

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR CALLS FOR FREE AND UNHINDERED HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

**Bangui, 22 February 2017** - The Acting Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Aboubacry Tall, calls on parties to the conflict in the Ouaka and Haute Kotto provinces to respect and uphold International Humanitarian Law (IHL). He also urges them to honor their commitment to protect civilians and to fulfill their human rights obligations.

Since the beginning of 2017, there have been deadly clashes between rival armed groups in the Haute Kotto and Ouaka provinces to the detriment of civilians who are forcibly displaced. The town of Bambari, the capital of Ouaka province, currently has 45,000 displaced persons out of a population of 160,000. Since the end of November 2016, about 20,000 new IDPs have been registered. The town of Maloum (63km north of Bambari), recently received an estimated 4,000 newly displaced persons due to clashes between armed groups in the Haute Kotto and Basse Kotto provinces as well as in the Ouaka province (Ndjoubissi, Ndassima, Ippy , Belengo, Mbroutchou and Atongo-Bakari).

This renewed violence has led to successive gross violations of IHL and breaches to the protection of civilians and for human rights. The affiliation of armed elements to some communities, have caused stigmatization, impacting negatively on their freedom of movement. “It is unacceptable for civilians to pay the price for rivalries between armed groups because of their religious beliefs or political affiliation,” said the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator. In order to ensure the provision of assistance in compliance with the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality, Aboubacry Tall recalled parties to the conflict of their obligation to “ensure unimpeded humanitarian access with no conditions”. “I strongly urge armed groups not to obstruct the free movement of civilians or humanitarian actors that humanitarian assistance can be delivered to the people in need” he added.

The Acting Humanitarian Coordinator recalls and reiterates the terms of his statement dated 25 January 2017 in relation to tension between rival armed groups in the Ouaka province and its impact on the protection of civilians.

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