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United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic

Human Rights Division

Monthly Report: Human Rights Situation

March 2022

The Human Rights Division's (HRD) mandate includes assisting the government of the Central African Republic (CAR) to promote and protect human rights through its field offices and headquarters in Bangui. This report is based on information received by the HRD and only includes human rights violations and abuses that occurred, were documented, and verified during the month of March 2022. Incidents that could not be verified are not included. Ordinary crimes are also excluded from this report.

This information is shared locally as well as nationally with CAR's authorities and partners.

Security and political context in March 2022

1. In the North-West and Centre of the country, the security situation was impacted heavily by the transhumance season. The HRD documented transhumance-related human rights incidents between Fulani herders and local populations, as well as clashes between armed groups and State actors, ostensibly in response to attacks on either herders or the local population. For example, the HRD received allegations regarding a 3R attack on the FACA position in Nzakoundou (Ouham-Pendé Prefecture) on 22 March in retaliation for what was claimed to be an alleged theft of oxen and munitions from armed Fulani in Kounang and Koundjili. Two civilians were allegedly killed in the clash while eleven others (including five children) were injured. In addition, 600 people fled to Bocaranga, Ndim or the bush. These clashes further exacerbate the already volatile security situation in this area of the country.

2. In the East of the country, FACA and OSP conducted operations against armed groups. The HRD documented human rights violations in the context of those operations. In a specific instance, in Gordil (Vakaga Prefecture) on 13 March, FACA and OSP reportedly killed at least 20 civilians at close range and burned down shops. Such operations can aggravate the volatile security situation and trigger more human rights abuses as armed groups could carry out retaliatory attacks once the State actors leave the region. For example, following the departure of FACA and OSP from Nzako (Mbomou Prefecture) on 6 March, after taking it from the FPRC combatants under the command of Mahamat Salleh, the latter returned to the town, triggering the displacement of at least 2,500 civilians. Armed groups also threatened to punish those who had supported the State actors. For instance, the HRD was informed that UPC combatants allegedly threatened Fulani herders in Sans-Souci (Haute-Kotto Prefecture), accusing them of having collaborated with the FACA and OSP during their operations in February. Furthermore, the movements of armed groups as well as State actors represent a serious risk for the protection of civilians in Haute-Kotto, Mbomou, and Vakaga Prefectures. For example, when FACA and OSP left Bria towards the Vakaga Prefecture and arrived in Sam Ouandja (Haute-Kotto Prefecture) on 17 March, they occupied two schools and other public buildings, and allegedly appropriated private property.

3. On 7 March, the High Council for Communications (HCC) issued four decisions, two of which were related to hate speech and speech inciting violence. Radio Lengo Songo received a warning for broadcasting messages inciting hatred and violence and Mr. Doctrouvé Euloge Koi, Spokesman for the ‘Mouvement citoyen de l’éveil des consciences’ (MCEC), was forbidden from accessing private and public media for a year.
4. On 8 March, ‘General Edmond’, an anti-Balaka leader, was detained by another anti-Balaka leader, ‘General Pasco’, in Ippy (Ouaka Prefecture). Both have been identified as having participated in the attack on Boyo from 6 to 13 December 2021 which resulted in the killing of at least 20 civilians, injury of 12 others and rape of five women. The arrest allegedly followed a disagreement between the leaders regarding the payment of their men for their joint operations with FACA and OSP. ‘General Edmond’ was put in the custody of the gendarmerie in Ippy, and then of the Bambari gendarmerie on 11 March, before being transferred on 13 March to the OSP camp in Bambari. The Prosecutor of Bambari refused the HRD access to the detainee, instead responding that he may be interviewed when transferred to Bangui.
5. On 17 March, the Special Criminal Court (SCC) announced that the trial of Issa Sallet Adoum, Yaouba Ousman and Mahamat Tahir for war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Koundjili and Lemouna (Ouham-Pendé Prefecture) in 2019 would open on 19 April 2022. It will be the first trial of the SCC.
6. On 30 March, the Human Rights Council in Geneva held a high-level interactive dialogue on the situation of human rights in CAR. The High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Ms. Michelle Bachelet, the Independent Expert, Mr. Yao Agbetse, who recently visited CAR, the MINUSCA Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ms. Lizbeth Cullity, and the Central African authorities, including the Minister of Justice, Human Rights and Good Governance, Mr. Arnaud Djoubaye Abazène, participated to the dialogue. It focused on the reconciliation process, guarantees of non-repetition and the work of the Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Reparation Commission (CVJRR).

