



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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Côte d'Ivoire: The Front for the Liberation of the Great West (FLGO), the Patriotic Alliance of the Wê (AP-Wê), the Union of Patriots for the Resistance of the Great West (UPRGO) and the Ivorian Movement for the Liberation of the West of Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI); the government's attitude toward members and supporters of these four groups (2005 - 2006)

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According to an article in *Le Nouveau Réveil*, the Front for the Liberation of the Great West (Front de libération du Grand Ouest, FLGO), the Patriotic Alliance of the Wê (Alliance des patriotes Wê, AP-Wê), the Union of Patriots for the Resistance of the Great West (Union patriotique pour la résistance du Grand Ouest, UPRGO) and the Ivorian Movement for the Liberation of the West of Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement ivoirien pour la libération de l'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire, MILOCI) are the principal armed militias operating in western Côte d'Ivoire (26 May 2005; *Le Patriote* 31 May 2005). A Radio France Internationale article refers these groups as [translation] "government militias" (30 June 2005).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), the militias in western Côte d'Ivoire are [HRW English version] "clearly based on ethnic origin" (May 2005). An article in *Le Patriote* notes that these militias operate mainly in Guiglo, Duékoué, Tai, Bloléquin and Toulépleu and that they

[Translation]

are made up of Wê (all from the *Guéré* ethnic group). The militiamen have been brainwashed into thinking that the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire (Parti démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire, PDCI) and the Rally of Republicans Party (Rassemblement des républicains de Côte d'Ivoire, RDR) are at war with the Ivorian Popular Front (Front populaire ivoirien, FPI), which is in power and which backs the militiamen. The Baoulé - the Malinké suspected of belonging to those two political parties - and foreigners - especially the Burkinabés - became their targets. In all the cities that they control, the militiamen have been imposing their diktat on foreigners, with the support of certain elements of the defence and security forces (31 May 2005).

### Front for the Liberation of the Great West (FLGO)

An article on the BBC's Website indicates that the FLGO was founded by Maho Glofiéi Denis in the town of Guiglo (n.d.). According to Maho Glofiéi, his troops are not a militia but an "army of resistance" (BBC n.d.). The FLGO is entirely made up of Wê and was created to fight the rebels who moved in to the north of the country in 2002 (ibid.). In its 12 July 2004 report, the International Crisis Group (ICG) states that Maho Glofiéi Denis is also

[ICG English version]

[ . . . ] the third assistant to the mayor of Guiglo[,] the [p]resident of the Association of W[ê] Chiefs, [and] member of the Central Committee of the FPI. Although his title does not suggest that he might be influential, sources in both the [W]est and Abidjan agree that he gives orders to all other elected or appointed government officials in the region around Guiglo. According to the same sources, Ma[h]o is the relay in a parallel chain of command that goes from the *Présidence* [ . . . ] to the various militia forces ("patriots" and [Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Mouvement pour la démocratie au Liberia, MODEL)] [members] or other Liberian fighters) on the Guiglo-Toulépleu and Guiglo-Bangolo axes. One source close to the *Présidence* confirmed that Ma[h]o had daily phone contact with either former Minister of Defence Kadet Bertin or Minister of Civil Service and Employment Hubert Oulaï, who is from Troya, a village near Guiglo.

The same report indicates that the FLGO militia

[ICG English version]

[ . . . ] patrol Guiglo town and neighbouring areas. ICG analysts saw them in Toulépleu and Guiglo. These militias have been blamed for murdering a Togolese citizen on [the night of] 18-19 May 2004, and a Dioula taxi driver on 2 June [2004]. The murder of the driver, left with his throat slit in the

middle of a road in Guiglo, drew a strong reaction from some of the town's citizens. Militia members have been identified as former FLGO combatants who rob and attack not only civilians but even the army. A FANCI [National Armed Forces of Côte d'Ivoire (Forces armées nationales de la Côte d'Ivoire)] soldier said, "Unfortunately, in the face of these attacks, our chiefs say they can do nothing. We are told that we can't disarm them because they fought to defend the region and [that] they are the bodyguards of certain authorities in the town" (ICG 12 July 2004).

The 2004 report by the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers indicates that, since December 2002, the FLGO has been recruiting Liberian children in refugee camps and that those who refuse to join are harassed and threatened.

### **Ivorian Movement for the Liberation of the West of Côte d'Ivoire (MILOCI)**

An article in *Le Patriote* indicates that the MILOCI is led by Pastor Gammi (31 May 2005). HRW states that the MILOCI represents members of the Yacoubas ethnic group (May 2005). An ICG report indicates that the MILOCI, like the FLGO, is composed of

[Translation]

former Ivorian and Liberian combatants of MODEL, a rebellion inspired and funded by the powers in Abidjan in 2003 to respond to the attack of western Côte d'Ivoire by rebels supported by the former Liberian president Charles Taylor (24 Mar. 2005).

