

Côte d'Ivoire

The widespread violence that ensued after Côte d'Ivoire's second round of presidential elections in November 2010 constituted the deadliest incident of electoral violence in Africa since 1990.¹ Over 3,000 people were killed and up to 1 million displaced. While the elections were meant to advance the peace process, the post-electoral violence instead pushed the country to the brink of a new civil war. After months of clashes, a military offensive by forces loyal to the president-elect, Alassane Ouattara, and backed by UN and French peacekeepers, defeated the incumbent president, Laurent Gbagbo, in April 2011. With Ouattara installed in office, the country has refocused on national reunification and advancing

the peace process, including holding parliamentary elections in December 2011. The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) played an important role in assisting the new government with these tasks and in establishing a conducive environment for peaceful elections.

Background

Following a failed coup attempt by the country's armed forces in September 2002, civil war broke out in Côte d'Ivoire, splitting the country between the rebel-held north and the government-controlled south.

In April 2004 the UN Security Council established UNOCI to assist in the implementation of the 2003 Linas-Marcoussis Accords, which sought to end the war. Since then, the mission has supported several other follow-on peace deals, including the most recent, the 2007 Ouagadougou Agreement, which called for elections and reunification of the country. In carrying out its mandate, UNOCI receives military support from Operation Licorne, deployed by France shortly after the outbreak of the war.

Though delayed several times following the Ouagadougou Agreement, presidential elections were announced in September 2010, once serious disputes over voting lists had been resolved. Given the heightened tension during the lead-up to the elections, which were to be held on 31 October, the Security Council, through Resolution 1942, authorized an increase of UNOCI's military and police presence by 500 peacekeepers, bringing the total to 9,150. UNOCI also received two





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UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI)

- Authorization Date 27 February 2004 (UNSC Res. 1528)
- Start Date 4 April 2004
- SRSG Albert Gerard Koenders (Netherlands)
- Force Commander Major-General Gnakoudé Béréná (Togo)
- Police Commissioner Major-General Jean Marie Bourry (France)
- Budget \$486.7 million
(1 July 2011–30 June 2012)
- Strength as of
31 October 2011 Troops: 9,356
 Military Observers: 199
 Police: 1,336
 International Civilian Staff: 397
 National Civilian Staff: 743
 UN Volunteers: 272

For detailed mission information see p. 312

Operation Licorne

- Authorization Date 24 January 2006 (UNSC Res. 1652)
- Start Date February 2004
- Force Commander Colonel Daniel Jaunin (France)
- Strength as of
30 September 2011 Troops: 700

military utility helicopters from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), on a temporary deployment.

On 31 October, the first round of elections failed to bring about an absolute majority victory for either incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo or his challenger and long-time political rival, Alassane Ouattara, which led to a runoff vote on 28 November. On 2 December, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced Ouattara as the winner of the second round. A day later, however, the president of the Constitutional Council voided the IEC's announcement and proclaimed Gbagbo victorious.

The then-Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and head of UNOCI, Choi Young-jin, in his mandated role as

independent election certifier for the presidential and legislative elections,² dismissed the results of the Constitutional Council and certified the outcome of the elections as announced by the IEC, again declaring Ouattara president-elect. The UN Secretary-General fully supported the SRSG's certification, which also received broad recognition by the international community. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the African Union (AU) called on Gbagbo to step down, and suspended Côte d'Ivoire from their organizations until Ouattara could assume power. The European Union and the United States adopted targeted sanctions against Gbagbo and his administration, while the World Bank froze \$800 million in aid and \$3 billion in debt relief.³

Aside from these punitive measures, efforts were under way to find a political solution to the ensuing crisis, particularly by the AU and ECOWAS, which held several high-level meetings on the situation and sent diplomatic delegations to mediate between the parties. The UN Secretary-General also engaged in diplomatic efforts and dispatched Said Djinnit, his Special Representative for West Africa, to Côte d'Ivoire to address the regional dimensions of the conflict.

