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## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

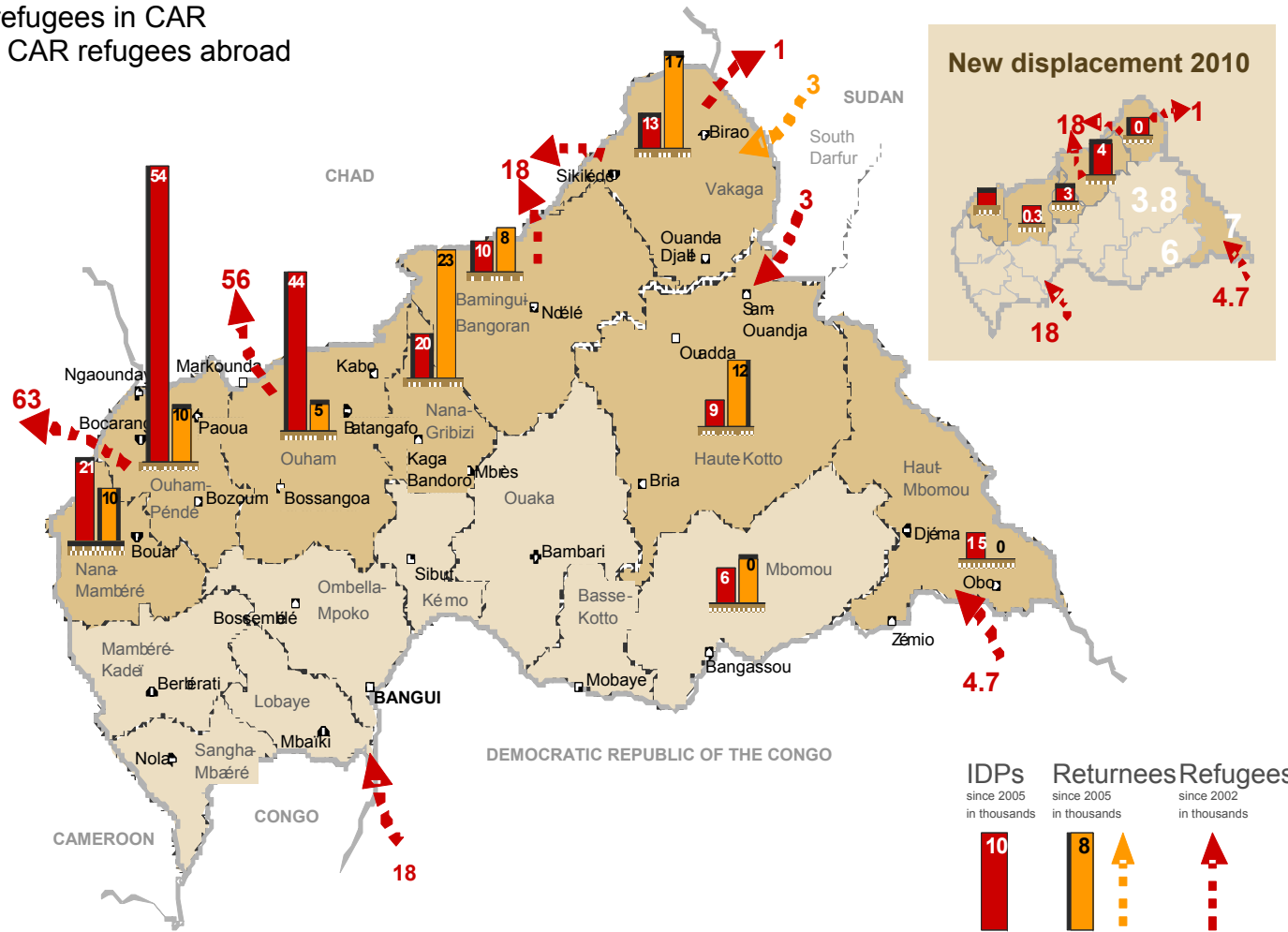
# Security remains fragile ahead of UN troop withdrawal and presidential election

Armed conflict pitting government forces against various armed groups in northern areas of the Central African Republic (CAR) caused the internal displacement of more than 200,000 people between 2005 and 2008. Following the signing of peace and reconciliation agreements, their number fell to around 108,000, but since 2009 clashes between the army and a splinter rebel group, and attacks on civilians by the Lord's Resistance Army have caused a new wave of displacement. As of November 2010, the number of internally displaced people (IDPs) was estimated at over 192,000.

