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Central African Republic (CAR): COI Compilation

December 2018



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This report serves the specific purpose of collating legally relevant information on conditions in countries of origin pertinent to the assessment of claims for asylum. It is not intended to be a general report on human rights conditions. The report is prepared within a specified time frame on the basis of publicly available documents as well as information provided by experts. All sources are cited and fully referenced.

This report is not, and does not purport to be, either exhaustive with regard to conditions in the country surveyed, or conclusive as to the merits of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Every effort has been made to compile information from reliable sources; users should refer to the full text of documents cited and assess the credibility, relevance and timeliness of source material with reference to the specific research concerns arising from individual applications.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Brief overview of the security situation	4
2	Brief overview of the political situation	9
3	Brief overview of the humanitarian situation.....	13
4	Overview of state security forces and law enforcement	16
4.1	Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines, FACA)	17
4.2	Internal Security Forces (Police and Gendarmerie)	21
4.3	Presidential Guard	23
4.4	Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).....	24
5	Overview of armed groups	26
5.1	Ex-Séléka.....	28
5.1.1	Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC).....	28
5.1.2	Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC).....	30
5.1.3	Mouvement Patriotique Centrafricain (MPC), including MPC-Siriri.....	32
5.2	Anti-Balaka	34
5.3	Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R)	37
5.4	Révolution and Justice (RJ)	38
5.5	Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA)	39
5.6	Clashes between armed groups in 2017 and 2018.....	40
5.7	Situation in PK5 neighbourhood of Bangui.....	44
6	Ethnic groups.....	48
6.1	Gbaya (Baya)	49
6.2	Ngbandi	50
6.3	Fulani (Peuhl), including Mbororo	51
6.4	Goula (Gula).....	56
6.5	Rounga (Runga).....	57
6.6	Ba’aka (Aka).....	58
7	Religious groups	60
7.1	Christians	61
7.2	Muslims	62
7.3	Traditional/indigenous religious groups	64
8	Human rights situation	66
8.1	Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment	67
8.1.1	State actors	67
8.1.2	Non-state actors.....	67
8.2	Extrajudicial (arbitrary and unlawful) killings	68
8.2.1	State actors	68
8.2.2	Non-state actors.....	68
8.3	Abduction, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention	71
8.3.1	State actors	71
8.3.2	Non-state actors.....	71

8.4 Sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse	72
8.4.1 State actors	74
8.4.2 Non-state actors	75
8.5 Extortion and looting	78
8.5.1 State actors	78
8.5.2 Non-state actors	79
8.6 Occupation of and attacks on schools, health centres and places of worship	83
8.6.1 Schools	83
8.6.2 Places of worship	85
8.6.3 Health centres	87
8.7 Rule of Law and access to justice	89
8.8 Forced labour	96
8.9 Freedom of religion	99
8.10 Treatment of persons accused of practicing witchcraft.....	104
8.11 Freedom of expression	106
8.12 Treatment of women	109
8.12.1 FGM.....	109
8.12.2 Sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence.....	112
8.12.3 Situation of widows and of divorced women	113
8.13 Treatment of children	114
8.13.1 Forced and underage recruitment and use of children	114
8.13.2 Access to education	118
8.14 Treatment of individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities ...	120
Sources	122

1 Brief overview of the security situation

The Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide gives a brief overview of the security situation in the Central African Republic in a June 2018 report:

“Since a violent takeover of power in 2013, stability in the country has deteriorated. Fighting has in part coalesced along religious lines. In late 2012, armed groups were formed in the north-east of the country, mostly among the minority Muslim population, including the former Seleka coalition and a splinter group, Union for Peace in Central Africa (UPC). In response, in late 2013, militias known as ‘Anti- Balaka’ were formed mostly among the country’s majority Christian and animist populations. [...] These conflicts have intensified since the crisis, owing to a perceived alliance between predominantly Fulani herders and the former Seleka. Now entering its fifth year, violence peaked in 2013-2014; followed by a relative improvement in 2015-2016 during which time, peaceful elections were held. This period presented a possible window for consolidation of peace, but renewed violence since late 2016 has marked a return to instability.” (Concern Worldwide, 19 June 2018, p. 22)

In its July 2018 submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report for the Universal Periodic Review, UNHCR mentions the following regarding the recent history of the crisis:

“The current situation in CAR remains distressed following the most recent episode of the long-running crisis in the country that erupted when a rebel coalition, the Séléka, overruled the then President, François Bozizé, in March 2013. The ensuing violence pitted the Séléka against self-defense groups that formed the anti-Balaka, prompting large-scale inter communal violence with religious undertones and a massive protection crisis, including the displacement of a fifth of the population internally and to neighboring countries. The country faced a total breakdown of law and order, and already fragile State institutions completely collapsed. Notwithstanding some improvement since 2013, civilians continue to be at serious risk and women and children are bearing the brunt of the crisis. Armed groups are still very active, perpetrating killings, inhumane and degrading treatment, extortion, pillaging and the destruction or appropriation of property” (UNHCR, July 2018, p. 1)

According to the German political research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung, “the repercussions of the 2013 to 2014 crisis were still evident” during the reporting period ranging from February 2015 to January 2017. The source adds that “security remained precarious across the country, and the U.N. peacekeeping mission continued to be the only actor reinforcing law and order.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 3)

The international human rights organisation Amnesty International (AI) in its annual human rights report notes a resurgence of violence in 2017 “mainly in and around the Ouaka, Basse-Kotto and Haute-Kotto prefectures (districts). Ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka armed groups controlled much of the country” (AI, 22 February 2018). AI further mentions that according to the International NGO Safety Organisation, relief agencies were targeted in over 390 security incidents and there were at least 15 local humanitarian workers killed. (AI, 22 February 2018)

A June 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa mentions that the “security situation in Bangui and other parts of the country has deteriorated since April 2018” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 1). The UN Secretary-General gives the following account of the security situation in Bangui:

“In Bangui, since April, the security situation has been marked by renewed violence, driven by the activities of criminal gangs and intercommunal tensions. Gangs involved in extortion rackets and illegal taxation frequently destabilized the third district of Bangui and threatened the safety and well-being of local residents. Despite mediation efforts, tensions escalated in the third district’s predominantly Muslim neighbourhood of PK5, as criminal group leaders adopted increasingly aggressive postures, including attacking MINUSCA patrols, which prompted the community to call upon the Government and MINUSCA to intervene.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, pp. 3-4)

Regarding the security situation in other parts of the country the report further notes:

“Notwithstanding some progress in the political process, the security situation continues to be marred by armed confrontations and violence against civilians in several areas of the country, as well as attacks against humanitarian personnel and peacekeepers. Sectarian rhetoric and the exploitation of religious differences have contributed to an increase in intercommunal violence, as well as manipulated popular hostility towards MINUSCA and other international actors. Armed groups such as the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) have tried to exploit sectarian tensions by threatening renewed military offensives against Bangui, despite committing to dialogue.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 3)

In his report on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, the UN Secretary-General mentions “incidents of violence in different parts of the country” and “a fragile security situation”, adding that:

“Continued activity by armed groups and criminal networks led to tensions in several regions. In April, a series of clashes occurred in Bangui following a joint operation launched by the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and national security forces to forcefully disarm criminal groups controlling neighbourhoods in the capital. The inflammatory rhetoric persisting in Bangui escalated tensions in early May, with continued clashes taking place between security forces and criminal groups. These resulted in casualties among civilians and peacekeepers.” (UN Security Council, 1 June 2018, p. 4)

In her August 2018 report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic to the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) (reporting period July 2017 to June 2018), the Independent Expert, Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum, remarks a deterioration of the situation in the country within one year and further notes:

“The Central African Republic is encountering multiple challenges on its road to peace. In one year, the situation on the ground has deteriorated, with a proliferation of armed

groups and an upsurge in violence, which again reached Bangui.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 15)

As reported by USAID in August 2018 the Central African Republic is facing continued conflict between armed groups. The ongoing crisis is further complicated as “armed groups have fragmented and reformed among various alliances”. The same report points out that the “security situation throughout CAR remains volatile, with continuing attacks against civilians, humanitarian workers, and UN peacekeeping forces.” (USAID, 8 August 2018, p. 4)

An October 2018 article by Radio Ndeke Luka mentions that insecurity persists in Ouham-Péndé prefecture. Several localities in Ngaoundaye are affected. (Radio Ndeke Luka, 11 October 2018)

A September 2018 article by Radio Ndeke Luka quotes sub-prefect Richard Noudémona as noting that the security situation in Bangassou is “totally calm” after the redeployment of the Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines, FACA) on 21 June 2018. However in the outskirts of the city the situation is still challenging:

“Après le redéploiement des FACA, la situation sécuritaire est totalement calme. On n’écoute pas des tirs et on ne voit pas les armes en circulation et la cohésion sociale marche très bien’, a expliqué Richard Noudémona, sous-préfet de Bangassou. [...]

Depuis le 21 juin 2018, les FACA ont été redéployées à Bangassou. Si leur présence a été saluée par la population au centre ville, la sécurité reste un défi dans les périphéries.”(Radio Ndeke Luka, 22 September 2018)

Regarding government control, an October 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region notes the following:

“In the Central African Republic, armed groups continued to occupy parts of the territory. Particularly in the east, militias maintained control of several areas of economic significance and continued to carry out deadly attacks, including against forces of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA).” (UN Security Council, 2 October 2018, p. 3)

The report however also mentions that “progress towards the restoration of State authority” was made by the government “although challenged by insecurity caused by the continuing activities of armed groups” (UN Security Council, 2 October 2018, p. 5)

AI in February 2018 reports that in 2017 the “government had minimal control outside the capital, Bangui” and further notes:

“Armed groups continued to fight for territorial control, and targeted civilians, humanitarian workers and peacekeepers. Widespread impunity further fuelled instability and conflict. Increasing numbers sought refuge in neighbouring countries or were internally displaced, in dire conditions.” (AI, 22 February 2018)

According to the April 2018 US Department of State (USDOS) report on human rights practices in the Central African Republic (covering 2017) state authority “beyond the capital, Bangui, was limited” and “armed groups controlled significant swaths of territory throughout the country”. (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Executive Summary)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its annual report on the human rights situation notes that in 2017 the government, with support from international partners, “kept control of the capital, Bangui, and surrounding areas in the southwestern region of the Central African Republic. However, much of the country remained insecure, unstable, and beset by serious human rights violations. Armed groups still control key towns, despite the presence of United Nations peacekeepers.” (HRW, 18 January 2018)

Freedom House in January 2018 similarly writes that in 2017 the country “suffers from pervasive insecurity and an absence of state authority in much of the country.” The source further notes:

“Free movement by citizens is inhibited by the lack of security and targeted violence in 2017. Transportation routes are threatened by banditry and theft in many areas.” (Freedom House, January 2018, G1)

“The agricultural economy—the livelihood of the majority of the population—remained restricted by ongoing violence and insecurity.” (Freedom House, January 2018, G2)

In August 2018 the Independent Expert mentions that state authority is steadily undermined by armed groups:

“The outbreaks of violence and clashes since July 2017 have returned the Central African Republic to serious crisis with dramatic consequences for the civilian population, humanitarian workers and United Nations peacekeepers. The proliferation of areas of tension in the centre of the country, the recent violence in Bangui and the uncertain situation in localities such as Bangassou and Paoua are evidence of a steady undermining of the authority of the State by armed groups, particularly the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 4)

The report of the UN Secretary-General on the Central African Republic to the UN Security Council published October 2018 gives an update on security incidents between June and October 2018 in the country:

“During the reporting period [15 June–15 October 2018], the number of security incidents decreased in Bangui, Bangassou and several western prefectures. However, clashes between armed groups, particularly in the centre and south-east, continued.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 4)

Please also see the ACCORD update on incidents and number of fatalities for the third quarter of 2018, published December 2018, with data provided by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED). ACLED is a project collecting, analysing and mapping information on crisis and conflict in Africa, South & Southeast Asia and Middle East and provides datasets on conflict

incidents. For each region, the number of casualties is followed by a list of places in which security related incidents occurred. The list can be accessed via the following link:

- ACCORD – Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation: Central African Republic, third quarter 2018: Update on incidents according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) - Updated 2nd edition, 20 December 2018 https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/2001786/2018q3CentralAfricanRepublic_en.pdf

Please also see [section 5.6](#) on conflict between armed groups for further and more detailed information on the current security situation.

2 Brief overview of the political situation

As noted by the German political research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung, general elections were held in the years 1993, 1998 to 1999, 2005, 2011 and 2015 to 2016. The source goes on to provide the following overview:

“After the violent overthrow of President Bozizé in 2013, transitional institutions were installed under the supervision of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Three years of transition ended during the period under review in December 2015 with legislative and presidential elections. [...] The results of the February 2015 [parliamentary] elections were deemed fair by the Central African Constitutional Court, and international stakeholders recognized the legitimacy of Faustin-Archange Touadera as the new president. [...] Touadera’s big win in early 2016 lent popular credibility to his administration during its first year, but popularity is cooling as voters are increasingly frustrated with the continued insecurity and instability of the country.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, pp. 8-9)

The USDOS also gives a brief overview on recent elections held in the country:

“The 2015 constitutional referendum led to the adoption of a new constitution with 93 percent of the votes cast in favor; voter turnout was 38 percent. The first round of presidential and legislative elections took place in December 2015 with a turnout of 62 percent. [...] A total of 415 appeals were lodged contesting the results of the legislative elections, leading the Transitional Constitutional Court to invalidate the ballot and require a new first round of elections. The appeals were based primarily on allegations of irregularities and fraud, corruption, and intimidation of voters and candidates.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 3)

Regarding the jointly held second round of presidential elections and the new first round of the legislative elections on 14 February 2016 the Bertelsmann Stiftung notes:

“According to the United Nations, there was a marked improvement in the overall organization of these elections, with the majority of polling stations opening on time with the required materials, but one might question how misconduct could have been isolated to legislative elections. The National Electoral Authority announced the final results of the presidential elections on March 1, 2016, confirming candidate Faustin-Archange Touadera as president with 62.69% of the vote (voter turnout was 58.8%).” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 12)

According to the USDOS, Anicet-George Dologuele had 37.3 percent of the vote and “quickly conceded defeat and called upon his supporters to accept the results of the vote”. President Touadera was inaugurated in March 2016. (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 3)

Freedom House’s January 2018 Freedom in the World report notes that the 2016 presidential elections “were monitored by the African Union Election Observation Mission (AUEOM), and were regarded as generally successful and a step towards peace and stabilization. Fears about widespread electoral violence were not realized, but there were many reports of serious irregularities at the polls.” (Freedom House, January 2018, A1)

Regarding the February 2016 legislative elections, Freedom House mentions that the polls “were plagued by irregularities and the disenfranchisement of voters unable to access the polls due to security concerns or refugee status”. The organisation further reports that “a first round had to be nullified following a slew of allegations of fraud and other misconduct, by actors ranging from armed groups to political candidates to the National Electoral Authority”. (Freedom House, January 2018, A2)

The report of the UN Secretary-General on the Central African Republic in October 2018 mentions that the government “initiated preparations for elections scheduled for 2020 and 2021”. (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 4)

With regard to forming and operating political parties, Freedom House in January writes that it is legally possible. However, “party members conducting political activities are at risk of intimidation and violence in areas controlled by irregular armed groups” (Freedom House, January 2018, B1). The Bertelsmann Stiftung mentions a significant fragmentation of political parties in 2013 and notes that these parties “seem more the private appendages of opportunistic politicians seeking personal entitlements than a plurality of representatives for the masses”. The organisation further states:

“The most recent elections have further destabilized the party system; an independent president was elected and 41% of seats in the National Assembly are held by independents. For the first time in CAR’s recent history, there is no dominant party that emanates from the president.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 13)

Regarding activities of the parliament, the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2018 indicates a “rift between the government and parliament, as parliament has sought to institutionalize its role as a government watchdog”. The organisation goes on to describe:

“Using their constitutional rights, parliamentarians have summoned the government on two occasions to justify its decisions on security matters. [...] There is no tradition in CAR for political checks and balances. The presidency is not used to a parliament that independently questions the government’s actions. At the end of 2016, tensions were high between the parliament and the president, as President Touadera, who supported Karim Meckassoua’s election as parliamentary speaker, felt unfairly treated. Although Karim Meckassoua is suspected by the press of using parliament to plan an institutional coup, it is a relatively new development to see parliament actually getting involved in the management of state affairs.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 10)

According to Freedom House “the weak authority of the state in many areas severely limits the government’s ability to implement policy decisions” (Freedom House, January 2018, C1). The Bertelsmann Stiftung also notes a lack of representation in interest groups of most layers of society. Social interests, “especially those of the rural population, youth and women, are underrepresented in public debate”. The report goes on to describe the role of rebel groups as interest groups:

“Outside Bangui, rebel groups have historically acted as the most viable interest groups for those who are ignored by the state, gaining their power and money through violence and

banditry in the stateless countryside. Ethnic minorities have never managed to organize themselves into powerful interest groups that are included in political processes.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 14)

The Independent Expert in August 2018 outlines the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan adopted by the Central African National Assembly in October 2016:

“This plan is based on three pillars (political, social and economic) and could make it possible speedily to provide for the needs of the Central African population, especially unemployed youth. The Expert noted the unanimous wish of Central Africans to prioritize the health, education and security sectors, and economic opportunities and employment. She was, however, concerned at the delay in disbursing funds and implementing projects. Noting the link between the National Plan and a transitional justice roadmap, she encouraged the strengthening of good governance to ensure speedy execution of the Plan, where that was possible.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 5)

Information on the peace process

The International Crisis Group (ICG), a transnational, independent, non-profit organization, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent, mitigate or resolve deadly conflict, gives the following account of international efforts in the peace process in September 2017:

“The African Union and the regional powers – Chad, Angola, Republic of Congo, ECCAS, the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) – all became involved again in 2016, bringing a range of parallel initiatives together to launch an African Union (AU) mediation effort, which was presented to the UN Security Council in March 2017. Various non-state actors joined the mediation party. The Sant’Egidio Community in Rome, a Catholic organisation that had become involved in 2015 during the political transition – particularly in relation to the Republican Pact – organised a new round of meetings in the Italian capital in 2017. Initially held in private with the representatives of armed groups, these discussions were widened out, culminating in the signature of a political peace agreement in June.” (ICG, 28 September 2017, p. 14)

ICG further notes that “these international mediation initiatives have had no impact on the local security dynamics” but “revealed the existence of differences in agenda, institutional rivalries and variations in mediation cultures” and goes on to say:

“Confronted with this reality, the European Union (EU) organised a round table of mediators in Brussels on 21 June 2017, in an attempt to relaunch a coherent and credible international mediation initiative. Since then, and on a number of occasions, including in New York in September 2017, these various actors have reaffirmed their support for the roadmap adopted by the AU in July 2017 in Libreville.” (ICG, 28 September 2017, p. 14)

Concerning the Libreville road map, also known as the Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, which was adopted by the African Union on 17 July 2017, the Independent Expert, Marie-

Thérèse Keita Bocoum, in her August 2018 report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic notes:

“In September [2017], a panel of facilitators was appointed to implement it with the aim of ensuring inclusion, reconciliation and national cohesion. The panel, the main responsibility of which is to promote dialogue between the Government and the armed groups, held talks between 27 November and 11 December 2017 and in March 2018 in order to establish a climate of trust, to deliver a message from the President of the African Union to the armed groups and to listen to their political, economic, social and judicial demands.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 5)

In October 2018 the UN Secretary-General reports that “the Initiative’s panel of facilitators concluded its ‘listening tours’ with the 14 main armed groups” and gives the following update:

“At the most recent meeting, held in Bouar from 28 to 30 August, the panel helped to harmonize the groups’ demands, which were subsequently submitted to President Touadéra for consideration by the Government. This represents an important preparatory step towards dialogue between the Government and armed groups, tentatively scheduled for November. [...] Civil society, members of Parliament and other national stakeholders, however, criticized the perceived lack of inclusiveness of the Initiative. There were concerns that limiting the dialogue to only 14 armed groups might have a negative impact on the popular support for and successful implementation of any eventual outcome.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 3)

Regarding the conclusion of the second round of consultations with the 14 recognized armed groups in April 2018, the October 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General on the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region states that “this engagement has yet to translate into measurable reduction in violence in the country”. (UN Security Council, 2 October 2018, p. 5)

In January 2018 Freedom House notes that efforts “to reach a negotiated settlement between the government and various armed groups have not yet achieved political reconciliation” (Freedom House, January 2018, Overview). The Independent Expert in August 2018 “again regretted the too weak involvement of the population [...]. She called for the inclusion in the consultation process of all players in civil and political life, especially women and local and religious leaders. She stresses the importance of such consultations for legitimizing the outcome of political dialogue” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 5).

Regarding further developments in the peace process, the UN Secretary-General mentions a meeting with the support of the Russian Federation in Khartoum with the three main ex-Séléka factions and one anti-Balaka faction on 28 August 2018, and a local agreement signed in Bangassou in April 2018 which was “complemented by the arrest of militia leaders, disarmament through community violence reduction programmes, the deployment of units of the Central African armed forces trained by the European Union Training Mission and intercommunal dialogue by local leaders.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 3)

3 Brief overview of the humanitarian situation

In its country report on human rights practice covering the year 2017 the USDOS gives the following overview on the effects of violent conflict on the humanitarian situation:

“The worsening situation raised concerns over the delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need, in a context where 50 percent of the population depended on humanitarian aid to survive. In many affected areas, humanitarian assistance was limited to strictly life-saving interventions, due to limited access and insecurity. The presence of armed groups continued to delay or block planned humanitarian deliveries by air. Humanitarian organizations remained concerned about evidence that members of armed groups continued to hide out in IDP sites and attempted to carry out recruitment activities. This raised concerns for the safety of humanitarian staff and vulnerable displaced individuals residing in these areas. The government provided assistance to IDPs and returnees and promoted the safe voluntary return, resettlement, or local integration of IDPs. The government allowed humanitarian organizations to provide services, although security concerns sometimes prevented organizations from operating in areas previously controlled by the Seleka, and targeted attacks on humanitarian operations impeded their ability to access some populations.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2d)

The report of the UN Secretary-General on the Central African Republic published October 2018 provides an update on the humanitarian situation:

“The country is second to last on the Human Development Index. More than half the population require humanitarian assistance. Non-governmental organizations continue to perform their life-saving work in an extremely dire and increasingly dangerous environment, de facto replacing the State in delivering basic services in some areas. The spike in incidents affecting humanitarian workers has resulted in severe access constraints and the temporary suspension of activities in several areas. Efforts to address the dire humanitarian situation in a sustainable manner have not moved forward in the absence of development and recovery partners and opportunities, owing to continued insecurity and the lack of national absorption and delivery capacity. The country therefore remains on the verge of a humanitarian crisis.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 6)

USAID reports in August 2018 that according to estimates 2.5 million people are in need of humanitarian assistance in the country and more than 573,000 people fled to neighbouring countries. (USAID, 8 August 2018, p. 4)

In her August 2018 report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic the Independent Expert, Marie-Thérèse Keita Bocoum, notes that the “humanitarian situation has not improved and remains very worrying”, adding that the “number of persons needing humanitarian assistance had risen from 2.2 million to 2.5 million”, which constitutes more than half of the population. (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 11)

The UN Secretary-General in June 2018 mentions that “clashes between armed groups and attacks on civilians increased humanitarian needs” between February and June 2018. New or compounding humanitarian needs were seen in Alindao, Amada-Gaza, Markounda, Seko and

Tagbara. The report adds that one in every four Central Africans is displaced (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 7). In his report published October 2018 the UN Secretary-General remained “deeply concerned that violent competition over illicit economies between armed groups” led to “an aggravation of the already fragile humanitarian situation”. (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 17)

According to an August 2018 report by USAID between January and June 2018 more than 180 security incidents against humanitarian organisations were recorded. This represented a nearly 50 percent increase compared to the same period in 2017. The report further mentions “numerous incidents reported in Haute-Kotto, Nana-Grébizi, and Ouaka prefectures in recent months”. Although the conditions in Nana-Grébizi’s Kaga-Bandoro town “relatively improved during June”, relief operations are still hindered by “intermittent attacks against relief organizations” (USAID, 8 August 2018, p. 2). USAID in its report further mentions a “series of criminal attacks against humanitarian organizations in Haute-Kotto Prefecture’s Bria town from mid-June to early July”, disrupting emergency operations. (USAID, 8 August 2018, p. 1)

In June 2018 the UN Secretary-General gives the following account of the humanitarian situation and the delivery of assistance:

“Acts of violence against humanitarian actors continued to increase, making the Central African Republic one of the deadliest humanitarian contexts in the world and curtailing the effective delivery of assistance. In priority areas such as Kabo and Markounda, aid workers withdrew owing to insecurity. Elsewhere, such as in Bangassou, Batangafo, Kaga Bandoro, Rafai and Zemio, aid organizations that reduced their footprint in 2017 owing to violent attacks were unable to resume full operational capacity. In some areas, the fragmentation of armed groups undermined efforts to negotiate humanitarian access.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 7)

The Independent Expert in her August 2018 report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic further states:

“Regarding identified needs, she [the Independent Expert] emphasized that persons with disabilities faced still greater challenges in accessing food, health services and medical assistance. She also notes the importance of strengthening measures on access to psychotherapeutic assistance for victims of the crisis.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 12)

The USDOS reports in April 2018 that humanitarian organisations could not access locations that host refugees because of the volatile security situation. As of July 2017, 9,100 refugees were in the country, including 1,900 Sudanese that continued to receive assistance in Bambari. (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2d)

The June 2018 report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in Central Africa and the activities of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa reports that the worsening security “had a negative impact on humanitarian access”. Humanitarian partners are reviewing their presence in some areas. Also, lack of funding has negative effects on humanitarian operations:

“In the Central African Republic, the overall number of internally displaced persons increased by 70 per cent in the past year, reaching over 680,000. The number of refugees also increased by 30 per cent in the same period, reaching almost 570,000. Worsening security had a negative impact on humanitarian access. Threats and acts of violence against non-governmental organizations led humanitarian partners to review their presence in some areas. Moreover, engagement with parties to the conflict was becoming increasingly difficult due to the increased fragmentation of armed groups. Humanitarian operations were hindered by lack of funding.” (UN Security Council, 1 June 2018, p. 6)

Concerning child protection the UN Secretary-General in his October 2018 report notes that the “denial of humanitarian access was noted as particularly problematic in Kaga Bandoro” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 8).

The Independent Expert in August 2018 notes that the “period from July 2017 was marked by a steady rise in human rights violations and abuses” by armed groups. One of the main abuses continues to be the “denial of humanitarian aid” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 6).

For information regarding attacks on humanitarian organisations and staff please see [section 8.6.3](#) of this compilation.

4 Overview of state security forces and law enforcement

The United Nations Security Sector Reform Unit provides the following overview on state security forces in October 2016:

“Despite adopting the French policing model and structure at independence, law enforcement and internal security in the CAR have over the years become the purview of the FACA [Central African Armed Forces, Forces armées centrafricaines]. The national police and the gendarmerie (a police force with military status, unique to French security systems) have always been underfunded, under-resourced and understaffed. Thus, building their institutional capacity and finding adequate funding remains a challenge. Given the history of these institutions and the role of the FACA in law enforcement, the delineation of roles and responsibilities between the two forces and the FACA remains unclear and is a further challenge for national authorities. The occupation of Bangui by the Séléka led to the institutional collapse of the police and gendarmerie, which have not yet recovered from the crisis despite the rehabilitation of 32 stations.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 13)

In 2018 the German political research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung notes that the “security forces have rarely been able to fully control the territory. They did little to protect the regime of Patassé from being toppled by Bozizé in 2003 and they were unable to protect Bozizé’s government from the coup staged by the Séléka rebels in March 2013.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 6)

In June 2016 the UN Secretary-General notes that despite “the development of a draft national security policy by the transitional authorities, the roles and responsibilities of the armed forces and internal security institutions have yet to be delineated”. According to the report, “policy frameworks are non-existent or anachronistic, while democratic civilian oversight of security agencies is weak.” (UN Security Council, 22 June 2016, p. 6)

The UN Security Sector Reform Unit notes that state security institutions “mirror the characteristics and historical deficits” of the state which is “unaccountable, lacking in legitimacy, non-inclusive, inefficient in the provision of services, composed of weak institutions and largely focused on Bangui”. They “have historically been either absent from large parts of the country and/or mistrusted by the population” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 11). The report further states:

“The absence of the state security forces in the north and north-eastern regions of the country, combined with the under-representation of the Muslim community in the FACA and Police and Gendarmerie, have fostered a perception of discrimination and marginalization in segments of the CAR’s population.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 11)

In its report to the UN Security Council dated December 2016 the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic mentions requests by ex-Séléka factions to integrate ex-Séléka combatants into the national security and armed forces:

“Several told the Panel that the deployment of national security and armed forces in areas under their control could only be accepted if the deployed units included a significant number of Muslims. [...]

The dissatisfaction of ex-Séléka factions regarding the Government’s integration policy is aggravated by the fact that most anti-balaka fighters have never lost their position in the national security and armed forces, or that some have even been reintegrated in spite of a record of human rights abuses during the crisis, such as sanctioned individual Eugène Ngaïkosset [...]” (UN Security Council, 5 December 2016, pp. 10-11)

The Bertelsmann Stiftung in 2018 notes that although army, police and gendarmerie exist as organised entities, they “lack resources, adequate training and overall numbers”. The eastern part of the country is at risk of incursions by Chadian and Sudanese herders and poachers, and rebel groups. According to the report, the “new president’s authority is only as strong as MINUSCA, the U.N. peacekeeping mission, which currently includes 10,000 soldiers, and 2,000 police and civilian support staff.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 6)

Referring to the limited state authority beyond Bangui, the USDOS notes that armed groups acted as “de facto governing institutions, taxing local populations, providing security services, and appointing armed group members to leadership roles” in the “significant swaths of territory” that they controlled (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Executive Summary).

A November 2017 report by the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) mentions the “establishment of parallel state services - including FACA, Gendarmerie, Customs, Police, Municipality, Water and Forestry, and Phytosanitary services” in areas controlled by armed groups. The groups replace the state in areas under their control and “simply copy the state’s organizational structure” (IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, pp. 17-18).

4.1 Central African Armed Forces (Forces armées centrafricaines, FACA)

The UN Security Sector Reform Unit in May 2014 mentions that the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) were established by a 1961 law. Concerning the activities and duties of the FACA, the report further notes:

“There is a 1961 law that established and still governs the structure and day-to-day activities of the Central African Armed Forces (FACA). The law was supposed to ensure that the armed forces would defend against all forms of aggression, maintain security and integrity of the country, protect the lives of its population and to support the national police and gendarmerie at all times and under all circumstances. Recently the missions anticipated for FACA also included providing humanitarian services, contributing to the socio-economic development of the nation during peacetime and being prepared to participate in peacekeeping operations. Originally, the CAR defence forces included the Bureau of the Chief of Defence Staff, ground forces, air force, a fluvial battalion, a brigade of protection and security of institutions, a battalion of fire-fighters, an engineering brigade, services (such as health, armoury) and schools and instructions centers.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 22)

The United Nations Security Sector Reform Unit in October 2016 mentions the collapse of the Forces armées centrafricaines (FACA) in March 2013 during the Séléka offensive. Most of the FACA soldiers joined the anti-Balaka groups while some Muslim soldiers joined the Séléka. (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 12)

IRIN in February 2014 also mentions that after the March 2013 coup many members of the FACA had joined anti-Balaka groups. After president Michel Djotodia resigned in January 2014 “hundreds of men, many of whom had fought as anti-Balaka, showed up for duty at FACA headquarters”. (IRIN, 12 February 2014)

At the time the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was deployed to the CAR in April 2014 (MINUSCA, undated), the FACA was no longer functional (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 12).

The United Nations Security Sector Reform Unit in October 2016 report mentions institutional deficits of the FACA which led to its dysfunctionality. First, the human resources management system was destroyed during the conflict and the authorities don't know how many soldiers are fit for service. Also, the lack of ethnic representativeness negatively impacts the legitimacy of FACA in the north and north-east of the country and another deficit lies in severe shortcomings in the governance of the defence sector combined with a broken command and control system. In detail the UN Security Sector Reform Unit gives the following account of FACA:

“When MINUSCA was deployed to the CAR, the FACA were no longer functional as a result of four major institutional capacity gaps. First the human resources management system was destroyed during the conflict. [...] With the support of EUMAM RCA and MINUSCA, in 2015, the Ministry of Defence successfully registered 7,300 persons into a biometric database. However, a discrepancy remains between this database and the payroll of the Ministry of Finance, which counts 8,400 FACA soldiers. [...]

The national authorities also miss a clear picture of how many soldiers remain fit for service in the FACA. Following a light vetting process called ‘simplified verification’, the Ministry of Defence could only certify that about 3,600 out of 7,300 registered soldiers met the minimum conditions to serve in the FACA. [...]

The second institutional deficit lies with the lack of ethnic representativeness of the FACA, which negatively impacts its legitimacy in the north and north-east of the country. Indeed, the FACA have historically been dominated by three primarily Christian ethnic groups, the Gbaya (33%), the Banda (27%) and the Manza (13%). The other ethnic groups, including the Fulani, and which are predominantly Muslim, are poorly represented in the FACA.

Severe shortcomings in the governance of the defence sector combined with a broken command and control system constitutes a third (sic!) set of challenges for the defence sector. [...] The Defence Headquarters do not have the capacity to plan, command, control and sustain the operational deployment of the FACA outside Bangui. [...] Due to the arms embargo, the FACA remain poorly equipped and lightly armed: according to the United

Nations Panel of Experts, the FACA only have 300 small arms and light weapons, which is insufficient to equip all the units currently operational.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, pp. 12-13)

Regarding ethnic representation, the UN Security Sector Reform Unit notes that “through the years, FACA, which had more recruits from certain dominant ethnic groups was negatively affected and also became a cause for political upheaval, nepotism and tribalism” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 22). The Global Observatory of the International Peace Institute (IPI) states in an August 2018 article that “little progress is to be seen with regards to the multi-ethnic and inclusive character of the forces” (IPI, 24 August 2018). According to a June 2016 report of the UN Security Council, the “military continues to be dominated by three primarily Christian ethnic groups” (UN Security Council, 22 June 2016, p. 6).

According to the UN Security Sector Reform Unit report of May 2014 the “total number of the FACA has fluctuated through the years between 2,000 and 8,500” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 22). During the transition period “7,300 soldiers were registered in a biometric database and more than 3,000 army personnel underwent a simplified verification process” (UN Security Council, 22 June 2016, p. 6). As of 15 September 2016, the Ministry of Defence “had registered 7,478 members of the Central African armed forces, of whom 3,533 had been verified by MINUSCA.” (UN Security Council, 29 September 2016, p. 13). In October 2016 the UN Security Sector Reform Unit reports that there were “8,360 troops on the government’s payroll” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 7). In February 2018 the UN Security Council notes that “1,313 members of the armed forces were verified, bringing the total to 7,113 out of 7,735 registered” (UN Security Council, 15 February 2018, p. 9). According to a June 2018 report by the UN Security Council, a “presidential decree of 6 March 2018 authorized the retirement of 829 armed forces personnel, which should pave the way for a new inclusive recruitment campaign and the integration of former combatants from armed groups” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 10).

A February 2018 report by the UN Security Council mentions that “President Touadéra signed two decrees on the organization and functions for the Central African armed forces and the general staff” in November 2017, which “assign public security tasks to the armed forces” (UN Security Council, 15 February 2018, p. 9). In September 2017 the president already signed the National Defence Plan outlining the future structure of the national army, which will be garrison based and organized in four zones (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017, p. 8). According to an article by IPI, the government plans to create “a 9,900-strong garrison army spread across four zones, with about half stationed outside Bangui, including some in the northern town of Ndélé currently held by the FPRC” (IPI, 24 August 2018).