Meanwhile, the security situation had deteriorated rapidly since the 2 December announcements, with pro-Gbagbo forces increasingly targeting perceived Ouattara supporters in Abidjan and elsewhere. UNOCI peacekeepers, stationed to protect Ouattara and his government at the Golf Hotel in Abidjan, also suffered attacks. Gbagbo's forces escalated their attempts to suffocate the UN peacekeeping operation—by denying customs clearance for supplies at port, cutting off fuel supplies, and blocking UNOCI supply vehicles and patrols.

On 20 December, concerned about the outbreak of violence against civilians and peacekeepers, the Security Council renewed UNOCI's mandate until 30 June 2011 (Resolution 1962), despite calls from Gbagbo for UN and French troops to leave the country. The Council also authorized a deployment

extension, until 31 March, of the additional troops provided under Resolution 1942, as well as a temporary redeployment of troops and an aviation unit from UNMIL to UNOCI.

On 23 December, UNOCI confirmed the presence of heavily armed Liberian mercenaries in Côte d'Ivoire who had been hired by Gbagbo's regime, bringing into focus the regional dimensions of the conflict. The crisis also intensified the country's existing intercommunal and interethnic tensions. Responding to reports that the homes of Gbagbo opponents had been marked to identify the owners' ethnicity and that elements loyal to Gbagbo had incited hatred and violence against Gbagbo opponents, the UN Special Advisers on Genocide and the Responsibility to Protect issued a joint statement condemning these actions. By the end of the year, violent clashes around the country had claimed an estimated 200 lives.⁴

Key Developments

In January and February 2011, the Security Council adopted Resolutions 1967 and 1968, authorizing the deployment of an additional 2,000 troops; extending deployment of the additional military and police personnel provided under Resolution 1942; authorizing the temporary transfer of three armed helicopters with crews from UNMIL to UNOCI; and extending the deployment of the UNMIL troops and aviation unit, comprised of two military helicopters and three armed helicopters with crews under UNOCI command, for another three months, until May 2011.

On 28 March, after an extended period of unabated clashes during which civilians were increasingly targeted, President Ouattara launched a countrywide military offensive. The offensive was supported by the Forces Républicaines de Côte d'Ivoire (FRCI), under which Ouattara unified by decree the rebel group Forces Nouvelles (FN) and the state group Forces de Défense et de Sécurité (FDS). Some elements of the FDS, however, remained loyal to Gbagbo and continued fighting on his behalf.

On 30 March the FRCI encircled Abidjan, prompting pro-Gbagbo forces to increase counterattacks and escalate assaults on civilians, including with heavy weaponry. Pro-Gbagbo forces also launched attacks against UNOCI's headquarters and patrols, wounding eleven peacekeepers. One international staff member of UNOCI and one staff member of the World Health Organization (WHO) were killed during the fighting in Abidjan.⁵

In response to the continued fighting and the absence of a political solution to the crisis, ECOWAS reiterated its calls for the use of "legitimate force," first made in December,⁶ if Gbagbo refused to step down, and urged the Security Council to strengthen UNOCI's mandate in order to enable the mission "to use all necessary means to protect life."⁷

Subsequently, on 30 March, in the face of the hostile operating environment and the widespread use of violence against civilians and peacekeepers, the Security Council granted UNOCI a more robust and deterrent posture, through Resolution 1975, by authorizing it to prevent the use of heavy weapons against the civilian population. The resolution also imposed sanctions on Gbagbo and his associates.



UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrives at Yamoussoukro Airport to attend the inauguration ceremony for Alassane Ouattara, president of Côte d'Ivoire, 21 May 2011. He was met at the airport by Prime Minister Guillaume Soro.

Box 2.2 Peace Operations and Electoral Violence

Elections play a vital role in postconflict countries and are a critical component of peace agreements, enabling the populations of war-torn societies to build democratic political processes and consolidate peace. In 2011, over eighty countries—thirty in Africa alone—held at least one election.

While the majority of elections are conducted without incidence of violence, countries that have experienced electoral violence in the past have a high risk of recurrence. At particular risk are countries—especially young democracies—with underlying systemic grievances, such as disputes concerning land rights, employment, or ethnic marginalization.

