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UNITED NATIONS

United Nations Multidimensional  
Integrated Stabilization Mission in the  
Central African Republic

January – March 2025

## HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY BRIEF ON THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

### HIGHLIGHTS

- **Illegal attacks on civilians, killings, destruction and appropriation of property, CRSV, and grave child rights violations by the 3R in the Yadé Region.**
- **Arbitrary detention of 11 individuals linked to armed group leader Armel Sayo.**
- **Appointment of 11 members to the *Commission Vérité, Justice, Réparation et Réconciliation*.**
- **MINUSCA documents 825 human rights violations and abuses, affecting 1,301 civilians with 3R responsible for the most abuses and victims (257 abuses affecting 210 victims). Ouham-Pendé Prefecture recorded the most human rights violations and abuses and victims (284 violations/abuses affecting 239 victims).**
- **Main human rights violations and abuses include inter alia: right to physical and mental integrity (28%), conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) (18%), deprivation of liberty and conditions of detention (17%), right to property (13%), and right to life (10%).**

## Significant human rights-related developments

1. On 31 December 2024, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra issued a decree<sup>1</sup> granting pardons to several categories of prisoners. By 30 January, 794 prisoners had been released following the presidential pardon which is said to have reduced the prison population by approximately 30%. MINUSCA continues to support prison authorities in the implementation of the decree.
2. On 7 February, the Minister of Justice, Promotion of Human Rights and Good Governance, Arnaud Djoubaye-Abazène and SRSG Valentine Rugwabiza visited Bouar, Nana-Mambéré Prefecture and presided over the handover ceremony of the Military Court, newly rehabilitated and equipped through MINUSCA programmatic funds. The Court will enhance the operationalization of the military justice system in Bouar which is critical to strengthening the rule of law and combatting impunity.
3. On 11 February, the Minister of Justice issued a press release on the findings of the Judicial Commission of Inquiry appointed on 27 August 2024, to investigate allegations of human rights violations and abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law committed in the Haut-Mbomou Prefecture. The Minister stated that alleged perpetrators had already been identified and some arrested, and that the Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal of Bambari had been instructed to coordinate the investigations, prosecutions, and trials. The Minister added that a Court of First Instance would be established in Zémio to facilitate access to justice for the population.
4. On 21 March, 11 new Commissioners of the *Commission Vérité, Justice, Réparation, et Réconciliation* (CVJRR) were appointed following their nomination by a Selection Committee and submission of their names to the President of the Republic. The 11 members, including four women, are representatives of civil society, professional organizations, the Central African Bar Association, the judiciary, academia, religious groups, associations of victims, women’s organizations, and youth representatives. The appointments mark an encouraging step in the transitional justice process which is central to the implementation of the *Accord Politique pour la Paix et la et la Réconciliation* (APPR-RCA) specifically the fight against impunity and promotion of national reconciliation.

## SECURITY AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

5. On 20 January, during the Government's weekly press conference, the Minister of Communication and Media, and Government spokesperson Maxime Balalou, confirmed the arrest of former Central African Minister Armel Sayo by Cameroonian authorities on 17 January. Armel Sayo is said to be the leader of a new armed group, *Coalition militaire pour le salut du peuple et de redressement* (CMSPR), after having led several other armed groups, among others the *Comité national pour la restauration de la démocratie* (CNRD) as well as the *Révolution et justice* (RJ). The spokesperson indicated that judicial proceedings against the latter would strictly adhere to international and national laws. Since late January 11 people (eight men and three women) who are considered to have ties with armed group leader Armel Sayo have been detained in the *Office central pour la répression du banditisme* (OCRB). They were only allowed access to their lawyers in the presence of police officers since 13 March.

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<sup>1</sup> Décret n° 24-326 du 31 Décembre 2024 portant remise gracieuse des peines.

