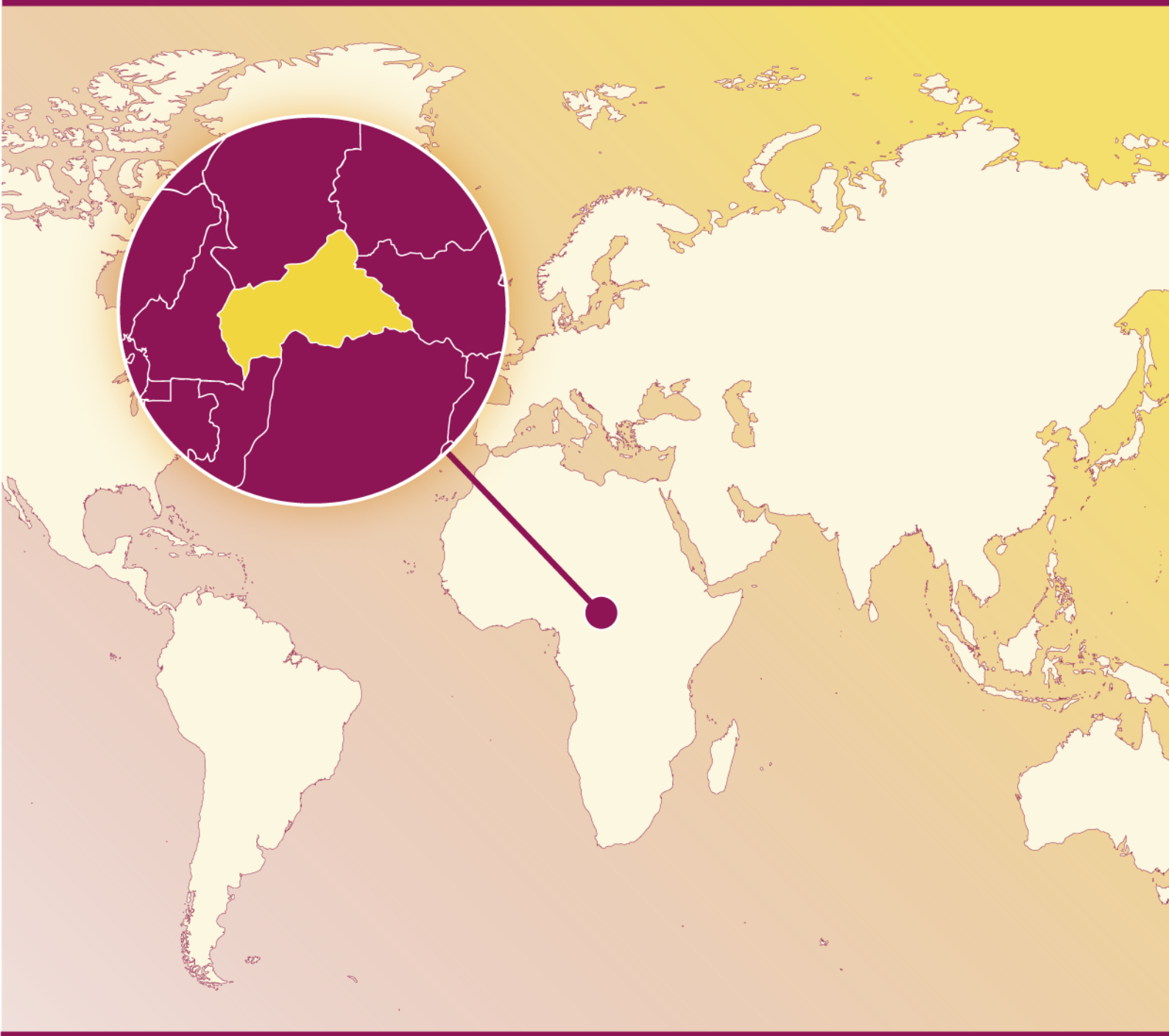


CENTRAL AFRICA REPUBLIC

Violence Against Health Care in Conflict

2022



**SAFEGUARDING
HEALTH
IN CONFLICT**



**Insecurity
Insight**
Data on People in Danger

Letter from the Chair



The more than 1,900 incidents of violence against health care in war and situations of political unrest described in this report are by far the highest number documented by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition since it began reporting a decade ago. The more than 700 assaults by Russia on health care in Ukraine are the most committed in a single year in one country.

Russia's atrocities in Ukraine have brought global attention to assaults on health care in war, highlighting pervasive violations of long-standing humanitarian norms. But in less visible conflicts and civil strife, the numbers of acts of violence and the stories behind them are equally grim: doctors imprisoned – and sometimes killed – in Myanmar and Iran for treating people in need of care; female health workers in Afghanistan harassed and sometimes beaten as they seek to provide health care for women and children; community health workers murdered in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and elsewhere as they go door to door to immunize children against polio and other infectious diseases.

