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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Human rights situation in the Central African Republic

Report of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic, Yao Agbetse*

Summary

The present report is based on the information made available to the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic and describes the human rights situation in the country between 1 July 2024 and 30 June 2025.

It reviews developments in the human rights situation over the past five years, takes stock of the peace process, analyses mechanisms for consolidating State authority and considers the challenges facing institutions involved in governance and human rights. It also makes recommendations to the Government of the Central African Republic and to technical and financial partners on technical assistance services to the country.

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I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 57/35 of 11 October 2024, by which the Council extended the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic and requested him to submit a written report to the Council at its sixtieth session.
2. The report, which covers the period from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025,¹ is based on information made available to the Independent Expert by government authorities, national institutions, United Nations agencies present in the country and national and international organizations working in the field of human rights, as well as testimonies from victims and associations. It is the Independent Expert's sixth and final report.
3. The Independent Expert was able to visit the Central African Republic from 17 to 27 February 2025. He travelled to Haut-Mbomou, where he met with local stakeholders, including displaced persons and refugees, to facilitate capacity-building programmes and examine local governance issues.
4. The Independent Expert wishes to acknowledge the cooperation of the authorities of the Central African Republic, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), technical and financial partners and civil society organizations, which have contributed to the effective fulfilment of his mandate over the past six years.

II. Developments in the human rights situation between 2020 and 2025

A. An encouraging but mixed trend

5. In the course of its monitoring work, the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA documented 1,322 human rights violations and abuses in 2022, with 4,193 victims. In 2023 and 2024, this worrying trend continued, with 2,498 and 2,882 confirmed violations, with 4,138 and 4,522 victims, respectively. In the first half of 2025, 1,636 cases of violations and abuses, affecting 2,480 victims, were recorded. These alarming figures, which fluctuate from month to month, attest to the persistence of fundamental rights violations and abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law.
6. The main perpetrators of documented violations were armed groups, including those signatory to the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic of 6 February 2019. Despite the negotiations towards a new peace agreement, which was finally signed on 19 April 2025, members of the armed group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation were implicated in conflict-related sexual violence, including the gang rape of four women in Koumbam on 17 April. On 26 February 2025, in Botembala, members of the same group assaulted the village chief and killed his father. After the signing of the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025, members of the armed group Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique (Union for Peace in the Central African Republic) and of Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation committed sexual violence against 18 women and 2 girls in the Prefectures of Basse-Kotto and Ouham-Pendé.
7. The defence and security forces in the Central African Republic have been implicated in numerous human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and detentions, deplorable conditions of detention,² violations of physical and mental integrity, extrajudicial executions,

¹ Information from July 2025 is included in the report.

² See "Analyse de la privation de liberté en République centrafricaine: état des lieux, défis et réponses" (Analysis of deprivation of liberty in the Central African Republic: current situation, challenges and responses), joint report by MINUSCA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, July 2024.

killings and other violations of the right to life, conflict-related sexual violence and measures restricting civic space.

8. Russian bilateral forces have been named as the alleged perpetrators of multiple violations.

9. The measures taken under the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic have helped to improve the human rights situation, although challenges remain in relation to the defence and security forces' compliance with basic rules for the protection of civilians.

B. Fragile improvement

10. Since early 2024, the number of human rights violations and abuses, particularly those committed by armed groups, including those who have not signed the Peace Agreement, has increased in the Central African Republic. Continued abuses by the armed groups *Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation* and *Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique*, despite their commitment to the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025, have sparked outrage. Anti-balaka groups affiliated with the *Coalition des patriotes pour le changement* remained active, while the *Azande Ani Kpi Gbe* group committed serious violations in Zemio, Dembia and Rafai, Haut-Mbomou Prefecture: killings, gang rapes, torture, expropriations and kidnappings, particularly targeting Muslims, Fulani and Sudanese asylum-seekers.

11. In 2024 and 2025, Sudanese and other foreign militias also committed violations, including attacks in Vakaga attributed to the Rapid Support Forces.

12. Furthermore, Russian bilateral forces, although providing support to the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, were involved in violations, extortion, violence, confiscations and the setting up of illegal checkpoints, and failed to exercise reasonable due diligence to prevent abuses by members of *Azande Ani Kpi Gbe* who they had trained.

13. Intercommunity tensions represent a serious threat to peace and human rights. In 2024 and 2025, several incidents rekindled these tensions: arrests of Muslims by the armed group *Wagner Ti Azande*³ in Haut-Mbomou, demonstrations against Muslim religious leaders in Zemio, attacks on herders in Kabodjou, conflicts linked to transhumance around Boali and Bouboui and deadly clashes involving Fulani in Sibéré 2. These events illustrate the fragility of the social fabric and the need for appropriate responses to prevent the escalation of intercommunity violence.

C. Risk of aggravation of human rights violations

14. The defence and security forces have been responsible for numerous human rights violations, despite the Government's efforts to establish a military justice system and an accountability mechanism. These efforts have failed to deter the defence and security forces from committing human rights violations against civilians.

15. In addition, the defence and security forces have encountered difficulties in their civilian protection mission due to a lack of resources, including the absence of air capability, insufficient ground equipment and defective infrastructure, which limited their access to the remote areas where armed groups were committing abuses.

16. The training, equipment, deployment, remuneration, command and accountability of defence and security forces all continue to pose challenges. The technical and financial support services provided by the international community should be channelled in this direction, including to ensure border security and ward off the threat from foreign armed groups and militias. Ineffective accountability mechanisms are a potential source of aggravation of human rights violations and abuses.

