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Cote d'Ivoire - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Friday 13 February 2015

Information on the current security situation; Information on the current political situation; Are pro-Gbagbo defendants including senior FPI figures being released

A paper issued in December 2014 by the *United Nations Security Council* notes that:

“With the presidential election of 2015 already on the horizon, political posturing and pre-campaign activities have dominated political developments in Côte d'Ivoire. Political dialogue, which had stalled since January, resumed on 22 May, following which the Government committed to a series of confidence-building measures, including the release of additional associates of former President Laurent Gbagbo, welcoming the return of those in self-imposed exile, unfreezing their bank accounts and returning illegally occupied properties” (United Nations Security Council (12 December 2014) *Thirty-fifth progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Cote d'Ivoire*).

This report also states:

“The security situation in Côte d'Ivoire continued to improve but remained fragile, with sporadic incidents of armed attacks, banditry and other violent crimes persisting, particularly near the border with Liberia” (ibid).

A report issued in December 2014 by *Human Rights Watch* points out that:

“Heavily-armed criminals are subjecting residents of northern Côte d'Ivoire to a relentless pace of often-violent attacks on buses and private vehicles and in villages, Human Rights Watch said today. Security forces have largely failed to protect the population or investigate the crimes” (Human Rights Watch (15 December 2014) *Côte d'Ivoire: Nowhere to Turn for Protection*).

This document also notes:

“The security situation in northern Côte d'Ivoire has been unstable since a military rebellion split the country in half in 2002. In 2009, the rebel New Forces marginally handed over control of the north to civilian authorities. But rebel commanders continued to exercise considerable control over security and judicial affairs in the north until the end of the 2011 post-election crisis and were loath to take action against the tens of thousands of former combatants who had fought with them. The presence of large numbers of former combatants in the north, who have yet to be disarmed, reintegrated into society or absorbed into the armed forces undermines security in the north” (ibid).

It is also noted in this report that:

“Criminality – and armed robbery in particular – has been an acute problem in Côte d'Ivoire for years, particularly in the northern and western regions. Officials from the

European Union, the UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire, and Ivorian human rights groups have repeatedly expressed concern about the problem" (ibid).

This report also states:

"Tens of thousands of armed men who fought with the rebel New Forces during the 2002-2004 armed conflict, and subsequently backed pro-Ouattara forces during the 2010-2011 political crisis have yet to be disarmed or reintegrated into civilian or military structures" (ibid).

It is also pointed out in this document that:

"Three years after the 2011 post-election violence, the Ivorian government, now partly consisting of former New Forces fighters, has made some progress in redeploying and equipping police, gendarmes, and judicial officers across the north. However, analysts, victims, and local government officials told Human Rights Watch that the security forces routinely fail to protect the population from criminals, because the security forces are inadequately equipped to handle the scale of the problem, and to a lesser extent because of what those interviewed believed to be indifference" (ibid).

A paper issued in January 2015 by the *United Nations News Service* states:

"While praising Côte d'Ivoire's significant progress towards lasting peace and economic recovery, the top United Nations official in the country told the Security Council today that vigilance and determination will still be required to hold onto recent gains and lay the ground for presidential elections next fall...Aïchatou Mindaoudou... Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Operation...briefed the Council on efforts undertaken during the past six months to consolidate peace in the West African country and ensure steady economic gains... While noting that the security situation has "significantly improved," Ms. Mindaoudou pointed out that armed robbery, banditry and other criminal activities continue to present challenges. At the same time, she was pleased to tell the Council there had been a slight decrease in inter-communal conflict" (United Nations News Service (13 January 2015) *Côte d'Ivoire: Welcoming recent progress, UN envoy urges vigilance in run-up to elections*).

In January 2015 *Jane's Country Risk Daily Report* states:

"The Ouattara regime has a much firmer grip on national security than that during Gbagbo's tenure thanks to the unifying of the country and its army, but attacks linked to pro-Gbagbo interests are still being carried out" (Jane's Country Risk Daily Report (22 January 2015) *Ivorian authorities' failure to demobilise 30,000 former combatants raises risks of militia attacks leading up to election*).

A report issued in January 2014 by the *Associated Press* points out that:

"State media in Ivory Coast says two soldiers have been killed in a raid on military posts in the southwest of the country...Western Ivory Coast was hit hard during Ivory Coast's 2010-11 postelection violence, which erupted after former President Laurent Gbagbo refused to concede defeat to his successor, Alassane Ouattara. Pro-Gbagbo fighters fled along with civilians into neighboring Liberia, and raids targeting the new army have occurred sporadically ever since" (Associated Press (10 January 2015) *Attack on Ivory Coast army posts kills 2 soldiers*).

In January 2015 *Human Rights Watch* states:

“Ahead of the 2015 general election, the government of President Alassane Ouattara made some progress in security sector reform and improving discipline within the security forces” (Human Rights Watch (29 January 2015) *World Report 2015: Cote d’Ivoire*).

This document also notes that:

“In 2014, the judiciary provisionally released some 200 pro-Gbagbo defendants, raising concerns of a de facto amnesty for perpetrators from all sides” (ibid).

A report issued in January 2015 by *StarAfrica* notes:

“Some fifty Ivoirian senior officials who had served under the rule of former head of State Laurent Gbagbo were released Wednesday, the Ivoirian justice unveiled in a statement...The General Prosecutor of Cote d’Ivoire has instructed the interim release of the some fifty seniors of officials under Gbagbo detained for active participation in the deadly post-poll crisis...” (StarAfrica (21 January 2015) *Cote d’Ivoire releases 50 pro-Gbagbo officials*).

No further information on these issues could be found among sources available to the RDC.

References

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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