

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Ensuring the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa

Student Officer: Christy Gnoth

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

Central Africa is a region located in the heart of the African continent that consists of eleven countries according to the European Union (EU), namely Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, and Sao Tomé and Príncipe¹ though definitions may vary.

Central Africa is one of the most ethnically diverse regions globally, with over 80 distinct ethnic groups residing within the Central African Republic alone.² These nomadic ethnic minorities can be divided into three main categories, namely the Mbororo Fulani, the Pygmy people (including the Aka, Baka, Mbuti, and Twa), and the Litho.

Currently, nomadic ethnic minorities of Central Africa are facing a range of serious threats that jeopardize their fundamental human rights, their safety, and traditions. To be more exact, these communities are largely affected by conflicts and competition over land and natural resources. They often experience violence perpetrated by armed groups, such as the Seleka coalition, which further escalates their situation.³ Moreover, these minorities lack formal recognition by their governments and face systematic marginalization, making them even more vulnerable to displacement. “Many minority and indigenous communities right across the African continent are being displaced because of political conflicts, natural resource extraction, large-scale infrastructure projects and tourism parks,” says Carl Söderbergh, MRG’s Director of Policy and Communications.⁴ In addition, these communities suffer from unequal treatment and

¹Central Africa and the EU | EEAS Website.” www.eeas.europa.eu, www.eeas.europa.eu/eeas/central-africa-and-eu_en

² “Central African Republic (07/01).” *U.S. Department of State*, 2017, 2009-2017.state.gov/outofdate/bgn/centralafricanrepublic/13179.htm. Accessed 20 July 2025.

³“State of the World’s Minorities and Indigenous Peoples 2014 - Central African Republic | Refworld.” *Refworld*, 2023, www.refworld.org/reference/annualreport/mrgi/2014/en/100286. Accessed 20 July 2025.

⁴“Minority and Indigenous Cultures in Africa Facing Serious Threat – New Global Report.” *Blog*, 12 July 2016, minorityrights.org/minority-and-indigenous-cultures-in-africa-facing-serious-threat-new-global-report/.

have limited or even no access to basic necessities, such as clean water, education, and healthcare.

Addressing and solving the issue of “Ensuring the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa” is of paramount importance, as it highlights severe neglect of human rights. The ongoing tension and violence between armed groups, sedentary farmers and nomadic, ethnic minorities destabilizes local communities and poses risks to peace. Lastly, the lack of secure land can lead to the loss of their traditional ways of life and their identity.

DEFINITION OF KEY-TERMS

Nomadic ethnic minorities

“Nomadic ethnic minorities” are communities that move from place to place instead of settling in one specific location in order to make a living and obtain food. They often have their own distinct cultures, languages, and costumes.⁵

Marginalization

“Marginalization” refers to the act of social exclusion of an individual or a particular group, such as nomadic ethnic minorities. They are treated as insignificant and have limited or no access to resources, opportunities, and decision-making processes.⁶

Displacement

“Displacement” is the act of changing an object’s or an individual’s proper place. When referring to the displacement of an individual or of communities, it denotes their involuntary movement from their homes to informal settlements.⁷

Discrimination

“Discrimination” is a term utilized to describe the unfair treatment of a person or a particular group, fueled by stereotypes and prejudicial distinctions. Especially nomadic ethnic

⁵“Nomadism | Society.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/nomadism.

⁶ Merriam-Webster. “Definition of MARGINALIZE.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2016, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/marginalize.

⁷Merriam-Webster. “Definition of DISPLACEMENT.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/displacement.

minorities face discrimination, due to a combination of historical, political, social, and economic factors.⁸

Cultural Genocide

The concept of “cultural genocide” refers to the systematic destruction of a community’s cultural heritage, traditions, values, language, identity, and further elements. Nomadic ethnic minorities especially face this problem.⁹

The Séléka coalition

“Séléka”, which derives from the Sango word “coalition”, refers to a former rebel alliance consisting predominantly of muslim fighters who conquered the CAR the 24th March of 2013.¹⁰

Sedentary farmers

“Sedentary farmers” are those who practice agriculture and engage in farming while remaining in a permanent location year after year, rather than moving.¹¹

Pastoralist

A “pastoralist” is a farmer who derives their livelihood from breeding and taking care of animals, such as sheep, goats, and camels, especially in Africa and Australia. They depend on their livestock for sustenance, including milk and meat, as well as materials like wool and hides.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Historical Context

Early settlement of Central Africa

⁸Merriam Webster. “Definition of DISCRIMINATION.” *Merriam-Webster.com*, 2019, www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/discrimination.

