

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

SITUATION TRACKER

Africa Program
5 April 2021



The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced extensive periods of violence with a new wave of violence erupting in 2012. The following Situation Tracker looks at background of the conflict, the key actors involved, the 2020 elections and the current situation in the country.



Background

- Since its independence in 1960, the Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced extensive periods of violence and conflict. In December 2012, a new wave of violence erupted when the Seleka, a rebel coalition, marched on the capital, Bangui, and overthrew President Francois Bozize-accusing him of breaking peace agreements.
- Following Bozize's overthrow, the Seleka, a coalition of rebel groups, controlled various regions across the country. Seleka militants, who are mostly Muslim, have committed widespread human rights violations, including rape and killings.
- The anti-Balaka, a coalition of predominantly Christian rebel groups, was established in reaction to the atrocities committed by the Seleka, resulting in increased instability.
- Since 2013, several international peacekeeping missions have been sent to CAR to stabilize the conflict, protect civilians and support the political transition. In 2013, MISCA, an African-led International Support Mission was deployed, that later transferred authority to a UN peacekeeping operation - MINUSCA - which was assisted by French troops until 2016.
- The United Nations Security Council issued an arms embargo on CAR in 2013 and has extended the embargo until July 2021. The UNSC eased the arms embargo to authorize Russia to provide CAR's armed forces with light arms in 2017. In 2014, the UNSC also issued targeted sanctions against former President Bozize for his involvement in the conflict.
- In February 2019, the eighth peace agreement in seven years was reached between the government and 14 armed groups, sponsored by the African Union. All previous agreements have failed.



Former President François Bozizé (Photo AFP)

Key Actors Involved

President Faustin-Archange Touadéra

Central African Armed Forces

Armed Militia Groups

Seleka

Anti-Balaka

Coalition for Patriots for Change (CPC):

CPC is an alliance of six armed groups created in 2020 and is allied with former President Francois Bozize.



President Faustin -Archange Touadéra. Ludovic MARIN AFP

International Key Actors Involved

UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA)

In 2014, the UN Security Council deployed 12,000 peacekeepers as part of MINUSCA. Overall, MINUSCA is comprised of 14,996 personnel including uninformed, civilian, and UN Volunteers. Prior to MINUSCA, an African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) was established in December 2013 by the UNSCR 2127 and later transitioned to MINUSCA due to several capacity issues.

Rwandan Troops

Rwanda has been the largest troop contributor to MINUSCA. Troops are deployed in various parts of the country.

Russia Troops and Mecenaries

Russia has been actively deploying troops to CAR and has relations with President Touadera. Touadera named Valery Zakharov, a former member of the Russian internal security service, as his national security adviser in 2018. CAR's military has also received training from Wagner Group, a Russian private security company.

