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RIGHTS  
WATCH

# “I Can Still Smell the Dead”

The Forgotten Human Rights Crisis in the Central African Republic



## **“I Can Still Smell the Dead”**

The Forgotten Human Rights Crisis in the Central African Republic

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# “I Can Still Smell the Dead”

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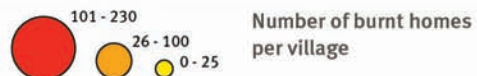
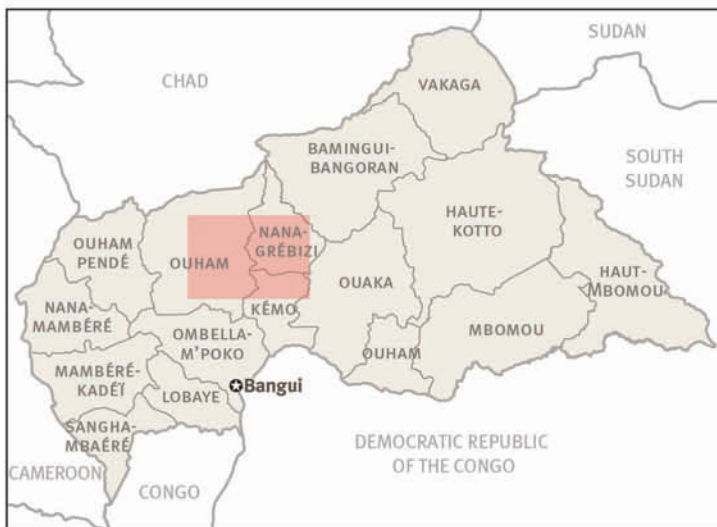
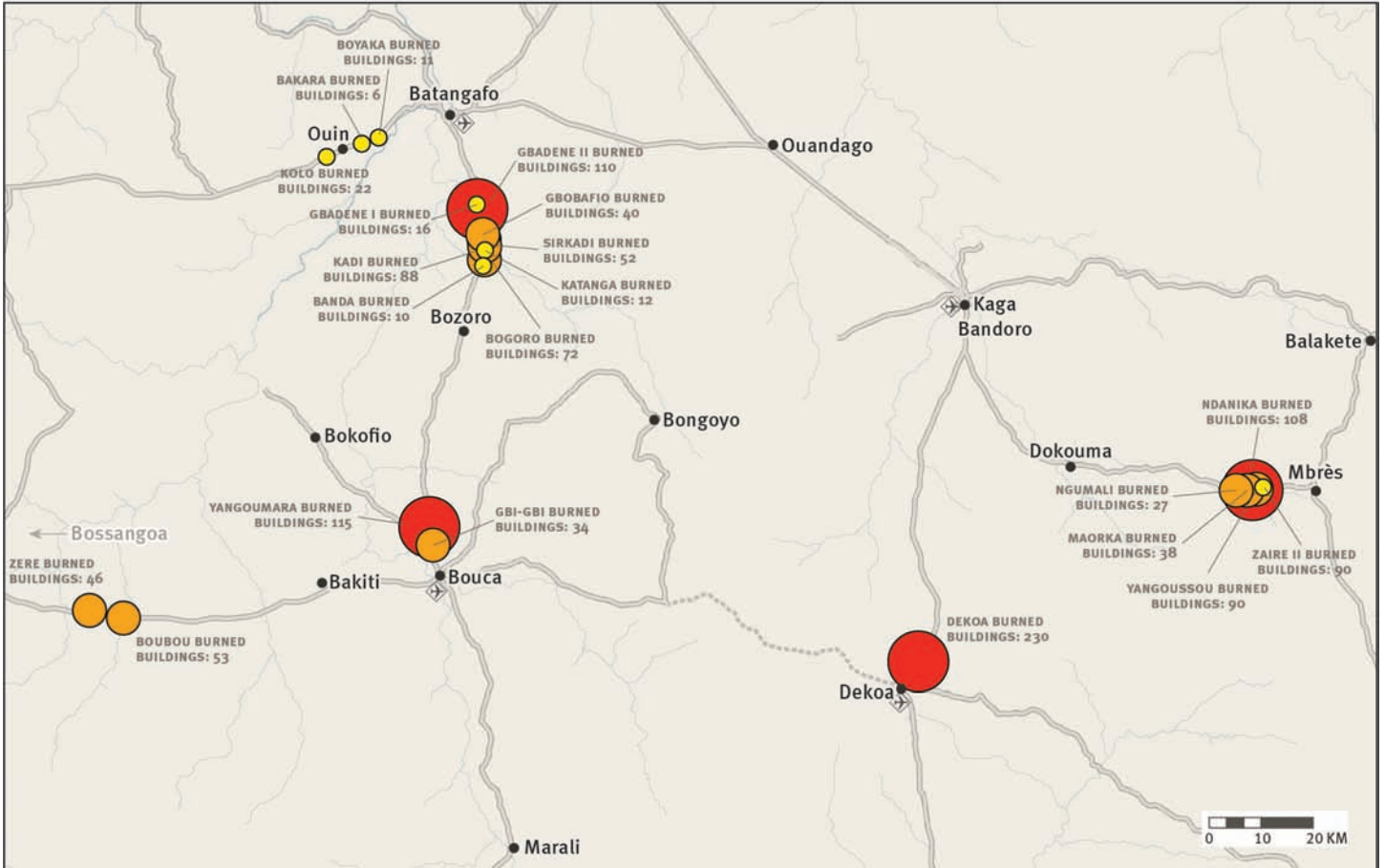
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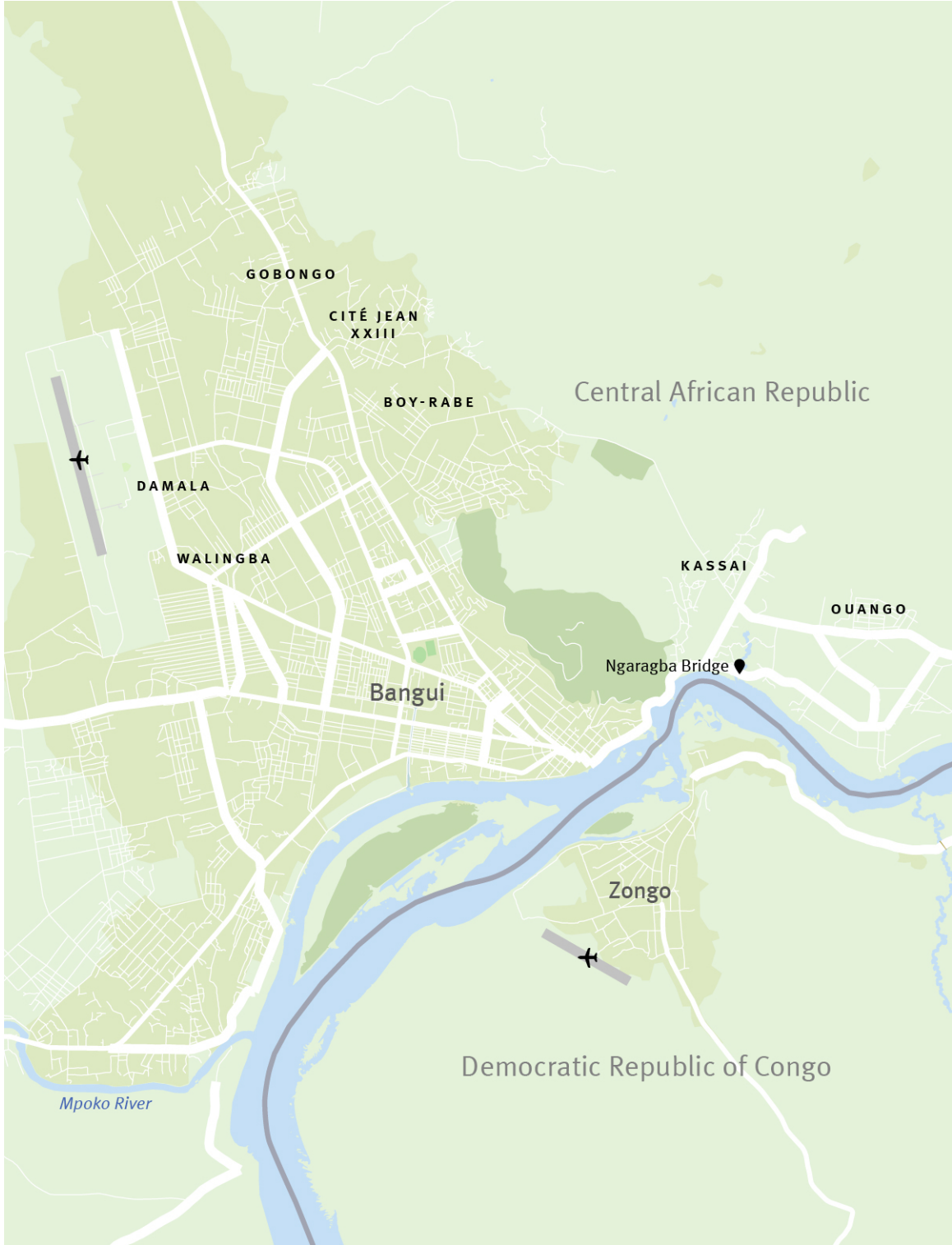
# Maps

Homes Burned in Villages and Towns in Northern CAR from February to June 2013\*



\*This map does not mark the numbers of civilians killed.

# Bangui



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## Glossary of Acronyms

<b>A2R</b>	Alliance for the Rebirth and Rebuilding ( <i>Alliance pour la Renaissance et la Refondation</i> )
<b>APRD</b>	The Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy ( <i>Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie</i> )
<b>BINUCA</b>	United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic ( <i>Bureau intégré des Nations Unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine</i> )
<b>CEEAC/ ECCAS</b>	Economic Community of Central African States ( <i>Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique centrale</i> )
<b>CEMAC</b>	Central African Economic and Monetary Community ( <i>Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale</i> )
<b>CPJP</b>	Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace ( <i>Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix</i> )
<b>CPSK</b>	Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Kodro ( <i>Convention Patriotique du salut du Kodro</i> )
<b>FACA</b>	Central African Armed Forces ( <i>Forces Armées Centrafricaines</i> )
<b>FDPC</b>	The Central African People's Democratic Front ( <i>Front démocratique du peuple centrafricaine</i> )
<b>FOMAC</b>	Multinational Forces for Central Africa ( <i>Force multinationale de l'Afrique centrale</i> )
<b>GP</b>	Presidential Guard ( <i>Garde présidentielle</i> )



<b>ICC</b>	International Criminal Court ( <i>Cour pénale internationale</i> )
<b>ICG</b>	International Contact Group ( <i>Groupe international de contact</i> )
<b>IPD</b>	Inclusive Political Dialogue ( <i>Dialogue Politique Inclusif</i> )
<b>MICOPAX</b>	Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic ( <i>Mission de consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine</i> )
<b>MISCA / AFISM-CAR</b>	African – led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (Mission internationale de soutien à la Centrafrique sous conduite africaine)
<b>MLC</b>	Movement for the Liberation of Congo ( <i>Mouvement pour la Libération du Congo</i> )
<b>OHCHR</b>	Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights ( <i>Bureau du Haut-Commissaire aux droits de l'homme</i> )
<b>OCRB</b>	Central Office for the Repression of Banditry ( <i>Office Central de Répression du Banditisme</i> )
<b>SRI</b>	Investigation and Intelligence Service ( <i>Section de Recherches et d'Investigations</i> )
<b>UFDR</b>	Union of Democratic Forces for Unity ( <i>Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement</i> )
<b>UFR</b>	Union of Republican Forces ( <i>Union des Forces Républicaines</i> )

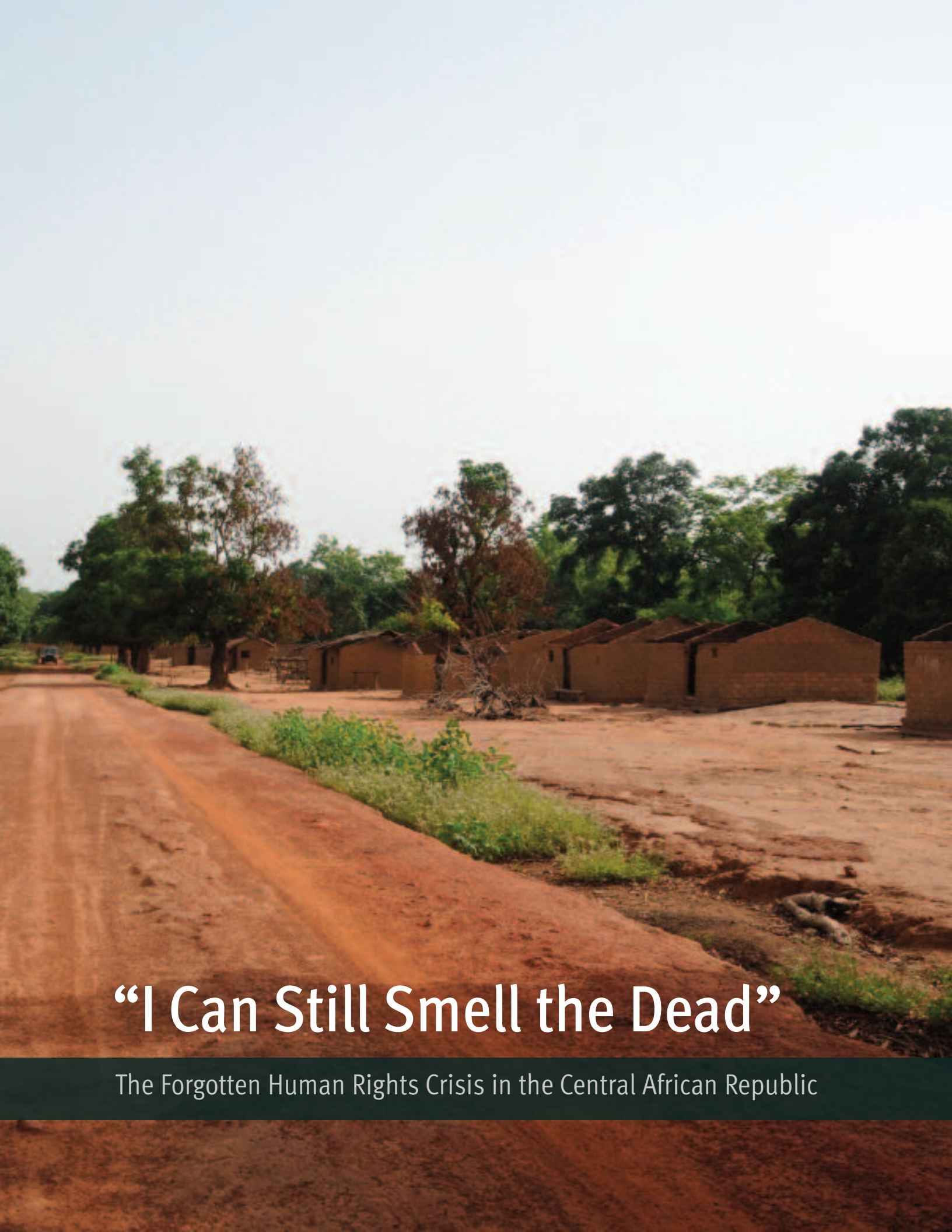
## **Summary and Recommendations**



Gbadene village, where over 100 homes were destroyed by the Seleka and Mbarara from April 10 to April 13, 2013.

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# “I Can Still Smell the Dead”

The Forgotten Human Rights Crisis in the Central African Republic





Destroyed homes in Ndanika, attacked by the Seleka April 14 and April 15, 2013.  
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On December 10, 2012, an alliance of three major rebel groups known as the Seleka coalition began a campaign to overthrow the government of President François Bozizé of the Central African Republic (CAR). On March 24, 2013, Seleka rebels took control of Bangui, CAR's capital, and also seized control of 15 of the country's 16 provinces. Michel Djotodia, one of the rebel groups' leaders, suspended the constitution, and installed himself as interim president—a role to which he was subsequently elected by a transitional government. Elections are to be held after 18 months.

The Seleka (“alliance” in Sango, the main national language) said they aimed to liberate the country and bring peace and security to the people. But for most Central Africans, 2013 has been a dark year, marked by rising violence and vicious Seleka attacks against civilians in Bangui and the provinces. With no checks on their power, the Seleka rule arbitrarily and with complete impunity, with the government failing to follow through on its public commitment to bring to justice those responsible for recent abuses.

