

COTE d'IVOIRE ASSESSMENT

October 2001

Country Information and Policy Unit

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I. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT

1.1 This assessment has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

1.2 The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom.

1.3 The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

1.4 It is intended to revise the assessment on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom. The assessment is available on the IND website (<http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/>). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to the following organisations:

Amnesty International UK
Immigration Advisory Service
Immigration Appellate Authority
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture
UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Refugee Legal Centre

II. GEOGRAPHY

A. Location and Climate

2.1 The Republic of the Cote d'Ivoire is situated on the west coast of Africa, between Ghana to the east and Liberia to the west, with Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso to the north.[1] The political and administrative capital is Yamoussoukro. Most government departments remain in the former capital and port of Abidjan, which is still the country's economic centre.[2] The country has an area of 322,463 sq. km.[1]

2.2 Except for the north-western fifth of the country, where tropical conditions prevail, the climate is equatorial.[1] The main rainy season is from May to July, which is followed by a shorter wet season in October and November.[2]

B. Population

2.3 There are approximately 60 ethnic groups. The population, in mid-1998, was approximately 14.5m (EIU estimate).[3b] In July 1999 the population was officially put at 15.4 million and growing at 3.3 percent annually.[17j]

C. Language

2.4 The official language is French and a large number of African languages are also spoken.[2]

III. HISTORY - [See Chronology]

A. Recent Political History and Summary of Important Dates

3.1 Presidential changes

Name	President		Political Party
	From	To	
Henri Konan Bedie	10/12/93	24/12/99	Parti Démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire - Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA) (Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire)
General Robert Guei	24/12/99	22/10/00	Conseil National de Salut Publique (CNSP) (National Committee for Public Salvation)
Laurent Gbagbo	22/10/00	Date	Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI) (Ivorian Popular Front)

3.2 Important dates

a) A bloodless coup took place on 24 December 1999. (see paras 3.3 - 3.17)

- b) A new constitution and electoral code were approved in a referendum on 23-24 July 2000. (see para 4.14)
- c) The death penalty was abolished under the new constitution. (see para 5.11)
- d) Presidential elections took place 22 October 2000. (see paras 4.2 - 4.3)
- e) Legislative elections took place 10 December 2000 & By-elections took place 14 January 2001. (see paras 4.4 - 4.6)
- f) Local elections took place 25 March 2001. (see para 4.7 - 4.8)

3.3 There was a bloodless military coup in December 1999. Retired General, Robert Guei, took over the government after a mutiny by soldiers, angered by unpaid wages and poor living standards began on December 23.[4a][32a] It evolved into a major military revolt on 24 December 1999. It culminated in the dismissal and forced departure of President Henri Konan Bedie.[4a] Bedie's government appeared on national television announcing their support for the coup leaders. It is the first coup in the Ivory Coast since its independence in 1960.[30c] Whilst the coup was condemned abroad, it was welcomed by many people in the Country.[30e]

3.4 On 25 December 1999, following the coup, General Guei said one of the main aims would be to install real democracy and hold fair elections. On 26 January 2000 UN secretary general Kofi Annan welcomed the official announcement that general elections were to be held before 31 October 2000.[5ap][16a]

3.5 On 2 March 2000 the former ruling party, the PDCI, said it hoped to win the elections in October.[5au]

3.6 The new constitution and electoral code (from 24 July 2000) provide for legislative and presidential elections to be held every 5 years, by a single and secret ballot.[4a]

3.7 On 9 December 1999 the National Assembly voted to allow the creation of a National Election Commission to supervise elections.[4a]

3.8 Following the coup, a curfew (from 6pm to 5am) was imposed by the new military junta, in an effort to restore order, following bouts of looting in Abidjan. The curfew was lifted on 27 December 1999.[5aq] The Guei and Gbagbo governments imposed curfews six times during 2000, in periods of political upheaval.[4a]

3.9 General Guei suspended the constitution, dissolved the National Assembly and formed the National Committee for Public Salvation (CNSP), which consisted of him and eight military officers (including two soldiers who participated in the coup). Guei said the CNSP would oversee the country for a transitional period.[4a]

3.10 On 29 December 1999 General Guei said the jailing of opposition politicians in November was one reason for the coup.[30d] During the coup, soldiers went to Abidjan's main prison, the MACA (Maison d'Arret et Correction d'Abidjan) and freed those Rally of the Republicans (RDR) opposition leaders who had been jailed in November 1999.[37a] On 5 January 2000 a transitional government, made up of army officers and civilians, was announced. Former FPI leader Laurent Gbagbo immediately announced that his party would not take part in the new administration because of military bias in favour of the RDR party.[30f][30v] Gbagbo finally agreed to join the transitional government on 12 January,

but said the best government posts had gone to the RDR, or those directly associated with the party.[17m] Prior to the coup, Cote d'Ivoire was a centralised republic dominated by a strong presidency.[4a]

3.11 General Guei pledged to rewrite the constitution, clean up government corruption, and hold fair and transparent elections in the year 2000. All of the country's political parties, including the former ruling Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) pledged to support Guei's transition government.[4a] On 1 February 2000 a consultative, constitutional and electoral commission, set up by Decree No 2012, dated 21 January 2000, was officially installed.[21d]

3.12 On 16 February 2000 General Guei signed a decree setting up a special commission to prepare a national constitutional referendum. Guei also signed a decree for another commission to investigate widespread complaints over the issue of national identity cards.[5at] Also, in February, Ivorian youths requested that the government reduce the voting age to 18 years, enabling them to get involved in elections.[17n]

3.13 On 4 and 5 July 2000 soldiers carried out a mutiny. They said they were owed money, which had been promised to them for their role in the December 1999 coup, which brought General Guei to power.[5ay] Guei said on 10 July that those soldiers who had participated in the mutiny would be punished.[17p]

3.14 On 18 September 2000 at least 14 soldiers were arrested in connection with an attack on the private residence of General Guei in Abidjan. Order was restored shortly after the incident and Guei said there was therefore no reason to delay the October elections.[30q] On 23 September General Guei sacked the two most senior figures in his military junta, Lassana Palenfo and Abdoulaye Coulibaly, both are considered to be close to opposition leader Alassane Ouattara.[30r][30s]

3.15 Generals Lassana Palenfo and Abdoulaye Coulibaly were charged with plotting to topple and kill General Guei in the attack on his home on 18 September 2000.[5bb] In March 2001 President Gbagbo offered an amnesty to Palenfo and others found guilty of threatening state security. Both Palenfo and Coulibaly have since been freed.[5bd][17x][17ab][18d][18e]

3.16 In November 2000 President Gbagbo told General Guei that he should return to his village and rejoin his family. Gbagbo said he would take no action and Guei gave his recognition to the new government and that Gbagbo was now the President.[30t]

3.17 In May 2001 Cote d'Ivoire's senior defence minister denied allegations that the government had foiled a coup attempt on 16 May 2001.[17aa]

B. Economy and Social Provision

3.18 Cote d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer of cocoa and Africa's largest producer of coffee.[3b]

3.19 In 2000 income remained unevenly distributed. Government expenditures for basic health services and education were far below planned levels. Approximately 56 percent of adults

are literate.[4a] In March 2000 General Guei's government revised the 'transition budget' reducing it to around 130.2 billion francs lower than the Bedie administration.[17o]

3.20 On 29 May 1998 the World Bank announced a \$53m loan to support the government's long-term education programme, under which primary school education would be extended to all Ivorian children by 2010.[3c] On 3 February 2000 the World Bank said it could not begin any new aid programmes in the Cote d'Ivoire because of a missed debt service payment of \$17 million due under the Bedie government in December 1999. It stressed the debt payment had to be made.[5as]

3.21 On average, Ivorian primary schools have about 50 children per class compared with an average of 100 per class in some neighbouring countries.[3c]

3.22 On 18 June 1999 the European Union said it uncovered irregularities during a routine audit in December 1998. A more detailed audit was carried out in May 1999 and serious irregularities, of around 18 billion CFA francs, were found.[5x] On 4 August at least 19 civil servants had been charged with the embezzlement.[5ac] On 6 August the finance minister said the Cote d'Ivoire would reimburse the 17.9 billion CFA francs embezzled, in accordance with EU procedures.[5ae] In February 2000 it was announced that this money had been repaid.[5as]

3.23 The Guei and Gbagbo governments only received limited assistance from international financial institutions during 2000, due to the coup, government corruption, mismanagement and political unrest following elections.[4a]

IV. INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE

A. Government

4.1 Cote d'Ivoire is a multi-party democracy and presidential, legislative and municipal elections were held in October 2000, December 2000 and March 2001.[34b]

4.2 Presidential election results: 22 October 2000 [38a]

Candidate	% of the vote
Laurent Gbagbo (FPI)	59.4
Robert Guei	32.7
Francis Wodie (PIT)	5.7
Theodore Mel (UDCI)	1.5
Nocolas Dioulou	0.8
Total	100.00

4.3 Laurent Gbagbo was named President and inaugurated on 26 October 2000.[4a]

4.4 Legislative election results: (225 seats available) - (196 seats) 10 December 2000 & **By-election results:** (29 seats) 14 January 2001 [17s][23b]

Party	Legislative	By-Election	Total Seats Won
Ivorian Popular Front - (FPI)	96	0	96
Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI-RDA)	77	19	96
Ivorian Workers Party (PIT)	4	0	4
Democratic Union of Cote d'Ivoire (UDCI)	1	0	1
Movement of the Forces of the Future (MFA)	1	0	1
Rally of Republicans (RDR)	1	4	5
Independent candidates	16	6	22

4.5 The FPI secured the support of 14 of the independent candidates and the 4 from the Ivorian Workers Party. This gave the FPI the necessary majority, which would ensure that the next speaker of the National Assembly would be from the FPI party.[21g]