Peace operations play an important role in assisting countries in the various stages of the electoral process, from pre-election planning, to the conduct of the elections themselves, to support during the post-election period. Peace operations, along with their partners on the ground, assist in establishing independent election management bodies and forming electoral laws and guidelines; assist in establishing dispute resolution mechanisms; encourage inclusive and transparent election processes; and support the dissemination of information about the electoral process. Peace operations also assist in delivering electoral material, while military and police personnel provide crucial security functions. Mission leadership meanwhile use their good offices to mediate between the various

parties to create an environment conducive to peaceful elections.

Where electoral violence does occur, blue helmets often serve as the first responders to quell such outbreaks. When Haiti experienced violent protests in December 2010, following the announcement of preliminary results of the presidential elections that put popular candidate Michel Martelly in third place, troops from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) moved to establish public order and security and to guard government buildings. Following the events of the first round of elections, MINUSTAH, along with national and international partners, identified measures to improve security for the second round, which included the replacement of electoral personnel involved in fraudulent or violent behavior. The second round of elections, in March 2011, led to the first peaceful transfer of power to the opposition in the country's history.

In Côte d'Ivoire, electoral violence broke out in December 2010 after incumbent president Laurent Gbagbo refused to step down from power and recognize president-elect Alassane Ouattara as the winner of the elections. The UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI) along with France's Operation Licorne, played a decisive role in protecting civilians in the ensuing violence and in guarding the president-elect and his cabinet. UN and French peacekeepers also provided crucial backing to pro-Ouattara

forces in defeating Gbagbo and in installing the president-elect to office. UNOCI also assisted the government in preparing for the December 2011 parliamentary elections by providing security and technical assistance and fostering dialogue and reconciliation.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, pre-electoral violence erupted in September 2011, when supporters of President Joseph Kabila's People's Party for Reconstruction and Democracy (PPRD) attacked the headquarters of the opposition Union for Democracy and Social Progress in an apparent retaliation for an arson attack on the PPRD's headquarters. The UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO) strongly condemned the violent incidents ahead of the November 2011 presidential and parliamentary elections and worked with the various parties to encourage dialogue. In anticipation of the election, MONUSCO also began training more than 700 police officers to provide increased security in the country's South Kivu province.

Peace operations play an important role in assisting countries throughout the electoral cycle, not least because, as first responders, they are critical in mitigating violence, protecting civilians, and reestablishing order. However, resource constraints—such as inadequate troop levels and aerial assets, particularly military helicopters—can hamper the ability of missions to perform this vital role.

In early April, UNOCI and Operation Licorne, the latter bolstered by a reinforcement of 300 troops,⁸ began military operations in Abidjan to prevent the use of heavy weapons against civilians. UN peacekeepers and French troops also helped to extricate approximately 400 foreign nationals, UN staff, and diplomatic personnel who were trapped in the city, including a dramatic aerial rescue of the Japanese

ambassador by French troops. During the ensuing fighting, UNOCI forces were once again targeted both at headquarters and during patrols.

On 9 April pro-Gbagbo forces unsuccessfully attacked the Golf Hotel with mortars and heavy machine guns. In response, UNOCI and Operation Licorne troops conducted further military operations, including aerial assaults,

with a focus on targeting heavy weapons in and around the presidential residence and military camps.

Two days later, Gbagbo's standoff finally came to an end when, in conjunction with sustained assaults by UN and Operation Licorne troops, FRCI forces broke through the presidential residency's defenses and apprehended the former president, his wife, and members of his family, staff, and "cabinet." Gbagbo was transferred to the north of the country, while members of the former president's extended family and retinue were either released, transferred to prisons, or placed under house arrest. Following the former president's capture, many former pro-Gbagbo commanders pledged to recognize Ouattara, while some were arrested by the FRCI and others went into hiding. Many fighters and mercenaries fled to Liberia. Acts of violence against civilians committed by these groups as well as clashes with the FRCI reportedly continued in the western part of the country.

