

Central African Republic: UN cites 'dire' situation for children; amid threats, some aid work suspended

5 May 2017 – Four international humanitarian organizations have temporarily suspended activities in northern Central African Republic (CAR) after dozens of attacks on aid workers in the region, the United Nations humanitarian office today said.

During the first quarter of the year, 33 incidents targeting humanitarians were recorded across the country, placing CAR “among the [high-risk countries](#) for humanitarian aid,” according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

Sixteen of those attacks were in the northern prefecture of Ouham, and were reported since March.

The senior UN humanitarian official in the country strongly condemned the attacks, reminding that half of the population – about 2.2 million people – depends on aid. Provision of basic services has been hampered by decades of instability, the latest following the ouster of President François Bozizé by the Séléka rebel coalition in March 2013.

“Suspending this aid would jeopardize social stability and threaten the fragile resilience of the communities,” said the Humanitarian Coordinator, [ai](#), Michel Yao.

“This withdrawal constitutes a setback in humanitarian access for the Central African Republic, as it places in the disarray of people who have already repeatedly suffered violence and have experienced successive displacements.”

The staff from the four non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will redeploy to the capital, Bangui, while other aid organization plan to “strictly reduce” their presence and possibly withdraw if the attacks persist, according to OCHA.

Aiding children in the 'forgotten crisis'

Meanwhile, the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today called for increased support to the more than 1 million children threatened by violence, in what a senior UNICEF official called a “forgotten crisis.”

The situation for children inside the country is “calamitous as violence and widespread displacement have made children especially vulnerable to [health risks, exploitation and abuse](#),” the UN agency reported.

“We cannot allow the Central African Republic to become a forgotten crisis,” said Christine Muhigana, UNICEF Representative in the Central African Republic. “The reality is that without sufficient support we will not be able

to provide the vital services that are needed to keep children healthy, safe and in school.”

The UN agency is facing a \$32.6 million funding gap in its work in the country.

[Worsening food insecurity forcing more people to migrate, finds new UN report](#)

5 May 2017 – Highlighting the complex link between food insecurity and migration – where increase in one forces the other to rise and then spirals back to push the former even higher – the United Nations food relief agency has urged greater investments in food security and livelihoods at places of origin to prevent displacement and reduce forced onward migration.

In its new report, [At the Root of Exodus: Food security, conflict and international migration](#), the UN World Food Programme (WFP) found that each 1 per cent increase in food insecurity pushed 1.9 per cent more people towards migration. However, the act of migration itself can cause food insecurity, given the costs, lack of opportunities and often hazardous conditions along the journey, and force people to continue to move.

“With millions of our brothers and sisters having fled their homes and facing so much hardship, it is our duty to shed light on their tragic situation,” David Beasley, the Executive Director of WFP, said in a [news release](#) announcing the report.

“By understanding the dynamics that compel people to move, we can better address what lies at the heart of forced migration and what must be done to end their suffering,” he added.

The report is launched at a moment when multiple protracted crises and a period of political transition challenge the levels of international food and humanitarian assistance provided for refugees and people who have been forcibly displaced.

Link between food insecurity and armed conflict

The WFP study is the first time such comprehensive analysis has been carried out on the subject. It is based on quantitative and qualitative research and features often dramatic accounts of people forced to take extreme measures when left with nothing at all.

A country with rising levels of food insecurity and conflict will

experience greater outward migrationWFP report

One particularly troubling finding was the link between food insecurity and armed conflict: food insecurity was found to be a significant cause for the incidence and intensity of armed conflict, with 0.4 percent more people fleeing a country for each additional year of conflict.

This means that a country with rising levels of food insecurity and conflict will experience greater outward migration, or movement of people away from their homes, noted the UN agency.

People want to stay closer to their homes

The report also found that people who are displaced often do not want to move far away from their homes, and try to stay as close to their place of origin as possible.

Nearly eight in ten Syrian refugee families interviewed had been internally displaced inside Syria at least once, and 65 per cent twice or more. Almost every single Syrian participant in the study strongly affirmed a desire to return to Syria if the situation stabilized and security prevailed.

In light of these findings, one of the key recommendations contained in the report is for increasing investments in food security and livelihoods at or near people's place of origin.

Doing so may prevent further displacement, reduce forced onward migration, result in more cost-effective humanitarian interventions and yield greater socioeconomic benefits now and in the long term, noted WFP.

[‘Blue helmet’ killed in attack on UN Mission camp in Timbuktu, Mali](#)

4 May 2017 – A United Nations peacekeeper from Liberia was killed and nine others injured when their camp came under attack in the Malian city of Timbuktu, the UN Integrated Mission in the country, known as MINUSMA, has reported.

According to MINUSMA, eight among the injured were evacuated to capital Bamako for treatment.

“[We] condemn in the strongest terms this cowardly and ignoble attack on the camp and personnel,” said MINUSMA in the [news release \(in French\)](#), underscoring the need to identify those responsible for the attack and to bring them to justice.

