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Postwar Governance and Threats to Student Academic Freedom in Côte d'Ivoire

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Introduction

Côte d'Ivoire was one of the most stable African countries between 1960 and 1999. The country experienced, in the 1970s, a period of prosperity called the “economic miracle”(Collier and Anke 2004). During this time, the state allocated 40% of its general budget to public education including universities (INS 1998). However, in the early 1990s, the increasing demand for democracy resulted in subsequent crises that ended in a coup d'état in December 1999. This coup initiated a period of prolonged political and military turmoil, exacerbated by a military rebellion in 2002 and civil war from 2010 to 2011. In 2002, while Ivorians were recovering from the 2000 post-electoral violence, the rebellion broke out and eventually the rebels seized 60% percent of the country, especially the North. Following a lengthy and complex peace-building process supported by the UN, a national presidential election took place in 2010. Unfortunately, this election did not provide peace to Côte d'Ivoire. Both presidential candidates Alassane Ouattara and the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo claimed victory, and the post-electoral crisis quickly escalated into a civil war in December 2010 -April 2011.

Scholarly works on Africa have explored how postwar state reconstruction relates to human rights issues through the lens of promoting democratic principles. According to Collier (2008), post-conflict government seeks to achieve legitimacy by ensuring democratic order and rebuilding a state of law that was seriously eroded during the war. However, the recovery often leads to a stronghold on political institutions and results in human rights abuses that pave the way for a post-war authoritarian regime (Diamond 2014; Strauss and Waldorf 2011). After the 2010-2011 civil war in Côte d'Ivoire, while the Ivorian authorities claimed restoration of democratic order, the government restricted freedom of speech in universities. Although higher education is essential to post-war rebuilding, Ivorian students' freedoms of speech and assembly continue to be undermined. Fifteen years after the war, in October 2024, the Ivorian government banned all student unions and associations at all universities of the country following violent incidents at Felix Houphouët-Boigny University.¹ Despite recommendations from human rights organizations to wait for the full judicial process, the government issued an executive order to ban all student unions, including the Federation of Students of Côte d'Ivoire (FESCI), which has been targeted for years by the postwar regime. As we revisit the Kampala Declaration on Academic Freedom, we may overlook the importance of students' academic freedom. This oversight occurs because both domestic stakeholders and external interveners involved in the reconstruction and reconciliation process often neglect the importance of liberty within the education sector, especially the connection between student movement and academic freedom (Barakat and Sansom 2015).

This article examines how a state emerging from civil war can reverse its democratic reconstruction gains by threatening student movements and, subsequently, academic freedom. I argue that because academic life is inherently based on the confrontation of ideas; thus, in the aftermath of a war, the state must encourage and protect academic freedom through free speech that favors debate about the issues (ethnic division, inequality, discrimination, hatred xenophobic rhetoric, etc.) that led to civil war. In this sense, I concur with Feuer et al. (2013) and Barakat & Sansom (2015), who argue that universities provide the intellectual space for students, faculty and staff to engage constructively in rebuilding a divided society. More importantly, campuses

¹ <https://www.gouv.ci/conseil-ministre-details.php?recordID=502>

(re)create harmony and promote cooperation and integration within an environment of tolerance that the post-war state needs (UNESCO, 2011; Bank, 2005).

Protection of academic freedom, especially students' free speech, as a paradigm of postwar reconstruction in Côte d'Ivoire, has not been thoroughly researched. Despite the blossoming of investigation and publication on the Ivorian political crisis (Akindes, 2010; Babo, 2013; Piccolino, 2011; McGovern, 2011; Bah, 2010; Banegas, 2011), little of this work has addressed academic freedom after the civil war. My recent work on this issue (Babo 2022) revealed the government's academic freedom limitations but failed to analyze them using the two African academic freedom instruments: the Kampala Declaration and the Dar es Salaam Declaration. This paper aims to critically expand my findings using the African declarations to show how the knowledge gap conceals threats against students' free speech and unionism and their pivotal role in the recovery process. The situation in Côte d'Ivoire demonstrates how reform measures for rebuilding higher education are being used by the post-war government to restrict civil liberties, including academic freedom for students on Ivorian campuses.

