



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[16 February 2015]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **The situation of the Muslim minority in Central African Republic**

Since September 2013 the situation of the Muslim minority in Central African Republic (CAR) rapidly has been deteriorating, after mostly Christian anti-Balaka-militias have started armed attacks targeting Muslim civilians in revenge for human rights violations of the Seleka forces. In the weeks before Transitional President and Seleka-leader Michel Djotodia resigned from office on January 10, 2014, anti-Balaka fighters attacked Muslim communities and villages. Small-scale displacements of Muslims occurred after these anti-Balaka attacks.

After the arrival of French troops in December 2013 an escalation of violence between Seleka fighters and anti-Balaka-forces could be prevented, but anti-Balaka fighters have used the presence of international armed forces and the disarmament of Seleka fighters to pursue their revenge attacks on Muslim civilians. These attacks against Muslims in numerous towns and villages continued after the new President Catherine Samba-Panza took office on January 23, 2014. The deliberate attacks have forced tens of thousands of Muslims in western and southern CAR to abandon their homes and to search for protection in bigger cities. But even in Bangui, Bouar, Paoua and Bossangoa there was no real protection for the traumatized Internal Displaced People.

Unfortunately even the international armed forces intervening in CAR have failed to provide adequate protection for the Muslim IDP. The small sized international peacekeeping units were overwhelmed by the escalation of violence. During weeks they were limited in their ability to show presence outside of the capital Bangui. Still today there is a desperate lack of protection of the civilian population outside of the capital. Therefore some 30,000 mostly Christian civilians have fled from the southern provinces of Ouaka and Basse-Kotto to neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo after fighting has escalated in January 2015 between Seleka and anti-Balaka militiamen.

Under the eyes of international peacekeepers and the CAR authorities anti-Balaka fighters pursued their revenge campaign against Muslim civilians. Despite calls of the Government of CAR Government and national religious institutions and leaders of all faiths to reunite and to overcome religious hatred, this campaign for religious tolerance has failed to show any remarkable progress. Some priests have shown incredible courage in offering protection to endangered Muslim civilians, but a general atmosphere of religious intolerance and hatred has led to many attacks against Muslim civilians who felt helpless and as second-class citizen without any meaningful protection. They are seeing no hope for a peaceful livelihood among the Christian majority population.

Therefore most Muslims have abandoned any hope to stay in their communities or to enjoy adequate protection in bigger cities and they are searching to find asylum in neighboring countries. Some 424.000 people living in CAR have been searching for protection in Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo and Congo, among them more than 100,000 Muslims.

We are deeply concerned about the fate of some 36,000 Muslims who still are trapped in seven Muslim enclaves in CAR (Bangui, Boda, Yaloké, Berbérati, Carnot, Bouar, Dekoa). The biggest of these enclaves are Bangui PK 5 with some 24,000 IDP and Boda with 9,000 IDP. Many of the displaced people are Peulh nomads who have a long history of migration between CAR, Chad and Cameroon. Others are merchantmen who had to abandon their shops due to threats and intimidation. This deliberate campaign of fear and social exclusion has led to a major breakdown of the CAR economy because Muslim shopkeepers had an imminent influence on the local economy. With greatest concern we had been following that CAR authorities have urged and forced international organizations and aid agencies to refrain from providing any support to IDP who are searching for protection in neighboring countries. By the use of force and blatant intimidation the IDP were prevented from leaving the enclaves and fleeing to neighboring countries.

It's one issue that CAR authorities were unable to provide adequate protection for the Muslim minority. The nationwide breakdown of public administration and law enforcement and the fear of an imminent genocide and of crimes against humanity certainly have contributed to a lack of capacity to ensure a sufficient protection for the minority. But it's a different issue that CAR authorities today are unwilling to acknowledge this failure and to ensure that at least the

remaining 36,000 Muslim minority people who want to search for more protection in abroad will get asylum and peaceful living conditions in neighboring countries. Every CAR citizen should have the right to freely move around in the country. Preventing heavily traumatized people from leaving IDP camps for political purposes is a violation of national and international law and a crime against humanity.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council:

- to urge the Government of CAR to immediately ensure the free passage of all IDP who want to migrate to neighboring countries,
- to call on the international community to ensure a more efficient protection of the civilian population in CAR
- to press the Government of CAR to end impunity on massive human rights violations of Seleka and anti-Balaka fighters, especially in regard to the violence against the Muslim minority. The international community should provide more technical support to ensure that law enforcement, the justice system and public administration will be reestablished in rural areas,
- to urge the Government of CAR to concentrate on reconciliation between Muslims and Christians and to prepare a basis of understanding on all levels between the communities which might facilitate a return of Muslim refugees.

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