

CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: CONFLICT IN BANGUI

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Latest events

Since 20 May, groups of soldiers from the armed forces of the Central African Republic have been protesting openly in the capital, Bangui, against the present government. The government ordered loyal troops to fight the rebels, resulting in heavy fighting in Bangui.

A two-car ICRC team bringing a nurse and first-aid supplies from Yaoundé, Cameroon, reported that there were insurgencies in every town along its route where army barracks were located.

Red Cross/Red Crescent action

The Central African Red Cross Society has been working in Bangui with two voluntary doctors, 100 voluntary first aiders and all its headquarters' staff from early morning until late at night every day since the armed conflict began in Bangui three days ago. The National Society is treating victims in Red Cross dispensaries as well as in its headquarters, transferring wounded people to the only hospital in town which continues to work and collecting dead bodies to be buried. Every day, an average of 75-100 patients are treated in the hospital and approximately 100 victims in the health posts and headquarters. On 23 May, at 7:30 a.m. they had also already evacuated 50 people to the airport.

As the conflict is raging in all areas of Bangui, all shops including banks and pharmacies are closed. The stocks of drugs and medical supplies in the hospital, dispensaries and pharmacies are rapidly diminishing and replacement sources are no longer available in-country. Since yesterday (23 May), the water in Bangui is no longer treated, so no drinking water is available. The President of the CARCS, a doctor himself, is expecting outbreaks of diarrhoea and dysentery soon. Even food is becoming scarce in Bangui.

The Central African Red Cross Society plans to continue to treat patients, transfer the wounded and collect the dead; train volunteers in educating the population on avoiding water-borne diseases; assist the hospital with medical equipment and medicines; prepare their dispensary and headquarters staff to treat greater numbers of patients in the next few days; and even prepare vaccination campaigns in the long run.

Immediate needs

The National Society estimates that it has the capacity to treat between 50-100 patients a day and assist a population of between 3,000-5,000. In order to do this, it needs not only the medical and other relief materials, but also logistics and communication systems. In detail their needs are:

- Consumable medical items (gloves, 5 ml syringes, surgical threads, serums, antibiotics etc.);
- Equipment for the cool chain (two large refrigerators and cool boxes);
- Disinfectants and soap;
- Survival kits (mainly for the volunteers);
- Five large tents for the storage and enlargement of the CARCS medical facilities;
- 100 family tents for those people whose houses are destroyed;
- Water purification tablets;
- A generator;
- 15 walkie-talkies for the Red Cross teams in town
- Two vehicles to add to the one still running with large Federation stickers;
- One fax machine including stabiliser;
- 5,000 Red Cross vests for the volunteers;
- 1,500 blankets for displaced population;
- 50 torches.

Further details will be provided as they become available. Donors interested in responding to the emergency needs of the Central African Red Cross Society can contact the Federation's Geneva-based desk officer in charge at: (41) 22 730-4312.

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