Civilians have suffered a range of human rights abuses, including killings, the looting and burning of villages, destruction of fields, loss of livelihoods, sexual violence and the abduction and recruitment of children. In June 2010, CAR was one of six African countries that signed the N'Djamena Declaration to end the recruitment of children by all parties to the region's conflicts. The country is also now a signatory to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC).

International peacekeeping forces have had little impact in areas affected by internal displacement. They were deployed in small numbers and without a mandate to engage criminal gangs. Nevertheless the government of CAR fears that the security situation in the north-east of the country will get worse with the scheduled withdrawal of UN peacekeeping troops, due to be completed by the end of the year. The latest wave of attacks highlights the fragility of the peace process and raises serious concerns about stability in the run-up to the presidential election scheduled for 23 January 2011.

**Total as of June 2010**  
 192,092 IDPs in CAR  
 31,500 refugees in CAR  
 162,000 CAR refugees abroad



## Background and causes of displacement

Of Africa's 11.6 million internally displaced people (IDPs), three million live in the regional conflict triangle made up of the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad and Sudan. The triangle is characterised by inter-related armed conflicts, high levels of insecurity despite the presence of international peacekeeping troops, the widespread availability of small arms, and forced displacement within and across borders. The three countries were included on a 2010 list of the world's top ten failed states (Fund for Peace, 21 June 2010).

Internal armed conflict and the overspill of fighting from neighbouring countries has caused successive waves of violence in CAR since 2003, leaving the country with some of the worst humanitarian indicators in the world. It is ranked 159th out of 169 countries on the 2010 Human Development Index (UNDP, 4 November 2010), and six per cent of its population dies every year – a rate four times higher than in any other African country (Foreign Policy, 3 August 2010). One in five children die before their fifth birthday, 60 per cent of the population do not have access to potable water or basic sanitation, and 62 per cent live on less than \$1.25 a day (OCHA, 14 July 2010). The humanitarian crisis in CAR was ranked the world's fourth most under-funded and ignored in 2010 (UN Dispatch, 23 August 2010).

President François Bozizé seized power in a 2003 military coup supported by the government of Chad (Small Arms Survey, December 2008), and after leading a two-year transitional government he won the 2005 presidential election with 64 per cent of the vote (Xinhuanet, 25 May 2005). The new government failed, however, to develop the north of the country either economically or socially. This fuelled resentment and led to armed conflict between government forces and two main rebels groups in the north-west of the country along the border with Chad – the Popular

Army for the Restoration of Democracy (Armée Populaire pour la Restauration de la Démocratie or APRD) and the Central African Democratic Front (Front Démocratique du Peuple Centrafricain or FDPC); and one in the north-east of the country along the border with Sudan – the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (Union des Forces Démocratiques pour le Rassemblement or UFDR) (HRW, 14 September 2007). The fighting lasted until mid-2008 and caused the displacement of more than 300,000 people, either across the border into neighbouring Cameroon and Chad, or within CAR, where those who fled sought refuge with impoverished host communities or in the fields and forests without access to basic services.

Criminal gangs known as coupeurs de route or zaraguina attack the civilian population and have also caused significant displacement. The gangs have acted with impunity, taking advantage of government forces overstretched in the wake of the conflict. In 2008, the UN estimated that a third of all IDPs in CAR had been displaced by criminal gangs (OCHA, November 2008). The state's inability to control its territory has also made CAR a base for foreign armed groups. Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has killed at least 2,000 civilians and abducted another 3,000 in the region since September 2008 (HRW, 11 November 2010).

