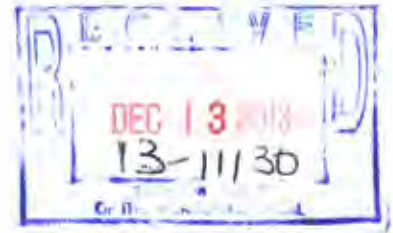


For Info  
DSG, CAC, AG, RA



**NOTE TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
(through Ms. Malcorra)**

**DPI Weekly Press Review**

This week the press review focuses on the United Nations dimension in the coverage of the passing of Nelson Mandela as well as the continuing crisis in the Central African Republic.

The memorial service for Mr. Mandela received global newspaper coverage and was carried live by many international television networks. Your presence and your remarks were extensively reported, and the social media reaction was especially positive.

The Department of Public Information is working closely with the Office of the President of the General Assembly to plan next week's special session to honour Mr. Mandela. DPI has also initiated planning on potential events and activities to mark the next Nelson Mandela International Day, on 18 July 2014.

The deepening crisis in the Central African Republic continues to receive broad media attention. Beyond the straight news reporting about the violence and tensions on the ground, many commentators have noted that the United Nations is clearly and consistently sounding the alarm about potential genocide.

The message to the people of the CAR that you recorded earlier today was immediately disseminated to our partner radio station in Bangui. We are distributing the message via social media and UN news platforms as well, ensuring wide international pick-up in multiple languages.

DPI is also working with both DPA, DPKO and OCHA to create a communications capacity within the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA).

Turning to Syria, we appreciate your decision to allow cameras to record Åke Sellström's hand-over to you of his report on chemical weapons, which significantly enhanced the media's coverage of the story.

Thank you.

Peter Launsky-Tieffenthal  
13 December 2013

cc: The Deputy Secretary-General/Ms. Amos/Mr. Feltman/Ms. Haq/Mr. Ladsous/Mr. Kim/Mr. Orr/Mr. Amundt  
Mr. Nesirky

COR/05/002





# PRESS REVIEW

Friday, 13 December 2013

Produced by News and Media Division, Department of Public Information

## CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The escalating violence in the Central African Republic (CAR), compounded by the mounting humanitarian crisis, unleashed a volley of commentary and analysis this week worldwide. As developments unfolded, the UN's role, both in providing humanitarian assistance and in finding a way to end the violence, came under intense media scrutiny. The decibel level of despair rose as commentators weighed in, laying blame at the door of the international community and individual governments, with expressions ranging from "a mess" to "carnage" to "genocide." Echoing the general tenor, a **Washington Post** opinion piece by Michael Gerson termed it "a national rampage of looting, rape and summary executions," and warned that CAR now "bids for historical notoriety." **International Business Times** (US) predicted that, in the coming weeks, CAR "will face one of the continent's worst, and worsening, security and humanitarian crises."

### *Looming humanitarian tragedy – or genocide in the making?*

The critical scrutiny of CAR's deteriorating humanitarian situation increased on Thursday with the publication of an open letter to the UN by Médecins Sans Frontières. News accounts cited MSF as stating it repeatedly asked the UN to provide supplies, including food and tents, but had not received a concrete response. Quoting a senior MSF official, **Reuters** reported that nobody was present at the airport where more than 30,000 civilians were taking shelter and "the air is heavy with the stench of urine and excrement." The NGO blamed the UN for "failing in its response to the crisis." CNN ran a story headlined, "NGO slams UN work in Central African Republic," which said the letter was "scathing in its assessment of the UN response," and that MSF had "deep concern" over the UN humanitarian agencies' "appalling performance" in CAR. In breaking news on Friday, **AP** reported on the "chaotic distribution" of food supplies by WFP and the arrival of a UNICEF cargo plane (the story was carried by **ABC**, among others).

Questions about the ability of the international community to respond effectively continued to crop up. Evoking tributes to Nelson Mandela, an article in **The Atlantic** (US) asserted that the international community was still struggling with how to respond to one of humanity's most depraved acts – mass killings. Posting the question, "Will the international community respond?," David Rohde noted that "UN officials have warned – in unusually blunt terms – that the country contained 'the seeds of a genocide'." Focusing on the choice of an African Union-led force (MISCA) to quell the violence, Rohde wondered whether the decision not to deploy UN peacekeepers was a matter of money, and quoted a US official who flatly denied this, arguing it was "about efficiency."

In a lengthy analysis examining the challenges facing the UN as it tries to address the crisis in the country, Somini Sengupta of the **New York Times** wrote that the "word genocide sends shivers down the spines of United Nations diplomats" given the memory of the "world body's failure" to stem massacres in Rwanda. Diplomats have been "swallowing" the word that seems to be "on the tip of their tongues," Sengupta noted, with "mass violence" being "Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's choice."

