

Central African Republic

The information below is based on the [Report of the Secretary-General on conflict-related sexual violence \(S/2016/361\) issued on 20 April 2016](#)

The only country covered herein for which detailed data are provided on sexual violence against men and boys is the Central African Republic, where a conscious effort has been made to describe gender-based violence services in gender-neutral terms and to train both male and female staff with a view to minimizing the perception that they support women exclusively. A total of 62 countries still provide no legal protection for male rape victims. Free medical treatment is also crucial for a survivor-centred response. However, in many settings, survivors are charged fees by the police to open a case file, as in Somalia, or asked to pay for medical certificates, as in the Central African Republic and Côte d'Ivoire. Moreover, health providers often require survivors to report to the police before receiving care. In Myanmar, this has meant that only 4 per cent of gender-based violence survivors choose to access health services. The practice of mandatory reporting to the police also presents a barrier to access to care in contexts such as the Sudan and South Sudan, despite formal instructions to the contrary, as well as in the Syrian Arab Republic and some countries receiving Syrian refugees.

The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) verified 79 cases of conflict-related sexual violence, 36 involving the rape of minors, committed by former Séléka, anti-balaka and Lord's Resistance Army elements; armed youth and self-defence groups; and gendarmes and the police. Service providers recorded 29,801 cases of gender-based violence more broadly, including rape, sexual assault and sexual slavery. Of the survivors, 27,977 were women and girls and 1,824 were men and boys. A total of 44 per cent of cases involved gang rapes, often committed in front of family members. Rape has been used to punish women suspected of trading with people on the other side of the sectarian divide. The pre-disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process, launched in 2015, revealed that a number of children associated with armed groups had been subjected to sexual violence. There was also a disturbing pattern of sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeepers, with the MINUSCA Conduct and Discipline Team addressing 23 cases.

The absence of a functioning justice system, combined with the fear of retaliation and the pressure placed on survivors and their families by the perpetrators, continue to deter reporting. Evidence has emerged of forced marriage as a negative coping mechanism to "protect the victims' honour". Those who report to service providers often come forward very late, sometimes a year or more after the incident. Survivors experience rejection by their families and communities, in particular when they are pregnant. Children born as a result of rape are rarely accepted by society, and a high number of rape victims resort to unsafe abortion, which is the leading cause of maternal mortality. Many public structures charge fees for medical services and certificates, which renders them inaccessible to the indigent. Sexual violence against men and boys has been shrouded in cultural taboos. Accordingly, a neutral term for gender-based violence crisis centres has been adopted, namely listening centres, and male staff have been employed. In 2015, 1,128 boys and 969 men accessed gender-based violence services.

Reports emerged of married women being abducted from their homes and forced to marry former Séléka fighters, and allegations arose of women and girls being used as sex slaves by anti-balaka elements. Conflict-related sexual violence is both a cause and a consequence of displacement, and most incidents are reported during flight. For example, women sought refuge in host families and sites for internally displaced persons following a series of rapes in connection with armed attacks in villages along the Mbrès and Ouandago axis. More than 447,000 people have been internally displaced, and sex has been demanded from women fleeing war zones as a form of "payment of passage". Sexual assaults are so frequent when internally displaced persons leave displacement sites that United Nations agencies have begun distributing warning kits to women, which contain flashlights and whistles to alert local protection committees in the case of emergency. The

law establishing a special criminal court with jurisdiction over grave human rights violations was promulgated in June 2015. Efforts are under way, including by the Team of Experts on the Rule of Law and Sexual Violence in Conflict, to ensure that conflict-related sexual violence remains central to the court's undertakings. Following the signing in January 2015 of a presidential decree establishing a rapid response unit within the police and the gendarmerie to combat sexual violence, the Team, in coordination with MINUSCA, was deployed to provide technical advice to the Government to make it operational. The Team also supported the training of military prosecutors through the regional training centre of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region. Although the justice system is largely non-functional, on 18 September an anti-balaka fighter was sentenced to five years' imprisonment for rape. Parties to the conflict participated in the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation, held in May, at which women's organizations called for action to end impunity for sexual violence.

The information below is based on [the report of an independent review on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic: "Taking action on sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeepers" \(A/71/99\)](#), issued on 23 June 2016

Summary

Introduction

When peacekeepers exploit the vulnerability of the people they have been sent to protect, it is a fundamental betrayal of trust. When the international community fails to care for the victims or to hold the perpetrators to account, that betrayal is compounded.

In the spring of 2014, allegations came to light that international troops serving in a peacekeeping mission in the Central African Republic had sexually abused a number of young children in exchange for food or money (the "allegations"). The alleged perpetrators were largely from a French military force known as the Sangaris forces, which were operating as peacekeepers under authorization of the Security Council but not under United Nations command.