⁹“DSpace.” *Cadmus.eui.eu*, 2025, cadmus.eui.eu/entities/publication/07e83cc7-a9ea-59a0-84c8-0d4b5b487f3a.

¹⁰“Seleka | Rebel Group, Central African Republic | Britannica.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 2024, www.britannica.com/topic/Seleka.

¹¹“Sedentary.” *Dictionary.cambridge.org*, dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/sedentary.

Central Africa has been home to humans for over a million years. During the earliest, primitive humans were hunter-gatherers who adapted to both the savanna and the forest environments, utilizing paleolithic tools out of stone and wood. They foraged for food and sought shelter. The Mbuti, Twa, and Mbenda peoples, who still reside in the region today, descend from these early populations and are known as “pygmies” due to their notably short height. Nowadays, these nomadic ethnic minorities only make up a very small percentage of Central Africa’s population.¹² To be more exact, approximately 13% of Central and West Africa’s inhabitants are considered nomadic or semi-nomadic ethnic minorities.¹³

The earliest period of settlement commenced 10.000 years ago, when desertification forced these communities to move southward into the Sahel regions of northern Central Africa. Nomads began to settle, to farm, and fish, indicating the region’s transition into the Neolithic Revolution. Those who once hunted in the savanna settled near rivers, refining their fishing techniques.¹⁴

Approximately 2000 years ago, a wave of migration swept into the region of Central Africa. This expansion of the original proto-Bantu (or Niger-Congo) language group commenced in West Africa around 1000 BCE. They are believed to have originated from present-day Cameroon and Nigeria and migrated southward. With them, they brought metalworking and agricultural skills, introducing pastoralism, cattle breeding, along with crop cultivation. Over the next millennium, the Bantu were able to absorb the already existing hunter-gatherer communities into their societies. Consequently, the majority of the contemporary Central African population speaks Bantu languages, as they are descended from the region’s early Bantu migrants.¹⁵

Colonial Impact

In the final two decades of the 19th century the colonial powers Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, and France competed for control of Central Africa, an occurrence that forms part of a

¹²“Exploring Africa.” *Msu.edu*, 2024, exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/curriculum/unit-four/module-eighteen/module-eighteen-activity-two/. Accessed 30 July 2025.

¹³“West and Central Africa | Pastoralist Knowledge Hub | FAO.” *PastoralistKnowledgeHub*, 2017, www.fao.org/pastoralist-knowledge-hub/pastoralist-networks/regional-networks/west-and-central-africa/en. Accessed 20 July 2025.

¹⁴“Central Africa - the Agricultural Revolution.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/central-Africa/The-agricultural-revolution.

¹⁵“Early Africa | World Civilizations I (HIS101) – Biel.” *Lumenlearning.com*, 2025, courses.lumenlearning.com/suny-fmcc-boundless-worldhistory/chapter/early-africa/.

broader phenomenon referred to as the “Scramble for Africa”. To be more exact, the term describes the period in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when seven European imperial powers, namely Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium, Portugal, Italy, and Spain rapidly and aggressively colonized the African continent.¹⁶

Ultimately, in the late 19th century, the French succeeded in taking control over Central Africa, a large territory consisting of present-day CAR, Chad, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo. This region was initially known as the “French Congo”, established in 1882 and was later recognized as “French Equatorial Africa”.

Furthermore, from 1885 to 1908 King Leopold II of Belgium was in possession of the Congo Free State, a colony which he established and ruled as a “private, ostensibly humanitarian venture aimed at limiting the devastation of slaving and liquor trade”.¹⁷ Though, he was widely condemned for his brutal forced labor. To be more clear, he granted commercial companies control over nationsize areas of land that were licensed to make profit and had to pay him taxes. These companies forced the local Chowke people to extract large amounts of rubber in horrible working conditions, since the profits on rubber were lower than those of other natural resources. Slaves were expected to venture into dangerous forests to gather rubber, which later on became a compulsory act. If the workers didn’t adhere, military force was utilized. They were abused and were punished by having their limbs amputated.

Generally, indigenous populations, mainly nomadic ethnic minorities, were compelled to extract natural resources mostly under threat of violence and abuse for non-compliance. These acts contributed to the displacement and uprooting of these communities.

Nomadic Groups in Central Africa

Mbororo Fulani¹⁸

The Mbororo Fulani, also known as Fulbé, are a subgroup of the Fulani people, the largest nomadic people group in the world, comprising 15 to 18 million



¹⁶Kulik, Rebecca. “Scramble for Africa | Summary, Meaning, Maps, Reasons, End, Result, & Facts | Britannica.” *Encyclopædia Britannica*, 3 Sept. 2024, www.britannica.com/event/Scramble-for-Africa.

