

UA 251/95 Fear of Ill-treatment / Health Concern /
Prisoners of Conscience

7 November 1995

CÔTE D'IVOIRE Guillaume Soro Kibafori Kibafori, secretary general of the
Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire
(FESCI), Ivorian Federation of Student and School Pupils

and 8 other FESCI members:

Dominique Maya

Marius Bossina

Armand Gogoua

Serge Bozon

Damana Adia

Charles Blégoudé

Faustin Drigoné Gobi

Amani Allangba

Guillaume Soro Kibafori, Secretary General of the *Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI), Ivorian Federation of Student and School Pupils, and eight other FESCI members have been held incommunicado without charge for more than one month. On 3 November, the detainees were shown on television when Guillaume Soro Kibafori made what appeared to be a forced public apology, calling on FESCI members to stop their activities. All nine detainees appeared to be in poor physical condition and Amnesty International believes they have been severely ill-treated during their detention. The organization is concerned that they may be at risk of further ill-treatment while held incommunicado as such detention does not provide them with legal safeguards against torture, ill-treatment and medical neglect.

Furthermore, Amnesty International believes they may be prisoners of conscience, as they have not been charged with any offence and appear to have been detained solely because of their membership of FESCI, an organization which the government claims has been outlawed.

Following the broadcast, the detainees are believed to have been returned to their places of detention. They are being held in the *Direction de la Sécurité du territoire* (DST), National Security Headquarters and the *Ecole de Police* in the capital, Abidjan.

Guillaume Soro Kibafori was arrested on 27 September 1995 by plain clothes members of the security forces, apparently from the DST, while he was on his way to a student meeting on the Youpougon university campus in Abidjan. The eight other FESCI members named above were arrested in the days which followed on the Youpougon and Mermoz university campuses both in Abidjan.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

These arrests come at a time of political unrest in Côte d'Ivoire linked to presidential elections held in October and which were boycotted by opposition parties protesting at amendments to the electoral code. In September, after several peaceful demonstrations which became violent when the security forces intervened, the government banned marches for three months, until presidential and local elections had been held. However, unrest continued and in the days and weeks preceding the elections dozens of people were arrested, many wounded and more than ten shot by the security forces during violent incidents in which shops and cars were burnt and looted. The unrest continued beyond the

presidential election, which was won by the incumbent president, Henri Konan Bédié.

FESCI, which campaigns for better student conditions, has been harassed throughout the year, as in previous years, by the security forces. Many FESCI leaders went into hiding after being threatened by the security forces. In June, a press conference organised by FESCI on the Youpougon campus was broken up by the security forces who arrested more than 40 people; one, a woman who was visiting a friend on the campus, was raped by a member of the security forces. The victim's lawyer lodged a complaint but no inquiry is known to have taken place.

Throughout 1994, many FESCI members were harassed, arrested and ill-treated.

In May 1994, the Minister of Higher Education apparently accused FESCI activists of terrorizing ordinary citizens and said FESCI was in league with the political opposition. The Minister challenged the legality of FESCI, claiming it had been banned in 1991. However, it is unclear whether there is a legal statute banning FESCI or whether the ban was only mentioned in verbal statements by the authorities. Despite the alleged ban, FESCI was allowed to hold numerous public meetings in 1993 and to participate in official negotiations with the government.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters either in French or in your own language:

- expressing concern that nine members of the *Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI) arrested on 15 May, are being held incommunicado in an unknown place of detention and without charge;
- expressing fears for the health of the nine after they appeared on television in apparently very poor physical condition, and asking for assurances that they will not be subjected to any form of ill-treatment while in custody;
- stating your belief that the nine may be prisoners of conscience, held solely on account of their non-violent political activities and urging the authorities to release the detainees if they are not to be charged promptly with recognizable criminal offences and given a fair and public trial within a reasonable period of time;
- urging that, while they are being held, the detainees be allowed immediate access to legal representatives, their families and, if necessary, medical treatment.

APPEALS TO:

1) President

Son Excellence

Henri Konan Bédié

Président de la République

La Présidence, Boulevard Clozel, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: Président Bédié, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Telexes: 23754 PRESID CI or 23169 PRELIT CI

Monsieur le Président / Dear President

2) Prime Minister

M. Daniel Kablan Duncan

Premier Ministre

Le Primature, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire
Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Abidjan, Côte
Monsieur le Premier Ministre / Dear Prime Minister

3) Minister of Justice

M. Faustin Kouamé
 Ministre de la Justice
 Ministère de la Justice
 Boulevard Angoulvant, BP V107, Abidjan
 République de Côte d'Ivoire
Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Telexes: 23752 MINAFET CI (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

4) Minister of Security

Général Gaston Ouassenan Kone
 Ministre de la Sécurité
 Ministère de la Sécurité
 Boulevard Angoulvant, Abidjan
 République de Côte d'Ivoire
Telegrams: Ministre Sécurité, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire
Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO:

M. Saliou Touré
 Ministre de l'Enseignement
 Supérieur
 Ministre de l'Enseignement
 Supérieur
 Abidjan
 République de Côte d'Ivoire
Telegrams: Ministre Education Supérieur, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Press:

La Voie, 17 BP 656, Abidjan 17, République de Côte d'Ivoire

and to diplomatic representatives of Côte d'Ivoire accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 19 December 1995.