

# COTE d'IVOIRE ASSESSMENT

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Country Information and Policy Unit

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## **I. SCOPE OF THE DOCUMENT**

**1.1** This assessment has been produced by the Country Information and Policy Unit, Immigration and Nationality Directorate of the Home Office, from information obtained from a variety of sources.

**1.2** The assessment has been prepared for background purposes for those involved in the asylum determination process. The information it contains is not exhaustive, nor is it intended to catalogue all human rights violations. It concentrates on the issues most commonly raised in asylum claims made in the United Kingdom.

**1.3** The assessment is sourced throughout. It is intended to be used by caseworkers as a signpost to the source material, which has been made available to them. The vast majority of the source material is readily available in the public domain.

**1.4** It is intended to revise the assessment on a six-monthly basis while the country remains within the top 35 asylum producing countries in the United Kingdom.

**1.5** The assessment will be placed on the Internet ([http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/asylum/asylum\\_contents02.html](http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/asylum/asylum_contents02.html)). An electronic copy of the assessment has been made available to:

Amnesty International UK  
Immigration Advisory Service  
Immigration Appellate Authority  
Immigration Law Practitioners' Association  
Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants  
Medical Foundation for the Care of Victims of Torture

## **II. GEOGRAPHY**

### **A. Location and Climate**

**2.1** The Republic of the Côte d'Ivoire is situated on the west coast of Africa, between Ghana to the east and Liberia to the west, with Guinea, Mali and Burkina Faso to the north.[1] The political and administrative capital is Yamoussoukro. Most government departments remain in the former capital and port of Abidjan, which is still the country's economic centre.[2] The country has an area of 322,463 sq km.[1]

**2.2** Except for the north-western fifth of the country, where tropical conditions prevail, the climate is equatorial.[1] The main rainy season is from May to July, which is followed by a shorter wet season in October and November.[2]

### **B. Population**

**2.3** There are approximately 60 ethnic groups. The population, in mid-1998, was approximately 14.5m (EIU estimate).[3b] In July 1999 the population was officially put at 15.4 million and growing at 3.3 percent annually.[17m]

### **C. Language**

**2.4** The official language is French and a large number of African languages are also spoken.[2]

## **III. HISTORY**

### **A. Recent Political History**

**3.1** Côte d'Ivoire obtained its independence from France on 7 August 1960. From 1960 until 1990 Dr Félix Houphouët-Boigny and the Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire - Rassemblement démocratique africain (PDCI-RDA), then the only legal political party, governed the country.[1][2]

**3.2** For two decades following independence, Côte d'Ivoire experienced economic prosperity largely as a result of its thriving export market. This in turn contributed towards national stability. However, the early 1980s marked an economic downturn, which was accompanied by evidence of social discontent.[1][2]

**3.3** In early 1990 Côte d'Ivoire experienced unprecedented political upheaval. In February and March, students and workers demonstrated against austerity measures being adopted by the government as a precondition for assistance by international creditors. In March the government announced reductions in salaries of up to 40% for public servants and the imposition of a new tax on private sector incomes. Many academic institutions were closed and troops were deployed in

Abidjan in response to continuing anti-government unrest. In April, following the death of a student when troops intervened to disperse demonstrators, all educational establishments were closed and the 1989/1990 academic year was declared invalid ("année blanche").[1][2]

**3.4** In mid-April 1990 President Houphouët-Boigny appointed Alassane Ouattara, the Governor of the Banque Centrale l'Afrique de l'Ouest, to head a commission to formulate economically effective and politically acceptable adjustment measures.[1][2]

**3.5** In May 1990 President Houphouët-Boigny agreed to the establishment of a plural political system. As a result, opposition groups that had previously operated unofficially acquired legal status, and many new parties were quickly established.[1][2]

**3.6** Côte d'Ivoire's first contested presidential election took place on 28 October 1990. Dr Houphouët-Boigny (representing the PDCI-RDA) was returned to office, having received the support of 81.7% of the votes cast. The only other candidate was Laurent Gbagbo of the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI). Gbagbo's supporters alleged malpractice, but their appeal to the Supreme Court to invalidate the election was unsuccessful.[1][2]

**3.7** Legislative elections took place on 25 November 1990 and were contested by approximately 500 candidates representing some 17 parties. According to official results, out of a total of 175 seats in the new legislature, the PDCI-RDA secured 163 seats and the FPI won 9 (including Laurent Gbagbo). Francis Wodié, the leader of the Parti ivoirien des travailleurs (PIT), and two independent candidates were also elected. Henri Konan Bédié was confirmed as the president of the National Assembly.[1][2]

**3.8** In the same month two constitutional amendments were approved. The first was an amendment to Article 11 which provided that the president of the National Assembly would assume the functions of the president of the Republic if the office became vacant, until the expiry of the mandate of the previous office holder. The second amendment provided for the appointment of a prime minister, a post which then went to Alassane Ouattara.[1][2]

**3.9** The government continued to experience considerable opposition, most notably from students. On 17 May 1991 security forces used violent methods to disperse a students' meeting at the University of Abidjan, resulting in around 180 arrests.[1][2] Students and academic staff staged demonstrations against the actions of the security forces. The violence continued in June 1991 when FESCI (Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de la Côte d'Ivoire) members were held responsible by the government for the death of a student who had defied FESCI's order to boycott classes.[1][2] Whereupon the government banned FESCI (by Decree no. 91-420) and sent members of the security forces onto the campus. The university lecturers began an indefinite strike and there were further student protests following the arrests of 11 FESCI activists in connection with the death of the student.[14b]

**3.10** In August 1991 tensions were temporarily dispelled when the government withdrew its troops from the campus, suspended legal proceedings against FESCI and restored the right of "non-academic" assembly at the university, although the ban on FESCI remained in place.[1][2]

**3.11** In January 1992 the government published the findings of an enquiry into the actions of the security forces at Abidjan's university on 17 May 1991. The government enquiry found that four women had been raped and many students had been severely beaten. The commission

found the Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces, General Robert Gueï, directly responsible for the violence committed by his troops. Despite requests from the opposition for sanctions to be taken against Gueï and for the government to resign, President Houphouët-Boigny announced that neither Gueï, nor any of those incriminated by the report, would be subject to disciplinary proceedings.[1][2][5a]

**3.12** In response, there were immediate demonstrations which were vigorously dispersed by the security forces. On 13 February 1992 FESCI organised a march in the course of which there were violent clashes between students and security forces on the Yopougon university campus. Sixteen members of FESCI including its Secretary General, Martial Ahipeaud, were arrested. A second demonstration, which took place on 18 February 1992, was organised by the main opposition parties (FPI), trade unions and the Ivorian Human Rights' League (LIDHO) and comprised some 20,000 people. It also degenerated into violence. More than 100 demonstrators were arrested following clashes with the security forces, including Laurent Gbagbo and René Degny-Séguï, the President of LIDHO. The government subsequently announced that they would be prosecuted under the newly enacted Anti-Casseur Law (Decree No. 92-464 of 30 July 1992) which makes the organisers and participants in an assembly jointly responsible for the acts of violence and criminal damage perpetrated during that assembly.[1][7a][8a]

**3.13** On 27 February 1992 Martial Ahipeaud and three other leaders of FESCI were sentenced to three years' imprisonment for organising violent demonstrations and reconstituting a banned organisation. On 6 March 1992 Laurent Gbagbo and eight others, including René Degny-Séguï, were each fined and sentenced to two years' imprisonment; three others received lesser sentences and the trials of opposition party supporters continued in the following weeks.[1][2][5a][8a]

**3.14** In July 1992 President Houphouët-Boigny declared an amnesty for **all** those convicted of political offences since the time of the 1990 disturbances. Accordingly, Laurent Gbagbo and the 76 others jailed in February 1992 were released from Abidjan's central prison on the night of 31 July 1992.[1][2][5a][8a]

**3.15** In September 1992 Abidjan saw further violent protest by students, following the abolition of free public transport for students in higher education. In November 1992 students refused to sit examinations and were reportedly dispersed by security forces.[1][2]

**3.16** There was further student unrest in April and May 1993 after a gathering of some 3000 students organised by FESCI were dispersed by security forces. In August 1993 students staged a two week hunger strike outside the cathedral in Abidjan, following rumours concerning the privatisation of university accommodation, and to demand payment of grant arrears.[1]

**3.17** On 7 December 1993 President Houphouët-Boigny died in Yamoussoukro. Henri Konan Bédié became president by constitutional succession and served the remaining two years of Houphouët-Boigny's term, in accordance with Article 11 of the Constitution.[2]

**3.18** Alassane Ouattara resigned as prime minister two days after Houphouët-Boigny's death. Bédié was elected chairman of the PDCI-RDA in April 1994. In May, Ouattara was appointed to the post of deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) based in Washington DC.[1][2]

**3.19** In June 1994 seemingly dissatisfied members of the PDCI-RDA loyal to Ouattara, left the party to form what they termed a moderate centrist organisation called the Rassemblement des républicains (RDR).[1][2]

**3.20** On 13 December 1994 an electoral code was adopted in preparation for the presidential and legislative elections, scheduled to take place in October and November 1995 respectively. It contained clauses imposing restrictions on eligibility for public office, in particular that presidential candidates should have Ivorian parents and have been continually resident in Côte d'Ivoire for the five years prior to seeking election. Both requirements were widely interpreted as being directly aimed at preventing Ouattara, whose father was reportedly Burkinabè, from contesting the presidency.[1][2]

**3.21** There were widespread opposition protests against the government's election preparations. The RDR, FPI and the Union des Forces démocratiques (a coalition of opposition parties including the PIT) affiliated in the Front républicain (FR), organised a number of demonstrations in Abidjan in an attempt to demand reform of the electoral code and the establishment of an independent electoral commission. The FR persisted in its efforts to revise the electoral code, to obtain guarantees regarding the autonomy of the electoral commission and revision of voters' lists. Bédié however, reiterated his government's commitment to the code.[1][2]

**3.22** On 25 December 1999, following the coup, Gen. Robert Guei said one of the main aims would be to install real democracy and hold fair elections. On 26 January 2000 UN secretary general Kofi Annan welcomed the official announcement by the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire of forthcoming elections. General elections are to be held by 31 October.[5bs][16a]

**3.23** On 2 March 2000 the former ruling party, the PDCI, said it still hoped to win the elections this year. Former president Bedie, exiled in France since the coup, insists that he should be the PDCI candidate as his mandate does not expire until 2001.[5bx] On 10 March the Swiss government said it had frozen the bank accounts of Bedie and several others on suspicion of corruption and illegally enriching themselves whilst in office.[5ca]

**3.24** Prior to the coup legislative elections were scheduled to be held every 5 years and presidential elections every 7 years. In June 1998 the National Assembly enacted amendments to the Constitution that diminished the authority of the Prime Minister, authorised the President to annul elections, or to postpone announcing election results and extended the presidential term from 5 to 7 years. In December 1998, President Bedie agreed to renounce some of the powers conferred on him by the amendments. However, all the constitutional amendments remained fully effective at the end of 1999. [4a]

**3.25** On 9 December 1999 the National Assembly voted to allow the creation of a National Election Commission to supervise elections.[4a]

**3.26** In June 1995 an FPI congress formally adopted Laurent Gbagbo as its presidential candidate. The RDR invited Ouattara to stand as its candidate but he declined, reportedly saying that although he wished to stand he would not do so in breach of the law. At the end of August 1995 Bédié was formally adopted by the PDCI-RDA as its presidential candidate.[1][2]

**3.27** On 20 September 1995 the government imposed a three month ban on political demonstrations citing the need to ensure continuation of economic activity (Decree No 95-721). The opposition considered this to be a breach of their constitutional rights. The RDR and FPI stated that they would not contest the presidential elections as long as the conditions were not "clear and open". The FR warned that further protests and disturbances would be organised during the week preceding the election.[1][2][7b]

**3.28** The presidential election took place, as scheduled, on 22 October 1995, following a week of violent incidents in several towns. The opposition had called for an "active boycott" of the presidential poll and Laurent Gbagbo reportedly called on his supporters to "do everything" to prevent the smooth running of the election. In several parts of the country protesters defied the ban on demonstrations and rallies. Serious disturbances took place on the day of the poll and ballot boxes and public buildings were set alight.[1][2][9a]

**3.29** President Bédié was returned to office, beating Francis Wodié of PIT, the only other candidate, with 95.25% of the vote. Bédié was formally installed by the constitutional council as president on 27 October 1995.[1][10a]

**3.30** There was considerable concern over the attacks on the Baoulé ethnic group around Gagnoa, by members of the local Bété ethnic group. Large numbers of Baoulé converged on the town of Gagnoa from surrounding areas during the election period.[1]