¹⁷Birmingham, David. “Central Africa - Colonialism.” *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/place/central-Africa/Colonialism.

¹⁸“File:1997 276-18A Yaake Demonstration.jpg - Wikimedia Commons.” *Wikimedia.org*, 28 June 2007, commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:1997_276-18A_Yaake_demonstration.jpg. Accessed 30 July 2025.

individuals across the African continent.¹⁹ They are semi-nomadic Islamic pastoralists, practicing transhumance, moving livestock, such as sheep between mountain and lowland pastures according to the seasonal cycle.

Primarily, they are residing in the western grasslands of Central Africa, though they are spread across Chad, Cameroon, Nigeria, Niger, and the Central African Republic.

Figure 1: Wodaabe performing a Yaake dance. Niger 1997

They originated in West Africa, mainly in regions from present day Nigeria and Senegal, and then migrated to Central Africa. This nomadic ethnic minority speaks Fula, the Benue-Congo language of the Fulani people. Their name, “Mbororo” means “cattle herder”, originating from their own language.

In terms of their culture, the Mbororo Fulani deeply value elegant appearance and striking beauty, which is clearly depicted in the aforementioned image. During courtship rituals, such as the Gerewol festival, men, particularly those belonging to the Wodabeeb group of the Fulani people, paint their faces with yellow ochre and extracts from desert plants. To be more clear, this tradition is part of a broader aesthetic emphasis on beauty within their communities. Additionally, they commonly paint their lips and eyes with a red, distinct pigment, in order to emphasize power and strength during their warrior dances.²⁰

The Pygmy Peoples (Aka)²¹



The Pygmy peoples are an ethnic group inhabiting the African continent, who are among the oldest inhabitants of Central Africa. They are primarily known for their unusually short stature, with their average height being about 150cm, and their deep knowledge of the rainforest environment. The Pygmies search for edible plants that they can utilize for

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Figure 2: Batwa Pygmies

“Mbororo of Central African Republic.” *Pray Africa*, prayafrica.org/project/mbororo-central-african-republic/.

²⁰Ortego, Alicia. “The Wodaabe of Chad: Origins, Symbols and Relationships in Gerewol.” *Kumakonda*, 23 Feb. 2023, kumakonda.com/nomads-wodaabe-of-chad/.

²¹“20150923-DSCF3921.” *Flickr*, 20150923-DSCF3921 | Batwa Pygmies Bwindi Impenetrable NP, Ug... | Brian Harries | Flickr, 30 July 2025, www.flickr.com/photos/129936023@N02/21909751398 . Accessed 30 July 2025.

medicine and other necessities. These communities consist of nomadic foragers and hunter-gatherers. Specifically the Aka (known as Biaka, Bayaka) inhabit the forests of the southwestern Central African Republic and the northern Republic of the Congo. With the largest ethnic group being the Ba'Aka in the CAR, Aka populations are estimated in tens of thousands.

Furthermore, the Pygmy peoples are considered to be direct ancestors of Late Stone Age hunter-gatherer communities of the Central African rainforest. Genetic data indicate that they diverged from other human populations between 170.000 and 100.000 years ago.

In terms of their culture, the Pygmies are renowned for their complex, vocal polyphonic music, performed during rituals. In the picture, we observe a group of pygmy people, standing together in a traditional gathering, a celebration, outdoors in a forested area. They are dressed in animal skins draped over their shoulders or wrapped around their bodies, indicating a festive occasion.²²

Socioeconomic and Cultural Challenges

Discrimination/Marginalization

Nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa, such as the Mbororo Fulani and the Aka people, face constant discrimination and marginalization due to their distinct culture and traditional lifestyle. The Mbororo, who are pastoralists, are especially vulnerable.

It is of paramount importance to highlight that continuous conflicts in the CAR have resulted in one of the most severe displacement crises on the African continent. "As of 30 September 2024, the total number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in CAR is estimated at 453,533 individuals, including 75,725 people living in the IDP sites (17%), and 379,808 people living with host families (83%)"²³ Armed groups have forced these communities to flee their homes and reside in refugee camps.

²²"Pygmy | People." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, www.britannica.com/topic/Pygmy.

²³"Central African Republic: UNHCR Operational Update, August - Sept 2024 - Central African Republic." *ReliefWeb*, 15 Nov. 2024, reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/central-african-republic-unhcr-operational-update-august-sept-2024 . Accessed 30 July 2025.

The Mbororo Fulani are often involved in conflict with sedentary farmers and the authorities, a main driver of the crisis in the CAR, when a coup d'état resulted in an immense civil war between the predominantly muslim Séléka rebel coalition and former President François Bozizé. To be more precise, in the northern Central African Republic, the aforementioned nomadic ethnic minority group engaged in disputes with local farmers concerning the water and grazing rights for their livestock. Furthermore, they face significant challenges due to armed violence, and limited access to fundamental services, such as healthcare.

