

April - June 2023

HUMAN RIGHTS QUARTERLY BRIEF ON THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

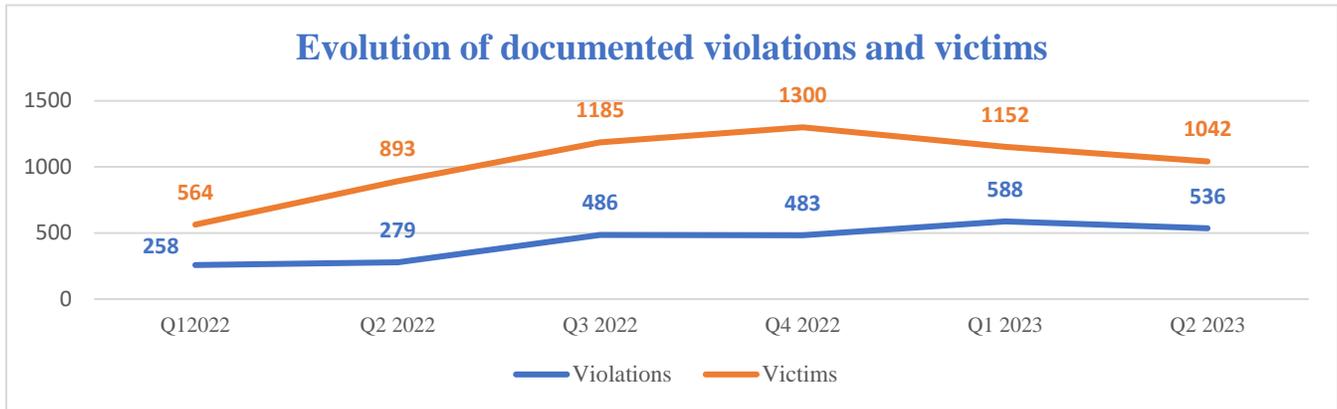
HIGHLIGHTS

- In Q2, the HRD documented 536 human rights violations and abuses, affecting 1,042 civilians: a 9% decrease in violations and 10% decrease in victims compared to Q1 2023.
- Among armed groups, the 3R were responsible for the most human rights abuses (56) and affecting the most victims (133). Among State Actors, OSP were responsible for committing the most human rights violations (79) while the Gendarmerie were responsible for the most victims (226 victims).
- The most recurrent violations were related to arbitrary arrest and arbitrary detention including inhuman conditions of detention (26%), torture, ill-treatment and maiming and injuries (17%), violations of the right to property (16%), violations of the right to life (14%) and CRSV (9%).
- At least 58 civilians, including 49 men, three women, and six boys were killed; most killings were perpetrated by OSP and unidentified armed men.
- Ouham was the most affected prefecture in terms of human rights violations and abuses (120), while Nana-Gribizi had the most victims (195).

CONTEXT

During the period under review, the security situation across the Central African Republic (CAR) was marked by an increase in attacks, notably in the **Haute-Kotto, Vakaga, Ouham-Pendé** and **Haut-Mbomou** prefectures due both to the presence of armed groups signatories to the *Accord Politique pour*

la Paix et la Réconciliation en République Centrafricaine (APPR-RCA) and to new armed entities in CAR. There were notable hotspots of conflict in the **Vakaga** prefecture since the outbreak of the Sudanese conflict in mid-April, where nearly 13,800 people fled Sudan for Am-Dafock, including 3,456



