

Central African Republic 2022

Human rights violations and abuses continued in the context of the armed conflict; dozens of civilians were killed during attacks by all parties. Women and girls were subjected to conflict-related sexual violence. The Special Criminal Court held its first trial and convicted three people for crimes against humanity. At least 50% of the population faced food insecurity; in some areas it reached 75%. Several journalists faced intimidation, harassment and threats. The death penalty was abolished.

Background

The security situation remained dire because of the armed conflict between the armed forces with their allies, and various armed groups.

In March, the Republican Dialogue for reconciliation, organized by the authorities, was boycotted by the main opposition parties. A constitutional reform project supported by the government was viewed by some political parties as a means to allow the president to run for a third term. In September, the constitutional court annulled the decree establishing a government-appointed committee to redraft the constitution. In the same month, lawyers and magistrates held a seven-day strike in support of independence for the judiciary. In October, the constitutional court's president was removed from office.

Unlawful attacks and killings

According to the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), at least 100 civilians were killed between February and March. In September at least 46 civilians were killed including eight women and eight children. They were killed by members of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic and Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (known as 3R), armed groups that had signed the peace agreement in 2019, as well as by the security forces.

On 3 October, three MINUSCA peacekeepers were killed, and one was seriously injured by an improvised explosive device (IED) in the Kouï area. According to OCHA, between January and October, 11 people were killed and 42 injured in 40 IED-related incidents.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

On 14 March, Maxime Jeoffroy Eli Mokom Gawaka, a leader of the Anti-Balaka armed group, was surrendered by the Chadian authorities to the ICC.¹ The opening of his hearing to confirm the charges was provisionally scheduled for 31 January 2023. He is suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out during 2013 and 2014 in the Central African Republic. The ICC trial of Mahamat Said, alleged commander of the Seleka armed group, opened on 26 September under charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The Court of Assizes in Bangui, the capital, held its first criminal trials since 2020 in April. Twenty-five cases were heard involving alleged members of the armed group, Coalition of Patriots for Change, who were found guilty.

Also in April, the government announced the opening of a judicial investigation into a deadly attack against the Muslim community in Boyo town which took place between 6 and 13 December

2021. In July, MINUSCA published a report on the events in which at least 20 civilians were killed, including a 12-year-old girl and three boys, and at least 12 people were injured; 547 homes were burned and food stocks looted. MINUSCA said the attacks were carried out by the armed group, Anti-Balaka, with the involvement of the Central African Republic armed forces who had trained the former in Bambari and transported them to the Boyo area the day before the attack.

The first trial before the Special Criminal Court (SCC), a UN-backed hybrid court mandated to investigate and prosecute crimes under international law committed since 2003, opened in May.² It concerned three members of 3R accused of killings, rapes and other inhumane acts committed in the villages of Lemouna and Koundjili in May 2019. On 31 October, they were found guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity. The SCC also announced the arrest of three people suspected of having committed crimes in the context of the conflict. The court said in its June report that it had issued more than 60 arrest warrants, of which only four had been executed.

Sexual and gender-based violence

According to the Gender-Based Violence Information Management System, between January and September, 17,831 cases of gender-based violence were registered, more than all cases recorded in 2021. The statistics related only to victims who agreed to speak, which suggests the actual figures might be far higher.

According to the UN Secretary-General's report on the situation in the Central African Republic, MINUSCA documented 47 cases of conflict-related sexual violence between June and October in which it identified 70 victims, including 42 girls aged between two and 17 years. It attributed responsibility for the crimes to all parties to the conflict.

Right to food

According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), food insecurity worsened as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, which led to a rise in food prices. In September, 50% of the population (around 2.2 million people) did not have enough to eat. The situation was of particular concern in the Bakouma, Kouï, Ngaoundaye, Obo and Zémio sub-prefectures where between 65% and 75% of people were affected. The WFP said that throughout the country 395,000 children under the age of five were chronically malnourished.

Freedom of expression

Journalists faced intimidation, harassment and threats simply for exercising their right to freedom of expression.

Ndeke Luka Radio officials said that on 26 September, the Ministry of Communication informed them that the station might be closed if the journalists continued to cover the constitutional reform issue. In October, the High Council of Communication (the media regulator) denounced intimidation, harassment and threats against journalists by "political authorities".

Death penalty

The death penalty was abolished under the Law on the Abolition of the Death Penalty which was passed by the National Assembly on 27 May, and promulgated by the president one month later. The last execution in the country took place in 1981.