## Peacekeeping operations, peace agreements and presidential elections

### *Peacekeeping operations*

International peacekeeping forces have had little impact in areas of internal displacement. They have been deployed in small numbers, and without a mandate to engage criminal gangs. The Multinational Force in the Central African Republic (Force Multinationale en Centrafrique or FOMUC) was deployed in CAR from 2002 to 2008 with a mandate to provide security by patrolling main roads. It was a regional peacekeeping force,

funded by the European Union and France, and made up of troops from Central African Economic and Monetary Community member states including Chad, Gabon and the Republic of Congo. However, it was only allocated 200 troops, its area of operations was limited to three towns in the north, and it was not authorised to patrol more than ten kilometres from the centre of each town. In July 2008, FOMUC was replaced by the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace (Mission de Consolidation de la Paix en Centrafrique or MICOPAX). Troop numbers were increased to 700, but the force's operational area was not expanded (ICG, 9 December 2008).

In 2007, the UN Security Council authorised the creation of MINURCAT, a joint UN mission to CAR and Chad, in response to the growing levels of insecurity and human rights abuses in both countries. It also approved the deployment of European Union troops (EUFOR) to protect IDPs and refugees affected by the overspill of violence from Darfur, and to safeguard the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The force's impact was limited, however, as less than 200 troops were deployed, and they were sent to north-east CAR near the border with Sudan, while criminal gangs operated predominantly in the north-west, where IDPs were concentrated.

EUFOR was replaced by MINURCAT troops in March 2009, and the mandate of the new force was extended by one year (UN SC, 14 January 2009). The UN Security Council authorised the deployment of 5,200 troops, but MINURCAT never reached more than half of its operational capacity (UN SC, 14 October 2009) due to a lack of funds and problems faced by contributing countries in equipping their troops. In early 2010, President Idriss Déby of Chad called for the withdrawal of MINURCAT troops, alleging that the force had been slow to deploy and had failed to protect civilians or build promised infrastructure projects (ISN, 18 May 2010). In May 2010, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1923, approving the

withdrawal of all MINURCAT troops and their civilian support from CAR and Chad by the end of the year (UN SC, 25 May 2010).

There are only 296 MINURCAT peacekeepers deployed in CAR, but the government credits them with having protected civilians and secured the delivery of humanitarian assistance (UN News Service, 8 June 2010). President Bozizé has asked the Security Council for continued UN help after the withdrawal of MINURCAT troops (Reuters, 10 August 2010). The head of MINURCAT has said that an urgent solution must be found to fill the security vacuum that the departure of his troops will leave in the north-east of the country (UN News Service, 10 August 2010). Government forces lack the military equipment and logistics to provide effective protection and security.

#### *Peace agreements*

Following individual ceasefire agreements with the APRD and UFDR, the government of CAR and all the country's rebel groups signed the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement in June 2008. The Agreement required the government to pass a general amnesty law and to undertake the demobilisation, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants. These efforts paved the way for further talks in CAR's capital Bangui in December 2008, mediated by Gabon's President Omar Bongo. Both political and armed opposition groups participated in a process known as the "inclusive political dialogue", which led to an agreement to form a unity government including APRD and UFDR leaders in January 2009 (UNICEF, January 2009). Former president Ange-Felix Patassé, overthrown by Bozizé in 2003, returned from exile to participate in the process and announced that he would run as an independent candidate in the upcoming presidential election (Reuters AlertNet, 31 October 2009).

The various peace agreements and the prospect of a new government led to a marked decrease in fighting in the second half of 2008, but a splinter

rebel group emerged which challenged the DDR process and accused the government of failing to uphold its power-sharing agreements (ICG, 12 January 2010). In November 2009, the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (Convention des Patriotes pour la Justice et la Paix or CPJP) seized the northern town of Ndélé, leading to clashes with the army and new displacement (BBC, 27 November 2009). The latest wave of attacks by the CPJP took place from June to October 2010 (HDPT, 9 November 2010), highlighting the fragility of the peace process and the lack of stability in the run-up to the presidential election, which has now been postponed until January 2011.

#### *Presidential election*

CAR's presidential election has been postponed four times in 2010. It was originally scheduled to take place on 25 April, but was delayed because the DDR process had not progressed as planned and voter registration lists were incomplete (AFP, 28 February 2010). Problems with the registration of candidates caused the second postponement, forcing the National Assembly to extend President Bozizé's term of office beyond June 2010 (UN DPI, 20 September 2010). The two latest postponements were the result of the ongoing violence in the north.