4.6 The RDR won a seat in spite of the party calling a boycott of the elections.[17s]

4.7 Local election results: (196 communes) 25 March 2001[17t][17u][34a]

Party	Number of Communes won
Rally of Republicans (RDR)	64
Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI)	59
Independent candidates	38
Ivorian Popular Front (FPI)	34
Ivorian Workers Party (PIT)	1

4.8 President Gbagbo expressed his satisfaction at the participation of all political parties in the local elections. He said it confirmed that the Cote d'Ivoire was a democratic country.[23d]

4.9 The PDCI secured the support of 21 of the Independent candidates, so it holds a majority of 80 communes.[17v]

4.10 Legislative power is vested in the 225 member National Assembly, elected for a five year term of office. In 1999 the government and opposition observers indicated that almost half of citizens did not have national identity cards, without which they could not vote.[4a] On 4 August 2000 it was announced that temporary identity certificates would be issued, from 10 August, to those Ivorians without national identity cards. The certificates would have the same security guarantees as the national identity cards. People would only have to pay the cost of their identity picture (around 750 CFA). There would be two types of certificate, a green background for Ivorians and an orange background for foreigners, which would also serve as their residence card.[25d]

4.11 In May 1999 negotiations between the government and the Rally of Republicans (RDR) ended in failure. No agreements were reached on the issues surrounding the organisation of the 2000 elections.[18a]

4.12 On 31 May 1999 Alassane Ouattara confirmed that he would be the RDR candidate for the 2000 presidential elections.[5y] President Bedie stated that Ouattara would not be eligible to run for president, under the terms of the amended constitution, (from 24 July 2000) given that his Ivorian nationality was in doubt.[5ag] On 12 September 2000 lawyers representing General Guei produced photocopied documents which suggested that Ouattara had been completing forms since 1962 as a citizen of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso). This would therefore make him ineligible to stand in the presidential elections.[30m][30n] Lawyers for Ouattara said genetic tests done showed that he was in fact the son of an Ivorian woman.[13a] On 16 September police questioned Ouattara about his identity papers.[5ah] On 22 September a legal investigation against Ouattara was initiated, on charges of using falsified documents.[20b] Bedie then proceeded to disqualify Ouattara from participating in forthcoming elections.[4a][30b] On 9 December a warrant was issued for Ouattara's arrest. Following the coup, on 29 December 1999, a Cote d'Ivoire court cancelled the arrest warrant and decreed that there was no justification for pursuing the investigation.[5ar] Ouattara returned to the country, immediately following the decision, having spent the previous three months in France.[17i]

4.13 On 11 July 1999 the FPI re-elected Laurent Gbagbo as its leader and candidate for the presidential elections in 2000.[5aa] On 23 July 2001 it was announced that Prime Minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan had been elected to replace President Gbagbo as head of the ruling FPI.[30v]

4.14 A new constitution and electoral code were approved in a referendum held on 23 and 24 July 2000. Almost 3 million Ivorians voted from the 5 million registered, with over 86 percent of votes cast being in favour. The new constitution limits presidents to two, five-year terms, lowers the voting age to 18 and guarantees immunity from prosecution for participants in the December 1999 coup. Provisions also stipulate that presidential candidates must be of Ivorian parentage and must never have had another nationality.[4a][5aw][21e][37b]

4.15 On 17 August 2000 nineteen candidates had been registered for the presidential elections due on 17 September 2000. The candidates included Alassane Ouattara (Rassemblement Des Republicains), Laurent Gbagbo (Front Populaire Ivoirien), Francis Wodie (Parti Ivoirien du Travail) and General Guei, who registered as an independent.[37d] Ousted former president Henri Konan Bedie failed to become the Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) candidate, losing the nomination to Emile Constant Bombet.[30j] On 8 September the authorities requested an investigation be carried out against Mr Bombet on allegations of corruption.[30i] Laurent Dona Fologo is currently the acting chairman of the PDCI.[33b]

4.16 The National Electoral Commission (CNE) asked the military government, on 26 August 2000, to delay the presidential elections scheduled for 17 September 2000. They requested more time in order to register voters, prepare election guidelines and distribute balloting material.[17r][30k] On 30 August 2000 the government agreed to the request and the presidential elections were postponed and changed to the new date of 22 October 2000.[21f] Registration for presidential candidates was re-opened from 11 September 2000 allowing any additional candidates to register. The Supreme Court were to rule on the eligibility of all candidates on 2 September 2000, but due to the postponement of the elections this was changed to 7 October 2000.[5az][37d]

4.17 Presidential elections took place on 22 October 2000. The Supreme Court disqualified 14 of the 19 candidates, including all the PDCI and RDR candidates, on 6 October. Preliminary results showed that Laurent Gbagbo had a significant lead. On 23 October soldiers and gendarmes entered the National Election Commission (CNE) to stop the count. On 24 October an announcement by a CNE official on national radio and television said the CNE had been dissolved and declared General Guei the winner. Thousands of Gbagbo supporters began protesting to demand a proper count. It was announced on 25 October that Guei had stepped down. Mass demonstrations continued until 26 October and resulted in numerous deaths and injuries.[4a]

4.18 When Laurent Gbagbo was inaugurated on 26 October 2000, gendarmes loyal to the new president violently suppressed RDR street demonstrations, which were held to demand new presidential elections.[4a]

4.19 By the end of 2000 the government had taken no action against the gendarmes and police officers responsible for the deaths and abuses committed, against RDR and FPI demonstrations, which followed the presidential elections in October and the parliamentary elections on 10 December 2000.[4a][5bf][37i] In August 2001 a military court acquitted eight paramilitary gendarmes charged with the massacre of 57 men during violence which followed the October 2000 presidential elections. The verdict was condemned by the RDR.[5bi][18f]

4.20 In August 2001 President Gbagbo announced a proposal to hold a political reconciliation meeting on 9 October 2001.[30w] Gbagbo invited ex-president Bedie, former army ruler Robert Guei and RDR leader Alassane Ouattara to attend.[5bi] Bedie has been living in Paris since he was overthrown in December 1999 and Gbagbo visited him in June 2001 to invite him to return to the Cote d'Ivoire.[5bg][18c] Ouattara has been living in self-imposed exile in Paris since the trouble surrounding the October 2000 presidential elections.[5bh] Guei fled to his village in the west of the Cote d'Ivoire, following the October 2000 elections, where he remains protected by some of his men.[5bg]

4.21 The RDR said on 18 August 2001 that it was willing to participate in the national reconciliation forum but with certain conditions. It wants the restoration of its leader Alassane Ouattara's rights, a constitutional amendment and a re-run of the general elections.[18g] In July 2001 Ouattara turned down a United Nations job, as special envoy to the Democratic Republic of Congo, because of his political commitments in the Cote d'Ivoire.[5bh] The leader of the Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI), Paul Akoto Yao, a party close to the former military leader Gen Robert Guei, said the inclusion of Bedie, Ouattara and Guei was the only opportunity to achieve national reconciliation.[18b] The acting leader of the ex-ruling Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI), Laurent Dona Fologo, said the party was ready, but that the forum was not a priority to the PDCI. Fologo said they did not need to reconcile with someone they were not in conflict with and that the only people who owe the PDCI an explanation were the soldiers who drove them from power.[33b]

B. Judiciary

4.22 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) provides for an independent judiciary. In practice, it is subject to executive branch, military and other outside influences. The judiciary is independent in ordinary criminal cases, although it follows the lead of the executive in national security, or politically sensitive cases.[4a]

4.23 Those convicted have the right of appeal, although higher courts rarely overturn verdicts. Military courts do not try civilians and there are no appellate courts within the military court system. Anyone convicted by a military tribunal may petition the Supreme Court to set aside the verdict and order a retrial. No free legal assistance is available.[4a]

4.24 In rural areas, traditional institutions often administer justice at the village level, handling domestic disputes and disputes over property, without the use of physical punishment. Formal courts are increasingly replacing the traditional mechanisms.[4a]

C. Security

4.25 Security forces include the army, navy and air force, all under the Ministry of Defence, the Republican Guard, a well-funded presidential security force, national police (Surete Nationale) and the gendarmerie, which is a branch of the armed forces with responsibility for general law enforcement. The gendarmerie is charged with maintenance of public order and internal security. In 2000 the Special Anti-Crime Police Brigade (SAVAC) continued its operations. Prior to the coup the armed forces accepted the primacy of civilian authority.[4a]

4.26 Cote d'Ivoire's parliament voted in a new law in September 1996 giving police and security forces greater powers to stop and search suspects and search private homes and vehicles, without a warrant.[3a][5d]

4.27 On 27 May 1999 President Bedie officially declared that a National Commission for banning Chemical Weapons in Cote d'Ivoire had been installed, with the aim of achieving the objectives of the Cote d'Ivoire convention regarding peace.[21b]

4.28 In August 2001 President Gbagbo announced plans to increase security at the borders and throughout the country. He said he aimed to recruit 1,000 policemen annually over the next 3 to 4 years and to increase the number of paramilitary gendarmes.[5bj]

V HUMAN RIGHTS: GENERAL SITUATION

A. General Human Rights Practice

5.1 The Bedie government's human rights record was poor and there were serious problems in a number of areas. The seizure of power, in December 1999, by the National Committee for Public Salvation (CNSP) led to a number of abuses. Whilst the constitution provides for the right of citizens to change their government peacefully through democratic means, the Bedie government limited this right in practice. The October 2000 presidential elections were however marred by significant violence and irregularities. The coup effectively disenfranchised citizens, preventing them from exercising this right. CNSP forces and others were responsible for numerous robberies, widespread looting and acts of intimidation. The CNSP arrested 150 government ministers and military officers but had released all but 40 of them by the end of 1999.[4a] The remaining 40 were released by the end of January 2000.[5av]

