I. 2010 Political & Humanitarian Crisis

b. Post-Election Violence: Human Rights Violations Reach RtoP Threshold

II. Responding to the Crisis

a. The UN Response

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c. Responses from the European Union and Foreign Governments

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The 2010 presidential election between incumbent Laurent Gbagbo and opposition member Alassane Ouattara resulted in a political stalemate and violent conflict after Gbagbo refused to honor the results that declared Ouattara the winner. As of April 2011, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reported that over 1000 civilians had died as a result of clashes, and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated that more than 500,000 Ivoirians were forcibly displaced, and 94,000 Ivoirians fled to neighboring Liberia out of fear of violence. Forces loyal to both Gbagbo and Ouattara were failing to protect civilians and were accused of gross human rights violations that could amount to crimes against humanity. In an effort to protect the people of Côte d'Ivoire from further atrocities, a military operation began on 4 April following a statement by the UN Secretary-General in which he instructed UN Operations in Côte D'Ivoire (UNOCI) to “take the necessary measures to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population.” Gbagbo’s hold on power ended on April 11, 2011 when he was arrested by Ouattara’s forces after days of fighting with involvement of UNOCI and the French military.

I. 2010 Political & Humanitarian Crisis
Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire

The political stalemate turned violent and caused the decline of state security, threatened human rights against civilians which could amount to crimes against humanity. UNOCI reported that the serious violations of international humanitarian law in Côte d'Ivoire had caused extensive losses of life, injuries, and displacement. In a letter to President Ouattara, the UN Secretary-General requested the implementation of a political solution to the crisis and underlined its determination to use all relevant instruments of the AU that the situation would require. As a measure to implement the resolution, ECOWAS appointed former Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, as a High Representative for the Côte d'Ivoire crisis. He called for the formation of a government of national unity while an “honorable exit was found for incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo”; however Gbagbo rejected the call for him to leave power.

UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which issued targeted sanctions on Gbagbo and his inner circle, and stressed the support for the transition to a new president. However, the new president, Alassane Ouattara, did not follow the procedures established by the previous elections. The European Union (EU), and numerous countries including the United States, Germany, France, and the United Kingdom, formally rejected the outcome of the elections and considered the new president to be illegitimate.

After months of defying the outcome of the presidential election, Laurent Gbagbo was arrested by Ouattara forces on 11 April 2011 following an attack on his residence in Abidjan. Alassane Ouattara, who claimed victory in the elections on 23 November 2010, took all measures to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and urged ECOWAS and the United Nations to implement the efforts. Furthermore, the Open Statement identified the crucial role of the international community to respond and to adopt stronger targeted sanctions against Gbagbo and his associates.

Kristalina Georgieva, the European Union (EU) Commissioner for International Development, appealed to Gbagbo and Ouattara to “allow the help of humanitarian workers” to prevent the country from “slipping further into a state of lawlessness”. The regional body issued an urgent call for humanitarian assistance and to adopt stronger targeted sanctions against Gbagbo and his associates.

The organization expressed its concern about the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and stated that the OTP had been investigating the situation since the November 28, 2010 presidential loss of Laurent Gbagbo. The OTP had been investigating the period since the November 28, 2010 presidential loss of Laurent Gbagbo and had issued on January 29, 2011, specifically warned “about the possibility of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other violations of international human rights law”.

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