Overview
Central African Republic (CAR) was a French colony, as Ubanghi-Shari. The territory of present day CAR was called Oubangui-Shari in colonial times, named after the country's two largest rivers. It was 1 of 4 territories of French Equatorial African Empire, marking the point where French colonial advance to the east was halted. Colonial rule was based on a plantation economy, and the French were often brutal in their treatment of the local population. CAR was formed in 1958 as the French empire
broke up, and became officially independent in 1960. The leader of the country in the 1950s, the priest Barthelemy Boganda, died in a plane crash in 1959. The young teacher David Dacko became President on independence, with strong French backing. David Dacko's rule was corrupt and incompetent. He was overthrown in a coup in 1966 by Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa. If life under Dacko was bad, it was about to get much worse under Bokassa. His rule was utterly despotic, culminating in his decision to transform the country into an empire, with himself as emperor, in 1976. The ruinously expensive coronation ceremony, based on the coronation of Napoleon, became a symbol of the excesses of despotic power. His regime unraveled rapidly in 1979, as he lost the crucial support of the French following an incident in which protesting school children were killed. He was toppled in September in a bloodless coup, orchestrated by the French, who put David Dacko back in the Presidential hot seat. Dacko restored the republic following the imperial interregnum. However, he was duly overthrown again, by the General Andre Kolingba in 1981. Initially the head of a military junta, Kolingba gradually incorporated civilians into his government. In 1986, he formed a political party, the RDC, and he became constitutional president in November 1986.

In 1958 until March 1959 subsequently became part of the French equatorial Africa & named an autonomous republic within the French community under the late Mr. Barthelemy Boganda, as it's native prime minister.

CAR gained it's independence on August 13, 1960. Headship since independence; Head of State

An independent state entitled "Central African Republic" declared under Mr. David Dacko, a former school teacher, as it's founder president on the 14th August, 1960, but inaugurated to office in December, 1960. In 1966 the CAR Military overthrew the civilian government of Mr. David Dacko and installed Colonel Jean Bedel Bokassa who had won "Croix de Guerre" in the French Indo-China Army, then commander of CAR Armed Forces as well as a distant cousin to the deposed president, came to power on the 31st December 1965, named himself president for life in 1972 and later to rename the country "Central African Empire" renamed himself "Emperor Bokassa".

BRIEF ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CENTRAL AFRICAN EMPIRE
The Central African Empire was a short-lived monarchical regime established in 1976 in what was then the Central African Republic, by Jean-Bédel Bokassa, the nation's president. Inspired by Napoleon's coronation in 1804, "Bokassa I" staged his own elaborate ritual inside a large outdoor stadium in Bangui, his capital, on 4 December 1977. While guests sweltered in the 100-degree heat, the self-proclaimed emperor ascended a giant golden throne shaped like an eagle with outstretched wings, donned a 32-pound coronation robe containing 785,000 pearls and 1,220,000 crystal beads, and then crowned himself with a gold crown topped by a 138-carat diamond that cost over $2,000,000 to manufacture. His empress, Catherine—the youngest of his three wives—was then invested with a smaller diadem. The total bill for Bokassa's regalia alone came to $5,000,000. 240 tons of food and drink were flown into Bangui for Bokassa's coronation banquet, including a tureen of caviar so large that two chefs had to carry it, and a seven-layer cake. Sixty new Mercedes-Benz limousines were airlifted into the capital, at a hefty cost of $300,000 for airfreight alone. All in all, the entire ceremony cost $20,000,000 to stage, an astronomical sum in a nation whose annual gross domestic product was only $250,000,000. The newly-coronated emperor used French aid grants to cover a significant portion of the bill, saying: "Everything here was financed by the French government. We ask the French for money, get it and waste it". In 1979, emperor Bokassa was overthrown in a coup, carried out with French military support, by the very man he had overthrown in 1965, Mr. David Dacko. The monarchy was abolished, the emperor was exiled, and his empire reverted to its former name, Central African Republic (CAR).

A Republic in central Africa. Central Africa Republic abbreviated as CAR joined with Chad in 1906 to form the French colony of Ubangi-Shari, was separated from Chad in 1920, later to become an overseas territory of France in 1946. It subsequently became part of the French equatorial Africa & named an autonomous republic within the French community in 1958 until March, 1959 under premiership of the late Mr. Barthelemy Boganda, as it's native prime minister. An independent state entitled "Central African Republic" declared with Mr. David Dacko, a former school teacher, as it's first president on the 14th August, 1960, but inaugurated to office on December, 1960, that's was almost a year after the sudden death of its prominent politician, Mr. Barthelemy Boganda, he was the leading pre-independence nationalist politician of what is now Central African Republic, he was active prior to his country's independence during the period when
the area under the name "Ubangui-Shari", he served as the first native prime minister of "Central African Republic autonomous territory within the French community" intended to serve as the first president of independent Central African Republic, he was killed in a mysterious plane crash on the 29th of March, 1959, while en route to Bangui, the capital.

In 1966 the CAR military overthrew the civilian government of Mr. David Dacko and installed Colonel Jean Bedel Bokassa who had previously served under the French Indo-China forces, then commander of the CAR Armed Forces as well as a distant cousin to the deposed president came to power on the 31st December 1965, named himself president for life in 1972 and later declared himself "Emperor Bokassa I" and renamed the country "the Central African Empire". Emperor Bokassa I, converted to Islam, renamed "Emperor Salah Nur Idi Ahmed of the Central African Empire" at an extravagant coronation crowned with a Persian made Diamond crown enthroning on a 2000 kg golden Eagle-wing throne which expenses afforded by the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya in December, 1976 before his conversion to Catholicism once again, his reign ended up on September, 1979, and went exile to the west African nation of Cote D’Ivoire during a period whose Mr. David Dacko the founder president has made a brief political comeback from exile (France), as third president in 2nd September, 1979 to September, 1981. Emperor Bokassa came back CAR to face trial in October, 1986 where a court sentenced him to death but turned the ruling to a life imprisonment, he later got a presidential amnesty of the ex-military head of state General Andre Kolingba until he dies of heart attack at age of 75 in 2nd November, 1996. The late emperor Bokassa has survived by 69 children from 17 wives.

In September, 1981 the army led by General Andre Kolingba took over political power in a military coup against president David Dacko once again, under a new one party rule constitution he was elected president for a six-year term until he forcibly stand down for free election to be held in 1992, after decades of misrule, mostly by military governments, a civilian rule was established under Mr. Ange Felix-Patassie who was first elected in democratic polls in 1993, he won re-election six years later, the civilian rule lasted only for one decade, during the period, CAR experienced a number of military mutinies and internal unrests, General Francois Bozize, the current president had taken-up arms against the civilian government in 2001, then to oust the civilian president Ange-Felix Patassie when rebel soldiers loyal to the Army chief of staff seized power in March, 2003, the civilian president, who succeeded by
the incumbent president, went into self-exile to Togo, west Africa. Mr. David Dacko the founder president died on the 20th of November, 2003 in exile.

The ex-Army chief of staff, General Francois Bozize, then established a transitional government. Following a municipal, legislative and presidential elections held on in May of 2005, General Francois Bozize was reaffirmed as president of CAR in followed elections. The former CAR president Ange-Felix Patassie has died recently at the age of 74, after being ousted by the current president in March 2003, he has died in Cameroon.

Major Conflicts
First Coup
When: 1966
Who: David Dacko vs Jean-Bedel Bokassa
Why: Personal ambition on the part of Bokassa. He took advantage of Dacko’s clumsy attempt to dilute his influence in the army
Outcome: Dacko overthrown by Bokassa

Second Coup
When: 1979
Who: Bokassa vs the French
Why: Bokassa’s controversial self-coronation as Emperor in 1977 and his subsequent massacre of protesting school children alienated world opinion and forced France to back a coup against him
Outcome: Bokassa was replaced by Dacko who was flown in from Paris

Third Coup
When: 1981
Who: Dacko vs Gen Andre Kolingba
Why: Local French security advisers believed to be acting without the mandate of the French Government conspired against Dacko
Outcome: Kolingba assumed power as Head of State

First multi-party election cancelled
When: 1992
Who: Kolingba vs Angie-Felix Patasse
Why: Kolingba engineered the cancellation deliberately after realizing he had trailed with only 10 per cent of the vote
Outcome: Western envoys, led by the US ambassador, forced Kolingba to reschedule within months another election, which Patasse won

Military rebellion and failed coup
When: 2001
Who: Patasse vs pro-Andre Kolingba soldiers
Why: Patasse’s perceived marginalization of the Yakoma ethnic group
provoked a mutiny of Yakoma soldiers in Bangui’s Camp Kassai military barracks. The mutiny was crushed by the intervention of Libyans and Congolese soldiers loyal to Jean-Pierre Bemba
Outcome: The brutality of Bemba’s troops against the Yakoma directly led to his subsequent indictment by the International Criminal Court

Fourth Coup
When: 2003
Who: Patasse vs General Francois Bozize
Why: Patasse had sacked Bozize as army chief of staff on suspicion of involvement in the 2001 coup attempt. Bozize fled to Chad from where he launched the counter-attack against Patasse
Outcome: Patasse was overthrown after alienating most of the CAR’s military and political factions

A National Reconciliation Commission appointed by President Bozize is a national priority. President Bozize heads an uneasy coalition government beset by ethnic rivalries and a legacy of political turmoil.

Hundreds of thousands of internally displaced people owing to many years of political turmoil CAR has a heavy burden of refugees from Chad, DRC and Sudan
The infrastructure is poor and outside Bangui is almost non-existent
Heavy dependence on foreign aid
A very limited tax base
Widespread poverty: Illegal arms proliferate in the poorly-policed countryside as a result of years of civil strife.
Tropical diseases like malaria.

According to international agencies, civic and human rights groups, CAR suffers one of the highest incidences in the world of child trafficking, both internally and into neighboring countries, for forced labor and sexual exploitation.

December 20, 2012: Central African Republic's rebellion' Rebels in the Central African Republic have taken over several towns, including the key mining centre of Bria, in just two weeks. The unrest has prompted the president to ask Chad for help - and troops have been sent over the border to help stop the rebel advance.

Who are the rebels? Called the Seleka coalition, their fighters are formed from the breakaway factions of several former armed groups. In 2007,
these groups signed an accord with the government and agreed to be integrated into the army. But recently some of the rebels who did join the army have deserted and taken up arms. They accuse President Francoise Bozize of not honoring the ceasefire deal, which pledged the release of political prisoners and payment for fighters who disarmed.

Do they pose a real threat? Yes, now the rebels say want to depose President Bozize unless he negotiates. Since independence in 1960 the landlocked country has had a history of coups and rebellions, the most infamous led by Jean-Bedel Bokassa who declared himself emperor. Even the current president is a former army chief-turned-rebel leader, taking power in 2003. He has since won several disputed elections. As a result of all the instability, illegal weapons proliferate across the CAR, where its forests and its rich resources provide cover and money for armed groups. The unrest is partly fuelled by ethnic rivalries and poor communities who feel ignored by those in power. Added to the mix, the Ugandan rebel movement the Lord's Resistance Army has become active in the region - further increasing insecurity.

