

Côte d'Ivoire: Next president must tackle urgent human rights issues

Côte d'Ivoire's next president must seize the opportunity of their mandate to prioritize the human rights of everyone in the country, Amnesty International said as it launched a manifesto setting out six key priorities for the next administration. The official list of candidates for the 25 October election was published on 9 September.

“Over the next five years, the president should address violations of the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. They should end forced evictions and support affected people, ensure respect for the right to truth, justice and reparation for victims of electoral violence, protect the rights of women and children and the right to a healthy environment,” said Marceau Sivieude, Amnesty International's Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

Ensure and protect freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly

The Criminal Code criminalizes the dissemination of ‘false information’ and provides for prison sentences for organizers of or participants in undeclared protests. These provisions are often used to silence critical voices. Furthermore, the authorities can currently dissolve organizations by a simple decree, without the possibility of appeal.

It is essential to amend the law on the organization of civil society to guarantee the right to freedom of association, to revise the Penal Code to reduce the penalties for disseminating false information and to ensure its compliance with international human rights standards.

“The future president must commit to ending abusive legal proceedings and all forms of intimidation, harassment or violence against individuals and legal entities simply for exercising their human rights,” said Marceau Sivieude.

End forced evictions and fairly compensate victims

Although support measures for the [tens of thousands of victims](#) of forced evictions have been [announced](#), they remain insufficient and have not been implemented for [all victims](#).

Amnesty International calls on the next president to put an end to forced evictions, in accordance with the country's obligations under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the UN International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, ratified by Côte d'Ivoire in 1992. All victims should be guaranteed fair compensation and adequate and secure rehousing.

Ensure right to truth, justice and reparations

The 2018 amnesty law benefited hundreds of people prosecuted or convicted for offences related to the 2010–2011 post-election violence. In the violence that followed the 2020 elections, [85 people](#) were killed and hundreds injured. Victims and their families are still waiting for justice and reparations. Since 2020, individuals and non-governmental organizations can no longer bring cases directly before the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights because the authorities withdrew the declaration that made this possible.

“Efforts towards national reconciliation must not compromise the rights of victims and families of victims of electoral violence. Domestic justice mechanisms must be strengthened, and the jurisdiction of the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights to receive complaints must be restored,” said Marceau Sivieude.

Tackle gender-based violence

Despite progress, sexual violence survivors continue to face obstacles in accessing justice and support services. For instance, a paid medical certificate is still required when filing rape complaints, and the Penal Code establishes a presumption of consent between spouses.

There is an urgent need to ensure the enforcement of laws against gender-based violence and to guarantee that survivors have access to medical care and forensic examinations, psychological counselling and shelters without delay or financial barriers.

Children’s rights should be protected

The president should prioritize the fight against child labour, which despite some progress persists as [noted](#) by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery. The authorities should conduct investigations and bring alleged perpetrators to justice. They must ensure access to justice and effective remedies to victims.

It is also essential to facilitate access to civil registration for all children to ensure their human rights.

Ensure and guarantee right to a healthy environment

Already vulnerable rural communities are seeing their land reduced or seized, sometimes without adequate consultation or fair compensation, due to the expansion of agricultural land and illegal logging. The chemicals used in gold mining are making water sources unfit for consumption and agriculture.

There is an urgent need to enforce laws against illegal deforestation, unsustainable logging and land grabbing, to establish consultation and compensation mechanisms, and to facilitate communities’ access to information and remedies when their human rights are violated through environmental degradation, including climate change impacts. The communities’ initiatives must be supported and integrated into public policy.

“The recommendations in our manifesto are not exhaustive, but they provide the future president with a roadmap. These elections offer an opportunity to strengthen respect for human rights in Côte d’Ivoire. We call on all candidates to commit to this,” said Marceau Sivieude.