

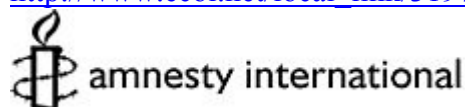
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Amnesty International Report 2015/16 - The State of the World's Human Rights - Central African Republic

Crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, were committed by all parties to the conflict. Security operations by international forces and political initiatives such as the National Reconciliation Forum held in the capital, Bangui, in May did not succeed in bringing an end to violations of international humanitarian law and violations and abuses of international human rights law. Many of those suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law, including commanders of the Séléka and anti-Balaka forces, as well as other militias and their allies, were yet to be effectively investigated or brought to justice. The International Criminal Court (ICC) continued to investigate crimes under international law. According to the UN and relief organizations, 2.7 million people remained in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 460,000 internally displaced people and 452,000 refugees in neighbouring countries.

Background

The conflict that led to the loss of thousands of lives in 2014 continued throughout 2015. Between September and October, a major upsurge in violence, including attacks targeted at civilians, resulted in the deaths of more than 75 people and injuries to hundreds more, in addition to widespread

destruction of private and public property. The UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), supported by the French “Sangaris” force, struggled to fully prevent violations of international humanitarian law.

In January, a ceasefire agreement between former Presidents François Bozizé and Michel Djotodia, both under UN and US sanctions, and radical factions of the anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka forces, was signed in Nairobi but was rejected by the transitional authorities and the international community. In May a national reconciliation forum postponed elections originally scheduled for August and ruled out immunity for those suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law. A Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration accord and an agreement on the demobilization of child soldiers were also signed by 11 armed groups.

In August, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General to the Central African Republic resigned following allegations that a 12-year-old girl was raped by a UN peacekeeper during a security operation in Bangui.

On 13 December a new Constitution was approved in a referendum.

Abuses by armed groups and communal violence

Serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, abductions, sexual assaults, looting and destruction of property, were perpetrated by all armed groups involved in the conflict, including the ex-Séléka and the anti-Balaka whose fighters could operate freely across much of the country, facilitated by the heavy circulation of small arms.

In February, armed ethnic Peulh herders, at times supported by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka fighters, attacked civilians along a corridor used for the seasonal movement of livestock in the central regions, leading to temporary mass displacement of populations in the towns of Kouango, Kaga Bando and Batangafo.

On 26 September, following the killing of a 17-year-old Muslim moto-taxi driver, armed men attacked residents of areas near the Muslim enclave known as PK5, killing dozens of people. Members of Muslim self-defence groups, anti-Balaka militia and a number of their supporters committed widespread abuses, including killings, rapes and destruction of property. More than 75 people were killed and 400 wounded, including civilians. More than 250 houses were set alight in non-Muslim areas and more than 40,000 civilians were forced to flee their homes. Although MINUSCA, supported by French peacekeepers, helped to secure key installations in Bangui, including the airport and government buildings, its intervention was slow and failed to protect civilians from violence.

On 26 October, anti-Balaka fighters attacked a delegation of ex-Séléka who had come to Bangui to meet President Samba-Panza. Two of the four members of the delegation remained unaccounted for. In the ensuing violence houses were burned and people killed during confrontations involving armed Muslim gangs, anti-Balaka and national security forces.

Violations by UN peacekeepers

On 10 July, four men were severely beaten after being arrested by MINUSCA peacekeepers in the town of Mambéré in the south-west. One died later of his wounds. Twenty peacekeepers were repatriated on 20 July by MINUSCA for excessive use of force against detainees.

On 2 and 3 August, a failed attempt by MINUSCA peacekeepers to arrest a Muslim self-defence group leader in the PK5 enclave of Bangui resulted in fierce fighting and the death of one peacekeeper. Evidence strongly suggested that a 12-year-old girl was raped by a MINUSCA soldier during the operation, while two civilians were killed after UN soldiers apparently shot indiscriminately down an alleyway.¹ An investigation by the UN International Office for Oversight was under way at the end of the year.

Allegations of sexual violence by French and other peacekeepers against children as young as nine were under investigation at the end of the year.

Freedom of movement and displacement

In the first months of 2015, internally displaced people from the Peulh community stranded in the town of Yaloké were repeatedly forbidden from leaving the town by local authorities, acting under orders from the interim central government.

The freedom of movement of about 25,000 Muslims living in enclaves in several towns protected by UN peacekeepers was restricted because of risks of attack by members of anti-Balaka and their affiliates.

More than 460,000 people remained internally displaced, including approximately 60,000 in Bangui, living in harsh conditions in makeshift camps. The crisis forced around 200,000 people to flee to Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Republic of Congo since December 2013, bringing the number of Central African refugees in neighbouring countries to about 452,000.

Freedom of religion and belief

Some Muslims returning to ethnically cleansed areas in the west of the country were forced by anti-Balaka to abandon their religion or convert to Christianity. Outside areas in the west of the country where Muslims live under the protection of UN peacekeepers, threats by anti-Balaka meant that Muslims had little freedom to practise their religion in public, wear traditional Muslim clothing or reconstruct destroyed mosques.

Impunity

The presence and functioning of judicial institutions remained limited, especially outside Bangui. Judicial authorities lacked the capacity to investigate and prosecute suspects of crimes, including human rights violations.

Few of those suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law, including commanders of the Séléka, anti-Balaka, other militias and their allies, were investigated or brought

to justice. On 17 January, Rodrigue Ngaïbo, a prominent anti-Balaka leader known as “Andilo”, was arrested by MINUSCA in the town of Bouca.

In October, MINUSCA met with Nourredine Adam, an ex-Séléka commander suspected of crimes against humanity and subject to UN sanctions and national and international arrest warrants.

Prison conditions

Prison conditions remained poor and security weak. In August, 17 detainees, including some high-ranking anti-Balaka commanders, escaped from the Ngaragba male prison in Bangui. On 28 September, between 500 and 700 detainees, including anti-Balaka fighters, escaped from the same prison as violence escalated in Bangui. On 4 November, 11 inmates escaped from the detention facility in the town of Bria.

International justice

On 30 May, the President promulgated a law creating a Special Criminal Court composed of national and international prosecutors and judges, tasked with investigating international crimes committed in the country since January 2003 and to complement the work of the ICC. By the end of year, the Special Criminal Court was yet to be operational, due particularly to lack of funding. ICC investigations, which had begun in September 2013 into crimes committed since August 2012, continued.

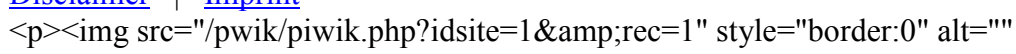
Natural resources

Conflict diamonds smuggled from the Central African Republic were traded on international markets, funding armed groups who controlled mine sites, “taxed” miners and extorted protection money. Two of the biggest diamond buying houses – Badica and Sodiam – purchased diamonds worth several million dollars during the conflict, including from areas where ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka groups were known to operate. While both companies denied buying conflict diamonds, it was believed they purchased diamonds without adequately investigating whether they funded armed groups. The government failed to provide protection to artisanal (small-scale) miners, including children, who often worked in dangerous conditions.

1. Central African Republic: UN troops implicated in rape of a girl and indiscriminate killings must be investigated ([News story](#), 11 August)

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