According to an October 2018 article published by Radio France Internationale (RFI), the EU Military training mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM) contributes to the reconstruction of the Central African army as part of the National Defence Plan. The European mission provides strategic advice and training to the FACA. (RFI, 10 October 2018)

In May 2017, EUTM completed the training of the first FACA battalion, consisting of 650 soldiers (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017, p. 8; RFI, 11 May 2017). The training of the second battalion was completed on 15 December 2017 and the training of a third battalion began in January 2018 (UN Security Council, 15 February 2018, p. 9) and was completed in August 2018 (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 8).

In August 2018 IPI gives the following account on international support for the FACA:

“Since late 2017, tensions have emerged over how multilateral and bilateral partners should support the FACA. Despite an arms embargo on the CAR since 2013, Russia successfully obtained an exemption from the UN Security Council to ship light weapons and ammunition to the government, earmarked for EU-trained FACA battalions. Russian military and civilian instructors were deployed in January 2018 to equip and advise the FACA, train additional defense and security forces, and provide personal security to President Touadéra. In July, after pressure from Russia, a presidential statement of the UN Security Council omitted explicit reference to the UN Human Rights Due Diligence Policy in the training and deploying of FACA - a framework that guides UN support to EU-trained FACA. Later that month, the EU Military Training Mission in CAR (EUTM-RCA) was extended to September 2020, and its mandate expanded to include training for the president’s cabinet and to provide military-civilian cooperation to the Ministry of Interior and the gendarmerie. In August, Moscow and Bangui signed a new military cooperation pact, the latest instance of an apparent race to support the CAR’s security institutions.” (IPI, 24 August 2018)

An August 2018 article by RFI mentions that 400 soldiers have completed training provided by Russian teams. In total 1,200 FACA soldiers will participate in a two month training by Russia while others are trained by EUTM. (RFI, 5 August 2018)

In its letter to the UN Security Council dated July 2018, the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic mentions that “trained FACA personnel have gradually been redeployed in Obo, Paoua, Sibut and Bangassou”. It is noted that there is quite positive feedback from international partners on the performance of FACA in the mentioned locations, however, “it must be stressed that FACA currently has insufficient capacity or lacks logistical support for conducting operations without the substantive and constant support of MINUSCA and/or the Russian instructors.” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 8)

According to IPI, strategic towns like Bambari “are yet to benefit from the FACA presence promised by the government” (IPI, 24 August 2018). In September 2018, FACA troops were deployed in Bouar and, according to the defence minister, will operate in the prefectures Nana Mambéré, Mambéré Kadéï, Sangha Mbaéré, Ouham and Ouham Péné (Radio Ndeke Luka, 14 September 2018). According to an August 2018 article by the Réseau des Journalistes pour les Droits de l’Homme (RJDH), FACA personnel has been deployed in Dekoa on 17 August 2018 (RJDH, 23 August 2018) and MINUSCA reports that personnel of MINUSCA and FACA started joint patrols in Bambari on 29 October 2018 (MINUSCA, 31 October 2018).

4.2 Internal Security Forces (Police and Gendarmerie)

According to the 2018 USDOS human rights report police and gendarmerie are responsible for law enforcement and maintaining order. However, police and gendarmerie “largely withdrew from the interior of the country during the violence in 2013 and maintained limited or no presence in many areas.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d)

The UN Security Sector Reform Unit also mentions the reduction of the country’s law enforcement system “to insignificance” after the crisis in March 2013 and gives the following account of the situation:

“The Police and Gendarmerie Forces in CAR (or what remains of them) resumed their activities and were merged at the end of August 2013 with an administrative decree placing the Gendarmerie (formerly under the Ministry of Defence) under the Ministry for Public Security, Immigration, Emigration and Public Order (corresponding to the Ministry of Interior), together with the National Police. The decision was due to mainly practical reasons rather than political, in order to try to assemble the minimum of a law enforcement organization throughout the country, taking into account the available strength on both sides. Such a measure of urgency was clearly needed in a scenario of serious instability and lack of public security, intensified by the almost total dispersal of the FACA after the Ex- Seleka uprising.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 19)

Regarding the gendarmerie, Small Arms Survey (SAS) in December 2008 notes that it has historically competed with other government security agencies for the president’s trust and support. The “gendarmerie has at times functioned independently and at other times served under the chief of staff of the armed forces.” (SAS, December 2008, p. 15)

In its October 2016 report the UN Security Sector Reform Unit notes that despite a decree placing the “gendarmerie under the operational command of the Ministry of Interior, the status of the gendarmerie as a military force given the mission of protecting persons and property remains uncertain.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 14)

The UN Security Sector Reform Unit mentions that the gendarmerie was dissatisfied with the decision to be merged with the national police under the Ministry of Interior “due to the overall better asset and conditions they enjoyed before the last crisis” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 19). The UN Security Sector Reform Unit in its October 2016 report notes that gendarmerie and police “have each their separate (weak) legal framework, separate command and organizational structure, different leadership, unclear management, resources, ranks, uniforms, tasks, etc.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 14).

As of April 2014, the total strength of police was around 1,600 and the gendarmerie was estimated to be between 2,400 and 2,500 (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 19). In June 2016 the UN Security Council notes that there are 3,700 registered police and gendarmerie officers. Since 2010 there has been no recruitment and since 2005 no retirements (UN Security Council, 22 June 2016, p. 6). In September 2016 a “joint task force of UNDP, MINUSCA, national police and gendarmerie undertook an identification exercise among the

internal security forces which resulted in the registration of 1,874 gendarmes and 1,154 police” (UN Security Council, 29 September 2016, p. 13). According to the October 2016 UN Security Sector Reform Unit report, the number of police officers was 1,500 and the number of gendarmerie officers was 2,161 (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, p. 7). A report published by the UN Security Council in June 2018 mentions that “MINUSCA, jointly with UNDP, verified 3,254 active personnel in the police and gendarmerie” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 10).

In its letter to the UN Security Council dated July 2018, the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic notes that according to the Director General of the Gendarmerie there is a lack of adequate training and equipment and gendarmes are “not currently in a position to undertake law enforcement activities”. Equipment delivery have “been focused almost exclusively on FACA, rather than on internal security forces”, the report further states. (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 8)

A June 2016 report by the UN Security Council mentions that police and gendarmerie “are understaffed and underfunded” (UN Security Council, 22 June 2016, p. 6). The UN Security Council in December 2017 further notes that deployed national security and defense forces “continue to face logistical challenges” (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017, pp. 7-8). According to the USDOS, deployed police and gendarmerie officers “remained poorly trained, few had functioning arms, and there was little ammunition. Local commanding officers paid for basic necessities (office supplies) out of their own pockets” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d).

In May 2014 the UN Security Sector Reform Unit mentions that “gendarmes and police officers until recently extorted regularly food and money from the population”. According to the report this is partly explained by bad working conditions, no efficient retirement process and salary arrears which contribute to disciplinary problems. (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 19)

In December 2017 the UN Security Council notes the following regarding cases of misconduct by police and gendarmerie forces:

“Cases of misconduct have also been reported, including the creation of checkpoints to collect so-called taxes in Sangha-Mbaéré and Nana Bakasa Prefectures in January and August 2017 respectively and the physical assault of a MINUSCA national staff member in Bambari in May 2017. Prior to their deployment, national security and defence forces should also, following the relevant exemptions request, be adequately equipped and armed, which the Panel observed is often not the case, for instance in Obo, Bambari and Boali.” (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017, p. 8)

According to the UN Security Sector Reform Unit, police and gendarmerie training centres in Bangui were looted during the 2013 crisis. The rehabilitation of these structures was envisaged under development programmes (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 19). In June 2018 the UN Security Council notes that the “Police Academy in Bangui, rehabilitated with UNDP support, started hosting police trainees” and that 500 police and gendarmerie recruits “started training at the police and gendarmerie schools in Bangui” (UN Security Council, 18 June

2018, pp. 9-10). An August 2018 article by Radio France Internationale (RFI) notes that two years after the election of President Touadéra, security structures are being rebuilt. Since 2012 no new gendarmerie recruits have been trained. After the rehabilitation of the police school and the gendarmerie school in Bangui police officers from all over the country undergo a basic training course and 500 police and gendarmerie officers are expected to leave the school in October 2018 (RFI, 9 August 2018). Since April 2018 a training of 160 police and gendarmerie officers by Russian instructors has started in Berengo (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 8).

UN Security Sector Reform Unit in its May 2014 report mentions that the “government has been often accused of ethnically biased recruitment and nepotism”. (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, 20 May 2014, p. 19). However in December 2017 the UN Security Council notes the following regarding recruitment of police and gendarmerie personnel:

“On 31 August 2017, the Minister of Defence and the Minister of the Interior signed a decree on the recruitment of 250 police and 250 gendarmerie officers, currently being trained by MINUSCA. Except for the Haute-Kotto and Mbomou Prefectures, where the security situation prevented the recruitment of candidates, all other regions are represented. However, local authorities in the Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga Prefectures expressed their dissatisfaction with the selection of the small number of candidates from their respective prefectures, regretting a geographical imbalance in the final selection.” (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017, pp. 7-8)

4.3 Presidential Guard

In September 2016, a UN Security Council report also mentions the creation of “a presidential security unit composed of some 175 Central African armed forces, police and gendarmes. Members of the unit have been deployed to protect the residences of high-level government officials in Bangui” (UN Security Council, 29 September 2016, p. 4). In its letter to the UN Security Council dated July 2018, the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic notes that the first two training sessions for the Presidential Guard conducted by Russian instructors were concluded in March and May 2018. The third training session commenced in Berengo in May 2018 (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 7). The Panel further notes that weapons and ammunition “have been assigned to elements from the Presidential Guard” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 9).

The December 2008 report by SAS provides a detailed account on the history of the presidential guard in the country:

“The force primarily responsible for protecting the president has had many names over the years. Initially known as the Garde républicaine (Republican Guard) after CAR was granted independence, it became the Presidential Guard and then the Imperial Guard under Bokassa. To distance his presidency from the record of the Imperial Guards’ human rights abuses, Dacko changed the name to the Praetorian Guard. It was known as the Presidential Guard during Kolingba’s rule, when it was placed under French command. [...]

Two things, however, have remained fairly constant concerning the unit entrusted primarily to protect the Central African head of state: it has been comparatively capably

staffed, and it has been relatively well treated. Bokassa reserved spots in the presidential guard for people from his home village (Decalo, 1989, p. 157). Under President Patassé, the presidential guard allegedly counted Chadian mercenaries among its forces (Africa Confidential, 2001), although in 2004 sources close to Patassé disputed the assertion. As of 2006, President Bozizé reportedly had a Chadian personal security contingent. [...]

Furthermore, its members are better armed than colleagues serving with other armed services and public security institutions in the country. For example, under President Patassé presidential security personnel, whether in uniform or not, could be identified by the personal firearms they carried. They tended to be outfitted with Kalashnikov assault rifles, AA-52 light machine guns, and rocket-propelled grenade launchers (RPGs).” (SAS, December 2008, pp. 16-18)

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

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) was established on 10 April 2014 by the UN Security Council through resolution 2149, and in 2016 its mandate was extended until 15 November 2017 by resolution 2301 (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, pp. 8-9). In 2017, the mandate of MINUSCA was extended until 15 November 2018 by resolution 2387 (2017) (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 1; for the complete resolution see UN Security Council, 15 November 2017). In November 2018 this mandate was extended for one month by resolution 2446 (UN Security Council, 15 November 2018), and in December 2018 the mandate was extended until 15 November 2019 (MINUSCA, 14 December 2018).

According to the German political research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung, “the new president’s authority is only as strong as MINUSCA” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 6). The UN Security Council also mentions that “MINUSCA is recognized as the de facto primary security provider” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 15).

In January 2018 Human Rights Watch (HRW) reports that MINUSCA “deployed about 10,050 military peacekeepers and 2,000 police across many parts of the country” (HRW, 18 January 2018). The USDOS mentions a uniformed force numbering “11,846, of whom 1,896 were police officers” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d).

The October 2018 UN Security Council report provides the following numbers of MINUSCA personnel:

“As at 1 October [2018], MINUSCA had deployed 11,170 military personnel, 3.17 per cent of whom were women. That figure represents 95.88 per cent of the total authorized strength of 11,650 personnel. [...] As at 1 October 2018, a total of 750 troops out of the 900 authorized by the Security Council were operational. The remaining troops are expected to reach full operational capability by end of November [...] As at 1 October, MINUSCA had deployed 1,918 police personnel, representing 92.21 per cent of the authorized strength of 2,080. That number comprised 385 individual police officers, including 52 women, representing 96.25 per cent of the authorized strength of 400. [...] As

at 1 October, MINUSCA had deployed 1,384 civilian personnel (1,151 staff members and 233 United Nations Volunteers) representing 90 per cent of the total 1,524 authorized positions.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 10)

The USDOS notes that the “role of MINUSCA’s uniformed force was to protect the civilian population from physical violence within its capabilities and areas of deployment. MINUSCA police had the authority to make arrests and transfer persons to national authorities” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d). According to HRW, MINUSCA, however, “struggled to establish security in key areas and to sufficiently protect civilians” (HRW, 18 January 2018).

5 Overview of armed groups

In 2018 the International Center for Transitional Justice, a New York-based Non-Profit-Organisation that seeks to foster accountability for human rights abuses through transitional justice publishes a report by independent researcher and humanitarian worker Enrica Picco on the situation of Muslim refugees from the CAR. The report briefly describes the formation of the two major armed movements in the CAR as well as their religious background:

“The turmoil of the past few years in the Central African Republic (CAR) was triggered by the overthrow of President François Bozizé by Seleka rebels in 2013, following a decade of instability and a series of rebellions. The rebel coalition, which originated in the remote northern provinces of CAR, was largely (though not exclusively) composed of Muslims. The violence and abuse perpetrated by the Seleka forces led to the creation of a militia, the so-called Anti-Balaka, intended to defend and represent - ethnically and religiously - the majority of Central Africans.” (ICTJ, 2018, p. 4)

In August 2018 the International Peace Information Service (IPIS) and the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) release a joint report on the nature and scope of the conflict in the CAR. IPIS is an independent research institute based in Belgium with a focus on development in Sub-Saharan Africa and DIIS works as an independent research institute on several projects providing analysis of international politics. The report features an introduction to the recent conflict in the CAR that started in 2013 with the establishment of the Séléka-militia and its counterforce, the anti-Balaka, as well as mentioning the fractured nature of both armed fronts:

“In the post-colonial history of the Central African Republic, violence has often been the shortest way to presidential power. President Bozizé presented little deviation from this narrative after coming to power after a coup d'état in 2003. Whilst he faced armed opposition and a conflict-affected northwest from the outset, it is not until the rise of the Séléka, that the CAR entered into an era of unprecedented violence. During its brief reign (March 2013 to January 2014), severe Séléka abuses in execution of a ‘spoils of war’ policy, saw local communities fall back on self defence militias (anti-balaka) from August 2013. This marked the start of an unprecedented cycle of violence characterized by ethnic cleansing and reprisal killings throughout much of 2014. It fomented a de facto partition between ex-Séléka and anti-balaka territory with a conflict-prone fault line down the country's center. As the transitional authorities fought to restore stability in the west, rising divisions among the ex-Séléka leadership over political strategy and the Brazzaville ceasefire culminated in the splintering of the movement from September 2014.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 6)

“Whilst the events of 2013 and 2014 established a veritable conflict fault line between these two main factions to the CAR's conflict (Séléka and anti-balaka), since then, the divergent interests, strengths and ambitions of their respective memberships has seen them fragment considerably, rendering conflict dynamics increasingly localised. Thus, whilst the Bangui Forum sought to engage 10 armed groups in dialogue in May 2015, by the start of DDR discussions in October 2016 that figure had risen to 14. By early 2018, at least 16 official armed groups appeared to be active in the CAR. Moreover, contest over leadership within these groups has sometimes led to multiple delegations representing

group interests in peace negotiations, or even the post facto revocation of representative mandates. The nature of the anti-balaka especially raises questions about the ability of group representatives to ensure wider group compliance with negotiated agreements.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 15)

Another joint report by IPIS and DIIS of November 2017 on the system of roadblocks imposed by armed groups and the state to garner revenues features a map outlining the zones of control of the different armed factions and the state. The roadblocks that can be seen on the map covering most of the country’s infrastructure network also give an indication of which parts of the country are under government control and which parts under control of armed groups. The map can be accessed on page 7 of the following report:

- IPIS/DIIS – International Peace Information Service/Danish Institute for International Studies: The Politics of Pillage: the political economy of roadblocks in the Central African Republic (Authors: Peer Schouten and Soleil-Perfect Kalessopo), November 2017
<http://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/1711-CAR-roadblocks-English.pdf>

IPIS also maintains an interactive map of the Central African Republic, in which security-related incidents involving all parties to the conflict have been geographically located for the years 2012 until 2017. The navigation allows the setting of time-frames and the singling out of different conflict groups or types of incidents. The map can be accessed via the following link:

- IPIS - International Peace Information Service: Interactive webmap of the Central African Republic, undated
<http://www.ipisresearch.be/mapping/webmapping/car/v2/#6.830533071991496/22.748244341965005/5.645397063794152/4/1/>

The Enough Project, based in Washington, D.C., a project co-founded by the Center for American Progress and the International Crisis Group working to end genocide and crimes against humanity, in November 2018 publishes a report on armed groups active in the CAR. On page 1 the report contains a chart outlining 18 different groups and their alliances. On page 4 it features maps showing the armed groups’ areas of influence and control in October 2018. The chart and the maps can be accessed via the following link:

- Enough Project: Splintered Warfare II: How Foreign Interference is Fueling Kleptocracy, Warlordism, and an Escalating Violent Crisis in the Central African Republic (Author: Nathalia Dukhan), November 2018
https://enoughproject.org/wp-content/uploads/SplinteredWarfare2_Enough_Nov2018-web.pdf

The following sub-sections contain information on the main armed groups (indigenous and foreign) that are currently active in the CAR and whose areas of control or influence are also marked on the above-mentioned map (IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, p. 7). The information in the sub-sections largely refers to two sources, a report by the Enough Project of August 2017 and the report by IPIS/DIIS of August 2018 which in turn draw much of their information from UN reports. Due to the difficulty of obtaining information on the complex conflict situation, the report by the UN Secretary-General which is released every four months as well as the biannual

report to the UN Security Council by the Panel of Experts are the essential sources of information on the CAR.

5.1 Ex-Séléka

The IPIS/DIIS report of August 2018 names the major splinter groups of the Séléka-militia and explains how despite the factionist tendencies their frequent interactions and collaborations led to them being described as ex-Séléka:

“As outlined in IPIS’ last report, the Séléka had already begun to faction off by October 2014. Having been rebranded the Front Populaire pour la renaissance de Centrafrique (FPRC) in August 2014, the ex-Séléka alliance saw its first major splinter group with the creation of the Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) by Ali Darassa and Al Khaitm. This factioning had followed tensions between fighters loyal to Joseph Zoundeko and Ali Darassa, principally over territorial control and rent seeking, as well as discord over FPRC demands for a partition of the country and rejection of the Brazzaville ceasefire. Whilst Al Khatim appears later to have rejoined the FPRC, he nevertheless splintered off to form his own armed faction, the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC), in July 2015. With the exception of more localized factions that remained strongly FPRC aligned in 2017, the FPRC, MPC and UPC have been the dominant ex-Séléka forces controlling central and eastern CAR since 2015. However, since this time these groups have themselves been subject to significant internal factioning along increasingly fratricidal lines (see below). Despite this factioning of the ex-Séléka into distinct groups from 2014, their frequent collaborations and complexity sees them often still referred to simply as ‘ex-Séléka’ in media reporting, a fact also reflected in certain incidents on the interactive web map.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 19)

5.1.1 *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)*

The Enough Project report of August 2017 mentions that FPRC was founded 2014 in the town Birao [Vakanga prefecture]. The report gives the names of six persons considered to be the main leaders of the group, most of whom hail from either the Rounga or Goula ethnic groups. The first name mentioned is Nourredine Adam from the Rounga ethnic group. The military strongholds of the FPRC are said to be Birao (capital of Vakanga prefecture), Ndélé (capital of Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture), Bria (capital of Haute-Kotto prefecture) and Kaga-Bandoro (capital of Nana-Grébizi prefecture). (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 7)

The report goes on to mention the following regarding the activities and political goals of the FPRC as well as an alliance with several ex-Séléka groups and an anti-Balaka group known as “the Coalition”:

“FPRC leaders maintain a climate of permanent crisis and intercommunal tension to justify their existence by the need to protect civilians from the insecurity. Leaders say that they act in self-defense against the central leadership’s authoritarian and predatory governance. FPRC leaders also denounce a policy that marginalizes the northeastern regions of the country. [...] Despite these grievances, the leaders have never intended to change the system, as the predatory Séléka regime demonstrated in 2013. Instead, the FPRC leaders have manipulated the perceived threat of anti-Balaka violence against the

Muslim community to justify the need to protect them. Since losing political power in January 2014, the FPRC leaders have claimed that cohabitation between the populations of the northeast and those of the southwest is impossible.” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 7)

“Since July 2016, Nourredine Adam has called on the ex-Séléka factions (FPRC, MPC, RPRC [Rassemblement Patriotique pour le Renouveau de la Centrafrique], and Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique, UPC) to create an alliance, together with the anti-Balaka-Mokom wing, in order to strengthen their negotiating power. UPC leaders refused to join this call. Abdoulaye Hissène and Maxime Mokom coordinated the military operations of this group, known as ‘the Coalition,’ which is composed of the FPRC, MPC, RPRC and anti-Balaka/Mokom groups. Systematic attacks against the UPC positions and Fulani communities led to ‘the Coalition’ gaining control of additional areas. The FPRC, together with ‘the Coalition,’ intensified pressure on the country’s economic resources to increase the conflict financing. [...]

Since losing political power in January 2014, the FPRC’s main objective has been to:

- Overthrow the central government based in Bangui and reestablish a Séléka regime; or,
- If they fail to regain power, to have official partition of the country (with Bambari as the new capital of the Dar El Kuti or Logone state).” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 8)

The IPIS/DIIS report of August 2018 mentions the following regarding the leadership structure of FPRC and its zones of control:

“The FPRC is composed of a number of ex-Séléka factions loyal to the warlords that form the core of its leadership. Since 2014, that leadership has been further concentrated by departures, fatalities, and marginalization. Whilst lower level faction leaders, like Haroun Gaye, Khalit Azor, Issa Banda and Ali Ousta, have risen in prominence over recent years, the group’s orientation up to 2018 remained dominated by Nourredine Adam, Abdoulaye Hissène and Zacharia Damane. Nevertheless, FPRC infighting from mid-2017 has reportedly seen Zacharia Damane’s Goula FPRC faction 37 begin to distance itself in 2018. [...]

From 2015 to 2018, the FPRC maintained one of the largest operational zones of all groups in the CAR, enjoying virtually unchallenged control throughout Vakaga, Bamingui-Bangoran and much of Haut Kotto. In areas where its territorial reach overlaps with those of other groups it has usually engaged in revenue sharing, seeing mostly only low-level conflict with other groups between 2014 and June 2016. This period saw the FPRC consolidate its hold over its existing territory whilst shifting its presence to key areas of economic concern. This has entailed its gradual reinforcement in key transhumance locales, like Kaga Bandoro, to where it shifted its stronghold in 2015, and mining centers like Bria, where it reinforced its presence from late 2014. Here, it has mostly operated collaboratively with MPC [Mouvement Patriotique Centrafricain] (Kaga Bandoro) and the RPRC [Rassemblement Patriotique pour le Renouveau de la Centrafrique] and UPC [Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique] (Bria). Early 2016 saw the group further expand its operations south of Bria

into mineral rich zones along the Bria-Yalinga axe, and later Nzako and Bakouma. Building on gains made during 2014, the FPRC has developed sophisticated predation strategies focused largely around control over transit and production hubs, particularly through taxation and the establishment of parallel administrations. Its sources of revenue generation are relatively diverse, encompassing provision of security services for Sudanese traders and Chinese oil exploration activities, as well as control over mining and, to a lesser extent, the cattle trade.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, pp. 19-20)

According to IPIS/DIIS, the main goals of FPRC are a regime change that would put the leaders of ex-Séléka groups in power, or a partition of the country:

“Persistently denouncing the marginalization of Muslims and northeastern CAR, Nourredine Adam and Abdoulaye Hisséne have been strong proponents of Séléka reunification to oust the incumbent government. In the absence of a regime change that would place these leaders in key positions of power they alternatively seek to partition the country. Despite a shared concern for the interests of certain Muslim communities, these hardline views are not generally shared by the more moderate MPC and UPC in the past. Occupying the central fault-line down which any proposed partition might take place these groups would not stand to benefit from such a partition, a fact reinforced by the rank and file of their membership (predominantly Fulani and Arab) who have particularly strong links to pastoralist activities, which rely on this central zone.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 21)

A map of FRPC-related incidents and roadblocks in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017 can be found on page 20 of the IPIS/DIIS report (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 20).

5.1.2 Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC)

According to the Enough Project report of August 2017, the UPC was founded in October 2014 in Bambari, the capital of Ouaka prefecture. Its leader is Ali Darassa from the Fulani ethnic group. The group’s stronghold is said to be the town of Alindao (in Basse Kotto prefecture). The report gives the following overview of UPC’s political aims and activities carried out by the group as well as clashes with members of the alliance called “the Coalition”:

“UPC leaders justify the group’s existence by the continuous threats and attacks against the Muslims and particularly the Peuhl/Fulani community. The UPC denounces marginalization and the systematic looting and taxes imposed on their cattle. The UPC also seeks access to education and literacy for the Fulani people. [...]

In 2016, the UPC was the strongest armed faction in CAR and was expanding its areas of control, particularly over economic resources, leading to rising tensions with the other ex-Séléka factions. Since the end of 2016, widespread attacks by ‘the Coalition’ (FPRC, RPRC, MPC, anti-Balaka-Mokom) and foreign mercenaries against the UPC and the Fulani community have weakened the UPC military force. UPC fighters left their stronghold in Bambari in March 2017 and now occupy the Alindao area. As of July 2017, the UPC remains strong, particularly because of its strong military command and its access to arms and ammunition from the region, particularly Sudan and the DRC [Democratic Republic of the Congo].

UPC leaders have always said that they are not interested in overthrowing the central government and their political agenda has mainly been focused on: Maintaining and expanding the de facto partition that allow the leaders and the group to benefit from the country's resources, including by imposing significant taxes on cattle herders and on other economic resources. Receiving military positions and getting UPC combatants integrated within the central government and the national armed forces." (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 25)

The IPIS/DIIS report portrays the UPC as an armed group composed mainly of ethnic Fulani fighters active in the areas surrounding the town Bangassou where it generates revenues through various forms of taxation, leading to tensions with local communities:

"Established following the intense inter-communal clashes of 2013/14, the Ali Darassa-led UPC originally counted a variety of factions within its ranks. Composed predominantly of Fulani and Arab fighters, the group claimed to be open to anyone that 'wants to work for peace in CAR', outlining its commitment to the Brazzaville ceasefire and its disapproval of the FPRC's partitionist agenda. Since then however a withdrawal of Arab UPC factions in mid-2016 appears to have rendered the group increasingly homogenous. This withdrawal followed in-fighting over what appears to have become a progressively segregationist approach to group operations and an apparent prioritization of protecting Fulani over Arab interests since the group's inception. Despite the UPC's democratic discourse, the group has from the outset engaged in systemic and diversified economic predation focused largely on taxation and security provision encompassing livestock, coffee, sugar, agricultural goods and general merchandise, as well as involving itself in diamond and especially gold taxation, production and trade." (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 26)

"The UPC's activities in its zones of operations heightened tensions with local communities who were subjected to numerous exactions, including taxation, arbitrary arrest, physical abuse and other forms of extortion, as well as retaliation killings and forced marriages. In particular, the UPC's relocation to areas surrounding Bangassou was a source of frustration for some locals, who saw Muslim merchants as receiving preferential treatment at UPC checkpoints – an allegation later instrumentalized to suggest that the city's entire Muslim community were UPC supporters." (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 27)

"Since the start of 2018, the UPC has sought to regain control over its former stronghold of Bambari and other key locales in Ouaka and beyond. This has pitched it into direct conflict with the Central African authorities and international forces in Bambari since May 2018, as it challenges attempts to render the city an armed group-free zone as part of a pilot for national reconciliation and social cohesion." (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 28)

A map of UPC-related incidents and roadblocks in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017 can be found on page 25 of the IPIS/DIIS report (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 25).

Lotje de Vries, assistant professor at the Sociology of Development and Change Group of Wageningen University who has carried out field research in the CAR, writes in her article on

the Mbororo subgroup of the Fulani of March 2018 about the UPC and its leader Ali Darassa. According to de Vries, the UPC claims to protect the interests of the Mbororo:

“More notorious is Ali Darassa who used to fight alongside the well-known Chadian rebel leader Baba Ladé. Darassa is a Fulani from Chad and just like his former boss, Baba Ladé, a highly controversial warlord. After the dissolution of the Séléka in September 2013, Darassa created his Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) controlling the areas surrounding Bambari. In the beginning of 2017 MINUSCA forced him to leave the town, which led to a spiral of new violence in areas where he allegedly wanted to install himself. Both Sidiki and Darassa vowed to protect the interest of the Mbororo and their cattle but at the same time impose the same conditions on them as other rebel groups (but did not resort to cattle theft).” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, pp. 7-8)

The German daily newspaper taz in a November 2018 article mentions Alindao as the stronghold of the UPC and describes the militia as being made up of fighters from the ethnic group Peuhl/Fulani. (taz, 19 November 2018)

5.1.3 Mouvement Patriotique Centrafricain (MPC), including MPC-Siriri

As the Enough Project writes in August 2011, MPC was formed in July 2015 and its leaders are Mahamat al-Khatim and Idriss Ahmed El-Bachar who are both classified as Chadian Arab. The strongholds of the MPC are said to be Moyen-Sido (Ouham prefecture on the border with Chad), Kabo (Ouham prefecture) and Kaga-Bandoro (capital of Nana-Grébizi prefecture). The report gives the following information regarding the activities of the group as well as its political agenda and allies:

“MPC leaders maintain a climate of permanent crisis and intercommunal tension to justify their existence by the need to protect civilians from the insecurity. Leaders say that they act in self-defense against the central leadership’s authoritarian and predatory governance. MPC leaders also denounce a political system that marginalizes the CAR-Chadian Arab communities. [...]

MPC has developed two main sets of military alliances. (1) MPC is part of ‘the Coalition,’ and since October 2016 the MPC operates in partnership with:

- The FPRC
- The Rassemblement Patriotique pour le Renouveau de la Centrafrique (RPRC)
- The anti-Balaka/Mokom wing allied with François Bozizé

Since May 2017 Mahamat al-Khatim has been chief of staff for ‘the Coalition.’ (2) Since 2016 MPC has had an alliance with:

- Révolution Justice

This is an opportunistic alliance based mainly on sharing economic revenues in areas they both control. MPC remains stronger than RJ.

[...]

Since 2015, MPC leaders have been perceived as more moderate than the FPRC leaders. The MPC's main political agenda has been to obtain political and military positions in the government, ensuring CAR citizens with Chadian origin are included in the political system. However, since joining 'the Coalition' formed by FPRC, RPRC and the anti-Balaka/Mokom wing in October 2016, the MPC leaders have supported the FPRC's agenda that seeks to:

- Overthrow the central government based in Bangui and reestablish a Séléka regime; or,
- If they fail to regain power, to have official partition of the country (with Bambari as the new capital of the Dar El Kuti or Logone state)" (Enough Project, August 2017, pp. 9-10)

The Enough Project report also contains information on the MPC splinter faction named MPC-Siriri (Siriri meaning "Peace"). According to the report, MPC-Siriri split from the MPC in June 2017 in Bangui and is led by Mahamat Abdel Karim and Saleh Zabadi, both Chadian Arabs. The group is said to be mainly active in the capital Bangui as well as Kaga-Bandoro, capital of Nana-Grébizi prefecture. The report further details the group's origin and its military objectives and clashes with the FPRC:

"This group emerged in June 2017, after serious, well-organized, deadly attacks with heavy weapons erupted beginning in May in the southeastern town of Bangassou (almost 500 km east of Bangui) that initially resulted in the deaths of a hundred people and the displacement of thousands more. MPC Siriri is a splinter group that broke off of the MPC group led by Mahamat al-Khatim. The leaders and the combatants from MPC Siriri are mostly composed of Arab Muslims who refuse to be associated with the abuses of 'the Coalition' against the Muslims, particularly Arabs. There is a conflict between members of this group and Abdoulaye Hissène [FPRC-leader, remark by ACCORD] and his troops. [...]

Attacks are committed against the leaders of the FPRC, particularly in Bria. Since the group left 'the Coalition' last June, their military strength is significantly weaker than the MPC group that is led by al-Khatim. This group has not articulated its political agenda yet, but it believes that any peace process should involve Chad. The leaders seek to obtain political and military positions in the government, with greater political inclusion of Central African-Chadian individuals." (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 11)

The IPIS/DIIS report notes the strong connections of MPC to neighbouring Chad as well as to the FPRC armed group. Its activities are said to be concentrated in the border areas with Chad. With reference to a UN report of 2017 the report points out the group's fractured leadership with de facto autonomous agency in different regions of the country. The report further mentions the emergence of a splinter faction called MPC-Siriri:

"Founded in August 2015 by Al Khatim and Ahamat Bahar, the MPC is predominantly composed of Arab fighters, though it also has a notable Fulani contingent. Its leadership is thought to be well connected to Chadian 'big men' responsible for driving herds between Chad and the CAR and as such, its principle zone of operations has focused on the northern border area between these two countries. Despite the MPC's split from the FPRC, it has

nevertheless maintained functional relations with the group in their areas of mutual interest from the outset. This saw both groups engage in resource sharing agreements and even joint military training around Nana-Grébizi in 2015, as well as entering into tactical alliances to counter common threats, in particular UPC expansion into their spheres of influence. [...]

At its inception, the MPC had an operational presence throughout much of Nana-Grébizi and north east Ouham (Kabo and Batangafo), placing particular emphasis on controlling major pastoralist hubs and transit locales. However, early 2016 saw it seek to expand its territorial reach and augment its fighting capacity by pushing both east and west. Whilst its westerly expansion into Ouham Pendé towards Paoua was facilitated by an alliance with the more native-based RJ [Révolution et Justice] up to late 2017, its easterly expansion into Bamingui-Bangoran saw rising tensions with the FPRC in early 2016. [...]

Since its founding, the MPC has been subject to notable rifts among its leadership, leading the UN Panel of experts to draw a semblance with ‘a network of independent leaders commanding elements in separate regions, with limited contacts with the Bangui-based political bureau.’ (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, pp. 23-24)

“In June 2017, a splinter MPC faction emerged calling itself MPC Siriri. Led by Mahamat Abdel Karim and Salah Zabadi, these Arab Muslim fighters are said to have denounced the MPC’s association with abuses committed by FPRC-led coalition members against Muslims, particularly Arabs.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 25)

A map of MPC-related incidents and roadblocks in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017 can be found on page 23 of the IPIS/DIIS report (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 23).

5.2 Anti-Balaka

According to the Enough Project report of August 2017, there are different types of anti-Balaka groups, ranging from local self-defence groups without political agenda that are mobilised during communal unrest to larger, more organised factions with political goals and prominent leaders. The locally active anti-Balaka groups are described by Enough Project in the following way:

“Self-defense groups emerged due to the high level of criminality and insecurity in rural areas in the 1980s and 1990s. In 2013, most of these groups joined the anti-Balaka movement to hunt down the Séléka fighters and Muslims who were perceived as complicit in the Séléka abuses. Some local anti-Balaka groups currently remain active. They have taken advantage of the climate of impunity, and they act as bandits. [...]