Seleka forces have destroyed numerous rural villages, looted country-wide, and raped women and girls. In one attack in Bangui on March 25, Seleka fighters raped two sisters, aged 33 and 23, in their home. The younger sister, who was eight-months pregnant, lost her baby the next day. Rape survivors lack access to adequate health care due to insecurity and lack of health services. Civilians who have been abused have nowhere to turn: the civilian administrative state in CAR has collapsed. In most provinces there are no police or courts. Many health clinics across the country do not function, and in at least one town a hospital has been occupied by the Seleka; most schools are closed.

Interim President Djotodia has denied that Seleka fighters have committed abuses, and continues to shift blame for the violence between Bozizé loyalists, “false Seleka,” and bandits—even though at least one Seleka official in the field admitted responsibility for some attacks to Human Rights Watch. “That was us, the



Church in Gbi-Gbi destroyed by the Seleka on June 2, 2013. The Seleka destroyed Gbi-Gbi after residents killed a member of their group in the neighboring village of Yangoumara. Jean-Michel Bangui, the executive secretary for the Seleka in the area, first admitted to Human Rights Watch that the Seleka had destroyed the village in anger but then said that the village of 34 homes, plus the church, had been burned unintentionally by stray bullets.

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Seleka,” the executive secretary of the highest-ranking Seleka commander in Bouca told Human Rights Watch after two villages were burned.

Human Rights Watch conducted extensive field research in the Central African Republic from April to June 2013 to document individual cases and identify patterns of violence committed by the Seleka. The research focused primarily on attacks against civilians and the destruction of civilian property. Human Rights Watch confirmed the deliberate killing of scores of civilians—including women,

children, and the elderly—between March and June 2013, and received reports of hundreds more from credible sources. Human Rights Watch also confirmed the deliberate destruction of more than 1,000 homes.

The recent fighting has further exacerbated an already grim humanitarian crisis in CAR, a desperately poor landlocked country with high rates of mortality, disease, and food insecurity. In the areas Human Rights Watch visited, thousands of villagers were living in life-threatening conditions. The Seleka stole or destroyed food and seed stocks, and there are now massive food shortages. Residents—including children—are living in the bush near their fields and homes, in tents made from trees and leaves. Most have no access to clean water. In this dire situation, the people of CAR have been left to fend for themselves.

Humanitarian organizations are themselves vulnerable to Seleka attacks, impeding outreach to affected





Church destroyed by the Seleka in Yangoumara on June 2, 2013. The Seleka destroyed Yangoumara after residents killed a member of their group. Jean-Michel Bangui, the executive secretary for the Seleka in the area, first admitted to Human Rights Watch that the Seleka had destroyed the village in anger but then said that the village of 115 homes, plus the church, had been burned unintentionally by stray bullets.

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populations. Civilians looked to the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX), a regional peacekeeping mission led by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), and in particular its military force, the Multinational Forces for Central Africa (FOMAC), for desperately needed protection. On July 19, 2013, the Peace and Security Council at the African Union (AU) adopted a decision to transition MICOPAX into the International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR) and to initially support the political transition for six months.

The Bozizé government, and particularly the Presidential Guard, have also been accused of committing serious human rights abuses, especially in northern CAR. Human Rights Watch interviewed former prisoners jailed under Bozizé's rule who were recently released from an illegal detention facility at the Bossembélé military training center. Prisoners there were held incommunicado for months and even years at a time; were denied food, water, and other basic services; and were tortured, they told Human Rights Watch. The prisoners said that Bozizé was present during torture sessions at the center, where he had a villa flanked by two concrete standing cells in which individuals were left until they died.

In 2013, however, the overwhelming majority of attacks against civilians were committed in Seleka-held territory—including by very young fighters, possibly child soldiers around 13 years old.





Mayor's office in Kaga Bando after it was destroyed by the Seleka.

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School materials destroyed in Bogoro by the Mbarara on April 11, 2013.

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## **ABUSES COMMITTED BY THE SELEKA IN THE PROVINCES**

As the Seleka moved down to Bangui from the northeast, they captured major towns along the way. In these towns, the Seleka immediately began to loot the homes of the civilian population; those who tried to resist were threatened, injured, or killed.

Human Rights Watch documented attacks on villages by Seleka forces and their allies in northern CAR between February and June 2013. This research focused on a broad triangle of territory within the main roads linking Kaga Bandoro, Batangafo, and Bossangoa.

Evidence indicates that Seleka fighters forced villagers out of their homes in order to loot them. Some villagers reported that the attacks were designed to create space for members of the Mbarara community—nomadic pastoralists who move their cattle between Chad and the Central African Republic and have recently been allied with the Seleka.

Human Rights Watch recorded more than 1,000 homes destroyed in at least 34 villages along these roads. Schools and churches were also looted and burned. The Seleka killed scores of civilians while they were trying to flee and have prompted whole communities to flee into the bush—including 113 families from Maorka. “Now I sleep in the fields,” one Maorka resident said. “I made a small hut out of leaves for my wife and our three children. I cannot come back because we do not have beds or our food stock and there is no security. [The Seleka] took all of



Injuries from a survivor of the executions at the Mpoko River on April 15, 2013.

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our farming tools, they took our hoes. We have to use our hands.”

In one attack, Seleka forces, in collaboration with a self-appointed mayor, Adoum Takaji, executed five men and killed five more people as they attempted to escape the village of Ouin. Eyewitnesses described how Takaji went door to door in the village, reassuring fearful residents it was safe to come out to talk to the Seleka. “The first few left their homes, five of them, and were grouped under a tree,” one eyewitness said. “Their arms were attached to each other. They were then shot down one by one. Takaji was only 50 meters away.” Several witnesses told Human

Rights Watch that one individual did not die straight away and the Seleka cut his throat. Later, when some residents returned to the village to bury their dead, the Seleka fired on them again, forcing them to flee once more into the bush. “I can still smell the dead,” one said.

In another attack, on May 19, Seleka forces killed 12 villagers trying to flee from three villages on the Bossangoa-Boguila road. According to residents, members of the Mbarara community also attacked villages outside Batangafo around this time.

Villagers who chose not to leave their homes live in perpetual fear of the prospect of renewed Seleka attacks. These traumatized residents told Human Rights Watch that when they hear a vehicle approaching they run.



MATERNITE  
S.M.I



Seleka fighter using a maternity room as an office at the hospital in Ouandago.  
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## **ABUSES COMMITTED BY THE SELEKA IN BANGUI**

As soon as the Seleka took Bangui on March 24, they started to attack civilians and pillage the city. Human Rights Watch gathered credible testimony that the Seleka killed civilians the day the rebels entered the capital. Virtually every neighborhood was attacked:

- On March 27, Seleka forces killed 17 unarmed people in the Damala neighborhood.
- On April 12, a rocket attack injured 15 people, including 13 children, in the Walingba neighborhood. Two of the children required amputations.
- On April 13, Seleka forces killed 18 unarmed people around the Ngaragba Bridge near the Ouango and Kassai neighborhoods, forcing some residents to flee across the Ubangui River to neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo. Witnesses described seeing Seleka forces kill a priest on the bridge as he appealed for calm holding a Bible aloft. “Three Seleka fighters stepped out of the pick-up, walked toward him and shot him dead,” one witness said. Another witness recounted how a Seleka fighter shot a woman carrying a baby on her back and left her for dead in the street, with her crying infant still strapped to her.
- Between April 13 and 14, Seleka forces attacked the neighborhood of Boy-Rabe and killed approximately 28 unarmed people including three killed in a Seleka rocket attack on a church in Boy-Rabe; 13 people, including children, were seriously injured.
- On April 15, Seleka killed the 26-year-old wife and 18-month-old daughter of a truck driver, whose vehicle they wanted in order to transport stolen goods. A witness described how Seleka shot the baby in the head, before killing her mother as she approached the door to the family house. An eyewitness heard one Seleka say simply to another, “The baby’s head exploded and the wife was shot dead.”
- On June 29, Seleka forces attacked the Gobongo neighborhood and killed at least six unarmed people.

Once they took Bangui, the Seleka began targeting members of the national army, the Central African Armed Forces (Forces Armées Centrafricaines, FACA). Human Rights Watch has recorded numerous cases of extrajudicial killings of members of the FACA by the Seleka. In the worst incident on April 18, residents found the bodies of eight members of the FACA 15 kilometers outside Bangui on the Sceaux Bridge. Family members of some of the victims had to go and retrieve the bodies of their loved ones from the bridge.

The Seleka also summarily executed men it believed were FACA members. On April 15, the Seleka executed five men at the Mpoko River outside Bangui. Human Rights Watch received other credible reports of the killing of suspected FACA at the river.





Seleka fighters seen from hole in a cell at the Bossembélé military training center where detainees could witness beatings outside the cell.

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## THE NEED FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The lack of accountability for serious human rights abuses committed since independence in the Central African Republic has contributed to renewed cycles of violence and the breakdown of normative behavior, further fueling abuses. As one lawyer and local human rights defender said, “Now a waiter is killed after giving a beer, a taxi driver is killed after transporting a person.... This is the negation of the existence of humanity.”

Part of the problem of poor accountability relates to the loose command structure within the Seleka and the difficulty that high-ranking generals have maintaining control over their troops. Fighters often only answer to

their direct commander, and different factions do not necessarily recognize one another. In April 2013, Human Rights Watch recorded multiple incidents of Seleka fighters killing other Seleka fighters to control territory in Bangui. Human Rights Watch also found inadequate efforts by Seleka leaders to ensure their subordinates do not commit serious abuses or are punished for crimes committed.

The transitional government appears unable to reign in Seleka forces or to restore order in the country. However, the larger problem stems from the government’s unwillingness to recognize that Seleka are committing abuses and/or bring to justice those responsible.

On May 20, President Djotodia set up a National Commission of Inquiry, composed of judges, human rights defenders, and police officers, to investigate serious crimes committed in the country since 2002. The commission has the authority to look into crimes



Seleka fighters standing outside former President François Bozizé's villa at the Bossembélé military training center. The concrete hole in the foreground is one of two reported to be cells where individuals were forced to stand.

© 2013 Human Rights Watch



committed both in the Bozizé era and since the Seleka took power. However, as of the end of June, the commission had not yet received funds or logistical support from the transitional government that would allow it to start its work.

The minister of justice has publicly committed to investigate and prosecute those responsible for past and current abuses. However, few steps have been taken and any efforts lacked impartiality. Isolated arrests of so-called false Seleka have occurred in connection with recent looting in the capital, but the state prosecutor has failed to carry out investigations or to arrest Seleka. The state prosecutor has also failed to investigate more serious crimes, including extrajudicial killings, rape, pillage, and torture. The only other cases being investigated appear to target members of the former government, including former President Bozizé and other former ministers.

The Seleka was formed partly due to frustration over the Bozizé government's refusal to investigate crimes committed in the northeast by both rebel groups and government forces since mid-2005. Yet, the Seleka are now committing similar abuses with near total impunity in Bangui and the provinces. Human Rights Watch welcomes the establishment of a commission of inquiry and the government's stated commitment to tackle impunity. But we are concerned about the lack of political will to ensure fair and impartial justice for all persons responsible for abuses. National judicial authorities must make legitimate efforts to hold violators of human rights responsible, including Seleka members, in order to ensure equitable justice.



Colonel Saleh Zabadi. Human Rights Watch researchers questioned Zabadi on villages attacked and burned in his area to which he responded: “There were no villages burned here. Our territory is calm.” Human Rights Watch researchers counted 53 houses burned in Boubou and 46 in Zere, both villages under his zone of command.

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The self-proclaimed mayor of Batangafo, Adoum Takaji. Witnesses say Takaji helped coordinate Seleka attacks on the road from Batangafo to Bouca between April 10 and 14, 2013 and was present during killings of civilians in Ouin on May 1, 2013. Takaji denies participating in these attacks and insists that the Seleka are in the area to provide protection, saying he wants people to “come back to the village and re-start their lives.”

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“Bebe Darine,” killed with her mother, Sandrine Poumengakola, by the Seleka in Boy-Rabe on April 15, 2013.

© 2013 Private



Sandrine Poumengakola killed by the Seleka in Boy-Rabe on April 15, 2013.

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The identify card of Jacques Ouilebon, killed by the Seleka in Bougone on May 19, 2013.

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The identify card of Tiburce-Jefferson Yankois, killed by the Seleka in Boy-Rabe on April 14, 2013.

© 2013 Private



Ludociv Hehine, killed by the Seleka in Damala on March 27, 2013.

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Rodrigue Gbenerio, killed by the Seleka in Damala on March 27, 2013.

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Raphael Bingilego, killed by the Seleka in Damala on March 27, 2013.

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Human Rights Watch documented the destruction of more than 1,000 homes destroyed by the Seleka in Northern Central African Republic. Satellite imagery collected in July 2013 confirms this widespread destruction. Human Rights Watch collected eye witness testimony to confirm that the Seleka, or individuals working with the Seleka, were responsible for these acts.

All before images were taken in 2010 (exact date unknown).  
The after images were taken on July 9, 2013.

## Bobafio



**Before**

© DigitalGlobe 2013,  
Source: Bing Maps Aerial, Microsoft Corporation



**After**

© Astrium 2013

## Bogoro



**Before**

© DigitalGlobe 2013,  
Source: Bing Maps Aerial, Microsoft Corporation



**After**

© Astrium 2013



## Gbadene II



### Before

© DigitalGlobe 2013,  
Source: Bing Maps Aerial, Microsoft Corporation



### After

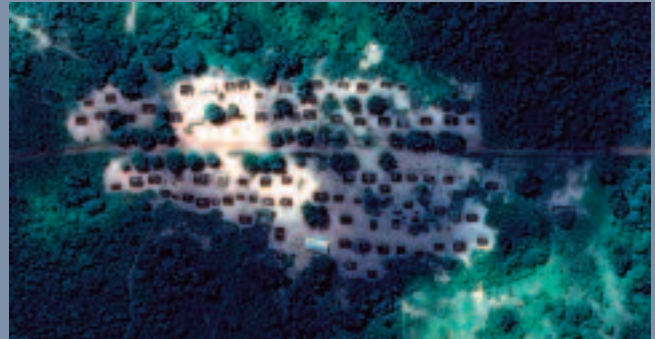
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## Kadi



### Before

© DigitalGlobe 2013,  
Source: Bing Maps Aerial, Microsoft Corporation



### After

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# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO THE TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

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- Issue a public declaration that the government will not tolerate attacks on civilians and will hold accountable anyone found responsible for murder, rape, pillage, and other serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law.
- Investigate and prosecute, in accordance with international fair trial standards, all persons against whom there is evidence of criminal responsibility for grave crimes, including those liable under command responsibility, for their failure to prevent or prosecute these crimes.
- Investigate attacks on schools, medical centers, and humanitarian actors, and prosecute or take disciplinary measures against any member of the Seleka found responsible.
- Restore law and order in the 15 provinces under its control by urgently deploying provincial military commanders under the leadership of the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Defence and deploying the provincial governors (Préfets) under the leadership of the Ministry of Territorial Administration.
- After a vetting process to exclude individuals who have committed human rights abuses, reinstate security institutions in the country, including the police, the gendarmerie, and the regular army. Ensure that members of the police, gendarmerie, and military are trained on human rights and international humanitarian law before deployment.
- Ensure that Seleka fighters found responsible for serious human rights abuses are not reintegrated into (or allowed to join) the national army and are not given other official positions within the government.
- Ensure all police, gendarmes, and soldiers receive a regular and adequate salary, and enforce a zero tolerance policy on looting.
- Ensure all soldiers are lodged in military barracks in order to ensure they do not occupy schools or hospitals.
- Provide the National Commission of Inquiry with the necessary resources to promptly, thoroughly, and independently investigate allegations of human rights abuses by all parties, including by Seleka rebels.
- Provide access to health and other services for victims of human rights violations, paying special attention to the needs of women and girls who have survived sexual violence.
- Expedite the rebuilding, repair, and re-opening of schools.
- Seek financial and technical assistance from international donors, and give guarantees that all steps will be taken to ensure fair and credible domestic investigations and prosecutions of grave crimes.
- Seek financial and technical assistance from international donors to support the National Commission of Inquiry and give guarantees that all steps will be taken to ensure the inquiry will be objective, transparent, and efficient.
- Continue to provide full cooperation and unhindered access to the International Criminal Court and other human rights investigators.