Can't the army halt the unrest? It is underfinanced, and its soldiers lack equipment and motivation. Historically CAR's leaders are wary of having a strong army. Only the presidential guard, made of troops from Mr Bozize's own ethnic group, has real firepower. Soldiers from Chad were actually in charge of the president's personal security until October when they were withdrawn.

Why is Chad so involved in CAR?
Mr Bozize came to power with the assistance of the Chadian army. Chad's President Idris Deby wants a close ally to the south. The unrest in CAR represents a serious security threat to Chad. The countries share a long and porous border and Chad already hosts several thousand refugees who have fled fighting over the years. In the past, Chad has faced rebel attacks from groups based in Sudan, its neighbor to the east. It does not want another area where rebel groups could base themselves. And it has intervened on several other occasions since 2003 to put down rebellions. Its most recent foray into CAR was to help defeat a rebel group whose leader, Baba Ladde, was from Chad.

Is the international community doing anything to help?
There are two international peace missions in CAR:
The UN Integrated Peace Building Office in Central African Republic (Binuca), whose staff has been trying to encourage dialogue between disparate groups.

And Micopax, a 400-strong regional force, funded by the European Union, which has a mandate to protect civilians and is involved disarmament exercises.

The Ugandan army, helped by US military advisers, is also trying to track down the LRA fighters. BBC News Africa

Central Africa Republic And The Bush War: The Central African Republic Bush War (2004–2007) began with the rebellion by the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) in North-Eastern CAR, led by Michel Djotodia, after President François Bozizé seized power in 2003. This quickly escalated into major fighting during 2004. During this conflict, the UFDR rebel forces fought the CAR government concurrently with several other rebel groups that were located in other parts of the country, including the Groupe d'action patriotique pour la libération de Centrafricaine (GAPLC), the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), the People's Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD), the Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ), and the Front démocratique Centrafricain (FDC). Tens of thousands of people were displaced by the unrest, which continued until 2007, with rebel forces seizing several cities during the conflict.

On 13 April 2007, a peace agreement between the government and the UFDR was signed in Birao. The agreement provided for an amnesty for the UFDR, its recognition as a political party, and the integration of its fighters into the army. Further negotiations resulted in an agreement in 2008 for reconciliation, a unity government, and local elections in 2009 and parliamentary and presidential elections in 2010. The new unity government that resulted was formed in January 2009.

According to the Human Rights Watch, hundreds of civilians were killed, more than 10,000 houses burned, and approximately 212,000 persons fled their homes to live in desperate conditions deep in the bush in northern parts of the Central African Republic. Additionally, rebel groups say that Bozizé has not followed the terms of the 2007 agreement, and that there continue to be political abuses, especially in the northern part of the country, such as "torture and illegal executions".

Despite the 25 August signing of the peace agreement between the
government and the CPJP that promised final closure of the Bush War, political violence continued in eastern and central CAR. On 15 September a dissident faction of the CPJP, led by Hassan Al-Habib and calling itself Fundamental CPJP, attacked the towns of Sibut, Damara and Dekoa. Two members of the national army, the Central African Armed Forces (known by its French acronym, FACA) were reportedly killed at Dekoa. Fundamental CPJP were opposed to the peace agreement, and in a radio announcement, the group threatened to march on Bangui. On 13 November, two civilians and a police officer traveling to Bangui were shot to death on the road between Sibut and Damara, near the village of Libi on the boundary of the Ombella-M'Poko prefecture. Further east in Obo, a FACA vehicle was attacked with RPGs on the same day. A civilian in the vehicle was killed and an unspecified number of troops injured. The vehicle was destroyed. The attack was Popular Front for Recovery rebels, who had been active in the region for some time.

Truce discussions and foreign troops’

On 30 December President Bozize agreed to a possible national unity government with members of the Séléka coalition, after meeting with current African Union chairperson Thomas Yayi Boni. He added that the CAR government was ready to begin peace talks "without condition and without delay". By 1 January reinforcements from FOMAC began to arrive in Damara to support the 400 Chadian troops already stationed there as part of the MICOPAX mission. With rebels closing in on the capital Bangui, a total of 360 soldiers were sent to boost the defenses of Damara – 120 each from Gabon, Republic of the Congo and Cameroon, with a Gabonese general in command of the force. In the capital itself, deadly clashes erupted after police killed a young Muslim man suspected of links to Séléka. According to news reports, the man was arrested overnight, and was shot when he tried to escape. Shortly after that clashes began in Bangui's PK5 neighborhood, killing one police officer. Meanwhile, in a new development, the US State Department voiced its concern over the "arrests and disappearances of hundreds of individuals who are members of ethnic groups with ties to the Séléka rebel alliance".

On 2 January a presidential decree read on state radio announced that President Bozize was the new head of the defense ministry, taking over from his son, Jean Francis Bozize. In addition, army chief Guillaume Lapo was dismissed due to failure of the CAR military to stop the rebel offensive in December. Meanwhile, rebel spokesman Col. Djouma Narkoyo confirmed that Séléka had stopped their advance and will enter peace talks due to start in Libreville on 8 January, on the precondition that
government forces stop arresting members of the Gula tribe. The rebel coalition confirmed it will demand the immediate departure of President Bozize, who has pledged to see out his term until its end in 2016. Jean-Félix Akaga, the Gabonese general in charge of the MICOPAX force sent by the ECCAS, declared that Damara represented a "red line that the rebels cannot cross", and that doing so would be "a declaration of war" against the 10 members of the regional bloc. It was also announced that Angola had contributed to the 760 troops stationed in the CAR, while France had further boosted its military presence in the country to 600 troops, sent to protect French nationals in case it is required.

On 6 January, South African President Jacob Zuma announced the deployment of 400 troops to the CAR to assist the forces already present there. Rebel forces secured two small towns near Bambari as peace talks were scheduled to begin in two days.

The Rebel SELEKA Offensive’
On 10 December an armed group seized the towns of N'Délé, Sam Ouandja and Ouadda. Rebels fought with government and allied CPJP troops for over an hour before securing the town of N'Délé. At least five government troops were reportedly killed. At Sam Ouandja, rebels claimed to had captured 22 soldiers and heavy mounted weapons.

On 15 December, rebel forces took Bamingui, a town approximately 120 km (75 mi) from N'Délé in a direct line towards Bangui. Three days later they advanced to Bria, an important diamond mining town lying 200 km (120 mi) southeast of Ouadda. The successful early morning rebel assault on 18 December killed over 15 government soldiers. The Seleka claim they are fighting because of a lack of progress after a peace deal ended the 2004–2007 Central African Republic Bush War. Following an appeal for help from Central African President François Bozizé, the President of Chad, Idriss Déby, pledged to send 2,000 troops to help quell the rebellion. The first Chadian troops arrived on 18 December to reinforce the CAR contingent in Kaga Bandoro, in preparation for a counter-attack on N'Délé.

Seleka forces took Kabo on 19 December, a major hub for transport between Chad and CAR, located west and north of the areas previously taken by the rebels. Four days later the rebel coalition took over Bambari, the country's third largest town, followed by Kaga-Bandoro on 25 December. On the same day, President Bozizé met with military advisers in the capital Bangui.
On 26 December hundreds of protesters angered by the rebel advance surrounded the French embassy in Bangui, hurling stones, burning tires and tearing down the French flag. The demonstrators accused the former colonial power of failing to help the army fight off rebel forces. At least 50 people, including women and children, were sheltering inside the building, protected by a large contingent of around 250 French troops that surrounded the area. A separate, smaller group of protesters chanted slogans outside the US Embassy and threw stones at cars carrying white passengers, according to news reports. A scheduled Air France weekly flight from Paris to Bangui had to turn back "due to the situation in Bangui", a spokeswoman at the company said.

Later in the day rebel forces reached Damara, bypassing the town of Sibut where around 150 Chadian troops are stationed together with CAR troops that withdrew from Kaga-Bandoro. Josué Binoua, the CAR's minister for territorial administration, requested that France intervene in case the rebels, now only 75 km (47 mi) away, manage to reach the capital Bangui. Colonel Djouma Narkoyo, a spokesman for Seleka, called on the army to lay down its weapons, adding that "Bozizé has lost all his legitimacy and does not control the country."

December 23, 2012: Rebels in Central African Republic take city of Bambari'
Rebels in the Central African Republic (CAR) have seized the key city of Bambari as part of their offensive against President Francois Bozize. The city, the third largest in the country, fell into rebels’ hands after two hours of fighting with government forces, witnesses said. Bambari is one of several towns recently captured by the rebels - and the nearest one to the capital Bangui. The rebels accuse President Bozize of failing to honor a 2007 peace deal. Their move into Bambari comes a day after regional leaders called on the rebels to withdraw back to their original positions and accept talks with the government.

Government minister Josue Binoua said that if the rebels wanted peace, they had to respect the mediation efforts under way and halt their advance, the Associated Press news agency reports. Observers say the rebels may have decided to push forward in a show of force to put more pressure on the administration before sitting down for talks, the BBC's West Africa correspondent Thomas Fessy notes. Displaced people: The rebels - known as the Seleka coalition - say the 2007 deal between the government and former armed groups was meant to see the release of political prisoners and payment for fighters who laid down their arms.
Seleka, which is made up of breakaway factions from three of the former armed groups, has pledged to depose Mr Bozize unless he negotiates with them. They began their campaign a month ago, and have taken several towns in their push towards the capital. They took the mining town of Bria in a diamond-rich part of the country a few days ago. Bambari is at a key crossroads between diamond mining sites and routes to the east.

A spokesman for the medical charity Medecins Sans Frontieres told the BBC that many people had been displaced by the fighting, including some in areas still controlled by government troops. Neighboring Chad, which has helped President Bozize fight several rebellions in the past, has stationed troops just under 200km (124 miles) north of Bangui to act as a buffer force should the rebels continue their advance. Mr Bozize has been in power since leading a coup in 2003 and winning elections in 2005 and 2011. The 2007 accord led to rebel forces being integrated into the army. But some of the rebels have since deserted and taken up arms again. The CAR is rich in mineral resources, including gold and diamonds, but its population is extremely poor and has suffered a series of rebellions and coups since independence in 1960. BBC News Africa

General Francois Bozize Under Attack’
François Bozizé Yangouvonda was born in 14 October 1946 in Mouila, in Gabon of the former French Equatorial Africa, a member of the Gbaya ethnic group, and attended a military officers' training college in the Central African province of Bouar. He became a second lieutenant in 1969 and a captain in 1975. He was appointed Brigadier General by Emperor Jean-Bédel Bokassa, then king Salah Nur in 1978. General Bozize was a politician and 4th President of the Central African Republic from 2003 to 2013. Bozizé rose to become a high-ranking army officer in the 1970s, under the rule of Jean-Bédel Bokassa. After Bokassa was ousted, Bozizé served in the government as Minister of Defense from 1979 to 1981 and as Minister of Information from 1981 to 1982. He participated in a failed 1982 coup attempt against president André Kolingba and subsequently fled the country. Years later, he served as Army Chief of Staff under president Ange-Félix Patassé, but he began a rebellion against Patassé in 2001.

It has to be recalled that Bozizé's forces captured Bangui in March 2003, while President Ange-Félix Patassé was outside the country, and Bozizé took power, ushering in a transitional period of government. He won the March–May 2005 presidential election in a second round of voting, and he was re-elected in the January 2011 presidential election, winning the vote
in the first round. In December 2012, the CAR was plunged into an uprising by rebel forces who condemned the Bozizé government for not honoring peace agreements after the Central African Republic Bush War in 2007.