The self-defense groups can be seen as standing forces that can re-activate themselves when they perceive the need. They represent a significant threat to peace, despite not having any specific political agenda or any specific military training.” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 16)

As a larger group the report mentions the “National coordination of the ex-anti-Balaka” led by Patrice-Edouard Ngaissona and based in Bangui and other areas in southwestern CAR:

“The anti-Balaka group led by Ngaïssona has justified its existence by the threat the ex-Séléka factions represent for the non-Muslim community. The group perceives a need to protect the homeland from ‘foreigners.’ This group refuses to disarm as long as the Séléka groups keep their arms.” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 17)

Another larger group according to Enough Project is the anti-Balaka - Maxime Mokom wing, founded 2015 in Bossangoa and lead by Maxime Mokom from the Gbaya ethnic group who is allied with former president Francois Bozizé. The group is said to retain strongholds in the capital Bangui with affiliates in the West, Center and East of the country. The following political aims of the group are mentioned:

“This group has justified its existence by the threat ex-Séléka factions represent to the non-Muslim community. This group says it will not disarm as long as the Séléka keep their arms. [...]

The main objective of the anti-Balaka faction led by Maxime Mokom is to:

- Overthrow the central government and bring François Bozizé back to power. In all scenarios, the leaders seek to:
- Obtain general amnesty for the leaders and the combatants, which includes the lifting of all multilateral and bilateral targeted sanctions imposed on individuals;
- Obtain special treatment for the former presidents; and
- Obtain political and military positions” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 18)

The IPIS/DIIS report refers to the anti-Balaka as small self-defence groups that received support from the former government under president Bozizé. Despite being conceived as a movement to fight the Séléka, it remained divided under various military leaders competing for power and is described as a “mobile network of militias with mainly local agendas”:

“The anti-balaka movement active in 2013/2014 originated in self-defense groups formed mainly in the mid-2000s to fight road bandits (zaraguinas) and armed pastoralists. Having emerged spontaneously, these groups were subsequently augmented and offered a greater degree of coordination by low-ranking officers and rank and file of Bozizé’s FACA, Presidential Guard and Gendarmerie. This saw the movement orchestrate some well-coordinated and prepared attacks in late 2013 and early 2014, including that on Bangui on 5 December 2013. Despite this initial coordination, whose original aim was ostensibly to hunt down Séléka fighters and those Muslims seen as complicit in their exactions, the movement is deeply divided. Even its most structured components have been hampered by internal competition for political leadership and recognition, ethnic divisions and conflict between military leaders, rendering it impossible to unify under a single banner even for would-be coordinators. The anti-balaka’s existence as a wide network of militias with mainly local agendas equates to the absence of any truly centralized command and control structure. This renders it one of the most challenging parties to the CAR’s conflict to define, assess and engage.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 28)

“Forming part of a loose network of militias operating to mainly local agendas, anti-balaka groups can either generally identify themselves as part of the broader movement or one of its official factions, or else be associated by default without any overt affiliation. The 2013/14 anti-balaka drew on a large local youth base mobilized by loss, unemployment or personal ambition – a base still susceptible to mobilization rhetoric today. Although many south-westerly antibalaka appear to have become increasingly dormant, local militias have nevertheless remained particularly active in Ouham, Nana-Grebizi, Ouaka and Basse Kotto prefectures where they have maintained an almost continuous front line with ex-Séléka groups in locales like Kaga Bandoro, Bouca, Mbrés, Bambari and Kouango. This geographical spread, which aligns strongly with ex-Séléka operations and transhumance activities, highlights the continuing relevance of the broad-based anti-balaka agenda of combatting ex-séléka groups and ‘foreigners’. Indeed, 2016 saw a particular rise in anti-balaka activities in northwestern CAR around the 3R-affected Bocaranga sous-prefecture, which has continued to the present day. 2017 likewise appears to have seen a spread of anti-balaka militias and rhetoric into new areas in the southeast of CAR in which the Fulani-led UPC had developed a notable presence.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 31)

Apart from the loose anti-Balaka network, the report also goes on to mention the political leadership of the anti-Balaka based in the capital, the principal factions of which are led by Maxime Mokom and Patrice-Édouard Ngaissona:

“Many actors forming part of the self-proclaimed political and military ‘leadership’ of the anti-balaka movement at the height of its mobilization retain a broadly focused political agenda that they continue to push with the incumbent authorities, usually for personal gain. Whilst numerous anti-balaka returned to their areas of influence, the Bangui-based anti-balaka ‘leadership’ has continued to jockey for political recognition, seeking to enhance its leverage in securing positions of power by bringing local militias within their spheres of influence. Since May 2015, the principle factions dominating this space have been those led by Maxime Mokom and Patrice-Édouard Ngaissona.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 29)

The BBC reports in December 2018 that Patrice-Édouard Ngaissona has been arrested by French authorities and faces extradition to the International Criminal Court (ICC) in The Hague for coordinating attacks on the Muslim population in the CAR in 2013 and 2014 (BBC, 12 December 2018). A few days after this announcement, the Central African NGO Network of Journalists for Human Rights (Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L’Homme, RJDH) writes that both the anti-Balaka wing led by Patrice-Édouard Ngaissona as well as the anti-Balaka wing led by Maxime Mokom have declared their withdrawal from the consultative committee of the DDRR (disarmament demobilization reintegration and repatriation) process (RJDH, 15 December 2018).

A map of anti-Balaka-related incidents in its principle zone of operations 2015-2017 can be found on page 29 of the IPIS/DIIS report (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 29).

5.3 Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R)

According to the Enough Project report, 3R is headed by General Sidiki Abass, a member of the Fulani ethnic group from Cameroon. The group's stronghold is indicated to be in Kouï, a town in the northwest of the country close to the border with Cameroon. The report then goes on to outline the group's ideology and military strategies:

"Ideology and grievances

The leaders say they fight against the anti-Balaka militias and Révolution Justice (RJ) combatants who threaten the Fulani/Peuhl communities living in southwest CAR. The 3R group also seeks to end the marginalization of the Peuhl/Fulani communities in CAR.

Military strategies

Control the territory and strategically key road axes connecting towns and benefit from the economic resources (particularly cattle). There are regular clashes with anti-Balaka groups and Révolution Justice (RJ) combatants, all seeking to steal cattle or impose taxes on the Fulani communities." (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 19)

Minority Rights Group International (MRG), an international human rights organisation working to promote the rights of ethnic, national, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples, in an overview of the Mbororo ethnic group provides the following information regarding the group 3R:

"One militia is reportedly made up predominantly of Peuhl, the Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation (3R) group. Created in late 2015 and now comprising hundreds of armed fighters, the militia has been accused of conducting widespread human rights abuses against civilians in CAR, in the process displacing tens of thousands of people. Both Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group note that, while the 3R claims to represent the interests of Peuhl, in fact this is a pretext for profiting from the crisis." (MRG, updated March 2018b)

The IPIS/DIIS report mentions the group's areas of activity and involvement in fighting against an anti-Balaka group, the ex-Séléka group MNLC/MPC and the group Révolution and Justice:

"December 2015 saw the advent of the '3R' (Retour, Reclamation et Réhabilitation) armed group under the leadership of former Front Populaire pour le Redressement (FPR) commander General Sidiki. This group has become particularly active around Kouï and Bocaranga, north of Bouar, as well as in the environs of Niem-Yelewa and as far north as Bang. Whilst it has claimed to defend the interests of Fulani communities returning from refuge in Cameroon, its activities have seen it mete out violent reprisals for acts of cattle rustling or hostage taking, characterized by widespread human rights abuses. Indeed, 3R acts as de facto authority in many locations around Kouï extorting the population, and imposing 'taxes', illegal detentions and looting. [...] Whilst 3R's principle adversaries have been the Ndalé anti-balaka clan, it has also found itself in contest with MNLC/MPC and RJ in areas around Kouï and Bocaranga." (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, pp. 38-39)

A map outlining the group's principle areas of operation can be found on page 39 of the IPIS/DIIS report (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 39).

In her article of March 2018 on the Mbororo, researcher Lotje de Vries along with the UPC mentions 3R as a group that vowed to protect the interests of the Mbororo subgroup of the Fulani:

“Secondly, two identity-driven armed groups have emerged vowing to protect the Mbororo. They explicitly claim to defend the wellbeing of the Mbororo and the cattle keepers in general. Their armed action, which is justified by reference to Mbororo identity, is the latest, and arguably counterproductive form of claim-making currently observed in the CAR. One of these groups has an Mbororo leader from the CAR. General Sidiki, operating in Kouï, in the west towards the border with Cameroon, has established the 3R movement (Retour, Reclamation et Réhabilitation) to ensure protection to community members herding and living in the area.” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, p. 7)

5.4 Révolution and Justice (RJ)

The Enough Project report places the military stronghold of the group Révolution et Justice under its leader Armel Ningatoloum Sayo in Bedam, close to the town Paoua in the Ouham-Pendé prefecture. The following information is given regarding the group's military strategy and political agenda:

“RJ leaders said they formed the group to protect the people from the persistent insecurity in northwestern CAR. The group relies on a network of self-defense groups located in northwestern CAR. RJ has developed a system of taxation and de facto partition in the areas they control. The RJ elements cohabit with the Mouvement Patriotique Centrafricain (MPC) elements led by al-Khatim in areas they both control. The leaders seek to obtain military and political positions in the government and to maintain the de facto partition that allows them to benefit from the country's economic resources.” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 22)

The IPIS/DIIS report outlines the areas of activity of RJ close to the borders with Chad and Cameroon as well as clashes with a splinter group of MPC:

“Armel Sayo's Revolution et Justice (RJ), established December 2013, claimed to be a response to Séléka and Fulani activities in north western CAR, where it appears to have drawn heavily on former Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la Démocratie (APRD) fighters. The group operates in the area extending from Markouda (Ouham) to Bang (Ouham-Pende) close to the Chad /Cameroon border (north of Bocaranga and around Paoua), vying particularly for control of Markounda and Ngayoundaye. Whilst making some notable gains in early 2014, 2016 found the group considerably diminished and facing a leadership crisis, whilst playing junior partner to Alkhatim's MPC. Both these issues came to a head in late November 2017 when General Bahar's MNLC (the MPC splinter group operating with RJ in the northwest) killed RJ leadership contender Raymond Belanga, breaking the alliance between the two groups and sparking violent clashes between them in the Paoua region from December 2017. In response to the violence, MINUSCA instituted an armed group-free zone around Paoua in mid-January 2018. This operation ('Mbaranga')

may have been more effective at dispersing the MNLC than RJ, which draws notable support from locals, whose fighters are therefore more readily concealed among the civilian population. Nevertheless, 30 January 2018 saw Armel Sayo's RJ reportedly agree to disarm in accordance with national DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration], making it the first of the CAR's groups to voluntarily dissolve itself. The actual adherence of the group and its membership to this agreement has yet to be determined, not least due to its continued clashes with MPC around Markounda since that agreement." (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, pp. 37-38)

A map outlining the group's principle area of operation 2015-2017 can be found on page 37 of the IPIS/DIIS report (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 37).

5.5 Lord's Resistance Army (LRA)

According to the Enough Project report, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) originated in Northern Uganda and has been active in the CAR since 2008 under its leader Joseph Kony. The military stronghold of the group is said to be the eastern part of the country where the LRA operates in smaller groups, carrying out abductions and killings and creating revenue by looting and trafficking. While the LRA does not have any official alliances, the report mentions that the group has cooperated with ex-Séléka factions on occasion. (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 20)

The IPIS/DIIS report further describes the way in which the LRA operates in the eastern part of the country:

"The LRA's modus operandi sees it target civilians on roads and in rural locales for looting and abductions, whilst avoiding confrontation with other armed groups and international forces. Recorded LRA activities in eastern CAR showed some decrease between 2013 to 2015, but was subject to a massive spike from early 2016 with over 500 civilian abductees over 104 attacks – the most in a single year since 2010. Indeed, January and February 2016 saw a surge in LRA incidents between Sam Oundja, Bria and Yalinga, including the abductions of dozens of persons by groups loyal to Kony. This spike in LRA activity was instrumentalised by ex-Séléka and other criminal groups to engage in both territorial expansion and acts of opportunistic violence and pillage. Indeed, attacks upon civilians in Haut Kotto, Mboumou and Haut Mboumou increased substantially in early 2017, as the departure of the African Union Taskforce from the east of the country in April 2017 left a power vacuum filled by armed groups and criminal gangs. Present in eastern CAR since 2009, the AU Task Force had exacerbated the LRA's internal weaknesses by killing numerous senior officers, scattering the group over a huge area, and frustrating sat phone and HF radio communications. Indeed, despite the increase in LRA activities in early 2016, by June 2016 there were thought to be only four main cells left operating in the CAR. Three of these were believed to be reporting to Kony, repatriating loot seasonally to Kafia Kingi from Haut Kotto and Haut Mboumou. The other is thought to be the Achaye splinter faction, which had lost ties to the LRA leadership and is operating in survival mode, looting for subsistence and avoiding confrontation in a bid to preserve ammunition. Despite the relative weakness of this group, it has nevertheless visited some particularly violent attacks on civilians in the south east of the country, occasioning a rise of self defence groups around Rafia and Zemio, as well as increasing frustration with international forces unable

to prevent such attacks. 2017 reportedly saw the LRA push further east towards Mboki, possibly in response to rising armed group presence further west. Overall, 2017 saw the stabilization of LRA activities to approximately the same annual average prior to 2016.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 40)

In his June 2018 report to the UN Security Council on the situation in Central Africa, the UN Secretary-General mentions 32 LRA attacks allegedly having taken place in the CAR between 1 November 2017 and 17 April 2018:

“The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) continued to pose security risks to civilians in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Its attacks consisted of ambushes, lootings, abductions, sexual violence, poaching and killings. [...]

Between 1 November 2017 and 17 April, 32 LRA attacks allegedly took place in the Central African Republic, resulting in three deaths and 79 abductions. Most of the abductees were released within a short period. Most of the incidents took place in Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures. As part of its protection of civilians mandate, on 1 April, a joint patrol of MINUSCA and the Central African Armed Forces rescued 15 people who had been abducted by LRA during an attack against Koubou village, Haut-Mbomou prefecture.” (UN Security Council, 1 June 2018, p. 5)

5.6 Clashes between armed groups in 2017 and 2018

The report by IPIS/DIIS of August 2018 contains on page 12 a map of the CAR showing clashes between armed groups between January 2015 and December 2017 based on source data, including ACLED, UN reports and other third-party reporting. The map can be accessed via the following link:

- IPIS – International Peace Information Service/DIIS - Danish Institute for International Studies: Central African Republic: A Conflict Mapping, August 2018
http://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/1809-CAR-conflict-mapping_web.pdf

The report goes on to mention conflict between the Coalition (FPRC, RPRC, MPC and the anti-Balaka under Maxime Mokom) and the UPC around the central city of Bambari in March and April 2017 as well as clashes between the UPC and anti-Balaka factions over economic resources in August and November 2017. The report also mentions infighting within the FPRC along ethnic lines as well as clashes between FPRC and former anti-Balaka collaborators:

“Conflict between a FPRC-led Coalition and the UPC continued into 2017, escalating in the centre and east in February and March as the Coalition sought to advance towards Bambari to oust the UPC from its stronghold. MINUSCA’s robust protection of civilians in the city halted this advance whilst expelling the UPC from Bambari to enable the municipality’s stabilization. Coalition seizure of key diamond production locales in Nzako and Bakouma in March 2017, saw the UPC further disperse into the south east whilst weathering severe attacks from self-defence groups loosely associated with the anti-balaka. Whilst an official ceasefire was not signed between the Coalition and the UPC until October 2017, active hostilities between the two diminished from April. Moreover, fratricidal tensions between the FPRC’s Rounga and Gula factions, as well as between the FPRC and its former anti-

balaka collaborators, erupted into violence from June 2017, affecting the FPRC's operations into the end of the year. [...]

Anti-balaka attacks on UPC positions throughout the southeast from August to November, often directly targeted Muslim civilians, particularly Fulani, as well as UPC fighters.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 8)

For the year 2018 IPIS and DIIS report continued clashes between UPC and anti-Balaka elements in and around Bambari and the southeast of the country:

“Meanwhile, in and around Bambari and the southeast of the country, UPC and anti-balaka forces have continued to clash for control over economically and strategically important locales. This has seen a further spike in violence with armed group and intercommunal retaliatory attacks targeting civilians, peacekeepers, humanitarians and government authorities, following the circulation of rumors of the killing of Muslims in mid-May.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 9)

A letter by the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic to the UN Security Council of July 2018 mentions clashes between the MNL and RJ in the prefectures Ouham and Ouham-Pendé between December 2017 and May 2018:

“The border between the Central African Republic and Chad has been officially closed since May 2014. Between December 2017 and May 2018, owing to fighting between the armed groups Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique (MNL) and Révolution et justice in Ouham and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registered nearly 30,000 new Central African refugees in the Goré area in Chad. This was in addition to reports of an alleged presence of Chadian fighters who were being recruited by ex-Séléka factions, as well as reports of arms trafficking from Chadian territory.” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 12)

The report by the UN Secretary-General of June 2018 (reporting period February to June 2018) similarly mentions clashes in Ouham prefecture between RJ and MPC. It also notes fighting between UPC and anti-Balaka elements in Basse-Kotto and Ouaka prefectures and attacks by the LRA in Haute-Kotto and Mbomou prefectures:

“In Ouham prefecture, the security situation continues to be marred by competition between the Révolution et justice and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC) armed groups for control over transit and transhumance corridors around Markounda. [...]

Security in the centre of the country continued to suffer as a result of fierce competition between UPC and anti-balaka associated militias vying for control over natural resources and trade routes along the Alindao-Dimbi axis and around Ippy. Civilians repeatedly sought refuge near MINUSCA bases in the area following clashes. [...]

In the south-east, the situation continues to be marred by criminal activities and attacks against civilians driven by a cycle of attacks and reprisals between UPC and anti-balaka associated militias. Attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army continued mainly in the Haute-

Kotto and Mbomou prefectures: 12 attacks allegedly occurred during the reporting period, resulting in 38 abductions.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 5)

In her report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic to the UN Human Rights Council (reporting period July 2017 to June 2018), the Independent Expert refers to human rights abuses committed due to clashes between armed groups before listing the largest clashes and the armed groups involved in chronological order:

“More than 60 per cent of violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law are attributed to armed groups. The increase in cases of violence is mainly the result of more widespread clashes between armed groups and their factions in the regions of the country that were previously relatively calm, such as Bangassou, Rafai and Zémio (south-east), Alindao, Kembé and Pombolo (south centre), and to frequent clashes in Bria (centre) between the anti-Balaka and various ex-Séléka factions. In addition, tension has increased in the north-west of the country because of the separation of General Bahar from the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique in order to form the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique. Other abuses are also attributed to the UPC and 3R groups and armed Peul elements. Moreover, the strengthened action of MINUSCA in Batangafo (north-west) has enabled abuses committed in previously inaccessible areas to be documented.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 7)

“In late July 2017, anti-Balaka elements attacked the compound of the cathedral of Bangassou (south), which shelters displaced persons. In August, clashes between armed groups, including anti-Balaka elements and elements of the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC) in Alindao (south - east), and anti-Balaka elements and elements of the Front Populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) in Bria (centre), affected the protection of civilians. On 23 September, elements of the armed group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R) used violence against civilians in Bocaranga (north-west). In October, conflict in Pombolo and Kembé (south-east) resulted in the death of several civilians. [...]

In late December, violence between the groups Révolution et justice, under the leadership of Armel Ningatoloum Sayo, and the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique, under the command of Mahamat Bahar, led to the destabilization of several localities around Paoua (north - west) and the displacement of 60,000 persons [...]

On 21 March 2018, there were clashes between anti-Balakas and UPC elements in Tagbara (centre). On 3 April, anti-Balakas targeted the MINUSCA base and killed a peacekeeper, while a UPC attack on the displaced persons compound caused 23 deaths, including of three children and four women.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 4)

In his report on the Central African Republic of October 2018 (reporting period 15 June to 15 October 2018) the UN Secretary-General outlines incidents of clashes between armed groups between June and October 2018:

“During the reporting period, the number of security incidents decreased in Bangui, Bangassou and several western prefectures. However, clashes between armed groups,

particularly in the centre and south-east, continued. From June to August, near Mbrès, Nana-Gribizi prefecture, the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique clashed with anti-balaka fighters, who continued to attack Muslim traders. Front populaire-aligned militia looted 15 villages and burned more than 2,000 houses during those clashes, displacing thousands of civilians. [...]

The Union pour la paix en Centrafrique and anti-balaka-associated militias continued to fight in Ouaka and Basse-Kotto. Anti-balaka-associated fighters routinely targeted MINUSCA convoys in Nana-Gribizi, Ouaka, Basse-Kotto and Mbomou Prefectures. Early in September, several internally displaced persons were killed in Bria following violent clashes between the Front populaire and anti-balaka armed groups.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, pp. 4-5)

In the north-west, MINUSCA operations and the deployment of a company from the Central African armed forces, eliminated the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique presence in Ouham-Pendé, leading to a reduction in attacks on civilians and allowing the return of most displaced persons who had sought refuge in Paoua in early 2018. The Mission’s military operations and cooperation between the Government of the Central African Republic and the Government of Cameroon helped to limit attacks on civilians by Siriri, a recently formed local militia engaged in extensive cattle theft. Intercommunal violence between pastoralists and farmers, and their related armed groups, continued in Ouaka and Basse-Kotto, with frequent attacks on civilians and MINUSCA. The Mission’s response has been severely hampered by its lack of presence in some of those areas and the extremely difficult road and logistics conditions.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 5)

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) in an October 2018 overview of security related developments in the CAR refers to reduced fighting in Haute-Kotto prefecture between anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka groups due to an agreement between anti-Balaka elements and the FPRC:

“By contrast, the levels of political violence significantly reduced in the Central African Republic (CAR) in September compared to August. The downward trend had much to do with the reduced fighting for control around Bria and Yalinga in Haute-Kotto between Anti-Balaka and ex-Seleka forces. The last clashes between the two groups occurred on September 6th outside of Bria and resulted in the abduction and reported killing of at least nine IDPs by one of the groups. The appeasement might be due to the joint commitment to work for peace and political stability made by the main CAR armed groups in Khartoum end August at a meeting instigated by Sudan and Russia. The signing of a new agreement in Bria last week between an Anti-Balaka faction under Ramazani’s command and the Popular Front for the Renaissance of Central Africa (FPRC) could lead to a further reduction of the violence in CAR’s Haute-Kotto.” (ACLED, 9 October 2018)

The November 2018 Overview by ACLED states that violence broke out between the UPC and anti-Balaka elements in Bambari and Alindao:

“There were also high levels of violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) and in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in the week of November 11th. [...] In Bambari, fighters of the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) held hostage six members of an Islamic committee mediating between armed groups in the town. A few days later, in Alindao, a retaliatory attack by UPC fighters to Anti-Balaka violence against Muslim civilians revealed the tense cohabitation of armed groups in the area. The UPC clashed with Anti-Balaka fighters and attacked an IDP camp hosting around 20,000 Christians, leaving a reported 48 people killed and structures pillaged and burnt down.” (ACLED, 20 November 2018)

5.7 Situation in PK5 neighbourhood of Bangui

Emmanuel Chauvin, researcher at Toulouse university and Pharos Observatory, a Paris-based association that supports religious and cultural pluralism in the world in June 2018 published a report for the French Development Agency (AFD) concerning the influence of the Chadian government on the situation in the CAR. The report contains a subchapter on the PK5 neighbourhood in Bangui, which is described as a large commercial neighbourhood inhabited by Muslims. Before 2013 the neighbourhood is said to have housed 100,000 people, a large number of which were Muslim. Some of these Muslims are of Chadian origin. During the conflicts of 2013-2014 the Muslim population in Bangui was increasingly concentrated in PK5. According to Pharos Observatory, during that time anti-Balaka groups besieged the neighbourhood and committed atrocities. Meanwhile, Muslim self-defence groups, who were at times supported by members of the Séléka, targeted Christians and their places of worship. As the conflicts progressed, the capital was increasingly segregated along religious and ethnic lines, turning individual neighbourhoods to closed-off enclaves. In 2014 the fighting leads to an anti-Muslim cleansing and causes 80 to 95 percent of Muslims to leave the PK5 neighbourhood. Muslims of Chadian origin flee North-East in the direction of Chad. The abandoned houses, stores and mosques are looted, with pilfered goods being sold at markets around Bangui:

“Le PK* 5 est le grand quartier commercial et des musulmans de Bangui. En 2013-2014, sous la pression des anti-balaka, la concentration des musulmans s’y accentue, avant la fuite de la majorité d’entre eux vers l’Est de la RCA et l’étranger. Avant 2013, le quartier du PK* 5 («5 kilos»*) accueillait 100 000 personnes, pour une densité dépassant les 200 habitants au km² (Villien, 1987). Son marché et ses boutiques proposaient des produits alimentaires et manufacturés (tissus, mobilier, quincaillerie, papeterie, matériel de construction), le centre-ville concentrant plutôt les services (banques, presse, agences de voyage). Le PK* 5 est aussi un lieu de concentration résidentielle des populations musulmanes, parfois à l’origine étrangère ancienne, comme les « Tchadiens »*. Le PK* 5 est aussi le cœur historique de l’islam en Centrafrique, orné de sa grande mosquée construite en 1933. Les conflits de 2013-2014 ont renforcé la concentration des musulmans au PK* 5, devenu un quartier refuge. Les anti-balaka harcèlent le quartier par des tueries spectaculaires et l’assiègent par des barricades. Parallèlement, des milices musulmanes d’autodéfense du PK* 5, parfois appuyées par des membres de la Séléka, prennent pour cibles des chrétiens et leurs lieux de culte, comme la Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Fatima. Les conflits ont donc accentué la ségrégation spatio-identitaire, ethnique et religieuse, et provoqué une fragmentation urbaine durant les combats, disloquant les

quartiers en enclaves relativement fermées. En 2014, les combats tournent nettement au nettoyage religieux anti-musulman, à l'Ouest de la RCA et à Bangui. 80 à 95% des musulmans partent du PK* 5. À chaque départ, les maisons, les boutiques et les mosquées sont pillées. Les biens volés se retrouvent sur les autres marchés de Bangui, certains se spécialisant même dans la vente de «biens musulmans». Les «Tchadiens»* musulmans organisent leurs fuites vers le Tchad et vers le Nord-Est centrafricain.” (AFD, 18 June 2018, pp. 69-71)

The Enough Project report of August 2017 explains how self-defence groups of the PK5 neighbourhood were manipulated by ex-Séléka leaders for their own political gains. After 2016 with the departure of the ex-Séléka group FPRC, the neighbourhood is said to be home to four local self-defence groups that have largely suspended their activities:

“These self-defense groups emerged in December 2013 in Bangui’s Muslim neighborhood of PK5. Initially composed of young Muslims mobilized to protect the communities from anti-Balaka attacks and reprisals, these self-defense groups were quickly organized by the Séléka leaders who were based in Bangui. These Séléka leaders manipulated young fighters for political gain and introduced military command and control structures. The PK5 area became an area where heavy weapons and heavily-armed Séléka combatants circulated. In 2015, ex-Séléka leaders took PK5 hostage, and self-defense groups were manipulated by politicians and Séléka leaders for political and personal gain. In August 2016, after the departure of Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) leaders from PK5, four self-defense groups remained active but had less strong political motives. Fearing arrests, the leaders did not want to lay down arms. [...]

As of July 2017, these groups suspended their activities, with the killings of two leaders (Abdoul Danda and Issa Kappi ‘50/50’) in clashes and the execution of another leader (Big Man). Self-defense groups in the Muslim area of PK5 could, however, be reactivated when the local population perceives a need, or the Séléka leaders and local fighters see political or economic opportunities.” (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 14)

In her report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic to the UN Human Rights Council (reporting period July 2017 to June 2018), the Independent Expert talks about unrest in the PK5 neighbourhood in April and May 2018 after an operation undertaken by MINUSCA against criminal gangs in the area:

“On 8 April, a joint operation by the internal security forces, the Central African armed forces and MINUSCA took place in Bangui to arrest members of criminal gangs from the PK5 neighbourhood. This operation, codenamed ‘Sukula’, provoked reactions against the MINUSCA forces, causing 31 deaths and 145 wounded, including many civilians. On 1 May in the PK5 neighbourhood, 22 were killed and another 185 wounded after an armed group led by Nimery Matar Jamous, the ‘Force’, stirred up violence in response to an attempt by the Central African authorities to arrest one of their members. Houses, hospitals, churches and mosques were targeted in a cowardly manner in Bangui, including the church of Fatima and the Lakouanga mosque.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 4)

The July 2018 report by the Panel of Experts talks in greater detail about the joint operation of MINUSCA, the Central African Armed Forces (FACA) and the security forces in the PK5 neighbourhood as well as the ensuing intercommunal and sectarian violence:

“Between April and May 2018, approximately 70 people were killed and 330 injured in Bangui alone. It is likely that the death toll is underestimated, given that casualties resulting from clashes after ‘Operation Sukula’ in the PK5 and Castor neighbourhoods were not included in the official account. Conflict dynamics reminiscent of the violence of 2013 and 2014 reappeared (see S/2014/452, paras. 104–112): civilians were assaulted because of their religion or ethnicity, health facilities and places of worship were attacked, and humanitarian assistance was obstructed. During ‘Operation Sukula’, on the night of 7 April, two people were killed and 45 injured, many by stray bullets. MINUSCA was not in a position to implement the planned contingency measures for the protection of civilians (see annex 5.1). During the first phase of the operation, between 2 a.m. and 5 a.m., several local houses were searched for members of self-defence groups; none of the leaders were arrested. After ‘Operation Sukula’, MINUSCA and national security forces installed a cordon around the third district, often supported by local youth from the surrounding areas, as observed by the Panel. While it was set up for security reasons, the cordon contributed to the isolation of the PK5 neighbourhood, mainly in terms of the provision of humanitarian assistance and supply to the local market. On 10 April 2018, a patrol of Rwandan peacekeepers intervened to calm down an angry crowd mixed with self-defence group elements that was approaching the police station in the fifth district. This triggered four hours of violent clashes inside the third district that left more than 30 people killed and 100 injured, most likely including a significant number of civilian casualties. The Panel interviewed 10 civilians who were either victims themselves or had relatives who were victims. Furthermore, one Rwandan peacekeeper lost his life and eight others were injured during the clashes. The events that occurred at the Church of Notre Dame de Fatima in Bangui should be regarded as part of the continuum of events following ‘Operation Sukula’. On 1 May at around 11 a.m. at a checkpoint close to the church premises, local policemen attempted to arrest an individual linked to the self-defence group of Nimeri Matar whose alias is ‘Force’. When self-defence groups from the PK5 neighbourhood responded, policemen escaped inside the church compound, where more than 1,000 people were participating in a ceremony. Self-defence groups then surrounded the church and besieged it for two hours, using automatic weapons and grenades. As a result, 30 people, including a priest, were killed and 185 injured. The response of Bangui’s population to the events that occurred at the Church of Notre Dame de Fatima was extremely violent and fuelled by anti-Muslim sentiment. An angry crowd that brought the body of the priest to the presidential palace in protest lynched two Muslims of Senegalese nationality in the Lakouanga neighbourhood. In the aftermath, two mosques were looted, in the Lakouanga and Ngaragba neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, several hundred outraged people broke into the Bangui Community Hospital, where most of the wounded had been transferred. The crowd first stoned to death a Muslim caretaker of a patient hospitalized in the facility, and then moved to the trauma ward in search of the other Muslim patients, who had locked themselves in a room. In addition, wounded patients from the Henry Dunant health facility in the PK5 neighbourhood could not be transferred to specialized health facilities in the

capital for 10 days, which resulted in the deaths of several patients. According to MINUSCA, the security situation prevented the creation of the humanitarian corridor requested by humanitarian actors.” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, pp. 14-15)

The report goes on to explain which armed groups operate in the PK5 neighbourhood:

“Five main self-proclaimed self-defence groups are currently active in the PK5 neighbourhood and were targeted by ‘Operation Sukula’. They are identified by the names (or aliases) of their current or former leaders: ‘Force’, ‘You’, Moussa Danda, ‘Apo’ and ‘50/50’ (see annex 5.6). Their activities are largely criminal and are limited to the PK5 area. Occasional clashes between these groups occur as they are competing for taxation with respect to the PK5 market and transport operators.[...]

The relationship between the residents of the PK5 neighbourhood and the self-defence groups is complex. Representatives of some communities, including victims of the groups’ actions, told the Panel that the existence of the groups and their acts of violence are ‘the price to pay for feeling protected’, as the inhabitants live in fear of a recurrence of the violence that targeted the area in 2014 and 2015. They also recognize that MINUSCA patrols play a positive role in reducing the influence of the groups. [...]

Violent clashes also occurred during the week following ‘Operation Sukula’ next to the border between the Castor and PK5 neighbourhoods. FACA and internal security forces, supported by anti-balaka groups, reportedly led by the sanctioned individual Alfred Yékatom, then clashed with self-defence groups from PK5. These events deepened the divide between the population and the national security forces, and reinforced the role of the self-defence groups in the community. Either during ‘Operation Sukula’ or the ensuing violence, civilians joined the self-defence groups and took part in the clashes. The recent events have elevated the profile of the self-defence group leaders; in particular, a number of ex-Séléka leaders attempted to reconnect with the self-defence group leaders to reinforce their position in the capital. While self-defence group leaders have refused to be associated with ex-Séléka factions, the treatment of their concerns remains related to a global political agreement. For example, ‘Force’ affirmed his willingness to be part of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation and security sector reform processes, his main objective being his reintegration into FACA.” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, pp. 16-17)

6 Ethnic groups

In its online profile of the Central African Republic, the Minority Rights Group (MRG) describes the ethnic composition of the population in the following terms:

“Main minorities and indigenous peoples include: Gbaya 33 per cent, Banda 27 per cent, Mandjia 13 per cent, Sara 10 per cent, Mboum 7 per cent, M’Baka 4 per cent, Yakoma 4 per cent [...]

The situation of minorities and indigenous peoples in the Central African Republic (CAR) are best understood against a background of other, less marginalized groupings. The first policemen and clerks, and later the bureaucratic bourgeoisie, were recruited from among the riverine Ubangi-speaking people first exposed to French schools – Banziri, Sango, Yakoma and M’Baka (or Ngbaka). Three major linguistically related groups based in the middle and west of the country together make up the majority: Banda, Gbaya and Mandjia peoples. Linguistically distinct, but also Sahelian farmers, are Sara people; they live chiefly along the northern border with Chad. Azande people inhabit the far south-east.” (MRG, updated June 2018)

The CIA World Factbook lists the main ethnic groups in the country in the following order: “Baya 33%, Banda 27%, Mandjia 13%, Sara 10%, Mboum 7%, M’Baka 4%, Yakoma 4%, other 2%” (CIA World Factbook, updated 14 November 2018).

In an article for an issue of the *Academic and Applied Research in Military Science* journal in 2014, János Tomolya explains the emergence of ethnic categories fostered by the French colonial rule and the different ethnic groups present in the CAR today:

“Prior to the arrival of Europeans in the late 19th century, distinctions between different groups were highly fluid. Many thought of themselves as members of a clan rather than of a broader ethnic group. [...]

