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Issue: The Situation in the Central African Republic

Introduction

The Central African Republic (CAR) has been a victim of violence and humanitarian crisis for years due to the aftermath of civil war and continued conflict between several rebel factions and religious groups. The numerous coup d'états that occurred ever since the country's independence in 1960 only furthered worsened the already complicated situation. According to the United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR), more than 540,000 refugees have fled the country, and another 600,000 are displaced within the CAR. Prolonged conflict also exacerbated the economic instability of the nation, and with a GDP per capita of merely \$380 US dollars, the country is considered one of the poorest. Overall, the current situation in the Central African Republic is a result of both political and economic crisis, and has affected the entire population, sparing no men, women, and children.

While the current situation of widespread chaos and political instability in the CAR can roughly be traced back to numerous events since its independence from France in 1960, a more recent and direct cause would be a violent exchange of power in 2013, when the Seleka, an alliance of several predominantly Muslim militia factions, took over the capital of Bangui. After the seizure of the capital, the president of the CAR, Francois Bozize, was overthrown, and Michel Djotodia, leader of the Seleka, was installed into power. The Anti-balaka, a Christian militia group, acted in retaliation of the violent acts of the Muslim Seleka, and added a religious component to the ongoing conflict. Upon taking power, Djotodia officially dissolved the Seleka, but violent, and often religiously motivated, conflict between the ex-Seleka forces and the Anti-balaka continued. The actions of Djotodia's Seleka forces have been considered as serious human rights violations, with recruitment of child soldiers, killing and raping of civilians, and destroying of public infrastructure.

Definition of Key Terms

Anti-balaka

The Anti-balaka is a predominantly Christian militia group. They are the opposition group of the Seleka, and began carrying out attacks as revenge of the brutal acts by the Seleka. The militia was created when President Francois Bozize was uncertain of the security of CAR civilians, thus established protection groups to offer local security. Atrocities committed by the Anti-balaka are often justified by the militia through references of violent crimes committed by the Seleka, reflecting on the Anti-balaka as largely motivated by revenge.

MINUSCA

The MINUSCA, also known as the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission of the Central African Republic, is a UN peacekeeping mission founded in 2014 to ensure the security of civilians

in the CAR. Although more than 10,000 peacekeepers have been deployed across the country, there have been allegations of sexual exploitation and violence by peacekeepers of CAR civilians, indicating the ineffectiveness of peacekeepers to the ongoing conflict.

Seleka

Led by Michel Djotodia, the Seleka is an alliance of many Muslim militia factions. The full name of the alliance is Seleka CPSK-CPJP-UFDR, signifying the three factions that signed the agreement to form the Seleka: Patriotic Convention for Saving the Country (CPSK), Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP), and the Union for Democratic Forces for Unity (UFDR). Although the Seleka has been dissolved, after its disbandment, ex-Seleka members continued to conduct atrocities against Christians and supporters of Francois Bozize across the country.

War Crimes

As defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, war crimes are “grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949.” In other words, they are any acts that go against the Geneva Conventions, which is a collection of rules that established standards for the treatment of people in times of war.

Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration Programs

Also known as DDR, this type of process is meant to rebuild peace and security in post-conflict areas, as a part of the recovery process. As suggested by the name, there are three phases to DDR. As defined by the United Nations Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Center (UNDDR), disarmament refers to the control of small arms trade and weapons from army forces as well as civilians. This is usually done through disposal or documentation of weapons and development of ammunition management programs. Demobilization refers to the disbandment of armed forces. Often, resources such as shelter, allowance, and medical services are provided for the combatants as preparation for the process of reintegration. Reintegration refers to the process in which these ex-combatants gain civilian status and find a stable income. DDR programs are included in many agreements throughout CAR history, especially many security council resolutions.

General Overview

Historical Context

The current political instability began ever since the CAR's independence from France in 1960. The country's history is filled with coups, human rights violation by governments and rebel factions, and overall chaos and instability in almost all its aspects. Clearly, the issue at hand is not a new one. Countless peacekeeping missions and military interventions such as the MINSUCA have been conducted, and several peace treaties have been negotiated, signed, and broken. The United Nations and its organs, as well as many nations, have

attempted different strategies and solutions, but evidently, the issue is far from resolved, and the over one million internally displaced people and refugees still haven't returned home.