³ *Wagner Ti Azande*, an offshoot of *Azande Ani Kpi Gbe*, is considered to have links with the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, as some of its members have service numbers. See paragraph 28 of the present report.

17. By its resolution 2745 (2024) of 30 July 2024, the Security Council decided to lift the arms embargo on the Central African Republic that was established in 2013. The armament capability of armed groups is an aggravating factor. The Security Council must ensure that arms-producing States and countries bordering the Central African Republic scrupulously comply with its decision by implementing the recommendations of the Panel of Experts pursuant to Security Council resolution 2745 (2024), those of the Sanctions Committee established in resolution 2127 (2013), adopted by the Council on 5 December 2013, and those of the Independent Expert; and by strengthening the good offices of the Central African Republic configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission to complete the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme.

18. Piecemeal implementation of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme risks the resurgence of partially disbanded armed groups or the emergence of new militias or splinter groups. Under the terms of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025, the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, associated with the community violence reduction programme, must lead to the full military or socioeconomic integration of former combatants, following background checks. The threat posed by the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe group must be dispelled by resolute and diligent action.

19. Despite the adoption between 2020 and 2025 of laws and policies for the promotion of human rights, implementation remains constrained by a lack of resources and of coordination, including within the United Nations. This situation particularly affects victims of sexual violence and children exposed to abuse and exploitation, and compromises effective access to their rights.

20. At the national high-level conference on transhumance, held on 13 May 2024, recommendations were issued on the regulatory framework, agropastoral infrastructure, community-based conflict prevention and cross-border cooperation. However, practical measures still need to be taken, including in respect of making transhumance secure, communication, infrastructure mapping and joint commissions with neighbouring countries.

21. The policy of zero tolerance for sexual abuse by peacekeepers must be fully effective in order to avoid tarnishing the peace and development work done by MINUSCA. Failure to take concrete action following the repatriation of peacekeepers accused of sexual abuse undermines victim protection and crime prevention. The Independent Expert welcomes the commitment of Gabon and Rwanda to the zero-tolerance policy of MINUSCA.

III. Challenges and means of consolidating State authority

A. Challenges in implementing peace instruments

1. Strategic review of peace agreements

22. The third strategic review of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and the joint road map for peace in the Central African Republic (the Luanda road map), held on 23 October 2023, welcomed progress in areas such as decentralization and the role of prefecture committees in conflict prevention, support for the disarmament, demobilization, repatriation and integration programme, transhumance management and electoral awareness-raising. These committees have facilitated free movement by dismantling illegal checkpoints on the roads linking Berbérati with Bania, Gamboula and Nandobo, respectively.

23. Despite the holding of the national high-level conference on transhumance on 13 May 2024, no significant operational measures have been taken to address the persistent tensions between herders and farmers, which threaten peace and social cohesion. Joint commissions with neighbouring countries are struggling to turn political commitments into the concrete, coordinated measures that are needed to prevent transhumance-related tensions.

24. Furthermore, since 2022, the implementation of the 217 recommendations resulting from the republican dialogue has been hampered by the absence of focal points in certain

ministries and the lack of institutional anchorage, which limits their integration into public policies. Four years after their validation, the implementation rate remains low.

2. Dissolution of armed groups and disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation

25. On 19 September 2024, the Strategic Committee for Disarmament, Demobilization, Reintegration and Repatriation, Security Sector Reform and National Reconciliation held its tenth session against a backdrop of internal divisions between armed groups. The establishment in December 2020 of the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement (later renamed the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement Fondamentale) and the support it has attracted from other groups has created an ambiguous situation, which threatens the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic and stability in the country.

26. In June 2025, rival factions of the armed group Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation clashed violently in several localities in Ouham-Pendé, while other members of the group took part in the disarmament process. At the same time, Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation have continued to commit serious human rights violations.

27. Six years after the conclusion of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, nine armed groups have been disbanded and others are beginning their withdrawal. Implementation of the Agreement is based on the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, the securing of demilitarized zones, the restoration of public services and the reduction of community violence for sustainable reintegration.

28. The major challenge concerns Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, a group that has committed multiple, blatant and repeated human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou. In February 2025, the Independent Expert met with leaders of the group; they estimated that it had 5,000 members, including 200 who had been trained by Russian bilateral forces and had served in the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic.

3. Border security and cross-border management

29. The Central African Republic has several tools at its disposal, including the National Policy for the Management of Border Areas 2024–2034, inter-agency standard operating procedures for integrated border management and the National Border Management Commission and its national plan. On 21 January 2025, a mixed border post was opened at Bembéré on the border with Chad, where a detachment of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic has been operational since 29 May 2025.

30. However, the porosity of the borders, in an unstable regional context, increases the risk of insecurity. Cross-border criminal networks threaten control of trade routes and mining sites. In connection with the conflict in the Sudan, there have been documented incursions by fighters from the Rapid Support Forces, accompanied by human rights violations.

B. Infrastructure as an instrument of peace and security

31. According to the recommendations resulting from the republican dialogue, the construction and repair of infrastructure are key to strengthening security, development and the restoration of State authority. The lack of infrastructure, notably roads, has hindered the defence and security forces' access to certain areas controlled by armed groups.

32. Rebuilding infrastructure in the domains of security, justice, education, health, sport and culture is essential for peacebuilding, reducing territorial inequalities, restoring social justice and ensuring fundamental rights. Such infrastructure is also a factor in social and institutional resilience.

