



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda items 3 and 10

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

**Technical assistance and capacity-building**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Elizka Relief Foundation, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



## **Mercenary in the Central African Republic**

As mercenaries increase in the African continent, especially in the Central African Republic, the region has become an arena for conflicts and tension. Mercenaries pose a real threat to the lives of many citizens of the Central African Republic who are suffering from ill-treatment, which violates their civil rights. In another context, the mercenary practices destroy large parts of the state converting it into dangerous territories and battlefields, foreshadowing a future of more tension that needs urgent intervention to put an end to these practices.

Thus, Elizka Relief Foundation submits this written intervention to point out how far the mercenary fighters affect the human right situation in the country that has been already depleted by the civil war.

### **First: using Mercenary fighter in the Central African Republic**

In the middle of January, 2018, the Russian Federation could exert pressure on the Security Council to send Russian fighters to the Central African Republic under the pretext of maintaining peace and security and training the Central African National Forces.<sup>1</sup> It also succeeded in sending 5 combatants and almost 170 field trainers. However, it was discovered later that Russia has provided free military aid to the Central African Republic at the country's government's request, these fighters were Wagner's mercenaries.<sup>2</sup> Because of the civil war that has been taking place since 2012, which was also followed by the withdrawal of French forces, the Central African Republic government found itself in a difficult situation. 75% of the land was owned and controlled by the rebel forces; therefore, there was no other way left for the government but to seek help from Russian private military firms.<sup>3</sup> By 2019, the Ukrainian Business management Unit announced that it has received intelligence about transferring about 1012 mercenaries to both the Central African Republic and the Sudan.<sup>4</sup>

### **Second: The Russian Mercenary Violate Civil Rights and Control Economic Capacity**

Siwa security firm has been entitled to protect the Central African Republic president. And by the beginning of 2019, the Russian started to live in Jean-Bédél Bokassa's former property in Beringo. They also built a training camp, to prohibit citizens from entering this banned area. Both Wagner and Siwa security firms shared the responsibility of managing Ouada and Birao airports, which decreased the job and management opportunities for citizens.<sup>5</sup> In gold and diamond sectors, more than 100 permissions were granted to the Russians without consulting the National Assembly, violating Article 60 of the Constitution.<sup>6</sup>

The presence of Russian mercenary resulted in the murder of some citizens, such as the war reporter Orhan Gamal, the documentary filmmaker Alexander Rastorguev, and the cameraman Kirill Radchenko, who were shot dead by gunmen in the north while covering

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<sup>1</sup> Russian ministry of foreign affairs, Answer of A.A. Kozhin, Deputy Director of the Department of Information and Press of the Russian Foreign Ministry, to a media question about the development of cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Central African Republic, March 22, 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/33ZeKYP>.

<sup>2</sup> TASS, Russia provides free military aid to Central African Republic — Foreign Ministry, 2018, available at: <https://tass.com/defense/995674>.

<sup>3</sup> Middle East, Foreign mercenaries in new scramble for Africa and the Sahel, 2018, available at: <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/foreign-mercenaries-new-scramble-africa-and-sahel>.

<sup>4</sup> UAWIRE, Ukrainian Security Service: Russian private military company Wagner active in Syria and Sudan, 2019, available at: <https://uawire.org/sbu-pmc-wagner-active-in-syria-and-sudan>.

<sup>5</sup> Steve Balestrieri, WAGNER GROUP: RUSSIAN MERCENARIES STILL FLOUNDERING IN AFRICA, SOFREP, April 19, 2020, available at: <https://sofrep.com/news/wagner-group-russian-mercenaries-still-floundering-in-africa/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

the activities of Wagner group. This was an undeniable proof of the real threat posed by Wagner not only on citizens but also on foreigners.

It has become normal for Wagner group to exist in Bangui, the capital; however, they humiliate citizens by all means. They do not distinguish civilians from gunmen, in spite of reclaiming many areas from the rebels to the central government, which resulted in the murder of many civilians outside Bangui.<sup>7</sup>

In November 2019, the number of Russian mercenaries was estimated by more than 370; however, their existence contributed to force the government to make deals and give economic concessions to promote Wagner's financial capacity.<sup>8</sup> Reports issued in late September, 2019 stated that the Russian side was involved in illicit diamond-mining, mentioning that Yafgini Pregojin, who is thought to be Wagner's founder and the accused of interfering in the United States of America presidential elections, is also the owner of a mining company that mine diamonds in the Central African Republic. This legal mining operation took place after the Ministry of Mines had given concession contracts in the same year of Wagner gunmen's arrival.<sup>9</sup> The presence of these Russian mercenaries costed the done deals concerning legal diamond-mining and trade, only to smuggle it through Cameroon, Chad, and the Sudan.

According to the Central African Republic officials, Western officials, and some warlords, Russian agents partnered with some warlords, who got in power without any fair trials, to make use of breaking the law that is not committed anymore to get diamonds from the areas where diamond trade is banned.<sup>10</sup>

A former official stated that the Russian mercenaries loaded private jets with diamonds near the local training camps; and according to officials and warlords, they also mine diamonds near the Sudanese borders.<sup>11</sup>

In 2019, after president Touadéra's attempt to visit Bambari to attend a celebration in spite of the rebel's threats, gunshots filled the air around the ministers and their security teams resulting in aborting the visit. Next day, both the Central African Republic Armed Forces and the Russian mercenaries committed mass arrests against tens of Muslims believing that they participated in the attack, and they tortured them to admit committing crimes they have no connection to.<sup>12</sup>

## Recommendations

Elzika Relief Foundation recommends the relevant authorities to:

1. Tighten the control on private security firms and mercenary operations in the Central African Republic, especially those causing economic blackmailing or bargaining access rights for security in return, along with gradually assigning the central government to claim mines under the gunmen's control.
2. Hold transparent parliamentary elections to make sure that the legislative authority has the right of consent and refusal regarding giving permissions to work for foreign companies in the Central African Republic mines.

<sup>7</sup> Inside Arabia, The Wagner Group's Presence in Africa and Beyond, 2020, available at: <https://insidearabia.com/the-wagner-groups-presence-in-africa-and-beyond/>.

<sup>8</sup> Shankara Narayanan, The Mercenaries Behind Russian Operations in Africa, the Jamestown foundation, November 15, 2019 10:47 AM, available at: <https://jamestown.org/the-mercenaries-behind-russian-operations-in-africa/>.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Leon Goldbeg, Why is Russia Suddenly So Interested in the Central African Republic?, UN dispatch October 14, 2019, available at: <https://www.undispatch.com/why-is-russia-suddenly-so-interested-in-the-central-african-republic/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Central African Republic: Don't Reward Warlords", Human Rights Watch, April 24, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3fM3Bwr>.

<sup>11</sup> "Russia's Playbook in Central African Republic - The New York Times, 30/9/2019, available at: <https://nyti.ms/3fFw8Uw>.

<sup>12</sup> Op.cit.

3. Grant the vast areas controlled by Wagner group to the citizens and landowners, especially croplands, and grant houses to their owners who were displaced and to the homeless in the Central African Republic.

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