



MANDATED TO PROTECT, EQUIPPED TO SUCCEED?

STRENGTHENING PEACEKEEPING
IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

AMNESTY
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Cover photo: Armoured cars of UN peacekeeping mission MINUSCA patrol on the streets after a Muslim man was burnt to death by a Christian mob in Bangui, Central Africa Republic, 9 October 2014. © Getty Images

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Central African Republic (CAR) seeks to emerge from years of violence and instability, including with the holding of elections to bring the political transition to an end, there is an opportunity for the international community and CAR authorities to turn a page in the country's history. This opportunity will only be seized, however, if all actors redouble their commitment to protecting civilians, and ensuring justice, truth and reparation for victims of the conflict.

The deployment of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) in September 2014 was the sign of a genuine commitment by the international community to put a stop to the cycle of violence in CAR that had killed over 5,000 civilians since December 2013 and displaced almost one million more. Armed groups, as well as members of CAR security forces, have committed crimes under international law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity, and gross human rights violations, such as unlawful killings, torture and other ill-treatment, abductions, sexual assaults, looting and destruction of property. Few of those suspected of criminal responsibility have been effectively investigated or apprehended, nurturing the cycle of impunity and insecurity.

Over the course of its deployment MINUSCA forces have saved many lives and helped prevent CAR's conflict from spiraling into even greater bloodshed, often displaying bravery at significant personal cost. Amnesty International continues to support MINUSCA's deployment in CAR but gaps in the force's capacity to respond have been evident since its earliest days.

These gaps were once again cruelly exposed on 26 September 2015 in a three-day surge of violence in Bangui that led to the deaths of at least 75 people, mostly civilians, the displacement of over 42,000 others, the rape of at least a dozen women in one district on the first day alone and the escape of more than 500 detainees from Bangui's main prison.

Despite the presence of 2,660 UN police and military personnel in Bangui, and a MINUSCA base just over 1 km from where the initial violence erupted, witnesses report that MINUSCA forces were almost entirely absent from key areas of conflict until late in the following afternoon, 27 September, and were unable to respond to requests from medical personnel to help transfer severely injured people to hospital.

It was not until day three of the violence, on 28 September, when MINUSCA, along with the French intervention force *Operation Sangaris*, took measures to dismantle road blocks set up by Anti-balaka militias – themselves sometimes supported by elements of CAR's security forces (FACA) – and prevent further escalation.

Despite fears of even greater tensions as elections approached, MINUSCA did operate more successfully over the following months, managing to prevent – with the support of French Sangaris forces – an advance of ex-Seleka forces on Bangui. They also managed to contain a new outbreak of violence in the capital when Anti-balaka militias attacked a delegation from the *Union pour la paix en Centrafrique (UPC)* near the airport. At the time of publication, UN peacekeepers had also navigated a visit from the Pope, a constitutional referendum, and one round of national elections without major violence.

In part this may reflect some of the steps taken by MINUSCA to respond to the weaknesses apparent in September's violence including the reinforcement of the Bangui Joint Task Force (BJTF), a change in its command structure, the use of new equipment such as aerial reconnaissance and enhanced dialogue with communities in Bangui to revise their Protection of Civilians strategy.

Yet there is little guarantee that, without further measures to strengthen MINUSCA, new outbreaks of violence will not continue to threaten the stability of the country and the security of its people. This is heightened further with the announcement, in January 2016, that the majority of French forces, which have provided essential support to MINUSCA, will be withdrawn before the end of the year.

It is in this light that Amnesty International conducted interviews with 85 people in Bangui and Carnot in October and November 2015 to analyse MINUSCA's response to the violence of September 2015, and identify measures needed to improve future performance. Those interviewed included senior MINUSCA military and civilian staff, government officials, diplomats, international and national NGO members and members of armed groups, as well as witnesses and victims of crimes under international law and human rights violations and abuses. Amnesty International discussed provisional findings with both MINUSCA and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operation (DPKO).

It is clear from these interviews that there were some specific short term causes limiting MINUSCA's response. For example, the September outbreak of violence occurred while both the transitional President and a large part of the MINUSCA leadership were out of the country. Although they remained in contact with those remaining in CAR and returned back a few days after conflict broke out, this may have made a rapid response more difficult. A lack of coordination between different parts of the military structure also meant that over 450 soldiers stationed in Bangui were not utilised during the first few days of violence.

In one of the world's most challenging peacekeeping environments, it is clear too that MINUSCA displays a number of more structural challenges and limitations that were exposed in September, and could be exposed again without prompt actions to remedy.

A large number of those interviewed identified a fundamental gap between the complexity of MINUSCA's multidimensional mandate and the means available to achieve it. Too often MINUSCA has been forced to choose between implementing different elements of the mandate. This has meant, for example, that a number of those suspected of having committed crimes under international law – including those who continue to provoke violence – have not been effectively investigated or apprehended for fear of not being able to manage the consequences. This gap must be closed.

The challenges faced by MINUSCA are also aggravated by the extreme weakness of the CAR state, which maintains primary responsibility for the protection of civilians and delivery of justice, and by the role of elements of the country's security forces in collaborating with armed groups and committing human rights violations themselves. A clear strategy for disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR) must be a priority for the incoming authorities.

Most of those interviewed also believed that there have been too few troops in place, and many of those that have been deployed are performing below expected standards, in part because they too often lack adequate training, equipment and – in some cases – discipline, motivation and accountability. Some troops themselves suffer from poor living conditions,

non-payment of salaries and extended deployments without rotation. In addition to poor performance, there have been allegations against some troops of direct involvement in human rights violations such as the excessive use of force, extortion and sexual exploitation.

Finally, with MINUSCA taken by surprise by September's surge in violence, many of those interviewed highlighted weaknesses in the mission's capacity to gather and analyse information to anticipate and prevent violence, and in perceptions amongst communities who increasingly see the force as either unable or unwilling to protect them – a sentiment shared and exploited by armed groups to justify their existence.

With the arrival of a newly elected government and the forthcoming renewal of MINUSCA's mandate, there could be no better time for the CAR authorities and the international community to work together, redoubling efforts and investment to ensure that the peacekeeping operation is strengthened, to ensure that civilians can be protected, those suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law can be held to account in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts, and the country can be supported on a sustainable path towards peace and stability.