5.2 In 2000 security forces reportedly committed hundreds of extrajudicial killings, including politically motivated killing. Violent crime remained widespread and the security forces frequently resorted to lethal force to combat it.[4a]

5.3 In December 1998 the government enacted legislation allowing lawyers to assist their clients during the early stages of detention when torture and abuse is most likely. In spite of this legislation, during 2000, police officers and gendarmes reportedly continued to mistreat suspects. On many instances the security forces did not allow lawyers access to their clients.[4a]

5.4 In 2000 it was reported that police frequently used excessive force to disperse demonstrators, or violence to restrain them. Riot police used tear gas and truncheons against demonstrators during 2000. On at least four occasions police used lethal force against protestors and innocent bystanders.[4a]

5.5 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention, although in practice it remained a problem in 2000. Journalists and opposition members in particular were detained without trial for long periods. Under the Code of Penal Procedure, a public prosecutor may order the detention of a suspect for only 48 hours without bringing charges. A magistrate may order detention for up to four months, but must provide the Minister of Justice with a written justification for continued detention on a monthly basis. The law is often violated. It is reported that the police and the CNSP held persons for more than 48 hours without bringing charges. This practice is reported to be common and magistrates are not often able to verify that those who are not charged, are released. Defendants do not have the right to a judicial determination of the legality of their detention. A judge may release pre-trial detainees on bail if the judge believes that the suspect is not likely to flee. In spite of a law enacted in 1998 which limits pre-trial detention to 10 months in civil cases and 22 months in criminal cases, some detainees have spent as much as five years in detention awaiting trial.[4a]

5.6 According to the human rights organisation LIDHO (Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme - Ivorian Human Rights League), many prisoners are detained for long periods, sometimes years, awaiting trial. On 24 December 1999, 6,693 persons were detained at the MACA, (Maison d'Arret et Correction d'Abidjan), the country's main prison in Abidjan, a prison built for 1,500. During the December 1999 coup, the mutineers released all inmates of the MACA. By November 2000 the population was approximately 3,800 inmates. In 1998 it was reported that the prison began to separate male and female prisoners and to maintain female guards for female prisoners. There are still no health facilities for women. There continued to be credible reports of childbirth in prison, although there were no reports that guards raped female prisoners. Nevertheless, there were still reports that female prisoners engaged in sexual relations with their wardens in exchange for food and more privileges.[4a] Medecins sans Frontieres (doctors without borders), an independent international medical relief organisation, reported in 2000 that conditions in the MACA had improved greatly since 1997.[37h]

5.7 On 3 October 1998 the president's office announced that those tried and sentenced for their role in the violent protests triggered by the 1995 presidential elections ("active boycott") would receive a presidential pardon. Of the estimated 450 people originally arrested, 10 were still in prison awaiting trial and over 100 were on bail awaiting trial.[9a][14e] In December 1998 the government granted an amnesty for all offences committed by all persons in connection with the active boycott of the 1995 elections. In September 1999 that amnesty was extended to military officers accused of involvement in the October 1995 coup plot. This particular group included General Guei. On 26 January 2000 the Guei government granted an amnesty for all offences committed during the September and October 1999 political demonstrations. This

included the RDR leaders already released by mutineers on 24 December 1999 during the coup.[4a]

5.8 Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening in 2000. Local and International NGOs and humanitarian organisations had access to the prisons in 2000. Problems include overcrowding, malnutrition, infectious diseases and a lack of treatment facilities and medication. In July 2000 the government newspaper *Fraternite Matin* reported that conditions were particularly difficult for women. The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) prohibits cruel and inhuman treatment, humiliating and degrading punishment, torture, physical violence and other mistreatment. Security forces however continued to beat detainees during 2000. Press photographs regularly show detainees with swollen or bruised faces and bodies.[4a]

5.9 Although prohibited by law, police restrict access to some prisoners. LIDHO (Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme - Ivorian Human Rights League) and local human rights groups have reported experiencing difficulty in gaining access to the prisons. Unlike in previous years, humanitarian NGOs did not report any difficulties in gaining access to prisons in 1999. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Prisoners without Borders and Doctors without Borders had access to the prisons and visited them during 1999 to provide food and medical care to prisoners. LIDHO did not visit prisons during 1998 or 1999 because it remained unable to do so without giving advance notice.[4a]

5.10 LIDHO (Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme - Ivorian Human Rights League) did not visit the MACA (Maison d'Arret et Correction d'Abidjan) during 2000 as conditions had improved following the release of all inmates during the December coup. They did however visit the MAMA (La Maison d'Arret Militaire), Abidjan's military prison. After Laurent Gbagbo took office there were no reports that NGOs had difficulty gaining access to prisons.[4a]

5.11 The death penalty for murder has been on the statute book, but has not been applied since independence from France in 1960.[5a][5b][5c][9a][9b][11a] In March 1999 a court sentenced to death six criminals aged between 18 and 20 years. They were found guilty of possessing arms and committing armed robbery in the country. This is the first time the death penalty has been imposed since the promulgation of the law. It can only be revoked by a presidential clemency.[17c] The courts continued to sentence criminals to death, although there have been no reports that the death penalty has been carried out.[5a][5b][5c][9a][9b][11a] The new constitution, approved by referendum in July 2000, abolishes the death penalty.[5ay]

5.12 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) provides for freedom of assembly, although the government sometimes restricted this right in practice during 2000.[4a]

B. Human Rights Monitoring

5.13 The Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme (LIDHO), a domestic human rights NGO, was formed in 1987 and recognised by the government in July 1990. It has actively investigated alleged violations of human rights and issued press releases and reports, some critical of the government. Other NGOs such as Amnesty International and the International Movement of Democratic Women (MIFED) have published press releases critical of government abuses of human rights.[4a][9c] Amnesty International maintains a section in Cote d'Ivoire.[11b]

5.14 The government has co-operated with international enquiries into its human rights practices, which have been chiefly in the area of prison conditions. Both the Guei and Gbagbo governments allowed inquiry and reporting by human rights NGOs.[4a]

C. Refugees

5.15 Cote d'Ivoire has signed, but not ratified, the Organisation of African Unity Convention governing specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.[4a]

5.16 The government respects the right to first asylum and does not deny recognition to refugees by either law or custom. At the end of 2000 there were an estimated 120,000 Liberian refugees in the Cote d'Ivoire. An estimated 150,000 to 200,000 refugees returned to Liberia under UN auspices, or independently. There were also several thousand refugees from Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Burundi in the country. There were no reports in 2000 of forced repatriation.[1][4a]

5.17 The government co-operates with the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in health, education and food distribution programmes for refugees.[4a]

5.18 In May 1999 the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire started to provide identity cards to the estimated 201,000 refugees in the country, as required by the United Nations. The refugees said the cards would be of little use to them given that all foreigners living in the country are obliged to acquire resident permits. The minister of the interior explained that these identity cards would enable holders to obtain the resident permits at a reduced cost. The current costs for the annually renewable cards are 15,500 CFA francs for West Africans, 150,000 francs for non-West Africans, 50,000 francs for French nationals and 3,500 francs for refugees. The 1951 Geneva Convention on free movement of refugees obliges all countries hosting the displaced to provide them with identity papers, enabling free movement in the country.[17h]

VI. HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC CONSIDERATION

A. Freedom of Political Association

6.1 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) provides for freedom of association and allows the formation of political parties and the government generally respects this in practice. The new constitution states that all parties must respect the laws and be registered before commencing activities. There were no reports of registration having been denied to any group.[21a] At the end of 2000 there were 106 legally recognised parties. The new constitution also prohibits the formation of political parties along ethnic or religious lines.[4a]

6.2 President Bedie pardoned and ordered the release of 388 activists arrested during a violent incident on 14 September 1999, outside Alassane Ouattara's home in Abidjan.[5ah]

6.3 The RDR staged a sit-in, on 16 October 1999, in front of the national television station, Radiodiffusion Television Ivoirienne (RTI). It was organised to press demands for access to government-owned television and radio. Police used tear gas and truncheons to break up the demonstration, which they said was not authorised. A follow-up demonstration was held on 27 October and police again used the same methods to disperse the demonstrators. Numerous people were injured and twenty RDR leaders, including the secretary-general, Henriette Diabate,

were arrested.[35a] They were charged under a special law which holds party officials responsible for the actions of their members.[5al] On 12 November, 11 RDR leaders, including Diabate, were fined and sentenced to 2 years in prison.[5am] They were released and given amnesty by rebel soldiers during the coup in December 1999. On 26 April 2000 the military government repealed the 1992 Anti-Casseur Law, which held organisers of a march or demonstration responsible if any of the participants engaged in violence.[4a]

6.4 On 26 November 1999, following the RDR demonstrations in October 1999, President Bedie banned all public demonstrations in the country.[27b] Supporters of Alassane Ouattara said they would defy the ban.[5an] On 18 December 1999 around 15,000 supporters of Ouattara held a peaceful rally in the country's main sports stadium, with the blessing of the government.[5ao]

6.5 On 23 February 2000, the CNSP suspended the holding of political rallies in the country.[21d]

6.6 A new political party, Union for the People's Cause (UCP) (Union pour la Cause du Peuple), was officially launched on 25 November 2000. The UCP decided to work with the new political authorities for the development of the country.[23a]

6.7 The Union for Democracy and Peace (UDP), a new political party, was officially launched on 25 February 2001. The main priority of this party is to fight poverty.[23c]