Ever since president Ange-Felix Patasse was sworn in as president of the Central African Republic in 1993, many coups arose due to varied reasons such as unpaid wages, mismanagement of the government, and corruption. In 2003, Francois Bozize and his rebel forces took over the CAR capital of Bangui, ousted president Patasse, and declared himself president. A transitional government, an emergency government set up during political transitions, was immediately established until 2005, when Bozize won presidential elections. This, however, did not mean political stability and an end to rebels. Different rebel groups continued to carry out violent attacks on CAR army camps and take over numerous cities. In 2007, the Birao Peace Agreement was signed, which was a peace agreement between CAR and UFDR rebels. The main goal was for the rebels to cease violent military operations in the country, and consisted of reintegration of UFDR soldiers into the CAR army, an amnesty, and permission of political participation of the UFDR in the CAR. Later, in 2008, the Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed between the CAR and three rebel groups, which, similar to the Birao Peace Agreement, also called for disarmament and reintegration of rebel combatants into the CAR army.

However, in 2013, the Seleka overthrew president Bozize over accusations of violations of peace agreements signed throughout his presidency. The rebel group took over the capital of Bangui and the leader of the Seleka, Michel Djotodia, declared himself president. Fighting among numerous rebel groups, namely the Seleka and Anti-balaka, ensued, including mass killings and human rights violations on the verge of genocide. As violent internal conflict between rebel groups escalates, the international community was quick to implement military intervention. However, UN peacekeeping forces proved ineffective after reports of the UN peacekeepers themselves abusing and raping the civilians emerged. In the midst of conflict in 2014, the Seleka forces and Anti-balaka forces conducted ceasefire talks in Brazzaville, but conflict continued as the ceasefire quickly crumbled. Later in May of 2015, the Bangui National Forum was held by the CAR government, which led to the signing of the Republic Pact for Peace, National Reconstruction and Reconciliation. Furthermore, an agreement on DDR between the government and nine of the ten forces that participated in the forum was formed. According to UNICEF, over 6,000 child soldiers were also released by the Seleka and Anti-balaka. Due to the recent withdrawal of many foreign forces in the CAR, there has been an increase of violent conflict, showing that the crisis is far from over yet. The UNHCR stated in September 2017 that since the beginning of the crisis in 2013, the CAR is currently at the highest level of displacement, at more than a million people.

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

African Union (AU)

The African Union (AU) is a union that consists of all the countries on the continent of Africa. In December of 2013, Security Council resolution 2127 was passed, which supported the African Union's deployment of the African-led International Support Mission in the Central African Republic, also referred to as MISCA. The peacekeeping mission consisted of troops from AU's prior established peacekeeping

mission of Multinational Force of Central Africa (FOMAC) as well as from France. The Peace and Security Council (PSC), an organ of the AU has also convened multiple times to discuss plans on ceasefire and protection of civilians. The PSC is currently working on plans to implement its Roadmap for Peace and Reconciliation in the CAR, but will be difficult considering the many failed ceasefires and constant resurgence of violence throughout the history of the war-torn nation.

Cameroon

Cameroon, a country that is immediately east of the CAR currently houses approximately 274,000 refugees that fled the CAR in the midst of chaos and violence. While fleeing to neighboring countries may mean some degree of peace and security, it definitely does not mean a better life. During the peak of the conflict in 2013-2014, the CAR was a subject of global attention, and people and organizations all around the world were quick to donate large amounts of money to help refugees. However, recently, the crisis in CAR is slowly being forgotten. Funding from the Bekou Trust Fund of the European Commission stopped in June of 2017, and according to the UNHCR, donations only met 5% of the necessary amount to sustain the refugee camps. As Cameroon also has to deal with widespread poverty themselves, extreme lack of development in the refugee camps continue to pose serious problems, and the crowded camps often lack basic necessities such as water, food, and firewood. Overall, civilians of the CAR that have fled as refugees are not necessarily in better living conditions due to poverty and lack of attention from authorities and the international community.

France

France has contributed a considerable amount of military and economic aid to the crisis in the CAR, and is in fact the only country that has an embassy in the capital of Bangui. As part of the MISCA peacekeeping mission, France has deployed troops in the CAR as part of Operation Sangaris in December of 2013, which was the seventh military intervention by France since the CAR's independence in 1960, further outlining the countless conflicts that occurred in the CAR. In January of 2014, UN Security Council resolution 2134 called upon the deployment of European Union Force RCA, also known as EUFOR RCA, which initially consisted of approximately 150 troops, mostly contributed by France and Estonia. As of now, French soldiers are still participating in the European Union Training Mission in the Central African Republic (EUTM RCA) and French troops are still part of the MINUSCA peacekeeping mission.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

The UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has taken much actions to help the near half a million refugees that have fled the CAR. The UN program has provided necessities such as sleeping mats and plastic sheeting, and has also drilled many wells to curtail the spread of water-borne diseases due to widespread water use from the unclean waters of the Ubangi River. Despite all these actions, refugee programs for refugees from the CAR are still largely underfunded. The UNHCR along with other