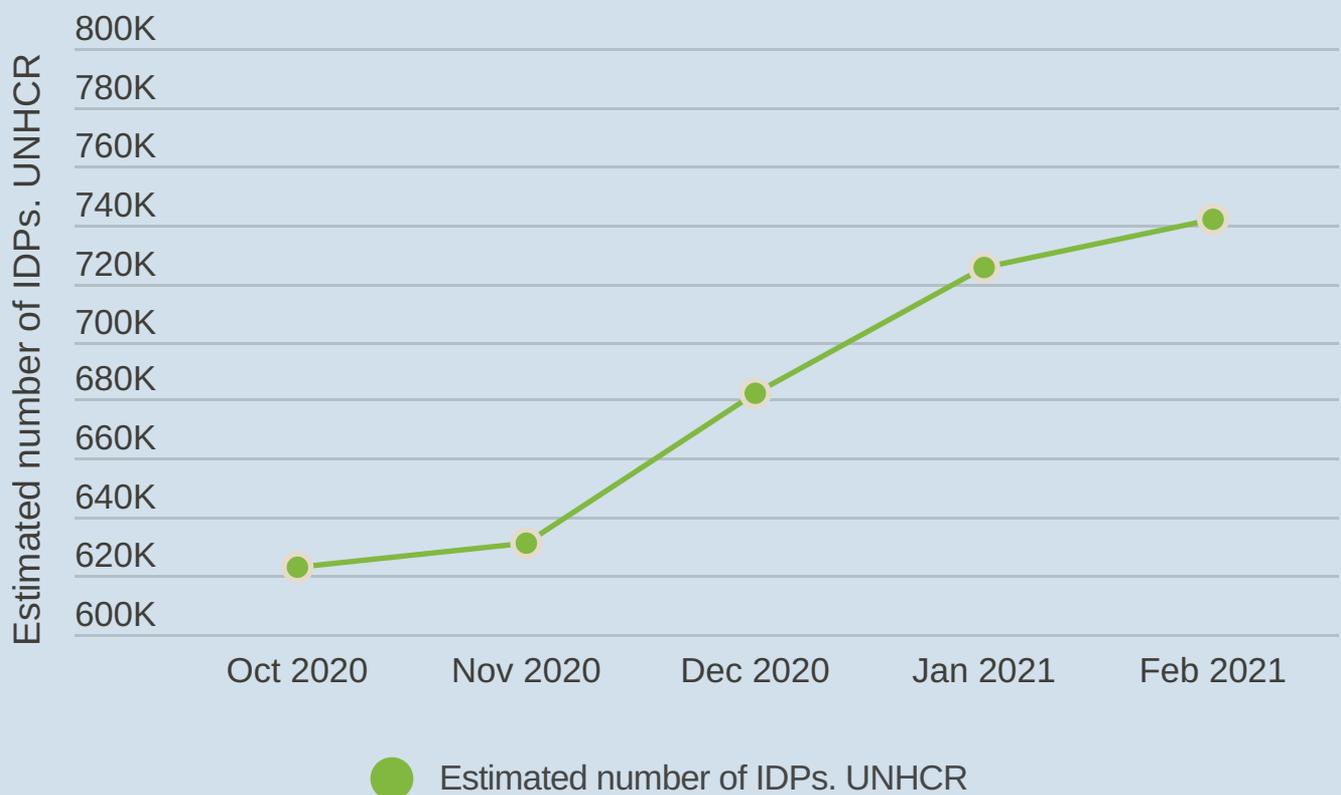
France Sangaris

France deployed over 1,000 troops in December 2013 under Operation Sangaris and withdraw them in 2016. 350 French troops remain in the country to assist MINUSCA.

United States

Support from the United States is mainly through aid. The U.S. has been the leading donor for humanitarian aid since the conflict escalated in 2013 and has provided over \$300 million in total aid between 2017 and 2019. Since 2014, the U.S. has been offering security assistance to the police and for justice and accountability.

Humanitarian Crisis



- As of February 2021, there are over 700,000 internally displaced persons, and over 240,000 people have been displaced due to rebel attacks during the December 2020 election.
- Aid agencies such as the UNHCR are struggling to help those affected due to a lack of funds. UNHCR has reported that as of 2 March 2021, CAR has only received 8% (USD 12.8M) of the USD164.7 million required to respond to the crisis in an effective manner. It is estimated that currently, 2.35 million people require humanitarian assistance.
- Due to the growing insecurity, food prices have skyrocketed and the lack of security is hampering the timely delivery of humanitarian aid such as food, water, and medicine.
- There has been a high number of cases of child recruitment and gender-based violence against women and girls.

Current situation

- Faustin Touadera, 63, was re-elected in December 2020 as president with more than 53% of the votes amid increased security concerns. Touadera has ruled the country since 2016 but has struggled to seize control of some areas from armed groups.
- Voter turnout was around 76% despite the violence, but in several towns, residents were unable to cast their vote. Opposition groups contested the vote and filed a petition to the Constitutional Court, which confirmed Touadera's reelection on January 18, 2021.
- The rejection of Bozize's candidacy for presidential elections by the highest court sparked tensions before election day on 27, December 2020. This led to the formation of the Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) by six armed groups who have since then been launching attacks across the country. Former President Bozize is said to now lead the CPC.
- Armed groups were repelled by a coalition of MINUSCA, Russian, and Rwanda troops when they attempted to attack the capitol Bangui on January 13, 2021. One of their strategies has been to block food, health, and humanitarian aid from reaching Bangui.
- In December, the CPC rebels took partial control of Bambari, seized several towns in January, and blocked the main trade route, and attacked the outskirts of Bangui. Before elections, Russian and Rwandan troops were mobilized in support of the CAR's military under a bilateral security deal, and they remain in the region.
- CAR's military retook control of several towns in mid-February but violence persists, notably in the south-east, west, and center regions.