However, French colonizers did promote ethnic and regional distinctions among their Central African subjects. Drawing from populations of such southern riverine people as the Ngbaka (Mbaka), Yakoma, and Ubangi, the French helped to create an elite group, which emerged as an indigenous ruling group for the whole country and has held most political positions since independence.” (AARMS, 2014, p. 459)

“About 75% are Baya–Mandjia and Banda (40% are largely located in the northern and central parts of the country), and 4% are M’Baka (south–western corner of CAR). The Baya (33%) to the west and the Banda (27%) in the east central region and are estimated to be the most numerous groups. In the savannah live the Mandjia, accounting for 13% of the population, the Sara, accounting for 10%, and the Mboum, accounting for 7%, each with several subgroups. In the forest region are the Pygmies (Binga) and some Bantu groups, including the Mbaka, who account for another 4% of the population. About 4% of the population are Yakoma.” (AARMS, 2014, p. 460)

Tim Glawion, research fellow at the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (GIGA), Hamburg, who focuses on civil war and governance in the CAR, provided excerpts of a 2018

confidential report in an email to ACCORD in November 2018 in which he explains the ethnic makeup of the CAR. According to Glawion, the Gbaya are the largest ethnic group, making up 28 percent of the population and living in the West of the country, followed by the Banda with 22 percent, who predominantly live in the centre of the country. Also located in the centre of the country are the Mandja who make up about ten percent of the population. Together, these three groups are sometimes called “Savanners”, inhabitants of the savannah. Former president Bozizé is a Gbaya. The Sara living on the border with Chad are estimated to make up 8 percent of the population. The ethnic groups living along the Oubangi have historically been in a favoured position and have had better opportunities regarding education. The Ngbaka who live in the region between the town Mbaiki and the capital Bangui are equally estimated to make up 8 percent. The Ngbandi make up about 5 percent of the population. The Yakoma ethnic group, from which hails former president Kolingba, is a subgroup of the Ngbandi. The ethnic groups Goula and Rounga live in the Northeast of the country and together constitute less than two percent of the population. Former president Djotodia is a Goula. The contrast between the North of the country (Savannah) and the South (riverine region, forest) that manifested itself in the first decades after independence has developed and become more complex. The southern educated elites around the capital Bangui have always been at an advantage and the first presidents Boganda, Dacko, Bokassa and Kolingba all hailed from these elites. There was a succession of regimes with a clear regional and ethnic focus, president Kolingba favouring the Yakoma, Patassé favouring the Sara-Kaba and Bozizé mobilising Gbaya as well as protestant Christians along religious lines. The short-lived Djotodia regime for the first time managed to bring Muslims and the ethnic groups Goula and Rounga into the centre of power. Current president Touadéra did not give any indications of ethnic favouritism when he nominated his cabinet in 2016. Influential political elites of almost all ethnicities and regions seem to be at least nominally represented in the government and in parliament. (Glawion, 2018)

In an email response of 27 November 2018 Tim Glawion notes that there have only been few recent studies regarding ethnic groups in the CAR. According to Glawion, there is hardly any cohesion of the different ethnic groups beyond their individual localities in the CAR compared to other countries. The state is weak and therefore hardly in a position to persecute certain groups. Conflicts between certain ethnic groups are mostly of a local nature. Insecurity and flight motives arise more from the conflict situation and from prejudice (towards many Muslims, who are being accused of having taken part in the repression by the Séléka forces) rather than from coordinated state repression. (Glawion, 27 November 2018)

6.1 Gbaya (Baya)

The Gbaya make up the largest ethnic group in the country (MRG, updated June 2018; CIA World Factbook, updated 14 November 2018). They predominantly live in “the west and north of the country, with the Ali, Ngbakamandja, Mandja and Gbanou subgroups in the centre and the Boffi subgroup in the south-west” (Government of Central African Republic, 5 September 2017).

A December 2013 Human Rights Watch Report talks about “Christian Gbaya” as sedentary farmers and mentions them coming into conflict with pastoralist nomads from the Mbororo ethnic group (HRW, 19 December 2013, p. 12).

A report of October 2017 by African non-profit organisation Institute for Security Studies (ISS) mentions that previous regimes under Ange-Félix Patassé and François Bozizé (who is an ethnic Gbaya) gave preferential treatment to the Gbaya people regarding political power and positions in the army while at the same time excluding the Goula and Rounga from the Northeast of the country. (ISS, October 2017, pp. 4-5)

References to the Gbaya's Christian faith can also be found in a Minority Rights Group report of December 2015:

“Bozizé, a Christian and a member of the country's largest ethnic group, the Gbaya, had reportedly relied increasingly on family and ethnic ties to consolidate his influence since taking power in a military coup ten years earlier, while failing to comply with the terms of peace agreements reached with previous groups of northern rebels.” (MRG, 9 December 2015, p. 5)

“More recently, a smaller wave of refugees into Cameroon during the preliminary stages of the current conflict were largely Christian and Gbaya, fleeing Séléka's bloody advance towards Bangui from December 2012 and the aftermath of Bozizé's ousting in March 2013.” (MRG, 9 December 2015, p. 10)

According to the Enough Project report of August 2017, Maxime Mokom, the leader of an anti-Balaka faction, is a Gbaya (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 18).

6.2 Ngbandi

In an undated entry the Encyclopaedia Britannica gives the following information regarding the Ngbandi, explaining that French ethnographers classify them in one group with other communities living along the Ubangi river, among them the Yakoma:

“Ngbandi, also spelled Gbandi or Mogwandi, a people of the upper Ubangi River in southern Central African Republic and northern Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ngbandi speak a language of the Adamawa-Ubangi subgroup of the Niger-Congo language family that is related to that of neighbouring Banda and Gbaya. Ngbandi is a term preferred by Belgian ethnographers, while the French include these people with such ‘Ubangian’ peoples as the Gbanziri, Nzakara, Sango, and Yakoma. The Ngbandi came from what is now South Sudan, converging upon and assimilating a number of small groups in their present lands. Ngbandi of the Bandia clan conquered Zande areas in the 18th century, creating a series of states; they assimilated Zande culture and language and are now indistinguishable from that group. Rural Ngbandi grow corn (maize), cassava (manioc), peanuts (groundnuts), sweet potatoes, lima beans, peppers, pineapples, papayas, and tobacco. Traditionally, men have hunted, fished, and cleared land for cultivation, while women have gathered wild foods and done the hoeing, planting, and harvesting. The migration of able-bodied men and women from rural areas to the city in search of work has been steadily increasing with the growth of the money economy. The Ngbandi traditionally lived in compact villages consisting of a single row of dwellings. They have been mainly patrilineal, though there have been circumstances in which a man might reside with his maternal

uncle. Ngbandi chiefs have acted as arbiters and priests of the ancestral cult central to traditional social life. Polygyny is practiced but has been on the decline for many years. The Ngbandi were once renowned warriors, and their craftsmen produced lances and knives of high quality that were traded with many neighbouring groups; these are now prized by collectors of African art. Ngbandi also produced elegant curved-neck harps reminiscent of those of their ancestral peoples living in Chad and South Sudan.” (Encyclopaedia Britannica, undated)

Several sources classify the Yakoma as a subgroup of the Ngbandi (Glawion, 2018; BBC, 12 June 2001). Médecins Sans Frontières describes the Yakoma as Christians (MSF, 8 June 2017) whereas the International Federation for Human Rights lists the the Yakoma under “Christian and/or animist populations” (FIDH, June 2014, p. 10).

6.3 Fulani (Peuhl), including Mbororo

The IPIS/DIIS report of August 2018 describes the Fulani ethnic group, distinguishing between the term “Mbororo” for Fulani pastoralists and semi-sedentary Fulani who are referred to as “Foulbé”:

“The Fulani are one of the largest ethnic groups in the Sahel and West Africa, and are comprised of numerous subgroups sharing a common language (Fula) and religion (Islam), as well as historical and cultural roots. One third of Fulani are pastoralist and their pastoral nomadism has driven their presence in the Central Africa region. Estimates of the CAR’s Fulani population vary considerably with some estimating 180,000, and others 400,000 to 750,000 people. Nomadic Fulani pastoralists are called ‘Mbororo’, a term denoting their nomadic lifestyle. They are composed of numerous clans (hereafter subgroups) whose shared development renders them more or less distinct from one another in culture and practice. For example, the Djafuun, Wodabe, Dnadji (also called Aku), Oudda, Biibé-woyla, Hontorbé and Hanagamba are all different Mbororo subgroups whose different migratory trajectories in arriving in the CAR have shaped their modes of survival and spheres of influence. Thus, some sub-groups (like Djafuun, Wodabe and Dnadji) are more often viewed as Central African Fulani due to their use of Sango as well as Fulani, their inter-marriage with other ethnic groups and their development of more conciliatory migratory customs. Meanwhile, groups more recently hailing from Chad (like the Oudda and Biibé-woyla), speak Arabic instead of Sango, and reportedly exhibit more combative/aggressive behaviour and a tendency towards criminality, generally engaging in militarised transhumance. This is believed to be the result of their greater historical exposure to conflict with Arabic herders and bandits further north in Chad and has often seen them viewed as violent ‘outsiders’ or ‘foreign invaders’. Some Fulani pastoralists are also sedentary or semi-sedentary, practicing farming alongside pastoralism to supplement their income in response to shocks sustained by herd losses. These groups are often referred to as Foulbé. By the start of the crisis an estimated 15% of Central African Fulani had become sedentary or semi-sedentary.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, pp. 60-61)

In her article of March 2018, Lotje de Vries explains the inconsistent terminology with regards to the Fulani ethnic group and further states how different subgroups of the Fulani came to settle in the CAR:

“The Fulani are a cattle-rearing people that are spread over about eighteen countries in West and Central Africa. Victor Azarya suggests a sharp divide between Fulani groups that sought to establish—or become part of—larger political units on the one hand, and groups such as the Mbororo living in present-day Cameroon and CAR and the Wodaabe in Niger who largely maintained their nomadic lifestyle. In Azarya’s words these ‘smaller groups of Fulbe, who took little part in the Jihad and state-formation, or even (actually) opposed them, continued to live at the margin, or even completely beyond those states, in smaller decentralized units, as in the past’ (Azarya, 1996, 12). [...]

In an attempt to clarify things, one Fulani trader in Paoua explained the different references to his people as: ‘There is no such thing as an Mbororo race. That only exists in the mind of the Central Africans. All these people are in fact Fulani.’ The respondent is right in stating that all these groups are part of different branches of the Fulani people, but his comment that the Mbororo as a group only exist in the mind of Central Africans is incorrect: the term Mbororo is used for a Fulani pastoralist group living in Cameroon, CAR and even further south and east (DR Congo and South Sudan) (Pelican, 2015). In popular vernacular in the CAR, the term Mbororo is often used interchangeably with the more encompassing reference Peuhl, the general French name for a people living all over West and Central Africa. In English, these same people are called Fulani and other recurring terms are Fellata, Fula, while the Fulani also refer to themselves as Fulbe. In CAR, Fulani is thus a reference to a variety of people with different roles in society. It primarily refers to Fulani who live sedentary lives in towns, but also to transhumance pastoralist who seasonally migrate from Chad and Sudan, and lastly to the Mbororo pastoralists. [...]

The Mbororo and Fulani are predominantly Muslim and the same holds for other certain other subgroups in society such as the Hausa and Arabs who originated from Nigeria, Sudan and Chad (Moukadas-Nouré, 2015).” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, pp. 1-2)

“Mbororo only arrived about a hundred years ago. The Mbororo thus simply claim belonging to the CAR from when they started to arrive around 1920. Meanwhile, people refer to Fulani or Mbororo as strangers or foreigners, without making a distinction between those who are Central Africans and those who come from Chad and Sudan for seasonal migration with cattle. Although their claim to belonging is perhaps weaker than the claim to autochthony of other Muslim minorities, the Mbororo rightly seek to oppose the discourse that considers them as strangers in the CAR.” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, p. 3)

The article by de Vries further indicates an estimated size of the Mbororo Fulani community and their distribution across almost the entire country:

“There is some competition between the Mbororo communities, although in interviews people would insist that they are all one group. There is consensus however that the Mbororo group that arrived first, the Jaafun, are by far the biggest community, but also the most established, settled, and best educated. Members of the Jaafun sub-group also came to dominate the administration of the Mbororo in the CAR. Today, the total size of the whole community is unknown but estimated to be somewhere between 150,000 and

450,000 people (between 3 and 10% of the total population).” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, p. 4)

“They persisted in their mobile lifestyle beyond the political radar, and today live in fourteen out of the sixteen prefectures in the country.” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, p. 5)

Minority Rights Group features on its website an overview of the Mbororo ethnic tribe in which it classifies Mbororo as semi-nomadic pastoralists who came to the CAR from Cameroon:

“Known also as Fulbé (also as Peuhl, Fula or Fulani), Mbororo are semi-nomadic Islamic pastoralists. They are found throughout the western grasslands. Resented for their relative wealth in cattle, they have been subject to harassment, bandit attacks and police shakedowns. From present-day Cameroon, Fulbé spearheaded slave raids among Gbaye and Mboum peoples in the nineteenth century.” (MRG, updated March 2018b)

MRG further mentions difficulties faced by Fulani people in the CAR due to their economic activities and their perceived support for the Séléka militia:

“While much of the recent violence in CAR was following the Séléka onslaught and its subsequent collapse, some of it is also reportedly rooted in long-standing tensions between farmers and pastoralists, including the nomadic Muslim Peuhl (Fulani, also Mbororo) minority, who in the current climate were perceived as supporting Séléka. Past instances of encroachment onto farmland as well as crop damage by pastoralist herds added to the more immediate resentments that drove the anti-balaka violence. Moreover, some Peuhl were themselves responsible for attacks on Christians, often in revenge for violence against their own community. In any event, in the wake of the first phase of the conflict, anti-balaka launched a number of vicious reprisal attacks against Peuhl civilians, including the killing of 14 ethnic Peuhl in March 2015, near Kaga-Bandoro, 10 of whom were reportedly under nine years of age. Sexual violence against the community has also been widespread, with many Peuhl women abducted and kept as sex slaves by anti-balaka fighters. Furthermore, looting Peuhl cattle herds provided anti-balaka with a lucrative source of income, meaning sectarian conflict has now been supplemented by criminal violence. At times, Séléka and anti-balaka have even worked together – for example, in Bakala in January 2017 – which has left Peuhl even more vulnerable. Thousands of Peuhl were displaced as a result and now make up a very large majority of the inhabitants in almost all of the CAR refugee camps in Cameroon.” (MRG, updated March 2018b)

According to the June 2018 report by Emmanuel Chauvin and the Pharos Observatory commissioned by AFD, the raising of cattle and the cattle trade in the CAR are predominantly in the hands of Mbororo-Fulani. The annotation section of the report furthermore explains the term “Mbarara” as cattle raising Fulani originally from Chad. This term is said to differentiate these Fulani of Chadian origin from the Fulani who originally hail from Cameroon:

“Comme dans plusieurs pays d’Afrique centrale et de l’Ouest (Boutrais, 2001), l’élevage et le commerce du bétail constituent historiquement deux secteurs économiques monopolisés par des groupes identitaires différenciés. En RCA, les éleveurs se revendiquent très majoritairement Peuls mbororo. Les commerçants de bétail sont pour

la plupart des locuteurs arabes et des descendants plus ou moins lointains de groupes arabes du Tchad.” (AFD, 18 June 2018, p. 91)

“Mbarara - Utilisé en Centrafrique; équivalent d'éleveurs peuls originaires du Tchad; utilisé pour différencier ces éleveurs des Peuls venus du Cameroun.” (AFD, 18 June 2018, p. 121)

The US Department of State Country Report on Human Rights Practices of April 2018 states that the Mbororo have been victims of targeted violence and occasional discrimination during the reporting period 2017:

“Violence by unidentified persons, bandits, and other armed groups against the Mbororo, primarily nomadic pastoralists, was a problem. Their cattle wealth made them attractive targets, and they continued to suffer disproportionately from civil disorder in the North. Additionally, since many citizens viewed them as inherently foreign due to their transnational migratory patterns, the Mbororo faced occasional discrimination with regard to government services and protections. In recent years the Mbororo began arming themselves against attacks from farmers who objected to the presence of the Mbororo’s grazing cattle. Several of the resulting altercations resulted in deaths.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

The 2018 report by the International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ) mentions the vulnerability especially of nomadic Fulani communities in the CAR:

“In CAR, like in many other countries of the region, Peuhl communities are particularly vulnerable. Peuhls are partly nomadic herders who move along the transhumance corridors with their cattle or temporarily settle in camps along the road. Because of their traditional practices, they are often marginalized and cut off from social services, such as health care and education. Much more than other ethnic groups, Peuhls are perceived as foreigners and are rarely represented in state institutions. Moreover, during the ongoing crisis, traditional conflicts related to the transhumance were exacerbated by the collapse of local mechanisms to settle disputes between farmers and herders. In 2013–14, Peuhl communities were particularly targeted by Anti-Balaka militias, who killed many and stole their cattle. Since then, transhumance corridors have partially changed and the supply of cattle to the biggest market in the country, in Bangui, is only assured via convoys escorted by peacekeepers.” (ICTJ, 2018, pp. 23-24)

The Association for the Integration and Social Development of Fulani in the CAR (Association pour l’Intégration et le Développement Social des Peuhls de Centrafrique, AIDSPC), an NGO defending the rights and interests of the Fulani people and disposing of representatives in 13 of the country’s 17 prefectures, writes in a report dated June 2015 on the situation of Fulani Mbororo in the CAR. The report states that Mbororo came to the CAR from Cameroon in the 1920s and adhere to Islam. Due to recurring violence in the CAR involving road banditry, some Mbororo lost their cattle herds and were left destitute, forcing them to give up their nomadic lifestyle. AIDSPC states that there are many former Mbororo nomads who can now be found in isolated rural areas where they practice farming. Mbororo are said to be affected by poverty as well as suffering abuses at the hands of the Fulani Mbarara, who originally came from Chad. The Mbarara drive their herds of cattle across the land, leaving destroyed agricultural land in

their wake. Not only the Mbarara, but also the successive governments are said to be responsible for human rights abuses against the Mbororo. After president Bozizé was pushed out of office, Séléka and anti-Balaka militia targeted Mbororo. Mbororo were not able to escape the violence, being subjected to torture, extrajudicial killings and summary executions due to their Muslim faith or their perceived collusion with Séléka forces or the Bozizé government. AIDSPC even says to have noted a tendency in public discourse on ideology and politics according to which Mbororo are not considered Central African:

“Arrivés en Centrafrique depuis les années 1920 par le Cameroun, les Peuhls Mbororo ont un comportement non violent et solidement attaché à l’Islam. [...]

Fortement influencée par les événements violents et récurrents en Centrafrique, une partie d’entre eux a perdu ses troupeaux sous l’action des coupeurs de route. Ainsi dépouillés, nombreux sont ceux qui ont dû mettre fin à leur activité pastorale. On retrouve ainsi beaucoup de ces éleveurs en milieu rural, souvent isolés, loin des villages, et qui ne possèdent plus qu’une poignée de têtes de bétails, et qui ont opté pour un début d’agriculture. Généralement stigmatisés par les autres populations, les Peuhls Mbororo vivent une situation marquée par une forte paupérisation. Ils subissent des exactions et des pressions de la part des Peuhls Mbarara. Venus du Tchad et détenant des gros effectifs de bovins, ils épuisent sur leurs passages les ressources végétales et agricoles : ce sont les Mbarara, les Ouda, les Hanagamba et les Hontorbe. Mais les conditions les plus inhumaines auxquelles ils sont confrontés viennent des violences politiques et les violations graves et massives des Droits de l’Homme résultant des régimes qui se succèdent en RCA depuis un demi-siècle. Notamment, en 2013, après que quelques groupes Peuhls centrafricains aient rejoint la Séléka, toute la communauté a été stigmatisée par le régime de Monsieur BOZIZE qui a ensuite mené des représailles contre nous.

Au lendemain du renversement de Bozizé, les Peuhl MBororo sont indexés par les milices Séléka et les Anti-Balakas. La communauté n’échappe pas à la spirale de violence et de haine qui se déchaîne contre les communautés musulmanes. Ils sont ainsi, dans leur ensemble, à la fois victimes de l’arbitraire, des voies de faits, des actes de torture, d’exécutions sommaires et extrajudiciaires, du fait de leur appartenance religieuse musulmane, ou tenus d’être de connivence avec les Séléka ou de complicité avec le régime déchu de Bozizé. On note à présent même un déni de nationalité centrafricaine des Peuhls MBororo dans certains discours idéologiques et politiques. On note également un mutisme inexplicable de la communauté internationale sur les violences qui sont exercées sur les Peuhls.” (AIDSPC, June 2015, pp. 7-8)

As for the involvement of Fulani in armed groups in the country, Enough Project mentions that the leader of the UPC (Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique) is a Fulani (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 25). IPIS/DIIS in their report of August 2018 further mention the UPC’s strong Fulani base:

“It should be noted that whilst the UPC does not have leadership over all armed Fulani present in the CAR, or even in Bambari or Bria, its strong Fulani base and repeated references to protecting Fulani communities in justifying its presence and especially its

expansion, has fueled the conflation of the UPC not only with all armed Fulani, but also with the broader Fulani community as a whole.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 28)

Enough Project further mentions that the leader of the armed group 3R is General Sidiki Abass, a member of the Fulani ethnic group from Cameroon. It is mentioned that 3R fights against other armed elements such as RJ and anti-Balaka who threaten the Fulani/Peuhl communities in the southwest of the country. (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 19)

The report by the UN Secretary-General of June 2018 mentions the formation of an armed Fulani-group called “Siriri” in Mambéré-Kadéï and Nana-Mambéré prefectures bordering Cameroon:

“In Mambéré-Kadéï and Nana-Mambéré prefectures, a small group of armed Fulani known as ‘Siriri’ established a presence and engaged in cattle theft and illegal taxation. On 22 April, the group attacked a MINUSCA patrol in Mambéré-Kadéï, which resulted in five Siriri combatants killed, including the leader of the group.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 5)

6.4 Goula (Gula)

Several sources mention that the Goula are Muslims (Sudan Tribune, 29 April 2014; Nationalia, 7 March 2014). The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) describes the Goula and Rounga as “mainly Muslim” (FIDH, June 2014, p. 10).

The report by the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic to the UN Security Council of December 2017 explains the history of rivalry and conflict with the Rounga ethnic group which in turn leads to tensions among ex-Séléka factions:

“The National Council on Defence and Security, with its headquarters in Bria, gathers the main ex-Séléka factions except UPC, although the latter group is also present in Bria (in the Gobolo neighbourhood). However, the crumbling of the armed groups makes it difficult for the Council to exercise effective control over its factions. The main division inside the Council is centred around the rivalry between the Rounga ethnic group, led in Bria by Abdoulaye Hissène (FPRC/Rounga), and the Goula ethnic group, led by General Damane (FPRC/Goula). Before joining FPRC, the Goulas of the coalition were gathered in the Rassemblement patriotique pour le renouveau de la Centrafrique.

The Rounga and Goula communities have a long history of conflict. Clashes between armed groups claiming to represent these communities have regularly taken place, including in Bria, where the Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement (Goula) and the Convention des patriotes pour la justice et la paix (Rounga), two groups which later took part in the creation of the Séléka, fought in September 2011 (S/2011/739 , para. 13). This rivalry and the mistrust between the groups persists today, as illustrated by the clashes of the past months which took place along clear ethnic lines.” (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017, p. 30)

The Enough Project report of August 2017 notes that the main leaders of the ex-Séléka group FPRC either belong to the Goula or Rounga ethnic groups (Enough Project, August 2017, p. 7).

6.5 Rounga (Runga)

As several sources mention, Runga people belong to the Muslim faith (Sudan Tribune, 29 April 2014; Nationalia, 7 March 2014). The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) describes the Goula and Rounga as “mainly Muslim” (FIDH, June 2014, p. 10).

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IPIS/DIIS also report fighting between Goula and Rounga factions of the ex-Séléka group FPRC in November 2017 as well as fighting against anti-Balaka elements and state and international forces:

“Following the official cessation of hostilities with the FPRC, late November 2017 saw an apparent alliance between the UPC and FPRC Rounga elements who fought alongside one another against both anti-balaka groups and the Azor Kalit-led FPRC Goula faction in Bria amid continuing fratricidal conflict. In December 2017, both parties ousted Gaetan Bouadé’s anti-balaka group from Ndassima, killing the latter.” (IPIS/DIIS, August 2018, p. 28)

The International Crisis Group (ICG) also reports fighting between Rounga and Goula in September 2017:

“In September 2017, fighting even broke out between the mainly Arab and Runga faction of the FPRC and another strand of the movement who are mainly Goula, provoked by the closeness of their links with leaders of the anti-balaka. So in Bangassou we are witnessing

the revival of old rivalries between the Gula and the Runga, which had already left large numbers of dead in this mining town in 2011.” (ICG, 28 September 2017, p. 10)

6.6 Ba’aka (Aka)

In its overview of the Aka people in the CAR (last updated March 2018) the Minority Rights Group gives the following information regarding the historic habitat of the Aka as well as their current situation:

“There are various groups of Aka peoples in the CAR, the largest of which are the Ba’Aka, who number an estimated 8,000-20,000 and speak a Bantu language. Though their exact numbers are not known, there are estimated to be some tens of thousands of Aka in CAR. Ba’Aka people live largely nomadic lives in the forested areas of the south-west, gaining livelihoods through hunting and gathering; local residents and traders regularly buy meat and other produce from them. Historically, the Ba’Aka have suffered deep discrimination, regarded as inferiors by other ethnic groups. In some zones, Ba’Aka men sell their labour to local residents and to forest industries. Socially subordinated, they are paid less than others for the same work. Ba’Aka social bonds are disintegrating; health problems, including alcoholism, malaria, HIV/AIDS and respiratory diseases such as tuberculosis, are increasing. Literacy levels, low throughout the country, are negligible. Formal schooling offers no means to learn their history and culture. Their cultural survival is severely threatened. As with similar peoples elsewhere in Central Africa, outsiders have tried to turn Ba’Aka to settled farming. The government has left ‘integration’ efforts to Catholic missionaries, who have established ‘pilot villages’. Other mission efforts, such as in schooling, have failed to retain pupils, as Ba’Aka families keep moving in the forests. For most, defence is a matter of always being able to move away from difficulties. Their future as a distinct cultural group depends greatly on the vulnerable forest ecology. Here as in Democratic Republic of Congo and Gabon, those forests are under great pressure from rapacious and mainly illegal logging. In deals made between the timber companies and government agents, Ba’Aka people have no voice.

The CAR’s indigenous forest-dwelling, hunter-gatherer Ba’Aka people continue to face discrimination and marginalization. With the onset of violence in late 2012 some members of the community were reportedly among those targeted for attack by combatants. The Dzanga-Sangha National Park, part of the World Heritage-listed Sangha Trinational forest located in the Ba’Aka people’s traditional home region of south-western CAR, suffered incursions by armed groups in 2013. The UN reported several instances in which Séléka targeted and killed individuals which the UN described as ‘pygmies’, such as a father and two young sons in Ngouma, 80 kilometres from Mbaïki, in April 2013, and three others from this population in Ndongo and Mangongi regions. This term likely refers to members of indigenous, traditionally nomadic hunter-gatherer groups such as the Ba’Aka living in the forests of the south-west. Séléka night raids, in which combatants robbed, looted and terrorized civilians, were also reported to have targeted members of these communities in Bangui and Lobaye Prefecture in April 2013. Like Muslim minorities such as Mbororo, these groups have long faced discrimination in the CAR and are at heightened risk of extreme poverty and a range of deprivations. More recently, there have been reports from Dzanga-Sangha National Park of anti-balaka militias using their weapons for poaching; large-scale

killing of the blue duiker, a forest antelope, is rapidly depleting one of the Ba'Aka's key staple foods. Community leaders warn that as hunting becomes more difficult, young people find the traditional way of life less appealing. They get drawn into local towns where some start using narcotics." (MRG, updated March 2018a)

The April 2018 USDOS report mentions discrimination against Ba'aka throughout 2017:

"Discrimination against the Ba'aka, who constituted 1 to 2 percent of the population, remained a problem. The Ba'aka continued to have little influence in decisions affecting their lands, culture, traditions, and the exploitation of natural resources. Forest-dwelling Ba'aka, in particular, experienced social and economic discrimination and exploitation, which the government did little to prevent. The Ba'aka, including children, were often coerced into agricultural, domestic, and other types of labor. They were considered slaves by members of other local ethnic groups, and even when they were remunerated for labor, their wages were far below those prescribed by the labor code and lower than wages paid to members of other groups. Refugees International reported the Ba'aka were effectively 'second-class citizens,' perceived as barbaric and subhuman and excluded from mainstream society." (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

The Central African NGO Network of Journalists for Human Rights (Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L'Homme, RJDH) in April 2018 publishes an interview with Bhely Vidackpa, the director of the Aka cultural organisation "Centre de Référence des Traditions Orales des Pygmées" in the town Mongoumba in the southern prefecture Lobaye. According to Vidackpa, the Aka in Lobaye have difficulties with neighbouring Bantu-speaking peoples. Aka are often faced with neglect and discrimination and earn significantly less than Bantu-speakers. Only 10 in 100 Aka get a school education. (RJDH, 3 April 2018)

7 Religious groups

For information on freedom of religion, please also refer to [section 8.9](#) of this compilation.

The sources consulted contain diverging information regarding the religious demography of the country. According to Minority Rights Group (MRG) and the CIA World Factbook, 35 percent of the population adhere to indigenous beliefs, 25 percent are Protestant, another 25 percent Roman Catholic and 15 percent Muslim (CIA World Factbook, updated 14 November 2018; MRG, updated June 2018). MRG concedes, however, that due to the conflict the number of Muslims is currently significantly lower than 15 percent (MRG, updated June 2018). The USDOS report on religious freedom, referring to figures released by the Pew Research Foundation, divides the population into 61 percent Protestant, 28 percent Roman Catholic, 9 percent Muslim and an estimated 2 percent that follow traditional beliefs or adhere to no particular belief (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section I). It further mentions that the NGO Oxfam estimates the number of Muslims to be up to 15 percent of the population (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section I). The French public radio service Radio France Internationale in an overview of the Central African Republic states that 60 percent of the population are Animist, 25 percent are Christian and 15 percent are Muslim (RFI, February 2018). While the CIA World Factbook notes that “animistic beliefs and practices strongly influence the Christian majority” (CIA World Factbook, updated 14 November 2018), the USDOS report mentions that both among Christians and Muslims there are adherents that “incorporate aspects of indigenous beliefs into their religious practices” (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section I).

The June 2018 report by Emmanuel Chauvin and Pharos Observatory commissioned by the French development agency L’Agence Française de Développement (AFD) features a map of 2016 that depicts the religious demography in each prefecture in 2003. According to the map the northern prefecture Vakaga is predominantly Muslim and the neighbouring prefectures Bamingui-Bangoran and Haute-Kotto both have a large Muslim population. In all other 13 prefectures Christians have a strong majority. The map also indicates that since 2013 the prefecture capitals in the West of the country have become increasingly religiously segregated and many Muslims have fled to the East of the country or abroad. The map is available on page 75 of the abovementioned report via the following link:

- AFD - L’Agence Française de Développement: La guerre en Centrafrique à l’ombre du Tchad. Une escalade conflictuelle régionale? - Étude réalisée pour l’Observatoire Pharos à la demande de l’Agence Française de Développement (Author: Emmanuel Chauvin), 18 June 2018
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/guerre-centrafrique-tchad-escalade-conflictuelle-regionale.pdf>

Minority Rights Group and USDOS both address the ethno-religious background of the conflict in the CAR in their respective reports, referring to religiously motivated violence perpetrated by the Muslim ex-Séléka and the Christian anti-Balaka militias:

“The recent conflict in CAR was initially sparked at the close of 2012 by a coalition (‘Séléka’) of rebel groups which launched an offensive in the north against the forces of then President François Bozizé. The Séléka came mainly from ethnic groups in the north of the

country, unified loosely by their opposition to Bozizé and their Muslim faith. As they advanced south, briefly seizing control, the conflict increasingly acquired ethnic and religious dimensions. Séléka raids particularly targeted non-Muslim areas. Christian communities began to form or activate existing anti-balaka ('anti-machete') groups to protect their areas. While antibalaka militias may initially have fought Séléka forces, they began attacking Muslim communities more generally. From late 2013 to early 2014, as a campaign of ethnic cleansing was perpetrated against the Muslim minority in CAR, hundreds of thousands fled to neighbouring countries, including Cameroon, Chad and the Democratic Republic of Congo. More fled during subsequent waves of violence in 2016 and 2017." (MRG, September 2018, p. 21)

"Violent conflict and instability in the country had a religious cast. Many, but not all, members of the ex-Seleka and its factions were Muslim, having originated in neighboring countries or in the remote Muslim north, a region former governments often neglected. During the worst of the crisis, some Christian communities formed anti-Seleka militias that targeted Muslim communities, presumably for their association with the Seleka. [...] Ethnic killings often related to transhumance movements occurred. The major groups playing a role in the transhumance movements were social groups centering on ethnic identity. These included Muslim Fulani/Peuhl herders, Muslim farming communities, and Christian/animist farming communities. These ethnic groups committed preemptive and/or reactionary killings in protection of perceived or real threats to their property (cattle herds or farms). Initial killings generated reprisal killings and counter killings." (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

The Clingendael Netherlands Institute for international relations, an independent think tank and diplomatic academy, in October 2015 publishes a report by two researchers on the CAR, Lotje de Vries and Tim Glawion, that mentions the different identity markers in the CAR, of which religion is only one of many but has been reinforced in light of the current crisis:

"Forging a national identity is not easy in such a vast and sparsely-populated country. In the face of continuous conflict and power struggles, identities are often formed in opposition to other groups rather than around common interests. [...] A lack of a common civil identity has had repercussions in the current crisis. For example, it contributed to the mostly poor Christian majority labelling their somewhat wealthier Muslim compatriots as 'foreigners'. Other divides include the north-south divide; one between pastoralists and farmers; between young and older generations; and between Bangui and the peripheries. What fuels these divides seems to be a combination of widely held grievances – political or economic – caused by the winner-takes-all nature of the country's politics." (de Vries and Glawion, October 2015, p. 21)

7.1 Christians

The report by Emmanuel Chauvin and Pharos Observatory commissioned by AFD quotes figures released by the Central African government in 2005, according to which 51 percent of the population are Protestant and 20 Percent Catholic. It further points out that since the 1990s the evangelical movement has been gaining ground in the country, among them radical pentecostal churches that carry out extensive missionary campaigns. (AFD, 18 June 2018, p. 58)

In its report of September 2017 the International Crisis Group (ICG) explains that some of the mistrust between Christians and Muslims is due to commercial activities in which Christians often feel to be at a disadvantage:

“According to Bangassou residents, the mainly Christian Nzakara, Mbogou and Kara traders were complaining that Muslim businesspeople – Arab and Fulani – were competing against them by selling their goods at prices that were too low. In Bangassou, as across much of the CAR, Muslim minorities, accounting for about 20 per cent of the country’s population, are more affluent and have more extensive networks. They organise much of the local trading, and in some respects this leaves them in a dominant position, creating a social hierarchy that is sometimes resented by the Christian and animist sections of the population. This resentment toward Muslim business people finds expression in the pejorative names by which they are described – ‘Bengue’, ‘Toubé’ or the ‘big boubous’ (‘big robes’) and they are sometimes the target of violent score settling assaults.” (ICG, 28 September 2017, pp. 10-11)

The tensions between Christians and Muslims that are related to economic activities and social standing are further explained in an ICG report of September 2015:

“Despite the many mixed marriages, relations between Muslims and the rest of the population are often tainted by social jealousy related, in particular, to Muslim control over commerce. In several regions of the country, Christians and animists even converted to Islam to make their way in business. But some sectors of the population, notably the Gbaya, are unhappy about the social hierarchy created by Muslim domination of commerce. Although some accounts describe close relations and even cooperation between the Gbaya and Fulani Mbororo pastoralists, relations between the Gbaya and Arab and Fulbe merchants have been notoriously more problematic. Resentment toward merchants led to the use of pejorative names, such as ‘long boubous’ (grands boubous), Bènguè and Toubè.” (ICG, 21 September 2015, p. 22)

7.2 Muslims

Lotje de Vries in her March 2018 article on the Mbororo group briefly describes the Muslim demographic in the CAR and describes how following the conflict in 2013 Muslims have increasingly been labelled as “foreigners” and “invaders” from neighbouring countries:

“The Muslim minority of about ten percent of the population is scattered throughout the territory, especially in the urban centers where they often dominate the commercial sector. In the remote northeastern region, Islam is the most important religion. After the Séléka took power in Bangui in March 2013, many people started to blame Central African Muslims, including the Mbororo, for insecurity and violence in the country, pointing to their religious affiliations and alleged ‘foreignness’ and exploiting narratives of ‘othering’ (van Houtum and van Naerssen, 2002). Although Muslims and the culture of Islam have historically formed an integral part of CAR society (Moukadas-Nouré, 2015), violent rhetoric of politicians and local vigilantes targeted the Muslim minority, calling them ‘invaders’ from Chad or Sudan. At the height of the crisis, the sense of belonging of the entire Muslim minority (including that of the Mbororo) was challenged and many fled to neighboring countries.” (de Vries, 19 March 2018, p. 3)

In its June 2018 profile of the CAR, Minority Rights Group writes about the mass exodus of Muslims from the country:

“While the increasingly sectarian nature of the violence has left both Christian and Muslim communities vulnerable to attacks by rival groups, the Muslim minority in particular has faced de facto ethnic cleansing. Over 80 per cent of CAR’s pre-conflict Muslim population has been driven out of the country, while in the capital Bangui the Muslim population has reduced from more than 100,000 to under 1,000. As of April 2018 more than 580,000 civilians, the majority of whom are Muslim, were still living outside the country.” (MRG, updated June 2018)

In May 2018 the USDOS reports the following regarding discrimination and marginalisation of Muslims within the Central African society as well as tensions within the Muslim community:

“Negative comments about or directed toward Muslims, particularly members of the Peulh community, were still common in most media outlets. Private media outlets reportedly continued to be heavily influenced by their financiers, generally representing a Christian perspective, and led by Christian editors. There had been no Muslim-operated radio station or Muslim-oriented program on the national radio station since September 2015. Muslims continued to report facing consistent social discrimination and marginalization, including an inability to move freely or to access schools, hospitals, and basic necessities, such as services provided by the government, as well as those provided by private donors and organizations. Muslims reported facing several challenges within their community, including differences among Muslims of Arab, Peulh, and Bantu ethnicity regarding identity, discrimination, and internal division over leadership.” (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section III)

The report by Emmanuel Chauvin and Pharos Observatory commissioned by AFD published in June 2018 explains how the antagonism between Christians and Muslims is reflected in the use of certain words. Muslims are often called “Arabs” or “Boubou” after a wide garb worn by men in predominantly Islamic West Africa, even if their clothes are not indicative of their religion and they are not of Arab descent. Conversely, Muslims use the negatively connoted terms “Kirdi” or “Kafir” meaning “heathen” to refer to Non-Muslims. According to Pharos Observatory, these respective designations are quite widespread including on the internet and in the press and even among parts of the intellectual elite. The term “Chadian” is also said to be used to refer to someone of Chadian origin, but also to the wider Muslim community as a whole, implying that Muslims are in fact foreigners in the CAR. The term “Chadian” is only rarely employed to refer to a Christian person of Chadian origin. Apart from a lack of knowledge about the other religious community, the use of derogatory terms is linked to economic and religious antagonisms. Muslims have long controlled key sectors of the informal economy whereas Christians are majorly represented in the public sector. Even before the current conflict, a part of the Christian peasantry denounced the Muslim hegemony in the most profitable economic sectors such as trade, transport, diamond mining and cattle raising. On the other hand, the representation of Muslims in the civil service is very low due to limited schooling and discrimination. (AFD, 18 June 2018, pp. 56-57)

Pharos Observatory also recounts the rise of Islamism in the CAR. After having been organised in Sufi orders for a long time, from the 1980s onward Islam in the CAR has come under the influence of Arab Islamic scholars trained in Sudan, Egypt and Saudi Arabia who advocate the ultraconservative Wahhabi doctrine. Since then many religious organisations have been established that promote a radical form of Islam especially among urban youth and women. Influences from North Nigeria and West Africa have also played their part, especially among Peuhl Mbororo who had heretofore been considered moderate Muslims. (AFD, 18 June 2018, pp. 57-58)

7.3 Traditional/indigenous religious groups

Apart from occasional mentionings of the existence of Animist practices (see [section 7](#) above), no detailed information on specific groups and their practices could be found. Information regarding witchcraft can be found in [section 8.10](#) of this compilation.

