

## CÔTE D'IVOIRE

*In Côte d'Ivoire, armed groups and military forces destroyed, damaged, looted or used almost 500 schools and universities during the 2010-2011 post-election crisis.*<sup>598</sup>

### CONTEXT

Civil conflict divided Côte d'Ivoire for more than a decade and caused the deaths of thousands of civilians. In 2002, a rebellion in the north led to a military-political stalemate in which the rebels, known as the New Forces, retained territory in defiance of the government-controlled south. At this time, the majority of teachers in the north fled and nearly all primary and secondary schools there ceased to function. Despite a 2007 peace agreement, few teachers returned to the north and, as a result, hundreds of thousands of children continued to miss out on education.<sup>599</sup>

People hoped that the presidential elections, held in October 2010 after repeated delays, would mark an end to the conflict. But renewed violence erupted when the incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, refused to concede victory to the internationally recognized president-elect, Alassane Ouattara, after a run-off vote in November 2010. Several months of failed negotiations led to fighting that left some 3,000 dead and at least 500,000 displaced.<sup>600</sup> During this period, members of the Student Federation of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) – a pro-Gbagbo militant student group created in the 1990s – spread fear throughout the education system by attacking students, teachers and officials. The situation came to a head in April 2011 when pro-Ouattara forces overran the south and captured Gbagbo in Abidjan, with the support of French forces.

Gross primary enrolment was 90 per cent (2011), while the rate of transition to secondary school was 49 per cent (2011)<sup>601</sup> and gross tertiary enrolment was 8 per cent (2009).<sup>602</sup> The adult literacy rate was 57 per cent (2011).<sup>603</sup>

### ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

Attacks occurred throughout 2009-2012 but predominantly from late 2010 to mid-2011 in association with the post-election crisis. The UN reported a total of 477 schools destroyed, damaged, looted or used by armed groups and military forces during this period, although it is not clear whether they were all targeted.<sup>604</sup>

Monitoring undertaken by the Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster indicates that a total of 224 attacks on education facilities in 15 education districts took place between January and June 2011,<sup>605</sup> with at least half occurring in Abidjan.<sup>606</sup> Approximately 180 schools were pillaged and 173 were destroyed, burned down or damaged.<sup>607</sup> Twenty schools were attacked by bombs and eight were left with unexploded ordnance.<sup>608</sup> At least 23 administrative buildings were also attacked.<sup>609</sup> As of July 2011, an estimated 67,000 children were prevented from accessing schooling as a result.<sup>610</sup>

Though 97 per cent of schools reopened by late April 2011, some 140,000 previously enrolled students had not yet returned to school by July 2011.<sup>611</sup> Teachers were also still absent in a number of areas, with almost 50 per cent missing from schools in Man and Odienné one month after the crisis.<sup>612</sup>

### ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND EDUCATION PERSONNEL

From 2009 through the post-election violence, members of FESCI created an atmosphere of fear

and intimidation in secondary schools and universities by injuring and sometimes killing fellow students as well as teachers and administrators, often with impunity.<sup>613</sup> On 26 March 2010, for example, FESCI and the National Student Union of Côte d'Ivoire of the Dimbokro modern high school fought pitched battles in Dimbokro. Eight FESCI members, armed with machetes, attacked and killed a student in the city centre. Four FESCI members were arrested by police and schools subsequently closed for a period.<sup>614</sup>

### MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

At least 23 school premises were used by armed forces during the crisis, including three to store weapons and four as collective graves.<sup>615</sup> These occupations of schools – especially in the west of the country – were predominantly committed by the Republican Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI), formerly the 'New Forces', who fought for President-elect Ouattara. The FRCI typically used primary and secondary schools as well as adult education centres for relatively short periods of time when occupying one village to launch attacks on another,<sup>616</sup> although in September 2011 five schools in the region of Moyen Cavally were reportedly still occupied by FRCI elements,<sup>617</sup> and at least one training centre remained occupied as of December 2012 after having become a de facto military camp.<sup>618</sup> The UN also identified one incident where Liberian mercenaries and pro-Gbagbo elements had employed a school for military purposes in the Yopougon neighbourhood of Abidjan.<sup>619</sup>

