

CCO statement on MINUSCA's mandate and the priority of protection of civilians

The CCO is writing as the representative of more than 45 international non-governmental organizations operating in the Central African Republic (CAR). We welcome the renewal of the mandate of the Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR on 15 November 2019, and would like to share our views on the current situation in order to relay our main concerns for the year ahead. Our combined experience paints a picture of a country still in the midst of a severe protection crisis. As such, we ask that stakeholders at the national, regional, and international level take the impact on the civilians into account when developing strategies to support MINUSCA in the implementation of its mandate and that all ensure the Mission has the ability to prioritize and fulfill its core mandate to protect civilians.

In particular we ask stakeholders to:

- Recognize and continue to prioritize resources to protect civilians given ongoing threats and instability;
- Increase efforts to facilitate the creation of safe conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- Provide adequate support to sustainable peacebuilding initiatives and ensure the implementation of the peace agreement at the local, subnational, and national-level while holding all actors that threaten the implementation of the agreement to account;
- Identify and anticipate tensions and violence that the upcoming elections could spark/catalyze and develop and implement plans to address them;
- Ensure that the Mission has the resources and capacity, it needs to implement its full mandate;
- Raise awareness of the ongoing humanitarian needs and fully fund humanitarian appeals.

We applaud the Security Council's decision to retain the protection of civilians as a priority for the MINUSCA. The situation in CAR continues to be characterized by a high level of violence against civilians, forced displacement, and attacks against humanitarian workers and UN peacekeepers. At present, MINUSCA remains the only actor capable of protecting Central African civilians, and of safeguarding a secure humanitarian access in many parts of the country.

While the civilian death toll resulting from confrontations between armed groups has decreased,¹ the overall number of security incidents has risen to similar numbers as in the previous years, with no sign of improvement. Moreover, in the past few months, criminal incidents rose to numbers unseen since the beginning of the crisis,² and more humanitarian workers have been injured in 2019 compared to 2018.³

It is important that the UN continue to highlight – in public and private reports and statements – the ongoing violence against and risks to civilians and the ambivalent behavior of parties to restrain from violence in pursuing their objectives.

Humanitarian needs remain dire,⁴ and CAR is still one of four countries worldwide where more than half of the population is in need of urgent humanitarian assistance, with some 2.6 million individuals in need of food, water, shelter, protection, and more. In this context and amid continuous threat of violence, it is not surprising that people continue to be forcibly displaced both inside the country's borders and to neighboring countries.⁵

We are concerned that the addition of resource-intensive tasks, such as the support to the implementation of the peace agreement and the 2020/2021 elections, may hinder MINUSCA's ability to prioritize and fulfill its mandate to protect civilians. While we recognize that the elections are an important step for a peaceful resolution of the conflict in CAR, they may also carry potential risks for civilians. As a result, we strongly encourage MINUSCA to enhance efforts to identify risks to civilians in the context of the upcoming elections, including through an update to its Mission-wide POC strategy, and implement mitigating measures to both prevent and respond to such risks accordingly. We also encourage the Mission to proactively develop contingency plans for worst-case scenarios in the context of elections, in consultation with humanitarian actors

¹ According to UN statistics, the trend of a decreasing number of civilian casualties linked to the conflict started at the beginning of 2018, mainly due to the decreased level of intercommunal violence. Source: [Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic \(S/2018/922\)](#), 15.10.2018. Confirmation of this trend can be found in the latest SG report, [Report of the Secretary-General on the Central African Republic \(S/2019/822\)](#), 15.10.2019.

² The signature of the peace agreement in February 2019 only had a momentary positive effect on security. Humanitarian organizations reported diminished levels of criminality between March and April, while conflict-related incidents perpetrated by armed groups were below traditional thresholds between March and July.

³ OCHA, [Overview of incidents affecting humanitarian workers](#), 08.01.2019.

⁴ OCHA, [Aperçu des Besoins Humanitaires \(HNO 2020\)](#), 11.10.2019

⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, [Statistiques Mensuelles des Réfugiés, Demandeurs d'asile et Rapatriés](#), 31 October 2019; Commission Mouvement de Populations (CMP), [Rapport CMP](#), 30.11.2019.

working in CAR. These steps will help ensure that MINUSCA is prepared and willing to protect civilians as the electoral process proceeds.

For MINUSCA to be able to succeed in delivering on the mandated tasks, without any potential tradeoffs, we call on Member States to adequately support the Mission to step up its resources and capacity to match the needs of the new mandate.

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