**3.31** In early November 1995 the government announced the establishment of a commission of enquiry to investigate the situation. At the time official reports stated that there had been some 25 deaths in the region (although it later emerged that only one death had resulted from the unrest); more than 3500 people, mainly Baoulé, had been displaced, and a number of settlements had been destroyed.[1]

**3.32** Most areas remained generally calm following the presidential election. The major political parties reached an accord with President Bédié on 6 November 1995 and the FR agreed to abandon its threatened boycott of the legislative elections, in return for government concessions regarding the revision of voters' lists. Representatives of both the RDR and FPI were subsequently appointed to the electoral commission. There was full party participation in the elections to the 175 seat National Assembly which took place, as scheduled, on 26 November 1995. The elections generally ran smoothly. Nevertheless, the opposition parties and observers noted several areas of concern. Voters and party representatives complained about the accuracy of the electoral list; that there had been problems with the distribution of voter cards; and inconsistencies and delays in the implementation of the court-ordered system for newly registered voters reduced the opportunity to vote by some eligible voters.[2][4a][8b]

**3.33** The legislative elections were postponed in six constituencies, either because of violence, or because the results had been declared invalid by the constitutional court. The delayed elections were held on 29 December 1996. It was reported that the elections proceeded in an orderly and transparent manner. The PDCI won 149 seats and the FPI and RDR each gained 13 seats. Laurent Gbagbo secured re-election to the National Assembly.[4a][5f][5h]

**3.34** Municipal elections took place in February 1996. The PDCI won control of 158 communes (out of 195), the RDR secured 19 (mainly northern) communes and the FPI 13

(mainly in the west). The participation by voters was low, and voting was reported to have proceeded generally without incident.[1]

## **B. Coup**

**3.35** Cote d'Ivoire is in transition following a bloodless military coup in December 1999. Retired General Robert Guei took over the Government after a mutiny[4a] by soldiers angered by unpaid wages and poor living standards[32b] began on December 23, evolved into a major military revolt on December 24. It culminated in the dismissal and forced departure of President Henri Konan Bedie. During the coup mutineers are reported to have forcibly entered the homes of some former government officials and conducted illegal searches and arrested some officials without warrants.[4a] Soldiers went to Abidjan's main penitentiary, the MACA, and freed the RDR opposition leaders jailed in November. The news of the overthrow was greeted with loud cheering on Abidjan's streets.[37a] President Bedie's government appeared on national television announcing their support for the coup leaders. It is the first coup in the Ivory Coast since its independence in 1960.[30c] Whilst the coup was condemned abroad, it was welcomed by many people in the Cote d'Ivoire.[30e]

**3.36** Following the coup, a curfew (from 6pm to 5am) was imposed by the new military junta, in an effort to restore order, following bouts of looting in Abidjan. The curfew was lifted on 27 December.[5bt]

**3.37** General Guei, who was Chief of Staff under Presidents Felix Houphouet-Boigny and Bedie, declared himself the new President.[30c] He suspended the Constitution, dissolved the National Assembly and formed the National Committee for Public Salvation (CNSP), which consists of himself and eight military officers (including two soldiers who participated in the coup).[4a] Guei said the CNSP would oversee the country for a transitional period.

**3.38** On 29 December Gen. Guei said the jailing of opposition politicians was one reason for the coup.[30d] On 5 January 2000 a transitional government, made up of army officers and civilians, was announced. FPI leader Laurent Gbagbo immediately announced that his party would not now take part in the new administration because of military bias in favour of the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) party.[30f] Gbagbo finally agreed to join the transitional government on 12 January, but said the choice places had gone to the RDR, or those directly associated with the party.[17p] Prior to the coup, Cote d'Ivoire was a centralized republic dominated by a strong presidency.[4a]

**3.39** Guei pledged to rewrite the Constitution, clean up government corruption, and hold fair and transparent elections in the year 2000. All of the country's political parties, including the former ruling Democratic Party of Cote d'Ivoire (PDCI) pledged to support Guei's transition government.[4a] On 1 February 2000 a Consultative, Constitutional and Electoral Commission, set up by Decree No 2012, dated 21 January 2000, was officially installed.[21m]

**3.40** On 16 February 2000 General Guei signed a decree setting up a special commission to prepare a national constitutional referendum.[5bw] People will be able to express their views on [21m] a new constitution and electoral code in an April referendum [5bz] Guei also signed a decree for another commission to investigate widespread complaints over the issue of national identity cards.[5bw] Also in February Ivorian youths requested that the government reduce the



voting age to 18 years, enabling them to get involved. Former president Bedie insisted that 18-year olds were not mature enough to cast votes during elections.[17q]

**3.41** On 4 and 5 July 2000 soldiers carried out a mutiny. They said they were owed money which had been promised to them for their role in the December 1999 coup, which brought General Guei to power. Damage to businesses and looting over the two days was estimated at six billion CFA francs (\$8.3 million).[5cd] Guei said on 10 July that those soldiers who had participated in the mutiny would be punished.[17s] Around 50 soldiers are on trial facing charges including treason and conspiracy. The death penalty was applicable to those found guilty of treason although the new constitution, approved by referendum in July 2000, abolishes the death penalty.[5cd]

**3.42** On 18 September 2000 at least 14 soldiers were arrested in connection with an attack on the private residence of General Guei in Abidjan. Order was restored shortly after the incident and Guei said there was no reason to delay the elections because of it. Opponents fear this incident could be used as an excuse to continue with military rule.[30q] On 23 September Guei sacked the two most senior figures in his military junta, both are considered to be close to opposition leader Alassane Ouattara.[30r][30s]

### **C. Economy and Social Provision**

**3.43** Côte d'Ivoire is the world's largest producer of cocoa and Africa's largest producer of coffee.[3b] Côte d'Ivoire experienced a high rate of economic growth between 1960 and the early 1980s resulting from its export of cocoa, coffee, timber and tropical fruits. The economy then entered a period of decline in the 1980s due to a drop in prices for the country's main agricultural exports.[1]

**3.44** In 1991 the government appointed Alassane Ouattara to implement a far reaching programme of structural reform, involving the Ivorian government's acceptance of an IMF/World Bank programme of fiscal austerity. By late 1994 a marked recovery was in progress. The significant factor was the 50% devaluation of the CFA franc in January 1994 which improved competitiveness.[1]

**3.45** Despite the continuing steady improvement in public finances, the government's position was still heavily restricted by the enormous debt burden incurred from the 1980s onwards. Payment of debts absorbed 42% of expenditure in 1997.[3b]

**3.46** During 1998 the Government increased its operating expenditures devoted to basic health services and education. Fewer than half of adults are literate. On 30 October 1998 the National Assembly enacted a law that requires the State to educate and train the disabled, to hire them or help them find jobs.[4a] On 29 July 1999 the Cote d'Ivoire parliament approved a revised budget for 1999, including 89.6 billion CFA francs (\$145 million) of spending cuts, which the government announced in January 1999.[5ba] In March General Guei's government cut the 2000 budget. The revised 'transition budget' was put at 1.786.9 billion francs, a reduction of around 130.2 billion francs from the Bedie administration. It forecasts a deficit of 109.4 billion francs. In 1999 Cote d'Ivoire's deficit was around 196.6 billion francs. Priorities, it said, would be given to the payment of salaries and pensions, expenditure in health and education as well as servicing debt.[17r]

**3.47** On 29 May 1998 the World Bank announced a \$53m loan to support the government's long-term education programme, under which primary school education will be extended to all Ivorian children by 2010. This followed the announcement of a World Bank loan of \$800m in November 1997 for education in particular.[3c] On 3 February 2000 the World Bank said it could not begin any new aid programmes in the Cote d'Ivoire because of a missed debt service payment of \$17 million due under the Bedie government in December 1999. It stressed the debt payment had to be made.[5bv]

**3.48** Various agreements in 1998 eased the pressure of debt repayment.[3c] On 18 June 1999 the European Union said it had frozen structural agreement loans to the Cote d'Ivoire because of irregularities uncovered during a routine audit in December 1998. A more detailed audit was carried out in May 1999 on all adjustment loans from 1992-1997. Serious irregularities, of around 18 billion CFA francs, were found in all sectors, particularly health and infrastructure. The government said legal action would be taken if fraud was uncovered.[5aw] On 28 July eleven government officials (seven from the housing ministry and four health ministry officials) were imprisoned, awaiting trial, for involvement in the embezzlement of the European aid money.[32a] On 4 August at least 19 civil servants had been charged with the embezzlement and taken to Abidjan's main MACA prison. No trial date had been set.[5bc] On 6 August the finance minister said the Cote d'Ivoire would reimburse the 17.9 billion CFA francs embezzled, in accordance with EU procedures.[5be] In February 2000 it was announced that this money had been repaid.[5bv]

**3.49** The government received only limited assistance from international financial institutions during 1999, and the European Union stopped its assistance programs due to government corruption.[4a]

**3.50** According to the government, 968 new classrooms and 10 new colleges were built between 1993 and 1997 while 3416 primary classrooms were refurbished. On average, Ivorian primary schools have about 50 children per class compared with an average of 100 per class in some neighbouring countries. The government's aim has been to draw in the large numbers of children who had been excluded from the school system, turning instead to low paid jobs or prostitution to survive.[3c]

#### **IV. INSTRUMENTS OF THE STATE**

##### **A. Government**

**4.1** Côte d'Ivoire is a multi-party democracy and legislative, presidential and municipal elections have been held in the last five years.[3e] The next presidential, parliamentary and local elections are scheduled to take place by the end of October 2000.[5bz]

##### Presidential Election Results: 22 October 1995

<b>Candidate</b>	<b>% of the vote</b>
Henri Konan Bédié	95.25
Francis Wodié	3.80
Abstentions	0.95

<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00</b>
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[2]

Legislative Election Results: 26 November 1995  
& 29 December 1996

<b>Party</b>	<b>No. of seats</b>
Parti démocratique de la Côte d'Ivoire - Rassemblement démocratique africain (PDCI-RDA)	149
Front populaire ivoirien (FPI)	13
Rassemblement des républicains (RDR)	13*
<b>Total</b>	<b>175</b>

[5f]

**4.2** Executive power is vested in the president who is currently elected for a five year term by direct universal suffrage and is eligible for re-election.[1]

**4.3** Legislative power is vested in the 175 member National Assembly, elected for a five year term of office. All citizens over 21 can vote and political parties are legally free to organise. In preparation for the next elections in 2000, the opposition parties have called upon the government to reduce the minimum voting age to 18 years. In 1999 the government and opposition observers indicated that almost half of citizens do not have national identity cards, without which they cannot vote. The government enacted and began to implement a law that simplified and greatly reduced the cost of obtaining national identity cards. This was intended to increase voter eligibility and registration, however, the same law tripled the cost of residence permits required by non-citizens.[4a] On 4 August 2000 it was announced that temporary identity certificates would be issued, from 10 August, to those Ivorians without national identity cards. The certificates would have the same security guarantees as the national identity cards. People would only have to pay the cost of their identity picture (750 CFA). The certificates would be valid for three months after the commencement of the issuance of national identity cards by the civilian government. There will be two types of certificate, a green background for Ivorians and an orange background for foreigners, which would also serve as their residence card.[25e]

**4.4** The major opposition parties continued to demand that elections be organised and supervised by an electoral commission independent of the government. The government continued to reject this demand.[1][4a][17c] In May 1999 negotiations between the government and the Rally of Republicans (RDR) ended in failure. No agreements were reached on the issues surrounding the organisation of the 2000 elections. The RDR want agreement on the electoral commission, its composition and functions, for the voting age to be 18 years and for a single ballot.[18b]

**4.5** At the PDCI congress in October 1996 President Bédié suggested an imprecise role in government for the parliamentary opposition. In response, the RDR and FPI did not exclude the possibility of participating in a "government of national reconciliation", but the FPI stipulated

that it would require, in particular, amendment of Article 11 of the Constitution (concerning constitutional succession), the revision of the electoral code and establishment of an autonomous electoral watchdog body.[1][18a][19a]

**4.6** The government which was formed on 26 January 1996 was PDCI dominated, with the exception of the Minister of Culture, Bernard Zaourou Zadi of the Union des sociaux-démocratiques (USD). In a government reshuffle on 6 March 1998, the Deputy Secretary General of the RDR, Adama Coulibaly, was appointed Minister of Transport. His appointment was seen as part of President Bédié's attempt to open up government to the opposition. In the same month, Coulibaly was however, expelled from the RDR because he had accepted the government post. Kobina, then leader of the RDR, said that Coulibaly's decision to join the government was a purely personal initiative and constituted a serious breach of party discipline. Kobina died, aged 61, on 18 October 1998.[5t][14f][20a]