6. During the reporting period, arrest and detention of relatives and acquaintances of prominent political figures and disruption of the activities of some political actors raised concerns over the respect of civil liberties and civic space particularly in the context of upcoming elections. Two brothers of former Prime Minister Henri-Marie Dondra were arrested on the night of 19-20 March and still did not have access to their lawyers by the end of March. According to the former Prime Minister, the arrest was an attempt to prevent him from running for office in the presidential elections. In a third case, the Gendarmerie broke into a meeting of opposition party *Union pour le renouveau centrafricain* (URCA), in Bégoua, on the outskirts of Bangui. URCA's chair, Anicet Dologuélé, issued a communiqué condemning the Gendarmerie's intervention which halted the meeting without any explanation.
7. Regarding the electoral process, opposition leaders and civil society actors continued to call for dialogue to defuse pre-election tensions. The second phase of the voter registration process which took place from 11 to 24 March was completed largely successfully with all tablet registration kits having been returned to the National Elections Authority's (ANE) Data Processing Centre. Nonetheless, the process witnessed a few security incidents including targeted attacks against electoral personnel by armed groups.
8. In the **Yadé Region**,<sup>2</sup> there were concerns related to intercommunal violence linked to transhumance, involving *Retour, Réclamation, et Réhabilitation* (3R) elements and local self-defence groups operating in areas with limited State presence particularly in the Lim-Pendé, Ouham-Pendé, and Ouham Prefectures. Throughout the reporting period, 3R committed grave abuses against civilians including CRSV and attacked *Forces armées centrafricaines* (FACA) checkpoints. There were also a number of clashes between Fulani, farmers, FACA, other security personnel (OSP), and other armed groups. On 25 February, in Nzoro (104 km of Paoua), Lim-Pendé Prefecture, an unspecified number of armed Fulani herders supported by 3R elements, attacked the village, resulting in 10 people being killed, including a woman. Additionally, over 760 houses were set on fire and around 5,000 residents fled into the bush towards Ngaoundaye (20 km of Nzoro) and surrounding areas. Furthermore, in Ouham Prefecture, there were reports of civilian casualties and violations against the civilian population during the FACA/OSP operation against the *Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement* (CPC) in Kette-Gbako (35km W of Kouki).
9. In the **Plateau Region**,<sup>3</sup> the security situation was characterised by transhumance-related security incidents occurring around Boali (95 km NW of Bangui), Bossembele (145 km NW of Bangui), and Bouboui (42 km of Bangui), close to transhumance corridors. On 26 February, in Botembala (45 km of Boda), Lobaye Prefecture, 3R elements beat the village chief and shot and killed his father who had come to his assistance; on 15 March, 3R elements killed four men in Boghoro (106 km NW of Bangui), near the mining site of Pama in Ombella M'Poko Prefecture.
10. In the **Kaga Region**,<sup>4</sup> transhumance-related violence, clashes between FACA/OSP and unidentified armed elements, and *Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique* (UPC) activity along the major axes were reported. On 22 and 23 February, OSP allegedly tortured two FACA soldiers resulting in the death of

<sup>2</sup> The Yadé Region includes the Lim-Pendé, Ouham, and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures, as per the Gov. decree No. 21001, January 2021.

<sup>3</sup> The Plateaux Region includes Ombella M'Poko and Lobaye Prefectures, as per the Gov. decree No. 21001, January 2021.

<sup>4</sup> The Kaga Region includes the Nana-Grébizi, Kémo, and Ouaka Prefectures, as per the *Gov. decree No. 21001, January 2021*.

one of them. Throughout March, OSP seized property of miners, assaulted and arbitrarily arrested and detained dozens of miners and other locals in the vicinity of the Ndassima mining site, Ouaka Prefecture, a recurring pattern since mid-2024.<sup>5</sup>

