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Alassane Ouattara won a second term in the October presidential elections, deemed free and fair by international observers – another step towards recovery from the 2010-2011 post-election crisis. In the lead-up to the elections, however, clashes between ruling party and opposition activists, particularly supporters of the former president, Laurent Gbagbo, left at least three people dead and dozens injured. The government's prohibition of several opposition protests, and the subsequent arrest of dozens of demonstrators, threatened freedom of assembly. Several opposition activists were held in unauthorized detention facilities without access to legal assistance.

Côte d'Ivoire's strong macroeconomic growth continued and led to some gradual improvement in social and economic rights, such as access to education and basic healthcare. However, the government has made insufficient progress in tackling corruption and strengthening the judicial system. Members of the security forces continued to be implicated in illegal detentions and torture, albeit less often than in previous years, but extortion and racketeering by security forces was pervasive. Gender-based violence remained widespread, although the government's September 2014 adoption of a national strategy against sexual violence led to some positive steps to address it.

The Ivorian judiciary made progress in investigating atrocities committed during the 2010-2011 post-election crisis, although concerns persisted about the government's willingness to prosecute pro-Ouattara forces.

Land dispossession remained a key driver of inter-communal tensions and local-level violence in western Côte d'Ivoire. The 1998 land law, designed to increase certainty over land ownership by converting customary claims to legal title, is largely unimplemented.

Côte d'Ivoire's key partners – France, the United Nations, the European Union, and the United States – continued to favor private advocacy to push the government to pursue accountability for past crimes. The International Criminal Court (ICC) is scheduled to begin the trial of former President Gbagbo and Charles Blé Goudé, a former youth minister and leader of a pro-Gbagbo

militia, in early 2016. However, the ICC made little progress in the investigation of crimes by pro-Ouattara forces.

Accountability for Past Abuses

The Special Investigative Cell, the body responsible for investigating crimes committed during the 2010-2011 post-election crisis, in late 2014 received sufficient funding to conduct effective investigations. In 2015 it charged more than 20 perpetrators in relation to human rights abuses committed during the crisis, including commanders from President Ouattara's side.

However, no individual has yet been tried in national civilian courts for atrocities committed during the 2010-2011 post-election violence. Former First Lady Simone Gbagbo, as well 78 of President Gbagbo's former allies, were tried by a civilian court in early 2015: she was convicted, along with 59 others. However, this was for offenses against the state, not human rights crimes. Concerns about evidentiary weaknesses in the case also raised doubt about Ivorian courts' capacity to fairly try human rights cases. The beleaguered military justice system tried several cases involving killings of civilians by pro-Gbagbo soldiers during the post-election crisis, but discontinued a case against two commanders for indiscriminate shelling after the prosecution failed to produce sufficient evidence.

In March 2015, the National Assembly passed legislation amending the criminal code and criminal procedure code to ensure conformity with the Rome Statute of the ICC. However, the government refused to transfer Simone Gbagbo to the ICC to face trial for crimes against humanity committed during the 2010-2011 crisis, despite in May 2015 losing an appeal at the ICC against the admissibility of the case against her.

The much-criticized Dialogue, Truth and Reconciliation Commission presented its final report to President Ouattara on December 15, 2014. However, the government had not yet publicly released the report at time of writing, although President Ouattara has pledged to make 10 billion CFA (US\$16.5 million) available for the indemnification of victims. The first group of victims began receiving financial and medical assistance in August 2015, but victims' groups criticized the lack of transparency of the reparations process.

Judicial System

Ongoing efforts to strengthen the judicial system continued throughout 2015, including the rehabilitation of court buildings and detention facilities, and training of judicial personnel. However, more fundamental problems, such as political interference in the judiciary and corruption, persisted. Prolonged pretrial detention remained the rule rather than the exception, and most prisons are overcrowded and lack adequate nutrition, sanitation, and medical care.

