

# Central African Republic Situation

21 January 2021

As of 20 January 2021, over 84,000 individuals are thought to have fled from the Central African Republic (CAR), where the situation continues to deteriorate since violence erupted amid the 27 December 2020 presidential election.

The most rapid increase in new arrivals is in Bas Uele and North-Ubangui provinces of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where an estimated 74,000 individuals are being hosted in local communities or staying in makeshift shelters.

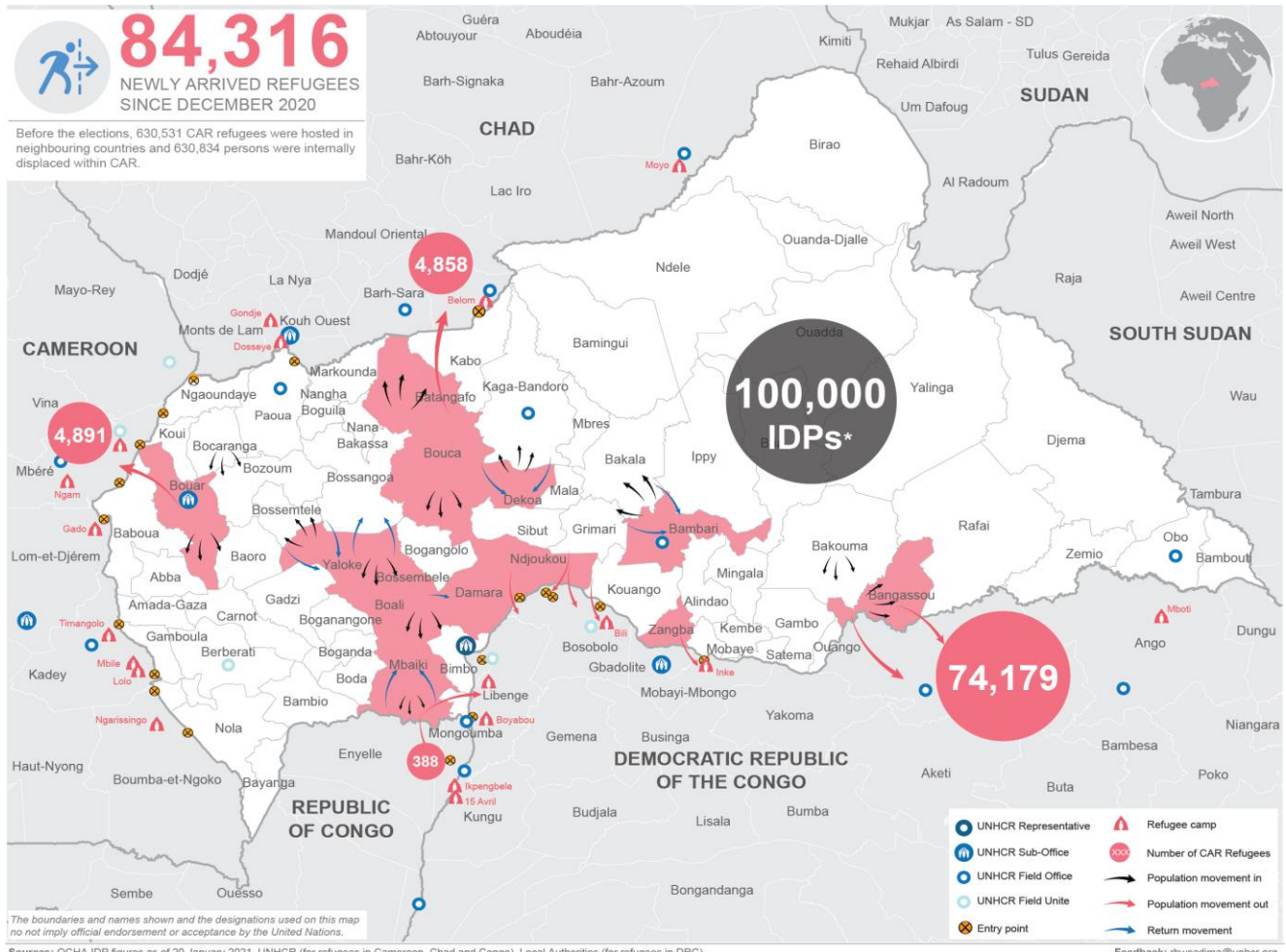
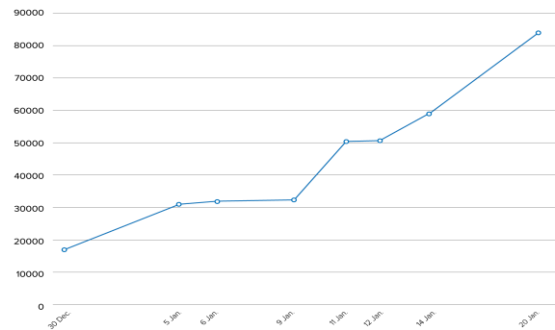
UNHCR operations in Cameroon, Chad, Republic of Congo and DRC are scaling up their field presence and working closely with national authorities, and partners to address the needs of the new arrivals.