Earlier in the week, the signs were already pointing to an all-out humanitarian tragedy in the making, with **Al Jazeera** reporting that the assistance provided by WFP and MSF was "not enough," and that "aid agencies do not feel safe enough to come here at the moment." In a story headlined, "Humanitarian

crisis looms for Central African Republic,” AFP cited an unidentified aid worker as saying the UN agencies had not delivered any food to a key camp for weeks.

In **The Guardian**, MSF’s Arjan Hehenkamp voiced disappointment with the UN, writing that earlier visits by OCHA’s Valerie Amos and other UN officials “were understood to represent clear commitments,” and yet the response remains “far below the standards expected” and “has not delivered the necessary life-saving assistance” over a prolonged period. In the **Huffington Post**, Amnesty International’s Joanne Mariner wondered “how did a bad situation become worse, and then much, much worse?” Mariner asserted that international peacekeeping forces must “urgently restore security” or “the sectarian bloodshed will continue.” Kofi Annan, in an interview to French-language **Europe 1** radio, conceded that “the UN is slow” and endorsed the decision of France to step in.

While critical assessments were widespread, some pointed to the fact that UN officials had flagged the dire situation and the need for an urgent response. Nigeria’s **Leadership** editorialized that DSG Jan Eliasson’s call “for urgent action... is cheering news,” while adding that the AU’s silence was disturbing.

### *What’s next?*

Amid portrayals of a situation spiralling out of control, the current status of the African mission in the wake of Security Council action fuelled an animated debate in the media over possible next steps. UK’s **Oxford Analytica** carried a report entitled “UN status” to explain how Ban’s Security Council report could lead to the transformation of MISCA into a UN force. In his analysis for London-based **Chatham House**, Paul Melly stressed that while “the UN intervention” may have “averted a total collapse,” the formidable rebuilding process risks being “hampered by a weak State.” Melly voiced hope that MISCA would soon transform into an operation with “full UN blue helmets status.”

In his analysis for **The New York Times**, Peter Bouckaert of Human Rights Watch felt that “the situation had changed” and that “under the auspices of the UN,” the peacekeeping force flying war planes were “delivering a message” – “rule by the gun and you will end up in The Hague.” In Kenya’s **Daily Nation**, Chege Mbitiru noted that the UN seemed to be “belatedly... re-thinking its peacekeeping tactics,” and asserted that “the UN should have known” that the still-armed Seleka would continue to fight.

Considerable analysis focused on the role of France and the response of other European governments and the US. **RFI** noted France’s argument that the intervention would be short, between four and six months. In Dubai, **Gulf News** reported that while initially the mission was “essentially a humanitarian” one, French officials have “expanded its goals to disarming all armed groups.” In **Libération**, editor Fabrice Rousselot contended that although France was in an “uncomfortable position” of being the “forced gendarme of Africa,” the solution must come from the international community, including the UN and the European Union. According to **France 24**, Ban praised France for being prepared to act.

On Vancouver-based **Straight.com**, Gwynne Dyer lauded the French for stepping up to the plate, adding: “It is deeply embarrassing for the African Union to admit that its own peacekeeping force cannot do the job in time, but it hasn’t let its pride get in the way of preventing genocide in the CAR”. **The Daily Mirror** (UK) raised the possibility that “Britain could join an international military effort to prevent genocide in the war-torn Central African Republic.” The article, however, quoted defence sources as saying that “sending UK combat forces is not on the table.” CNN cited US officials as saying “the United States is joining the international community” in aiding the peacekeeping effort “because of our belief that immediate action is required to avert a humanitarian and human rights catastrophe.”

## FAREWELL TO MANDELA

The death of Nelson Mandela was a front-page story around the world, with the outpouring of tributes, including at the high-level memorial events in South Africa, generating a tremendous volume of news reports, analyses, commentaries and multimedia features highlighting his life and legacy. In all of this coverage, the United Nations occupied a prominent place as the press recalled Mandela's association with the Organization and its ideals, and highlighted the reactions to his passing from the Secretary-General and other senior UN officials.

### *'A giant for justice'*

Reporting on the immediate reaction from world leaders was a major part of the early coverage as headlines announced the responses from key players, with a wide range of outlets making immediate use of the statement released by the Secretary-General and leading their stories on it. A **BBC** chronology, "As it happened: Reaction to Nelson Mandela's death," placed Ban's response close to the top, right after the UK's David Cameron, and ahead of Presidents Barack Obama and Jacob Zuma. In a similar feature, **Radio France Internationale** (RFI), in a similar feature, gave prominent placement to the Secretary-General's reaction and included a link to the audio recording of his statement.

The Secretary-General's description of Mandela as a champion of justice was used widely in headlines and lead paragraphs. "UN's Ban Ki-moon: Mandela was a 'giant for justice'," announced **BBC**; "Mandela was 'a giant for justice,'" chimed in **The Voice of Russia**, while **AFP** led its story by saying that "UN Chief Ban Ki-moon paid homage to Nelson Mandela as a giant for justice, equality and human rights." In the same vein, **The Hindu** of Chennai reported that Ban "mourned the death of Nelson Mandela, saying the South African leader was 'a giant for justice' and a human inspiration who made great personal sacrifices in his lifelong fight against racial oppression."