## TO SELEKA FORCES

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- Cease immediately all attacks on civilians. Put in place measures to deter, prevent, and punish individuals who commit human rights abuses and cooperate with all national investigations and prosecutions of Seleka members, including the National Commission of Inquiry.
- Cease immediately all attacks on humanitarian actors and make public assurances that they will have safe passage to carry out their work.
- Cease all recruitment and use of children as soldiers. Groups that have already concluded action plans with the United Nations (the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace [CPJP] and the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity [UFDR]) should fulfil all obligations under these agreements. All other groups that have been listed by the United Nations Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict (the CPJP, the Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Kodro [CPSK], and the Union of Republican Forces [UFR]) should develop plans to address grave violations against children.
- Cease immediately all attacks on schools and medical centers. If occupied, vacate these premises immediately. Prohibit the use of such facilities in any manner in violation of international humanitarian law, or which impede the right to education.
- Put in place measures to prevent harassment or intimidation by Seleka members of any potential witnesses in future investigations or a national commission of inquiry.

## TO THE ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF CENTRAL AFRICAN STATES (ECCAS)

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- Urgently bolster peacekeeping efforts in the Central African Republic by implementing the African Union Peace and Security Council's July 19, 2013, decision to protect civilians, restore security and public order, and create the necessary security conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance.
- Deploy additional, trained, and well-equipped troops throughout the country to ensure civilian protection.

## TO THE AFRICAN UNION PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL AND AFISM-CAR

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- Ensure that the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR) has the logistical and financial support to fulfil its mandate on civilian protection.
- Consider troop deployment from other member states and expanding the nucleus of the contingent to countries that were not originally a part of MICOPAX.
- Exclude any troops from AFISM-CAR whose presence might compromise the perceived neutrality of the AU force.

## TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

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- **Impose targeted sanctions against individuals, including Seleka leaders, responsible for serious human rights abuses since December 2012, as recommended by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.**
- **As requested by the AU, give full support to the AU and ECCAS to facilitate the implementation of AFISM-CAR's mandate to protect civilians, including through the provision of the necessary financial, logistical, and technical support.**
- **Expand the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA) to allow the mission to monitor, investigate and report publicly and to the Council on any abuses or violations of human rights or international humanitarian law committed throughout the country.**
- **Ask the UN secretary general to deploy a group of experts in the protection of civilians to the Central African Republic to inquire into, and rapidly report on, civilian protection needs and challenges. The group should recommend concrete measures to advance the protection of civilians, ensure unhindered humanitarian access and assistance, and end impunity for serious crimes and violations of international law.**
- **Task the BINUCA with monitoring closely the Central African Republic government's pursuit of justice to ensure that national efforts to investigate and prosecute those responsible for abuses are carried out in accordance with international fair trial standards.**
- **Request to be briefed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the fact-finding mission to the Central African Republic conducted in June and July and covering human rights violations committed in Bangui and other localities since December 2012.**

## TO THE UNITED NATIONS INTEGRATED PEACEBUILDING OFFICE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (BINUCA)

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- **Ensure the office's Human Rights and Justice Unit has the necessary resources and staff to effectively monitor, investigate, and report on past and on-going human rights abuses in the Central African Republic.**
- **Provide assistance to the National Commission of Inquiry and urge the transitional government to investigate and prosecute all persons against whom there is evidence of criminal responsibility for grave crimes.**
- **Assist the government to re-establish the rule of law with a focus on the independence and impartiality of the justice system, the humane treatment of detainees, and the protection of the accused and witnesses.**

## TO THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (OHCHR)

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- Publish an interim report on the human rights situation including the findings of the OHCHR fact-finding mission to CAR in June-July, as well as continue to report publicly on any deterioration of the situation.

## TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

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- Remain seized of the human rights situation in the Central African Republic and consider a special session in case the situation deteriorates.
- Consider the report of the OHCHR fact-finding mission in CAR and consider establishing the mandate of an Independent Expert to provide technical assistance to the transitional government, monitor and report on the situation of human rights, and report to the Council on human rights developments and challenges.
- Encourage the Human Rights Council Special Procedures to respond to the standing invitation issued by the CAR minister of justice in June 2013 to visit CAR.

## TO THE PROSECUTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT (ICC)

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- Continue to actively monitor developments in the Central African Republic to determine whether crimes within the ICC's jurisdiction are being committed.
- Remind all parties of the ICC's jurisdiction and, as appropriate, issue public statements assessing the situation.
- Press national authorities to investigate and prosecute all persons against whom there is evidence of criminal responsibility for grave crimes, including those liable under command responsibility, in accordance with international fair trial standards.
- Monitor any domestic efforts to prosecute these crimes to ensure that the trials are fair, credible, and meet international standards.
- Discuss with national authorities international assistance that may be available to assist accountability efforts and identify areas where ICC officials may have practical expertise to share, such as conducting investigations of complex crimes and ensuring witness protection.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## TO THE GOVERNMENTS OF FRANCE, THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE UNITED STATES, AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL DONORS

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- As requested by the AU, give full support to the AU and ECCAS to facilitate the implementation of AFISM-CAR's mandate to protect civilians, including through the provision of the necessary financial, logistical, and technical support.
- Incorporate training on human rights protection in any security sector reform programs and create vetting mechanisms to ensure that Seleka fighters who have committed human rights abuses are not reintegrated into the national army or given other official positions within the government.
- Support programs that protect, demobilize, and rehabilitate child soldiers.
- Assist national authorities in their efforts to restore the rule of law and to conduct trials for grave crimes in accordance with international fair trial standards, including by conducting an assessment of the domestic judicial system with the view toward identifying possible areas of assistance.
- Ensure adequate humanitarian funding to restore education.

## TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CHAD

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- Investigate and publish findings into allegations of Chadian involvement with and/or support to the Seleka. If evidence of Chadian involvement is discovered, ensure this activity ceases immediately.

## Methodology

This report's primary focus is on abuses carried out before and after the Seleka took control of the CAR capital Bangui on March 24, 2013. Most of the abuses documented occurred in Seleka-controlled territory.

The cases presented in this report represent just a small number of the human rights abuses that have taken place, including the killing of civilians and destruction of property.

This report focuses on the capital Bangui and the provinces of Kémo Gribingui, Nana Grébizi, and Ouham. It does not document equally serious reports of human rights abuses reported in the provinces of Ombella-Mpoko, Ouham Pendé, Nana-Mambéré, Mambere-Kadei, Sangha Mbaere, Lobaye, Ouaka, Basse Kotto, and Mbomou. Human Rights Watch has gathered evidence on abuses in some of these provinces, but prioritized research on accessible provinces given the current security situation.

To date, no organization, including BINUCA, has advanced total figures of the numbers of civilians killed by the Seleka. On the basis of its own research, Human Rights Watch estimates that at least scores of people have been killed in Seleka-controlled territory. It has been difficult to advance a more precise figure as no comprehensive or reliable record has been made of these incidents, and Human Rights Watch was able to document only a small proportion of reported killings and attacks on villages. Many people who have been victims of or witnesses to Seleka abuse remain in hiding, fearful of talking to outsiders, given the possibility of retribution by the Seleka. Furthermore, the security situation in both Bangui and the provinces has further limited the ability of Human Rights Watch to investigate all credible reports.

The majority of killings and attacks on villages documented by Human Rights Watch were carried out by the Seleka. Some killings and attacks were carried out by members of the Mbarara community; however these attacks were undertaken with Seleka support. Human Rights Watch's research focused on cases where the Seleka targeted civilians or those who were unarmed. Cases that appeared to be common crimes or where there were no clear indications of Seleka involvement are not included in this report.



Principal research for this report was carried out in April, May, and June 2013. A Human Rights Watch researcher and a consultant conducted interviews in the capital Bangui and the provinces of Ombella-Mpoko, Kémo Gribingui, Nana Grébizi, Ouham, and Mbomou. Human Rights Watch interviewed multiple sources for each case in order to confirm and validate the reliability of testimony.

Human Rights Watch interviewed numerous victims and eyewitnesses of targeted killings of civilians and attacks on villages. Human Rights Watch also spoke with relatives and friends of victims, journalists, members of civil society organizations and international nongovernmental organizations, former members of the Bozizé government, former parliamentarians, national and local Seleka officials, members of the transitional government, judicial personnel, foreign diplomats, and United Nations officials.

Additionally, Human Rights Watch representatives met with senior government officials including Interim President Michel Djotodia, Public Security Minister Nouredine Adam, (Former) Water and Forests Minister Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, Justice Minister Arsène Sende, and the National Prosecutor Alain Tolmo. Government officials' responses to cases and concerns raised by Human Rights Watch are referenced in this report.

Because of the fear of reprisals, the names of witnesses, family members and friends of victims who spoke to Human Rights Watch have been withheld from this report. Interviews were conducted in French or Sango with the assistance of interpreters.

## **Background**

### **The Seleka**

The Seleka was created in late 2012. Its main factions are the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Kodro (CPSK), the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) and to a lesser extent the Union of Republican Forces (UFR) and the Alliance for the Rebirth and Rebuilding (A2R).

Initially, the Seleka called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Inclusive Political Dialogue (IPD)—held in 2008 to create conditions for peaceful elections in 2010. At that time, the Seleka was looking for: financial compensation for the rebels; the release of political prisoners; and the opening of investigations into past crimes including the disappearance of former CPJP leader Charles Massi.

The Libreville Agreement forged between the Seleka and the Bozizé government in January 2013 aimed to provide a road map for a political transition and ceasefire. In February 2013, Michel Djotodia was named deputy prime minister and defense minister. The following month, both sides resumed fighting, and the Seleka took Bangui in late March.

### **Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement, UFDR)**

The UFDR is a rebel group created to address marginalization of the Gula ethnic group in northeastern CAR. In 2006 the UFDR started taking control of strategic diamond-producing towns in northeastern CAR and advancing on Bangui. At the time, Damane Zakaria was the UFDR's commander on the ground, while Michel Djotodia was active as one of the group's leaders. So serious was the UFDR offensive that French troops had to step in to assist the Bozizé government in December 2006. The UFDR signed a peace agreement in May 2007 with the CAR government and the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement in June 2008, after which it continued to maintain influence over the diamond trade in the Haute-Kotto province. Its ranks include men who helped overthrow former president Ange-Félix Patassé in 2003 and who felt they were never adequately compensated by President Bozizé.

## **Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix, CPJP)**

The CPJP is a rebel group created in 2008 based near Ndélé. It was created to protect ethnic Runga from UFDR attacks of non-Gula tribes. The CPJP soon sought control of diamond mines in the northeast. By 2010 it controlled mining territory around Bria in Haute-Kotto province. In late 2010 it attacked Birao with the help of Chadian rebels and briefly held the town. The CPJP signed a ceasefire with the government of CAR on June 12, 2011, and a peace agreement on August 25, 2012. Two CPJP commanders, Noureddine Adam and Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, opposed the peace deal. Dhaffane left the CPJP in 2012 to start his own rebel group, the CPSK.

## **Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Kodro (Convention Patriotique du salut du Kodro, CPSK)**

The CPSK was founded in June 2012 by General Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, formally of the CPJP. Dhaffane was arrested in Chad in 2009, but was released in December 2012. He promptly re-joined the CPSK and the Seleka. He was appointed the minister of water and forests but was accused by the transitional government of recruiting mercenaries and buying weapons and was fired. He was arrested by the Seleka on June 30. At the time of writing he was detained at the *Camp de Roux*, a military camp occupied by the Seleka in Bangui.

## **Union of Republican Forces (Union des Forces Républicaines, UFR)**

The UFR is a rebel group created by Colonel Florian N'Djadder, a former member of the FACA. The UFR has long maintained a limited presence in CAR. It took advantage of the political benefits offered by the Inclusive Political Dialogue and signed the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Bangui on December 15, 2008. It has a limited role in the Seleka.

## **Alliance for the Rebirth and Rebuilding (Alliance pour la Renaissance et la Refondation, A2R)**

The A2R was a loose underground movement within the former FACA. It opposed the prominent position of ethnic Gbaya in the army. It was formed in October 2012 by former army officers and sought connections with the Seleka, from which it has distanced itself since the start of hostilities.



# I. Origins of the March 24 coup

The current attacks on civilians in the Central African Republic should be understood in the broader context of the country's and region's fractured political history.<sup>1</sup> Since independence from France in 1960, almost every political transition in the Central African Republic has been marred by political violence. Many politicians, candidates, and combatants have used violence as a means of securing political power. Those committing violence and abuse have rarely been brought to justice.

## Rebellion Before 2012

Before 2012, the political landscape in CAR was marked by the presence of multiple rebel groups and three main armed opposition groups:<sup>2</sup> the Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy (*Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie*, APRD<sup>3</sup>), the The Central African People's Democratic Front (*Front démocratique du peuple centrafricaine*, FDPC<sup>4</sup>), and the UFDR. While the APRD and FDPC were historically active in the northwest of the country, bordering Chad and Cameroon, the UFDR was based in the northeast, on the border with Sudan.

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<sup>1</sup> See International Crisis Group, "Central African Republic: Priorities of the Transition," Africa Report N°203, June 11 2013, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/203-central-african-republic-priorities-of-the-transition.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/203-central-african-republic-priorities-of-the-transition.pdf). See Amnesty International, "Central African Republic - action needed to end decades of abuse," October 2011, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AFR19/001/2011/en/3a61a8a4-cf37-4d59-a09e-39b77c70957f/af190012011en.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> In its September 2007 report on CAR, Human Rights Watch reported on abuses by the Bozizé government security forces, documenting serious and widespread abuses against the civilian population, including multiple summary executions and unlawful killings, widespread burning of civilian homes, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture and ill-treatment. Following this report few substantive changes were made to address civilian protection and abuses committed by the armed forces. For more information see Human Rights Watch, *State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians*, September 2007, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2007/09/14/state-anarchy>.

<sup>3</sup> The APRD was established in 2005/2006 after the 2005 elections legitimized the 2003 coup. It was primarily made up of elements of the Presidential Guard still loyal to Patassé and community defense groups operating in the Ouham-Pendé province. In 2008 it emerged as a political front with former defense minister under Patassé, Jean Jacques Demafouth, as the civilian leader. He agreed only to take this post if the group would sign a peace accord.

<sup>4</sup> The FDPC was established by Abdoulayé Miskine (born Martin Koumtamadji), an ethnic N'Gama, in 2005 in the north of the country near Kabo in the Ouham province. At this time the group maintained a presence in a small area near the Chadian border with a handful of combatants. Miskine signed a ceasefire in December 2006. However in 2008 it increased attacks on government positions. The group signed an act of adherence to the 2008 Global Peace Accord in 2009, however they continued small-scale attacks throughout 2009 and beyond before signing the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2013. The FDPC was affiliated with the Seleka at the start of the movement but subsequently distanced itself.

To resolve conflicts between these opposition groups and the government, between 2007 and 2012, several peace agreements, brokered by regional powers, were proffered and signed. The most important agreement, the Global Peace Accord — signed in Libreville, Gabon on June 21, 2008 — was first signed by the APRD and the UFDR. The FDPC later signed an agreement in 2009. The CPJP signed a ceasefire with the government of CAR on June 12, 2011, and a peace agreement on August 25, 2012.

Despite the signing of these agreements, change in northern CAR did not come fast enough for those who felt they were neglected in terms of development and assistance from Bangui. State security and social services were almost totally absent in the north. While gross human rights violations were reported to have diminished,<sup>5</sup> the failure of the state judiciary to hold perpetrators accountable and the high probability that they would remain unpunished fostered resentment. Although some progress was made in the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process in 2012 with APRD, UFR and FDPC combatants, the lack of a national reintegration strategy and the prevailing security vacuum created additional volatility.

The Seleka emerged in late 2012 into an environment marked by the absence of state institutions, the presence of arms and former members of armed groups, and porous national borders in an unstable region.<sup>6</sup>

## Post 2012: The Seleka Coalition—Chadian Influence

The government of Chadian President Idriss Déby has played a role in CAR since the early 1990s. The Bozizé government was installed with Chadian support in 2003. The Déby government is believed to have been a sponsor and perpetrator of human rights abuses against civilians in CAR's north. In 2008, the Chadian Army, the *Armée Nationale Tchadienne*, launched numerous cross-border raids on villages in this region, killing civilians, burning villages, and stealing cattle.<sup>7</sup> More recently, in early 2012, the Chadian

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<sup>5</sup> At the end of 2008 the UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Execution, Philip Alston, concluded that extrajudicial executions had “fallen dramatically”, see <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/Go8/139/76/PDF/Go813976.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed August 4, 2013).

