



Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS AND  
DEPUTY EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR, KYUNG-WHA KANG**

**PRESS BRIEFING ON CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC  
AND CAMEROON**

**NEW YORK, 24 FEBRUARY 2015**

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen of the press, for giving me this opportunity to brief you on my recent visit to the Central African Republic and Cameroon. I did this visit jointly with the Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, Dr. Chaloka Beyani, and also with ECHO's Director of Operations, Mr. Jean-Louis de Brouwer.

Our aim was to help focus the global spotlight on the complex and tragic humanitarian emergency that continues in the CAR and its impact on neighbouring Cameroon.

In spite of the notable progress made on the security and political fronts in the past year, the humanitarian situation in the CAR remains dire: more than 2.7 million people out of a population of 4.6 million require humanitarian assistance. Half a million of them are still displaced within the country, with a further half million across the borders as refugees in neighbouring countries.

In CAR, I visited the capital Bangui, and some of the IDP sites within the city, and also IDP sites in Bambari and Yaloke.

The overwhelming majority of displaced and refugee families that I met mentioned that insecurity is the main obstacle to them in returning to their homes, or being located elsewhere. They also called for reparation and compensation mechanisms to be established for the violence and losses they suffered. People from minority groups such as the Fulani – also known as Peul - expressed strong feelings of having been marginalized in society.

I was particularly alarmed by the fact that the lines between armed elements and civilians have become entirely blurred in many displacement sites. As we know, preserving the civilian nature of IDP camps and sites is vital – without this the UN and our partners cannot provide effective assistance and protection to civilians.

In many places outside Bangui, state authority is almost non-existent. This means that aid organizations are the main providers of life-saving assistance and many basic services – and we really stretch our capacity and mandates to the limits to do this.

It is also a very dangerous place for our work: last year there were nearly 140 security incidents directly targeting aid workers, and since 1 January this year, four humanitarian workers have been kidnapped.

We repeated to all we met that humanitarian organizations are working in the country only with the aim of assisting everyone in need regardless of their ethnic, religious and political affiliations.

We also stressed the importance of maintaining the capacity of aid groups to operate independently and reinforce the perception of their independence and neutrality – especially at a time when international forces are stepping up operations against armed groups inside the country.

In Cameroon, we travelled to Yaoundé and visited the Gado camp for CAR refugees in the eastern part of the country.

I was impressed by the commitment shown by the Cameroon national and local authorities in helping the refugees from CAR. With the support of UN agencies and NGOs, the Government has managed to improve living conditions in the camps.

Although the influx of Central Africans has almost stopped, Cameroon is now facing enormous challenges from the impact of attacks by the Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria as well as in the far north of Cameroon itself. It is an extremely complicated environment for aid organizations to work in, especially as the humanitarian needs grow.

In both these countries, the lack of resources is hampering the aid response. We must regain broad donor attention. In the current worldwide context of multiple crises, the biggest threat to the vulnerable people in both countries is the neglect from the international community.

We must not forget the people in this region, who have suffered so much and who are dependent on external assistance for survival and to rebuild their lives.