In her book *Culture and Customs of the Central African Republic* published in 2006, Jaqueline Cassandra Woodfork describes the different forms of traditional beliefs that are common in Central African society, explaining the belief in a supreme being, the veneration of ancestors and spirits as well as the use of charms and amulets:

“Centrafrican faiths are specific to localities and ethnic groups. Although the guiding body of ideas is commonly held, at the same time, there is flexibility in practice. [...] In the CAR, there are many aspects of indigenous religion that cross ethnic lines, yet each group has certain specific beliefs, customs, and rituals.” (Woodfork, 2006, pp. 24-25)

“The supreme being or creator-god created the earth, humankind, plants, animals, and all that exists on the earth. The usual configuration has a supreme being who lives in the sky and is all-powerful. The supreme being has many names in the Central African Republic.” (Woodfork, 2006, p. 25)

“The ancestors are a part of the family, even though they are not physically present on earth. They need to be treated like other relatives: They must be remembered and included in family life. In death, they are still very much like living people in that they respond to the way they are treated. If properly looked after, an ancestor is an ally; if neglected, an ancestor can become an adversarial force. Thus, people make offerings of food, drink, prayer, and other things that the deceased enjoyed in life (such as tobacco) to placate and please their forbearers and try to curry their good favour.” (Woodfork, 2006, p. 26)

“Spirits are part of the worldview of all those who follow indigenous religions. [...] Despite a lack of agreement about all facets of spirits, Centrafricans will agree that the spirits are ubiquitous and powerful. [...] Spirits of the ancestors are called *mânes*. Ngandro to the Banda, Gbozon to the Manza and the Gbaya, they are highly feared creatures. These are the disembodied souls of the deceased that wander the countryside.” (Woodfork, 2006, p. 27)

“Charms, amulets, or gris-gris play an important role in the ways in which people try to mediate the potential for harm and encourage benevolence. Charms are frequently called *fetishes*. These items have specific targets: Their use is always deliberate, and charms are made in a ritualized way.” (Woodfork, 2006, p. 31)

8 Human rights situation

In its report on human rights practices of April 2018 the USDOS lists human rights abuses that were recorded in the CAR in 2017 and refers to 492 cases registered by MINUSCA between February and June 2017:

“Serious violations and abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law, including unlawful killings, torture and other mistreatment, abductions, sexual assaults, looting, and destruction of property, were perpetrated by all armed groups in the conflict, including the ex-Seleka and the anti-Balaka, whose fighters operated freely across much of the country, facilitated by the widespread circulation of small arms. MINUSCA documented 492 human rights violations or abuses, or violations of international humanitarian law, between February and June, including against 103 women and 172 children. These incidents included arbitrary killings, violations of physical integrity, conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and abductions.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1g)

In its report to the UN Security Council of June 2018 the UN Secretary-General mentions the MINUSCA figures regarding human rights abuses in the period from mid-February 2018 to mid-June 2018:

“During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented 1,062 incidents of human rights abuses, violations of international human rights law or violations of international humanitarian law, compared with 1,283 incidents for the previous reporting period. Those incidents affected 1,978 victims, comprising 1,122 men, 252 women, 414 children (297 boys, 97 girls and 20 unknown minors) and 190 unidentified victims. The most frequently documented offences related to killings, destruction of civilian property, cruel and inhumane treatment, conflict-related sexual violence, arbitrary detention, deprivation of liberty, abduction, recruitment of children, attacks against schools and denial of humanitarian access. However, the decrease in the number of documented cases and victims does not represent the reality on the ground, given the increased insecurity in the country, which prevented MINUSCA from undertaking monitoring activities. The violations were committed mainly by ex-Séléka splinter factions (336 documented acts), other organized armed groups and militia, particularly the criminal group called ‘Force’ in the PK5 neighbourhood of Bangui (138 acts), and the anti-balaka associated militias (151 acts). Internal security forces were responsible for 437 violations, including 401 cases of arbitrary detention.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 10)

The October 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General addresses the human rights situation in the country covering the period June until September 2018:

“Since 2017, the number of documented human rights violations by armed groups and security forces has considerably increased. However, MINUSCA has noted a decrease in civilian deaths linked to the conflict since January 2018, primarily owing to a decline in intercommunal violence. During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented 597 new cases of grave human rights violations and breaches to international humanitarian law affecting 1,077 victims. Armed groups were responsible for of the vast majority of those cases, mainly in Haute-Kotto, Haut Mbomou, Mambéré Kadéi and Ouaka. The most

widespread violations remain killings, injuries, death threats, cruel and inhuman treatment and conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the deprivation of liberty, looting and the occupation of and attacks on health centres and places of worship.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 8)

8.1 Torture, inhuman and degrading treatment

8.1.1 State actors

The April 2018 USDOS human rights practices report mentions that according to NGOs, state forces have carried out acts of torture:

“Although the law prohibits torture and specifies punishment for those found guilty of physical abuse, there were reports from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that soldiers of the Central African Armed Forces, gendarmes, and police were responsible for torture.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1c)

The January 2018 Freedom House report states that “[a]rmed groups and state security forces and police reportedly engaged in torture.” (Freedom House, January 2018)

The final report of the Panel of Experts of December 2017 states based on reporting by confidential sources that during the year 2017, elements of the Central African army were accused of ill-treatment:

“In addition, FACA elements in Zémio are accused of misconduct and ill-treatment of the local population. Similar accusations were made towards FACA members deployed in Obo and Berberati.” (UN Security Council, 6 December 2017)

The Central African NGO Network of Journalists for Human Rights (Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L’Homme, RJDH) reports in March 2018 that three police officers of the Central Office for Combating Banditry (l’Office Central de Répression du Banditisme, OCRB) North of Bangui have been arrested and stand accused of torturing a 40 year old woman. The chief officer allegedly ordered the other two policemen to violently beat the woman, who fractured her right arm and sustained injuries all over her body. (RJDH, 19 March 2018)

8.1.2 Non-state actors

The April 2018 USDOS report names the following non-state actors as being responsible for inhuman treatment:

“Inhuman treatment, akin to torture, by forces from the ex-Seleka, anti-Balaka, LRA, and other armed groups, including abuse and rape of civilians with impunity, resulted in deaths [...]” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1c)

In her report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic to the UN Human Rights Council (reporting period July 2017 to June 2018), the Independent Expert explains how armed groups have been responsible for inhuman treatment of persons they accused of witchcraft:

“Cases of cruel and inhuman treatment by armed groups on the basis of accusations of witchcraft have been brought to the attention of the Independent Expert in several regions. These allegations affect in particular the Mbomou region (south-west), where, on 5 May, in Béma, anti-Balaka elements under the command of Pino-Pino are alleged to have killed eight women accused of witchcraft, while on 30 May in Bangassou (south-east), anti-Balaka elements commanded by Line Roger are alleged to have killed a woman for the same reasons. Other allegations concern Bria (centre east), where FPRC elements commanded by General Ali Ousta are said to have subjected three men to cruel and inhuman treatment in May and to have killed a woman on 3 June, all of whom had been accused of witchcraft. Such abuses are also alleged to have occurred in Batangafo (northwest) on 3 and 28 May, when anti-Balaka elements threatened a 32-year-old woman and killed a 60-year-old woman, both accused of witchcraft.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 8)

8.2 Extrajudicial (arbitrary and unlawful) killings

8.2.1 State actors

According to the April 2018 USDOS report, “there were several reports of some government elements or its agents committing arbitrary or unlawful killings while serving as clandestine partisans of the anti-Balaka.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1a)

No more recent information could be found regarding killings perpetrated by state actors. A report by Human Rights Watch of June 2016 lists 18 cases of unlawful killings committed by the special anti-crime unit Central Office for Combating Banditry (Office Central de Répression du Banditisme, OCRB) between April 2015 and March 2016. (HRW, 27 June 2016)

8.2.2 Non-state actors

In its report on the human rights situation in the CAR in 2017, Human Rights Watch (HRW) names ex-Séléka groups such as UPC and MPC, anti-Balaka, local armed groups as well as armed groups originating in neighbouring countries, among them 3R (Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation) and LRA (Lord’s Resistance Army) as perpetrators of arbitrary killings:

“Human Rights Watch documented the killings of at least 249 civilians between May and September by various armed groups, as violence surged in many parts of the country, most notably in the Basse Kotto, Haut-Mboumou, Mboumou, Ouham and Ouham-Pendé provinces. The actual number of deaths is likely significantly higher. The Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (l’Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique, UPC), a Seleka faction, carried out some of the worst attacks in and around Alindao, in Basse Kotte province, killing at least 188 people between May and August. The group established a military base in Alindao in February, after the UN peacekeeping mission asked the group to leave their former base in Bambari, Ouaka province. [...]

On May 13, anti-balaka forces attacked the Muslim neighborhood of Tokoyo in Bangassou, Mboumou province. Nine survivors who fled to Bangui estimated that fighters killed at least 12 civilians, including the town’s imam, as they tried to seek safety in the mosque. Peacekeepers transported Muslims from the mosque to the Catholic Church, where they continued at time of writing to provide protection to approximately 1,500 Muslim civilians.

In July, fighters from the Central African Patriotic Movement (Mouvement Patriotique pour la Centrafrique, MPC), a Seleka faction, attacked a displacement camp in Batangafo, in Ouham province, and surrounding neighborhoods, killing at least 15 people, including three with disabilities, and burning approximately 230 homes and makeshift huts in the camp. In Zemio, Haut-Mbomou province, local armed Muslims without a clear link to the Seleka killed at least 28 civilians between late June and August, including during an attack on a displacement camp in the town on August 17. Forces apparently from the UPC and Muslim civilians attacked and killed six volunteers working with the Red Cross in Gambo, Mbomou province, in August. In October, the armed group 'Return, Reclamation, Rehabilitation,' or 3R, comprising of Muslim Peuhl under the command of General Sidiki Abass, took control of Bocaranga, a major town in Ouham-Pendé province, for several days. The UN mission forced them out of the town after several civilians were killed. Also in October, at least 20 Muslims were killed by auto-defense groups, local armed groups often linked to anti-balaka, in the town of Kembe in Basse-Kotto prefecture. The Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remained active in the southeast with allegations of killings and abductions of civilians." (HRW, 18 January 2018)

Amnesty International in its report of February 2018 gives a chronological overview of incidents involving the activities of armed groups and the killing of civilians during the year 2017. Ex-Séléka, anti-Balaka and groups such as 3R and the LRA are listed as the perpetrators:

"Between 20 and 21 March, at least 20 people, including civilians, were killed in clashes between ex-Seleka and Anti-balaka in the towns of Bakouma and Nzako, Mbomou prefecture. In April, 11 civilians were killed in fighting between Anti-balaka and the Union for Peace in the Central African Republic (UPC) in loose alliance with herders along the Bangassou-Rafai road. On 2 May, Return, Reclamation and Rehabilitation (3R) killed 12 people in Niem-Yelewa and occupied the town for 12 days. Between 7 and 25 May, UPC's attacks killed hundreds of civilians and displaced thousands in the southeast including in the towns of Alindao, Nzangba and Mobaye. At least 130 civilians died in Alindao; women were systematically raped. Between 12 and 13 May, Anti-balaka attacked the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood of Tokoyo in Bangassou, Mbomou prefecture, and the MINUSCA base. The UN estimated that at least 72 people were killed, 76 injured and 4,400 displaced, while the national Red Cross estimated at least 115 deaths. From 16 to 18 May, at least 17 civilians were killed in clashes between ex-Seleka and Anti-balaka in the town of Bria, and some 15,000 displaced. On 6 June, at least 18 civilians were killed when Popular Front for the Rebirth of Central African Republic (FPRC) elements attacked Anti-balaka positions in Nzako. From 20 to 23 June, over 80 civilians died during fights between Anti-balaka and FPRC in Bria. Between 27 and 30 June, at least 22 people were killed when Anti-balaka attacked Muslim neighbourhoods in Zemio town, and the local population retaliated. On 1 July, at least 10 people were killed in fighting between the Central African Patriotic Movement (MPC) and Anti-balaka in Kaga-Bandoro, Nana-Gribizi province. Between 29 July and 1 August, clashes between ex-Seleka and Anti-balaka in the town of Batangafo resulted in at least 14 civilian deaths and over 24,000 people displaced. In August, clashes between Anti-balaka and UPC in the town of Gambo, near Bangassou, resulted in at least 36 civilian deaths including six national Red Cross workers. In September, clashes between rival FPRC factions left 10 people dead in Bria. Hundreds of

Muslims returned home in the southwest but continued to be persecuted; fear of attacks forced them to restrict their movements and, in some cases, hide their religion. In the southeast, international NGOs reported 113 attacks by the LRA and at least 12 civilian casualties and 362 kidnappings. On 10 October, at least 25 people were killed in a mosque when Anti-balaka attacked Kembe town, in the Basse-Kotto province. On 18 October, clashes between Anti-balaka and UPC fighters in Pombolo, in Mbomou province, led to at least 26 deaths. In November, four people were killed when unidentified assailants threw a grenade at a concert in Bangui.” (AI, 22 February 2018)

The April 2018 USDOS report on the human rights situation in 2017 records the following instances of arbitrary killings carried out by armed groups:

“Armed rebel groups, particularly members of the various factions of ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka, killed civilians, especially persons suspected of being members or sympathizers of opposing parties in the conflict [...]. The killings, often reprisals in nature, included summary executions and deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians. The Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), a Ugandan rebel group that operated in eastern regions of the country, and other armed groups, including Reclamation, Return, and Rehabilitation (3R), Revolution and Justice, MPC, UPC, FPRC, and Democratic Front of the Central African People [Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain, FDPC], were responsible for civilian killings (see section 1.g.). The 3R, MPC, UPC, FPRC, and anti-Balaka groups participated in ethnic killings related to cattle theft [...].” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1a)

“Killings: In May self-defense groups reportedly associated with anti-Balaka forces killed 115 persons in the town of Bangassou, Mbomou Prefecture. The conflict displaced several thousand persons, with some fleeing to the nearby Democratic Republic of the Congo. Six UN peacekeepers were also killed. As of September 1, a total of 2,000 Muslim displaced persons were still sheltering at the Catholic seminary in the town. On May 2, in the town of Niem between Bouar and the Cameroon border, members of the 3R rebel group reportedly shot nine men in the head in a church, killing them.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1g)

In October 2018 Human Rights Watch reports that fighters of the ex-Séléka faction FPRC executed civilians near the central town Bria. Further civilians are said to have been previously killed by the FPRC in the same region at the end of August, after clashes took place with anti-Balaka elements:

“Seleka rebels in the Central African Republic captured and executed at least nine civilians, including seven women, on September 6, 2018, Human Rights Watch said today. The executions around the town of Bria in the Haute-Kotto province came almost two weeks after the same group killed 11 civilians after a clash with a rival militia. [...]

Rebels from the Popular Front for the Renaissance in the Central African Republic (Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique, FPRC), captured and executed the nine civilians, who had been working or going to their fields outside a displaced people’s camp. The same group killed at least 11 civilians fleeing the town’s Borno neighborhood, three kilometers from the camp, on August 25 after fighting between the FPRC and anti-balaka

militia. Human Rights Watch found evidence that the group killed at least four more civilians around Bria on September 16. Human Rights Watch also found evidence that anti-balaka groups killed at least eight civilians in the area since June. Tensions have increased between the two groups since 2017, with unlawful killings by both. Both groups deny attacking civilians.” (HRW, 12 October 2018)

The Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, a joint initiative formed by several governments and human rights groups to promote the responsibility to protect in violent conflicts, in November 2018 releases an atrocity alert for the CAR that reports the killing of at least 37 IDPs in Alindao:

“On Thursday, 15 November, violence erupted in the Central African Republic (CAR) town of Alindao between armed men affiliated with local anti-Balaka militias and members of the Union pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC) armed group. During the violence at least 37 people were killed when the UPC attacked a camp for 20,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) that is operated by the Catholic Church. A church was burned during the attack, a priest was among those killed, and thousands of people sheltering at the camp were forced to flee.” (Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect, 21 November 2018)

A detailed account of the attack on the IDP camp in Alindao is available in an Amnesty International report of December 2018 (AI, 14 December 2018).

Radio Ndeke Luka reports in December 2018 that, following an attack by UPC fighters on an IDP site near a Catholic church in Ippy (Ouaka prefecture), three persons have been killed according to local sources. (Radio Ndeke Luka, 6 December 2018)

8.3 Abduction, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrest and detention

8.3.1 State actors

The April 2018 USDOS report mentions the following legal provisions regarding arbitrary arrest:

“The law provides protection against arbitrary arrest and detention and accords detainees the right to a judicial determination of the legality of their detention, but the government did not always provide for exercise of these rights. Obtaining and affording a lawyer, and the ability to get courts to act, remained serious impediments to such challenges.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d)

No further information could be found regarding abduction or arbitrary arrest carried out by state actors. Information on prison conditions can be found in section 1c of the above-mentioned USDOS report (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1c).

8.3.2 Non-state actors

According to the April 2018 USDOS report, both ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka elements as well as the Lord’s Resistance Army were responsible for arbitrary detention and abductions during the year 2017:

“In the territories controlled by ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka, arbitrary arrest and detention remained serious problems. [...]

Arbitrary Arrest: The constitution prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention. Arbitrary arrest was a serious problem, however, and some ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka groups arbitrarily targeted and detained individuals.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d)

“Abductions: The LRA, ex-Seleka, anti-Balaka, and other armed groups abducted numerous persons. According to MINUSCA, abductions and hostage taking were used to extort money from relatives, press authorities into releasing incarcerated colleagues, and intimidate populations into allowing armed groups to impose authority. Kidnappings by the LRA reportedly continued. For example, on February 11, in the village of Derbissaka in the eastern region, the LRA abducted two women, burned their homes, and burned and looted their businesses.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1g)

The Central African NGO Network of Journalists for Human Rights (Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L’Homme, RJDH) during the year 2018 reports on several occasions on cases of abduction. In March 2018 RJDH recounts the abduction of an educational consultant in Bangassou by anti-Balaka fighters. According to the man’s testimony, the fighters arrested him on account of having “Muslim contacts” and held him for ten hours, requesting a ransom sum of 5 million CFA-Franc. After negotiations with the local authorities he was finally set free (RJDH, 30 March 2018). In April 2018 RJDH reports a hostage taking of regional political figures and members of civil society by FPRC elements near Bria (RJDH, 12 April 2018). Several days later RJDH mentions that the hostages have been set free (RJDH, 18 April 2018). A further hostage-taking is reported by RJDH in Bambari in July 2018, where a local representative was kidnapped by armed groups with ties to the anti-Balaka. Several days after the kidnapping, RJDH states that some sources have reported the representative’s death, others say he has been taken to a different location (RJDH, 7 July 2018). In August 2018 RJDH reports that a village chief has been abducted by armed men near Baboua. According to RJDH, the armed group Siriri might be responsible for the kidnapping (RJDH, 28 August 2018).

Radio Ndeke Luka reports in September 2018 that a 45-year old man in Ndjoukou in Kémo prefecture was kidnapped by anti-Balaka fighters, violently beaten and later released after payment of ransom (Radio Ndeke Luka, 28 September 2018). In October 2018 Radio Ndeke Luka notes that four persons have been kidnapped presumably by the armed group Siriri in Mambéré-Kadéï prefecture (Radio Ndeke Luka, 3 October 2018).

8.4 Sexual violence, sexual exploitation and abuse

In its October 2018 report the UN Secretary-General notes that there “was an increase in the number of incidents of sexual violence, including conflict-related, reported by victims to the national police rapid intervention unit” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 9).

The Bangui-based Mixed Unit for Rapid Intervention and Repression of Sexual Violence to Women and Children (Unité Mixte d’Intervention rapide et de Répression des violences sexuelles, UMIRR) was inaugurated in June 2017 and is composed of gendarmes and police (SRSG-SVC, 23 April 2018). According to the annual report on trafficking in persons of the

USDOS “the UMIRR focused on sexual violence against women and children in armed conflict, which included child soldiers and potential victims of forced labor or sexual exploitation”. It investigated an estimated 10 cases between April 2017 and March 2018. (USDOS, 28 June 2018, Prosecution)

For further information regarding UMIRR please see [section 8.12.2](#) of this compilation.

MINUSCA documented 39 incidents of conflict-related sexual violence, including rape, forced marriage, attempted rape and sexual assault. The perpetrators include armed Fulani elements, as well as elements from UPC, MPC, anti-Balaka, MNLC, the FPRC/MPC coalition, Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation, unspecified ex-Séléka groups, internal security forces and the FPRC Abdoulaye Hissène faction (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 10).

Regarding children the USDOS mentions in its April 2018 report that there are “no statutory rape or child pornography laws to protect minors”. Penalties for the commercial exploitation of children are prescribed in the family code and include imprisonment and financial penalties. According to the source, the minimum age of sexual consent is 18, but was rarely observed. Cases involving minor victims were reported by a legal aid center for sexual and gender-based crimes in Bimbo. (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

HRW in its annual report notes that “survivors of sexual violence continued to face stigma, rejection, and other barriers to accessing essential services and justice.” (HRW, 18 January 2018)

In November 2018 UNICEF mentions that thousands of girls are subject to sexual violence:

“Thousands of girls are subject to sexual violence, not only by armed groups and forces but also by people they know and trust. The true numbers are unclear because of under-reporting. Survivors are often unwilling to come forward – largely because of the stigma they will face, as well as the scarcity of services available to them and the slim chance of perpetrators being brought to justice.” (UNICEF, November 2018, p. 14)

According to UNICEF, there were 31 new cases of gender based violence (GBV) against girls and boys, including 15 cases of rape against girls, registered and documented across the country in September 2018 (UNICEF, September 2018, p. 4). In August 2018, UNICEF registered and documented 23 new GBV cases, including 14 cases of rape against girls (UNICEF, August 2018, p. 5), and in July there were 38 newly registered and documented GBV cases, including five cases of rape (UNICEF, July 2018, p. 4).

In his report on conflict-related sexual violence covering January to December 2017, the UN Secretary-General mentions that the “rape of men and boys has also been a feature of attacks by armed groups on civilian villages, such as in Nana-Grébizi or in Basse-Kotto where 13 men were raped” (UN Security Council, 23 March 2018, p. 9).

An article by African Arguments notes that about 14% of the 11,110 recorded cases of gender-based violence in 2016 involved men or boys (African Arguments, 5 March 2018). HRW mentions that 2,313 of the 11,110 registered cases constituted sexual violence (HRW,

5 October 2017, p. 43). Regarding gender-based violence involving men or boys the article by African Arguments further reports:

“Intense stigma and shame make it difficult for men and boys to discuss what happened to them. As one expert on gender-based violence at an international medical NGO explained, male victims of sexual violence are regarded as having sullied the name of the community and are often forced to leave. [...] All survivors of sexual violence in the CAR face huge difficulties in accessing care and support due to a lack of adequate public services, prohibitive costs, and insecurity. But many aid workers acknowledge that the lack of attention to men and boys in humanitarian programming is a particular weakness. Even identifying male survivors is a serious challenge. According to a UNICEF child protection expert, ‘the main reason behind the low numbers of boys is because they are not being screened and identified. It is not because there are no cases. We are not asking the questions.’ Care designed for male survivors is also practically nonexistent. The clinical guidance for treating male survivors is very limited for international and national service providers in the CAR. Meanwhile, humanitarian agencies’ levels of expertise on sexual violence against males are generally low.” (African Arguments, 5 March 2018)

The All Survivors Project published a detailed report on sexual violence against men and boys in February 2018:

- All Survivors Project: “I don’t know who can help” Men and boys facing sexual violence in Central African Republic, February 2018
<https://allsurvivorsproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/ASP-Central-African-Republic.pdf>

8.4.1 State actors

In October 2018 the UN Secretary-General reports that nine new incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse were allegedly perpetrated by MINUSCA forces between 15 June and 1 October 2018 (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 11). In October 2018 MINUSCA reports that it has received “new allegations of sexual abuse of at least three minors by Mauritanian peacekeepers” in the south of the country (MINUSCA, 5 October 2018). In September 2018 RFI reports that NGOs and UN agencies signed a protocol for the protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and the implementation of internal procedures for cases committed by staff (RFI, 4 September 2018).

Regarding the year 2017 the USDOS notes that there “were reports of sexual abuse of children and the inappropriate use of force by international and MINUSCA peacekeeping forces” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6). In March 2018 the UN Secretary-General notes that in 2017 a “member of the armed forces of the Central African Republic was also implicated in one incident” of conflict-related sexual violence (UN Security Council, 23 March 2018, p. 9). Also, Freedom House mentions that “sexual abuses by UN peacekeeping forces have been documented, but many instances have not been investigated or prosecuted” (Freedom House, January 2018, G3). Amnesty International (AI) in its annual report covering the year 2017 also notes that incidents of sexual exploitation and abuses by UN peacekeeping troops continued to be reported. AI further states:

“In January, the UN Secretary-General announced a new task force to prevent and respond to SEA [sexual exploitation and abuses]. However, the UN registered 21 SEA cases, including against six children, involving peacekeepers. In June, the Republic of the Congo withdrew nearly 650 troops in light of sexual abuse and misconduct allegations. [...] On 30 September, at least one Mauritanian peacekeeper allegedly drugged and raped a woman in the town of Bambari. MINUSCA rapidly deployed investigators and committed to pursuing the issue. [...] Several SEA complaints involving French forces, deployed under Operation Sangaris, were dismissed following investigations. In March, the Paris Prosecutor requested the dismissal of a rape case which allegedly occurred between 2013 and 2014 at an internally displaced people’s settlement in M’Poko in Bangui. At least 14 Operation Sangaris soldiers and five soldiers of the African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA), AU troops, and peacekeepers, were allegedly involved. The Prosecutor’s decision was that the victims’ testimonies did not sufficiently establish the facts.” (AI, 22 February 2018)

In May 2017 HRW mentions the following with regard to Ugandan soldiers in the country:

“Ugandan soldiers in the Central African Republic have sexually exploited or abused at least 13 women and girls since 2015, including at least one rape, and threatened some victims to remain silent, Human Rights Watch said today. The Ugandan military has been deployed in the country since 2009 as a part of the African Union’s Regional Task Force to eliminate the Uganda rebel group, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), but recently announced it is withdrawing its troops.” (HRW, 15 May 2017)

8.4.2 Non-state actors

In its July 2018 submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report for the Universal Periodic Review, UNHCR provides the following overview on sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) perpetrated by armed groups:

“SGBV remains pervasive in CAR and is perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. Sexual violence against children by ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka groups forms part of a larger pattern of violations against civilians in areas under their control. A particularly nefarious form of SGBV prevalent in CAR is gang rape. Against this backdrop, 40 cases of rape are being reported every day. More than 70% of protection incidents recorded through the UNHCR protection monitoring system are related to SGBV. In 2017, 4417 cases were reported to UNHCR and partners. The majority of SGBV incidents survivors are internally displaced persons. Thus, an important part of the protection response in CAR is oriented towards the prevention and response to SGBV cases. However, there are indications SGBV is even more widespread as it remains underreported out of fear of stigmatization, shame, risk of rejection by the spouse or family, or fear of reprisals by suspected perpetrators. Underreporting has also been compounded by a lack of trust in or access to the judiciary and the absence of State authorities across the country. The disintegration of the judicial system and the security forces together with most disturbing cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations peacekeepers and non-UN international forces have contributed to a climate of widespread impunity and the absence of protective measures to separate victims of SGBV from perpetrators. Furthermore, chronic insecurity

has hampered access to assistance for victims. In addition to sexual assaults like rape, sex slavery and forced marriage, women and girls are also increasingly being forced into and are resorting to transactional sex, also called ‘survival sex’, to provide for their families’ most basic needs. Given the high HIV/AIDS infection rates in CAR, survival sex has far-reaching psychological and life-threatening health implications.” (UNHCR, July 2018, pp. 2-3)

In an October 2017 report HRW mentions that both Séléka and anti-Balaka forces have raped women and girls since early 2013 (HRW, 5 October 2017, p. 46). Freedom House in January further notes that “domestic abuse, rape, and sexual slavery against women by armed groups threaten the security of women and girls, and sexual violence is increasingly used as a deliberate tool of warfare, and attackers enjoy broad impunity” (Freedom House, January 2018, G3).

The USDOS notes that in 2017 “NGOs reported the LRA continued to target and abduct children. Abducted girls often were kept as sex slaves. Armed groups committed sexual violence against children and used girls as sex slaves.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

In January 2018 HRW states that the organisation documented “the rapes of at least 25 women, ages 18 to 50, by UPC fighters during attacks on local communities in Basse-Kotto in May.” (HRW, 18 January 2018)

The October 2017 HRW report provides the following overview on sexual violence documented by the organisation:

“Both Seleka and anti-balaka fighters have committed widespread sexual violence in the ongoing Central African Republic conflict, with Human Rights Watch having documented cases that occurred as recently as May 2017. Women and girls told Human Rights Watch of sexual slavery and rape, usually by multiple perpetrators, accompanied by physical violence and acts of humiliation. Perpetrators beat women and girls, tied them up, burned them, and raped them with objects. [...]

Women and girls frequently described armed groups using sexual violence as punishment, usually because of a perceived affiliation with a rival faction. Perpetrators often targeted women and girls on the basis of their presumed religious affiliation—using it as grounds to assume support for opposing fighters—as well as for allegedly conducting trade across sectarian lines, or because of their husbands’ or family members’ purported allegiances. [...]

Human Rights Watch interviewed 44 women and girl survivors of sexual slavery, who said that they were held captive with a total of at least 167 other women and girls who were also sexual slavery victims. In two cases, armed groups held the women and girls for over a year. Thirty-five of the 44 women and girls said that multiple men raped them repeatedly, sometimes every day. At least nine survivors became pregnant during the time they were held as sexual slaves, including girls aged 14 and approximately 16 at the time, and at least five gave birth to children from the rapes.” (HRW, 5 October 2017, pp. 45-47)

For detailed findings and information please access the HRW report under the following link:

- HRW – Human Rights Watch: Central African Republic: Sexual Violence as Weapon of War, 5 October 2017

https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1411145/5228_1507274926_car1017-web.pdf

In August 2018 the report of the Independent Expert gives the following overview on incidents of conflict-related sexual violence perpetrated by armed groups:

“Conflict-related sexual violence increased steadily in 2017 according to the United Nations, which documented 308 cases committed against 155 women, 138 girls, 13 men and two boys. This violence continues to be committed by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka armed groups, the Lord’s Resistance Army and the 3R group, which are present in all regions. It involves rape, group rape, abduction and forced marriage. The Independent Expert is concerned about allegations of the rape of girls recruited by armed groups (48 girls out of the 138 cases reported in 2017). The joint rapid response unit to combat sexual violence against women and children has handled more than 300 complaints since 2017, but few have resulted in prosecution.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 9)

The UN Secretary-General notes that in August 2017 “the United Nations registered the first case in which members of a party to the conflict were convicted for crimes of sexual violence, namely, two anti-Balaka elements for the rape of a 16-year-old girl in Bambari.” However, they “received lenient sentences of two years’ imprisonment and a fine.” (UN Security Council, 23 March 2018, p. 9)

In its July 2018 letter to the UN Security Council dated July 2018, the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic mentions widespread rapes and sexual assaults in the Bossangoa area as a result of ongoing fighting involving both anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka fighters (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 2). The report of the Panel further notes that a case of mass rape was reported in the village of Kiriwiri in Ouham Prefecture on 3 March 2018. According to the report “a significant number of women living in the Nana-Bakassa-Bouaye area were raped and sexually assaulted in small groups and on different occasions over the past two months by a group of herders led by an individual named Balewa” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 23).

