Central African Republic

Country Overview

Politics

The Central African Republic (CAR) is a presidential republic in Central Africa. In March 2016, independent candidate Faustin-Archange Touadera was elected president after a decade of unstable government and conflict between military forces and rebel groups that led to significant civilian casualties. As of 2017, the country is effectively partitioned and armed groups act as the de facto government in many regions of the country and were reported to carry out serious human rights violations.

Economy

The World Bank classified CAR as a low-income country. The conflict in 2013 led to an economic collapse in which GDP fell by 36 percent. Ongoing security challenges have hindered economic development. Gold, diamonds, wood and cotton are key exports.

Social/Human Development

The Central African Republic ranked last — 188 out of 188 countries — on the Human Development Index with a score of 0.352 in 2015, falling in the low human development category. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated that there were 216,392 internally displaced persons within CAR at the end of 2015. According to the World Bank, more than half the population needed urgent humanitarian assistance in 2016, with an even higher number living in poverty.

There are seven predominant ethnic groups in CAR: Baya (33 percent), Banda (27 percent), Mandjia (13 percent), Sara (10 percent), Mboum (7 percent), M’Baka (4 percent), and Yakoma (4 percent). The remaining two percent of the population is from other ethnic groups. The population is also divided across different religious groups, with 35 percent holding indigenous beliefs, 25 percent Protestant, 25 percent Roman Catholic, and 15 percent Muslim.

U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 3

According to the Trafficking in Persons Report, trafficking risk among children may be found in export supply chains including agriculture, artisanal gold, and diamond mining. Ba’aka (pygmy) minorities are vulnerable to trafficking in the agriculture sector.

Read the full TIP Report at: https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271162.htm

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

CAR has negative net migration. Around 1.27 percent of the total resident population within CAR are migrants. In 2015, 436,171 persons left CAR while only 81,598 persons migrated to the country.

The largest source countries for migrants to CAR are Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Chad, and France. Cameroon is by far the top destination country for migrants from CAR. Other migrant destination countries include Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Congo.⁹
Exports and Trade

The top exports from Central African Republic were vehicles, wood, parts of aircraft, machinery, and diamonds. The official diamond export statistics are thought to underestimate the extent of diamond production due to smuggling.
According to mirror data, the top importing countries from Central African Republic are France, Burundi, China, Cameroon and Germany.\textsuperscript{12}
In 2015, Central African Republic was the 195th largest exporter to the United States. Wood was a primary export to the United States.¹³
Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The U.S. Department of State has reported that the government generally respects the constitutionally provided freedom of association, but that nonpolitical organizations are prohibited from uniting for political purposes. Several categories of workers, including senior state employees, security forces and foreign workers who have been in the country for less than two years are prohibited from joining unions without authorization. Foreign citizens can not easily hold union positions.14

In practice, the ITUC reports that the breakdown of the rule of law in 2013 led to human rights violations by the interim government, and held that when the governmental institutions have failed, the protections of workers’ rights is accordingly limited.15 The ITUC rated the Central African Republic at 5+ in its 2016 Annual Global Rights Index, the highest risk score on their scale.16

Working Conditions

The law set the minimum wage at CFA 28,000, with CFA 26,000 for government workers and 8,500 CFA francs for agricultural workers. This minimum wage only applies to the formal sector,17 which leaves the wide-ranging informal sector – the bulk of economic activity – nearly wholly unregulated. The law sets a workweek of 40 hours a week, while household employees can work 52 hours per week. Additionally, the law sets out general health and safety standards, but these have been clearly defined.18

Discrimination

The law states that it is illegal to discriminate based on race, national or social origin, gender, opinions, or belief, but the U.S. Department of State reports that this anti-discriminatory law is not enforced.19 Additionally, there are many identifying factors that are not prohibited under the law, such as age, disability, gender identity, and HIV-positive status. Discrimination against women and migrant workers is reported to have occurred throughout the country.20

Forced Labor

The law prohibits forced labor, but the U.S. Department of State reports that resources, inspections, remediation and penalties are inadequate.21
Child Labor

The law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 14, but children as young as 12 can be employed in types of light work in agriculture or home services. Children under 18 cannot, by law, perform hazardous or night work. Children are specifically prohibited from mining work by the mining code. The State Department reports that child labor is common, especially in rural areas, and that children are employed as child soldiers.

