

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Most attacks took place after the Séléka rebellion in late 2012 and during 2013. More than 100 schools were damaged, destroyed or looted, two dozen were used for military purposes and there were reports of students and teachers being killed. By early 2013, one in two schools had closed.

CONTEXT

The Central African Republic (CAR) has experienced decades of political unrest, including two conflicts in the past ten years and ongoing violence, particularly in the north.⁴⁹⁹ Various armed rebel groups, including the Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and of Democracy (APRD), the Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR), and the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), fought government forces between 2004 and 2011.⁵⁰⁰ The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), a rebel group originally from Uganda, spread its operations into south-east CAR after 2008.⁵⁰¹

In late 2012, renewed conflict broke out when a group of rebel forces known as Séléka (meaning 'coalition' in Sango), comprised primarily of UFDR and CPJP dissidents and members of the Patriotic Convention for the Salvation of Kodro (CPSK), accused President François Bozizé's government of failing to abide by previous peace agreements.⁵⁰² Séléka's military campaign from the north to the capital Bangui in the south-west culminated in a coup d'état on 24 March 2013 and the formation of a new transitional government.⁵⁰³ However, for months after the coup, law and order broke down and Séléka forces committed serious human rights abuses against civilians.⁵⁰⁴ In October 2013, a UN Security Council Resolution was unanimously

approved to deploy an African Union (AU) peacekeeping force and to support a possible UN peacekeeping mission.⁵⁰⁵ By early December 2013, amid escalating violence, French troops were additionally deployed to CAR after the Security Council authorized their temporary intervention and the use of 'all necessary measures' to support the AU-led peacekeeping force in protecting civilians and restoring order.⁵⁰⁶

The education system suffered as teachers and students were displaced and schools were shut, damaged or destroyed.⁵⁰⁷ By April 2013, nearly half of CAR's schools had closed⁵⁰⁸ and more than 650,000 children were out of school.⁵⁰⁹

Net enrolment at primary level was estimated at 69 per cent in 2011, and 14 per cent at secondary level, while gross tertiary enrolment was only 3 per cent. The estimated adult literacy rate was 57 per cent.⁵¹⁰ In the northern conflict-affected regions, net primary enrolment was only 48 per cent in 2012.⁵¹¹

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

No attacks on or looting of infrastructure were reported in 2009 or 2010 but due to fear of fighting in the eastern part of the country, including LRA raids, parents kept many students out of school.⁵¹² In 2011, according to the UN, 12 schools were used, attacked or destroyed in fighting between CPJP, UFDR and FPR.⁵¹³ In 2012, fewer attacks were reported on schools and hospitals than in 2011.⁵¹⁴

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

Teachers were abducted and killed in 2010, but it was not clear whether this was related to their work.⁵¹⁵ In 2011, the UN reported teachers in Bria, the capital of Haute-Kotto prefecture, being

assaulted by armed groups because their schools were in areas under the control of rival groups.⁵¹⁶

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS

CPJP elements used schools in villages in Haute-Kotto between May and July 2010,⁵¹⁷ while in 2011, more were used during confrontations between CPJP and UFDR, as well as during attacks by the Chadian rebel group the Popular Front for Recovery (FPR).⁵¹⁸ In January 2012, a Chadian army helicopter landed on a school in Ouadango (Nana Grébizi prefecture), destroying the building; also, two schools were used as outposts by CPJP in Yangoudrounja (Haute-Kotto prefecture) and Miamani (Bamingui-Bangoran prefecture).⁵¹⁹

ATTACKS ON EDUCATION IN 2013

Attacks spiked at the time of the Séléka rebellion in late 2012 and heightened insecurity in 2013. An assessment conducted by the Education Cluster in CAR, which surveyed some 176 schools in conflict-affected areas, reported that at least 108 of the schools had been looted or vandalized by rebels, soldiers and local populations; 14 were hit by bullets (in four cases intentionally, two of which occurred while school was in session) and two were specifically targeted by shells; and three were intentionally set on fire.⁵²⁰

There were numerous alleged attacks on students and teachers during the fighting in late 2012 and in 2013 that occurred at or near schools.⁵²¹ According to the Education Cluster, at least two teachers were reportedly killed intentionally; the wife of a school director was killed at school; and a school student was shot dead. It also reported allegations of ‘many atrocities’ committed at schools in Haute-Kotto, including the rape of girls and the killing of one teacher.⁵²² Séléka members reportedly robbed or

assaulted two teachers, and entered at least one school and told students if they returned to class they would be taken hostage.⁵²³ In another case, a child soldier entered his former school and threatened to detonate a grenade if schooling continued.⁵²⁴

Between December 2012 and August 2013, at least 24 schools were occupied or used by combatants in Bamingui-Bangoran, Kémo, Ombella-M’Poko, Bangui, Haute-Kotto, Nana-Grébizi and Ouaka prefectures, four of which by the military.⁵²⁵ Many of these schools reported looting and damage.⁵²⁶

ENDNOTES CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

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⁵¹³ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/66/782-S/2012/261, 26 April 2012, para 22.

⁵¹⁴ UNSC, Children and Armed Conflict: Report of the Secretary-General, A/67/845-S/2013/245, 15 May 2013, para 39.

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