

Forum: Security Council

Issue: The crisis in the Central African Republic

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INTRODUCTION

The Central African Republic (CAR) is facing a prolonged crisis characterized by instability and ongoing challenges that have deeply impacted its people. Since gaining independence from France in 1960, the CAR has experienced a turbulent journey with frequent coups, power struggles, and marginalization of its citizens. At the heart of the CAR crisis lies a complex web of factors, including long-standing political and economic grievances, ethnic and religious tensions, and the scramble for control over the country's abundant natural resources. These underlying causes have fuelled the violent clashes between rival armed groups, exacerbating the already dire situation in the country.

The magnitude of the crisis is alarming, with approximately 1.9 million Central Africans, representing over a third of the country's population, displaced from their homes as refugees or internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹ This humanitarian catastrophe has disrupted the lives of many, causing families to separate and communities to face continuous instability. Furthermore, the CAR crisis has led to widespread human rights abuses and violations. Both rebel groups and government forces, along with their foreign allies, have been implicated in severe atrocities. These include extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, conflict-related sexual violence, and the recruitment of children into armed groups.

However, achieving lasting peace and stability in the CAR remains a significant challenge. The underlying causes of the crisis, such as ethnic and religious divisions, political rivalries, and economic disparities, continue to fuel tensions and impede progress. All in all, the CAR finds itself in the midst of a crisis that demands urgent attention and support from the international community in an effort to ensure lasting peace and prosperity.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Coup d'état

¹ UNHCR. "Central African Republic Refugee Crisis." www.unrefugees.org, www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/central-african-republic/

A coup d'état, also known as a coup or military coup, refers to the abrupt and illegal seizure of governmental power by a small group, typically involving the military, resulting in the overthrow of the existing government.²

Séléka

The Séléka, derived from the Sango term meaning "alliance," is a coalition primarily consisting of rebels from the northern region of the Central African Republic, predominantly Muslim. Their rule led to the emergence of the anti-balaka Christian militias, who are opposed to the Seleka.³

Anti-balaka

The anti-balaka, an alliance of militia groups in the Central African Republic, primarily consists of Christians who are engaged in resistance against the Seleka and conducting retaliatory acts of violence.⁴

Revenge killings

Revenge killings are acts of killing committed as a response to a perceived wrongdoing or injustice, motivated by a strong desire for revenge or retribution.

Ceasefire

A ceasefire can be described as an arrangement, typically between two armed forces, to stop hostilities and create a space for peace negotiations to take place.⁵

Militia

A militia is a fighting force, usually comprised of armed civilians that carries out rebellious or terrorist activities in opposition to a formal military force.⁶

Ultimatum

² "Coup D'état." Dictionary.cambridge.org, www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/coup-d-etat.

³ Berg, Stephanie van den. "Central African Republic Seleka Militia Leader Pleads Not Guilty at ICC." Reuters, 26 Sept. 2022, www.reuters.com/world/africa/central-african-republic-seleka-militia-leader-pleads-not-guilty-icc-2022-09-26/. Accessed 26 May 2023.

⁴ "Briefing: Who Are the Anti-Balaka of CAR? - Central African Republic." ReliefWeb, 12 Feb. 2014, www.reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/briefing-who-are-anti-balaka-car.

⁵ Cambridge Dictionary. "Ceasefire." @CambridgeWords, 2 Mar. 2022, www.dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ceasefire.

⁶ "Militia Noun ." Oxford Dictionary, 2023, www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/militia.

An ultimatum refers to a final and decisive demand, often accompanied by a threat of consequences or retaliation if the specified conditions are not met.⁷

De facto head of state

A de facto head of state is an individual who exercises control and power over a nation, despite lacking widespread recognition and legitimacy.⁸

Transitional government

A transitional government, often referred to as an interim government, is established on a temporary basis to govern a nation until official elections can be held.⁹

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Background

It is no secret that many African countries that gained independence after colonial rule have faced a pattern of political instability, corruption, and dictatorial rule. The CAR is no exception, having experienced these challenges since gaining independence from France in 1960. Almost every ruler, without any significant exceptions, has either come to power through a military coup or been overthrown by one. Moreover, the country has been marred by a constant state of rebellion, with multiple coup attempts carried out by military groups. The initial instance of political upheaval occurred in 1965, marking the Central African Republic's first military coup. During this event, Jean-Bedel Bokassa, military leader at the time, seized power, overthrowing the country's first president, David Dacko. Bokassa went on to declare himself emperor in 1977. However, he was subsequently dethroned by his predecessor, which set the stage for a series of subsequent coups in 1979, 1981, 2003, and 2013.