11. The **Fertit** Region,<sup>6</sup> amid escalating violence and intensification of the civil war in Sudan, continued to experience human rights violations and cross-border security challenges. In the Vakaga Prefecture, the arrest of two suspected Sudanese Rapid Support Forces (RSF) members on 14 January in Am-Dafock led to increased tensions after RSF members responded by firing gunshots from Um-Dafoq, in Sudan, to Am-Dafock, in the Central African Republic. The detainees were subsequently released on the following day, along with their weapons. On 15 January, armed Sudanese men robbed a group of 11 civilians on board a vehicle hired by humanitarian workers and another group of three civilians near Délembé (50 km S of Birao). On 18 March, a 40-year-old man was shot in the legs by RSF elements (95 km NE of Birao), and, on 24 March, four civilians were robbed by RSF elements near Tiringoulou (108 km SW of Birao).
12. In the **Equateur** Region,<sup>7</sup> armed group activities were relatively limited but incidents by State actors in the Nana-Mambéré and Mambéré-Kadéï Prefectures continued to raise protection of civilians concerns, with most incidents in the region being committed by the FACA, and *Forces de sécurité intérieure* (ISF), especially the Gendarmerie. Throughout the reporting period, civilians in the Nana-Mambéré and Mambéré-Kadéï Prefectures were subjected to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, arbitrary arrest and/or detention, and appropriation or destruction of property by State actors. On 20 January, five Police officers beat a man at the police station in Baoro (60 km S of Bouar). On 14 February, a FACA soldier shot an unarmed woman, severely injuring her in Abba (140 km SW of Bouar). Moreover, between 1 and 3 March, four men arrested for alleged theft were mistreated during arrest and detention by three ISF officers in Bania (55 km SE of Berberati).
13. In the **Haut-Oubangui** Region,<sup>8</sup> activities by a number of armed groups and State actors, including OSP and *Wagner Ti Azandé* (WTA) impacted human rights and the protection of civilians. Despite deployment of OSP and FACA at the start of the year, the *Azandé Ani Kpi Gbe* (Azanikpigbe) and WTA elements have continued to commit human rights abuses and/or violations often at illegal checkpoints. The continued targeting of the Muslim minority population by WTA elements raised additional concerns. On 21 January, WTA elements attacked a Fulani camp located about 20 km SE of Mboki (75 km SW of Obo), killing 12 civilians, including six minors, and injuring four. WTA elements, including WTA leaders, were arrested in connection with the killings in Mboki and are presently detained in Bangui.<sup>9</sup> On 10 February, locals in Obo, Haut-Mbomou Prefecture, staged a peaceful protest to demand the release of

<sup>5</sup> OSP do not have the legal authority to arrest or detain individuals, based on Article 11 of the *Code de procédure pénale centrafricain*, which reserves these powers to judicial police officers.

<sup>6</sup> The Fertit Region includes the Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, and Vakaga Prefectures, as per the *Gov. decree No. 21001, January 2021*.

<sup>7</sup> The Equateur Region includes the Mambéré, Mambéré-Kadéï, Nana-Mambéré, and Sangha Mbaéré Prefectures, as per the *Gov. decree No. 21001, January 2021*.