<sup>6</sup> See International Crisis Group, “Failure Has Many Fathers: The Coup in Central African Republic,” March 27, 2013, <http://www.crisisgroupblogs.org/africanpeacebuilding/2013/03/27/failure-has-many-fathers-the-coup-in-central-african-republic/>.

<sup>7</sup> See “CAR: Chadian Army Attacks, Burns Border Villages”, Human Rights Watch news release, March 20, 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2008/03/19/central-african-republic-chadian-army-attacks-burns-border-villages>.

Army shelled a number of villages along the road between Ouandago and Batangafo, causing the forced displacement of three villages.

In 2012, the CAR government began to lose favor with the Chadian president. Reflecting this falling-out, Chadian members of Bozizé's presidential guard were called back to N'Djamena in 2012. At the same time, the Chadian government released members of the Seleka who were being held under surveillance in Chad, which freed them to join the rebel coalition forming in CAR. Analysts see Chad's shifting allegiances in CAR as tied to the need to maintain control of the southern oil belt in Chad, an area where local residents have historically opposed Déby.<sup>8</sup>

Chadian armed rebel groups hostile to Déby, such as the United Front for Change (*Front uni pour le changement*) or elements of the former Chadian rebel leader Abdel Khader Baba Laddé of the Popular Front for Redress (*Front populaire pour le redressement*), are said to be using northern CAR as a rear base.<sup>9</sup>

The Seleka coalition, primarily comprising members of the CPJP, the UFDR, and the CPSK, is strongly suspected to include Chadians who have aligned themselves with local rebels. In Bossangoa, Human Rights Watch met with the highest-ranking Seleka official, Colonel Saleh Zabadi. During the meeting, Human Rights Watch asked a young soldier, standing close by, where he was from. The soldier quickly said, "I am from Chad." Zabadi corrected him and said, "No, he is from Kabo." Kabo is a town in northern CAR, 60 kilometers south of the Chadian border. The soldier again reiterated, "No, I am from Chad."<sup>10</sup> Zabadi again insisted the soldier was from Kabo. Human Rights Watch spoke with other Seleka fighters who said they were Chadian.

The national origin of Seleka troops is a source of friction in CAR. Most victims and witnesses with whom Human Rights Watch spoke said they believed the majority of Seleka come from Chad or Sudan, largely because most Seleka fighters do not seem to speak Sango, the most widely used language in CAR. In virtually all accounts of attacks in Bangui

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<sup>8</sup> See International Crisis Group, "Central African Republic: Priorities of the Transition," Africa Report N°203, June 11 2013, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/203-central-african-republic-priorities-of-the-transition.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/203-central-african-republic-priorities-of-the-transition.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with FOMAC officer, Kaga-Bandoro, June 5, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Colonel Saleh Zabadi, Bossangoa, June 8, 2013.



and the provinces, victims and witnesses said Seleka members were speaking in Arabic. Human Rights Watch interviewed many Seleka fighters who were not able to communicate with a Sango-speaking translator. (In these cases, interviews had to be done in French with a Seleka commander or in basic Arabic). FOMAC troops operating outside Bangui have confirmed to Human Rights Watch that Seleka fighters in their zones are majority Chadian or Sudanese.

### **The Peuhl Communities**

The security situation in northern CAR is further complicated by long-standing tensions over grazing rights, migration routes, and access to water sources between local farming communities and pastoralist nomadic tribes from CAR, Chad, and Sudan. These include members of the Peuhl cultural group, notably the Mbororo, the Mbarara, and the Fulata, as they are known in CAR.<sup>11</sup>

Generally, the Mbororos are considered to come originally from CAR and Cameroon, while the Mbararas are considered to be nomadic tribes from northern Chad. Both tribes consider cattle to determine social status and individual identity.

During the Bozizé government, armed bandits from CAR and Chad known as “Zaraguinas” or *coupeur de routes* (road bandits) kidnapped and assaulted members of the Mbororo and Mbarara communities. The Zaraguinas also often targeted cattle of the nomadic Peuhl communities to sell back for a ransom. As a result of this insecurity, some groups of Mbororo and Mbarara armed themselves against the Zaraguinas.

In some areas of northern CAR, the Mbarara have aligned themselves with the Seleka and have participated in attacks on civilians.

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<sup>11</sup> The Peuhl are a nomadic, pastoralist ethnic group spread across West and Central Africa. A cultural identifier of this group revolves around herding cattle.

## II. Seleka Attacks in the Provinces

When we hear a vehicle, we run into the bush.

—Resident of Zere, June 8, 2013

In June 2013, Human Rights Watch investigated abuses carried out by the Seleka in the provinces of Kémo-Gribingui, Nana Grébizi, and Ouham. Human Rights Watch confirmed that Seleka elements killed scores of civilians who were trying to flee the attacks. Human Rights Watch also documented the widespread and wanton burning of homes. In some villages, every single structure was affected. The destruction was often accompanied by the pillaging of goods, leaving civilian populations utterly destitute.

While the majority of attacks outside of Bangui occurred in villages, the larger towns were not spared. For example, as the Seleka made their way south in February, they attacked the town of Dekoa. In that attack, four people were killed, eight people were seriously injured, and over 230 homes were burned.<sup>12</sup>

Most villages in rural Central African Republic are situated on roads. As such, Seleka forces and their allies were able to attack numerous villages in quick succession. Villagers told Human Rights Watch that they were sometimes able to flee their homes because they could hear shooting from the next village on the road. However, many villagers had no choice but to stay in the area to continue working their fields. In villages that were not destroyed, Human Rights Watch researchers would enter in their vehicle and see residents fleeing into the bush.<sup>13</sup>

When Human Rights Watch on June 9, 2013, entered the village of Gbade—a village that had been abandoned, but not burned—villagers slowly emerged, carrying machetes and homemade hunting rifles as protection. A resident of Gbade told Human Rights Watch, “Now we only come back for church service....We see nothing here to give us the confidence to come back.”<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Human Rights Watch interviews with multiple witnesses, Dekoa, June 5, 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Human Rights Watch researchers were able to convince the villagers that they were not from the Seleka. Human Rights Watch gently encouraged the residents to come out, assuring them of security and confidentiality.

<sup>14</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Gbade, June 9, 2013.

Another villager from Bougone told Human Rights Watch, “We are here, but... we are afraid. The Seleka still come at night on the same road and we have to run again.”<sup>15</sup>

### **Attacks on Villages on the Batangafo-Bouca Road: April 10-14, 2013**

Human Rights Watch researched abuses by the Seleka and Mbarara that took place in April on the road between Batangafo and Bouca. Between April 10 and April 14, the Seleka attacked a string of villages between Gbadene and Banda along this road. The Seleka began the attack and pillaging on Wednesday, April 10, while riding on motorcycles along the main road; as they travelled, the Seleka shot at residents and forced them to flee into the bush.

According to witnesses, the Seleka first attacked the village of Gbadene, where over 100 homes were pillaged and burned. They then attacked the village of Gbobafio; the entire village—roughly 40 homes—was pillaged and burned. On, Sunday April 14, armed Mbarara returned on horseback and also burned houses in these villages.

While the motivation for these attacks is not completely clear, villagers along this road said that they were triggered by the killing of an Mbarara in the village of Kadi. One villager from Kadi told Human Rights Watch:

The Mbarara ... started breaking into houses and pillaging. They were armed....They started shooting all over and a villager killed one of them with his hunting rifle.<sup>16</sup>

The next day, the Seleka returned and attacked villages on both sides of Kadi. Human Rights Watch saw how the entire village of 88 homes in Kadi itself was burned. Some residents of these villages stayed behind to watch the events and identified Adoum Takaji, the self-proclaimed mayor of Batangafo, as coordinating the attacks.

One witness told Human Rights Watch:

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<sup>15</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Bougone, June 9, 2013.

<sup>16</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Kadi, June 8, 2013.



The Seleka were numerous.... Takaji gave the orders. The Seleka were shooting all over... but they did not burn the houses. It was on Sunday the 14th that the Mbarara came and burned the village. They came on horseback.... Before Takaji was the mayor he was a delegate for the [herders]<sup>17</sup>... He used to come here for meetings so we know him.<sup>18</sup>

In Sirkadi, Human Rights Watch again found the entire village—52 homes along with a church—burned. A witness told Human Rights Watch:

We started hearing shots on that day in the other villages ... the Seleka came on motorcycles.... Takaji was with them. Nobody was killed here [because we heard the shots] ... the Seleka took all the goats. [Then on Sunday the 14th] the Mbarara came on horses [to burn the village], there was maybe 100 of them. They were shooting in the air.<sup>19</sup>

The Seleka, followed later by the Mbarara, destroyed the small village of Katanga—12 homes— before attacking and destroying the entire village of Bogoro—72 homes. One resident of Bogoro told Human Rights Watch:

When the Mbarara came we ran away. They came shooting. Now we are living [in another village], but there are others living in the bush near their fields....The Mbarara tried to burn the roof of the school, [but it was difficult so] instead they just burned all the books. The school was for the villages of Bogoro, Katanga, Sirkadi, Kadi, Gbobafio, and Banda. It is a primary school.<sup>20</sup>

The Seleka continued to Banda and destroyed the entire village of 10 homes.

All of the residents with whom Human Rights Watch spoke from these locations were living in the bush outside of their villages. As one villager told Human Rights Watch:

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<sup>17</sup> Takaji is also the chairperson of the National Federation of Cattle Herders in the Central African Republic (*Fédération nationale des éleveurs centrafricains*), Human Rights Watch interview with Adoum Takaji, Batangafo, June 8, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Kadi, June 8, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Sirkadi, June 8, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Bogoro, June 8, 2013.

They took our goats and our seeds. We are living in the bush and we are hungry. Without security we cannot come back to the village ... we cannot come back with the Seleka armed.<sup>21</sup>

### **Attacks on the Kaga-Bandoro-Mbrès Road: April 14-15, 2013**

Seleka forces based in Kaga-Bandoro and Mbrès on April 14-15 carried out a string of attacks on the villages of Nguimale, Maorka, Ndanika, Yangoussou, and Zaire, which are located between the two bases. The attacks, Human Rights Watch research shows, were carried out by Seleka forces to retaliate against the killing of one of their own fighters by a group of villagers in Yangoussou, a large village on this road with over 100 homes. The Seleka fighter, residents of Yangoussou said, threatened them. After he shot a villager in the face, the population retaliated and killed him. Seleka forces stationed in nearby Kaga-Bandoro and Mbrès soon learned of the incident.

Seleka forces from Mbrès then moved on motorbikes up the road and stopped in Nguimale. They entered the town firing their weapons and killed two residents. As one resident told Human Rights Watch, “They shot one woman who was in her kitchen.”<sup>22</sup> The remaining villagers ran into the surrounding bush. The Seleka then burned 27 homes in this village.

Leaving Nguimale, the Seleka moved down the road to Maorka. Villagers told Human Rights Watch that they could hear the shots coming from Nguimale and thus were ready to flee. As one villager told Human Rights Watch:

[When] they entered the village ... they started shooting, after they started to burn the first house we ran into the bush. They were burning houses they thought had people in them or if they saw people near them.<sup>23</sup>

Before burning the homes, the Seleka would loot anything of value; anything deemed worthless was burned. The villagers, distraught at seeing their possessions stolen or burnt, watched from afar. As one witness told Human Rights Watch:

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<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Kadi, June 8, 2013.

<sup>22</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Nguimale, June 6, 2013.

<sup>23</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Maorka, June 6, 2013.

We men would run into the bush, but then we come back to watch. They burned everything, our mattresses, our beds, our mats. They took our peanuts, our seeds, our manioc, our goats and our chickens. They took everything but the pigs.<sup>24</sup>

Human Rights Watch counted 38 houses burned by the Seleka at Maorka.

The Seleka then attacked the village of Ndanika. According to witnesses, Seleka forces burned houses there before moving on to Yangoussou. On Monday, April 15th, the Seleka returned to Ndanika to burn the rest of that village. As in other villages, the residents were prepared for an attack. As one resident told Human Rights Watch, “They came with two 4x4 vehicles and they started to burn houses again.”<sup>25</sup>

From Ndanika, the Seleka elements moved down to Yangoussou. A resident told Human Rights Watch:

When they came into the village they were shooting in the air to make people flee. If they saw someone they shot at them and then they pillaged and burned the houses. We had to take our women, children, and elderly into the bush. My house was burned. They burned our bed, mattresses, my bike, two radios, and our peanut stock.<sup>26</sup>

From Yangoussou the Seleka attacked Zaire, the last village before Mbrès. Villagers from Zaire said that they had already fled, so the Seleka burned their homes.

### **Attacks on Villages on the Bouca-Bossangoa Road: April 18, 2013**

According to villagers, on April 18, 2013, Seleka elements arrived in the villages of Boubou and Zere from the direction of Bossangoa. Witnesses told Human Rights Watch the Seleka travelled this road in a 4x4 vehicle and indiscriminately shot at civilians as they entered the villages.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Ndanika, June 6, 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Yangoussou, June 6, 2013.



## Living and Dying in the Bush

Send troops here so we do not have to live in the bush! Come quickly so we can live in the village because we sleep in the forest like animals!

—Resident of Boubou, June 8, 2013

Villagers who had been forced to abandon their homes told Human Rights Watch of extremely difficult living conditions in the bush. As of June 2013, humanitarian agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross were able to give only very limited support to some affected areas. For example, in some regions, villagers said they had received plastic tarp sheeting to protect them from the elements. However, in other regions villagers are living with no support.

Villagers told Human Rights Watch of whole communities that had fled the Seleka. A village authority from Maorka told Human Rights Watch, “The majority of the villagers are still in the bush. There are 113 families living in the forest, only a handful have come back.”<sup>27</sup>

In multiple communities, Human Rights Watch heard accounts of extremely difficult living conditions. One resident from Maorka told Human Rights Watch:

Now I sleep in the fields. I made a small hut out of leaves for my wife and our three children. I cannot come back because we do not have beds or our food stock and there is no security. [The Seleka] took all of our farming tools, they took our hoes. We have to use our hands.<sup>28</sup>

The abandonment of these communities has meant that health services have stopped, since clinics in affected villages are either destroyed or closed. In a country with some of the lowest health indicators in the world, this has exacerbated a situation already teetering on the verge of a crisis.<sup>29</sup>

Access to education is also affected, due to the destruction of schools, the looting of education materials, and the displacement of teachers and students. Human Rights Watch spoke with the headmaster of a school that serves four villages with a total of 449 students. He said, “All of the

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<sup>27</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Maorka, June 6, 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Maorka, June 6, 2013.

<sup>29</sup> See Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), “*Central African Republic: Abandoned to its fate?*” July 9, 2013, <http://www.msf.org/article/central-african-republic-abandoned-its-fate> (accessed August 23, 2013).

materials were pillaged. Most of the students are now hiding in the bush. Two of our four teachers are hiding.”<sup>30</sup>

Human Rights Watch was given credible information on numbers of people who have died in the bush since the Seleka forced them to abandon their villages. For example, 23 people from six villages (Nguimale, Maorka, Ndanika, Yangoussou, Maraomba and Zaire) have died in the bush. In the villages of Bogoro, Katanga, Sirkadi, Kadi, Gbobafio, and Banda—attacked between April 10 and 14, 2013, villagers have told Human Rights Watch that 15 people, including many children, have died since fleeing the village. They are dying from illness, hunger, and exposure to the elements.

One villager from Ndanika told Human Rights Watch that when the Seleka came, “I was with my dad who was sick, we had him hidden behind the house....[We had to flee]....My father died in the bush.”<sup>31</sup>

Residents of Yangoussou told Human Rights Watch:

Two children from the village are sick. They are with us in the bush. They have constant pain in the head and legs. They were injured fleeing the attack on the village.<sup>32</sup>

The rains, while important for a harvest, are only compounding the difficulty of living with no protection. As one villager from Zere told Human Rights Watch, “Some people have started to come back to the village because the rains are coming, but most people are still out in the bush.”<sup>33</sup>

A villager of Boubou told Human Rights Watch, “They just shot at people, they did not pillage.”<sup>34</sup> The Seleka killed two men in Boubou as they were trying to flee and they then chased people on a forest path out of the village.<sup>35</sup> They burned 53 houses.

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<sup>30</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with school official at Maorka, June 6, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Ndanika, June 6, 2013.

<sup>32</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Yangoussou, June 6, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Zere, June 8, 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Boubou, June 8, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Boubou, June 8, 2013.