Following the end of the political crisis, military use of schools decreased dramatically, with only two incidents verified by the UN in 2012.<sup>620</sup> However, the military continued to erect checkpoints near primary schools located in Touba, Ziriglo, Toa-Zéou and Keibly, among other towns and villages, making

schoolchildren vulnerable to attack or intimidation by armed elements.<sup>621</sup>

### ATTACKS ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Following the 2010 elections, attacks on higher education increased as tension mounted between the pro-Gbagbo and pro-Ouattara camps. Universities quickly became embroiled in the conflict, with FESCI, among others, operating alongside Gbagbo's security forces.<sup>622</sup> On 30 November, for example, FESCI members attacked pro-Ouattara students from the University of Cocody<sup>623</sup> campus in Abidjan, forcibly ejecting some 50 students from their dormitories.<sup>624</sup>

A number of universities, including in Abidjan, Daloa and Korhogo, were forced to shut down indefinitely.<sup>625</sup> As fighting began, a university in Abidjan was transformed into an improvised military training camp for pro-Gbagbo militia.<sup>626</sup> Gbagbo supporters gained control of most campuses in Abidjan.<sup>627</sup> Hundreds of young men received military training in schools and university housing in 2011, typically conducted by members of the Ivorian security forces, according to accounts from the Abidjan neighbourhoods of Yopougon, Abobo and Port-Bouët, the political capital, Yamoussoukro, and the far western town of Duékoué.<sup>628</sup>

Occupation and use of university facilities by forces on both sides led to substantial damage, looting and destruction. For example, in March 2011 during the most intense period of hostilities, the University of Abobo-Adjamé was first taken by pro-Ouattara forces, and then by Gbagbo's security forces.<sup>629</sup> At least 70 per cent of the campus was destroyed in the process, including key academic records.<sup>630</sup> After the post-election crisis, the Ouattara government temporarily closed and renovated the country's public universities, which had become hotbeds of

violence and militant politics, before reopening them in September 2012.<sup>631</sup>

### ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

At the start of the 2013 academic year, at least two university residences, Cité d'Abobo and Cité de Port-Bouët, were still occupied by the FRCI.<sup>632</sup> A third, Cité de Williamsville, had recently been vacated,<sup>633</sup> following a government operation to restore public and private property that had been occupied by force during the post-election crisis.<sup>634</sup>

### ENDNOTES COTE D'IVOIRE

<sup>598</sup> This profile covers attacks in the period 2009-2012, with an additional section on 2013.

<sup>599</sup> GCPEA, Study on Field-based Programmatic Measures to Protect Education from Attack (New York: GCPEA, December 2011), 47.

<sup>600</sup> "Ivory Coast Profile," BBC News, 18 June 2013.

<sup>601</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "Education (all levels) Profile – Côte d'Ivoire," UIS Statistics in Brief (2011).

<sup>602</sup> The World Bank, "School enrollment – tertiary (% gross)," The World Bank Data (2009).

<sup>603</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS), "Education (all levels) Profile – Côte d'Ivoire," UIS Statistics in Brief (2011).

<sup>604</sup> UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782-S/2012/261, 26 April 2012, para 32.

<sup>605</sup> Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster, *Attaques contre l'Éducation : Rapport sur L'impact de La Crise sur Le Système Éducatif Ivoirien - RAPPORT NUMERO 2* (Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster, 15 June 2011), 3.

<sup>606</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), "Côte d'Ivoire Special Update on Education," July 2011.

<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> Ibid.

<sup>609</sup> Ibid.

<sup>610</sup> Ibid. See also : Plan National de Développement 2012-2015, Ministère de l'Éducation Nationale Côte d'Ivoire, March 2012, 78-79.

<sup>611</sup> OCHA, "Côte d'Ivoire Special Update on Education," July 2011.

<sup>612</sup> Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster, *Back to School in Côte d'Ivoire: An Assessment One Month after the Reopening of Schools in the CNO Area* (Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster, 5 May 2011).