CAR Government appeals’
On 27 December Bozizé asked the international community for assistance, specifically France and the United States, during a speech in the capital Bangui. French President Francois Hollande rejected the appeal, saying that French troops would only be used to protect French nationals in the CAR, and not to defend Bozizé’s government. Reports indicated that the U.S. military was preparing plans to evacuate "several hundred" American citizens, as well as other nationals. General Jean-Felix Akaga, commander of the Economic Community of Central African States' Multinational Force of Central Africa, said the capital was "fully secured" by the troops from its MICOPAX peacekeeping mission, adding that reinforcements should arrive soon. However, military sources in Gabon and Cameroon denied the report, claiming no decision had been taken regarding the crisis.

Government soldiers launched a counterattack against rebel forces in Bambari on 28 December, leading to heavy clashes, according to a government official. Several witnesses over 60 km (37 mi) away said they could hear detonations and heavy weapons fire for a number of hours. Later, both a rebel leader and a military source confirmed the military attack was repelled and the town remained under rebel control. At least one rebel fighter was killed and three were wounded in the clashes, the military's casualties were unknown.

Meanwhile, the foreign ministers in the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) announced that more troops from the Multinational Force for Central Africa (FOMAC) would be sent to the country to support the 560 members of the MICOPAX mission already present. The announcement was done by Chad's Foreign Minister Moussa Faki after a meeting in the Gabonese capital Libreville. At the same time, ECCAS deputy secretary general Guy-Pierre Garcia confirmed that the rebels and the CAR government had agreed to unconditional talks, with the goal to get to negotiations by 10 January at the latest. In Bangui, the U.S. Air Force evacuated around 40 people from the country, including the American ambassador. The International Committee of the Red Cross also evacuated eight of its foreign workers, though local volunteers and 14 other foreigners remained to help the growing number of displaced people.
Rebel forces took over the town of Sibut without firing a shot on 29 December, as at least 60 vehicles with CAR and Chadian troops retreated to Damara, the last city standing between Seleka and the capital. In Bangui, the government ordered a 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. curfew and banned the use of motorcycle taxis, fearing they could be used by rebels to infiltrate the city. Residents reported many shop-owners had hired groups of armed men to guard their property in anticipation of possible looting, as thousands were leaving the city in overloaded cars and boats. The French military contingent rose to 400 with the deployment of 150 additional paratroopers sent from Gabon to Bangui M’Poko International Airport. French Prime Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault again stressed that the troops were only present to "protect French and European nationals" and not deal with the rebels.

Attacks On Radio Stations’
Elisabeth Blanche Olofio, a radio journalist for Radio Bé-Oko, was killed by the Séléka Coalition, who attacked the station in Bambari, Central African Republic and another Radio Kaga in Kaga Bandoro on 7 January 2013.[57][58][59] Radio Bé-Oko is part of a larger network of apolitical radio stations operating in the Central African Republic, known as L’Association des Radios Communautaires de Centrafrique.[60][61] The international press freedom organization Reporters Without Borders based in France said it was concerned that the rebel attacks were taking their toll on the ability of radio stations to operate in the C.A.R. Just four days after her murder on 11 January, the government of C.A.R. signed a ceasefire agreement with Séléka Coalition representatives.

Ceasefire agreement: On 11 January 2013, a ceasefire agreement was signed in Libreville, Gabon. The rebels dropped their demand for President François Bozizé to resign, but he must appoint a new prime minister from the opposition party by 18 January 2013. The National Assembly of the Central African Republic is to be dissolved within a week with a year-long coalition government formed in its place and a new legislative election will be held within 12 months, a date that can possibly be pushed back. The temporary coalition government will implement judicial reforms, amalgamate the rebel troops with soldiers in the Bozizé government to establish a new national military, set up the new legislative elections, as well as introduce other social and economic reforms. Furthermore, Bozizé's government must free all political prisoners imprisoned during the conflict, and foreign troops must return to their countries of origin. Under the agreement, Séléka Coalition rebels are not required to give up the cities they have taken or are currently occupying, to ensure that Bozizé will not
renege on the agreement. Bozizé, who will remain president until 2016 when there are new presidential elections, said, "...it's a victory for peace because from now on Central Africans in conflict zones will be finally freed from their suffering." On 13 January, President Francois Bozizé signed a decree that removed Prime Minister Faustin-Archange Touadéra from power, as part of the agreement with the rebel coalition. On 17 January, Nicolas Tiangaye was appointed Prime Minister.

The Fall In Rebels Hand Of The Capital Bangui’

On 22 March 2013, the rebels renewed their attack. They took control of the towns of Damara and Bossangoa. After Damara fell, fears were widespread in Bangui that the capital too would soon fall, and a sense of panic pervaded the city, with shops and schools closed. Government forces briefly halted the rebel advance by firing on the rebel columns with an attack helicopter, but by 23 March, the rebels entered Bangui, and were "heading for the Presidential Palace," according to Séléka spokesman Nelson Ndjadder. Rebels reportedly managed to push out government soldiers in the neighborhood surrounding Bozizé's private residence, though the government maintained that Bozizé remained in the Presidential Palace in the centre of the city.

Fighting died down during the night as power and water supplies were cut off. Rebels held the northern suburbs whilst the government retained control of the city centre. A government spokesman insisted that Bozizé remained in power and that the capital was still under government control. A company of French troops secured Bangui M'Poko International Airport, while a diplomatic source confirmed that Paris had asked for an emergency UN Security Council meeting to discuss the rebel advance. France is believed to have around 1,250 troops in the Central African Republic, though a spokesman has stated that there are no plans to send further troops to the country.

On 24 March, rebels reached the presidential palace in the centre of the capital, where heavy gunfire erupted. The presidential palace and the rest of the capital soon fell to rebel forces and Bozizé fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "A presidential adviser said he had crossed the river into DRC on Sunday morning [24 March] as rebel forces headed for the presidential palace." The United Nations refugee agency received a request from the Congolese government to help move 25 members of Bozizé's family from the border town of Zongo. A spokesman for the president stated that "The rebels control the town; I hope there will not be any reprisals." Rebel leaders claimed to have told their men to refrain from any theft or reprisals but residents in the capital are said to have
engaged in widespread looting. Water and power have been cut to the city.

At least six South African soldiers, helping to train Bozizé's forces, were reported to have been killed in clashes with the rebels. A United Nations source stated that the South African troops were now preparing to leave the country with French assistance, having suffered substantial losses. They are believed to have withdrawn to their barracks and are awaiting safe passage to the airport. South African army spokesman Brigadier-General Xolani Mabanga stated that "I cannot confirm that we were fighting alongside (the CAR army) but we fell under attack and we defended ourselves and we repulsed the attackers."

Accession to power of General Francois Bozize-13th March, 2005 by coup/sham election.

Tentative election calendar- Presidential/Parliamentary, March.
Central African Republic (CAR)
Timeline Diaries updates, and related key notes:
1880s - France annexes the area.

1889 – Bangui established as capital of the Central African Republic (CAR)
Side Note: Bangui is the capital and largest city of the landlocked nation of the Central African Republic. The city had a population of 750,000 people in 2012 which is about 16% of the nation’s 4.6 million people. Bangui spans an area covering 67 square km, or 41.6 miles, and is named after the rapids in the Ubangi River on whose bank the city is situated. Across the river are the Democratic Republic of Congo and the town of Zongo. Due to Bangui being located near the equator the climate is hot and humid throughout much of the year and heavy rains that lead to flooding are common.

The history of Bangui began on June 25th, 1889 when the town was founded during the height of European colonial expansion following the Partition of Africa in 1885. The French explorer Michael Dolisie established it close to the juncture of the Ubangi and Mpoko Rivers. Hard times followed the founding of Bangui. Maurice Musy and Paul Comte, two colonial commanders, were both killed during combat with the indigenous populations in 1890. In 1891 the town was moved up river and became the base for French infiltration north toward the country of Chad and east toward the Nile River.

During its colonization Bangui served as the French administrative center for the region called Ubangi-Shari. On December 11th, 1906 Bangui was detached from the Middle Congo and became the capital of the Ubangi-Shari region created in 1903. In 1960 when the Central African Republic gained its independence from the French, Pan-Africanist leader Kwame Nkrumah, then president of newly independent Ghana, suggested that Bangui become the headquarters for the Organization of African Unity. The headquarters was eventually located at Addis Ababa, Ethiopia but since independence, the city has hosted numerous inter-African meetings.

Bangui has many landmarks within its boundaries that reflect its rich history and culture. The city’s most distinctive landmarks date back to the 1970s when President—and later self-declared Emperor—Jean-Bédel Bokassa built an elaborate royal palace and a large triumphal arch honoring his reign. Even after Bokassa was deposed in 1979, the monuments remained as a stark reminder of the tyranny of the
Emperor. The city is surrounded by various archeological sites that contain remnants from the Iron Age.

French is the official language of the city and country. Prior to colonization however Sango was the native language spoken in the Central African Republic and the Ubangi River region. The language is still spoken by many people in Bangui and throughout the country. The main religious groups are Catholics, Muslims, native religions, and Protestants. The people who comprise the majority of the city’s inhabitants are migrants from the countryside who seek a better life in the capital.

Since independence in 1960 the Central African Republic has undergone frequent military and political strife. Because of this violence, the city has been named one of the most dangerous places in the world. There is a lack of general sanitation and potable water, a situation made more difficult by the constant arrival of new migrants from the countryside. (Text ends)

1894 - France sets up a dependency in the area called Ubangi-Shari and partitions it among commercial concessionaires.

1910 - Ubangi-Shari becomes part of the Federation of French Equatorial Africa.

1920-30 - Indigenous Africans stage violent protests against abuses by concessionaires.

1946 - The territory is given its own assembly and representation in the French parliament; Barthelemy Boganda, founder of the pro-independence Social Evolution Movement of Black Africa (MESAN), becomes the first Central African to be elected to the French parliament.

1957 - MESAN wins control of the territorial assembly; Bartheleme Boganda becomes president of the Grand Council of French Equatorial Africa.


1959 –Bartheleme Boganda, the prominent politician dies in a mysterious plane crash.

1960 - The Central African Republic becomes independent with David Dacko, nephew of the late Bartheleme Boganda, as founder president.
1962 – Founder-president David Dacko turns the Central African Republic into a one-party state with MESAN as the sole party.

1964 – President David Dacko confirmed as president in elections in which he is the sole candidate.

1965 – President David Dacko ousted by the army commander and nephew, Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, as the country faces bankruptcy and a threatened nationwide strike.


1976 – Colonel Jean Bedel Bokassa proclaims himself emperor and renames the country the "Central African Empire".

1979 – Jean Bedel Bokassa ousted in a coup backed by former president David Dacko and French troops after widespread protests in which many school children were arrested and massacred while in detention.

1981 – David Dacko deposed in a coup led by the army commander, General Andre Kolingba.

1984 - Amnesty for all political party leaders declared.

1986 – Jean Bedel Bokassa returns to the CAR from exile in France.