Central African returnees and which led to movements of unidentified armed men attempting to recruit youth from Birao. In the **Haute-Kotto** prefecture, the axes of Ouadda to Bria, Ouadda to Sam-Ouandja, and Ouadda to Ouanda-Djallé were particularly affected due to clashes around mining sites between the *Unité pour la Paix en Centrafrique* (UPC), the *Front Populaire pour la Renaissance en Centrafrique* (FPRC), the *Parti pour le Rassemblement National Centrafricain* (PRNC) and State agents along with other security personnel (OSP). Of note, since May 2023, the UPC has taken control of the sub-prefectures of Gbali and Ouadda, in Haute-Kotto, in the absence of FACA and Internal Security Forces (ISF), committing murders, abductions, thefts, ill-treatments, illegal tax collection and rapes. The **Ouham-Pendé** prefecture was marked by attacks, incursions and abuses committed by the *Mouvement des Révolutionnaires Sudistes Tchadiens* (MRST), a Chadian armed group that positioned itself in Bénermé (55km of Paoua) and along the Chad border. Since their first arrival in October 2022, their number gradually increased as they recruited youth from the area and due to new combatants arriving from Chad. On 15 May, the Chadian army and the FACA carried out a joint operation against the MRST in Bénermé, managing to expel its fighters from the area and push them back to the border. In addition, in May and June 2023, Azande Ani Kpi Gbe, a self-defense group based in Kadjema, and UPC, which controls the locality of Mboki, clashed

several times in the **Haut-Mbomou** prefecture, in particular in Obo and Mboki sub-prefectures. In this respect, it should be noted that clashes began in the Bambouti sub-prefecture and gradually moved towards Zémio (190 km of Obo). In Mboki (75km of Obo), UPC combatants abducted civilians and looted houses and the premises of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). On 20 June, the Azande Ani Kpi Gbe group reportedly launched an attack against the UPC. Many civilians fled Mboki towards Zémio, fearing for their security.

The HRD also documented an increase in discrimination suffered by the Fulani and Muslim populations, notably pertaining to the obtention of identity documents in Bangui and the prefectures of Ombella M'Poko, Ouham-Pendé, Mambéré-Kadéï and Haute-Kotto. Members of the Peuhl and Muslim communities are often requested to pay higher fees and to present additional documents such as their parents' birth certificates in order to obtain national identity cards.

With regards to political developments, on 30 May, President Faustin-Archange Touadéra announced a referendum to be held on 30 July on a bill to adopt a new constitution, which led to messages of hatred and incitement to violence in social media by both supporters of the reform and political opponents. The HRD documented acts of threats, intimidations, searches and police harassment against individuals, political parties and associations opposed to or critical of the government.

On the judicial front, on 5 April, following an Extraordinary Plenary Meeting held on 4 April, the *Commission Vérité, Justice, Réparation et Réconciliation (CVJRR)*, terminated the tenure of the President Ms. Marie Edith Douzima. On 12 June, the administrative court suspended the

execution of the decision. A judgement is pending on the merits regarding the legality of the Extraordinary Plenary Meeting to remove Ms. Douzima from office.

GENERAL TRENDS

During the second quarter of 2023, the HRD documented a slight decrease in the number of both human rights violations and abuses (9%), and victims (10%), compared to the first quarter. However, the numbers remain in line with the overall average number of violations and victims documented in Q1. Between April and June 2023, the HRD verified 536 human rights violations and abuses and breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL) that affected 1042 civilian victims¹. Armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were responsible for 28% of the human rights abuses (149) and for 24% of the victims (245). State actors were

responsible for 57% of the human rights violations (305) and for 69% of the victims (715). Of note, more than half of those violations (157) and the majority of victims (552) are related to the right to liberty and fair trial, mainly arbitrary arrest and detention. The increase in indiscriminate attacks in the **Vakaga, Haute-Kotto, Haut-Mbomou** and **Ouham-Pendé** prefectures has contributed to increasing threats to the protection of civilians. It is worth noting that the HRD carried out a fact-finding mission in June 2023 in the **Ouham** Prefecture during which 27 cases of conflict-related sexual violences (CRSV) were documented with armed groups having committed 82% of them.

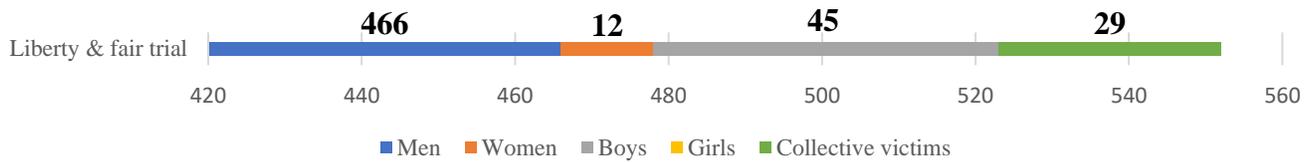
VIOLATIONS

During the period under review, most cases of human rights violations and abuses were linked to the violation of the right to liberty and a fair trial, including arbitrary arrests and detentions and conditions of detention that failed to comply with the minimum standard rules for the treatment of detainees (157), torture, ill-treatment and maiming and injuries (92), violations of right of property (88), violations of the right to life (75), and cases of CRSV (51). Armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were responsible for most abduction