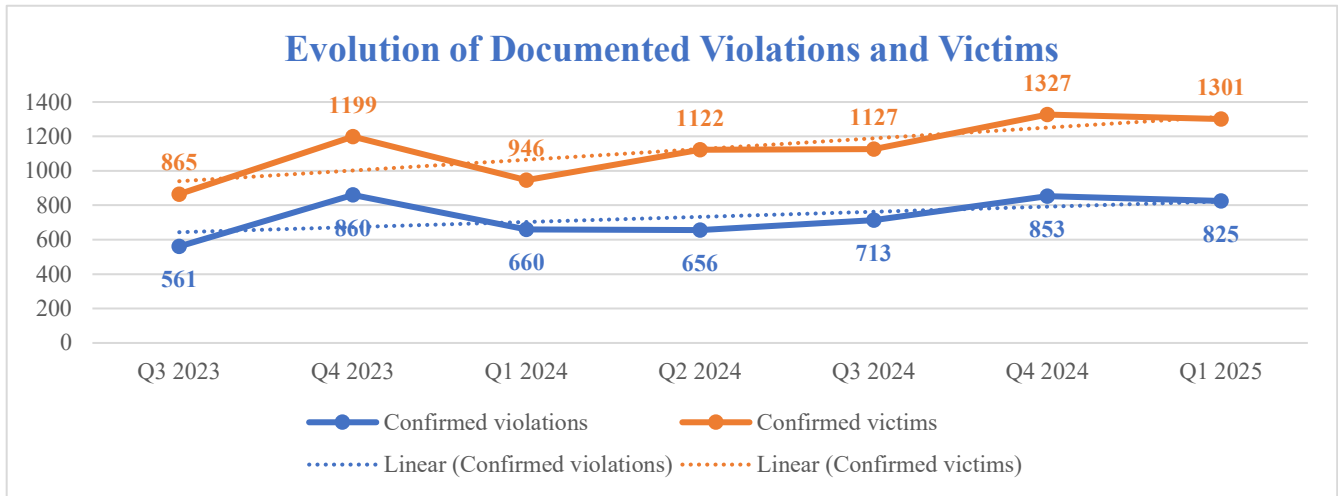
<sup>8</sup> The Haut-Oubangui Region includes Basse-Kotto, Mbomou and the Haut-Mbomou Prefecture, in accordance with government decree no. 21001, January 2021.

<sup>9</sup> On 24 January, ten WTA members were arrested in Mboki by five OSP agents and transferred to Bangui on 25 January. Additionally, four WTA, including two leaders, were arrested in Bangui on the same day by the Section de Recherche et d'Investigation (SRI).

WTA and Azanikpigbe elements. On 1 March, a high-level government delegation conducted a mission to Zémio (157km SW of Obo) in response to the protests. On 24 March, during a peace forum, the Azanikpigbe reportedly issued an ultimatum banning Muslims from entering Zémio and demanded exclusive control of Zémio and other localities by the Zandé community. On 28 March, 50-70 suspected Azanikpigbe elements ambushed MINUSCA patrol near Tabane (20 km W of Zémio), physically assaulting them, looting personal belongings and weapons, and killing one military observer (MILOB).

## GENERAL TRENDS

14. Despite certain aforementioned positive developments, human rights challenges remain. During the reporting period, MINUSCA verified **825 human rights violations and abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) affecting 1,301 civilian victims** (including 718 men, 153 women, 215 boys, 150 girls, and 65 groups of collective victims). This represents a 3.3% decrease in violations/abuses and a 1.9% decrease in victims compared to the previous quarter (Q4 2024).<sup>10</sup> The most common violations and abuses were related to the right to physical and mental integrity (28%), CRSV (18%), and deprivation of liberty and conditions of detention (17%). The 3R were responsible for the highest number of abuses (257 abuses affecting 210 victims), whilst the Gendarmerie were responsible for the highest number of victims (77 violations affecting 239 victims).



