

MRG strongly condemns ethnically motivated attacks on civilians in Cote d'Ivoire, calls on new administration to investigate killings Minority Rights Group 11 April 2011 Minority Rights Group International (MRG) strongly condemns the recent ethnic killings in Côte d'Ivoire and calls for an immediate investigation by the new administration into the attacks, which have left hundreds of civilians dead in the West of the country.

According to reports, between 244 and 800 people were killed during an incident that took place between 28 and 30 March in the town of Duékoué. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights says that the victims are believed to have been mostly or all of Guéré ethnicity.

'All sides must cease targeting civilians immediately, otherwise there is a clear risk that ethnic tensions will spiral out of control,' says Carl Soderbergh, MRG's Director of Policy and Communications.

The killings took place when pro-Ouattara fighters took control of Duékoué. In an earlier incident in mid-March, 100 people of the Dioula ethnicity were reportedly killed whilst pro-Gbagbo forces were in control of the town. (...)

(...)Guéré number some 318,000 and are Krou people traditionally residing in west-central Côte d'Ivoire. Until recently Guéré were exclusively subsistence farmers, however cash cropping, such as cocoa cultivation, has brought rapid social and economic changes and many Guéré have migrated.

Dioula are mostly Muslim and live in both northwest and southern Côte d'Ivoire. They have traditionally formed the support base of Ouattara, who is himself Dioula.

Duékoué has seen some of the worst violence in Côte d'Ivoire since a 2002 rebellion divided the country. MRG is anxious that the current violence does not further exacerbate the fragile situation for minorities in the strife-torn town.

'Alassane Ouattara has already promised that perpetrators of human rights abuses will be brought to justice. It is now time that he puts words into actions, by authorising impartial investigations into the tragic events of recent weeks,' says Soderbergh.

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