

UPDATE : New influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC



Newly arrived families near the Ubangi river in Zongo, South Ubangi Province © UNHCR/Lobota

I- SITUATION

- **Elections**

Presidential and legislative elections were held in the Central African Republic (CAR) on Sunday 27 December 2020 in a tense security context. Several armed groups who called off a ceasefire decided to merge into a single entity, called the "Coalition of Patriots for Change (CPC) and resume their military operations against the Government. The opposition fears massive electoral fraud to reelect President Faustin Archange Touadéra and called for the postponement of the vote. Results are expected on 19 January 2021 with eventually a second round to take place on 14 February 2021.

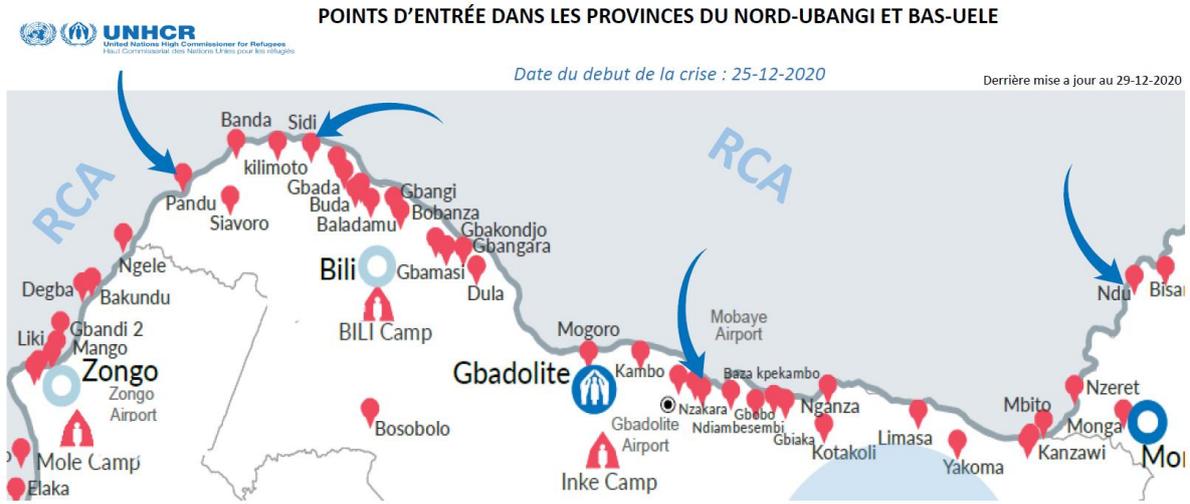
- **Insecurity**

The security situation in Bangui, the capital of CAR remains calm with the presence of UN peacekeepers who help provide security. This apparent calm contrasts with tensions in the rest of the country, where death threats against voters or attacks on polling stations prevented a significant portion of the population from voting. There have been reports that atrocities and other violence against civilians have been committed by armed groups in the occupied localities during recent days. In the DRC, new arrivals from CAR have been observed in the provinces of North Ubangi and Bas-Uele.

- **Consequences of the voluntary repatriation operation**

Insecurity in CAR could affect the voluntary repatriation operation which was relaunched in November 2020 since the COVID-19 pandemic forced border closures. Several areas deemed safe to receive returnees are potentially controlled by rebels. It should be noted that more than 17,000 refugees currently living at Mole and Boyabu camps in South Ubangi Province had initially expressed their intention to return home.

Figure 1 : Entry points of newly arrived families from the Central African Republic



II- STATISTICS

As of **29 December 2020**, **3,445 individuals from the Central African Republic** arrived in the DRC according to local sources. The figure is yet to be verified.

Locality	Province		TOTAL
Ndu	Bas-Uele Province	120km North East of Gbadolite	2,275
Bili	North Ubangi Province	167km South Qest from Gbadolite	300
Pandu		Banda in Bosobolo Territory	800
Nzakara		35 km North East of Gbadolite, Mobaye Mbongo Territory	70
ESTIMATED TOTAL			3,445
<p>Note : In South Ubangi Province (Zongo and Libenge), UNHCR observed the return of Congolese currently living in the CAR and potential asylum seekers who did not yet express their interest to register as refugee. They stated that they would like to observe the situation from a distance in order to be able to return to CAR if the security situation improves and are currently living with host families.</p>			

III- NEEDS

The greatest needs of the new arrivals regard food, water, shelter, health care and sanitation to limit prevent the spread of the coronavirus and other epidemic diseases.

- Many families arriving from the Central African Republic are welcomed by host community families, while others seek shelter under makeshift tents along the Ubangi river. These families arrived in the DRC with few or no personal belongings.
- In some host community villages, health care is almost non-existent with very little medical equipment, medicines, or trained health care personnel.
- Humanitarian access to newly arrived individuals from CAR currently staying at Kpako and Koukou sites on the banks of the Ubangi River, two kilometers from the village of Nzakara, North Ubangi Province, remains impossible due to the problem of access as these individuals are settled on islets in the Ubangi River that are far from the host villages. Some people are now being accommodated by local host communities who often lack the resources to meet their own needs.

- It is important to strengthen COVID-19 prevention measures at border services (with infra-red thermometers, masks, hand washing devices, etc.).

IV- ACTIONS

- UNHCR works closely with the Provincial Government, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR), UN agencies (WFP and UNICEF) and implementing partners.
- UNHCR has strengthened its presence on the ground to respond to this situation and continues to monitor the situation at the border along the Ubangi River. The UNHCR team has been in the localities of Moyabi-Bongo, Nzakara, Kambo and Ndyasembi from 24 to 26 December 2020 and is currently working in the localities of Satema, Yomba, Ngansa, Biyaka, Bobo, Yakoma and Bosolo axis in South Ubangi and in Ndu zone in Bas-Uele Province.
- Awareness-raising sessions are conducted for authorities, state services and border security forces in the town of Gbadolite, the localities of Mobayi Mbongo, Nzakara, Kambo, Morogo, Lembo, Pandu and Sidi in North Ubangi province, on humanitarian and protection principles to facilitate access of asylum seekers to the Congolese Territory. Following the plea made by the joint teams, the Provincial Minister of Interior and Security issued instructions to state services operating at the border to facilitate access to Congolese territory for asylum seekers.
- UNHCR is continuing its activities to identify persons with special needs, including female-headed households and separated or unaccompanied children.
- UNHCR plans to deploy a registration mission to Nzakara in North Ubangi Province in the coming days.
- Based on the recommendations of the assessment missions, UNHCR plans to distribute basic household items to the most vulnerable people.

UNHCR will continue to provide regular updates should the situation evolves.

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