MSF provides further details regarding the incident:

“A mass rape has been reported in the Central African Republic (CAR) after ten survivors were taken to Bossangoa Hospital and provided emergency medical care by staff from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). The group of women arrived on 3 March at Bossangoa hospital, in western CAR. According to the women, the attack took place on 17 February near Kiriwiri, a village 56 km from Bossangoa. The 10 women said they were with a larger group in the bush, collecting water, washing clothes and tending to their crops, when men from a local armed group took them hostage. Some women managed to escape but the rest were abducted and taken to the armed group’s camp. The men raped them multiple times over the course of the day before releasing them. [...]

According to the survivors, many more victims of this attack remain in their village and did not come to the hospital in Bossangoa due to the stigma of rape, including the fear of being excluded from their community if they were identified as survivors. [...]

This latest attack brings the total number of survivors of rape and sexual assault treated by MSF's team at Bossangoa from September 2017 to present to 56. This compares to the 13 treated from January to August 2017. This increase is mirrored by both a rise in violence seen in the area and the wider rollout of MSF's sexual violence programme." (MSF, 8 March 2018)

Regarding the scale of conflict-related sexual violence and the possible underreporting of the problem, HRW in its October 2017 report notes:

"The absence of systematic data collection has hindered attempts to assess the scale of the problem. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which leads the humanitarian coordination group on gender-based violence (the GBV sub-cluster) and GBV information management system, registered 11,110 cases of sexual and gender-based violence between January and December 2016, of which 2,313 constituted sexual violence. Nonstate armed actors committed approximately 12.5 percent of total incidents, but the information is not disaggregated to show the number of cases of sexual violence (versus other gender-based violence) perpetrated by armed men. The UN Secretary-General's 2017 annual report on sexual violence in conflict states that MINUSCA recorded 179 cases in 2016, perpetrated by a variety of armed groups. The Panel of Experts reported receiving information about 59 cases of rape throughout the country between January and July 2017, but noted persistent underreporting of sexual violence." (HRW, 5 October 2017, pp. 43-44)

For further information on sexual and gender-based violence, please also see [section 8.12.2](#) of this compilation.

8.5 Extortion and looting

8.5.1 State actors

The UN Secretary-General in October 2018 mentions that the "leadership of the Central African armed forces has so far maintained high levels of discipline in the deployed units, particularly where accompanied by MINUSCA." However, some violations attributed to the Central African armed forces have been reported, including "theft, harassment, threats, physical aggression and extortion". (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 6)

The USDOS notes that, amongst others, government forces used illegal checkpoints to extort funds in 2017 (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2d).

A report by IPIS and DIIS published in November 2017 refers to a 2009 OECD report as mentioning that on the main economic axis between Bangui and the Cameroonian border, legal and illegal taxes would oscillate between 50 and 60 percent of the cost of the transport. The

gendarmerie and the police are making the most use of this method of financing. (IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, p. 50)

The November 2017 IPIS/DIIS report identified 284 roadblocks. 41 percent or 117 of these were operated by government forces. The army, police and different administrative entities operated roadblocks mainly in the southwestern part of the country. (IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, p. 8)

The eight official roadblocks on the road linking Bangui to the Cameroonian border are three customs posts at PK12, Bouar and Beloko and five toll stations in Ndéré, Birlo, Bossembélé, Yakolé and Bossempaté. Regarding these barriers the IPIS report notes the following:

“Despite the legality of these eight barriers, officers currently manning these posts demand illegal payments from carriers. In addition, there are other illegal barriers on the corridor: 26 were mapped in total between Bangui and Beloko as part of this research (see Annex 3 for a full list). The sheer density of high-value traffic seems to function as a magnet for illegal taxation.” (IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, p. 50)

The IPIS/DIIS report notes that state agents are not or very poorly paid by the state and their “livelihood depends on their ability to impose taxes along the road”. As a result they resort to extortion. IPIS further notes there is “a notable risk that State agents engaging in this type of behaviour further alienate the population from the incumbent government”. (IPIS/DIIS, November 2017, p. 51)

8.5.2 Non-state actors

Freedom House notes that businesses and homes “are regularly looted by armed militants, with little prospect for compensation or legal recourse for victims” (Freedom House, January 2018, G2).

In its May 2018 report the USDOS notes that in 2017 police and the gendarmerie “failed to stop or punish abuses committed by the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militias”, including extortion. (USDOS, 29 May 2018)

According to the Independent Expert, the main abuses in the period from July 2017 to August 2018 included extortion and looting. (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 6)

The USDOS notes that armed groups abducted numerous persons and “abductions and hostage taking were used to extort money from relatives” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1g). Armed groups and criminals “frequently used illegal checkpoints to extort funds” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2d). In an incident in February 2017 the LRA looted the businesses of two women in the village of Derbissaka after abducting them (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1g).

In October 2018 the UN Security Council reports that MINUSCA “documented 597 new cases of grave human rights violations and breaches to international humanitarian law affecting 1,077 victims” in the reporting period. The most widespread violations included looting. (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 8)

According to Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) after an attack by gunmen on a church near KM5 district in Bangui in May 2018 the perpetrators looted shops and homes in neighboring districts. Reprisals followed, with cars and personal property looted. (CSW, September 2018, p. 1)

In June 2018 the UN Security Council mentions the looting of hundreds of houses in various neighbourhoods of Bangui following population displacement (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 7).

In September 2018 IRIN notes that in PK5 area in Bangui armed figures patrol many roadblocks and extortion is widespread. (IRIN, 25 September 2018)

A May 2018 article by the Réseau des Journalistes pour les Droits de l'Homme (RJDH) notes that in several streets barricades were set up by individuals and residents fear extortion. According to a resident of the eight arrondissement of Bangui baskets were set up next to the barricades demanding money to buy coffee. (RJDH, 16 May 2018)

Between June and August 2018 the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique looted 15 villages and burned more than 2,000 houses during clashes with anti-Balaka fighters (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 4).

In June 2018 the UN Security Council notes that gangs “involved in extortion rackets and illegal taxation frequently destabilized the third district of Bangui and threatened the safety and well-being of local residents” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 4).

In Ouham-Pendé prefecture fighters of the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique (MNL) “continued to attack civilians and loot villages”. (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 5)

UPC elements “attacked the gendarmerie of Bambari and looted several homes, the cathedral and the court” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 4). During May 2018 nine premises of humanitarian organizations and the National Refugee Commission were looted in Bambari” (UN OCHA, 31 May 2018). The UN Security Council also mentions that “the security situation significantly deteriorated in Bambari” in mid-May 2018 and the premises of “several international non-governmental organizations were looted” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 5). In August 2018 USAID notes that armed actors “looted at least 10 non-governmental organization (NGO) compounds in Ouaka Prefecture’s Bambari town between mid-May and late July, prompting some relief organizations to suspend operations temporarily in the area” (USAID, 8 August 2018, p. 1).

In her August 2018 report the Independent Expert deplores “the unacceptable looting and attacks on humanitarian workers and their equipment”. 150 violent incidents were committed against humanitarian workers or property from January to June 2018. Also, the warehouses of the World Food Programme in Bangassou “had been looted several times by anti-Balaka elements”. (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 12)

In Kanga-Bandoro armed elements attempted to rob a humanitarian organisation's compound in the town in July 2018, resulting in the suspension of relief operations. According to UN reports, it was the "fifth robbery attempt against the humanitarian organization in Kanga-Bandoro since May" (USAID, 8 August 2018, p. 2).

In July 2018 Corbeau News mentions the looting of a World Food Programme (WFP) truck near Bossangoa by an anti-Balaka group (Corbeau News, 17 July 2018). RJDH further mentions that the NGO Espérance was looted during the night of 28 to 29 July 2018 by unidentified armed men (RJDH, 31 July 2018).

In June 2015 the Enough Project released a report on "the political economy of roadblocks in the Central African Republic". The report gives the following account of the phenomenon:

"Multiple armed groups in CAR, including the ex-Séléka, the Anti-Balaka, and their different factions profit extensively from forceful taxation and illicit trade with gold and diamonds that are smuggled across international borders or sold to Central African diamond companies. Moreover, armed groups use violence, attacks, and threats to collect revenue from civilians, businesses, and public institutions and to conduct widespread looting. The majority of funds generated by the armed groups goes directly into the pockets of the senior leaders, leaving very little for lower-level soldiers and creating increased divisions and factions within the groups." (Enough Project, June 2015, p. 19)

According to a September 2018 CSW report, the ex-Séléka "imposes informal and ad hoc taxes on the movement of persons and goods" in areas it controls in the north of the country. Muslims living in these areas are "also required to pay these illegal taxes". (CSW, September 2018)

In July 2018 the Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic notes that ex-Séléka factions continued to establish parallel administration structures. According to leaders of the groups the objectives of such structures were "(a) to cope with the continued lack of State presence in areas under their control; and (b) to generate revenues to sustain the provision of public services for the population, including through the establishment of security forces" (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, p. 19). The same report goes on to describe:

"Some ex-Séléka leaders claim that any activities in areas under their influence must have their agreement. For example, FPRC leaders told the Panel that the transit in May 2018 of the convoy transporting matériel for the construction of hospitals in Bria and Ouadda [...], as part of the cooperation between the Governments of the Central African Republic and the Russian Federation, as well as the provision of security to the convoy by FPRC combatants, had been accepted only in exchange for financial remuneration. Representatives of the Russian Federation denied those allegations and underlined that the only incentive for cooperation by FPRC in allowing the convoy to pass through had been the provision of support to the population through the establishment of hospitals in areas under the armed groups' control." (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, pp. 19-20)

The report also gives the following account on parallel administration by the FPRC in Haute-Kotto Prefecture:

“‘General’ Mahmat Seid, President of the Financial Management Committee of FPRC in Haute-Kotto Prefecture, told the Panel that his administration was divided into five branches, covering the following activities: the coffee trade, livestock farming, tax collection, customs and phytosanitary services.” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, pp. 19-20)

Annex 6.4 of the July 2018 report further details the taxation system of the FPRC:

“‘General’ Mahmat Seid, President of the Financial Management Committee in Haute-Kotto, provided the Panel with the following information regarding the functioning of the administration under his control:

- The so-called ‘tax office’ collects tolls from all traders and merchants. For instance, depending on the size of the trucks, each truck owner pays between FCFA 200,000 and 300,000 (USD\$350 - 530) per year to operate in the Haute-Kotto prefecture.
- Customs offices in Bria check whether economic operators coming from abroad (mainly Sudanese) have paid their taxes at FPRC customs offices in Tissi and Am Dafock (Vakaga prefecture).
- The ‘coffee trade’ office collects taxes from coffee traders (mainly from the Sudan) who buy coffee in the CAR. The traders pay taxes at 3 levels: in Bambari (FCFA 25,000, \$44), in Bria (FCFA 15 000, \$26) and in Am Dafok (FCFA 15,000, \$26). The revenues generated by tolls from the coffee trade is shared between UPC and FPRC.
- The phytosanitary services check of food delivered in Bria and collect taxes from the traders delivering the food.
- Livestock: Revenues generated from the livestock market in Bria are collected by UPC. Part of the revenues is shared with FPRC.” (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, Annex 6.4, p. 94)

The FPRC established similar parallel structures in other prefectures. The Financial Management Committees in Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga prefectures are headed by Djafar Adouma and Haroun Gaye, respectively (UN Security Council, 23 July 2018, Annex 6.4, p. 96).

For further detailed information on the use of roadblocks in the country please also see the following report:

- IPIS/DIIS – International Peace Information Service/Danish Institute for International Studies: The Politics of Pillage: the political economy of roadblocks in the Central African Republic (Authors: Peer Schouten and Soleil-Perfect Kalessopo), November 2017
<http://ipisresearch.be/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/1711-CAR-roadblocks-English.pdf>

8.6 Occupation of and attacks on schools, health centres and places of worship

8.6.1 Schools

According to the Independent Expert the main abuses in the period from July 2017 to August 2018 included occupation of and attacks on schools (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 6). There were 28 attacks on schools in 2017 (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 10). In his October 2018 report the UN Secretary-General mentions that attacks against schools continued (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 8).

According to a November 2018 UNICEF report, 89 attacks against education facilities and personnel were reported since January 2017. The report further mentions an incident near Markounda in February 2018:

“In February 2018, six education workers – including a UNICEF consultant – were gunned down near Markounda, a remote area close to the Chadian border. [...] The deadly incident near Markounda was one of 89 attacks against education facilities and personnel that have been reported since January 2017. This figure marks a sharp escalation in such attacks perpetrated by armed groups – ranging from looting and burning to occupying or fighting in close proximity to schools. As a result of continued killings, abductions, assaults and threats, qualified teachers have fled their posts outside Bangui and major townships. Newly trained teachers decline deployment until they know they can do their work safely and be paid regularly, which is nearly impossible as there are very few banks outside Bangui. Numerous schools have shut down because of the violence or because they have no teachers. And in many cases, fear is keeping children away.” (UNICEF, November 2018, p. 11)

In its “Education Under Attack” report covering the period between 2013 and 2017, the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA) provides the following overview on attacks on schools:

“There were reports of more than 100 incidents of non-state armed groups and unidentified assailants targeting schools in the current reporting period [2013 to 2017], an increase in the rate of reported attacks on schools from the 2009-2013 period covered by Education under Attack 2014. Schools were continually attacked throughout the current reporting period. A series of Education Cluster assessments found that 17.5 percent of purposefully sampled schools were attacked as of August 2013, 33 percent as of February 2014, and 38 percent as of April 2015, yet it was not clear that the rate of attacks on schools accelerated during this period. The increased percentages of school attacks may instead have been cumulative. Attacks on schools included threats against educational personnel and military occupation of schools, and the Education Cluster noted that threats and military use often occurred in conjunction with attacks on schools.” (GCPEA, 2018, p. 1)

“Attacks on schools were reported far less frequently in 2016 and 2017, although it was not clear whether this indicated a decline in the number of incidents or was due to the availability of information. From June 2015 through March 2016, the Human Rights Division of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African

Republic found that armed groups perpetrated at least 23 attacks on schools. MINUSCA also found 15 incidents of attacks on schools between April 2016 and March 2017. The UN verified eight attacks on schools and education personnel in 2016, although it was not clear how many of these attacks fell into each category.” (GCPEA, 2018, p. 2)

“Reports indicated that foreign peacekeeping forces and non-state armed groups occupied dozens of schools annually in CAR, often staying for several years, which forced out students and teachers. According to Human Rights Watch, the armed groups occupying schools destroyed desks and books. The current reporting period [2013 to 2017] saw a rise in reports of military use of schools and universities over the 2009-2013 reporting period, likely due to the escalation of armed conflict since 2013.” (GCPEA, 2018, pp. 3-4)

“Military use of schools remained an ongoing problem in 2017, although advocacy continued to contribute to the vacating of some school buildings. MINUSCA reported that armed groups were occupying 11 schools as of March 31, 2017. The UN also reported that four schools were occupied and looted between February 2017 and June 2017.” (GCPEA, 2018, p. 5)

For further details please see:

- GCPEA - Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack: Education Under Attack; GCPEA Country Profiles; Central African Republic, 2018
http://protectingeducation.org/sites/default/files/documents/eua2018_car.pdf

Regarding the situation since December 2012, HRW notes the following:

“Attempts to quantify the effects of the use of schools by armed groups in the Central African Republic since December 2012 is complicated due to different reporting standards used by UN agencies and nongovernmental organizations, as well as limited access caused by insecurity and remoteness of locations. Further complicating matters, some schools were occupied repeatedly for short periods of time. While the absence of comprehensive data has hindered attempts to understand the full scale of the problem, some general conclusions emerge.” (HRW, 23 March 2017, p. 12)

“As the Seleka moved out of the northeast of the country, they looted and occupied schools. By late 2013, schools across the country had lost an average of 25 weeks of the school year. Looting became so severe that in many schools there was nothing left to steal. Anti-balaka groups similarly looted schools as they became more active in 2013.” (HRW, 23 March 2017, p. 12)

In a March 2017 report on the use of schools by armed groups Human Rights Watch (HRW) “documented five occasions in which armed international peacekeepers from the AU mission, MISCA, and the UN mission, MINUSCA, used schools as bases” since 2013 (HRW, 23 March 2017, p. 20). The report mentions cases in November 2016 in Ouham-Pendé and in January 2017 in Ouaka:

“In November 2016, Human Rights Watch visited a school in De Gualle in the Kouï sub-prefecture in the Ouham-Pendé province and observed how MINUSCA peacekeepers from

the Republic of Congo had occupied the town's primary school and grounds. Locals said the armed peacekeepers had been there for several weeks. The commanding officer told Human Rights Watch that they were going to leave the school soon, but that it was the community's wish for the peacekeepers to use the school. The peacekeepers did leave the school in November 2016 after Human Rights Watch contacted MINUSCA staff in Bangui. Since December 2016, Mourouba, a small town in the Ouaka province, has seen clashes between the UPC and FPRC in the area. UPC fighters took control of the town in December and killed at least three civilians, a father and his two sons, aged 10 and 16. They also ransacked the school and burned documents, residents said. The town's population fled and when they returned in January, the school was occupied by MINUSCA peacekeepers." (HRW, 23 March 2017, p. 20)

"During a visit to the town on January 22, Human Rights Watch researchers saw MINUSCA peacekeepers from Pakistan using the school grounds as their base. Residents told Human Rights Watch that they want the peacekeepers to stay, but they also want to send their children back to school." (HRW, 23 March 2017, p. 21)

"Human Rights Watch informed MINUSCA authorities of the occupied schools in De Gaulle and Mourouba and both were subsequently vacated. However, these recent occupations are troubling violations of MINUSCA's own directive 'not to use schools for any purpose' [...] that show how orders from Bangui are not getting implemented in the provinces. When speaking with Human Rights Watch, the MINUSCA commanding officers in De Gaulle defended their use of the school, on grounds that the local population wished them to be based there, and officers in Mourouba failed to clearly answer questions about the directive." (HRW, 23 March 2017, p. 22)

According to "United Nations documentation, Human Rights Watch research, and research conducted by other nongovernmental organizations, attacks on students, teachers, and schools by Séléka and anti-Balaka took place between 2012 and 2016" (HRW, February 2018, p. 2) and "government forces and non-state armed groups, including Séléka and anti-Balaka fighters, occupied schools for military purposes between 2012 and 2017" (HRW, February 2018, p. 3).

For further information on attacks on and military use of schools please see pages 2-5 of the following document:

- HRW – Human Rights Watch: Submission by Human Rights Watch to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 63rd plenary session concerning the Central African Republic, February 2018
https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1426100/1930_1520418939_int-cescr-css-caf-30338-e.pdf

8.6.2 Places of worship

In November 2018 Al Jazeera reports that over 40 people have been killed in an attack on a Catholic mission sheltering refugees in Aliando. The violence had started when anti-Balaka killed Muslims, which led to revenge attacks. (Al Jazeera, 18 November 2018)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) in September 2018 gives the following overview on religiously motivated attacks, including attacks on churches and the vandalism of a mosque:

“During the transition period violence was regularly reported, including grenade attacks, bombs thrown into occupied church buildings, looting, desecration of places of worship, destruction of buildings providing essential social services, and muggings. Muslims in the capital, Bangui, were also affected by this violence. The security situation in Bangui has improved significantly in recent months, and churches in most of the city have been able to resume their activities, although churches remain closed in areas where the situation is still volatile. Religiously-motivated attacks continue to occur. At least 15 people were killed and 100 were injured when gunmen attacked a mass service at Our Lady Fatima Church near KM5 district in Bangui on 1 May 2018. A Catholic priest was among those killed in the attack. Constant gunfire was heard in and around KM5 district from the time of the attack until 3pm. After attacking the church, the perpetrators moved into neighbouring districts, looting shops and homes and attacking civilians. An Evangelical church member was killed outside his home. Reprisals soon followed, with a local mosque vandalised, and cars and personal property looted and burned. Our Lady Fatima Church had been attacked in 2014 by gunmen who killed a priest and several churchgoers. On 7 February 2017 three churches were burned and a pastor killed in the KM5 district of Bangui, following the death of a gang leader at the hands of the police and the UN Peacekeeping Mission in the CAR (MINUSCA). On 11 February 2017 Popular Front for the Central African Renaissance (FPRC) leader General Zoundeko was killed near Bambari. Several churches in the Ouham area were subsequently set on fire in reprisal attacks.” (CSW, September 2018)

According to the Independent Expert the main abuses in the period from July 2017 to August 2018 included occupation of and attacks on places of worship. (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 6)

The USDOS mentions that in 2017 “militia groups continued to target IDPs and threaten individuals and organizations attempting to shelter IDPs, including churches” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2d).

According to the report of the Independent Expert, anti-Balaka elements attacked the compound of the cathedral of Bangassou in late July 2017, which shelters displaced persons (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 4). A Reuters article published in July 2017 also mentions that “Christian militias in Central African Republic have launched several attacks in the town of Bangassou in recent days, attempting to seize a cathedral housing displaced Muslims” (Reuters, 24 July 2017).

In June 2018 the UN Secretary-General mentions that the “first months of 2018 saw frequent armed confrontations in Bangassou between local anti-Balaka associated militias and internally displaced persons who had sought refuge at the Catholic mission since May 2017. In March, armed fighters frequently blocked humanitarian access to the Catholic mission, robbed humanitarian staff and regularly fired on MINUSCA, injuring two peacekeepers.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 6)

In August 2018 the National Catholic Reporter mentions that the St. Peter Claver Cathedral in Bangassou houses some 2,000 Muslims. In July 2018, a “self-styled Church Defense Group for Christians called on all Christians in the country to carry out revenge attacks on Muslims for killing Christians”. Hundreds of students and residents have also taken refuge in a local parish in Zemio. According to the article, in “both places, Muslims and their protectors live in constant fear of attack amid threats from Christian militia”. (National Catholic Reporter, 16 August 2018)

The UN Secretary-General provides the following information regarding an attack on a Catholic church in Bangui on 1 May 2018:

“Several weeks of volatility in the capital culminated on 1 May in a deadly attack on a Catholic church by elements of one of the PK5 armed criminal groups, in retaliation for the arrest of one of its members by internal security forces. The attack resulted in the killing of a prominent peace activist cleric, Abbé Albert Toungoumale Baba, and nine other civilians who were in the church. Retaliatory violence against Muslims surged and included the destruction of several mosques, the killing of at least three civilians from the Muslim community and the looting of Muslim-owned shops and homes. In support of national security forces, MINUSCA dispatched patrols to secure the city. Total casualties were estimated at 22 deaths and 185 wounded that day.” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 4)

A May 2018 article by the New York Times (NYT) also mentions the attack on the Roman Catholic church Notre Dame of Fatima. The article further mentions that “an ‘angry mob’ had attacked several mosques, injured people on the streets, and damaged United Nations vehicles” in retaliatory violence in Bangui (NYT, 2 May 2018). An article by news agency Reuters mentions that the death toll from the church attack increased to 26, as ten more people have died from wounds sustained during the attack on Notre Dame de Fatima church (Reuters, 3 May 2018).

8.6.3 Health centres

According to the Independent Expert the main abuses in the period from July 2017 to August 2018 included occupation of and attacks on health centres (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 6). There were 19 attacks on hospitals in 2017 (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 10). The UN Secretary-General in his October 2018 report mentions that attacks against hospitals continued (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 8).

The Independent Expert provides the following account on attacks on Zémio hospital in July and in August 2017:

“With regard to health services, the Independent Expert, strongly condemned the attack on Zémio hospital on 11 July 2017 by an anti-Balaka element, who killed a one-year-old Muslim child. The same hospital was attacked again on 17 August by armed Peul elements, who killed at least 11 civilians. In late August, anti-Balaka elements prevented Muslims from entering the hospital.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 12)

In January 2018 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) mentions attacks by armed men outside the hospital in Batangafo on 8 September 2017 and also an attack on the hospital in Zémio on 11 July 2017 and another attack on the same hospital one month later (MSF, 30 January 2018).

The report by the Independent Expert further mentions an “attack on the community hospital in Bangui in May 2018 by individuals seeking to attack Muslim victims who were receiving treatment, which led to the lynching of a member of the healthcare staff” and a June 2018 incident when “armed elements entered the hospital of Bambari and threatened medical staff and patients” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 12). Also, in December 2017 “UPC and FPRC fighters surrounded the hospital of Ippy (centre) and opened fire on civilian staff and patients, killing 12 men, one woman, three children and a baby” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 4).

MSF reports in January 2018 that the organisation “suffered an average of three attacks per month against its medical facilities, vehicles and staff” in 2017. The year 2017 has seen “ambulances being brought to a standstill or attacked while transporting the wounded, indiscriminate shooting inside medical facilities, and patients being forcibly removed from their beds and executed in cold blood”. (MSF, 30 January 2018)

In May 2018 armed groups retook control of the city Bambari, where an MSF hospital is located between the frontlines. An August 2018 article by MSF gives the following account on the situation in the hospital:

“Staff there have seen the results of the pervasive violence. They have treated over 70 patients with gun or bladed-weapon wounds since May. A is one of them. He is Muslim and was caught amid gunfire along with his brother, who was killed instantly. A was injured by a bullet in the leg. While he was being treated at the hospital in Bambari, he saw groups of armed men enter the facility twice. ‘The first time was on 15 May. Armed men entered the hospital and we hid under our beds,’ A explained. ‘The Christian patients helped us and, fortunately, the hospital staff persuaded the group not to enter the room we were staying in. Three weeks later, another armed group entered the hospital. This time, as soon as we heard that they were coming, we fled. We were too worried about what could happen. Because I couldn’t walk with my wounded leg, people put me on a blanket and carried me.’ After this double incursion, 21 shell casings were found inside the hospital.” (MSF, 31 August 2018)

The organisation further mentions that a “MSF-supported health centre, located in the Elevage neighbourhood, had to stay closed for more than a week” because of insecurity in Bambari. During the closure the centre was looted by armed men. (MSF, 31 August 2018)

A September 2018 article by Radio Ndeke Luka mentions that ex-Séléka elements set up barricades on the road from PK3 to Bria hospital in the city of Bria between 29 and 31 August 2018. According to the article this constitutes a blockage of humanitarian workers, as the barricades were not far from a camp for displaced persons in PK3. (Radio Ndeke Luka, 3 September 2018)

The UN Secretary-General mentions in his October 2018 report that “so far in 2018, 7 humanitarian workers have been killed and 18 injured by hostile action, while 294 security incidents against humanitarian actors or organizations have been reported” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 6).

HRW mentions that forces “apparently from the UPC and Muslim civilians attacked and killed six volunteers working with the Red Cross in Gambo, Mboumou province”, in August 2017 (HRW, 18 January 2018).

In June 2018 MSF mentions that a “MSF house in Bambari was robbed by armed men in the middle of the night” on 30 May 2018. MSF evacuated most of its team to Bangui, while a small team remained in Bria. On 15 June 2018 MSF resumed “both surgical and medical activities but there are still health facilities which are not functioning” (MSF, 26 June 2018).

For a detailed account on attacks on health care in 2017 please also see the Central African Republic country profile (pages 19 to 21) in the May 2018 report by the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, a group of more than 35 organizations working to protect health workers and services threatened by war or civil unrest:

- Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition: Violence on the front line: Attacks on Health Care in 2017, May 2018
<https://www.safeguardinghealth.org/sites/shcc/files/SHCC2018final.pdf>

8.7 Rule of Law and access to justice

The German political research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung provides an overview on the Central African judiciary in its country report published in 2018:

“The judiciary, historically understaffed and weak, was extremely weakened by months of turmoil in 2013 and 2014. In Bangui, several prosecutors and judges were killed and legal archives systematically destroyed during looting by both the Anti-Balaka and Séléka. Judges, prosecutors and lawyers are always in short supply and professionalism is low. Impunity at all levels of society is the status quo, in particular for elites. Presidents are expected to dole out punishments, not the courts. Nevertheless, during the reporting period, a new constitution was adopted and the transitional Constitutional Court validated elections results and stepped aside for the new parliament – critical steps towards creating an independent judiciary. The judiciary also suffers from structural weaknesses with the police and gendarmerie forces, especially their inability to effectively investigate cases and secure evidence. The deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping mission under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter is (among many other critical tasks) attempting to strengthen the judiciary, and restore the courts and tribunals across the country. In 2015, together with the UNDP, the peacekeeping mission supported the rehabilitation of eight courts and organized training sessions for the personnel of the Bangui Court of Appeal as well as for 65 magistrates and clerks. In February 2016, the Council of Ministers approved the emergency strategic plan of the Ministry of Justice, developed with the support of MINUSCA and the UNDP. In June 2015, a Special Criminal Court was promulgated to investigate war crimes and crimes against humanity committed on the territory of CAR since 2003, and prosecute

the perpetrators. The Court of Appeals in Bangui also resumed activities for the first time since 2010.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, pp. 10-11)

In its October 2016 report, the United Nations Security Sector Reform Unit provides the following overview on the civil law based judicial system:

“The civil-law based judicial system is spread over sixteen prefectures and has three tiers: A constitutional court, three courts of appeal, and twenty-four courts of first instance. There are also thematic courts: a court of auditors, a permanent military tribunal and also a children’s tribunal. A specialized mobile court with nation-wide jurisdiction addresses international criminal cases. About 177 magistrates work in the legal system, and there are around 150 lawyers for the entire population, with a high concentration of lawyers based in and around Bangui. Finally, the penitentiary system is made up of 38 prison facilities, which are spread evenly across the CAR’s territory, and a total of 40 personnel work in Penitentiary Administration. In the absence of correction officers, the FACA provide security to the two main prisons in Bangui.” (UN Security Sector Reform Unit, October 2016, pp. 7-8)

Regarding civil courts the USDOS mentions the following in its annual human rights report published April 2018:

“The constitution provides for an independent judiciary in civil matters, but citizens had limited access to courts to bring lawsuits seeking damages for, or cessation of, a human rights violation. Civil courts operated since 2015 and held regular sessions. One international legal NGO was able to assist citizens in filing more than 1,680 civil and penal cases and obtain judgments in more than 175. There is no system for the protection of victims and witnesses, who faced intimidation and insecurity. Victims, who often lived side-by-side with perpetrators, were often unable to testify against perpetrators, especially since there was no guarantee of a credible judicial process. Several civil courts were operational in Bangui and prefectures in western parts of the country.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1e)

In October 2017 HRW notes that throughout much of the country, and “especially in the east, most judicial structures were not operational between early 2013 and 2017”. At the time of writing of the HRW report some courts were functioning in nine areas, including Bangui and Boda. In areas in the north and east and in Kaga-Bandoro no courts were functioning. HRW further mentions that 113 registered lawyers serve the entire country, but most of them are based in Bangui. (HRW, 5 October 2017, p. 126)

Freedom House also notes that “the state justice system has limited presence beyond Bangui” (Freedom House, January 2018, F2). According to several judges interviewed by Human Rights Watch “the judicial police routinely fail to investigate criminal cases when the perpetrator does not confess” (HRW, 5 October 2017, p. 126).

In an October 2015 Clingendael Institute report Lotje de Vries and Tim Glawion mention that “local leaders such as chiefs and headmen are trapped between citizens’ high expectations of the state and its low actual performance” and “are left to mediate lower-scale disputes, such

as fistfights and conflicts within households, or to engage in dialogue with non-violent cattle groups approaching their territory”. (de Vries and Glawion, October 2015, p. 23)

The USDOS notes that “there was a lack of independence between the judiciary and political actors” and gives the following account on the situation of the judicial system:

“In March [2017] the president issued a decree appointing eight members of the Constitutional Court, four of whom, including the president of the court, were women. In 2013 the Seleka destroyed court buildings and records throughout the country, leaving the judicial system barely functional. Courts in Bangui and some prefectures resumed operations, but the deployment of magistrates and administrators outside Bangui was limited. Many judges were unwilling to leave Bangui citing security concerns, the inability to receive their salaries while in provincial cities, and the lack of office space and housing.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1e)

Regarding trial procedures, the USDOS further provides the following account:

“The penal code presumes defendants are innocent until proven guilty. Trials are public, and defendants have the right to be present and consult a public defender. Criminal trials use juries. The law obliges the government to provide counsel for indigent defendants; this process delayed trial proceedings due to the state’s limited resources. Defendants have the right to question witnesses, present witnesses and evidence on their own behalf, and file appeals. The government sometimes complied with these requirements. Defendants have the right to be informed promptly and in detail of the charges (with free interpretation as necessary from the moment charged through all appeals), to receive adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense, and not to be compelled to testify or confess guilt. Authorities seldom respected these rights.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1e)

According to Freedom House, courts “are inefficient and politicized. Judicial salaries have often gone unpaid, and there is a shortage of judges” (Freedom House, January 2018, F1). The USDOS further mentions that courts “suffered from inefficient administration, understaffing, a shortage of trained personnel, salary arrears, and a lack of resources” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1e).

In August 2018 the Independent Expert notes the following regarding lack of personnel and its effects on impunity:

“In February 2018, the Independent Expert regretted the lack of judges, who had, however, been redeployed, in the towns of Paoua, Bossangoa and Bria. During her visit to Paoua, she observed that the premises of the new Paoua Prison were empty for lack of prison guards. She then visited the premises of the gendarmerie, which, despite a recent escape, still held 16 prisoners sharing the same space, five of them women, one of whom was four months pregnant. In June, she went to Bangassou, where the local authorities also regretted that there had been no judges in the town for almost a year, resulting in impunity. Aware of the security risks, as in Bambari, where the court was looted in May 2018, the Expert called

upon judges to display courage and join the administrative and prefectural authorities already present in the regions without further delay.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 8)

The Independent Expert further notes that the “lack of representatives of the criminal justice system in some regions continues to affect pre-trial detention periods” and limits access to justice (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 8).

According to the USDOS report, the primary cause of pre-trial detention was the slow investigation and processing of a case. With regard to the judicial police force the report states that it was “poorly trained, understaffed, and had few resources, resulting in poorly processed cases with little physical evidence”. Although the constitution mandated two criminal sessions per year, the court system did not hold them in 2017. According to the USDOS the “judges resisted holding sessions out of security concerns and insisted on receiving stipends beyond their salaries”. (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1d)

In a March 2018 report AI notes the following regarding annual criminal sessions by the Court of Appeal:

“The national justice system is expected to try most criminal cases, including those related to the conflict. However, despite efforts by the authorities and support by international partners, the justice system continues to face challenges in holding the prescribed two annual sessions by the Court of Appeal. In 2015, two criminal sessions were scheduled by the Court of Appeal of Bangui. However, due to various challenges, including a strike by pro-bono lawyers over low fees for representing those accused, the second criminal session was only held in 2016. In 2017, only the Court of Appeal of Bouar held a criminal session, and in early 2018, the Court of Appeal of Bangui held a session.” (AI, March 2018, pp. 6-7)

The UN Secretary-General mentions that in January 2018, “at the third criminal session of the Bangui Court of Appeal organized since 2015, for the first time, several members of armed groups were convicted” (UN Security Council, 15 February 2018, p. 7). The first criminal session at the Bouar Court of Appeal since 2008 led to 62 individual convictions (UN Security Council, 15 February 2018, p. 8).

In his June 2018 report, the UN Secretary-General notes that during “the Bangui criminal court session, 12 of the 32 registered cases were tried”. The report further mentions that judicial authorities “are also implementing the reforms needed to address the procedural and technical irregularities observed during those trials”. (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 8)

RFI mentions that the first criminal session of 2018 was held in Bangui from 16 July 2018 to 31 August 2018 (RFI, 1 September 2018). It was the third criminal session since 2016 (RFI, 17 July 2018).