Human Rights Violations and Abuses and Breaches of International Humanitarian Law

Main Trends

36 verified incidents, representing 43 human rights violations and abuses and breaches of IHL **affecting 129 victims**, were documented in March 2022. This is similar to what was observed in January 2022, despite a modest decrease compared to February 2022.

Incidents were evenly split between State actors and armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA, although the latter were responsible for slightly more victims. However, State actors, and particularly **OSP, alone or jointly with FACA, were responsible for almost all documented killings of civilians**.

7. During the month of March, the HRD, including the Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Section (CRSV) and the Child Protection Section (CPS), documented and verified 96 incidents,¹ representing 112 human rights violations and abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) and affecting 233 victims. In addition, the HRD also recorded 64 alleged incidents, representing 74 violations and abuses and affecting 132 victims, which were still being verified at the end of March.

8. Out of these 96 incidents documented by the HRD during the month of March, 36 incidents, representing 43 violations and affecting 129 victims, effectively took place in March 2022. This marks a 17.30 percent decrease and a 15.78 percent decrease of

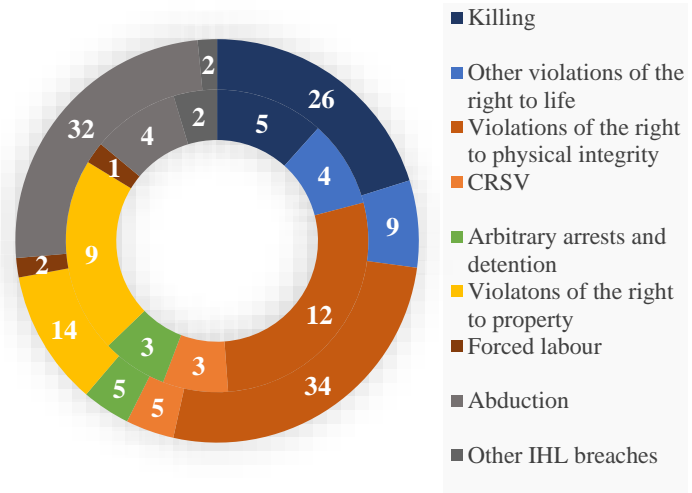
¹ Several types of human rights violations and abuses may be recorded during a single incident, against different victims. The following data is based on the most serious type of violation per incident and the most serious type of violation per victim.

the number of incidents and victims, respectively, compared to February 2022 during which 52 incidents that affected 152 victims had been documented. This is similar to what was observed in January 2022 (42 incidents affecting 131 victims).

9. The majority of victims were men (76), followed by women (20) and children (four girls and 12 unidentified children). In addition, there were nine unidentified civilian victims and eight groups of collective victims.

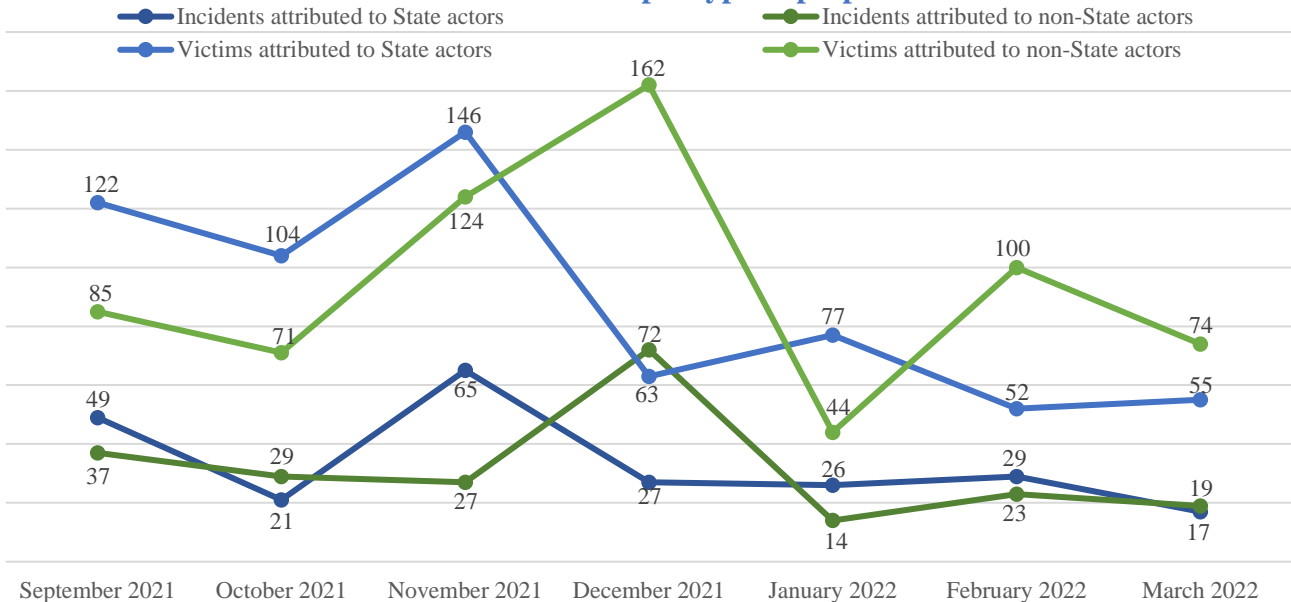
10. More civilians were killed during human rights incidents in March than in February, but slightly less than in January: the HRD documented and verified four incidents during which five violations of the right to life by killing occurred against a total of 26 victims, whereas ten victims had been recorded in February and 37 in January. This can be explained by the fact that no indiscriminate attack was documented in February, while some did occur in January and March. State actors were responsible for the majority of civilians killed (23); armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were however responsible for the majority of victims of violations of the right to physical and mental integrity (20) and cases of abduction (27).

