

PRESS RELEASE

THE HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR STRONGLY CONDEMNS THE RESURGENCE OF RELIGIOUS AND ETHNIC BASED ATTACKS

Bangui, 28 May 2017 – The Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Najat Rochdi, expresses great concern at the resurgence of violence, atrocities and the violation of human rights with religious and ethnic connotations, committed in the past days. Six women and several children were brutally murdered by armed men based on their religious affiliation over the past week. Najat Rochdi strongly condemns all these assassinations and extreme violence targeting particular communities. She denounced “these odious and unspeakable acts of cowardice against defenseless women and children”.

“ I firmly condemn the persecution of the civilians, in the localities of Alindao, Bangassou, Mobaye and Bria in particular despite all calls for peace and tolerance to the perpetrators of these attacks” she declared. “Any attack on religious or ethnic grounds is an attack against humanity and the universal values that unite us all and should no longer have a place in the Central African Republic where we seek to heal the wounds of the past. Such attitudes must be eradicated in order to give the people a chance to regain peace and rebuild their lives and those of future generations. I appeal to all parties to immediately cease these abuses and to engage again in the dialogue for peace” stressed Najat Rochdi.

The Humanitarian Coordinator also warned all those involved in these atrocities against the stigma that brought the Central African Republic into the abyss in December 2013. They led to the displacement of more than 900,000 people, a multitude of deaths and thousands of people who will carry the wounds of the conflict forever. “We must make sure that we do not fall back in those travails because we know the consequences and are concerned by some worrying warning signs. In May 2017, the Central African Republic has more than 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). This number had not been reached since August 2014” alerted Najat Rochdi.

At the same time, humanitarian actors are increasingly being attacked while performing their duties. In the past three days, three of them were violently beaten despite the fact they were helping those in need. The Humanitarian Coordinator calls upon the parties to the conflict to put the interests and welfare of civilians above all other considerations. She also urges them to respect the civilian and humanitarian character of IDP sites and the neutrality of health facilities. “Humanitarian actors must have unimpeded access to those in need and enable the most vulnerable to benefit from aid,” said Najat Rochdi. She also stressed that violations of International Humanitarian Law and the numerous human rights violations could be considered as crimes against humanity.

Lastly, the Humanitarian Coordinator reminds “that only dialogue and tolerance will enable the Central Africans to find peace”.

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