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IFRC COVID-19 Emergency Decree Pro Bono Research: Central African Republic (CAR)

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1. Is there coordination between state and non-state actors, e.g. through a national emergency response mechanism?

Publicly available materials do not discuss any coordination between state and non-state actors with respect to a national emergency response to COVID-19. The government has established a coronavirus hotline in French and Sango to respond to questions or report possible exposure (accessible by calling 1212).¹

As substantial parts of the country are occupied and/or controlled by rebel groups, the United Nations has urged these groups to cooperate with the government with respect to a COVID-19 response, including by ceasing attacks on the civilian population, lifting any obstacle to humanitarian operations, leaving public buildings (including health centers), and implementing any COVID-19 measures adopted by the government in the areas they control.² At least one rebel group has indicated its support of government efforts to protect the population.³

2. Is there mention of the role of Red Cross (RC) or humanitarian actors? In what areas/sectors? What responsibilities are ascribed to RC?

Publicly available materials do not address the role of RC or humanitarian actors beyond the exemptions mentioned below.

3. Are there exceptions to travel restrictions that will facilitate the movement of RC/humanitarian relief teams and/or aid across borders? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

President Touadéra's address to the country on 26 March 2020 announced measures exempting NGO workers and diplomats from a general prohibition on entry into CAR for any person coming from another country where local transmission of COVID-19 has occurred. The address also confirmed that the airport of Bangui, the capital city of CAR, would remain open for humanitarian and cargo flights.⁴

¹ *Health Alert*, U.S. EMBASSY IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, <https://cf.usembassy.gov/covid-19-information/> (last visited Mar. 31, 2020).

² *Central African Republic: UN Expert Calls for Urgent Ceasefire to Protect Population from COVID-19*, U.N. OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMM'R FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (Mar. 26, 2020), <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25747&LangID=E>.

³ *Coronavirus: Ali Darassa, Chef de l'UPC, Exhorte le Pouvoir de Bangui à Prendre Toutes les Dispositions pour Protéger la Population [Coronavirus: Ali Darassa, Head of the UPC, Calls on Bangui Authorities to Take all Measures to Protect the Population]*, CORBEAU NEWS CENTRAFRIQUE, <https://corbeaunews-centrafrique.com/coronavirus-ali-darassa-chef-de-lupc-exhorte-le-pouvoir-de-bangui-a-prendre-toutes-les-dispositions-pour-protéger-la-population/>.

The address of 26 March did not specifically exempt any class of persons from earlier measures introduced for persons arriving in CAR from abroad, including (1) medical screening upon arrival;⁵ (2) quarantine for confirmed cases of COVID-19;⁶ and (3) quarantine for persons arriving from countries where local transmission of COVID-19 has occurred.⁷ The United States and French embassies in CAR currently advise on their websites that any person arriving from a location with local transmission of COVID-19 is required to self-quarantine.^{8 9}

The address of 26 March announced a general prohibition on travel between Bangui and other provinces, without providing any exemptions.¹⁰ The United States Embassy currently advises that humanitarian workers are exempt from this prohibition.¹¹

The address of 26 March announced a requirement to report all suspected cases of COVID-19 to the government, without providing any exemptions.¹²

4. Are there exceptions to quarantines, curfews and other restrictions on movement that allow RC/humanitarian organizations access to vulnerable populations (including for psychosocial or non-medical aid)?

Publicly available materials do not discuss exceptions to quarantines, curfews or other restrictions for RC/humanitarian workers who have arrived in CAR from a country with local transmission of COVID-19 or who have confirmed cases of COVID-19.

5. Have any special legal facilities or exemptions been put in place for the importation of medical aid or other relief items or personnel (International Disaster Response Law)? What (if any) quarantine requirements or other conditions are attached?

The address of 26 March announced an exemption for NGO workers and diplomats from the general prohibition on entry into CAR for any person coming from a country where local transmission of COVID-

⁴ *Message à la Nation de Son Excellence le Professeur Faustin Archange Touadéra, Président de la République, Chef de l'État, à la Suite de la Découverte du Premier Cas d'Infection Locale à Coronavirus* [Message to the Nation of His Excellency Prof. Faustin Archange Touadéra, Head of State, Following the Discovery of the First Case of Local Coronavirus Infection], AFRICA NEWS (Mar. 27, 2020), <https://fr.africanews.com/2020/03/27/coronavirus-republique-centrafricaine-message-a-la-nation-de-son-excellence-le-professeur-faustin-archange-touadere-president-de-la-republique-chef-de-letat-a-la-suite-de-la-decouverte-du-premier-cas-dinfection-locale-a-coronavirus-26-mars-2020/>.