The manner in which United Nations agencies responded to the allegations was seriously flawed. The Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) failed to take any action to follow up on the allegations; he neither asked the Sangaris forces to institute measures to end the abuses nor directed that the children be removed to safe housing. He also failed to direct his staff to report the allegations at a higher level within the United Nations. Meanwhile, both the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations human rights staff in the Central African Republic failed to ensure that the children received adequate medical attention and humanitarian aid, and to take steps to protect other potential victims identified by the children who first raised the allegations.

Instead, information about the allegations was passed from desk to desk, inbox to inbox, across multiple United Nations offices, with no one willing to take responsibility to address the serious human rights violations. Indeed, even when the Government of France became aware of the allegations and requested the cooperation of United Nations staff in its investigation, these requests were met with resistance and became bogged down in formalities. Staff became overly concerned with whether the allegations had been improperly "leaked" to the French authorities, and focused on protocols rather than action. The welfare of the victims and the accountability of the perpetrators appeared to be an afterthought, if considered at all. Overall, the response of the United Nations was fragmented and bureaucratic, and failed to satisfy the core mandate of the United Nations to address human rights violations.

By examining these failures and recommending reforms to deter future incidents of sexual violence by peacekeepers, the present report provides an opportunity for the United Nations to chart a new course of action and to undertake meaningful organizational change. If the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy is to become a reality, the United Nations as a whole — including troop-contributing countries — must recognize that sexual abuse perpetrated by peacekeepers is not a mere disciplinary matter, but a violation of the victims' fundamental human rights and, in many cases, a violation of international humanitarian and criminal law. Regardless of whether the peacekeepers were acting under direct United

Nations command, victims must be made the priority. In particular, the United Nations must recognize that sexual violence by peacekeepers triggers its human rights mandate to protect victims, investigate, report and follow up on human rights violations, and take measures to hold perpetrators accountable. In the absence of concrete action to address wrongdoing by the very persons sent to protect vulnerable populations, the credibility of the United Nations and the future of peacekeeping operations are in jeopardy.

An overview of the allegations

Between May and June 2014, a Human Rights Officer working for MINUSCA, together with local UNICEF staff, interviewed six young boys. The children reported that they had been subjected to sexual abuse by international peacekeeping troops or that they had witnessed other children being abused. In most cases, the alleged perpetrators were from the French Sangaris forces. In exchange, the children received small amounts of food or cash from the soldiers. All of the incidents occurred between December 2013 and June 2014, near the M'Poko camp for internally displaced persons, in Bangui. In some cases, the children also reported detailed information about the perpetrators, including names and certain distinguishing features such as tattoos, piercings and facial features.

The information reported by the children indicates that the violations were likely not isolated incidents. For example, some of the children described witnessing the rape of other child victims (who were not interviewed by the Human Rights Officer); others indicated that it was known that they could approach certain Sangaris soldiers for food, but would be compelled to submit to sexual abuse in exchange. In several cases, soldiers reportedly acknowledged or coordinated with each other, for example, by bringing a child onto the base past guards, where civilians were not authorized to be, or by calling out to children and instructing them to approach (indicating that the perpetrators did not fear being caught). In sum, if the allegations are substantiated by further investigation, they could potentially indicate the existence of a pattern of sexual violence against children by some peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic.

The information below is based on [the Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic \(S/2016/824\) issued on 29th September 2016](#)

During the reporting period, MINUSCA registered 44 allegations of conflict-related sexual violence throughout the country, 25 of which were investigated and verified. The victims comprised 22 women, 21 girls and 1 boy. Twenty-seven of the cases involved rape, while 17 involved attempted rape, sexual slavery, forced marriage and/or sexual assault. Of the 27 cases of rape, 16 were perpetrated by multiple actors and 5 occurred in the context of sexual slavery. Of the 44 registered cases, 20 were allegedly perpetrated by ex-Séléka or affiliated groups, 14 by anti-balaka, 9 by LRA elements and 1 by unidentified perpetrators. The actual number of incidents of conflict-related sexual violence is suspected to be much higher than the number reported.

The information below is based on [the Report of the Secretary General on conflict related sexual violence \(S/2015/203\) issued on 23 March 2015](#)

During the reporting period, 2,527 cases of conflict-related sexual violence were documented in the Central African Republic, including rape perpetrated to terrorize civilians, with many victims being assaulted in their homes, during door-to-door searches and while sheltering in fields or the bush. Women and girls have been systematically targeted. There have also been cases of conflict-related sexual violence against men and boys. Alleged perpetrators are associated with armed herders from Fulani Mbarara communities and members of ex-Séléka, anti-balaka, Révolution et justice and the Front démocratique du peuple centrafricain armed groups. On 5 May, my Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict briefed the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2127 (2013) on the situation in the country, noting that all parties have used sexual violence to subjugate and humiliate opponents.