**4.7** In a further cabinet reshuffle in August 1998, Bernard Zaourou Zadi and Adama Coulibaly retained their portfolios. The new cabinet also saw the introduction of Francis Wodié, the leader of PIT (the Ivorian Workers Party) who became the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. All other cabinet members belonged to, or were associated with the ruling PDCI. It was further reported that the prime minister approached Laurent Gbagbo, leader of the FPI, about the prospect of his joining the government, however, there were still too many differences between them.[5ab][5ac][5ad][17b]

**4.8** In August 1997 the government announced proposals for constitutional reform, including the amendment of Article 11. It was reported that conditions for eligibility as president of the Republic would be stipulated in the Constitution and there would be a dilution of the nationality requirement and amendment of the residency clause. The electoral code would be reviewed particularly concerning the ballot system which would incorporate proportional representation and an election control and arbitration commission open to international observers would be established. The president also called for the early compilation of voters registers, which would be available to political parties for their scrutiny. Measures regarding the funding of parliamentary opposition groups and leaders would also be addressed. The chairman of the FPI, Laurent Gbagbo, broadly welcomed the government's proposed constitutional reforms.[14d][21e]

**4.9** On 30 June 1998 parliament approved constitutional reforms which included the extension of the presidential mandate from five to seven years, taking effect after the 2000 presidential elections. Also the creation of an upper chamber, the senate, whose president would take over as interim president in the case of death or incapacity of the head of state. The interim president would call elections within six months but could not be a candidate. This provision amends Article 11. Other constitutional provisions include the prime minister no longer being the head of the government and tighter presidential candidacy rules. Contrary to expectations however, the parliament refused to amend the electoral law and in fact toughened the residency requirement from five to ten years and maintained the nationality clause which requires a presidential candidate to have Ivorian parents. Another key measure introduced under Article 10 is a presidential prerogative to cancel or postpone elections in case of a "force majeure" (national crisis).[5w][5x][5y][5aa]

**4.10** Any presidential ambitions held by Alassane Ouattara still seemed to be blocked by the electoral law. Ouattara announced in March 1998 that he would leave his current position as

deputy managing director of the IMF in Washington in July 1999 to return to politics. The RDR announced on 13 April 1998 that he would be their chosen candidate for the 2000 presidential elections.[3c] On 31 May 1999 Ouattara confirmed he would become president of the RDR, (which broke away from the ruling Democratic Party (PDCI) after Houphouët died)[5ax], in August.[5au] On 2 September 1999 Ouattara accused the police of harassment, following an incident, described as an illegal search of his baggage, at Abidjan airport. It was alleged that the contents of his briefcase were photocopied before being returned to him. Opposition newspapers reported that the Government planned to arrest Ouattara on charges of possessing forged identity papers. The Government denied any such plans. President Bedie stated that Ouattara was not eligible to run for president, under the terms of the amended constitution, as he is a national of Burkina Faso. Ouattara maintained he is Ivorian and could prove it.[5bh] On 16 September police questioned Ouattara about his identity papers.[5bi] On 22 September a legal investigation against Ouattara was initiated, on charges of falsifying and using falsified documents.[20c] Ouattara left the country in September following accusations that he was using forged documents. President Bedie disqualified Ouattara from participating in forthcoming elections.[4a][30b] On 4 October the RDR party submitted registration documents for Ouattara to formally take over the leadership of the party.[5bm] On 6 October the nationality certificate submitted by the RDR, as part of Ouattara's registration dossier, was annulled by the justice minister. It was reported that this action should not be connected to a separate judicial investigation into Ouattara's alleged forged identity papers.[5bn] On 9 December the Bedie government issued a warrant for Ouattara's arrest. Following the coup, on 29 December, a Cote d'Ivoire court cancelled the arrest warrant and decreed that there was no justification for pursuing the investigation.[5bu] Ouattara returned to the country, immediately following the decision, having spent the previous three months in France.[17o]

**4.11** On 12 September 2000 lawyers representing General Guei produced documents to show that Mr Ouattara would be ineligible to stand in the presidential elections. The photocopied documents they produced suggested that Ouattara had been completing forms since 1962 as a citizen of Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso).[30m] Lawyers for Ouattara said genetic tests done showed that he was in fact the son of an Ivorian woman.[13n]

**4.12** The opposition denounced the constitutional amendments and called for a series of street protests. A march took place in Abidjan on 7 September 1998. It was organised by the RDR and FPI (grouped together as the Front républicain - FR) to protest against some of the revisions to the Constitution. Their discontent focused, inter alia, on provisions extending the presidential term, the composition of the senate and the clause allowing the president to postpone elections in the face of a national crisis.[5ae][21j]

**4.13** A march on 7 September 1998, led by Laurent Gbagbo and Djeni Kobina, leaders of the FPI and RDR respectively, had marchers present in their thousands. Kobina urged the FR activists to return home calmly and commended the security forces for their discipline. A further march was staged on 14 September, disrupting traffic in Abidjan, Bouaké and other towns up country. It was reported that the parties intended to continue the marches until the government agreed to hold talks on repealing the amendments.[5ae][5af][21j]

**4.14** President Bédié promised to pursue dialogue with the opposition on the electoral law and certain points of the Constitution. The government subsequently held a series of meetings in October 1998 with the FPI leader, Gbagbo. As a result of these meetings, the opposition suspended its programme of marches. On 16 December 1998 Bedie agreed to renounce, in a

second round of constitutional amendments, some of the powers conferred on him by the June 1998 amendments. These included the power to, annual elections, postpone announcements of election results and to appoint one-third of the Senate, all members of which are to now be elected. All the other June amendments remain fully effective.[4a][10c] On 11 July 1999 the FPI re-elected Laurent Gbagbo as its leader and candidate for the presidential elections in 2000.[5az]

**4.15** A new constitution and electoral code were approved in a referendum held on 23 and 24 July 2000. Almost 3 million Ivoirians voted from the 5 million registered, with over 86 percent of votes cast being in favour. The new constitution limits presidents to two five-year terms, lowers the voting age to 18 and guarantees immunity from prosecution for participants in the coup. Provisions also stipulate that presidential candidates must be of Ivorien parentage and must never have had another nationality.[5cb][21n][37b]

**4.16** On 17 August 2000 nineteen candidates had been registered for the presidential elections which were due on 17 September. The candidates include Alassane Ouattara (Rassemblement Des Republicains), Laurent Gbagbo (Front Populaire Ivoirien), Francis Wodie (Parti Ivoirien du Travail) and General Guei, who registered as an independent.[37d] Ousted former president Henri Konan Bedie failed to become the Parti Democratique de Cote d'Ivoire candidate, losing the PDCI nomination to former interior minister Emile Constant Bombet.[30j] On 8 September the authorities requested an investigation be carried out against Mr Bombet on allegations of corruption. This could stop Bombet from standing in the election as candidates should not be facing criminal charges.[30i]

**4.17** The National Electoral Commission (NEC) asked the military government, on 26 August 2000, to delay the presidential elections scheduled for 17 September. They requested more time to register voters, prepare election guidelines and distribute balloting material.[17u][30k] On 30 August the government agreed the request and the presidential elections were postponed and changed to the new date of 22 October 2000.[21o] Registration for presidential candidates was re-opened from 11 September allowing any additional candidates to register. The Supreme Court were to rule on the eligibility of all candidates on 2 September, but due to the postponement of the elections this was changed to 7 October.[5ce][37d]

## **B. Judiciary**

**4.18** The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary. In practice, it is subject to executive branch and other outside influences. The judicial system is headed by a Supreme Court and includes the Court of Appeals and lower courts.[4a]

**4.19** Those convicted have the right of appeal, although higher courts rarely overturn verdicts. Military courts do not try civilians and there are no appellate courts within the military court system. Anyone convicted by a military tribunal may petition the Supreme Court to set aside the verdict and order a retrial. No free legal assistance is available.[4a]

**4.20** In rural areas, traditional institutions often administer justice at the village level, handling domestic disputes and disputes over property, without the use of physical punishment. Formal courts are increasingly replacing the traditional mechanisms.[4a]

## C. Security

**4.21** Following the coup d'etat the structure of the security forces did not change. Security forces include the army, navy and air force, all under the Ministry of Defence, the Republican Guard, a well-funded presidential security force, national police (Surete) and the gendarmerie, which is a branch of the armed forces with responsibility for general law enforcement. The gendarmerie is charged with maintenance of public order and internal security. The Special Anti-Crime Police Brigade (SAVAC) continued its operations. Prior to the coup the armed forces accepted the primacy of civilian authority.[4a]

**4.22** Crime has increased in recent years, most notoriously in Abidjan. A new National Security Council was inaugurated in August 1996 to advise the president on military and defence matters. It has a co-ordinating and advisory role in the fight against crime, armed robbery and national security. The Ivorian government approved new measures to fight crime, promising more effective deployment, re-education of existing officers and greater attention to recruitment standards.[5d] On 25 August 1999 riots took place in the Abidjan suburb of Youpougon with protestors complaining against rising prices, such as transport fares. Police used tear gas to disperse demonstrators and reportedly detained several people. Women and youths were said to have made up the majority of the protestors.[5bg][30a] During 1999 confrontations between the police and demonstrators resulted in at least 4 deaths.[4a]

**4.23** The law providing for the death penalty for robbery with violence was adopted by the government in March 1995 as part of its law and order offensive.[5b][5c][9b][11b]

**4.24** Côte d'Ivoire's parliament voted in a new law in September 1996 giving police and security forces greater powers to stop and search suspects and search private homes and vehicles, without a warrant.[3a][5f]

**4.25** The civil war in neighbouring Liberia (1989 to 1996) increased the availability of weapons in Côte d'Ivoire, which in turn was being blamed for the prevalence of high levels of crime in the country. The government declared western Côte d'Ivoire to be a military operational zone in an attempt to prevent rebel incursions and infiltration of refugee groups in Côte d'Ivoire by Liberian fighters.[1][2] On 27 May 1999 President Bedie officially declared that a National Commission for banning Chemical Weapons in Cote d'Ivoire had been installed, with the aim to achieve the objectives of the Cote d'Ivoire convention regarding peace.[21k]

**4.26** According to a report issued in April 1998, crime had declined in 1997, in particular domestic burglaries, armed robberies and car thefts. One major reason behind the improvement is thought to be the establishment of roadblocks in and around Abidjan, which makes it more difficult for criminals to flee. Crime nevertheless remains a major problem in Côte d'Ivoire. Human rights organisations, especially LIDHO, have continued to express their concerns about police behaviour, in particular extra-judicial killings.[3c]

**4.27** In May 1996 there were reports that a suspected coup attempt by members of the armed forces had taken place during the civil unrest, prior to the presidential elections in October 1995. General Robert Gueï and seven others were dismissed from the army following legal procedures before an investigation council. Four others were dismissed from the army for a period of 16 months. In March 1997 the government ordered the release of the seven soldiers who had been detained pending investigation of the coup plot allegations.[1][51][21b]

## **V HUMAN RIGHTS: GENERAL SITUATION**

### **A. General Human Rights Practice**

**5.1** The Bedie government's human rights record was poor and there were serious problems in a number of areas. The seizure of power, in December 1999, by the National Committee for Public Salvation (CNSP) led to a number of abuses. Whilst the Constitution provides for the right of citizens to change their government peacefully through democratic means, the Bedie government limited this right in practice. The coup effectively disenfranchised citizens, preventing them from exercising this right. CNSP forces and others were responsible for numerous robberies, widespread looting and acts of intimidation. The CNSP arrested 150 government ministers and military officers but had released all but 40 of them by the end of 1999.[4a] The remaining 40 were released by the end of January 2000.[5by]

**5.2** In 1999 there were no confirmed reports of politically motivated killings, or disappearances, by the government forces. Violent crime remained widespread and the security forces frequently resorted to lethal force and committed numerous extrajudicial killings. According to the Ministry of Security, 64 persons were killed by the security forces during 1998. Although statistics are not known for 1999, the number of persons killed by security forces was expected to be higher.[4a]

**5.3** In June 1996 Police and gendarmerie officers adopted a "code of conduct" to be observed "in cases of internal troubles and tensions". The code stipulates that police should limit the recourse of force to "the strict minimum necessary for the respect of the human person", that murder and torture are forbidden; as are other cruel, inhuman and degrading punishments, as well as the taking of hostages. The code stipulates that "any person deprived of their liberty should be treated with humanity".[10b] In December 1998 the Government enacted legislation allowing lawyers to assist their clients at the stage of preliminary police hearings, that is, during the early stages of detention when torture and abuse may be most likely. In spite of the new legislation, during 1999 police officers reportedly continued to mistreat suspects. In July 1999 all lawyers in the country participated in a one week strike to protest against the mistreatment and humiliation to which police subject them, when they try and assist their clients. The strike ended when two police officers were arrested.[4a]

