



Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference

(Abidjan, 26 May 2011)

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE CLAIMS MORE THAN 1000 LIVES IN WESTERN COTE D'IVOIRE, ACCORDING TO UNOCI REPORT

At least 1,012 persons, including 103 women and 42 children, were killed in post-election violence in the regions of Moyen Cavally and Dix-Huit Montagnes, the interim head of the Human Rights Division of the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Guillaume Ngefa, said on Thursday in Abidjan at the mission's weekly press conference.

Presenting the conclusions of a UNOCI report on violations of human rights and international humanitarian law perpetrated in western Côte d'Ivoire during the post-election crisis, based on an investigation conducted by a team of 23 experts, Mr. Ngefa said at least 505 of the 1,012 victims were killed in Duékoué.

The report covers December 2010 to April 2011. It states that the violations were committed following incidents linked to communal violence and clashes between the Defence and Security Forces (FDS), militias and mercenaries, on the one hand, and the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI) and dozos [traditional hunters], on the other. It also mentioned the Young Patriots and self-defence groups. "Certain civilians also committed acts of looting and reprisals," Mr. Ngefa added.

With regard to UNOCI's actions, the head of the Human Rights Division highlighted the strategy the mission developed to protect civilians in Duékoué and Guiglo despite the hostility and restrictions on freedom of movement imposed by combatants from both camps on its civilian and military personnel.

"At the request of the Catholic and Protestant churches, UNOCI (thanks to the Moroccan battalion present in Duékoué) was able to provide protection at the Catholic and Protestant churches, traditionally recognized as places of refuge for internally displaced persons in these two localities during the cycles of armed violence and clashes that have occurred in this part of the territory since 2002," Mr. Ngefa stated. Thousands of lives were saved as a result of that strategy, he added.

Mr. Ngefa also mentioned visits to the area by a number of high-level delegations, including those led by the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, the Humanitarian Coordinator, and the UN under-secretaries-general for humanitarian affairs, human rights and peacekeeping operations. "These visits were aimed at looking at the

arrangements made by UNOCI to ensure the protection of the civilian population,” he explained.

On the military plane, Mr. Ngefa cited the initiatives taken by the Moroccan battalion to obtain the return of more than 6,000 persons who had fled to the forest and to host more than 200 fugitives in its military camp.

Earlier, UNOCI Spokesman Hamadoun Touré informed the journalists that Arnaud Akodjenou of Benin had been appointed Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d’Ivoire. He replaces the former number two of UNOCI, Abou Moussa, who is now the Special Representative and head of the UN Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) based in Libreville, Gabon.

Mr. Touré also announced the celebration of International Peacekeeping Day on 30 May under the theme of “Law, order and peace”, which will be the topic of a roundtable discussion to be held at the headquarters of the mission in Seboko on that day.

He also mentioned the logistical support given by the Blue Helmets to the Ivorian authorities and their active participation in providing security at the airport and main roads at the inauguration ceremony for President Ouattara on 21 May in Yamoussoukro.

Where UNOCI’s operational activities are concerned, the Blue Helmets carried out 766 land and air patrols last week. The mixed patrols – with their counterparts of the FRCI - help to improve the security situation. “In a related development, a weekly meeting was held between the generals of the impartial forces and the FRCI,” Mr. Touré said.

Within the framework of its humanitarian activities, UNOCI’s force provided free medical treatment to 979 patients and distributed 96,000 litres of drinking water over the past week. “On 23 May, the Jordanian battalion distributed 140 humanitarian rations and school bags to pupils of a primary school in Marcory,” the spokesman added.

Finally, he announced that a delegation from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) is currently in Abidjan to attend a coordination meeting with UNOCI, the French Force Licorne and the FRCI. “This meeting is aimed at coordinating actions for ensuring the security of the border between Côte d’Ivoire and Liberia,” he explained.

For further information, please contact:

Hamadoun Touré, Spokesman
Tel. : +225-06203305 ; Cell phone : + 225-05990075 ; Fax : +225-020235107
Email: hamadoun@un.org.
<http://www.onuci.org>;

Twitter : @ONUCINFO