C. Decentralization and local governance

33. During a high-level dialogue at its fifty-eighth session, the Human Rights Council explored decentralization and local governance as levers for implementing human rights recommendations, restoring and consolidating State authority and supporting peace in the Central African Republic. This dialogue followed a seminar organized in February 2025 in Bangui by the Independent Expert under the auspices of the Ministry of Territorial Administration, Decentralization and Local Development. The National Policy on Decentralization and Territorial Development 2022–2032 has been adopted but its implementation remains limited. The National Development Plan 2024–2028, in particular its governance component, presents an opportunity to relaunch efforts in this area.

34. Local elections, intended to lay the foundations for local governance in accordance with the Act on Local Government Authorities, have been postponed several times since September 2022. The first round, scheduled for 31 August, cannot take on account of delays and dysfunction within the National Electoral Authority, including in respect of updating the electoral roll. Questions are being raised about the Authority's ability to organize the local, legislative and presidential elections scheduled for 28 December 2025 in an effective, inclusive and transparent manner.

35. Decentralization and local governance goes beyond merely holding local elections. They require strategic and practical measures, such as a mechanism for the effective transfer of competences and resources, the creation of a parliamentary committee to facilitate dialogue between national and municipal elected representatives, and a coherent local government policy defining the roles of regions, prefectures, sub-prefectures and communes and the synergies between them. It is also essential to adopt measures for the implementation of articles 175 to 177 of the Constitution of 30 August 2023, concerning local authorities and the Chamber of Traditional Leaders.

D. December 2025 local, legislative and presidential elections

36. On 11 July 2025, following a meeting of the strategic committee for elections, the Prime Minister announced that local, legislative and presidential elections would be organized simultaneously in December 2025. There is a risk that the local elections will be neglected. Holding combined elections multiplies the challenges involved.

37. In a press release of 26 June 2025, the Independent Expert stressed the need for an institutional overhaul of the National Electoral Authority in view of the demands of the electoral calendar. Despite the assurances given to the Independent Expert by the Authority's senior officials in February 2025, internal dysfunction is likely to compromise the optimal preparation of the polls. This dysfunction hampers the institution's effectiveness, despite the national and international support it has received and efforts such as the organization on 16 and 17 May 2025 of a high-level dialogue to combat electoral violence against women.

38. The electoral process faces serious technical and organizational obstacles. The review of the electoral roll has failed to produce even a provisional version, whereas the definitive voter list must be published by the end of September at the latest. The budget initially earmarked for local elections must be adjusted to cover the combined elections in December 2025.

39. The adoption on 17 May 2025 of a derogation law suspending article 18 of the Electoral Code reflects the hurdles faced by the National Electoral Authority. Without immediate institutional reform, it is likely that the constitutional deadlines for the legislative and presidential elections will not be met, which risks causing a political crisis.

IV. Peace and reconciliation process

A. Implementation of peace instruments for reconciliation

1. Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025

40. The Peace Agreement signed at N'Djamena on 19 April 2025 by the Government of the Central African Republic and the armed groups Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation and Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique has revived the peace process. The two armed groups, which belong to the Coalition des patriotes pour le changement Fondamentale, have pledged to rejoin the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, cease hostilities and commit to the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. The return of the two armed groups to the Political Agreement was formalized at an official ceremony on 10 July.

41. The Independent Expert calls on the signatory parties to implement this agreement in good faith, and on the guarantors of the Political Agreement to work towards an effective programme for the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation of the signatory armed groups.

2. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation

42. During the period under review, the Government continued to implement the national disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, conducting several operations in various localities (Bangassou, Bria, Kouï, Nzakoundou, Obo and Sangrelin). Armed groups such as Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation have begun to take steps towards voluntary disarmament, although their intentions remain unclear. Increased vigilance is therefore required on the part of the African Union and the Economic Community of Central African States as guarantors of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic.

43. The Independent Expert warns against disarmament outside the regulatory framework, particularly when it is carried out by the armed forces and their allies, which could jeopardize the process. In addition, delays in implementing the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme have led some former combatants to abandon it. The Government must therefore ensure that the established protocols and timetables are respected.

3. Community violence reduction programme

44. The Independent Expert regards the community violence reduction programme as complementary to the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme. Together, the two programmes provide a means of restoring security, peace and national cohesion. The community violence reduction programme, besides reducing violence, enables socioeconomic integration, encourages community dialogue and promotes peaceful human relations. It is intended, in particular, to support socioeconomic reintegration. The programme has allowed thousands of beneficiaries to distance themselves from violence and devote themselves to income-generating activities, paid work or vocational training in order to regain a stable place in society. The Independent Expert underscores the need to encourage and multiply these local initiatives.

B. Justice as a means to peace and national reconciliation

1. Combating impunity

45. From 3 to 10 October 2024, a judicial commission of inquiry mandated by the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Promotion and Good Governance investigated human rights violations in Zemio, Mboki and Obo, Haut-Mbomou Prefecture. On 11 February 2025, the Minister and the Prosecutor of Bambari Court of Appeal announced the identification and arrest of the suspected perpetrators. However, the terms of reference of the commission of

inquiry only cover events prior to its establishment. The Independent Expert welcomes the establishment of such commissions as a good practice to be encouraged.