Threats to traditional lifestyle

The Mbororo fulani and other nomadic ethnic minorities have faced numerous threats to their traditional lifestyle, including armed conflicts, rapid environmental changes, and systematic discrimination. To be more clear, these multifaceted challenges are undermining their mobility, livelihoods, cultural practices, and social cohesion.

The Sahel, a transition zone between the dry savanna desert to the north and the more humid Sudanian savannas to its south, spans approximately 5.7 million hectares. It is increasingly affected by climate change, including severe droughts, heatwaves, and loss of biodiversity. One of the worst instances of drought occurred in 2010, resulting in the death of

over 4.8 million head of cattle in Niger, about a quarter of the country's herd, and causing economic losses exceeding \$700 million.²⁴



For many pastoralists, climate change is making life far more difficult. To clarify, such changes force nomadic ethnic minorities to alter traditional transhumance patterns, minimizing access to safe grazing routes. Their livestock

Figure 3: Bahr River, Chad

is in need of water, but due to prolonged

droughts, natural resources, including springs and streams have dried up, making it difficult to

²⁴ Davis, Marion. "Pastoralism, farming and a changing climate in the Sahel region." *Stockholm Environment Institute*, 18 January 2022, <https://www.sei.org/features/pastoralism-farming-climate-in-sahel/> . Accessed 26 August 2025.

access sufficient water. Hence, they are driven south into areas where farming is prevalent. Pastoralists need extensive land and water sources for their animals, while sedentary farmers rely on fertile land to grow crops. When pushed into these areas, livestock can destroy crops by trampling and grazing on it. Ultimately, farmers are triggered, resulting in violence between the two parties.

Additionally, nomadic ethnic minorities frequently experience neglect by their governments, especially pastoralist groups like the Mbororo Fulani. They often have a lower population density than sedentary communities. Therefore, both local and national politicians view them as having limited political influence, being a “minority vote”.²⁵ Their mobility further complicates access to government services, political representation, and protection of their fundamental human rights. Moreover, state policies have frequently contributed to the marginalization of pastoralist communities by preventing cross-boarder mobility, forcing them to settle, and by limiting their access to natural resources, social services, and government jobs.²⁶ It is essential to highlight that herding is often excluded from national laws as a formally recognized and legitimate form of productive land utilization.

Health and Social complications

Nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa face a plethora of health and social complications due to a combination of mobility, marginalization, discrimination, conflicts with armed groups or sedentary farmers, and lack of inclusion in political matters.

It is of paramount importance to underline the fact that approximately 50 million pastoralists in Africa exist for whom there is little data on healthcare access and utilization.²⁷ For instance, a study in Somalia, a country located in Eastern Africa, and, in which 59% of its population practice a nomadic lifestyle, revealed that 90% of its nomads were unable to access national health services. This phenomenon occurred due to constant moving in addition to seasonal barriers including rivers, floods, and terrains, intensifying the current situation. To be

²⁵“The Erosion of Pastoralism in the Sudano-Sahel • Stimson Center.” *Stimson Center*, 24 Apr. 2020, www.stimson.org/2020/the-erosion-of-pastoralism-in-the-sudano-sahel/.

²⁶*Pastoralist Violence in North and West Africa.*, https://www.oecd.org/content/dam/oecd/en/publications/reports/2021/07/pastoralist-violence-in-north-and-west-africa_541e23b6/63dff519-en.pdf

²⁷Gammino, Victoria M., et al. “Health Services Uptake among Nomadic Pastoralist Populations in Africa: A Systematic Review of the Literature.” *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases*, vol. 14, no. 7, 27 July 2020, www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7447058/, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pntd.0008474>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2025.

more exact, the nomad's traditional lifestyle is based on constant movement to access grazing lands and water for their livestock. Healthcare systems are usually organized around fixed settlements, in order to provide constant services to the population. However, nomadic ethnic minorities, unlike residents, do not remain long enough so as to benefit from regular checkups, vaccinations, and treatment of illnesses.

