



A handwritten mark resembling a stylized 'S' or a checkmark, located in the top right corner of the page.

Human Rights Watch Statement

UPR outcome report of the Central African Republic

23 September 2009

Human Rights Watch welcomes the UPR report on the Central African Republic, which includes important recommendations concerning the fight against impunity and efforts to improve respect for international humanitarian and human rights law within the ranks of the government's security forces.

We welcome steps taken by the government of the Central African Republic to end abuses by the security forces, as recommended by a large number of delegations during the UPR interactive dialogue, such as the decision to withdraw the Republican Guard from the northwest of the country in 2007 after members of that unit had been implicated in attacks against civilians, including widespread summary executions. However, Human Rights Watch is deeply concerned about continuing attacks against civilians in the context of the government's counter-insurgency operations against rebels in the north of the country.

Human Rights Watch has received reports that members of the government's regular army, the FACA, were responsible for summary executions of civilians in the towns of Zokoumba, Doum and Zobosinda in January and February of 2009. Further, Human Rights Watch is concerned by allegations of abuses by paramilitary groups that are allied with the government, such as the UFDR rebel movement, which has been working alongside the FACA and has been implicated in attacks against villages such as Balembe in the northwest of the country in April 2009, much of which was burned to the ground.

In this regard and in the interest of regaining the trust of the population, it is crucial to meaningfully reform the security sector, including FACA, the Republican Guard, the Gendarmerie and the Police, in line with the recommendations accepted by the Government. The government should ensure that members of the security forces have undergone a thorough training and awareness program in international humanitarian and human rights law, as recommended by several delegations and that they follow a program for gender awareness at all ranks, as recommended by Belgium.

The Government must also begin to prosecute those who bear individual criminal responsibility for killings, and we encourage the Government to provide a supportive answer to the recommendations made by the United States and Sweden in this regard. Human Rights Watch has repeatedly called upon the Government to investigate and prosecute Lieutenant Eugène Ngaïkossé for serious crimes including the summary execution of civilians in the northeast of the country between 2005 and 2007, but no action has been taken to date to hold him or other senior officers implicated in serious abuses to account for their actions. The Central African Republic should also fully implement recommendations accepted by the Government to ensure that all

violations of human rights or humanitarian law are investigated and those responsible, in particular members of the security forces, are prosecuted and punished.

Government security forces were responsible for widespread attacks against civilians until relatively recently. The fact that the incidence of such abuses has fallen dramatically is testament to the capacity of the government to take concrete steps to halt rights violations. Human Rights Watch is hopeful that the government will demonstrate a sustained commitment to protecting its citizens and ensuring that those responsible for serious abuses are held to account for their crimes.

* * *