

**DEPUTY UN EMERGENCY RELIEF COORDINATOR BEGINS FIVE-DAY VISIT TO  
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC**

(Bangui/New York, 27 July 2009): Catherine Bragg, United Nations Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, has visited Birao in northeastern Central African Republic (CAR) at the start of a five-day mission to the country. During her visit, Ms. Bragg plans to assess the humanitarian situation in the country and ensure that continued humanitarian assistance is being provided to people in need.

“I start my visit here in compassion and solidarity with people of this town who have suffered from the effects of recent ethnically motivated violence and to see for myself the scope of the humanitarian situation. I am deeply concerned by the limited protection of populations that has led to the displacement of many families and the insecurity that is hampering the work of the humanitarian organisations”, said Ms. Bragg in Birao on 26 July.

Last month, interethnic violence in Birao, which involved the burning of more than 600 homes, resulted in the displacement of some 3,700 people who are now scattered throughout the town and in surrounding bush areas.

During her visit Ms. Bragg, accompanied by Ms. Rimah Salah, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), met with local authorities, internally displaced persons, humanitarian actors and the MINURCAT force to better understand the needs of civilians.

Birao is located around 1,200 km east of Bangui, the country’s capital, and is effectively cut off during the six-month rainy season (May-October) due to impassable road conditions. The unpredictable security situation coupled with the lack of infrastructure is also affecting humanitarian access.

After a period of increasing stability in 2008 in CAR, this year has seen a resurgence in violence and displacement across northern regions of the country. There have been clashes among armed groups and increased displacement in some areas.

Ms. Bragg will hold meetings in Bangui with senior Governmental officials, the SRSG, members of the diplomatic corps and donors on 27 July before travelling to Kabo and Paoua in the north and west of CAR on 28 and 29 July. The mission concludes on 30 July.

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