and deprivation of liberty (61%), rape (42%), of the overall unlawful attacks (37%) and ill-treatment and maiming and injuries (47%) while States actors were responsible for most cases of torture (90%). State actors were also responsible for 45% of the violations of the right to life, including the extrajudicial killings of 23 civilians. This included the killing on 31 March and 1st April of two adult men, caused by severe ill-treatments by OSP elements in their base in Bouar (Nana-Mambéré), as well as the

¹ Since January 2022, in accordance with OHCHR methodology, the HRD records all the human rights violations that occurred during a single incident and against different victims. Since July 2022, the Division also counts all the violations per victim (multiple violations). Additionally, since June 2022, the HRD systematically reports on cases of arbitrary detention by State authorities that exceed the legal custody time limit, as well as unlawful conditions of detention.

Number of victims of the violation of the right to liberty and fair trial



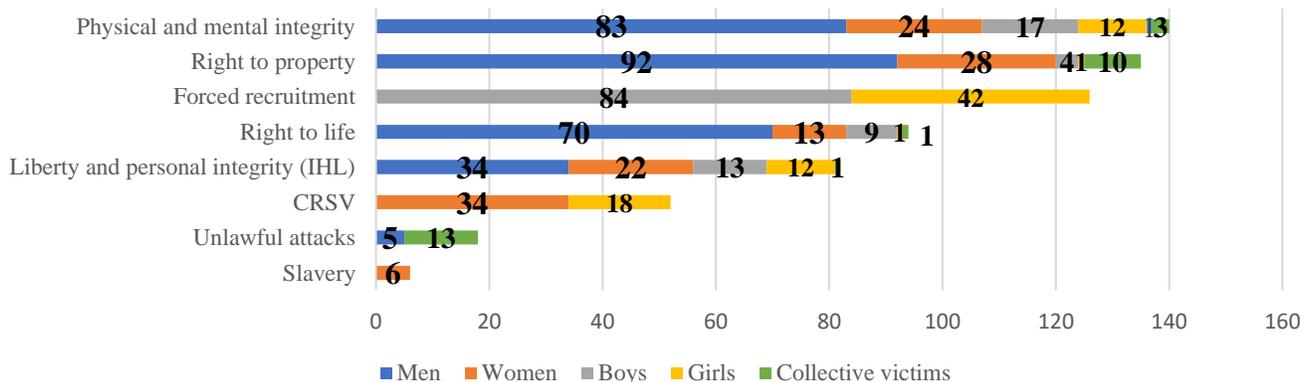
extrajudicial execution, on 2 April of two men by the OSP in the Ndassima mining site (Ouaka). Armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were responsible for **32%** of the violations of the right to life, notably the summary killings of 19 civilians. At a mining site in Mandjam (Vakaga), on 25 June, unidentified CPC combatants killed a 45-year-old man. On 6 May, armed combatants affiliated to the MRST killed a 14-year-old shepherd boy in Bebingui (Ouham-Pendé). Moreover, since May 2023, the HRD documented an increase in the violations of the right to life in the PK5 neighbourhood of the 3rd arrondissement in Bangui.

Violations of the right to liberty and fair trial represents **29%** of the total number of human rights violations, including arbitrary arrests and detentions. In most cases detainees are held beyond the legal custody time limit and/or suffered from inhumane conditions of detention, which do not meet minimum standards. During the reporting period,

552 victims were affected by violations of the **right to liberty and fair trial**, all by State actors (including **29** groups of collective victims). During June, the HRD documented the deaths of four detainees, including one at Camp de Roux and three at Ngaragba Central Prison. At the latter, due to an overcrowding rate of 500%, some prisoners had to lie down in the toilets or on the roofs of the cells. In addition, because of a lack of food due to the absence of adequate funding from the government, an increase of around 30% in cases of malnutrition was documented in just three months, from **313** prisoners suffering from malnutrition in March 2023 to **418** in June 2023.

