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Côte d'Ivoire has over 60 ethnic groups, with complex linguistic and cultural interrelationships. The north of the country, largely Muslim, has seen several uprisings in protest at perceived marginalization by largely southern governments, while since the mid-1990s, the term 'Ivoirité' has been used in some political discourse to denote 'genuine' belonging to Côte d'Ivoire and to cast doubt upon the nationality of many northerners. Presidential elections in 2010, the first in a decade, saw the use of xenophobic campaign language by supporters of President Laurent Gbagbo, a southerner, against those of his northern opponent Alassane Ouattara.

This language played on the perception among some of the public of northerners as 'foreigners' descended from economic migrants drawn by the country's wealth. Despite this, Ouattara won the 2010 elections, though Gbagbo's refusal to accept the results led to armed conflict before Ouattara was able to become President.

In 2013, tensions between supporters of Ouattara and those of former President Gbagbo continued, with some ongoing incidents of violence motivated apparently by identity and, by extension, perceived party affiliation. Although both sides committed serious human rights abuses during the post-electoral conflict of 2010-11, justice has been applied unequally: at year's end all of those brought to justice for crimes committed during this period were Gbagbo supporters. For his part, Laurent Gbagbo is being held by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on four counts of crimes against humanity, including murder and sexual violence. His wife Simone and a militia leader, Charles Blé Goudé, also face ICC charges.

To date the ICC has pursued a 'sequential' approach, investigating the Gbagbo side first before beginning on Ouattara's: this has provoked criticism that it is perpetuating the perception of one-sided justice and tacitly enabling the Ouattara government to prosecute only its political opponents. This disparity, the entrenchment of ethnocentric politics and ongoing abuses and attacks formed serious obstacles to reconciliation.

Another obstacle is land. Throughout Côte d'Ivoire, and particularly in the west, land is increasingly scarce, in part due to population increases. Political manipulation of the divisions mentioned above between those who are 'native' to the region and those who are not have linked competition for resources with questions of identity. Conflict over land, like politics, is being drawn along cultural and religious lines.

The west saw high levels of displacement during the 2010-11 conflict. Some returnees to the area, in large part Gbagbo supporters of Guéré ethnicity, claimed that their land had been occupied by non-locals, who typically supported Ouattara; in many cases, the latter maintain that they acquired the land legitimately. Tensions around land have led some residents to occupy protected government forests, contributing to deforestation; security forces forcibly expelled some occupiers in 2013.

In 2013 concern continued about reports of serious human rights violations, including sexual and gender-based violence, attributed to security forces, as well as abuses by other armed groups. In the west, traditional hunters known as *dozos*, allied with Ouattara's administration, were also accused of numerous human rights violations, often against perceived government opponents, in the course of security duties in 2013.

However, there were some positive steps taken to address the widespread climate of impunity for human rights abuses. In April, 33 soldiers were tried by a military court for violations against civilians committed after the post-electoral crisis period. Two soldiers received prison sentences. In July 2012 soldiers, pro-Ouattara militias and civilians attacked a camp of internally displaced people at Nahibly, leaving at least 11 dead and forcing thousands more to flee. The camp's residents were largely ethnic Guéré, who had been forced to flee their homes by Ouattara supporters during the post-electoral crisis. A judicial investigation into the massacre continued in 2013.

Another positive development was a reported decrease in the overall use of hate speech in the national media, according to the UN country office. In August the government also reformed parts of the nationality law, as well as the law on land tenure, both issues that have been central to the country's protracted violence and political instability. While positive, however, these measures will need to be supported by strong political commitment from the government if the underlying causes of inter-ethnic grievances are to be addressed. In late November the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported over 16,000 voluntary refugee returns to western Côte d'Ivoire from Liberia, though another 58,000 remain in Liberia.

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