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

Host Countries	New Arrivals
DRC	74,179*
Cameroon	4,891**
Chad	4,858**
Congo	388**
<b>Total</b>	<b>84,316</b>

\* source: local authorities in DRC

\*\* Data as of 21 Jan 2021 as reported by UNHCR Operations



# 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. As of 19 January 2021, over 84,000 individuals are thought to have fled CAR into Cameroon (4,891), Chad (4,858) and the Republic of Congo (388) and the DRC (an estimated 74,179).
- The figures reported for DRC are based on estimates provided by local authorities and UNHCR teams are currently planning a registration exercise to have a more accurate count of the new arrivals and to better assess their protection needs.
- In its [press release](#) of 20 January 2021, OCHA announced that some 100,000 persons remain internally displaced within CAR as a direct result of the post-electoral violence and the ongoing tensions.
- The Constitutional court announced on 18th January the decision to uphold the re-election of President Touadéra with a 53.16% absolute majority. The court is still reviewing the parliamentary election results and will issue their judgment latest the 28th January, confirming the date of a potential 2<sup>nd</sup> round parliamentary election.
- The security situation remains tense in Bangui and the rest of the country with reports of abuses by armed groups, including of sexual violence, being gathered by UNHCR and its partners. In this context, further displacement within CAR and into neighboring countries is expected in the near future.
- The disruption of the main supply route prevents the safe and timely delivery of critical humanitarian and other commercial supplies in CAR. Prices of essential commodities including fish, Oil, have risen by more than 50%, with a devastating impact on the protection and well-being of civilians, including IDPs and refugees.

## Population movements and border monitoring

- The borders of CAR with Chad and Cameroon remain officially closed as part of movement restrictions to prevent the spread of COVID-19, and UNHCR continues to advocate for access to asylum for people fleeing CAR. The border with the Republic of Congo remains open.
- Most new arrivals are being hosted in local communities or staying in makeshift shelters. Based on pre-registration exercises and initial needs assessments, there are urgent needs for water and shelter as well as better access to health and adequate sanitation to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other diseases. Many also need psycho-social support.
- UNHCR continuously monitors the situation to ensure persons of concern are safe and provided with the needed assistance. UNHCR is continuing its activities to identify persons with specific needs, including female-headed households and separated or unaccompanied children.
- The unrest in CAR has forced UNHCR to suspend its voluntary repatriation programme from Cameroon and DRC, which had been relaunched in November 2020 after a seven-month halt due to COVID-19. 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

- To support UNHCR operations' preparedness and response activities to address the protection needs of refugees and internally displaced people, a Level 2 emergency has been declared for the UNHCR's Operation

in Democratic Republic of Congo, and a Level 1 emergency is declared for UNHCR's Operations in Central African Republic, Cameroon, Chad and the Republic of Congo.

