

**RAN #5/2008 February 8**

**IVORY COAST: activist Antoine Assalé Tiémoko, 1-year prison sentence for opinion piece**

**BACKGROUND: Antoine Assalé Tiémoko**, activist and occasional contributor to the daily *Le Nouveau Réveil*, was arrested on December 28, 2007. On December 14, the newspaper had published an opinion piece by Tiémoko on judicial corruption, entitled 'Justice, criminals, and corruption'. In the piece, Tiémoko used an imaginary country called Mastodon Coast, as well as coded words and innuendo, to question the Ivorian minister of justice (whose photo accompanied the piece), the state prosecutor, and various judges, and to accuse them of corruption. Tiémoko was condemned to one year in prison for 'libelling the prosecutor's office' and 'contempt of court' on 4 January 2008. In a report released last week, Writers in Prison Committee of International PEN notes that writers and journalists who report on corruption in Africa are particularly liable to face imprisonment on criminal defamation charges, including libel. For the report:

<http://www.internationalpen.org.uk/index.php?pid=33&aid=735&type=current>

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**Send your appeals to:**

President

Laurent Gbagbo

Monsieur le Président de la République

Palais de la Présidence au Plateau

P.O. Box: 01 BP 1354 Abidjan 01

Fax: 011 225 20 21 14 25 OR 011 225 2031 45 40

To send a message using the Internet, please follow this link

[http://www.cotedivoire-pr.ci/?action=show\\_page&id\\_page=7&lang=fr](http://www.cotedivoire-pr.ci/?action=show_page&id_page=7&lang=fr)

Dear Monsieur le Président,

As a member of PEN Canada, the Canadian centre of the worldwide writers' organization, International PEN, I am writing to express concern that a citizen of Côte d'Ivoire, M. Antoine Assalé Tiémoko, has been sentenced to 12 months in prison for writing and publishing an opinion piece in a newspaper.

This sentence is in direct violation of M. Tiémoko's right to freedom of expression and opinion, guaranteed by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and by the UN International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which La République de la Côte d'Ivoire is party.

I join my writer colleagues around the world in urging you to reconsider this decision to impose a prison sentence on M. Tiémoko, and in calling for M. Tiémoko's immediate and unconditional release.

Yours sincerely,

[your name and address here]

**Please send a copy of your letter to one or more of the following:**

Permanent Mission of Côte d'Ivoire to the United Nations

Permanent Representative: H.E. Mr. Ilahiri Alcide Djedje, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary

46 East 74th Street, New York, NY 10021

Phone: (212) 717-5555

Fax: (212) 717-4492

E-mail: [cotedivoiremission@yahoo.com](mailto:cotedivoiremission@yahoo.com)

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