
Prease Release

CAR : Increased violence against civilians threatens the provision of aid and puts many lives at risk.

Bangui, 11th August 2017 - Following the escalation of violence in many parts of the country, NGOs signatories, members of the INGO Coordination Committee (CCO) in the Central African Republic (CAR) call for an increased protection of civilians and an improved humanitarian access to allow the affected population access to vital aid.

As NGOs working across CAR, we witness the impact of violence on the civilian population on a daily basis:

- An increased number of civilians, including humanitarian actors, are being attacked or are losing their lives: while there are wounded civilians in one out of 2 security incidents, almost one out of 5 is lethal
- Women and children are being affected the most given the spread of sexual exploitation and abuse and the recruitment of children by armed groups
- More than 20% of the population have fled their homes: The number of internally displaced persons reached 600,000 in July - the highest it's been since March 2014, with an increase of 215,000 people in the last six months. An additional 438.724 people live as refugees in neighbouring countries (Source: OCHA/UNHCR).

“The INGO community in CAR is deeply concerned by this very worrying situation. The civilian population are the ones who bear the brunt of violence the most as it impacts on their safety and livelihoods.” says Mr. Mohammed Chikhaoui, the Chair of the CCO.

As civilians ourselves, we also face numerous incidents and attacks. For the third consecutive year, CAR is being named the most dangerous country in the world for humanitarian personnel in the world in terms of number of incidents they face, with 181 incidents being recorded since the beginning of this year.

These attacks impact on our capacity to deliver life-saving assistance and much needed services to the affected population. And given that half of the population is dependent on humanitarian aid, it is worrisome that the humanitarian organizations working to provide emergency relief to the most vulnerable can no longer do so due to the continuous violence towards civilians, them included. This reduction in the humanitarian space - both in terms of the humanitarian actors' capacities to reach the affected population and the population's ability to access basic services and life-saving assistance – could rapidly lead to a new humanitarian catastrophe in the Central African Republic.

Therefore, the INGOs signatories to this statement:

- first and foremost, remind all parties of their responsibility to protect civilians' lives and livelihoods;
- strongly urge all parties to refrain from targeting civilians, and perpetrating or allowing the use of force, abuse of power or any action that violates human rights in the CAR;
- call on armed actors to agree on an immediate cease fire and to engage in a political dialogue to bring about a peaceful solution to the current crisis;
- call on all parties to guarantee the safe access of civilians to life-saving and much needed services, and the safe access of the humanitarian actors to all vulnerable groups as stipulated under international humanitarian law.

In this regard, August, 11th 2017 has been chosen as a day of mobilisation and dialogue dedicated to the protection of civilians and of humanitarian space in CAR.

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