The Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire

I. 2010 Political & Humanitarian Crisis

a. The Electoral Process

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

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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.

I. 2010 Political & Humanitarian Crisis
for presidential candidates Laurent Gbagbo and Alassane Ouattara. The first-round of the presidential elections took place on 28 November 2010.

UN Photos / Basile Zoma

The country must continue to be monitored and if it is determined that crimes against humanity have been committed, there should be a clear call for accountability. The registered refugees in neighboring states must receive the protection and support they require. Liberia is presently hosting the majority of the refugees displaced by the conflict.

Amnesty International (AI) issued several statements documenting sexual violence and other human rights abuses carried out by forces loyal to both Gbagbo and Ouattara. AI called on both men to issue clear instructions to all their armed forces to stop the killings and extreme violence that was unfolding. ICG called on Ouattara and his supporters to take all measures to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and urged ECOWAS and the AU to mobilize all international partners to react to the increased violence and bolster the efforts. Furthermore, the Open Statement identified the crucial role of the AU's Peace and Security Council in the situation.

The African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU) issued statements expressing concern about the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. The EU reiterated its commitment to supporting the democratic process in the country and urged the parties to respect the rule of law. The AU called for a peaceful resolution to the crisis and rejected any violence as a means to resolve the situation.

On April 6, 2011 the Office of the Prosecutor (OTP) for the International Criminal Court instructed UNOCI to "take the necessary measures to prevent the use of heavy weapons and other military force in response to the seizure of Duékoué and subsequent attack." The Secretary-General of the United Nations also expressed his concern about the violence and called for immediate action to protect civilians in Abidjan. The OCHA, which issued a report on the situation, noted that over 1000 people had been killed and tens of thousands had fled the brutal attack in which most of the city of Duékoué was burnt.

Human Rights Watch reported on 28 March that pro-Gbagbo forces had used mortars and heavy machine guns and targeted civilians, which could amount to crimes against humanity. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) condemned the attack on civilians, which it stated that at least 800 civilians were killed and tens of thousands fled the attack in which most of the city of Duékoué was burnt.

The UN reported in March 2011 that the security of UN staff and vehicles had been threatened by attacks in the city of Abidjan. Alassane Ouattara established his seat of government at the Hotel du Peuple. The government announced that it would withdraw from the AU's Peace and Security Council established a High-Level Panel that, with the assistance of Thabo Mbeki, denounced violence carried out by forces loyal to Gbagbo and Ouattara and accused both of committing crimes against humanity.

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The Open Statement on the Situation in Côte d'Ivoire expressed the Panel for the Resolution of the Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire's concern about the human rights violations. The Council responded to the increase in violence and urged the ICRC to document the human rights violations. The Panel for the Resolution of the Crisis in Côte d'Ivoire issued a report on its findings.

The Security Council met again on the issue of Côte d'Ivoire on 11 April 2011 following an attack on his residence in Abidjan. Alassane Ouattara established his seat of government at the Hotel du Peuple. The Council responded to the increase in violence and urged the parties to respect the rule of law.

The European Council issued a Communiqué calling on the AU to mobilize all international partners to react to the increased violence and bolster the efforts. Furthermore, the Open Statement identified the crucial role of the AU's Peace and Security Council in the situation.

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