

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## FACT SHEET

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### Toxic waste dumping in Côte d'Ivoire

#### **Trafigura**

Trafigura is the world's third largest independent oil trader. Its clients include BP, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil, Total, Shell, Chevron.

Trafigura Ltd. is based in London and acts as the coordinating entity for a substantial proportion of the group's oil operations, including those relating to the dumping incident in Côte d'Ivoire.

In 2010, Trafigura's turnover was US\$79.2 billion; its gross profit was US\$1.3 billion and its net profit was US\$690 million. Its annual turnover dwarfs the gross national product of many states. By way of comparison, in 2006, Trafigura's turnover was US\$45 billion, while Côte d'Ivoire had a gross national product of approximately US\$18 billion.

#### **The toxic waste**

The hazardous toxic waste dumped in Abidjan was the by-product of the caustic washing of large amounts of an unrefined gasoline called coker naphtha, purchased by Trafigura in June 2005.

The chemicals present in the waste included sodium hydroxide, mercaptides, sulphides, phenolates and organic chemicals such as benzene, xylenes and toluene.

#### **Dumping the toxic waste**

The waste was shipped to Abidjan on board a ship called the *Probo Koala* after Trafigura rejected the proposed costs of the Amsterdam Port Services (APS) in the Netherlands who were originally contracted to dispose of the waste. Costs were increased after APS tested the waste and discovered the actual level of contamination.

A newly licensed company in the Cote d'Ivoire, Compagnie Tommy, was then contracted to dispose of the waste in Abidjan. There was no mention in the contract of treating the waste to make it safe.

Truck drivers hired by Compagnie Tommy offloaded and dumped the waste at the Akouédo dump site, which lacked the capacity to safely dispose of the waste, as well as at various locations across the city

#### **Health effects on the people of Abidjan**

Tens of thousands of people experienced health problems, including nausea, headaches, vomiting, abdominal pains, and irritation of the skin and eyes. More than 100,000 people were registered by health centres for treatment for symptoms consistent with exposure to the waste. The Ivorian authorities also recorded at least 15 deaths linked to exposure to the waste.

#### **Controls on toxic waste dumping under international law**

The waste carried by the *Probo Koala* and illegally dumped in Cote d'Ivoire was hazardous waste as defined under the Basel Convention. Any trans-boundary movement of hazardous or other waste is considered "illegal traffic" if the state to which the waste is to be taken is not notified, or if it results in deliberate improper disposal (such as dumping). The Basel

Convention makes illegal traffic in hazardous wastes or other wastes a criminal offence and requires states to take legal and other measures to punish such conduct and enforce the Convention.

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