

Timeline

1894 -Ubangi-Shari territory becomes a French colony.

1910 -French Equatorial Africa (AEF), encompassing Ubangi-Shari, is leased to private companies with vast control.

1920-1930 -Indigenous protest against French concessionaires.

1946 -AEF inhabitants are given French citizenship. First Central African elected to French parliament and founder of the Social Evolution Movement of Black Africa (MESAN), Barthelemy Boganda, represents Ubangi-Shari territory.

1958 -AEF dissolves and Boganda becomes Prime Minister of territory, renamed Central African Republic (CAR).

1959 -Boganda dies in a plane crash.

1960 -CAR gains independence and Boganda's nephew, David Dacko, becomes president.

1962 -Dacko consolidates power and transforms CAR into a one-party state with MESAN as the only party.

1964 -Dacko is elected president after running uncontested.

1965 -Army Commander and Defense Minister Jean-Bedel Bokassa ousts Dacko in a coup amid national bankruptcy fears.

1972 -Bokassa proclaims himself president for life.

1976 -Bokassa declares himself emperor of the renamed Central African Empire.

1979 -Arrest and massacre of school children in detention leads Dacko, with French backing, to oust Bokassa in a coup.

1981 -Army commander Andre Kolingba deposes Dacko.

1984 -Political party leaders granted amnesty.

1988 -Bokassa's death sentence for murder and embezzlement is commuted to life in prison.

1991 -The formation of political parties is permitted.

1993 -12 years of military rule ends with the election of Ange-Felix Patasse. Thousands of political prisoners, including Bokassa, are released prior to Kolingba stepping down.

1996 -Soldiers lead mutiny in the capital over unpaid wages.

1997 -African peacekeepers begin to replace French forces.

1999 -Patasse is reelected.

2000 -Wage strike leads to riots.

2001 -Kolingba attempted coup is suppressed with troops from Libya and Chad and Congolese rebels. Army chief of staff General Francois Bozize's attempted arrest for involvement in the coup leads thousands to flee amid violent clashes.

2002 -A coup attempt by forces loyal to General Bozize is subdued with help from Libyan-backed forces.

2003 -Bozize successfully takes over Bangui, declares himself president, dissolves parliament, and within a few weeks sets up a transitional government.

2004 -New constitution is approved. Bozize briefly held in Germany with diamonds in his briefcase.

2005 -Bozize wins presidential elections. Thousands flee into southern Chad from northwest CAR amid rebel insurgencies.

2006 -Rebel attacks on a northern army camp result in 33 deaths. Patasse is sentenced to 20 years of hard labor after being found guilty of fraud. Birao, a town in the north-east is seized by rebels. French air attacks against rebel held territory are used to support the government's attempt to regain the northeast.

2007 -The government and the People's Democratic Front (FDPC) sign peace deal. ICC investigates war crimes from the 2002 failed coup. The Union of Democratic Forces for Unity, the Union of Republican Forces and the Convention of Patriots for Justice and Peace (CPJP) form an alliance (Seleka).

2008 -Strikes over unpaid salaries for civil servants and teachers occur. Prime Minister Elie Dote resigns along with his cabinet and is replaced by Faustin-Archange Touadera. The Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) raids CAR. Rebel groups UFDR and the Popular Army for the Restoration of Democracy (APRD) and the government sign a peace deal to disarm and demobilize rebels. Peace deal calls for elections by 2010.

2009 -FDPC and the Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice (MLCJ) resume insurgency. Uganda pursues LRA into

CAR. France deploy troops to the capital, Bangui, after rebel infiltration. UN Security Council supports the development of a new UN peace building office to address CAR insecurity. UN reports that over a million people have been affected by violence and unrest in CAR. Patasse returns. By the end of the year, CPJP is the only rebel group to join the peace process.

2010 -CPJP leader, Charles Massi, allegedly tortured to death in a government prison. Fear of fraud delays elections resulting in the extension of Bozize's term. UN Security Council agrees to withdraw UN forces, sent to protect displaced Chadians and Darfuri refugees, from CAR and Chad. Birao attacked by rebels. CAR, DRC, Sudan and Uganda form joint military brigade to fight LRA. Jean-Pierre Bemba, ex-DRC vice president, begins ICC trial for allowing troops to rape and murder.

2011 -Bozize elected to another term. Medecins Sans Frontieres warns that CAR suffers from diseases, conflict, economic depression and a deteriorating health system.

2012 -African Union (AU) searches for LRA leader Joseph Kony in CAR. CPJP signs peace agreement. New Seleka rebel alliance takes over north and central CAR.

2013 -Seleka takes power in Bangui as Bozize escapes. Constitution is suspended and parliament is dissolved in an internationally-condemned coup led by rebel leader Michel Djotodia, who becomes president five months later. UN Security Council calls CAR a risk to regional stability. After Djotodia dissolves Seleka, he is criticized for failure to control rebels. Armed, mostly Christians groups (anti-balaka) join to fight Seleka and commit attacks, murder and human rights abuses against Muslim and Muslim-sympathizing civilians. UN Security Council approves UN force to support AU and French forces. France increases troops to 1600 in an attempt to disarm militias amidst continued violence.