Furthermore, a study from Timbuktu, Mali, a country largely represented by nomadic ethnic minorities, indicates that the average distance to a local healthcare center covers approximately 40.94 km. Walking around 80 km to obtain medical care would be exhausting for any individual, resulting in delayed and forgone treatments. As a result, nomadic populations, who are frequently isolated, are vulnerable to diseases including tuberculosis (TB) and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), especially adolescents. In 2019 alone, there were 460.000 new HIV infections among young individuals aged 10 to 24 years, with 170.000 of these cases occurring in adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19, as stated by the National Library of Medicine.²⁸

Limited public awareness, coupled with widespread poverty among many African countries further exacerbates the issue. According to a study from the National Library of Medicine, awareness and utilization of HIV and TB services among nomadic youth are lower than in settled or agricultural communities. This gap largely results from their geographic isolation, lack of testing, and education. Consequently, nomadic ethnic minorities may not even be aware of the fact that they are infected. Additionally, poverty often correlates with low literacy and education in nomadic populations, restricting nomadic communities'ability to afford transportation to healthcare facilities or pay for medical services, intensifying the issue.

Conflicts

Armed Groups

Nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa, such as the Mbororo and the Aka Pygmies, are consistently in dispute with armed groups. To be more explicit, they have been often targeted by armed groups and bandits for their livestock and assets. Thus, these hostilities manifest as fatal attacks, mass displacements, and severe human rights violations.

²⁸Ngadaya, E., et al. "Knowledge, Awareness and Use of HIV Services among the Youth from Nomadic and Agricultural Communities in Tanzania." *Public Health Action*, vol. 11, no. 2, 21 June 2021, pp. 69–74, <https://doi.org/10.5588/pha.20.0081>. Accessed 20 Jun. 2025.

Especially in the Central African Republic (CAR), conflicts between nomadic ethnic minorities and sedentary farming communities are deeply rooted in their everyday life. In CAR, nomadic herders, primarily Muslim pastoralists, including the Mbororo Fulani people, have frequently engaged in disputes involving sedentary farmers, armed militias, and rebel groups. Since 2014, organizations such as the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC, French: Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique), and the 3R (Retour, Réclamation et Réhabilitation) have operated, intensifying tensions and contributing to armed conflict.

When a coup d'état, orchestrated by the Séléka rebel coalition, plunged the Central African Republic into civil war in 2013, pastoralists were attacked from all sides. As a result, two powerful militias, namely the UPC and the 3R emerged, claiming to defend them.²⁹

The Union for Peace in the Central African Republic, established on the 17th October of 2014 by Ali Darassa from the ex-Séléka elements, was a rebel group in the CAR that controlled parts of the country's south. It joined the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) in December of 2020, a broader coalition of armed groups. They have historically targeted those who they believed to be members of the anti-balaka militia, an alliance largely composed of Christians , including some muslims, and animists, who emerged in 2013 in response to the rise of the Séléka coalition. The UPC and 3R militias mainly support the interests of nomadic herders, more specifically the Mbororo Fulani pastoralists, as they primarily comprise Fulani people.

Since 2021, the government and military, supported by international allies, have increasingly viewed pastoralist communities as security threats, frequently conflating them with the aforementioned opposition groups. As a result, armed forces have engaged in operations involving cattle confiscation and the displacement of the Fulani from their traditional migration routes. These operations have undoubtedly disrupted pastoralist's livelihoods, demanding herders to move their livestock south, into agricultural lands with crops. Grazing animals could harm these crops by trampling on them, which could escalate into disputes between sedentary farmers and nomadic ethnic minorities.³⁰

²⁹"Violence and Herding in the Central African Republic: Time to Act | International Crisis Group." *Crisisgroup.org*, 28 May 2025, www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic-chad/317-violence-et-transhumance-en-centrafrique-le-temps-dagir .

³⁰in. "Central African Republic: Violence and Herding in the Central African Republic - Time to Act." *AllAfrica.com*, 29 May 2025, allafrica.com/stories/202505290045.html. Accessed 30 July 2025.

Farmers³¹

Furthermore, nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa, including the Mbororo and the Aka Pygmies, also frequently face conflicts with sedentary farmers. Scarcity of grazing land, exacerbated by drought, desertification, climate change, and changing demographics, compels nomadic ethnic minorities to drive their cattle onto farmland, resulting in violent clashes between the two parties. Moreover, the damage to crops caused by livestock, along with the competition over water and grazing land, are major contributors to the aforementioned tensions.

Especially the Mbororo face marginalization and lack legal land rights. To clarify, due to climate change, socioeconomic factors, and violence they are forced to alter their transhumance and move south towards agricultural land, where crops are grown. Their cattle grazing on farmland frequently leads to conflicts between the two parties, as sedentary farmers view the herders as outsiders and a threat to their livelihoods. This marginalization pressures pastoralists to fall back on militias and armed groups for protection.

