



Alliance for
Peacebuilding



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GLOBAL CENTRE
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SEARCH FOR
COMMON GROUND



April 22, 2022

Dear Members of the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate Appropriations Committees:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we are writing to urge a strong U.S. commitment to supporting peace, recovery, and justice in the Central African Republic (CAR) as part of the FY23 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill.

Specifically, we urge the following language be included in the FY23 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs appropriations bill:

SEC. 7042. (c) CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC. -

- (1) "Of the funds appropriated by this Act under the heading "Economic Support Fund", not less than \$3,000,000 shall be made available for a contribution to the Special Criminal Court in the Central African Republic."
- (2) "PEACEBUILDING IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC.—Funds appropriated by this Act shall be made available for programs and activities in Central African Republic to support peacebuilding, reconciliation, food security, livelihoods, and strengthening democracy."

Report Language: "Peacebuilding in Central African Republic - \$10m"

We greatly appreciate the inclusion of similar language regarding the Special Criminal Court in SFOPs appropriations bill text since FY19, P.L. 116-6, P.L. 116-94, P.L. 116-260, and P.L. 117-103.

Central Africans continue to experience mass violence and instability at the hands of armed groups, while government forces and their allies have also been responsible for atrocities against civilians. Between June-September 2021 alone, the United Nations Mission in CAR (known as MINUSCA) documented [409 incidents of human rights violations and abuses](#) and violations of international humanitarian law that caused 228 conflict-related civilian deaths. As a result of the ongoing crisis, the UN estimates that more than 1.3 million Central Africans—more

than one-fourth of the population—[have been displaced](#) from their homes, and 49% of the population faces food insecurity.

Special Criminal Court: The Government of CAR has taken important steps to limit impunity for atrocity crimes committed in the country through the establishment of the Special Criminal Court (SCC) in 2018 to prosecute grave violations of human rights and international humanitarian law committed since 2003. The Court has [made significant progress in the past year](#), and [started its first trial](#) on April 19, 2022. The opening of the trial is a landmark moment for victims in the Central African Republic who have repeatedly called for justice for heinous crimes committed during successive conflicts in the country.

The SCC has pioneered a unique structure in which international and national judges and prosecutors work together in the court, which is based in the Central African Republic justice system. If successful, the SCC could be a model for delivering justice for war crimes while strengthening national judicial mechanisms. The effectiveness of the SCC is important to the Government of CAR's ability to hold independent and fair trials and to bring perpetrators of war crimes to justice in order to advance accountability and contribute to long-term stability and peace in the country.

The SCC operates on a modest budget of approximately \$14-15 million per year, a fraction of the annual cost of other hybrid war crimes courts. Given the SCC budget, the U.S.'s contribution of \$3 million in FY20, FY21, and FY22 has provided critically important funding, including for victim and witness protection, operational and financial support for investigative missions, staff training and development, improved case management, and forensics. U.S. funding is also important to encouraging other donors to dedicate resources to the court.

Reconciliation, peacebuilding, and other activities: We urge U.S. support for critical peacebuilding, livelihood, food security, and strengthening of democracy initiatives. Central Africans have expressed a deep commitment to peace, forming more than 1,000 community level peace committees. These committees resolve conflicts and rebuild economies disrupted by war through grassroots approaches and social cohesion initiatives that effectively engage marginalized communities. Increasing support to \$10 million in FY23 would advance proven community-based peacebuilding approaches and allow investments in underfunded sectors such as agriculture, which currently receive no U.S. funding.

MINUSCA: Finally, in order to maintain stability in CAR, we also urge fully funding of U.S. commitments to UN peacekeeping operations and MINUSCA. In 2021, MINUSCA played a critical role in protecting populations, securing presidential and legislative elections and preventing non-state armed groups from taking over the capital. While the U.S. has repeatedly voted on the Security Council to renew the mandate of MINUSCA—and supported an increase of nearly 3,700 military and police personnel—we are not currently paying our fair share to the mission in CAR or any other peacekeeping operation. Overall, the U.S. has amassed \$1.1 billion in arrears over the last few years. The continued accumulation of debt by the U.S. is unsustainable for UN peacekeeping, which, among other responsibilities, separates warring parties, protects civilians, and facilitates the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance in conflict zones around the world, all at just one-eighth the cost of deploying U.S. troops. This debt also means that troop-contributing countries are not being fully reimbursed,

which is especially troubling when the U.S. is voting for these missions and pushing for additional troops to be deployed. As such, we request that you include \$2.577 billion to the State Department's Contributions for International Peacekeeping Activities (CIPA) account in FY23, as well as bill language lifting the statutory 25% cap that has prevented the U.S. from paying our UN peacekeeping assessments in-full. These actions would ensure full funding for MINUSCA, which is paramount in this volatile period.

In recognition of the situation in CAR, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed H. Res. 387 in March, 2020, calling for U.S. leadership in supporting peace and accountability efforts in the country. We urge you to continue and strengthen U.S. commitment to long-term sustainable peace for the citizens of the Central African Republic.

Sincerely,

- *Alliance for Peacebuilding*
- *Association of Central African Republic (ACAR)*
- *The Better World Campaign*
- *Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC)*
- *Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*
- *Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)*
- *Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (GCR2P)*
- *Invisible Children*
- *Search for Common Ground*
- *World Without Genocide*