

PUBLIC

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Fear of torture or ill-treatment/incommunicado detention

CÔTE D'IVOIRE

**Brian Hamish Sans (m), New Zealand national
35 Ivorian alleged militiamen**

The former armed opposition group *Forces Nouvelles* (FN), New Forces, who control the northern part of Côte d'Ivoire, arrested New Zealand national Brian Hamish Sans on 11 March in their stronghold, the city of Bouaké, in the centre of the country. In a separate incident, the FN have also arrested 35 men whom they accuse of being pro-government fighters. All appear to be held incommunicado, and are at risk of torture.

Brian Hamish Sans was reportedly arrested on his way to Bouaké in a coach from the country's main city, Abidjan. FN officials accused him of being a mercenary and wanting to "kill [FN] political and military leaders". They stated that Brian Sans had admitted belonging to the French Foreign Legion from 1986 to 1994, that he was carrying a GPS satellite navigation system, a bullet-proof vest and maps, and that he admitted to having contacted certain "people within the Ivorian presidency" since he arrived in Abidjan in mid-February 2005. The New Zealand government, which has no consulate in Côte d'Ivoire, asked the British Foreign Office assist him.

As there is no independent judiciary system in the FN-held north of the country, Brian Sans is probably held incommunicado and is at serious risk of torture and ill-treatment in order to extract a confession that he was involved in a plot to kill some FN leaders. This arrest may be used by the FN to show that the government was not honouring its commitments under a ceasefire agreement.

In a separate incident, the FN arrested 35 alleged militia members after an attack by a pro-government militia in the West of the country at the end of February. The FN have previously tortured and killed dozens of people they have arrested, including members of the security forces and dissident FN members, and Amnesty International fears that these 35 are in grave danger.

On 28 February, gunmen launched a surprise attack on an FN position in the town of Logoualé, 450 km north-west of Abidjan, not far from the ceasefire line that has divided the north and south of the country since the end of 2002. The FN alleged that they were members of the pro-government *Mouvement de libération de l'ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire* (MILOCI), Movement for the Liberation of the West of Côte d'Ivoire militia, led by "Pasteur Gammi". In the hours that followed the launch of this attack, the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), which is in charge of monitoring a ceasefire agreed in January 2003, intervened and intercepted 87 suspected MILOCI members, and put a stop to the fighting. But many observers fear that this new violation of the ceasefire in the west of Côte d'Ivoire was just the first sign of a resumption of hostilities between the two parties that have been fighting for power in Côte d'Ivoire since September 2002.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

In September 2002 the FN, which was then called the *Mouvement Patriotique de la Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), Patriotic Movement of the Ivory Coast, rose up against the elected government of Laurent Gbagbo. Since then Côte d'Ivoire has been divided in two, with the FN controlling the northern half of the country.

Since the end of 2002, a security zone dividing the two halves of the country has been controlled by a French peace keeping force, called Licorne, and troops of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In January 2003, the FN and the other organisations opposing the government signed a ceasefire agreement, in France. Under the agreement all these groups, together with the previous administration, were to form a new government of national reconciliation.

In February 2004, the UN Security Council established the 6,000-strong UNOCI peacekeeping force, with a mandate to oversee with the French forces the disarmament and reconciliation process. This joint force was deployed in April 2004, with the French force intending to remain until after the presidential elections, due to be held in October 2005.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French, Arabic or your own language:

- expressing concern for the safety of Brian Hamish Sans and at least 35 alleged pro-government militiamen recently arrested by the *Forces Nouvelles* and reportedly held incommunicado where they are at risk of torture;
- urging the *Forces Nouvelles* officials to give clear assurances that the detainees will not be tortured or ill-treated, and that they will be given immediate access to any medical attention they may need, to the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and to their families.

APPEALS TO:

Guillaume Soro
Secretary general of the *Forces Nouvelles*
Bouaké
Côte d'Ivoire

Fax: + 225 31 63 22 84
Email: mopaci@hotmail.com
Salutation: Dear Sir

Sidiki Konaté
Spokesman of the *Forces Nouvelles*
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Fax: + 225 31 63 22 84
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Salutation: Dear Sir

COPIES 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 26 April 2005.