“Farmer-herder violence in West and Central Africa has increased over the past 10 years with geographic concentrations in Nigeria, central Mali, and northern Burkina Faso”.³²Since 2010, farmer-herder conflicts have led to more than 15.000 fatalities, with approximately half of these occurring after the year 2018. As depicted in the graph, 2018 was the most fatal year for most countries in West- and Central Africa, such as Nigeria with well over 2500 deaths in a year. These trends signal a major increase in violence, highlighting an immense security concern in the region.

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED

Central African Republic (CAR)

The Central African Republic (CAR), is the primary country where nomadic ethnic minorities reside. To be exact, more than 80 distinct ethnic groups reside within the country. The

³¹*Africacenter.org*, 2025,
africacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Trends-in-Farmer-Herder-Violence-in-West-and-Central-Africa.jpg-scale_d.jpg.

³² Brottem, Leif . “The Growing Complexity of Farmer-Herder Conflict in West and Central Africa.” *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*, 12 July 2021,
africacenter.org/publication/growing-complexity-farmer-herder-conflict-west-central-africa/.

CAR government has already implemented protections for nomadic ethnic minorities, including the Mbororo and the Pygmies.

Furthermore, as the first African Member State of the International Labor Organization, the CAR has incorporated the ILO convention 169 into its constitution in 2010. This international treaty, adopted by the International Labor Organization, safeguards the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, recognizing them as distinct communities.

Additionally, the CAR has launched an initiative called CAR Health System Support and Strengthening (SENI) Project, which primarily focuses on the access to essential health services, especially for minority groups, like children, women, and nomadic ethnic minorities. The purpose of this Health System Support in CAR is to improve the quality of fundamental health services in targeted areas in the territory of the recipient.

Chad

Chad is a landlocked country located in north-central Africa that is central to the issue. To clarify, pastoralist communities, such as the Mbororo Fulani and the Toubou, traditionally move across the borders of the Central African Republic and Chad for seasonal transhumance. Due to claims that both parties are supporting rebel factions to interfere in each other's affairs, the two countries have had the military present along their shared border. This is included in their security protocols. Though, in recent years both countries have significantly increased their military presence, in response to rising violence and accusations. Mutual suspicion still persists today, posing a major risk to efforts of protecting vulnerable nomadic ethnic minorities.³³

Additionally, the government of Chad does not officially recognize indigenous people, more specifically the Mbororo. They are not granted legal status or political representation on national levels, despite their distinct culture and way of life as pastoralists. In 2014 Chad attempted to pass a new Pastoral Code aiming to replace the outdated 1959 law governing pastoralism. However, it was largely rejected by the parliament and the government, leaving the 1959 law still in force.³⁴ The absence of modern legal frameworks that recognize their lands and nomadic lifestyle results in ongoing challenges, including socioeconomic marginalization, political representation, and access to resources.

³³ "CAR, Chad Conduct Separate Military Operations amid Border Security Concerns." *Voice of America*, 6 Oct. 2023, www.voanews.com/a/car-chad-conduct-separate-military-operations-amid-border-security-concerns/7299958.html.

³⁴ "Chad - Context and Land Governance." *Land Portal*, landportal.org/book/narratives/2023/chad.

France

France is a country located in Western Europe that has played a significant role in the topic of ensuring the protection of nomadic, ethnic minorities in Central Africa. To be more precise, France has repeatedly engaged in military interventions aimed at containing violence and protecting civilians during conflicts involving ethnic minorities and armed groups.

To clarify, the French established Operation Sengaris from late 2013 till 2016 in an act to stabilize the CAR during a violent civil war, marked by ethnic and religious conflicts between Muslim ex-Séléka rebels and Christian anti-balaka militias, affecting minority communities. With the authorization of the UN Security Council and the permission of the former president of CAR Michael Djotodia, French troops secured the capital, Bangui, where ethnic killings had recently occurred, leaving over 300 civilians dead.³⁵ The dispute caused severe humanitarian crises. According to the UN around 460.000 people in CAR need shelter.³⁶ Though, with the aid of the French military, Operation Sangaris successfully prevented mass atrocities in major urban areas and effectively reduced violent crashes. The French have expanded their operations to rural areas.

International Labor Organization

The International Labor Organization (ILO) does indeed play a remarkable role in the question of ensuring the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa, especially in the Central African Republic, Cameroon, and Chad. The ILO created a key international instrument, intending to protect indigenous and nomadic peoples, namely the ILO Convention No. 169. The Central African Republic became the first African Member State to adopt this international treaty in 2010.³⁷ As of 2025, it is the only one that has done so. The treaty safeguards the rights of indigenous people by recognizing their cultural and ethnic diversity, emphasizing their rights to maintain their customs. It acknowledges their right to land and

³⁵ NATO. ““No Time to Procrastinate”: France’s Leadership on African Security.” *NAOC*, 19 Dec. 2013, natoassociation.ca/no-time-to-procrastinate-frances-leadership-on-african-security/ . Accessed 30 July 2025.