The Secretary-General's participation in the memorial services in South Africa attracted keen media interest. Describing the audience's response, **The Star** (Toronto) said Ban was given a "rapturous ovation," while **CNN** reported that Ban gave his address "to loud cheers." In its *Big Story* section, **AP** reported that "United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon waved and bowed to spectators." **Reuters** noted Ban called Mandela "one of our greatest teachers." **Foreign Policy Magazine** (US) said Ban had praised Mandela as a "deep root that reached across the planet." Under the headline "United Nations Secretary-General Pays Tribute to Nelson Mandela," **ABC News** (US) featured the video of the speech, while **The Washington Post** reprinted the transcript of his address.

A flurry of headlines around the world echoed key messages from Ban's speech: "Memorial Service Mandela: 'The world has lost a friend and mentor' (Ban Ki-Moon)" (Russia's **RIA Novosti**); "UN Secretary-General pays tribute to Mandela" (**Xinhua**); "Ban Ki-moon says that Mandela led by example" (**EFE**); "UN Secretary-General pays tribute to Mandela" (**Philippines News Agency**); "Ban Ki-moon: rest in peace" (**ASCA**, Italy) and "Ban Ki-Moon: Mandela's lesson is for all humankind" (Bulgaria's **Novinite**).

Media outlets in Africa, and especially in South Africa, paid particularly close attention to the involvement of the UN leader in memorial-related events. South Africa's **Mail and Guardian** reported that during Ban's 2009 meeting with "South Africa's first democratically elected president," the Secretary-General "was struck" by the Nobel laureate's human decency. The story ran under the headline: "UN's Ban pays homage to 'giant' Mandela." A **SAPA** dispatch carried in **Times Live** described Ban's sentiment that Mandela had been prepared to give up everything for freedom and democracy, "he taught by example." The Secretary-General's remark about the rainbow of hope

resonated widely, with the national newspaper **The New Age** and **News 24** according it prominent place in their coverage (“Rainbow of hope for SA – Ban Ki-Moon,” headlined the latter).

The Secretary-General’s visit to the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory in Johannesburg drew extensive coverage, including multimedia features, from an array of outlets, such as **Pretoria News** and **Business Day Live**. In its *Five Minutes: South Africa* segment, the **Daily Maverick** ran a photo of the Secretary-General addressing the press; the caption noted that Ban was there “to pay his respects and honour the anti-apartheid icon.” **The Times** ran a front-page photo of the UN chief in Soweto. Elsewhere, **Journal du Tchad** echoed Ban’s words that “the world had lost one of its greatest thinkers.” Uganda’s **Daily Monitor** quoted Ban as saying that even in death, Mandela had managed to unite people of opposing political and social camps, a theme also highlighted by Burkina Faso’s **Sidwaya**.

Meanwhile, Iran’s **IRNA**, **Philippines News Agency** and Sierra Leone’s **Cocorioko** ran a UN News Centre under the same headline: “UN honours Mandela as champion of peace, reconciliation,” complete with a photo of the half-mast UN flag in front of the Secretariat building in New York. It was tweeted 930 times from the UN website, and there was considerable Twitter pick-up elsewhere. The video of the Secretary-General’s statement on Mandela’s death and a special video tribute to Mandela registered nearly 20,000 views on the UN website and on the UN Channel on YouTube.

#### ***UN’s role highlighted***

In the coverage of the events surrounding the tributes, there was a visible strand connecting the UN as a world body with Mandela’s efforts towards the common goal of dismantling apartheid in South Africa and protecting human rights in general. Under the headline “South Africa boos and cheers leaders as it celebrates Mandela,” the **All Africa** website published an analysis that said appreciation was “clearly on display” in the “cheers for Ban Ki-moon,” representing the UN’s anti-apartheid record. In its account of the response from the General Assembly, **UPI** said that the UN body offered a moment of silence and its President, John Ashe, said Mandela had demonstrated the “difference one person can make in the face of adversity, oppression and prejudice.” Citing the GA President, **Xinhua** said that Ashe described Mandela as a symbol of reconciliation in a country that was for generations the definition of racism. Also highlighting Ashe’s statement, **Turkish Weekly** quoted his remark that Mandela’s heroic spirit will “forever remain with us all.”

The observance of Human Rights Day provided the press with another related angle to explore. **CNN** said the memorial service coinciding with the Day was “the centrepiece of a week of mourning.” In **The Nation** (Pakistan), Jon Nichols recalled the passing of the African leader to underscore the importance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a document Mandela “revered as a touchstone for nation-building and governing.” In Kinshasa, a **Radio Okapi** website story ran under the headline, “International Day of Human Rights – Ban Ki-moon pays tribute to Mandela.” There were also frequent references to the fact that the UN had established a special International Day to honour Mandela. Kenya’s **Digital Standard**, for example, reminded its readers that the UN had a special annual observance to celebrate Mandela’s contribution by remembering society’s less fortunate.

\* \* \*