



## RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

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19 January 2004

### CIV42256.FE

Côte d'Ivoire: Current situation of the Federation of Students and Schools in Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI), including the conflict between internal factions, in particular since the cease-fire between rebels and government forces (2003-January 2004)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Little recent information on the Federation of Students and Schools in Côte d'Ivoire (Fédération estudiantine et scolaire de Côte d'Ivoire, FESCI), including its internal divisions, was found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate within the time constraints for this Response.

A 4 June 2003 article published on the Internet site of the National Confederation of Labour (Confédération nationale du travail, CNT) indicated that rifts within the FESCI first appeared during the October 2000 presidential elections (CNT 4 June 2003). The leading FESCI faction, headed by the organization's then secretary-general, Charles Blé Goudé, was linked to the Popular Ivorian Front (Front populaire ivoirien, FPI) of Laurent Gbagbo, current president of Côte d'Ivoire, while the members of the other faction, described as [translation] "minority dissidents," were [translation] "stigmatized as foreigners and as supporters of the opposition party" and were [translation] "forced into exile under threat of arrest, torture and assassination" (ibid. ). However, this article also observed that this [translation] "separatist group" led by Gueï Paul was still in existence, but that the members who advocated the FESCI's independence from political parties and the government were in hiding or in exile at the time (ibid.).

In its August 2003 report "Prise entre deux guerres : violence contre les civils dans l'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire," Human Rights Watch (HRW) emphasized the role played by certain figures in the current crisis, namely, Charles Blé Goudé and Guillaume Soro, [HRW English version] "both former leaders of the national university student network (FESCI)." Charles Blé Goudé played a crucial role in mobilizing [HRW English version] "young patriots" in Abidjan to support President Gbagbo and in the demonstrations against the Linas-Marcoussis accords, while Guillaume Soro became known internationally as the spokesperson for the rebel group Patriotic Movement of Côte d'Ivoire (Mouvement patriotique de Côte d'Ivoire, MPC) (HRW Aug. 2003). The report added that [HRW English version] "[t]he role of the FESCI student movement and the student leaders in Abidjan in inciting violence has grown clearer over the past eight months" (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 to refugee status or asylum. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

#### References

Confédération nationale du travail (CNT), sections universitaires. 4 June 2003. "La mise au pas du syndicalisme étudiant en Côte d'Ivoire." <[http://www.cnt-f.org/fau/article.php?id\\_article=15](http://www.cnt-f.org/fau/article.php?id_article=15)> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2004]

Human Rights Watch (HRW). August 2003. "Côte d'Ivoire. Prise entre deux guerres : violence contre les civils dans l'Ouest de la Côte d'Ivoire." <<http://www.hrw.org/french/reports/2003/cotedivoire0803/index.htm>> [Accessed 12 Jan. 2004]

#### Additional Sources Consulted

*Africa Confidential* 2003

*Africa Research Bulletin* 2003

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IRB Databases

*Jeune Afrique/L'Intelligent* 2003

Resource Centre country file. Côte d'Ivoire

*West Africa*

**Internet sites, including:**

Amnesty International

*Fraternité matin*

International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH)

*Ivoire Soir*

La Nouvelle république

Le Jour

Notre Voie

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