



The Honorable Antony Blinken
 Secretary of State
 US Department of State
 2201 C St NW
 Washington, DC 20230

February 2nd 2021

Dear Mr. Secretary:

As a collection of humanitarian, faith-based, human rights, diaspora and peacebuilding groups committed to supporting the people of the Central African Republic (CAR), we congratulate you on your recent Senate confirmation and thank you for your focus on reseeding democracy and standing up for human rights in Africa and around the world.

We are writing to ask for your support at an urgent moment. Central Africans are reeling from a new wave of violence and insecurity that has deepened the humanitarian crisis, marred the recent electoral process and threatens to undermine hard-won gains by the Central African people. In the past month alone, 200,000 IDPs and refugees have been newly displaced, bringing the total displaced to 1.4 million. At the start of the CAR crisis, the Obama Administration led America to play a decisive role in preventing atrocities, investing in local peace efforts, in providing lifesaving humanitarian aid, and in ultimately supporting a democratic transition.

We ask that the State Department and the Interagency act in this moment to articulate both near and medium-term measures to restore these gains and to support peace, democratic governance, and relief and recovery efforts in the country. Specifically, we ask that you prioritize:

1. Immediate humanitarian ceasefire efforts and improving civilian protection

- We encourage you to urgently support regionally-led ceasefire efforts and humanitarian access negotiations; facilitate the movement of supplies into and throughout the country along key supply routes; and condemn attacks on aid workers and hold perpetrators to account.
- We encourage you to address the structural instability caused by armed groups controlling vast areas of CAR outside of Bangui. We urge you to ensure that armed groups uphold their existing commitments to the Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in the Central African Republic (APPR).

We ask that you urgently consider UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Mankeur Ndiaye's appeal to the Security Council on January 21 for more resources to protect civilians, including "a substantial increase of uniformed troops in the mission," as well as engage in a discussion with the Government of the CAR (GoCAR) and international partners on other mechanisms to strengthen the protection of civilians. The Council should also continue to review the performance of MINUSCA in protecting civilians, including by implementing more robust early warning and response mechanisms.

2. Immediate and medium-term conflict prevention, de-escalation, and local peace efforts

As violence spikes and atrocity risks grow, we ask that you urgently invest in rapid-response efforts to prevent further escalation by supporting efforts by local authorities, religious leaders, women, media and youth to prevent atrocities, reduce hate speech, and prevent mobilization. We ask that you complement rapid-response support with dedicated five-year funding to these local efforts to ensure that they can be sustained to through the eventual return, reintegration and reconciliation efforts.

3. Efforts to reinforce democratic governance and accountability

We ask that during this second and final term of President Touadera, you invest in strengthening the structures of democracy in the country to secure a consolidation of democratic institutions and norms. We ask that you support human rights accountability, anti-corruption, and building a democratic political culture, including through: technical assistance to appropriate GoCAR institutions; establishing new programs to support civil society, media, and human rights efforts; continue direct support to transitional justice, including the Special Criminal Court; and prioritize democratic governance and anti-corruption via the International Financial Institutions and with all other stakeholders.

4. Urgent humanitarian needs and eventual transition to Central African-led recovery

CAR requires urgent humanitarian assistance as well as a strategic commitment to ending chronic needs. We ask that the US—in conjunction with other donors and the International Financial Institutions—should directly support programs that transition from humanitarian relief to sustainable recovery. Additionally, we ask that you consider non-traditional approaches secure a peace dividend by encouraging trade and investment, including engagement with the US private sector, the diaspora, as well as the USDFC, USAID, USDA and others on opportunities to support private-sector-led recovery.

5. Coordinated regional and international strategy to support a peaceful and stable CAR

We urge you to show leadership in working with the AU, ECCAS, UN, EU, neighboring countries, other countries militarily engaged, and other international actors to end the transnational dynamics driving the conflict; reduce cross-border flows of illicit weapons and resources; and instead, prioritize coordinated interventions that support peace and justice for all Central Africans.

6. Interagency focus and adequate resourcing to address the current crisis

- We ask that you review and ensure that the Department of State, US/UN, Embassy Bangui and USAID have adequate human and financial resources, review the timetable for upgrading the capacity at Embassy Bangui, and work with the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and Congress to ensure that these are budgeted for, and funded.
- In light of the crisis and need for additional troops and increased responsibilities, we ask that the President's Budget include language calling for a lift of the legislative cap on peacekeeping contributions, full funding for MINUSCA, and payment of peacekeeping arrears in order to ensure

the United States is no longer significantly underfunding troop contributing countries and the missions we vote for in the Security Council. We also ask that the President's Budget enables the Department of State and USAID to make five-year commitments to strengthen democratic governance, peacebuilding, and a transition to economic recovery.

- Finally, we ask that the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force prioritize CAR and that other appropriate offices, such as Global Criminal Justice and International Religious Freedom prioritize CAR in their engagements within and outside government, in coordination with Africa Bureau and Embassy Bangui.

We encourage you to capitalize upon this moment to join and support these initiatives that can work towards addressing immediate needs while resolving the underlying causes of the conflict. We thank you for your support to the civilians of the CAR in helping to advance long-term positive peace and security and would welcome the opportunity to discuss further.

Sincerely,

- *Africa Faith and Justice Network*
- *Alliance for Peacebuilding*
- *Association of Central African Republic Families US-Canada (ACAR)*
- *The Better World Campaign*
- *The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)*
- *Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)*
- *Global Center for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)*
- *International Interfaith Peace Corps (IIPC)*
- *Invisible Children*
- *Islamic Relief USA*
- *Jewish World Watch*
- *Lutheran Partners in Global Ministry (LPGM)*
- *Mercy Corps*
- *Peace Direct*
- *Refugees International*
- *Search for Common Ground*
- *URU Central African Republic*

With copy to:

Amb. Lucy Tamlyn, *US Embassy Bangui*
Amb. Richard Mills, *US Mission to the UN*
Gloria Steele, *US Agency for International Development*
Amb. Robert Godec, *US Department of State*
Dana Brooks, *National Security Council*
Linda Etim, *National Security Council*
Amb. Samantha Power, *USAID Administrator-Designate*
Amb. Linda Thomas-Greenfield, *Ambassador-Designate to the UN*

Senator Robert Menendez, *Senate Foreign Relations Committee*
Senator James Risch, *Senate Foreign Relations Committee*
Congressman Gregory Meeks, *House Foreign Affairs Committee*
Congressman Michael McCaul, *House Foreign Affairs Committee*