The second criminal session of 2018 by the Bangui Court of Appeal commenced on 19 November 2018 and is set to conclude on 20 December 2018. During the first criminal

session between July and August 2018, the Court tried 34 cases and sentenced 15 people, including to life imprisonment and 20 years in prison. (RJDH, 19 November 2018)

Freedom House notes that “arbitrary detention and lengthy pre-trial detention are commonplace” in the country. In 2017 “impunity for violence, economic crimes, and human rights violations remained widespread”. (Freedom House, January 2018, F2)

In February 2018 Amnesty International provides the following overview on impunity for human rights abuses and violations:

“Many suspected perpetrators of human rights abuses and violations, including armed groups and security forces, were not investigated or tried. Impunity was exacerbated by the collapse of the national justice system and its slow reconstruction. On 26 February, MINUSCA arrested six FPRC and MPC members. Central African authorities detained them from 1 March and opened investigations. Suspects had not been brought to trial by the end of the year. Between November and December, eight Anti-balaka members were sentenced in four cases, in a court in the western town of Bouar, to up to 20 years’ imprisonment for crimes including criminal association, unlawful possession of homemade arms, murder and theft. Others were sentenced in their absence.” (AI, 22 February 2018)

The USDOS also mentions that the government “did not take steps to investigate and prosecute officials who committed violations, whether in the security forces or elsewhere in the government, creating a climate of impunity reinforced by a general lack of citizen access to judicial services” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, Executive Summary).

According to the Bertelsmann Stiftung “de jure protection of civil rights for the entire population continues to be hindered by the weak judicial system and culture of impunity for the elite” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 11).

The UN Secretary-General in June 2018 notes that in the past four months MINUSCA “continued to use its urgent temporary measures, apprehending 91 individuals suspected of committing various crimes, including murder, rape, kidnapping, armed robbery, torture and looting” (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, p. 9).

According to the USDOS the law provides penalties for corruption by officials, but the law was not implemented effectively and officials engaged in corrupt practices with impunity (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 4). Court orders were not always respected by the authorities, particularly by those of high rank (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1e). The report further states:

“Few cases of corruption were brought to trial or exposed with strong evidence in the media; however, there were widespread rumors and anecdotal stories of pervasive corruption. A report by the foreign NGO Collaborative for Development Action Collaborative Learning Projects utilizing firsthand testimony highlighted the extensive nature of corruption in the criminal justice system, where ‘extortion/bribery, sexual favors, favoritism, and political interference distort every aspect of the criminal justice system.’” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 4)

In February 2018 AI notes that the authorities “failed to implement an asset freeze which was extended by the UN Security Council on 27 January until 31 January 2018 along with an arms embargo and travel ban. Several listed individuals continued to collect their state salaries.” (AI, 22 February 2018)

Special Criminal Court (SCC)

According to HRW the Special Criminal Court (SCC) is a “hybrid court with national and international judges and prosecutors that will focus on grave international crimes committed since 2003”. In February 2017 the court’s chief prosecutor, Toussaint Muntazini Mukimapa, was appointed. In April 2017 the appointment of two international judges was announced, followed by the appointment of five national judges in May and a deputy international prosecutor in June. The court is mainly funded by the Netherlands, the US, and the UN, but the court’s five-year budget remained only partially covered. (HRW, 18 January 2018)

The USDOS summarises the 2017 developments regarding the SCC as follows:

“With assistance from MINUSCA and international donors, the government began the process of establishing the Special Criminal Court tasked to investigate and prosecute serious human rights violations, with a focus on conflict-related and gender-based crimes. The internationally nominated chief prosecutor for the court took office in May. More than a dozen international and national positions within the court, including judges, prosecutors, and clerks, had also been filled.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1e)

20 judicial police officers were appointed on 20 February 2018 and trained. According to the June 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General, in “a parallel development, on 22 May, the Mission and UNDP officially handed over to the Government the strategy for the protection of victims and witnesses which will underpin the establishment of a victim and witness protection programme for the Court and other national jurisdictions”. (UN Security Council, 18 June 2018, pp. 8-9)

According to the UN Secretary-General, “regulations providing for the prosecution by the Special Criminal Court of serious crimes committed since 2003, including outside the Central African Republic, were adopted by Parliament in May 2018 and validated by the Constitutional Court” (UN Security Council, 2 October 2018, p. 7).

A further October 2018 report by the UN Secretary-General mentions that the “Special Criminal Court rules of procedure and evidence were promulgated on 2 July 2018. The Court is actively working, with MINUSCA support, to develop its prosecutorial and case selection strategy.” (UN Security Council, 15 October 2018, p. 7)

In August 2018 the Independent Expert “welcomed the imminent opening of the Special Criminal Court investigations following the adoption of the procedural and evidentiary regulations, and encouraged donors to provide steady funding to enable its staff to concentrate on judicial work” (HRC, 13 August 2018, pp. 13-14).

In October 2018 HRW mentions that “the Special Criminal Court - staffed with national and international judges and prosecutors to try grave human rights violations since 2003 - has begun operations” (HRW, 12 October 2018).

According to an October 2018 article the inaugural session of the Special Criminal Court was held in Bangui on 22 October 2018. The SSC is composed of 13 national and 12 international judges. (RFI, 23 October 2018)

An IRIN article published November 2018 notes the following regarding the SCC:

“The overriding question remains whether the SCC, made up of 13 local judges and 12 international judges, can be the beginning of the end of CAR’s widespread impunity. The recent inauguration of the SCC after almost four years of preparatory work and last week’s extradition of Yekatom [see below, remark ACCORD] does show ‘grounds for optimism’, said Patryk Labuda from NYU School of Law, adding: ‘There is a real opportunity to break the cycle of impunity in CAR.’ ‘The SCC has taken a long time to be established, but the international community and Central Africans have used this time wisely.’ he said.” (IRIN, 28 November 2018)

A July 2017 report by HRW notes the following concerning the jurisdiction of SCC and the International Criminal Court (ICC):

“The law establishing the SCC foresees that if the ICC and the SCC work on the same case, priority will go to the ICC. In terms of jurisdiction over ordinary national courts, the SCC is given primary, but not exclusive, jurisdiction, meaning that the SCC has priority to select cases but ordinary courts can still try remaining cases of grave international crimes, in accordance with Central African law.” (HRW, 5 July 2017, p. 76)

International Criminal Court (ICC)

In July 2017 HRW provides the following overview on proceedings of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in the country:

“The Central African Republic accepted the court’s authority in 2001 when it became a party to the Rome Statute. The ICC has jurisdiction over genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes as of July 1, 2002, when the Rome Statute entered into force. In December 2004, the Central African government referred the situation of grave crimes committed in the country during the political upheaval and Bozizé-lead coup in 2002 and 2003 to the ICC. The Bangui Court of Appeals had ruled that domestic courts were unable to prosecute serious crimes effectively. In 2007, the ICC prosecutor announced the opening of a formal investigation. The then-prosecutor also announced he would monitor more recent events in the north. The ICC investigation led to one case against former vice-president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo. [...] On June 21, 2016, the judges sentenced Bemba to 18 years in prison. In May 2014, then-interim president Catherine Samba-Panza referred the situation in the Central African Republic since August 2012 to the ICC, inviting the prosecutor to investigate crimes within the jurisdiction of the Rome Statute.” (HRW, 5 July 2017, pp. 73-44)

In January 2018 HRW gives the following account regarding investigations into alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the country by the Office of the Prosecutor at the ICC:

“The ICC issued no arrest warrants in 2017. Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo, a former vice president of the Democratic Republic of Congo and leader of the Movement for the Liberation of the Congo (Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo), was sentenced to 12-months in jail and fined €300,000 euros (approximately US\$353,000) in March for bribing witnesses during an earlier war crimes trial at the ICC. ICC judges found Bemba and four associates guilty of witness tampering in October 2016. Bemba was found guilty of rape, murder and pillage in March 2016 for crimes committed in the Central African Republic in 2002 and 2003. There was no progress in bringing to justice African Union peacekeepers from the Republic of Congo allegedly responsible for abuses in CAR in 2014. A mass grave exhumed at Boali in February 2016 appeared to contain the remains of 12 people allegedly killed by Congolese soldiers. In June 2016, the government of the Republic of Congo had announced that a judicial procedure was ongoing for this case. A forensic investigation and exhumation was concluded in November and a private report of this investigation was handed to the Central African investigating judge. The victim’s remains were buried in Boali.” (HRW, 18 January 2018)

In November 2018 a Member of Parliament and former Christian militia leader was extradited to the ICC in The Hague. The ICC alleges that Alfred Yekatom, known as “Rambo”, was responsible for murder, torture, attacking civilians and using child fighters. (BBC, 18 November 2018)

Regarding the extradition of Yekatom to The Hague, Patryk I. Labuda from the New York University School of Law notes the following:

“The timing, circumstances and wider context of Yekatom’s arrest inevitably raise questions about complementarity. Why is the ICC – instead of focusing on national jurisdictions that are ‘unable or unwilling’ to prosecute – wasting precious time and resources, yet again, on cases that could be prosecuted domestically (think Lubanga, Katanga, Al-Mahdi, Mudacumura, etc)? This question seems especially relevant in CAR, where the new Special Criminal Court (SCC) finally launched investigations just weeks ago. Can it credibly be argued that the ICC should prosecute Yekatom given that the international community has just poured millions of dollars into a new hybrid court that is supposed to bring perpetrators to justice in CAR?” (Labuda, 19 November 2018)

8.8 Forced labour

In June 2018 the USDOS notes that the Central African Republic is a source and transit country for adults subjected to forced labour (USDOS, 28 June 2018, Trafficking Profile). In April 2018 the USDOS states that the labour code “specifically prohibits and criminalizes all forms of forced or compulsory labor and prescribes a penalty of five to 10 years’ imprisonment for violations”. However, the prohibition was not enforced effectively and “there were reports such practices occurred, especially in armed conflict zones”. Men, women, and children were subjected to

“forced domestic, agricultural, mining, market or street vending, and restaurant labor, as well as sexual exploitation” by their employers. The report further notes:

“Criminal courts sentenced convicted persons to imprisonment and forced labor, and prisoners often worked on public projects without compensation. In Bangui and other large urban areas, however, the practice was rare, partly because of the presence of human rights NGOs or lawyers and because day labor was inexpensive. Ba’aka, including children, often were coerced into labor as day laborers, farm hands, or other unskilled labor and often treated as slaves [...]. No known victims were removed from forced labor during the year.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 7b)

In June 2018 the USDOS further mentions that “article 151 of the penal code criminalized sex and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of five to 10 years imprisonment” and “five to 10 years imprisonment with hard labor” if the offense “involved a child victim of sex trafficking or forced labor similar to slavery”. Forced and bonded labour is criminalized by Articles 7 and 8 of the 2009 Labour Code. (USDOS, 28 June 2018, Prosecution)

For the Central African labour and penal codes in French please see:

- Labour Code: Code du Travail de la République Centrafricaine, Loi N° 09-004, adopted 29 January 2009, 2009
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/travail/docs/1231/code%20du%20travail.pdf>
- Penal Code: Code Penal de la République Centrafricaine, Loi N° 10.001, adopted 6 January 2010, 2010
<http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/fr/cf/cf003fr.pdf>

Regarding sentencing to “hard labour”, FIDH notes that a former anti-Balaka warlord “was sentenced to life imprisonment with forced labour. In reality, this verdict means a sentence of/equals to life in prison, as sentences of hard labour are no longer meted out in the Central African Republic”. (FIDH, 22 January 2018)

Freedom House notes that “many armed groups exploit gold and diamond mines, and forced labor and child recruitment for soldiering are common practices” (Freedom House, January 2018, G4).

In July 2017 the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic mentions that the LRA continued to “abduct civilians almost routinely, subjecting them to forced labour, forced recruitment, sexual slavery, sexual violence and forced marriage” in the areas under its control in the east of the Central African Republic (HRC, 28 July 2017, p. 9).

A July 2017 report HRW mentions the “kidnapping and forced labor of six civilians around Bianga by anti-Balaka from late 2014 to mid-2015” (HRW, 5 July 2017, p. 64).

Child labour

In its human rights report covering 2017, the USDOS provides the following overview on child labour:

“The labor code forbids the employment of children younger than 14 without specific authorization from the Ministry of Labor, of Employment and Social Protection, but the law also provides that the minimum age for employment can be as young as 12 for some types of light work in traditional agricultural activities or home services. The law prohibits children younger than 18 from performing hazardous work or working at night. Although the law defines hazardous work as any employment that endangers children’s physical and mental health, it does not define the worst forms of child labor. The mining code specifically prohibits child or underage labor. The government did not enforce child labor laws. The government trained police, military, and civilians on child rights and protection, but trainees lacked resources to conduct investigations. The government had numerous policies related to child labor, including those to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children and the recruitment and use of children in armed conflict, but there was no evidence of programs to eliminate or prevent child labor, including its worst forms. Five labor inspectors were specifically trained to investigate child labor. Penalties were not sufficient to deter violations. Child labor was common in many sectors of the economy, especially in rural areas. Children continued to perform hazardous work and labored as child soldiers. No known victims were removed from the worst forms of child labor during the year. Local and displaced children as young as seven frequently performed agricultural work, including harvesting peanuts and cassava and helping gather items subsequently sold at markets, such as mushrooms, hay, firewood, and caterpillars. In Bangui many of the city’s street children worked as street vendors. Children often worked as domestic workers, fishermen, and in mines, often in dangerous conditions. Children also worked in the diamond fields alongside adult relatives, transporting and washing gravel as well as mining gold, digging holes, and carrying heavy loads. Despite the law prohibiting child labor in mining, observers saw many children working in and around diamond mining fields. Although there were no reports ex-Seleka and anti-Balaka recruited child soldiers during the year, both groups continued using child soldiers [...] .” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 7c)

In May 2018 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) mentions that “articles 259–263 of the Labour Code and Article 190 of the Mining Code are aimed at preventing and combating the worst forms of labour, especially the economic exploitation of children”. However, the Committee is concerned at the fact that “children are the victims of exploitation and forced labour in agriculture, mining and domestic work”. (CESCR, 4 May 2018, p. 5)

The USDOL notes that the government has “ratified all key international conventions”, and has established laws and regulations” concerning child labour, but gaps exist in the legal framework to “adequately protect children from the worst forms of child labor, including the minimum age for work” (USDOL, 20 September 2018, p. 2). The government did not determine the types of hazardous work prohibited for children by national law or regulation. The Labour Code prohibits

work by children under age 14, but “the law does not apply to children outside of formal employment relationships” (USDOL, 20 September 2018, p. 3). Victims of child labour “may be referred to the Ministry of the Promotion of Women, Family, and Protection of Children”, and 19 magistrates were appointed throughout the country. According to the USDOL “those who were unable to be deployed to the regions due to threats by armed groups or continued insecurity assisted with a backlog of cases in Bangui” (USDOL, 20 September 2018, p. 4).

The USDOL further mentions that “gaps exist within the operations of the MOL [Ministry of Public Service, Modernization of Administration, Labor, Employment and Social Protection] that may hinder adequate labor law enforcement, including adequate financial resource allocation” and “government efforts to combat child labor were hindered by a lack of Labor Inspectorate capacity and inadequate financial and material resources”. Due to a lack of resources “the government relies primarily on NGOs to provide social services to victims”. (USDOL, 20 September 2018, p. 4)

Criminal law enforcement agencies took actions to combat child labour and established institutional mechanisms for the enforcement of laws and regulations on child labour, but gaps existed that may hinder adequate law enforcement. (USDOL, 20 September 2018, pp. 5-6)

The USDOS notes in its June 2018 trafficking report that an international organization “identified 253 victims (177 women and 76 men), but did not report whether they were victims of forced labor or sex trafficking” (USDOS, 28 June 2018, Protection). The report further mentions that the government “did not report any measures to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts or forced labor” (USDOS, 28 June 2018, Prevention).

8.9 Freedom of religion

The January 2018 Freedom House report describes the state of religious freedom in the CAR in the following terms:

“Officially Central African Republic is a secular state, but religious and sectarian cleavages often overlap with the country’s political divisions. In 2017, sectarian clashes between Christian and Muslim populations continued to threaten the free practice of religion. [...]

Armed nonstate actors—many of which are successors to the Muslim Séléka rebels and Christian anti-Balaka militias involved in violent atrocities since the onset of the country’s current crisis in 2013—continue to operate with impunity in the eastern, northern, and northwestern regions of the country. These groups were responsible for violent attacks against civilians, often on the basis of ethnic and religious identity, as well as attacks against international peacekeeping forces and humanitarian aid workers.” (Freedom House, January 2018)

The May 2018 USDOS report on religious freedom outlines the constitutional as well as further legal provisions regarding religious freedom in the CAR:

“The constitution provides for freedom of religion under conditions set by law and equal protection under the law regardless of religion. It prohibits all forms of religious intolerance and ‘religious fundamentalism,’ which is not defined in law. [...]

Religious groups, except for indigenous religious groups, are required to register with the Ministry of the Interior, Public Security, and Territorial Administration. To register, religious groups must prove they have a minimum of 1,000 members and their leaders have adequate religious education, as judged by the ministry. [...]

The law does not prohibit religious instruction in public or private schools, but it is not part of the public school curriculum. The country is not a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.” (USDOS, 29 May 2018, Executive Summary)

The report goes on to mention abuses committed by state officials and armed groups with regard to religious minorities as well as a lack of investigation into such cases:

“According to media reports and religious and civil society leaders, civilian authorities failed to maintain effective control over the security forces, a situation that has persisted for a number of years. Human rights organizations stated the government again failed to take steps to investigate and prosecute officials who committed abuses that targeted members of various religious groups. These individuals were in the security forces and elsewhere in the government, and the human rights organizations stated this was a long-standing problem and one that fostered a climate of impunity. During a government and UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) military operation to question and arrest local Muslim militia leader Yossouf Malinga, security forces killed Malinga in a February 7 shootout in Bangui’s predominantly Muslim PK5 neighborhood. According to the Christian Broadcasting Network, his death was followed by several violent incidents, including the fatal stabbing of a Protestant minister at his church by supporters of Malinga’s militia group, the burning of two other churches, and the killing of a Muslim civilian, reportedly by anti-Balaka elements in retaliation. In addition, 300 residents of the Fondo neighborhood, also in the same district, fled their homes and took shelter at the recently closed IDP site at nearby M’Poko International Airport. Muslims continued to report harassment outside of the PK5 enclave and exclusion from national decision making. Muslim leaders cited situations where Muslims were treated as outsiders or as a different class of citizens, especially when requesting government services. [...]

Armed groups, which generally operated freely in certain areas of the country, continued to commit many of the actions affecting religious freedom. The government remained incapable of imposing its authority throughout the territory, preventing abuses, or ensuring the rule of law and the administration of justice, according to many observers.” (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section II)

Section II of the aforementioned report further lists abuses committed by armed elements with regard to religious groups during the year 2017. The report also points out the difficulty of determining religious identity as the sole factor behind incidents of violence:

“While most observers stated violent conflict and instability in the country had multiple sources, they also said religion continued to be used as a tool to divide the population. Because religion and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity.” (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section III)

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a governmental body for monitoring religious freedom abroad, addresses religiously motivated violence in the CAR during the year 2017 in its annual report of April 2018. According to the report, different armed groups engaged in this form of violence and the ethnoreligious Peuhl (Fulani) minority is said to have been primarily affected:

“Since May, targeted killings based on religious identity increased dramatically and clashes between armed groups continued across the country. Violence was reminiscent of the extensive killing and displacement of Muslims that occurred in 2014; armed groups are especially targeting the ethnoreligious minority Peuhl population. In early August, then UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien warned again that the early signs of genocide are present in CAR. As in previous reporting periods, CAR authorities lacked the capacity to investigate the killings or hold the perpetrators accountable. On May 13–14, in Bangassou, anti-balaka militias attacked and killed Muslims, including the town’s imam, Mahamat Saleh. The fighters sought to eliminate Muslims from the town, even trapping Muslims who sought refuge in a mosque and hospital. Cardinal Dieudonne Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui and a founder of the national interfaith Religious Leaders Platform, had to negotiate their release and escort them to the town’s Catholic cathedral, where an estimated 2,000 still reside as IDPs. Days later, in Bria, ex-Séléka militias attacked and killed Christians. Other small towns, such as Alindo and Mombaye, also experienced sectarian violence in May. The UN reports that overall, the violence resulted in more than 100 dead and 40,000 displaced. On October 13, anti-balaka fighters attacked the Djimbi mosque in Kembe, killing 26, including the imam and deputy imam. Survivors reported that the militants surrounded the mosque before attacking it, with dozens inside. Since June, in Batangafo, Zemio, Bria, and Pombolo, ex-Séléka and anti-balaka fighters engaged in repeated religious-based violence, killing hundreds and displacing tens of thousands. Human rights groups reported that between August and October alone, approximately 250 civilians were killed in this violence.” (USCIRF, April 2018, p. 3)

USCIRF then reports on the discrimination and marginalisation as well as restrictions of free movement affecting the wider Muslim community:

“During USCIRF’s May 2017 visit to CAR, the delegation concluded that despite some positive efforts to reverse the displacement of Muslims from the capital and west, notable concerns remained and CAR’s Muslim population remains highly marginalized. Muslims continue to face severe limitations on their ability to move freely within and outside of their communities. Imams in Bangui and Boda stated that some Muslims in their cities could move outside of their enclaves; however, it remained unsafe for Muslims to travel to other areas, especially in Islamic garb. Representatives of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and civil society told USCIRF that throughout western CAR, especially in rural areas, predominantly Christian communities limit the movement of

Muslims and prohibit them from returning to their homes or their previous jobs in the mining sector. UNHCR and human rights groups also reported that in some western villages, Muslim returnees are prohibited from practicing their faith. Muslims in CAR were already marginalized prior to the current conflict, which has further hardened views on Muslim Central African identity and citizenship. Muslims endure social and structural discrimination related to access to education, healthcare, and identity documents. They suffer hate speech and harassment frequently, including by security officers who treat them as foreigners, asking for multiple forms of identification. On a positive note, in Bangui and Boda, imams and Muslim leaders reported to USCIRF that physical barriers and peacekeepers stationed to protect Muslim residents had been removed and that some Muslim IDPs had returned to their home villages.” (USCIRF, April 2018, pp. 3-4)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) in its September 2018 report on religious freedom in the CAR describes the situation for Christians living in areas under control of the Muslim ex-Séléka as well as for Muslims living in anti-Balaka-held regions:

“In areas controlled by the Seleka in the north of the country such as Kaka Bango, the local population lives under severe restrictions. [...] A church leader informed CSW of the impact of the pervasive sense of fear: ‘It is not easy for the church to live and function and at different times there are still attacks, there are killings and executions which means the Christians are continuing to live in fear. Sometimes people flee to church buildings for refuge but they are pursued and killed there.’ Attendance of religious meetings during the week or of special events requires permission. Attendance of church services on Sundays has not been expressly forbidden; however, due to the restrictions on other activities, Christians have limited their meetings to Sundays. In the Anti-Balaka-held regions in the south-west of the country, Christians are generally free to worship and to express their faith in public and in private, but Muslims face far more restrictions. As a result, very few Muslims remain in the area. The Anti-Balaka have targeted non-Muslim religious leaders who advocate for Muslims, and have attacked those involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation between Muslims and Christians, including an elderly man who was assaulted in his home.” (CSW, September 2018, p. 1)

For information on attacks on places of worship please refer to [section 8.6.2](#). For further information on the situation of the Muslim minority please refer to [section 7.2](#) of this compilation.

Treatment of religious leaders

In their joint article of October 2015 de Vries and Glawion describe, based on discussions with members of so called mediation boards in the towns Paoua, Bangassou and Obo, the role of religious leaders in settling communal disputes and promoting peace:

“The few exceptions to an otherwise poorly developed civil society include religious organisations, churches being one of the most powerful civilian players [...]. They play a role in peace and reconciliation, with key religious leaders – both Christian and Muslim – acting as role models during the current crisis. The Archbishop, Imam and Chair of the

Evangelist churches formed a national peace committee which was replicated in many towns throughout the country, such as Bangassou, Paoua, Obo and Bossangoa. Mediation boards comprised of religious leaders and civil society representatives sought to convince armed actors and those seeking revenge to refrain from violence by engaging them in dialogue.” (de Vries and Glawion, October 2015, p. 21)

The report by the Independent Expert (reporting period July 2017 to June 2018) mentions attacks on religious leaders in the capital Bangui and in Bambari:

“41. The Independent Expert is incensed at the ability of armed groups to exercise de facto judicial functions in the form of illegal and arbitrary detention, which in some cases resembles abduction. She is particularly concerned about serious violations committed against children, violence against women and the resurgence of attacks on religious leaders since the beginning of 2018, especially in Bangui in May and in Bambari in June.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 7)

Christian Solidarity Worldwide mentions attacks on religious leaders who are working towards peace and reconciliation between Muslims and Christians:

“In the Anti-Balaka-held regions in the south-west of the country, Christians are generally free to worship and to express their faith in public and in private, but Muslims face far more restrictions. As a result, very few Muslims remain in the area. The Anti-Balaka have targeted non-Muslim religious leaders who advocate for Muslims, and have attacked those involved in peacebuilding and reconciliation between Muslims and Christians, including an elderly man who was assaulted in his home.” (CSW, September 2018, p. 1)

National Catholic Reporter, a Kansas City based biweekly newspaper covering topics of religion and church in August 2018 publishes an article on sectarian violence in the CAR. It mentions a Church Defence group calling to avenge the killings of priests and pastors as well as a priest living in fear of attack because he is sheltering Muslims in his cathedral:

“In July, a self-styled Church Defense Group for Christians called on all Christians in the country to carry out revenge attacks on Muslims for killing Christians. The leader of the group, François Nzapakéyé, said ‘priests and pastors are systematically assassinated.’ He cited Father Paul Emile Nzalé, murdered in an attack by 200 armed men in May at Notre Dame of Fatima in the capital, Bangui. ‘We will avenge the killings of the many church leaders and men of God, killed in the exercise of their functions. Muslims or Christians, we shall see,’ Nzapakéyé said in his communique to followers. Yet in Bangassou, St. Peter Claver Cathedral has opened its doors to some 2,000 Muslims. And three hours east, hundreds of students and residents have taken refuge in a local parish in Zemio. In both places, Muslims and their protectors live in constant fear of attack amid threats from Christian militia.” (National Catholic Reporter, 16 August 2018)

The Central African NGO Network of Journalists for Human Rights (Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L’Homme, RJDH) reports at several instances during the year 2018 on the killing of religious leaders in the conflict. In November 2018 RJDH writes that in the previous 8 months five priests were killed by armed groups (RJDH, 16 November 2018). In May 2018, a priest is

killed by a grenade that is thrown into a church in Bangui (RJDH, 1 May 2018). In June, a priest is shot during an attack by UPC fighters on a church in Bambari (RJDH, 30 June 2018).

Radio Ndeke Luka reports the same incident of a priest being killed in Bambari in June 2018. Based on witness accounts, the unidentified armed men entered the church and requested money. The church staff tried to hide themselves while the priest invited the armed men into his room to talk. A dispute broke out, in the course of which the priest was shot by the armed men. (Radio Ndeke Luka, 30 June 2018)

8.10 Treatment of persons accused of practicing witchcraft

In her book *Culture and Customs of the Central African Republic* published in 2006, Jaqueline Cassandra Woodfork describes the significance of witchcraft in Central African society:

“Witchcraft is not a part of religion per se, rather it is a part of Centraficans’ worldview. Witchcraft and sorcery in the context of the CAR and the rest of Africa is different than it is in Western countries. Instead of being theologically defined as an aspect of the battle of good versus evil, witchcraft is anything that challenges the norms of the society and the way people in it should behave. This social fabric is tightly and intricately woven; thus; many actions can be interpreted as witchcraft.” (Woodfork, 2006, p. 29)

The USCIRF report of April 2018 and an article by the New York Times of May 2014 both mention the widespread belief in witchcraft and sorcery among Central African society:

“Witchcraft is a part of many Central Africans’ lives, and accusations of witchcraft can lead to human rights violations. Women, the elderly, children, and people with disabilities are common targets of witchcraft accusations, which have resulted in detention, torture, or death. Such abuses continued in 2017 and were carried out by the anti-balaka.” (USCIRF, April 2018, p. 4)

“And if the violence has reached fearsome levels in the last few months, it is partly because a pervasive belief in sorcery among Central Africans has mapped onto and exacerbated Christian-Muslim divisions. ‘Witchcraft is real,’ the country’s interim president, Catherine Samba-Panza, assured me during an interview at her home in Bangui in late March. Ms. Samba-Panza, a lawyer, said she knew as much because sorcery ‘is against the law, and the courts try people for it.’ Before the war, the Central African legal system was clogged with cases against the ‘practice of charlatanism and sorcery.’ Lawyers told me P.C.S. [pratiques de charlatanisme et sorcellerie] is the country’s most commonly prosecuted crime. Some 60 percent of female prisoners were sent to jail for witchcraft. Central Africans invoke sorcery by others to explain puzzling or adverse events - a roof’s collapse, a long-term illness, a helicopter crash. In times of war, witchcraft is a force to be marshaled for self-protection or greater strength in battle. [...]

The week before I met President Samba-Panza, on the streets of Bangui I saw armed anti-balaka swearing by their amulets - typically leather or cloth pouches filled with herbs or scraps of paper and strung around the neck. These tokens, called gris-gris throughout francophone Africa, are believed to ward off harm in battle.” (NYT, 18 May 2014)

In her report on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic to the UN Human Rights Council (reporting period July 2017 to June 2018), the Independent Expert mentions incidents of violence perpetrated by both ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka elements against persons accused of witchcraft:

“Cases of cruel and inhuman treatment by armed groups on the basis of accusations of witchcraft have been brought to the attention of the Independent Expert in several regions. These allegations affect in particular the Mbomou region (south-west), where, on 5 May, in Béma, anti-Balaka elements under the command of Pino-Pino are alleged to have killed eight women accused of witchcraft, while on 30 May in Bangassou (south-east), anti-Balaka elements commanded by Line Roger are alleged to have killed a woman for the same reasons. Other allegations concern Bria (centre east), where FPRC elements commanded by General Ali Ousta are said to have subjected three men to cruel and inhuman treatment in May and to have killed a woman on 3 June, all of whom had been accused of witchcraft. Such abuses are also alleged to have occurred in Batangafo (northwest) on 3 and 28 May, when anti-Balaka elements threatened a 32-year-old woman and killed a 60-year-old woman, both accused of witchcraft.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 8)

A previous report of July 2017 to the UN Human Rights Council by the Independent Expert (reporting period July 2016 to June 2017) states the statutory provisions regarding witchcraft:

„Under Central African law, offences of witchcraft carry a maximum sentence of life imprisonment with forced labour if they cause death. This situation is of deep concern because of the obvious questions it raises as to evidence.” (HRC, 28 July 2017, p. 10)

The May 2018 USDOS report mentions 12 persons being handed over to the authorities for alleged witchcraft in October 2017:

“In October a Bangui newspaper reported that a ‘network of sorcerers’ had been dismantled in the village of Ndangala, outside Bangui. Villagers reportedly handed over to authorities in the town of Bimbo for investigation 12 individuals whom they accused of attempting to kill a woman through witchcraft.” (USDOS, 29 May 2018, section II)

The Central African NGO Network of Journalists for Human Rights (Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L’Homme, RJDH) regularly publishes reports on human rights issues in the CAR. Among these reports, incidents of violence in connection with accusations of witchcraft are a recurring feature. The following reports are from the year 2018:

In January 2018, RJDH writes that a woman in Nanzembé (Mambéré-Kadéï prefecture) escaped a violent mob of young people who almost buried the woman alive because they suspected her of using witchcraft to kill a child (RJDH, 23 January 2018). In March 2018 RJDH recounts the case of a nine year old girl suspected of witchcraft who was accused by her stepmother of being responsible for her miscarriage. She is said to have been held in confinement for eight months at her father’s house and for one and a half years by an exorcist priest before being able to flee (RJDH, 5 March 2018). According to another report of March 2018, a 50 year old man in Ndélé (Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture) was accused of sorcery and beaten to death by members of the armed group FPRC after a soothsayer declared him responsible for the death

of a woman (RJDH, 10 March 2018). RJDH reports in May 2018 that three elderly women were killed in Ndolobo (Lobaye prefecture) by a group of young people who accused them of bewitching a sick woman who later died. According to RJDH, witchcraft is sanctioned in Articles 149 and 150 of the Central African penal code. However, since state authorities do not often intervene, vigilante justice takes its place (RJDH, 21 May 2018). In September 2018 RJDH reports that four women accused of witchcraft have been killed in Bouca, a town under control of anti-Balaka elements (Ouham prefecture) (RJDH, 6 September 2018). In another incident in Lobaye prefecture a woman in her fifties was killed and another woman violently beaten after being abducted by young people from the village who accused them of practicing witchcraft. The second woman was rescued after the police intervened (RJDH, 21 September 2018).

The Geneva-based daily newspaper Tribune de Genève in February 2018 publishes an article on women in the CAR who have been imprisoned for witchcraft. In Bimbo women's prison in Bangui, about one half of the inmates have been imprisoned for witchcraft, a crime sanctioned by Articles 149 and 150 of the Central African penal code. Sylvie, one of these women, explains that her sister Nina accused her of witchcraft after Nina's husband died in their joint care. However, Sylvie does not know precisely for which act she was put in jail. She has been in prison for one year and is still waiting for her sentence to be passed. According to the newspaper, Sylvie's story is like many others. After an illness or a death within a family, a member of the family accuses a relative or a neighbour of being responsible. Nadia Carine Fornel Poutou, head of the association for female jurists in Bangui, points out that witchcraft constitutes a problem for the Central African legislator. Due to the mystical background of the accusation, it is complicated for the judge to come to a decision. Since it is difficult if not impossible to gather evidence, a mere accusation often leads to a conviction. According to Fournel Patou some people make use of this judicial deficiency in order to settle personal scores, with women being the first victims followed by other vulnerable persons such as children or old people. Roger N'Gaka-Passi, chief administrator of Bimbo prison, confirms this trend, saying that there are only few men imprisoned on grounds of sorcery since women are more likely suspected to be making use of witchcraft. Fornel Poutou adds that even after women accused of witchcraft are released from prison, they are at risk of rejection by their communities or even falling victim to vigilante justice. (Tribune de Genève, 27 February 2018)

8.11 Freedom of expression

The January 2018 Freedom House report talks about large parts of the country not being able to access media and journalists not being able to cover these regions:

“While direct state censorship of media is uncommon, reporters face restricted access to many areas of the country due to insecurity. Few residents outside Bangui enjoy access to national or international media sources or the internet. Since the onset of conflict in 2013, many community radio stations have been shuttered. However, some independently run stations continue to operate and host robust debates, with active participation from callers-in.” (Freedom House, January 2018, D1)

The legal framework for and the attitude of the government towards freedom of expression are described in the April 2018 USDOS report:

“The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech, including for the press, and the government generally respected this right. In March President Touadera issued a decree appointing the members of the High Council for Communication, an independent body mandated by the constitution. It is tasked with assuring liberty of expression and equal access for the media; it also has regulatory powers.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2a)

The USDOS report further describes the media landscape in the country:

“Press and Media Freedom: All print media in the country were privately owned. Radio was the most important medium of mass communication. There were a number of alternatives to the state-owned radio station, Radio Centrafrique. Independent radio stations operated freely and broadcast organized debates and call-in talk shows critical of the government, the election process, ex-Seleka, and anti-Balaka militias.

International media broadcast within the country. Bangui’s Maison de la Presse (Media Center), which provides working and meeting space for journalists, was ordered closed after a legal dispute with the family of a former president. The government monopolized domestic television broadcasting (available only in the capital and for limited hours), and television news coverage generally supported government positions. [...]