B. FESCI

6.8 The student union, Federation Estudiantine et Scolaire de la Cote d'Ivoire (FESCI) was established in April 1990. In June 1991 the government banned FESCI following the death of a student. Notwithstanding its dissolution, FESCI continued to operate and play a leading part in demanding from the government improvements in the living and academic conditions of students. The government tolerated the union until May 1994 when it insisted that the organisation be banned. FESCI contends that it was never legally banned and was active in demonstrations, ceremonies and political party conventions. The government however, stated that FESCI was legally banned by Decree No. 91-420 of 21 June 1991. FESCI has more than 60,000 members in high schools and universities across the country. [4a][6a][14b][17e]

6.9 Universities had been built to cater for some 10,000 students but were expected to accommodate in the region of 70,000 in the 1997/1998 academic year. Discontent among the country's university students has repeatedly spilled over from the campuses onto the streets and into the secondary and even primary schools and has usually received rough treatment from the police. Underfunding has been the major source of grievances but resentment was also fuelled by moves in the early 1990s to end the long established right of all university graduates to jobs in the public sector.[3b][5g][25a]

6.10 President Bedie held a week long National Conference, from 30 September 1997, on the Future of Higher Education in Cote d'Ivoire.[5e] Bedie announced the lifting of the ban on FESCI and the desire for reconciliation.[5f][13a]

6.11 Decree No. 97-599 of 13 October 1997 rescinded decree no 91-420 (which had banned FESCI) and made it an authorised and legally constituted organisation.[14c]

6.12 The 1997/98 academic year was generally calm, although there were isolated incidents of unrest.[11c]

6.13 On 7 May 1998 courses were suspended at Cocody University after members of FESCI beat up a faculty member. The government, the FPI and the leading human rights organisation, LIDHO (Ligue Ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme - Ivorian Human Rights League), issued statements condemning the act. FESCI issued a statement on 18 May apologising for the incident. Two students were subsequently banned from higher education establishments for four years.[5h][11c]

6.14 On 14 May 1998, a student at a secondary school in Abidjan was shot by police, when they were called in to deal with violent demonstrations by students. There was then a wave of strikes and demonstrations by students protesting at the increased use of unofficial levies in schools. High schools were closed on 26 May 1998 for 48 hours as a mark of respect for the shot student, who died.[5i] On 1 June, the authorities banned all demonstrations in schools. A government statement, read out on the television, stated that the headmaster of the dead boy's school would be sacked for imposing the controversial student levy, as would a second master. Also, that any group organising fresh protests would be banned from primary and secondary schools and any students claiming membership of such groups would be expelled.[17a] Following widespread student protests about this killing, a police sergeant was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for the student's death.[4a][11c]

6.15 In July 1998 the education minister, in trying to combat cheating throughout the education system, ordered the cancellation of the results at 14 primary schools in Abidjan, alleging massive fraud and cheating. The pupils rejected the minister's claims and thousands of primary school children protested in the streets of the capital, demanding that the minister either rescind his decision or resign. They had the backing of FESCI in so doing. Several hundred school children staged a sit-in outside the presidency in Abidjan on 15 July 1998 in protest, but no problems were reported.[5j][17a]

6.16 There is no known law specifically concerning academic freedom but in practice the government tolerates much academic freedom. There were numerous student protests during 1999. In 2000 students did not stage demonstrations and protests about educational problems, due to a decision by the student organisations to allow General Guei time to organise elections. However, there were numerous student protests at the end of 2000.[4a]

6.17 On 26 March 1999 the University of Bouake was closed after police forced students to leave their hostels, after boycotting classes for 48 hours earlier that week. The university authorities said they were compelled to close the institution after students used force to prevent their colleagues, who refused to join them, from attending classes.[17d]

6.18 On 1 April 1999 the university room occupied by FESCI student union leader Charles Ble Goude was gutted in a grenade attack. Goude was not in the room at the time.[5k] On 26 April 1999 students took to the streets demanding larger grants and reforms in the education system. Riot police dispersed protestors with tear gas.[5l] The police reportedly arrested 105, mostly students, following the incidents.[17f] The government said it was spending 40 percent of its annual budget on education but the students claimed it was not reaching the target groups.[17e] On 27 April the university authorities banned campus meetings and student sit-ins

at the National University of Abidjan.[4a][17f] In April 1999 the Council of Ministers ratified the action and extended it to ban all FESCI activities throughout the country.[4a] On 30 April the government banned university student leaders from organising any protest activities in elementary or secondary schools. This decision followed student activists storming lower schools and forcing school children to go out and help enforce a classroom boycott. Following a three-day boycott it was reported that secondary schools had resumed some classes, but the university of Abidjan remained closed due to a teachers' strike over pay and conditions.[5m]

6.19 On 2 May 1999 President Bedie told students that if they broke the law they would have to face the consequences with no hope of clemency.[5n] On 4 May protests over the cost of living took place in the towns of Gagnoa and Lakota by students and youths, who began a looting and wrecking spree. Troops were deployed to restore order.[5o] On 5 May FESCI called for a two-day strike on 6 & 7 May over grants and study conditions, in defiance of the government ban on its activities in schools. FESCI officials said if the government did not respond, it would be followed by a week long nationwide strike in schools and universities.[5p] On 6 May the government ordered the indefinite closure of primary and secondary schools in Bouake and Abidjan to stem the student unrest. President Bedie said police would be deployed in schools and universities in a further move to curb unrest. He announced a ban on campus meetings and sit-ins, as this was believed to be where trouble begins.[5q] On 8 May FESCI leader Charles Ble Goude said FESCI was an organisation that did not seek to make violence part of the strategy for its struggle.[5r] On 13 May 1999 FESCI called for a four-day strike because the government had failed to address its demands. The government warned FESCI that it was going beyond the bounds of legitimate union activity and risked being banned.[5s]

6.20 On 27 May 1999 students renewed their protests, following the government's decision on 21 May to fine and jail six students for five years on charges of acts of violence and vandalism.[5t] Police used tear gas and batons to disperse around 100 students at Cocody campus who had gathered for a planned meeting.[20a] On 28 May students boycotted classes and demonstrated in Bouake and Gagnoa. There were reports of vandalism and looting.[5u] The government closed all schools at all levels for 17 days in May 1999, following widespread demonstrations.[4a] The government stressed that the universities would remain open to willing students wishing to attend lectures. This was considered necessary action in order to restore law and order on campuses.[17g] On 31 May, FESCI announced that it would go ahead with a planned four-day strike, due to begin on 1 June, despite a government warning. A FESCI spokesman said they would organise meetings, sit-ins and marches across the country until their demands were met.[5v]

6.21 On 1 June 1999 riot police used tear gas to break up attempted student marches.[5w] The FPI, whilst it had remained silent over the education dispute, expressed its dismay at the government's handling of the situation.[34a] On 7 June FESCI announced that the current strike, which commenced on 1 June and due to end on 5 June, had been extended until 12 June.[25b] On 23 June FESCI announced the suspension of its strike action in all schools, colleges and universities in the country. Students and pupils had been striking intermittently since 20 April.[17i] FESCI leader Charles Ble Goude held a press briefing on 30 June at Cocody University campus. He called on President Bedie to get more seriously involved in the education crisis or else FESCI would assume its responsibility.[33a]

6.22 On 3 August 1999 it was reported that student strikes had disrupted university courses so severely that most courses for the 1998/99 academic year had been declared "invalid". This

measure would affect around 40,000 - 50,000 students. This would be the second time in three years that the academic year had been all but nullified.[5ab] FESCI complained this action would lead to overcrowding in universities.[4a] On 5 August police used tear gas to break up a news conference, held by student union leaders, to discuss the decision by authorities to invalidate the academic year.[5ad]

6.23 FESCI leader Charles Ble Goude was arrested in August 1999 charged with inciting violence and destruction of property. He was released without charge in October 1999.[4a][5af][5ah][5ai][5ak][25c]

6.24 Between April and August 1999 the police reportedly detained at least 180 students and unemployed persons across the country, for involvement in strikes and demonstrations. Of those detained, 120 were released, minors were tried and released to their parents. Those over 18 years old were sentenced to 5 years in prison. On 1 October 1999 President Bedie signed a decree which granted pardons to the 60 sentenced students and all were released from custody. The pardon did not extend to those non-students who infiltrated the demonstrations and committed offences.[4a][21c] On 4 October, at the start of the new academic year, FESCI boycotted university classes, demanding better study conditions and grants. The boycott was maintained despite the President's pardon only day's before.[5ak]

6.25 On 31 July 2000 security forces used teargas to disperse around 500 students who gathered outside the French embassy in support of the French statement urging Ivorian authorities not to prevent any candidate from standing in the presidential elections due on 17 September 2000.[17q][30h]

6.26 On 17 August 2000 several thousand young demonstrators marched through Abidjan's administrative district, Le Plateau. They were demanding that General Guei step down if he proposed to stand as a candidate in the Presidential election. The demonstration had a heavy police presence but was peaceful and with no reports of violence.[30i][37c]

6.27 Following the December 1999 coup, the Guei government allowed FESCI to resume operations. However, on 25 September 2000 it was reported that members of the military beat FESCI students on the campus at Cocody university. Three of the students were seriously injured. No action was taken against any members of the military.[4a]

6.28 On 6 April 2001 the main university teachers' union said it was suspending classes until further notice due to student violence.[5be] The authorities decided, on the same day, to close all university campuses in Abidjan following the death of a student at Cocody.[17r] The closed campuses were expected to re-open on 23 April.[17w] For several months there has been hostility within FESCI, resulting in two rival factions. Jean-Yves Dibopieu stated he was the general secretary of the group, with Paul Guei, head of the rival faction, also claiming to be the general secretary.[17r] Clashes between the rival factions, armed with machetes, left one student dead and several injured.[17w] In May 2001 the two rival factions signed an agreement for unity under which they pledged to stop causing trouble in the country's university. Jean-Yves Dibopieu would be general secretary with Paul Guei as deputy.[17y]