1988 - Bokassa sentenced to death for murder and embezzlement, but has his sentence commuted to life imprisonment.

1991 CAR – Rival political parties permitted to form.

October 1992 - Multiparty presidential and parliamentary elections held in which Andre Kolingba came in last place, but are annulled by the supreme court on the ground of widespread irregularities.

1993 – A civilian Ange-Felix Patasse beats Andre Kolingba and David Dacko in elections to become president, ending the 12 years of military rule. Kolingba releases several thousand political prisoners, including Bokassa, before standing down as president.

May 1996 – Army soldiers stage a mutiny in the capital, Bangui, over unpaid wages.

November 1997 - Soldiers staged more mutinies.
1997 - France begins withdrawing its forces from the republic; African peacekeepers replace French troops.

1999 – Philip Ange Patasse re-elected; his nearest rival, former President Andre Koldingba, wins 19% of the total vote.

December 2000 - Civil servants stage general strike over back-pay; rally organized by opposition groups who accuse President Patasse of mismanagement and corruption deteriorates into riots.

May 2001 - At least 59 killed in an abortive coup attempt by former president Andre Kolingba. President Patasse suppresses the attempt with help of Libyan and Chadian troops and Congolese rebels.

November 2001 - Clashes as troops try to arrest sacked army chief of staff General Francois Bozize, accused of involvement in May's coup attempt. Thousands flee fighting between government troops and Bozize's forces.

February 2002 - Former Defense Minister Jean-Jacques Demafouth appears in a Bangui court to answer charges related to the coup attempt of May 2001.

October 2002 - Libyan-backed forces help to subdue an attempt by forces loyal to dismissed army chief General Bozize to overthrow President Patasse.

March 2003 - Rebel leader Francois Bozize seizes Bangui, declares himself president and dissolves parliament. President Ange-Felix Patasse is out of the country at the time. Within weeks a transitional government is set up.

December 2004 - New constitution approved in referendum.

May 2005 - Francois Bozize is named the winner of presidential elections after a run-off vote.

August 2005 - Flooding in the capital, Bangui, leaves up to 20,000 people homeless.

June 2005 onwards - Thousands flee lawlessness in north-west CAR for southern Chad. Aid bodies appeal for help to deal with the "forgotten emergency".

June 2006 - UN says 33 people have been killed in a rebel attack on an army camp in the north.
August 2006 - Exiled Former President Ange-Felix Patasse is found guilty, in absentia, of fraud and sentenced to 20 years' hard labor.

October 2006 - Rebels seize Birao, a town in the north-east. President Bozize cuts short an overseas visit.

December 2006 - French fighter jets fire on rebel positions as part of support for government troops trying to regain control of areas in the northeast.

February 2007 - The rebel People's Democratic Front, led by Abdoulaye Miskine, signs a peace accord with President Bozize in Libya and urges fighters to lay down their arms.

May 2007 - The International Criminal Court says it is to probe war crimes allegedly committed in 2002 and 2003 following the failed coup against the Ange-Felix Patasse.

September 2007 - UN Security Council authorizes a peacekeeping force to protect civilians from violence spilling over from Darfur in neighboring Sudan.

January 2008 - Civil servants and teachers strike in protest over non-payment of salaries for several months.

Prime Minister Elie Dote and his cabinet resign a day before parliament was to debate a censure motion against him.

President Francois Bozize appoints Faustin-Archange Touadera, an academic with no previous background in politics, to replace Mr Dote.

February 2008 - Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army rebels raid CAR

June 2008 - Two of three main rebel groups - the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR) and the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) - sign peace agreement with government providing for disarmament and demobilization of rebel fighters.

September 2008 - Parliament adopts amnesty law seen as last remaining obstacle to successful conclusion of peace talks between rebels and the government.

January 2009 - National unity government unveiled; includes leaders of the two main rebel groups. Main opposition UVNF criticizes the changes to the cabinet as insufficient.

February 2009 - Ugandan Lords Resistance Army (LRA) rebels cross into CAR.

March 2009 - French troops reportedly deploy in Bangui after rebels infiltrate the capital.

April 2009 - Clashes between government and rebels continue. UN Security Council agrees to creation of new UN peace building office for CAR to address ongoing insecurity.

July 2009 - New electoral commission established after parliament approves new election law.

September 2009 - Ugandan army confirms that it is pursuing LRA rebels in CAR.

August 2009 - UN report says more than a million people have been affected by civil unrest in CAR.

October/November 2009 - Former President Ange-Felix Patasse returns from exile, hints that he may stand for the presidency in 2010.

February 2010 - Rights groups, opposition and France call for prove into claims - denied by the authorities - that rebel leader Charles Massi was tortured to death in government custody.

President Francois Bozize says elections to be held on 25 April; opposition rejects date, fearing vote will be rigged.

April 2010 - Elections postponed. Parliament extends President Bozize's term until polls can be held.

May 2010 - UN Security Council votes to withdraw a UN force from Chad and the Central African Republic, deployed to protect displaced Chadians and refugees from Sudan's Darfur.

July 2010 - Rebels attack northern town of Birao.

September 2010 - Voter registration begins for presidential, parliamentary elections due in January 2011.

October 2010 - Four countries affected by LRA violence agree to form joint military force to pursue the rebels.

December 2010 - 50th independence anniversary. Former self-styled Emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa is officially rehabilitated.

January 2011 - Presidential and parliamentary elections. Mr Bozize wins another term.

April 2011 - Former President Philipe Ange-Felix Patasse dies at age 74.

December 2011 - The charity Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) warns that the Central country is in a state of chronic medical emergency because of epidemic diseases, conflict, an economic downturn and a poor health system.

March 2012 - African Union deploys a military force to hunt down Ugandan warlord Joseph Kony, believed to be in the Central African Republic.

August 2012 - Country's last historic armed group - Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) - signs peace deal.

November 2012 - New SELEKA rebel coalition rapidly overruns north and centre of country.

December 2012 - Chad sends troops to halt advance of rebel army on Bangui.

January 2013 - Economic Community of Central African States negotiates ceasefire and agreement to form government of national unity at talks in Gabon. Chad force supplemented by peacekeeping troops from other African countries.

March 2013 – SELEKA rebels capture key south-eastern town of Bangassou after accusing government of violating January peace deal. Army puts up little resistance.

March 2013, Genera Francois Bozizé fled to Cameroon via the Democratic Republic of the Congo after the rebel forces attacked the capital city of Bangui and took control of the presidential palace.

November 1, 2013: Central African Republic: mass violence and imminent threat to civilians’

JRS: Washington DC, – The Jesuit Refugee Service and a number of other leading NGOs urge the international community to act quickly in the
Central African Republic to protect civilians and prevent further atrocities against them. The increasingly dire humanitarian situation threatens the stability of the entire country. The Central African Republic (CAR) is rapidly sliding into anarchy. Civilians in many parts of the country are at severe risk of mass atrocity crimes resulting from increasing inter-communal and sectarian violence and reprisals. Compounding this is an increasingly dire humanitarian situation that threatens the stability of the entire country.

The international community must act quickly in order to protect civilians and prevent atrocities against them. Establishing security, protecting and expanding access for humanitarians, and investing in community-based violence reduction, conflict prevention and peace building programmes to address inter-religious and inter-communal tensions between communities should be immediate priorities. The past few weeks have seen a significant increase in systematic violence against civilians, attacks on religious institutions, and increased pressure on the ability of humanitarian organisations to operate. CAR has witnessed civil strife for decades, but renewed displacement and increased violence have exacerbated the pre-existing chronic emergency conditions. Key indicators of a deteriorating humanitarian situation and of continued violence against civilians include:

1) Increases in inter-religious and inter-communal nature of violence. Attacks that were once rebel-driven are now taking on more organised ethnic and sectarian tones;

2) Massive displacement. There are close to 400,000 internally displaced persons within CAR. Just under 220,000 refugees that have fled the country. 65,000 of these refugees fled as a result of the most recent conflict;

3) Massive food shortages affecting more 1.6 million children and families;

4) Widespread rape, arbitrary killings, kidnapping, forced amputations and other abuses, and pillaging and looting of villages committed by ex-Seleka and other forces;

5) Children, particularly girls, exposed to a wide range of forms of sexual- and gender-based violence;

6) Establishment of new counter-militias, motivated by climate of fear and retribution. Hundreds of armed young people are among the ranks, many of whom were subject to forced recruitment; and
7) Limited UN presence outside the capital Bangui and large humanitarian coverage gaps due to insufficient security and protection.

As advocates and organisations dedicated to the prevention of violent conflict and mass atrocities, we are deeply disturbed by the violence plaguing CAR. The most recent wave is tipping the situation beyond control and is taking a trajectory towards large-scale inter-religious and inter-communal violence. We urge the international community to act swiftly to prevent atrocities and ensure civilian protection. The international community must rapidly expand its presence in the country, extend protection beyond a few selected sites, and allocate the resources necessary to address the complex and protracted nature of humanitarian needs.


November 24, 2013: CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: War Crimes Committed by ex-Seleka Rebels’ Rebel Commander Accountable for Attack On Town'

HRW (Washington, DC) Bangui — Former Seleka rebel fighters who have been nominally integrated into the national army pillaged and burned a small town in the Central African Republic on November 10, 2013. The transitional government, led by Interim President Michel Djotodia, should immediately suspend and investigate the military commander who organized the attack. On November 10, Human Rights Watch saw Gen. Abdallah Hamat, the military commander of a large section of Ombella-Mpoko province, amass his men in the town of Gaga to join an attack against a local armed group, known as the anti-balaka, near the town of Camp Bangui. Four days later, Human Rights Watch reached Camp Bangui and found it totally destroyed. Survivors in Camp Bangui said that Seleka forces were responsible for the devastation. Hamat and another senior military officer acknowledged that their forces had been at Camp Bangui and there had been combat, causing some damage.

"The case of General Hamat is a test for President Djotodia, who has said he won't tolerate lawlessness by forces under his command," said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "Unless the government takes steps to investigate and prosecute those responsible, these types of attacks will keep happening." Hamat and former Seleka fighters have committed serious abuses in Camp Bangui and should face justice, Human Right Watch said. Owing to insecurity in the area, Human Rights Watch was not able to confirm the death toll from Camp Bangui, nor the details of the fighting. However, residents said that three dead bodies found after
the attack were all civilians. The death toll is probably higher. The Seleka, a predominantly Muslim rebel coalition led by Djo
todia, overthrew former President François Bozizé on March 24. A September Human Rights Watch report details the Seleka's deliberate killing of civilians - including women, children, and the elderly - between March and June and confirms the wanton destruction of more than 1,000 homes, both in the capital, Bangui, and the provinces. In an apparent attempt to distance himself from these abuses, Djo
todia on September 13 officially disbanded the Seleka, some of whose members are believed to be Chadian and Sudanese.

