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Côte d'Ivoire: An Amnesty International mission to the north of the country

Yesterday, 8 December 2002, Amnesty International sent a research mission to the north of Côte d'Ivoire, via Mali, to investigate the human rights situation in that region of the country, since last September's uprising by the *Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire* (MPCI), Côte d'Ivoire Patriotic Movement. The members of the delegation are Gaëtan Mootoo, Stéphane Mikala and Salvatore Saguès, all three of whom are members of the Amnesty International Secretariat.

The objective of the mission is to evaluate the human rights situation in this part of the country, especially by visiting individuals detained by the MPCI and meeting leaders of the armed opposition movement. This mission follows on from a first mission to Abidjan in October 2002 by an Amnesty International delegation sent to investigate human rights violations committed by the security forces.

Since the beginning of this crisis, Amnesty International has, on three occasions, denounced human rights violations committed by the parties to the conflict and stated that an essential element of any settlement of this crisis must include respect for human rights by all parties to the conflict, especially a halt to the summary executions, arbitrary arrests and harassment of civilians accused by one side or the other of being sympathizers of the opposing party because of their political sympathies, ethnic group or foreign origin.

Amnesty International has also publicly reminded the international community of its duty to prevent the proliferation of attacks against civilians, whatever their nationality, ethnicity, religion or presumed political opinions.

The organization also launched an appeal to the peacekeeping forces, whoever they represent (French troops are currently stationed on the front line while awaiting ECOWAS forces). The organization says that these forces must have a clear mandate to protect human rights and the physical integrity of civilians, who are the main victims of this conflict.

The Amnesty International delegation will be in the north of Côte d'Ivoire between 9 and 18 December 2002.

For more information, contact the Amnesty International press office in London, the United Kingdom, on +44 20 7413 5562 Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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