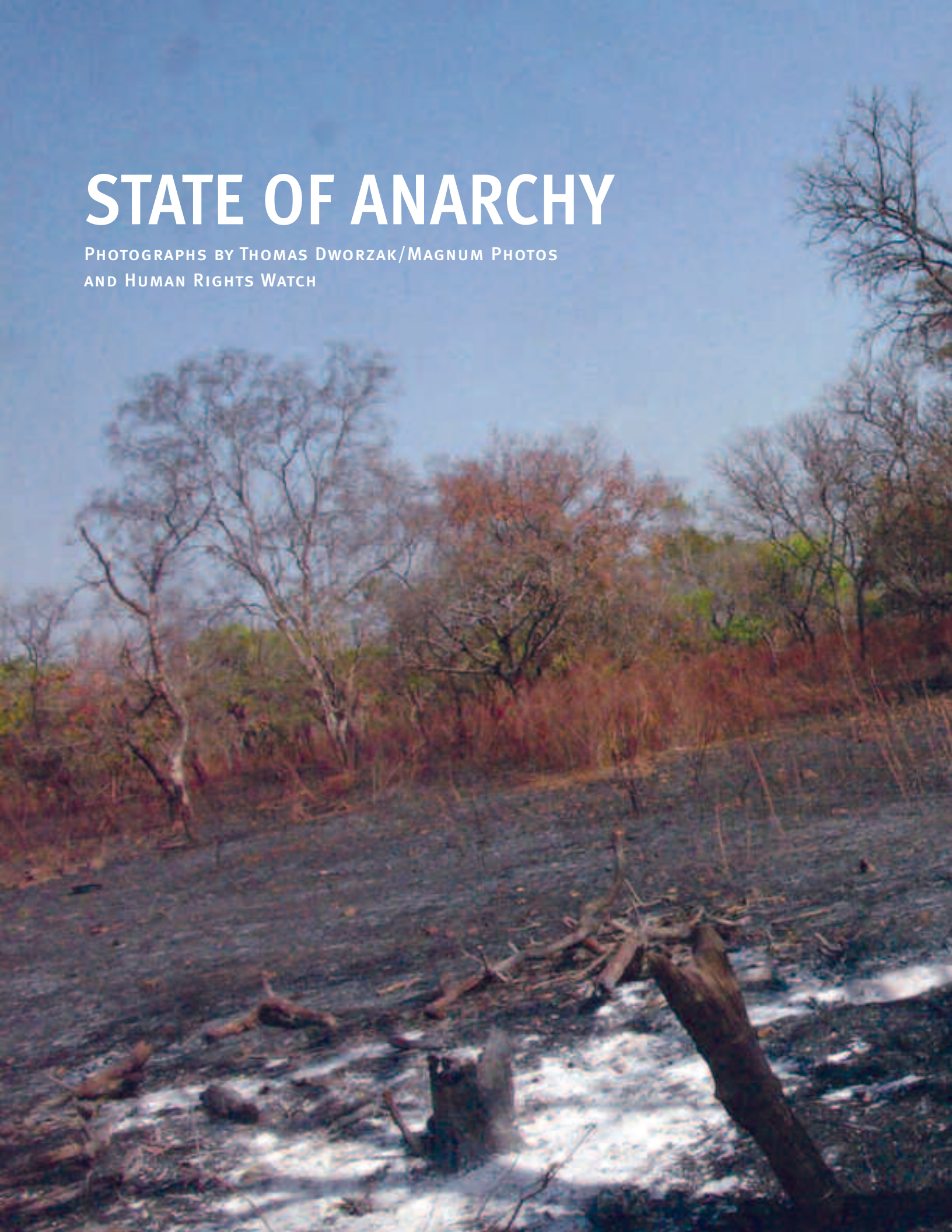


Summary and Recommendations

STATE OF ANARCHY

PHOTOGRAPHS BY THOMAS DWORZAK/MAGNUM PHOTOS
AND HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH





Civilian homes along the Paoua-Boguila road
burned by government forces.

