

DECLARATION OF ALEXANDRA LAMARCHE

I, Alexandra Lamarche, submit the following declaration of conditions in the Central African Republic (“CAR”) for third-country national deportees from the United States. Under penalty of perjury, I swear that the following statements are accurate and true to the best of my knowledge, memory, and belief.

I. QUALIFICATIONS

1. I am a doctoral candidate in Political Science at the Université de Montréal, where I am completing a dissertation entitled *Civilian Responses to Identity-Based Repression in the Central African Republic*. My research is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. I hold a Master of Arts in Conflict, Security and Development from the University of Sussex (2015) and a Bachelor of Social Science with Honours in Conflict Studies and Human Rights from the University of Ottawa (2009).

2. Prior to my doctoral studies, I held a series of research and field positions focused on armed conflict, displacement, and humanitarian response in sub-Saharan Africa. From 2017 to October 2025, I served as Senior Fellow and Senior Advocate for West and Central Africa at Refugees International (Washington, D.C.), where I covered displacement, humanitarian need, conflict, and peace operations in the Central African Republic and the broader region; wrote reports and policy recommendations on international engagement and humanitarian assistance; and held regular meetings with government officials, UN personnel, and NGO staff. In 2021, I was seconded to iMMAP as a Humanitarian Data Expert, conducting interviews with humanitarian stakeholders across Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Syria. In 2017, I served as AGORA Project Lead with Impact Initiatives in Bangui, Central African Republic, overseeing field research teams and coordinating data collection on humanitarian needs. And, earlier, I served as a REACH Assessment Officer and Country Focal Point with Impact Initiatives in N'Djamena, Chad (2016 to 2017), where I conducted humanitarian needs assessments.

3. I am a member of the CAR Working Group, a body of researchers, practitioners, and policy analysts with specialist expertise on the Central African Republic. I have published extensively on CAR and related humanitarian and security issues for Impact Initiatives, Refugees International, *Foreign Policy*, *The Conversation*, *The New Humanitarian*, *The National Interest*, *African Arguments*, and the *Fair Observer*. I am also regularly cited and interviewed by media outlets about CAR, its political dynamics, and the ongoing humanitarian crisis.

4. I have been asked to provide an independent expert opinion regarding the conditions in the Central African Republic for third-country national deportees from the United States. My

conclusions are based on my research, fieldwork, and professional expertise concerning the political and security situation in CAR, with particular reference to the treatment of perceived outsiders and Muslim Central Africans by state forces and affiliated armed actors.

II. BASIS FOR OPINION

5. The conclusions below draw on: (a) 50 semi-structured interviews conducted in early 2025 with Muslim Central Africans who experienced state-led repression between 2016 and 2025, carried out as part of my dissertation research under conditions of confidentiality, with participant identifiers used in place of names; (b) fieldwork conducted in CAR and with Central African refugee and diaspora communities; (c) my professional experience working on CAR (2017-Present); and (d) published reports by the United Nations, the U.S. State Department, and other bodies documenting conditions in CAR.

III. WHAT AWAITS DEPORTEES IN THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

6. The United States has entered into a third-country removal agreement with the Central African Republic, a country to which these individuals have no connection. Most do not speak Sango or French, CAR's official languages. They have no family, community, or economic ties there. They are not being returned. They are being sent somewhere entirely foreign, under conditions that the U.S. government has formally recognised as dangerous.

7. Since January 2026, the U.S. Department of State has ranked CAR "Do Not Travel," its highest advisory level.¹ For decades, the country has been the scene of persistent humanitarian need, and the 2026 Humanitarian Response Plan—designed to provide for only a fraction of the 2.3 million people in need of assistance²—is funded at only 22%.³ Health infrastructure is largely absent. Unemployment is pervasive. The country hosts over 600,000 displaced people and returnees of its own, in a situation already beyond the capacity of the humanitarian system. The \$85 million in U.S. funding for the International Organisation for Migration⁴ does not help the humanitarian community meet civilians' needs or make CAR a safer place for these new arrivals.