³⁶ “Central African Republic Crisis: Another French Intervention?” *BBC News*, 2 Dec. 2013, www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-25183377.

³⁷ “Central African Republic Ratifies ILO Convention No. 169 - Rights + Resources - Supporting Forest Tenure, Policy, and Market Reforms.” *Rights + Resources - Supporting Forest Tenure, Policy, and Market Reforms - Supporting Forest Tenure, Policy, and Market Reforms*, 5 May 2010, rightsandresources.org/blog/central-african-republic-ratifies-ilo-convention-no-169/ . Accessed 30 July 2025.

natural resources, as well as to define their own priorities for development. The ratification of the Convention No. 169 is a major step towards the legal protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in the region of Central Africa. Despite these efforts to improve the unstable situation, ongoing conflicts in countries, such as the 2013 coup d'état in CAR, have had a detrimental effect on indigenous peoples. These disputes have severely aggravated the implementation process and the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities.

Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA)

The Mbororo and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) refers to the largest membership-based association of the ethnic Mbororo pastoralists in Cameroon. The organization was established on the 21st October 1992, aiming to address their social, cultural and economic challenges. To be more clear, it was founded to give the community a collective voice, such as advocating for their rights as citizens and not remaining in the shadows. It aims to enhance the “socio-economic conditions, education, health, and cultural preservation of the Mbororo people”, as stated by the Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association.³⁸

Moreover, their objective includes addressing challenges faced by this community, including discrimination, marginalization, and limited access to fundamental necessities. This association has significantly contributed to raising awareness about the preservation of the Mbororo’s distinct cultural heritage, helping them assert their social, cultural, political, and economic rights. Although the Mbororo community still faces persistent challenges of exclusion, the MBOSCUDA represents a vital source of hope and empowerment for their people.³⁹

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

³⁸ “MBOSCUDA - Mayo Banyo Chapter.” *MBOSCUDA - Mayo Banyo Chapter*, 14 Jan. 2024, mboscuda.group/. Accessed 30 July 2025., <https://mboscuda.group/>

³⁹“Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA).” *Equal Land Rights*, 16 Dec. 2021, equallandsrights.org/member/mbororo-social-and-cultural-development-association-mboscuda/ . Accessed 30 July 2025.

DATE	DESCRIPTION OF EVENT
8000BC	The earliest period of settlement commenced 10.000 years ago, when desertification forced nomadic ethnic minorities to move southward into the Sahel regions of northern Central Africa.
1000BCE	A wave of migration swept into the region of Central Africa in 1000BCE. This expansion of the original proto-Bantu (or Niger-Congo) language group commenced in West Africa.
1870 -1914	The colonial powers Belgium, Great Britain, Germany, and France competed for control of Central Africa, by aggressively colonizing parts of it, an occurrence that forms part of a broader phenomenon referred to as the “Scramble for Africa”.
November 30th 1882	On the 30th November 1882 the French Congo colony was formally established.
February 5th 1885	“Belgian King Leopold II. established the Congo Free State by brutally seizing the African landmass as his personal possession”. ⁴⁰
1885-1908	King Leopold II. of Belgium ruled the Congo Free State from 1885 to 1908 as a private

⁴⁰Crooks, Mary. “Feb 5, 1885 CE: Belgian King Establishes Congo Free State.” *Education.nationalgeographic.org*, National Geographic, 1 Nov. 2024, education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/belgian-king-establishes-congo-free-state/.

	venture, condemned for brutal forced labor, involving forced rubber extraction under threat of violence.
2010	Severe drought in the Sahel region caused the death of over 4.8 million head of cattle in Niger, about a quarter of the country's herd, and caused economic losses exceeding \$700 million.
August 30th 2010	The Central African Republic was the first African Member State that ratified the ILO Convention No. 169, taking a big step towards the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in the region of Central Africa.
March 24th 2013	The Séléka rebel coalition seized power from CAR's government on the 24th March of 2013. This event is known as a coup d'état.
December 5th 2013 - October 30th 2016	Operation Sangaris was a French military intervention in the Central African Republic, established on the 5th December 2013 in an act to stabilize the CAR during a violent civil war, marked by ethnic and religious conflicts between Muslim ex-Séléka rebels and Christian anti-balaka militias, affecting minority communities.
July 2014	Chad attempted to pass the new Pastoral Code about the protection of the nomadic ethnic minorities, aimed at replacing the

	outdated 1959 law, which was rejected by the parliament and the government.
October 17th 2014	Formation of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) by Ali Darassa from ex-Séléka elements.
17th December 2020	The Union for Peace in the Central African Republic joined the Coalition of Patriots for Change, a wider coalition of armed groups in CAR on the 17th December 2020.
September 2024	Estimated 450.000 internally displaced persons in the central African Republic due to ongoing conflict, seriously affecting nomadic ethnic minorities.