© 2007 Thomas Dworzak/Magnum Photos

STATE OF ANARCHY

Rebellion and Abuses Against Civilians

Since mid-2005, hundreds of civilians have been killed, more than 10 thousand houses burned, and approximately 212,000 persons have fled their homes in terror to live in desperate conditions deep in the bush in northern Central African Republic (CAR). Bordering eastern Chad and war-ravaged Darfur in Sudan, this area has been destabilized by at least two major rebellions against the government of President François Bozizé.

The vast majority of summary executions and unlawful killings, and almost all village burnings, have been carried out by government forces, often in reprisal for rebel attacks. While both main rebel groups have been responsible for widespread looting and the forced taxation of the civilian population in areas they control—and rebels in the northeast have committed killings, beatings, and rape—their abuses pale in comparison to those of the Central African Armed Forces (*Forces armées Centrafricaines, FACA*) and the elite Presidential Guard (*Garde présidentielle, GP*). As the International Criminal Court (ICC) begins investigations into atrocities committed during the 2002-2003 rebellion against former President Patassé, it should also investigate possible war crimes under its jurisdiction committed in the current round of fighting.

This report documents the human rights abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law being committed in northern CAR and describes the make-up, origins, and aims of the most significant rebel groups. The Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and Democracy (*Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et la démocratie, APRD*) is active in the northwestern provinces of Ouham, Ouham-Pendé, and Nana-Grébizi. The Union of Democratic Forces for Unity (*Union des forces démocratiques pour la rassemblement, UFDR*) is most active in remote northeastern provinces of Bamingui-Bangoran and Vakaga.

In February and March 2007 Human Rights Watch researchers visited the majority of towns and villages affected, documenting summary executions, unlawful killings, beatings, house burnings, extortion and unlawful taxation, the recruitment and use of children as soldiers, and many other human rights abuses. Human Rights Watch researchers interviewed over 100 persons, including many victims and witnesses, local and regional government officials, military commanders, rebel officials, religious leaders, and representatives of local and international humanitarian organizations active in northern CAR.

Until quite recently there was little international awareness of the situation in northern CAR. However, in 2006, human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law began to receive some attention. The killings, village burnings, displacement, and humanitarian suffering are now occasionally reported in the international press and are the subject of increasing diplomatic notice, usually being seen as “spill-over” from the continuing crisis in Darfur.

Little attention, however, has been paid to the actual dynamics of conflict, which are largely home grown. The main rebel protagonists are Central Africans with local grievances. Human Rights Watch’s research suggests that the degree of linkage with the situation in Darfur has been exaggerated. The APRD in the northwest is so poorly equipped that it is difficult to imagine it has foreign sponsorship. Human Rights Watch has found no other evidence of such support. Although there have been contacts between the UFDR and Sudan-sponsored Chadian rebels opposed to the Chadian President Déby based in the northeast of CAR in early 2006, foreign support does not appear to be a driving force behind this rebellion.

Neither has attention been paid to the issue of responsibility for human rights violations and breaches of international humanitarian law, nor to action to ensure accountability. The sorry fact is that the perpetrators of violence and abuse, the majority of them government soldiers, have so far enjoyed total impunity for acts that include war crimes.



Route of February-March 2007 Human Rights Watch research mission

The APRD Rebellion

The APRD rebellion in the northwest was launched almost immediately after controversial 2005 elections led to the election of General Bozizé as President. These had excluded the candidacy of ex-President Patassé, who had been overthrown by General Bozizé in March 2003. The leadership of the APRD rebellion consists mostly of former Presidential Guards of Patassé, himself from the region. The APRD has about 1,000 poorly equipped members, including 200 rebels armed with automatic weapons, and another 600 with home-made hunting weapons. They claim their aim is to engage in “dialogue” to address the political exclusion of Patassé and his supporters and to improve the security situation in the northwest, rather than to overthrow the government.

One of the main grievances of the population of the northwest is lack of security. Armed bandits, known as *zaraguinas* or *coupeurs de route*, regularly attack villagers and have taken advantage of insufficient security provided by the state to increase attacks. The *zaraguinas* commonly kidnap children for ransom and regularly kill civilians during raids. Many cattle-herders from the Peulh ethnic group in the northwest, particularly targeted because of their valuable livestock, have fled to the safety of larger towns and refugee camps in Chad. Along with the political grievances of former Patassé supporters, the failure of the CAR security forces to protect local communities from banditry is an important element in the development of the APRD, and many local armed self-defense groups have merged into the rebel group.