INTRODUCTION

Since early 2014, when CAR was suffering the most intense period of civil conflict in which more than 5,000 people were killed and almost one million people displaced, Amnesty International called on the international community to deploy a UN peacekeeping force to protect civilians from the armed groups preying on them.¹

Amnesty International made that call because the organisation believed a peacekeeping force was necessary to save thousands of lives from spiralling violence, and because with the full engagement of the UN there would be a greater opportunity to ensure justice, truth and reparation for victims of the conflict and accountability for those who committed crimes under international law and human rights violations.

Amnesty International remains supportive of MINUSCA's presence in CAR and recognises that, despite many challenges, the Mission, supported by French Sangaris forces, has saved many lives and continues to contribute towards the transition and accountability efforts in the country. Amnesty International also recognises that peacekeepers have paid a high price for their efforts, with several having been killed in action, and many more seriously injured.

However, like many organisations, Amnesty International is concerned that MINUSCA is not adequately equipped to fully deliver the mandate provided by the UN Security Council, including to protect civilians, and that these weaknesses must be addressed, including when the UN Security Council considers renewal of the Mission's mandate in April 2016.

This research aims at providing a constructive input into a process of reviewing MINUSCA's limitations and identifying ways of overcoming them in order to ensure better protection of civilians and end gross human rights violations in CAR. Amnesty International believes that strengthening MINUSCA will be critical towards end the cycle of conflict and injustice that has blighted CAR for so much of its history.

¹ Amnesty International, *Central African Republic: War crimes and crimes against humanity in Bangui*, 19 December 2013, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2013/12/central-african-republic-war-crimes-and-crimes-against-humanity-bangui/> (accessed on 12 December 2015).

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH

Between 14 October and 23 November 2015, Amnesty International conducted interviews with 85 people in Bangui and Carnot. These included senior MINUSCA military and civilian staff, government officials, diplomats, international and national NGO members and members of armed groups, as well as witnesses and victims of crimes under international law and human rights violations and abuses.

The research looked first of all at the events of 26-28 September 2015, gathering evidence and perspective about the outbreak of violence and MINUSCA's reaction to it. It then also gathered opinions and analysis of a wide range of senior stakeholders with expert knowledge of the Mission to understand their views of MINUSCA's current capacity to protect civilians and their recommendations. These views are consolidated and presented in this document. The research did not seek to analyse in depth MINUSCA's civilian capacity, nor progress on ending impunity, promoting security sector reform (SSR), disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), or achieving a political peace agreement.

While the scope of this particular research is limited to assessing the ability of MINUSCA's uniformed personnel to protect civilians, Amnesty International recognises that any successful mission to protect civilians in CAR will need a more robust civilian component within MINUSCA, effective measures to tackle impunity, rehabilitation of the justice and penitentiary systems, an effective process of DDR, and ultimately a political resolution to the ongoing conflict.

This report also draws on other research by Amnesty International in CAR, notably the reports and briefings published since the renewed outbreak of conflict in December 2013.

Preliminary findings were shared with both MINUSCA and the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and their responses considered and integrated in the final report.

Interviewees were informed about the purpose of this research and how the information they provided would be used and why. Amnesty International obtained consent from each of the interviewees and has ensured their anonymity and confidentiality.

CHAPTER 1: MINUSCA HISTORY AND CHALLENGES

September 2014 – September 2015: MINUSCA's first year

With the establishment of a peacekeeping mission, the UN's role was increased substantially with approval for a force of 11,820 uniformed personnel, with responsibilities including the protection of civilians, support to implement the transition process, facilitation of humanitarian assistance, protection and promotion of human rights, support for national and international justice, and DDR.² Prior to this resolution the role of the UN had been limited to authorising the deployment of MISCA, the African Union's International Support Mission to the Central African Republic, as well as France's Operation Sangaris, the facilitation of humanitarian assistance, and a political role through the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA).³

The deployment of MINUSCA, with more means and a broader mandate than MISCA, did help to contribute to a more secure environment and prevent a return to high-level conflict. Yet violence, insecurity and impunity has continued, and the force has not always been able to respond effectively.

For example, within one month of MINUSCA's deployment, dozens of civilians, including several children, were killed and thousands more displaced as violence erupted in Bangui, Dekoa and Bambari in October 2014. Amnesty International documented a number of attacks on civilians. In most cases MINUSCA was not able to fully prevent the attacks, but were able to prevent the killings developing into a much larger massacre.⁴

MINUSCA's inability to ensure security across CAR's vast territory also manifested itself in the continued lack of physical security for the Muslim population, most of whom had been either forced to flee or killed since late 2013. Although MINUSCA has provided some protection to a number of 'enclaves' where Muslims live together, many who remained outside those enclaves have lived under constant threat of attacks by Anti-balaka. In western CAR, for example, Amnesty International has documented how many Muslims have been barred from practicing or manifesting their religion in public, as well as forcibly converted to Christianity on the threat of death.⁵ In most of these cases documented, MINUSCA provided

² UNSC Resolution 2149, 10 April 2014, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11349.doc.htm> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

³ Established in January 2010, BINUCA's mandate was to help consolidate peace in CAR, foster national reconciliation, strengthen democratic institutions, as well as the promotion and protection of human rights, http://binuca.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=5212&& sm_au =iVVZF87549FZ0qP (accessed on 16 January 2016).

⁴ Amnesty International, *Central African Republic: UN credibility at stake amid rising attacks against civilians*, 6 November 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2014/11/central-african-republic-un-credibility-stake-amid-rising-attacks-against-civilians/> (accessed on 16 January 2016) and *Central African Republic: Impunity is fueling violence*, 11 December 2014, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr19/011/2014/en/>. (accessed on 16 January 2016)

⁵ Amnesty International, *Erased identity*, 30 July 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr19/2165/2015/en/> (AI, *Erased Identity*).

little deterrent to Anti-balaka as there were rarely forces patrolling in the area due to lack of numbers and mobility.⁶

There have been other areas of concern highlighted by Amnesty International during MINUSCA's first year of operations, including in maintaining law and order and fighting impunity. Although the CAR authorities retain primary responsibility for this, UN Security Council Resolution 2149 provides MINUSCA with a mandate to use 'Urgent Temporary Measures' (UTMs) to maintain basic law and order and fight impunity.⁷ Such powers include the ability to arrest, detain and hand over individuals or groups inciting, planning, committing or having committed criminal acts related to the conflict, as well as advise on investigations and judicial procedures.⁸ However, while there have been some investigations, a few arrests of leaders of armed groups and seven individuals placed under UN sanctions most of the more high-profile individuals suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law have not been effectively investigated or arrested.⁹

As a state party to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as to other human rights treaties, the authorities of CAR are obliged to bring all those suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law and human rights violations to justice in fair trials before ordinary civilian courts and without recourse to death penalty. Such an obligation is also binding under customary international law.

