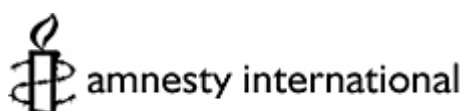


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Amnesty International Annual Report 2011 - Côte d'Ivoire

Death penalty: **abolitionist for all crimes**
Population: **21.6 million**
Life expectancy: **58.4 years**
Under-5 mortality (m/f): **129/117 per 1,000**
Adult literacy: **54.6 per cent**

Tensions rose dramatically after presidential elections in November that led to a political stalemate and to serious human rights violations, mostly committed by security forces loyal to the outgoing President, Laurent Gbagbo. Dozens of people were killed, detained, abducted or disappeared. Several thousand people fled to neighbouring countries or became internally displaced. Throughout the year, the New Forces (Forces Nouvelles) a coalition of armed groups in control of the north of the country since 2002, continued to commit human rights abuses. Harassment and physical assault remained rampant, notably at roadblocks.

Background

The presidential election postponed since 2005 was finally held in November, and led to a political stalemate. Both the outgoing President, Laurent Gbagbo, and his opponent, Alassane Ouattara, declared themselves winners of the election and appointed rival governments.

The international community, including the AU and ECOWAS, unanimously recognized Alassane Ouattara as the winner of the election. Sanctions against Laurent Gbagbo and some of his close supporters were adopted by the EU and the USA.

In December, Laurent Gbagbo called for the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the French peacekeeping force, Licorne, to leave the country. The Security Council turned down this request and extended the mandate of UNOCI for an additional six months. The French government also said that its force would remain.

Despite several mediation efforts led by the AU and ECOWAS, no political solution was found by the end of the year, against a background of deepening shortages and rising prices of basic commodities.

Despite the fact that several thousand members of the New Forces were integrated into the national army, full disarmament of the New Forces and of pro-government militias,

as set out in the 2007 Ouagadougou peace agreement, was not achieved by the end of 2010. This fuelled the political crisis, as both sides used their armed members to quell and intimidate political opponents.

Police and security forces

Throughout the year the security forces used excessive force in dispersing protests, unlawfully killing a number of people. They were also responsible for widespread abuses committed to extort money at checkpoints and during inspections of identity documents.

- In February, the security forces violently repressed several demonstrations, particularly in the town of Gagnoa, where at least five demonstrators were shot dead. They were protesting against President Gbagbo's decision to dissolve the government and the electoral commission.

After the disputed presidential election, security forces loyal to Laurent Gbagbo committed extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and enforced disappearances.

- On 1 December, security forces in Abidjan led a raid on the offices of the Rally of Republicans (RDR), the party of Alassane Ouattara which left at least four people dead and several wounded.
- On 16 December, security forces and militiamen loyal to Laurent Gbagbo killed at least 10 unarmed protesters in Abidjan during mass protests over the political deadlock. Salami Ismaël, a car washer, who was nearby and not participating in the march, was shot dead by two hooded men wearing military uniforms.
- On 18 December, Brahim Ouattara and Abdoulaye Coulibaly, members of an organization called Alliance pour le changement (APC), were arrested in a neighbourhood of Abidjan by Republican Guards. By the end of the year, their fate and whereabouts remained unknown.

Abuses by armed groups

Fighters and supporters of the New Forces were responsible for human rights abuses, including torture and other ill-treatment, arbitrary detention and widespread extortion. A climate of impunity prevailed due to the absence of a functioning judicial system in the north of the country.

- In April, a student, Amani Wenceslas, was killed by a stray bullet during an exchange of fire between two factions of the New Forces in Bouaké. Two armed fighters were also killed during this clash.

After the November election, the New Forces in the border region with Liberia in the west of the country reportedly threatened and harassed people accused of being supporters of Laurent Gbagbo. As a result, thousands of people fled to Liberia.

Violence and impunity in the west of the country

Throughout the year, people living in the west of the country were physically and sexually abused by criminal gangs and militiamen close to President Gbagbo's party. Neither the state security forces nor the New Forces, which each controlled parts of the area, provided protection. Both forces extorted money and attacked people at checkpoints with complete impunity.

After the November election, there were several reports of clashes between supporters of the two presidential candidates.

- In November, in Sinfra, a retired gendarme shot at a group of alleged supporters

of Alassane Ouattara, who then went to the retired gendarme's home and killed his wife.

Freedom of expression – media

Several journalists, newspapers and media outlets were harassed and threatened by the authorities.

- In May, Dembélé Al Seni, editor of the daily *L'Expression*, and one of his journalists were summoned to the headquarters of the Directorate for Surveillance of the Territory (DST). They were interrogated for several hours about their coverage of opposition demonstrations in February in Gagnoa. They had provided video footage of the violent reaction of the security forces to the French TV news station France 24, which was suspended for several days for reporting these events.

After the November election, several newspapers close to Alassane Ouattara were prevented from publishing for several days in December. Foreign media including Radio France Internationale and France 24 were also banned from broadcasting until the end of the year.

Corporate accountability

More than one year after reaching an out-of-court settlement with the oil-trading company Trafigura over waste dumping in Côte d'Ivoire, thousands of victims were still waiting to receive their compensation money.

In January, an Ivorian appeal court ruled that the compensation money should be transferred to a group called the National Coordination of Toxic Waste Victims of Côte d'Ivoire (CNVDT-CI), which falsely claimed to represent the 30,000 victims involved in the UK settlement.

Following the court's decision to transfer the compensation to CNVDT-CI, the claimants' legal representatives saw no option but to reach an agreement with CNVDT-CI to distribute the funds jointly. The joint distribution process which followed was plagued by repeated delays and concerns over CNVDT-CI's role. By July, an estimated 23,000 people had received compensation, but the joint distribution process came to a halt shortly thereafter. In September, CNVDT-CI began a new distribution process that was again halted. By the end of the year, thousands of legitimate claimants were still awaiting payment and there were serious concerns about the future of the remaining compensation funds given the lack of transparency of the process and allegations regarding misappropriation of funds.

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