

**Statement of Under Secretary-General/Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide  
Mr. Adama Dieng on the human rights and humanitarian dimensions of the crisis in the  
Central African Republic** United Nations 22 January 2014 (...) **The Sectarian Element  
of the Conflict**

Mr. President, the violence that was initially perceived as a confrontation between ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militia quickly evolved into a very dangerous confrontation between Muslim and Christian civilians and the level of hatred between these communities shocked me. Incitement to commit violence on the basis of religion or ethnicity and deliberate and targeted attacks against civilians based on their identity are both factors that indicate a high risk both of crimes against humanity and of genocide. Protection of the Civilian Population

There is no doubt that the actions of the African Union peacekeeping force known as MISCA and of French troops have contributed immensely to the protection of Central Africans, particularly in and around IDP camps. However, it is evident that their resources and capacity to protect are limited, given the scale of the violence and the fact that it is happening across the country MISCA is still only partially deployed. There is an urgent need for the full deployment of MISCA peacekeepers as soon as possible.

Another concern emerging from our mission and which has had a negative impact on civilian protection was the perception by some that peacekeepers deployed in the country were not neutral. Some interlocutors alleged that peacekeepers, in some instances, are perceived to side either with anti-Balaka or ex-Séléka elements, which has eroded trust in some instances and affected their capacity to act. In our interaction with religious leaders, we noted that despite concerted efforts by the Archbishop and the Imam of Bangui to promote peace and dialogue, the impact of the initiatives undertaken since December 2012 remains limited. There is an urgent need to support – and intensify - such inter-religious dialogue both at the national and at the community level. **Overall Assessment of the Situation**

In my assessment, the widespread, unchecked nature of attacks by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka militia, as well as by armed civilians associated with them, against civilians on the basis of religion or ethnicity constitute crimes against humanity. If not halted, there is a risk of genocide in this country. **What can be Done?**

The primary responsibility for the protection of its populations lies with the Central African authorities. However, recognizing the fact that the transitional authorities have neither the capacity to protect the civilian population nor to exercise control over the armed elements that are attacking the civilian population, particularly women and children the international community must take concrete measures to assist the State to stop the abuses and protect the civilian population. There is urgent need to support the full and effective deployment of MISCA. African countries should urgently contribute troops to this mission.

There should be concerted efforts to promote and support a national peace and reconciliation process. There is urgent need to promote dialogue between Christians and Muslims to mitigate the existing ethnical and religious divisions in the country. As a first step

among a series of initiatives in the country, my office is working to support the efforts of the President of the Commission on Human Rights of the National Transitional Council and the National Coordinator of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR) to organise peace forums in the country that will bring together community and religious leaders from seven provinces. But this is not enough, and I urge the international community to contribute to this process.

It will be difficult to promote reconciliation and restore peace in the country without addressing the current culture of impunity. The human rights violations and abuses that have occurred have sowed seeds of hatred in communities. It is very important that we support all initiatives, including the Commission of Inquiry, to identify perpetrators and hold those responsible for violations and abuses accountable. We should also consider the establishment of transitional justice mechanisms. There can be no excuses or justification for condoning impunity.

Although the international community is responding late in the day, there is still a window to act to mobilize appropriate resources and to reverse one of the worst human rights and humanitarian crises of our time. We need to uphold our responsibility to protect Central Africans from the risk of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity yesterday. Read full statement

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