MINUSCA peacekeepers were also implicated in several cases of excessive use of force and sexual exploitation and abuse.¹⁰ For example, in August 2015 Amnesty International collected evidence strongly suggesting that a 12-year old girl was raped by MINUSCA soldiers.¹¹ The revelations led to the resignation of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General's (SRSG) Babacar Gaye, and the opening of an investigation by the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services.

⁶ AI, *Erased Identity*.

⁷ UNSC Resolution 2149, para 40, 10 April 2014, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11349.doc.htm>, (accessed on 16 January 2016).

⁸ Report of the UN Secretary-General on the situation in the Central African Republic, para 56, August 2014, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2014/562 (accessed on 21 January 2016).

⁹ High level individuals arrested included leaders of armed groups Rodrigue Ngaïbona ('Andilo') and Brice Namsio ('Emotion', who escaped prison in September 2015). Overall the Report of the UN Secretary-General on CAR (July 2015) reported that MINUSCA supported the arrest and transfer of 365 criminal suspects from 15 September 2014 to 30 June 2015. By the end of 2015 the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee had placed seven people on its list, who were subject to asset freezes and travel bans. <https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/sites/www.un.org.sc.suborg/files/2127.pdf> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

¹⁰ For example see *Central African Republic: Impunity is fueling violence*, 11 December 2014, (Index: AFR 19/011/2014), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr19/011/2014/en/> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

¹¹ Amnesty International, *CAR: UN troops implicated in rape of girl and indiscriminate killings must be investigated*, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/08/car-un-troops-implicated-in-rape-of-girl-and-indiscriminate-killings-must-be-investigated/> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

26 September – 1 October 2015: MINUSCA struggles to respond to a major surge in violence

By September 2015 MINUSCA was deployed in greater force than one year previously, but still short of personnel and equipment and approached a tense and unpredictable electoral period. These gaps were exposed in a week of intense violence – the worst in Bangui since early 2014.

Between 26 September and 1 October 2015, more than 75 people, many of whom were civilians, were killed in an upsurge of violence in Bangui, while a further 42,000 people fled their homes.¹² Violence also led to widespread destruction and looting, with more than 10 international NGOs' premises almost completely ransacked, and a major prison break with 500 to 700 inmates escaping from the main CAR's prison in Bangui.¹³

Civilian populations across other regions of CAR were affected by the fallout from the violence in Bangui. During the same period in Carnot, for example, there were at least two targeted attacks against Muslims by Anti-balaka militias resulting in one Muslim man being killed.¹⁴

The immediate trigger of the violence in Bangui was the murder of Amine Mahamat, a 17-year-old moto taxi driver, whose mutilated body was brought to Ali Babolo mosque in the Muslim district of Bangui early in the morning of 26 September.

A violent reaction from armed men in the Muslim community in PK5 followed when people brought the body to the mosque. Within an hour, gunshots were heard in the mainly-Christian 5th district, and throughout the day dozens of houses were set ablaze in the Bazanga, Brazza, Baïdi, Gala Baba, Sara Blagué, Moustapha and Baïdi neighborhoods. Corinne (not her real name), a 37-year old woman from the Bazanga area, described what happened in her area:

"Muslim militias burned down my house in Bazanga completely. I could go back to see the destruction only a week later. What I saw devastated me. My house was gone. There was nothing left. It was burned down with all my goods, including the TV, the fridge, the fan. I couldn't even save a single spoon. I lost all my documents, the birth certificate for me and my kids, my diploma. I lost everything".¹⁵

Later in the same day, Anti-balaka militia, supported by members of FACA and armed civilians, mobilized and built road blocks in the 5th district and elsewhere.

Amnesty International documented the cases of a number of people who fell victim to this violence, including a young pregnant woman who was shot in the stomach¹⁶ and a 31 year-

¹² OCHA, *Humanitarian Bulletin*, Issue 4, October 2015, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CAR%20HB_OCT%20015.pdf (accessed on 16 January 2016).

¹³ Human Rights Watch, *Central African Republic: New Spate of Senseless Deaths*, 22 October 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/10/22/central-african-republic-new-spate-senseless-deaths> (accessed on 2 December 2015).

¹⁴ Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 54-62, November 2015, Carnot.

¹⁵ Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 63, November 2015, Bangui.

¹⁶ Key informants interview n° 7 with an Anti-balaka leader, October 2015, Bangui; Key informants interview n° 19 with a humanitarian worker on October 2015, Bangui; Victims and witnesses' interview

old barber who was burnt alive and left to die in a ditch.¹⁷ Jeanne (not her real name), a 36 year-old woman explained to Amnesty International what happened:

"When I arrived at the hospital, Koko [the barber] was still alive, all wrapped in bandages. He was also injured on the head. He told me he was captured by armed Muslims, rolled up on a mosquito net and put a tire around the neck. He explained that then they [armed Muslims] pour fuel on him and burn him. He asked me for water, but we couldn't give him any. He finally died at about 8 pm".¹⁸

Medical sources in Bangui told Amnesty International that they received a dozen women reporting to have been raped in PK5 by armed Muslim men on 26 September.¹⁹ Sabrine (not her real name), an 18 year-old mother of one child described what happened to Amnesty International:

"I work as a cleaner in a house in PK5. In the morning of 26 September, at around 8 am, I went to the market for shopping [...] I heard gunfire. I ran back home, but near the office of the local Red Cross, I was stopped by 6 Muslim men wearing military uniforms. They took me to Pont Jackson. There, they put some cardboard on the ground. A young man and an old man raped me. The others didn't want to because they had no condoms".²⁰

Attacks against civilians took place throughout the day despite the nearby presence of a MINUSCA base housing about 750 Rwandan soldiers, among 2,660 uniformed personnel stationed across Bangui.²¹ For several hours, Muslim militias armed with light weapons, grenades and jerricans of petrol made their way almost completely unhindered through the 5th district. Amnesty International collected numerous testimonies in both PK5 and the 5th district confirming that MINUSCA peacekeepers were entirely absent from these areas on 26 September and did not intervene there until late in the afternoon the following day.

