



Refugee Documentation Centre (Ireland)
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Cote D'Ivoire - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 28 May 2009

Information on the treatment of ethnic minorities in Cote D'Ivoire?

A report by the *US Department of State* under the heading '2008 Human Rights Report: Cote d'Ivoire' subheading 'National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities' states:

"The country's population was ethnically diverse, and ethnic groups sometimes practiced societal discrimination against others on the basis of ethnicity. At least one-quarter of the population was foreign. Outdated or inadequate land ownership laws resulted in conflicts with ethnic and xenophobic overtones. There were reported clashes, usually over land tenure, between the native Guere populations and other groups." (US Department of State (25th February 2009) *2008 Human Rights Report: Cote d'Ivoire*)

It also states under the heading 'Several incidents of ethnic violence resulted in deaths'

"On September 2, a land dispute between villagers from Abouabou and Gonzagueville turned violent, leaving seven dead and eight others with serious injuries, including one victim whose hand was hacked off with a machete. Abidjan police arrested three persons in relation to the incident.

On September 3 and 5, eight persons were killed, 21 wounded, and 400 displaced in two violent confrontations between the Lobi and Koulangou communities in the eastern part of the country. A group of 60 Lobi attacked the Koulangou with machetes, 12-caliber rifles, and knives, and then burned down their homes in retaliation for the death of a Lobi. No arrests were made. Village leaders from the two communities settled the dispute at a reconciliation meeting on September 13, in which the Lobis made a symbolic donation of 70,000 CFA (approximately \$140) and food items to the Koulangous." (ibid)

A report by the *US Department of State* under the heading 'International Religious Freedom Report 2008 Cote d'Ivoire' subheading 'Restrictions on Religious Freedom' states:

"Many northern Muslims continued to feel discriminated against when applying for certificates of nationality and passports. However, the Government issued replacement birth certificates during the reporting period under a political agreement to address this concern." (US Department of State (19th September 2009) *International Religious Freedom Report 2008 Cote d'Ivoire*)

It also states under the heading 'Societal Abuses and Discrimination'

“Some societal discrimination against Muslims and followers of traditional indigenous religions continued during the reporting period. Other groups, particularly evangelical Christians, complained of discrimination and sectarian hostility.” (ibid)

A report by Frances Stewart & Graham Brown for the *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity*, (CRISE) under the heading ‘Fragile States’ subheading ‘Côte d’Ivoire’ states: (pg 59)

“Côte d’Ivoire is a multiethnic country with approximately 60 different ethnic groups which can be grouped into five larger socio-cultural or ethno-linguistic groups: Akan (42.1 percent), Voltaic or Gur (17.6 per cent), Krou (11 per cent), Northern Mandé (16.5 per cent) and Southern Mandé (10 per cent). Although the northern ethnic groups, Northern Mandé and Voltaic, originate from Côte d’Ivoire’s northern regions, many people belonging to these ethnic groups now live in the southern parts of Côte d’Ivoire. Another important dividing line, partly reinforcing the ethno-regional differences, is religion. The largest religious group are the Muslims with approximately 38 per cent of the population. The Muslims are predominantly found among the northern ethnic group, Northern Mandé and Voltaic, while the majority of the ethnic groups that originate from the southern and western regions, the Akan and Krou, are Christian (RGPH-1998 2001).” (Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security and Ethnicity (CRISE) (January 2008) *Fragile States*)

It also states under the heading ‘Social Exclusion’ (pg 68)

“A more ethnically equal distribution of government positions is likely to improve ethnic groups’ perceptions and attitudes towards a political regime. However, whether the inclusion of different ethnic groups in government actually results in a more equal and participatory decision-making process is not always certain.” (ibid)

A report by *Human Rights Watch* under the heading “My Heart Is Cut” Sexual Violence by Rebels and Pro-Government Forces in Côte d’Ivoire’ subheading ‘Causes and Perpetrators: the Responsibility of Both Government and Rebel Forces’ states: (pg 4)

“Rebels in Côte d’Ivoire perpetrated horrific sexual abuse against women and girls in areas under their control, including rape, gang rape, sexual assault, forced miscarriages, and forced incest. The various rebel factions targeted some women for abuse because of their ethnicity or perceived pro-government affiliation, often because their husband, father or another male relative worked for the state.” (Human Rights Watch (2nd August 2007) “*My Heart Is Cut*” *Sexual Violence by Rebels and Pro-Government Forces in Côte d’Ivoire*)

It also states under the heading ‘General Background on the Conflict in Côte d’Ivoire’ (pg 15)

“Politicians exploited ethnic divisions to oust political rivals in elections, using the state apparatus to repress opponents and incite hatred or fear among populations that had lived in relative harmony for decades.” (ibid)

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.

References:

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(January 2008) *Fragile States* (Frances Stewart & Graham Brown)
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