



**Statement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict**

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**to the Security Council on the Situation in the Central African Republic (CAR)**

**New York  
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Mr President,  
Distinguished Members of the Council,  
Dear UN Colleagues,

I want to thank the Security Council, under the Presidency of the Kingdom of Jordan, for inviting us to contribute to the efforts to end violence in the Central African Republic (CAR). I am also grateful to the Permanent Representation of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg for supporting this initiative.

Exactly one year ago, in January 2013, I briefed this Council following my visit to the Central African Republic (CAR) from 5-13 December 2012. I noted the horrendous trends of sexual violence and warned that if parties were not made to respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, the consequences would be grave.

I referred to two Joint Communiqués, the first signed between the UN and Government and the other with armed groups participating in the National DDR Steering Committee, aimed at consolidating the commitment of the parties to the conflict to prevent crimes of conflict-related sexual violence.

I also recalled CAR was a “forgotten conflict”, and I warned the International Community to pay particular attention to the management of regional aspects of the crisis.

Mr President,  
Distinguished Members of the Council,

Today, the situation in CAR has deteriorated and many of the worst predictions have unfortunately come true. Communities have taken up weapons, killing each other based on religious affinity. Part of the tragedy is that this extreme animosity is new; previously these communities lived with each other, worked side by side and intermarried. Clearly this could have been prevented.

The participation of children in the commission of these atrocious crimes may signify the “point of no return”, beyond which the cohabitation of certain communities may be impossible in the near future. There should be no doubt that the violence in the Central African Republic will stain the conscience of its people and the world forever.

At the invitation of SRSG Gaye, I dispatched Nancee Oku Bright, my Chief of Staff, to participate in a joint mission to the CAR together with the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, from 17-21 December 2013. The Mission was assisted by a joint technical level-mission organized in conjunction with the OSRSG CAAC from 12-23 December, which travelled to Bouar and also coordinated with a fact-finding team deployed by the High Commissioner on Human Rights, during the same period.

The delegation observed the unfolding situation of violence in the CAR and in some cases eye-witnessed near-lynching incidents and empty villages with homes still burning. We learnt about the growing strength and organisation of armed groups, particularly Anti-Balaka, who have colluded with former national army elements, the ex-FACA, and are targeting Muslim combatants and civilians. Likewise, Muslim civilians have created militias to protect themselves and have engaged in retaliatory attacks, reportedly with the aid of Seleka and Chadian elements.

Sexual violence continues to be pervasive in the conflict. Between January and November 2013, the UN recorded at least 4,530 cases of sexual violence perpetrated by armed men, largely believed to be

Séléka, in Bangui, Boali, Bossembélé, Damara, Mbaiki, Sibut and Prefecture de l'Ouham Pende.

Following the 5<sup>th</sup> December attacks by Anti-Balaka and FACA elements on military positions in Bangui, there are reports that conflict-related sexual violence has continued to be used. The team received reports of sexual violence used by Anti-Balaka and Seleka during house- to-house searches and during retaliatory attacks. The mission also confirmed that forced marriages, sometimes involving children, were being contracted mainly by Seleka elements.

There are also numerous allegations that IDP camps, most of which shelter elements of armed groups, are the locus of conflict-related sexual violence. Victims are afraid to come forward to report these crimes due to the continued presence of elements of armed groups in communities and the absence of law and order.

I am very perturbed by the finding of the mission that adequate provisions were not made to assist victims of sexual violence during the year-long conflict.

There are however, some encouraging signs that the situation could improve. The involvement of religious leaders, Muslims and Christians alike, in ongoing initiatives to reconcile communities in CAR is commendable and should be supported by the international community.

The efforts of BINUCA, under the able leadership of SRSG Babacar Gaye, in the management of two delicate political transitions is worthy of high praise. In that regard, the international community, which has responded decisively in deploying the African-led International Support Mission in the CAR (MISCA) and the French Operation Sangaris deserve commendation.

I also welcome the recent announcement of the EU of its intention to deploy a mission to the CAR. The international community should provide the necessary support required for the implementation of resolutions 2121 and 2127.

However, important steps are required to be taken to stop the violence in the CAR and limit the damage that is being inflicted on the citizens of this nation and on the conscience of humanity as a whole.

The historic appointment of the first-ever female interim President in the Central African Republic is a source of hope and inspiration for all. Women's leadership at the highest levels of government is a powerful symbol of progress and change, but no leader can steer this transition alone. I therefore urge the international community to lend her its full support and cooperation so that she may be a force for unity and peace, in a country that has known too much chaos and war.

Secondly, there is the need to conduct a comprehensive DDRRR, DDR program in an improved protective environment for civilians. This will help dissuade the creation of community-based self-defense groups. Subsequent efforts to build a national army should take into account the application of human rights standards, as prescribed in resolutions 2121 and 2127.

Thirdly, the international community must improve the coordination of its efforts in the CAR. The establishment of simple tools such as emergency hotlines and coordinated rapid response mechanisms can save lives.

International forces operating in the CAR also need to be sensitive to the specificities of this conflict, requiring an in-depth understanding of the crisis and its causes. This requires the deployment of specific expertise in civil-military coordination and the protection of civilians.

Furthermore, the proactive management of regional dynamics could pay rapid dividends and lay the foundation for solving this crisis.

I congratulate the Council for its attention and the important steps it has already taken to stop the violence and ensure accountability for crimes. I commend the Council for establishing sanctions mechanisms as well as a Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights violations in CAR and call for their expedited implementation. The importance of deploying various fact-finding missions by the High Commissioner for Human Rights cannot be overestimated.

Finally, I call for an increased focus on the prevention of conflict-related sexual violence by international partners, to ensure that services are available to victims of sexual violence, especially in places of displacement and isolated locations.

Thank You.