6.29 In August 2001 student protesters rampaged through Bouake in protest against the non-payment of university grants. Police used teargas to disperse the protest march.[5bk]

C. Freedom of Assembly

6.30 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) provides for freedom of assembly, although the government restricted this right during 2000.[4a]

6.31 On 26 November 1999 President Bédié issued Decree No 99-668, which eliminated the right to hold outdoor meetings and demonstrations during the working week. The ban was to remain in effect until 30 May 2000. It eliminated a number of planned opposition demonstrations for December 1999, although the government allowed an outdoor rally to take place on 18 December. The Decree remained in effect at the end of 2000. Until 18 August 2000, groups wanting to hold rallies or demonstrations were required by law to submit a notice of intent to the Ministry of Security, or the Ministry of Interior, 48 hours before the proposed event. No law expressly authorises the government to ban public meetings or events for which advance notice has been given in the required manner. Nevertheless, the Guei government often denied the opposition permission to meet in public outdoor locations. On 18 August 2000 restrictions on public demonstrations were tightened further. Groups are now required to request, in writing, authorisation 3 days in advance of the event. Even if authorisation is given, it can be revoked. Gbagbo's government retained this restriction.[4a] Anyone contravening the decree is liable to imprisonment for a period of 10 days to two months plus a fine of between 10,000 and 360,000 CFA francs, or to one or other of these penalties.[7b]

6.32 The "Anti-Casseur Law", Decree No. 92-464, was introduced on 30 July 1992. It punished the organisers of demonstrations as well as the direct participants in violence, assault or criminal damage committed during the event.[7a][14a] The Guei Government repealed this law on 26 April 2001.[4a]

6.33 On 19 September 2000 the ruling Conseil National de Salut Publique (CNSP) announced that all political rallies and meetings had been temporarily suspended. The ban would be in place until the official opening of the election campaign, two weeks before the polls on 22 October 2000.[37e] Opposition parties reacted angrily to the restrictions put on political activity.[30p]

D. Freedom of Speech and the Press

6.34 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) provides for freedom of expression, although private newspapers frequently criticise government policies. The Guei government imposed significant restrictions on this right, at times by inflicting physical harm upon, threatening and arresting journalists. Also by ransacking media offices.[4a]

6.35 The two government-owned daily newspapers (Fraternite Matin and Ivoir Soir) offer little criticism of government policy, while government-owned radio and television offer none at all. The privately owned press grew rapidly in the 1990s and, although it has a relatively limited circulation, it succeeds in presenting a wide range of views and political trends. Independent newspapers (17 daily, 30 weekly, 5 bi-monthly and 10 monthly), as well as student and opposition parties, voice their disapproval of government or presidential actions frequently.[4a][15a]

6.36 The government owns both television channels and two major radio stations; only the primary government radio and television stations are broadcast nationwide. There are also four radio stations not controlled by the government and a private television subscription service,

Canal Horizon. The independent stations have complete control over their editorial content but the government continues to exercise considerable influence over official media programme content, news coverage and other matters. The government does not restrict access to, or distribution of electronic media. There are twelve domestic Internet service providers and all twelve are privately owned and relatively expensive.[4a]

6.37 Press Law No. 91-1033 makes it a crime, punishable by three months to two years in prison, to offend the president, the prime minister, foreign chiefs of state, government or their diplomatic representatives, or to defame institutions of state. A number of journalists have been prosecuted under this legislation.[15a] Criminal libel is punishable by 3 months to 2 years in prison. The Guei government used this law against a number of journalists during 2000.[4a]

6.38 Journalists Raphael Lapke and Jean Khalil Sylla from the pro-RDR newspaper, *Le Populaire*, were arrested in April and June 1999 respectively, for publishing false stories of student deaths, disturbing public order, and offending the head of state. They were tried in October 1999 and both fined and sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment.[4a] The press laws were changed by parliament on 30 June 1999, replacing some custodial sentences with fines ranging from 500,000 (\$788) to 2.5 million (\$3,943) CFA francs. Insulting or holding the head of state in contempt was the one exception that remained.[5z]

6.39 On 21 September 1999 the publisher of the pro-RDR newspaper, *'Le Liberal'*, was shot dead in a suspected robbery.[4a][5aj] On 26 September 1999 the founder of *'Liberation'*, another pro-RDR newspaper, was shot at by an unidentified person, but escaped unhurt. Both papers are close to the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) party of Alassane Ouattara.[4a][27a] On 28 December 1999 Reporters sans Frontières (RSF) (journalists without borders) an NGO for freedom of the press, expressed their concern to General Guei over the detention of two journalists from the government daily, *Fraternite Matin*. Both had been arrested by military officers on 27 December 1999, but freed a few hours after being detained. The authorities said an uncontrolled group acting on its own initiative had arrested the journalists. No charges were brought against the journalists.[36a] In October 2000 RSF again expressed concern over attacks on journalists. It called on President Gbagbo to take a position on the issue of press freedom in the country.[37g]

6.40 On 2 August 2000 the government tightened the conditions of admission to the journalism profession by demanding professional certificates from accredited schools of journalism, or a university degree.[14f]

6.41 On 19 September 2000 Amnesty International issued a report which stated that soldiers had seriously violated human rights since the coup in December 1999. The report said that unarmed criminals had been shot, relatives of ousted president Bedie had been tortured and that lawyers and journalists had been beaten. Amnesty said it welcomed the abolition, in July 2000, of the death penalty.[30o]

6.42 On 21 September 2000 the media observed a one-day news blackout in the country to protest against the abuses against journalists. Journalists stated that the strike was specifically in protest to the beating of a journalist by soldiers, after he was summoned to see the President, over an article he had written for the independent daily, *Le Jour*. Following the meeting the journalist was escorted home by soldiers. He was hospitalised for several days after being badly beaten.[5ba][37f]

6.43 In May 2001 Reporters Sans Frontieres (RSF) denounced the sentencing of two journalists, from Le Patriote, to three months imprisonment for libel.[17z]

E. Freedom of Religion

6.44 At the time of the 1988 census, approximately 39% of the population of Côte d'Ivoire were Muslim, 26% were Christian (mainly Roman Catholic) and approximately 17% followed traditional animist beliefs.[1]

6.45 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) provides for freedom of religion, and both the Guei and Gbagbo governments generally respected this right in practice. There is no state religion, however for historical as well as ethnic reasons, the government informally favours Christianity, in particular the Roman Catholic Church. The government permits the open practice of religion and there are no restrictions on religious ceremonies or teaching.[4a]

6.46 Some Muslims believe that their religious or ethnic affiliation makes them targets of discrimination by the government, with regard to employment and the renewal of national identity cards.[4a] Native Muslims are frequently subject to petty harassment as part of general pressure against Muslims from neighbouring countries and, despite being a plurality of the population, constitute a significant minority at all levels of government. In December 1997 Côte d'Ivoire became an observer member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference at its request.[26a]

6.47 Discrimination based on religion is prohibited by law and the government enforces this provision.[1][4a] Relations between the various religious communities generally are amicable.[4a]

6.48 According to the US State Department followers of traditional indigenous religions (TIR) are subject to societal discrimination. Many leaders of religions such as Christianity or Islam look down on practitioners of TIR as pagans, practitioners of black magic, or human sacrifice. However, there have been no reports of human sacrifice in the country since well before independence. Some Christians or Muslims refuse to associate with practitioners of TIR, whose practices are often shrouded by secrecy and include exclusive initiation rites, oaths of silence and taboos against writing down orally transmitted history. Although the purported practice of black magic or witchcraft continues to be feared widely, it generally is discouraged by TIR, aspects of which commonly purport to offer protection from witchcraft. TIR commonly involves belief in one supreme deity as well as lesser deities or spirits that are to be praised or appeased, some of whom in some religions may be believed to inhabit or otherwise be associated with particular places, natural objects, or man-made images. However, many practitioners of TIR are aware of societal discrimination but have not complained.[4a]

6.49 In December 1999 the Guei government ordered the Superior Islamic Council, a pro-Bédie religious organisation, to disband. They were allowed to resume their activities from March 2000.[4a]

6.50 The Catholic church began to operate community radio stations in 1998. On 21 April 1999 the government authorised Muslims to operate a similar station. Although at the end of 2000 no Muslim station had begun operation.[4a]

F. Ethnicity

6.51 There are more than 60 ethnic groups in Cote d'Ivoire. The country's population is ethnically diverse and made up of five major ethnic groups. According to a 1998 census the Akan family make up more than 42 percent of the population. The largest Akan ethnic group, is the Baoule. About 18 percent belong to the northern Mande family, of which the Malinke are the largest group. About 11 percent belong to the Krou family, of which the Bete are the largest group. The Voltaic family accounts for another 18 percent of the population, of which the Senoufo are the largest group. Approximately 10 percent belong to the southern Mande family, of which the Yacouba are the largest group. Major ethnic groups generally have their own primary languages and their non-urban populations tend to be concentrated regionally.[4a]

6.52 Discrimination based on ethnicity and national origin is prohibited by law. The government enforces these provisions. There are no impediments to the exercise of political rights by any of the ethnic groups. Members of all ethnic groups sometimes practise societal discrimination based on ethnicity, although interethnic marriage is increasingly common in urban areas.[4a]

6.53 At least 26 percent of the population is foreign, of which 95 percent are other Africans. Most of the Africans are from neighbouring countries such as Mali and Burkina Faso and may not claim citizenship legally. Birth in Ivorian national territory does not confer citizenship.[4a]

