



GENEVA (8 November 2013) – Unfortunately it's worse than angry drivers of Peugeots or BMW:s getting into fights – CAR stands for the Central African Republic, a landlocked nation of 4.6 million people, which has slipped into chaos since a coalition of fighters named Seleka took control of the capital, Bangui, and deposed President Francois Bozize in March this year. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay on Friday warned that a deteriorating cycle of violent attacks and reprisals in the Central African Republic risks plunging the country into a new conflict.

On 26 October, self-defence militias, known as anti-Balaka, attacked and occupied Bouar, a town in the west of the country, on the main road to neighbouring Cameroon. This led to clashes with ex-Séléka forces, and resulted in the death of at least 20 civilians. At least 10,000 people have been displaced as a result of the fighting in and around Bouar.

"I am deeply shocked by the killings and human rights violations that are being committed in the Central African Republic," Pillay said. "The latest clashes between ex-Séléka forces and various self-defence groups, are extremely worrying. Such violent incidents have heightened tensions among communities, caused splits along religious and sectarian lines and could lead to further destabilization in the country."

"For decades, diverse ethnic and religious communities have lived together in this country. This escalation of violence and hatred must be halted before it spins completely out of control," the High Commissioner said.

Pillay said that recent reports of a massacre of mostly women and children in a village near Bouar on 26 October illustrate the level of violence prevailing in the Central African Republic and the absolute disregard for human life shown by fighters – in this particular case, alleged ex-Séléka forces.

"I urge the authorities to immediately launch a transparent, independent investigation to verify these shocking reports," she said.

"There is an urgent need for the restoration of the rule of law in the Central African Republic," the High Commissioner said. "Unless immediate action is taken, both by the authorities and by the international community, there is a clear risk that the situation will degenerate rapidly and inexorably into a full-blown conflict. This would take a terrible toll on the people of the Central African Republic, and could also reverberate across the region."