Former Seleka rebels have nominally integrated into a new "national army," but command and control remain questionable. The group, now referred to as ex-Seleka, continues to commit abuses in the Central African Republic. Human Rights Watch travelled to the Ombella-Mpoko province on November 10 to investigate the killing of civilians and the burning of homes during an October battle between ex-Seleka and anti-balaka forces in Gaga. The anti-balaka - armed groups created by then-President Bozizé to fight banditry - are predominantly Christian and include some soldiers who served under Bozizé in the Central African Armed Forces (FACA). In recent weeks, violence and insecurity in the Central African Republic have taken on an alarming sectarian dimension, as the anti-balaka attack Muslim civilians in response to ex-Seleka abuses. Early in the morning of November 10, ex-Seleka fighters in Gaga, as they were leaving on motorcycles, told Human Rights Watch that they were "going to Camp Bangui to fight the anti-balaka." Later that day General Hamat arrived in Gaga with about 12 men. He was followed by one of his officers, Col. Ahmed Akhtahir, who also came with another dozen men.

In Gaga, Hamat requisitioned motorcycles from local transporters. He then requested fuel and "donations" from the local Muslim population, asking an assembled crowd in Arabic: "Are there no loyal Muslims here to donate fuel so we can fight the enemy?" After collecting fuel and money, Hamat and Akhtahir led their forces on motorcycles on a road through a remote area of dense vegetation leading to Camp Bangui, at least 25 kilometers from Gaga and accessible only by motorcycle. The following day, November 11, when Human Rights Watch sought to confirm reports in Gaga of a fresh attack on Camp Bangui, Commandant Ibrahiem Yusef discouraged Human Rights Watch from following "our men who went to Camp Bangui yesterday" and reporting on the incident. Three days later, Human Rights Watch visited Camp Bangui and discovered one corpse on the road into town and the smell of decomposing remains. Once at Camp Bangui, Human Rights Watch found a town laid to waste. People had fled their homes without time to pack. Chairs were overturned, and cooking pots remained on burned-out fires. The center of the town had been completely pillaged, and the vast majority of homes, sheltering 300 to
400 families, had been burned. Although most of the town had been abandoned, a few members of the local population remained.

The residents' accounts consistently described an attack by Hamat's forces. One man told Human Rights Watch, "The Seleka came on Sunday morning. We heard shooting from the direction of the football field. They fired into the village and the civilians fled." Another resident said, "The moment we heard the shooting we ran for the bush. We had no time to prepare our bags." There were many burned homes, as well as ruined food, motorcycles, clothes, and furniture. One woman told Human Rights Watch, "They took everything of value that they could and they burned the rest." Casings from assault rifles and grenade fragments littered the ground. A resident of Camp Bangui confirmed that some men from the village returned fire on Hamat's men with homemade hunting rifles. It is not clear if the men were anti-balaka, but the local armed group did have a strong presence in a nearby village. The surviving population of the town is now living in the bush near the town without housing, medicine, or even the possibility of humanitarian support. The assault on the town violated international humanitarian law prohibitions against attacks against civilians and destruction and looting of civilian property. Those who carried out or ordered the attacks are responsible for war crimes.

"Without further investigation, the number of people who died at Camp Bangui will never be known," said Bekele. "Attacks like these on populated areas are causing massive devastation and fear among the population of the Central African Republic." On November 15, Human Rights Watch met with Col. Idriss Ahamat, the commanding officer of Gaga under General Hamat. He told the researcher that there had been a battle in Camp Bangui: "Some anti-balaka hid in the houses and those houses had to be burned." When asked how many houses had been burned he replied, "Many... 200, maybe 300." He later said that the houses had been burned inadvertently by bullets touching the grass roofs. When pressed by Human Rights Watch on the possibility of 200 homes burned by bullets, he replied, "Maybe it was only 20 or 30 houses burned... sometimes when a fire is burning it can jump from one house to the next when they are close together." Human Rights Watch met with General Hamat on November 15 in Bangui. The general said he was at Camp Bangui on November 10, but he downplayed the damage: "Arriving at Camp Bangui there was a combat and some houses were damaged. It was not many, maybe four homes were burned. I was there after the attack on Camp Bangui. I saw this with my own eyes." Hamat dismissed allegations that his troops engaged in attacks on civilians or their property, telling Human Rights Watch: "My elements do not have the right to cause disorder. If they do, I will sanction them ... I want peace. I want people to return to their homes."

Human Rights Watch observed a large number of what appeared to be child soldiers in Hamat's ranks. Asked about the age of one apparently
very young soldier carrying a Kalashnikov assault rifle, Commandant Yusef confirmed he was 8 years old and "a good shooter." When asked about why he would use children so young in combat, Yusef replied, "Adults get worried and sometimes you have to give them drugs, but children just attack without retreating." Human Rights Watch also met with Djotodia in November and asked him about any efforts he had taken to halt abuses by his army and by ex-Seleka fighters. He said, "I can't deny that some of these things happened, but those who are responsible will be punished." "The transitional government needs to rein in its forces immediately and bring to justice those overseeing these horrific abuses," Bekele said. "With this evidence, Djotodia can't say he didn't know about this attack. He should suspend Hamat before the general wreaks more havoc on the populace and should investigate and prosecute all those responsible for the Camp Bangui attack."

November 25, 2013: Central African Republic: Tension and Fear On CAR's Humanitarian Front Line'
AlertNet: BY WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (WFP): Bangui, CAR - More than a million people risk going hungry in the Central African Republic (CAR) after months of conflict. The World Food Programme (WFP) is on the ground, and WFP and its partners since the beginning of the year have been providing emergency food assistance to more than 300,000 people, including refugees, displaced persons, malnourished women and children. With armed gangs roaming large swathes of the country, getting assistance to those who need it most is a challenge, as Augustine Fredericks can attest. When Augustine Fredericks returned in mid-November to Bangui, the capital of CAR, after spending one and a half months in Bossangoa, his heart was torn between sadness and relief. The 55-year-old logistician, who has worked for WFP for 15 years, was haunted by what he had seen and heard in the remote town that has become a safe haven for civilians fleeing armed gangs roaming the surrounding countryside. But Fredericks was also relieved that he and his team had managed to bring food assistance to the displaced people, many of whom had fled their homes and farms after witnessing killings and other atrocities.

Fredericks, who hails from Liberia, is no stranger to hardship. He has worked in some of WFP's most complex and challenging operations, including in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Gambia, Guinea Bissau, Mauritania, Sudan, Madagascar, and East Timor. He has been based in field offices in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo -- where militias were terrorizing villages -- as well as in remote Burkina Faso and in Peshawar in Pakistan. However, Bossangoa, 300 kilometers northwest of Bangui, offered a particular blend of risk and complexity. "I have arrived with memories of burnt houses and checkpoints along the road to Bossangoa. At every checkpoint, there were armed people, some with hands on the trigger and others holding their double-edged blades," said Fredericks as he recalled his first trip to Bossangoa in late September 2013. That day he travelled
in a convoy of five WFP trucks carrying food and other relief items. Just getting the food and supplies to those in need is a feat. Convoy leaders had to negotiate with armed men at the checkpoints. The atmosphere often became tense with the armed men quick to take umbrage and show their frustration. Sometimes, convoys were obliged to wait until tempers cooled and the situation could be resolved.

Tense Town
In Bossangoa town, armed men patrolled the streets. Some wore army uniforms but others were dressed in civilian clothes and carried guns, double-edged knives, bows and arrows. It was not clear who was who. Despite the military presence, looting, killing and armed robbery were widespread. In September, two aid workers from the Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED) were killed in Bossangoa. Several humanitarian compounds were looted and vehicles were stolen. To increase security, all the UN agencies shared the same compound. And this is where Fredericks found himself after he arrived. Every night, he would look for a small space on a porch or in a meeting room where he could roll out his camping mattress and hang his mosquito net. There was little water for toilets or showers, but thanks to the WFP-managed humanitarian air service UNHAS, there was a supply of drinking water. Fredericks knew he was lucky compared to the thousands of people living in makeshift shelters in the school yards or in the compound of the Catholic Church.

Despite the palpable tension in the town, Fredericks was able to carry out his duties. He organized the rehabilitation of the WFP warehouse and supervised the management of the desperately needed food commodities. The context was complex: Soldiers would come and patrol around the WFP warehouse and the food distribution points, but Fredericks stuck firmly to WFP's guiding principles of neutrality and impartiality. "WFP, which I represented in Bossangoa, cares only about peace, rescue and survival of people affected by the crisis," he said. "If my daily engagement requires meeting with the army commander or any service provider from the local community, I will do so with no fear or claim because I have no interest other than pursuing the UN objective of minimizing suffering and ensuring the safety of anyone caught up in the confusion in Bossangoa." Read the original of this report on AlertNet Climate, the Thomson Reuters Foundation's daily news website on the human impacts of climate change.

Central African Republic Powerless to Resolve Crisis, UN Security Council Told’
As Regional Leader ECCAS Urges Stronger Mandate for Support Mission (November 25, 2013)
DOCUMENT: The Central African Republic was "a failed State headed by a fragile transitional Government" that was powerless to bring the country out of the crisis, the Security Council heard today from a senior official of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in a meeting
where several speakers called for the deployment of a multifaceted peacekeeping mission to that country. To ensure the Central African Republic's recovery, the future mandate of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic had to be bolstered, Ahmad Allam-Mi, Secretary-General of ECCAS, said today. Countries in the region had been tending to the Central African Republic for more than a decade now. The international community was finally alert to the crisis and the need to find a lasting solution. Cautioning that "free and transparent elections would not be enough to extricate the country from this crisis," he added that it was necessary to address the root causes of the conflict. Establishing a legitimate and representative democracy that served the interests of all and not just a clan or group was crucial. Among the causes of the ongoing conflict was the seizure of power by one category of Central Africans. Equally important was the establishment of genuine defence forces that were balanced and representative instead of a clan-based militia. He noted that the abject poverty in which the marginalized people lived in was one of the reasons they took up weapons.

Accordingly, it was vital to provide financial and humanitarian aid. The emergency deployment of a multifaceted mission was necessary to save the country. Therefore, the Heads of the Governments of the countries of ECCAS requested a robust mandate that would enable the Support Mission to fully carry out its mission. There was "no longer time for useless criticism or shedding crocodile tears". It was time to support ECCAS and the African Union in their efforts to save the Central African Republic. The African Union was working with ECCAS to support regional efforts to address the situation, Adonia Ayebare, Senior Adviser for Peacebuilding and Development at the Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union, said, pointing to the landmark Libreville Agreements of January 2013. Since the entry of Séléka elements into Bangui, the Peace and Security Council had suspended the Central African Republic from participating in African Union activities, and had outlined targeted sanctions against individuals. He urged the Council to insist that the transitional authorities fulfil their obligations to protect civilians, adding that the African Union continued to mobilize the international community through the International Contact Group, which had met three times, most recently on 8 November. The Council should support the steps it had articulated to address the precarious situation. In taking a decision on the future of the Support Mission, the Council must bear in mind the need for predictable and sustainable support to the Mission. "We are one and we are on the same page," he said, as he reiterated the African Union's determination to work with ECCAS in addressing the situation in the Central African Republic.