**5.4** It was reported that police frequently used violence to restrain demonstrators. Riot police used tear gas and truncheons against protesting students and other demonstrators on several occasions during 1999. On at least four occasions police used lethal force against protestors and innocent bystanders. The transition government detained a number of police personnel believed to be responsible for deaths and injuries during demonstrations that occurred between April and October. No police officers were arrested for these abuses.[4a]

**5.5** On 10 September 1998 in Yopougon a policeman shot dead a taxi driver who refused his request to stop. The policeman was arrested and the government stated that justice would take its course. The president ordered an investigation into the incident. The taxi drivers went on strike and protested at police action. They accused the police of stopping them to extort money during impromptu roadside checks.[5ag] Strikers set fire to vehicles and stoned police who in turn responded with tear gas. The government acceded to the drivers demands, including a compensation payment to the deceased widow and son. On 15 October 1998, another taxi driver



died in police custody. Police authorities announced that he had hanged himself in his cell by the shoelaces. Dignite, the independent trade union that represents most taxi drivers, filed a suit against the Minister of Security and the Prefect Police in connection with this death. In October 1999 the Abidjan military court jailed a man for 6 months, for the death of a taxi driver at a checkpoint in 1997.[4a]

**5.6** The government reportedly used arbitrary arrest and detention, and prolonged detention remained a problem in 1999. Journalists and students in particular were detained without trial for long periods. Under the Code of Penal Procedure, a public prosecutor may order the detention of a suspect for only 48 hours without bringing charges. A magistrate may order detention for up to four months, but must provide the Minister of Justice with a written justification for continued detention on a monthly basis. The law is often violated. It is reported that the police and the CNSP held persons for more than 48 hours without bringing charges. This practice is reported to be common and magistrates are not often able to verify that those who are not charged, are released. Defendants do not have the right to a judicial determination of the legality of their detention. A judge may release pre-trial detainees on provisional liberty if the judge believes that the suspect is not likely to flee. A law enacted in December 1998 limits pre-trial detention to 10 months in civil cases and 22 months in criminal cases. If these limits are exceeded the prisoner must be released on provisional liberty with no bail. If the responsible judge takes no action, the prison director must act to free the suspect or face sanctions.[4a]

**5.7** According to the human rights organisation LIDHO, many prisoners are detained for long periods, sometimes years, awaiting trial. On 31 December 1996, the Attorney General referred in public to the long periods of detention endured by remand prisoners in MACA (Maison d'Arret et Correction d'Abidjan), the country's main prison in Abidjan. He reported that, of a total population of 4,600 prisoners in MACA, 1,741 detainees had yet to be tried. Of this number, 470 had been detained for more than two years, 60 had been detained for at least four years and 39 had been detained for between five and twelve years. On 24 December 1999, 6,693 persons were detained at the MACA, a prison built for 1,500. In 1998 it was reported that the main prison of Abidjan began to separate male and female prisoners and to maintain female guards for female prisoners. There are still no health facilities for women. There continued to be credible reports of childbirth in prison, although there were no reports that guards raped female prisoners. Nevertheless, there were still reports that female prisoners engaged in sexual relations with their wardens in exchange for food and more privileges.[4a]

**5.8** In a statement issued on 24 April 1998 the government commented on those arrested for their involvement in the "active boycott" of the 1995 presidential elections. The government stated that 312 persons were originally prosecuted, of whom 148 were detained. Following decisions to discharge, release or acquit by examining magistrates or on appeal, the expiry of short sentences and a decree granting a presidential pardon on 6 August 1997, 34 people currently remained in detention. Of the 34 still in prison, 8 had been sentenced to three years' imprisonment, 4 to five years', 9 to ten years' and 13 to life imprisonment. Those sentenced to life imprisonment had been found guilty of killing nine people.[21i]

**5.9** On 3 October 1998 the president's office announced that those tried and sentenced for their role in the violent protests triggered by the 1995 presidential elections ("active boycott") would receive a presidential pardon. The FPI responded favourably to this development. Of the estimated 450 people originally arrested, 10 were still in prison awaiting trial and over 100 were on provisional liberty awaiting trial.[9b][14g] In December 1998 the government granted an

amnesty for all offences committed by all persons in connection with the active boycott of the 1995 elections. In September 1999 that amnesty was extended to military officers accused of involvement in the October 1995 coup plot. This particular group included General Guei. There were no other reports of political prisoners.[4a]

**5.10** Prison conditions are reported to be harsh and life threatening, although in 1998 they were allegedly improving in some respects. International humanitarian organisations reported better access to the prison system. Problems include overcrowding, malnutrition, infectious diseases and a lack of treatment facilities and medication, which are responsible for a high prisoner death rate. LIDHO reports that conditions at the MACA were particularly hazardous for women. The country acceded to the Convention Against Torture in 1995, but has enacted no implementing legislation. Although the Penal Code generally prohibits violence against persons, neither the Constitution nor the Penal Code specifically prohibits torture or other mistreatment. Police sometimes beat detainees or prisoners as punishment, or to extract confessions. Press photographs regularly show criminal detainees with swollen or bruised faces and bodies. At least four people are known to have died in custody as a direct result of harsh prison conditions. HIV/AIDS is also a significant mortality factor. It was credibly reported that 700 prisoners died in 1997. Figures for 1998 are not yet available, although at least 60 prisoners are known to have died during the year.[4a]

**5.11** Although prohibited by law, police restrict access to some prisoners. LIDHO and local human rights groups have reported experiencing difficulty in gaining access to the prisons. Unlike in previous years, humanitarian NGO's did not report any difficulties in gaining access to prisons in 1999. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Prisoners without borders and Doctors without Borders had access to the prisons and visited them during 1999 to provide food and medical care to prisoners. LIDHO did not visit prisons during 1998 or 1999 because it remained unable to do so without giving advance notice. It applied twice for authorisation to visit prisons without advance notice, but it has not received such authorisation to date.[4a] In April 1999, 792 prison warders, who man the country's 33 prisons where about 15,000 prisoners and suspects are detained, went on strike accusing the government of neglecting them. The action partially paralysed court hearings because suspects held in prison cells could not be sent to court. The secretary-general of the Ivorian Prison Warders Union said that 32 of the prisons carry out escorts of prisoners on foot. Policemen were mobilised to fill in as escorts while negotiations were carried out between the government and warders.[17i]

**5.12** In 1995 parliament voted in a new law authorising the extension of the death penalty to robbery with violence in certain cases, as well as murder. The death penalty for murder has been on the statute book, but has not been applied since independence from France in 1960. The courts continued to sentence criminals to death, but President Houphouët-Boigny always commuted these to custodial sentences. In March 1995 the government announced that it wanted to extend the death penalty to curb a surge in violent crime. The legislation was passed by the National Assembly to extend the scope of the death penalty, although there have been no reports that the death penalty has been carried out.[5b][5c][9b][9c][11b] In March 1999 a court sentenced to death six criminals aged between 18 and 20 years. They were found guilty of possessing arms and committing armed robbery in the country. This is the first time the death penalty has been imposed since the promulgation of the law. It can only be revoked by a presidential clemency.[17e]

**5.13** The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, although the Government sometimes restricted this right during the second half of 1999.[4a]

## **B. Human Rights Monitoring**

**5.14** The Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme (LIDHO), a domestic human rights NGO, was formed in 1987 and recognised by the government in July 1990. It has actively investigated alleged violations of human rights and issued press releases and reports, some critical of the government. Other NGO's such as Amnesty International and the International Movement of Democratic Women (MIFED) have published press releases critical of government abuses of human rights.[4a][9d] Amnesty International maintains a section in Côte d'Ivoire.[11c]

**5.15** The government has co-operated with international enquiries into its human rights practices, which have been chiefly in the area of prison conditions.[4a]

## **C. Refugees**

**5.16** Côte d'Ivoire has signed, but not ratified, the Organisation of African Unity Convention governing specific aspects of refugee problems in Africa.[4a]

**5.17** The government respects the right to first asylum and does not deny recognition to refugees by either law or custom. In 1999 an estimated 65,000 Liberian refugees remained in the Côte d'Ivoire, and from 150,000 to 200,000 refugees returned to Liberia under UN auspices, or independently. There are also several thousand refugees from Sierra Leone, Rwanda and Burundi. There have been no cases of forced repatriation.[1][4a]

**5.18** The government co-operates with the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees in health, education and food distribution programmes for refugees.[4a] An agreement was signed in Abidjan in January 1996, regarding a major programme of assistance valued at about \$100m to be co-ordinated by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme, for refugees from conflicts in Liberia and Sierra Leone displaced in those countries and in Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.[1]

**5.19** In July 1995 the government announced the establishment of the first reception centre for Liberian refugees at Guiglo and stated that further camps would also be established. Côte d'Ivoire had previously tended to promote the full integration of refugees into Ivorian society.[1]

**5.20** It was reported that several thousand Liberian refugees returned to Liberia from Côte d'Ivoire to vote in the elections on 19 July 1997 and then they re-entered Côte d'Ivoire without incident. Since the beginning of 1998 the UNHCR has repatriated in the region of 20,000 Liberian nationals, although some 4,000 have reportedly been re-admitted to Côte d'Ivoire following ethnic unrest in Liberia.[5ah][21h] In May 1999 the authorities in Cote d'Ivoire started providing identity cards to the estimated 201,000 refugees in the country, as required by the United Nations. The refugees said the cards would be of little use to them given that all foreigners living in the country were obliged to acquire resident permits. The minister of the interior explained that these identity cards would enable holders to obtain the resident permits at a reduced cost. The present costs for the annually renewable cards are 15,500 CFA francs for West Africans, 150,000 francs for non-West Africans, 50,000 francs for French nationals and 3,500 francs for refugees. The 1951 Geneva Convention on free movement of refugees obliges

all countries hosting the displaced to provide them with identity papers, enabling free movement in the country.[17k]

## **VI. HUMAN RIGHTS: SPECIFIC CONSIDERATION**

### **A. Freedom of Political Association**

**6.1** Côte d'Ivoire is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Article 7 of the Constitution provides for the existence of more than one political party. It stipulates that political organisations can be formed and can exercise their activities freely, provided that they respect the principles of national sovereignty and democracy and the laws of the Republic. Until May 1990, the PDCI-RDA was the sole legal party in the Côte d'Ivoire.[1][2][11b][12a]

**6.2** The government restricts freedom of association formally, but generally respects it in practice. The Constitution states that people are free to organise associations, and the implementing law stipulates that people must register, but does not require any authorisation. Opposition parties assert that the Constitution permits private associations to form and does not mention registration, therefore this requirement is unconstitutional. The government rejects this interpretation and requires all organisations to register before commencing activities. There were no reports in the last 5 years of registration having been denied.[21a] Before the coup in December 1999, there were 102 legally recognised parties. An August decree implementing the 1993 political party registration law was apparently interpreted to be aimed at the RDR and former minister Alassane Ouattara. The law prohibits the formation of political parties along ethnic or religious lines.[4a]

**6.3** The FPI (left of centre) and RDR (centre) parties remain very active. According to the United States Department of State Profile of Asylum Claims and Country Conditions dated June 1996, affiliation with either of those parties or any other registered opposition party would not expose that person to danger for that reason alone.[8b]

**6.4** President Bedie pardoned and ordered the release of 388 activists arrested during a violent incident on the 14 September 1999, outside Alassane Ouattara's home in Abidjan.[5bi]

**6.5** The RDR staged a sit-in, on 16 October 1999, in front of the national television station, Radiodiffusion Television Ivoirienne (RTI). It was organised to press demands for access to government-owned television and radio. Police used tear gas and truncheons to break up the demonstration, which they said was not authorised. A follow up demonstration was held on 27 October and police again used the same methods to disperse the demonstrators. Numerous people were injured and twenty RDR leaders, including the secretary-general, Henriette Diabate were arrested.[35a] They were charged under a special law which holds party officials responsible for the actions of their members.[5bo] On 12 November 11 RDR leaders, including Diabate, were fined and sentenced to 2 years in prison.[5bp] They were released and given amnesty by rebel soldiers during the coup in December.[4a]

**6.6** On 26 November President Bedie banned all public demonstrations in the country.[27b] Supporters of Alassane Ouattara said they would defy the ban.[5bq] On 18 December 1999 around 15,000 supporters of Ouattara held a peaceful rally in the country's

main sports stadium, with the blessing of the government.[5br]

**6.7** On 23 February 2000, the CNSP suspended the holding of political rallies in the country until further notice. As the election campaign has not been officially declared open the CNSP urged party leaders to refrain from holding all public rallies that would mobilize large numbers of people and resembling a premature electoral campaign.[21m]

## **B. FESCI**

**6.8** The student union, Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de la Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) was established in April 1990. In June 1991 the government banned FESCI following the death of a student. Notwithstanding its dissolution, FESCI continued to operate and play a leading part in demanding from the government improvements in the living and academic conditions of students. The government tolerated the union until May 1994 when it insisted that the organisation was banned. FESCI contends that it was never legally banned and was active in demonstrations, ceremonies and political party conventions. The government however, states that FESCI was legally banned by Decree No. 91-420 of 21 June 1991.[4a][6a][14b]