46. Following the conclusion of the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025, the President of the Republic appointed two representatives of Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique and Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation as ministerial advisers in the areas of livestock and trade, and two other former rebels as ministerial advisers responsible for evaluation of the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025 and follow-up to the Luanda road map. The Independent Expert points out that political arrangements do not exempt perpetrators of human rights violations from responsibility, nor the Central African Republic from its international obligations. The pursuit of peace cannot be at the expense of the right to truth and justice.

2. Special Criminal Court

47. On 13 December 2024, the first section of the Assize Chamber of the Special Criminal Court passed judgment on the first part of the Ndélé 1 case (*Special Prosecutor v. Kalite Azor et al.*), concerning acts constituting war crimes and crimes against humanity committed between March and April 2020 in and around Ndélé, in the Prefecture of Bamingui-Bangoran, during clashes between the two factions of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (Roungas and Goulas).⁴ Sentences of 15 to 20 years' imprisonment were handed down. In the second part of the Ndélé 1 case (*Special Prosecutor v. Général Fache et al.*), in which the defendants were tried in absentia, the first section of the Assize Chamber passed judgment on 28 July 2025.⁵ The six defendants were found guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed during clashes in March and April 2020 between factions of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique in Ndélé and surrounding villages. Sentences of 20 to 25 years' imprisonment were handed down. However, the court dismissed the charges against the defendants relating to attacks on civilians, looting and the killing of a Goula on 4 March 2020.

48. On 19 June, the first section of the Assize Chamber of the Special Criminal Court passed judgment in the case of *Special Prosecutor v. Oumar Serge Abdoulaye Assan et al.* (Ndélé 2 case), concerning charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in March 2020 in Ndélé and the villages of Gozbeïda, Lemena and Alihou.⁶ The Court acquitted the main defendant, Oumar Serge Abdoulaye Assan, of all charges and ordered his release. The six other defendants, members of the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique, were found guilty of crimes against humanity and war crimes and sentenced to between 20 and 25 years' imprisonment.

49. On 7 July 2025, the first section of the Assize Chamber of the Special Criminal Court heard the case of *Special Prosecutor v. Mathurin Kombo, François Boybanda (alias Balere), Philémon Kahena (alias CB), Dieudonné Gomitoua, Edmond Beina and Jean Bahara* (Guen case). The defendants were prosecuted for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed between February and March 2014 in the sub-prefecture of Gadzi, notably in the localities of Guen, Djomo and Gadzi. Jean Bahara is the subject of an arrest warrant and remains at large.

50. The arrest warrant for the former President, François Bozizé, who stands accused of crimes committed between 2009 and 2013, has still not been executed by Guinea-Bissau, where he resides. In addition, Hassan Bouba Ali, former head of Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique, who was released by the authorities on 26 November 2021 in defiance of the ongoing legal proceedings against him, has not been handed over to the Court despite facing charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

51. Despite its efforts, the Special Criminal Court faces a lack of financial resources, with a deficit for 2025 and an uncertain situation in 2026, aggravated by the international aid crisis.

⁴ <https://cpsrca.cf/sites/default/files/2025-05/jugement-ndeg-38-2024-du-13-decembre-2024-sur-l-action-publique.pdf>.

⁵ <https://cpsrca.cf/sites/default/files/2025-07/resume-du-jugement-n43-s1-2025-sur-l-action-publique-ndele-1-contumace.pdf>.

⁶ See the quarterly bulletin of the Special Criminal Court, May 2025: <https://www.cpsrca.cf/sites/default/files/2025-05/bulletin-n6-mai-2025.pdf>.

While the support of the Trust Fund for Victims of the International Criminal Court is useful, it is vital to establish an autonomous reparation mechanism specific to the Special Criminal Court in order to ensure comprehensive justice focused on the rights of victims.

52. The methods and best practices developed and implemented by the Special Criminal Court must be leveraged and bequeathed as a legacy to the national courts. The Court's expertise and experience in victim and witness protection, the right of defence, the conduct of investigations and the preservation of evidence, as well as its practical procedural tools, can serve to enrich the country's justice system.

3. International Criminal Court

53. On 24 July 2025, in the case of *The Prosecutor v. Alfred Yekatom and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona*,⁷ the Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Court found Alfred Yekatom, former zone commander, and Patrice-Edouard Ngaïssona, national general coordinator of the anti-balaka armed group, guilty of multiple war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the group's widespread attack on civilian populations between September 2013 and at least February 2014. They were sentenced to 15 and 12 years' imprisonment, respectively. The Independent Expert welcomes this decision and points out that, sooner or later, those who carry out such acts, whatever their rank, must answer for them before the national and international courts.

4. National courts

54. The national courts play an essential role in combating impunity, restoring State authority and strengthening democracy. Their presence beyond the capital is being strengthened. On 11 July 2025, 63 judges and prosecutors, including four women, were sworn in at Bangui: 39 were assigned to existing courts and 24 to new ones. As of June, 24 of the 26 courts outside Bangui were operational; however, the staffing level for justice officials stood at only 56 per cent.

55. From 4 to 19 November 2024, Bambari Court of Appeal, renovated by MINUSCA, held its first criminal session, at which it tried and convicted 16 people for serious offences, including rape. In December 2024, Bangui Court of Appeal concluded its second criminal session of the year, resulting in 45 convictions, with sentences ranging from 1 year's imprisonment to life imprisonment. The large backlog of cases means that it will be necessary to organize special sessions in addition to the two statutory annual sessions.

