

# Central African Republic Situation

16 February 2021

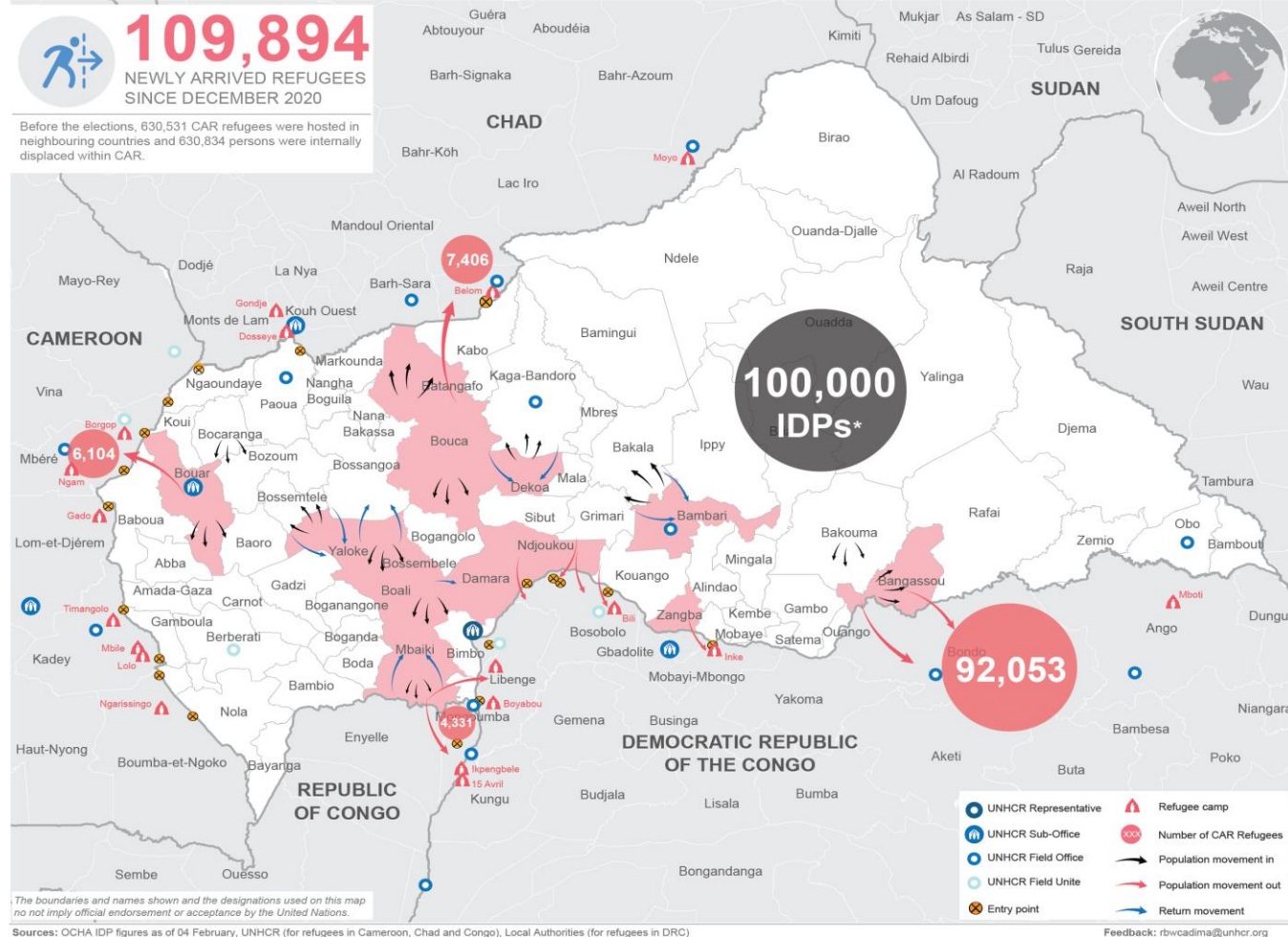
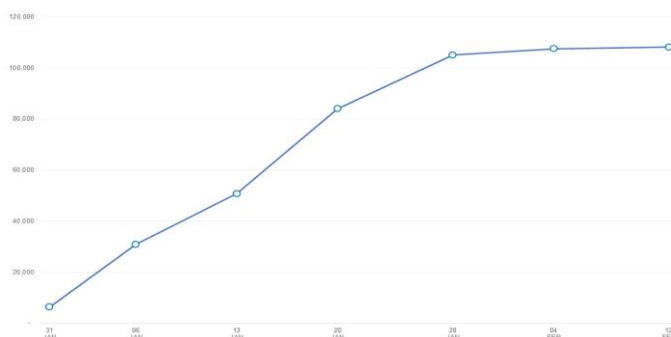
Over **109,000 persons have fled CAR** due to the ongoing conflict (estimates from host governments as of 12 February 2021), the majority across the southern border to the Democratic Republic of Congo. Within CAR, increasing attacks against humanitarian workers and blocked key supply routes are **hampering UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations' ability to assist** the internally displaced populations. As further displacement is expected and humanitarian needs are growing, **UNHCR and its partners continue to scale up** their response to provide emergency assistance to affected populations.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Countries	New Arrivals
Cameroon	6,104*
Chad	7,406*
Congo	4,331*
DRC	92,053**
<b>Total</b>	<b>109,894</b>