On 21 May, in a ceremony that was attended by the UN Secretary-General and twenty heads of state, Alassane Ouattara was officially inaugurated president of Côte d'Ivoire. While the inauguration officially ended the electoral crisis, the installment of the president-elect came at a high human cost: since the outbreak of the crisis five months earlier, an estimated 3,000 people had lost their lives and between 700,000 and 1 million had been displaced.⁹

In June 2011 the Security Council adopted Resolution 1992, extending the temporary deployment of three armed helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI until 30 September, after which they returned to Liberia to support the country's October elections. A month later, Resolution 2000 extended UNOCI's mandate at its current force level until 31 July 2012 and authorized the deployment of 205 additional police advisers. The Council also set forth terms of the mission's mandated tasks, including protection of civilians; security sector reform; addressing security threats; monitoring the arms embargo; weapons collection;

disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR); support for free, fair, and transparent legislative elections; extension of state authority throughout the country; and humanitarian assistance.

Security

The security situation in Côte d'Ivoire remained precarious throughout the second half of 2011, with the UN warning of a high risk of renewed armed conflict.¹⁰ Continuing outbursts of violence indicated that although there had been a return to constitutional order, the crisis was not yet over. Fighting in Abidjan largely subsided, but unrest, including sporadic gunfire and looting, continued in the Abobo and Yopougon districts throughout July. In an effort to restore law and order, UNOCI and the FRCI launched joint patrols in Abidjan in mid-April, and UNOCI assisted in the collection and registration of 500 weapons and 65,000 rounds of ammunition.¹¹

The security situation in the west was particularly volatile. In September, several Ivorian villages on the Liberian border suffered violent attacks allegedly carried out by Liberian mercenaries. In response, UNOCI dispatched ground forces and attack helicopters to the site, increased cooperation with UNMIL on border patrols, and began to bolster its military presence in the west. UNOCI also established eight new military camps, including four in the area along the border with Liberia. By September, two of the eight camps had been set up, while the remaining six were nearing completion. The camps are further reinforced by civilian staff working on human rights and the rule of law. The FRCI has also strengthened its presence in the west.

The post-electoral crisis led to a proliferation of armed groups around the country, which together with the large number of weapons present among the civilian population posed a challenge for DDR. In July the government reported that 11,000 former combatants had been reintegrated into the national army,¹² though disarmament among the civilian population was progressing slowly. UNOCI's DDR section

supported the government in its efforts and carried out voluntary small arms collection in Abidjan's Yopougon district and throughout the country.

In September the government announced its intention to change the official name of its armed forces, the FRCI, to Forces Armées Nationales de Côte d'Ivoire (FANCI). Some see the name change as an effort to overhaul the image of the armed forces after Human Rights Watch in April and June reported that FRCI forces were increasingly targeting suspected Gbagbo supporters, particularly in the west. UNOCI's human rights section also reported an increase in attacks and violence by FRCI forces in the southwestern part of the country, which had contributed to considerable mistrust and even fear of the FRCI among the population. Beyond the change in name, further planned reforms of the army include the demobilization of 10,000 soldiers by the end of the year, troop training, and the restructuring of existing posts.¹³

UNOCI forces also came under scrutiny in August when allegations surfaced that peacekeepers had exchanged food for sex with young local girls in 2009. Following a year-long investigation into the allegations, sixteen peacekeepers from Benin were repatriated on disciplinary grounds and were barred from participating in future peacekeeping operations.¹⁴

Longer-term security provision and the maintenance of law and order will eventually be taken over by the Ivorian police and gendarmerie. However, the force has largely disintegrated. And although by July 85 percent reported back to resume duty, very few were actually working.¹⁵ Even before the crisis, impunity, lack of accountability, politicization, corruption, absenteeism, and lack of training and equipment characterized the police force, pointing to a strong need for reform. The government in particular criticized the lack of weapons for the police, reportedly amounting to only fifteen handguns, and asked the UN to expedite distribution of recovered weapons to the authorities.¹⁶ As part of the restoration of security and rule of law institutions, UNOCI

assisted in rehabilitating and equipping a number of municipal offices, police stations, and gendarmeries damaged during the crisis. The mission also conducted training and sensitization sessions to prepare police personnel for the legislative elections. In November, in an effort to further strengthen the police force capacity, France, after a seven-year hiatus, resumed security cooperation with Côte d'Ivoire with the delivery of computer equipment and thirty police vehicles.