MINUSCA also failed to respond to calls to escort injured people to hospitals on 27 September. One medical staff told Amnesty International: *"We received 25 wounded, of whom 13 severely, and we could not take them to the hospital with our vehicle because access was blocked due to insecurity. My staff called MINUSCA for help and MINUSCA said they couldn't come. I called again the Commander of the battalion and he told me he could not take the decision to come and that I needed to call the Chief of Operations. So I called the Chief of Operations and he told me he would call me back. He never did. The day after we had lost 6 of those severely injured".²²*

The violence continued for two more days, with further crimes under international law and human rights abuses committed, including killings, rape, looting and destruction of property, while fears of an attempted *coup d'état* mounted. During this time, on 27 September, Anti-balaka militias continued to set up road blocks in the 5th district, surrounding areas such as

n° 41, October 2015, Bangui.

¹⁷ Key informants interview n° 7 with an Anti-balaka leader, October 2015, Bangui; Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 40 and 42, October 2015, Bangui; Key informants interview n° 19 with a humanitarian worker, October 2015, Bangui.

¹⁸ The name of the barber was changed. Victims and witnesses' interview n° 40, October 2015, Bangui.

¹⁹ Key informants interview n° 18, October 2015, Bangui.

²⁰ Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 45 with an 18 years-old woman, November 2015 in Bangui.

²¹ The MINUSCA base is located at about 1km from where the initial violence erupted (areas surrounding the Muslim district of PK5).

²² Key informants interview n° 19, October 2015, Bangui.

Castors, as well as in Bruxelles, Gobongo, Boganda, PK12, Combattant and elsewhere. They also clashed with Muslim self-defense groups in both PK5 and the 5th district (Bazanga).²³

It was not until day three of the violence, on 28 September, that MINUSCA forces, along with soldiers from Sangaris, took measures to dismantle the Anti-balaka road blocks and prevent further escalation in the areas most affected by the violence (around PK5, 5th district).²⁴

Despite the presence in Bangui of over 2,660 military and police personnel – including 1,860 from the Bangui Joint Task Force (BJTF)²⁵ - Amnesty International's research suggests that MINUSCA was initially overwhelmed by the scale of the violence. Structural weaknesses and capacity gaps that contributed to this will be discussed in Chapter 2. Yet there were also some more immediate factors that contributed to a weak and delayed response.

Many of those interviewed highlighted how gaps in leadership and crisis management capacity seemed to slow down decision making processes. Crucially the September outbreak of violence occurred while both the transitional President and a large part of the MINUSCA leadership - including the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (UNSRSG), the two deputy SRSRs, and the Chief of Staff and the deputy police commissioner - were out of the country. While senior civilian, police and military staff were rushed back, arriving from 29 and 30 September²⁶, along with the transitional President, their absence meant that the Mission was, in the words of one interviewee, "*short of crisis management capacity*".²⁷ While MINUSCA's leadership did maintain regular communication and engagement with the BJTF while abroad²⁸, it remains possible that their absence may have affected the Mission's capacity to act forcefully and rapidly to fulfil its PoC mandate.

Additionally, while a number of those interviewed highlighted how the BJTF was ill-equipped to operate in a high-intensity conflict environment, partly because a large component was made up of policing units, coordination problems between the different parts of the military command structure seem to have led to key available military capacities not being utilised. In particular, a lack of coordination between the BJTF command and the Force Commander's Reserve also meant that over 450 soldiers stationed in Bangui – but not part of the BJTF - were not utilised until the BJTF was transferred from police to military command on 30 September.²⁹ One MINUSCA source indicated that they were not even aware about the number of their own troops and their location in Bangui on 26 September 2015.³⁰

²³ Key informants interview n° 29, October 2015, Bangui.

²⁴ Key informants interview n° 19, 29, 35, 48, October-November 2015, Bangui.

²⁵ When the transfer of authority from MISCA to MINUSCA became effective in September 2014, MINUSCA established a joint police and military task force in Bangui. It was the first of its kind in a peacekeeping missions, with a command structure led by the police component. See R. Perito, *UN Peacekeeping in the Sahel*, March 2015, <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR365-UN-Peacekeeping-in-the-Sahel-Overcoming-new-Challenges.pdf> (accessed on 21 January 2016).

²⁶ Key informants interview n° 29 and n° 46 respectively, October and November 2015, Bangui.

²⁷ Key informants interview n° 29, October 2015, Bangui.

²⁸ Information from MINUSCA, January 2016.

²⁹ Key informants interview n° 47, November 2015.

³⁰ Key informants interview n° 35 2015, Bangui.

October 2015 – January 2016: Managing electoral and pre-electoral tensions

After the three days of fighting Bangui experienced a period of tense calm until 26 October when an ex-Seleka delegation from the UPC, reportedly travelling from Bambari to attend negotiations, was attacked by a group of Anti-balaka militias near the airport. One representative was seriously wounded, two others are still unaccounted for and feared dead.³¹ Reprisals from armed Muslim self-defense groups led to the killing, on 27 October, of three Christian men who used to sell water in the 5th district and destruction and looting of several houses located in the Lakwanga area. On 29 October the Fatima IDP camp was also attacked, resulting in dozens of houses burnt, four people killed and at least twenty wounded including a peacekeeper.³²

In contrast to the events of 26-28 September, however, MINUSCA reacted more promptly to contain the violence. MINUSCA forces, supported by Sangaris soldiers, also stopped a large column of ex-Séléka fighters aiming to reach Bangui from 10 to 12 October 2015 in Sibut, some 200 km from the capital.³³ Had these fighters reached Bangui, an even larger outbreak of violence would have been likely.

