



UNITED NATIONS

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Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: UN CONDEMNS MURDER OF AID
WORKER**

(New York, 12 June 2007): The United Nations is deeply concerned about the death of a staff member of Médecins sans Frontières near Ngaounday in northwest Central African Republic (CAR) on 11 June. The MSF staff was killed while on an assessment mission in the far northwest corner of the CAR, on the border with Cameroon and Chad.

“I strongly condemn this incident and extend my condolences to the family of the staff member,” said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “It is particularly disturbing because I saw firsthand the good work MSF was doing when I visited Paoua,” he added.

In several areas of the CAR the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) tripled during 2006. The UN estimates that the current conflict in the CAR affects 1 million people, or up to one-quarter of the population of the country. More than 280,000 Central Africans are displaced, including 20,000 refugees in Cameroon, 50,000 refugees in Chad and an estimated 212,000 IDPs. Insecurity remains the prime cause of displacement.

The local population in the northwest of CAR is targeted by systematic violence. Many villages along the roadways have been attacked, pillaged and burned, forcing inhabitants to flee and try to survive in the bush, living in extremely precarious conditions. Insecurity along Cameroon's border is hampering efforts to provide assistance to the population.

Security for humanitarian workers has been deteriorating significantly in northwest CAR. Serious incidents have been reported over the past months, including the abduction of 2 NGO/Government staff last month and regular harassment of staff.

“I am very concerned by the recent deterioration of the security situation in northwestern CAR,” Mr. Holmes said. “The repeated harassment and violence humanitarian workers have been subjected to in the past weeks are unacceptable and must stop immediately,” he added. “In accordance with international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict are responsible for the security of humanitarian workers and their safe access to people in need.”

Decades of recurrent armed conflict, political instability and poor governance have resulted in a near total absence of development. Today, the CAR stands as the seventh least developed country on earth. Its population is one of the poorest in the world with social indicators worsening steadily for 20 years. Estimates for 2003 put mortality of children under the age of five at more than 20 per cent. Basic infrastructure and social services, such as health and education services, are nearly non-existent outside the capital of Bangui.

The United Nations has suspended all movements in Paoua for the time being.

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