Number of violations (inner circle) and victims (outer circle)



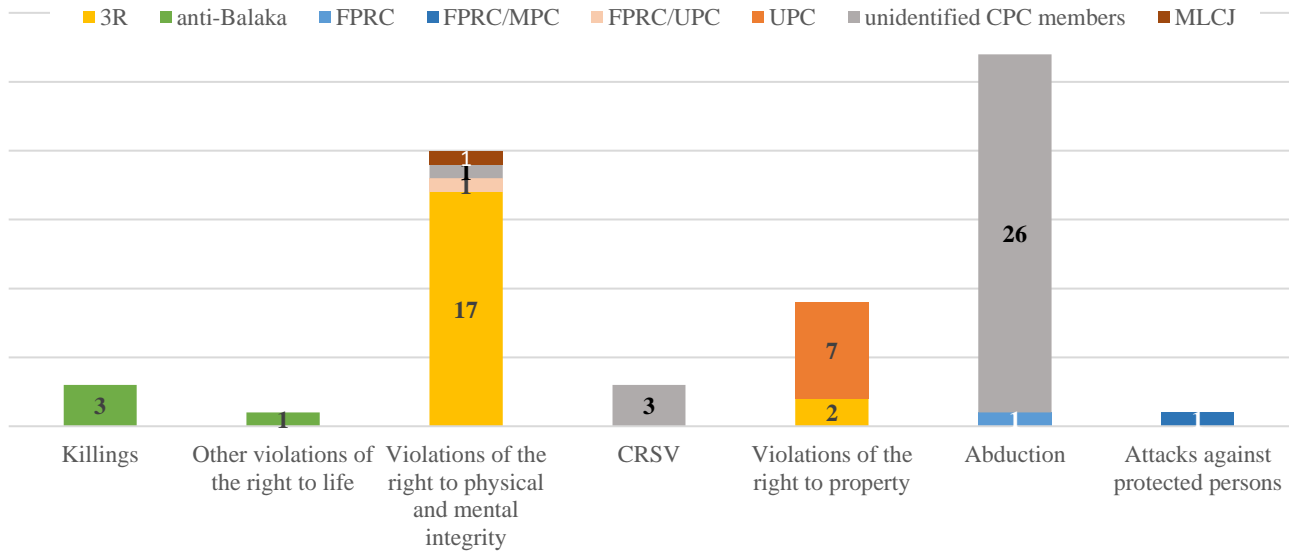
11. Armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were responsible for 16 incidents, representing 17 violations and affecting 64 victims, which is comparable to the 17 incidents, representing 22 violations and 55 victims, attributed to State actors. In addition, three incidents, representing four violations and affecting ten victims, were attributed to other non-State actors. This confirms the trend observed since the beginning of 2022, with the data evenly split between armed groups and State actors – with some expected variations from month to month.