Between October 2015 and January 2016 MINUSCA also navigated a series of potentially dangerous events without any major outbreak of violence. These included the visit of the Pope, the holding of a referendum on a new constitution and two rounds of Presidential elections on 30 December 2015 and 31 January 2016. While some violence broke out on 13 December during the constitutional referendum in the Muslim enclave of PK5 in Bangui, killing of at least two people, MINUSCA reacted promptly and peacekeepers were deployed to protect voters and civilians. On 30 December, as CAR voted in presidential and legislative elections, MINUSCA military and police, as well as soldiers from Sangaris, were deployed to help ensure voting occurred without major security incidents.³⁴

MINUSCA reports to having taken some measures to learn from the challenges it faced in September, including by revising the Bangui PoC Strategy and BJTF's Concept of Operations. The BJTF was reinforced with an additional infantry battalion, two police support units and 9 FPU's, while new equipment including aerial reconnaissance was deployed and the command structure was transferred from police to military. Consultations were held with affected communities in Bangui to collect information and/to better understand conflict dynamics. MINUSCA's Human Rights Division also worked with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to develop a report on the abuses and violations committed from 26

³¹ MINUSCA, *MINUSCA condemns the attack in Bangui against UPC members*, 26 October 2015, <https://minusca.unmissions.org/en/minusca-condemns-attack-bangui-upc-members> (accessed on 20 January 2016).

³² Agence France-Presse, *Centrafrique: 4 morts et une vingtaine de blessés dans des violences à Bangui* 30 October 2015, <http://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/centrafrique-4-morts-et-une-vingtaine-de-bless-s-dans-des-violences> (accessed on 20 January 2016).

³³ MINUSCA, *MINUSCA calls on all armed groups to abide by their commitments to the peace process*, 17 October 2015, <https://minusca.unmissions.org/en/minusca-calls-all-armed-groups-abide-their-commitments-peace-process> (accessed on 20 January 2016).

³⁴ MINUSCA, *Referendum: La MINUSCA a fortement appuyé le vote des centrafricains*, 14 December 2015, <http://minusca.unmissions.org/referendum-constitutionnel-la-minusca-fortement-appuy%C3%A9-le-vote-des-centrafricains> (accessed on 21 January 2016); Key informants, Victims and Witnesses interviews and observation of the vote by Amnesty International, November 2015.

September to 20 October.³⁵ Finally, in January 2016 the UN decided to withdraw the DRC contingent because it did not meet UN standards. The contingent had also been implicated in allegations of sexual exploitation by some of its soldiers.³⁶

³⁵ Information from MINUSCA, January 2016.

³⁶ Reuters, *Hundreds of Congolese Troops withdraw from Central African Force*, 9 January 2016, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-centralafrica-violence-idUKKCNOUNOS720160109> (accessed on 20 January 2016).

CHAPTER 2: STRUCTURAL FACTORS LIMITING MINUSCA'S EFFECTIVENESS

MINUSCA's inability to effectively respond to serious security threats such as the events of September 2015, or fulfil all aspects of its mandate, cannot be explained solely by specific events or decisions of individual commanders. Interviews conducted for this report, in particular with senior MINUSCA civilian and military staff, but also with diplomats, humanitarian agencies, leaders of armed groups and the civilian population, clearly suggest that limited or delayed responses are rather an indication of larger structural problems. This chapter reflects the most important and widely shared points highlighted to Amnesty International during these interviews.

Amnesty International recognises the extremely complex environment in which MINUSCA is operating in CAR. Many of those interviewed identified CAR as one of the world's most challenging peacekeeping environments. Given the complexity of CAR's conflict dynamics, the diversity and fragmentation of its armed actors, and the widespread proliferation of arms – in part due to ineffective historic and current disarmament processes – and with little progress towards a political peace agreement, there is often little peace to keep.

Mandate and State capacity

*“Our forces have been called to bring back order in an environment where there is no peace to keep. MINUSCA was not mandated to do peace enforcement and was not provided with the means to impose order in an environment of urban guerrilla warfare”.*³⁷

The gap between the complex mandate of MINUSCA and its capacity to implement it was a fundamental concern of a significant number of interviewees, who believed that the Mission was often moving from peacekeeping to peace enforcement, but without the corresponding means to do so.

MINUSCA's multidimensional mandate - supporting the transition process, including efforts in favour of the extension of State authority and preservation of territorial integrity,

³⁷ Interview with senior civilian Mission staff. Key informants interview n° 46, November 2015, Bangui.

strengthening of the rule of law, promoting and protecting human rights, supporting DDR and SSR, facilitating the delivery of civilian-led humanitarian assistance and, predominantly, protecting civilians - has proven to be extremely complex. This was summarised by one diplomat in Bangui:

*“There are competing mandates - elections are a priority, SSR and DDR are a priority, PoC is a priority. You have to treat all of those things together, but no one has a capacity to replace a country. You can't just put everything on MINUSCA's lap and say 'fix it' ”.*³⁸

A number of sources told Amnesty International that MINUSCA often had to choose between competing objectives because of limited force capacity. The continued freedom of many leaders of armed groups - including some who continue to provoke violence and those under UN sanctions - who have long been suspected to have committed crimes under international law, attack civilians and maintain a situation of insecurity is one clear example. That so few leaders of armed groups have been investigated or apprehended³⁹ is in part due fears that MINUSCA lacks the capacity to manage any potentially violent backlash. One senior MINUSCA civilian staff for instance explained to Amnesty International that “[we] would like to arrest or confront them, but we have to be mindful of the many lives that could be lost in the process”.⁴⁰

The protection of civilians and pursuit of justice are, as previously described, primarily the responsibility of the CAR authorities, even though MINUSCA has various powers to maintain basic law and order and fight impunity through the implementation of UTMs. As implementation of this part of the mandate requires cooperation with the CAR authorities, it is apparent that MINUSCA's challenges are closely linked to the extreme weakness of CAR's State institutions. The transitional authorities remain largely unable to provide security and services in almost any part of the country outside Bangui. Worse still, some members of CAR's security forces, particularly from FACA, have been implicated in serious human rights violations since the beginning of the conflict.

However, while acknowledging these challenges, Amnesty International believes that, in light of its mandate, MINUSCA should take all necessary measures to ensure the protection of population, especially when CAR authorities are unable to. The statement made by the High Level Independent Panel on Peacekeeping Operations (HIPPO) “*State responsibility [does not] dilute the obligation of the UN missions to act within their capabilities when the host government is not willing or able to protect its civilians*” is especially relevant in this context.⁴¹

³⁸ Key informants interview n° 66, October 2015, Bangui.

