

1/03/2006

Central African Republic /Election

The Civilian Population in Northern Central African Republic is in Great Danger

[Version | français](#)

FIDH and its member organisation, the Central African Human Rights League (LCDH), are deeply concerned by the tremendous insecurity of the civilian population in the northern and north western part of the Central African Republic (CAR) due to attacks by ever better organised armed gangs, as well as to the violent counter-offensives by government forces, in violation of international humanitarian law.

“Law and order has been precarious ever since the end of the electoral process, in particular in the western and north eastern part of the country” stressed a report by the Secretary General of the United Nations submitted to the Security Council on December 29, 2005. This lack of security is due not only to criminal acts by highway robbers and poachers but also to “well armed gangs, often in military uniform, who not only commit crimes and rapes but also have a political agenda and are involved in forceful recruitment” as stated in a report of a mission of the African Union, made public by the Peace and Security Council on December 29, 2005.

By way of confirmation of the existence of rebel movements, two recent attacks on villages in the north western part of the country were claimed by a hitherto unknown organisation - the Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy - whose official objective is the fall of President François Bozizé. As stated in the AU report, these armed groups “ are probably composed of former members of the presidential security forces of former president Ange Félix Patassé and demobilized rebels who have participated in a previous rebellion by the current head of state”.

At the end of January 2006 armed groups launched a bloody attack against the town of Paoua. In reaction, the Central African army launched a violent counter-offensive on January 29, 2006, leading to several dozen dead, mostly civilians suspected of belonging to armed gangs, this being confirmed by several sources. With daily deadly attacks and counter-offensives launched without concern for the rules of international humanitarian law, the civilian population is fleeing in large numbers to Chad. According to the United Nations High Commission for Refugees there are almost 15 000 Central African nationals who have found refuge in Chad since June 2005 and who are meeting up with some 30 000 others who have lived in UN-run camps since 2003. This emergency leads

to fears of the outbreak of a serious humanitarian crisis on the border between Chad and the Central African Republic.

FIDH and LCDH are especially concerned by the serious lack of security of the civilian population in the northern part of the country, which is similar to the armed tension that took place before the deadly repeated attempts over the past ten years to overthrow the government in the CAR. This concern has become even more troublesome in light of a report of the UN Secretary General, which indicates that “ the crisis in Darfur, added to the effects of porous frontiers, has accentuated the proliferation and circulation of light weapons” in the country.

FIDH and LCDH call upon the Central African authorities and the armed gangs to strictly respect international human rights and humanitarian law. FIDH and LCDH stress the duty of the Central African government to protect their population. Moreover, the FIDH and the LCDH emphasize that the situation in the CAR was referred to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court by the Head of state, General Bozizé in December 2004.

Considering not only the impunity of the perpetrators of crimes committed by various belligerents during General Bozizé’s military offensive against former president Patassé, but also the fact that ongoing crimes falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court are being committed in the north of the country, FIDH and LCDH are asking the Prosecutor to open an investigation concerning this situation as quickly as possible. FIDH and LCDH stress that crime prevention and dissuasion are an integral part of the ICC’s terms of reference and call upon the Prosecutor to use all possible means to this end.

[[Print](#)] [[Top](#)]