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Côte d'Ivoire: Assita Sylla, who was allegedly arrested by the Ivorian government for helping soldiers in an attempted coup; date of the attempted coup; date of Assita Sylla's arrest and whether she was released
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

According to *Country Reports 2002*, "[on] June 21 [2002], the DST [Directorate for Territorial Security] arrested and held incommunicado for 2 months businesswoman Assita Sylla" (31 Mar. 2003). Without specifying the reasons for her arrest, *Country Reports 2002* indicated that "[d]uring the months prior to the events of September [19 September 2002 attempted coup], security forces arrested a number of persons from the north of the country, persons of northern origin, and RDR [Republican Rally] party members and officials" (31 Mar. 2003; see also AFP 23 Nov. 2003). *Country Reports 2002* added that Assita Sylla was among the detainees released on 12 September 2002 (31 Mar. 2003). No other information on Assita Sylla could be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

However, several sources referred to an attempted coup that occurred on 19 September 2002 (AFP 23 Nov. 2002; *ibid.* 9 Nov. 2002; *Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 23-29 Sept. 2002; *Libération* 20 Sept. 2002).

The rebels, mainly military members living in exile in Burkina Faso and their co-conspirators in the capital, Abidjan (*Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003), attacked the homes of several political leaders (*ibid.*; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 23-29 Sept. 2002), as well as military facilities in Abidjan, Bouake and Korhogo (*Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003).

Clashes between loyalist troops and rebels allegedly claimed many victims, including the former Chief of State, General Guei, the Interior Minister of the Gbagbo government, Émile Boga Doudou, dozens of loyalist soldiers, civilians, and rebel soldiers (AFP 23 Nov. 2002; *Libération* 20 Sept. 2002). Quoting the Ivorian Human Rights Movement (Mouvement ivoirien des droits de l'homme, MIDH), Agence France-Presse (AFP) stated that the wave of arrests that followed the events of 19 September 2002

[translation]

targetted mainly Muslims or persons with names from the northern part of the country, but also activists from opposition parties, such as General Guei's Union for Democracy and Peace in Côte d'Ivoire (Union pour la démocratie et la paix en Côte d'Ivoire, UDPCI) and Alassane Ouattara's Republican Rally (RDR). Some people were released, but others have been detained for over six weeks (23 Nov. 2002).

The day after the failed putsch, foreigners who had been living in Côte d'Ivoire for many years were attacked and displaced (AFP 9 Nov. 2003; *ibid.* 1 Oct. 2002). According to AFP, the United Nations (UN) estimated that [translation] "over 6,000 displaced persons?Ivoirians, foreign immigrants and refugees-ended up in the capital after being driven from their homes" (1 Oct. 2002). Amnesty International (AI) indicated that

[AI English version]

[s]erious human rights abuses were committed by both the government and the armed groups. In Abidjan, government forces committed extrajudicial executions and arbitrary arrests. They destroyed several deprived neighbourhoods where poor people, including many foreign nationals, were living, leaving thousands of people homeless. Armed opposition groups were responsible for killing unarmed members of the security forces and people suspected of supporting the government (2003, 145).

The first military coup in Côte d'Ivoire was led by General Guei in December 1999 (AI 2000, 126; *Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 23-29 Sept. 2002; *Libération* 20 Sept. 2002). General Guei lost power in October 2000 (*ibid.*) when Laurent Gbagbo won the presidential election (*Country Reports 2002* 31 Mar. 2003). According to a report in *Libération*, another attempted coup occurred in January 2001 (20 Sept. 2002).

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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

References

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Afrique/Asie

L'Autre Afrique

Human Rights Watch

Keesing's Record of World Events

New African

Resource Centre country file. Côte d'Ivoire.

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