³⁹ In July 2014 Amnesty International named 20 individuals suspected of criminal responsibility for crimes under international law, almost none of whom have been effectively investigated or arrested. The names are listed in the report Amnesty International, *Central African Republic: Time for Accountability*, 10 July 2014, (Index: AFR 19/006/2014), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr19/006/2014/en/> (accessed on 21 January 2016).

⁴⁰ Key informants interview n° 29, October 2015, Bangui.

⁴¹ UN Secretary-General Letter to the UNSC and the UNGA, A/70/95-S/2015/446, 17 June 2015, para. 85, http://www.un.org/sg/pdf/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf, (accessed on 16 January 2016).

Number of MINUSCA's uniformed personnel

“ We still have a shortage of men. The initial troop strength was established during an assessment done in July 2014. Now, it's clear that we need at least 2 infantry battalions on top of the current ceiling” .⁴²

A number of those interviewed thought that an insufficient number of uniformed personnel deployed to CAR, and the limitations in their geographic and operational distribution, are fundamental to explaining the gap between MINUSCA's mandate and its implementation,. There was a widely held view amongst interviewees about the need to significantly increase the numbers of uniformed personnel on the ground.

In March 2015, the UN Security Council Resolution 2212 authorized a force strength of 12,870 uniformed personnel, itself an increase from the original mandate of 11,820 agreed in April 2014⁴³. In June the force was still 1,640 below capacity, but with some reinforcements by January 2016 the police component had reached 95% of its mandated strength and the military 93.5%.⁴⁴

A significant number of those interviewed believed that the mandated force strength should be further increased, adding both infantry troops and specialised units able to better manage the severe security challenges and the complexity of the mandate.⁴⁵ The need to respond to violence in multiple locations was highlighted, and the risk that bringing reinforcements from elsewhere in the country during a crisis exposes other areas that also have significant needs.⁴⁶ There were fears, however that these resources would not become available. As one senior MINUSCA's staff explained: *"Increasing the number of troops will be a good idea. However, I'm afraid there'll be issues with the budget and Mali or South Sudan will always be prioritized"*.⁴⁷

Even though the number of forces deployed appears significant, the country's vast territory and low population density, coupled with a significant number of security hotspots, mean that field bases are too small to provide an adequate deterrent against armed groups. Peacekeepers from the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) contingent in Bambari, for example, were not been able to pose an effective deterrent to General Darassa's ex-Seleka forces because they are too few in numbers. This was shown on 12 November 2015 when the ex-Seleka forces attacked the town's internally displaced people's camp, killing three people, wounding 30 others and burning approximately 40 shelters.⁴⁸

⁴² Key informants interview n° 37 on 30 October 2015, Bangui.

⁴³ UN Security Council Resolution 2149, April 2014, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2014/sc11349.doc.htm> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

⁴⁴ Information from MINUSCA, January 2016.

⁴⁵ Key informants interviews n° 16, 19, 24, 32, 52, 65, October-November 2015, Bangui.

⁴⁶ Key informants interviews n° 17, 18, 24, 47, 59, October-November 2015, Bangui.

⁴⁷ Key informants interview n° 52, November 2015, Bangui.

⁴⁸ UNHCR, *UNHCR condemns attacks on camps in Central African Republic*, 12 November 2015,

In at least one instance, conditions in the Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) signed between the UN and troop contributing countries restrict where forces can be deployed. One diplomat explained, for example, how a part of the well-trained and equipped Senegalese contingent has been restricted to guarding the airport for this reason.⁴⁹

A number of those interviewed also believed the MINUSCA's Concept of Operations (CONOPs) underestimated the level of threats in Bangui, in part as it had been developed during a calmer period. Interviewees suggest that this may have led to the BJTF being too small and too heavily made up of police units less able to respond to a coordinated and significant escalation of violence such as that in September 2015.

Training, equipment and living conditions of uniformed personnel

*“Our forces present structural deficits. I would say that they work at 30% of the capacity we can usually expect within peace operations”.*⁵⁰

Most of those interviewed raised serious concerns that even if MINUSCA reaches its personnel ceiling as mandated by the UN Security Council, problems relating to the capacity, motivation and discipline of some contingents deployed will prevent them from operating effectively to the standards expected of UN peacekeepers.

Country Owned Equipment (COE) is highly variable, for example, and many MINUSCA contingents lack the necessary equipment to operate effectively and intervene in combat-intensive environments. Almost all interviewed MINUSCA staff members told Amnesty International that the COE available to the Mission's contingents is uneven and often deeply inadequate.

Explaining why MINUSCA did not dispatch troops to the 5th district at the beginning of the September events, one senior MINUSCA force staff said: *“When there's gunfire, we can only send the guys in armored vehicles. But several of these are currently out of service. The Rwandan battalion, with 750 men, only has a certain number of armored personnel carriers. Some FPU's only have 2 or 3 of them. This reduces our capacity of intervention”.*⁵¹

In another example, two Special Weapons And Tactics (SWAT) teams that arrived in CAR could not be used because one lacked training and the other lacked equipment.⁵² Three helicopters were only used to support security operations from early November 2015, despite arriving in country several months previously.⁵³

<http://www.unhcr.org/564499112.html> (accessed on 1 December 2015).

⁴⁹ Interview with a diplomat. Key informants interview n° 47, November 2015, Bangui.

⁵⁰ Interview with a senior civilian Mission staff. Key informants interview n° 46, November 2015, Bangui.

⁵¹ Interview with a senior civilian Mission staff. Key informants interview n° 48, November 2015, Bangui.

⁵² Interview with a senior Mission staff. Key informants interview n° 30, October 2015, Bangui.

⁵³ Interview with a diplomat. Key informants interview n° 47, November 2015, Bangui.

Such gaps also mean that MINUSCA often relies heavily on Sangaris forces, which have more modern and functioning equipment, such as heavier armored vehicles, aerial combat support, and communication systems.