56. The justice sector in the Central African Republic faces major challenges: lack of independent funding, heavy dependence on external partners and limited presence of officials in remote areas. It is crucial that Bouar Court of Appeal be provided with the resources it needs to function. The Government must carry out a plan for the renovation and fitting out of judicial and prison infrastructure, while building the capacity of actors in the sector.

57. On 28 July 2025, at the closure of the annual general meeting of judges and prosecutors in Bangui, the main justice actors identified numerous challenges, including prison overcrowding, non-compliance with statutory detention periods and ethical issues.

5. Prison administration

58. On 17 May 2024, 295 trained prison officers were sworn in before the Bangui Tribunal de Grande Instance (court of major jurisdiction). With the support of MINUSCA, prison infrastructure has been built or renovated in several localities, including the prison at Bossangoa, Ouham Prefecture, which was closed for four years and reopened on 18 June 2024; the infirmary at Kaga-Bandoro prison, Nana-Grébizi Prefecture, operational since 13 June 2024; and Ndélé Tribunal de Grande Instance, operational since February 2025. Although improvements have been made, most prison buildings and facilities remain in need of refurbishment.

59. Decree No. 24-326 of 31 December 2024 on the remission of sentences led to the release of 806 prisoners (including 30 women and 7 children), reducing the prison population

⁷ <https://www.icc-cpi.int/court-record/icc-01/14-01/18-2784-red>.

by about 30 per cent. In addition, the Minister of Justice, Human Rights Promotion and Good Governance, has issued instructions⁸ to its departments to produce weekly reports on the presence of justice officials and the situation in places of deprivation of liberty.

60. In February 2025, the Independent Expert observed worrisome conditions of detention in several of the country's prisons. Several prisons were particularly overcrowded: Roux, Ngaragba (with an overcrowding rate of 282 per cent), Berbérati (143 per cent) and Carnot (86 per cent). The holding cells in several police stations were also overwhelmed. With the exception of Bimbo prison, most detention facilities were experiencing serious issues of hygiene, lack of privacy, violence, inhuman treatment, scarcity of food and lack of medical care. Prolonged pretrial detention, due to the failure to conduct investigations within the legal time limit, undermined procedural guarantees.

61. On 5 May 2025, Armel Sayo, leader of the Coalition militaire pour le salut du peuple et le redressement, who had been extradited from Cameroon, was imprisoned in the Central African Republic without access to a lawyer. Joseph Figueira Martin, a Belgian and Portuguese national arrested on 26 May 2024 in Zemio, has been held in prolonged detention since 30 May 2024 at the Camp de Roux prison, with limited contact with his family, for offences under articles 163 and 166 of the Criminal Code.

62. The prison administration does not provide any reintegration programmes to prevent reoffending and it lacks a restorative justice approach with the application of alternative measures to detention, including for children and women with young children.

6. Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission

63. Since its establishment, the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission has not succeeded in fulfilling its mandate. The institution has been shaken by a series of crises. In addition to the lack of resources, a deep internal feud has hampered the implementation of its strategic plan. To remedy the situation, the President of the Republic, by a decree of 24 May 2024, terminated the mandate of the 11 commissioners; a selection committee to appoint new commissioners was established by a decree of 30 December 2024.⁹

64. In a press release of 30 July 2024, the Independent Expert stressed the importance of respecting certain fundamental principles during the selection process in order to avoid past mistakes. On the recommendation of the selection committee, new commissioners were appointed by decree on 21 March 2025 and sworn in on 10 April 2025. The Commission then organized an induction seminar and adopted its rules of procedure. However, internal tensions persist, particularly regarding the election of the bureau. The Independent Expert recommends that the Commission be attached to the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Promotion and Good Governance in order to improve the conditions in which it operates.

C. Impact of security in fostering respect for human rights

1. Haut-Mbomou

65. The situation in the Haut-Mbomou and Haut-Oubangui regions is marked by serious insecurity, with dramatic consequences for human rights. A March 2025 joint report by MINUSCA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights revealed that the Wagner Ti Azande and Azande Ani Kpi Gbe armed groups have targeted the Fulani and Muslim communities, associating them with Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique. This violence has led to mass displacement, public killings and heightened tensions, particularly following the arrest of leaders of Azande Ani Kpi Gbe.

66. From 17 to 20 February 2025, the Independent Expert visited Obo and Mboki, where he observed a very fragile security and social situation. Despite efforts by the local

⁸ Ministerial Instruction No. 592/MCJPDHBG/DIRCAB/24 of 3 October 2024 on the situation of judges and prosecutors and No. 593/MCJPDHBG/DIRCAB/24 of 3 October 2024 on the situation of persons in detention.

⁹ Decree No. 24-325 of 30 December 2024, appointing the members of the candidate selection committee for the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission.

authorities, community leaders, non-governmental organizations and MINUSCA to promote cohesion between communities (including between Azande, Fulani, Muslims and Arabs), tensions persisted, exacerbated by the violence committed by Azande Ani Kpi Gbe. Following a joint report by MINUSCA and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Independent Expert stressed the urgent need for an overarching response to prevent threats to peace and human rights as a result of new intercommunity crises.

2. Border areas

67. Vakaga Prefecture, which borders the Sudan, has assumed strategic significance owing to the armed conflict that has been raging in that country since April 2023. This instability threatens the sovereignty of the Central African Republic, favours the activities of armed groups (recruitment, arms trafficking and smuggling of fighters) and arouses interest in the country's mineral resources, including gold and hydrocarbons.