6.54 Electoral law changes in 1999 limited presidential candidates to those who could prove that both parents had been born in Cote d'Ivoire. Due to this restriction Alassane Ouattara of the RDR was considered ineligible for both the presidential and legislative elections in 2000. The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) also states that a candidate can never have benefited from the use of another nationality.[4a]

6.55 Members of the Bete ethnic group allege discrimination by the more powerful Baoule tribal group. The Bete are part of the Krou group and the Baoule are part of the Akan ethnic group. The Baoule are the single largest tribal group in the country and have been politically dominant. Former President Bedie is from the Baoule ethnic group and President Laurent Gbagbo is Bete, membership of the latter is associated with FPI affiliation.[1]

6.56 There have been historical tensions between the Bete and Baoule groups. According to the Bete, in 1970 members of the army (under Baoule command) killed 4,000 Bete in the Gagnoa region.[1]

6.57 Various ethnic groups have come into conflict on the issue of land ownership about which there has been growing tension in Cote d'Ivoire. In September 1998 four people died when the Guere (Krou) and Baoule (Akan) groups were involved in a land dispute in the Bangolo area, in the west of the country. In December 1998, the National Assembly enacted a new Land Use Law that established that land title does not transfer from the traditional owner to the user simply by virtue of use.[4a][17b]

6.58 There are no legal impediments to the exercise of political rights by any of the more than 60 ethnic groups in the country. Prior to the December 1999 coup, Baoules had always held the position of President. General Guei however is Youra, a subgroup of the Yacouba, one of the

main ethnic groups in the west of the country. The current President, Laurent Gbagbo, is Bete.[4a]

G. Women and Children

6.59 Cote d'Ivoire is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) and the law prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex. In practice women in general occupy a subordinate role in society.[4a][12a]

6.60 Cote d'Ivoire is a signatory to the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Articles 19, 24, 36 and 37 of the Convention indirectly and directly address the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) and the Convention calls on State parties to eradicate such practices.[12a][22a]

6.61 The courts and police generally view domestic violence as a family problem, unless serious bodily harm is inflicted, or the victim lodges a complaint, in which case they may initiate criminal proceedings.[4a]

6.62 Women's advocacy groups have protested against what they consider to be the authorities indifference to female victims of violence. They have called attention to domestic violence and female genital mutilation (FGM). An Association of Ivory Coast for the defence of women's human rights (AIDF) survey in 1998 found that many women refused to discuss their experience of domestic violence but 90 percent of those that completed the survey had been beaten or struck on at least one occasion. The government has no clear cut policy regarding spouse abuse beyond the provisions against violence in the civil code. In December 1998 the National Assembly enacted a law, Concerning Crimes against Women, which forbids and provides criminal penalties for forced, or early marriage and sexual harassment, but says nothing about spouse abuse.[4a] In August 1999 the AIDF began a campaign against the violation of women's rights and domestic violence, with the aim of ensuring the adoption of specific laws protecting women against conjugal violence within households. Media reports suggest Abidjan's suburb of Youpougon was the worse affected area, with women facing serious violence on a daily basis. Cote d'Ivoire has ratified an international convention to eradicate all forms of violence to women. The AIDF suggested that more female police officers should be posted in police stations to deal with women who are victims of domestic violence.[17k]

6.63 The US State Department reports that FGM remains a serious problem. It is considered illegal only as a violation of general laws prohibiting crimes against the person. The new law, Concerning Crimes against Women, enacted in December 1998, specifically forbids FGM and makes those who perform it subject to criminal penalties of imprisonment for up to 5 years and a fine ranging from \$650 to \$3,500. Double penalties apply for medical practitioners.[4a]

6.64 FGM is practised particularly among the rural population in the north and west and to a lesser extent in the centre. The procedure is usually performed on young girls, or at puberty as part of rite of passage. It is almost always done outside modern medical facilities and techniques and hygiene do not meet modern medical standards. According to the World Health Organisation and the AIDF (Association of Ivory Coast for the defence of women's human rights), as many as 60 percent of women have undergone FGM. Since the new law on FGM was

enacted in December 1998, 6 girls in Abidjan's Port Bouet district had been mutilated. Police and social workers neither acted to prevent the mutilation, or to arrest the girls' parents.[4a]

6.65 An elderly woman, who was a FGM practitioner for 40 years, led delegations to remote regions of Côte d'Ivoire urging former colleagues to stop FGM. Eradicating FGM has been an uphill struggle as it forms an important part of traditional rituals among some Ivorian ethnic groups. Some women practice FGM because it is a source of income or they may be paid in kind.[22a]

6.66 As a result of the active campaign against FGM undertaken by the government and NGOs, several people were arrested in the north of the country for performing excisions. In prior years arrests were only made following the death of the FGM victim. In July 2000 two Ivorian women were arrested for practising FGM on girls aged between 10 and 14.[4a]

6.67 The Ministries of Public Health and of Employment, Public Service and Social Security seek to safeguard the welfare of children, and the government has also encouraged the formation of NGOs such as the Abidjan Legal Centre for the Defence of Children. In 1996 the government announced a series of measures aimed at reducing the population of street children. These steps included holding parents legally and financially responsible for their abandoned children and the development of training centres where children can learn a trade. One such centre opened in Dabou in July 1999.[4a] In September 1998 a 16 year old street child was taken from a roadblock by police. The police commissioner announced the following day that he had hanged himself in his cell. Friends accused the police of beating him to death. No arrests were made.[3c][22a]

6.68 Cities, especially Abidjan, have large populations of street children. Some children are employed as domestics and are subject to sexual abuse, harassment and other forms of mistreatment by their employers, according to AIDF (Association of Ivory Coast for the defence of women's human rights) and press reports. The law prohibits forced and bonded child labour, although the government does not enforce this effectively.[4a] In May 2001 President Gbagbo was reported to be looking to present parliament with a bill aimed at eliminating child labour in the country.[8a]

6.69 The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons and there were credible reports that it occurs. It was reported that Malian children were trafficked and sold into forced labour on Ivorian plantations. These children were reportedly forced to work 12 hour days in the fields and were locked at night in crowded sheds, with their clothing confiscated. The governments of both Mali and Cote d'Ivoire confirmed the reports. The government of Mali and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) took steps to halt this trafficking and repatriate the children. More than 270 Malian children were returned to their families in 2000.[4a]

6.70 Primary education is compulsory, but this requirement is not effectively enforced. Primary education is free but usually ends at the age of 13. Secondary school entrance is restricted by an entrance exam. Students who pass the exam may elect to go to free public secondary schools. There is a parental preference for educating boys. According to UNICEF statistics, 79 percent of males and 58 percent of females of primary school age reportedly enrolled between 1990 and 1996. More recent statistics are not available.[4a] In May 2001 President Gbagbo informed the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) that Cote d'Ivoire was committed to a program of education reform with a goal of free and mandatory schooling until

the age of 16.[8a] The OAU decided, with effect from the end of May 2001, to change its name to the African Union.[8b]

6.71 An analysis on AIDS in Africa said children were affected by the direct impact it had on their families. Nearly seven and a half million children are said to have lost their mothers or both parents through AIDS. This left them without breadwinners and forced them on to the streets. It also had an effect on the education system as one teacher a day is said to be dying through AIDS in Cote d'Ivoire, making the closure of some schools likely.[29a]

6.72 In April 1999 twelve members of the under-19 rugby team, taking part in the Rugby World Championships in Llanelli, Wales, left unannounced from their lodgings. The first disappeared on 4 April. Another five left during the evening of the same day, with a further six vanishing on 6 April. All the youths were 18 years old and could speak little or no English.[28a] In early May 1999 they re-appeared in London reportedly waiting the chance to cross to France, although their documents had been confiscated by the team management on their arrival in Britain. This was a necessary precaution, given that four members of the senior rugby team vanished on a tour of France in 1998.[31a]

G. Freedom to Travel

6.73 The new constitution (from 24 July 2000) does not provide specifically for freedom of movement, but the government generally does not restrict internal travel. However, police and customs officials regularly demand small amounts of money or goods for contrived or minor infractions by motorists or passengers.[4a]

6.74 Citizens may normally travel abroad and emigrate freely and have the right of voluntary repatriation. However, the government severely restricted political party leaders from travelling outside of the country in 2000. There are no known cases of revocation of citizenship, although the public debate over the citizenship of Alassane Ouattara continued at the end of 2000.[4a] On 27 July 2000 a two-month long travel ban, imposed on political leaders leading up to the constitution referendum, was lifted by the military government.[30g] On the same day Alassane Ouattara was reported to have been prevented from leaving the country despite having prior authorisation and the travel restrictions having been lifted.[5ax]

6.75 On 7 March 1997 President Bedie issued a statement concerning those Ivorians who had left the country to seek asylum. Bedie rejected allegations of persecution as unfounded and invited them to return to Côte d'Ivoire where they were guaranteed the right to exercise their civil and political rights.[14c]

6.76 The US State Department reported that in 2000 there were no reports that persons who had a valid claim to asylum or refugee status were repatriated involuntarily to a country where they feared persecution.[4a]

I. Medical

6.77 In March 2001 the government announced that it had struck a deal with leading pharmaceutical companies to cut the cost of HIV/AIDS treatment. The reduction to the price of anti-retroviral drugs ranges between 80 and 90 percent, reducing the cost of treating a patient from 300,000 CFA francs to between 65,000 and 75,000 CFA francs (around \$100) per month.

