

AI Index: PRE 01/206/2011
12 April 2011

Reprisal attacks against Gbagbo supporters in Côte d'Ivoire must stop

Perceived supporters of former Côte d'Ivoire President Laurent Gbagbo are at risk of violent reprisals, despite President Ouattara's call on Monday for Ivoirians to "abstain from all forms of reprisals and violence", Amnesty International warned today.

Today in Abidjan, armed men, some wearing military uniforms, have been conducting house-to-house searches in neighborhoods where real or perceived supporters of Laurent Gbagbo are living, including Yopougon and Koumassi.

One eyewitness told Amnesty International how a policeman belonging to Laurent Gbagbo's ethnic group was taken from his house this morning at around 10 am and shot dead at point blank range in front of him.

"Dozens of young people are going into hiding in Abidjan out of fear for their lives. In the western part of the country people suspected of being pro-Gbagbo are also terrified. Many are hiding in the bush after their villages were burned down and they need to be protected," said Véronique Aubert, Amnesty International's deputy director for Africa.

Amnesty International has learned that the village of Zikisso, 300 km west of Abidjan, has been attacked several times, including last Sunday, by armed forces allegedly loyal to President Alassane Ouattara. The village chief, Gnagbo Matthias, was abducted by these forces Monday and is reportedly being held in the town of Lakota.

Humanitarian conditions are rapidly deteriorating in a Catholic mission in Duékoué (600 km west of Abidjan) where 27,500 people took refuge after hundreds of people were killed on the basis of their ethnic origin or presumed political affiliation.

"They are trapped in overcrowded and appalling conditions, having fled their homes after atrocious abuses were carried out by both parties to the conflict," said Véronique Aubert.

"The local authorities are telling the displaced people that they can return to their villages, but people are afraid of reprisals and refuse to leave the camp. These people need proper shelter and protection from the UN mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)."

"Only justice and protection can bring an end to the climate of fear in Côte d'Ivoire. Alassane Ouattara must establish law and order in the country by giving strong instructions to all his forces to respect human rights and prevent abuses by anyone," said Véronique Aubert.

Amnesty International is calling for Laurent Gbagbo and his family, who are being held in Abidjan, to be treated according to due process of law.

“Serious human rights violations committed by Laurent Gbagbo and his supporters, as well as those committed by forces loyal to Alassane Ouattara, must be tackled and the perpetrators brought to justice,” said Véronique Aubert.