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November 7, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to express my concern with the abysmal state of affairs in the Central African Republic (C.A.R.) and urge meaningful and practical engagement by the State Department.

Since Seleka rebels seized Bangui, forcibly ousting President Francois Bozize and installing a rebel commander to fill the role, C.A.R. has spiraled into a state of lawlessness. Reports indicate that several hundred thousand civilians have been displaced internally or fled to neighboring countries. With no government security forces in place, the rebels operate without restraint, indiscriminately killing, looting, and torturing innocent civilians. Prime Minister Nicolas Tiangaye, the only current C.A.R. official recognized as a legitimate leader by the international community, described his own country as "anarchy, a nonstate" and explained that the rebels "are sowing terrorism." His comments are particularly disturbing given the pattern of ethno-religious violence that has emerged in parts of the country.

The United States has a national security interest in seeing that C.A.R. regains a semblance of order and stability. C.A.R. shares borders with six countries, some which have received significant U.S. assistance, elevating its regional importance. These countries are contending with an influx of refugees from C.A.R. and the potential for heightened inter-communal tensions as religious and identity fault-lines deepen as a consequence. The Ugandan-led, African Union military operation to counter the Lord's Resistance Army, which receives U.S. government logistical and advisory support, operates in C.A.R.'s southwest and was halted for several months this year due to C.A.R.'s insecurity and political uncertainty. Additionally, with no semblance of the rule of law, the situation in the country lends itself to transnational criminal activity, such as wildlife trafficking and illicit resource extraction, both of which the State Department has attempted to curtail on the continent.

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I understand that the U.N. Security Council has taken certain actions regarding the situation in C.A.R. and that the State Department is giving consideration to providing support to the African Union-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA). I urge you to remain substantively engaged with these international efforts, and to keep the Committee fully informed as you evaluate options to provide bilateral and/or multilateral support to this mission.

The appalling security and humanitarian conditions in C.A.R. warrant substantive international engagement. With U.S. national security interests at stake, I look forward to working with you in developing concrete steps to help address instability in the Central African Republic.

Sincerely,



EDWARD R. ROYCE

Chairman