The government did not restrict or disrupt access to the internet or censor online content, and there were no credible reports the government monitored private online communications without appropriate legal authority. According to the International Telecommunication Union, approximately 4 percent of the population used the internet in 2016.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 2a)

The German political research foundation Bertelsmann Stiftung mentions that although the legal framework guarantees freedom of expression, the media face restrictions because of the volatile security situation:

“Freedom of expression is generally guaranteed by law in CAR, but has often been limited in practice. During the last two review periods, the fragile security situation imposed substantial restrictions on media. The existing media remain remarkably critical of government action, with a few vocal newspapers circulating regularly in Bangui. Radio is the most important source of information; the only source for most of the population. Radio services are provided inter alia by Radio Ndeke Luka and the government’s Radio Centrafrique, and confessional radios. Internet services have become important sources of information for urban Central Africans and the diaspora. Most important are Sangonet, Centrafrique Presse and Centrafrique Libre. Facebook and WhatsApp are also increasingly popular forums for information sharing and communication. As for press agencies, Agence Centrafrique Presse (ACAP) and La Nouvelle Centrafrique are the most important.” (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, p. 9)

“Despite this rather impressive array of organizations, press freedom has strongly declined in international rankings. Reporters sans Frontières currently ranks CAR 110 out of 180 countries. (In 2013, CAR was ranked 65 out of 197, while in 2012, CAR ranked 62 out of 179). Similar to the freedom of assembly, the current security context restricts freedom of

expression, as attacks on the media continue and journalists' security is far from guaranteed. Except for radio, which generally maintains good standards, the quality of media is low, as poor living conditions render journalists vulnerable to payouts and subjective reporting. This is particularly true for the written press. As for social networks, they have sometimes lent themselves to hate speech and dissemination of rumors. Outside of Bangui, expressions of dissent from prevailing de facto power structures are not tolerated." (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2018, pp. 9-10)

The privately owned news website Corbeau News based in Bangui reports in October 2016 that one of its journalists has been dragged across the ground and kicked by policemen stationed at the MINUSCA headquarters in Bangui. According to the journalist, as he was leaving the MINUSCA headquarters after a press conference, the policemen ordered him to empty his backpack for inspection. A misunderstanding then led to the violent assault committed by the policemen. (Corbeau News, 20 October 2016)

In February 2017 Corbeau News writes that the presidential guards have been given a "red list" of persons working for different media who are not allowed to enter the Boy Rabe district of Bangui, where president Touadera resides. The article further mentions that there have been attempted arrests of journalists since president Touadera took office in March 2016. (Corbeau News, 10 February 2017)

Réseau Des Journalistes Pour Les Droits De L'Homme (RJDH) reports in March 2017 that the journaliste Bienvenu Doumta is being held by the Central Office for Combating Banditry (l'Office Central de Répression du Banditisme, OCRB). Doumta is said to have written an article critical of an agreement signed between the government and an Ivorian organisation. (RJDH, 29 March 2017)

Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) in October 2017 writes about a local radio station that was forced to close due to threats issued by armed groups:

"Reporters Without Borders (RSF) regrets that a leading community radio station in the southeast of the Central African Republic has been forced to close after being threatened by armed groups, and reminds all parties to the conflict of the need to respect media freedom and independence. The main source of local news and information in the southeastern town of Bangassou and the surrounding region, Radio Mbari has been harassed and threatened repeatedly by rival armed factions, which accuse it of not broadcasting their messages with sufficient readiness. [...] The violence reached a new level on 13 October when a member of a self-defence group burst into Radio Mbari and told staff to broadcast a communiqué that ordered Bangassou's inhabitants not to go to the market in Tokoyo, one of the town's districts. The programme presenter wanted to have the communiqué approved by the head of programmes before broadcasting it, but the militiaman threatened him with his automatic weapon, forcing him to read it out on the air at once. After this incident, the radio station's management decided to temporarily suspend all broadcasting because of the growing violence." (RSF, 18 October 2017)

Radio Ndeke Luka in November 2018 conducts an interview with Tita Samba Solé, the president of the Central African Union of Journalists (l'Union des Journalistes de Centrafrique, UJCA). Samba Solé calls for an end of impunity for crimes committed against journalists, stating that since the start of the crisis in 2013 media personnel have been killed or threatened with death as well as arbitrarily detained. Local radio and television stations as well as press offices have been looted. (Radio Ndeke Luka, 2 November 2018)

8.12 Treatment of women

8.12.1 FGM

The UK-based charity 28 Too Many provides the following overview on prevalence of FGM in the country on its website:

“FGM is practised across all prefectures and ethnic groups in the CAR. The prefectures with the highest prevalence are in the centre of the country: Bamingui-Bangoran (76.6%), Ouaka (72.9%) and Haute-Kotto (67.1%). The prefectures with the lowest prevalence are all 3-4%. Women aged 15-49 who live in rural areas are more likely to undergo FGM (28.7%) than those who live in urban areas (18.1%). Prevalence of FGM is inversely correlated with level of wealth. The highest prevalence of FGM is found in households where the head is of Banda ethnicity (53.4% of women aged 15-49); the lowest is found in households where the head is of Mboum ethnicity (2.6%). [...]

Between 2006 and 2010, the overall prevalence for women aged 15-49 fell from 25.7% to 24.2%. Due to the large age-range of women included, however, the overall prevalence alone may not fully reflect the progress that has been made in recent years. Breaking down the most recent data by age group shows that the prevalence for women aged 45-49 is 33.8%, while for the youngest age group this has fallen to 17.9%. Despite the fact that a small proportion of women may be cut after the age of 15, the data demonstrates a clear trend towards lower prevalences among younger women.” (28 Too Many, undated)

On the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February 2016, RJDH published an article concerning a conference held in Bangui. According to the coordinator of the platform Société Civile de la République Centrafrique (SCRCA), Solange Chantale Touabena, FGM continues to affect Muslim, Christian and Animist women. Surveys show that in Bangui, Bambari, Boda and other cities, young girls still suffer the practice of female genital mutilation. The article notes that it is acknowledged that FGM does not occur frequently, but people still continue the practice. (RJDH, 6 February 2016)

In July 2013 the NYT refers to a report by UNICEF and notes that FGM prevalence rate dropped to “24 percent in 2010 from 43 percent in the mid-1990s” (NYT, 22 July 2013). The article further describes:

“Unicef found that the steepest declines in the prevalence of the practice, also known as female genital mutilation, have occurred in Kenya, one of Africa’s most dynamic and developed nations, and - most surprisingly - in the Central African Republic, one of its poorest and least developed. Researchers now say the prevalence of the practice in these two countries began to fall four or five decades ago. They said the progress made sense in

Kenya, where efforts to stop female genital cutting stretch to the early 1900s, but they were at a loss to explain why it had plunged in the Central African Republic, to 24 percent in 2010 from 43 percent in the mid-1990s. ‘We have no idea, not even a guess,’ said Bettina Shell-Duncan, an anthropology professor at the University of Washington who was a consultant on the report. Professor Shell-Duncan said researchers needed to get to the Central African Republic soon to figure out what was happening there.” (NYT, 22 July 2013)

A statistical profile on female genital mutilation/cutting in the Central African Republic can be accessed via the following link. The country profile however is dated December 2013, and the prevalence data provided is dated 2010:

- UNICEF - United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting country profiles, August 2016
<https://data.unicef.org/resources/female-genital-mutilation-cutting-country-profiles/>

A February 2018 article by RJDH mentions that the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation is celebrated in silence in the country, while female genital mutilation, which is prohibited by law, continues to be practised even in some parts of the capital Bangui. According to a general practitioner in Bangui, Fiobeme Fanny Diane, parents must understand that FGM can have negative effects on young girls. She calls on the government to put in place an awareness-raising strategy, involving local authorities in order to stop the practice. (RJDH, 7 February 2018)

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) mentions in May 2018 that the Committee is concerned at “the continued practice of female genital mutilation, in particular in rural areas” (CESCR, 4 May 2018, p. 6).

In its report on the humanitarian situation covering January 2018 UNICEF mentions that two cases related to female genital mutilations were registered (UNICEF, 29 March 2018, p. 4).

The USDOS notes that “the law prohibits FGM/C for women and girls, which is punishable by two to five years’ imprisonment and a fine of 100,000 to one million CFA francs (\$176 to \$1,760), depending on the severity of the case.”(USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

The UK-based charity 28 Too Many published a report in July 2018 that “was prepared in collaboration with TrustLaw, the Thomson Reuters Foundation’s global, legal pro bono service that connects law firms and legal teams to NGOs and social enterprises that are working to create social and environmental change” (28 Too Many, July 2018, p. 6). The report provides the following overview on the domestic legal framework regarding FGM:

“The current Constitution of the Central African Republic (adopted in 2015) does not directly address harmful practices or FGM. However, Article 3 affirms the right to bodily integrity and states that ‘no one shall be subjected to torture, rape or cruel, inhuman, degrading or humiliating treatment or punishment.’ Under Article 5, ‘The law guarantees men and women equal rights in all areas’, and under Article 6, ‘The protection of women and children against violence and insecurity . . . is an obligation for the State and other public authorities.’ The main law against FGM is Law No. 06.032 on the Protection of

Women Against Violence in Central African Republic (Law No. 06.032), dated 27 December 2006. Law No. 10.001, the Penal Code of the Central African Republic (Penal Code), dated 6 January 2010, also criminalises the performance of FGM. (An earlier Ordinance No. 66/16 Abolishing the Practice of Female Circumcision was passed in 1966. This recognised that FGM has harmful consequences to both the physical and mental health of young women, but it is unclear whether this ordinance created any associated criminal penalty for incidents of FGM.)” (28 Too Many, July 2018, pp. 2-3)

Concerning the implementation of the legislation the report notes the following:

“It has not been possible to find any recent cases where the laws detailed in this report have been applied. [...] The lack of law enforcement in the CAR has been widely noted. Some commentators have reported that no serious crimes have been prosecuted since 2013 and many groups have carried out executions and sexual violence with impunity. A United Nations Human Rights Council report in 2016 by an independent expert on the situation in the CAR noted that ‘criminal justice remains practically non-existent’ and that, between July 2015 and January 2017, the Criminal Court of Bangui held only one session, following a five-year period of inactivity. The lack of resources and staff remains a major obstacle, and, outside of Bangui, access to judicial resources is even more limited. While legislation is in place to tackle gender-based violence, including FGM, it is reported that local magistrates often have difficulty in accessing the most recent versions of the law and may not receive appropriate legal training. At a local level, FGM is reportedly continuing in many parts of the country, despite the law – for example, in the regions of Damara and Bogangolo.” (28 Too Many, July 2018, pp. 4-5)

The Penal Code and the Law on the Protection of Women Against Violence in Central African Republic can be accessed under the following links:

- Penal Code: Code Penal de la République Centrafricaine, Loi N° 10.001, adopted 6 January 2010, 2010
<http://www.wipo.int/edocs/lexdocs/laws/fr/cf/cf003fr.pdf>
- Law on the Protection of Women Against Violence in Central African Republic: Loi n°06. 032 du 27 Decembre 2006 portant protection de la femme contre les violences en Republique centrafricaine, adopted 27 December 2006, 2006
<http://www.refworld.org/docid/54f821684.html>

In August 2018 the Independent Expert mentions that she “was informed of the signing of a decree on 7 June 2018 replacing the National Committee to Curb Traditional Practices Harmful to the Health of Women and Girls by the National Technical Committee to Combat Gender-Based Violence, Harmful Traditional Practices and Child Marriage in the Central African Republic in order to extend its powers.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 9)

Further information on the relevant legislation can also be found in the above quoted report by 28 Too Many:

- 28 Too Many: Central African Republic: The Law and FGM, July 2018
[https://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Law%20Reports/car_law_report_v1_july_2018\).pdf](https://www.28toomany.org/static/media/uploads/Law%20Reports/car_law_report_v1_july_2018).pdf)

For further data on FGM please also see the following report published by the Population Reference Bureau, a private, nonprofit organization specializing in collecting and supplying statistics:

- Population Reference Bureau: Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: Data and Trends, Update 2017, 2017

<http://www.prb.org/pdf17/FGMC%20Poster%202017.pdf>

8.12.2 Sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence

The USDOS reports the following regarding gender-based violence in April 2018:

“Between January and October 2015, the UN Population Fund reported the gender-based violence Information Management System, established in 2014, recorded 60,208 victims who received medical or psychosocial care or both. Among those were 29,801 cases of sexual violence, including rape, gang rape, sexual slavery, sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual aggression. Although the law does not specifically mention spousal abuse, it prohibits violence against any person and provides for penalties of up to 10 years in prison. Domestic violence against women was common, although there are laws and instrument prohibiting violence against women. The government took no known action to punish perpetrators.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

Freedom House notes that “domestic abuse, rape, and sexual slavery against women by armed groups threaten the security of women and girls, and sexual violence is increasingly used as a deliberate tool of warfare, and attackers enjoy broad impunity”. The same source adds that “constitutional guarantees for women’s rights are rarely enforced, especially in rural areas.” (Freedom House, January 2018, G3)

The USDOS further notes that the law “prohibits rape, although it does not specifically prohibit spousal rape. Rape is punishable by imprisonment with hard labor, but the law does not specify a minimum sentence. The government did not enforce the law effectively.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

In November 2018 RFI reports that violence against women, including rape, sexual assault, forced marriage, sexual slavery, is very common in the country. In 2016, the number of sexual violence cases was estimated at more than 11,000. In response, the government created a Joint Rapid Intervention Unit for the repression of sexual violence against women and children (Unité Mixte d’Intervention rapide et de Répression des violences sexuelles faites aux femmes et aux Enfants, UMIRR). The unit is operational since June 2017 and is composed of executives from four ministries (Public Security, Social Affairs, Justice, Health). Women can report violence they have suffered to UMIRR. In October 2018 alone, more than 500 people showed up at the UMIRR office that is staffed by a small team of about 30 people. (RFI, 25 November 2018)

In October 2017 MINUSCA mentions that according to the head of UMIRR, Captain Paul Amédée Moyenzo, UMIRR aims to promote an appropriate framework for the prevention and repression of offences relating to gender-based violence and violations of the rights of the child. UMIRR was created by Decree No. 15,007 of 8 January 2015 and is a mixed unit composed of

gendarmes, police officers and medical and social personnel under the authority of the ministries in charge of justice and public security (MINUSCA, 24 October 2017). It was inaugurated by president Faustin Archange Touadéra on 14 June 2017 at the camp Henri Izamo in Bangui (ACAP, 14 June 2017), and according to a March 2018 UN Security Council report “has since addressed 254 complaints” (UN Security Council, 23 March 2018, p. 10). In her September 2018 remarks on UMIRR the UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict, Pramila Patten, notes that since its inception, UMIRR has received 515 complaints about criminal incidents involving women and children, including 318 complaints of rape. These criminal incidents have been investigated and the Central African Police have referred the matter to the Prosecutor’s Office, which will have to ensure that those responsible are promptly brought to justice. (SRSG-SVC, 17 September 2018)

Please see [section 8.4](#) of this compilation on further information on gender based violence affecting women.

8.12.3 Situation of widows and of divorced women

The USDOS mentions in its April 2018 report that customary law “does not consider single, divorced, or widowed women, including those with children, to be heads of households” and further notes:

“Discrimination: The formal law does not discriminate against women in inheritance and property rights, but a number of discriminatory customary laws often prevailed. Women’s statutory inheritance rights often were not respected, particularly in rural areas. Women experienced economic and social discrimination.

[...] By law men and women are entitled to family subsidies from the government, but several women’s groups complained about lack of access to these payments for women.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

In May 2018 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) notes that it is concerned at “cruel and inhumane treatment, which can result in death, sometimes inflicted on women and widows accused of witchcraft” (CESCR, 4 May 2018, p. 6).

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) notes the following in November 2017:

“For women, the harm of separation is aggravated because of the discrimination suffered by unmarried women and widows in the Central African Republic. ‘Here in CAR, if you don’t have a husband, nobody respects you. If your husband just died, people say you are a witch.’ C.I., 51 years old (from Sibut). Bangui, 13 June 2017.” (FIDH, 20 November 2017, p. 32)

More information on the treatment of persons accused of practicing witchcraft can be found in [section 8.10](#) of this compilation.

8.13 Treatment of children

8.13.1 Forced and underage recruitment and use of children

In November 2018 UNICEF notes that since “2014, some 13,000 children in CAR, including about 3,200 girls, have been released from armed groups with UNICEF support”, but “30 per cent of these children have yet to receive crucial assistance with reintegration” (UNICEF, November 2018, p. 14). Regarding demobilized children UNICEF further notes:

“‘Demobilized’ children who do not get reintegration support are sometimes rejected by their families. Girls are stigmatized because they are seen as sexually compromised. They are at high risk of being driven back into armed groups. Once re-recruited, they are far less likely to come back into a reintegration programme.” (UNICEF, November 2018, p. 14)

In its July 2018 submission to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ Compilation Report for the Universal Periodic Review, UNHCR provides the following overview on use of children by armed groups:

“As many as 10,000 children were used by armed groups involved in the latest conflict in CAR. Boys as young as eight are reportedly being used as combatants, guards, messengers, informants and cooks, while girls are used as sex slaves. Despite the agreement signed on 5 May 2015 by 10 armed groups aiming at ending and preventing the recruitment and use of children and other grave violations against children, human rights observers recently reported continuous association of children with violent activities perpetrated by warring parties. In addition, documented articles revealed the presence of an undetermined number of children manning checkpoints and barricades alongside armed individuals reportedly sympathetic or affiliated to the mainly Muslim ex-Seleka coalition or the predominantly Christian anti-Balaka militia. On several occasions, suspected anti-Balaka elements used children as shields as they fired at United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Central African Republic (MINUSCA) forces. Finally, village self-defense units, established by towns to combat armed groups and bandits in areas where the national army and gendarmes are not present, also used children as lookouts and porters. As they remain unreported, children casualties are extremely difficult to calculate and any published figures are always believed to be highly underestimated. Children are also targeted by armed groups and brutally assaulted by machete, firearm and other weaponry on the basis of their religious affiliation.” (UNHCR, July 2018, pp. 3-4)

In its annual report covering 2017 and 2018, Child Soldiers International provides the following overview on child recruitment:

“Since CAR’s current conflict started in 2012, the UN says more than 14,000 children have been recruited by Séléka and Anti-Balaka militias and several other disparate armed groups. Armed groups in the mainly Muslim Séléka coalition (now dissolved) and predominantly Christian Anti-Balaka militias have used children as young as eight as combatants, guards, human shields, porters, messengers, spies, cooks, and/or for sexual purposes. Some children are abducted, but many join ‘voluntarily’ to protect themselves and their communities. This is especially so with Anti-Balaka groups, many of whom are poorly equipped and organised, but emerged locally for self-defence. The situation is

exacerbated by the reality that released children often return to communities where the same armed groups are still operating, and risk being re-recruited.” (Child Soldiers International, September 2018)

In its human rights report covering 2017 the USDOS summarizes information by various sources on child recruitment as follows:

“Child Soldiers: Reports of unlawful use and recruitment of child soldiers continued during the year. According to estimates by UNICEF, armed groups recruited between 6,000 and 10,000 child soldiers during the latest conflict through 2015; some remained with armed groups. NGOs reported that armed groups sent recruited children to fight, used them for sexual purposes, and as cooks, porters, or messengers. According to the UN independent expert, the LRA forced children to commit atrocities such as killing village residents, abducting or killing other children, and looting and burning villages. According to the 2016 Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, the United Nations documented 40 cases of child recruitment and use in 2015; more than half the cases were perpetrated by the LRA and more than a quarter by ex-Seleka factions of the UPC. Armed groups forced children to be combatants, messengers, informants, and cooks, and they used girls as sex slaves. In addition the United Nations documented the presence of children manning checkpoints and barricades alongside armed individuals reportedly sympathetic to or affiliated with anti-Balaka and ex-Seleka elements. During the first phase of the pilot national Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration, and Repatriation Consultative Committee plan in September in Bangui, two minors (both age 17) applied to participate. One presented a firearm. UNICEF took both minors into its care.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 1g)

In March 2018 the UN Secretary-General reports that in 2017, UNICEF “and partners helped to secure the release of 3,419 children (1,090 girls and 2,329 boys) from armed groups, with most of the forcibly-recruited girls reporting incidents of sexual abuse.” (UN Security Council, 23 March 2018, p. 9) Regarding the situation of girls associated with armed groups the report notes the following:

“Girls associated with armed groups who return home pregnant or with children are often rejected by their communities, forcing many to turn to sex work as a means of survival. In some cases, stigmatization is itself a driver of displacement: two girls from Haute-Kotto who became pregnant as a result of rape were forced to relocate to different districts to escape abuse by their families. Instability has also perpetuated child marriage as a perceived means of protecting girls from sexual violence.” (UN Security Council, 23 March 2018, p. 9)

The UNODC mentions that during “the last months of 2014 and first months of 2015, children have continued to be recruited by armed elements of the ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka and LRA” (UNODC, December 2016, p. 8).

According to the UN Secretary-General the “number of children recruited and used increased by almost 50 per cent,” in 2016, “with 50 boys and 24 girls affected, including some children as young as nine”. The perpetrators were the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), FPRC, anti-Balaka

elements, UPC and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique (MPC). (UN General Assembly, 24 August 2017, p. 7)

In its May 2018 report, the UN Secretary-General notes that the “number of children recruited and used more than quadrupled compared to 2016, with 196 boys and 103 girls affected, some as young as 8 years of age.” They were used as “combatants, porters, informants, cooks and for sexual purposes”. The verified cases were attributed to UPC, FPRC, MPC, anti-Balaka elements, joint operations by FPRC/MPC, ex-Séléka renouée, Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain (FDPC), Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation (3R). The report further mentions that “43 incidents of abduction were verified, affecting 35 girls and 66 boys, including infants.” Of those, most were abducted for recruitment purposes. (UN General Assembly, 16 May 2018, p. 7)

In a September 2018 article IRIN refers to the child recruitment numbers published in the May 2018 UN report, but notes that the “numbers are likely far greater; with 80 percent of the country controlled by armed groups, confirming child recruitments is an onerous task” (IRIN, 25 September 2018). Regarding abductions of children the IRIN article notes:

“A large proportion of the 14,000 children known to have been ‘recruited’ by armed groups in CAR over the past six years were kidnapped, but many joined because they wanted to protect themselves and their communities. This is especially so with the poorly equipped and organised anti-balaka groups, which emerged as local militias to protect specific neighbourhoods. And keep in mind that because many cases of child recruitment go unverified, it’s likely that many more than 14,000 children have been recruited. The fact that armed groups often operate in residential communities increases the likelihood of children joining or re-joining such groups.” (IRIN, 25 September 2018)

Child Soldiers International notes that the Central African Republic ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) in September 2017 making the country the most recent signatory. The international treaty prohibits the conscription of children under the age of 18 and their participation in hostilities. (Child Soldiers International, 11 February 2018)

The IRIN article notes that in “Pissa, a town a short drive from Bangui, several children were known to have joined anti-Balaka groups. Many local residents were unaware of the OPAC ratification or a national labour law that incorporates a child recruitment ban. Several people said they believed that boys and girls as young as 13 were ready to be tasked with adult responsibilities.” (IRIN, 25 September 2018)

Article 262 of the Labour Code defines the worst forms of Child Labour. The definition includes forced or compulsory labour of children, including forced or compulsory recruitment for use in armed conflict. According to Article 263 of the Labour Code the worst forms of child labour are prohibited throughout the country. Article 393 of the Labour Code provides a fine of 500,000 to 5,000,000 CFA francs and/or imprisonment for a term of one to five years for the worst forms of child labour:

“Art.262 : L’expression pires formes de travail des enfants s’entend :

- toutes formes d'esclavage ou pratiques analogues tels que la vente et la traite des enfants, la servitude pour dette et le servage ainsi que le travail forcé ou obligatoire, y compris le recrutement forcé ou obligatoire, des enfants en vue de leur utilisation dans des conflits armés ;

- l'utilisation, le recrutement ou l'offre d'un enfant à des fins de prostitution de production de matériels pornographiques ou de spectacles pornographiques ;

- l'utilisation, le recrutement ou l'offre d'un enfant aux fins d'activités illicites pour la production et les trafics des stupéfiants ;

- les travaux qui, par leur nature ou les conditions dans lesquelles ils s'exercent, sont susceptibles de nuire à la santé, à la sécurité ou à la moralité de l'enfant." (Labour Code, Article 262)

"Art.263 : Les pires formes de travail des enfants sont interdites sur toute l'étendue de la République Centrafricaine." (Labour Code, 2009, Article 263)

"Art.393 : Est puni d'une amende de 500.000 à 5.000.000F CFA ou à une peine d'emprisonnement de un (1) an à cinq (5) ans ferme ou à l'une de ces deux peines seulement, quiconque aura recruté ou aura tenté de recruter à l'une quelconque de ces pires formes de travail des enfants. En cas de récidive, ces peines sont portées au double." (Labour Code, 2009, Article 393)

In June 2018 UNICEF mentions the following regarding efforts to prevent child recruitment in the CAR:

"During the first semester UNICEF and MINUSCA continued to negotiate with armed groups for the signature of the action plan adopted within the framework of Security Council Resolutions 1612 to end and prevent the recruitment of children in their ranks. Thus, in May, armed groups such as UPC, FPRC, Seleka Renovée and Antibalaka in Bria (Haute-Kotto), Kaga Bandoro (Nana-Gribizi), Mboki (Haute-Mbomou) and Bangui handed over to UNICEF and MINUSCA a list of 348 children allegedly associated with their groups. UNICEF and MINUSCA carried out verifications in June, also including a complementary list of 105 children. Thus, 263 children including 47 girls were confirmed and included in a reintegration programme. In total, since the start of the year, close to 500 children were released from armed groups and benefited from a reintegration programme. In June, MPC, another former Seleka faction, signed an action plan to end and prevent grave violations against children in CAR. However, following the outburst of violence in Bambari, Bangui, Kaga Bandoro since April, new allegations of recruitment of children by various armed groups involved in these clashes have been reported. In May and June, 13,389 children (including 6,849 girls) benefited from educational and recreational activities and psychosocial support in child friendly spaces (CFS) in Ippy, Paoua, Tagbara, Seko, Bria, Zemio, Kaga Bandoro and Bangui. In addition, 112 unaccompanied and separated children (including 23 girls) newly registered in May and June benefitted from family tracing assistance. Out of 340 children previously identified (including 110 girls), 40 children, including 17 girls, have been reunified with their families. In May, UNICEF partners

registered 36 new cases of rape against girls aged 10-16 in Ippy, Kaga Bandoro and Bangui. In June, 64 survivors of sexual violence including two new victims of sexual and exploitation abuses (SEA) were registered. All the survivors received psychosocial support, medical reference and dignity kits.” (UNICEF, June 2018, p. 4)

In her August 2018 report the Independent Expert “took note of the action plan signed on 30 May 2018 by the armed group MPC to put an end to six serious violations against children and she encourages its speedy implementation”. She further reports on being informed “that the social integration and psychological assistance projects are still insufficient and that the pilot project on disarmament, reintegration and repatriation of minors has been ineffective.” (HRC, 13 August 2018, p. 10)

In September 2018 UNICEF mentions that “Caritas Bangui facilitated the release of 166 children, including 76 girls from an armed group in Bangui’s 3rd district”. The report further notes:

“In Sibut, Kemo prefecture, UNICEF with MINUSCA DDDR programme released 18 children including 3 girls from an armed group. After verification, the children released were integrated into an assistance programme and provided with medical reference, psycho-social support as well as reintegration support.” (UNICEF, September 2018, p. 4)

UNICEF mentions that during August 2018, “128 children, including 43 girls, were newly identified in armed groups in the 3rd District of Bangui”. Also, 20 children were verified and released from armed groups in Bouca (Ouham) and Amada-Gaza (Nana-Manbere). 137 self-demobilized children were identified in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou prefectures (UNICEF, August 2018, p. 5). During July 2018 15 children were released from an armed group in Nana Gribizi prefecture. They were part of “the 190 children previously identified as associated with armed groups”. (UNICEF, July 2018, p. 4)

8.13.2 Access to education

The USDOL report published in September 2018 gives the following account on access to education:

“An estimated 1.4 million children lacked access to education as a result of ongoing instability, and limited resources hampered the government’s implementation of policies and programs to address child labor. [...]

The Ministry of Education has attempted to improve access to education by providing free school admission to children from IDP camps, waiving school exam fees for children affected by conflict, and expanding programs to provide birth registration which may be required for school enrollment. However, children continued to experience difficulties accessing education due to school fees, an absence of teachers, security concerns, destruction or looting of school materials and buildings by armed groups, and unavailability of schools, especially in rural areas or IDP camps. Although many schools have reopened, some were temporarily closed due to attacks or occupation by armed groups, occupation by peacekeeping troops or internally displaced persons, or the close proximity of armed groups. The UN estimates that 25 percent of school-age children are not in school and at

least 500,000 children have had their education disrupted.” (USDOL, 20 September 2018, pp. 1-2)

In its human rights report covering 2017 the USDOS provides the following overview on education in the country:

“Education is compulsory from six to 15 years of age. Tuition is free, but students have to pay for items such as books and supplies and for transportation. Human Rights Watch documented the continued occupation of schools for military purposes, such as for barracks or bases. Further, it documented that abuses by fighters in and around schools threatened the safety of students and teachers, and impeded children’s ability to learn. In 2015, according to UNICEF, 38 percent of schools were attacked or looted during the crisis, and one-third of school-age children did not go to school. Girls did not have equal access to primary or secondary education. Few Ba’aka, the earliest known inhabitants of the forests in the south, attended primary school. There was no significant government assistance for efforts to increase Ba’aka enrollment. According to an NGO nationwide survey in 2015, between 78 and 88 percent of schools were open. According to the United Nations, an estimated 10,000 children were prevented from attending school during the year, mostly due to schools being occupied by armed groups.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

In its May 2018 concluding observations on the Central African Republic state report, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) notes the following concerns regarding the country’s education system:

“(a) the very high illiteracy rate in the State party, particularly among women and girls, indigenous populations and in rural areas, as well as the requirement to pay for certain aspects of education, which may have the effect of lowering the rate of school attendance; (b) the State party’s inability to ensure inclusive education despite the provisions of article 28 of Act No. 00.007 of 20 May 2000, and the shortage of qualified teachers to supervise pupils with disabilities; (c) the low rate of enrolment in schools and the high dropout rate, particularly among girls; (d) the obstacles faced by demobilized child soldiers in accessing education or professional or vocational training; (e) the insufficient number of qualified teachers and the still considerable proportion of parent-teachers; and (f) the looting, attacks and occupation of several schools and the murders of teachers by armed groups, which have led to the closure of schools for security reasons (art. 13).” (CESCR, 4 May 2018, p. 7)

Education Cannot Wait (ECW), a global fund dedicated to education in emergencies and protracted crises, notes that before the crisis “only 67 per cent of children were attending school, and in 2009 it was estimated that only 35 per cent of the population was literate” (ECW, 8 November 2018). ECW further states:

“The education system in CAR faces structural challenges that can only be addressed through multi-year programming connecting practical on-the-ground work to build schools, provide supplies and fund teachers, with longer-reaching policy and support programmes to build capacity, improve teacher training and create the enabling

environments required for long-term sustainability. It will be an uphill battle in CAR. Prior to the crisis only 67 per cent of children were attending school, and in 2009 it was estimated that only 35 per cent of the population was literate.” (ECW, 8 November 2018)

In April 2018 UNICEF published the annual Cluster Education Information Bulletin. According to the report, the main causes for dropping out of primary school and of retention at the secondary level are access problems and the quality of education, coupled with the precarious socio-economic situation and population displacements. Only 60 percent of the children complete primary school. At least 500,000 children and adolescents (between 3 and 24 years) are out of school. 55% of the teachers are poorly trained parent teachers (“maitres-parents”), who remain present in crisis areas and provide some supervision for children. Since 2015, interventions have focused on the reopening of schools, teacher promotion, school rehabilitation, provision of school kits, private lessons and the accelerated education programme, as well as support to parent-teacher associations. (UNICEF, 30 April 2018, p. 1)

In its Bulletin covering the first trimester of 2018 UNICEF notes that despite multiple efforts by the government and humanitarian partners, the educational situation remains precarious in several conflict areas following the resurgence of hostilities. Amongst others the report mentions a lack of qualified personnel, the destruction of school infrastructure and the loss of school and teaching materials. (UNICEF, 8 August 2018, p. 1)

In September 2018 RFI notes that the school year started on 17 September. It is estimated that 22% of school-age girls in the country are not enrolled in school, more than twice as many as boys. (RFI, 20 September 2018)

In September 2018 UNICEF also mentions that “the school year was officially launched by the President in Bangui” on 17 September 2018, however, “due to insecurity in some areas, many schools remained closed two weeks after the official start of the school year, and UNICEF and its partners continue to advocate for the reopening of all the schools countrywide.” (UNICEF, September 2018, pp. 3-4)

Please also see [section 8.6.1](#) for information on occupation and attacks on schools.

8.14 Treatment of individuals of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities

In its January 2018 report Freedom House mentions the following regarding the legal and social situation of LGBT persons:

“Societal and legal discrimination against LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people prevent them from working to see their interests represented in the political sphere. [...] Same-sex sexual acts are illegal, and punishable by fines and imprisonment. While enforcement of these laws is uncommon, societal discrimination against LGBT people remains acute.” (Freedom House, January 2018, F4)

The April 2018 USDOS report explains the legal provisions regarding same sex relationships, mentioning that there were no reports regarding their implementation. It goes on to state that

anti-LGBT sentiment is rooted in society yet there were no reports of violence directed against LGBT persons during the reporting period:

“The penal code criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual activity. The penalty for ‘public expression of love’ between persons of the same sex is imprisonment for six months to two years or a fine of between 150,000 and 600,000 CFA francs (\$265 and \$1,060). When one of the participants is a child, the adult could be sentenced to two to five years’ imprisonment or a fine of 100,000 to 800,000 CFA francs (\$176 and \$1,413); however, there were no reports police arrested or detained persons under these provisions. While official discrimination based on sexual orientation occurred, there were no reports the government targeted gays and lesbians.

Societal discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) persons was entrenched due to a high degree of cultural stigmatization. There were no reports of LGBTI persons targeted for acts of violence, although the absence of reports could reflect cultural biases and stigma attached to being an LGBTI individual. There were no known organizations advocating for or working on behalf of LGBTI persons.” (USDOS, 20 April 2018, section 6)

All Survivors Project Foundation, an organisation based in Liechtenstein that conducts research on sexual and gender-based violence in conflict situations, mentions in a 2018 report the following regarding sexual violence against men in the CAR:

“Incidents of gang rape have been documented, as have incidents in which males have been forced to engage in oral sex with and touch the genitals of other males: according to one human rights expert this may be a deliberate tactic to increase the sense of shame of victims by making it appear that they have engaged in a homosexual act. This is particularly stigmatising in CAR where homophobic attitudes are widespread.” (All Survivors Project, 2018, p. 3)

Echos de Centrafrique, a weblog written by a journalist-blogger on developments in the CAR, in 2013 publishes a blog entry that deals with societal attitudes towards homosexuality in the CAR. The journalist recounts how he tried to convince his colleagues at a radio station to put on a discussion about homophobia. That idea was rejected by his colleagues who acknowledged that there are homosexuals in the CAR but that it is not their duty to sensitize the public and make them accept this “deviance”. According to the journalist, homophobia is considered to be non-existent in the CAR and just another silly invention by white people in order to normalise a shameful practice that is rejected by African culture. It is generally considered to be forming part of a debate led by white people. According to some, entering this debate would be to encourage homosexuality. The journalist states that even though homosexuality is not explicitly criminalised by the penal code, it is despised to such a degree that if two same-sex people are discovered touching each other in inappropriate ways, they will be laughed at, stigmatised, abused and often even taken to the nearest police station. There the two will be held until they are released again after paying a fine. (Echos de Centrafrique, 17 May 2013)

No further relevant information could be found regarding the situation of LGBT persons in CAR.

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