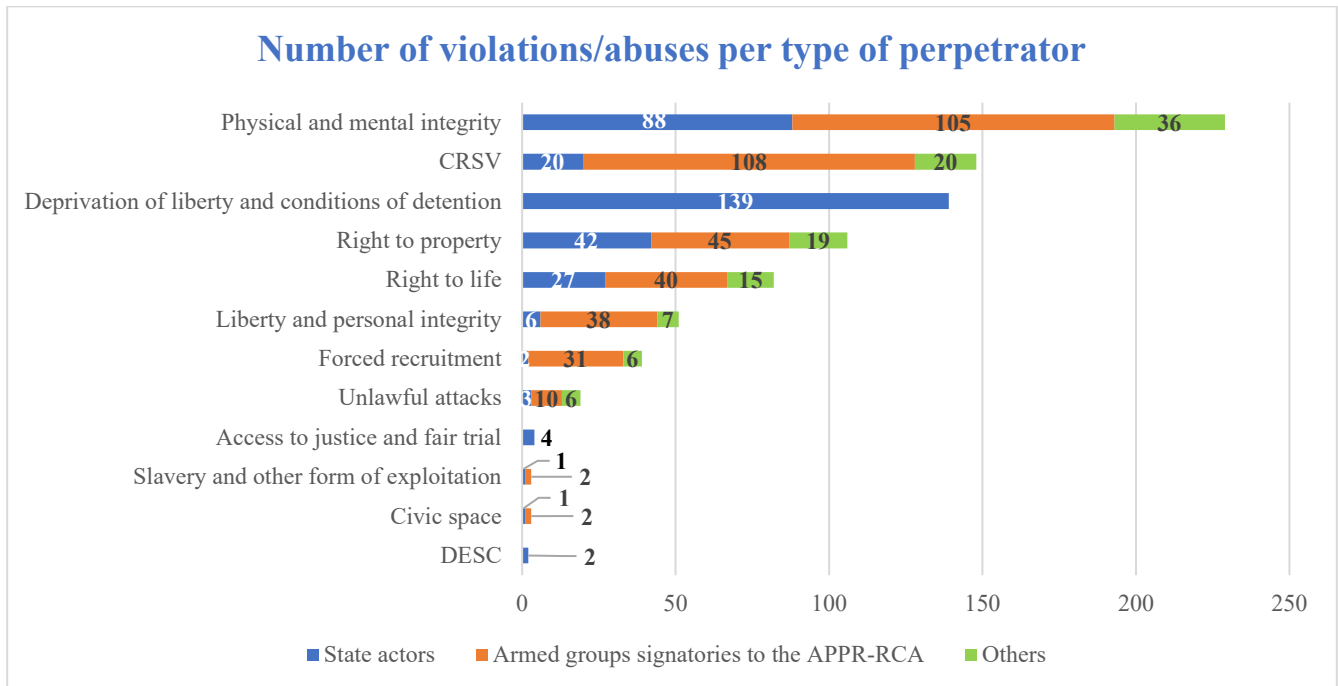
15. **State actors** were responsible for 41% of the human rights violations (335) and for 50% of the victims (652). This represents a 39% decrease in the number of violations and a 19% decrease in the number of victims by State actors compared to Q4 2024.<sup>11</sup> The common types of violations committed by State actors were primarily related to arbitrary arrest and detention, including detention beyond the legal time limit for custody, as well as violations linked to conditions of detention that do not comply with national and international standards (139 violations affecting 480 victims); the right to physical and mental integrity (88 violations affecting 117 victims), and the right to property (42 violations affecting 140

<sup>10</sup> In Q4 2024, MINUSCA verified 853 violations/abuses, affecting 1327 victims.

<sup>11</sup> In Q4 2024, State actors were responsible for 547 violations, affecting 805 victims. The decrease in the number of violations and victims by State actors in Q1 2025 is mostly due to the fact that the HRD investigated two major attacks in Q4 of 2024 (Dembia and Rafai, Mbomou), which led to a very high number of violations and victims being verified and registered in Q4.