The force generation process provides part of the explanation for these weaknesses, with MINUSCA designed to be built on the existing MISCA force. This meant that some contingents that, according to a number of those interviewed, would not normally meet UN standards were retained, and some have yet to be rotated.⁵⁴ Forces from Cameroon, Republic of Congo and DRC, for example, have never had experience of UN operations on this scale.⁵⁵ The conduct and discipline of a number of the contingents had already come under scrutiny, including allegations of extortion, excessive use of force, enforced disappearances and sexual exploitation, and these practices appear to have continued under MINUSCA command.⁵⁶

One contributing factor to poor discipline, in addition to a range of other issues such as a lack of effective accountability mechanisms, is that a number of MINUSCA contingents, including those from DRC, Burundi and Cameroon, have been seriously affected by delays or non-payment of salaries, which is the responsibility of the country contributing the force. Unpaid troops are less motivated, willing to listen to their commanders or ready to take risks, and are more likely to extort money from the local population. A number of civilians, humanitarian and Mission sources confirmed how some peacekeepers ask for money for escorts.

According to one trader from the PK5 area in Bangui *"if you want to go into town, the peacekeepers can take you on their APCs, but they ask from 10,000 to 25,000 CFA. Without them, we cannot leave our neighborhood to go to the bank or carry out other business"*.⁵⁷

Motivation, effectiveness and respect for UN standards are also affected by poor conditions and the lack of rotation of certain contingents. The DRC forces, for example, had remained in CAR for more than two years before being withdrawn on evidence that they have performed

⁵⁴ Standards include pre-deployment training and in-country inductions on PoC, Human rights and IHL, UN Zero Tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. Key informants interviews n° 46 and 52, November 2015, Bangui.

⁵⁵ UNDPKO, *Troop and police contributors*, Statistics, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

⁵⁶ Amnesty International, *CAR: UN troops implicated in rape of girl and indiscriminate killings must be investigated*, 11 August 2015, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2015/08/car-un-troops-implicated-in-rape-of-girl-and-indiscriminate-killings-must-be-investigated/> (accessed on 16 January 2016). The Globe and the Mail, Thompson Reuters, *UN peacekeepers face new sex allegations in Central African Republic*, 11 November 2015, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/un-peacekeepers-face-new-sex-allegations-in-central-african-republic/article27211242/> (accessed on 16 January 2016). Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 50 and 51, November 2015, Bangui.

⁵⁷ Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 51, November 2015, Bangui.

poorly, and with accusations of sexual exploitation and abuse of minors.⁵⁸ Untreated illnesses and stress has also led to a high-rate of breakdowns, according to senior Mission staff.⁵⁹

Some of the limitations of MINUSCA's contingents have been partially addressed through an ongoing force generation process that has enabled the inclusion of new national contingents and FPU's, such as those from Bangladesh, Cambodia, Egypt, Pakistan, Senegal and Zambia.⁶⁰

While some of these troops arrived with the required equipment and capacities, as per their MoUs with the UN, others failed to do so however. For example, a number of contingents, notably the Pakistani forces, lack translators, something that severely hinders their ability to be able to interact with the local population.⁶¹ Such gaps risk increasing perceptions by the local population that UN forces are distant, and lack understanding of the context.⁶²

Information gathering, early-warning capacity and perceptions of MINUSCA

*“We’ve got little time to do intelligence. The more we can optimize our intelligence capacity, the more efficient we will be. But we are not an intervention force like Sangaris. With 900 men, their capacity to collect information is superior to ours with 12,000 people”.*⁶³

The ability of MINUSCA to anticipate and prevent violence depends in part on its ability to gather, analyse and act on information and intelligence, including that gathered from communities whose perceptions of MINUSCA are critical to effective cooperation.

A large number of those interviewed from within and outside the Mission believe that MINUSCA was caught by surprise by September's violence, something that may be partly

⁵⁸ The Telegraph, *Fresh rape allegations against UN peacekeepers in the Central African Republic*, 19 August 2015, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/centralafricanrepublic/11813395/Fresh-rape-allegations-against-UN-peacekeepers-in-the-Central-African-Republic.html> (accessed on 16 January 2016) ; Reuters, *UN says Congo failed to properly vet Central African Republic troops*, 19 November 2015, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/11/19/us-centralafrica-congodemocratic-un-idUSKCN0T82M620151119#aqTRwpLBs0Ahgmbg.97> (accessed on 16 January 2016) ; Réseau des journalistes pour les droits de l'homme, *Trois nouvelles allégations de viols signalées par la Minusca*, 19 August 2015, <http://rjdh.org/de-nouvelles-allegations-de-viols-presumes-signalees-par-la-minusca/> (accessed on 16 January 2016).

⁵⁹ Key informants interview n° 52, November 2015, Bangui.

⁶⁰ Key informants interview n° 64, November 2015, Bangui.

⁶¹ Key informants interview n° 34, November 2015, Bangui.

⁶² Veronique Barbelet, *Central Africa: addressing the protection crisis*, November 2015, <http://www.odi.org/publications/10103-protection-car-africa-conflict-seleka-anti-balaka-peacekeepers>, (accessed on 20 January 2016).

⁶³ Interview with a senior civilian Mission staff. Key informants interview n° 48, November 2015, Bangui.

explained by weak information gathering and analysis capacity. By early November MINUSCA had, for example, just 24 Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) – an essential way of strengthening insight and analysis of emerging threats - operating in the country, and just four in Bangui. While an additional 28 CLAs are currently being recruited, the MINUSCA civilian units employed just over 1,000 staff, significantly fewer than similar-sized Missions in Mali or South Sudan.⁶⁴ A number of those interviewed, including humanitarian staff, criticized the quality of security analysis provided by MINUSCA.

