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Central African Republic: UN peacekeeping mission needed to avoid mass slaughter

The UN Security Council has no time to waste to authorize a robust peacekeeping force for deployment to the Central African Republic to protect civilians from the violence and chaos engulfing the country, Amnesty International said today.

This week, the Security Council is expected to give French and African Union troops on the ground an initial mandate to rein in the armed groups responsible for spiralling human rights abuses. But a full-fledged UN peacekeeping operation may be necessary to overcome the current crisis.

“The consequences of this life-and-death decision will affect an entire country. If the Security Council does not act now to stem the horrific cycle of violence in the Central African Republic, that failure will hang heavily on the international community for years to come,” said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International.

“The Security Council must request that the UN Secretary-General immediately start preparations for the deployment of a robust peacekeeping force, with a mandate to protect civilians, including internally displaced persons (IDPs). Troops on the ground must have the resources necessary to stop the ongoing abuses and rein in armed groups and forces that have already spun out of control over the past year.”

The call comes as France has already begun sending between 800 and 1,000 additional troops to bolster a contingent of some 2,600 African Union (AU) forces on the ground. The country has largely descended into lawlessness since the Seleka coalition of armed groups ousted President François Bozizé and took power in March.

An [Amnesty International report](#) released on 29 October documented severe human rights violations and abuses in the country. Tens of thousands have been internally displaced, with hundreds of unlawful killings, extrajudicial executions, rape and other forms of violence against women and girls widely committed with total impunity by members of the security forces and armed groups alike. An Amnesty International delegation to neighbouring Chad earlier this month interviewed people who have fled Central African Republic to refugee camps across the border.

The Security Council should act now to assist the AU forces in the Republic – as well as reinforcements from France or other countries – to protect civilians, including IDPs and refugees, under a UN mandate and ensure that they have the resources to do so effectively and in full compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

It is expected that discussions around the structure and mandate of any UN peacekeeping mission in the Republic will continue in the coming weeks and months.

“The people of the Central African Republic cannot wait another day. They are staring into the abyss, with mass slaughter of civilians a real danger. The UN Security Council must act now to ensure that AU and French troops on the ground can start functioning as an effective peacekeeping force, with more reinforcements to follow as needed,” said Shetty.

In particular, Amnesty International urges the Security Council to:

- Request that the UN Secretary-General immediately start preparations for the **deployment of a robust peacekeeping force** to the Central African Republic to protect civilians, including IDPs and refugees, and stop the downward spiral into a human catastrophe of epic proportions.
- **Take transitional measures to stem the violence.** The international community should support a proposal by the UN Secretary-General to draw in troops from UN peacekeeping missions in neighbouring countries until the full UN peacekeeping mission can be deployed in the Central African Republic.
- Ensure the peacekeeping mission as well as any transitional mechanisms have **a strong human rights mandate** to protect civilians from crimes under international law and to protect IDPs and refugees. The force should have strong capacity and expertise with respect to sexual and gender-based violence and women’s human rights. It should be proactive in protecting civilians and have rules of engagement that reflect this mandate.

The Security Council is also expected to seek an international arms embargo on the Central African Republic. There is a substantial risk that any further arms supplied to the country would be used to commit or facilitate more human rights abuses. Such arms transfers would violate essential provisions of the [Arms Trade Treaty](#), which can already be applied by the 115 states that have signed the treaty.