8. The section below documents what any foreigner—especially Muslim individuals—removed to CAR under that agreement will face. This is not a general account of insecurity in a conflict-affected country. Rather, it is an account of what the CAR state itself does to perceived outsiders

¹ U.S. Dep't of State, *Central African Republic Travel Advisory* (Jan. 15, 2026), <https://travel.state.gov/en/international-travel/travel-advisories/central-african-republic.html>.

² OCHA, *République Centrafricaine 2026 Plan de Réponse Humanitaire – En Un Clin d'Œil – Central African Republic*, ReliefWeb (Feb. 5, 2026), <https://reliefweb.int/report/central-african-republic/republique-centrafricaine-2026-plan-de-reponse-humanitaire-en-un-clin-doeil>.

³ OCHA, *République Centrafricaine: Besoins Humanitaires et Plan de Réponse 2026*, Financial Tracking Service, <https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1507/summary> (last visited June 9, 2026).

⁴ Giulia Paravicini, *Central African Republic to Accept Third-Country Deportees from US, Sources Say*, Reuters (June 7, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/central-african-republic-accept-third-country-deportees-us-sources-say-2026-06-07/>.

and Muslims through its armed forces, its bureaucratic apparatus, and its Russian mercenary partners, and what that means for anyone sent there.

A. The Logic of Third-Country Removal and What It Conceals

9. Third-country removal agreements allow a government to send individuals to a country other than their country of origin on the basis that the receiving country has agreed to accept them. The legal and practical premise is that the receiving country will not itself persecute the individuals it receives. In CAR's case, that premise fails for deportees perceived as Muslim.

10. Precedents from other third-country deportation agreements are instructive about how receiving-country conditions translate into individual harm. Other countries that have accepted third-country deportees under similar agreements have subsequently refused to absorb them, leaving individuals stranded or returned onward to unknown destinations. Ghana's experience with U.S. third-country deportees, reported by the Los Angeles Times⁵, illustrates how these agreements can break down in practice, with deportees caught between states unwilling to take responsibility for them. CAR, whose government operates with limited institutional capacity and a documented record of targeting Muslims, is an unlikely exception to this pattern. It is unclear which incentive was offered that made this agreement palatable to a government operating under heavy Russian influence with documented disregard for human rights. Individuals will arrive without documentation, without recourse, and in a country whose government and armed forces treat the presence of Muslims and foreigners as a security threat.

11. The CAR government and its armed forces (the Forces Armées Centrafricaines, or "FACA"), operating alongside Russian Wagner Group mercenaries, have spent nearly a decade systematically repressing the country's Muslim population and others perceived as such, on the basis of appearance, name, language, or origin. This repression is not a by-product of civil war. Rather, it is embedded in how the state governs: through document denial, electoral exclusion, economic dispossession, and violence. A deportee perceived as Muslim does not simply face a dangerous *environment*. They are being sent to a country where the *state itself* is the perpetrator.

B. The Russian Dimension: What Wagner's Presence Means for Deportees

12. The Wagner Group—a Russian state-linked private military company, rebranded in 2023 as the Africa Corps—has operated in CAR since 2018 and constitutes one of the most significant sources of violence against civilians perceived as Muslim. Wagner fighters operate while embedded with FACA units, meaning that encounters with state forces are also encounters with Russian mercenaries. For several reasons, this matters for any individual perceived as Muslim who is removed to CAR.

⁵ Nicholas Riccardi, Chinedu Asadu & Edward Acquah, *Ghana Says Immigrants Deported by the U.S. Have Been Sent Home, Contradicting Lawyers*, L.A. Times (Sept. 16, 2025), <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2025-09-16/ghana-insists-immigrants-deported-by-the-us-have-been-sent-home-contradicting-lawyers>.

13. First, Wagner forces have specifically targeted Muslim religious practice. Multiple interviewees reported that Wagner fighters detained people during prayer. Mosques across the country have stopped the call to prayer in response. As one interviewee put it: "Wagner fighters took people during prayer." This targeting is not incidental: it reflects a joint state-and-mercenary campaign to suppress the visibility of Muslim life in CAR.

