

Fresh violence in Central African Republic sparks 'unprecedented' levels of displacement – UN

23 January 2018 – Surging violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) has put unprecedented numbers of people on the run, the United Nations refugee agency said Tuesday, reporting that hungry, desperate arrivals being registered in neighbouring Chad say their houses have been torched and that armed groups are “killing anyone in their way.”

Overall, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees said the violence has pushed displacement to its highest levels since the start of the violence in 2013, moreover, estimates show that almost half the population is now food insecure and some 2.5 million people need humanitarian assistance.

“Data as of the end of December shows that [688,700 people were displaced internally](#) – 60 per cent more than just a year ago,” Adrian Edwards, UNHCR spokesperson told reporters at today’s regular press briefing in Geneva.

Meanwhile, 542,380 CAR refugees are in neighbouring countries, a 12 per cent increase compared to last year.

“For a country whose population is estimated at around 4.6 million, these two figures combined represent an astonishing level of suffering and people in need,” he added.

Clashes between the mainly Muslim Séléka rebel coalition and anti-Balaka militia, which are mostly Christian, plunged the country into civil conflict in 2013. Hundreds of thousands of people have been uprooted and have fled to neighbouring Cameroon, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Chad and the Republic of Congo for safety.

The recent surge in violence, particularly in the country’s north-west, has led over 17,000 Central Africans to flee to Chad since end-December – some ten times more than during the whole of 2017 – making it the biggest refugee influx since 2014.

UNHCR and the authorities are identifying host villages away from the border in Chad to relocate the refugees, and teams are distributing food and basic relief items, including blankets and mosquito nets, provided by the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)).

The UN refugee agency and its partners are also providing medical assistance to new arrivals, some of whom are affected by malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory infections. In total Chad hosts 77,122 refugees from CAR.

The conflict in CAR’s north-west has also displaced some 65,000 Central Africans to the city of Paoua, which has seen its population tripling.

“The newly displaced told UNHCR that armed groups attacked their villages, torching houses, looting food and killing anyone in their way,” updated Mr. Edwards.

While local authorities report that some 15,000 houses have been burned and 487 people killed across the northwest, UNHCR fears the number could be higher as some places are still inaccessible.

Describing the situation as “one of the world’s most forgotten displacement crises,” Mr. Edwards shared humanitarian community estimates that almost half of all Central Africans will face food insecurity in 2018.”

“In 2017, against needs we estimated at \$209.2 million for the CAR situation, only 12 per cent was funded – barely more than a dollar for every 10 required. In 2018, UNHCR’s financial requirements for the CAR situation amount to \$176.1 million,” he concluded.