2014 -Djotodia resigns after failing to quell sectarian violence. Catherine Samba-Panza becomes interim leader. ICC concludes that there is reasonable basis to investigate crimes committed since 2012. UN Security Council calls for 12,000 peacekeepers. Djotodia is designated as Seleka's president despite being under UN and US sanctions for charges of human rights abuses. UN assumes control over AU peacekeeping efforts (MINUSCA). In October, violence erupts between Seleka, Peulh fighters and anti-balaka. Mahamat Kamoun begins building a transitional government. MINUSCA arrests leader of Chadian Popular Front for Recovery, Abdel Kader "Baba Ladde", accused of recruiting child soldiers and attacking civilians in the north.

2015 -CAR and 10 groups sign peace agreement on May 10 to end fighting. Forced displacement of civilians fleeing violence numbers almost a million by April 2015 according to UNHCR.



Torture Methods

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN, including rape and sexual abuse in areas taken over by opposing rebel groups has been reported. Women are imprisoned on charges of sorcery.

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES of civilians and the military by rebels have been reported.

ABDUCTIONS of religious leaders has been perpetrated by suspected Seleka rebels.

ASSISNATIONS and SUMMARY EXECUTIONS have occurred as rebels advance into new territory and attempt to loot houses. Additionally, unarmed civilians have been shot fleeing rebel advancement, particularly those thought to have been members of the military or opposing rebel groups. Seleka members have been accused of tying groups of civilians and throwing them in the river to drown. Both Seleka and anti-balaka members have been accused of rounding up large groups of civilians and murdering them. Journalists have also been killed for their work.

BEATINGS and STABBINGS of actual and suspected military members have occurred at the hands of various rebel groups and military members.

MACHETE ATTACKS against opposing and suspected opposing rebel groups have occurred by all sides.

FORCED WITNESS of the murder and beating of friends, neighbors, and relatives has occurred by rebel groups.

BURNING of villages and homes have occurred as rebel groups advance into new territory and are used to force groups with opposing religious beliefs to abandon the area.

LOOTING and PILLAGING both indiscriminately and in places integral to survival, such as health centers, schools, fields, places of worship and housing have been reported as rebels gain territory.

FOCRED DISPLACEMENT of civilians fleeing violence reached almost a million by April 2015 according to UNHCR.

PRISONS are overcrowded, lack food, water, clothing, and medicine. Prisoners depend on family members to supplement basic necessities that at times are confiscated by guards. If a prisoner is housed in an opposing rebel area, family members rarely if ever visit for fear of being killed. Many prisoners have reportedly never been to trial. Prisons have reportedly housed former political opponents and those accused of working with rebels. Torture, including the beating and murder of prisoners occurred under former president Bozize.

DETENTION CENTERS are reportedly far worse than prisons. Centers are severely overcrowded with little lighting. Leaky buckets are used for toilets and the rare ability to bathe, coupled with poor food and sanitation cause infectious disease. Beatings and torture have led to deaths.

CHILD SOLDIERS have been used by the state military and armed groups, such as the LRA, Seleka, and the Anti-Balaka.

IMPUNITY for major human rights violations including torture and murder are rarely investigated. Decades of a lack of government ability to offer justice to victims is a main component of the continued violence.

Current Situation

Language: French (official), Sangho (lingua franca and national language), tribal languages

Population: 5,277,959 (July 2014 est.)

Religion: indigenous beliefs 35%, Protestant 25%, Roman Catholic 25%, Muslim 15% (animistic beliefs and practices strongly influence the Christian majority)

Ethnic groups: Baya 33%, Banda 27%, Mandjia 13%, Sara 10%, Mboum 7%, M'Baka 4%, Yakoma 4%, other 2%. There are over 80 ethnic groups with their own language in CAR.

GOVERNMENT FAILURE to establish civil and socio-economic rights, frame a national consensus and develop the nation for over 30 years has led to bitter violence and distrust within the various ethnic and religious groups in CAR.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION is severely limited and the small number of journalist still working report harassment and intimidation by government authorities and rebel groups.

REBEL GROUPS vying for power and retaliating for acts committed against their ethnic, religious, or armed group are responsible for much of the unrest and violence. In 2014, the UN Panel of Experts on CAR reported armed groups exploit natural resources, proliferate and transfer arms, perpetuate sexual violence and use child soldiers. Opposing groups continue to vie for power and have committed major human rights violations in attempts to gain control while fostering sectarian violence. All sides have targeted civilians especially those they believe support the opposing rebel groups.

SELEKA, meaning "alliance" in Sango, is a conglomeration of mostly Muslim rebel groups who came to power in a coup in March 2013 and were subsequently overthrown with the help of French peacekeepers in December 2013. Seleka have committed major human rights violations including destroying villages, indiscriminate killing, looting and raping women and girls. Competing factions vying for power within their ranks have led to internal fighting.

ANTI-BALAKA, meaning anti machete, is a group comprised of mostly Christian and animist fighters who came together in the middle of 2013 to fight Seleka. They have committed major human rights violations and reprisal attacks against both Muslim and Muslim sympathizing civilians including murder, beatings, and looting.

PEULH fighters comprised of mostly Muslims are often aligned with Seleka fighters and have committed human rights violations against mainly Christians including murder, beatings and the pillaging and burning of homes and villages.

AFRICAN UNION PEACEKEEPERS from the Chadian army have been accused of committing human rights violations including murder and enforced disappearance.

CLASHES BETWEEN HERDERS AND FARMERS are cyclical and often incorporate religious and ethnic connotations. After nomadic cattle herders are attacked for entering agricultural areas, the herders retaliate.

REFUGEES and INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE number almost one million people, many who fear being attacked if they return home. Camps have been attacked by rebel groups and peacekeepers are often unable to provide safety.