Negative perceptions and unmet expectations of MINUSCA by many communities have also contributed to undermining the Mission's ability to fulfil its PoC mandate.⁶⁵ The outbreak of violence on 26 September 2015 has further exacerbated the feeling of many of those interviewed in Bangui that MINUSCA is not able – or willing - to protect them. According to Joseph (not his real name), a 45-years old man working as a barber in Bangui:

"People expected a lot. They told us to wait. That soon they'd be 12,000. But today, with 12,000 men, we don't see them on the ground. There were so many unmet expectations that people have begun suspecting MINUSCA to be on the side of the armed groups. When people wait on them to intervene, they never come. And when they do, it is too late. So people became hostile".⁶⁶

Simon (not his real name), a young man who had been displaced for a second time explained his disappointment: *"If we are back to Mpoko [the IDP camp by the airport], it's not because we like it. We left our homes in December 2013 following violence perpetrated by the Seleka. Then MINUSCA came and told us they'll ensure our security and that we could go back home. So, in June 2015 we went back to the 5th district, until we had to flee again in September".*

Such perceptions were also reflected back by leaders of armed groups interviewed by Amnesty International, who used the lack of protection offered by MINUSCA to justify their continuing role. Haroun Tidjani, a leader of a Muslim armed self-defense group in PK5, said to Amnesty International that *"we are told that Sangaris and MINUSCA have come to protect us. But they don't. So I have to take up my weapon to protect myself."* The sentiment was shared by another Muslim self-defence group leader, Haroun Gaye, who added that *"the westerners have taught us that freedom and equality cannot be asked for. They must be seized".⁶⁷*

For Sébastien Mokom, the national coordinator of a radical branch of the Anti-balaka, *"people are at the mercy of nature. The government does not protect them. The international community does not protect them. The forces say they came here to protect... but where are they? Has MINUSCA come here to fail its mission?"⁶⁸*

⁶⁴ UNDPKO, *Peacekeeping Fact Sheet, Statistics*, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/factsheet.shtml> (accessed on 20 January 2016).

⁶⁵ Veronique Barbelet, *Central Africa: addressing the protection crisis*, November 2015, <http://www.odi.org/publications/10103-protection-car-africa-conflict-seleka-anti-balaka-peacekeepers> (accessed on 20 January 2016).

⁶⁶ Victims and witnesses' interviews n° 09, October 2015, Bangui.

⁶⁷ Interview with Haroun Gaye, leader of Muslim armed self-defence group in PK5, Bangui. Key informants interview n° 53, November 2015, Bangui.

⁶⁸ Interview with Maxime Mokom, leader of Anti-balaka militia. Key informants interview n° 7, October 2015, Bangui.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the clearest messages emanating from the UN's recent High-Level Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) was that it is essential to ensure that stabilization mandates are matched with sufficient capabilities to deliver them.⁶⁹ This is not the case with MINUSCA, which is deeply lacking in adequate means – civilian and military – to fulfil an extremely demanding and complex mandate in a context where peace is fragile and there are few functioning State institutions to support.

Resolving these problems will require action from the UN Security Council, DPKO and MINUSCA, as well as from countries contributing forces and the CAR authorities themselves. Some may deal with challenges specific to CAR, others to problems inherent across many peacekeeping operations. All are essential to ensure that the international community's investment in CAR will have a possibility of success. Failure to do so risks further diminishing MINUSCA's credibility in the eyes of both armed groups and the population, and an inability to protect civilians while also promoting disarmament, justice, and supporting the political transition.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL AND DPKO

- Evaluate and revise, in consultation with all relevant stakeholders including the Government of CAR, civil society organizations in CAR and bodies such as the African Union, MINUSCA's current capacity and Concept of Operations (CONOPs) before the renewal of its mandate in April 2016;
- Ensure adequate human, financial and logistical resources are provided to match a demanding multidimensional mandate that includes ensuring accountability for crimes under international law, protection of civilians, reform of the security services and the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of combatants;
- Identify ways in which the use of Urgent Temporary Measures (UTMs) can better reflect the capacity challenges of CAR State institutions, and empower MINUSCA to play a more effective proactive role in investigating and apprehending those suspected of having committing crimes against international law, as well as protecting civilians;
- Speed up the deployment of troops and police complying with UN standards to meet at least the troop ceiling established by Resolution 2212, and rapidly evaluate the need for further reinforcements beyond the authorized levels;
- Conduct periodic assessments and pre-deployment visits to make sure that troop-contributing countries respect UN standards regarding pre-deployment training, adequate

⁶⁹ A/70/95-S/2015/446, 17 June 2015, http://www.un.org/sg/pdf/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf (accessed on 03 February 2016).

country-owned equipment, regular rotations and the provision of timely salaries and adequate living conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO MINUSCA

- Ensure presence of adequate military forces with appropriate equipment remain and conduct patrols in high risk and strategic areas, including Bangui, Sibut, Bambari, Boda, Kagabandoro, Batangafo and throughout the MSR1;
- Reinforce the Mission's presence around the already protected Muslim enclaves and enhance protection for Muslims that have returned to their home communities outside these enclaves;
- Recruit and deploy significantly higher numbers of CLAs as part of efforts to facilitate closer and more proactive engagement with all affected communities and better understand their protection needs in order to revise the Mission's PoC strategy;
- Conduct regular surveys among affected communities to better understand their perceptions and expectations and ensure they inform protection strategies;
- Engage in systematic dialogue with local and international NGOs and other humanitarian agencies to strengthen analysis of existing PoC threats. This includes information sharing between the Protection Cluster, the PoC Working Group and other relevant MINUSCA units.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO TROOP AND POLICE CONTRIBUTING COUNTRIES

- Take all necessary actions to ensure that military and police personnel meet UN standards of pre-deployment training and COE;
- Ensure personnel are paid in a regular and timely manner, contingents are rotated regularly, and living conditions are improved, especially in field bases;
- Avoid the inclusion of conditions in MoUs with MINUSCA that would limit or restrict the deployment of forces to the detriment of the Mission's effectiveness;
- Ensure effective accountability for human rights violations committed by any MINUSCA personnel, not least in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, including by effective investigations and fair trials of those suspected of criminal responsibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE INCOMING CAR AUTHORITIES

- Commit to providing sustained support to enable MINUSCA to fulfil its mandate, including the protection of civilians, the use of Urgent Temporary Measures and the development and implementation of clear strategies for Security Sector Reform and Disarmament. Demobilization and Reintegration;

- To re-establish and extend state authority across CAR by redeploying and rebuilding viable institutions in the various provinces;
- Commit to putting an end to impunity, including supporting the rebuilding of the justice sector, supporting national and international accountability mechanisms for crimes under international law, and human rights violations and abuses committed during the conflict;
- Strengthen locally-owned conflict management, reconciliation and peacebuilding initiatives engaging all sectors of the society, including minorities, youth and women.

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