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31 July 2013

PRESS RELEASE

More than two years have passed since Côte d'Ivoire's post-election crisis left 3,000 dead. Forces backing both former President Laurent Gbagbo and current President Alassane Ouattara were implicated in war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity during this period.

Yesterday, the UN Security Council pressed Côte d'Ivoire to swiftly hold accountable those on both sides of the fighting, which split the country down political and ethnic lines. Until now, the international community, after backing Ouattara's electoral victory, has been slow to criticize the government's failure to ensure its own forces are brought to justice for any crimes.

Since Gbagbo's arrest in 2011, President Ouattara has repeatedly promised accountability for abuses during the post-election period. He created a commission of inquiry that documented grave crimes by both sides. Yet investigations and prosecutions remain disturbingly one-sided. Everyone charged to date with post-election crimes comes from the Gbagbo camp. The UN Secretary-General recently reported that, since the commission of inquiry report, only 3 of the 207 investigations opened by Ivorian authorities target pro-Ouattara forces.

Meanwhile, political leaders on both sides hinder reconciliation by refusing to accept any responsibility for the country's decade-long descent into violence.

The Security Council resolution yesterday "strongly urge[d] the Government to ensure in the shortest possible timeframe that, irrespective of their status or political affiliation, all those responsible" for serious crimes "are brought to justice." It also called for an "impartial, credible, [and] transparent" justice system, which, sadly, does not yet exist in Côte d'Ivoire.

The Security Council's strong language should hearten victims seeking justice. It recognizes that the country's peace and security are closely linked to the government's ability to end the dangerous legacy of impunity. Ivorian leaders have made the right promises. Now Côte d'Ivoire's international partners are watching closely to ensure that Ivorian authorities translate this rhetoric into action.