



**Meeting of the Security Council in Arria format on
Inter-communities Dialogue and prevention of crimes in Central African Republic**

**Statement of Under Secretary-General/Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide
Mr. Adama Dieng**

Your Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen.

I thank the Permanent Missions of France and Nigeria, particularly His Excellency Ambassador Gérard Araud and Her Excellency Ambassador Joy Ogwu, for convening this meeting to exchange ideas on actions that could promote inter-community dialogue and the prevention of atrocity crimes in the Central African Republic.

Your Excellencies, since my last briefing to the Security Council on 24 January 2014, the situation in the Central African Republic has deteriorated significantly. We are facing a very serious protection crisis with continued, brutal, targeted attacks against individuals and groups on the basis of their religious affiliation and lack of capacity by the transitional authorities and international actors to protect those at risk. The Central African Republic provides a clear example of how armed elements can manipulate communities and incite them to violence along religious lines even in situations where these communities have lived peacefully together for generations.

The retreat of the ex-Seleka from Bangui has sparked renewed attacks against their remaining members, their associates and their perceived supporters, as well as the Muslim population as a whole. Muslims are now being deliberately and systematically targeted by the anti-Balaka and by mobs of civilians in Bangui and in the countryside. These attacks have reportedly involved mass killings, targeted assassinations and public lynching, sexual violence, , looting and the destruction of property. Mob violence has reached unprecedented levels. Such attacks are publicly referred to by the anti-Balaka as “cleansing operations”. There are reports of hate speech by anti-balaka on public media referring to Muslims as “rotten potatoes” and public justification of their actions.

Every day we hear of horrific attacks against Muslim civilians by anti-Balaka or mobs. The gruesome nature of the attacks and mutilation of the bodies of the victims, as well as desecration of places of worship, are clear signs that the attacks are intended to send a strong message to the victim group. For example, on 28 February 2014 the Muslim Deputy Mayor of Mbaiki, which is located 60 miles south of Bangui,, was attacked in cold blood by his own neighbours, who are predominantly Christian. He was speared to death, his body decapitated and mutilated, just a few metres from a police station. He had been one of fewer than ten Muslims left in the town out of a pre-conflict population of 2,000. Twelve suspects were arrested, some with fresh blood on their machetes, but they were immediately released.

In addition to physical attacks, in some locations, for instance in Boda (190 km from Bangui), anti-Balaka elements are reportedly preventing civilians from selling food to Muslims, thereby imposing conditions that threaten the lives of this group.

The deliberate and targeted violence against Muslims has emptied Bangui and many other major towns of their Muslim population. . Many Muslims have fled to the north of the country and others have fled across borders. It is reported that only about 20% of the total Muslim population are left in CAR, the rest have been forced to flee outside the country. The remaining between 15,000 and 20,000 Muslims across the country are at high risk and urgently require protection. Such widespread and systematic targeting of civilians based on their religion or ethnicity indicates that crimes against humanity are being committed and that the risk of genocide remains high. There is a pressing and urgent need to protect the civilian population in the Central African Republic, especially the Muslim minority, from the atrocity crimes being committed. As the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Coordination, Valerie Amos, indicated in her briefing to the Security Council last week, “Unless the current trajectory is urgently reversed, the demographic and social changes taking place in the Central African Republic will have severe and lasting consequences for the country, the region, and the continent”.

Your Excellencies, there is no doubt that the actions of MISCA, the African Union peacekeeping force, and the French and EU troops, have contributed immensely to the protection of Central Africans, particularly in and around IDP camps. It is clear that security and stabilization of the situation remains a top priority. However, it is also evident that resources and capacity of the international forces to protect the population are limited, given the scale of the violence and the fact that it is happening across the country. Today’s discussion on “inter-communities dialogue and prevention of atrocity crimes” is extremely important, given these developments. It will be difficult to achieve peace, security and stability in the Central African Republic without a significant part of the population, the Muslim population.

The country risks being divided, with a Muslim north and a Christian south, as Muslims are forced to flee for safety to the north. We know that atrocities have been committed by both sides; the ex-Seleka violations and abuses that were perceived to be against Christians prompted the anti-Balaka reprisal attacks against Muslims, which are now out of control. We have to work together, urgently, to find ways to promote reconciliation between these two communities that have traditionally co-existed peacefully.

While in Bangui in December 2013, I met with religious leaders, including Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga and Imam Oumar Loayama, who are here with us today. We must pay tribute to their courage and determination to convey peace messages to their followers even amidst an atmosphere of hatred and desolation. As we in the international community call for a strengthened protection force in the Central African Republic, for support to transitional authorities to restore state authority and for a political process, we must not forget that reconciliation must be at the heart of any process to secure peace among

Central Africans. Let us try our best to support the work of these religious leaders and all other initiatives aimed at restoring national and social cohesion.

My Office is working with the Transitional Authorities to launch a national committee on the prevention of genocide and other atrocity crimes in accordance with the ICGLR Protocol on the prevention and punishment of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and all forms of discrimination. We hope that this committee will be launched in May 2014. We have agreed with the Authorities that the national committee will be used as a vehicle to carry out community level peace forums across all the sixteen provinces in the country. We have emphasized to the authorities the need to ensure that the national committee includes both state and non-state actors, particularly religious leaders, civil society, youth and women representatives.

I would like to finish by emphasizing that it is hard to achieve peace and reconciliation without justice. The dialogue between communities should also include the objective of bringing the perpetrators of crimes committed to justice. Religious and community leaders have a moral obligation to call for justice and to speak out for the victims of atrocities. National authorities should take the lead in the pursuit of justice. I call on the transitional authorities as well as regional and sub-regional leaders and the broader international community to support all initiatives aimed at ending impunity. If perpetrators go unpunished they will continue to kill, maim, rape, loot and commit atrocities. We must give our full support to the work of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry and of the International Criminal Court to establish the facts about what has taken place and obtain justice for the victims.

The Central African Republic is on the brink; we must remain committed to the clarion call of “never again” and save lives while we still can.

Thank you.

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Under Secretary-General

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