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PRESS RELEASE

UNOCI CONCERNED ABOUT THE USE OF HEAVY WEAPONS AGAINST THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN ABIDJAN

Abidjan, 22 March 2011.... The United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) is extremely concerned about the increased use of heavy weapons, including machine guns and mortars, by the Special Forces loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo's camp against the civilian population in Abidjan.

Recently, the Mission has observed that this camp is repairing an MI-24 attack helicopter in the military wing of Abidjan airport and is also getting BM21 multiple rocket launchers ready in Abidjan.

UNOCI is closely monitoring these heavy weapons which pose a grave threat to the civilian population. The Mission strongly warns this camp that it will not tolerate any attempt to use these weapons and will take action against this in keeping with its mandate.

While increasing its patrols and direct intervention where civilians are in imminent danger, UNOCI will continue to record and investigate all reported human rights violations in order to ensure that the instigators and perpetrators are held accountable, especially those involved in the use of heavy weapons against civilians, for possible crimes against humanity.

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