To provide an understanding of the threats to academic freedom in Ivorian higher education institutions, I first discuss academic freedom from a human rights perspective and review the literature on its role on the African continent. The second section of this article provides background on higher education, and the third presents the restrictive measures taken by the government to rule Ivorian universities and campuses. Finally, I use the Kampala Declaration and Dar es Salaam Declaration to describe how the rebuilding programs and reforms accompanying the usage of the various forms of force, restrictions, and privations under the postwar government impair academic freedom. This research relies on materials collected from interviews conducted at Ivorian universities, reports, and newspapers within the collaborations with Scholars at Risk's Academic Freedom Monitoring Project (SAR) and the Sweden-American Variety of Democracy (V-Dem) Project².

1. Academic Freedom in Question

Academic Freedom and Human Rights

Attacks on academic freedom driven by anti-democratic trends worldwide attract the attention of professionals in human rights who undertake to defend it by devising a more practical meaning. When speaking of academic freedom, I refer to the organization Scholars-at-Risk (SAR) definition³: "Academic freedom includes the liberty of individuals to express freely opinions about the institution or system in which they work, to fulfill their functions without discrimination or fear or repression by the state or any other actor, to participate in professional or representative academic bodies..." (SAR 2015). In addition, SAR presents five practical typologies⁴ of conduct that constitute violations of academic freedom especially in fragile post-war states. The protection of liberties in academia represents one of the cornerstones for re-installing a state of law and civil liberties after a deadly war that dismantled human rights. However, some research shows that post-conflict recovery can result in severe depletion of civil and human rights (Yakaré-Oulé 2014;

² The views expressed in this article are the author's and do not necessary reflect the position of SAR and V-DEM.

³ Through the General Comment 13 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ESCR)

⁴ (i) killings/violence/disappearances; (ii) wrongful/ imprisonment/detention; (iii) wrongful prosecution; (iv) restrictions on travel or movement; and (v) retaliatory discharge/loss of position/expulsion from study.

Strauss and Waldorf 2011). Since post-war academic freedom remains relatively unexplored, especially in the African context, analyzing the issue within the human rights perspective can spotlight potential and/or eventual threats. In this sense, the Ivorian case studied here can serve to highlight direct and subtle threats to academic freedom in African states that are overcoming or solving war, terrorism, and post-electoral violence as, for example, in DRC, Nigeria, and Kenya SAR (2017).

Academic Freedom in Africa

On the African continent, scholars have debated the relationship of academic freedom in higher education to democratic and human rights principles as expressed by the two main instruments: the Kampala Declaration⁵ and the Dar es Salam Declaration⁶. When drafting these two texts in 1990, in the context of democratic change, African scholars focused on restrictions of intellectual freedom and the relationships between academics and repressive regimes (Mamdani 1993). More than two decades later⁷, scholars considered dissidents by governments continue to face imprisonment (Chigudu 2016), intrusive supervision, expulsion, and epistemic violence (Taylor 2006; Higgins 2000). Despite numerous crises across the continent, examining academic freedom in post-conflict situations has not been extensively addressed and considered to review and rewrite these two important instruments of academic freedom on the continent. In their review of academic freedom in African universities, Kwadwo (et al. 2016) do not discuss the post-conflict situation. Their study concludes that Côte d'Ivoire, which experienced a civil war in 2011, does not comply with the indicators of self-governance or those of individual rights and freedom, and it is poorly compliant with institutional autonomy. However, they did not require how the two declarations should be reviewed to take into consideration crisis and post-crisis situations during which liberties are limited, including in academia. In this article, I build upon existing literature to argue that Côte d'Ivoire's failure to meet the criteria for academic freedom, as recommended by ILO/UNESCO,⁸ is influenced by government restrictive policies. I propose that the two African declarations consider post-crisis situations—such as outbreaks of violence, conflicts, wars, and coups d'état—in order to promote and strengthen academic freedom on the continent.

