



Country Report: The Central African Republic December 2022

Since 2004, the Central African Republic (CAR) has been in a perpetual cycle of civil war. While CAR's conflicts have historically been blamed on religion, classifying CAR's current conflict as a religious war overlooks its complexities and [contributes to simplistic peacebuilding responses](#). CAR's civil war has been driven by extreme poverty, socioeconomic inequality, unemployment, lack of education, and a struggle to control CAR's rich resources, which include diamonds, uranium, oil, gold, cobalt, and lumber. Despite its natural wealth, the CAR had the world's third lowest [per capita GDP in 2022 according to the IMF](#).

The current conflict began in 2013 and was mainly fought between Séléka rebels from the marginalized Muslim community and Anti-Balaka militias claiming to defend their Christian communities. 80% of the persecuted Muslim community was driven from the country. While the conflict has subsided in the capital city of Bangui, its dynamics have shifted to unlikely alliances, including one between the Séléka and Anti-Balaka. In 2020 they established several anti-government alliances, including the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique*, *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement (CPC)* and *Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique (UPC)*.

In response to new attacks by rebels, the CAR government hired the Russian "private" military Wagner Group, to provide "security" for CAR's diamond and other mines. In fact, the Wagner Group is a criminal gang financed by Russian billionaires who support Putin. Wagner mercenaries have perpetrated war crimes and widespread crimes against humanity against civilians. Since 2017, the Russian military has donated [large shipments of arms](#) and sent an increasing number of Russian "military instructors" to support the CAR military. As of 2022, there are an estimated 2,000+ Russian mercenaries in the CAR. In return for its "services", the Wagner Group receives huge profits from its control of diamond, gold, uranium, and cobalt mines.

The Central African government credits the Wagner Group with providing military training and helping the government push back rebel forces. [Credible reports](#) reveal that these Russian mercenaries have been involved in active combat, [execution, torture, and beating of civilians](#). Some of their attacks have even targeted members of CAR government forces under the justification of "disciplinary action," including the [torture and murder of government soldiers for "drunkenness."](#) The Wagner group has carried out [bloody massacres](#) in the mining areas on the border of the CAR and Sudan, in their effort to take over CAR's [valuable gold trade](#).

In the [Western grasslands](#) of the country, the Wagner Group has targeted Muslim Fulani herders. Known as "Mbororo" in Sango, the trade language of the CAR, the Fulani are a predominantly Muslim pastoralist group with Chadian origins. Given their nomadic livelihoods, [the Fulani are often referred to as 'foreigners'](#). They are suspected of disloyalty to the CAR though many have resided in the CAR for generations and have CAR citizenship. The Wagner Group considers [all Muslims](#), particularly Fulani, to be enemy insurgents. This classification has put Fulani civilians at risk of genocidal massacres.

The *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC)* and the UPC, which are closely affiliated with the CPC, have been identified in United Nations reports as the perpetrators of massacres, crimes against humanity, and [sexual violence against over 200 victims](#) in the Mbomou and Haute-Kotto prefectures. Most of the target victims, aged between age eight and 55 years old, were gang raped.

The Special Criminal Court in the [Central African Republic](#) issued its first verdict on October 31, 2022. The Court is staffed by international and national judges and prosecutors. It is supported by the United Nations and international donors. It has jurisdiction over grave crimes committed in the Central African Republic since 2003.

The International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA) – was authorized in December 2013, following a series of UN and AU peacekeeping operations since 1997. This African Union force of 6,000 personnel was accompanied by the French Operation Sangaris from 2013 - 2016. The UN replaced the peacekeeping operation with MINUSCA. It has 14,000 troops as of 30 September 2022.

Due to the atrocities committed against numerous civilians during its civil wars, Genocide Watch considers the CAR to be at **Stage 5: Organization, Stage 6: Polarization, Stage 8: Persecution, and Stage 9: Extermination.**

Genocide Watch recommends that:

- The government must gain control over the CAR military and totally expel the Wagner Group from the CAR.
- MINUSCA's UN mandate must be renewed, and its troop strength maintained until peace returns to the CAR.
- The Special Criminal Court should continue to try perpetrators of crimes against humanity and sexual violence.
- Donor countries should increase funding to care for and resettle internally displaced persons and refugees.