**6.9** By the mid 1990s, the education system was under acute strain with significant shortcomings, a chronic lack of investment and failure to keep pace with the population explosion. The universities had been built to cater for some 10,000 students but were expected to accommodate in the region of 70,000 in the 1997/1998 academic year. Discontent among the country's university students has repeatedly spilled over from the campuses onto the streets and into the secondary and even primary schools and has usually received rough treatment from the police. Underfunding has been the major source of grievances but resentment was also fuelled by moves in the early 1990s to end the long established right of all university graduates to jobs in the public sector.[3b][5s]

**6.10** The 1996/1997 academic year was very badly disrupted by student demonstrations and strikes called in an attempt to effect changes in the education system. Student demands included the payment of grants arrears, the improvement of housing and studying conditions and a revision of the marking system. The government accused student activists of vandalism and violence and campuses around the country were disrupted and closed for varying periods.[1][5m]

**6.11** In the last five years the government has attempted to redress the imbalance and lack of infrastructure in higher education resulting from the economic crisis of the 1980s. It has invested in lecture facilities, libraries, equipment and the rehabilitation of the university campus.[11a]

**6.12** On 18 January 1997 Cocody University Council met and established two working commissions to look into the student's grievances. The first commission, under the dean-emeritus of the law faculty, was tasked with investigating scholarships the second, under the vice-president of the University of Cocody, to look into the "Unite de Valeurs" or course credits.[11a]

**6.13** A court in Côte d'Ivoire fined and sentenced three student leaders to two years in prison on 7 January 1997, after a trial on public order charges. A fourth student was acquitted and discharged.[5g] Later in January, a student, Akpele Akpele Marcellin, died while escaping from police, who disrupted a FESCI meeting at a university hall of residence. On 21 January, the eve

of a widely observed 72 hour class boycott called by FESCI, two students were injured in clashes with police at the Yopougon campus, Abidjan. The Minister of Security rejected claims that the police had opened fire on protesting students and stressed that the police had no involvement in the death of the student.[1][5i][23b][24a]

**6.14** A university lecturers' union staged a 48 hour strike at the end of January 1997 to protest at the situation in Ivorian universities. It drew a mixed response. On 4 February 1997 Guillaume Soro, Secretary General of FESCI, was arrested for inciting student "disobedience".[5j][5k]

**6.15** On 27 February 1997, in a move designed to defuse the student crisis, President Bédié signed a presidential decree releasing all students who had been detained during recent disturbances. The three students sentenced on 7 January 1997 were pardoned. Twenty seven others, including the FESCI Secretary General, Guillaume Soro, detained under "preventative measures" were released without charge. A permanent committee of dialogue was set up for mediation and arbitration, if mediation otherwise failed, in order to bring peace to the university campus.[11a]

**6.16** Disruption continued in early April 1997 with disturbances at the University of Bouaké resulting in considerable material damage. On 3 April students carried out acts of vandalism, including setting fire to administrative and private vehicles as well as administrative buildings. The president of the university had been scheduled to meet student delegates on 10 April to listen to the students' demands. On the evening of 9 April a group of students, claiming that the number of scholarships was insufficient, set ablaze the premises of the regional branch of the University Welfare Services Centre (CNOU) resulting in the destruction of two offices. On the morning of 10 April, whilst the meeting was in progress other students ransacked and looted the office of the CNOU that had not been destroyed. There was insecurity in the residences as students were pursued and attacked by other students, in an attempt to prevent them sitting examinations. As a result, the government closed the university and residences and suspended the payment of scholarship allowances to students at Bouaké. The government also set up an enquiry to establish responsibility for the violence and took measures to increase the security at other campuses.[1][21c]

**6.17** FESCI held a rally of about 1000 students on 16 April 1997, at the Cocody university campus. The Secretary General of the union announced a five day boycott starting on 22 April 1997. FESCI added the reopening of the University of Bouaké to its demands. [25a]

**6.18** In early May 1997, the Ivorian government closed down student residences in Abidjan after a wave of unrest in the universities. The universities were not closed and lectures continued. The government said that the closure of the halls of residence was designed to stop students who wanted to continue studying becoming the victims of threats and attacks from student militants based in the hostels. The resumption of classes at Bouaké was announced at the end of May.[5m][21d]

**6.19** FESCI announced the lifting of its class suspension order and classes resumed on 10 June 1997. The Secretary General of FESCI said that, although not all of its grievances had been satisfied, the organisation had obtained some concessions from the authorities. [25b]

**6.20** As a result of the troubled 1996/1997 year, certain faculties were unable to finish the academic year before the main holidays began in July 1997. The university year 1997/98

would normally have begun in November 1997 however, the authorities decided to extend the disrupted 1996/97 year after the summer holidays, reopening in September 1997 so that courses could be completed and examinations taken. Cocody, the largest campus, failed to reopen as planned on 23 September 1997, with student militants urging a boycott of classes and other students staying away, fearing unrest. Riot police guarded the main university buildings but no major incidents were reported. Officials at other campuses reported that students had resumed classes.[5o][21f]

**6.21** President Bédié held a week long National Conference on the Future of Higher Education in Côte d'Ivoire. It took place on 30 September 1997 and was attended by several hundred delegates, including FESCI leaders, ministers and diplomats.[5p] Bédié announced the lifting of the ban on FESCI and the desire for reconciliation. He pledged cash to address some of the problems affecting the higher education sector. Also that new student residences would be built and teachers' working conditions improved. He hoped for "calm and effective" relations with student unions in future and urged students to abide by the country's laws.[5q][13a]

**6.22** Bédié said 100 million CFA francs (\$170,000) would go towards grants that students said had not been paid, on condition that they returned to classes. Another 100 million CFA francs would go towards temporary accommodation for students from the Yopougon university campus, in Abidjan, which had been used to house police officers since summer 1997. Following the conference, the government and university students reached a further agreement over the reopening of the halls of residence. Under the deal, the government agreed to let students, many of whom still had exams to take to end the 1996/97 academic year, return to their rooms in the residences which had been closed during unrest.[5r][5s][21g]

**6.23** On 10 October 1997, at the end of a FESCI rally, FESCI Secretary General, Soro Guillaume read a statement lifting the strike call and he urged his fellow students to return to classes.[5q][21g] Decree No. 97-599 of 13 October 1997 rescinded decree no 91-420 (which had banned FESCI) and made it an authorised and legally constituted organisation.[14e]

**6.24** The 1997/98 academic year was generally calm, although there were isolated incidents of unrest. It was reported in April 1998 that since October 1997 the situation on the campus had remained calm and there had been no return to the troubles which disrupted the universities for most of the year. Following the students' return to classes, considerable efforts were made by both the faculties and students themselves to make up for lost time. Many courses delayed by the 1997 disruptions were completed along with course assessments. The campus accommodation was returned to the students as agreed and there was little or no police presence.[11d]

**6.25** On 6 May 1998 students from the University of Cocody marched on the local bus depot to demonstrate against the rules for obtaining concessionary bus passes. Due to the late issue of student identity cards for the 1997/98 session many students were unable to produce the necessary documentation. The march followed a meeting on campus organised by FESCI which was closely monitored by the police. Some violence was reported.[11e]

**6.26** On 7 May 1998 courses were suspended at Cocody University after a faculty member was beaten up by members of FESCI. The government, the FPI and the leading human rights organisation, LIDHO, issued statements condemning the act. FESCI issued a statement on 18

May apologising for the incident. Two students were subsequently banned from higher education establishments for four years.[5u][11d]

**6.27** On 14 May 1998, a 16 year old student, Sombo Ellele Mages, at a secondary school in Abidjan was shot and fatally wounded by police. The police were called in to deal with violent demonstrations by students, against an excessive levy imposed by the headmaster to help to pay for the school upkeep. This was followed by a wave of strikes and demonstrations by students protesting at the increasing use of unofficial levies in schools. High schools were closed on 26 May for 48 hours as a mark of respect for Mages.[5v] On 1 June, the authorities banned all demonstrations in schools. In a government statement read out on the television, the Education Minister, Pierre Kipre, said that the headmaster of the dead boy's school would be sacked for imposing the controversial student levy, as would a second master. He said that any group organising fresh protests would be banned from primary and secondary schools and any students claiming membership of such groups would be expelled.[17a] Following widespread student protests about this killing, police sergeant Kouakou Souassi was charged with Sombo's death. In October 1998 a military tribunal sentenced him to 10 years imprisonment.[4a][11d]

**6.28** The Education Minister, in trying to combat cheating throughout the education system, in July 1998 ordered the cancellation of the results at 14 primary schools in Abidjan, alleging massive fraud and cheating. Typically this involves teachers selling exam questions to pupils, or candidates getting someone else to take the exams. The Education Minister directed that the examinations should be re-written in the affected schools and promised to identify examination supervisors suspected of conniving with pupils. The pupils rejected the minister's claims and thousands of primary school children protested in the streets of the capital, demanding that the minister either rescind his decision or resign. They had the backing of FESCI in so doing. Several hundred school children staged a sit-in outside the presidency in Abidjan on 15 July 1998 in protest, but no problems were reported.[5z][17a]

**6.29** There is no known law specifically concerning academic freedom but in practice the government tolerates much academic freedom. There were numerous student protests during 1999.[4a]

**6.30** On 26 March 1999 the University of Bouake was closed indefinitely after police forced students to leave their hostels after boycotting classes for 48 hours earlier that week. The university authorities said they were compelled to close the institution after students used force to prevent their colleagues, who refused to join them, from attending classes.[17f]

**6.31** On 1 April 1999 the university room occupied by FESCI student union leader Ble Goude was the target of a grenade attack in the early hours. The room was gutted but Goude was not in the room at the time.[5ai] On 26 April students took to the streets demanding larger grants and reforms in the education system. This triggered looting and clashes with police in Youpougon. Riot police dispersed protestors with tear gas, shops and markets closed and public transport stopped operating.[5aj] The police reportedly arrested 105, mostly students, following the incidents.[17h] Students began a three-day boycott of classes in protest against various issues such as the way scholarships are awarded, health, housing, transport and education. FESCI has more than 60,000 members in high schools and universities across the country. The government said it was spending 40 percent of its annual budget on education but the students claimed it was not reaching the target groups.[17g] On 27 April the university authorities banned campus meetings and student sit-ins at the National University of Abidjan.[4a][17h] On 29 April the



Council of Ministers ratified the action and extended it to ban all FESCI activities throughout the country.[4a] On 30 April the government banned university student leaders from organising any protest activities in elementary or secondary schools. This decision followed student activists storming lower schools and forcing school children to go out and help enforce a classroom boycott. Following the three-day boycott it was reported that secondary schools had resumed some classes but the university of Abidjan remained closed due to a teacher's strike over pay and conditions.[5ak]

**6.32** On 2 May 1999 President Bedie told students that if they break the law they would have to face the consequences with no hope of clemency.[5al] On 4 May protests over the cost of living took place in the towns of Gagnoa and Lakota by students and youths, who began a looting and wrecking spree. Troops were deployed to restore order.[5ao] On 5 May FESCI called for a two-day strike on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> over grants and study conditions, in defiance of the government ban on its activities in schools. FESCI officials said if the government did not respond, it would be followed by a week long nationwide strike in schools and universities.[5an] On 6<sup>th</sup> the government ordered the indefinite closure of primary and secondary schools in Bouake and Abidjan to stem the student unrest. President Bedie said police would be deployed in schools and universities in a further move to curb unrest. He announced a ban on campus meetings and sit-ins, as this was believed to be where the trouble begins.[5ao] On 8 May FESCI leader Ble Goude said FESCI was an organisation that did not seek to make violence part of the strategy for its struggle.[5ap] On 13 May FESCI called for a four-day strike because the government had failed to address its demands. The government warned FESCI that it was going beyond the bounds of legitimate union activity and risked being banned.[5aq]

**6.33** On 27 May students renewed their protests, following the governments decision on 21 May to fine and jail six students for five years on charges of acts of violence and vandalism.[5ar] Police used tear gas and batons to disperse around 100 students at Cocody campus who had gathered for a planned meeting.[20b] On 28 May students boycotted classes and demonstrated in Bouake and Gagnoa. There were reports of vandalism and looting.[5as] The government closed all schools at all levels for 17 days in May, following widespread demonstrations.[4a] The government stressed that the universities would remain open to willing students wishing to attend lectures. This was considered necessary action in order to restore law and order on campuses.[17j] On 31<sup>st</sup> FESCI announced that it would go ahead with a planned four-day strike, due to begin on 1 June, despite a government warning that it would crack down on acts of violence. A FESCI spokesman said they would organise meetings, sit-ins and marches across the country until their demands were met.[5at]