2. Background of the Higher Education Sector in Côte d'Ivoire

Côte d'Ivoire has a higher education system that includes public universities and private institutions across the country, including eight public universities⁹: University Félix Houphouët-Boigny (UFHB) of Cocody located in the capital Abidjan (south) was founded in 1964 and; The University of Nangui Abrogoua (UNA) also in Abidjan, was created in 1994; The University Alassane Ouattara (UAO) of Bouaké (center), opened in 1994; The University Jean Lohourignon Guédé (UJLG) of Daloa (west), created in 2012; The University Peleforo Gbon Coulibaly (UPGC) of Korhogo (north) in 2012; The University of Man founded in 2015; the University of Bondoukou

⁵ Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility of November 1990

⁶ Dar es Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of April 1990.

⁷ The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) organized an international conference themed: “Academic Freedom in Africa: 25 years after the Kampala Declaration. Challenges, Issues, and Prospects.” The conference took place in Lilongwe, Malawi from 11 to 13 April 2016.

⁸ The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference adopted the ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel in November 1997.

⁹ For this research, I focused on the public universities.

(east) founded in 2019; and the Polytechnic University of San-Pedro (South-west) created in 2021. It is important to notice that in the post-war economic context, this education share was 22% of the total budget in 2016 as the Ivorian government dedicated only F.CFA 1,233 billion to the education system (APA 2015) and at least five new universities have been established recently in the postwar context as a response to the growing number of students.

At the beginning of the economic crisis of early 1990, the number of students attending public institutions of higher learning increased tremendously. However, the infrastructure and facilities of these institutions were not improving. The Ivorian government, limited by the austerity of the structural adjustment plan of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), drastically lowered the higher education budget to 20 percent of the education budget and only 6 percent of the national budget. As a consequence, the government could neither afford to build new facilities nor to restore the old and outdated ones. As a result of this chronic neglect, classrooms and auditoriums became insufficient for the increasing number of students. Overcrowding in classes between the end of high school and the first year of university has risen quite significantly.

From 1995 to 2010, the three universities in the country have not functioned normally and have alternated between years when schools failed to open and incomplete academic cycles called *années blanches*. As a result of these disturbances, courses were not well delivered, and the results of final exams were very disappointing. Overall, the general level of education decreased significantly with the dropout rate increasing to 17.6% (INS 2003). The persistence of the political crisis and the ineffective response of successive governments at the time triggered frequent demonstrations along with violence in higher education institutions.

3. The Post-War State and Threats to Academic Freedom

Higher education is vital to post-conflict rebuilding and reconciliation. However, the postwar Ivorian government did not protect the academic freedom that it could have used as a means of unity in the divided nation. The union FESCI's violent past could easily justify the government's arguments against student academic freedom. In a recent survey that assesses the indicators of academic freedom in African universities, it was determined that Côte d'Ivoire does not explicitly or directly recognize academic freedom in its constitution, and furthermore, does not meet basic institutional autonomy conditions and doesn't comply with individual rights and freedoms and institutional self-governance (Kwadwo, Klauss and Karran 2016).

Rebuilding and reform of university systems

In conflict-affected contexts, there is a significant need for a greater understanding of how to rebuild higher education. When the new government assumed power in April 2011 following the civil war, it implemented a series of measures aimed at overhauling campuses that had been marred by decades of political and military turmoil, during which universities became sites of violence. The government initially prioritized improving living and studying conditions while eliminating political interference.

To enact this agenda, the government closed the country's public universities and campuses for two academic years, in 2011 and 2012. While this drastic measure faced disapproval from many in the higher education sector, it profoundly impacted collective awareness. Most importantly,

similar to the situation in Burma/Myanmar (Feuer et al., 2013), the closures were strategically intended to dismantle university infrastructure temporarily. This was done to prevent student organizing and solidarity to reduce collective action against forthcoming government reforms.

The aftermath of a crisis can open new opportunities to reform and accomplish improvements during rebuilding. In the Ivorian case, the post-war reconstruction agenda included symbolic, administrative, as well as infrastructure rehabilitation of the universities routinely destroyed during the 2010 - 2011 civil war.