Before the civil war of 2012-2013

Though the CAR has a long history of conflict, in the 2000's, a new aspect started playing a prominent role, namely religion, as a source of violence. The CAR is a nation where Muslim and Christian communities coexist. Since gaining independence, these two groups have generally

⁷ "Ultimatum Noun - Definition, Pictures, Pronunciation and Usage Notes | Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary at OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com." Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com, 2023, www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/ultimatum. Accessed 5 June 2023.

⁸ De Facto | Meaning, de Jure, & Facts | Britannica. www.britannica.com/topic/de-facto.

⁹ Transitional Government | Meaning of Transitional Government in Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English | LDOCE. 2020, www.ldoceonline.com/dictionary/transitional-government.

maintained peaceful relations given that numerous towns and villages have populations of both religions, and intermarriage was commonly accepted among their inhabitants. However, while both religions are represented throughout the country, Muslims dominate the northern region and Christians the southern region. Moreover, Christians have solely wielded economic and political power in the country since independence.

The aforementioned problematic, religious dynamics became clear when an army group mainly composed of Muslims, the Séléka, engaged in fighting Christian governments. During the Central African Bush War, which took place from 2004 to 2007, various armed groups, including the Séléka, were involved in the conflict. It's important to note that the Séléka initially emerged in response to François Bozizé's seizure of power in a coup d'état in 2003,¹⁰ rather than having religious motivations. The civil war that ensued from the conflict between the Séléka and government forces resulted in a series of peace agreements between the warring factions. These agreements aimed to address the grievances and concerns of the Muslim population, particularly in terms of representation in the government. However, these promises of better representation for the North, and subsequently Muslims within the government were largely unfulfilled, leading to ongoing tensions and unresolved issues later on.

Unfolding the conflict

In late 2012, the Séléka accused President Bozizé of failing to implement aspects of a previous peace agreement. They demanded his removal from the government and trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC). In January 2013, a cease-fire and power-sharing agreement were reached,¹¹ which addressed rebel demands such as prisoner release and foreign troop withdrawal. It also included the incorporation of certain Séléka members in a new unity government and allowed Bozizé to complete his term, with new elections scheduled for 2016. However, the Séléka became dissatisfied with the agreement's implementation and issued an ultimatum to Bozizé. On March 24, 2013, the Séléka reached their climax by capturing Bangui, leading to Bozizé's departure from the country. The Séléka then declared control over the government.¹²

After the capture of Bangui by the Séléka in March 2013, rebel leader Michel Djotodia asserted himself as the de facto head of state. At first, he pledged to honor the terms of the power-sharing agreement reached in January. However, he subsequently made the announcement that he was suspending the constitution and dissolving both the National Assembly and the government. The international community strongly denounced Séléka's actions, leading to widespread

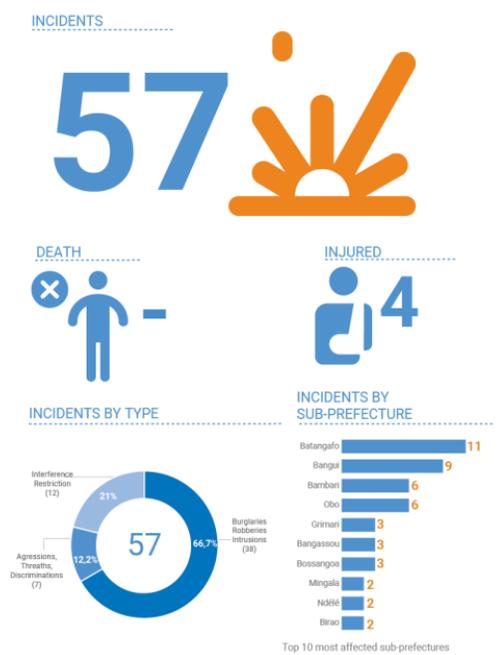
¹⁰ "State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians: Background: The Varied Causes of Conflict in CAR." HRW, 2007, www.hrw.org/reports/2007/car0907/4.htm.