The UFDR Rebellion

From October to December 2006, the UFDR rebel movement gained international attention by seizing military control of the major towns in the remote Vakaga and Bamingui-Bangoran provinces of northeastern CAR, right on the border of Sudan’s Darfur region. The UFDR’s bold military offensive led to French military intervention on behalf of the CAR government in December 2006, allowing the security forces to regain control of urban centers.

The UFDR rebellion has its roots in the deep marginalization of northeastern CAR, which is virtually cut off from the rest of the country and is almost completely undeveloped. Elements from the Gula ethnic group, many of them trained militarily as anti-poaching units, are at the core of the rebellion, citing grievances such as discrimination against their community and the alleged embezzlement by the CAR authorities of compensation funds received from the Sudanese government following clashes perpetrated by Sudanese nomads in 2002. As the rebellion has grown, a backlash of anti-Gula sentiment among government officials, the military, and the general population has

developed. As a result, most of the Gula population has fled government-controlled areas in fear of retaliation.

A second element making up the UFDR is Bozizé’s own former colleagues, so-called *ex-libérateurs*, who participated in his overthrow of former President Patassé in 2003. They accuse Bozizé of betraying his promises and failing to compensate them for their support.

Abuses by FACA and GP Forces

Since the beginning of the conflict in mid 2005 with rebel forces in northern CAR, the CAR security forces have committed serious and widespread abuses against the civilian population, including multiple summary executions and unlawful killings, widespread burning of civilian homes, and the forced displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians, which have instilled terror in the civilian population. In most instances, these village burnings and killings were in direct response to recent rebel activity in the area and amount to unlawful reprisals against the civilian population. It is the FACA and GP that have been responsible for the vast majority of the most serious human rights abuses in the conflict, and they have carried out these atrocities in full confidence of impunity from accountability for their crimes.

During the course of its research, Human Rights Watch documented 119 summary executions and unlawful killings committed by government security forces in both the northwest and northeast (the vast majority in the northwest), including at least 51 committed since late 2005 by a single military unit, the Bossangoa-based GP unit, commanded at the time by Lieutenant Eugène Ngaïkossé.

Human Rights Watch believes that the killings it has documented are only a fraction of the total number of those committed by government security forces. Since the beginning of the conflict these are estimated to amount to many hundreds. Killings committed by security forces have often involved dozens of civilian deaths in a single day and have often included unspeakable brutality. For example, on February 11, 2006, a single GP unit killed at least 30 civilians in more than a dozen separate villages located along the Nana-Barya to Béal road. On March 22, this same GP unit beheaded a teacher in Béal, cutting off his head with a knife while he was still alive. Other civilians have simply “disappeared” in military custody, arrested and not seen alive again.

Since December 2005, government forces, particularly the GP, have also been almost solely responsible for the burning down of more than 10,000 civilian homes in northwestern CAR. Hundreds of villages across vast swathes of northern CAR have been destroyed. Troops arrive in villages and indiscriminately fire into the civilian population, forcing them to flee before burning down their



FACA soldiers pose with the just-executed bodies of Salvador Dami and Rodrigue Wanda in Kaga Bandoro, January 5, 2007.

© 2007 Private



FACA soldiers prepare to patrol in APRD-controlled areas between Batangafo and Kabo.

© 2007 Peter Bouckaert/Human Rights Watch





A group of APRD rebels near Ouandago pose with their homemade weapons.

© 2007 Olivier Bercault/Human Rights Watch

homes, sometimes looting them first. In December 2005, GP forces burned down 500 to 900 houses in the Markoundia area. A Human Rights Watch count in the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago-Kaga Bandoro area found a total of 2,923 burned homes, including more than 1,000 homes in the large market town of Ouandago alone. In some places every single home in every single village was burned. Similarly massive destruction can be found all around the town of Paoua, all the way east to Nana Barya—hundreds of kilometers of villages destroyed by government security forces.

The reprisal and counterinsurgency tactics of the CAR security forces have affected the lives of over 1 million people and have forced an estimated 212,000 civilians to abandon their road-side homes and live deep inside the bush, too fearful to return to their burned villages in case of repeat attack. Another 78,000 have sought refuge in neighboring Chad and Cameroon. The level of civilian fear in northern CAR is palpable. People are simply not to be seen in many areas, hiding far away. At the sound of approaching cars, everyone flees, dropping their possessions, sometimes even abandoning babies in their haste.