The same Seleka elements then moved to Zere where, according to a witness:

They came in a vehicle and starting shooting and broke in the doors and pillaged all the houses in the village. Then they burned some of them.... They were shooting at everyone.”<sup>36</sup>

The Seleka executed a captured resident of Zere and burned 46 homes.

### **Attack of Ouin: May 1, 2013**

In late April and early May 2013, Seleka forces carried out a string of attacks on a road leading west out of Batangafo toward Kambakota. One horrific attack took place in the village of Ouin on May 1. Multiple witnesses in different villages along this route confirmed that Seleka forces carried out the attacks with the participation of the self-proclaimed mayor of Batangafo, Adoum Takaji. Members of the Mbarara community also attacked villages outside Batangafo around this time, according to witnesses.

In Ouin, the Seleka summarily executed five residents; five more were killed while trying to flee. Eyewitness testimony indicates that the attack of Ouin was linked to an incident that took place in late April in the village of Kolo, located a few kilometers from Ouin. On that day, villagers reported that several Mbarara had tried to steal a cow belonging to a resident of Kolo. There was an altercation, and an Mbarara was killed. In revenge, the Mbarara attacked Kolo and the nearby village of Baraka, killing one individual there. The Mbarara burned houses in both villages. Residents from Kolo and Baraka then fled to Ouin, the largest village in the surrounding area.

Seleka forces, self-appointed Mayor Takaji, and men described as members of Batangafo’s Muslim community arrived in Ouin on May 1. The villagers were fearful. Takaji tried to reassure the villagers in order to make them come out of their homes. As one resident told Human Rights Watch:

Mayor Takaji went door to door in the village to ask people to leave their homes and come to a meeting to talk with the Seleka. The first few left their

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<sup>36</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Zere, June 8, 2013.

homes, five of them, and were grouped under a tree ... their arms were attached to each other. They were then shot down one by one. Takaji was only 50 meters away.<sup>37</sup>

Multiple witnesses told Human Rights Watch that one individual did not die straight away and the Seleka cut his throat.

Another witness told Human Rights Watch, “The mayor was not armed, but he took people out to be killed.”<sup>38</sup> Residents told Human Rights Watch that after the execution:

The Seleka shot at all the houses. They killed five more people in the neighborhoods. The entire village ran away when the shooting started.<sup>39</sup>

Some residents returned to the village later to bury their dead. However, the Seleka also returned and started to fire on the villagers again. As one resident told Human Rights Watch:

We were burying our own dead and they started to shoot at us again; we all fled back into the bush.... I can still smell the dead.<sup>40</sup>

In research carried out in June 2013, Human Rights Watch found Ouin completely abandoned. After eventually emerging from the bush, residents of Ouin showed Human Rights Watch the fresh graves of the 10 killed individuals. Residents confirmed to Human Rights Watch that they were now living in the surrounding forest. One resident told Human Rights Watch, “The populations of Bakara, Kolo and Ouin are all living in the bush. There are many of us there, many.”<sup>41</sup>

Human Rights Watch met with Adoum Takaji who admitted that “there are still Seleka troops that are not controlled” and that “the Mbarara have profited with the presence of the Seleka.” He also confirmed that he had “volunteered” to be the mayor, but that his

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<sup>37</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Ouin, June 7, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Ouin, June 7, 2013.

<sup>39</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Ouin, June 7, 2013.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Ouin, June 7, 2013.



authority was recognized in Bangui by the Seleka *chef d'antenne*<sup>42</sup> and spokesperson, Issa Amat, and that he was “with the head of the Seleka [in Batangafo] every day.” However, he denies being in Ouin on the day of the attacks. Instead, he claims he went there days later:

When I went the village was totally empty. I hear that 11 people were killed there. Since these events I have tried to reassure the population but they are scared. We want them to come back to the village and re-start their lives. I have tried to explain that the Seleka are here to reassure their security.<sup>43</sup>

### **Attacks on Villages on the Bossangoa-Boguila Road: May 19, 2013**

On May 19, 2013, Seleka elements based in Boguila attacked villages along the road leading to Bossangoa. Numerous credible reports indicate that they first burned over 150 homes in Gbaduma before moving down the road to Bodoro.<sup>44</sup>

In Bodoro, four Seleka vehicles entered the village. According to a witness, as the Seleka arrived, “They started shooting at the people. They gave no warning, they did not say anything. Five people were killed here and three people were injured.”<sup>45</sup>

The Seleka moved down the road to the village of Bougone, where, according to a witness:

They did not announce anything, they just started shooting at the village....They were aiming at the young men. After we fled they pillaged the village house by house. They took everything....They stayed here maybe 40 minutes. In that time they pillaged the entire village. When they shoot, we run, but we could hear them from the bush.<sup>46</sup>

Three men were killed in Bougone. According to witnesses, the men were shot while trying to flee. The Seleka then moved on to Gbade:

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<sup>42</sup> *Chef d'antenne* is a Seleka military commander based in Bangui.

<sup>43</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Adoum Takaji, Batangafo, June 8, 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Due to security concerns Human Rights Watch was not able to go to Gbaduma, however, multiple authorities from other villages along this road confirmed this information.

<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Bodoro, June 9, 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Bougone, June 9, 2013.

The Seleka started shooting in the village as the people were fleeing... people were killed while running away. Then they pillaged all the houses. They went house by house.<sup>47</sup>

Four people were killed in Gbade while trying to flee the Seleka, according to witnesses.

In Bossangoa, Human Rights Watch spoke to Seleka Col. Saleh Zabadi and his executive secretary, Sacrifier-Boris Yamassamba. The villages of Boubou, Zere, Gbaduma, Bodoro, Bougone, and Gbade fall under Zabadi's responsibility. Zabadi told Human Rights Watch:

There were no villages burned here.... I don't know about these killings in the villages. Our territory is calm. There are no problems.... I was on the roads two or three weeks ago to Boguila, it was fine.<sup>48</sup>

Zabadi and Yamassamba reiterated to Human Rights Watch that any movement on the road between Boguila and Bossongoa must have their prior knowledge and approval. Yamassamba, told Human Rights Watch: "The villagers are happy to see us. They see us as liberators. They come and wave to us and are happy."<sup>49</sup>

### **Attacks on Villages on the Batangafo-Bouca Road: June 2, 2013**

Human Rights Watch researched attacks on civilians and destruction of villages that took place in June 2013 on the Batangafo–Bouca road. Human Rights Watch documented the destruction of the entire village of Yangoumara, including the village church, but was not able to find any inhabitants of the village. However, in the next village, Gbi-Gbi, where 34 homes were burned along with the village church, Human Rights Watch was able to speak with some villagers. According to these witnesses, the Seleka had attacked Yangoumara and Gbi-Gbi on Sunday, June 2. The witnesses told Human Rights Watch that members of Seleka were coming from Bouca on their way to Yangoumara, but: "[T]hey stopped here at Gbi-Gbi and killed a woman....They shot her when she was fleeing. They shot her in her side. There were eight Seleka total."<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Gbade, June 9, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Colonel Saleh Zabadi, Bossangoa, June 9, 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Sacrifier-Boris Yamassamba, Bossangoa, June 9, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Gbi-Gbi, June 8, 2013.

Witness testimony points to these attacks being carried out as revenge on communities after a villager killed a Seleka fighter who was trying to steal a cow in Yangoumara. At the time of writing, the population of the villages of Gbi-Gbi and Yangoumara were still living in the bush.

Human Rights Watch met with Jean-Michel Bangui, the executive secretary of Colonel Bashir Muhammad, who is the highest-ranking member of the Seleka in Bouca. Bangui candidly told Human Rights Watch, regarding Yangoumara and Gbi-Gbi: “We burned those villages. That was us, the Seleka.”<sup>51</sup> He claimed that certain Seleka soldiers were “children” and that they were angry after a villager shot their captain, so they acted in revenge. He said:

These children decided to do this. I do not know which one. No order was given. But the children got upset because the captain was shot, they were nervous so they shot.<sup>52</sup>

Human Rights Watch interviewed Bangui in the presence of Seleka troops, who appeared to be very young and possibly child soldiers in the age range of 13-15. Later in the interview, Bangui said that the houses had been burned by bullets touching the straw roofs; the houses, he said, had not been burned intentionally. When asked by Human Rights Watch what actions he was taking as a local administrator to reassure the safety of local residents, Bangui insisted that the priority was to catch the villager who had shot the Seleka in Yangoumara: “People are living in the bush. We are trying to call the people back to the villages. But now we need to know who the real criminal in this affair is; who the shooter is.”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Jean-Michel Bangui, Bouca, June 8, 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## Local Seleka Authorities

I am the law.

–Jean-Michel Bangui, executive secretary of Col. Bashir Muhammad, Bouca,  
June 8, 2013

Outside Bangui it is difficult to establish lines of command within the Seleka. Most Seleka officials whom Human Rights Watch interviewed said that if problems pre-dated their arrival, they were because of a former commander. For example, in Bossangoa, Col. Saleh Zabadi—the highest ranking Seleka official in the region—told Human Rights Watch:

[The villagers] had run into the bush when Colonel Abdulim was here. I do not know his first name ... [but] I have no problems here.<sup>54</sup>

Other authorities control their regions with complete impunity. Jean-Michel Bangui, the executive secretary of Bouca (see above) was open with Human Rights Watch about how he interprets his authority. He told Human Rights Watch:

Let me tell you something. There is no law now. You know that the international community has recognized that the president is ruling by decree.... After 18 months there will be a law. I am an army official now, I have that authority.<sup>55</sup>

Bangui told Human Rights Watch that he was the police, prosecutor, and judge when it came to crime prevention in Bouca:

I conduct the investigations, arrest people, and put them in detention. And I will make a decision on the duration of their detention.... After the investigation we will know who is who and who did what.<sup>56</sup>

When Human Rights Watch questioned Bangui as to investigative methods, he replied, “We torture them so they can tell the truth.”<sup>57</sup> Bangui insisted that he had studied law and was qualified to fill this role in Bouca.

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<sup>54</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Col. Saleh Zabadi, Bossangoa, June 9, 2013.

<sup>55</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Jean-Michel Bangui, Bouca, June 8, 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.



Bangui allowed Human Rights Watch to visit three prisoners that he was holding in an office of the sub-district headquarters. Human Rights Watch found three men in a room sitting in their own urine and faeces. The men seemed afraid and appeared to have been beaten; one had a swollen face and a bloody right eye. Bangui said they were local thieves.

Human Rights Watch met Nouredine Adam, minister of public security, who denied the Seleka had played any role in the attacks documented in the provinces. However, he did concede that the situation was complex:

[In] the provinces, there are a lot of groups operating there. The Fulata, the Mbororos, they come from Sudan, Chad, CAR. We try to resolve the disputes.<sup>58</sup>

In response to witness accounts presented by Human Rights Watch on the attack of the village of Yangoumara, Adam said, “These are related to the disputes between Muslims and Christians in the area. The Muslims are those who are setting fire, burning the villages.”<sup>59</sup> In response to evidence of attacks on villages on the road between Kaga-Bandoro and Mbrès, Adam told Human Rights Watch, “The Mbororos, the Peuhls, are responsible for these attacks in this area.”<sup>60</sup>

In response to allegations of human rights abuses, Adam denied any Seleka involvement saying that the only problem was the lack of funds to train the Seleka to respect human rights, “We will respect human rights when we have the means.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nouredine Adam, minister of public security, Bangui, June 12, 2013.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

### III. Abuses Committed by Seleka in Bangui

Throughout April, May, and June 2013, Human Rights Watch investigated abuses that Seleka forces carried out in Bangui after they took power. The following accounts are representative of patterns of abuses that Human Rights Watch was able to corroborate.

#### Attack on Damala—March 27, 2013

On March 27, three days after the coup, Seleka soldiers killed 17 people in the neighborhood of Damala near the Bangui International Airport. The attack began when four Seleka soldiers entered the neighborhood and assaulted a local official with the aim of stealing a large truck. This official told Human Rights Watch:

I [tried] to explain to them that the vehicle helped us because it allows us to transport people to the hospital. They were Chadians, but one of them spoke some Sango. [But] they pulled me out of my house and they started to beat me with their guns. They told me to give them the key to the vehicle. I said, “I do not have it.” They pushed and beat me to the truck; by this point my arm was broken. They got me to the truck and they started to pillage shops that were nearby. They made me sit on the ground.<sup>62</sup>

Local youth from the neighborhood were watching these events unfold. One youth who was later shot by the Seleka told Human Rights Watch:

I saw members of the Seleka beating the local chief. They were beating him with their guns and with their belts. We followed them from a distance to the truck. The Seleka were speaking and yelling in Arabic.<sup>63</sup>

Young men in Damala, seeing a local authority beaten in this fashion, started to throw stones. According to one victim:

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<sup>62</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with official from Damala, Bangui, June 10, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with victim of the Damala shootings, Bangui, June 11, 2013.

[The youth started] throwing rocks and it made the Seleka very angry; they started shooting their guns in the air and then they shot at the people. People started to run away ... at this moment one of the Seleka turned and shot me. He did not say anything. I had nothing in my hands. When he shot me I had my hands up.<sup>64</sup>

The victim was shot in the abdomen and still suffers as a result of his injury. After firing on the population, the four Seleka started to move into the Damala neighborhood, but they soon ran out of ammunition and were attacked by area residents. As a witness told Human Rights Watch, “[One of the] Seleka ran out of bullets and the youth got him with stones. They killed him. The other Seleka had [left] for reinforcements.”<sup>65</sup>

When members of the Seleka returned, they exacted revenge on the residents of Damala. A witness told Human Rights Watch:

The Seleka reinforcements came in one vehicle, a 4x4, with 12 Seleka on it. They had a big gun on it that one man used; he stayed on the vehicle shooting. Others were chasing people in the neighborhood.<sup>66</sup>

Because of the confusion created by the initial shooting, it is difficult to ascertain how many people the four Seleka soldiers killed at the Damala market, but Human Rights Watch received reports of 17 people killed in the neighborhood that day by the Seleka.

- Rodrigue Gbenerio was one victim. He had a business charging cell phones near the market in Damala. Witnesses say he was the first person whom the Seleka killed when they started firing. A witness told Human Rights Watch: “[When the] youth ... started to throw rocks, the Seleka started shooting. They killed Rodrigue right away.”<sup>67</sup> Another witness said: “Rodrigue was killed where he had his kiosk.”<sup>68</sup>
- Raphael Bingilego was killed outside his home by the Seleka on March 27, 2013. A family member told Human Rights Watch: “I was in my house and there were many

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<sup>64</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with victim of the Damala shootings, Bangui, June 11, 2013.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with authority from Damala, Bangui, June 10, 2013.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Damala, Bangui, June 11, 2013.

- people outside trying to understand what was happening. Then [the] Seleka arrived shooting. Everyone ran from the front of the house and I got down. [Raphael] ran around [the outside] of the house. When the Seleka left we went outside and I found him. He had been shot in the back; the bullet went out his chest. He was lying face down. He was already dead.”<sup>69</sup>
- Ludociv Hehine was in his home that same day when the Seleka broke open the door and killed him. A family member of Hehine told Human Rights Watch that when the Seleka approached his home, his “mother and father hid in the kitchen and Ludociv and I stayed in the salon with his daughter. We had the door closed, but the Seleka had seen people running [near] our house. The Seleka came and shot open the door. They were two: one Seleka came in and the other one waited outside. He came and shot everywhere in the salon. Ludociv got down near the table and I fell behind a chair. Ludociv put up his hands. The Seleka fighter cried out and shot him twice in the chest and then left.”<sup>70</sup>

### **Attack on Walingba—April 12, 2013**

On April 12, a Seleka rocket propelled grenade (RPG) injured 15 people in the Walingba neighborhood. 13 children were among the injured, two of whom required amputations. An eyewitness said:

It was about 4:30 p.m., I was standing by my house in front of the soccer field where the children were playing. We heard a loud explosion. There was a lot of dust everywhere. When the dust settled, I rushed to the scene and saw the bodies of the children injured. The Red Cross ambulance arrived fifteen minutes later and took the wounded to the hospital. We found the point of impact which was around 50 cm in diameter....These children live here in the neighborhood.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Bingilego, Bangui, June 11, 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Hehine, Bangui, June 11, 2013.

<sup>71</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with witness to Walingba attack, Bangui, April 24, 2013.



The Seleka had been in control of Bangui since March 24 when this attack occurred and despite Human Rights Watch inquiries we received no reports of anyone but Seleka moving with RPGs.

