

CRISIS IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC



JUNE 2017

ACT NOW TO AVOID THE WORST

A CALL FOR ACTION

by Najat Rochdi, Humanitarian Coordinator

SLIDING TOWARDS THE ABYSS

The Central African Republic is being shaken by a new spate of vicious violence. In recent weeks, the frequency and brutality of attacks against communities have surged to levels last seen in 2014. Entire towns have been emptied, houses burnt down and women and children brutally killed. Some 100,000 people have fled their homes. Multiple hotspots of violence are emerging, and no area has been spared by the renewed tensions. Atrocious intra-communal crimes are shattering communities whose peaceful coexistence had withstood even the most tormented times of 2014.

JEOPARDIZING FRAGILE GAINS

This new escalation comes at a time when communities in the Central African Republic are in dire need of recovery and reconstruction. The gains of our efforts in the last three years are still highly fragile. Where security was restored and all actors joined forces, communities have seen positive change for their lives. Around 20,000 internally displaced people have finally returned home, after more than three years, including the families who had sought refuge at M'Poko airport in the capital Bangui. Recovery projects giving young men and women resources and skills to provide for their families have started to bear fruit in some towns with relative stability.

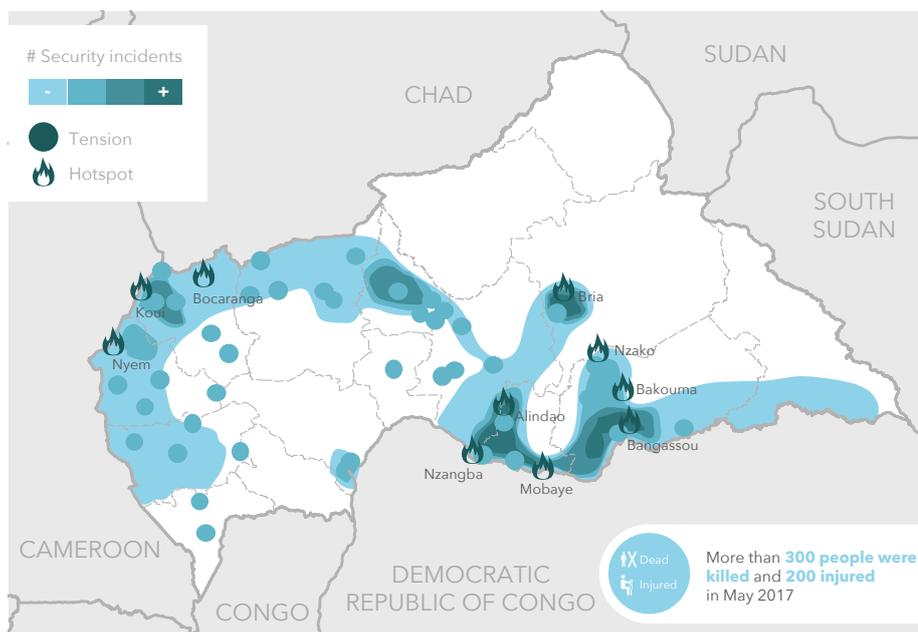
FROM CRITICAL TO WORSE

What has been achieved is now overshadowed by a much grimmer picture. The situation risks deteriorating further, and quickly, hitting communities already beset by severe adversity. The proportion of people in need of humanitarian aid in the country is among the highest in the world: nearly one in two Central Africans depends on aid to survive. For the first time in two years, the number of internally displaced people has surpassed 500,000, and almost as many continue to live as refugees in the neighboring countries. Thus, more than one in five Central African families has been uprooted from their home.

BRINGING THE RESPONSE TO SCALE

To save lives and assist the most affected communities, and to prevent the crisis from further escalation, a strong, concerted response is required. But facing these new needs, funding for humanitarian action in the Central African Republic stands at an all-time low. Almost six months into the year, only 25 per cent of the required funds have been received. The underfunding already has deep consequences for the people in need. Humanitarians have had to reduce or shut down operations. Food rations, a lifeline for families in highly precarious situations, have been halved. Humanitarian flight services, essential in delivering aid to hard-to-access areas, risk cut backs. Unless humanitarian actors are given sufficient means, tens of thousands of the most vulnerable people will be cut off from aid and entire areas of the country abandoned.

