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UNITED NATIONS
United Nations Operation in
Côte d'Ivoire

Summary of UNOCI weekly press conference *(Abidjan, 31 March 2011)*

UNOCI APPEALS TO MILITARY FORCES TO PRESERVE THE LIVES OF THE POPULATION

In an effort to save civilians, whatever their political leanings, ethnic origin, religion or region, the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Y.J. Choi, is in contact with all the parties, the Spokesman of the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), Hamadoun Touré said on Thursday in Abidjan.

The objective of Mr. Choi's initiatives is to find quick solutions to the humanitarian drama unfolding in the west of the country, on the one hand, and to avoid atrocities being committed against civilians, especially through the use of heavy weapons, the Spokesman said during the mission's weekly press conference.

In this regard, Mr. Touré added, the Special Representative went to Guiglo on Saturday, 26 March 2011 and sent a mission on Wednesday and Thursday to Duekoué and Yamoussoukro. He said that this was to see what the United Nations family could do to alleviate the suffering of the internally displaced persons (IDPs). "The humanitarian situation is dramatic and every day that passes the suffering of the population increases. We therefore have to move fast," he said, before outlining UNOCI's action on the ground, especially the deployment of troops in Duékoué to protect 10,000 IDPs living in the Catholic Mission.

Mr. Touré also announced that the Special Representative had obtained the release of Father Richard Kissi, who had been detained by the *Commando Invisible* in Anyama, as well as 150 priests from the parish of Abobo.

In addition to the humanitarian initiatives, the Spokesman also outlined the actions of UNOCI Forces, who had carried out 950 ground, mixed and air patrols, including 115 in Abidjan in the past week. "Thanks to these activities, UNOCI was able to save foreigners and Ivorians during fighting in different parts of the country," said Mr. Touré.

The Spokesman also gave an update on the weekly human rights situation. “UNOCI documented 32 new cases of people who were killed, including one woman, two children as well as two elements of the Defence and Security Forces (FDS), which brings the number of persons killed during the post-electoral crisis since mid-December 2010 to 494,” said Mr. Touré. He denounced the number of human rights violations and abuses, including the settling of scores, summary executions, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests as well as pillaging on a grand scale, mainly in Daloa during the advancing of the *Forces Républicaines de Côte d’Ivoire (FRCI)*.

As they tried to escape, hordes of militias and Liberian mercenaries loyal to President Laurent Gbagbo, committed a number of atrocities, including summary executions and looting on a grand scale, mainly in Guiglo.

“UNOCI warns all the political and military leaders of all the forces that they will be held personally responsible for human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by armed soldiers or groups operating on their orders,” he warned. All the forces must show restraint, respect human rights, protect civilians in order to facilitate the peace and reconciliation process which has been under strain since December 2010, » the Spokesman concluded.

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