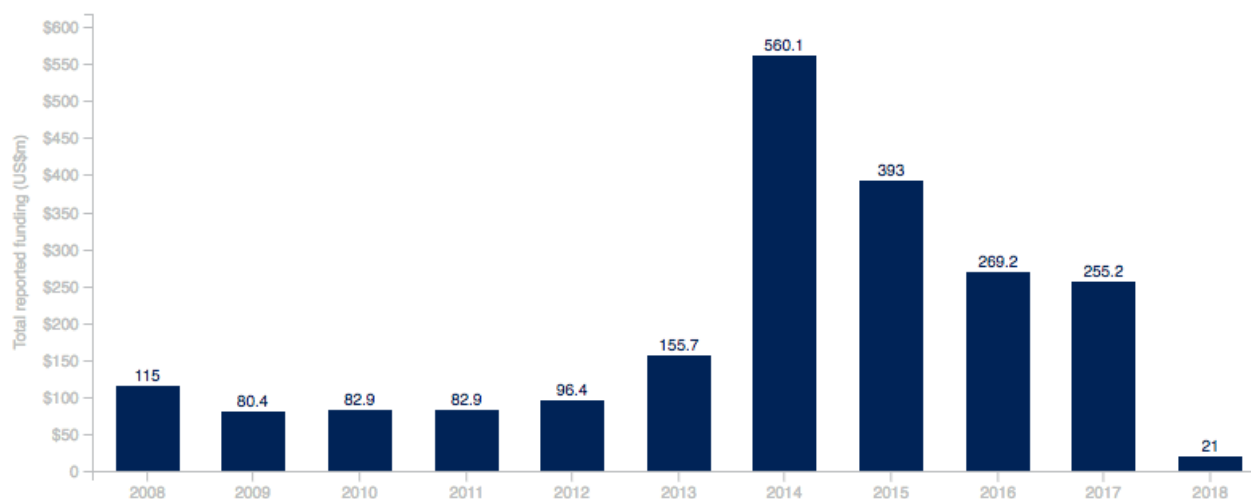
organizations appealed for 9 million US dollars in 2017, but by October of 2017, only 9% of those funds have been met. Continued flow of refugees out of the CAR and into neighboring countries such as Cameroon, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Republic of Congo is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain due to drastic decreases of necessary funding. As seen from data by the Financial Tracking Service (FTS), funding to the CAR peaked in 2014 during the most intense period of conflict, then was reduced by nearly half by 2017.

Caption 1: Funding by year to the Central African Republic as recorded by the FTS

Recent Key Issues

Continued Conflict and Weak Justice System

While the situation in the CAR is often referred to as post-conflict, conflict among the government, other militias, and UN peacekeepers are still ongoing in the nation. Many who have previously committed



crimes and human rights violations have been linked to ongoing armed violence. Clearly, these people

must be held accountable for their crimes, as they appear to continue to commit numerous crimes and human rights abuses. However, resources are lacking for judicial authorities to investigate crimes in detail, and witnesses and victims deny testimony in fear of facing reprisal attacks. Outside of the capital of Bangui, where many regions are controlled by armed forces, these forces take charge of the judicial system, and can make decisions on impunity themselves. Prison conditions throughout the nation were also poor and only eight out of the 38 detention facilities in the nation remains functional. Abuse of prisoners by prison guards is prevalent, and also causes attempted prison breaks.

Poverty

Poverty is one of the glaring issues in the Central African Republic today. The nation's GDP per capita is \$380 USD, extremely low compared to the world average of \$15,800 USD. The CAR is in fact abundant in natural resources such as gold, diamonds, and uranium, which would yield much profit to the nation if managed properly. However, due to widespread conflict in the region, there is a lack of

infrastructure to extract and distribute these resources. Poverty leads to the vicious cycle of the inability to build infrastructure and reinstate peace and security in the nation, thus causing more widespread poverty. With the lack of infrastructure, healthcare is clearly also lacking, and this only serves to worsen the ongoing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the CAR. 4.7% of the adult population has the disease and approximately 11,000 were killed in 2012 as a result. Apart from HIV/AIDS, protozoal diarrhea, dengue, malaria, typhoid fever, hepatitis A and E, rabies, and so on, are also prevalent in the CAR, further reflecting on its complete lack of sufficient sanitation infrastructure. Furthermore, the CAR is also severely underfunded, and as funds continue to decrease, it is becoming increasingly difficult for assistance to reach the nation.