<sup>613</sup> For detailed information on incidents involving FESCI, please see: US Department of State, 2009 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Côte d'Ivoire (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 11 March 2010); US Department of State, 2010 Country Report on Human Rights Practices – Côte D'Ivoire (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 April 2011); and UNSC, *Vingt-Troisième Rapport du Secrétaire Général sur l'Opération des Nations Unies en Côte d'Ivoire, S/2010/15*, 7 January 2010.

<sup>614</sup> US Department of State, 2010 Country Report on Human Rights Practices - Côte D'Ivoire (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 April 2011).

<sup>615</sup> Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster, *Attaques contre l'Éducation : Rapport sur L'impact de La Crise sur Le Système Éducatif Ivoirien - RAPPORT NUMERO 2* (Côte d'Ivoire Education Cluster, 15 June 2011), 3.

<sup>616</sup> Matt Wells, Human Rights Watch, telephone interview, 19 December 2012.

<sup>617</sup> UNOCHA, Côte D'Ivoire Situation Report 17 (Côte D'Ivoire: OCHA, 23 September 2011), 4; and UNSC, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782-S/2012/261*, 26 April 2012, para 32.

<sup>618</sup> Matt Wells, Human Rights Watch, telephone interview, 19 December 2012.

<sup>619</sup> UNSC, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782-S/2012/261*, 26 April 2012, para 32.

<sup>620</sup> UNSC, *Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/67/845-S/2013/245*, 15 May 2013, para 54.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid.

<sup>622</sup> Tunde Fatunde, "COTE D'IVOIRE: Campuses Closed by Conflict, Sanctions," *University World News*, Issue No: 74, 27 March 2011, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20110326100631783>; and Tunde Fatunde, "COTED'IVOIRE: Campuses Cleared of Militia," *University World News*, Issue No: 77, 8 May 2011, <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20110507093128736&q...>

<sup>623</sup> The university has since been renamed the Université Félix Houphouët-Boigny.

<sup>624</sup> US Department of State, 2010 Country Report on Human Rights Practices ü Côte D'Ivoire (Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 8 April 2011).

<sup>625</sup> Tunde Fatunde, "COTE D'IVOIRE: Campuses Closed by Conflict, Sanctions," *University World News*, Issue No: 74, 27 March 2011.

<sup>626</sup> Ibid.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid.

<sup>628</sup> HRW, "Côte d'Ivoire: "AU Should Press Gbagbo to Halt Abuses," 23 February 2011.

<sup>629</sup> The university administration had previously complained that the tanks were creating fear among students and impinging on

attendance and they were still in negotiation with UNOCI when the pro-Ouattara forces moved in and took over the campus. See K. Parfait, "Pr Germain Gourène (Président de l'Université d'Abobo-Adjamé): 'Toutes Les Mémoires sur Papier et Supports Electroniques ont été Détruites' –SOS pour l' l'Université d'Abobo-Adjamé,'" *Abidjan.net*, 26 March 2011; Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu, "Research Africa Exclusive: Fighting in Côte d'Ivoire Disrupts Universities in Abidjan," *Research Africa*, 28 March 2011; and Christina Scott and Deborah-Fay Ndhlovu, "Fighting Destroys Ivory University," *Mail and Guardian*, 8 April 2011.

<sup>630</sup> Ibid.

<sup>631</sup> Information provided by Human Rights Watch on 5 November 2013; Robbie Corey-Boulet, "Côte d'Ivoire's Universities – Shedding a Legacy of Violence and Corruption," *Inter Press Service*, 4 September 2012; Isabelle Rey-Lefebvre, "Rebirth of a university in Ivory Coast," *The Guardian*, 30 October 2012.

<sup>632</sup> Franck Souhoné, "Résidences universitaires: Les loyers passent du simple au double, La cité d'Abobo toujours occupée par les FRCI," *L'inter*, 21 August 2013; and Donatien Kautcha, "Côte d'Ivoire : Les cités universitaires rouvrent le 2septembre, avec de nouvelles conditions...," *Koaci*, 21 August 2013.

<sup>633</sup> Franck Souhoné, "Résidences universitaires: Les loyers passent du simple au double, La cité d'Abobo toujours occupée par les FRCI," *L'inter*, 21 August 2013.

<sup>634</sup> "Côte d'Ivoire: les soldats occupant de force des sites appelés à déguerpir," *Xinhua*, 7 June 2013.