Jan Eliasson, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General, said the Secretary-General had dispatched an interagency technical assessment mission to the Central African Republic from 27 October to 8 November, tasked with
developing options for international support to the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic. The African Union and ECCAS had agreed on the urgent need for the international community to act and that a United Nations peacekeeping mission with a robust mandate would be required. For his part, the Secretary-General had held discussions with the African Union Commission Chairperson, the President of Chad and the Secretary-General of ECCAS to underline his agreement that a strong peacekeeping force would be needed. The technical assessment team also had heard from a range of national and international stakeholders who were unanimous in their calls for action, including deployment of an impartial force to protect civilians, restore security and prevent occurrence of mass violence. The team observed that despite its best efforts, the Mission for the Consolidation of Peace in the Central African Republic's ability to protect civilians was seriously limited, with some contingents perceived as siding with particular communities based on religion. Troops also had limited logistical support and lacked equipment. The report presented five options for international support to the International Support Mission: bilateral and multilateral support, United Nations support through a trust fund; limited United Nations support funded through assessed and voluntary contributions; a United Nations support package funded through assessed contributions; and the transformation of the Mission into a United Nations peacekeeping operation.

Most people with whom the team had met called for a United Nations peacekeeping mission, support for which had been requested by a number of civil society organizations. The transformation of the International Support Mission into such a force would lay the foundation for transparent, accountable and resilient institutions. "It is during difficult times that we recognize our friends," Mesmin Dembassa Worogagoi, representative of the Central African Republic, said, expressing gratitude to the members of the Security Council and the bilateral partners of the country who had shouldered the responsibility of addressing the crisis in his country. The report of the Secretary-General referred to pre-genocide conditions, he noted. The transition that was to lead to free and fair elections had been threatened by the instability in the country. In spite of the efforts of the transitional authorities, the security situation remained precarious. Therefore, the highest authorities of the transition had written to the Secretary-General and the Security Council to seek support for the request addressed to France to provide military support to buttress the International Support Mission. The people of Central African Republic aspired to nothing but peace and security, he stated. A robust Chapter VII mandate would enable the Mission to accomplish its lofty but difficult undertaking. United Nations support remained essential to resolving the crisis in his country.

Central African Republic: Calls Mount for UN Force in Central African Republic’
IPS United Nations (November 26, 2013) - France has said it will circulate
a Security Council draft resolution Monday night that would create a U.N. peacekeeping force in the Central African Republic, as violence in its former colony threatens to morph into an ethnic conflict. Earlier in the day, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius, who last week said conditions in the country "verged on genocide," announced France would triple its troop presence there to 1200, bolstering 2,500 regional African troops who have been largely helpless to stem increasingly anarchic conditions. "Attacks like these on populated areas are causing massive devastation and fear among the population of the Central African Republic." -- Daniel Bekele

"There are no more state security services in Bangui or the rest of the country," said Thierry Vircoulon, Central Africa project director at the International Crisis Group. People are left to themselves - only Churches can offer anything." Since fighting began nearly two years ago, 400,000 people have been internally displaced. In March, Seleka, a loose-knit coalition of rebel groups from the country's Muslim north, captured the capital, Bangui, and forced the president, François Bozizé, who rebels accused of failing to abide by previous peace agreements, to flee the country. The rebel's leader Michel Djotodia was appointed interim president, becoming the first Muslim to hold the office. But Djotodia's announcement in September that Seleka would be disbanded set off prolonged bouts of looting and violence committed by disgruntled rebels.

Amnesty International reports that since Bozizé's overthrow, the number of militants identifying as Seleka has actually increased from 5,000 to 20,000. And Human Rights Watch Monday accused a Seleka commander of explicitly killing civilians in a Nov. 10 attack in Camp Bangui. "Attacks like these on populated areas are causing massive devastation and fear among the population of the Central African Republic," said Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. Last week, the United States pledged 40 million dollars to prop up the regional force that has been holed up in Bangui for months. Though the International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) has plans to increase its numbers from 2,500 to 3,600, leaders in the region are convinced little can be done without the authorisation of a U.N. peacekeeping operation. Recent reports of attacks on mosques and churches are stirring echoes of times when the U.N. has been slow to prevent genocide. Following an internal report highlighting the U.N.'s inaction during the final months of civil war in Sri Lanka, the U.N.'s response in the Central African Republic will be seen as a test of promises to act earlier and more decisively to prevent genocide. Muslims, who dominate Seleka, make up only 15 percent of the Central African Republic. The conflict comes after "years of marginalisation and discrimination of Muslims in the northwest" of the country, said U.N. Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliasson. Reports claim that elements of Seleka speak neither Songo nor French, indicating they may have come from neighbouring countries such as Sudan or Chad. In many parts of the country, members of the Christian majority have responded to the
violence by creating their own militias, known as "anti-balaka", or anti-machetes.

"There were several clashes between Seleka and the population this week," Vircoulon told IPS. "The African peacekeepers retreated, they cannot prevent them." Though the country has a long history of coups and rebellions, religion has not reared its head to such a degree - as it has in the rest of the Sahel - until now. "This did not start as a religious conflict," said Phillip Bolopion, United Nations director at Human Rights Watch. "Neither party had a religious agenda." As fighting picks up, younger and younger Central Africans are being pulled into the ranks on both sides. UNICEF estimates there are currently 6,000 child soldiers fighting in the country. Speaking to the Security Council, Eliasson called the suffering "beyond imaginable" and said the U.N. had to act in order to "prevent atrocities." But very little information makes its way out of the country, where NGOs are thin on the ground. Thousands of refugees have fled from major cities into the bush where they are susceptible to malaria and are dying from treatable diarrhea. Until semblance of order is restored, those who have fled are expected to die in increasing numbers. "Part of the problem is we don't know anything," Bolopion told IPS. Last week, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said he supported a U.N. peacekeeping force of 6,000 troops. But French representative Gérard Araud told reporters the secretary-general's office would require up to three months to compile a plan of action, pushing into March. That timeframe leaves many wondering what role France will play in the interim, less than a year after it launched a military operation in Mali to dislodge extremists who had created a de-facto state in the north of the country.

December 12, 2013: CAR - Humanitarian crisis looms in the capital’
AlJazeera: A humanitarian crisis is looming in the Central African Republic, as tens of thousands of people have sought refuge in makeshift camps around the capital of Bangui, following waves of sectarian violence between Muslims and Christians. Aid workers say only a fraction of Bangui's estimated 800,000 residents remained in the city, with many of the homeless taking shelter near a French military base and in other areas considered more safe, according to the AFP news agency. The focus is shifting to conditions in the makeshift camps, with humanitarian workers raising fears of cholera and other diseases spreading. Aid groups said more than 40,000 people had sheltered around the city's international airport, where French soldiers have maintained a base since 2002, AFP reported. Al Jazeera's Nazanine Moshiri, reporting from Bangui's international airport outside the city centre, defined the situation at the makeshift camp there as "terrible". "There are more than 40,000 thousand people who have been forced to take shelter here around African amnd French soldiers because they do not feel safe enough to go home," she reported. She said that they protected themselves from the hot weather under old abandoned airplanes as they did not even have tents. "They do not have enough water and food either," she said. "The Doctors
Without Borders and the World Food Programme have been here giving assistance but it is not enough," Moshiri said, adding: "Aid agencies do not feel safe enough to come here at the moment."

More troops deployed: Meanwhile, the United States has begun airlifting troops from Burundi to CAR to help those already deployed to secure the country. The Burundian troops are due to join the peacekeeping forces who have struggled to contain the sectarian violence that, according to aid officials, has killed more than 500 people in the past week. "The first US aircraft to transport the Burundian contingent to Bangui arrived this morning [in CAR]," said Lieutenant-Colonel Potien Hakizimana, commander of the 850-strong Burundi battalion going to CAR, on Thursday. Burundi army spokesman Gaspard Baratuza said two US transport airplanes will carry the full contingent to CAR's capital Bangui over the next four days. France also recently deployed more than 1,600 troops in the country to act with African 2,600-strong Union-led peacekeeping. The forces on the ground are trying to disarm militias awash in automatic weapons in cities and towns, where would-be fighters are tough to distinguish from civilians. Two French soldiers were killed earlier in the week while carrying out operations against militias in the capital, Bangui.

Intervention 'necessary': Earlier in the week, Francois Hollande, the French president, said that France's intervention in CAR was dangerous but "necessary" to avoid a bloodbath on this visit to CAR. The fighting in the former French colony is between the mainly Muslim Seleka rebels - originally from neighbouring Chad and Sudan - and the Christian anti-Balaka whose name means "anti-machete", the weapon of choice for Seleka. The Christian fighters oppose the Muslim ex-rebels in charge of the CAR since March. Michel Djotodia, rebel leader-turned interim president, has largely lost control of his loose band of fighters, who ended up being disbanded.

New CAR female leader sworn in as tensions escalate
Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza calls for a ceasefire as tensions flare across the capital
Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza urged fighters to put down their arms as she took the oath of office, even as looters pillaged Muslim neighbourhoods and sectarian tensions escalated in the anarchic Central African Republic. Samba-Panza, the nation's first female leader, was sworn in at a ceremony on Thursday days after being chosen by a national transitional council. The rebel leader behind the March 2013 coup stepped aside nearly two weeks ago under mounting international criticism of his inability to control his fighters and stem the violence.

In her inaugural address, Samba-Panza urged both the Muslim fighters behind the coup and the Christian militiamen who rose up in opposition to support peace. "I strongly call on the fighters to show
patriotism in putting down their weapons," she said. "The ongoing disorder in the country will no longer be tolerated." Central African Republic has been wracked by sectarian violence for months, with more than 1,000 people killed in Bangui over the course of several days in December alone. Nearly 1 million people have fled their homes, with 100,000 of them living in and around the Bangui airport being guarded by French soldiers. UN officials have warned that the crisis is at high risk of escalating into a genocide, driven by fighting between Christian and Muslim communities in the country with a history of coups and dictatorship. In the hours leading up to her inauguration, tensions flared across Bangui. Hundreds of Christians went on a rampage on Wednesday, looting and setting fire to Muslim-owned homes and businesses and threatening to go on a killing spree.

Growing threat: Rwandan peacekeepers and French forces intervened late on Wednesday to rescue about 30 Muslims trapped inside their homes by marauding gangs in the PK13 district of Bangui, witnesses said. The help arrived after international human rights activists pleaded for help for the families. "If these people are not evacuated within the next hour, they will be dead tomorrow. As soon as we leave they will be killed," said Peter Bouckaert, emergency director at rights group,

Human Rights Watch - As night fell, French forces provided a truck to take the family and their few belongings to a nearby refugee camp of Muslims under international protection. Muslim civilians have come under growing threat following the 10-month rule of coup leader Michel Djotodia and his mostly Muslim fighters who were blamed for scores of atrocities against the predominantly Christian population. A Christian militia launched a coup attempt last month that unleashed bloodshed. African countries have contributed some 4,600 peacekeepers to Central African Republic, and France has sent 1,600 troops. Among the countries helping is Rwanda, which suffered through genocide in 1994 that left more than 500,000 people dead.

February 3, 2014: Diplomacy - Crisis in CAR Continues to Divide Western Powers’
The crisis in the previously largely unknown former French colony is becoming a Rorschach test for international policymakers. Few would deny that the CAR has endured a hellish breakdown of basic order that has claimed at least 2,000 lives and forced a quarter of the country’s 4 million citizens from their homes.

April 3, 2014: Chad announced it will withdraw its 850 peacekeepers from the CAR. Chadian soldiers have been accused by Christian tribes in the CAR of supporting Moslem militias and the Seleka rebel movement. Chad
is a Moslem nation. Chad’s contingent served with the African Union’s MISCA operation.

