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Central African Republic: Violence of security forces now out of control

The security forces in the Central African Republic (CAR) are out of control and urgent action is needed by the national authorities and the international community to establish law and order, Amnesty International said in a report released today.

[CAR: Human rights crisis spiralling out of control](#) highlights the unprecedented scale of human rights violations committed across the country by Seleka, the coalition of armed groups, which launched an offensive against former President Francois Bozizé in early December 2012 and seized power in March 2013.

“Seleka forces have attacked civilians across the country, executing and torturing civilians, indiscriminately shelling communities, raping women and forcefully conscripting children,” says Godfrey Byaruhanga, Amnesty International’s CAR researcher.

“The level of hopelessness and despair has reached a new high as a result of these persistent, large scale human rights violations, which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.”

A senior government official told Amnesty International during a recent visit that ministers who were not heads of Seleka factions struggle to prevent the serious human rights violations and that not even President Michel Djotodia could issue orders to Seleka forces outside his faction.

In one incident documented by Amnesty International researchers, Seleka forces stopped a taxi carrying around a dozen men. They found a bag of T-shirts with Bozizé’s picture printed on them and suspected them all of being his supporters. They took them away to an unknown destination. Several days later, the bodies of some of the men were found floating in a nearby river with their arms and legs tied and displaying signs of torture.

One woman told Amnesty International how she had been raped by three Seleka forces lasting several hours, in view of her crying children. The soldiers bit and slapped her and a month on she still bore injuries from the vicious attack.

The Seleka coalition is reported to have recruited former criminals, many of them violent, such as highway robbers and poachers. It also reportedly includes Chadian and Sudanese fighters, who are believed to have committed a large number of human rights violations in the CAR.

It is estimated that there are as many as 3,500 child soldiers under the age of 18 within Seleka’s ranks, with some of them recruited from neighbouring Chad and Sudan. Amnesty International is extremely concerned that many of these children are being used as bargaining chips by foreign commanders who are waiting to be paid by the CAR government for their role in the war.

There are also fears that some of the abuses appear to be targeted at religious groups, with predominantly Muslim members of Seleka targeting churches and people they believe to be Christians. Meanwhile, Christian militia around the country are targeting Muslims.

Exacerbated by the conflict, the humanitarian situation in CAR is calamitous, with thousands of people dependent on food and medical care provided by aid workers. But these too are being targeted. In one incident, Seleka forces broke into a children's orphanage and opened fire, traumatizing the children. They then stole all the vehicles, computers and food supplies.

On 7 September 2013, Seleka militia in Bossangoa severely beat and then summarily executed two workers of ACTED, a French humanitarian organization.

Amnesty International is calling upon the CAR authorities to publically and unequivocally condemn all human rights violations committed by all security forces and armed groups; to bring perpetrators to justice and provide reparations for the victims.

"The Central African authorities have shown scant signs of ending these human rights violations or bringing the perpetrators to justice and the international community's efforts are piecemeal and ineffective," said Godfrey Byaruhanga.

"The African Union, leading the deployment of African troops in CAR, declared in July 2013 that it would deploy some 3,500 soldiers to protect civilians but less than half of these are in the country. Moreover, this number would be grossly inadequate in a country more than twice the size of France," said Godfrey Byaruhanga.

The UN is currently deciding whether or not it will intervene to take over peacekeeping in the CAR. Amnesty International calls upon the UN to support and train the peacekeeping forces to be able to establish law and order and to deploy human rights monitors to cover the whole country.

Concerned about the horrific situation in the CAR, numerous delegations from the UN, AU, European Union and other foreign governments have visited the country since President Bozizé was ousted in March 2013. But Amnesty International is concerned that these various stakeholders are not properly coordinating their efforts with each other or the national authorities.

The organization is calling on the AU and the UN to ensure effective and coordinated measures are taken to establish law and order in the country and finally put an end to this devastating human rights and humanitarian crisis.