In the face of the profound harms communities and health workers endure from this violence, the international community has long been passive, even ignoring commitments it has made to prevent attacks and hold perpetrators to account. Impunity for the violence has continued, and even the tracking of attacks has faltered. The World Health Organization's (WHO) system for collecting and disseminating data on attacks on health care in emergencies is plagued by inadequate reporting, lack of transparency, and resistance to reform. After being criticized for reporting zero attacks in Ethiopia despite evidence of looting or damage to hospitals and health centers during the conflict in Tigray, the WHO removed Ethiopia from its public dashboard on attacks on health care.

If we mobilize, however, the war in Ukraine could prove an inflection point. Never have calls for accountability for attacks on health care been as loud and sustained as now. We have an opportunity to press for justice for the people of Ukraine in the face of these atrocities and to extend that demand to people everywhere. The time for accountability for these devastating assaults on health care throughout the world is *now*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Len Rubenstein".

Len Rubenstein
Chair, Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition



REPORTED INCIDENTS AND MOST COMMONLY REPORTED CONCERNS



27

REPORTED INCIDENTS



16

HEALTH SUPPLIES LOOTED

↓ Source: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data

OVERVIEW

The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition (SHCC) identified 27 incidents of violence against or obstruction of health care in the Central African Republic (CAR) in 2022, compared to 107 in 2021. It is unclear whether this shows a decline in violence or increased difficulties in reporting such incidents. In 2022, health supplies were looted or stolen, undermining health care providers' ability to stock health facilities with the necessary supplies. This factsheet is based on the dataset [2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data](#), which is available for download on the Humanitarian Data Exchange (HDX).

THE CONTEXT

Armed violence by non-state armed groups, including Anti-Balaka and the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), continued to affect health workers and supplies, undermining health care delivery in the CAR. The growing presence of private military companies (PMCs), including the Russian-government-linked Wagner Group, impacted health care. As a result of insecurity, in 2022 services and access to health care continued to deteriorate, increasing the number of civilians with unmet health care needs to 2.8 million by the end of the year.

VIOLENCE AGAINST OR OBSTRUCTION OF HEALTH CARE IN 2022

Incidents were reported throughout the year in six of the CAR's 17 prefectures and often affected health workers working for the national health structure, with three incidents reported to have directly affected INGOs.¹

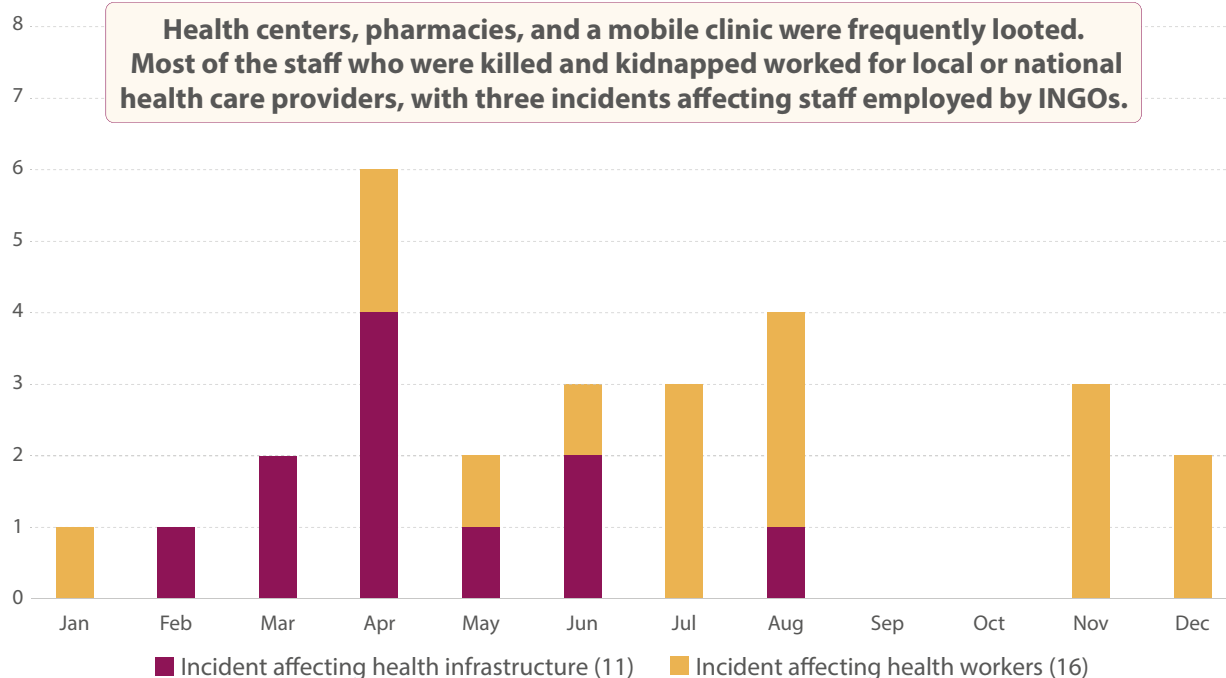
Three health workers were kidnapped in 2022 compared to one in 2021, two of whom were killed by their captors while being held. The looting of health supplies and equipment was the predominant form of violence against health care. There were no reported health worker arrests in 2022 – a change from 2021, when 25 health workers were reported to have been arrested or detained.



