

# **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT**

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## **Côte d'Ivoire: Authorities must urgently conduct an independent investigation into unlawful killings and injuries during mutiny**

Authorities in Côte d'Ivoire must urgently open an independent investigation into the deaths of eight people and more than ten injured this month and bring those responsible to justice in fair trials, Amnesty International said today. The events occurred over two periods of violence about disputed bonus payments.

The international community should also continue to monitor the human rights situation closely as the United Nations Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on capacity building and technical cooperation in the country are due to end on 30 June.

A four day mutiny beginning on 12 May left four people dead, including a demobilised soldier, and at least nine injured. Violence ended as the government agreed to meet the mutineers' payment demands. It was the third mutiny in Côte d'Ivoire in 2017.

A week later, on 23 May, the Ministry of Internal Affairs announced that four protestors died following a confrontation in Bouaké between police and demobilised soldiers, who had created roadblocks protesting for an agreement equivalent to the one obtained by mutineers the previous week. The Ministry of Internal Affairs claims the protestors were killed when one of them used a grenade, but a spokesperson for the demobilised soldiers denies that they were armed and claims that the police opened fire on them.

### **Four killed and more than 10 injured following 12 May mutiny**

The 12 May mutiny began in the city of Bouaké before quickly spreading to other cities including Korogho and Abidjan, where shots were also fired. It lasted for four days and was carried out by soldiers who had been integrated into the army in 2011 and were demanding the payment of bonuses, mirroring similar uprisings earlier in the year. On 17 May, Bruno Koné, spokesperson for the government announced that mutinying soldiers killed four people and injured nine others.

According to information collected by Amnesty International, the situation deteriorated on Saturday 13 May in Bouaké when a group of mutineers went to

the office of the “Cellule 39”, an association of demobilised soldiers, and shot at them with live ammunition after they published a statement condemning the mutiny. Several were wounded including demobilised soldier Issoufou Diawara, who later died. One of his friends told Amnesty International that Issoufou was conversing with the members of his organisation when he was shot and injured.

One of the demobilised soldiers told Amnesty International:

“On Saturday 13 May, there were 40 of us in the courtyard of the “Cellule 39” association building, which leads out to a road, when around 10 mutineers arrived in vehicles. They parked up and started firing at us in the courtyard. We ran. One of us, Issoufou Diawara, was shot in the back. The bullet came straight through his stomach. He died of his injuries the next day.”

According to an eyewitness, the same day, mutineers also patrolled the northern city of Korhogo in pickup vehicles equipped with heavy artillery and shot in the air with rifles. 19 year-old Traoré Siaka was shot in the lower abdomen and died from his injuries. Several others received gunshot wounds. The mutineers hit people who had gathered to protest against the mutinies over the weekend with batons and rifle butts.

Similar protests were held in Bouaké on Sunday 14 May, at a place known as “quartier commerce”, nearby the city’s cathedral. The mutineers fired tear gas and live ammunition, injuring two people including Souleymane Mamadou, President of the organisation “Rassemblement des Enseignants Républicains”.

A protester told Amnesty International:

“The mutineers arrived in civilian vehicles and attacked protestors with batons, tear gas and live ammunition. At least 11 people were wounded. I myself was shot in the arm... we don’t understand what the mutineers want.”

During the mutiny one witness explained to Amnesty International how movement in Bouaké was severely restricted: “Bouaké has become a prison, nobody is allowed to go out”.

### **Accountability needed**

On Monday 15 May, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces issued a statement acknowledging the abuses and damages committed by the mutineers including significant damage to property, injuries and deaths.

Amnesty International considers that while the statement warned the mutineers of potential disciplinary sanctions, it failed to clarify that suspected perpetrators

would be investigated and brought to justice for human rights violations in an ordinary criminal court. The authorities have to date not conducted an independent investigation into two deaths that occurred during the prior mutinies in January. The frequency of the mutinies - this is the third mutiny in 2017, and the fourth since 2014 - raises serious concerns about the ability of the government to exercise civilian control over parts of the military and to hold members of the armed forces accountable for human rights violations.