⁵ Communiqué du Ministère de la Santé et de la Population No. 233 du 6 Mars 2020 de dispositions prises applicables aux voyageurs arrivant en République centrafricaine pour la prévention de la propagation de la maladie au nouveau virus corona COVID-19 [Communiqué of the Ministry of Health and Population No. 233 of March 6, 2020 on Measures Applicable to Travelers Arriving in the Central African Republic to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19], Mar. 6, 2020, accessible at https://cf.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/directives_covid19-2.pdf?1920/212_95791cb4776fa4c89be4666a62d92363b811e.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Communiqué du Ministère de la Santé et de la Population No. 250 du 13 Mars 2020 relatif à l'adoption des mesures restrictives visant le renforcement de la prévention et du contrôle de l'épidémie du coronavirus en République centrafricaine [Communiqué of the Ministry of Health and Population No. 250 of March 13, 2020 Regarding Restrictive Measures Aimed at Strengthening the Prevention and Control of the Coronavirus Epidemic in Central African Republic], Mar. 13, 2020, accessible at https://cf.ambafrance.org/IMG/pdf/2020_03_13_-_mesures_covid-19-2.pdf?1921/c7766d857578a6c4a860e7992a866e0730a68ff2.

⁸ U.S. EMBASSY IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, *supra* note 1. The U.S. Embassy indicates the mandatory self-quarantine period is twenty-one days, which corresponds to the latest measures announced in President Touadéra's address of 26 March.

⁹ *Informations Coronavirus Covid-19* [Information on Coronavirus COVID-19], EMBASSY OF FRANCE IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, <https://cf.ambafrance.org/Informations-Coronavirus-Covid-19-16-mars-2020> (last visited Mar. 31, 2020).

¹⁰ *Message à la Nation*, *supra* note 4.

¹¹ U.S. EMBASSY IN CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, *supra* note 1.

¹² *Message à la Nation*, *supra* note 4.

19 has occurred.¹³ But the address of 26 March does not specifically exempt NGO workers coming from such countries, or who have confirmed cases of COVID-19, from mandatory quarantine.

The address of 26 March provides for continued humanitarian flights into the Bangui airport.¹⁴ The World Health Organization announced on 29 March the delivery of COVID-19-related medical supplies to Bangui, indicating that such flights are being allowed to arrive in the country.¹⁵

6. Is the RC (or humanitarian organizations) categorized as ‘essential’ or ‘emergency’ services, for the purposes of exemptions to restrictions on business operations and opening hours?

Publicly available materials do not discuss exemptions for RC or other humanitarian organizations from any restrictions on business operations.

7. What other measures are provided in the emergency decrees? (for governmental actors, for communities, for health workers, etc.).

On 6 March 2020, the Ministry of Health and Population issued a communiqué governing the screening of travelers arriving in CAR and handling of potential, suspected, and confirmed COVID-19 cases among travelers.¹⁶ The material portions of this communiqué are discussed in the answer to Question 3, above.

On 13 March 2020, the Ministry of Health and Population announced the adoption of additional measures aimed at preventing the spread of COVID-19 in CAR. The material measures in this communiqué, beyond those described in the answer to Question 3, included:

- restrictions on hospital visits;
- a prohibition on travel by government officials and members of public and “parapublic” administration to areas with local transmission of COVID-19;
- a requirement for diplomatic missions and NGOs to comply with COVID-19-related measures and to cooperate with national authorities in implementing such measures;
- a requirement for airlines and companies transporting persons from countries with local transmission of COVID-19 to cooperate with CAR health authorities;
- a prohibition on mass meetings.¹⁷

President Touadera’s address of 26 March announced the adoption of further measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19. The material measures in this announcement, beyond those described in the answer to Question 3, included:

- the closure of all schools and universities for fifteen days (to be extended if necessary);
- the closure of all nightlife establishments for fifteen days (to be extended if necessary);
- a prohibition on meeting in groups of more than fifteen people for fifteen days (to be extended if necessary);
- a prohibition on breaking quarantine, except as medically directed;
- limitations on attendance at certain social gatherings (weddings, funerals, etc.), and prohibition on social celebrations for fifteen days (to be extended if necessary);
- the establishment of local crisis committees in the provinces;
- the suspension of religious observances attended by more than fifteen people for fifteen days (to be extended if necessary).¹⁸

¹³ *Id.*

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ @OMSCentrafrrique, TWITTER (Mar. 29, 2020, 9:37 AM), <https://twitter.com/OMSCentrafrrique/status/1244181792321650689>.

¹⁶ Communiqué du Ministère de la Santé et de la Population No. 233 du 6 Mars 2020, *supra* note 5.

¹⁷ Communiqué du Ministère de la Santé et de la Population No. 250 du 13 Mars, *supra* note 7.

¹⁸ *Message à la Nation*, *supra* note 4.

8. Have restrictions been adopted or put in place that ban the export of protective medical equipment?

Publicly available materials do not discuss bans on exporting protective medical equipment.