While over \$200 million [FCFA 100 billion] were expended to rebuild classrooms, finish amphitheatres, repair laboratories, repaint buildings, create new green spaces, and erect athletic facilities in the country's three universities, like most post-war states, the post-war Ivorian government was hunted by the fear of a resurgence of violence on campuses and its power to ignite the embers of war. The history of collective violence in a society plays a critical role in not only the recovery process but also in the reconstruction program of a post-war state. Acknowledging the violence that has marked the past is central to the post-war program of reconstruction (Pinker 2007). The encrustation of violence within the Ivorian higher education institutions is the result of a complex socio-political construction of mutual violence regularly enacted by the government, but also by students and their unions (Konaté 2003; Goin Bi Zamblé 2011). Higher education is one of the primary victims of civil war as reported by the Global Coalition to Protect Education (GCPEA) and the Safe Schools Declaration¹⁰. In Côte d'Ivoire, during the rebellion of 2002 and the civil war of 2010 – 2011, its three universities¹¹ were devastated and occupied by military troops (GCPEA, 2014). In addition, during the last two decades, threats to student academic freedom in Ivorian universities present a series of inconsistencies.

As President Alassane Ouattara re-opened the restored University Felix Houphouët-Boigny in October 2012, he insisted that under his presidency, the violence that had grasped campuses would not be tolerated. Both the violent past of the students' union and the political socialization of dissidents in universities justify this discourse of rupture. FESCI continued to be branded by the government with its previous radicalism. In fact, on May 31, 1999, for the first time, the police nationally televised the seizure of a set of weapons from university residences on the campus of Cocody. Police stated that these weapons, including rifles, revolvers, and tear gas, were intended to be used by FESCI militants to attack and burn down the police station in Cocody's 13th district. In 2008 Human Rights Watch reported on this violence in delineating the involvement of this student union in the military-political crises that took place in Côte d'Ivoire since 2002.¹² In sum, before 2011, Ivorian universities became the sites for not only social but also political violence (Konaté 2003; Zinsou 2004) that the postwar government intended to end.

In addition, the governing authorities' strategy to alleviate factors of conflict reappearance was driven by anti-democratic action and continued to foster human rights abuses against opponents as well as civil society leaders (Babo, 2019). For example, according to the 2015 - 2016 Amnesty

¹⁰ http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/safe_schools_declaration-final.pdf; The Safe Schools Declaration, an inter-governmental political commitment developed in a state-led process headed by Norway and Argentina, was opened for endorsement in Oslo on May 29, 2015.

¹¹ Abidjan-Cocody, Abobo-Adjamé and Bouaké

¹² <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2008/country-chapters/cote-divoire>

International (AI) report¹³ after years of the post-war peace-building process, arbitrary arrests and detentions of opponents and civil society leaders continue. During the 2020 presidential election, the current president Ouattara not only ran for a controversial and anti-constitutional third term but he disqualified all serious opposition leaders from the race. In preparation for the upcoming election in October 2025, he is considering running for a non-democratic fourth term. Like in 2020, major contenders in Ivorian politics such as former President Laurent Gbagbo and former Speaker of the House, Soro Guillaume, are barred from participating in the race due to their sentences of 20 years and life in prison, respectively.¹⁴ This tendency of the postwar authorities to threaten and silence dissent voices also extended to academia and especially to student unions.

Institutional autonomy and self-governance

In 2016 Côte d'Ivoire was listed as a country that does not comply with the indicators of academic freedom, especially those of institutional autonomy and self-governance. This is mostly due to the state authorities' strategy of intervening in the micro-management of the universities by controlling administrative top positions. Thus, the government reaffirmed the authority of the state over public universities by specifically nominating new presidents, deans, and department chairs. The government ruled that President Alassane Ouattara will henceforth appoint all of the leadership of Ivorian universities in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. This measure was a decisive rupture that suspended the previous electoral and democratic system which, for a decade, governed the hiring of university leadership staff. Unions of professors and students criticized this manner of government involvement in daily management as being democratically regressive and infringing on academic freedom. In addition, they were opposed to appointees who would be accountable to the state authorities and not the university councils and the specific communities of faculty, students, and staff. These unions also gave voice to the negative effect of this form of appointment on freedom of speech and the inability of appointees to make decisions or criticize unpopular governmental choices. Even though institutional autonomy is not a feature of academic freedom according to Tierney and Sabbarwal (2016), in such a fragile democratic post-war context, the autonomy of university staff and its ability to self-govern are necessary conditions for the protection of free speech and academic responsibilities and rights.