Violations of the **right to physical and mental integrity** represents **17%** of the documented human rights violations and abuses. State actors were responsible for **44%** of such violations. Ill-treatment (**60** violations) were the most common type of violations in this category, followed by maiming and

Number of victims per violations (other than right to liberty and fair trial)



injuries (**21** violations). A total of **140** victims were affected by this type of violation (**83** men, **24** women, **17** boys, **12** girls, **one** unknown minor and **three** groups of collective victims). For instance, on 22 May, FACA elements abducted, tortured, and ill-treated three adult men (Bangui). On 21 June, 3R combatants ill-treated a young woman and then abducted her six sisters.

During the period under review, there were at least **51** cases of **CRSV** affecting **52** people (**34** women and **18** girls). These violations included rape (**38** violations), sexual slavery (**seven** violations), sexual assault and harassment (**three** violations), attempted rape (**two** violations) and **one** violation of other sexual violence. State actors were responsible for **28%** of CRSV cases, and armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were responsible for **41%** of them. It should be highlighted that this increase of CRSV cases documented compared to the previous quarter, can be explained by the results of an investigation mission conducted by the HRD, during which **27** CRSV cases affecting **22** victims, including four victims of multiple CRSV (three women and one girl), were documented (Ouham). At least **ten**

victims were subjected to sexual slavery by CPC combatants who accused them of spying for the FACA and OSP.

Violations of the right to property represented **16%** of the human rights violations and abuses documented during the reporting period, affecting a total of **135** victims (**92** men, **28** women, **four** boys, **one** girl and **ten** groups of collective victims). Armed groups signatories of the APPR-RCA were responsible for **31%** of these violations and State actors were responsible for **57%**. The OSP were responsible for most of the violations of the right to property, (**25** violations), followed by FACA, alone or in association with other actors (**16** violations) and UPC (**11** violations). Of note, this violation often occurs with others, especially with violations of the right to physical and mental integrity. In this regard, on 23 May, five armed combatants affiliated to the 3R abducted and ill-treated three Fulani herders in the sub-prefecture of Baboua (Nana-Mambéré). The perpetrators asked a ransom of 1,250,000 XFA (around 2,100 USD) for their release. On 26 May, they released them after receiving the ransom money.

GEOGRAPHIC TRENDS

Most of the human rights violations and abuses, as well as victims, were documented in the **Western Sector** (**314** violations affecting **559** victims). This is partly due to a high number of arbitrary arrests and detentions and conditions of detention that failed to comply with the minimum standard rules for the treatment of detainees (**69** violations affecting **242** victims), mostly attributable to the Gendarmerie and the Police. Western Sector was also affected by cases of torture, ill-treatment, maiming and injuries (**62** violations and **88** victims) and violations of the right to property (**54** violations and **70** victims).

With **83** violations affecting **276** victims, the **Central Sector** registered a drop in the number of violations compared to Q1, while the number of documented victims remained in line with Q1. Central Sector was mostly affected by violations of the rights to liberty and fair trial (**38** violations and **217** victims), to property (**14** violations and **42** victims) and to physical and mental integrity (**11** violations and **20** victims). In this regard, on 1st April, unidentified CPC combatants stopped 25 Sudanese on Ngarba axis (Bamingui-Bangoran) and robbed them of their possessions.