Living conditions for the displaced are life-threatening. They have no access to clean water, are often desperately short of food supplies, and their widely dispersed shelters are beyond the reach of the humanitarian community. Educational facilities have been closed, and aside from mobile clinics run by international organizations in some areas, health care is non-existent.

Rebel Abuses

APRD rebels in the northwest have engaged in widespread extortion, forced taxation, kidnappings for ransom, and beatings of civilians, particularly in the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago area of Ouham province. In that area, particularly on the Batangafo-Ouandago road, almost all villages have been systematically looted of all livestock, and village leaders have been regularly kidnapped for ransom. APRD rebels also have large numbers of child soldiers in their ranks, some as young as 12. APRD commanders expressed willingness to Human Rights Watch to demobilize the child soldiers if the post-demobilization security of the children could be guaranteed.

During its investigation in the field, Human Rights Watch documented one summary execution by the APRD (the killing of Mohammed Haroon in June 2006, in Gbaïzera) and did not identify any cases of home-burning by the group. Human Rights Watch has not received any credible additional reports of summary killings or village burnings by APRD rebels from local or international human rights organizations or journalists. On June 11, 2007, APRD rebels fired upon a vehicle of the international humanitarian



organization Doctors without Borders (*Médecins Sans Frontières, MSF*), killing Elsa Serfass, an MSF nurse. While the APRD immediately apologized for the incident, saying it had been a “mistake,” the persons responsible should be held to account.

Human Rights Watch’s research found that UFDR rebels in the northeast have carried out widespread abuses against



the civilian population. During attacks on villages and towns they have often indiscriminately fired at fleeing civilians, leading to unlawful killings. Meanwhile, UFDR rebels have been responsible for summary executions of captured civilians. From October to December 2006, the rebels carried out massive looting of the belongings and livestock of the civilian population in areas they controlled.

Women forcibly displaced by the government forces burning of homes wash their pots in a muddy stream outside Paoua. Tens of thousands of civilians live deep inside the bush without access to clean water, health care, humanitarian aid, or education out of fear from army attacks.

© 2007 Thomas Dworzak/Magnum Photos



The destroyed market of Kouvousou village, where Presidential Guard troops burned some 220 homes and shops in December 2006.

© 2007 Peter Bouckaert/Human Rights Watch



One of many homes burned in Ouadda in December 2006 in retaliation for the perceived support of the Gula community for the UFDR rebellion.

© 2007 Olivier Bercault/Human Rights Watch



A church burned by government forces near Kabo.

© 2007 Peter Bouckaert/Human Rights Watch

There have been allegations of rape by UFDR rebels, although Human Rights Watch has only been able to corroborate one case—a woman raped by five UFDR rebels during their brief capture of Birao in March 2007. The UFDR also has child soldiers in its ranks, and Human Rights Watch found that some of them had been forcibly recruited.

The Need for Protection

Establishing credible mechanisms to protect the civilian population from abuses is fundamental to addressing the human rights crisis in northern CAR. The responsibility for civilian protection lies first and foremost with the CAR authorities: they must take immediate steps to end military abuses and to re-establish a functioning police force and court system that serve to protect the rights of the civilian population.

However, the international community can also do more. A stronger international protection presence in the north is urgently needed. There already is a substantial UN human rights presence in CAR, in the form of a 19-person human rights unit in the office of the United Nations Peace-building Support Office in the Central African Republic (*Bureau d'appui des Nations Unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République centrafricaine, BONUCA*), a long-standing UN peace support mission established in 2000. However, the human rights unit has been largely passive to date and does not effectively monitor or report on human rights abuses in the north. The UN should take the necessary measures, including changes to the mandate of the human rights section, to ensure that the BONUCA human rights unit effectively monitors and reports on human rights abuses in the north, in the same way that the human rights units of UN peacekeeping missions operate in neighboring Sudan and DRC.

If the UN Security Council moves ahead with the deployment of a UN protection mission to CAR and Chad, that mission should focus on the real protection needs of the civilian population of both countries, and not focus solely on neutralizing the “spill-over effect” of the Darfur crisis.