Freedom of expression and association

Côte d'Ivoire does not meet the indicators of individual rights, freedom of expression and association because police surveillance, restrictions on civil liberties, academic bans as well as limitations on organizing are used to undermine student influence and power. Although the FESCI union changed its philosophy of action by committing to a focus on academic affairs, the use of peaceful methods, and the July 2014 election of a new moderate leader,¹⁵ the history of this student movement's deep involvement in social and political violence, along with the fear of its eventual use by political opponents, prompted the post-war government to adopt tough policies and methods to neutralize unions at universities. This aim never disappeared as the government used the recent

¹³ <https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/africa/cote-d-ivoire/report-cote-divoire/> Also see the latest 2016/2017 report

¹⁴ While Gbagbo was pardoned he is still not eligible. Soro Guillaume is kept in exile to avoid unfair trial and imprisonment if he returns.

¹⁵ <http://www.notrevoie.com/develop.asp?id=58083>

killing of a student on the campus of the University FHB to ban all student unions and associations and arrest and indictment of FESCI's leaders.

The first incident occurred in October 2012, only three months after the re-opening of the renovated University Felix Houphouet-Boigny, when students engaged in strikes to denounce the poor living conditions to which they were still subject after the restoration. They decried the lack of bathrooms, the insufficiency of the libraries and the shortage of reading resources, the excessive price of food in the dining halls, the increase of registration fees, the lack of efficient public transportation, and the deficiency of classrooms to accommodate the increasing number of students. Students in medical, pharmacy, and chemistry studies were missing critical equipment and functioning laboratories for their courses¹⁶. To respond to the strikes, the newly established Campus Police used brutality, arrests, and acts of intimidation¹⁷. For students at University Felix Houphouet-Boigny, police force action on campus was a violation of their liberties, and especially their freedom of expression. Most students argued that the campus police looked like an actual militia controlled by the minister's cabinet for surveillance of students and professors who are usually considered by the government as dissidents and political opponents. The enforcement officers were not well educated and did not have the professional skills needed to perform police tasks. After abuses by the campus police were reported, the government acknowledged the inadequacies of campus police and suspended their presence on campus.

The second event involved kidnapping attempts as state police forces targeted student leaders and tried to remove them from campus. At the same time, campus surveillance intensified. On December 13, 2012, four students were reported missing after a meeting on difficult transportation at the University Felix Houphouet-Boigny. After several hours of searching, it was learned that these students were taken captive by the Bureau of the Intelligence Services (DST) in Abidjan. They were detained in cells at this office of investigation for two days without legal assistance and were released without charges on December 15, 2012. These incidents were reported and monitored by the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Project in October and December 2012 and February 2013¹⁸. Tactics like this fall under the definition of incidents involving killings and violence, disappearances, and wrongful imprisonment/detention that appear to violate multiple provisions of international human rights law including those regarding the protection of life (UDHR, ICCPR; ACPHCR), (SAR 2015:16). Moreover, the use of intelligence offices by the government against students is an extreme way to shut them off and prevent them from voicing their concerns and demands. As a result, student mistrust of the authorities intensified and the government sought to control student unions by supporting some and weakening others.

In Côte d'Ivoire, government attacks on civil liberties in academia continue through attempts to regulate unionization by threatening student leaders with expulsion. Students indicated that the leaders of FESCI would be ruled out if they continued to organize protests. In the meantime, new unions such as the General Association of Students of Côte d'Ivoire (AGEECI) have been created and allegedly are working closely with the government and its intelligence services. As a result,

¹⁶ <http://observers.france24.com/fr/20150803-promesses-non-tenues-toujours-pas-materiel-etudiants-pharmacie-abidjan>

¹⁷ <http://observers.france24.com/fr/20140225-police-universitaire-violences-universite-abidjan-cocody-tension-syndicats>

¹⁸ <http://www.monitoring.academicfreedom.info/reports/2012-12-13-universite-felix>

clashes between students and their unions regularly occur as they compete for leadership on campus. In November 2015, one of these clashes between students of FESCI and those of AGEECI resulted in one dead and several injured¹⁹. In reaction to this tragedy, on December 5 the University Council decided to expel twelve students, including the leader of FESCI, who allegedly were involved in the incident²⁰. Even though doubts persisted about their involvement students argued that the university had never provided solid proof against the twelve expelled students. In addition, the Council suspended both FESCI and AGEECI from the University. On the same day, in response to the expulsion of students, violence erupted on campus once again. The office of student residential life was set on fire by unidentified arsonists²¹.

