**Activity 3.1 Case Study Scenario 1 - Central African Republic**

**Background**

The present crisis in CAR began in December 2012 with the launch of the Séléka rebellion against the government of President Francois Bozize. Human rights violations perpetrated by the predominantly Muslim Séléka rebel group, largely against the Christian majority of CAR, between December 2012 and March 2013 were grave and widespread. The rebellion culminated in the overthrow of President Bozize by Séléka forces on 24 March 2013.

Séléka attacks against the civilian population continued after March 2013, leading to the emergence of predominantly Christian and animist local self-defense groups called “anti-balaka” (anti-machete) in towns and villages in the north and west of the country. Anti-balaka factions began launching attacks against ex- Séléka forces and targeting Muslim communities for violent reprisals in September 2013. Fighting between the anti-balaka and Séléka fighters, in Bangui and Bossangoa on 5 and 6 December 2013 left more than 1,000 people dead and engrained religious identity as a defining feature of the conflict. By April 2014 approximately 80 percent of the country's Muslim population was forced to flee or was killed and those that remain are still at high risk of attack.

Following the violence in late 2013 the UN established a Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission, MINUSCA, to support peacekeeping efforts. France and the European Union also had forces within CAR helping to stabilize the situation during the peak of the crisis.

During 2014, international forces pushed the Séléka out of the capital, Bangui. Ethnic divisions, rivalries, disagreements over resource control, and disputes over strategy quickly tore the Séléka apart. By late 2014, the Séléka split into several factions, each controlling its own area. Despite relative stability in the country following January 2016 elections, rebel groups continue to control territory in the majority of the country.

As of January 2018, 688,000 people were internally displaced and 546,000 others had sought refuge in neighboring countries. After France withdrew its forces during October 2017, MINUSCA remained the sole source of security in many parts of the country that lacked a government presence.

Fractured alliances and escalated fighting

In late 2016 tensions grew among the separate ex-Séléka elements as they competed for control of territory and resources, including cattle grazing land and access to mines. Violence essentially pitted two ex-Séléka factions - the Unité pour la paix en centrafrique (UPC) and the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique (FPRC) – against one another, and uniting some ex-Séléka factions and anti-balaka groups.

The conflict between the FPRC coalition and UPC led to repeated attacks on the ethnic Fulani population – a predominantly herding community - over its perceived affiliation with UPC. The pattern of violence coincided with an increase in cattle migrating into the eastern Central African Republic, generating friction between local farmers and herders and Fulani herders or armed militia, causing animosity towards the Muslim community. Anti-balaka aligned with the FPRC coalition also targeted Muslim communities in the south and east.

During November 2016 fighting erupted between the FPRC and UPC over control of roads to diamond mines near the central town of Bria. As fighting broke out, leaders from both the UPC and FPRC reportedly incited violence against civilian populations, with members of their respective groups targeting civilians based upon their ethnicity or religion. The head of the FPRC’s military wing in Bria said he wanted all Fulani and UPC out of Bria.

The FPRC reportedly singled out ethnic Fulani in the town, carrying out house-to-house searches, killing, looting and abducting residents. The FPRC also occupied hospital buildings, preventing wounded Fulani from receiving medical treatment.

This pattern of fighting between the UPC and FPRC, as well as affiliated militias, continued with a severe impact on civilians as violence spread to areas previously unaffected by the conflict. During December 2016 the UPC engaged in targeted attacks aimed at civilians in Ouaka prefecture, reportedly perpetrating summary executions of individuals perceived to be affiliated with the anti-balaka. Anti-balaka also continued their targeted attacks on Fulani and Muslim populations and throughout early 2017. By May 2017 anti-balaka attacks included targeting humanitarian convoys and MINUSCA bases, limiting civilian access to essential services and protection.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has stated that the violence should “set off loud alarm bells” and the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide has warned that this wave of violence could rapidly escalate and result in more reprisal attacks.