The Need for Accountability

The crimes being committed in northern CAR by government security forces are no secret inside the country. Local newspapers and radio frequently report them, opposition parliamentarians have prepared public reports documenting the atrocities, and diplomatic envoys regularly raise their concerns with President Bozizé. Despite this, the government has not investigated, prosecuted, or punished a single military officer, or even publicly reprimanded them for any of the abuses. Even in the capital, Bangui, security forces carry out summary killings of



suspected bandits and rebels with impunity. During Human Rights Watch's visit, two handcuffed Chadian rebel suspects were executed on the outskirts of Bangui by security forces. The commander of the most notorious of the units, Lieutenant Eugène Ngaïkossé of the Bossangoa-based GP unit that has killed dozens of civilians and is directly implicated in most of the village burnings in the north, remains a free man and an active duty military officer to date.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecutor's office is already involved in the CAR, having announced in May 2007 that they would investigate crimes committed in CAR during the 2002-2003 fighting, and that they would continue to monitor possible crimes committed during the current conflict. The investigations of the ICC in CAR should not, however, detract from the primary obligation of the CAR authorities to end impunity and bring about accountability for crimes committed by its armed forces and others. Ultimately, the crisis in northern CAR will only be resolved

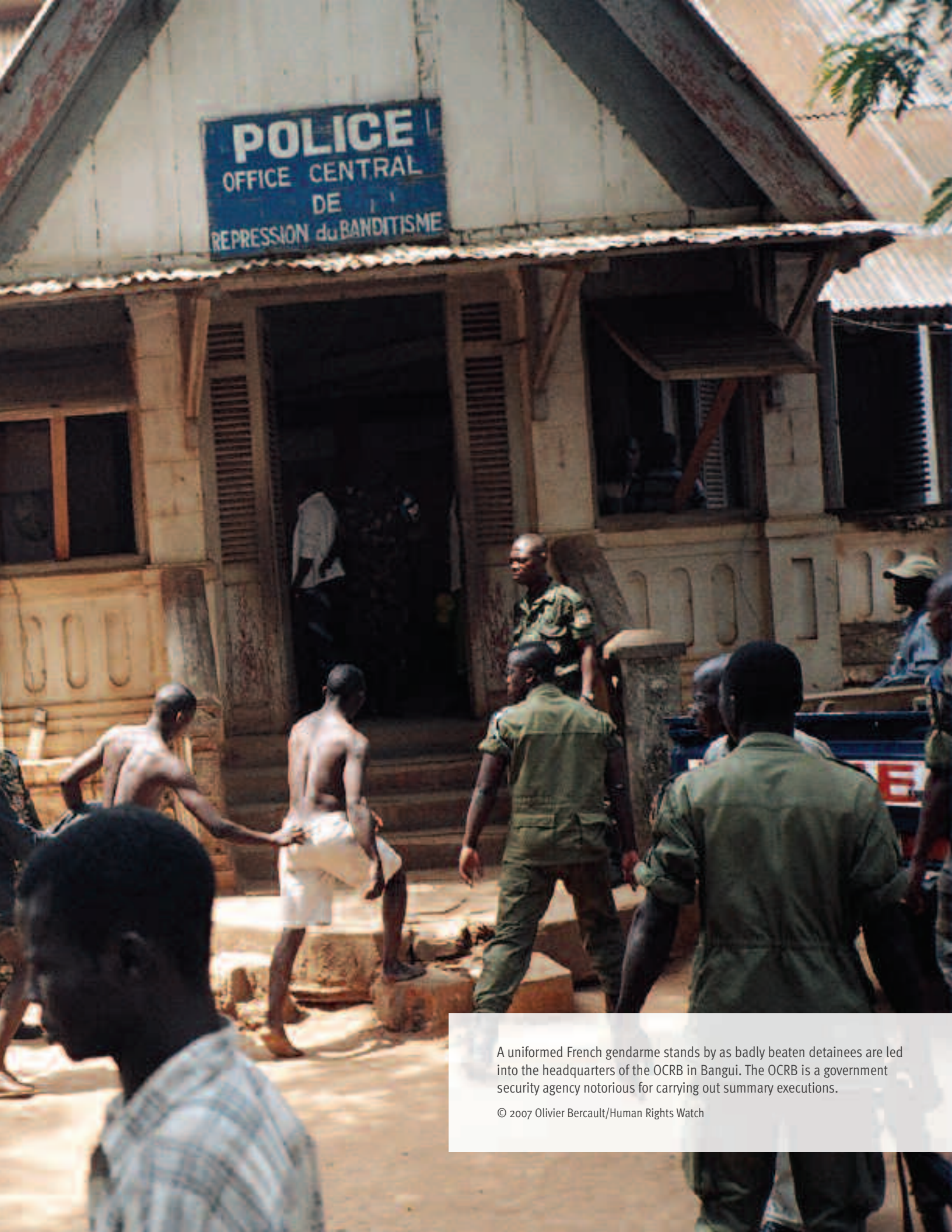
Some of the more than 1,000 homes burned by government forces in Ouandago in 2006.