Justice and Reconciliation

In June 2011 the government of Côte d'Ivoire announced the establishment of a national commission to investigate human rights violations committed during the post-electoral violence. While the government pledged to prosecute all violators, members of a UN investigation team warned of "one-sided victory justice," as none of Ouattara's affiliates have been detained or come under investigation, by either the military or the civilian prosecutor.¹⁷ In August, reinforcing the perception of impunity for his supporters, Ouattara appointed rebel commanders, some of whom the UN and Human Rights Watch have accused of human rights violations, to key military posts.

On 18 August, Côte d'Ivoire's state prosecutor officially charged former president Gbagbo and his wife with "economic crimes, armed robbery, looting and embezzlement." Following the indictment, both were moved from house arrest to prison. State prosecutors also indicted members of Gbagbo's party and soldiers of his regime on charges ranging from murder to attacking state security to buying illegal arms.

On 28 September, as part of a national reconciliation effort, the government launched a Truth, Reconciliation and Dialogue Commission, first proposed in May and modeled after South Africa's post-apartheid commission. The eleven-member commission, headed by former prime minister Charles Konan Banny, comprises religious leaders, regional representatives, and world-famous football star Didier

Drogba as a representative of the diaspora. UNOCI and the UN Country Team provided assistance to the commission to ensure that it would function according to international principles and standards. UNOCI also supported reconciliation efforts at the community level, to prevent and resolve further conflict.

On 29 November, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Gbagbo on charges of crimes against humanity, including murder, rape, persecution, and inhuman acts. Gbagbo was handed over to international custody and moved to The Hague the following day. The charges follow a request by Ouattara in May for the ICC to investigate the most serious crimes committed during the crisis. The ICC prosecutor has also opened investigations on members of the Gbagbo government, in addition to individuals in the current government. The court may also widen its investigation to include crimes committed between 2002 and 2010 and thus potentially including allegations of abuse by the FN, which during that period was under the command of the current prime minister, Guillaume Soro.

Elections

Shortly after Ouattara's inauguration, national stakeholders reiterated the importance of holding legislative elections as soon as possible to ensure full restoration of constitutional order and national reconciliation. In late June 2011, an electoral assessment mission to Côte d'Ivoire, led by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, concluded that elections could be held by the end of the year if the security situation improved. At the end of September, the government announced plans to hold parliamentary elections on 11 December 2011.

A week prior to the announcement, Gbagbo's party, the Front Populaire Ivoirien (FPI), pulled out of the Independent Election Commission, criticizing a "recent modification of the electoral commission's composition in favor of the coalition of parties behind President Ouattara."¹⁸ Ouattara, who in June had announced the formation of a new government

without FPI representation, subsequently opened negotiations with opposition parties, including the FPI, in an effort to keep them from boycotting the December elections. However, in November the FPI announced its decision to boycott the election, and the parliamentary vote list closed without the party's representation.

UNOCI supported the government in the lead-up to the elections, including providing logistical and technical assistance as well as bolstering security. UNOCI stationed 7,000 peacekeepers throughout the country—a presence further augmented by the transfer of five helicopters from UNMIL to UNOCI from 3 to 31 December. The mission also worked to create a favorable environment for the elections by promoting an inclusive political process.

Considering the events that followed the 2010 elections, some members of the international community voiced concern about continuing the election certification role of the SRSG, arguing that it may have helped to fuel the crisis rather than to resolve it. However, Albert Gerard Koenders, who replaced Choi Young-jin as UNOCI's SRSG in September 2011, retained the role for parliamentary elections to ensure that the process was carried out in accordance with internationally recognized standards.

Notwithstanding several violent incidents in the lead-up to the vote, international election monitors and the UN described the conduct of the parliamentary elections as calm and peaceful. Preliminary results show that with 80 percent of the vote, President Ouattara's ruling coalition won a parliamentary majority. However, the vote took place amid a low voter turnout of around 36 percent. While this reflects in part fear among the population for renewed violence at the polls, some may interpret the low turnout as the result of the FPI's calls for a boycott.