\* Data as reported by UNHCR Operations as of 12 February 2021

\*\* Source: Local authorities in DRC as of 04 February 2021



# Operational Context

## Political and security situation in Central African Republic

- As of 12 February 2021, local authorities in neighbouring countries reported the arrival of over 109,000 individuals who have fled from the Central African Republic (CAR) due to violence surrounding the 27 December 2020 elections. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), 92,053 persons reportedly sought safety), while 6,104 went to Cameroon, 7,406 to Chad, and 4,331 to the Republic of Congo.
- While the situation in Bangui remains relatively calm, instability and violence persist across large parts of the country, particularly the west, the center and south-east, sparing only few regions and hampering humanitarian access to the affected population. There are regular reports of grave human rights violations and abuses, including sexual and gender-based violence, arbitrary arrest and illegal detention, extortion, armed robbery, and looting creating of climate of general insecurity and lawlessness.
- According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 100,000 persons are still internally displaced within CAR as a direct result of the post-electoral violence and the ongoing tensions. Concentrated in the main cities and towns of Bouar, Bangassou, Dekoa, Bouca, Ndomete, Grimari and the surroundings of Bangui, most of these new IDPs are in urgent need of food, water, protection, essential household and shelter items, as well as improved access to health and adequate sanitation.
- On 8 February, a truck convoy of fourteen UN humanitarian aid arrived from Cameroon to Bangui, escorted by the MINUSCA, the UN peacekeeping mission in CAR. This was the first humanitarian convoy to reach Bangui since the blockade of the capital by rebels in December 2020. Over 500 trucks with critical UN and partners' supplies, including food and medicines, are still stuck at the Cameroonian border since mid-December, along with over 1,100 trucks transporting commercial goods. As CAR is completely landlocked in the heart of the continent, the disruption of its main supply route with Cameroon is triggering food shortages and price rises on essential commodities with dire consequences on the population. Food, primary health care products, water and sanitation, essential household items, and shelter are the most urgent humanitarian needs in CAR.
- In this volatile context, the state of emergency declared on 21 January 2021 has been extended for six months until early August as well as the countrywide curfew (18:00 to 5:00) in place since 13 January, which restricts humanitarian access to people in need. The second round of legislative elections has also been set on 14th March and the campaign is due to start on 27th February despite the ongoing conflict.
- As further displacement is expected and humanitarian needs are growing, UNHCR and its partners continue to scale up their response to provide emergency assistance to the displaced and other affected populations, while facing a chronic lack of funding for one the most neglected crises in the world.

## Population movements and border monitoring

- While less new arrivals are reported in Cameroon, Chad, Congo and DRC, UNHCR continues to monitor the borders between CAR and the neighboring countries to ensure that those who continue to flee CAR have access to asylum and that those with specific needs are identified and provided with adequate assistance.
- While scaling up its emergency response in the main hosting areas to address the most urgent humanitarian needs, UNHCR is conducting registration, and issuing documentation to the new refugee. Preventive measures have been put in place at the borders to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contamination, including quarantine periods.
- The situation remains particularly challenging in DRC, where the refugees live in remote areas and are in urgent need of shelter, food, and better access to water, health and adequate sanitation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases.
- Adding to the nearly 1,3 million people who were already displaced within CAR or in neighbouring countries, this latest displacement crisis brings the number of displaced Central Africans to over 1,5 million, representing almost a third of the country's total population.

# UNHCR Emergency Response

## L1 and L2 Emergency Declarations

- Since the beginning of this crisis, UNHCR has stepped up its emergency response in CAR and the main hosting areas. To structure the scale up of its emergency response and preparedness activities, UNHCR declared, on 21 January 2021, a Level 2 emergency for its Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and a Level 1 emergency for its Operations in the Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad and in the Republic of Congo.