Some six mortar shells or rockets hit the camp at around 13:15 local time, yesterday, 3 May. The projectiles also caused some material damage, the full extent of which has not been established yet.

MINUSMA added that defences at the camp have been strengthened and air assets have been deployed to reconnoitre the area where the shots originated.

The UN Mission also informed that no civilian personnel were deployed at the camp.

Also in the news release, MINUSMA extended sincere condolences to the family of the peacekeeper who was killed and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.

[UN envoy commends plan to setup de-escalation zones in Syria as 'promising positive step'](#)

4 May 2017 – Following today's signing of a deal to setup so-called 'de-escalation zones' in Syria, the United Nations envoy for the war-torn country praised the agreement and said its success could bolster the path towards peace talks.

"Today in Astana I think we have been able to witness an [important, promising and positive step](#) in the right direction in the process of de-escalation of the conflict," said Staffan de Mistura, who witnessed today's signing.

He is in Astana as an observer to the latest round of the Astana talks aimed to bolster the ceasefire regime brokered by Russia, Turkey and Iran in late December 2016.

"The hard work of Iran, Russian Federation, Turkey and the presence at the senior level of the United States of America and of Jordan has produced something that we believe as a UN is a very significant, and in my opinion – our opinion – is a promising step," Mr. de Mistura also noted.

While details of the de-escalation agreement between the three guarantor parties have not been made public, expectations have been raised that it will lead to greater humanitarian access for the 6.3 million Syrians still living in the country.

Speaking to journalists today, Mr. de Mistura said that "if and when" the de-escalation agreement becomes concrete, it would be "conducive and helping" the intra-Syrian discussions.

“We hope it is going to be concrete in the next two weeks for the resumption of the Geneva talks,” the UN envoy said.

The [intra-Syrian talks](#) taking place in Geneva, held in parallel to the Astana talks, aim for a political solution to the six-year conflict. The discussions are guided by UN Security Council [resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#), focusing on matters of governance, a schedule and process to draft a new constitution and the holding of elections as the basis for a Syrian-led, Syrian-owned process to end the conflict. The last round wrapped up in March.

In addition to today’s agreement, Mr. de Mistura said that the three guarantor countries, plus Jordan and US, have been discussing humanitarian demining in Syria and the issue of detainees, missing people and abductees.

“Both areas have not been yet formally finalized but we believe is being almost finalized, we believe, in imminent discussions. This is also a very good development. Conclusion: this is an important day,” said Mr. de Mistura.

[Importance of broad financing for sustainable forest management highlighted at UN forum](#)

4 May 2017 – A United Nations meeting on sustainable management of forests today discussed the importance of mobilizing resources from a diverse range of actors to ensure broad ownership as well as to advance the overall sustainable development agenda.

“By far the greatest source of forest financing has been – and will continue to be – from commercial private sector investments in sustainable forest management,” Manoel Sobral Filho, the Director of the [UN Forum on Forests](#) secretariat, [said](#) in a briefing on the importance of diversifying resources.

In the UN Strategic Plan for Forests, agreed earlier this year, UN Member States stressed the importance of partnerships of philanthropic organizations, foundations, as well as public-private and other multi-stakeholder entities in scaling up resources for sustainable forest management and as well as the plan’s own implementation.

The Strategic Plan also provides a framework for forest-related contributions to the implementation of the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development, the [Paris Agreement](#) on climate change and a number of other international instruments, commitments and goals.

In addition to these direct links, importance of ensuring sustainable forest management was also recognized in the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#) – one of the

key constituents of the 2030 Agenda – given the importance of forests for efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition as well as for its larger environmental benefits.

In his briefing today, Mr. Filho further informed the meeting of funding received from resources allocated for sustainable forest management initiatives, as well as the activities of the Global Forest Financing Facilitation Network, one of the five main components of the post-2015 International Arrangement on Forests.

Some key functions of the Network include mobilizing and supporting new and additional financial resources, and promoting effective use of existing financial resources for sustainable forest management.

The briefing was followed by a panel discussion that was attended, among others, by officials from the Ford Foundation and the World Bank.

Penny Davies, Programme Officer for Equitable Development, Ford Foundation, said the organization planned to disburse \$1 billion over the next 10 years into private funds promoting “social and environmental justice” activities, she described two specific streams of forest-related investment financing: first, sustainable agriculture that did not clear natural forests and included some protection of forests; and second, sustainable forest management and community-based forest management.

“However, we are finding it difficult to place [that financing],” she said, due to a number of constraints that made those investments too difficult to justify, including: “incoherent spatial mapping” and uncertain land tenure, where investments could be contested by several parties; conflict, which could cause delays in the Foundation’s projects or cause the withdrawal of its partners; and the fact that the Ford Foundation’s private finance is insufficient in the face of government subsidies to unsustainable forest and agricultural management, that incentivizes forest clearance.

The UN Forum on Forests (UNFF) is a high-level intergovernmental policy forum that includes UN Member States, Permanent Observers as well as regional organizations and groups.

Its current (twelfth) session concludes tomorrow, 5 May.