Conclusion

UNOCI and Operation Licorne played a decisive role in ending the 2011 electoral crisis in

Côte d'Ivoire by providing military backing to the FRCI, which enabled the latter to arrest Gbagbo and facilitate the immediate transfer of power to Ouattara. Indeed, the presence of Operation Licorne, particularly its attack helicopter assets, provided an essential force complement to that of the UN during the April operations.

Although constitutional order has been restored, Côte d'Ivoire continues to face major challenges, including stabilizing the security situation, reconciliation and justice, further

bolstering economic recovery, and addressing the humanitarian situation: in November, more than 138,000 refugees remained in Liberia and an estimated 25,000 remained in other countries in the region,¹⁹ while an estimated 17,000 internally displaced persons are still living in camps.²⁰ The magnitude of these challenges and the fragility of national political and security institutions as demonstrated this year suggest that the presence of peacekeepers is likely to remain necessary for the foreseeable future.

Notes

1. USIP, *Prevention Newsletter*, September 2011, p. 4.
2. For more on the SRSG's certification role, see the United Nations, *Twenty-seventh Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire*, UN Doc. S/2011/211, 30 March 2011, para. 74.
3. United Nations, *Twenty-seventh Progress Report*, para. 24.
4. Dan Smith et al., "Ivory Coast Violence Forces Thousands to Flee," *The Guardian*, 26 December 2010.
5. United Nations, *Twenty-eighth Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire*, UN Doc. S/2011/387, 24 June 2011, para. 4.
6. "Ecowas Bloc Threatens Ivory Coast's Gbagbo with Force," *BBC News*, 25 December 2010, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-12077298>.
7. Letter from the Permanent Representative of Nigeria to the President of the UN Security Council, 24 March 2011, <http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF%7D/Cote%20d'Ivoire%20s%202011%20182.pdf>.
8. "French Troops Take Control of Airport in I. Coast Main City," *Agence France-Presse*, 3 April 2011, <http://www.dawn.com/2011/04/03/french-troops-take-control-of-airport-in-i-coast-main-city.html>.
9. United Nations, *Twenty-eighth Report*, S/2011/387, para. 40; UNHCR, "Escalating Violence Fuels Dramatic Rise in Displacement in Côte d'Ivoire," 25 March 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/4d8c950a9.html>.
10. United Nations, *Twenty-eighth Report*, S/2011/387, para. 22.
11. Ibid., para. 13.
12. United Nations, "Restoring Order Key to National Reconciliation, Economic Recovery, All Other Tasks in Côte d'Ivoire, Special Representative Tells Security Council," press release, 18 July 2011, <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2011/sc10329.doc.htm>.
13. "Côte d'Ivoire: Rebranding the Army," *IRIN News*, 5 October 2011, <http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=93886>.
14. "UN Peacekeepers Traded Food for Sex, Cable Says," *Associated Press*, 2 September 2011, http://articles.boston.com/2011-09-02/news/30106728_1_children-uk-peacekeepers-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse.
15. United Nations, *Twenty-eighth Report*, S/2011/387, para. IV, B, 2.
16. United Nations, "Restoring Order Key to National Reconciliation."
17. Fredrik Dahl, "U.N. Rights Chief Concerned About New Ivory Coast Army," *Reuters*, 15 June 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/06/15/us-ivorycoast-un-idUSTRE75E4FO20110615>.
18. Eric Agnero, "Ouattara Opens Talks with Gbagbo Supporters," *CNN News*, 29 September 2011, http://articles.cnn.com/2011-09-29/africa/world_africa_ivory-coast-politics_1_president-alassane-ouattara-gbagbo-loyalists-gbagbo-supporters?_s=PM:AFRICA.
19. UNHCR, "New Ivorian Refugee Camp Opened in Eastern Liberia," 2 September 2011, <http://www.unhcr.org/4e60afb09.html>.
20. OCHA, "Côte d'Ivoire Situation Report Nr. 15," 8 September 2011.