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Côte d'Ivoire: Reports of the government ill-treating individuals released from captivity by rebel groups; whether such individuals are perceived as rebel sympathizers; treatment of individuals perceived as rebel sympathizers (2004 - 2008)

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According to a 2004 United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) article, the New Forces "rebels" (Forces nouvelles, FN) have been known to take northern residents hostage in order to obtain ransom (25 Nov. 2004). The FN is "the coalition of armed groups in control of the north since September 2002" (AI 2007). A 2007 IRIN report indicates that in the buffer zone that divides the north from the south "kidnappings and extortion are serious problems" (UN Feb. 2007). Information on whether the government has ill-treated individuals released from captivity by rebel groups, or whether such individuals are perceived as rebel sympathizers, could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. However, sources indicate that the government has ill-treated individuals suspected of being rebel sympathizers (AI 2007; UN 31 Jan. 2005).

According to Human Rights Watch (HRW), security forces and government-supported militias "regularly harass and intimidate" individuals who are perceived to be sympathizers of the FN rebels (May 2006, 2). Amnesty International (AI) reports that the security forces conducted "arbitrary arrests, torture and extrajudicial executions of detainees" believed to be supporters of the FN (2007).

A 2005 IRIN article indicates that human rights abuses have been reported during Côte d'Ivoire's civil war, including "violence against ethnic groups viewed as rebel sympathisers" (UN 31 Jan. 2005). HRW reports that Ivoirians whose last names may link them to an ethnic group originating in the rebel-held north are at risk of ill-treatment by government law enforcement agencies while they travel in the south of Côte d'Ivoire (May 2006, 18).

A 2004 United Nations (UN) Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) article indicates that supporters of President Laurent Gbagbo suspect immigrants from West African countries of being rebel sympathizers (UN 25 Jan. 2004). The article indicates that the government and pro-government youth organizations have subjected immigrants to "persistent persecution and harrassment" (ibid.). Another 2004 IRIN article indicates that 500,000 migrant workers left Côte d'Ivoire to "escape persecution" because they are regarded as rebel sympathizers (UN 28 Dec. 2004). A 2007 Reuters article also reports that government supporters often viewed immigrants as rebel sympathizers (9 Nov.

2007).

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 sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Additional Sources Consulted

Internet sites, including: *Africa Confidential*, *Africa Research Bulletin*, Agence France-Presse, Economist Intelligence Unit (EUI), Factiva, *Fraternité Matin* [Abidjan], Global Security, Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Ivorian.net, Jeune Afrique, Médecins sans frontières (MSF), The Norwegian Council for Africa, Pan African News Agency (PANA), *Soir Info* [Abidjan], United Nations (UN) Operations in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), UN Relief Web, United States (US) Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), US Department of State.

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