HRW reports that the MILOCI claimed responsibility for the 28 February 2005 attack against the city of Logouale (May 2005). However, according to that same report, [HRW English version] "a senior French army officer accused government forces of being behind the Logouale attack: 'We have proof that the attack on Logouale was planned, organized and financed by the central powers in Abidjan,' Colonel Eric Burgaud, head of the French forces in western Côte d'Ivoire said." (HRW May 2005).

### **Union of Patriots for the Resistance of the Great West (UPRGO) and the Patriotic Alliance of the Wê (AP-Wê)**

An article in *Le Patriote* indicates that the UPRGO was created by Yahi Octave and that his militiamen, who are led on land by Banao Gabriel, are based in Bloléquin (31 May 2005). The same article states that the AP-Wê, which is commanded by Mompého Julien, called Colombo, represents an [translation] "offshoot of the FLGO and rules" in Duékoué (*Le Patriote* 31 May 2005). Some residents of Duékoué said that the members of the AP-Wê [translation] "prevented them from going out in the fields and that the plantation routes had become roads of death" (ibid.)

### **Resistance Forces of the Great West (FRGO)**

According to the 21 December 2005 HRW report, since July 2005, Maho Glofiéi Denis, leader of the FLGO, has been leading the four militia groups of western Côte d'Ivoire (FLGO, MILOCI, UPRGO and AP-Wê); the militias are collectively known as the Resistance Forces of the Great West (Forces de résistance du Grand Ouest, FRGO). The May 2005 HRW report indicates that the militias in western Côte d'Ivoire were

[HRW English version]

[ . . . ] clearly armed, as the February 28, 2005 attack on Logouale showed. FLGO militia leader Maho denie[d] his men receive[d] government arms, saying they came by their abundant weaponry by taking guns from slain rebel fighters. However, Colonel Eric Burgaud, head of the French forces in western Côte d'Ivoire contradicted this: "We have proof that the militiamen were supervised by the Ivorian army and [that] they had been armed by the Ivorian army" [ . . . ] This was confirmed during Human Rights Watch interviews in March 2005 with five Liberians who participated in the Logouale attack, who said they received arms, ammunition and uniforms from military personnel in preparation for the attack.

In August 2005, United Nations (UN) representatives reported that the dismantling [UN English version] "of militias that support Côte d'Ivoire's president Laurent Gbagbo," which was supposed to take place in August 2005 (UN 24 Aug. 2005) and which involved the FLGO, UPRGO, AP-Wê and MILOCI (*Notre Voie* 19 Aug. 2005), did not take place

[UN English version]

[because the] National Programme for Disarmament Demobilisation and Reconciliation (PNDDR), which is responsible for carrying out the process, [did] not have enough money to do the job, [ . . . ] [and] [b]ecause the number of militia fighters ha[d] swollen from the original count of 2,000 to near[ly] 10,000 (UN 24 Aug. 2005).

The FRGO held a 13 December 2005 press briefing during which it [translation] "acknowledged the appointment of Charles Konan Banny to the position of Prime Minister and said that it was willing to help him succeed in his mission" (*Nord-Sud* 15 Dec. 2005). Maho Glofiéi Denis also

[Translation]

addressed the disarming of the 10,700 FRGO combatants. The resistance forces immediately expressed their disappointment at not being involved in the various discussions aimed at bringing peace back to Côte d'Ivoire held by the UN, the African Union (Union africaine, UA) and south-African mediation since, according to their president, they have a stake in the Ivorian conflict because they fought the rebels of the Ivorian Popular Movement for the Great West (Mouvement populaire ivoirien du Grand Ouest, MPIGO) and of the Movement for Justice and Peace (Mouvement pour la justice et la paix, MJP). "General" Maho, whose resistance movements, alongside the defence and security forces, have reconquered territory formerly in the hands of the above rebel movements, hopes, in the same way those movements did, to have a voice in the pursuit of peace (*Courrier d'Abidjan* n.d.).

A *Fraternité Matin* article, appearing on allAfrica.com on 1 February 2006, reports that the departure of UN forces from Guiglo and Duékoué has created some uncertainty in the western region of Côte d'Ivoire. Residents and international observers fear that fighting and hostilities will resume in the area (*Fraternité Matin* 1 Feb. 2006). Maho Glofiéi Denis said that [translation] "no one can attack Guiglo. We also have confidence in the military governor's men" (ibid.). Octave Yahi, president of the UPRGO, added that [translation] "we are not attacking. We are resisting. When there are no rebel attacks, we do nothing. Some are even in the fields. We do not have the time and the means to attack; however, once we are attacked, we will defend ourselves" (ibid.).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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