RELEVANT UN RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

ILO Convention (No. 169)

This legally binding international treaty, adopted by the International Labor Organization on June 27th 1989, safeguards the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples, recognizing them as distinct communities. In addition, the treaty concerns indigenous, tribal people in independent countries, focusing on protecting their fundamental human rights, which incorporates their social, economic and political rights. The treaty safeguards the rights of indigenous people by recognizing their cultural and ethnic diversity, emphasizing their rights to maintain their customs.

It acknowledges their right to land and natural resources, as well as to define their own priorities for development. The ratification of the Convention No. 169 is a major step towards the legal protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in the region of Central Africa. Despite these efforts to improve the unstable situation, ongoing conflicts in countries, such as the 2013 coup d'état in CAR, have had a detrimental effect on indigenous peoples. These disputes have severely aggravated the implementation process and the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities.

UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/59 (2023)

The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/78/59, Regional confidence-building measures: activities of the United Nations Standing Advisory Committee on Security Questions in Central Africa, was adopted by the General Assembly on the 4th December 2023. It primarily focuses on cross-boarder security threats in Central Africa, as mentioned in the title. Moreover, this resolution advocates for the protection of vulnerable populations, such as nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa. Such disputes between the borders have detrimental effects on these communities, especially pastoralists who need to cross them in order to move their cattle. Nomadic minorities, including the Mbororo Fulani and the Aka Pygmies, frequently face marginalization, discrimination, and violence that largely affect their traditional way of life. The resolution's emphasis on cooperation focuses on protecting these communities.⁴¹

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

Community dialogues between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers

Since 2015, the Central African Republic has initiated community dialogues between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers, attempting to effectively minimise their tensions and encourage peaceful coexistence. These tensions stem from competition between the two parties, regarding scarce natural resources, including grazing land, water sources, and crop fields. To clarify, pastoralist communities have been forced to retreat south, where farming is prevalent, due to climate change and marginalization. When pushed into these areas, their animals pose risks to sedentary farmer's crops. As a result, disputes have sparked. Such talks are being actively supported by non-governmental organizations (NGO's) and have already led

⁴¹ "Document Viewer." *Un.org*, 2025, docs.un.org/en/A/RES/78/59. Accessed 30 July 2025.

to agreements. Through these discussions representatives from nomadic pastoralist communities and sedentary farmers are brought together to directly talk over misunderstandings and practical solutions to their conflicts.

Pastoralism and Transhumance Platform

The Pastoralism and multi-stakeholder initiative, launched in 2015 by the government of the Central African Republic (CAR), aims at promoting dialogue and fostering partnerships. To make it more precise, it brings together local and international organizations in an effort to mitigate and prevent conflicts that commence from competition over land and resources. Moreover, individuals utilizing this platform try to find efficient solutions for the multifaceted challenges pastoralists face, such as socioeconomic marginalization, climate change, and restricted mobility/access.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Creating designated transhumance corridors

The creation of designated transhumance corridors is one of many reasonable approaches to the question of “Ensuring the protection of nomadic ethnic minorities in Central Africa.” First and foremost, mapping and restoring these designated pathways helps guide pastoralists away from farmland, thus effectively minimizing the clashes between sedentary farmers and nomadic ethnic minorities. Additionally, enhanced security throughout these routes guarantees the safety and peace of the passage. They benefit both nomadic communities as well as conservation efforts.

Land Tenure Safety

Land Tenure refers to “the relationship, whether legally or customarily defined, among people, as individuals or groups, with respect to land.”⁴² This solution to the aforementioned questions suggests the prevention of disputes between pastoralists and farmers, by clarifying both the rights of pastoral and farming communities. Official documents would reduce the likelihood of unauthorized land and crop use. Official land tenure documents formalize who has rights to use, occupy, or cultivate particular lands. This would significantly help prevent conflicts by making rights transparent and providing a legal basis to resolve disputes.

Formal Recognition

In order for nomadic ethnic minorities to be legally acknowledged and have the same rights as the people that have settled in large cities for instance, they ought to be formally recognised. It helps them be protected from unlawful criminalization and discrimination. In that way, there are no restrictions as to participating in political instances. Formal recognition helps nomadic ethnic minorities to preserve their cultural identity and traditional practices, including their mobility, their transhumance and use of land, by affirming these as legitimate and protected ways of life under the law.

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