**6.34** On 1 June 1999 riot police used tear gas to break up attempted student marches in Abidjan and Bouake. There were also isolated incidents in Youpougon.[5av] The FPI, whilst it had remained silent over the education dispute, expressed its dismay at the government's handling of the situation.[34a] On 7 June FESCI announced that the current strike, which commenced on 1 June and due to end on 5 June, had been extended until 12 June.[25c] On 23 June FESCI announced the suspension of its strike action in all schools, colleges and universities in the country. Students and pupils had been striking intermittently since 20 April.[17i] FESCI leader Ble Goude held a press briefing on 30 June at Cocody University campus. He called on President Bedie to get more seriously involved in the education crisis or else FESCI would assume its responsibility.[33a]

**6.35** On 3 August 1999 it was reported that student strikes had disrupted university courses so severely that most courses for the 1998/99 academic year had been declared "invalid". Around 40,000 - 50,000 students would be affected by this measure. This would be the second time in three years that the academic year had been all but nullified.[5bb] FESCI complained this action would lead to overcrowding in universities.[4a] On 5 August police used tear gas to break up a news conference in Youpougon, held by student union leaders, to discuss the decision by authorities to invalidate the academic year. FESCI said some of its people were hurt and others were taken away by police.[5bd] On 17 August FESCI leader Ble Goude was arrested by police.[5bf] Goude had 10 charges brought against him which included the murder of a trader in Divo in April, looting, a break-in at the prime minister's residence in Bassam and destruction of property in Abidjan. 200 students have already been sentenced to five years each in prison for the same offences.[25d]

**6.36** On 28 September 1999 jailed FESCI leader Charles Ble Goude was rushed to hospital with respiratory problems. The student union leader had been held in prison since 25 August 1999 awaiting trial for violent student protests earlier in the year.[4a][5bi]

**6.37** Between April and August 1999 the police reportedly detained at least 180 students and unemployed persons across the country, for involvement in sometimes violent strikes and demonstrations. Of those detained, 120 were released, of the remainder the minors were tried and released to their parents. Those over 18 years old were sentenced to 5 years in prison. On 1 October 1999 President Bedie signed a decree which granted pardons to the 60 sentenced students and all were released from custody. The pardon did not extend to those non-students that infiltrated the demonstrations and committed offences.[4a][21i] On 4 October, at the start of the new academic year, FESCI boycotted university classes demanding better study conditions and grants. The boycott was maintained despite the President's pardon only days before. Among those freed was Charles Ble Goude.[5bi]

**6.38** On 28 July 2000 at least one thousand demonstrators, mostly students, gathered outside the French embassy in Abidjan to protest against French interference in Cote d'Ivoire internal affairs. On 31 July security forces used teargas to disperse around 500 students who gathered outside the French embassy in support of the French statement urging Ivorian authorities not to prevent any candidate from standing in the presidential elections due on 17 September 2000.[17t][30h]

**6.39** On 17 August 2000 several thousand young demonstrators marched through Abidjan's administrative district, Le Plateau. They were demanding that General Guei step down if he proposed to stand as a candidate in the forthcoming elections. The demonstration was provided with a heavy police presence and was peaceful, with no reports of violence.[30i][37c]

### **C. Freedom of Assembly**

**6.40** The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly, although the government sometimes restricted this right during the second half of 1999.[4a]

**6.41** During the October 1995 presidential poll when the opposition called for an "active boycott" of the elections, the government announced that "all marches and sit-ins would be banned for a three month period in all streets and public places". The ban was reportedly applied to opposition gatherings only. Penalties for infraction ranged from no action to 12 months'

imprisonment. The same Decree No. 95-721 of 20 September 1995 also made marches and demonstrations in public places subject to a system of advance notice.[7b] Groups wanting to hold rallies or demonstrations are required by law to submit a notice of intent to the Ministry of Security, or the Ministry of Interior, 48 hours before the proposed event. No law expressly authorizes the government to ban public meetings or events for which advance notice has been given in the required manner. Nevertheless, the government has sometimes denied the opposition permission to meet in public outdoor locations. No opposition events were banned in 1997.[4a] Anyone contravening the decree is liable to imprisonment for a period of 10 days to two months plus a fine of between 10,000 and 360,000 CFA francs, or to one or other of these penalties.[7b] On 26 November 1999 President Bedie issued Decree No 99-668, which eliminated the right to hold outdoor meetings and demonstrations during the workweek. The ban was to remain in effect until 30 May 2000. It eliminated a number of planned opposition demonstrations for December 1999, although the government allowed an outdoor rally to take place on 18 December. The Decree remained in effect at the end of 1999.[4a]

**6.42** The "Anti-Casseur Law", Decree No. 92-464, was introduced on 30 July 1992. It punishes the organisers of demonstrations as well as the direct participants in violence, assault or criminal damage committed during the event.[7a][14a]

**6.43** The political opposition remains active, holding seminars, rallies (some in large football stadiums) and continues a vocal criticism of the government through the press.[4a][8b][23a]

**6.44** On 19 September 2000 the ruling Conseil National de Salut Publique (CNSP) announced that all political rallies and meetings had been suspended. The ban would be in place until the official opening of the election campaign, two weeks before the polls on 22 October.[37e] Opposition parties reacted angrily to the restrictions put on political activity.[30p]

#### **D. Freedom of Speech and the Press**

**6.45** The Constitution provides for freedom of expression, although private newspapers frequently criticize government policies and the government imposes significant restrictions on this right.[4a]

**6.46** The two government-owned daily newspapers (Fraternite Matin and Ivoir Soir) offer little criticism of government policy, while government-owned radio and television offer none at all. The privately owned press has grown rapidly in the 1990s and, although it has a relatively limited circulation, it succeeds in presenting a wide range of views and political trends. Independent newspapers (twelve daily, several weekly), as well as student and opposition parties, voice their disapproval of government or presidential actions frequently.[4a][15a]

**6.47** The government owns both television channels and two major radio stations; only the primary government radio and television stations are broadcast nationwide. There are also four radio stations not controlled by the government and a private television subscription service, Canal Horizon. The independent stations have complete control over their editorial content but the government continues to exercise considerable influence over official media programme content, news coverage and other matters. The government does not restrict access to, or distribution of electronic media. There are twelve domestic Internet service providers and all twelve are private.[4a]

**6.48** Press Law No. 91-1033 makes it a crime, punishable by three months to two years in prison, to offend the president, the prime minister, foreign chiefs of state, government or their diplomatic representatives, or to defame institutions of state. A number of journalists have been prosecuted under this legislation.[15a] In October 1998 the government announced it would punish criminal libel convictions by fines rather than imprisonment, except in the cases of libel against the President.[4a]

**6.49** Journalists Raphael Lapke and Jean Khalil Sylla of *Le Populaire* were arrested in April and June 1999 respectively, for publishing false stories of student deaths, disturbing public order, and offending the Head of State. They were tried in October and both fined and sentenced to 6 months' imprisonment.[4a] The press laws were changed by parliament on 30 June 1999, replacing some custodial sentences with fines ranging from 500,000 (\$788) to 2.5 million (\$3,943) CFA francs. Insulting or holding the head of state in contempt was the one exception that remained.[5ay]

**6.50** On 21 September 1999 the publisher of the opposition newspaper, 'Le Liberal', was shot dead in a suspected robbery.[4a][5bk] On 26 September the founder of 'Liberation', another opposition newspaper, was targeted, but escaped unhurt. Both papers are close to the Rally of the Republicans (RDR) party of Alassane Ouattara.[4a][27a] On 28 December 1999 *Reporters sans Frontiers* expressed their concern to General Guei over the detention of two journalists from the government daily, *Fraternite Matin*. Both were arrested by military officers on 27 December, but freed a few hours after being detained. The authorities said an uncontrolled group acting on its own initiative had arrested the journalists. No charges were brought against the journalists.[36a]

**6.51** On 2 August 2000 the government tightened the conditions of admission to the journalism profession by demanding professional certificates from accredited schools of journalism, or a university degree.[14h]

**6.52** On 19 September 2000 Amnesty International issued a report which stated that soldiers had seriously violated human rights since the coup in December 1999. The report said that unarmed criminals had been shot, relatives of ousted president Bedie had been tortured and that lawyers and journalists had been beaten. Amnesty said it welcomed the abolition, in July, of the death penalty.[30o]

**6.53** On 21 September 2000 the media observed a one-day news blackout in the country to protest against the abuses against journalists. Journalists stated that the strike was specifically in protest to the beating of a journalist by soldiers, after he was summoned to see the President, over an article he had written for the independent daily, *Le Jour*. Following the meeting the journalist was escorted home by soldiers. He was hospitalised for several days after being badly beaten.[5cf][37f]

## **E. Freedom of Religion**

**6.54** At the time of the 1988 census, approximately 39% of the population of Côte d'Ivoire were muslim, 26% were Christian (mainly Roman Catholic) and approximately 17% followed traditional animist beliefs.[1]

**6.55** The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the government generally respects this right in practice. There are no known impediments to religious expression. There is no state religion, but for historical as well as ethnic reasons, the government informally favours Christianity, in particular the Roman Catholic Church. The government permits the open practice of religion and there are no restrictions on religious ceremonies or teaching.[4a]

**6.56** Some muslims believe that their religious or ethnic affiliation makes them targets of discrimination by the government, with regard to employment and the renewal of national identity cards.[4a] Native muslims are frequently subject to petty harassment as part of general pressure against muslims from neighbouring countries and, despite being a plurality of the population, constitute a significant minority at all levels of government. In December 1997 Côte d'Ivoire became an observer member of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference at its request.[26a]

**6.57** Discrimination based on religion is prohibited by law and the government enforces this provision.[1][4a]

**6.58** The new Government ordered the Superior Islamic Council, a pro-Bedie religious organisation, to disband.[4a]

**6.59** The Catholic church began to operate community radio stations in 1998. On 21 April 1999 the government authorised Muslims to operate a similar station.[4a]

## **F. Ethnicity**

**6.60** There are some 60 ethnic groups in Côte d'Ivoire. The country's population is ethnically diverse and made up five major ethnic groups. According to a 1998 census the Akan family make up more than 40 percent of the citizenry. The largest Akan ethnic group, was the Baoule. About 25 percent belong to the Mande family, of which the Malinke are the largest group. About 15 percent belong to the Krou family, of which the Bete are the largest group. Slightly more than 15 percent belong to the Voltaic family, of which the Senoufo are the largest group. Major ethnic groups generally have their own primary languages.[4a]

**6.61** Discrimination based on ethnicity and national origin is prohibited by law. The government enforces these provisions. There are no impediments to the exercise of political rights by any of the ethnic groups. Societal discrimination based on ethnicity is sometimes practiced by members of all ethnic groups, although interethnic marriage is increasingly common in urban areas.[4a]

**6.62** Non-Ivorians resident in Côte d'Ivoire represent more than one third of the total population and are perceived to be routinely harassed by the police. This reflects the Ivorian conclusion that foreigners are responsible for high local crime rates and concern over Ivorian national identity.[4a]

**6.63** Electoral law changes in 1995 limited candidates to those who could prove that both parents had been born in Côte d'Ivoire. This measure was not relaxed in the constitutional changes voted in on 30 June 1998.[4a]

**6.64** Members of the Bété ethnic group allege discrimination by the more powerful Baoulé tribal group. The Bété are part of the Krou group and the Baoulé are part of the Akan ethnic group. The Baoulé are the single largest tribal group in the country and have been politically dominant. President Bédié is from the Baoulé ethnic group and Laurent Gbagbo is Bété, membership of the latter is associated with FPI affiliation.[1]

**6.65** There have been historical tensions between the Bété and Baoulé groups. According to the Bété, in 1970 members of the army (under Baoulé command) killed 4,000 Bété in the Gagnoa region. Tensions between the groups escalated before the 1995 presidential elections in Gagnoa region.[1]

**6.66** Various ethnic groups have come into conflict on the issue of land ownership about which there has been growing tension in Côte d'Ivoire. In September 1998 four people died when the Guere (Krou) and Baoulé (Akan) groups were involved in a land dispute in the Bangolo area, in the west of the country. In December 1998, the National Assembly enacted a new Land Use Law that established that land title does not transfer from the traditional owner to the user simply by virtue of use.[4a][17d]

**6.67** There are no legal impediments to the exercise of political rights by any of the more than 60 ethnic groups in the country. Prior to the coup, Baoules had always held the positions of President and Defense Minister. General Guei however is Youra, a subgroup of the Yacouba, one of the main ethnic groups in the west of the country. Many of his supporters are from historically underrepresented ethnic groups in the north and west.[4a]

