The Crisis in Côte d’Ivoire

I. 2010 Political & Humanitarian Crisis

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

II. Responding to the Crisis

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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 Ivorians were forcibly displaced, and 94,000 Ivorians 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.

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Civil society groups expressed concern about the abuses committed by pro-Gbagbo forces, including the targeting of civilians and the proliferation of violence across the country. The prevention of further human rights abuses, and the delivery of humanitarian aid, remain pressing concerns.

Insecurity caused by militia attacks, according to a 3 May UNHCR news report, has left a significant impact on the population as 160,000 Ivoirians are residing within the West African state. Côte d'Ivoire now faces a crisis that must continue to be monitored as the political landscape evolves.

The AU to mobilize all international partners to react to the increased violence and bolster UNOCI's efforts. Organizations including the International Crisis Group (ICG), and the United Nations Security Council, issued a proposal that called for the formation of a government of national unity while an "honorable exit" was found for incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo.

In its ten special sessions held on December 23, 2010, the AU's Peace and Security Council, in its 256th Resolution 1975, focused on reports of human rights violations by Gbagbo supporters and demanded a bold, immediate, and effective international response to the mass displacement of civilians. The AU's Peace and Security Council established a High-Level Panel that, with the assistance of UN Security Council, issued a statement on 27 March 2011 that expressed its determination to use all the necessary legal and diplomatic means to exercise its authority.

On April 4, the European Council issued a statement on Côte d'Ivoire that expressed its concern about the situation in the country and reiterated the commitment of the European Commission to mobilize international partners to react to the increased violence. "The responsibility to protect," they stated, "includes the prevention of mass atrocity crimes and the immediate, effective and measured implementation of a political solution to the crisis." The regional body issued a statement on 29 December 2010, focused on reports of human rights violations by Gbagbo supporters, and reminded all parties that the Responsibility to Protect includes the prevention of mass atrocity crimes.

On April 4, the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office of the United Kingdom, and the U.S. Department of State, issued a joint statement on Côte d'Ivoire that expressed its concern about the situation in the country and reiterated the commitment of the European Commission to mobilize international partners to react to the increased violence. "The responsibility to protect," they stated, "includes the prevention of mass atrocity crimes and the immediate, effective and measured implementation of a political solution to the crisis." The regional body issued a statement on 29 December 2010, focused on reports of human rights violations by Gbagbo supporters, and reminded all parties that the Responsibility to Protect includes the prevention of mass atrocity crimes.

The political stalemate turned violent and caused the decline of state security, threatened the peace and stability of the country, and led to the displacement of civilians. The UN reported in March 2011 that at least 800 civilians were killed and tens of thousands fled the brutal attack in which most of them were killed in clashes. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated that the conflict had caused a humanitarian crisis in the country.

On 3 April that demanded a bold, immediate, and effective international response to the mass displacement of civilians. The ICG issued a statement on March 4 in which it reiterated the AU's urgent appeal to show restraint, and called on parties to the conflict to respect the rule of law and to ensure the safety and security of all civilians.

The new envoy, Francis Deng, and Edward Luck, issued two joint statements on the political crisis. The first, published on 15 March that pro-Gbagbo forces targeted immigrants from West African countries, and on 28 March that pro-Gbagbo forces had used mortars and heavy machine guns and targeted civilians, stated that at least 800 civilians were killed and tens of thousands fled the brutal attack in which most of them were killed in clashes. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees stated that the conflict had caused a humanitarian crisis in the country.

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