Most incidents were attributed to members of named and unnamed non-state armed groups carrying firearms. Anti-Balaka fighters stole medical supplies and equipment from health centers in and around Mobaye city in Basse-Kotto prefecture on three occasions in April and once in May.² No staff members were physically harmed or present in these incidents. CPC fighters, sometimes armed with AK-47s, stole health supplies and equipment from health workers traveling to provide care to patients living in remote areas. These armed groups also forcefully kidnapped staff to service their fighters and communities in areas with limited health services. For example, CPC fighters attempted to kidnap a health worker and force them to treat those wounded during the July 4 attack on Dimbi, Mbomou prefecture.³ In Ouham prefecture, Central African Armed Forces troops shot and injured a national doctor employed by an INGO inside his home in May who later died in hospital.⁴ In Ouaka, the Russian-government-linked Wagner Group private military company kidnapped, tortured, and executed a pharmacist who it suspected of providing health care to a rebel leader in June.⁵ In other attacks, the attackers remained unidentified.

Attacks on health care in CAR, 2022

Health centers, pharmacies, and a mobile clinic were frequently looted. Most of the staff who were killed and kidnapped worked for local or national health care providers, with three incidents affecting staff employed by INGOs.



HEALTH SUPPLIES LOOTED

Vital medicine and other health care supplies were looted from health centers and a pharmacy, and stolen from staff traveling to remote areas to provide health care at least 16 times in 2022. During many of these looting incidents, health workers were present, and were threatened, mistreated, and violently robbed by gunmen. On two occasions, staff working for INGOs were threatened, mistreated, and violently robbed when their vehicles were ambushed by armed men in Bamingui-Bangoran and Ouham prefectures.⁶ The looting of medical supplies temporarily reduces access to vital medication. Repeated lootings severely affect reliable supplies and can put health workers at risk from frustrated patients and their families.



Other incidents affecting health infrastructure included the hijacking of an ambulance transporting vaccines in February, the arson attack on a health facility in March, and the robbing of a mobile clinic in June.⁷

HEALTH WORKERS KILLED AND KIDNAPPED

At least three health workers were kidnapped in 2022. Two were killed by their captors after being kidnapped in June and November. Another was abducted during a road ambush by unidentified perpetrators in November⁸; the health worker's fate was not reported. Violence against health workers impacts health providers' ability to maintain safe staffing levels and affects staff well-being.

THE IMPACT OF ATTACKS ON HEALTH CARE

Continued insecurity and attacks on health workers and centers has devastated the CAR's health system. According to the UN, in 2022 the number of civilians with unmet health care needs increased, with violence targeting health care identified as a critical reason for people's deteriorating access to services and treatment. Out of 59 health structures in the CAR equipped for obstetric and neonatal emergencies, only 17 were functioning as of November 2022 and only 42.9% of births in 2022 were attended by medical personnel. The CAR has one of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

- 1 This data is based on 13 incidents where information on the prefectures where the incidents occurred was included in the reporting. For 14 incidents provided by the WHO SSA, no such information was made available..
- 2 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data. Incident numbers 35036; 35038; 35063; 35072.
- 3 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data. Incident number 36094.
- 4 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data. Incident number 32847.
- 5 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data. Incident numbers 32847; 33558.
- 6 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data. Incident numbers 31140; 33737.
- 7 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Data. Incident numbers 36212; 36213; 36217. These three incidents that had not been reported elsewhere were provided by the WHO SSA. Further information on the locations of these incidents is not available.
- 8 Insecurity Insight. Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition 2023 Report Dataset: 2022 SHCC Health Care CAR Health Data. Incident numbers 33558; 36199; 36200.

SAFEGUARDING HEALTH IN CONFLICT

The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition is a group of more than 40 organizations working to protect health workers and services threatened by war or civil unrest. We have raised awareness of global attacks on health and pressed United Nations agencies for greater global action to protect the security of health care. We monitor attacks, strengthen universal norms of respect for the right to health, and demand accountability for perpetrators.

www.safeguardinghealth.org

Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition
615 N. Wolfe Street, E7143, Baltimore, MD 21205
SHCC administrator, safeguardinghcc@gmail.com