## **G. Women and Children**

**6.68** Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women. Discrimination based on sex is prohibited by law. In practice women in general occupy a subordinate role in society.[4a][12a]

**6.69** Côte d'Ivoire is a signatory to the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Articles 19, 24, 36 and 37 of the Convention indirectly and directly address the issue of female genital mutilation (FGM) and the Convention calls on State parties to eradicate such practices.[12a][22a]

**6.70** The courts and police generally view domestic violence as a family problem, unless serious bodily harm is inflicted, or the victim lodges a complaint, in which case they may initiate criminal proceedings.[4a]

**6.71** The Ivorian Association for the Defence of Women (AIDF) and MIFED have protested against what they consider to be the authorities indifference to female victims of violence. They have called attention to domestic violence and female genital mutilation (FGM). An AIDF survey found that many women refused to discuss their experience of domestic violence but 90% of those that completed the survey had been beaten or struck on at least one occasion. The government has no clear cut policy regarding spouse abuse beyond the provisions against violence in the civil code. In 1996 the Minister of Communications opened an NGO-sponsored forum on violence against women and said that there would be more government action in this area. In December 1998 the National Assembly enacted a law, Concerning Crimes against Women, which forbids and provides criminal penalties for forced, or early marriage and sexual

harassment, but says nothing about spouse abuse.[4a] In August 1999 the AIDF began a campaign against the violation of women's rights and domestic violence, with the aim of ensuring the adoption of specific laws protecting women against conjugal violence within households. Media reports suggest Abidjan's suburb of Youpougon was the worse affected area, with women facing serious violence on a daily basis. Cote d'Ivoire has ratified an international convention to eradicate all forms of violence to women. The AIDF suggested that more female police officers should be posted in police stations to deal with women who are victims of domestic violence.[17n]

**6.72** FGM remained a serious problem. It is considered illegal only as a violation of general laws prohibiting crimes against the person. A new law, Concerning Crimes against Women, enacted in December 1998, specifically forbids FGM and makes those who perform it subject to criminal penalties of imprisonment for up to 5 years and a fine ranging from \$650 to \$3,500. Double penalties apply for medical practitioners.[4a]

**6.73** A 75 year old woman, who was a FGM practitioner for 40 years, led delegations to remote regions of Côte d'Ivoire urging former colleagues to stop FGM. Eradicating FGM has been an uphill struggle as it forms an important part of traditional rituals among some Ivorian ethnic groups. Some women practice FGM because it is a source of income or they may be paid in kind. Two years ago the government promised, when inaugurating the national anti-circumcision commission, to help practitioners with funds to start alternative revenue-generating schemes. Nothing reportedly came of the pledge.[22a]

**6.74** FGM is practised particularly among the rural population in the north and west and to a lesser extent in the centre. The procedure is usually performed on young girls, or at puberty as part of rite of passage. It is almost always done outside modern medical facilities and techniques and hygiene do not meet modern medical standards. According to the World Health Organisation and the AIDF, as many as 60% of women have undergone FGM. Since the new law on FGM was enacted, 6 girls in Abidjan's Port Bouet district had been mutilated. Police and social workers neither acted to prevent the mutilation, nor to arrest the girls' parents.[4a]

**6.75** The Ministries of Public Health and of Employment, Public Service and Social Security seek to safeguard the welfare of children, and the government has also encouraged the formation of NGOs such as the Abidjan Legal Centre for the Defence of Children. In 1996 the government announced a series of measures aimed at reducing the population of street children. These steps included holding parents legally and financially responsible for their abandoned children and the development of training centres where abandoned children can learn a trade. One such centre opened in Dabou on 31 July 1999.[4a] In September 1998 a 16 year old street child was taken from a roadblock by police. The police commissioner announced the following day that he had hanged himself in his cell. Friends accused the police of beating him to death. No arrests were made.[3c][22a]

**6.76** Cities, especially Abidjan, have large populations of street children. Some children are employed as domestics and are subject to sexual abuse, harassment and other forms of mistreatment by their employers, according to AIDF and press reports. The law prohibits forced and bonded child labour, although the government does not enforce this effectively. Child labour and forced child labour remained a problem in 1999.[4a]

**6.77** The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons and there were credible reports that it occurs. It was reported that at least hundreds and perhaps thousands of Malian children were trafficked and sold into forced labour on Ivorian plantations, under abusive conditions. These children were reportedly forced to work 12 hour days in the fields and were locked at night in crowded sheds, with their clothing confiscated. The governments of both Mali and Côte d'Ivoire confirmed the reports. The government of Mali and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) took steps to halt this trafficking and repatriate the children.[4a]

**6.78** Primary education is compulsory, but not effectively enforced and there is a parental preference for educating boys. According to UNICEF statistics, 79 percent of males and 58 percent of females of primary school age reportedly enrolled between 1990 and 1996.[4a]

**6.79** An analysis on Aids in Africa said children were affected by the direct impact it had on their families. Nearly seven and a half million children are said to have lost their mothers or both parents through Aids. This left them without breadwinners and forced them on to the streets. It also had an affect on the education system as one teacher a day is said to be dying through Aids in Cote d'Ivoire, making the closure of some schools likely.[29a]

**6.80** In April 1999 twelve members of the under-19 rugby team, taking part in the Rugby World Championships in Llanelli, Wales, left unannounced from their lodgings. The first disappeared on 4 April. Another five left during the evening of the same day, with a further six vanishing on 6 April. All the youths were 18 years old and could speak little or no English.[28a] In early May 1999 they re-appeared in London reportedly waiting the chance to cross to France, although their documents had been confiscated by the team management on their arrival in Britain. This was a necessary precaution, given that four of the senior rugby team players had vanished on a tour of France in 1998.[31a]

## **G. Freedom to Travel**

**6.81** Although neither the Constitution nor any law provides for freedom of movement, the government generally does not restrict internal travel. However, uniformed police regularly extort small amounts of money or goods for contrived or minor infractions by motorists or passengers on public transport. In September 1997 the government announced measures to crack down on corruption among members of the police and other security forces and limit the number of road blocks. This followed a week-long strike by long-distance truck drivers against police extortion at road blocks in Côte d'Ivoire.[4a][5n]

**6.82** Citizens may normally travel abroad and emigrate freely and have the right of voluntary repatriation. There are no known cases of revocation of citizenship, although the Bedie government challenged the citizenship of presidential candidate Alassane Ouattara. It is reported that the government sometimes restricts foreign travel for political reasons.[4a] On 27 July 2000 a two-month long travel ban, imposed on political leaders leading up to the constitution referendum, was lifted by the military government.[30g] On the same day Alassane Ouattara was reported to have been prevented from leaving the country despite having prior authorisation and the travel restrictions having been lifted.[5cc]

**6.83** On 7 March 1997 President Bédié issued a statement concerning those Ivorians who had left the country to seek asylum. President Bédié rejected allegations of persecution as unfounded



and invited them to return to Côte d'Ivoire where they were guaranteed the right to exercise their civil and political rights.[14c]



Parti progressiste ivoirien (PPI)  
Parti pour la protection de l'environnement (PPE)  
Parti du rassemblement du peuple pour la jeunesse de Côte d'Ivoire (PRJCI)  
Parti pour la reconstruction nationale et la démocratie (PRND)  
Parti réformiste démocratique ivoirien (PRDI)  
Parti pour la réhabilitation ivoirienne du social et de l'économie (PRISE)  
Parti républicain de Côte d'Ivoire (PRCI)  
Parti socialiste ivoirien (PSI)  
Rassemblement des forces démocratiques (RFD)  
Rassemblement pour le progrès social (RPS)  
Rassemblement pour la République (RPR)  
Rassemblement des sociaux-démocrates (RSD)  
Union des libéraux pour la République (ULR)  
Union nationale des démocrates (UND)  
Union des paysans, des ouvriers et des salariés de Côte d'Ivoire (UPOSCI)  
Union pour le progrès social (UPS)  
Union des sociaux-démocrates (USD)

In April 1995 the FPI, RDR and the Union des forces démocratiques (comprising the PIT, PPS, PLCI and the UND) formed the Front Républicain (FR)

[1]

Alliance pour la Démocratie et le Socialisme (ADS) (Alliance for Democracy and Socialism)  
Formed on 1 August 2000 and made up of four parties - the Party for Environmental Protection, the Renaissance, the Party for Progress and Socialism (PPS) and the Party for National Reconstruction and Democracy.[27c]

**PROMINENT PEOPLE**

**Martial Ahipeaud:** Former Secretary General of the Fédération Estudiantine et Scolaire de la Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI)

**Aimé Henri Konan Bédié:** As president of the National Assembly, he assumed duties of the president in accordance with Article 11 of the constitution on the death of Felix Houphouët-Boigny on 7 December 1993. Mr Bédié won the presidential election on 22 October 1995 and was the current chairman of the PDCI-RDA and President of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire until he was ousted in a coup on 24 December 1999.

**René Degny-Ségui:** President of the Ligue ivoirienne des droits de l'homme (LIDHO).

**Daniel Kablan Duncan:** Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and Industrial Development.

**Laurent Gbagbo:** Founded the Front populaire ivoirien (FPI) in 1982 and is its current Chairman. He contested the country's first multi-party presidential elections in 1990, but was defeated by the incumbent, Dr Félix Houphouët-Boigny. He did not contest the 1995 presidential elections. Mr Gbagbo was re-elected as one of 13 FPI deputies in the National Assembly in the postponed legislative elections in December 1996.

**Felix Houphouët-Boigny:** Became the country's first president after independence from France on 7 August 1960. He was the sole candidate for the presidency at every election until 1990. Despite constitutional provision for a plural political system, his party, the PDCI-RDA was the only legal party until that year. Dr Houphouët-Boigny won the 1990 multi-party presidential elections in 1990. He died in office on 7 December 1993.

**Djéni Kobina** Leader of the RDR which he launched with PDCI reformers in 1994. Boycotted the presidential elections in 1995. Died aged 61 on 18 October 1998.

**General Gaston Koné** Former Minister of Security, removed from office in August 1996.

**Alassane Ouattara** Former governor of the Banque centrale de l'Afrique de l'ouest. Appointed by Dr Houphouët-Boigny in 1990 to head a commission to formulate economic adjustment measures. He was appointed Prime Minister. He resigned his premiership two days after Dr Houphouët-Boigny's death. In May 1994 Mr Ouattara was appointed deputy managing director of the IMF in Washington. In July 1995 the RDR invited Ouattara to stand as its presidential candidate. He declined. He announced his intention to leave the IMF in July 1999 to return to politics. He would be the RDR's chosen candidate in the 2000 elections.

**Abou Drahamane Sangaré** Secretary General of the FPI and director of the newspaper La Voie, organ of the FPI.

**Francis Wodié** First National Secretary of PIT. He contested the October 1995 presidential election. He failed to secure re-election to the National Assembly in the legislative elections which followed in November 1995. In August 1998 he accepted a post in the government as the Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This post was lost following the coup in December 1999.

**CHRONOLOGY**

- 7 August 1960** Unilateral independence from France declared.
- Feb/March 1990** Demonstrations held by students and workers against the government's austerity policies.
- April 1990** The Fédération Etudiante et Scolaire de la Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI) is established. Following the death of a student when troops dispersed demonstrators, all educational establishments are closed. The 1989/90 academic year is declared invalid. Alassane Ouattara is appointed to head a commission to formulate adjustment measures.
- May 1990** Plural political system is adopted.
- September 1990** Laurent Gbagbo is chosen by the FPI as its presidential candidate.
- October 1990** Félix Houphouët-Boigny is endorsed by the PDCI-RDA as its presidential candidate. On **28<sup>th</sup>** the first contested presidential election takes place. The incumbent, Dr Houphouët-Boigny, is re-elected for a seventh term.
- November 1990** The legislature approves two constitutional amendments with regard to Article 11 and the appointment of a Prime Minister, which goes to Alassane Ouattara. On **25<sup>th</sup>** legislative elections take place, contested by approximately 500 candidates representing some 17 parties. Official results have PDCI-RDA with 163 seats, FPI with 9, PIT had 1 (Francis Wodié), and there were 2 independently held seats. Bédié is confirmed as president of the National Assembly.
- May 1991** Security forces use violent methods to disperse a students' meeting at the University of Abidjan. Students stage demonstrations in at the armed forces.
- June 1991** Student is killed by FESCI members for defying an order to boycott classes. On **21<sup>st</sup>** the Government bans FESCI by Decree No. 91-420.
- July 1991** 11 FESCI activists are arrested, suspected of involvement in the death of the student, prompting further protests.
- August 1991** Government withdraws troops from the campus, suspends legal proceedings against FESCI activist, restores the right of "non academic" assembly on the campus (ban on FESCI remains).
- January 1992** Publication of the findings of the commission of enquiry appointed by President Houphouët Boigny to investigate the security forces actions at the university. The Chief of General Staff of the armed forces, General Robert Guei, found directly responsible for the actions of his troops. President Houphouët-Boigny states that no-one will be disciplined. Immediate demonstrations by FESCI members on the university campus.

