

May 20, 2026

IDU Statement on the Deteriorating Democratic Situation in Côte d'Ivoire

The International Democracy Union (IDU) strongly condemns the systematic political repression carried out by the Government of Côte d'Ivoire against our member-party, the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire – Rassemblement Démocratique Africain (PDCI-RDA), and its leader Tidjane Thiam, the recipients of the 2025 IDU Bush-Thatcher Award for Freedom.

The October 2025 presidential election, in which President Alassane Ouattara secured a contested fourth term, took place without the participation of several major opposition figures, including PDCI-RDA Leader Tidjane Thiam, who had been excluded from the electoral roll. The exclusion of legitimate opposition candidates fundamentally compromised the inclusiveness and credibility of the vote. These concerns were compounded by restrictions on opposition-led demonstrations and broader limitations on political mobilisation in the period preceding the election. The credibility of the election must also be assessed in light of the 2016 constitutional reform, which reset the presidential two-term limit and enabled President Ouattara to seek two additional mandates.

According to information conveyed to the IDU by the PDCI-RDA, more than 740 of its members and activists are currently imprisoned for the peaceful expression of their political views. Members of Parliament from the PDCI-RDA have been arrested and detained in disregard of their parliamentary immunity, without following the procedures required to lift it. Tidjane Thiam himself, together with key party officials, has been forced into exile under threat of arbitrary prosecution. Activists and local representatives continue to face systematic intimidation aimed at paralyzing legitimate political activity.

The IDU has further taken note of the Ivorian government's announcement on May 6, 2026, dissolving the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI). While long-standing concerns regarding the CEI's independence, voiced for years by the opposition, civil society, and international observers, were legitimate, the dissolution alone is no remedy. Any successor body must be designed in genuine consultation with all political forces, must be demonstrably independent of the executive, and must guarantee transparent and inclusive electoral processes.

The International Democracy Union calls on the Government of Côte d'Ivoire to:

- Immediately and unconditionally release all PDCI-RDA parliamentarians, officials, and activists detained for the peaceful exercise of their political rights;
- Provide credible security guarantees enabling the immediate and unconditional return of PDCI-RDA Leader Tidjane Thiam and other exiled party officials to Côte d'Ivoire;
- Respect parliamentary immunity and end the practice of detaining elected representatives outside legally established procedures;
- Reconstitute the Independent Electoral Commission (CEI) to guarantee its independence from executive influence and to strengthen transparency, accountability and impartial oversight in the administration of the next electoral process;



- End all forms of harassment, intimidation, and politically motivated prosecution of opposition figures, activists, and supporters.

The IDU also urges the international democratic community to engage decisively with the Ivorian authorities to ensure that future electoral cycles are open, competitive, and credible.

The International Democracy Union stands in firm solidarity with the PDCI-RDA, with its leader Tidjane Thiam, and with all Ivorians striving peacefully for liberty, justice, and democratic governance.