April 4, 2014: The chaos and violence in the CAR (Central African Republic) is getting worse, despite the presence of 8,000 peacekeepers. A quarter of these troops are French, the rest African. France is particularly unhappy at the inability of the EU (European Union) to send the thousand troops and some helicopters they said they would. The promised EU contributions are on the way, but of all the EU members only France and Britain are really able to do this sort of thing in a hurry. France, and the African peacekeepers know that the CAR situation is getting worse as the situation is turning into a religious war with Christian militias in the south seeking to expel all Moslems. Ethnic cleansing is not the sort of thing peacekeepers like to have happen in their presence. At the moment peacekeepers are trying to protect some 15,000 Moslem refugees trapped in the south. It’s gotten so bad that the AU (African Union) has accused the Christian militias of being terrorists. When it comes to Moslem civilians many of these militias are certainly using a lot of terror.

It gets worse. Chad is pulling its 850 troops out of CAR because of accusations that the Chad soldiers (who are Moslem) have been too rough on Christians and are secretly aiding the Moslem rebels. Ousted CAR president Francois Bozizé has regularly claimed that Chad helped the Moslem rebels overthrow him. Chad denies all this and there is not a lot of real evidence to back it up. The EU and AU are trying to organize a force of 12,000 peacekeepers plus an economic reconstruction program. Raising all the troops will be difficult if the Chad contingent does leave.

Most of the mayhem is in the largely Christian south and especially in and around the capital, where most of the Moslems are in the south. This all began when the capital was captured by Moslem rebels in early 2013. That was followed by rebels engaging in extensive looting and other crimes. Most of their victims were Christians. This included some deliberate attacks on churches. That resulted in Christians forming militias to fight the rebels. In the last year over 2,000 people have died, most of them in the last six months. Now the Moslems remaining in the south are arming themselves and fighting back at Christian civilians. This caused the number of refugees in and around the capital to go from 20,000 to over 200,000 in March.

The Christian militia are also angry because the peacekeepers failed to curb rebel violence against Christians last year. The general chaos of the last few months has caused over a million people (a quarter of the CAR
population) to flee their homes. Foreign aid groups are having a hard time getting food and other supplies in since rebels, militias and bandits are looting aid supplies and convoys. Peacekeepers have to be used as armed escorts for the convoys and provide protection for aid workers distributing food.

For the French this is all a big disappointment. CAR was supposed to be the kind of classic emergency peacekeeping France has been doing in this part of the world (former French colonies) for decades. The main problem in CAR was that the new rebel (Seleka) government has not been able to deal with the chaos and lawlessness unleashed by the March 2013 overthrow of the elected government. The Moslem rebels from the north ousted a largely unpopular, but Christian government in a country where 85 percent of the population is Christian (50 percent) or pagan (35 percent). This caused more friction and violence.

The Moslem rebel leader resigned as interim president at the end of 2013 and tribal leaders elected a Christian woman as interim president. She will organize nationwide elections for a new president and parliament. In the meantime she selected 20 new ministers from all factions (Christian, Moslem, Moslem rebel, tribal leaders and so on). The problem is that there are too many freelancers with guns out to steal what they can while they can.

CAR is landlocked and surrounded by Cameroon to the west, Chad to the north, Sudan to the east, and Congo to the south. CAR has too many people (a population that has quadrupled to 4.6 million in the last 50 years) and too many ethnic groups/tribes (over 80) to govern easily. Many of the tribes do not get along with each other in the best of times and now with the over crowding and the spreading desert in the north things get very ugly. There is not enough water for herds or irrigation for crops and not enough arable land for anything. Foreign aid keeps a lot of people alive, and that aid comes in via the national government, which steals as much as it can. That’s the prize for rebels; the capital and all those lucrative government jobs and income from foreign mining operations that goes with it.

CAR needs all the outside help it can get because the economy, especially in the capital, is a mess. The rebels and sundry criminals have been extorting cash from businesses and travelers (via a lot of new “security checkpoints” on the main roads) and causing all sorts of problems. Many schools were closed and supplies of all kinds (especially medical) are scarce. Crime is more common, as is unemployment. Then there’s the
violence against Christians. Clergy and churches in and around the capital have been attacked.

Outside the capital there has also been a crime wave, often caused by local Seleka groups (or armed men claiming to be Seleka) going on a looting and mayhem spree in 2013. Many have been robbed, often in addition to women and female children being raped. Over a thousand have died in all this suburban violence and even more injured.

The rebels justified their takeover by accusing the former government (with some accuracy) of reneging on an earlier peace deal. This time the rebels got to the capital and overthrew the government of president Francois Bozizé. The northern rebels had become much more formidable in 2012 by forming a new rebel organization Seleka, a coalition of five rebel groups. That made it possible to advance from northern CAR (near the Chad border) to the capital (on the Congo border in the southwest).

All the rebels had a lot of grievances. Back in 2011, elections were held in CAR and it was obvious to foreign observers (and CAR citizens) that the process was corrupt. The electoral commission declared that president Francois Bozizé won the vote with a 66 percent majority. In addition Bozizé was accused to stealing money meant for the disarmament effort which failed to collect many weapons from the 6,000 rebels who showed up at disarmament centers. The rebels that were still active were frequently operating as bandits, often so intensively that civilian populations fled. Bozizé never provided all the benefits to rebels who accepted the amnesty, and these rebels threatened to overthrow the government to get what they were promised. Bozizé thought he could keep the rebels quiet with double-talk and lies. That did not work and Bozizé called on other nations in the region to help him out. ECCAS agreed to send “peacekeepers” but these troops were not able to stop the enraged rebels. There were never enough peacekeepers to cover the entire country and the rebels were now more numerous and determined.

CAR has been torn by a tribal conflict since November 2001, when former CAR Army Chief of Staff General Francois Bozize and his supporters fled to Chad, after fighting broke out in CAR’s capital Bangui. For two years Libya provided troops to help keep the new government secure. But in 2003, Bozize and his armed followers returned, and the unpopular president Ange-Félix Patassé sort of fled. Patassé supporters and people who simply opposed Bozize, or government in general, got guns and adopted an attitude that they were a law unto themselves. Their bases were in northwestern CAR which was always a lawless place, made worse by years
of civil war in nearby Chad and heavy poaching activity from nearby Sudan. Things never settled down after that. Until last year (when it was destroyed) the CAR Army had only 4,000 troops, who were poorly paid, led, trained, and equipped. CAR soldiers usually fled when confronted by the Seleka rebels. By early 2013 most CAR troops had deserted and the rebels took control of the capital. Driving out the former government has, so far, proved easier than actually running a government. Now the northern rebel government is gone and there is a new coalition government. No one expects this to solve a lot of problems. France wants to pull its troops out in 2014, as early in the new year as possible. At the moment the French appear to be stuck.

April 22, 2014: A coalition unit of African soldiers operating in the CAR captured a low-level Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) leader. The unit also rescued 10 people the LRA band had kidnapped. The captured LRA officer was identified as a lieutenant. He was captured after a firefight between his band and the anti-LRA troops. Uganda is the lead nation in the anti-LRA coalition. The U.S. military recently reinforced its anti-LRA contingent. Around 250 American personnel are currently engaged in the anti-LRA operation. The U.S. also committed four CV-22 Osprey tilt-rotor aircraft, two C-130 transports and two KC-135 tankers to the anti-LRA effort.

April 25, 2014: Former members of the Seleka rebel movement in the CAR demanded that the country be partitioned into Christian and Moslem areas. Hard-core guerrillas in Seleka were from predominantly Moslem tribes in the northern CAR. The Seleka group advocating partition is based in the town of Bambari (north central CAR). Bambari has become a sanctuary for Moslems displaced in the south. The group wants to call the new country the Republic of Northern Central Africa. However, several Christian tribes also live in the north. They oppose partition. These tribes also claim that Chad and Sudan are pushing partition because they would be able to control the new country. Partition would require mass population displacement. Several thousand Moslem tribals live in the capital, Bangui, particularly in an area known as PK-5. Moslems accused Christian militias of trying to drive them out of Bangui. The CAR has a population of 4.7 million people. Around 80 to 85 percent of the people are Christians or animists.

April 27, 2014: The CAR government reported that anti-balaka militia groups have trapped around 10,000 Moslems in the town of Boda (southern CAR).
April 28, 2014: Conflict between Christian and Moslem tribes in the Central African Republic (CAR) continues. A convoy of 18 trucks organized by the CAR government and protected by African soldiers serving with the MISCA peacekeeping operation moved an estimated 1,300 Moslems from a refugee camp near the capital, Bangui, to a safe-zone in northern CAR. The Moslems feared attacks by Christian anti-balaka (machete) militias.

Central African Republic: providing aid amidst insecurity’
Washington DC, 21 May 2014 — Jesuit Refugee Service welcomes the statement by 26 NGOs in the Central African Republic reaffirming their commitment to the people there, and we echo their call for armed actors to respect humanitarian access. JRS currently supports the emergency education program established by UNICEF. These projects serve as temporary primary and secondary schools for those children who cannot return to their schools because of insecurity.

The statement: Twenty-six international non-governmental organisations (NGOs) express their deep concern over violence in the Central African Republic (CAR), condemn recent attacks against humanitarians and reaffirm their commitment to helping civilians in need. Despite an environment that is becoming increasingly dangerous for aid workers, NGOs are resolute in providing life-saving support and call upon all armed actors in CAR to respect the safety of humanitarian staff, material and activities; and to ensure all communities have unhindered access to assistance.

National and international NGO staff are working to reduce the scale of suffering in CAR by providing assistance to nearly 2.5 million people, more than 50 percent of the population, which live in dire circumstance throughout the country. Aid workers conduct essential activities, including: provide medical services, distribute emergency shelter, improve access to water and sanitation facilities, treat malnutrition, support livelihood activities, give food assistance, equip schools for children and help victims of violence. NGOs cooperate closely with local communities to make sure assistance addresses concerns and is equitable.

NGOs operating in CAR are guided by fundamental principles to ensure that everyone in need can reach humanitarian assistance:

Humanity: NGOs aim to prevent or alleviate human suffering.

Neutrality: NGOs do not side with any of the parties to conflict in CAR, nor advance political or religious objectives.
Impartiality: NGOs provide assistance on the basis of need alone and without any discrimination.

Independence: NGOs are autonomous and operate independently from political or military actors.

But violence and threats against humanitarians jeopardise assistance and risks reducing access to vulnerable populations, who depend on NGOs for their basic needs.

Within the past month alone, humanitarians have experienced serious insecurity, for example: the killing of 16 civilians, including three aid workers, in an attack on an NGO-supported hospital; the looting and killing of three aid workers in an attack on a humanitarian convoy; an attack against a convoy transporting IDPs and humanitarians, killing two IDPs and wounding six; and the abduction and killing of two aid workers.

One NGO representative said, "Humanitarians have experienced deadly incidents and attacks. Our fundamental priority is to make sure that everyone in need can access humanitarian aid and protection. But first, we must ensure that all armed actors respect our independence, neutrality and safety in order to maintain our activities and help population who are suffering the most".

