



Côte d'Ivoire: NPWJ calls on new government to bring an end to violence and ensure accountability for all crimes committed

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After months of political stalemate and fighting, the incumbent President of Côte d'Ivoire, Laurent Gbagbo, who had refused to hand over power to the President-elect Alassane Ouattara, has been apprehended in Abidjan on 11 April 2011 by forces loyal to Ouattara. Several human rights groups and the international press have reported that both pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouattara forces have been implicated in extreme violence against civilians before, during and after the arrest of President Gbagbo, including women and children, which may constitute serious violations of international law.

Statement by Alison Smith, Legal Counsel of No Peace Without Justice:

“No Peace Without Justice (NPWJ) and the Transnational Nonviolent Radical Party (TRP) call on President Alassane Ouattara to fulfil his commitment to investigate serious violations of international law committed by all forces, to prevent further reprisals of violence and make all efforts to bringing about reconciliation in this sharply divided country.

“To end Côte d'Ivoire's longstanding cycle of abuse and impunity, the new government should urgently take decisive measures to ensure that all perpetrators of human rights abuses against the civilian population are held accountable for their actions and brought to justice, irrespective of their rank or political allegiance. They must do so not only to provide redress for the events of the past, but to prevent crimes being committed today, tomorrow and in the weeks to come.

“This includes cooperation with the International Criminal Court: in 2003, the former Ivorian Government recognised the ICC's jurisdiction over events in Côte d'Ivoire since 19 September 2002. The new government should take immediate action to become a State Party to the Rome Statute for the ICC, to overcome the inertia that seems to have existed since that declaration. While we welcome the Prosecutor's indications last week of an intention to open an investigation into recent events in Côte d'Ivoire, there is a serious need to take real, concrete action to answer the victims' cries for justice over the past decade.

“Côte d'Ivoire's own history demonstrates that granting impunity for serious crimes only encourages those crimes to continue, whether by the same the perpetrators or others. The people of Côte d'Ivoire deserve a chance at lasting peace, which in turn requires impartial and effective justice. The new government should demonstrate its clear commitment to stand on the side of victims of human rights violations and not to rally behind their perpetrators”.

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