

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: AFR 31/001/2008 (Public)

Date: 1 April 2008

Women victims of sexual violence: Amnesty International hands over 70,000 signature petition to the Côte d'Ivoire ambassador in Paris

Amnesty International yesterday met, in Paris, His Excellency Mr Pierre-Aimé Kipré, Côte d'Ivoire ambassador to France. Amnesty International handed over a 70,000 signature petition calling on the Ivorian authorities to work with the international community to take practical measures to ensure respect for and protect the rights of the thousands of women who have been victims of sexual violence committed by all sides in the armed conflict suffered by the country after the armed insurrection of September 2002. These tens of thousands of signatures have been gathered as part of a campaign by activists and sympathisers of the French Section of Amnesty International, begun after the publication in March 2007 of the report: "*Côte d'Ivoire: women and girls, forgotten victims of the conflict*".

Amnesty International reiterated the main recommendations of this report, which called for the creation of national programmes to help victims of sexual violence, provide free treatment for women who have suffered sexual violence and fight the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these acts.

The ambassador recognised the gravity of the sexual violence suffered by women in Côte d'Ivoire and described the problem as "tragic". He also emphasised the Ivorian government's intention to introduce appropriate solutions in programmes to be organised by three different ministries:

- The Ministry of Solidarity and War Victims will provide health and psychological support, especially to displaced populations;
- The Ministry of Reconciliation will try to prevent new conflicts and sexual violence;
- The Ministry of Health will implement a FCFA 58 billion action plan, still being prepared, to provide medical personnel.

M. Kipré promised to pass on the 70,000 signature petition to the Ivorian authorities and communicate the recommendations brought to his attention during the meeting.

Mr Kipré reaffirmed that the Ivorian authorities do not regard the amnesty decreed by the Ivorian head of state, Laurent Gbagbo, in April 2007, as applicable to the perpetrators of sexual violence during the conflict in Côte d'Ivoire.

Amnesty International welcomes the promises made by the Côte d'Ivoire ambassador to France and awaits the fulfilment of these promises so that the specific needs of women who have suffered sexual violence are met as soon as possible.

The organisation remains mobilised, just like the 70,000 people who signed this petition, and will closely monitor the situation of women victims of sexual violence in Côte d'Ivoire so that their tragic fate, forgotten for so long, is finally taken into account.

Public Document

International Secretariat, Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW, UK

www.amnesty.org