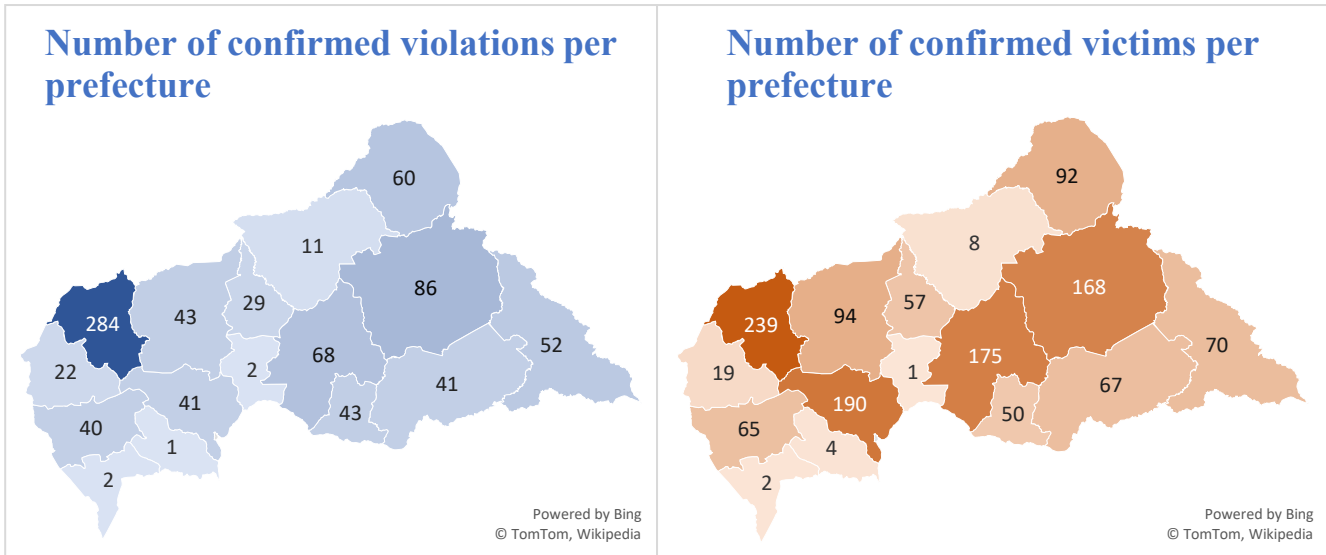
victims). Aside from the Gendarmerie, main perpetrators included the FACA (89 violations affecting 64 victims), the Police (60 violations affecting 118 victims) the OSP (51 violations affecting 124 victims), and the WTA and its proxies (38 violations affecting 44 victims). It is worth noting that four of the violations affecting 29 victims attributed to the Police were committed by the OCRB. Many of the violations committed by the OSP were committed jointly with the FACA (13 violations affecting 18 victims) or with the ISF (two violations affecting 60 victims).

16. **Armed groups signatories to the *Accord Politique pour la Paix et la Réconciliation (APPR-RCA)*** were responsible for 46% of abuses (381) and for 34% of the victims (443). This represents an increase of 46% in the number of abuses and a decrease of 4% in the number of victims compared to Q4 2024.<sup>12</sup> This increase is primarily attributed to the high number of CRSV cases and other human rights abuses committed by 3R members, documented during a series of investigation missions in Lim-Pendé and Ouham Pendé Prefectures. The most common abuses included CRSV (108 abuses affecting 144 victims), the right to physical and mental integrity (105 abuses affecting 145 victims), and the right to property (45 abuses affecting 84 victims). The main perpetrators were the 3R (257 abuses affecting 210 victims), the UPC (82 abuses affecting 118 victims) and CPC-affiliated Anti-Balaka (28 abuses affecting 93 victims).
17. **Other actors**, including armed groups non-signatories to the APPR-RCA, were responsible for 109 abuses (13% of total violations and abuses) and 207 victims (16% of total victims). The most common abuses included the right to physical and mental integrity (36 abuses/violations affecting 89 victims), CRSV (20 abuses/violations affecting 52 victims), and the right to property (19 abuses/violations affecting 86 victims). The main perpetrators were unidentified armed men (50 abuses affecting 60 victims), armed Fulani (12 abuses affecting 26 victims), and the RSF (10 violations affecting 16 victims).



<sup>12</sup> In Q4 2024, armed groups signatories to the *Accord Politique pour la Paix et la Réconciliation (APPR-RCA)* were responsible for 261 abuses, affecting 461 victims.

18. During the quarter under review, most violations/abuses and victims were documented in the **Yadé** Region (327 violations/abuses affecting 333 victims) linked primarily to activities by the 3R (250 violations/abuses affecting 197 victims) and unidentified armed men (23 abuses affecting 15 victims). Within the **Yadé** Region, most violations/abuses and victims were documented in the **Ouham-Pendé** and **Lim-Pendé** Prefectures as a result of several investigative missions in these prefectures which revealed a high number of CRSV cases (76% of verified CRSV cases occurred in the **Yadé** Region) and violations of the right to physical and mental integrity (41% of verified violations occurred in the **Yadé** Region).



