

# Central African Republic Situation

29 January 2021

As of 28 January 2021, countries bordering the Central African Republic (CAR) have reported the arrival of **over 105,000 individuals who fled** from (CAR) as a result of the violence that erupted amid the December 2020 elections.

With an estimated 92,000 arrivals, the **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has received over 90% of the new refugees**, most of whom are living in dire conditions in remote areas, without basic shelter and facing acute food shortages.

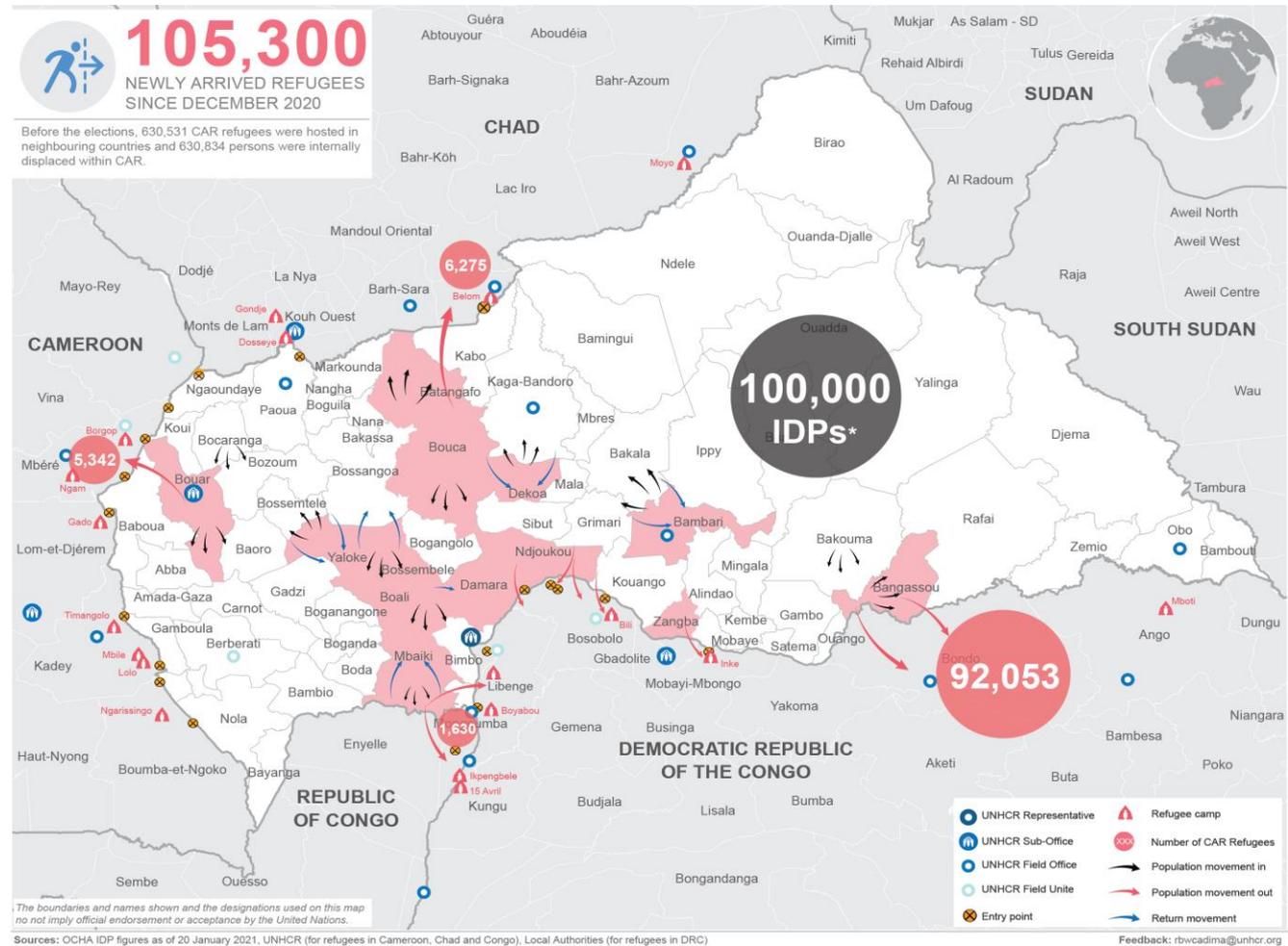
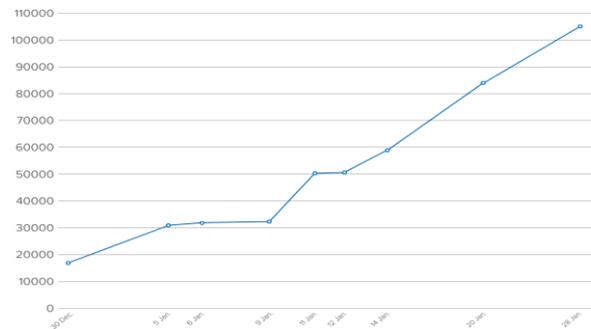
Within CAR, the **continuing volatility** has hampered the humanitarian response and made **access to the internally displaced populations more difficult**, while the main road used to bring supplies remain shut by the armed groups.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Countries	New Arrivals
Cameroon	5,342*
Chad	6,275*
Congo	1,630*
DRC	92,053**
<b>Total</b>	<b>105,300</b>

