

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Attacks on schools and military use of schools continued during this reporting period, although at a reduced rate compared to 2020 and 2021. GCPEA identified at least 40 cases of military use of schools or attacks on schools perpetrated by state armed forces, other security personnel, and non-state armed groups in 2022 and 2023.

CONTEXT

During the 2022-2023 reporting period, conflict continued in Central African Republic (CAR), and the security situation remained unstable.¹ Violence between the armed forces, supported by other security personnel and Rwandan forces, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the Coalition des Patriotes pour le Changement (CPC - Coalition of Patriots for Change), a grouping of non-state armed groups led by former president Francois Bozizé, continued.² The 2019 peace agreement between the government and 14 armed groups fell apart in 2020;³ however, some armed groups that signed the peace deal disbanded during the reporting period, including four in December 2022, and two in April 2023, in addition to factions of other groups.⁴

Local and regional elections, originally scheduled for 2022, were rescheduled twice in 2023 before being postponed to 2024.⁵ In May 2023, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra announced a constitutional referendum to allow unlimited presidential terms and to increase term length;⁶ the referendum was passed in August 2023.⁷ The government threatened members of civil society and media ahead of anticipated local elections and the constitutional referendum, according to Human Rights Watch.⁸ The economic situation continued to deteriorate, leading to strikes across various sectors.⁹

Violence continued during the reporting period. The UN reported that attacks by armed groups increased in late 2022, affecting civilians, humanitarian actors, and national forces.¹⁰ In early 2023, CPC conducted three attacks against the government using explosive devices in Nana-Mambéré and Vakaga prefectures.¹¹ During the reporting period, the number of incidents involving explosive devices increased, with 53 incidents in 2022 and 82 incidents in 2023, resulting in 12 and 27 fatalities respectively, according to the UN.¹²

The humanitarian situation remained difficult during the reporting period,¹³ including due to the presence of explosive devices, which restricted humanitarian access in many areas of the country.¹⁴ The UN reported that 3.4 million people needed humanitarian assistance in 2023, including 1.6 million children.¹⁵ In 2023, more than 514,000 people were internally displaced, and CAR hosted more than 48,000 refugees and asylum seekers, primarily from Sudan.¹⁶

Conflict and insecurity continued to impact education during the reporting period. The UN reported in 2022 that at least 999 schools were closed due to insecurity,¹⁷ and that schools in Ouadda, Yalinga, and Sam-Ouandja regions in Haute-Kotto prefecture had not been operational for four years.¹⁸ Over half a million children

were at risk of dropping out of school or were out of school in 2023, according to the UN.¹⁹ The UN reported that over 220 children were recruited between January 2022 and June 2023.²⁰

ATTACKS ON SCHOOLS

GCPEA identified at least 24 attacks on schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This marks a decrease as compared to the previous reporting period, when over 48 attacks were identified in 2020 and 2021.²¹

In 2022, GCPEA identified at least 13 attacks on schools.²² For example, the UN reported that, on June 23, 2022, members of non-state armed groups looted a primary school in Ouanda-Djallé town, Vakaga prefecture.²³

The UN reported five attacks that destroyed schools in 2023.²⁴ Separately, GCPEA identified at least 11 attacks on schools in 2023.²⁵ Since it is not clear whether the UN incidents overlapped with those identified by GCPEA, they were not included in the total, to avoid double counting. In one incident, on April 6, 2023, an explosion in a military base near a school in Carnot city, Mambéré prefecture, led the school to close for over four weeks, according to the UN.²⁶

ATTACKS ON SCHOOL STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND OTHER EDUCATION PERSONNEL

GCPEA identified one incident of an attack on teachers during the reporting period, which involved protest repression. This was a similar rate as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified two such incidents, also involving protest repression.²⁷

Amid ongoing teacher strikes in February and March 2023, for improved pay and conditions, police reportedly arrested and interrogated three teacher union leaders on March 9, 2023; the union leaders were reportedly released the following day.²⁸

MILITARY USE OF SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES

GCPEA identified at least 16 cases of military use of schools during the 2022-2023 reporting period. This marks a decline as compared to the previous reporting period, when GCPEA identified at least 45 such incidents.²⁹

The UN reported that armed actors, in particular the Armed Forces of the Central African Republic (FACA), other security personnel, and CPC groups, occupied 14 schools during 2022.³⁰ Separately, GCPEA identified six incidents of military use in 2022. Since it was unclear how many of these incidents overlapped with the UN count, they were not included in the total number of military use cases, to avoid double counting. Incidents collected by GCPEA:

- On March 17, 2022, FACA and other security personnel used two schools in Sam-Ouandja, Haute-Kotto prefecture, according to the UN.³¹
- Between May 23, 2022, and May 29, 2023, FACA and other security personnel established temporary bases at a primary and secondary school in Gordil town, Vakaga prefecture, according to the UN; classes were suspended during this time, and some students and teachers fled.³²
- In July 2022, the UN reported that UPC forces occupied two schools.³³

The UN reported that 11 schools were used for military purposes in 2023, and also that six of those were vacated the same year.³⁴ Separately, GCPEA identified four cases of the military use of schools in 2023.³⁵ However, since it was not clear in which year some incidents began, not all have been included in the total for the reporting period, to avoid double counting. Examples included:

- In February 2023, the UN reported that armed forces used a primary school in Lady village, Ouham prefecture, disrupting students' access to education.³⁶
- On March 17, 2023, armed forces began using a primary school in Ouham-Pendé prefecture, as reported by the UN; the school was still occupied in May 2023.³⁷
- The UN reported that, between April and June 2023, armed forces occupied a school in Haut-Mbomou prefecture.³⁸

ENDNOTES

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