

Côte d'Ivoire: Political unrest likely if incumbent wins October elections | Credendo

Event

Over the summer, the risk for political instability has continued to increase ahead of the October 2025 presidential elections. President Ouattara's intent to run for a fourth term (which is argued to be unconstitutional), together with the exclusion of some of the main opposition figures from running and increased arrests of opposition members, has further raised the risk for civil unrest and political violence. Already, thousands of people have been participating in protests across the country's largest cities.

Impact

Banning major opposition figures from the vote has made it more likely for President Ouattara to win next month's presidential elections, which would result in policy continuation and a status quo. Nevertheless, such a scenario raises the risk for severe post-election protests and violence. Political grievances might add to the socio-economic unrest over the high cost of living. Côte d'Ivoire has a relatively recent history of civil war (with the latest in 2010-2011), in which supporters of Ouattara and Gbagbo (who is now banned from running) violently clashed. Even though the ethnic component in political rivalry continues to simmer, widespread conflict was avoided in recent elections, partly thanks to important reconciliation efforts. Also, the recollection of civil war amongst the population might limit public willingness to participate in such protests. However, the reconciliation strategy seems to have been reversed in favour of repression of dissidents in the build-up towards the October elections. Local opposition strongholds are likely to be the scene of serious unrest if President Ouattara takes the win next month, yet it remains to be seen whether this could spiral into nationwide unrest and instability. In addition, militant groups spilling over from the Sahel are taking advantage of tensions to step-up their attacks on the northern regions.

Côte d'Ivoire continues to be one of the best African economic performers. Strong growth prospects (around 6.5% over the coming years) are driven by robust domestic consumption, together with investments in energy, infrastructure and mining, while cocoa continues to be the country's main source of export receipts. As the world's leading cocoa producer, Côte d'Ivoire is in the process of regulating the all-important sector to the benefit of farmers as well as exporters. A significant financial support agreement with the IMF should help keep public finances in check. Credendo classifies Côte d'Ivoire in short-term political risk category 4/7 and medium- to long-term political risk category 5/7, yet the outlook will depend on the unfolding and aftermath of the October 2025 elections.

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