\* Data as reported by UNHCR Operations as of 28 Jan 2021

\*\* Source: Local authorities in DRC



# Operational Context

## Political and security situation in Central African Republic

- The escalating violence surrounding the presidential and legislative elections held on 27 December 2020 in CAR has triggered a growing refugee influx into neighboring countries. According to estimates provided by local authorities, over 105,000 individuals have fled CAR into Cameroon (5,342), Chad (6,275) and the Republic of Congo (1,630) and the DRC (92,053) as of 28 January 2020.
- According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 100,000 persons are internally displaced within CAR as a direct result of the post-electoral violence and the ongoing tensions.
- After confirming the re-election of President Touadéra, the Constitutional court is reviewing the parliamentary election results. It should make its ruling public in the next days and confirm the date of a potential second round of parliamentary elections later this year.
- On 21 January, authorities declared a 15-day state of emergency across the country. Conferring "exceptional police powers to the civilian authority in certain circumstances", the authorities indicated that this aimed at facilitating the ongoing investigations following last week's offensive against Bangui.
- In the rest of the country, the security situation remains volatile, making access to the internally displaced more difficult for humanitarian actors. Armed groups have reportedly entered IDP sites in Batangafo and Bria, in violation of the humanitarian and civilian nature of those sites. This exposes those internally displaced populations to grave protection risks, including forced recruitment amongst other types of violence and abuse. As the situation remains tense within CAR, displacement is expected to continue in the near future.

## Population movements and border monitoring

- While the main border entry points between CAR and Chad as well as Cameroon and Congo remain officially closed due to COVID-19-related movement restrictions, people fleeing from CAR have been allowed to enter the countries and seek asylum. UNHCR continues to advocate for Governments to maintain access to their territory for asylum seekers that are fleeing the ongoing violence in CAR.
- While new arrivals in Cameroon, Chad and Congo are being assisted by local authorities, UNHCR and its partners, the conditions in the main hosting areas in DRC are more precarious. With an estimated 92,000 arrivals, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has received over 90% of the new refugees. Most of them are living in dire conditions – without basic shelter and facing acute food shortages – across remote areas in the provinces of North Ubangi, South Ubangi, and Bas Uele.
- While scaling up its presence and response in the main hosting areas, UNHCR is working closely with the authorities to monitor the situation, assess the needs and inform the emergency response and preparedness activities as more displacement is expected.
- The voluntary repatriation programme from Cameroon and DRC, relaunched in November 2020, is still suspended and the facilitation of returns will resume when the security situation in the main areas of return in CAR are conducive for safe, dignified repatriation and a durable reintegration of the returnees.

# UNHCR Emergency Response

## L1 and L2 Emergency Declarations

- On 21 January, a Level 2 emergency has been declared for the UNHCR Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a Level 1 emergency is declared for UNHCR's Operations in the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad and in the Republic of Congo. This decision is designed to scale up UNHCR operations' preparedness and response activities in addressing the protection needs of refugees, internally displaced persons and other populations affected by this new crisis in CAR.

## Central African Republic

- The security situation remains volatile in vast areas of CAR, hampering access and humanitarian assistance to internally displaced populations. With the main supply road of the country still shut by armed groups, the delivery of critical humanitarian is heavily disrupted while prices of essential commodities have risen with dire consequences on the protection and well-being of civilians, including IDPs and refugees. There are pressing needs for shelter, core relief items, health assistance and food in most IDP hosting areas.
- From its nine offices throughout the country, UNHCR provides assistance and continues its protection monitoring efforts via field visits, community relays and key informant interviews. These reports outline the worsening of the protection situation due to the violence, and increasing numbers of protection incidents, particularly sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). To address this issue, monitoring alerts have been put in place for the care of victims of SGBV, in coordination with various actors at the national level, including MINUSCA.
- As part of this significant deterioration, armed groups have reportedly entered into the Batangafo and Bria IDP sites in violation of the humanitarian and civilian nature of those sites, thus exposing these populations to forced recruitments and other serious protection risks.
- In this challenging context, UNHCR is coordinating with OCHA and humanitarian partners in Bangui and at local level to assess needs and organize assistance for IDPs where access is possible.

