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## PUBLIC STATEMENT

### CÔTE D'IVOIRE: CONTINUED HUMAN RIGHTS CAPACITY BUILDING AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION REQUIRED

UN Human Rights Council  
Thirty-fifth session  
6 June - 23 June 2017

Amnesty International welcomes progress made in creating a supportive legal environment for human rights defenders in Côte d'Ivoire, particularly with the adoption of the law on the protection of human rights defenders in 2014 and its decree of implementation in 2017.

Amnesty International is concerned, however, that the closure of the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire and the simultaneous end of the mandate of the Independent Expert is likely to reduce international support and scrutiny at a time when human rights challenges are increasing in the country. As the independent expert notes in his report, the security situation in Côte d'Ivoire remains fragile.<sup>1</sup>

Despite some progress in the protection of human rights defenders, there is more to be done to address remaining restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and of peaceful assembly. Journalists and trade unionists continue to be targeted because of their work.<sup>2</sup> A draft law on the press, currently under review, contains provisions which curtail the right to freedom of expression, and includes sections related to defamation, offending the President and "false news."

The recent killings of at least eight people during mutinies and clashes with demobilised soldiers demonstrate the need for greater accountability and civilian control over the security forces. They also highlight the need for truth, justice and reconciliation in relation to crimes committed during and since the 2010 and 2011 crisis.

Amnesty International encourages Côte d'Ivoire to seek sustained technical assistance from the OHCHR as the mandate of the Independent Expert comes to an end. In particular, we urge

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<sup>1</sup> Rapport de l'Expert indépendant sur le renforcement des capacités et la coopération technique avec la Côte d'Ivoire dans le domaine des droits de l'homme, A/HRC/35/43, para. 74

<sup>2</sup> Dozens of members of a teachers' union were demoted and transferred to remote areas of the country on vague grounds, after participating having participated in a series of strikes by public sector workers in January 2017. On 12 February 2017, six journalists were arrested and detained in Abidjan for their coverage of the mutinies. They were charged with "publishing false news" and "inciting soldiers to mutiny" and detained for two days without access to a lawyer.

Côte d'Ivoire to facilitate the establishment of an OHCHR presence in the country once UNOCI closes, and regular visits by thematic Special Procedures.

We call on Côte d'Ivoire, in cooperation with this Council, to keep the country's human rights situation on the Human Rights Council's agenda during the next two years, and ensure continued reporting by the OHCHR to follow up the implementation of recommendations set out in the final report of the Independent Expert. This would make clear that Ivorian authorities are serious in their commitment to improve the human rights situation in the country.

End.