



Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference (Abidjan, 20 January 2011)

POST-ELECTORAL CRISIS CONTINUES TO DISPLACE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE, SAYS HUMANITARIAN CO-ORDINATOR

“So far we have registered 16,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and almost 29, 000 Ivorian refugees in Liberia,” the Deputy Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Côte d’Ivoire and Humanitarian Co-ordinator, Ndolamb Ngokwey said on Thursday, 20 January 2011 in Abidjan.

Giving an update on the humanitarian situation in the west of the country during the weekly press conference of the United Nations Operation Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI), Mr. Ngokwey said that the number of IDPs was not decreasing. “This is due to the sense of insecurity which persists,” he noted.

Mr. Ngokwey also spoke about eight cases of sexual violence, six of which involved children aged between 6 and 9 years.

According to the Deputy Special Representative, humanitarian actors have been helping the IDPs by providing food rations to last two weeks. They also distributed water, hygiene kits and medical equipment, as well as built temporary shelters and toilets. Highlighting the special role of local organisations, authorities, volunteers and the IDPs themselves in the organisation of these sites, Mr. Ngokwey once again welcomed the national solidarity, as well as the response of the international humanitarian community.

The challenges were met with the help of the local authorities, said the Humanitarian Co-ordinator, who noted that “What remains to be done now is the protection of the civilians, women and children, and that also concerns education”. He said that in order to respond efficiently and in a co-ordinated way, agencies and humanitarian NGOs had launched an appeal in Geneva for funds totalling \$32 million for Côte d’Ivoire and five neighbouring countries.

Regarding the human rights situation, the director of the Human Rights Division, Simon Munzu, announced that UNOCI had received reports of 13 new cases of people who were killed by members of the defence and security forces and militia groups, bringing the total number of people who have died as a result of the post-electoral violence to 260. With regard to the number of disappearances, UNOCI received reports of seven new cases, bringing the total number to 68, said Mr. Munzu, who also gave an update on the situation on sexual violence in Abidjan, Bouaké, Duékoué and Man.

He also spoke about the infringement on people's personal, social and cultural rights with regard to the effects of the call for civil disobedience entitled "ghost country", noting that this had hindered freedom of movement, blocked commercial activities and the disrupted health services. He also appealed to the armed forces and groups from President Laurent Gbagbo's camp to stop their violence against the population.

Mr. Munzu highlighted the work of the different international human rights organisations, especially Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, who arrived in Côte d'Ivoire a few days ago on missions of inquiry. "We maintain our relationship with all actors, because we believe that nationally and internationally, each of us should be concerned by the human rights situation in the country and each of us should contribute to putting an end to the abuse.

Earlier, UNOCI's deputy spokesman, Kenneth Blackman, recalled the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1967 on Côte d'Ivoire, which authorises the deployment of 2000 additional peacekeepers, as well as the replacement of 60 UN police officers by the same number of members of a Formed Police Unit (FPU), specialising in crowd management and maintaining order. The resolution also authorises the sending of combat helicopters. The reinforcement was necessary in order to allow the mission to better fulfill its mandate, especially with regard to the protection of civilians, he said.

Mr. Blackman also said that UNOCI would continue to provide humanitarian assistance to the population. Between Tuesday and Wednesday, the Mission provided medical treatment to 17 people who had been injured by security forces from the outgoing president's camp and brought in front of the Mission's headquarters by people living in the poor neighbourhood of Boribana, said the deputy spokesman.

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