Incidents and victims per type of perpetrator



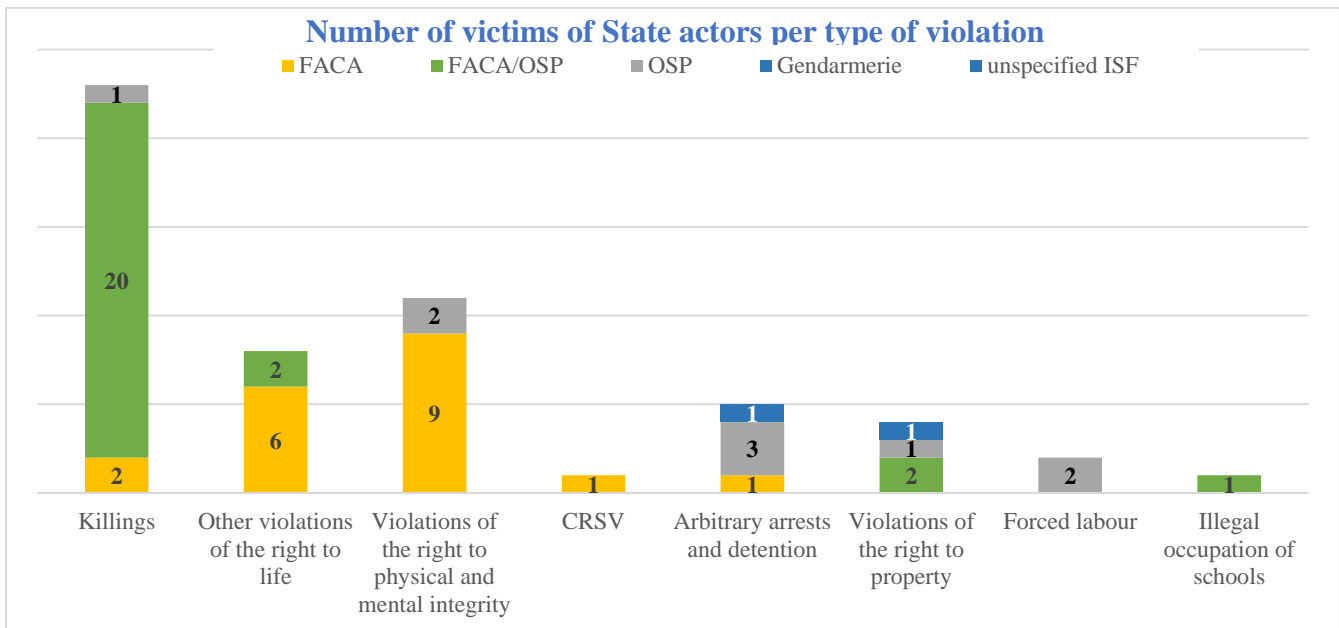
12. Among the armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA, unidentified CPC members were responsible for most of the victims (30), followed by the 3R (19). The most common type of violation were abductions (3 cases affecting 27 victims) – 26 of which are attributed to unidentified CPC members and 25 in a single incident which occurred in the Ouham Prefecture - followed by violations of the right to physical and mental integrity (five cases affecting 20 victims).

Number of victims of armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA per type of violation