Cote d'Ivoire is one of the worst affected countries, with an estimated 10 percent of the population diagnosed as HIV positive.**[5bc][30u]**

Parti progressiste ivoirien (PPI)
Parti pour la protection de l'environnement (PPE)
Parti du rassemblement du peuple pour la jeunesse de Côte d'Ivoire (PRJCI)
Parti pour la reconstruction nationale et la démocratie (PRND)
Parti réformiste démocratique ivoirien (PRDI)
Parti pour la réhabilitation ivoirienne du social et de l'économie (PRISE)
Parti républicain de Côte d'Ivoire (PRCI)
Parti socialiste ivoirien (PSI)
Rassemblement des forces démocratiques (RFD)
Rassemblement pour le progrès social (RPS)
Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)
Rassemblement des sociaux-démocrates (RSD)
Union des libéraux pour la République (ULR)
Union nationale des démocrates (UND)
Union des paysans, des ouvriers et des salariés de Côte d'Ivoire (UPOSCI)
Union pour le progrès social (UPS)
Union des sociaux-démocrates (USD)

In April 1995 the FPI, RDR and the Union des forces démocratiques (comprising the PIT, PPS, PLCI and the UND) formed the Front Républicain (FR)

Alliance pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme (ADS) (Alliance for Democracy and Socialism)
Formed on 1 August 2000 and made up of four parties - the Party for Environmental Protection, the Renaissance, the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS) and the Party for National Reconstruction and Democracy.

Union pour la Cause du Peuple (UCP) - launched 25 November 2000.
Secretary-General is Jean-Baptiste Omoui-Gba.

Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI) - launched 25 February 2001.
President is Paul Yao Akoto, Vice-President is Paul Guy, Secretary-General is Robert Dion Guiokan

PROMINENT PEOPLE

Martial Ahipeaud: Former Secretary General of the Federation Estudiantine et Scolaire de la Cote d'Ivoire (FESCI)

Aimé Henri Konan Bédié: As president of the National Assembly, he assumed duties of the president in accordance with Article 11 of the constitution on the death of Felix Houphouët-Boigny on 7 December 1993. Mr Bedie won the presidential election on 22 October 1995 and was the current chairman of the PDCI-RDA and President of the Republic of Cote d'Ivoire until he was ousted in a coup on 24 December 1999.

Laurent Gbagbo: Founded the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) in 1982 and is its current Chairman. He contested the country's first multi-party presidential elections in 1990, but was defeated by the incumbent, Dr Felix Houphouët-Boigny. He did not contest the 1995 presidential elections. Mr Gbagbo was re-elected as one of 13 FPI deputies in the National Assembly in the postponed legislative elections in December 1996. Gbagbo became President following presidential elections in October 2000. He was inaugurated on 26 October 2000.

Robert Guei: Leader of the coup in December 1999. He declared himself President on 24 December 1999 and formed the Conseil National de Salut Publique (CNSP) : (National Committee for Public Salvation) party, to oversee a transitional period leading to Presidential elections in October 2000.

Felix Houphouët-Boigny: Became the country's first president after independence from France on 7 August 1960. He was the sole candidate for the presidency at every election until 1990. Despite constitutional provision for a plural political system, his party, the PDCI-RDA was the only legal party until that year. Dr Houphouët-Boigny won the 1990 multi-party presidential elections in 1990. He died in office on 7 December 1993.

René Degny-Ségui: President of the Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme (LIDHO).

Daniel Kablan Duncan: Former Prime Minister. Minister of Planning and Industrial Development.

Djéni Kobina Leader of the RDR which he launched with PDCI reformers in 1994. Boycotted the presidential elections in 1995. Died aged 61 on 18 October 1998.

General Gaston Koné Former Minister of Security, removed from office in August 1996.

Pascal Affi N'Guessan Prime Minister and head of the FPI.

Alassane Ouattara Former governor of the Banque centrale de l'Afrique de l'ouest. Appointed by Dr Houphouët-Boigny in 1990 to head a commission to formulate economic adjustment measures. He was appointed Prime Minister. He resigned his premiership two days after Dr Houphouët-Boigny's death. In May 1994 Mr Ouattara was appointed deputy managing

director of the IMF in Washington. In July 1995 the RDR invited Ouattara to stand as its presidential candidate. He declined. He announced his intention to leave the IMF in July 1999 to return to politics. He would be the RDR's chosen candidate in the 2000 elections.

Abou Drahamane Sangaré Secretary General of the FPI and director of the newspaper La Voie, organ of the FPI.

Francis Wodié First National Secretary of PIT. He contested the October 1995 presidential election. He failed to secure re-election to the National Assembly in the legislative elections, which followed in November 1995. In August 1998 he accepted a post in the government as the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This post was lost following the coup in December 1999.

Paul Akoto Yao Leader of the Union for Democracy and Peace in Cote d'Ivoire (UDPCI), a party close to the former military junta leader Gen. Robert Guei.

CHRONOLOGY

7 August 1960 Unilateral independence from France declared.

1990 *Feb/March* Demonstrations held by students and workers against the government's austerity policies. *April* The Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de la Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) is established. Following the death of a student when troops dispersed demonstrators, all educational establishments are closed. The 1989/90 academic year is declared invalid. Alassane Ouattara is appointed to head a commission to formulate adjustment measures. *May* Plural political system is adopted. *September* Laurent Gbagbo is chosen by the FPI as its presidential candidate. *October* Félix Houphouët-Boigny is endorsed by the PDCI-RDA as its presidential candidate. On **28 October** the first contested presidential election takes place. The incumbent, Dr Houphouët-Boigny, is re-elected for a seventh term. *November* The legislature approves two constitutional amendments with regard to Article 11 and the appointment of a Prime Minister, which goes to Alassane Ouattara. On **25 November** legislative elections take place, contested by approximately 500 candidates representing some 17 parties. Official results have PDCI-RDA with 163 seats, FPI with 9, PIT had 1 (Francis Wodié), and there were 2 independently held seats. Bedie is confirmed as president of the National Assembly.

1991 *May* Security forces use violent methods to disperse a students' meeting at the University of Abidjan. Students stage demonstrations in at the armed forces. *June* Student is killed by FESCI members for defying an order to boycott classes. On **21 June** the government bans FESCI by Decree No. 91-420. *July* 11 FESCI activists are arrested, suspected of involvement in the death of the student, prompting further protests. *August* Government withdraws troops from the campus, suspends legal proceedings against FESCI activist, restores the right of "non academic" assembly on the campus (ban on FESCI remains).

1992 *January* Publication of the findings of the commission of enquiry appointed by President Houphouët Boigny to investigate the security forces actions at the university. The Chief of General Staff of the armed forces, General Robert Guei, found directly responsible for the actions of his troops. President Houphouët-Boigny states that no-one will be disciplined. Immediate demonstrations by FESCI members on the university campus. *February* 16 FESCI leaders arrested. FPI organises demonstration of some 20,000 people degenerates into violence. More than 100 detained, including Laurent Gbagbo and René Dégny-Segui. *March* Gbagbo, Dégny-Segui and 7 others each fined and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment. *April* FPI deputies begin boycott of National Assembly in protest against imprisonment of Gbagbo and other FPI deputies. *June* President Houphouët-Boigny returns to Cote d'Ivoire after an absence of some 5 months. *July* President Houphouët-Boigny declares an amnesty for all those convicted of political offences since the time of the 1990 disturbances. *September* Violent student protests prompted by the abolition of free public transport for students in higher education. *November* University students refuse to sit examinations and are reportedly dispersed by security forces using tear gas.

1993 *March* About 45 members of the elite presidential guard take 2 NCOs hostage at the presidential palace in Abidjan demanding pay increases. They end their protest following direct intervention by Houphouët-Boigny. *April* 250 presidential guards' mutiny in Yamoussoukro

again demanding salary increases. **April/May** Further student unrest after a gathering of some 3000 students at the University of Abidjan organised by members of FESCI is dispersed by members of the security forces. **May** Houphouët-Boigny leaves Côte d'Ivoire and spends 6 months receiving medical treatment in France and Switzerland. **August** Students stage a 2-week hunger strike outside the cathedral in Abidjan following rumours that university accommodation is to be privatised and to demand the payment of grant arrears. **7 December** President Houphouët-Boigny dies in Yamoussoukro. The same day Henri Bedie announces that he will assume the duties of the presidency with immediate effect. On **9 December** Ouattara resigns his premiership. On **10 December** the Supreme Court confirms Bedie as president. Daniel Kablan Duncan, formerly minister-delegate, responsible for the economy, finance and planning, is appointed to succeed Ouattara as Prime Minister.

1994 **January** 50% devaluation of the CFA Franc. **February** Houphouët-Boigny's state funeral takes place in the basilica in Yamoussoukro. **April** Bedie is elected chairman of the PDCI-RDA. Abou Drahaime Sangaré (head of an influential publishing group, also deputy of the FPI) is imprisoned in his capacity as director of the daily, La Voie, together with other journalists from his newspaper. **May** Ouattara is appointed to the post of deputy managing director of the IMF, based in Washington. **May/June** Campaign of action by students in an attempt to secure the payment of grant arrears, resulting in numerous arrests. **June** Rassemblement des républicains (RDR) formed from a split by Ouattara loyalists from the PDCI-RDA. **December** Sangaré released in accordance with a presidential amnesty for some 2,000 detainees. Controversial electoral code adopted in preparation for the presidential and legislative elections to take place in October and November 1995.