¹¹ "Central African Republic - the 21st Century." Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/place/Central-African-Republic/The-21st-century.

¹² "Central African Republic - the 21st Century." Encyclopedia Britannica, www.britannica.com/place/Central-African-Republic/The-21st-century.

condemnation and the African Union's (AU) decision to suspend the country's membership and impose sanctions on rebel leaders. Nonetheless, Djotodia was formally installed as president on August 28, 2013.

Following Djotodia's inauguration, the formation of anti-balaka coalitions, composed mainly of Christians from the civil population, introduced religious animosity into the conflict. In September 2013, anti-balaka forces launched revenge attacks, displacing numerous Muslim civilians. In the meantime, the Séléka rebels had been looting various areas of the country and committing brutal acts of violence, including rape and kidnapping. Even though the government disbanded Séléka forces on September 13, ex- Séléka members retaliated, exacerbating the state of violence, and aggravating the humanitarian crisis.



In response to international pressure, Michel Djotodia resigned from power and a transitional government was established by the end of 2013. Despite initial hopes following the election of President Faustin Archange Touadera in the spring of 2016, the crisis continued to escalate. The subsequent year saw the signing of a peace treaty between the government and 13 out of the 14 main armed groups.¹⁴ This resulted in a division of territories, temporarily reducing conflicts between Muslims and Christians.

Nevertheless, internal divisions within the ex-Séléka militia further exacerbated the situation. President Touadera's attempts to restore calm through disarmament faced significant challenges, as most armed groups refused to participate, leaving the government with limited authority beyond the capital. Consequently, lawlessness prevailed in various parts of the country, enabling armed groups to thrive. Multiple attacks, including assaults on a base and a convoy, resulted in the deaths of several UN peacekeepers, emphasizing the gravity of the situation in the Central African Republic. Throughout 2017 and 2018, armed groups carried out numerous attacks on peacekeepers, resulting in the deaths of fifteen

¹³ "Central African Republic." Reports.unocha.org, 26 May 2023, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/car/card/1C9W2zNgC6/>.

¹⁴ Center for Preventive Action. "Conflict in the Central African Republic." Global Conflict Tracker, 25 Apr. 2023, www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/violence-central-african-republic#RecentDevelopments-2. Accessed 1 June 2023.

¹⁵ "Central African Republic." Reports.unocha.org, 26 May 2023, <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/car/card/1C9W2zNgC6/>.

peacekeepers in 2017 and six peacekeepers in 2018.¹⁶ Despite efforts to restore calm and disarm armed groups, the country still faces challenges, resulting in incidents that impact the safety and operations of humanitarian personnel.

Recent developments

The year 2020 in the Central African Republic was marked by a heightened state of conflict, as disputed elections in December fueled further violence and raised tensions. The formation of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), a coalition of armed groups including the anti-Balaka militia, contributed to the already volatile situation in the CAR. President Faustin-Archange Touadéra was re-elected with 54 percent of the vote on December 27, 2020. On December 30, 2020, supporters of his main opponent Anicet-Georges Dologuélé demanded the annulment of the presidential and legislative elections, citing election fraud. With armed groups taking control of resource-rich areas, expanding their influence and exacerbating the humanitarian crisis, as depicted in the accompanying graph illustrating the territorial occupation by armed groups in the CAR.

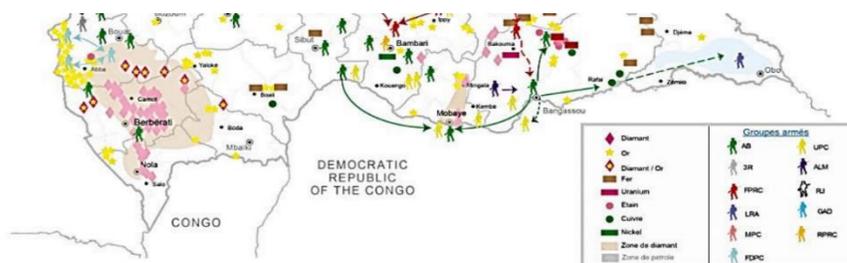
Consequences of the conflict in the CAR

In the context of the evolving conflict, it is evident that civilians are heavily impacted by the actions of rebel groups. Both rebel factions and government forces, along with their foreign allies, have been involved in numerous human rights abuses in the CAR. These include extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, and detentions, conflict-related sexual violence, and violations



Graph depicting the Extent of Territorial Occupation by Armed Groups in the Central African Republic.