The election is currently set to take place on 23 January 2011. The two primary contenders, Bozizé and Patassé, are both tainted by appalling human rights records, including killings and sexual violence perpetrated by troops under their command (Foreign Policy, 3 August 2010). The former defence minister turned rebel Jean-Jacques Démafouth, who is now deputy head of the national DDR programme, is a possible third candidate (AFP, 2 August 2010).

## **Displaced population movement and figures**

Nearly eight per cent of CAR's 4.5 million people are either internally displaced or living as refu-

gees outside the country, and the number fleeing has continued to increase during 2010. As of November, the UN estimated the number of IDPs at over 192,000 and the number of Central African refugees living in Cameroon and Chad at 162,000. CAR also hosts more than 31,000 refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Sudan (OCHA, 14 July 2010).

These population movements reveal a worrying trend of increasing violence and renewed displacements. As reported by the former UN secretary general's representative on IDPs' human rights, "efforts to build sustainable peace will be weakened as long as entire communities remain displaced and in despair" (UN News Service, 28 July 2010).

## **Physical security and basic necessities of life**

Since 2005, all parties to CAR's conflict have subjected civilians to a range of human rights abuses, including killings, the looting and burning of villages, destruction of fields, loss of livelihoods, sexual violence, and the abduction and recruitment of children. Government forces committed atrocities until late 2007 in retaliation for civilians' support of rebel groups. As the de facto authorities in some areas, these groups in turn punished civilians if they felt their authority was not respected. Criminal gangs have committed atrocities for financial gain, and self-defence militias created with government support in response to attacks by criminal gangs have recruited children to their ranks (IDMC, November 2008).

IDPs' living conditions in CAR are very different from those in neighbouring countries. Most have dispersed to remote rural towns after long periods living rough in the bush, and they rely almost entirely on their host communities for support. Those still living in the bush receive no humanitarian assistance because of problems of access.

In these cases, protection monitoring remains challenging (UNHCR, June 2010), and the difficulty in obtaining accurate displacement figures is yet another obstacle to providing much-needed services to IDPs. Given that IDPs are scattered over very large areas, the “protection by presence” strategies of humanitarian agencies are largely ineffective.

The UN identifies humanitarian priorities in CAR as food security, health, protection, water, sanitation and hygiene, and education (OCHA, 14 July 2010). These pressing needs affect IDPs, refugees, returnees and local host communities alike (ECHO, July 2010). The worsening security situation in 2010 has restricted people’s ability to farm, adding to food insecurity. According to the ICRC: “There is plenty of fertile land in the region but violence is interfering with traditional ways of life such as agriculture, hunting and fishing, with farmers often afraid to stray far from town to work their fields for fear of attack. This has reduced production, pushing up prices to the point at which not everyone can afford to buy food, even when it’s available” (IRIN, 12 November 2010). The ICRC will distribute food to about 55,000 people until mid-December in areas where the LRA has been active.

## National and international responses

### *National response*

Until 2009, the Ministry of Social Affairs was the government office charged with coordinating assistance to IDPs. However, it had neither the funds nor the capacity to respond to their needs. In 2009, CAR’s high commissioner for human rights and good governance created the National Standing Committee for IDPs (Comité National Permanent de Concertation et de Coordination pour la Gestion de la Protection des Droits des Personnes Déplacées) to coordinate a national response to internal displacement (Office of the President of the Central African Republic, 24 June 2009).

While the government has been unable to assist IDPs, it has given international humanitarian organisations unimpeded access to displaced communities and has allowed them to operate freely in the country. It has allowed UN agencies and NGOs to run rule-of-law projects with local authorities, security forces and even armed opposition groups such as the APRD. These have included workshops on human rights principles and the protection of IDPs. In July 2010, the government and civil society organisations took part in a workshop on the development of a national legal and institutional framework to address internal displacement (UN GA, 11 August 2010).

In June 2010, CAR was one of six African countries to sign the N’Djamena Declaration, a binding legal document aimed at ending the recruitment of children by all parties to the region’s conflicts (HDPT, 14 June 2010). The other five countries were Cameroon, Chad, Niger, Nigeria, and Sudan. CAR also signed the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) in September 2010 (UN News Centre, 27 September 2010).

