

Central African Republic in danger of becoming a failed state, UN warns

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USPA News - The United Nations (UN) Security Council warned Wednesday that turmoil in the Central African Republic (CAR) poses a "serious threat" to the region as a whole, with one UN official urging swift action to prevent the country from becoming a failed state. The 15-member Security Council issued a unanimous declaration after it was briefed on the situation in the African country, demanding that all parties refrain from further violence against civilians, allow safe and unhindered humanitarian access throughout the country, and respect international humanitarian and human rights law.

"The members of the Security Council expressed deep concern at the security situation in CAR, characterized by a total breakdown in law and order, and the absence of the rule of law," the press statement said. "They stressed that the armed conflict and crisis in CAR pose a serious threat to the stability of the CAR and the region." The Security Council, which is composed of five permanent members and ten non-permanent members, also expressed "grave concern" about the significant deterioration of the humanitarian situation as well as violations of international humanitarian law and reports of widespread human rights violations, notably by Séléka rebels who overthrew President Francois Bozize in March. The Council said such violations include arbitrary arrests and detention, sexual violence against women and children, torture, rape, extrajudicial killings, recruitment and use of children and attacks against civilians. They also strongly condemned targeted attacks against UN staff members. "The members of the Security Council underlined the need for swift progress on the political track, which will be vital to achieving any progress in the country," the communique added. "The members of the Security Council strongly urged all parties to comply with the Libreville Agreements of 11 January 2013, as well as the N'Djamena Declaration, of 18 April 2013, which provide the basis for a peaceful political resolution to the crisis in CAR." The statement continued: "They further urged the parties to increase efforts to implement the agreement. In this regard, they called for the swift implementation of transitional arrangements which shall lead to the holding of free, fair and transparent elections, in line with the time-frame called for by the N'Djamena Declaration." Valerie Amos, the UN's Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, told Council members that the humanitarian situation in CAR deteriorated "dramatically" over the past few months, shifting from being a long-term crisis of poverty and chronic vulnerability to a complex emergency characterized by violence, acute needs and grave protection issues. "The Central African Republic is not yet a failed State but has the potential to become one if swift action is not taken," Amos told the Security Council. "If inadequately addressed, this crisis threatens to spread beyond the Central African Republic's borders and to further destabilize a region already facing significant challenges." The Security Council also emphasized that those responsible for violations and abuses of international human rights law and violations of international humanitarian law must be held accountable at either the national or international level, and recalled last week's statement from the International Criminal Court (ICC) which said the office will investigate and, if necessary, prosecute those most responsible for the commission of serious crimes. "The findings of the OHCHR Fact Finding Mission to CAR, which will be presented formally in the High Commissioner's report to the Human Rights Council later this year, seem to confirm that crimes that may fall under the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court continue to be committed in CAR," ICC Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said on August 7. "I reiterate my previous calls to those responsible for committing these crimes to desist forthwith." The permanent members of the UN Security Council are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The current non-permanent members are Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Luxembourg, Morocco, Pakistan, South Korea, Rwanda, and Togo. The Central African Republic has been through a series of coups and revolts since its independence from France in 1960. Located next to Cameroon, the African country is one of the poorest in the world, despite considerable agricultural, water and mineral resources. But corruption is rife and undermines the timber and diamond industries.

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