Students argue that university authorities are using this incident as a means to eliminate the remaining active leaders of FESCI. The way the latest incident from October 2024 was handled by the government seems to confirm that allegation. In fact, on September 30, 2024, a student was murdered in the wake of internal clashes among FESCI's factions. The death of this member of the largest student union in Côte d'Ivoire, in conflict with its secretary general, has revived the debate on the future of this influential and controversial organization. In response, the government took drastic measures that included a burst of policemen on the campus, the destruction of the student union's headquarters, the closure of residencies, the arrest and indictment of the union's leaders, and the ban of all student organizations from all public universities in the country. While applauding the government's prompt reaction and the judicial process against the alleged perpetrators, some civil society organizations criticized the government's hasty decision to ban all student unions and organizations from campuses.

Another restrictive action deployed by the Ivorian government to limit academic freedom is its use of imprisonment as a tactic to silence students and their unions. Students are often arrested following a demonstration, sent to jail, and freed later without a trial. Most recently, on September 13, 2017, FESCI decided to march against the sudden increase in registration fees for the new academic year. The authorities refused to engage with the union and sent police to repress the students' march. As a result, demonstrations escalated in the streets and degenerated on September 18 into violent clashes with police. In the wake of this repression, students were beaten and 43, including three women, were arrested and immediately sent to prison²². After lobbying by civil society organizations, the government released them on October 11, 2017. This group arrest falls under the Scholars at Risk definition of incidents involving wrongful imprisonment/detention and appears to violate multiple provisions of international human rights law including those regarding protecting life (UDHR, ICCPR; ACPHCR).

4. Restrictions against student unions scrutinized through the African declarations

The two African declarations should consider post-crisis situations—such as outbreaks of violence, conflicts, wars, and coups d'état—in order to promote and strengthen academic freedom

¹⁹ <http://news.abidjan.net/h/573787.html>

²⁰ <http://koaci.com/cote-divoire-kolo-propos-depart-drogba-netait-moment%E2%80%A6--93807.html>

²¹ <http://www.connectionivoirienne.net/117592/abidjan-locaux-centre-oeuvres-universitaires-campus-de-cocody-saccages-incendies-temoins>

²² <http://www.connectionivoirienne.net/119474/cote-divoire-violences-a-luniversite-dabidjan-etudiants-arretes-battus-jetes-prison>

on the continent. It is clear that the lack of democracy during these periods of crisis strongly undermines academic freedom. To be specific, first, the government's appointment of the leadership of Ivorian universities is a measure that was a decisive rupture ending the previous electoral and democratic system which, for a decade, governed the hiring of university leadership by autonomous committees composed of faculty, staff, and student representatives. As such it challenges the Kampala Declaration's Articles 11 and 12.²³

Other decisions go against the declaration. The expulsion of the student leaders in falls under the related to eviction from the study. Seven months later as student unions were still calling for the reintegration of the expelled and the government was refusing any dialogue, violent riots erupted again at the UFHB. Those who are not banned are thrown into jail, which falls under Articles 15 & 16²⁴ and 26²⁵ of the Dar es Salaam Declaration. The government's responses consisting of the brutal intervention of policemen and soldiers on the campus to enforce decisions often result in the destruction of the student union's properties and student goods, the closure of residencies, the arrest and indictment of the union's leaders, and the ban of student organizations from all public universities in the country. It is clear that the presence of armed agents on campuses out of some exceptions exposed in article 40, violates Dar es Salaam Declaration articles 33²⁶ as well as the Kampala Declaration Article 14²⁷. Moreover, the prohibition of student unions on campus instead, aimed to completely silence them and it was also against Articles 15, 24²⁸ and 26 of the Dar es Salaam Declaration.