Source: UNDP¹⁹



¹⁶ Centre
www.cf
June 20

¹⁷ UNDP. “La République Centrafricaine : Les 6 ODD Retenus En Chiffres et En Graphiques,” Sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2019, p.7, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23414RAPPORT_VOLONTAIRE_DE_SUIVI_ODD_RCA_FINAL_SIGNATURE_MINISTRE_003.pdf.

¹⁸ UNDP. “La République Centrafricaine : Les 6 ODD Retenus En Chiffres et En Graphiques,” Sustainabledevelopment.un.org, 2019, https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/23414RAPPORT_VOLONTAIRE_DE_SUIVI_ODD_RCA_FINAL_SIGNATURE_MINISTRE_003.pdf.

against children. Additionally, attacks on civilians, peacekeepers, and civilian infrastructure disrupt livelihoods and force people to flee their homes.

Throughout the CAR, there has been a significant displacement of the population as a result of the conflict. With over a third of the country's total population, approximately 1.9 million Central Africans have been forced to leave their homes,¹⁹ seeking safety and refuge both within and outside the country's borders. Among them, nearly 700,000 individuals have been internally displaced within the CAR,²⁰ while others have sought refuge in neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Republic of the Congo, Sudan, and South Sudan. It is also important to note that the neighboring countries that are receiving such large numbers of immigrants have been left to cope with the so-called "spillover effects of the conflict", that is, they have to deal with a growing refugee crisis themselves, as the CAR conflict keeps escalating.

In addition to the above, the ongoing crisis in the CAR disproportionately affects women and children, with shocking numbers revealing the severity of the situation, such as 11,732 cases of gender-based violence recorded between January and June 2022 and documented instances of 221 rapes or attempted rapes and 12 cases of sexual slavery.²¹ In addition, boys and people with disabilities have limited access to education, healthcare, and nutrition. Despite existing policies and legislation, socio-cultural norms further exacerbate the challenges faced by women and girls in the CAR.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

France

Due to its historical ties to the region, France is an indisputably significant force in the CAR conflict. It maintains a military presence in the country as part of its broader security interests in the region. While France has transitioned towards a neutral peacekeeping role in recent years, it has a history of intervention. For example, during the 2013-2016 high tension period, France launched Operation Sangaris, deploying 1,200 troops to support the African Union's International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) amid escalating violence between Muslim Séléka and Christian anti-Balaka militias.²² Following the conclusion of Operation

¹⁹ UNHCR. "Central African Republic Refugee Crisis." www.unrefugees.org, www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/central-african-republic/.

²⁰ UNHCR. "Central African Republic Refugee Crisis." www.unrefugees.org, www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/central-african-republic/.

²¹ "Gender-Based Violence: A Scourge with Devastating Consequences." reports.unocha.org, 17 Oct. 2022, www.reports.unocha.org/en/country/car/card/3wnXz0h5EQ/.

²² "France Suspends Aid, Military Support for Central African Republic." [Reuters](http://reuters.com), 8 June 2021, www.reuters.com/world/africa/france-suspends-aid-military-support-central-african-republic-2021-06-08/.

Sangaris, approximately 350 French soldiers remained in the CAR to provide support to MINUSCA,²³ the UN mission in the country.

Russian Federation

The Russian Federation has played an active role in the CAR conflict, particularly in recent years. Specifically, Russia's involvement in the CAR conflict includes the deployment of mercenaries from the Wagner Group, a Russian private security firm. These mercenaries have actively engaged in combat operations, supporting the CAR government forces against rebel groups. However, their presence has drawn criticism due to allegations of human rights violations. It is also important to note that the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War could have significant implications for CAR. Should the Wagner Group become distracted by the conflict in Ukraine, it could potentially shift the balance of power in the CAR. As a result, rebel groups may seize the opportunity to gain more control over various areas, complicating efforts to achieve a workable peace deal and potentially destabilizing the region further. Last but not least, another important factor to consider is the presence of fuel shortages in the CAR because of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine War, which without question complicate yet another aspect of the ongoing conflict in the country, namely, the battle over natural resources.

