

Côte d'Ivoire: Well holes suspected to be mass graves must be excavated
By Amnesty International
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The government of Cote d'Ivoire has failed to properly investigate evidence of human rights abuses linked to the killings at Nahibly displacement camp in the west of the country just over a year ago, says Amnesty International.

In a [report published today](#) the organisation gives details of bodies thrown in several wells that have not been excavated by the authorities despite repeated calls for an investigation. Amnesty International is calling on Cote d'Ivoire to establish an international commission of inquiry into this atrocity.

"One year on, and despite repeated promises to ensure justice, the Ivorian government has made no substantial progress in investigating the crimes committed during this attack," said Salvatore Saguès, Amnesty International's Researcher on West Africa.

On 20 July 2012 the Nahibly camp, home to an estimated 2,500 internally displaced people (IDPs) who had fled post-election violence, was attacked and destroyed by a large crowd. The mob included members of the local population, Dozos – a state-sponsored militia – and elements of the Ivorian army. Most of the IDPs belonged to the Guere ethnic group, generally perceived to be supporters of former president Laurent Gbagbo.

Amnesty International estimates that at least 14 people were summarily killed during the attack but the exact figure is not known. A number of others were subjected to enforced disappearance. Six corpses were exhumed from one well in October 2012 but a further 11 wells in the area, believed to contain bodies, have not been investigated.

"It is inhumane that those who lost loved ones are still waiting to find out where the bodies of their relatives are, and that those responsible are still walking free," said Salvatore Saguès.

Eleven wells in the area of the attack are being guarded around the clock by UN peacekeepers and police officers but no official attempt has been made to excavate them. The government has cited a lack of equipment and materials but has reportedly not accepted the offer of the UN to provide support.

Amnesty International spoke to a local human rights defender who has lowered himself into three of the wells on a rope and ascertained that there is at least one body in at least three of the wells.

Another human rights defender, who could not be named for security reasons, told Amnesty International:

"If the bodies of the people down the wells were supporters of the government, they would have recovered the corpses months ago. But because these are bodies from Nahibly and are accused of being Gbagbo supporters, they do nothing."

An autopsy on the six corpses found in the first well has reportedly been carried out. However, nine months later, the results have still not been shared with the families of those who died, and the bodies have not been returned.

The violence that followed the November 2010 election in Cote d'Ivoire resulted in the unlawful killing of hundreds of people primarily on the grounds of their ethnicity or perceived political affiliation.

Both forces loyal to former President Laurent Gbagbo and those aligned to current President Alassane Ouattara committed war crimes and crimes against humanity in breach of international law.

Gbagbo is currently awaiting trial at the International Criminal Court.

In March and April 2011 when the FRCI and Dozos took control of western Cote d'Ivoire during the post-election violence, they massacred hundreds of Guerres in Duekoue and the surrounding area.

These attacks have never been adequately investigated and no one has ever been charged or tried.

"In a clear case of victor's justice, the government has failed to hold any members of the FRCI or the Dozo militia accountable for any of the crimes committed during the post-election crisis."

"This is all the more worrying because these same security forces and Dozos have continued to commit human rights abuses against known or suspected supporters of the former president, as evidenced by the attack on Nahibly," said Salvatore Saguès.

Given the one-sided nature of the justice currently being administered in Cote d'Ivoire, Amnesty International calls on the government to establish an international commission of inquiry into the events at Nahibly.

Amnesty International received many statements from people who told them that UN police rebuffed people who asked for help during the attack and stood by as camp residents were beaten.

The organisation calls for the United Nations to make public an internal review into the actions of its military and police personnel responsible for providing protection to the camp inhabitants during the attack.

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