

Côte d'Ivoire: Time to put an end to the cycle of reprisals and revenge Amnesty International

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More than 200 people including members of former President Laurent Gbagbo's Front Populaire Ivoirien (Ivorian Popular Front, FPI) have faced illegal detention and torture with many still languishing behind bars, Amnesty International can reveal after members of the organisation returned from a month-long mission to Côte D'Ivoire.

"We were able to meet dozens of detainees who told us how they have been tortured by electricity or had molten plastic poured on their bodies, two of them have been sexually abused," said Gaëtan Mootoo, Amnesty International researcher on West Africa.

"Some have been held for many months and denied contact with their families and access to lawyers." (...)

Among those held in illegal places of detention in Abidjan, some have been charged with endangering the security of the State, others were released without charge or trial. In some cases release followed ransoms being paid to military officers. (...)

During the mission Amnesty International met high ranking officials close to Gbagbo detained in four towns in the centre and the north of the country including his wife Simone who is held in the town of Odienné, his son Michel, held in Bouna plus key figures from the former administration held in Boundiali and Korhogo.

All are facing a number of charges including crimes against State security and murder.

"Some of them told us that despite the fact that they have been held since April 2011, they only saw an investigating judge twice for less than a few hours," said Mootoo. (...)

Amnesty International collected credible accounts of numerous people being arbitrarily detained, "disappeared" and extrajudicially executed in the aftermath of the attack. The attack and violations occurred despite the fact that peacekeeping soldiers of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) were stationed outside the camp and UN police were posted inside the camp.

"While acknowledging that the Côte d'Ivoire government is facing a wave of attacks, we are very

worried that the current arrests and repression stem from a willingness of reprisals and revenge”, said Mootoo.

“More than 18 months after the arrest of Laurent Gbagbo in April 2011, it’s high time for President Alassane Dramane Ouattara to go beyond promises and put the respect of human rights at the top of his government’s agenda.”

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