© 2007 Peter Bouckaert/Human Rights Watch

when law and order is restored, and the institutions of justice have the capacity to punish those who commit crimes against the civilian population, including members of the army and the elite GP.

The international community—particularly France, without whose direct military support the government of President Bozizé would not survive—have an obligation to speak out about the abuses in northern CAR and to demand accountability for the crimes committed in northern CAR.





A uniformed French gendarme stands by as badly beaten detainees are led into the headquarters of the OCRB in Bangui. The OCRB is a government security agency notorious for carrying out summary executions.

© 2007 Olivier Bercault/Human Rights Watch

A man tortured by government forces in Paoua in January 2006 shows his severely disfigured arms.

© 2007 Thomas Dworzak/Magnum Photos

“At the base, they tied my arms behind my back and also my legs, arbatachar style. They cut me with razor blades on my arms. We were a total of eight youngsters who were detained, and they beat us for a long time. They beat us with their batons. The whole time they asked us questions: were we married, did we work, were we ever in the army, were we with the rebels? I kept saying no. There were many soldiers, a few would beat us and then others would come. We spent two days like this”.

“Five of us died from the beatings on the first day. ...The Abbé from the church came to see us the second day, and then they let us go. He took us to the hospital, and my younger brother died from his wounds on February 9. I was at the hospital for a long time and even had to go to Bangui for treatment. They had to remove [infected broken] bones from both my front arms. There still is a big unhealed wound on my foot. I still can’t use my hands because of the arbatachar tying”.

TESTIMONY OF A 27-YEAR-OLD STUDENT TORTURED BY CAR SOLDIERS IN JANUARY, 2006, IN PAOUA, FOLLOWING AN UNSUCCESSFUL APRD REBEL ATTACK ON THE TOWN.