## Democratic Republic of Congo

- As of 21 January 2021, 92,053 individuals from the CAR reportedly arrived in the DRC. These figures are based on estimates provided by local authorities. A biometric registration exercise is being conducted by UNHCR in coordination with the National Commission for Refugee (CNR) to have a more accurate count of the new arrivals and to better assess their protection needs. As of 28 January, over 11,500 refugees have been registered in Nord-Ubangi and the Ba-Uelé provinces, while 14 survivors of sexual violence, 20 children at risk and another 326 persons with special needs were identified and assisted.
- Based on initial needs assessments conducted in the main hosting areas in DRC, there are urgent needs for water, food, and shelter as well as better access to health and adequate sanitation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases. UNHCR partners are treating patients and distributing medicine but the needs are mounting with instances of malaria, respiratory tract infections, and diarrhoea increasing among refugees.
- UNHCR has started distributing emergency supplies to the most vulnerable families in South Ubangi Province while additional supplies arrived last week in the North Ubangi and Bas Uele Provinces despite the extremely

poor road conditions. As these areas risk becoming inaccessible during the upcoming rainy season, UNHCR is pre-positioning emergency supplies in Yakoma, North Ubangi province. UNHCR is fundraising to bring more supplies from Kinshasa through airlifts or trucking to assist people in need and increase warehousing stocks ahead of the rainy season which should start in March.

- As most of the new arrivals are still living close to the borders where they remain exposed to risks of attacks by armed groups from CAR, UNHCR is preparing for the temporary relocation of a first group to Yabongo site located three kilometers further inland. Promoting an out-of-camp approach, UNHCR is also working with authorities to identify other areas further inland where local infrastructure and social services could be reinforced, and economic activities developed to ensure better protection and boost self-reliance for refugees and their hosts.
- UNHCR continues to monitor the situation at the border along the Ubangi River while engaging with local authorities, state services and border security forces to facilitate access of asylum seekers to the Congolese Territory and prevent potential refoulement.
- UNHCR is working closely with the Provincial Government, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), UN agencies (WFP and UNICEF), implementing partners (ADSSE, AIDES, AIRD and ACTED) and operational partners (Congolese Red Cross, MSF Belgium and LIZADEL).
- UNHCR is also liaising with the UN Country Team in Kinshasa to provide information on the refugee situation and the emergency and protection response and ensure proper coordination with all relevant partners.

## Cameroon

- As of 20 January, a total of 4,891 new Central African arrivals have crossed into Cameroon. While the borders are officially closed, reports indicate that those seeking refuge are allowed to cross through unofficial border points.
- At then Garoua Boulai transit site, over 250 new arrivals attended the health awareness sessions on handwashing/mask-wearing as part of the Covid-19 prevention measures, as well as on STIs and HIV/AIDS. The reassignment of the Gado 2 transit center into a COVID-19 quarantine facility for new arrivals was completed, and the rehabilitation of public structures and shelters is ongoing in the camp.
- The transfers of new arrivals to the Gado settlement continues. As of 26 January, a total of 687 refugees have arrived at the site where each household was provided with a family shelter. Arrangements are being made with the schools in Gado to ensure the 134 children among them can resume their education. Another 571 people have expressed their desire to settle on the site. Their transfer will be organized in the coming days.
- In Batouri, UNHCR met with representatives of the new arrivals and is planning a registration exercise and a needs assessment before the provision of assistance. In Bertoua, a registration mission is planned for the first half of February.
- UNHCR is working closely with the Government of Cameroon to organize and coordinate the emergency response for the new arrivals.

## Chad

- As of 27 January, a total of 6,275 people had crossed into Chad, among them more than 86 per cent are women and children, and surveys indicate there are as many as 890 persons with specific needs (included lactating women, women at danger of other SGBV, single-parent families, unaccompanied children and elderly refugees).

- Registration activities are ongoing which help better assess the protection needs and inform the emergency response. A mobile clinic provides first aid care and transfers the most severe cases to the district hospital in Gore.
- A mandatory 14-day quarantine is required for all new arrivals to prevent the spread of COVID-19. One quarantine center with the capacity to receive over 400 people is operational in Dossey, while and a second one with a capacity for 480 people is being completed in Gore.
- On 27 January, 262 people were relocated to the Doholo settlement site and another 233 new refugees will be transferred on the site after their quarantine period. Each household is provided with a family emergency shelter, as well as with food rations and CRIs (including blankets and mats buckets, mosquito nets, mats, blankets, and kitchen kits). Another 600 shelters are being built or rehabilitated in the Doholo settlement to receive more new arrivals.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate with WFP, and 755 people received food assistance during the first distribution phase. The distribution of 2,800 food rations for a duration of 01 month is ongoing while an additional request for 3,000 rations has been made to the WFP in view of arrival trends.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate closely with the local authorities, the CNARR, WFP and other partners to respond to this situation. On 19 January, health sector actors (CSSI, MSF-Hollande & ACF) started a joint needs assessment to inform the response in the areas hosting new arrivals.

## Republic of Congo

- As of 24th January, a total of 1,630 people in 587 families had crossed into Congo where they are staying in existing structures in local communities where UNHCR's health partner (TSF) conducts systematic health screening with the new arrivals to prevent the risk of COVID-19 contamination.
- In coordination with the local authorities including the National Committee for Refugee Assistance (CNAR) and the Immigration and Police Services, UNHCR continues to monitor the border and conducts emergency registration.
- A needs assessment is being conducted with partners (WFP, Terre sans Frontiers, and AARREC) to identify the most pressing needs and inform the multi sectorial response, including relocation of the most vulnerable to an adequate settlement in Betou.

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