The Guardian | Thursday 3 January 2013

## **International**

## Ivory Coast death toll rises amid search for crush survivors

Stampede kills 62, many of whom were children

Concerns over removal of evidence from the scene

Afua Hirsch

**West Africa correspondent** 

The death toll after the New Year's Eve stampede in Ivory Coast has risen to 62 as injured people continue to arrive in hospital in the commercial capital, Abidjan. Witnesses said seven people were still miss-

ing and five bodies remained unidentified as emergency services continued their work in the aftermath of the tragedy at the main football stadium in the centre of Abidian.

"Yesterday there was a lack of information and many injured people went home," said Mohamed Diaby, a social entrepreneur who is part of a citizens' action group set up after the disaster. "We asked injured people this morning to come back to the hospital and now they are arriving in their dozens."

The Ivory Coast president, Alassane Ouattara, visited injured people at the Cocody hospital in Abidjan on Tuesday and said an investigation had begun.

Details are still coming to light about the tragedy, which occurred after a fireworks display that was meant to celebrate Ivory Coast's return to peace after a 2011 civil war. Government officials said many of the dead were children aged between eight and 15.

Rescue workers, who reached the scene quickly on Monday night, said they found people trampled and suffocated as a crowd of thousands was crushed trying to leave the area around the Félix Houphouët-Boigny stadium.

Local newspapers reported that the roadblocks were set up by criminal gangs trying to steal money and phones. Other witnesses blamed security forces who



Many children were killed in the crush at the main football stadium in Abidjan

arrived to break up the crowd, triggering a panic in which many people fell, and the failure of the authorities to manage a collision between a large crowd trying to leave and another group arriving.

Concerns have been raised that an official investigation would be hampered by the removal of evidence from the scene.

"At first people were sad, but now they are angry and I am not sure that the investigation will tell us anything," said Diaby. "I have been on the ground in the days since this happened, and I saw that all the things that could explain what happened have been removed."

"How can you have an investigation when all evidence has been removed?"

**Advertisement** 

## Rebel fighters halt advance on capital and seek peace talks

## **Afua Hirsch**

**West Africa correspondent** 

Rebels who have captured large parts of the Central African Republic yesterday halted their advance and agreed to take part in talks, leading to fresh hopes of a peace agreement.

The Séléka coalition of rebel fighters, which began seizing regional capitals and mining areas in the diamond-rich country last month, said it will not attack capital city Bangui and is expected to begin negotiations with the government in Libreville, the capital of nearby Gabon next week.

But the fate of President Francois Bozizé continues to hang in the balance as the rebels - who accuse Bozizé of failing to honour the terms of an earlier peace deal - say they might insist on his removal.

"I am in discussion with our partners to come up with proposals to end the crisis, but one solution could be a political transition that excludes Bozizé," a Séléka spokesman, Eric Massi, told Reuters.

Bozizé has pledged not to run for a third term in presidential elections scheduled for 2016. But there are signs that rebel demands for him to step down could scupper negotiations. Bozizé - who used military force to seize power in 2003 but has since won two elections - has said that he will form a government of national unity.

Residents in Bangui, which remains under curfew, expressed relief after days of speculation that the city could fall under rebel control. A deployment of troops from nearby central African nations has been bolstered, as an extra 360 soldiers from Gabon, Congo Brazzaville and Cameroon began arriving in CAR on Tuesday, bringing the total number of central African troops in the country to 760.

Neighbouring Chad - where president Idriss Deby is one of Bozize's closest allies - has sent 400 troops . "

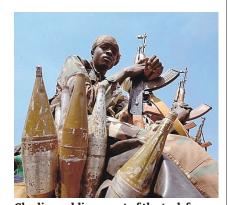
Humanitarian concerns remain for the country, which despite its mineral wealth has 60% of the population living in poverty. Aid groups have been pulling out of the country, including the United Nations, which has evacuated more than 200 non-essential staff, and children's charity Unicef, which has relocated all international staff to Cameroon.

South Africa added its voice to the growing list of nations concerned about the situation in CAR vectoriay.

the situation in CAR yesterday.

"We call on all parties to refrain from acts of violence against civilians and to respect human rights," a statement said.

The African Union, United States, European Union and France have called on both sides to negotiate and spare civilians, while the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) has organised the coming talks aimed at solving the crisis.



Chadian soldiers, part of the task force of central African states, near Damara

Copy of the letter from the President of Argentina, Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, to Prime Minister David Cameron.

Buenos Aires, January 3rd, 2013

Mr. Prime Minister David Cameron,

One hundred and eighty years ago on this same date, January 3rd, in a blatant exercise of 19th-century colonialism, Argentina was forcibly stripped of the Malvinas Islands, which are situated 14,000 km (8700 miles) away from London.

The Argentines on the Islands were expelled by the Royal Navy and the United Kingdom subsequently began a population implantation process similar to that applied to other territories under colonial rule.

Since then, Britain, the colonial power, has refused to return the territories to the Argentine Republic, thus preventing it from restoring its territorial integrity.

The Question of the Malvinas Islands is also a cause embraced by Latin America and by a vast majority of peoples and governments around the world that reject colonialism.

In 1960, the United Nations proclaimed the necessity of "bringing to an end colonialism in all its forms and manifestations". In 1965, the General Assembly adopted, with no votes against (not even by the United Kingdom), a resolution considering the Malvinas Islands a colonial case and inviting the two countries to negotiate a solution to the sovereignty dispute between them.

This was followed by many other resolutions to that effect.

In the name of the Argentine people, I reiterate our invitation for us to abide by the resolutions of the United Nations.

Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner President of the Argentine Republic

Cc: Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations