

To all Member States of the UN Human Rights Council

December 21, 2010

RE: Call for a special session on the situation of human rights in Côte d'Ivoire

Your Excellency,

We urge your government to support a special session of the Human Rights Council to address the situation in Côte d'Ivoire. With reports of more than 50 killed, over 200 injured, and at least 470 arbitrarily arrested and detained, Côte d'Ivoire already raises serious human rights concerns, and there is a substantial risk of further violence. As you know, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navanethem Pillay expressed deep concern on Sunday about the growing evidence of massive human rights violations taking place in the country, including reports of the abduction of individuals from their homes, especially at night, by unidentified armed individuals in military uniform. Very credible reports of illegal detention, extrajudicial killings, and the recruitment of foreign mercenaries have likewise come from journalists, human rights activists, and the UN.

We understand that member states of ECOWAS and the African Union in Geneva have been discussing possible actions of the HRC, but have deferred taking action until further consultations can occur. We believe that this is an important occasion for engagement by the members of the African group and other states and are convinced that further delay should be avoided given the risk that the situation will continue to deteriorate. A special session could condemn attacks on civilians as well as UN peacekeepers and staff, and firmly remind those responsible that they will be held accountable, in accordance with international human rights law. The session could also emphasize the concern for destabilizing the region and the need for cooperative measures to address this crisis.

In particular, we believe that a special session could make an important contribution to addressing this crisis by requesting the High Commissioner for Human Rights to appoint a special representative to report regularly to the HRC on developments on the ground until the situation stabilizes. The special representative would liaise with the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) and ensure that the HRC is appropriately informed of human rights violations taking place in the country.

At this critical moment, the Human Rights Council should ensure that is fully briefed on the situation in Côte d'Ivoire and take steps to address the ongoing violence before it escalates. Your support for a special session is essential.

Sincerely,

1. African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies (ACDHRS)
2. African Democracy Forum (ADF)



3. Asian Forum for Human Rights Development (FORUM-ASIA)



4. Asian Legal Resource Centre (ALRC)



5. Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales – CELS



6. Conectas Human Rights



7. Democracy Coalition Project



8. East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project (EHAHRDP)



9. Egyptian Initiative for Personal Rights (EIPR)



10. Human Rights Agenda Nigeria



11. Human Rights Watch



12. International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)



13. Partnership for Justice, Nigeria

14. West African Human Rights Defenders Network (ROADHH / WARDHN)



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