Building Commission. The delegation's visit to the UK formed part of their preparations for a National Conference in December 2011, and was organised by the UK's All-Party Parliamentary Group on Guinea-Bissau which fosters bilateral relations.

Elections are expected in Guinea-Bissau in 2012, and participants in the panel discussion posed a variety of questions about human security, female participation in the newly elected institutions, and the potential role of diasporans in the reconciliation process. CWAS is grateful to Dr Jose Nafafe (POLSIS) for translating between English and Portuguese during this lengthy event, which gave way to more informal discussions. CWAS students were able to ask questions about agricultural exports and the possibility of oil extraction, whilst enjoying the drinks and canapés provided by the All-Party Parliamentary Group.

The President of the Group's Secretariat, Peter R Thompson, expressed his pleasure at finding in Birmingham a group of staff and students whose knowledge of and interest in West Africa permitted an unusually high level of the event a success.



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