## Central African Republic

- As ongoing violence and insecurity continues to hamper humanitarian access and assistance to internally displaced populations, UNHCR continues its protection monitoring efforts and maintains an alert mechanism for SGBV incidents. Working with community relays and key informants in affected areas, UNHCR focuses on strengthening community structures to ensure a solid community-based protection response.
- The ongoing crisis in CAR is exacerbating long standing vulnerabilities and protection issues, particularly sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). According to UNHCR's 2020 Protection Monitoring Report published on February 1, a total 6,236 protection incidents recorded, representing a 10% increase compared to 2019. Among these incidents, 47% (2918 cases) are related to SGBV.
- With cases of sexual violence against women and girls reported since the beginning of the crisis, UNHCR is also scaling up its direct assistance to survivors of SGBV. This assistance includes individual counseling session, medical referrals, mental health, and psychosocial support, as well as cash assistance to survivors of SGBV for payment of medical expenses, support for food needs and reimbursement of transportation costs. UNHCR is also conducting a mapping of health facilities equipped with PEP kits around the country to ensure they are available as widely as possible.
- Additional staff are being deployed, with support from MINUSCA and OCHA, in the main hosting areas to implement emergency shelter interventions and NFI kits distributions. An evaluation of IDP shelters in Bangui and other cities in CAR is being conducted to assess the existing capacities and the needs in rehabilitation or restructuring of the sites to accommodate the newly displaced while avoiding incursion of armed actors which remains a cause of great concern and represents major protection risks. The continues disruption in supply route is a major challenge to UNHCR's shelter and NFI response, over 18,000 NFI and Shelter kits remaining blocked in Cameroun awaiting an opening for humanitarian assistance.



*UNHCR continues to provide emergency assistance to the most vulnerable people affected by the current crisis in CAR, here in the SOS village IDP site in Bouar (Nana Mambéré). © UNHCR CAR*

- While scaling its presence with the deployment of additional staff to enhance the protection monitoring and response in the most affected areas and strengthen the supply chain management, UNHCR works closely with OCHA, the government and other humanitarian agencies to conduct joint assessments in Bangui and across the country in order to facilitate a coordinated emergency response. UNHCR also participates actively in the key coordination fora activated at the regional level, including the Protection Cluster Protection and CCCM Cluster led by UNHCR, to coordinate the response.

## Democratic Republic of Congo

- As of 4 February 2021, 92,053 new asylum-seekers from CAR have crossed into the DRC, according to reports by local authorities. As of 7 February 2021, UNHCR and its government partner CNR have biometrically registered 5,996 households comprising 22,055 individuals.
- UNHCR and CNR have scaled-up the process of biometric registration for asylum-seekers from CAR, registering on average 1,000 people per day. However, more equipment and staff are required to complete the exercise to enable accurate and timely planning for assistance delivery. Most of the new arrivals, who in some areas number three times the host population, are living in the open and in makeshift shelters around village markets, schools, and hospitals. The majority are women, children, elderly persons, and people with special needs. There are also several unaccompanied children, who have been taken in by local families or other refugee households. Education facilities are absent, health services and social infrastructure are extremely limited, while water and sanitation are major gaps, especially in communities and households that have become crowded due hosting asylum-seekers.
- UNHCR is prepositioning available core relief items in hard-to-reach border localities before seasonal rains begin in a few weeks. As of 3 February, 16,000 surgical masks, 2,500 sleeping mats, 2,485 blankets, 1,500 buckets, 1,312 mosquito nets, 485 kitchen sets, 475 jerry cans, and 200 tarpaulins have arrived to warehouses in Ndu, Bas Uele Province and Yakoma, Nord Ubangi Province and are being distributed to the most vulnerable individuals in the refugee and host communities.
- Two sites have been identified to which new arrivals can be relocated, further away from the border, in Bas Uele Province and in Nord Ubangi Province. UNHCR is assessing these sites where refugees can be settled in the local communities and be included in the national structures and systems. In such sites, UNHCR will support improvements to infrastructure including schools, water supply and health centres, and will seek to develop income-generating activities to promote self-reliance among refugees as well as the host community.
- Health and nutrition screening for 5,642 people in Ndu, Bas Uele Province has been carried out, with respiratory tract infections, malaria, intestinal diseases, diarrhoea, malnutrition, and trauma prevalent amongst the new arrivals. Awareness-raising on COVID-19 is ongoing at registration sites, however there is urgent need to strengthen COVID-19 prevention measures in sites hosting new arrivals in the DRC.