Conduct of Security Forces

Security forces continued to be implicated in arbitrary arrest and detentions and, less frequently, mistreatment and torture of detainees. They were also frequently implicated in criminal conduct, notably extortion. Very few security forces members faced judicial or disciplinary actions for these violations. Several commanders credibly implicated in atrocities during the 2010-2011 crisis remained in key positions in the security forces.

The military justice system is severely under-resourced, with one military tribunal in Abidjan for the whole country, and needs reform to strengthen its independence from the executive.

Cote d'Ivoire's Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program officially ended on June 30, 2015, and the government claims to have reintegrated almost 60,000 former

combatants. The DDR process, however, has been one-sided, mostly benefitting forces who fought on President Ouattara's side during the post-election crisis. Former rebel commanders who fought with Ouattara had particularly close control over which ex-combatants obtained jobs as customs, prison, and forestry officers.

Corruption

Security forces continued to plunder revenues through smuggling and parallel tax systems on cocoa, timber, diamonds, and other natural resources. In its April 2015 report, the UN Group of Experts, appointed by the UN Security Council to monitor the sanctions regime in Cote d'Ivoire, identified several army officers involved in the illicit exploitation of natural resources, including gold and cocoa.

Extortion by security forces at illegal checkpoints remained an acute problem, particularly on secondary roads in rural areas. A specialized anti-racket unit has been undermined by inconsistent financial support from the government and the failure of the military tribunal to consistently prosecute perpetrators.

Land Rights

Land dispossession remains a key driver of inter-communal tensions and local-level violence between ethnic groups in western Côte d'Ivoire. Although customary authorities and local officials have successfully mediated many cases related to the 2010-2011 post-election crisis, the outcome of mediation often allows those who acquired land in bad faith to remain and frequently discriminates against women. Those implicated in illegal land sales are rarely prosecuted.

In 2013, the Ivorian government passed several reforms to land tenure and nationality laws designed to facilitate implementation of the 1998 land law, which seeks to convert customary land ownership into a land certificate and eventually legal title. However, the procedure for obtaining a certificate is too complicated and expensive, and so few landowners have applied for one. The government is considering reforms to simplify the process.

Violence against Women

Gender-based violence remained widespread, although the government has taken some positive steps to address it. In the first five months of 2015, the UN secretary-general's report on the UN Operation in Cote d'Ivoire (UNOCI) reported at least 80 cases of rape and other sexual abuses, fewer than in previous reporting periods.

In September 2014, the government launched a national strategy against sexual violence, with a strong commitment to prosecute perpetrators, and has conducted sensitization trainings for the security forces. In March 2015, the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Public Liberties instructed law enforcement officials that a medical certificate is not required to open a rape investigation, although fear of stigmatization still prevents victims from reporting rape cases. The *cour d'assises* mandated to try rape cases rarely functions, and many cases are downgraded to indecent assault, which carries a more lenient penalty, in order to be heard in regular courts.

Trafficking of women and girls, often from Nigeria, into Côte d'Ivoire for commercial sexual exploitation continues to be a problem.

Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

Côte d'Ivoire does not criminalize same-sex conduct. However, same-sex couples can be prosecuted for public acts of indecency. Additionally, the penal code codifies discrimination by

establishing a higher age of consent for same-sex couples. No law prohibits discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, or intersex status.

Police have failed to arrest anyone in relation to a series of attacks in January 2014 on Alternative-Côte d'Ivoire, a nonprofit working on LGBTI rights and HIV prevention.

Human Rights Defenders

International and national human rights groups generally operate without government restrictions. In June 2014, the government passed a law that strengthened protections for human rights defenders, described as the first as its kind in Africa, though the government has so far failed to adopt a decree to facilitate the law's implementation.

Key International Actors

France, the European Union, and the United States continued to be the Ivorian government's main partners on justice and security sector reform, along with UNOCI, whose mandate the UN Security Council extended until June 30, 2016. The UN's new independent expert on capacity-building and technical cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire in the field of human rights published his first report in April 2015. The report praised the government's efforts to pursue sustainable economic development, but underscored the need to prosecute human rights crimes committed by both sides in the post-election crisis.

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