CAR is also a signatory to the Pact on Security, Stability and Development in Africa’s Great Lakes (known as the Great Lakes Pact), which commits member states to incorporating the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement into domestic law and to creating a practical framework for their implementation (ICGLR, 14-15 December 2006).

In October 2009, the African Union adopted the Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (known as the Kampala Convention), the first legally binding regional measure to protect IDPs’ rights. The convention, however, will not come into force until it is ratified by at least 15 states. CAR is still to become a signatory, though the prime minister’s office and UNHCR did hold a meeting for members of parliament in October 2010 to examine

the convention with a view to ratification (HDPT, 9 November 2010).

In November 2010, eight countries in central Africa, including CAR, signed a convention to limit the spread of small and light-calibre weapons in one of the world's most volatile regions. Known as the Kinshasa Convention, it will come into force after ratification by six member states. The other seven signatories of the convention are Angola, Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Gabon, Republic of Congo, and Sao Tome and Principe (IRIN, 22 November 2010).

#### *International response*

UN agencies and international NGOs have provided protection and assistance to conflict-affected communities in CAR. Some have also worked on early recovery and development programmes. The cluster system, a coordination mechanism designed to improve humanitarian organisations' ability to protect and assist IDPs, was introduced in CAR in August 2007. Ten clusters now operate, including a protection cluster led by UNHCR (OCHA, 14 July 2010).

Humanitarian projects nevertheless remain severely underfunded. As of November 2010, only 43 per cent of the \$149 million requested in the revised 2010 Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) was funded, compared with 68 per cent of the \$116 million requested last year (OCHA, 30 November 2009). The health, protection and education sectors were only 17 per cent, 29 per cent and 37 per cent funded respectively (OCHA, 12 November 2010).

The Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has allocated UN agencies more than \$3 million to assist 500,000 people affected by the ongoing conflict (CERF, 14 October 2010). The UN Peacebuilding Commission has also allocated \$20 million to support security sector reform, economic revitalisation and rule of law programmes (UN News Service, 4 February 2010). This is in

addition to the \$10 million CAR received from the same body last year to kickstart efforts to build a lasting peace.

As required by UN Security Council resolution 1612, the UN country team in CAR established a task force on children and armed conflict in 2008. The task force is meant to implement a monitoring and reporting mechanism on six violations against children: killing or maiming, recruitment as soldiers, attacks against schools or hospitals, rape or other grave sexual violence, abduction, and denial of humanitarian access. While the task force has been slow to submit reports to the UN Security Council, it is taking steps to move the process forward. For example, UNICEF did conduct a workshop in September 2010 to train organisations that advocate for children's rights in the monitoring and reporting of violations. The workshop included training on interviewing children and their families while ensuring confidentiality and security (HDPT, 12 October 2010).

In October 2010, Ministers from CAR, DRC, Sudan and Uganda met in Bangui to set up a joint military task force under the supervision of the African Union to pursue the LRA across the region's vast and porous borders (OpenDemocracy, 18 October 2010). The US Congress also passed legislation requiring the US government to adopt a comprehensive strategy to help governments in the region disarm the LRA and protect civilians. The law calls for the coordination of US diplomatic, economic, intelligence and military efforts, as well as increased humanitarian aid to affected populations (Sudan Tribune, 14 May 2010).

**Note:** This is a summary of IDMC's internal displacement profile on the Central African Republic. The full profile is available online [here](#).

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## About the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, established in 1998 by the Norwegian Refugee Council, is the leading international body monitoring conflict-induced internal displacement worldwide.

Through its work, the Centre contributes to improving national and international capacities to protect and assist the millions of people around the globe who have been displaced within their own country as a result of conflicts or human rights violations.

At the request of the United Nations, the Geneva-based Centre runs an online database providing comprehensive information and analysis on internal displacement in some 50 countries.

Based on its monitoring and data collection activities, the Centre advocates for durable solutions to the plight of the internally displaced in line with international standards.

The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre also carries out training activities to enhance the capacity of local actors to respond to the needs of internally displaced people.

In its work, the Centre cooperates with and provides support to local and national civil society initiatives.

For more information, visit the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre website and the database at [www.internal-displacement.org](http://www.internal-displacement.org).

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