Civil Society Organizations

The U.S. Department of State reports that the labor code provides for the right of workers to organize and administer trade unions without employer interference and grants trade unions full legal status. However, substantial restrictions hamper noncitizens from holding leadership positions in the unions.

Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convention</th>
<th>Status</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO 29 Forced Labour</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 98 Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 100 Equal Remuneration</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labour</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 111 Discrimination</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 138 Minimum Age</td>
<td>In force</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labour</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 97 Migration for Employment</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
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Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

CAR scored a 112.1 in the 2016 Fragile States Index, placing it in the “Very High Alert” Category. CAR was the third-highest country on the Fragile States Index, and its score has been increasing since 2013. The State Department reported that state authority did not extend beyond the capital. Armed groups act as de facto government in many regions of the country and are reported to carry out human rights violations. Parties to the conflict have carried out arbitrary killings of thousands, including many civilians. Other human rights violations include “disappearances, torture, ... sexual violence, including rape... harsh and life-threatening conditions in prisons and illegal detention facilities; arbitrary arrest and detention; delays in reestablishing a functional judicial system, resulting in prolonged pretrial detention; seizure and destruction of property without due process; and the use of excessive and indiscriminate force in internal conflict.”

Level of Crime and Violence

The U.S. State Department Bureau of Diplomatic Security reports that crimes in CAR can be attributed to political instability. The country has a homicide rate of 11.8 per 100,000 people.

State Persecution

The U.S. Department of State reports that birth registration is difficult in regions with little government presence, which results in low levels of birth registration and this citizenship for children born in those areas.

Level of Corruption

The U.S. Department of State reports that corruption is widespread. Although the law provides criminal penalties for corruption by officials, the government does not implement the law effectively. Transparency International ranked CAR as 159 out of 176 countries on the 2016 Corruption Perceptions Index. CAR scored 20 out of 100 on the Index, where scores go from 0 (“Highly Corrupt”) to 100 (“Very Clean”).

The U.S. Department of State has reported that violence by armed groups against Mbororo nomadic pastoralists is a problem, especially as other citizens view them as foreign because of their migratory patterns. Mbororo have been reported to occasionally face discrimination with regard to government services and protections. Additionally, the Ba’aka (pygmy) indigenous people are effectively “second-class citizens” and often face social and economic discrimination. The U.S. Department of State has
reported that the Ba’aka are coerced into agricultural, domestic, and other types of labor, and often receive less remuneration for their work than prescribed by the labor code.³⁴

**Socio-Economic Risk Factors**

**Level of National Economic Development**

The Central African Republic ranked 188 out of 188 countries on the Human Development Index with a score of 0.352 in 2015, falling in the low human development category.³⁵ All of CAR’s neighbors rank higher on the Index, though the majority of countries rank low on the index overall. The World Bank classifies CAR in the low-income level. CAR’s economic growth rose 4.8 percent in 2015, according to the World Bank.³⁶

**Level and Extent of Poverty**

The Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index value for CAR is 0.199, the lowest value on the index.³⁷ The poverty headcount ratio at the national poverty lines is 62 percent according to the World Bank.³⁸ This number represents the percentage of the population living below the national poverty lines. According to the UNDP Human Development Reports Multidimensional Poverty Index, 76.3 percent of the population is living in multidimensional poverty. On the Multidimensional Poverty Index, CAR has a value of 0.424.³⁹

**Degree of Gender Inequality**

The Central African Republic was ranked 149 out of 155 countries on the Gender Development Index with a score of 0.648.⁴⁰

The U.S. Department of State reports that while the law does not discriminate against women in inheritance and property rights, customary laws that discriminate against women prevail, and women experience economic and social discrimination. Women cannot inherit land under statutory inheritance rights, and women are not considered heads of households under customary law. Women’s access to educational opportunities and jobs remains limited.⁴¹

Approximately 12.3 percent of the female population have a secondary education, compared to 29.8 percent of the male population. The Gender Development Index reported that 71.7 percent of the female population participate in the labor force, while 84.6 percent of the male population participate in the labor force.⁴²
Landlessness or Dispossession

The UNHCR estimated there were 216,392 internally displaced persons within CAR at the end of 2015, representing approximately 42 percent of the population. The State Department reports that seizure and destruction of property have occurred without due process of law, and that many internally displaced persons lack protection and access to basic services.