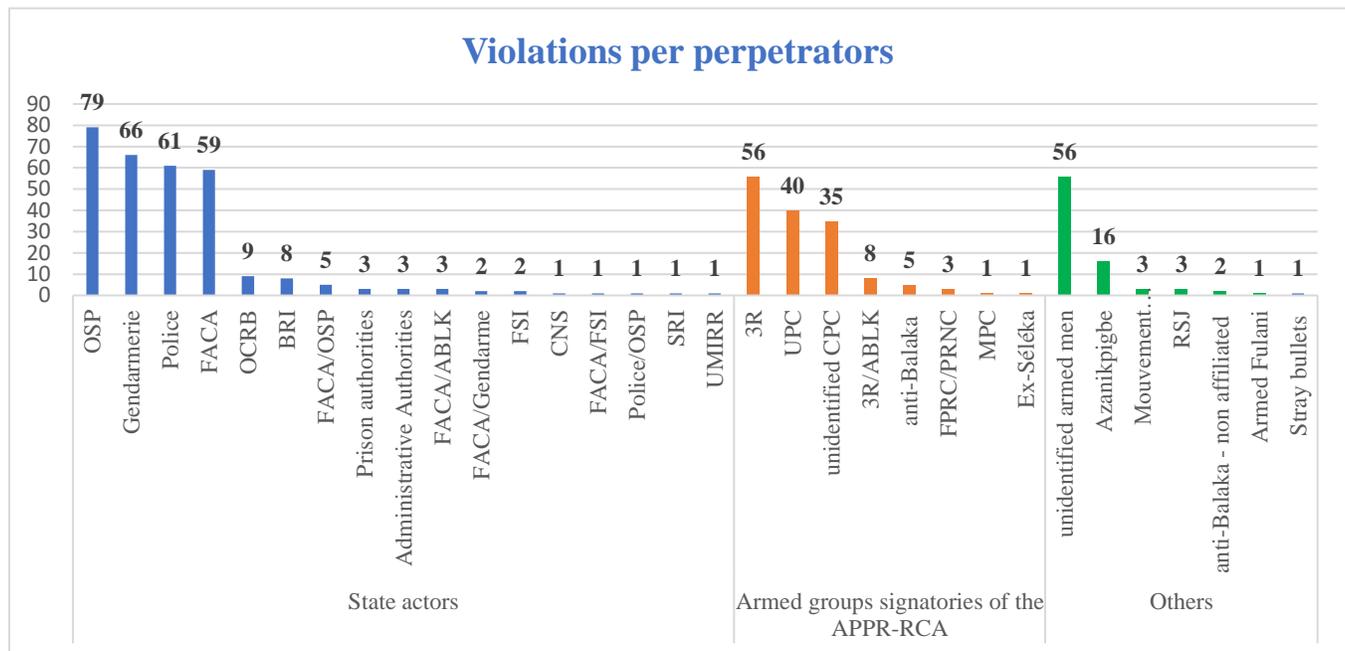
PERPETRATORS

During the second quarter of 2023, **57%** of the documented human rights violations and abuses (**305**) affecting **715** victims were attributable to State actors. The armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA were responsible for **28%** of the abuses (**149**) affecting **245** victims. The HRD also documented **82** human rights abuses committed by **other actors**, affecting **83** victims, mostly committed by unidentified armed men, and Azande Ani Kpi Gbe self-defence group.

The most common types of abuses committed by **armed groups signatories to the APPR-RCA** were ill-treatment and maiming and injuries (**38** abuses and **59** victims), abduction and deprivation of liberty (**27** abuses and **49** victims), appropriation of property (**26** abuses and **57** victims), rape (**16** abuses

recruitment and use of **68** children. The UPC was mostly responsible for appropriation of property (**11** abuses and **15** victims) and ill-treatment and maiming of **12** civilians (eight abuses).

It is worth noting that **unidentified armed men** committed **13** cases of CRSV (**13** victims), **10** summary killings (**14** victims) and **nine** abductions and deprivation of liberty (**10** victims). The **Azande Ani Kpi Gbe** self-defence group was responsible for **six** abductions (**18** victims), **two** rapes (**two** victims) and **one** case of torture affecting **four** victims. Regarding this case, the perpetrators suspected four refugees of spying on their activities and movements for the profit of the Muslim community of Obo. They subjected the four civilians to torture and ill-



and **19** victims) and killings (**12** abuses and **19** victims). Among armed groups, the **3R** (**56** abuses and **133** victims) and the **UPC** (**40** abuses and **37** victims) were the main perpetrators in terms of human rights abuses and victims. Among others, the 3R were responsible for the ill-treatment and maiming of **25** people (18 abuses) and the

treatment in their base. One of the captives managed to escape and two others, deemed beyond suspicion, were released; the last remained captive.