Environment

The environment only further contributes to instability in the already war-torn nation. Exploitation of resources in the nation such as poaching and deforestation has led to desertification and soil erosion. Despite the wet climate of CAR, its tap water is unsafe to drink and widespread lack of infrastructure also prevents the filtration of water for safe use. Clearly, environmental issues are only exacerbating the current situation as it decreases health of the citizens and minimizes arable land for self use and profit.

Refugee Camps

As aforementioned, over a million people are currently displaced as a result of this conflict, and approximately half of them currently seek shelter in refugee camps in neighboring countries. According to Amnesty International, at least 2.3 million people both inside and outside of the CAR need humanitarian assistance. Funding has only been going downhill, and is recently at its lowest point. Neighboring countries to the CAR and the international community must take action to increase funding so as to provide sufficient resources for those living in refugee camps.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
August 13, 1960	The Central African Republic gained independence.
October 22, 1993	Ange-Felix Patasse is sworn in as president of CAR.
May 1996	Soldiers stage mutiny in Bangui over unpaid wages.
December 2000	Riots occur over accusations of mismanagement and corruption of Patasse.
May 28, 2001	Failed coup staged by former CAR president Andre Kolingba kills 59.

March 15, 2003	President Patasse is ousted after Bozize takes over Bangui and declares himself as president.
March 13, 2005	Francois Bozize wins presidential election and is officially sworn in.
October 31, 2006	Rebels seize the city of Birao along with other nearby towns.
April 1, 2007	The Birao Peace Agreement is signed between the UFDR and CAR government.
May 9, 2008	The Libreville Comprehensive Peace Agreement is signed
December 2012	Seleka rebel group becomes active and starts seizing towns and working towards taking over Bangui and overthrowing Bozize
March 24, 2013	The Seleka takes over Bangui and Michel Djotodia declares himself president.
September 13, 2013	Djotodia dissolves the Seleka, but the rebel fighters scattered across the country continue to fight with the Anti-balaka and conduct mass killings
December 5, 2013	UN Security Council resolution 2127 calls upon deployment of MISCA
January 10, 2014	Michel Djotodia resigns as president of CAR over criticisms of failure to control conflict and bloodshed in the country. Catherine Samba-Panza takes over as interim leader
January 28, 2014	UN Security Council resolution 2134 approves deployment of EU intervention troops in the CAR
July 21, 2014	Three day ceasefire negotiation between the Seleka and Anti-balaka begins in Brazzaville
November 29, 2015	Pope visits the CAR in Bangui as he declared himself a “pilgrim of peace and an apostle of hope.”
March 30, 2016	Current president Faustin-Archange Touadera is inaugurated after winning presidential election
September 15, 2017	UNHCR states that displacement of CAR people has reached record high since the beginning of the conflict, at over 1.1 million people

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

- Security Council Resolution 2127, 5 December 2013 **(S/RES/2127)**

The resolution called upon the deployment of MISCA, created methods of more effective and efficient humanitarian assistance, and established embargoes and sanctions. This was only one of the approximately 25 Security Council resolutions passed on the CAR since 1997, most of which included the topic of military intervention.

- Security Council Resolution 2134, 28 January 2014 **(S/RES/2134)**

This resolution renewed the mandate of United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), and authorized EU military intervention. Upon adoption of resolution 2149 in April of 2014, BINUCA has already been integrated into MINUSCA.

- Security Council Resolution 2301, 26 July 2015 **(S/RES/2301)**

The resolution renewed the mandate of MINUSCA. The mandate of MINUSCA has been renewed many times and its troops increased on multiple occasions, reflecting on the complexity of the long-standing crisis.

Possible Solutions

One solution would be to have NGOs lead the process of rebuilding the government and facilitate negotiations between the Seleka and Anti-balaka. Due nature of NGOs as lacking affiliation with any government, NGOs can act as an unbiased party in resolving conflict among rebel groups and the government. Furthermore, without being led by a government, they do not violate the sovereignty of the CAR, and can assist in reconstruction of the government in a relatively unopposed manner. However, most NGOs provide humanitarian aid such as basic necessities including food and shelter, and work in the short-term until the government or other larger organizations replace it. NGOs may struggle to restore political stability as it would mean long term help in the CAR, without a government to replace it in the long-term. It would not just be humanitarian assistance, but also political and military restoration.

As two main parties in the CAR crisis, negotiation and peace between the Seleka and Anti-balaka are extremely important to resolving the issue at hand. Very few talks have taken place between the rebel groups, and ceasefire deals have never lasted long. They must be more actively pushed towards negotiation, and the current CAR government and other religious leaders must mediate between the two parties to resolve political and religious differences. Furthermore, the International Criminal Court (ICC) must hold people and groups that have previously committed atrocities responsible for their actions. These people must be brought to justice to enforce laws and to prevent similar events from repeating itself.

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