68. Border management is essential to contain the growing insecurity in the north-east of the Central African Republic. Incursions by the Sudanese Rapid Support Forces are aggravating tensions and jeopardizing the peace process. Transhumance in Vakaga requires a subregional strategy that is more effective than the current joint commissions.

69. The authorities of the Central African Republic must strengthen border security through practical measures such as the adoption of inter-agency procedures and the opening of border posts on the borders with Chad and the Sudan in order to promote free movement while ensuring safe economic activities for the population, the return of refugees, arms control and a subregional dialogue on transhumance.

V. Status of institutions whose mandate includes governance and human rights

A. National observatory for parity

70. The national observatory for parity was established by a decree of 23 February 2024 in accordance with a law of 24 November 2016, and its members were appointed by a decree of 11 February 2025. Its mission is to promote, monitor and evaluate gender equality in State institutions in the Central African Republic. It conducts awareness-raising campaigns, works with government ministries, collects and disseminates data on parity and can establish international partnerships.

71. The observatory has no regional offices, data collection or processing tools or even any connections with institutions such as the Central African Institute of Statistics and Economic and Social Studies.

B. Ministry technical teams

72. Some donors prefer to entrust project implementation to non-governmental organizations, citing technical weaknesses, a lack of transparency and unsatisfactory management practices in certain ministries. Although this approach appears to promote good governance, it may compromise the strategic goal of strengthening the country's institutions on a sustainable basis. The Independent Expert stresses that national institutions must be at the heart of projects, from design to evaluation, and that projects must provide for the participation of civil society. It is important for each project to include a capacity-building component for ministerial teams.

C. National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

73. In 2024, the Independent Expert highlighted limitations in the functioning of the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms that necessitated legal

reform, capacity-building and the allocation of sufficient resources, including for the purpose of extending its activities outside Bangui.

74. On 2 June 2025, a technical committee was set up by ministerial order¹⁰ to review the 2017 law that established the Commission. The committee is due to submit its report by 2 September 2025 and is expected to propose that the Commission's mandate be widened to include that of national torture prevention mechanism following the accession of the Central African Republic to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

75. It is essential that the law be revised to bring the Commission into line with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) and enable it to fully perform its role at the national, regional and international levels. The Government should also increase the Commission's human, technical and financial resources to support the extension of its mandate.

76. The Independent Expert appreciates the financial and substantial technical support that MINUSCA has provided to the Commission. This support should gradually lead to the empowerment of the Commission so that it can take over from the Human Rights Division of MINUSCA.

VI. Human rights

A. Civic space

1. Peaceful demonstrations

77. Although the Central African Republic is a party to international legal instruments and has constitutional provisions guaranteeing the freedoms of thought, conscience and religion, expression and assembly,¹¹ the effective exercise of these rights seems to be hampered by the tense political and social climate, with 2025 being an election year.

78. During the period under review, several peaceful demonstrations, including by the Bloc républicain pour la défense de la Constitution and human rights organizations, were banned or suppressed. At a march on 26 June 2025, organized in tribute to students who had died in a stampede, human rights defenders were arrested, handcuffed and imprisoned, before being released. Such repression, which is sometimes targeted, raises concerns about the equity and freedom of civic space in the country.

2. Law on human rights defenders

79. On 27 December 2024, the National Assembly adopted by acclamation a law on the protection of human rights defenders in the Central African Republic. In a press release of 7 January 2025,¹² the Independent Expert stated that this law marked a crucial stage in the recognition and protection of organizations and individuals who devoted their lives to the defence of fundamental rights and the preservation of their operating space. As the watchdogs of democracy, civil society organizations should benefit from capacity-building, including for their professionalization. However, the law has not yet been promulgated.

B. Freedom of the press

1. Press offences

80. On 26 May 2025, the National Assembly adopted a law on freedom of the press and of communication, certain provisions of which – notably articles 130, 140, 151 and 193 – are

¹⁰ Order No. 026/MJPDHBG/DIRCAB/CMDH/DGDHBG25.

¹¹ The Constitution of 30 August 2023 enshrines the freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 22), the freedom of expression (art. 23) and the freedom of assembly (art. 25).

¹² <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/01/central-african-republic-independent-expert-welcomes-adoption-law-protection>.

considered detrimental to press freedom. While the law is certainly intended to create the conditions for media pluralism and for the quality of information and media sources, several provisions envisage criminal penalties, including article 151, under which journalists can be punished for defamation and insult. On 30 May 2025, at a press luncheon with the President of the Republic, the Union of Central African Journalists expressed its concerns about the law and called on the Head of State not to promulgate it as it stood.

2. Detention of journalists

81. The journalist Landry Ulrich Nguéma Ngokpélé, editor of the *Quotidien de Bangui*, was arrested on 8 May 2025, remanded in custody at the Research and Investigation Section and transferred to Ngaragba prison on 14 May 2025. He is charged with complicity in rebellion, dissemination of information likely to disturb public order, incitement to hatred and revolt, and subversion against the Constitution and the State.

82. The Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Promotion and Good Governance and the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms discussed the situation of detained journalists on 28 May 2025.

83. On the night of 7 and 8 June 2025, the premises of the newspaper *Afrique en plus* were vandalized and equipment was taken. This incident took place while the editor was living in hiding following an attempted kidnapping.

