



THE BLUE HELMETS IN ACTION IN THE WEST

In western Côte d'Ivoire, where the deleterious situation has had a harmful effect of social cohesion, inter-ethnic clashes have attained unprecedented proportions. ONUCI conducts mixed patrols with the Ivorian armed forces, FANCI, in affected areas to reassure the population. They are the first to know about exactions inflicted on the population in the most remote villages and camps.

“Generally, the victims come to us spontaneously and we, in turn, inform the Defence and Security Forces, the FDS, with whom we go to the scene,” said Colonel Sharma of the Bangladeshi battalion, Banbatt. For example, when the localities of Bohoussoukro and N'zuekro were attacked by unidentified men in June, a resident of the former cycled to a Banbatt camp to ask the Blue Helmets for help.

Despite the poor state of roads in some areas, ONUCI civilian police, military observers and a battalion of Blue Helmets went immediately to the area to help the villagers, who were shocked by the killings and the arson.

However, finding out exactly what has happened is sometimes a major challenge, especially when residents are reluctant to talk, as occurred in the village of Diapahi, where the violence that affected the Bohoussoukro/N'zuekro area started.

When a group of UNOCI peacekeepers visited Diapahi, where the FANCI had just discovered a mass grave, clothing could be seen scattered here and there at the entrance to the village. While the male villagers played hide and seek with the UN soldiers, some of the women appeared. However, the law of silence reigned supreme. The women said they knew nothing of the fate of the inhabitants of houses that had been set on fire. They swore they did not know what had happened 100 metres from their homes.

No one had seen anything. No one had heard anything. The soldiers left without any information.



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