### **Killings at the Ngaragba Bridge—April 13, 2013**

On April 13, Seleka forces killed at least 18 unarmed civilians in the area surrounding the Ngaragba Bridge near the Ouango and Kassai neighborhoods in Bangui.

According to eyewitnesses, Seleka elements drove their vehicle onto the bridge and hit a funeral procession walking toward the local cemetery. Enraged, civilians from the procession began to throw stones at the Seleka fighters. Within minutes, additional Seleka forces arrived. They shot what witnesses said was a rocket-propelled grenade into the crowd and began shooting indiscriminately at civilians who were trying to flee the area and run to their homes in the direction of the Ouango neighbourhood. Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that they saw Seleka forces kill a priest on the bridge who was appealing for calm. One witness told Human Rights Watch:

The priest walked toward the Seleka elements ... raising a Bible in his hand and calling [them] to stop shooting. Three Seleka fighters stepped out of the pick-up, walked toward him and shot him dead.<sup>72</sup>

Another witness told Human Rights Watch:

After the Seleka convoy started shooting at the crowd, a woman with a baby on her back was on the street past the bridge, when she was shot by a Seleka fighter and left dead in the street with the baby crying on her back.<sup>73</sup>

Another eyewitness described the attack on the bridge to Human Rights Watch:

After the coffin was hit and the priest was killed at the bridge, people were terrified. They ran in all directions to escape. The Seleka called for

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<sup>72</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with witness of Ngaragba Bridge attack, Bangui, April 20, 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

reinforcements from Camp de Roux. The Seleka fighters loaded a rocket in their RPG [and] they pulled into the crowd and shot a rocket at the bridge. There were many people injured. The Seleka started chasing at people who fled. There were lots of dead bodies on the road and many wounded.<sup>74</sup>

## The Attack on Boy-Rabe—April 13 and 14

On the weekend of April 13 and 14, Seleka forces carried out an organized attack on the neighborhood of Boy-Rabe in Bangui. A local authority described to Human Rights Watch how the Seleka started the attack:

15 vehicles entered Boy-Rabe. The first vehicle had an officer on board. They went to the market. He asked who I was and I said I was [a local official]. He said, “We have heard that Bozizé distributed arms in Boy-Rabe to fight the Seleka.” I said, “Please, come out and see if there is one weapon in the hands of the youth here.” [But they] just wanted to pillage. They had their vehicles ready to take people’s property. Then they started shooting. They went into the neighborhood and shot at people.<sup>75</sup>

Another witness told Human Rights Watch:

I saw them shooting their guns at us, at the people. This is the technique of the Seleka, to come in and to pillage. If there are people there they will not hesitate to shoot to make people leave. Sometimes they kill people, sometimes not. Leaving the neighborhood, the people resisted and members of the Seleka shot at the crowd. They take over Bangui and only a few days later they come to do this. It is not correct.<sup>76</sup>

Minister of Public Security and Seleka General Nouredine Adam told Human Rights Watch that the Seleka operations in Boy-Rabe in mid-April were “organized disarmament operations.”<sup>77</sup> The former minister of water and forests and former Seleka general,

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<sup>74</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with witness of Ngaragba Bridge attack, Bangui, April 20, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Boy-Rabe, Bangui, April 23, 2013.

<sup>76</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Boy-Rabe, Bangui, April 23, 2013.

<sup>77</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nouredine Adam, minister of public security, Bangui, May 1, 2013.

Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, told Human Rights Watch that, “[It was a priority] to disarm Boy-Rabe. Boy-Rabe is a neighborhood of 60 percent of families of elements of the Presidential Guard. They are all there.”<sup>78</sup> However, residents of Boy-Rabe said:

This [was] not disarmament...They did not come to disarm. They came to pillage. There are no soldiers left in the quarter. If this had been a real disarmament they should have called the FACA and had them bring their arms.<sup>79</sup>

Human Rights Watch has uncovered dozens of killings in Boy-Rabe of unarmed civilians through the weekend of April 13 and 14, 2013, and into the following week. The stories of a few victims follow.

#### **The Killing of Simon Assana**

Simon Assana was a resident of Boy-Rabe. The Seleka executed him at his home on April 14, 2013. Assana was trying to protect people fleeing the fighting. A witness in a nearby house described his killing:

Members of the Seleka [were] coming down the road ahead of the house [and] three women ran across the street. They are not from [Boy-Rabe], I think they were fleeing the fighting from [another neighborhood]. The Seleka saw the women running across the street.

Simon was on his terrace and he yelled to them “Come here! Come here!” They ran into his compound, he opened the door and they ran into his house.

The Seleka members on the road saw this. They pulled up to his house and got out. There were two Seleka on foot. One stayed in the truck....They followed the women, they were running after them.

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<sup>78</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, (Former) minister of water and forests, Bangui, May 1, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Boy-Rabe, Bangui, April 23, 2013.

Simon was outside his house on the veranda. There is a small route between our compounds, so I could see everything.

The Seleka members said to him, “Where are the people who passed here?” Simon said, “Nobody is here.”

The Seleka wanted to go into the house. They started to climb the stairs so he closed the door behind him. Simon said, “It is only my children there in the house.” He blocked the door.

One of the Seleka said, “Give me your money.” Simon said, “I don’t have any money....The Seleka soldier said, “Give me your phone”. Simon touched his body to show he had nothing. He said, “I have no telephone. I have no money”.

The Seleka soldier walked down the steps of the veranda. He looked at Simon and he shot him twice in the stomach. He was about four or five feet away from Simon. He held his rifle by his side when he shot. The Seleka soldier went back to the truck.

Simon fell down on the ground. I heard the truck leave and I ran out of my house. The three women in the house came out. Two young men from the neighborhood also saw it. They also came over. We lifted Simon and brought him into the house. He was trying to speak, but he could not. We put him on the floor. I had my hand on his chest and he stopped breathing about five minutes later.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with witness to Assana’s killing, Bangui, April 25, 2013.

### **The Killing of Tiburce-Jefferson Yankioisse**

The Seleka killed Tiburce-Jefferson Yankioisse in Boy-Rabe on April 14. Witnesses described how he was at his home with his brothers when the shooting started. One witness told Human Rights Watch:

It was raining bullets and they felt like they had to flee. They were between houses. [Tiburce] waited a moment in the shooting and he tried to run across the road, the three of them were trying to save their own lives. He got hit in the head as he crossed.<sup>81</sup>

An individual close to Yankioisse told Human Rights Watch that when he saw the members of the Seleka shooting in the market he had called Yankioisse and told him to stay at home, “I asked [him] to stay inside. Around 11 a.m. my pastor called to say that [Yankioisse] had been killed.”<sup>82</sup> He was 25 years old.

### **The Killing of Sandrine Poumengakola and Her Daughter “Bebe Darine”**

During the attack on Boy-Rabe, the Seleka also looked for trucks in order to transport stolen goods. On Monday April 15, members of the Seleka searched for the driver of a truck who lives in the neighborhood. In the process, they killed the driver’s wife and his baby daughter. A witness to the killing told Human Rights Watch:

There was shooting [all around, but then] there were shots in the air to summon [the driver] at his home. They waited a moment and then they started to shoot at the house. The Seleka were shouting, “Come out!” but they were shooting so [the driver] could not. They stopped shooting and [Sandrine] approached the door. [As she approached] they kicked it down and shot her. The baby was in her arms and it was hit in the head, [Sandrine] was then hit in the head and in the chest.

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<sup>81</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Boy-Rabe, Bangui, April 23, 2013.

<sup>82</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with an individual close to Yankioisse, Bangui, April 23, 2013.



Three Seleka members entered the house and two stayed outside. [The driver] had fallen down so [he] got up and they threw [him] back down on the ground. They kicked [him] in the head and chest and they used their guns on [him]. They asked [him], “Where is the truck?”

They took [him] outside and [forced him] to take them to the truck. When they got outside one of the Seleka members said to another, “The baby’s head exploded and the wife was shot dead.” They started walking. It is three kilometers. They were shooting into the air [to make him move faster].

When they reached the truck they said, “If you can’t start the truck we will kill you.”

By the time [he] returned home, the bodies of his wife and daughter had been transported to the morgue.<sup>83</sup>

Poumengakola was 26 years old; her daughter was 18 months old.

On Sunday April 14, an RPG hit the Cité Jean XXIII Church, located in Boy-Rabe. The attack injured 13 people, including three children who were maimed. According to the victims and witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch, the RPG hit the church at about 10 a.m. while the choir was singing. The grandmother of an 8-year-old boy told Human Rights Watch:

All the faithful were praying and singing when the rocket pierced the corrugated iron roof. [My grandson] was seriously injured. He had two broken legs, which were later amputated at the hospital. The Red Cross arrived a few minutes after the attack and carried the wounded to the hospitals in Bangui. Besides [my grandson], there were two other boys, one was 5 and the other was 4 years old. Both of them were also injured and

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<sup>83</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with witness to the killing of Poumengakola and her daughter, Bangui, April 23, 2013.

had their limbs amputated. They live across our house in Boy-Rabe. The three boys were sitting on the bench in the second row of the church.<sup>84</sup>

Human Rights Watch was told by Nouredine Adam, the minister of public security, that the numbers killed since the coup have been exaggerated saying, “The total of people killed after the coup is very low. Only 10 people were killed [total], only 1 person was killed in Damala.”<sup>85</sup>

## Summary Executions at the Mpoko River

On April 15, 2013, Seleka forces stopped nine male residents of the Boy-Rabe and Foh neighborhoods and forced them into a pick-up truck. The men had spent the weekend outside Boy-Rabe due to violence there; they had heard the Seleka forces were targeting young males.

They walked back to their homes in a group for protection, but were captured by a Seleka patrol early in the morning. One survivor told Human Rights Watch that once they were in the truck:

They [the Seleka] searched us and took our telephones and our money. Then they started to stab us with knives and hit us with their guns. They hit me in the foot with a small axe. They were insulting us saying we were ill bred while also saying “You killed us at Boy-Rabe,”<sup>86</sup> (a reference to the killing of Seleka members on April 14-15 by Boy-Rabe residents throwing stones).<sup>87</sup>

Another survivor told Human Rights Watch, “The Seleka yelled, ‘You are the Gbaya and you are FACA.’”<sup>88</sup> (Gbaya refers to the same ethnic group of ousted president François Bozizé). As one survivor told Human Rights Watch:

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<sup>84</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with grandmother of a survivor, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>85</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nouredine Adam, minister of public security, Bangui, June 12, 2013.

<sup>86</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>87</sup> Human Rights Watch interviewed multiple witnesses from Boy-Rabe who confirmed that mobs of people, particularly youth, would isolate Seleka fighters and kill them with stones. The total number of Seleka fighters killed in Boy-Rabe over April 13 and 14 is not known, but it is at least three.

<sup>88</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

They had made us lie down on our stomachs and they did not know what they were stabbing. They were happy and were saying, “Ha! You are military and we have you!” When we cried out they stabbed us more.<sup>89</sup>

All of the survivors interviewed presented Human Rights Watch with fresh stab wounds that they said were from this incident.

A survivor said the men were driven through Bangui and at one point, when the pick-up stopped, overheard a conversation between the Seleka members in their truck and a presumed commander on the road. The Seleka members told the presumed commander, “Here are the youth of Boy-Rabe who killed us. We brought them.” The commander said, “Is it really them?” When he was told yes, the commander said, “Take them to the Mbaiki road and do what you want.”<sup>90</sup>

The survivors said that they were lying in the truck face down. People from the general population began to approach the truck and ask what was happening. They heard the commander say, “They are FACA. You will have to find their bodies.”<sup>91</sup>

One survivor told Human Rights Watch that after he heard that, “I saw that I had no chance to escape, all I could do was pray.”<sup>92</sup>

The men were driven to the Mpoko River southwest of Bangui, below the neighborhood of Bimbo. There they were forced by the Seleka to leave the truck and were marched to the river’s edge. One survivor told Human Rights Watch:

The put us in a line and told us to follow a trail. They insulted some of us. They took us to a place on the river that was a type of camp. They were saying, “FACA, Gbaya, it is finished for you. We have caught you!” At the spot they said, “Make a column one by one!”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>90</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>93</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

One survivor told Human Rights Watch, “At the river we stayed together as small groups and we said to each other, ‘At least we will die together.’”<sup>94</sup>

After arranging the men in a line, the Seleka shot five of them one by one. Their bodies fell into the water. One of the four survivors told Human Rights Watch, “When they were being shot I knew that it was over for me.”<sup>95</sup>

The four survivors said they believed they were spared by a “Central African” Seleka member, one from the southern part of the country, distinct from the northerners, many of them Muslim, who dominate the Seleka. One survivor told Human Rights Watch:

[Suddenly] the Central African came and said, ‘Go back’. Then we were taken back to the truck and he talked with the Muslims, it was as if he had found his spirit. He said to us that we had been arrested for nothing. We went back to the truck, we were crying for the five killed.<sup>96</sup>

The four survivors were eventually released and are seeking medical attention for their stab wounds. All of the survivors claimed not to have been FACA.

## Targeting of FACA

Human Rights Watch received credible information concerning the deliberate targeting of members of the FACA. These attacks began shortly after the March coup and continued through June, according to credible reports obtained by Human Rights Watch.

Delmass Konama was a military driver for the FACA before the fall of Bangui. After the coup he was forced to work as a driver for the Seleka, and he made at least one trip to Chad for them. On the evening of April 13, Seleka forces arrived at his house shouting in Arabic, “Give us your money, guns and uniforms!”<sup>97</sup> Konama was able to flee, but the Seleka entered his home. A witness in the house told Human Rights Watch:

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<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with survivor of Mpoko River killings, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Konama, Bangui, April 21, 2013.

I went out into the lounge and they hit me in the head with a rifle. I started bleeding into my eyes. They said to me, “Where is [he]?” They meant Delmass by that. I said, “I don’t know where he is”. They then checked the house. They asked, “Where are the guns?”<sup>98</sup> The Seleka looted the house but found no weapons or uniforms. As they left they told Konama’s children, “We have not come to kill you, we have come to kill your papa.”<sup>99</sup>

The Seleka captured Konama the next day near the Kilo 5 neighborhood, approximately five kilometers northwest of Bangui. A witness told Human Rights Watch:

I saw him with my own eyes when he was sitting in the Seleka pick-up. They had already started beating him. He was crying.<sup>100</sup>

The Red Cross found Konama’s body later that day. He had been shot repeatedly.

Witnesses also told Human Rights Watch of the execution of FACA Corporal St. Clair Mamadou in Bangui. A week before his death, Mamadou told people close to him that the Seleka were looking for him. He claimed not to know why, but he speculated it could be because he had been involved in the fighting against the Seleka. On April 17, a man Mamadou knew asked him to meet, but when Mamadou arrived at the appointed destination, Seleka forces took him.

People close to Mamadou visited police stations in the capital to try to find him. After searching for hours, they heard that villagers had found corpses outside Bangui at the Sceaux Bridge, in an area known as PK 15. An individual close to Mamadou went to the bridge and later told Human Rights Watch: “We found the body; he was still on the bridge and still dressed in his clothes. He had been shot many times, maybe 12, and his body had been stabbed.”<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Konama, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>99</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Konama, Bangui, April 21, 2013.

<sup>100</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Konama, Bangui, April 25, 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individual close to Mamadou, Bangui, April 25, 2013.



Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that the bodies of seven other FACA soldiers were also found at the bridge.<sup>102</sup>

## Rape and Sexual Violence

Human Rights Watch was unable to estimate or confirm the total number of women and girls who were raped by Seleka members. Human Rights Watch received credible reports of 37 cases of rapes allegedly perpetrated by Seleka elements in Bangui, Sibut, and Damara. Human Rights Watch also received credible reports of multiple rapes in Ouandago between Kaga-Bandoro and Batangafo. Most women were raped by Seleka armed elements who forced them to undress at night in the street and threatened them at gunpoint. Due to the insecurity in Bangui, the victims were not able to report the crimes or seek medical assistance in the days immediately following the incidents.

Human Rights Watch was able to speak directly with some rape survivors. One woman who was raped together with her sister told Human Rights Watch:

The day after they captured Bangui, I was in my house, where I live with my younger sister ... when many Seleka fighters entered the neighborhood. I am 33 years old and my sister is 23. She was 8 months pregnant when they raped us on March 25. They were shooting in the air in front of our house. Two armed men entered the house, threatened us, and forced us to get undressed and lay down on the ground....They both raped us, one after the other. They were shouting bad words in Sango and in Arabic. One of them was shouting the Arabic word *charmouta* (prostitute in Arabic) while raping me. Then they left the house. Our neighbor took us to the community hospital, where my sister lost her baby the day after.<sup>103</sup>

Another survivor, a mother of three children, was assaulted by Seleka fighters in her house during the attack on Boy-Rabe on April 14:

I was at home with my children when a large number of armed men arrived

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<sup>102</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with individuals close to Mamadou, Bangui, April 24, 2013.

