



A senior UN official says he fears that the number of victims of sexual violence in the Central African Republic (CAR) is “astronomical”. Mr. Mabingue Ngom, who has supervised UNFPA’s emergency work since violence broke out in the Central African Republic, says in the past month they have 1186 confirmed cases of sexual violence. Since in every likelihood most cases have not been reported, he fears that “the real number can be astronomical,” he said in a meeting with journalists at UNRIC, Brussels.

Meanwhile, the Mayor of Bangui, Catherine Samba-Panza, has been elected interim president of the Central African Republic and tasked with restoring peace.

"Show your support for my nomination by giving the strong signal of laying down your weapons" to "stop the suffering of the people," Samba-Panza said after the election in the interim parliament.

The European Union Foreign ministers also decided today to deploy 500 troops, in addition to 1,600 French and 4,000 African soldiers who have already been sent to CAR.

The UN Human Rights Council today met to discuss the situation in CAR, which UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon says is in “freefall”, one million or a fifth of the population having fled the violence and more than half the population now needing humanitarian assistance.

„ I call for an immediate end to the cycle of violence and retaliation before the divide between the communities takes deep root and sectarian violence escalates into further mass atrocities. Religious tensions have not been part of the CAR’s past and they must not become part of its future,“ Mr. Ban said in a statement to the session of the Human Rights Council, read on his behalf by Michael Møller, Acting Head of the United Nations Office in Geneva.