NGOs aim to continue providing life-saving assistance, increase aid, and help prepare a foundation for the full recovery of the country. However, the safety of humanitarian staff must be ensured and all communities in need must have unhindered access to aid. (Text ends)

CAR: Praying with refugees in the Central African Republic: children suffering an endless nightmare'
Bangui, (January 1, 2015) – The long-forgotten and -neglected crisis consuming the Central African Republic (CAR) for the last 30 years has spiralled out of control, and the most vulnerable pay the heaviest price. Since 2013, this already fragile country, unable to survive the fall of François Bozize regime, has succumbed to a dictatorship under multiple armed groups which have established a climate of terror and atrocity.

Two groups, known as Séléka and anti-balaka, driven by different politico-economic interests, have learned how to play upon religious sensibilities, inciting hatred between Christians and Muslims and risking total breakdown in the country. Some 430,000 have been internally displaced, of whom almost 61,250 are from the city of Bangui alone. A further
419,000 have sought asylum in neighbouring countries, and more than 2.5 million persons, primarily civilians, have been rendered vulnerable by the crisis.

The lives of children in CAR is ongoing tragedy, with seemingly no end in sight. Some children have witnessed abuses, killings of their parents and neighbours, scenes of unparalleled violence, all which provoke trauma and unusual behaviour. Furthermore, life in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps is completely unrecognisable as ordinary family life. Some children are separated from their families; others live a life marked by acute austerity. Such a breakdown in social life is leading to a grave psychological legacy. In this landscape of daily, continuous violence, the suffering of children seems like an endless nightmare.

Successive crises in CAR have pushed children to join armed groups which now pose a threat today. If nothing is done to re-establish an education system, there is a risk that another lost generation will provoke the crises of tomorrow.

Education as a target of conflict. Over time, armed conflicts have a certain impact on educational activities. Approximately 65 percent of schools have been closed for the last two years, and a further 400,000 children prevented from receiving quality education.

Most schools in CAR have been looted, occupied, burned or damaged by gun or artillery fire, and almost 280,000 primary school children have abandoned school in the last year. More than a third of schools in are used as shelters. Many schools are subjected to indiscriminate attack, leaving both pupils and teachers as collateral damage.

Constant interruptions. When the new school year began in November, the education minister confirmed the crisis would once again prevent thousands of children from attending school. In Boy Rabe, a pro-anti-balaka district of the capital, Bangui, there are frequent clashes with the ex-Séléka group. For instance, the schools in this district were closed since December 2013, and the families have been forced to return to IDPs camps, with more than 3,640 children in the Boy Rabe Monastery camp. Since then, these schools, including emergency education activities, have only opened sporadically. When activities opened in May 2014, they were once again interrupted by renewed violence in October.
The international community has established Child Friendly and Temporary Learning Spaces and Child Protection (ETAPE) programmes, which have provided 34,555 children with access to emergency education. Only a few schools, particularly secondary schools, have been able to re-open for the 2014 school year.

During a crisis, education is rarely prioritised in child protection and the reconstruction of the country. Yet, when education is neglected during emergencies, children are more unlikely to resume their studies. During the second phase of the UNICEF-funded ETAPE programme, the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) secondary school programme, benefiting 391 students, was closed. The students, 23 of whom received scholarships from JRS, were referred to colleges and public secondary schools, yet many children were forced to abandon their studies. Clearly, the lack of resources in the field of emergency education presents great challenge.

Obstacles to universal education. The goodwill of the authorities trying to re-launch the education system is not enough. Most schools are closed due to deep-seated insecurity linked to decades of instability and the absence of a functioning state. Many state schools in Bangui have not re-opened because their teachers are demanding payment of outstanding salaries. Hopefully, negotiations between the education minister and the teachers will have a positive outcome.

There is a distinct divide between the private and public sector. Private schools, particularly Catholic schools, have more resources at their disposal and thus are in a better position to guarantee salaries to teachers and higher quality services, including didactic materials, to students. Yet, private schools have neither the space nor resources to meet the needs of all children.

Education as rehabilitation. IDP camps, like a vast ocean of distress, radically dismantle normal family life making a return to normalcy seemingly impossible. Although schools can be places where armed groups seek to recruit children, they are also spaces which offer a sense of wellbeing and normalcy in emergencies to those who would otherwise be at greater risk.

Nearly 235 children in CAR have been freed from armed groups. For some, their games become war. As they play, they use terms learned from armed groups. In observing the emergence of warlike culture among
children under five years of age, JRS emergency education programmes in the Boy Rabe and Bimbo camps seek to give children back their childhood and innocence. Schooling, in addition to guaranteeing children an education, also guarantees continuous protection and socialisation.

Reflections for prayer
While social links have been torn apart by conflict and social stability turned upside down, education in times of crisis provides the seeds for reconstruction and the prop on which national reconciliation will be built. It must be the duty of governments and strategic players to facilitate a favourable return to education in countries destroyed by war.

Isidore Ngueuleu, JRS, West Africa Advocacy and Communications Officer

Scripture for Reading Proverbs 9: 9-10
Instruct a wise man, and he becomes still wiser; teach a just man, and he advances in learning. The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
COUNTRY FACT FILE
Location
In the central Africa

Official title of the state
Central African Republic – Also abbreviated as CAR (English)
Republique Centrafricaine (French)

Flag description:
Four equal horizontal bands of blue (top), white, green, and yellow with a vertical red band in center; a yellow five-pointed star to the hoist side of the blue band; banner combines the Pan-African and French flag colors; red symbolizes the blood spilled in the struggle for independence, blue represents the sky and freedom, white peace and dignity, green hope and faith, and yellow tolerance; the star represents aspiration towards a vibrant future.

Neighbours
Chad on N, Cameroon on W, Congo and the Congo on S, Sudan on E. Land boundaries; total 5,203 km. Border countries; Cameroon 797 km, Chad 1197 km, The Congo 1577 km, Congo 467 km, South Sudan 1165 km.

Local division
14 prefectures

Government type
Republic - Semi-presidential

Legislation chamber
Unicameral - National Assembly

Form of State
A multi-party Republic with one legislative house.
President is Chief of State, elected for 5 year term, eligible for a 2nd term.
The National Assembly, 105 seats, members are elected by popular vote to serve for five-year terms.

Executive branch
Separated by chief of State and head of Government.
Executive President. President elected by popular vote to serve for five-year terms eligible for a second term. Head of government is to be appointed by the political party with parliamentary majority.

Former Rulers
1960 to 1966 David Dacko
1966 to 1979 Army Colonel Jean-Bedel Bokassa, later to be known in the name of Emperor Salah Nur when he converted to Islam/Emperor Bokassa (turned again to Catholicism).
1979 to 1981 David Dacko (briefly)
1981 to 1993 General Andre Kolingba
1993 to 2003 Angie-Felix Patassé
2003 – 2013 General Francois Bozize
2013 - Interim President Michel Djotodia (briefly)
2014 - Interim President Catherine Samba-Panza

Judicial chamber
Supreme Court, Constitutional Court.

Capital city
Bangui  Altitude 369 mtrs/1210 ft
Geographic coordinates 4.22N, 18.35E. The capital of the Central African Republic, which abbreviated as CAR. Lies on the northern banks of the Ubangi-river. It was formerly a centre of the Ivory trade. Founded by the French in March 1889, served as an administrative center during the French colonial territory of Haut-Ubangi and later Ubangi-Shari, and continues to be the national capital of CAR.

Names of main towns
Berberati, Bouar, Bossangoa, Bangassou

Date of Independence
1st December, 1960.

Religions (Major)
Traditional beliefs 35%, Christian (Roman Catholic 25%, Protestant 25%), Muslim 15%. Note: traditionalist beliefs and practices strongly influence the Christian majority.

Main spoken languages
Sango (Lingua-franca), French (official)

Currency unit
African Franc (CFA)=100 Centimes

Area in Km2
622,984.00

Country area comparison in Africa
20 out of 55 states
Demographic terms:
Average annual population growth rate 2.149 %
Birth rate 36.79 births per 1,000 population
Death rate 15.3 deaths per 1,000 population
Average life expectancy; 49.68 years
Male 48.45 years; Female 50.95 years;

Illiteracy rate (%)
Male: 35, Female: 65

Average per capita income
USD 700

Population density
7.2/km2

Urban population (%)
39

Contributor groups (%)
Farming, Fishing: 55, Industry: 20, Social service: 25

Main Export Items
Diamonds, Timber, Cotton, Coffee, Tobacco

Economy is based on
Agriculture

Climate
Tropical savannah in the north. Equatorial in the south. The dry season run from November to March.

Extremes;
Lowest point; Oubangui River 335 meters.
Highest point; Mt. Ngaoui 1,420 meters.

Weather of the Capital city (Bangui) average annual temperature 25.4°c.

Altitude 369 mtrs/1210 ft
Hottest Month February 21-34oc
Coldest Month July-Aug., 21-29oc
Driest Month December 5mm average Rf
Wettest Month July 226mm average Rf

Measures
Metric system
Time zone
1 hour ahead of GMT/UTC

Public holidays
January 1, March 29, May 1, 14, August 13, November 10, December 1,
All Roman catholic holidays.

Ethnic groups
Baya 34, Banda 27%, Mandja 13%, Sara 10%, Mboum 7%, M’baka 4%,
Yakoma 4%, others 2%.

Topographic & Environmental concern
Mostly rolling plateau average altitude 2,000 ft with rivers draining to the
Congo and N to Lake Chad open well watered Savannah to the area, with
an arid area in NE. and tropical rainforest in SW. Environment: tap water
is not potable; poaching has diminished the country's reputation as one of
the last great wildlife refuges; desertification; deforestation.
Economic Overview

Industry
Gold & diamonds mining, logging, brewing, textiles, foot-wears, assembly of Bicycles & Motor-cycles.

Chief crops
Coffee, cotton, manioc, yams, millet, bananas, tobacco: Timber logging.

Natural resources
Diamonds, Uranium, Timber, Gold, Oil reserve, water-resources.

Land in use (%)
Arable land: 3
Grassland: 5
Forest woods: 57
Other: 35

Marine
Coastline; None

Commercial Sea port:-
Central African Republic (CAR) is an inland state.

Development prospect;-
CAR economy is hampered by a lack of infrastructure and ineffective governance. The few international investors that have been willing to risk operating in the country have run into difficulties. Relations between the government and international mining houses have been fraught. French company Areva, which controls the uranium mine at Bakouma, announced in early November that it would suspend its operations for at least two years due to the Fukushima crisis's impact on the price of yellowcake. Areva executives maintain that minimal operations will be maintained in the interim. Mines minister Sylvain Ndoutingai has plans to improve the management of the diamond industry, but it will be a complicated process due to corruption and the armed occupation of diamond-producing zones.

Urban residents complain about the lack of electricity and the lack of good roads, which exacerbate the impact of floods and sewerage problems. Rural residents often do not have even dilapidated infrastructure projects to criticize. In July, the government signed a $30m deal with the Chinese government to finance a 10MW power plant outside of Bangui in order to boost production for the capital city, which can be without electricity for weeks at a time. The European Union is the country's main provider of aid and Bangui hosted a donors' conference in June that led to commitments
of $870m for the period covering 2011-2014. Donors and the International Monetary Fund are pressuring the government in Bangui to fight graft and conduct proper audits of government accounts. Scandals tied to the Société Centrafricaine des Télécommunications and the posts and telecommunications ministry were revealed in mid-2011.