



## **It is time to rebuild the Central African Republic!**

*Stronger commitment needed to prevent further human suffering*

*Pax Christi International is calling all parties involved in the violent conflict in the Central African Republic (CAR) – one of the 10 poorest countries in the world with a population close to 4.5 million people – to put an end to the suffering of the people and to restore human security and the Rule of Law throughout the country. The international community should provide all necessary humanitarian assistance and support political and religious leaders in their efforts of restoring peace and reconciliation.*

### **Stop the violence**

1. The political crisis after the coup-d'état of March 2013 created on-going and horrific violence which has become a human catastrophe – it has been even called pre-genocidal – sowing death and terror. Thousands of people have been killed (over 1,000 in December alone).
2. Amidst the terror, children have been recruited to fight and it is believed that the number of child soldiers has risen to about 6,000 – considering all sides. Engaging children in combat is unlawful and immoral. Child soldiers should be released and placed in the care of child protection actors.
3. Pax Christi International acknowledges and encourages the appeal of CAR's new president, Catherine Samba-Panza, to all parties involved to lay down their arms. Her election as president brings some hope to this situation.

### **Increase humanitarian assistance**

4. The deteriorating security situation has forced over one million people to flee their homes and it is estimated that about 60 percent of the population desperately need humanitarian assistance. More aid and funding have to be provided in no time. The displaced should be able to return to their homes as soon as possible.
5. It is imperative that commitments recently made in Brussels by the European Union, the United Nations, the United States, the World Bank and the African Development Bank to financially support stabilisation measures, including humanitarian relief, be implemented immediately.

## **Implement the United Nations Security Council Resolutions**

6. The Resolutions of the United Nations Security Council should become operative without delay, especially the start of a political process and dialogue; programmes for disarmament, demilitarization, reintegration and resettlement; arms embargo; and a travel ban on all people undermining the country's stability, fuelling violence and abusing human rights.

## **Rebuild a climate of reconciliation and peace**

7. People in Bangui and other areas have shared that Christian and Muslim communities have lived together peacefully, far from the animosity being fuelled in the last months. However, the crisis has taken an increasingly Muslim-versus-Christian overtone as Séléka rebels fight anti-Balaka groups while identifying the other in terms of religious affiliation. Both parties have used religious discourses to promote violence, something which is totally unacceptable.
8. Our international peace movement endorses the Catholic bishops' call to rebuild the country<sup>1</sup> as well as the courageous efforts of many religious congregations and missions in the Central African Republic. We hope they will continue their presence and cooperation, working generously to help people in every possible way and, above all, to rebuild a climate of peace and reconciliation among all groups in society.

Pax Christi International highlights the importance of the repeated calls by the country's two most senior religious leaders – Archbishop Dieudonné Nzapalainga of Bangui and Imam Oumar Kobine Layama<sup>2</sup> – for tolerance and respect within their communities. The promotion of unity and the spirit of fraternity and forgiveness as a healing process are the foundations and pathways to peace.

Pax Christi calls the international community – especially the European Union and its member states, as well as the African Union – to increase their efforts to help bringing violence to an end, to ensure a return to the rule of law and to guarantee access to humanitarian aid to the thousands of refugees and displaced persons.

Pax Christi International invites all its members worldwide to pray for the victims of this conflict and to join initiatives to provide them with so much needed support.

Brussels, 24 January 2014

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<sup>1</sup> See « Plea From Bishops of Central African Republic : Let Us Rebuild Together in Peace » - dated 15 January 2014 : <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/plea-from-bishops-of-central-african-republic-let-us-rebuild-together-in-peace>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.la-croix.com/Actualite/Monde/L-archeveque-de-Bangui-et-le-grand-imam-de-Centrafrigue-unissent-leurs-voix-pour-la-paix-2013-12-15-1076379>