**February 1992** 16 FESCI leaders arrested. FPI organises demonstration of some 20,000 people degenerates into violence. More than 100 detained, including Laurent Gbagbo and René Dégny-Segui.

**March 1992** Gbagbo, Dégny-Segui and 7 others each fined and sentenced to 2 years' imprisonment.

**April 1992** FPI deputies begin boycott of National Assembly in protest against imprisonment of Gbagbo and other FPI deputies.

**June 1992** President Houphouët-Boigny returns to Côte d'Ivoire after an absence of some 5 months.

**July 1992** President Houphouët-Boigny declares an amnesty for all those convicted of political offences since the time of the 1990 disturbances.

**September 1992** Violent student protests prompted by the abolition of free public transport for students in higher education.

**November 1992** University students refuse to sit examinations and are reportedly dispersed by security forces using tear gas.

**March 1993** About 45 members of the elite presidential guard take 2 NCOs hostage at the presidential palace in Abidjan demanding pay increases. They end their protest following direct intervention by Houphouët-Boigny.

**April 1993** 250 presidential guards mutiny in Yamoussoukro again demanding salary increases.

**April/May 1993** Further student unrest after a gathering of some 3000 students at the University of Abidjan organised by members of FESCI is dispersed by members of the security forces.

**May 1993** Houphouët-Boigny leaves Côte d'Ivoire and spends 6 months receiving medical treatment in France and Switzerland.

**August 1993** Students stage a 2-week hunger strike outside the cathedral in Abidjan following rumours that university accommodation is to be privatised and to demand the payment of grant arrears.

**7 December 1993** President Houphouët-Boigny dies in Yamoussoukro. The same day Henri Bédié announces that he will assume the duties of the presidency with immediate effect. On 9<sup>th</sup> Ouattara resigns his premiership. On 10<sup>th</sup> the Supreme Court confirms Bédié as president. Daniel Kablan Duncan, formerly minister-delegate, responsible for the economy, finance and planning, is appointed to succeed Ouattara as Prime Minister.

**January 1994** 50% devaluation of the CFA Franc.

**February 1994** Houphouët-Boigny's state funeral takes place in the basilica in Yamoussoukro.

**April 1994** Bédié is elected chairman of the PDCI-RDA. Abou Drahou Sangaré (head of an influential publishing group, also deputy of the FPI) is imprisoned in his capacity as director of the daily, La Voie, together with other journalists from his newspaper.

**May 1994** Ouattara is appointed to the post of deputy managing director of the IMF, based in Washington.

**May/June 1994** Campaign of action by students in an attempt to secure the payment of grant arrears, resulting in numerous arrests.

**June 1994** Rassemblement des républicains (RDR) formed from a split by Ouattara loyalists from the PDCI-RDA.

**December 1994** Sangaré released in accordance with a presidential amnesty for some 2,000 detainees. Controversial electoral code adopted in preparation for the presidential and legislative elections to take place in October and November 1995.

**April 1995** Front républicain (FR) formed.

**June 1995** National Assembly approves proposals for legislation permitting the extension of the death penalty (already in existence for murder convictions, although no record of implementation since independence) to cases of robbery with violence. Abou Drahou Sangaré is beaten by security forces at the office of the Minister of Security, General Gaston Koné, apparently on the latter's orders. An FPI congress formally adopts Gbagbo as its candidate for presidency.

**July 1995** The RDR invites Ouattara to stand as its presidential candidate.

**August 1995** Ouattara declines invitation to stand as RDR's candidate. Ouattara holds amicable talks with President Bédié who reiterates government's commitment to electoral code. At the end of August, PDCI-RDA officially adopts Bédié as the party's presidential candidate.

**September 1995** The government imposes a 3 month ban on political demonstrations, citing the need to ensure continuation of economic activity. Opposition groups counters that the ban is unconstitutional. Clear intention to continue to hold protest marches. Clashes between demonstrators and security forces continue in Abidjan and elsewhere.

**October 1995** Deadline for submission of candidates for the presidency election reached at beginning of October. The FPI and RDR stated that they will not be contesting the elections long as the conditions were not "clear and open". Coup attempt reportedly takes place. On 22<sup>nd</sup> Presidential elections take place as scheduled. FR calls for an "active boycott" of the elections. Generally calm following elections however, violence between the Baoulé and Bété ethnic groups is a cause for concern.

**November 1995** Government announces the establishment of a commission of enquiry to investigate the situation. In early November the FR reaches an accord with the government and



abandons its threatened boycott of the elections. Mid-November the government announces that voting in three constituencies in Gagnoa will be postponed due to disruption arising from recent disturbances. On 26<sup>th</sup> legislative elections take place.

**December 1995** Abou Drahome Sangaré, Director of La Voie, and other journalists from his newspaper, are imprisoned for 2 years for insulting the Head of State. The court orders the suspension of La Voie for 3 months.

**February 1996** Municipal elections take place.

**October 1996** PDCI Congress at which President Bédié suggests an imprecise role in government for members of the opposition.

**December 1996** President Bédié pardons Sangaré and 2 other La Voie journalists at the end of the month. On 31<sup>st</sup> postponed legislative elections take place.

**7 January 1997** Court sentences three student leaders to 2 years in prison and fines them 300,000 CFA francs (\$572) for inciting violence and disrupting public order charges. A fourth student is acquitted and discharged.

**4 February 1997** Guillaume Soro, Secretary General of FESCI is arrested for inciting student disobedience. On 27<sup>th</sup> President Bédié signs a presidential decree releasing all students detained during recent disturbances, including the 3 jailed on 7<sup>th</sup> January and Soro who is released without charge. Government statement announcing the creation of a permanent committee to oversee discussions between the government and representatives of the student body.

**March 1997** The government releases the soldiers detained for an alleged attempted coup plot at the time of the 1995 elections.

**9 August 1997** Government announces proposed constitutional changes.

**23 September 1997** University campuses scheduled to open. FESCI backs boycott of classes. On 30<sup>th</sup> the National Conference on the Future of Higher Education in Côte d'Ivoire opens. President Bédié announces measures to improve conditions in universities and the lifting of the ban on FESCI.

**10 October 1997** FESCI Secretary General announces that FESCI is lifting its strike call and urges students to return to classes. On 13<sup>th</sup> Presidential Decree No. 97-599 rescinds Decree No. 91-420 banning FESCI.

**February 1998** The government signs an agreement with the International Monetary Fund.

**March 1998** A government reshuffle sees the appointment of Adama Coulibaly, the former deputy secretary general of the RDR. He was then expelled from the party.

**7 May 1998** University lecturer is beaten up by two students who are banned from higher education for four years. On **14<sup>th</sup>** a student dies in clashes with police during a protest over a school levy.

**30 June 1998** Constitutional changes are passed by the National Assembly and denounced by opposition parties.

**July 1998** Alleged cheating in school examinations prompts demonstrations by school children.

**7/14 Sept 1998** Opposition marches against constitutional reforms.

**3 October 1998** Government announces proposed amnesty for those convicted/sentenced in connection with the "active boycott" of the 1995 presidential election. On **18<sup>th</sup>** Djéni Kobina, leader of the RDR, dies aged 61 years.

**March 1999** A court sentenced six criminals aged between 18 and 20 to death for armed robbery. On **26<sup>th</sup>** the university of Bouake was closed indefinitely following student boycotts.

**April 1999** Twelve members of the under-19 rugby team disappear from a tournament in Wales. On **1<sup>st</sup>** the university room of FESCI leader, Ble Goude was the target of a grenade attack. He was not in the room at the time. On **26<sup>th</sup>** students took to the streets protesting against various issues. This triggered clashes with the police and looting in Youpougou. A boycott of classes followed and on the **28<sup>th</sup>** the university authorities banned, until further notice, campus meetings and sit-ins at the National University of Abidjan. Prison warders began an indefinite strike. At the end of the month 'Le Populaire' journalist Raphael Lapke was arrested and was put in prison to await trial.

**May 1999** The government and the RDR held negotiations but could not agree on issues to the organisation of the 2000 elections. Also in May the authorities began issuing identity cards to the refugees in the country. On **2<sup>nd</sup>** President Bedie announced that students who break the law will have to face the consequences with no hope of clemency. On **4<sup>th</sup>** student protests took place in Gagnoa and Lakota. On **6<sup>th</sup>** the government ordered the indefinite closure of primary and secondary schools in Bouake and Abidjan to stem the student unrest. On **21<sup>st</sup>** the government sentenced six students to five years imprisonment for acts of violence and vandalism. On **27<sup>th</sup>** students renewed their protests at Cocody campus. Also on **27<sup>th</sup>** President Bedie officially declared the national commission for banning chemical weapons had been installed in the country. On **28<sup>th</sup>** students boycotted classes and demonstrated at Bouake and Gagnoa. On **29<sup>th</sup>** the government ordered the indefinite closure of all university halls of residence following continued protests. On **31<sup>st</sup>** Alassane Ouattara confirmed he would be leader of the RDR at the beginning of August 1999.

**June 1999** The EU froze structural agreement loans due to irregularities found after a routine audit. On **1<sup>st</sup>** riot police used tear gas to break up protests in Abidjan and Bouake. The FPI expressed its concern over the handling of the situation by the government. On **23<sup>rd</sup>** FESCI announced the suspension of its strike action in all schools, colleges and universities. On **30<sup>th</sup>** the press laws were changed by parliament to replace some custodial sentences with fines.

**July 1999** The population was officially put at 15.4 million and growing at 3.3 percent annually. On 11<sup>th</sup> the FPI re-elected Laurent Gbagbo as its leader and candidate for the 2000 presidential elections. On 28<sup>th</sup> eleven government officials were imprisoned for involvement in the embezzlement of 17.9 billion CFA francs of EU aid money.

**August 1999** On 3<sup>rd</sup> it was stated that because of all the student strikes the 1998/99 academic year had been declared 'invalid'. On 5<sup>th</sup> police used tear gas to break up a student union conference in Youpougon. On 17<sup>th</sup> FESCI leader Ble Goude was arrested. On 24<sup>th</sup> he was handed over to the courts to decide his fate following an investigation. 200 students have already been sentenced to five years each in prison. Also in August Alassane Ouattara accused police of harassment. President Bedie stated that Ouattara was a national of Burkina Faso and could not stand in the 2000 elections. Ouattara said he could prove he was Ivorian. On 25<sup>th</sup> riots occurred in Youpougon because of rising fuel prices. On 30<sup>th</sup> Parliament voted to amnesty soldiers implicated in political violence linked to the 1995 elections.

**September 1999** Investigation initiated into Alassane Ouattara's identity papers. An Amnesty was extended to military officers accused of involvement in the October 1995 coup plot.

**October 1999** The RDR party staged a protest on 16<sup>th</sup> over media access. In a follow up demonstration on 27<sup>th</sup> twenty of the party's leaders were arrested. President Bedie granted a pardon for 60 sentenced students, following demonstrations between April and August 1999. The government announced that criminal libel convictions would be punishable by fines rather than imprisonment, except those cases of libel against the president.

**November 1999** Eleven of the RDR leaders were imprisoned. President Bedie banned all public demonstrations in the country.

**December 1999** A coup took place on 24<sup>th</sup> and General Robert Guei assumed the Presidency, forming the National Committee for Public Salvation (CNSP). The National Assembly was dissolved and the constitution suspended. The imprisoned RDR leaders are released during the coup. They were subsequently pardoned.

**January 2000** A new transitional government was announced. Also the announcement of general elections to be by the end of October 2000.

**February 2000** The CNSP suspended the holding of political rallies until further notice.

**March 2000** The Swiss government freezes former president Bedie's accounts on suspicion of corruption.

**May 2000** The CNSP announce the election timetable.

**July 2000** On 4 and 5 soldiers mutiny in Abidjan and other main towns. At the end of the month a new constitution is put to a referendum and is approved.

**August 2000** A peaceful demonstration is held to request Guei's resignation.

**September 2000** An attack takes place on Guei's private residence.

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| (g) | 07/01/97 | (ab) | 11/08/98 | (aw) | 18/06/99 | (br) | 18/12/99 |
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| (l) | 29/03/97 | (ag) | 18/09/98 | (bb) | 03/08/99 | (bw) | 16/02/00 |
| (m) | 03/05/97 | (ah) | 27/10/98 | (bc) | 04/08/99 | (bx) | 02/03/00 |
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| (o) | 23/09/97 | (aj) | 26/04/99 | (be) | 06/08/99 | (bz) | 09/03/00 |
| (p) | 30/09/97 | (ak) | 30/04/99 | (bf) | 18/08/99 | (ca) | 10/03/00 |
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