

Press release

**CIVILIANS PAY THE PRICE OF THE NEW WAVE OF VIOLENCE IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

**Bangui, 17 May 2018** – Over the past two weeks, the civilian population has paid the price of the resurgence of violence in various prefectures. Humanitarian actors have not been spared either. On 15 May, an exchange of fire between an armed group and national security forces in Bambari, Ouaka Prefecture led to looting of the premises of four NGOs whose staff was physically assaulted.

The Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Najat Rochdi, strongly condemns this umpteenth attack against humanitarian workers whose actions are guided by no other criterion than the principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. “These utterly cowardly acts are certainly a blow to humanitarians, but they also constitute a double punishment for vulnerable people who will be deprived of much-needed assistance,” she said. Prior to the recent incidents, Bambari sheltered nearly 35,000 displaced persons; most of whom relied on humanitarian assistance to survive.

In the first quarter of 2018, 3,261 protection incidents were reported countrywide. Over the same period, 63 attacks directly targeted humanitarian workers. During the first half of May alone, 15 incidents were committed against humanitarians. In this regard, Najat Rochdi recalled that “often humanitarian workers are the only ones who provide vital assistance to the population in need. Attacking them is tantamount to killing the most vulnerable people.” “The Humanitarian Coordinator urges “the immediate respect of International Humanitarian Law”. She also recalled that “attacks on humanitarian workers can be considered as war crimes and therefore liable to prosecution”.

Najat Rochdi expressed her deepest concern about renewed violence in the Central African Republic and its spread into relatively stable areas where pilot projects for post-conflict recovery were being developed such as in Bambari and Paoua. “If this new trend continues, it would be a dangerous set-back for the Central African Republic,” she warned. The impact of the renewed violence is reflected in population displacements and new needs, while the humanitarian response remains underfunded.

This year, six people on a humanitarian missions lost their lives. The Central African Republic remains one of the most dangerous countries in the world for humanitarian operations.

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