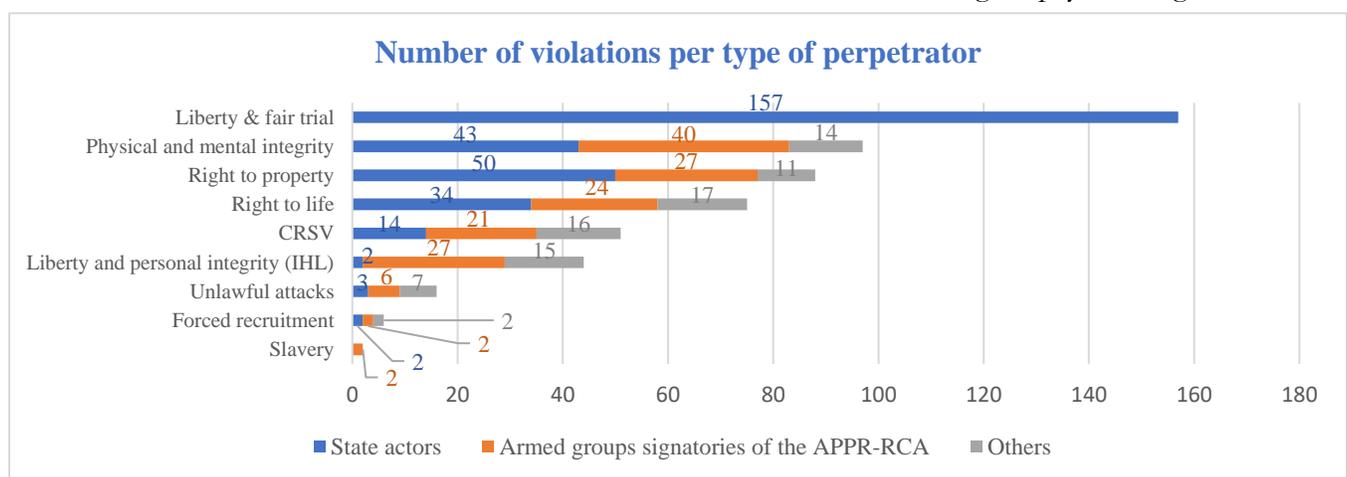
Among unlawful attacks, attacks on humanitarian personnel and NGOs are to be noted. Unlawful attacks were mostly perpetrated by unidentified

armed groups and signatories to the APPR-RCA, representing 3% of the total number of human rights violations and abuses documented during the reporting period, affecting a total of 18 victims (five men and 13 collective victims). On 24 May, an NGO vehicle was ambushed by unidentified armed combatants on the Am-Dafock-Birao axis (Vakaga). They killed one humanitarian aid worker while two others managed to escape. On 1 June, on the same axis, unidentified armed men attacked an NGO vehicle on its way to provide humanitarian assistance to the refugees at the Sudanese border. The driver of the NGO vehicle was alone fetching water at a water point when armed men on three motorcycles arrived, threatened to kill him and requested the key of the vehicle. Moreover, on 28 May, UPC combatants ambushed two NGO vehicles in the Basse-Kotto prefecture, robbing the staff of money and cell phones.

In addition, the use of improvised explosive devices (IED) continued to cause civilian victims. On 16 April, an IED placed by 3R combatants on the Yéléwa/Ndongué-Douane axis caused the explosion of the vehicle of a Catholic priest. Three civilians died on the spot and three others were injured. One of them died of his injuries two days later. Of note, a similar incident took place in February in which two catholic priests were injured.

The most recurrent violations committed by **State actors** were arbitrary arrest and/or detention and conditions of detention that failed to comply with the minimum standard rules for the treatment of detainees (146), torture, ill-treatment, and maiming (42), appropriation of property (40) and extrajudicial execution (21). Among State actors, **OSP** committed the most human rights violations (79 violations and 128 victims) due to appropriation of property (25 violations and 27 victims), extrajudicial killings (15 violations and 16 victims), and arbitrary arrest and detention (11 violations and 27 victims). Arbitrary arrest and/or detention and inhuman conditions of detention are also the main violations attributable to the **Gendarmerie** (49 violations affecting 225 victims out of their 66 violations and 226 victims) and the **Police** (39 violations and 156 victims).