14. Second, Wagner forces operate with near-total impunity. No accountability mechanism, domestic or international, has successfully prosecuted Wagner personnel for violence against Muslim civilians. Russian Wagner mercenaries are not operating at the margins of the Central African state. According to my colleagues in the Central African Republic and those I interviewed, they are embedded within it and present across government institutions, including border control, airport security, and civil registry offices, where nationals obtain identity documents and birth certificates. Wagner fighters have been documented enacting their own exclusionary practices alongside the government's nativist ideology, targeting Muslims at the very checkpoints and offices that deportees would need to pass through upon arrival. For nationals of countries where Russia holds complicated geopolitical interests, this presence introduces an additional and unpredictable layer of risk that the U.S. government has not publicly accounted for. A deportee sent to CAR is therefore being placed in a country where the forces most likely to encounter them are accountable to no one.

15. Third, the presence of Russian mercenaries entrenches the political conditions that produce repression. Wagner's role in CAR is not solely military. It extends to advising and supporting the Touadéra government, which in turn has adopted and amplified nativist policies that frame outsiders—especially Muslims—as threats. The removal of individuals—Muslim or not—to CAR is therefore not a removal to a neutral third country: it is a removal to a country whose governance is co-managed by a Russian military contractor whose forces have documented records of human rights violations.

C. Being Erased: Cultural and Religious Repression of Muslims

16. Muslim identity in CAR has become a source of danger. Visible markers of faith, such as clothing, prayer, and language, expose individuals to harassment, threats, and violence. Interviewees described a forced choice between safety and identity. Multiple interviewees reported that bureaucrats and soldiers called them slurs, told them to "leave CAR," or said that they were "not worthy of Central African documents." As interviewees at multiple locations described, Muslim Central Africans feel they have "no dignity." A Peul man living in Bangui reported being regularly harassed for praying in public, with security forces and Christian civilians telling him, "Oh, you guys still live here?"

17. Wearing traditional Muslim clothing such as hijabs, jalabiyas, boubous, and prayer caps provokes mockery and harassment. Many interviewees now wear what one participant described

as "Christian clothes"—jeans and T-shirts—to avoid attention. This is not a minor inconvenience. It is a coerced erasure of religious identity under threat of violence.

18. In 2018, a government official declared during a nationally broadcast National Assembly session that the predominantly Muslim PK5 neighbourhood of Bangui had "become Chad" and added: "I wonder if, with you, it wouldn't be necessary to burn PK5 one day."⁶ No accountability followed. The statement was not exceptional. It reflected the governing logic that Muslim Central Africans are foreign interlopers in their own country. There is little reason to expect that actual foreigners—especially those of the Muslim faith—would experience better conditions.

D. Being Excluded: Civil and Political Repression of Muslims

19. Muslims seeking national identity documents are routinely required to produce extensive documentation, birth certificates, residency certificates, nationality certificates, parents' and grandparents' documents, that Christian applicants are not asked to provide. For those displaced by conflict, obtaining these documents is close to impossible. All interviewees who had attempted to obtain identity cards reported paying more than their Christian compatriots for the same procedures. Many who sought documents were harassed by FACA forces. Deportees will undoubtedly face similar challenges in obtaining the documentation they require to integrate into CAR society.

20. Without documents, individuals cannot prove citizenship, access services, or vote. For a deportee arriving in CAR from the United States, the absence of locally recognised documentation is immediate. They will be unable to establish legal status, access any formal service, or seek protection through legal channels.

E. Being Dispossessed: Economic Repression of Muslims

21. Economic repression of Muslims in CAR is systematic and cumulative. Interviewees reported consistent extortion at roadblocks and checkpoints, where Muslims were singled out and charged more than Christians, with prices changing arbitrarily. One man was asked to pay 20,000 Central African Francs (approximately 35 USD); when soldiers realised he did not have that amount, they took everything he had, including his phone. Market vendors described being expelled from markets or having goods stolen by FACA soldiers, sometimes with civilian collusion. Motorcycle taxi drivers had their vehicles taken at checkpoints. Business owners described looting by FACA forces and Wagner mercenaries. As one interviewee summarised: "Everything was either stolen or destroyed after the war." For a deportee with no prior assets, no community network, and no documentation, these conditions mean immediate destitution with no safety net and no legal means of redress.