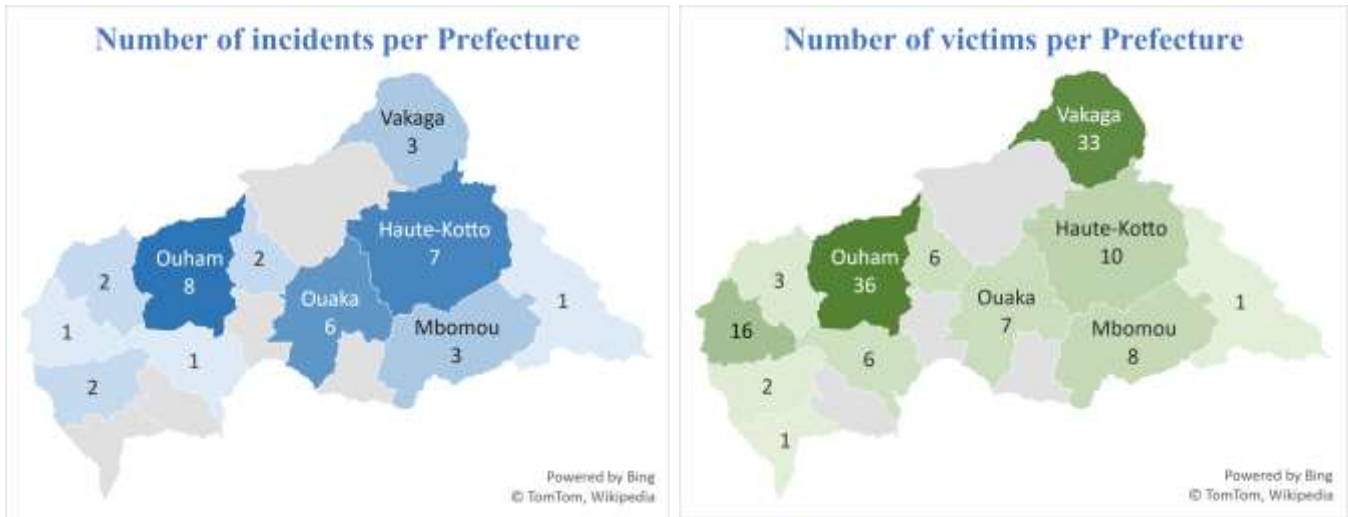
13. Among State actors, OSP, alone or jointly with FACA, committed violations that affected the most victims (nine alone, 25 with FACA), followed closely by FACA alone (nine violations affecting 19 victims). The most common type of violation attributed to State actors are violations of the right to life with five cases affecting 29 victims, including 23 civilians killed. Twenty of these deaths occurred during a single incident during the 13 March FACA/OSP operation in Gordil (Vakaga Prefecture).

Number of victims of State actors per type of violation



14. In March 2022, the HRD also documented incidents attributed to other non-State actors. The Misserya Arabs were responsible for one incident, representing two violations and affecting eight victims; and the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) and Janjaweed were responsible each for one violation affecting one victim.

15. The Ouham Prefecture is the region most affected by human rights violations and abuses, recording eight incidents, representing ten violations and affecting 36 victims. High numbers of incidents were also recorded in the Haute-Kotto and Ouaka Prefectures; however, the Vakaga Prefecture is the second most affected area, with three incidents representing seven violations and affecting 33 victims. Twenty-three of these victims were affected either in the 13 March FACA/OSP operation in Gordil.

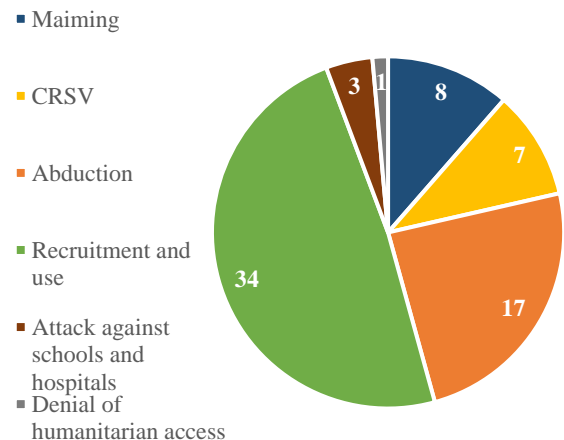


Children in Armed Conflict²

16. During the reporting period, the Country Task Force on Monitoring and Reporting (CTFMR) verified 70 grave child rights violations directly affecting 56 children (35 boys, 21 girls), which represents 89 percent and 75 percent increases in the number of violations and victims, respectively, compared to February 2022, during which 37 violations affecting 32 children had been documented. Thirty-two of these violations occurred outside the reporting period but were only verified in March 2022.

17. Nearly half of the violations were of recruitment and use of children by national forces and armed groups. The verified grave child rights violations are attributed in majority to armed groups (48), with State actors being responsible for only 26 percent of the violations (18). The rest of the

Types of grave child rights violations documented



² The Child Protection (CPS) and Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSVS) Sections apply a different methodology. They include incidents that are attributed to unidentified armed individuals, as well as some incidents that may have occurred before the month under consideration but were documented during the reporting period. The CPS also includes incidents that affected the civilian population as a whole (not only children), such as denial of humanitarian access.

violations were attributed to unidentified armed individuals (four), including explosive ordinances.

18. The Prefectures most affected by grave child rights violations differ slightly from those most affected by human rights violations and abuses: the Ouham recorded the most violations (16), closely followed by the Kemo (15) and the Basse-Kotto (14).

