

# Ivory Coast: African civil society and international NGOs call for the protection of civilians and respect of the population's

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## Description :

Very concerned about the current political and security situation in Ivory Coast, our organizations firmly condemn acts of violence against civilians and constraints to their fundamental rights and liberties. We fear an escalation of violence during the marches scheduled for Thursday 16 and Friday 17 December 2010 and urge Ivorian political leaders to call on their supporters to remain calm and refrain from acts of violence.

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On 3 December 2010, the Ivorian Constitutional Council announced the victory of Laurent Gbagbo, thereby invalidating a previous announcement from the independent electoral commission naming Alassane Dramane Ouattara as the winner of the election. Since then, Ivory Coast has found itself in an unprecedented political and institutional gridlock, leading to many illegal acts of violence against civilian populations and constraints to their fundamental rights and liberties.

It is estimated that acts of violence in the whole country so far may have already caused the death of dozens of people, with several hundreds more being injured. Approximately 3700 people have fled Ivory Coast to take refuge to neighboring countries, in particular in Liberia [1]. Intimidation and threats against groups perceived as supporting one party or the other as well as information about the presence of militias, including some coming from outside the country, and the flow of illegal weapons are also matters of serious concern.

Public liberties are seriously threatened. On 2 December 2010, under the pretext of 'maintaining social peace', the national council of audiovisual communications decided to censor international medias, thereby depriving the Ivorian population of their right to information. Some journalists have been subjected to intimidation, thereby constraining their freedom of expression. A curfew was put in place on the eve of the presidential election and has just been extended by a week, constraining freedom of movement of civilians. The economic situation, marked by a sharp increase in food prices, might deteriorate further, first hurting civilian populations once again.

Guillaume Soro (Alassane Ouattara's Prime Minister) has announced that he will march onto the headquarters of State television on Thursday 16 December and that he will chair a council of ministers in government buildings the following day. Marches around these events may lead to acts of violence. Indeed, on 13 December, Ouattara's army ('Forces nouvelles') as well as UN forces had to fire warning shots to disperse Gbagbo forces who had barricaded the hotel where Ouattara's government is currently taking refuge.

#### **Our organizations therefore urge:**

- ▶ Political leaders of both parties to manage the current political and institutional crisis responsibly, taking all necessary measures to prevent an increase in violence and guarantee the security and physical integrity of the civilian population in Ivory Coast. More specifically, our organizations urge political leaders to call on their supporters to remain calm and avoid any acts of violence.
- ▶ Military leaders, in particular leaders of the Garde Républicaine, Marine Nationale (national navy) and the Command Centre for security operations, as well as armed troops of the Forces nouvelles, to take all necessary measures to prevent any illegal acts of violence by security and defense forces, as they could be held accountable for these acts.
- ▶ Political and military leaders to guarantee basic rights and liberties of the Ivoirian population, including by ending censorship of international medias.
- ▶ Media outlets able to operate in the whole country to act responsibly by avoiding any appeals to hate or violence.
- ▶ ONUCI to implement its mandate "*to protect [...] civilians under imminent threat of physical violence*" and to "

*collect [...] arms and any related materiel" circulating illegally in the whole country.*

Our organizations further remind that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court has urged supporters of both opponents and security forces to refrain from violence and has indicated that "*All reported acts of violence will be closely scrutinized by the Office.*"

**Signatory organizations :**

- ▶ Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT) - Côte d'Ivoire
- ▶ Action pour les Droits Humains et L'Amitié - Senegal
- ▶ Association africaine des droits de l'Homme (ASADHO) - Democratic Republic of Congo
- ▶ Association mauritanienne des droits de l'Homme (AMDH) - Mauritania
- ▶ Association nigérienne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (ANDDH) - Niger
- ▶ Civil Liberties Organisation (CLO) - Nigeria
- ▶ Coalition ivoirienne pour la CPI
- ▶ Convention de la société civile ivoirienne (CSCI) - Côte d'Ivoire
- ▶ Fondation Congolaise pour la Promotion des Droits humains et la Paix (FOCDP)
- ▶ Groupe Lotus - Democratic Republic of Congo
- ▶ Human Rights Watch
- ▶ International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- ▶ International Federation of the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT)
- ▶ International Refugees Rights Initiative (IRRI)
- ▶ La Voix des Sans Voix pour les droits de l'Homme - Democratic Republic of Congo
- ▶ Ligue des électeurs (LE) - Democratic Republic of Congo
- ▶ Ligue burundaise des droits de l'Homme (ITEKA) - Burundi
- ▶ Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'Homme (LIDHO) - Côte d'Ivoire
- ▶ Ligue sénégalaise des droits humains - Senegal
- ▶ Ligue tchadienne des droits de l'Homme (LTDH) - Chad
- ▶ Ligue togolaise des droits de l'Homme (LTDH) - Togo
- ▶ Ligue tunisienne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (LTDH) - Tunisia
- ▶ Maison des droits de l'Homme du Cameroun - Cameroon
- ▶ Mouvement burkinabé des droits de l'Homme et des peuples (MBDHP) - Burkina Faso
- ▶ Mouvement ivoirien des droits humains (MIDH) - Côte d'Ivoire
- ▶ Organisation guinéenne pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (OGDH) - Guinea-Conakry
- ▶ Observatoire congolais des droits de l'Homme (OCDH) - Republic of Congo
- ▶ Rencontre africaine pour la défense des droits de l'Homme (RADDHO) - Senegal
- ▶ Union interafricaine des droits de l'Homme (UIDH)
- ▶ West African Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons Network - Senegal

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[1] Cf. Communiqué de l'Agence des Nations unies pour les réfugiés, Des réfugiés ivoiriens continuent à fuir au Libéria, <http://www.unhcr.fr/4d077e083.html>