

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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UA 60/92

10 March 1992

Further information on UA 60/92 (AFR 31/01/92, 19 February 1992) - **Legal concern**

Côte d'Ivoire: Martial Ahipeaud, President of *Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (FESCI), Ivorian Federation of Students and School Pupils
Laurent GBAGBO, leader of the opposition *Front populaire ivoirien* (FPI), Ivorian Popular Front
Simone GBAGBO, wife of Laurent Gbagbo
Laurent AKOUN, former President of the *Syndicat national des Enseignants du Secondaire de Côte d'Ivoire* (SYNESCI), National Union of Secondary School Teachers, and leading member of the FPI
René Dégny Ségui, President of the *Ligue ivoirienne des Droits de l'Homme* (LIDHO), Ivorian League of Human Rights

Francis Wodié, President of the opposition *Parti Ivoirien des Travailleurs* (PIT), Ivorian Workers' Party, and former head of Amnesty International's Ivorian Section

and many others

Four of those named above are among 16 people who have been sentenced to terms of imprisonment in connection with recent demonstrations. Simone Gbagbo remains held without charge or trial. She has been detained at the Gendarmerie in Agban since she left hospital where she was receiving treatment after reportedly being ill-treated in custody. Francis Wodié was released for lack of evidence against him.

Since the arrests on 13 and 18 February (not 16 February as mentioned in original UA), there have been two trials in Abidjan. On 27 February, Martial Ahipeaud and three other leaders of FESCI, an independent student organization, which was banned in July 1991, were sentenced to three years' imprisonment on charges of criminal damage and re-establishing a banned organization (*reconstitution d'une association dissoute*). On 6 March, Laurent Gbagbo and eight others, including Rene Degni Segui, were sentenced to two years' imprisonment while Laurent Akoun and three others each received a one year sentence, after being convicted of sharing responsibility for the destruction of public property. All were tried under the terms of Article 26 of the Penal Code which establishes the criminal responsibility of someone associated with a crime, even if they

have not themselves carried out the criminal act.

Amnesty International is still investigating whether any of those convicted of sharing responsibility for criminal damage was personally involved in using or calling for violence. If, at it seems, they have not used or advocated violence, they are prisoners of conscience imprisoned on account of their membership of or leading roles in particular political organizations.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The findings of a Commission of Inquiry into incidents at the university in May 1991 were published on 29 January 1992. The Commission concluded that soldiers were guilty of raping and beating students during the raid and identified the army Chief of Staff, General Robert Guei, as solely responsible for the decision to send troops onto the university campus. It recommended that he should be punished. However, President Houphouët Boigny criticised the Commission's findings and refused to take any action against General Guei. This provoked demonstrations on 13 February (please see original UA).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/telexes/faxes/express and airmail letters:

- expressing concern about the conviction of 16 people in connection with recent demonstrations in Abidjan;
- stating that by making the leaders of organizations responsible before the law for the actions of their members which they have neither ordered nor condoned, they are effectively punishing them for exercising their right to freedom of association with others;
- calling on the authorities to release any of the 16 in whose case there was no evidence of personal use or advocacy of violence.

APPEALS TO

1. President

Son Excellence

Monsieur le Président / Dear President

Felix Houphouët-Boigny

Président de la République

La Présidence, Boulevard Clozel, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: President Houphouët-Boigny, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Telexes: 23754 PRESID CI or 23169 PRELIT CI

2) Prime Minister:

M. Alassane Ouattara

Monsieur le Premier Ministre /

Premier Ministre

Dear Prime Minister

Le Primature, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: Premier Ministre, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

3) Minister of Justice:

Mme Jacqueline Lohouès-Oble

Madame le Ministre / Dear Minister

Ministre de la Justice

Ministère de la Justice

Boulevard Angoulvant, BP V107, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: Ministre Justice, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Telexes: 23752 MINAFET CI (via Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

4) Minister of Interieur:

M. Emile-Constant Bombet **Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister**

Ministre de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Ministère de l'Intérieur et de la Sécurité

Boulevard Angoulvant, Abidjan

République de Côte d'Ivoire

Telegrams: Ministre Interieur, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire

COPIES OF YOUR APPEALS TO: diplomatic representatives of Côte d'Ivoire in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 21 April 1992.