19. The HRD continued its efforts to engage with both the national security and defences forces and armed groups to address child protection concerns. In particular, the HRD met, on behalf of the CTFMR, with

ACT to Protect! Campaign

In the framework of the global *ACT to protect!* Campaign, MINUSCA conducted trainings and awareness-raising activities which reached, in March **1,802 representatives of local communities, local authorities, SDF and ISF and other relevant actors** (1,170 men and 632 women). In addition, 185 newly deployed peacekeepers, including 55 women, were also trained on the six grave child rights violations.

government representatives to raise the issue of children recruited and used by State actors. The government, through the Minister Advisor to the President on Child Protection, committed to investigating these allegations. The HRD also recommended it issues a directive to all State actors prohibiting them from associating and using children or committing any other grave child rights violation.

20. The HRD also met with government to discuss the idea of a “National Prevention Plan” on violence against children and shared a concept note to this end. The representatives of the Ministry for the Promotion of Family, Women and Child Protection agreed that such a plan should be created within the strategy of the National Council for the Protection of Children.

Conflict-Related Sexual Violence

21. During the period under review, the HRD documented a total of 58 cases of CRSV, affecting 69 victims (46 women, 22 girls, and one unidentified victim). Forty of these cases, affecting 48 victims, were verified. Only three of these verified cases, affecting five victims, effectively took place in March 2022.

22. Twenty-one of these cases, affecting 26 victims, occurred in Boali (Ombella M’Poko Prefecture), during the occupation of the area by CPC combatants between mid-December 2020 and February 2021. These cases were documented during a mission conducted in February 2022.³ The HRD also received information regarding three alleged cases, affecting three victims, which could not be verified.

23. In addition, during the reporting period the HRD also conducted a mission to Bakouma (Mbomou Prefecture), during which it documented and verified eleven cases of CRSV, affecting 14 victims, which took place in Nzako, as well as two alleged cases affecting two victims. Nine of these cases, affecting thirteen victims (including nine girls), took place between November 2021 and March 2022 and were perpetrated by combatants of the FPRC and UPC or unidentified CPC members in the context of their occupation of the area. One girl was the subject of sexual slavery in two separate incidents, once by a member of the OSP – which resulted in an early pregnancy – and a few months later by Mahamat Salleh, leader of the FPRC.

³ See HRD Monthly Report of February 2022: the findings of the mission were still being analysed at the time of publication and have thus been included in this report.

Human Rights Promotion and Capacity Building

24. On 24 and 25 March and on 31 March and 1 April, the Ministry of Justice, Human Rights and Good Governance organised capacity building workshops, with the financial and technical support of the HRD, for some of its staff. Fifty-five ministry staff, including 16 women, were thus trained on human rights violations and abuses monitoring and reporting and on access to justice for victims. Each session, the HRD facilitated two presentations on "UN Human Rights Monitoring Mechanisms" and "Human Rights Monitoring: Techniques and Methodology for Visits and Reporting". The objective of these activities is to ensure that members of the judiciary and the Ministry of Justice take a human rights-based approach when carrying out their work.

25. The HRD also trained uniformed personnel based in the field offices of Berbérati (Mambéré-Kadéï) working on temporary emergency measures and field coordinators on the human rights due diligence policy (HRDDP) and their respective roles in implementing it. The 42 participants (including 12 women) were prepared to monitor the conduct of security forces receiving UN support and to report all information and recommendations relevant to the implementation of the HRDDP by the Mission.

26. The HRD also conducted 25 visits to police and gendarmerie detention centres in Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, Haut-Mbomou, Mambéré-Kadéï, Mbomou, Ombella M’Poko, Ouaka, Ouham, and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures, to monitor and document the number of illegal detentions and the conditions in which the detainees were held. In most cases, it observed a high number of illegal detentions, with legal deadlines being regularly violated, as well as very poor conditions of detention.

International Women’s Day Celebrations

All through March, the HRD actively participated in / organised **13 activities celebrating International Women’s Day** throughout the territory of the CAR and underlined the rights of women and the need to assess the gendered impact of human rights violations and abuses. These activities took place in the Bamingui-Bangoran, Haute-Kotto, Haut-Mbomou Mambéré-Kadéï, Mbomou, Nana-Grébizi, Ouaka, Ouham and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures.

In Bambari for example, on 8 March, the HRD together, with other components of the Mission, organised a roundtable on early marriage, female genital mutilations and hate speech which gathered 50 women representing local women’s organisations.