C. Monitoring of the human rights situation

84. On 1 July 2024, the Central African Republic submitted its initial report to the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, which was reviewed on 19 and 20 March 2025. It submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on 6 March 2025, and its initial report to the Committee against Torture on 14 March 2025. On 23 October 2024, the Government submitted a request for financial and technical assistance from the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance in the Implementation of the Universal Periodic Review, in relation to the recommendations made on 26 January 2024 in the framework of the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review. From 12 to 24 September 2024, a workshop was held to draw up an action plan to implement the 238 recommendations that the Central African Republic had accepted during the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review. While efforts to overcome delays in the submission of periodic reports are encouraging, the same dynamic has not been observed in reporting to African bodies, including the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the African Peer Review Mechanism.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

85. **The Central African Republic remains heavily dependent on international aid, which makes it vulnerable, especially in a context in which this aid is being reduced. It is therefore crucial that the international community build the country's capacity to mobilize internal resources to ensure resilience and stability. This falls within the scope of the Economic and Financial Reform Programme of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, aimed at stimulating growth.**

86. **Implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic goes through phases of fragility and resilience. The return to the peace process of the armed groups Retour, réclamation et réhabilitation and Unité pour la paix en Centrafrique offers hope for peace and security, provided that the actors engage in good faith over the long term. It will be essential to implement the recommendations of the republican dialogue if the country is to make tangible progress on the issues of security, justice, national reconciliation and peacebuilding.**

87. The disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme would be more effective with a proactive multidimensional strategy, combining the reintegration of former combatants (after background checks), the deployment of security forces, community development and the gradual restoration of State authority, including by restoring access to basic social services.

88. Improving security requires additional efforts in terms of the training, equipment, deployment, command and accountability of the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic, as well as a strategic plan for border management, including in respect of transhumance.

89. While there has been encouraging progress in justice sector reforms, several challenges remain, including in relation to the effective presence of judicial actors throughout the country, the fight against corruption, the proximity of the justice system to citizens, the rebuilding of infrastructure, compliance with legal procedures and the recruitment of additional judges and prosecutors.

90. It is imperative that the Special Criminal Court set up a reparations fund for victims in order to equitably fulfil its mission of combating impunity. Likewise, the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission must free itself from all political influence, strengthen its management, draw up a realistic strategic plan and mobilize the necessary resources to discharge its mandate effectively.

91. Despite strong political will to promote the rights of women and children, a gap persists between the commitments made, the resources allocated and the steps that are actually taken. Moreover, the lack of strategic coordination between technical and financial partners reduces the impact and effectiveness of their activities in this area.

92. The country has institutions whose remit includes human rights, governance and democracy, but they remain fragile. Public awareness-raising of their respective missions should be accompanied by internal coordination, a system for the creation of synergies, and technical and financial support.

93. Notwithstanding the importance of humanitarian aid, the current situation calls for greater investment in development, including through the National Development Plan 2024–2028. This plan requires sustained international support in order to restore State authority and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

94. The National Human Rights Policy 2023–2027 attests to the State's commitment in this area. However, its implementation is hampered by the lack of internal resources and the irregular nature of external support. The State's compliance with the recommendations of the human rights treaty bodies and its international commitments is contingent on the effectiveness of this policy.

B. Recommendations

95. The Independent Expert recommends that the Government of the Central African Republic:

(a) Strengthen national institutions and instruments for the mobilization of domestic resources in order to progressively reduce financial dependence on external resources; strengthen national mechanisms for transparency, accountability, the sound governance of public finances and the fight against corruption; and ensure the effective implementation of the Act on the Prevention and Punishment of Corruption and Related Offences;

(b) Evaluate the implementation status of the National Policy on Decentralization and Territorial Development 2022–2032, four years after its validation, in order to inform the relaunch of the process, and objectively identify priority projects within the framework of the National Development Plan 2024–2028;

(c) Promptly carry out a budget audit to identify funding needs for transitional justice programmes, in the context of the partial withdrawal of

development aid by the United States of America, and to mobilize alternative resources while ensuring the continuity of commitments;

(d) Strengthen the implementation of the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the Luanda road map, the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025 and relevant recommendations from the republican dialogue in order to achieve the goals of justice, security, peace and reconciliation;

(e) Accelerate the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation process, including with the signatories of the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025, and ensure that disarmament is duly followed by the deployment of security and defence forces, the implementation of the community violence reduction programme in demilitarized zones and the restoration of basic social services;

(f) Implement, as soon as possible, a sustainable solution to the critical situation with the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe group, combining the massive deployment in the region of trained and equipped elements of Armed Forces of the Central African Republic with the delivery of the disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation programme, the training and integration into the army of untrained members of Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, and community development and intercommunity dialogue in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou;

(g) Ensure that the situation with the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe group is not exploited for political ends;

(h) Create a strategic and technical framework for cooperation between the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic and MINUSCA, without hindrance from Russian bilateral forces, to meet the security challenge in Mbomou and Haut-Mbomou;

(i) Draw up a plan for the gradual withdrawal of Russian bilateral forces from the territory of the Central African Republic;

(j) Continue justice sector reform while increasing the presence of justice officials on the ground and respecting the principle of promptness and procedural guarantees;

(k) Preserve the independence of the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, ensure its continued functioning by allocating adequate national resources, and mobilize substantial and sustainable support from technical and financial partners;

(l) Define the structure and composition of commissions of inquiry in each region, in compliance with international human rights standards, to enable their rapid and coordinated deployment on the ground in the event of reports of human rights violations or abuses;

(m) Continue to build and renovate judicial, prison, road, health, educational, sporting and cultural infrastructure, according to a precise timetable;