Environmental factors

The CIA reports that CAR’s environmental issues include the following: unpotable tap water, desertification, deforestation, and poaching. CAR has a “remarkably high forest degradation rate.” Deforestation is closely tied to illegal logging which has funded the ongoing conflict. Poaching is primarily for the ivory trade which also funds the conflict. CAR laws legally permit killing of some elephants and the exporting of ivory.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Forestry/Wood

Forestry/Wood Overview

The forested area is a relatively small area in the southern portions of the country that has been reduced to about 15 percent contiguous coverage. Forestry and related sectors contribute about 6 percent of GDP, 16 percent of exports, and 14 percent of formal government revenues. The primary driver of forest exploitation is foreign companies.

A 2015 report by Global Witness documented how Chinese, French and Lebanese companies made financial deals with Seleka leaders for “protection services,” thus financing the group to procure additional arms. After 2014, the same companies made similar payments to “anti-balaka” militias.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Forestry/Wood

As deforestation associated with the conflict and illegal logging has continued, the indigenous Ba’aka (pygmy) populations have been significantly displaced. According to the U.S. Department of State, “...Ba’aka (pygmy) minorities are at risk of becoming victims of forced agricultural work, especially in the region around the Lobaye rainforest.” Further, both parties to the conflict, both of whom have benefitted from the logging trade, have been documented to use forced child soldiers, with UNICEF reporting that nearly 10,000 child soldiers have been recruited since 2013.
Diamonds

Diamonds Overview

All diamonds in CAR are mined artisanally from alluvial deposits. Prior to a Kimberly Process ban on diamond exports in 2014, diamonds represented about half of the country’s exports. The ban, however, did not stop trade of diamonds within the country, so small-scale miners have continued mining. Some diamonds are sold and warehoused while others are smuggled out of the country. A report from Amnesty International states that both Seleka and anti-balaka forces have profited from the diamond trade, even during the Kimberly Process ban.

The U.N. noted in May 2017 that violence was significantly on the rise, particularly in diamond rich areas. Reuters reported that the uptick in violence was at least partially due to armed groups struggling for control of diamond mines, citing aid workers. 115 bodies were found in a diamond mining town in May 2017.

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Diamonds

In 2015, Amnesty International reported that both parties to the conflict directly control diamond mines and also extort “taxes” from artisanal miners. Although the scope of child labor has not been documented, Amnesty International and other NGOs have anecdotally documented hazardous child labor in diamond mining.

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Gold

Gold Overview

All gold is mined from alluvial deposits by artisanal miners. It is estimated that illegal gold exports might nearly double legal gold exports. Although diamonds remain the leading export, artisanal miners have increasingly sought out gold as prices have remained relatively stable. Dubai is the top destination for gold exports, both legal and illegal.
Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Gold

According to the U.S. Department of State 2016 Trafficking in Persons Report, gold is produced with trafficking or trafficking risk in CAR. Armed groups are funded by control of artisanal mining operations, including gold mines. In some cases, mines previously operated by international companies have been overtaken by rebel groups who then run the mines, demanding “protection payments” from artisanal miners who work there.

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Endnotes

47 https://www.loc.gov/law/help/wildlife-poaching/centralafricanrepublic.php#Crimes
53 https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2016/258741.htm
54 UNICEF. “Press Release: At least 65,000 children released from armed forces and groups over the last 10 years.” February 20, 2017. https://www.unicef.org/media/media_94892.html


64 UNICEF. “Press Release: At least 65,000 children released from armed forces and groups over the last 10 years.” February 20, 2017. https://www.unicef.org/media/media_94892.html


