

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

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### **Côte d'Ivoire: Broken necklaces to be sent in a call for reparation**

This week, President Laurent Gbagbo and Prime Minister Guillaume Soro will receive hundreds of broken necklaces sent from all over the world by thousands of Amnesty International members. These broken necklaces accompany a petition signed by some 20,000 people, mainly from Benin, Burkina Faso, Mali, Senegal, Togo, as well as France, Canada, Austria, Italy, the Netherlands and the United States.

These necklaces and petitions are a tangible sign of Amnesty International members' solidarity with the hundreds, if not thousands, of women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence in Côte d'Ivoire since December 2000 in the context of the political and military conflict which has torn the country apart.

With this action, Amnesty International members are appealing to the Ivorian authorities to publicly denounce violence against women and do all in their power to provide reparation. There is a particularly urgent need for a comprehensive program, offering medical, social and legal support for victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Large numbers of women continue to suffer the consequences of this sexual violence and many lives could be saved if adequately-funded co-ordinated action could be implemented immediately.

#### **Background information**

In its report, *Côte d'Ivoire: Women and girls forgotten victims of conflict*, published in March 2007, Amnesty International condemned the widespread and, at times, systematic sexual assault committed by all parties to the conflict or by civilians closely associated with these forces and groups.

Many women and girls have been the victims of gang rape or have been abducted and forced into sexual slavery by fighters, who regarded them as their property. Some women have also been attacked on political or ethnic grounds, in particular by government security forces and their supporters.

Many of the women suffering from rape-related injuries or diseases - some of them are life-threatening - have no access to the medical care they need. Stigmatized by rape, some women, often with dependent children, are abandoned by their husbands and families and so condemned to extreme poverty.