

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON THE NEW CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC GOVERNMENT TO PROTECT CIVILIANS

Amnesty International is calling on the new government in the Central African Republic (CAR) to end the scourge of human rights violations and the humanitarian crises currently affecting the country.

The African Union together with the United Nations and foreign governments must use their influence to ensure that the administration in Bangui takes immediate measures to protect civilians from human rights abuses and bring an end to impunity.

Civilians bare the brunt of the human rights violations. The human rights violations include extrajudicial executions, torture, arbitrary arrests, unlawful detentions, armed robbery, looting and indiscriminate shootings resulting in multiple deaths and injuries.

Amnesty International received reports of armed men raping women and girls, some of whom are pregnant. Many children, some of whom had recently been demobilized have been re-recruited by Seleka.

Tens of thousands of civilians have been internally displaced and others have fled to neighbouring countries as a result of the violence.

According to reports, Seleka soldiers have been summarily executing and torturing members of the former government's security forces, sometimes under the pretext of carrying out disarmament.

Amnesty International is concerned that there is no evidence that the government is taking measures to halt the cycle of violence and human rights violations or to bring perpetrators to justice.

Human rights defenders in the CAR have told Amnesty International that they thought they had witnessed the worst excesses of blatant human rights violations and impunity in the CAR but are shocked that they cannot remember a period worse than since the new government came to power. The CAR government must assure human rights defenders, humanitarian workers and journalists that they can carry out their work without fear and that those who attack them will be brought to justice in fair trials.

Since a coalition of armed groups known as Seleka launched a war in December 2012 to overthrow President François Bozizé, hundreds of civilians are reported to have been killed. Some of the civilians have reportedly been targeted and killed because of their known or suspected support for Bozizé's government or their opposition to Seleka. The CAR government must publicly and unequivocally condemn human rights violations by Seleka soldiers.

Many of these unlawful killings have occurred in the capital, Bangui, and others in other parts of the country occupied by Seleka before and after the fall of Bozizé's government.

Other civilians have been killed while resisting human rights abuses, including looting of their property. Some Seleka soldiers are also reported to have been killed by civilians in revenge. Other civilians have been killed by soldiers in reprisal attacks.

There is serious concern for the rights and safety of human rights defenders, humanitarian workers, journalists and members of civil society organizations. Several leaders of human rights organizations have gone into hiding and others have fled the country after they were threatened with death by Seleka gunmen.

Amnesty International urges the CAR authorities to protect members of civil society organizations and ensure that they can do their work without fear and in safety. Property that has been looted or robbed must be returned to their rightful owners and the perpetrators brought to justice.