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Côte d'Ivoire : Daloa massacres recall the spectre of Youpougon

Since the town of Daloa (in the west of the country) was retaken by government forces, on 16 October 2002, several dozen civilians have been the victims of extra-judicial killings by individuals wearing military fatigues. The victims were Côte d'Ivoire citizens with Muslim names or nationals of other countries in the sub-region, notably Mali and Burkina Faso, suspected of supporting the *Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Movement.

Côte d'Ivoire authorities have recognized that these massacres took place and on 25 October 2002, they ordered the opening of an inquiry into the facts, referring to "*executions at Daloa by individuals dressed in military fatigues*" and stating that "*the government deploras these flagrant violations of human rights, for which the republican forces bear no responsibility*". The government added that the inquiry will also look into atrocities committed in the areas held by the MPCI.

Amnesty International notes this statement but issues a reminder that, whoever is responsible for these massacres, the role of the Côte d'Ivoire authorities is to protect the civilian population, which it visibly has not done throughout the period in which these massacres took place, which lasted for several days. Moreover, the organization is concerned at information received from eye witnesses indicating that the men responsible for the massacres arrived in military tanks and vehicles, some of which carried the emblem of the *Brigade anti-émeute* (BAE), Anti-Riot Brigade.

A man of Mali nationality living in Daloa described to Amnesty International the conditions in which the uniformed men burst in to his home:

"The soldiers threatened to break down the doors so the occupants opened up. The soldiers accused the people, including the imam of the Abattoir district, SYLLA GAOUSSOU and his assistant CHEIKNA AMALA HAÏDARA, both Mali nationals, of sheltering the rebels. They took their money, told them to strip and lie on the ground. They threatened to execute them in the mosque courtyard. Then they took a dozen people to the outskirts of the town. The bodies were found five kilometres outside the town, towards ten o'clock on Monday 21 October."

According to information gathered by Amnesty International, several dozen people arrested because of their ethnic origin or their presumed sympathies with the armed opposition movement, the MPCI, were killed in the days that followed the recapture of Daloa by government forces. On Saturday 19 October, 56 bodies were buried at the town cemetery and on the following Monday 21 October, 19 more bodies were buried there. Amnesty International has been able to obtain the names of more than 25 victims. Among the victims were 25 people from Mali, two from Burkina Faso and two from Guinea. Among those killed were BAKARY TOURÉ, President of the Mali community in Daloa, his brother, AMADOU TOURÉ, an

assistant imam, CHÉRIF OUSMANE and a Burkina Faso businessman, TINTA SAÏD TAHIROU.

Among the Côte d'Ivoire citizens killed were MAÏMOUNA FANNY, a woman shopkeeper, MAMADOU COULIBALY, an attendant at a petrol station opposite the cemetery, and SIDIBÉ BAKARY, a driver. Some bodies were found on Monday, 21 October 2002, not far from the military camp in the Orly II neighbourhood.

After these raids, many people went to hide in the Daloa mosque. The supreme head of the town's Muslims then went to talk to the military officers and obtained a halt to the summary executions, although arrests seem to be continuing.

"The fact that the military authorities have been able to stop these massacres shows that they can exercise control over the armed elements dressed in fatigues who are responsible for the massacres. It is up to the state's highest authorities to send a strong signal to the security forces to make them protect the civilian population and prevent harassment, especially foreign nationals", Amnesty International declared yesterday.

Amnesty International is also concerned about the extra-judicial execution of two people killed by the security forces on 18 October 2002 after a funeral at Williamsville cemetery. These people, COULIBALY SEYDOU and COULIBALY LANSENY seem to have been killed only because their names were typical of the north of the country.

"On 27 October 2002, practically two years to the day after the discovery of a mass grave at Youpougou, people have once again been targeted and killed just because of their name. The highest authorities of the state have the duty to do everything possible to avoid innocent civilians becoming the victims of reprisals and harassment", concluded Amnesty International.

The organization also appeals to the two parties to the conflict to stop all atrocities against civilians and refrain from any announcement that could lead to attacks against civilians because of their ethnicity or presumed political sympathies.

BACKGROUND

On 18 October 2002, after having sent a research mission to Côte d'Ivoire earlier in the month, the organization appealed to the two parties to the conflict to stop attacking civilians or military personnel no longer able to fight.

In that press release, Amnesty International especially denounced the arbitrary arrests, summary executions and the mobilization of minors by MPCF forces, as well as human rights violations committed by the Côte d'Ivoire security forces.

For the last decade, Amnesty International has not ceased to denounce the violations committed against all people arrested or persecuted for their opinions, including the current head of state, LAURENT GBAGBO, arrested in 1992; journalists of *La Voie*, organ of the *Front patriotique ivoirien* (FPI), Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Front; students of the *Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI), Côte d'Ivoire Student and School Federation, including GUILLAUME KIGBAFORI SORO, who has emerged as the political leader of the MPCF.

The organization also protested against the torture of certain members of the family of former President HENRI KONAN BÉDIÉ, during the transitional government of General ROBERT GUÉÏ, and against the arrest, torture and extra-judicial execution of alleged or proven militants of the *Rassemblement des Républicains* (RDR), Republican Assembly. During the last two years, the organization has addressed special appeals to the Côte d'Ivoire authorities to identify and bring to justice the gendarmes responsible for the massacre of 57 people, arrested on 26 October 2002, taken to the Abobo gendarme camp, and whose

bodies were found the following day on waste ground in Youpougon, a district of Abidjan.

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