⁶ Off. of the U.N. High Comm'r for Hum. Rts., *L'incitation à la haine et à la violence en République Centrafricaine (2017–2020)* (2020), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/incitement-hatred-and-violence-central-african-republic-2017-2020>.

F. Being Harmed: Physical Violence Targeting Muslims

22. Physical violence by state forces and their allies is pervasive and carried out with near-total impunity. Any deportee will be perceived as an outsider, as a person with no locally established ties, documentation, or community protection, and that status alone creates serious exposure to violence at checkpoints, airports, and in encounters with FACA forces and Wagner mercenaries who routinely target those they regard as not belonging. For deportees perceived as Muslim, that exposure is compounded by every dimension of repression documented above. Interviewees showed physical evidence of injuries inflicted by FACA or gendarmerie forces: shattered ankles and legs, scarring, a damaged spleen, missing fingers, blindness; three had bullets still lodged in their bodies. One man was held without charge across multiple detention centres for nearly two years before UN peacekeeping staff intervened to secure his release. Testimonies included relatives killed by FACA soldiers or Russian forces, and raids in which entire communities were attacked with indiscriminate shootings. Women and girls reported rape by FACA and Russian forces; one female interviewee described being raped simultaneously with her daughter while her husband—a Sultan—was forced to watch, following weeks of FACA harassment she believed was designed to undermine his authority. Violence here is not incidental: it is a collective instrument of political intimidation directed at community structures and at those marked as not belonging. Every deportee will be marked as such. Deportees perceived as Muslim will be marked twice.

G. The Absence of Any Protection Infrastructure

23. There is no humanitarian infrastructure in CAR capable of receiving or supporting deportees. The 2026 Humanitarian Response Plan for CAR is only 22% funded.⁷ MINUSCA, the UN peacekeeping mission, lacks the mandate and capacity to provide individual protection. There are no functioning domestic legal mechanisms through which civilians—citizens or new arrivals—can seek redress against government neglect or FACA violence. No international actor is positioned to monitor or respond to what happens to deportees after arrival. The absence of infrastructure is not a temporary gap: it reflects the structural conditions of a country whose government is itself the primary threat to the people being sent there.

24. Any individual removed to CAR does not simply face a dangerous security environment. They are being sent to a country where the state itself is unwilling and unable to provide for its own citizens, and is a documented perpetrator of identity-based violence against people of the Muslim faith. The government treats Muslims as foreign guests rather than citizens, regardless of legal status. Its armed forces and Russian mercenary partners have systematically harassed, beaten, detained, looted, and killed Muslims with impunity. Its bureaucratic system denies documentation and blocks legal recourse. The political system from which Muslims are actively excluded is co-managed by a Russian military contractor accountable to no oversight mechanism. This is not a

⁷ OCHA, *Besoins Humanitaires*, *supra* note 3.

risk that logistical planning or resettlement support can resolve. Rather, it is structural, institutionalised, and ongoing.

IV. EXPERT OPINION

25. Based on my expertise, my research, and the country conditions documented above, it is my opinion that no individual, of any background or faith, should be removed to the Central African Republic. Individuals sent to CAR would face a serious risk of persecution, including harassment, economic destruction, deprivation of legal status, physical violence, arbitrary detention, torture, and possibly death, because of their status as outsiders or their perceived (or imputed) Muslim religion. The CAR state and its armed forces are documented perpetrators of identity-based violence against Muslim Central Africans. The government is unwilling and unable to provide protection. Russian mercenary forces operating alongside the state are accountable to no oversight body. There is no viable internal relocation alternative. There is no humanitarian or legal infrastructure capable of providing protection upon arrival.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.



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