Some of the emblematic cases committed by State actors are linked to the increase of abuses of power and impunity of **FACA** in the whole country, which was documented the last three months. This trend notably pertained to violations of the right to property such as extortion of money and illegal taxes at security barriers or checkpoints located at village entrances or near main roads. These abuses are often committed alongside other violations such as ill-treatment, death threats and deprivation of liberty. For instance, on 10 April in Boda (Lobaye), a man was stabbed to death by a FACA, after refusing to pay the illegal tax of 500



XAF (around US\$0.85) demanded of all road users by the FACA. Similarly, on 27 May, a FACA officer raped a young woman under threats of death (Nana-Mambéré). A complaint was filed and the FACA officer confessed the crime but was released. Weeks later, the Gendarmerie Commander confirmed that even though the case was open, the FACA perpetrator had been transferred elsewhere without any disciplinary measure taken. In addition, on 15 May, the HRD documented that FACA arbitrarily arrested individuals, detaining them in holes a few meters deep (Mambéré-Kadéï). Weeks later, the practice continued despite the promise of the FACA Commander to take disciplinary measures.

In addition, on 8 June, **OSP**, assisted by their proxies, appropriated a family's house in Bria (Haute-Kotto) to establish their base. They threw the family's personal

belongings out and arrested 40 young men and children, the youngest of whom was aged 13, subjected them to forced labour to clear the area and dig trenches around the house.

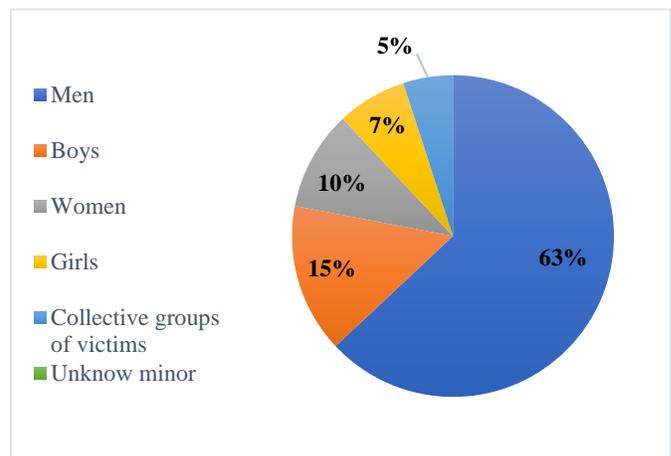
In what concerns **discriminatory acts**, in Bangui, on 5 May, shopkeepers from the PK5 neighbourhood decided to observe a city-shutdown (ville morte) to protest the multiple arrests and detentions by OSP of local residents, all of whom are Muslim. The arrest of an Imam and his cousin who were allegedly ill-treated and tortured by OSP elements led to the protests. In Berbérati (Mambéré-Kadéï), from May to June, reports indicated that the Muslim population were subject to discriminatory practices by the Police such as requests for higher payments and additional documents to issue identity documents.

VICTIMS

According to the HRD's findings, **1,042** civilians suffered human rights violations and abuses at the hands of armed groups, State actors and other perpetrators. Of these victims, **163** suffered multiple violations, including five groups of collective victims.

Men continue to represent most victims (**657**), followed by **boys (157)**, **women (99)** and **girls (76)**. In addition, there was one **minor victim** whose gender was not indicated, as well as **52** groups of **collective victims**.

Men were mainly victims of arbitrary arrest and/or detention (**447**), ill-treatment, maiming and injuries, and torture (**82**), appropriation of property (**82**), killings (**49**) and abduction and deprivation of liberty (**37**). **Women** were mainly victims of CRSV (**34**), appropriation of property (**28**) ill-treatment and maiming and injuries (**23**), and abduction and deprivation of liberty (**22**). **Boys** suffered mainly



from forced recruitment and use (**84**) and arbitrary arrest and/or detention (**33**). **Girls** suffered mainly from forced recruitment and use (**42**), rape and sexual slavery (**19**) and abduction (**11**).