Although higher education has the potential to bring people together, despite differences in ethnic, religious, and political identity, and can engage critical inquiry and coexistence in open and diverse universities, the government continues to remove activist students from campus. Since the Ivorian government remains fearful of the political socialization function of campus spaces, ten satellite campus residences located across the city of Abidjan²⁹ remained closed for years. Even though parents and students demanded the rehabilitation and reopening of these campus dormitories to

²³ Art. 11: Institutions of higher education shall be autonomous of the State or any other public authority in conducting their affairs, including the administration, and setting up their academic, teaching research and other related programmes. / Art. 12: The autonomy of institutions of higher education shall be exercised by democratic means of self-government, involving active participation of all members of the respective academic community.

²⁴ Art. 15. Civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights of members of the academic community recognized by the United Nations Covenants on Human Rights shall be respected. In particular, all members of the academic community shall enjoy freedom of thought, enquiry, conscience, expression, assembly and association as well as the right to liberty, security and integrity of the person./ Art. 16. All members of the academic community shall enjoy freedom of movement within the country and freedom to travel outside and re-enter the country without let, hindrance or harassment. This freedom may be restricted only on grounds of public health, morality or in circumstances of clear, present and imminent danger to the nation and its independence and which restrictions are justifiable in a democratic society.

²⁵ All members of the academic community shall have the freedom of association, including the right to form and join independent and autonomous trade unions. The right of association includes the right of peaceful assembly and formation of groups, clubs, associations and such other bodies to further the academic and professional interests of the members of the academic community

²⁶ Art. 33: Subject to article 40, the State shall not deploy any military, paramilitary, security or intelligence, or any other like forces within the premises and grounds of the institutions of higher education.

²⁷ Art. 14: The State shall not deploy any military, paramilitary, security, intelligence, or any like forces within the premises and grounds of institutions of education. Provided that such deployment is necessary in the interest of protecting life and property in which case the following conditions shall be satisfied

²⁸ All institutions of higher education shall guarantee the participation of students in their governing bodies. They shall respect the right of students, individually or collectively, to express and disseminate opinions on any national or international question.

²⁹ See the following reporting of France24 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCTMS5ehGr8>

host needy students, the government refused. In September 2017, as reported by Ivorian media, many university students were sleeping either in classrooms, auditoriums, or even in toilets and warehouses on and around the university³⁰. For the government, removing students from available university housing is a way to weaken their unions' capacity to press for educational, political, and social change. For students and their unions, on the other hand, the extended closure of the residences is a direct infringement of their rights to high-quality education, which certainly falls under the preambles of the two declarations.

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dCTMS5ehGr8>

Conclusion

In the name of national security and reconstruction, post-war state authorities undermine academic freedom in higher education in Côte d'Ivoire by various stratagems that include dismantling student unions, brutality and threats, and arrests and imprisonment of students. Because of their autonomous nature and place of independent thought, universities were fulcrums for the social and political changes that took place from 1990 onwards, and students were at the forefront of protests to reclaim social justice and democracy. Universities were and remain a site of social vision, progressive action, and expression of norms of accountability. As a result, higher education institutions often are bastions of dissent and contestation. They are also places of inquiry for equality and proper conditions of work and study. However, as a result of the violence suffered from government authorities in response to their claims, students and their unions rose up in violence themselves. For more than two decades, and as a result of campus uprisings and political crackdown, Ivorian universities did not have a single fully functioning academic year. With the crises of 2002, the destabilization of the education system worsened as the students' union FESCI pursued narrow nationalism and xenophobic rhetoric in the academic environment.

After the war in 2011, the new government strove to make sure that universities achieved peace by improving their institutional framework and quality of life and work for their students and faculty. To this end, it instituted a political campaign that now seems to be producing positive effects, while also appeasing the academic world. However, sources of anxiety have come to light and should be given adequate attention by governing powers to put an end to force and repression within universities once and for all. In other words, violence can be conquered not by controlling, forbidding or repressing liberties, but rather by reinforcing people's rights, freedoms, and democracy within union leadership. It can also be achieved by the creation of a formal framework for permanent on-campus social dialogue between differing entities. In this sense, promoting peace and non-violence on campuses should be viewed, respected and promoted as a primary civic duty by students, university leadership, and the state.

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