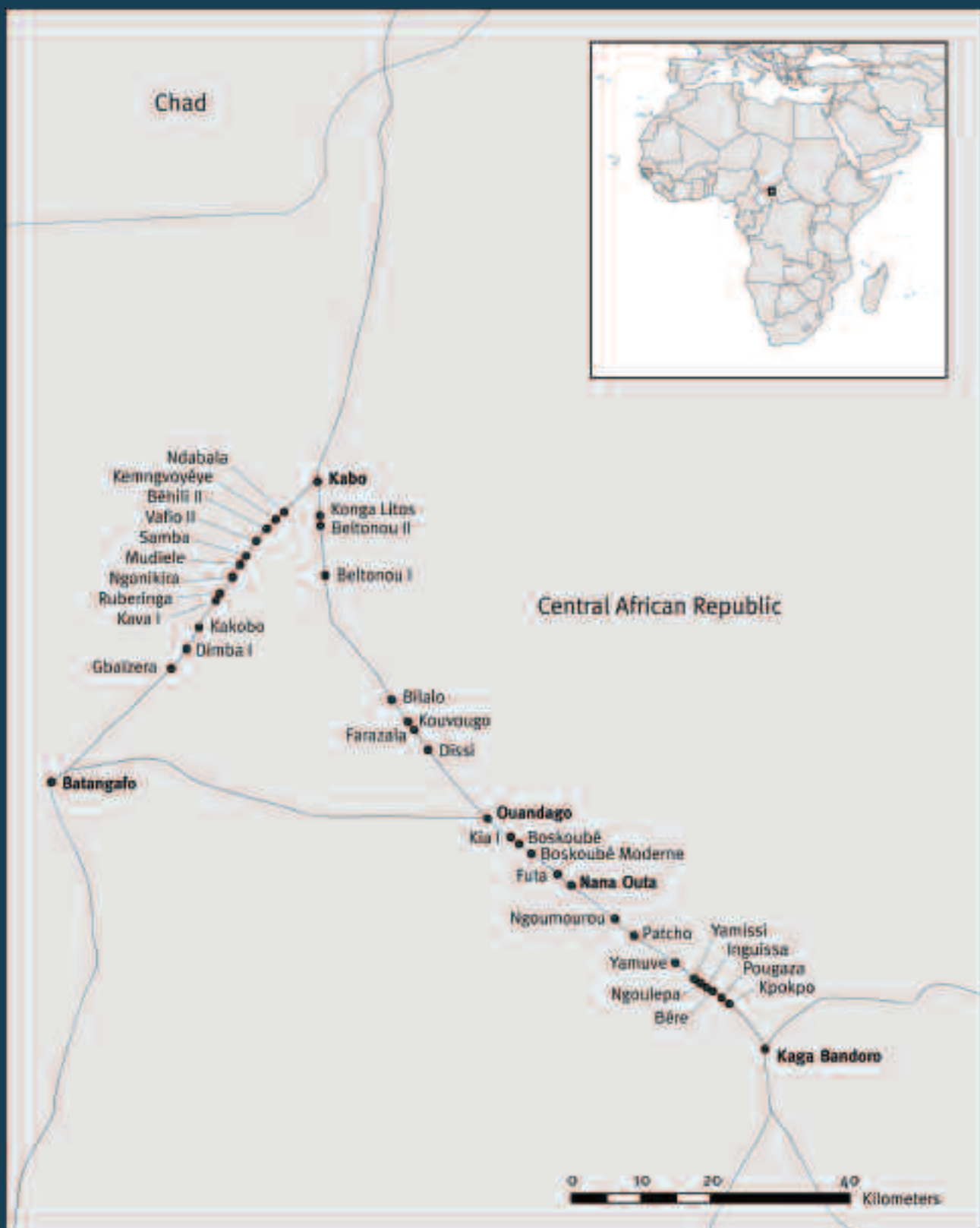
GLOSSARY

APRD	Armée populaire pour la restauration de la République et la démocratie —Popular Army for the Restoration of the Republic and of Democracy	HCDH	Haut Commissariat aux droits de l'homme —High Commissioner for Human Rights
BONUCA	Bureau d'appui des Nations Unies pour la consolidation de la paix en République Centrafricaine —United Nations Peace-Building Office in the Central African Republic	MISAB	Mission de surveillance des accords de Bangui —Inter-African Mission to Monitor the Implementation of the Bangui Agreements
CEMAC	Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale —Central African Economic and Monetary Community, now known as CEEAC-ECCAS	MLC	Mouvement de libération du Congo —Movement for the Liberation of the Congo
CFA	Communauté Financière d'Afrique —Financial Community of Africa	MLCJ	Mouvement des libérateurs Centrafricains pour la justice —Movement of Central African Liberators for Justice
CICR-ICRC	Comité international de la Croix-Rouge —International committee of the Red Cross	MPRD	Mouvement pour la paix, la reconstruction, et le développement —Movement for Peace, Reconstruction, and Development
CPI-ICC	Cour pénale internationale —International Criminal Court	MSF	Médecins sans Frontières —Doctors without Borders
FACA	Forces armées centrafricaines —Central African Armed Forces	OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
FDC	Front démocratique centrafricain —Central African Democratic Front	OCRB	Office Central de Répression du Banditisme —Central Bureau for the Repression of Banditry
FDPC	Forces démocratiques pour le peuple centrafricain —Democratic Forces for Central African people	UFDR	Union des forces démocratiques pour le rassemblement —Union of Democratic Forces for Unity
FOMUC	Force multinationale en Centrafrique —Multinational Force in the Central African Republic	PNUD-UNDP	Programme des Nations Unies pour le développement —United Nations Development Programme
FUC	Front uni pour le changement —United Front for Change	VSBG-SGBV	Violences sexuelles et basées sur le genre —Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
GAPLC	Groupe d'action patriotique pour la libération de Centrafrique —Patriotic Action Group for the Liberation of Central Africa	UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
GP	Garde présidentielle —Presidential Guard		



Children's images of fighting drawn on the walls of a compound along the Paoua-Boguila road burned down by government forces.