## Cameroon

- As of 12 February, a total of 6,104 new CAR refugees have crossed into Cameroon, mostly in the Garoua Boulai area (90% of new arrivals) and further south in Kentzou in the Batouri region. In collaboration with national authorities, UNHCR continues to monitor the border to ensure people fleeing have access to asylum. UNHCR is also maintaining a quick alert system to identify and reach new arrivals who crossed through irregular border points.
- Preventive measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 contamination are implemented by UNHCR. So far, health screenings conducted have allowed to identify 48 new arrivals infected with COVID-19. All have been quarantined at the Garoua Boulai district hospital while UNHCR teams assisting them and their families. The health infrastructure in the border areas has limited capacity and increased support is urgently required to address the needs.
- Registration remains a priority for UNHCR, and the first step towards protection and solutions. As of 12 February, 4,195 of the new arrivals have been biometrically registered and enrolled in UNHCR's PRIMES database. A total of 3,826 refugees were registered in the Garoua Boulai region and over 369 in the regions

of Batouri were registration activities started last week. In addition to their registration, 3,934 refugees received protection documents, including 1,863 Family Composition Attestations (CFAs) and 2,071 refugee Identification Cards.

- Protection screenings are also ongoing to allow for the identification of those with specific needs who are prioritized for assistance. So far, 100 persons with specific needs have been identified, including 74 vulnerable women, among whom 8 SGBV survivors who have been directly assisted medical assistance and psychosocial support.
- The transfer of new arrivals from border villages to the Gado settlement continues. As of 10 February, a total of 1,227 individuals have been transferred to this site where they were provided with one emergency shelter per household as well as food and NFIs. As the Gado camp is reaching full capacity, the UNHCR and its partners (WFP, UNICEF, UNFPA) are building and rehabilitating emergency shelters, water infrastructure including 40 communal latrines and showers, while distributing NFIs, dignity kits and food assistance.
- While scaling up its response focusing on WASH, health, education, and protection (including registration), UNHCR continues to closely coordinate with the authorities and its humanitarian partners, at both Yaoundé and field level, to ensure an effective and coherent response.



*In Ndu village, Bas Uele province, UNHCR and the DRC National Commission for Refugees have started biometric registration of people who fled Bangassou in CAR. © UNHCR DRC*

## Chad

- As of 12 February, 7,406 new CAR refugees arrived in Chad and have been registered by UNHCR. In coordination with local authorities, UNHCR continues to monitor the border to ensure new arrivals are identified and assisted. A mission is ongoing to inquire about a potential new influx of 750 individuals in the border areas near Bedlam and Komba.

- Among the new arrivals, 1,578 people with specific protection needs have been identified. These include breastfeeding women, women at risk of other SGBV, single-parent families, unaccompanied children, and elderlies. Psychosocial and medical support is provided to survivors of SGBV and PEP KITs are available for urgent GBV response, with UNFPA support.
- UNHCR continues to assist new arrivals in border villages while arrangements are being made for more durable shelters. So far, 3,030 new arrivals were provided with NFIs kits (including blankets, mats, Jerry cans, kitchen kits, mosquito nets) and 3,681 received food rations with the support of WFP. The refugees are also provided with information and awareness sessions on COVID-19 prevention. A total of 55 children and 7 pregnant women were vaccinated and 31 children aged 6 to 59 months were screened for malnutrition.
- Transfers continue to the Doholo camp where emergency shelters and basic infrastructures are being built to accommodate the new arrivals. Over 1,000 new shelters and 68 community latrines were finalized in the camp so far. In the past week, 276 refugees from the border village Komba joined the camp bringing to 2,172 the total number of people transferred from the border villages to Goré.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate closely with the local authorities, the CNARR, WFP and other partners to respond to this situation.

## Republic of Congo

- As of 12 February, 4,331 CAR refugees have arrived in the Republic of Congo since the beginning of electoral crisis. Among these new arrivals, 51% are female (25% women and 26% girls) and 49% are male (22% men and 27% boys).
- UNHCR is distributing core relief items to new arrivals, with 286 people receiving assistance in the first week of February. UNHCR also continues to monitor the border area between the Republic of Congo and CAR in coordination with local authorities and other stakeholders and is conducting emergency registration with the National Committee for Refugee Assistance (CNAR) and the Immigration and Police Services.
- UNHCR is coordinating humanitarian assistance to refugees and asylum-seekers in the Likouala Department, with UN partners and NGOs, as well as government partners including CNAR, Ministry of Social Affairs, the Immigration and Police Services.

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