



## Country Profile: Central African Republic

As one of the least developed, poorest countries of the world, the Central African Republic (CAR), (ranked 217 out of 225 nations in GDP per capita, \$800 per year) suffers an endless humanitarian crisis. It has the world's eighth highest rate of maternal deaths in childbirth, and the fifth highest infant mortality rate before age five. It has been largely forgotten by the rest of the world.

Since its independence from France in 1960, the political situation in CAR has always been unstable. The first President, David Dacko, established a one party state. Jean-Bedel Bokassa seized power from 1966 until 1979, renamed the CAR the Central African Empire, declared himself Emperor for Life, and ruled with cruelty and barbarity. A military coup, backed by the French, restored David Dacko to power in 1979. After two years, Dacko was overthrown by Andre Kolingba, who finally announced a move toward parliamentary democracy in 1991.

When the country's first democratic elections were held in 1993, Ange-Félix Patassé became president. In March 2003, the French backed General Bozizé launched a surprise attack against Patassé, who was out of the country. Libyan troops and some 1,000 soldiers of Bemba's Congolese rebel organization failed to stop Bozizé, who took control of the country and thus succeeded in overthrowing Patassé. Bozizé was reelected in the 2011 elections.

Since 2003, Bozizé's government has been in conflict with several rebel groups in a so-called 'bush war'. Because of the unstable situation, there has been massive displacement of people, both within the country and to neighboring countries. According to the 2012 UNHCR country operations profile, an estimated 130,000 CAR refugees have sought refuge in Cameroon, Chad and Sudan, while an estimated 176,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) remain within the CAR, most dependent on UN assistance.

Some progress towards ending the bush war was made in 2008, when two rebel groups APRD and UFDR signed peace accords with the government and a peace process of disarmament, demobilization and social reinsertion (DDR) was launched. In 2011, another rebel group CPJP signed a ceasefire agreement. However, the political situation and peace process in CAR is still unpredictable: in January 2012 the APRD said it was pulling out of the peace process because of the arrest of its chief, Jean-Jacques Demafouth ([link article](#)).

The CAR has also become a refuge for the Lord's Resistance Army, led since 1987 by the mass murderer, Joseph Kony of Uganda. Kony is notorious for abducting child soldiers and girl sex slaves. Kony was indicted by the International Criminal Court in 2005. His forces have dwindled to around 150 men. Kony is currently being hunted by a US backed African Union commando unit. The CAR has become Kony's haven because of its ineffective police and lack of infrastructure. More information about the LRA can be found on the website of the Enough Project. Genocide Watch supports the work of the Enough Project and advocates the arrest and trial of Kony and his henchmen by the ICC.

Another pressing security threat in the CAR is the Front Populaire Pour le Redressement (FPR), a Chadian armed rebel group backed by Sudan that has carried out sporadic attacks in northern CAR since 2008. In January, an offensive by armed forces of both CAR and Chad was launched to oust the FPR from its stronghold in CAR and to capture its rebel leader. According to humanitarian officials, this campaign has displaced thousands of people within the CAR and has increased widespread insecurity ([link article](#)).

Because crimes against humanity by the LRA and FPR have led to widespread terror and forced displacement, Genocide Watch considers CAR at stage 6: potential massacres.