MULTIPLYING HOTSPOTS



KEY CHALLENGES

-  **Humanitarian access**
-  **Civilian protection**
-  **Limited capacity and presence of national authorities**
-  **Funding gap**

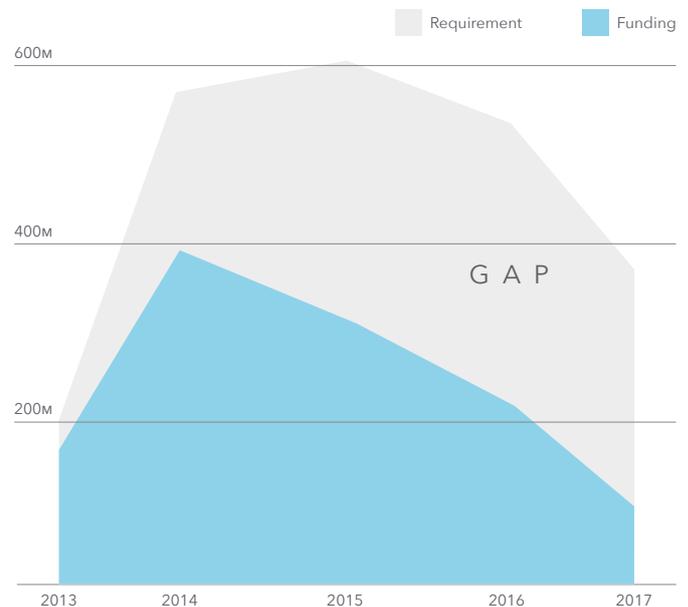
REACHING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Insecurity is rampant in much of the country, and humanitarian access a constant challenge. More than two-thirds of displaced people have found refuge within host communities. Others have gathered in hard-to-access localities, and thousands are struggling for survival in dire conditions, on the move and in the bush. Too often, assistance cannot reach the people most in need: humanitarians are unable to access communities, who themselves are cut off from localities where aid is delivered.

LEAVING NO ONE BEHIND

Humanitarian actors in the Central African Republic are doing their utmost to assist. Their attention and resources are now focused on new hotspots of violence and displacement. However, limited capacities and resources are undermining effective and adequate response to address the increasing needs. Aid organisations are struggling to respond to acute emergencies and uphold assistance in communities that, while in relative security, remain highly vulnerable. At the same time, protracted emergencies in the country's central and eastern regions, if further neglected, will deteriorate fast and escalate needs. The effects of this vicious cycle will be disastrous for the Central African Republic, and risk destabilizing the region. Humanitarian actors urgently need the means to step up assistance and adapt strategic priorities, without leaving anyone behind.

EVOLUTION OF THE FUNDING OF THE HRP



THE WAY FORWARD

The Central African Republic is at a critical moment. The international community needs to be strategically ambitious and step up engagement to head off a looming catastrophe. Keeping our eyes on the horizon and sustainable change, we also need flexible approaches that allow us to quickly react to surges in tension and violence in shifting hotspots.

To adapt to the fast-evolving context, better reflect different needs, and identify priorities, we will review the humanitarian response along three strategic axes:

1. Strengthen the humanitarian response in the new hotspots.

People affected in the new hotspots urgently need protection and assistance, including food, water, shelter, and health services. While the protection of civilians and facilitation of humanitarian access remain huge challenges, high risk areas need to be prioritized by all actors. Rapid Response Mechanisms and the Humanitarian Fund will be used to respond quickly and effectively to emerging needs.

2. Ensure the continuity of humanitarian aid for protracted emergencies.

With the continuing lack of basic services, livelihoods and infrastructure, the Central African population is de facto in constant need of humanitarian aid. Insecurity and the lack of resources are hindering efforts in restoring the State authority. Humanitarian actors will provide vital assistance in basic services and livelihood while paving the way for early recovery in conjunction with the Government and development actors.

3. Support durable solutions for returning IDPs and refugees.

Humanitarian action, in line with the strategic plan defined by the Central African government, will support the voluntary return and reintegration of displaced populations to their place of origin or other locations in the country.



MAKING A MEANINGFUL DIFFERENCE

The path towards recovery in the past three years has been hard for Central Africans, but they have stood up to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Today, they face the imminent risk that their communities and country slide back into the abyss of conflict and violence, jeopardizing all fragile gains.

Addressing the crisis in the Central African Republic requires the strong engagement by all partners. We need to urgently step up our support and resources, otherwise a window of opportunity could shut very soon. What may seem like a heavy price today will prevent a much steeper bill tomorrow. This is not the time to let down the people of the Central African Republic.

Najat Rochdi

**United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator
in the Central African Republic**