



Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference *(Abidjan, 13 January 2011)*

UNOCI REITERATES ITS APPEAL FOR CALM FACED WITH INCREASING VIOLENCE

The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), on Thursday, in Abidjan, reiterated its appeal for calm and serenity faced with the recent increased violence. It also deplored the loss of life, as well as the suffering imposed on the population.

Speaking during UNOCI's weekly press conference, deputy spokesman Kenneth Blackman said that the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, Y. J. Choi, and the Force Commander, Major-General Abdul Hafiz, accompanied by patrols, went to Abobo PK 18, one of the places which witnessed violent clashes, to provide protection to the civilian population.

Mr. Blackman also mentioned the statement of the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki Moon, in which he condemned the human rights violations and assured Ivorians that UNOCI was committed to protecting all civilians whatever their political affiliation.

For his part, the United Nations Humanitarian Co-ordinator, N'Dolamb N'Gokwey, gave an update of the humanitarian situation in the west of the country, after leading an assessment, outreach and assistance mission to Duékoué, Man and Danané, following inter-community violence in the region.

"We recorded 34 deaths, innumerable material damage and 17,960 internally displaced persons (IDPs), including 14,853 in Duékoué, 2,009 in Man and 1,098 in Danané. 75% of these people were women and children living in disorder with no privacy," the Humanitarian Co-ordinator explained.

Faced with the distress of the IDP, Mr. N'Gokwey thanked the leaders and welcomed the commitment of the Ivorian volunteers and humanitarian organisations and highlighted the solidarity of the community and the participation of the IDPs themselves. "The humanitarian community is supporting these local initiatives," he added, announcing that trucks carrying 85 tons of food supplies and medicines will leave Abidjan today for Duékoué.

In his intervention, the Director of UNOCI's Human Rights Division, Simon Munzu, gave an update on the human rights situation in Côte d'Ivoire. He said that the Mission had recorded a total of 247 deaths and 61 disappearances since the post-electoral crisis started.

“UNOCI is equally concerned over the situation in the CNO zone with regard to the deprivation of the population of their social and economic rights, especially in the education sector, due to the call for a general strike launched by the RHDP ", he said.

Turning to a different issue, Mr. Munzu said that UNOCI had recently noticed the sort of acts which could lead to genocide in the country.

Refuting any claim of eminent genocide in Côte d'Ivoire based on current facts, the chief of the Human Rights Division nevertheless said that there were signs of the sort of drama which unfolded in Rwanda, including the intransigence of political actors and the action of public and private media.

“For almost two months now, RTI has dedicated itself to praising only one of the camps involved in the current political disagreement,” said Mr. Munzu, who believes that as a state media and to better inform national and international opinion, it was imperative that RTI be more balanced in its own analysis as well as its programmes.

Citing another sign which could be a precursor to possible genocide, Mr. Munzu said that UNOCI had noticed signs that arms had been distributed among civilians.

He called for vigilance and reiterated UNOCI’s determination to ensure that the situation did not deteriorate, reminding everyone that each person would be held responsible for their actions. “In order for us to do this we need to be allowed to do our work and not to be denied freedom of movement in order to go and help the population when necessary,” he said, while stressing on the impartiality of the Mission.

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