(n) Adopt a restorative justice approach to relieve overcrowding in places of deprivation of liberty;

(o) Ensure that any measures affecting the civic space form part of a balanced approach that reconciles security imperatives with respect for fundamental freedoms, in which rights and freedom are seen not as a hindrance to public order, but as the very condition of its legitimacy and durability;

(p) Enhance the strategic, technical and logistical capabilities of the defence and security forces, including in terms of their training, equipment, deployment, remuneration, command and accountability, and thus ensure their autonomy;

(q) Strengthen oversight and accountability of the defence and security forces and measures to prevent human rights violations and abuses during missions to protect civilians;

(r) Put in place a plan for the gradual withdrawal of Russian bilateral forces;

(s) Ensure that the challenges linked to the combining of local, legislative and presidential elections are identified and appropriate responses found;

(t) Avert a major political crisis by organizing the combined elections by December 2025;

(u) Reform the National Electoral Authority without delay, enhancing its strategic, technical and operational capabilities;

(v) Immediately define technical and operational mechanisms for the transfer of resources to decentralized local authorities and take practical steps to operationalize the constitutional provisions on the Chamber of Traditional Leaders;

(w) Accelerate the harmonization of the law establishing the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms with the Paris Principles and ensure that the Commission's original mandate is duly separated from that of the national torture prevention mechanism and that the Commission has adequate resources to fulfil this dual mandate;

(x) Review, as soon as possible, article 4 of the law on the Truth, Justice, Reparation and Reconciliation Commission, concerning the duration of the Commission's mandate;

(y) Allocate adequate resources to the national observatory for parity, provide it with technical and technological facilities, develop quantitative and qualitative indicators, provide it with institutional support for the purpose of data collection and facilitate partnerships with relevant international bodies, including the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, relevant special procedures of the Human Rights Council and relevant United Nations mechanisms;

(z) Refrain from any legal, judicial, political or administrative measures that restrict civic space, unless such restrictions strictly respect the principles of legality, legitimacy, necessity, proportionality and appropriateness;

(aa) Promulgate the law on human rights defenders without delay;

(bb) Draw up an action plan to implement the recommendations accepted by the Central African Republic during the 2024 universal periodic review and incorporate the recommendations of national and international monitoring mechanisms into the action plan of the National Human Rights Policy.

96. The Independent Expert recommends that MINUSCA:

(a) Continue to build the capacity of State institutions whose mandate includes governance and human rights by providing them with suitable technical and operational tools with a view to consolidating their autonomy and effectiveness;

(b) Increase technical and financial support for the committee responsible for the preparation of periodic reports and follow-up to the recommendations of the human rights treaty bodies and for the steering committee of the National Human Rights Policy;

(c) Put in place a structured mechanism, including a tracking table, for the monitoring and evaluation of laws and action plans adopted by the Government, and conduct periodic reviews to support and inform its implementation;

(d) Adapt the intervention methods and means of support of the defence and security forces to the border threat;

(e) Establish a forward base at the border with mobile observation posts, air support and robust and regular joint patrols of cross-border routes into Chad and the Sudan in order to control the movements of armed groups and elements.

97. The Independent Expert recommends that the United Nations country team:

(a) Accelerate and strengthen the safe, voluntary and sustainable return of internally displaced persons and refugees, accompanied by development programmes

whose duration and scope ensure the effective reintegration and sustainable financial autonomy of returnees;

(b) Establish, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights Promotion and Good Governance, the National Commission on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and civil society organizations, a platform for monitoring treaty commitments and periodic reporting deadlines as a dashboard for the Government;

(c) Take due account of the human rights dimension when selecting priority projects under the five main components of the National Development Plan 2024–2028;

(d) Take practical steps for the clearance of regions where explosive devices have been laid.

98. The Independent Expert recommends that the Economic Community of Central African States and the African Union:

(a) Strengthen good offices initiatives aimed at implementing the Political Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic, the Luanda road map and the Peace Agreement of 19 April 2025, and apply the established sanctions, where appropriate;

(b) Organize a subregional conference on peace and development with the countries neighbouring the Central African Republic in order to address cross-border issues such as the circulation of weapons, cross-border security and crime, transhumance and refugees;

(c) Promptly mobilize the Democracy, Elections and Constitutionalism Division of the African Union to provide strategic and technical support to the National Electoral Authority in preparing for the combined local, legislative and presidential elections in December 2025, in the spirit of aspirations 3 and 4 of Agenda 2063 of the African Union;

(d) Work towards the extradition of former President Bozizé from Guinea-Bissau in execution of the Special Criminal Court's arrest warrant against him.

99. The Independent Expert recommends that the international community:

(a) Comply with Security Council resolution 2745 (2024) on the lifting of the arms embargo on the Central African Republic, which calls for Member States to take the necessary measures to prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale or transfer of arms and related materiel of all types to armed groups and associated individuals operating in the Central African Republic;

(b) Maintain and increase technical, logistical and financial support for the National Electoral Authority so that the 2025 electoral calendar is respected;

(c) Support the authorities' efforts to improve the training, equipment, deployment, remuneration, command and accountability of the defence and security forces in order to make the presence of foreign forces unnecessary;

(d) Ensure that the States that made recommendations in the context of the universal periodic review provide technical and financial support to the Central African Republic for the implementation of the recommendations made and accepted;

(e) Strengthen support for the various transitional justice programmes, in particular those relating to the fight against impunity, justice system reform, efforts to secure the country, local governance, humanitarian response and national institution-building.