



Written by [Alex Newman](#) on April 7, 2011

## UN-backed Forces Slaughter Christians in Ivory Coast

Though conflicts have been a regular occurrence in recent decades, the current civil war engulfing the West-African former French colony stems from a contested presidential election held in November. The original vote count indicated a narrow victory for Ouattara, a U.S.-educated Muslim from the largely Islamic Northern part of the country who has worked at the International Monetary Fund and the Central Bank of West African States.



But after the nation's Constitutional Council discovered evidence of alleged voting fraud and ballot stuffing, it nullified the results, recounted the votes, and [declared](#) Gbagbo the winner. Gbagbo, who has ruled the Ivory Coast since 2000, is a leftist Catholic from the largely Christian Southern part of the country. He is claiming to be the legitimately elected President and is refusing to leave power.

The UN, Obama, and the French government, however, maintain that Gbagbo should step down and allow Ouattara to assume the presidency. And at least the French and the UN are [using armed force](#) to make sure that happens, providing military support to Islamic militias loyal to Ouattara while [bombing](#) the Ivory Coast's soldiers and equipment from the air.

[Reports](#) of brutal massacres have been [pouring](#) out of the country, intensifying in recent days as the struggle becomes more violent. One of the most barbarous attacks left around 1,000 civilians dead in Duékoué at the [hands of Ouattara supporters](#) as they advanced on the capital. Even Ouattara's international supporters [blasted the slaughter](#).

The victims, members of a pro-Gbagbo Christian tribe, were reportedly fleeing their homes to a nearby Catholic mission. But according to news reports, they were [mowed down or hacked to death with machetes](#) shortly before arriving at the compound.

"I can't go home, the rebels have guns. I don't have a gun," 25-year-old refugee Djeke Fulgence [told](#) the U.K. *Guardian* from a camp across the border, where he fled with his wife and children. "They kill people and rape women. They can kill children and then they take the small children to go and fight. It's impossible. I can't go back."

Over 30,000 civilians are estimated to be taking refuge at the mission to escape the violence. But reports [indicate](#) that food and water supplies are running low. Meanwhile, up to a million refugees have reportedly fled their homes, with an estimated hundred thousand crossing the border into Liberia.

As both sides blame each other for human-rights abuses, even the UN has now jumped in and [urged](#)



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Ouattara's forces to show "restraint" after reports of looting, abductions, and ill-treatment of civilians by his supporters went public. Talk of prosecuting those responsible for the atrocities at the International Criminal Court is already making headlines.

But as the UN helicopters were [bombarding](#) Gbagbo forces earlier this week, critics of the international body's military support for Ouattara blasted the campaign. The Russian government, for example, said the UN and the French government had no right to intervene on one side in the dispute.

"The UN peacekeepers and supporting French forces in Ivory Coast have started military action taking the side of Ouattara, carrying out air strikes on the positions held by supporters of Gbagbo. We're now looking into the legality of this situation because the peacekeepers were authorized to remain neutral — nothing more," [said](#) Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. "An emergency briefing in the UN Security Council has been held upon our request, but we have not received any concrete answers. We will keep looking into the matter."

In the United States, conservative critics of the international intervention have also attacked efforts to oust Gbagbo. *World Net Daily* [described the situation](#) as "the forced Islamist takeover of [the Ivory Coast] government." It also noted that UN and U.S. government leaders were "ignoring the nation's own procedures that determined Laurent Gbagbo, a Christian, legitimately was re-elected president."

*WND* also compared the situation to another recent "Muslim-Christian battle" in Africa. In 2007, Obama backed Kenyan Muslim Raila Odinga, a socialist currently serving as Prime Minister following a power-sharing agreement. After Odinga lost the election and accused his opponent of rigging the vote, his Islamic supporters went on a rampage that included burning churches, hacking more than a thousand Christians to death with machetes, and eventually displacing an estimated 500,000 people. To placate the rioters, an agreement eventually allowed Odinga to serve as Prime Minister.

In another recent foreign dispute, Obama [backed](#) socialist Honduran leader Manuel Zelaya. The [leftist Hugo Chavez ally](#) was lawfully removed from office through established constitutional procedures for violating the law. But Obama demanded that he be reinstated.

In the Ivory Coast conflict, like in the Kenya dispute, Obama also [expressed support](#) for the Muslim candidate. And despite the Ivory Coast Constitutional Council's ruling, which is supposed to be the final word on election results, Obama demanded that Gbagbo leave power.

"Tragically, the violence that we are seeing could have been averted had Laurent Gbagbo respected the results of last year's presidential election," Obama [said](#) on April 5, without mentioning the Constitutional Council's ruling. "To end this violence and prevent more bloodshed, former President Gbagbo must stand down immediately, and direct those who are fighting on his behalf to lay down their arms."

But despite the administration's declared support for Ouattara, prominent U.S. lawmakers blasted the international intervention and criticized Obama's choice of sides. In an interview with the U.S. government-funded *Voice of America* news service, Republican Senator James Inhofe of Oklahoma [said](#) it was clear that Ouattara was chosen by the French government and that "quite frankly, they rigged the election." Inhofe also said the original election results purportedly showing that Ouattara won were statistically impossible.

Citing the massacre in Duékoué, Sen. Inhofe [called](#) the situation "a reign of terror by Ouattara" that was being "supported by the French." He also said the Obama administration "had it wrong" and that letters he had sent to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton about the matter were ignored.



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Inhofe accused the UN of violating its charter, too. “They went in and immediately assumed that it was a legitimate election and, yet, we have all the evidence to the contrary,” he told VOA. “By the way, there are a lot of people in Africa who agree with me.”

News reports [indicate](#) that Gbagbo will probably be forced to surrender soon. By April 6 media accounts [claimed](#) he was holed up in a bunker as some government forces were starting to lay down their weapons. The French government said it was only a matter of time.

“This stubbornness is absurd. Gbagbo has no other solution anymore. Everybody has dropped him,” [said](#) French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe. “He is holed up in the bunker in his residence so we will continue with the United Nations, which is handling that, to put pressure on him so he accepts to acknowledge the reality: There is only one legal and legitimate president today, it is Alassane Ouattara and I hope that persuasion will win and that we will avoid having to resume the military operations.”

French forces were [reportedly](#) attacking the presidential palace as Ouattara’s militias were said to be in control most of the nation and its capital. Other reports [indicated](#) that Gbagbo was already negotiating the terms of his surrender after foreign military forces decimated his government’s ability to hold out any longer.

Analysts noted, however, that the underlying conflict would not end with Ouattara’s rise to power. Tensions have been running high in the Ivory Coast for years, especially after another civil war about a decade ago left the nation divided between Muslims to the North and Christians in the South.

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