19. Between January and March 2025, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 370 grave child rights violations against 280 children (149 boys, 131 girls). These included **recruitment and use** of 212 children (127 boys and 85 girls) – a 4% decrease compared to Q4 2024, during which 220 (171 boys, 49 girls) were victims of recruitment and use. The **Fertit** Region was the most affected with 72 cases, with all cases occurring in the Haute-Kotto Prefecture. The main perpetrators were **armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA**, who were involved in 74% of the cases of recruitment and use (156 cases); **other actors** were involved in 24% of cases (51 cases); and **State actors** were responsible for 2% of cases (five cases). ‘Recruitment and use’ was the most common grave violation committed during the period under review, followed by rape and other forms of sexual violence (56 violations affecting 91 victims; all girls) and by abduction (27 violations affecting 73 victims: 46 boys and 27 girls).

## MAIN HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AND ABUSES, AND VIOLATIONS OF IHL

20. In this report covering Q1 2025,<sup>13</sup> emphasis is placed on the abuses committed by the 3R in Yadé Region, including CRSV given its widespread use. Investigative missions conducted in February and March 2025 documented human rights abuses committed by the 3R armed group in the Lim-Pendé and Ouham-Pendé

<sup>13</sup> For a thorough overview of the human rights violations and abuses that occurred during the reporting period, please refer to the monthlies of January, February, and March, available on the following webpage <https://minusca.unmissions.org/en/human-rights-division-reports-0>

Prefectures. The documented violations include illegal attacks on civilians, killings, destruction and appropriation of property, CRSV, and grave child rights violations. Investigations revealed that 3R members perpetrated CRSV in small groups of two to five armed men, targeting women working in their fields, collecting water, or going to the market. While men and boys were also targeted, they were more often killed and ill-treated, particularly when attempting to protect women and girls.

21. Local communities appear to be fully aware of this modus operandi, leading to the men and boys staying in the villages out of fear of being killed by the armed elements. However, women and girls are faced with no alternatives and remain vulnerable to these attacks as they venture out to work on their farms and go to the market. It was also noted that several women and girls were rejected by their families and stigmatized by their communities once it became known that they had been raped by the armed men. The lack of access to critical support services such as medical, psychosocial, socio-economic, and legal assistance contributes to persistent stigma within the communities and hinders the full enjoyment of the rights of victims. It also limits the awareness of the victims about their right to seek assistance. It is worth noting that failure to adequately address this pattern of CRSV in the Yadé Region and beyond will further complicate efforts to enhance social cohesion between communities and, ultimately, achieve sustainable peace and stability. As investigations continue, MINUSCA, in collaboration with relevant UN entities and the Government, is working to improve access to critical services for victims of CRSV.

## CONFLICT-RELATED SEXUAL VIOLENCE

22. During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented **148 cases of CRSV affecting 214 victims** (including 102 women, 91 girls, and 21 men). This represents a 63% increase in cases and a 75% increase in victims compared to Q4 2024,<sup>14</sup> largely due to the investigation missions conducted in the **Yadé** Region. CRSV cases accounted for 18% of the total number of human rights violations and abuses, and 16% of the victims documented during the period under review. The male victims were all victims of forced nudity while women and girls were mainly victims of rape, including gang rape. The most affected prefectures were the Lim-Pendé (87 cases affecting 98 victims) and Ouham- Pendé (23 cases affecting 24 victims) Prefectures in the **Yadé** Region. Rape continued to be the most prevalent abuse (128 cases affecting 88 women and 83 girls), while other CRSV abuses included sexual slavery (seven cases affecting six women and four girls), attempted rape (five cases affecting two women and three girls), forced nudity (four cases affecting 21 men and five women), forced pregnancy (two cases affecting two girls), forced marriage (one case affecting one girl), and sexual assault and harassment (one case affecting one victim). CRSV perpetrators included armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA (73%), State actors (14%), and other actors (14%). The 3R (97 cases affecting 109 victims) and unidentified armed men (14 cases affecting 35 victims) were the main perpetrators. It is worth highlighting that cases of CRSV remain underreported due to the fear of stigmatization and reprisals, the climate of impunity, the absence of adequate support for survivors in CAR, as well as socio-cultural stereotypes.

## DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY AND CONDITIONS OF DETENTION

23. During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented **139 violations related to the deprivation of liberty and conditions of detention affecting 480 victims** (including 409 men, nine women, 45 boys,

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<sup>14</sup> In Q4 2024, there were 91 cases of CRSV documented, affecting 122 victims.



1 girl, and 16 groups of collective victims). This represents a 36% decrease in the number of violations and a 7% decrease in the number of victims in comparison to Q4 2024.<sup>15</sup> The decrease would be related to a number of factors, including the presidential pardons to several categories of prisoners<sup>16</sup>. Most violations were related to arbitrary arrest and/or detention (98 violations affecting 449 victims), largely due to detention beyond the legal time limit for custody. The Gendarmerie and Police were the main perpetrators, with 60 and 43 violations, respectively.

24. During the reporting period, detention conditions remained concerning. Overcrowding in prisons, partly due to preventive detention and the prolonged absence of judicial personnel continue to have serious implications for the rights of persons in detention. For instance, the separation of detainees remains a challenge in police and Gendarmerie holding cells. In 10 instances concerning 17 minors, authorities failed to ensure the separation of the minors from the adult population. Nonetheless, this represents a decrease compared to Q4 2024 (19 instances concerning 35 minors) which could be a result of the presidential pardons granted to 794 detainees (759 men, 29 women, and six boys), the directives of the Minister of Justice requiring the submission of weekly data on prisons, and the presence of judicial personnel in some duty stations.
25. It is worth highlighting that persons in custody and detainees are protected by various national laws, including the Constitution, the *Code pénal* (Criminal Code) and the *Code de procédure pénale* (Criminal Procedure Code) adopted by laws n°10.001, n°10.002 and the law n°12.003 on fundamental principles of the prison system.<sup>17</sup>

## RIGHT TO PHYSICAL AND MENTAL INTEGRITY

26. During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented **229 violations/abuses of the right to physical and mental integrity**<sup>18</sup> affecting **351 victims** (192 men, 82 women, 31 boys, 33 girls, and 13 groups of collective victims). This represents a 14.5% increase in the number of violations/abuses, and a 5% increase in the number of victims in comparison to Q4 2024.<sup>19</sup> The two most documented violations/abuses were cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment (166 affecting 252 victims), and threats to physical and mental integrity (35 affecting 69 victims). Notably, there were also 12 documented cases of torture affecting 22 victims.
27. **State actors** were responsible for 88 violations affecting 117 victims; **armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA** were responsible for 105 abuses affecting 145 victims; and **other actors** were responsible for 36 abuses affecting 89 victims.
28. In line with its obligations under Article 5 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and Articles 2 and 16 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and

<sup>15</sup> In Q4 2024, there were 216 violations related to deprivation of liberty documented, affecting 515 victims.

<sup>16</sup> *Décret n° 24-326 du 31 Décembre 2024 portant remise gracieuse des peines.*

<sup>17</sup> Additional national texts protecting persons in custody and detainees: Decree n°160090 on standard internal regulations applicable to prisons in the Central African Republic, decree n°160087 on the organization and operation of prisons in the Central African Republic and determining their internal regulations, as well as decree n°160088 redefining the framework of the prison administration.

<sup>18</sup> Violations related to the right of physical and mental integrity including ill-treatment, torture, and maiming and injuries.

<sup>19</sup> In Q4 2024, there were 200 violations/abuses of the right to physical and mental integrity affecting 333 victims.

Articles 4 and 5 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the CAR Government is expected to take concrete steps to prevent and investigate cases relating to torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.