



GUIGLO: Towards a common front against impunity

The celebration on 10 December 2005 of the 57th International Human Rights Day provided the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Côte d'Ivoire, Mr Pierre Schori, with an opportunity to launch an appeal for the formation of a national coalition against impunity in the country.

His appeal, launched at a commemoration ceremony held by UNOCI in Guiglo, a town 516 km west of Abidjan and located in a region plagued by human rights abuses in 2005, was supported by Ivorian human rights NGOs, which decided to join their efforts so as to fight effectively against impunity.

The commemoration, organised by UNOCI's Human Rights Section, brought together over 400 participants, including representatives of local human rights groups and other civil society organisations, the diplomatic corps, UN agencies, UNOCI and other bodies.

The theme of the 2005 International Human Rights Day was the fight against torture. In messages issued in commemoration of the Day, the UN Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Louise Arbour, recalled that all states were bound by an international ban on torture.

In their messages, which were read at the Guiglo Forum, they also urged governments to reaffirm their commitment to a total ban on torture.

UNOCI's commemoration of the Day included the theme of impunity because of its relevance to the Ivorian context.

Ms Margherita Amodeo, UNOCI's Director of Public Information, told the gathering that the struggle against impunity also involved journalists. « They are unavoidable actors with regard to denouncing human rights violations and helping to promote and ensure the full application of human rights,» she said.

Ms Amodeo denounced abuses against journalists and praised the courage of those who lost their lives exposing injustice.

Quoting reports published by an independent commission of inquiry set up under the Linas Marcoussis agreements between Ivorian political groups (January 2003), and by national and international human rights groups, the director of UNOCI's Human Rights

Division, Mr Simon Munzu, said too many human rights offences and violations were committed in Côte d'Ivoire.

Mr Munzu, whose division produces a quarterly report on the human rights situation in Côte d'Ivoire, called on everyone to rely on the justice system to punish those responsible for abuses.

However, he recognized that the system of justice was not functioning well in the area under governmental control because there was a shortage of resources, staff and technical capacity. He added: "It is not functioning in the Forces Nouvelles zone and in the zone of confidence the administration is totally absent."

Before arriving in Guiglo, Mr Schori travelled to the village of Guitrozon for a wreath-laying ceremony in honour of the victims of killings perpetrated there on the night of 31 May to 1 June 2005. Addressing the crowd present at the ceremony, he stated that "this event has left traces, and it will be remembered".

Visibly moved, the spokesman of the population of Guitrozon, Mr Pierre Gnoble, thanked Mr Schori for the visit, his third to the village, and expressed the hope that the perpetrators of the Guitrozon killings would be punished.



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