Sudan

Sudan has played a significant role in the conflict in the CAR through various channels. The historical connections between the two countries, particularly the North-South Sudanese civil war and the most recent crisis in the country, have resulted in Sudanese refugees entering the CAR, causing population displacement, and facilitating the movement of weapons and combatants across the border. Transit routes established during the Sudanese conflict have allowed for the transfer of troops, arms, and supplies in the northern CAR. However, the arms flow from Sudan into the CAR has fueled violence and threatened security in the CAR. Despite these complexities, formal diplomatic relations between Sudan and the CAR have remained relatively civil. Sudan has also committed soldiers to peacekeeping forces in the CAR, aiming to promote stability in the region.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Being a neighboring country to the CAR, the DRC is unquestionably dragged into the multifaceted crises that are currently plaguing the latter. It can be said with certainty that the DRC is currently facing the largest number of refugees fleeing the Central African Republic. Following the recent developments of the 2020 elections in the CAR, approximately 90% of Central African refugees

²³ "France Ends Sangaris Military Operation in CAR." BBC News, 31 Oct. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37823047.

have found refuge within the DRC itself.²⁴ Hence, the influx of refugees from the CAR places a significant burden on the DRC, as it grapples with the challenges of hosting a large number of refugees and addressing their humanitarian needs.

United States of America (US)

The United States established diplomatic relations with the CAR in 1960 and has generally maintained good relations. The US has been actively involved in providing assistance to the CAR, particularly in strengthening the UN mission and addressing the humanitarian crisis in the country. As the top donor of humanitarian aid to the CAR, the US allocated \$177 million in 2020 and \$60 million in 2021.²⁵ Additionally, the US is the largest contributor to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic's (MINUSCA) budget, providing \$281 million in 2020.²⁶ In an effort to address the situation in the CAR, the US has imposed sanctions on 17 individuals and organizations, including former presidents Bozizé and Michel Djotodia. It is worth noting that the US designations go beyond those imposed by the UN sanctions committee on the CAR, reflecting a more extensive approach to addressing the issues at hand.

African Union (AU)

The AU initially paid little attention to the crisis in the Central African CAR but faced increasing pressure to intervene as the situation worsened. In December 2013, the AU deployed the International Support Mission for the CAR (MISCA) alongside the French operation known as Operation Sangaris. MISCA's mandate was to stabilize the country, protect civilians, restore order, facilitate humanitarian assistance, and support disarmament, demobilization, and security sector reform processes. However, the AU deployment mission faced challenges due to weak institutional capacity and dependence on international support. In January 2014, the AU held a regional summit that led to the resignation of President Djotodia and the appointment of Catherine Samba-Panza as president. Furthermore, in February 2019, the AU sponsored a peace agreement between the CAR government and fourteen armed groups, demonstrating its commitment to resolving the conflict.

Amnesty International

The CAR conflict has been a consistent source of concern for Amnesty International. Since early 2014, when the country faced intense civil conflict, Amnesty International has consistently urged

²⁴ UNHCR. "Central African Republic Refugee Crisis." www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/central-african-republic/.

²⁵ Bureau of African Affairs. "U.S. Relations with Central African Republic - United States Department of State." United States Department of State, 2019, www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-central-african-republic/.

²⁶ Bureau of African Affairs. "U.S. Relations with Central African Republic - United States Department of State." United States Department of State, 2019, www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-central-african-republic/.

the international community to deploy a UN peacekeeping force to safeguard civilians from armed groups that targeted them. The organization has actively raised awareness about human rights violations and abuses occurring in the context of the armed conflict in the CAR. A number of reports that shed light on these issues has also been published, which closely monitor developments in the justice sector in the CAR. Through their efforts, Amnesty International strives to draw attention to the plight of the population affected by the conflict and ensure accountability for human rights violations.

United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF has been actively responding to the challenging conditions in the CAR despite security and access issues. Their efforts focus on various areas, including releasing children from armed groups, reuniting separated or unaccompanied children with their families, providing psychosocial support to children affected by conflict, addressing preventable illnesses and malnutrition, developing water and sanitation infrastructure, and ensuring access to education for children. UNICEF has established temporary learning spaces, trained community teachers, and implemented catch-up programs for children who missed out on education. Their Rapid Response Mechanism has already reached nearly 180,000 people with essential supplies and support.²⁷

United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCHA)

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) plays a crucial role in providing humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by the ongoing conflict in the CAR. With an estimated 3.1 million people in need of assistance and protection, UNOCHA, along with the humanitarian community, aims to assist 2.4 million of the most vulnerable Central Africans.²⁸ However, the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan is currently only 30% funded, highlighting the urgent need for increased support to address the humanitarian crisis in CAR.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
13 August 1960	The CAR gained independence from France.