© 2007 Olivier Bercault/Human Rights Watch



Villages affected by house burnings in the Batangafo-Kabo-Ouandago-Kaga Bandoro area in 2006-2007



Area of UFDR rebel activity in northeastern Central African Republic in 2006-2007

Recommendations September 2007

To the Government of the Central African Republic

- Take all necessary steps, including by issuing clear public orders to the Central African Armed Forces (FACA), the Presidential Guard (GP), and other relevant government security agencies, to immediately cease attacks on civilians and civilian property in northern Central African Republic.
- Suspend from official duty, investigate, and prosecute all military personnel implicated in human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in Central African Republic since March 2003, both those who bear direct individual criminal responsibility and those with command responsibility.
- Investigate and prosecute any present or former member of the Bossangoa-based GP unit, including the former commander Eugène Ngaïkossé and his former deputy commander Abdoulayé Alias, for their individual actions as well as on the basis of command responsibility for crimes documented in this report, as well as other human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law.
- Review and revise the training curriculum of the Central African Republic security forces, the FACA and GP in particular, to ensure comprehensive training on human rights and international humanitarian law, including appropriate use of force and the protection of the civilian population and civilian objects.
- Deploy sufficient military personnel, police, and resources to areas affected by banditry, coupeurs de route, zaraguinas, and criminal nomads to ensure that civilians are protected from further attacks.
- Fully cooperate with and facilitate any International Criminal Court investigation in Central African Republic.
- Ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.

To the APRD, UFDR and other rebel factions

- Take all appropriate actions, in accordance with international standards, to prevent and punish human rights abuses, and violations of international humanitarian law by rebel commanders and combatants.
- Take action to ensure the demobilization of all child soldiers and end the recruitment of children under the age of 18.

To the Government of Chad

- Take all necessary steps, including by issuing clear public orders to government forces, to immediately cease attacks on civilians and civilian property in Central African Republic.
- Investigate and bring to justice all the members of the Chadian government forces involved in attacks on civilians in Central African Republic.

To the United Nations Security Council

- Reform the BONUCA human rights unit, if necessary by changing its mandate, so it will, in close coordination with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, effectively monitor and report on human rights abuses and violations of international humanitarian law in CAR, and work with the CAR authorities in developing a human rights plan of action and effective national human rights institutions.
- Consider the recruitment and use of child soldiers and other violations against children in CAR in the context of its working group on children and armed conflict.
- Deploy a civilian protection force to CAR and Chad with a mandate that includes effective civilian protection from government and rebel forces in northern CAR.

To the United Nations CAR country team

- Increase the protection capacity of UN agencies operative in CAR by deploying on-the-ground protection officers in northern CAR, and strengthening interagency protection mechanisms.
- Engage in dialogue with the APRD, UFDR, and other groups as appropriate to secure concrete planned measures to release all children under the age of 18 currently serving in armed groups, and to end all further recruitment of children in accordance with Security Council resolution 1612.
- Establish a country task force for monitoring and reporting on violations against children in armed conflict.

To the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Children and Armed Conflict

- Ensure the inclusion of information on the recruitment and use of child soldiers as violations of international law in relevant reports to the UN Security Council, including the identification of the specific parties responsible.

To the Government of France and other governments providing military assistance to CAR

- Ensure that French or other foreign troops operating with the Forces armées Centrafricaines (FACA) and other governmental armed forces respect international humanitarian law, prevent the FACA and other governmental armed forces from committing abuses, and intervene to protect all civilians in their area of deployment.
- Closely monitor human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law committed by CAR forces, and demand investigations and prosecutions of all documented violations.
- Condition military or police assistance to the Central African Republic government on respect of human rights, and the investigation and prosecution of military personnel implicated in violations of human rights and international humanitarian law.
- Ensure that all assistance programs have a prominent training component on human rights and international humanitarian law.