

PRESS RELEASE

**HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR ALERTS ON EARLY SIGNS OF A NEW HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN CENTRAL AFRICA**

**Bangui, 15 May 2017** – The city of Bangassou in the Mbomou Prefecture (South-Eastern CAR) has been the scene of indiscriminate violence since May 13 when an assault was launched by unidentified gunmen on the Tokoyo district, which is mainly inhabited by the Muslim population. Massive displacement of population followed. Within hours, intense violence forced more than 3,000 people to flee their homes. At present, nearly 1,000 people are confined in the Mosque compound following threats of an imminent attack on them. The Cathedral of Bangassou is home to about 1,500 people, while 500 others have taken refuge in the town's hospital. An unknown number of displaced persons also took refuge in the parish of Tokoyo. Another unknown number of people have crossed the border into the Democratic Republic of Congo, where an outbreak of Ebola virus was recently reported in a town located about 250 km from the border with CAR.

"This violence is of the utmost concern as it returns the country to the stigmatization of communities, which instigated the political crisis in 2013 and resulted in more than 800,000 Internally Displaced People, and an unprecedented humanitarian crisis," regretted the Humanitarian Coordinator in the Central African Republic, Najat Rochdi. Bangassou had so far been spared by inter-communal violence and was presented as a model of social cohesion. Najat Rochdi forcefully condemned this stigmatization of a community and the ensuing human rights violations.

The situation in Bangassou is all the more dramatic that the level of violence does not yet allow wounded to be attend or to bury the deceased. Indeed, armed men proceeded to the destruction of all the bridges of Bangassou and to the occupation of the road. "This regrettable trend undermines the mechanisms for the protection of civilians and the capacity of humanitarian actors to reach the affected populations and affected populations to access aid," said Ms. Rochdi. The humanitarian community is ready to initiate lifesaving interventions as soon as calm returns. The NGO "Doctors without Borders" is already providing vital assistance at the Bangassou hospital. In the spirit of "Stay and Deliver", the Humanitarian Coordinator praised the courage of the actors who maintained their presence in Bangassou in order to continue saving lives even in an extremely unstable environment.

The ongoing crisis in Bangassou will inevitably generate new needs that were not foreseen in the humanitarian response. Additional funding will be needed to help those whose vulnerability will be exacerbated. "It is unfortunate that the humanitarian situation is deteriorating in Bangassou while advocacy efforts aimed at increasing donors' support to the Central African Republic are beginning to yield encouraging results," said the Humanitarian Coordinator. "I urge the perpetrators of this upsurge of violence not to lose sight of the fact that in CAR half of the population is still dependent on aid," she added. To date, the \$ 399.5 million Humanitarian Response Plan has received only \$ 64.8 million, or 16% of the required amount.

*For more information, please contact OCHA CAR*  
**Joseph Inganji**, Head of Office, +236 70738730, [inganji@un.org](mailto:inganji@un.org)  
**Yaye Nabo Séne**, Chief, Public Information + 236 70 08 75 65, [seney@un.org](mailto:seney@un.org)  
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