²⁷ "Crisis in Central African Republic." UNICEF, www.unicef.org/emergencies/crisis-central-african-republic.

²⁸ "Central African Republic ." UNOCHA, www.reports.unocha.org/en/country/car/.

31 December 1965	Deposition of President David Dacko. Military coup led by Colonel Jean-Bédél Bokassa.
21 September 1979	Ousting of Bokassa by Dacko through a military coup.
15 March 2003	Francois Bozize stages a coup, ousting President Ange-Felix Patasse and taking control of Bangui.
January 2013	A ceasefire and power-sharing agreement are reached.
24 March 2013	Séléka captures Bangui. Michel Djotodia stages a coup, suspends the constitution, and dissolves parliament.
28 August 2013	Michel Djotodia is sworn in as president.
13 September 2013	Séléka coalition disbanded.
5 December 2013	MISCA is established by the AU with the endorsement of the UNSC.
6 December 2013	Operation Sangaris is initiated by France.
10 January 2014	President Djotodia resigns amid criticism for inability to stop sectarian violence.
10 April 2014	MINUSCA is established by the UNSC.
4-11 May 2015	Bangui Forum takes place in Bangui.
21 February 2016	Touadéra wins presidential run-off.
15 December 2020	CPC formed by rebel groups including anti-Balaka.
27 December 2020	President Faustin-Archange Touadéra wins re-election with 54 percent of the vote.

30 December 2020	Supporters of Anicet-Georges Dologuélé demand the nullification of the elections, citing fraud.
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RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

S/RES/2127²⁹

On December 5, 2013, the UNSC authorized the deployment of MISCA, a mission aimed at protecting civilians, supporting reform efforts, and facilitating humanitarian assistance in the CAR. The resolution also granted French forces the authority to assist MISCA as necessary. Furthermore, it called for the establishment of an international commission of inquiry, implemented an arms embargo, and created a sanctions committee and panel of experts to address the situation in the CAR. Despite its provisions for civilian protection, the situation in the CAR is still dire, therefore the effectiveness of this resolution is questionable.

S/RES/2134³⁰

UN Security Council Resolution 2134, adopted on January 28, 2014, extended and reinforced the mandate of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) for a one-year period. The resolution imposed a travel ban and asset freeze related to the CAR, as well as an arms embargo. It also established a panel of experts responsible for monitoring the implementation of the arms embargo. Furthermore, the resolution authorized the deployment of a European Union force to the CAR and included provisions for targeted sanctions. In order to assess the effectiveness and impact of UN Security Council Resolution 2134 on addressing the conflict in the CAR and achieving lasting peace, continuing reports of arms smuggling, as well as the complexity of measuring the impact of travel bans, asset freezes, and targeted sanctions, remain challenging.

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

MINUSCA was established by Security Council Resolution 2149 on April 10, 2014. With the primary objectives of protecting civilians, supporting the political transition, and promoting human rights, MINUSCA comprises military, police, and civilian personnel from various countries.

²⁹ Resolution 2127 (2013). 5 Dec. 2013, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/S_res_2127.pdf.

³⁰ Resolution 2134 (2014). 21 Jan. 2014, www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_res_2134.pdf.

As of April 2023, approximately 12,000 personnel are deployed under MINUSCA's mandate.³¹ The Security Council has renewed MINUSCA's mandate multiple times, most recently extending it until November 15, 2023, highlighting the need for MINUSCA within CAR's borders. MINUSCA has been instrumental in protecting civilians, especially during the initial two years of its operation, supporting the political transition, and promoting human rights in the Central African Republic, highlighting the ongoing need for its presence and efforts in the country.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Operation Sangaris

Operation Sangaris refers to the French military intervention in the CAR that commenced on December 6, 2013. Originally envisioned as a brief mission lasting around six months, the operation exceeded its intended duration due to the persistent escalation of tensions within the CAR. It officially concluded in 2016 when the final troops withdrew from the country. Subsequently, approximately 350 French soldiers remained in the CAR in addition to MINUSCA forces.³² In spite of being characterized as another French intervention in the CAR's politics, Operation Sangaris undoubtedly demonstrated a dedication to strengthening security and disarmament in the region.

