

AD HOC UPDATE #2: New influx from the Central African Republic to the DRC

6 January 2021



A mother sits with two of her children in Ndu village in the Democratic Republic of the Congo after fleeing her village in Bangassou in the Central African Republic © UNHCR/Nentobo

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.

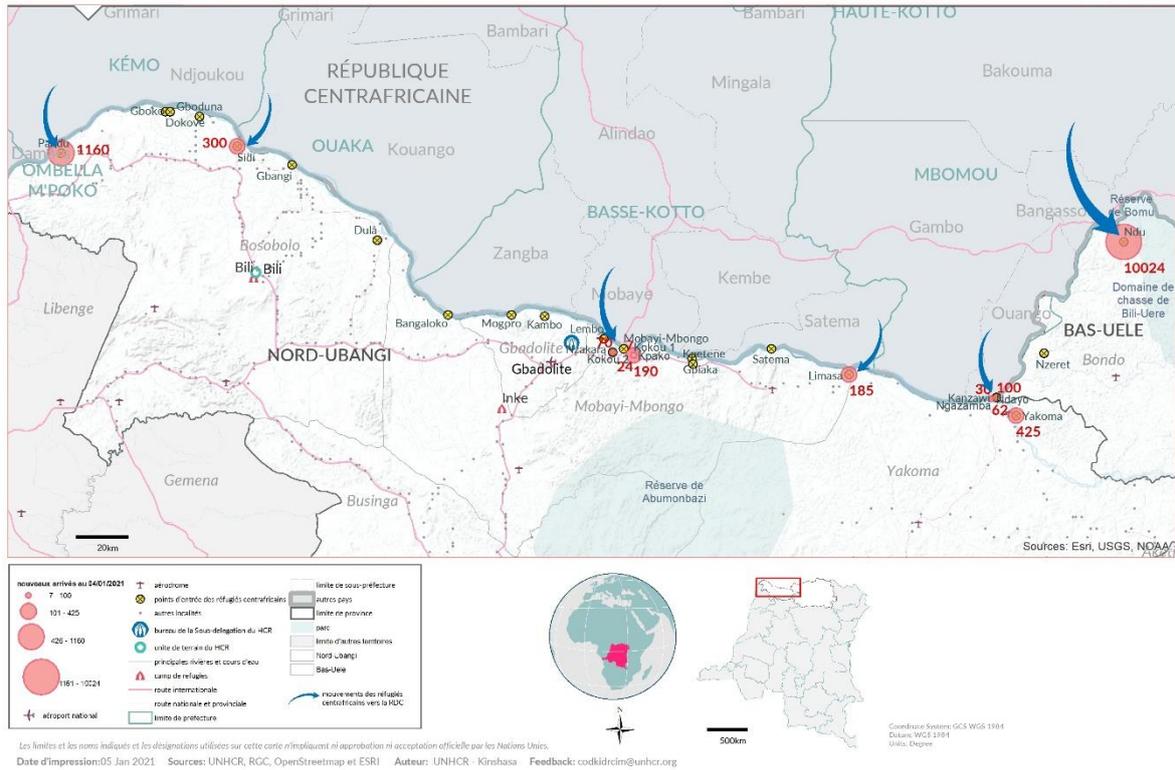
- **Insecurity**

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. Following attacks by armed groups in the towns of Damara (Ombella-M'Poko Prefecture) and Bangassou (Mbomou) in CAR on 2 and 3 January 2021, more than 10,000 people crossed the border from CAR to Ndu in Bas-Uele Province, DRC.

- **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 **4 January 2021**, **12,577 individuals from the Central African Republic** arrived in the DRC according to local sources. The figure is yet to be verified.

Localité	Province	Sit. géographique	TOTAL
Ndu	Bas-Uele Province	120 KM North East of Gbadolite	10,024
Kanzawi		210 KM North of Gbadolite	100
Bili	North Ubangi Province	167km South West from Gbadolite	300
Pandu		Banda in Bosobolo Territory	1,160
Nzakara		35 KM North East of Gbadolite, Mobaye Mbongo Territory	70
Kokou 1		28 KM East of Gbadolite	7
Kokou 2		28 KM East of Gbadolite	190
Kpako		27 KM East of Gbadolite	24
Ndayo		200 KM East of Gbadolite	30
Ngazamba		205 KM East of Gbadolite	62
Limassa		135 KM North of Gbadolite	185
Yakoma		200 KM North of Gbadolite	425
TOTAL ESTIMATIF			12,577

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.

III- NEEDS

The greatest needs of the new arrivals regard food, water, shelter, health care, education, Core relief items 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.
- The arrival of more than 10,000 people from CAR in Ndu, Bas-Uele Province, is placing a great strain on resources and on host families in this border village which usually has a population of 3,500 people.
- 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.
- Following the arrival of more than 10,000 people from CAR in Ndu, Bas-Uele province, UNHCR is starting to identify people with special needs, and who may need assistance. UNHCR is also preparing for the registration and temporary relocation the new arrivals to Yabongo site located three kilometers further inland where they will be safer from any conflict on the other side of the border. While the people may be sheltered temporarily in a transit centre, UNHCR continues to promote shelter outside of camps, with a view to providing effective protection and assistance to refugees while contributing to local infrastructure. A multisectoral humanitarian needs assessment and pre-registration was carried out by CNR and UNHCR teams in the Ndu and Yakoma areas.
- 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.
- 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 evolve.

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