



Security Assessment

Of

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC (CAR)

25 October 2016

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Background

The Central African Republic's (CAR) political and security situation has remained volatile since March 2013 when the militia known as the Séléka, which draws mostly from the country's minority Muslim population, toppled President François Bozizé. Fighting between the Séléka rebels and anti-Balaka Christian militias ensued, prompting the establishment of the United Nations (UN) peacekeeping mission (known by the French acronym MINUSCA) in 2014. Although a relatively peaceful transfer of power took place in February 2016, armed groups continue to engage in violence as the deeply engrained drivers of the conflict still exist.

On top of the sectarian conflict in CAR, the most recent bout of unrest has revolved around the continued presence of the 13,000-strong MINUSCA mission, which has been accused by dozens of allegations of sexual abuse, prompting a broad UN inquiry. In July 2016, the UN Security Council voted unanimously to extend the peacekeeping mission in CAR until November 2017. Criticism of the mission has mounted in recent weeks with CAR nationals accusing the peacekeepers of not doing enough to protect civilians. Civil society groups launched a petition last week calling for MINUSCA's departure and for the re-arming of the national armed forces, currently subject to a weapons embargo.

While violence and unrest in the capital has been relatively rare in recent months, October has seen a slight uptick in activity. On 24 October, four civilians were killed and 14 others wounded – including five peacekeepers – as anti-MINUSCA protesters attempted to storm the UN headquarters in the main square in Bangui, prompting UN troops to reportedly fire live ammunition. However, a MINUSCA spokesman claims the UN had only fired tear gas to disperse the demonstration. On 4 October, the US Embassy reported disturbances between MINUSCA troops and civilians in Bangui's notoriously unstable PK5 district. According to reports, 11 people were killed in clashes, which were set off by the murder of an army officer. Outside of Bangui, on 12 October, at least 30 people were killed and dozens wounded during an attack on refugees by Séléka forces in CAR's remote north. According to officials, Séléka forces killed 13 people before UN peacekeepers repelled them, killing at least 10.

On 19 October, the US Department of State (DoS) released an updated Travel Warning—replacing a Travel Warning previously released on 16 April—continuing to advise US citizens to avoid travel to CAR due to the unpredictable security situation that is subject to rapid deterioration, the activities of armed groups, and violent crime. The warning also urges citizens currently in CAR to consider departing.

Assessment

Global Rescue continues to rate CAR as a country with an Extreme security risk. The security situation remains unstable, and periods of unrest and outbreaks of violence can arise without warning. Armed groups may still engage in violence as the deeply engrained drivers of the conflict still exist, including extreme poverty, sectarian tension, the absence of a formal economy, the abundance of firearms in the region, and the loosely organized structure of armed groups. Kidnapping is common in CAR and Westerners, aid workers, individuals linked to foreign missions or other international organizations, and those who appear wealthy are often targeted. Several foreign governments advise against travel to the country and consular assistance for foreigners is limited due to continued instability. Local authorities may impose curfews and travel restrictions at short notice. Due to these factors, Global Rescue continues to rate the country with its highest possible security risk rating and recommends that anyone choosing to travel to CAR is informed of the risks involved, takes necessary precautions ahead of and during travel, and has redundant contingency plans in place.