## Central African Republic

- UNHCR has issued a protection monitoring report using a community-based approach to collect and document protection incidents where access to affected populations was not possible. The report outlines a series of protection incidents resulting from the current violence and clashes, as well as a worsening of existing trends such as SGBV or violence in the context of transhumance.
- 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. MSR1, the main supply road linking Cameroon and CAR, remains blocked impeding the transportation of vital relief items into the country.
- UNHCR still has nine offices active throughout the country from where assistance is provided but with humanitarian access significantly hindered by the ongoing violence and insecurity the delivery of assistance by UNHCR and its partners is challenging. There are pressing needs for shelter, core relief items, health assistance and food in most IDP hosting areas.

## Democratic Republic of Congo

- As of 20 January 2021, an estimated 74,000 individuals from CAR have fled to the DRC. The figures reported for DRC are based on estimates provided by local authorities and UNHCR teams are currently planning a registration exercise to have a more accurate count of the new arrivals and to better assess their protection needs.
- 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. A multisectoral humanitarian needs assessment and pre-registration were 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 to facilitate access of asylum seekers to the Congolese Territory.
- Biometric registration is ongoing in Nord-Ubangui and the Ba-Uelé provinces where UNHCR teams identify people with special needs. UNHCR is working to identify persons with specific needs such as female-headed households and unaccompanied children to target the most vulnerable new arrivals for CRI distribution. UNHCR is also responding to reports of refugees from the DRC who have returned from CAR and may have protection needs.
- UNHCR is also preparing for the 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. UNHCR is distributing basic household items to the most vulnerable people While the people may be sheltered temporarily in a transit center, UNHCR continues to promote shelter outside of camps, with a view to providing effective protection and assistance to refugees while contributing to local infrastructure.
- UNHCR is raising resources to airlift more emergency equipment from Kinshasa to Gbadolite to assist people in need as quickly as possible. Further resources for trucking this equipment as well as for warehousing stocks are also needed.
- 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).

## 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 were allowed to cross through unofficial

border points. A total of 3,065 individuals has been registered so far and the process is ongoing for the rest of the new arrivals.

- Four cases of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) were identified among the new arrivals during screening, and clinical and psycho-social support has been provided with the help of DRC and IMC. The rehabilitation of the Gado 2 transit center to serve as a COVID-19 quarantine facility for new arrivals is ongoing, and UNHCR partner ADES is building new structures and rehabilitating 103 shelters in the camp.
- A first group of 289 refugees has been transferred from Garoua Boulai to the Gado settlement on 15 January 2021 where 300 emergency shelters were built. A total of 716 people who have expressed their desire to settle on the site and will be transferred there in the next days.
- UNHCR is working closely with the Government of Cameroon to organize the response, and inter-agency multi-sector coordination is underway.

## Chad

- As of 20 January, a total of 4,858 refugees have crossed the border into Chad. The Government of Chad is also registering Chadian returnees from CAR. Of the new arrivals, more than 85 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.
- UNHCR is providing medical support through partner CSSI. A mobile clinic has been set up to provide first aid care while the seriously ill are transferred to the district hospital in Gore. A total of 84 people has received medical treatment, and vaccines have been administered to 176 children and 19 women.
- Screening and other measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are ongoing, and a mandatory 14-day quarantine is required for all new arrivals. A total of 406 new arrivals have been transferred to the quarantine center in Dossey and the construction of a second quarantine center with a capacity of 480 has started in Gore. Those being transferred to the quarantine center receive one month of food rations and CRIs, including blankets and mats buckets, mosquito nets, mats, blankets and kitchen kits.
- UNHCR continues to coordinate with WFP, and 755 people received food assistance during the first distribution phase. UNHCR has requested additional support from WFP to provide rations for 2,800 people as part of the second phase.

## Republic of Congo

- As of 20 January, 388 persons fled CAR to Republic of Congo. All of them were pre-registered by UNHCR and are currently staying in existing structures in local communities, such as school compounds, and are exposed to the elements. Local immigration authorities are waiting and monitoring the election results and country conditions in CAR before proceeding with formal registration activities.
- UNHCR is coordinating with local authorities including the National Committee for Refugee Assistance (CNAR) and the Immigration and Police Services and partners (WFP, Terre sans Frontiers, and AARREC) to ensure most pressing needs are identified and addressed.

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