<sup>103</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with rape survivor, Bangui, April 22, 2013.

in pick-up vehicles in front of my house. Three of them came into my house, pointed their rifles at me, tied me up in front of my children, and raped me. After they had raped me, they looted my house and left. I'm now alone with my children. My husband abandoned me the day after the rape. I feel pains in my body.<sup>104</sup>

The parents of one rape survivor told Human Rights Watch that their daughter, age 14, was raped by Seleka forces after they looted the family's home. While Seleka forces held the parents at gunpoint, one of the Seleka members took the daughter outside on the veranda and raped her. The parents could hear her crying. When finished, the Seleka members told the parents, "We have done what we came to do."<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with rape survivor, Bangui, April 22, 2013.

<sup>105</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with mother of rape survivor, Bangui, April 22, 2013.

## IV. Past Crimes: Abuses under Bozizé

While this report's main focus is on abuses committed by the Seleka, Human Rights Watch was able to do limited research on abuses carried out by security agents under the previous government. These do not represent an exhaustive rendering of human rights abuses committed under Bozizé's rule.<sup>106</sup>

On March 23, 2013, Seleka fighters liberated 17 detainees from a secret detention facility located at the Bossembélé military training center, 155 kilometers north of Bangui. The detainees were held incommunicado and in inhumane conditions for months or years. The facility was run by Bozizé's elite Presidential Guard unit.<sup>107</sup>

Detainees and other sources told Human Rights Watch that the secret military facility was under the control of former President Bozizé, who would visit the military training center as often as every other week. Bozizé had a private villa at the center.

At the time of the coup, 17 men were being detained in a 25 square-meter cell. Human Rights Watch found that none of the 17 men detained in Bossembélé had been charged, nor were they informed of the accusations against them. None of them reported that they had been questioned by interrogators or guards during their detention.

The detained men had either been arrested by Presidential Guards under the command of Lieutenant Eugène Ngaikosset in the northeast, or kidnapped by one of President Bozizé's sons—Joseph Bozizé, alias “Jojo,” or Aimé Vincent Bozizé, alias “Papy”—in Bangui.<sup>108</sup>

Those captured in Bangui were usually taken to the Presidential Palace, the Central Office for the Repression of Banditry (*l'Office centrafricain de repression du banditisme*) or the

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<sup>106</sup> For more information see Human Rights Watch, *State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians*, September 2007, Amnesty International, “Central African Republic - action needed to end decades of abuse,” October 2011, and International Crisis Group, “Central African Republic: Keeping the Dialogue Alive,” Africa Briefing N°69, January 12, 2010.

<sup>107</sup> The detention facility is commonly known as “Guantanamo” in reference to the American detention facility in Cuba.

<sup>108</sup> Joseph Bozizé, alias “Jojo” was the head of the National Basketball Association under the former government. Aimé Vincent Bozizé, alias “Papy” was the head of the Investigation and Intelligence Service (*Section de recherches et d'investigations*) of the police.

Investigation and Intelligence Service (*Section de recherches et d'investigations*) before being transferred to Bossembélé by Presidential Guards.

Human Rights Watch interviewed 10 former detainees from Bossembélé. They confirmed torture methods and inhumane conditions of detention. Once arrested, most said they were beaten until they lost consciousness and were put into a common cell with no windows or access to daylight. At the center, detainees said they were put in the middle of a group of soldiers and beaten. As one former detainee described to Human Rights Watch:

They started to hit me with their guns in my head. They used a whip to hit me and a baton. They put me in a circle [of soldiers] and beat me. I fell down. They dragged me to a small canal where they drain the toilets and they pushed me in it and kept hitting me. They told me to get out but I was starting to lose consciousness. They hit me so hard that I lost several front teeth.<sup>109</sup>

The former detainees described conditions of near starvation and constant beatings by Presidential Guards, including by their head, Lieutenant Domboye. According to one witness:

Guards would enter the cell to kick us. Once Lieutenant Domboye entered the cell [and] shot in the air; he then shot two bullets at one detainee's foot, he then trampled his injured foot with his boots.<sup>110</sup>

Detainees could watch beatings outside through a small hole in the door of their cell. Human Rights Watch visited Bossembélé and confirmed both the existence of the cell and the ability for men to secretly watch events outside it.

Torture often included being tied with their wrists connected to their ankles and suspended from a pole while kicked and beaten with clubs. Detainees told Human Rights Watch they had witnessed scenes of torture outside the cell, and described at least two men being forced to dig holes before being shot dead and buried by the Presidential Guards. Another witness told Human Rights Watch:

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<sup>109</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with former detainee from Bossembélé, Bangui, April 29, 2013.

<sup>110</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with former detainee from Bossembélé, Bangui, April 29, 2013.

[They took the] Bororo with us ... outside of the cell they hog-tied him, he had his wrists and ankles tied with cords and was put on a long baton like a sheep. They beat and punched him repeatedly for hours. We could hear and see them beating him through the little holes in the door of the cell. He never came back.<sup>111</sup>

Other former detainees died shortly after their liberation. According to one witness, a former detainee:

[w]as thrown into the cell one day, he had been tied with cords, wrapped in a plastic sheet. He was severely wounded ... he had been so badly tortured. He died of his wounds after we were freed and was buried in Bangui on April 27.<sup>112</sup>

The majority of detainees at Bossembélé were Muslims from the north and were accused of being rebels. As the Seleka advanced on Bangui, the beatings increased. One former detainee told Human Rights Watch:

When we heard about the Libreville Agreements in January 2013, including the decision to release political prisoners, we all thought it was the end of our nightmare. Instead, on January 31, the guards took us all out of the cell; they put us in the centre of the military training fence and started beating us. We were all tortured severely in front of each other, like never before.<sup>113</sup>

In a visit to the Bossembélé barracks, Human Rights Watch was shown two standing cells on either side of Bozizé's villa, approximately two meters from the dwelling. The cells were concrete shafts in the ground with just enough space for a person to stand. A cement enclosure on the top had air holes for the person to breath, but no space to move. Reliable accounts by former prisoners indicate that individuals were left in these cells until they died.

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<sup>111</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with former detainee from Bossembélé, Bangui, April 29, 2013.

<sup>112</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with former detainee from Bossembélé, Bangui, April 29, 2013.

<sup>113</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with former detainee from Bossembélé, Bangui, April 29, 2013. The 2013 Libreville ceasefire agreement contained a clause that would see the release of political prisoners in CAR.



## V. Lack of Accountability

On July 26, 2013, Interim President Djotodia announced at a press conference in Bangui, “There is no longer space for impunity in the Central African Republic.”<sup>114</sup> However, since coming to power in March, the government has taken few meaningful steps toward ensuring accountability for perpetrators of grave human rights abuses.

Former presidents have made similar statements about the need for accountability, but impunity has been the norm in the country for decades and has often led to renewed cycles of violence. In 2008 former President Bozizé adopted an amnesty law that covered crimes committed between March 2003 and October 2008, despite unanimous opposition by rebel groups. Some of these groups went on to form the Seleka, who opposed the exoneration of government troops, particularly the Republican Guard, which committed human rights crimes in the north.<sup>115</sup>

While the current transitional government under Djotodia does not appear to be contemplating a formal grant of amnesty, it is repeating many mistakes of the past by failing to investigate and prosecute recent crimes committed by the Seleka. No meaningful inquiries have been made into the abuses highlighted in this report, and the few isolated arrests that have occurred appear to be empty gestures involving minor cases of banditry in the capital.

Evidence of Seleka involvement in serious human rights abuses has largely been met with denial. When Human Rights Watch presented Minister of Public Security Nouredine Adam with witness accounts of the killing of civilians and destruction of villages his response was, “These events you are mentioning took place before our arrival.”<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> News conference, Interim President Michel Djotodia, Interim Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye, and President of the National Transitional Council Alexandre Ferdinand Nguendet, Ledger Plaza Hotel, Bangui, July 26, 2013. See: <http://www.radiondekeluka.org/secure/item/16499-bilan-de-4-mois-de-r%C3%A8gne-la-s%C3%A9curit%C3%A9,-une-pr%C3%A9occupation-majeure-de-michel-djotodia.html> (accessed August 2, 2013).

<sup>115</sup> While the amnesty also applied to rebel groups, Bozizé loyalists are thought to have greatly benefited from the amnesty, see: International Crisis Group, “Central African Republic: Untangling the Political Dialogue,” Africa Briefing N°55, December 9, 2008, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/Bo55%20Central%20African%20Republic%20Untangling%20the%20Political%20Dialogue.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/central-africa/central-african-republic/Bo55%20Central%20African%20Republic%20Untangling%20the%20Political%20Dialogue.pdf), pp. 6-7.

<sup>116</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Nouredine Adam, minister of public security, Bangui, June 12, 2013.

Where judicial action has occurred, it has been largely one-sided and has focused on members of the former Bozizé government. Here too, however, no meaningful investigations appear to have taken place.

## The Need for Justice

The crimes documented in this report—including extrajudicial killings, rape, and other forms of sexual violence, pillage and destruction of property, unlawful detention, and torture—are all serious crimes under international and domestic law. By virtue of both treaty and customary international law, the government has an obligation to carry out effective investigations into these crimes and to prosecute those persons deemed responsible in fair and credible trials that meet international standards.<sup>117</sup>

The Central African Republic is a party to the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocols I and II, and has ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. The Geneva Conventions, as well as customary international humanitarian law, establish clear rules of conduct in conflict, which include prohibitions on targeting the civilian population, or individuals hors de combat, and the commission of crimes such as rape, murder, torture, and pillage.

The treaties guarantee respect for fundamental rights, including the rights to life, liberty, and property and the right to be free from torture or other cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, which must be upheld by the government.<sup>118</sup>

Beyond the country's legal obligations to hold perpetrators of grave international crimes accountable, justice is crucial for the well-being and security of the civilian population at large. A long history of abuses committed in the country since colonialism—most of which

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<sup>117</sup> A review of the state of international law on justice for serious crimes is available in Human Rights Watch, *Selling Justice Short: Why Accountability Matters for Peace*, July 2009, <http://www.hrw.org/node/84262/section/3>, pp. 10-17.

<sup>118</sup> See: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), adopted December 16, 1966, G.A. Res. 2200A (XXI), 21 UN GAOR Supp. (No. 16) at 52, UN Doc. A/6316 (1966), 999 UNT.S. arts. 6, 7, 9, 10 at <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx> (accessed August 2, 2013); the African (Banjul) Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Adopted 27 June 1981, OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 I.L.M. 58 (1982), entered into force 21 October 1986 arts. 4, 5, 6, 14 at <http://www.achpr.org/instruments/achpr/> (accessed August 2, 2013); the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (Rome Statute), A/CONF.183/9, July 17, 1998 entered into force July 1, 2002, art.: 7-8 at <http://untreaty.un.org/cod/icc/statute/rome.htm> (accessed August 2, 2013); or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted December 10, 1948, G.A. Res. 217A(III), U. N. Doc. A/810 at 1 (1948), at [www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/](http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/) (accessed August 2, 2013).

have gone unpunished—has created an environment of impunity and has left the civilian population with little hope that the government will protect them. Victims of abuse and their families told Human Rights Watch that they wanted perpetrators held to account. However, several interviewed said that they feel the Seleka will continue to kill openly and will suffer no repercussions for their conduct.<sup>119</sup>

Human Rights Watch was told repeatedly by both victims and members of civil society that the current level of impunity is breaking down boundaries of normative behavior and further fueling abuses. As one lawyer and local human rights defender told Human Rights Watch:

Now a waiter is killed after giving a beer, a taxi driver is killed after transporting a person. It is planned terror. They steal a doctor's car when he is trying to go help someone....This is the negation of the existence of humanity.<sup>120</sup>

Fair and credible prosecutions of those responsible for recent abuses would give these victims some measure of redress for the horrific harms they have suffered and might deter future abuses. Accountability for the gravest crimes might also help restore order in the country and strengthen respect for the rule of law, which in turn, might promote long-term peace and stability.<sup>121</sup>

## Commission of Inquiry

On May 22, 2013, a presidential decree established a National Commission of Inquiry to investigate human rights violations committed since 2002 and to identify the persons most responsible for these crimes. The commission is also tasked with identifying individual victims and assessing levels of damage for eventual compensation.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with residents of Boy-Rabe, April 23, 2013; Human Rights Watch interview with resident of Gbade, June 9, 2013.

<sup>120</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with human rights lawyers, Bangui, April 22, 2013.

<sup>121</sup> The World Bank's 2011 World Development Report, "Conflict, Security, and Development", states as its "central message ... that strengthening legitimate institutions and governance to provide citizen security, justice, and jobs is crucial to break cycles of violence." World Bank, "World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development" (Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, 2011), [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011\\_Full\\_Text.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWDRS/Resources/WDR2011_Full_Text.pdf) (accessed July 31, 2013), p. 2. See also UN Security Council, "The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies," S/2011/634, October 12, 2011, [http://www.unrol.org/files/S\\_2011\\_634EN.pdf](http://www.unrol.org/files/S_2011_634EN.pdf) (accessed August 2, 2013), paragraphs 17-32.

<sup>122</sup> Decree (No. 13.106) was issued on May 22, 2013 for the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry to be chaired by Judge Flammarion Goba.

In theory, the commission—composed of judges, human rights defenders, and police officers—should address all serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed from just before Bozizé took power until the present, including the most recent abuses committed by the Seleka. As part of its work, the commission could recommend that domestic prosecutions are undertaken to address the crimes documented in its final report.

However, the body remains a commission in name only and has been unable to begin its work. Since its creation, the commission has not received the necessary funding or support to carry out proper investigations. Commission staff have not been paid and have not been given vehicles or logistical support with which to carry out investigations. The minister of justice told Human Rights Watch, “The commission has no means with which to do its work. It only has one clerk.”<sup>123</sup> Mathias Morouba, a lawyer and local human rights campaigner who had originally agreed to serve as the vice president of the commission, resigned from his post in June 2013.

## State of the National Judicial System

Before the Seleka took power, the legacy of impunity in the country was tied to a combination of factors: a lack of political will; successive granting of amnesties; the absence of a functioning and professional police force; and the lack of an independent public prosecutor and judiciary. These problems, which sustained a dysfunctional judicial system, have only intensified since the Seleka takeover.

Human Rights Watch noted the physical destruction of the judicial system outside Bangui: both Seleka fighters and commonplace looters have stripped regional courts of all furniture and fixtures, burned or destroyed court documents, and stolen court vehicles. Court officials have either abandoned their posts or have not been paid.

UN Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights Ivan Šimonović made similar observations when he visited a regional court in Bambari in late July: “I only found an

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<sup>123</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Arsène Sendé, minister of justice, Bangui, June 3, 2013.

empty room with broken doors, no windows, and a thick layer of remnants of archives and registries covering the floor.”<sup>124</sup>

Along with state administration outside Bangui, the judicial system has been gutted and the courts have ceased to function. In this context, even judicial officials are pessimistic, as the national prosecutor in Bangui told Human Rights Watch, “There is no justice, no forgiveness, no repair.... We had....[former president] Patassé and Bozizé, then the Seleka.... [it is a continual] cycle of violence and impunity.”<sup>125</sup>

In the provinces, Seleka officials have claimed to Human Rights Watch that they have the authority to be at the same time the police, prosecutor, and judge in the zones under their command. The minister of justice told Human Rights Watch that the head of the Seleka in Bambari had declared himself the head of the local courts.<sup>126</sup> The lack of judicial process has only exacerbated the already tense situation and has left civilians with the impression that the government has no intention of pursuing justice for recent abuses.

## Domestic Investigations and Prosecutions

Human Rights Watch has not been given any indication that the National Prosecutor’s Office has investigated the serious abuses committed in Bangui or outside the capital.