1995 **April** Front républicain (FR) formed. **June** National Assembly approves proposals for legislation permitting the extension of the death penalty (already in existence for murder convictions, although no record of implementation since independence) to cases of robbery with violence. Abou Drahaime Sangaré is beaten by security forces at the office of the Minister of Security, General Gaston Koné, apparently on the latter's orders. An FPI congress formally adopts Gbagbo as its candidate for presidency. **July** The RDR invites Ouattara to stand as its presidential candidate. **August** Ouattara declines invitation to stand as RDR's candidate. Ouattara holds amicable talks with President Bedie who reiterates government's commitment to electoral code. At the end of August, PDCI-RDA officially adopts Bedie as the party's presidential candidate. **September** The government imposes a 3 month ban on political demonstrations, citing the need to ensure continuation of economic activity. Opposition groups counters that the ban is unconstitutional. Clear intention to continue to hold protest marches. Clashes between demonstrators and security forces continue in Abidjan and elsewhere. **October** Deadline for submission of candidates for the presidency election reached at beginning of October. The FPI and RDR stated that they will not be contesting the elections long as the conditions were not "clear and open". Coup attempt reportedly takes place. On **22 October** Presidential elections take place as scheduled. FR calls for an "active boycott" of the elections. Generally calm following elections however, violence between the Baoule and Bete ethnic groups is a cause for concern. **November** Government announces the establishment of a commission of enquiry to investigate the situation. In early November the FR reaches an accord with the government and abandons its threatened boycott of the elections. Mid-November the government announces that voting in three constituencies in Gagnoa will be postponed due to disruption arising from recent disturbances. On **26 November** legislative elections take place.

December Abou Drahome Sangaré, Director of La Voie, and other journalists from his newspaper, are imprisoned for 2 years for insulting the Head of State. The court orders the suspension of La Voie for 3 months.

1996 **February** Municipal elections take place. **October** PDCI Congress at which President Bedie suggests an imprecise role in government for members of the opposition. **December** President Bedie pardons Sangaré and 2 other La Voie journalists at the end of the month. On **31 December** postponed legislative elections take place.

1997 **7 January** Court sentences three student leaders to 2 years in prison and fines them 300,000 CFA francs (\$572) for inciting violence and disrupting public order charges. A fourth student is acquitted and discharged. **4 February** Guillaume Soro, Secretary General of FESCI is arrested for inciting student disobedience. On **27 February** President Bedie signs a presidential decree releasing all students detained during recent disturbances, including the 3 jailed on **7 January** and Soro who is released without charge. Government statement announcing the creation of a permanent committee to oversee discussions between the government and representatives of the student body. **March** The government releases the soldiers detained for an alleged attempted coup plot at the time of the 1995 elections. **9 August** Government announces proposed constitutional changes. **23 September** University campuses scheduled to open. FESCI backs boycott of classes. On **30 September** the National Conference on the Future of Higher Education in Côte d'Ivoire opens. President Bedie announces measures to improve conditions in universities and the lifting of the ban on FESCI. **10 October** FESCI Secretary General announces that FESCI is lifting its strike call and urges students to return to classes. On **13 October** Presidential Decree No. 97-599 rescinds Decree No. 91-420 banning FESCI.

1998 **February** The government signs an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. **March** A government reshuffle sees the appointment of Adama Coulibaly, the former deputy secretary general of the RDR. He was then expelled from the party. **7 May** University lecturer is beaten up by two students who are banned from higher education for four years. On **14 May** a student dies in clashes with police during a protest over a school levy. **30 June** Constitutional changes are passed by the National Assembly and denounced by opposition parties. **July** Alleged cheating in school examinations prompts demonstrations by school children. **7/14 September** Opposition marches against constitutional reforms. **3 October** Government announces proposed amnesty for those convicted/sentenced in connection with the "active boycott" of the 1995 presidential election. On **18 October** Djéni Kobina, leader of the RDR, dies aged 61 years.

1999 **March** A court sentenced six criminals aged between 18 and 20 to death for armed robbery. On **26 March** the university of Bouake was closed indefinitely following student boycotts. **April** Twelve members of the under-19 rugby team disappear from a tournament in Wales. On **1 April** the university room of FESCI leader, Ble Goude was the target of a grenade attack. He was not in the room at the time. On **26 April** students took to the streets protesting against various issues. This triggered clashes with the police and looting in Youpougon. A boycott of classes followed and on the **28 April** the university authorities banned, until further notice, campus meetings and sit-ins at the National University of Abidjan. Prison warders began an indefinite strike. At the end of the month 'Le Populaire' journalist Raphael Lapke was arrested and was put in prison to await trial. **May** The government and the RDR held negotiations but could not agree on issues to the organisation of the 2000 elections. Also in May the authorities began issuing identity cards to the refugees in the country. On **2 May** President Bedie

announced that students who break the law will have to face the consequences with no hope of clemency. On **4 May** student protests took place in Gagnoa and Lakota. On **6 May** the government ordered the indefinite closure of primary and secondary schools in Bouake and Abidjan to stem the student unrest. On **21 May** the government sentenced six students to five years imprisonment for acts of violence and vandalism. On **27 May** students renewed their protests at Cocody campus. Also on **27 May** President Bedie officially declared the national commission for banning chemical weapons had been installed in the country. On **28 May** students boycotted classes and demonstrated at Bouake and Gagnoa. On **29 May** the government ordered the indefinite closure of all university halls of residence following continued protests. On **31 May** Alassane Ouattara confirmed he would be leader of the RDR at the beginning of August 1999. **June** The EU froze structural agreement loans due to irregularities found after a routine audit. On **1 June** riot police used tear gas to break up protests in Abidjan and Bouake. The FPI expressed its concern over the handling of the situation by the government. On **23 June** FESCI announced the suspension of its strike action in all schools, colleges and universities. On **30 June** the press laws were changed by parliament to replace some custodial sentences with fines. **July** The population was officially put at 15.4 million and growing at 3.3 percent annually. On **11 July** the FPI re-elected Laurent Gbagbo as its leader and candidate for the 2000 presidential elections. On **28 July** eleven government officials were imprisoned for involvement in the embezzlement of 17.9 billion CFA francs of EU aid money. **August** On **3 August** it was stated that because of all the student strikes the 1998/99 academic year had been declared 'invalid'. On **5 August** police used tear gas to break up a student union conference in Youpougon. On **17 August** FESCI leader Ble Goude was arrested. On **24 August** he was handed over to the courts to decide his fate following an investigation. 200 students have already been sentenced to five years each in prison. Also in August Alassane Ouattara accused police of harassment. President Bedie stated that Ouattara was a national of Burkina Faso and could not stand in the 2000 elections. Ouattara said he could prove he was Ivorian. On **25 August** riots occurred in Youpougon because of rising fuel prices. On **30 August** Parliament voted to amnesty soldiers implicated in political violence linked to the 1995 elections. **September** Investigation initiated into Alassane Ouattara's identity papers. An Amnesty was extended to military officer's accused of involvement in the October 1995 coup plot. **October** The RDR party staged a protest on **16 October** over media access. In a follow up demonstration on **27 October** twenty of the party's leaders were arrested. President Bedie granted a pardon for 60 sentenced students, following demonstrations between April and August 1999. The government announced that criminal libel convictions would be punishable by fines rather than imprisonment, except those cases of libel against the president. **November** Eleven of the RDR leaders were imprisoned. President Bedie banned all public demonstrations in the country. **December** A coup took place on **24 December** and General Robert Guei assumed the Presidency, forming the National Committee for Public Salvation (CNSP). The National Assembly was dissolved and the constitution suspended. The imprisoned RDR leaders are released during the coup. They were subsequently pardoned.

2000 **January** A new transitional government was announced. Also the announcement of general elections to be by the end of October 2000. **February** The CNSP suspended the holding of political rallies until further notice. **March** The Swiss government freezes former president Bedie's accounts on suspicion of corruption. **May** The CNSP announce the election timetable. **July** On 4 and 5 soldiers mutiny in Abidjan and other main towns. At the end of the month a new constitution and electoral code are put to a referendum and are approved. The death penalty is abolished under the new constitution. **August** A peaceful demonstration is held to request Guei's resignation. **September** An attack takes place on Guei's private residence.

October Presidential elections take place on **22 October** and Laurent Gbagbo is inaugurated as the new President on **26 October**. **December** Legislative elections take place on **10 December**.

2001 **January** By-elections take place on **14 January**. **March** The government announced a deal with pharmaceutical companies which should cut the cost of treatment for HIV/AIDS. On **25 March** local elections took place. In **May** the defence minister denied that there had been a foiled coup attempt on **16 May**. On **23 July** Prime Minister Pascal Affi N'Guessan was elected to replace Laurent Gbagbo as head of the ruling FPI. In **August** a military court acquitted 8 gendarmes of the massacre of 57 men following the October 2000 presidential elections. Also in **August** students staged a protest against the non-payment of university grants.

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(b) 08/12/99 (h) 31/07/00 (n) 13/09/00 (t) 14/11/00
(c) 26/12/99 (i) 17/08/00 (o) 19/09/00 (u) 10/03/01
(d) 29/12/99 (j) 20/08/00 (p) 20/09/00 (v) 23/07/01
(e) 03/01/00 (k) 26/08/00 (q) 21/09/00 (w) 28/08/01
(f) 05/01/00 (l) 08/09/00 (r) 23/09/00
- [31] **Sunday Times Newspaper**
(a) 09/05/99
- [32] **Dow Jones Emerging Markets Report**
(a) 24/12/99
- [33] **Gabonese Africa Radio, Libreville**
(a) 30/06/99 (b) 29/08/01
- [34] **BBC World Monitoring Service: 'Notre Voir', Abidjan - Ivorian Newspaper**
(a) 02/06/99 (b) 25/03/01
- [35] **Associated Press Writer**
(a) 27/10/99
- [36] **International Freedom of Expression Exchange, Toronto**
(a) 28/12/99
- [37] **Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN)**
(a) 24/12/99 (d) 18/08/00 (g) 30/10/00
(b) 25/07/00 (e) 20/09/00 (h) 05/01/01
(c) 17/08/00 (f) 21/09/00 (i) 16/04/01
- [38] **CIA World Fact Book Almanac - Elections**
(a) 22/10/00