African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA)³³

In 2013, the Peace and Security Council (PSC) of the AU established MISCA in response to the conflict in the CAR. With UN backing and authorization by Security Council Resolution 2127, MISCA was deployed in December 2013. Its primary objective was to restore security and protect civilians in CAR, and it consisted of troops from various AU member countries. Additionally, MISCA received support from French forces operating under Operation Sangaris. In April 2014, MISCA was succeeded by MINUSCA. A significant step forward was taken in addressing the CAR conflict and protecting civilians when the AU authorized MISCA, although the mission was eventually replaced due to potential shortcomings.

Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation

³¹ United Nations Peacekeeping. "MINUSCA." United Nations Peacekeeping, 2014, www.peacekeeping.un.org/en/mission/Minusca.

³² "France Ends Sangaris Military Operation in CAR." BBC News, 31 Oct. 2016, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-37823047.

³³ "MISCA Establishment - APSA - Peace and Security AU." Misca.peaceau.org, 1 Sept. 2014, <https://misca.peaceau.org/en/page/110-about-misca>.

The Bangui Forum, held in May 2015, was a national gathering in the CAR aimed at finalizing recommendations for long-term peace. With the support of the AU and the UN, the forum was organized by the transitional government and brought together over 700 participants³⁴ from diverse sectors of society. The objective was to engage political parties, civil society organizations, religious leaders, and armed groups in discussions to seek solutions and end the ongoing conflict in the country. Whilst the Bangui Forum marked a positive step towards peace, the CAR still faces significant challenges, requiring continued efforts to achieve long-term stability and promote lasting peace in the country.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Upholding international humanitarian and human rights law

In the pursuit of lasting peace in the CAR, upholding international humanitarian and human rights law is of utmost importance. All armed actors in the CAR must fulfil their obligations under International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law, safeguarding the well-being of affected civilian populations. Hence, the SC can encourage the CAR government to cooperate fully with criminal courts and ensure the arrest and transfer of individuals regardless of rank, affiliation, or nationality, reinforcing the importance of impartial justice and the fight against impunity.

Facilitating dialogue and negotiations

Through active diplomatic engagement, the SC can play a crucial role in supporting and facilitating peace negotiations in the CAR. By urging President Touadéra and other key actors to engage in meaningful dialogue with all relevant parties, including the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC), the SC can help create an atmosphere conducive to peaceful resolutions and ceasefires. Furthermore, international mediation efforts, supported by the SC, may provide a platform for addressing the underlying grievances, promoting reconciliation, and establishing a sustainable framework for peace in the CAR.

Ensuring cooperation with MINUSCA

Ensuring full cooperation with MINUSCA is essential for promoting peace and stability in the CAR. The SC can take the lead in ensuring that all parties involved in the conflict cooperate fully with MINUSCA, providing the mission with the necessary resources, support, and political backing. By addressing any obstacles or challenges that hinder MINUSCA's effectiveness, the SC can enhance

³⁴ Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in the Central African Republic.
https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BFCF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/s_2015_576.pdf.

the mission's ability to protect civilians, facilitate humanitarian assistance, and contribute to the overall stability of the CAR.

Integrating armed groups into the social structure

Evidence from other contexts demonstrates that integrating armed groups into the state security system can be an effective long-term strategy to reduce violence and increase stability. To address the situation in the CAR, it is essential to consider innovative approaches that aim to integrate armed groups at the local level, focusing on village-level security apparatus rather than dismantling existing structures. By incorporating elements of armed groups into the existing security framework, opportunities for dialogue, cooperation, and community engagement can be fostered, contributing to a more inclusive and comprehensive peace process.

Strengthening humanitarian aid for affected populations

Another essential aspect of tackling the CAR conflict involves the need to improve humanitarian assistance, with a focus on meeting the urgent requirements of the impacted communities. By allocating sufficient resources and coordinating with humanitarian organizations, the SC can provide vital assistance to those impacted by the crisis, including access to healthcare, food, shelter, and other essential services. Additionally, the SC must come up with ways to promote regional and international cooperation, encouraging neighbouring countries and the international community to actively engage in supporting stability and development efforts in the CAR.

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