A few arrests have been made since the Seleka took power in March, but they have been isolated arrests made against so called false Seleka accused of looting in the capital and appear to be more for show than ensuring accountability. Following the discovery of several young men’s bodies in the Ubangui River near the capital in mid-July, Minister of Justice Arsène Sendé announced at a July 26 press conference that investigations had begun and that “in a few days you will be aware of the identity of the perpetrators.”<sup>127</sup> However, no further steps have been taken to identify and prosecute those responsible. All other current investigations appear to be aimed at members of the former government. On May 29, the national prosecutor announced the issuance of an international arrest

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<sup>124</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, “Top Human Rights expert: Do not forget the Central African Republic and its people,” August 1, 2013 <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13601&LangID=E> (accessed August 2, 2013).

<sup>125</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Alain Tolmo, national prosecutor, Bangui, June 12, 2013.

<sup>126</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Arsène Sendé, minister of justice, Bangui, June 3, 2013.

<sup>127</sup> News conference, Ledger Plaza Hotel, Bangui, July 26, 2013.

warrant against former president Bozizé. Human Rights Watch is not aware of any formal investigation conducted prior to the issuance of the arrest warrant. The minister of justice told Human Rights Watch that an investigation was not necessary as, “On the basis of information or reports, the prosecutor may apply to the magistrate to open an investigation.”<sup>128</sup> During the same interview, however, the minister stated that, “Bozizé was too agitated in Yaoundé; he was too vocal. He had to calm down,”<sup>129</sup> implying political considerations may have contributed to the decision to issue the arrest warrant.

The Seleka arrested General Mohamed Moussa Dhaffane, former minister of water and forests in the transitional government, on June 30. As of early August, he is being held in a military camp in Bangui but has yet to be formally charged. He has also not been before a judge, despite the requirement in the country’s penal code that individuals must be presented before a court within 48 hours of their arrest. A member of the National Transitional Council, which replaced the national parliament, told Human Rights Watch, “This arrest was just a settling of scores within the Seleka. It has nothing to do with justice.”<sup>130</sup>

On July 4, former Prime Minister Faustin-Archange Touadéra was blocked from leaving the country on the grounds that he is being investigated for his role in human rights abuses. However, no further judicial action has been taken against him since that time.

## International Criminal Court

The Central African Republic first accepted the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court (ICC) in 2001, when it became a state party to the Rome Statute. On December 22, 2004, the government went one step further and referred the situation in the country to the ICC prosecutor after a Bangui Court of Appeals ruled that domestic courts were unable to prosecute grave international crimes effectively.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Human Rights Watch interview with Arsène Sendé, minister of justice, Bangui, June 3, 2013. Sendé told Human Rights Watch that the 2007 Human Rights Watch report, *State of Anarchy: Rebellion and Abuses against Civilians*, was used as a report forming the basis of the arrest warrant.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Human Rights Watch phone interview with member of the National Transitional Council, July 31, 2013.

<sup>131</sup> The Central African Republic invited the Office of the Prosecutor to investigate and prosecute crimes within the ICC’s jurisdiction committed anywhere in the country after July 1, 2002. “Prosecutor receives referral concerning Central African Republic,” ICC press release, ICC-OTP-20050107-86, January 7, 2005, <http://www.icc->



The ICC prosecutor initiated a preliminary examination of the 2002-2003 events in the country and, in May 2007, announced the opening of a formal investigation.<sup>132</sup> During his announcement, the prosecutor noted that he would monitor more recent events to determine whether crimes committed in the north as part of a counterinsurgency campaign warranted investigation.<sup>133</sup>

The ICC investigation has led to only one case, that of Jean-Pierre Bemba Gombo. Bemba, a Congolese national and former vice-president of the Democratic Republic of Congo, was in the Central African Republic beginning in 2002 after its then-President Patassé, invited him and his Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) forces, as well as Chadian mercenaries, to help put down a coup attempt by François Bozizé, the former chief of staff. Bemba's MLC forces are alleged to have carried out mass rapes, killings, and looting against the civilian population in the Central African Republic. Bemba was arrested in Belgium in 2008, and he was promptly transferred to The Hague to face justice before the ICC. His trial began in November 2010 and is expected to finish in late 2013, although a ruling is not expected before 2014.

Many observers had hoped that the ICC prosecutor would initiate additional cases in connection with the events of 2002-03, including against former president Patassé (who died in April 2011). While this has not happened, the ICC prosecutor has placed direct pressure on national authorities to investigate and prosecute more recent crimes. On June 10, 2008, then-ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo addressed a letter to then-President François Bozizé noting that “sustained attention needed to be paid to the acts of violence committed in the north of the Central African Republic.”<sup>134</sup> In response, Bozizé sought the

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[http://www.iccpi.int/en\\_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/2005/Pages/otp%20prosecutor%20receives%20referral%20concerning%20central%20african%20republic.aspx](http://www.iccpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/2005/Pages/otp%20prosecutor%20receives%20referral%20concerning%20central%20african%20republic.aspx) (accessed July 26, 2013).

<sup>132</sup> In April 2006, the Cour de Cassation, the country's highest court, reaffirmed the inability of domestic courts to investigate and prosecute grave international crimes committed in the country. See International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), “La Cour de Cassation confirme l'incapacité des tribunaux à enquêter sur les crimes graves. Le Procureur de la Cour pénale internationale doit ouvrir une enquête sur la situation en RCA,” April 13, 2006, <http://www.fidh.org/La-Cour-de-Cassation-confirme-l> (accessed July 26, 2013).

<sup>133</sup> “Prosecutor opens investigation in the Central African Republic,” ICC press release, ICC-OTP-20070522-220, May 22, 2007, [http://www.iccpi.int/en\\_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/2007/Pages/prosecutor%20opens%20investigation%20in%20the%20central%20african%20republic.aspx](http://www.iccpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/2007/Pages/prosecutor%20opens%20investigation%20in%20the%20central%20african%20republic.aspx) (accessed July 26, 2013).

<sup>134</sup> Letter from ICC Prosecutor Luis Moreno Ocampo to President Francois Bozizé, June 10, 2008, on file with Human Rights Watch. See also Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009, Central African Republic chapter* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2009), [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related\\_material/car.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/car.pdf).

UN's assistance in suspending ICC investigations, arguing in a letter to the UN secretary-general that the domestic justice system was competent to investigate and prosecute more recent crimes itself.<sup>135</sup> Bozizé's letter resulted in no action by the UN Security Council.<sup>136</sup>

Current ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda continues to monitor developments in the country and has indicated that she may exercise jurisdiction over more recent crimes. She issued public statements on April 22 and August 7, 2013, warning those responsible for recent abuses that their crimes may fall under the ICC's jurisdiction and that her office will prosecute if necessary.<sup>137</sup>

The ICC prosecutor should continue to monitor the situation in the Central African Republic and should press national authorities to investigate and prosecute all perpetrators of grave international crimes. As appropriate, her office should continue to speak out publicly with her assessment of events in the country and should remind all parties involved of the ICC's jurisdiction over crimes being committed.

Violence against civilians continues in CAR. Human Rights Watch received credible reports of at least 20 people killed by the Seleka during a large scale looting operation in Boy-Rabe on the night of August 20. Interim President Djotodia continues to blame the violence on Bozizé loyalists and remains incapable of controlling his troops. Humanitarian agencies remain hobbled by violence in both Bangui and the provinces. The Seleka continue to attack civilians with widespread impunity. Villagers still in their homes live in fear of Seleka attacks; those who have fled continue to suffer and die in the bush.

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<sup>135</sup> Letter from Francois Bozizé to Ban Ki-moon, August 1, 2008, on file with Human Rights Watch. See also Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2009, Central African Republic chapter*, [http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related\\_material/car.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/car.pdf).

<sup>136</sup> Article 16 of the Rome Statute allows the UN Security Council, in exceptional circumstances, to pass a resolution under its Chapter VII authority to defer an ICC investigation or prosecution for a renewable period of 12 months. Chapter VII of the UN Charter only empowers the Security Council to take measures to "maintain or restore international peace and security."

<sup>137</sup> "Prosecutor's Statement in relation to [the] situation in [the] Central African Republic," ICC Press Release, August 7, 2013, [http://www.icc-cpi.int/en\\_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/Pages/otp-statement-07-08-2013.aspx](http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/Pages/otp-statement-07-08-2013.aspx) (accessed August 14, 2013); "Prosecutor's Statement in relation to [the] situation in [the] Central African Republic," ICC Press Release, April 22, 2013, [http://www.icc-cpi.int/en\\_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/Pages/otp-statement-22-04-2013.aspx](http://www.icc-cpi.int/en_menus/icc/press%20and%20media/press%20releases/Pages/otp-statement-22-04-2013.aspx) (accessed July 26, 2013).

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## **Annex I: Peacekeeping and Civilian Protection**

In most parts of Bangui and in the provinces, Multinational Forces for Central Africa (FOMAC) troops serving under the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX) have been unable to ensure civilian protection. The mission remains understaffed and underfunded.

Under an agreement signed in late 2007 in Brazzaville by the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) Heads of State, MICOPAX was deployed to the Central African Republic with logistical and financial support provided by France and the European Union. The overall objective of the MICOPAX and FOMAC was to contribute to the consolidation of peace and restore stability in CAR in preparations for a democratic transition in 2008. FOMAC-MICOPAX was also tasked with restructuring the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), of which they achieved limited success.

When the Seleka coalition was launched in December 2012, the ECCAS Heads of State met that month and called on the rebel group to retreat to its original positions in the north. The January 11, 2013 Libreville peace agreements, signed under the auspices of the ECCAS, included a ceasefire between President Bozizé and the Seleka, power-sharing arrangements, and a timeline for a political transition.

When the Seleka started its descent toward Bangui in December 2012, MICOPAX was not capable of maintaining security. In late March, FOMAC troops failed to prevent the Seleka from passing their lines at Damara upon which they descended upon Bangui. On March 23, the Seleka won a fierce battle against soldiers of the South African Defence Force, the last line of defense, killing 13. They took the capital the next day. Bozizé fled Bangui on March 24. Latest reports indicate he is currently in France. The United Nations and AU condemned the coup. The AU suspended the Central African Republic on March 25, 2013.

On April 3, the ECCAS called for the creation of a National Transitional Council in CAR and two weeks later also decided to deploy an additional 2,000 troops to assist MICOPAX in CAR's stabilization. The ECCAS established an International Contact Group, which held its first meeting on May 3 in Brazzaville and expressed its support for the implementation of the transitional process as articulated by ECCAS.

The MICOPAX mission was transitioned into the AU-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR) on August 1, 2013. While the AU's Peace and Security Council is calling for the deployment of 3,500 uniformed personnel, most of these troops will be made up of contingents that were already serving in MICOPAX. The mandate of AFISM-CAR is: protection of civilians; stabilization of the country and restoration of the authority of a central government; security sector reform; and the creation of conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance.

There are currently over 1,000 AFISM-CAR troops in CAR, with small numbers in bases in Kaga-Bandoro and Ndélé monitoring large swathes of territory. Nevertheless, in areas with a peacekeeping presence, such as Kaga-Bandoro, Human Rights Watch noted there were fewer human rights abuses than where there is no presence.

In mid-July a comprehensive DDR process was discussed between the transitional government, members of the Seleka, and MICOPAX. FOMAC troops disarmed only isolated Seleka elements in Bangui.

On July 26, 2013, Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza announced that 500 soldiers were ready to be deployed to CAR as a part of a peacekeeping mission.

## Annex II: Recent Diplomatic Timeline

**May 9, 2008:** The Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy (*Armée populaire pour la restauration de la république et la démocratie*, APRD) signs a peace deal in Libreville under the auspices of an ad hoc committee of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), led by President Omar Bongo of Gabon.

**June 21, 2008:** The APRD and the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (*Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement*, UFDR) sign the Global Peace Accord with the government of CAR in Libreville. This agreement grants amnesty for any acts perpetrated against the state prior to its inception and calls for a disarmament and demobilization process to integrate rebels from the north.

**July 3, 2009:** The Central African People's Democratic Front (*Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain*, FDPC) signs an act of adherence to the Global Peace Accord.

**June 12, 2011:** The Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (*Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix*, CPJP) signs a ceasefire with the government.

**August 25, 2012:** The CPJP signs a peace deal with the government.

**December 21, 2012:** At an extraordinary summit, the member states of the Economic Community of Central African States (*Communauté économique des États de l'Afrique centrale*, ECCAS) call on the Seleka to stop its advance on Bangui.

**January 11, 2013:** The Seleka and President François Bozizé sign the Libreville Agreement to prevent the violent overthrow of the government and to set up a three-year power sharing arrangement between Bozizé and the Seleka as a part of a political transition. The agreement, negotiated under the auspices of the ECCAS, provides for a ceasefire between the government and the Seleka and specifies that Bozizé should remain in power until the end of his term in 2016. It also stipulates that a prime minister should be appointed from the opposition and be granted full executive power. Finally, the agreement stipulates that a national unity government should be established and be responsible for organizing elections within a year after the dissolution of the National Assembly.



**January 2013:** The role of the Multinational Forces for Central Africa (FOMAC) is redefined to enforce the January 11, 2013 Libreville Agreement. FOMAC establishes a “red-line” at Damara, 100 miles north of the capital.

**March 24, 2013:** The Seleka takes Bangui.

**April 3, 2013:** ECCAS calls for a national transitional government to be established.

**April 18, 2013:** ECCAS calls for 2,000 additional FOMAC troops to be deployed before June 5.

**May 3, 2013:** The African Union’s International Contact Group (ICG) on the Central African Republic meets in Brazzaville to reaffirm its support during the transition period in CAR. Amongst other things, it “warns the authors, sponsors and accomplices of the acts, abuses and other violation of human rights, as well as the acts likely to be considered as crimes against mankind and stresses the related individual criminal responsibility.”

**June 17, 2013:** The AU Peace and Security Committee requests the AU Commission to engage in consultations for the establishment of an African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic (AFISM-CAR) within 30 days. Consultations are held between July 2 and 5.

**July 8, 2013:** In a meeting of the ICG the AU Commission and ECCAS are encouraged to pursue their cooperation with other actors to speed up the process of integrating Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in Central African Republic (MICOPAX) into AFISM - CAR and facilitate the deployment of this mission with a robust mandate.

**July 19, 2013:** The AU Peace and Security Committee adopt the decision to turn MICOPAX into AFISM-CAR to protect civilians and restore security and public order; stabilize the country and restore authority of the central government; reform and restructure the security and defense services; and create conditions for the provision of humanitarian assistance. The decision takes effect on August 1, 2013. The decision calls for the deployment of 3,500 uniformed personnel for six months and acknowledges that “the nucleus will be constituted by the contingents currently serving in MICOPAX.”

# “I Can Still Smell the Dead”

## The Forgotten Human Rights Crisis in the Central African Republic

On March 24, 2013, the Seleka alliance, having overthrown former President François Bozizé, seized power in the Central African Republic (CAR), unlawfully killing scores of civilians in the process. Since then, the Seleka have ruled with complete impunity; abusing and killing civilians, raping women and girls, and looting properties.

Based on field research in April to June 2013, *“I Can Still Smell the Dead”*: *The Forgotten Human Rights Crisis in the Central African Republic*, documents the litany of serious violations committed against civilians by the Seleka since the alliance of rebel groups took power, as well as the response of the transitional government and Seleka leaders. It also describes human rights abuses that occurred under Bozizé’s rule at an illegal detention facility at the Bossembélé military training center.

In the capital, Bangui, the Seleka have executed individuals who served in the national army under Bozizé, or whom they believed to be members of the army, attacking and looting neighbourhoods. Many unarmed civilians were killed in these attacks, forcing residents—including children—to seek refuge in the bush and in tents made from trees and leaves. Most have no access to clean water and there are serious food shortages.

The Seleka takeover has caused the collapse of the civilian administration. Hospitals and schools have closed down. Humanitarian organizations operating outside of the capital are themselves vulnerable to Seleka attacks, impeding outreach to affected populations. The transitional government has utterly failed to ensure security for its citizens, or to take measures to prevent and prosecute human rights violations. In this dire situation, the people of CAR have been left to fend for themselves, as the response from the international community has been minimal.

Human Rights Watch calls on the transitional government to take prompt measures to ensure that those responsible for the unlawful killing of civilians are brought to justice and to prevent further killings by the Seleka. Leaders of the Seleka should take immediate action to prevent their men from attacking civilians and destroying homes. International actors should take steps, including considering sanctions, to pressure the Seleka to hold their members to account and to ensure the transitional government seeks to prevent further abuses. All necessary support should be given to the African Union’s International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, the peacekeeping force in the country mandated with civilian protection.



*Resident of Ndanika holding a photo of his father who died in the bush after fleeing the Seleka on April 14, 2013.*

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