

## **Hundreds of lives lost in Ivory Coast amidst slow international response**

Federation internationale des Droits de l'Homme 25 March 2011 **32 International and African organizations call for urgent action in face of deteriorating situation**

Greater measures to protect civilians and meet fundamental humanitarian needs in Ivory Coast are urgently needed, a coalition of 32 international and African civil society organizations including Human Rights Watch, the International Federation for Human Rights, and the Open Society Initiative for West Africa have warned today.

Increased fighting and insecurity have taken the total number of displaced towards the half million mark with new displacements of people in the capital, Abidjan, and in the Western part of the country. UNHCR has documented nearly 500,000 people displaced in Abidjan and western Côte d'Ivoire[1], with more than 100,000 refugees in Liberia - of which more than a half have arrived since late February[2]. Hundreds of thousands of people are in urgent need of food and non-food aid, including medicine. The coalition warns that the current provision of funding for humanitarian aid is already insufficient.

"The humanitarian situation caused by the conflict in Ivory Coast has reached a critical level. Aid distributions have been postponed as a result of new fighting around Abidjan and the plight of IDPs in Ivory Coast and refugees into Liberia and other neighboring countries is of grave concern. It is of critical importance that the international donor community steps up funding to meaningfully address the deepening humanitarian crisis in the Ivory Coast and Liberia", declared Elisabeth Rasmusson, Secretary General of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC).

The conflict has already resulted in the reported killing of more than 460 civilians[3] in addition to dozens of reported rapes (many politically motivated) as well as illegal detention and enforced disappearance by Gbagbo's security forces. Heavy arms and explosive weapons have been used in populated areas with no discrimination between civilians and armed actors. According to recent field research conducted by members of the coalition, Ivoirians and immigrants from neighboring West African countries are being targeted by pro-Gbagbo forces, beaten to death or doused with gas and burnt alive. Reports also indicate that pro-Ouattara fighters have also committed extrajudicial executions against real or perceived pro-Gbagbo supporters in territory under their control.

The coalition calls for those responsible for serious human rights violations to be held accountable for their crimes. On March 25, the UN Human Rights Council will decide whether to establish a Commission of inquiry to investigate grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law during the post-election period. Such an inquiry could help prevent impunity of perpetrators and deter further atrocities, particularly if it worked to identify those most responsible for these abuses and make clear recommendations aimed at holding them responsible.

See

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