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*December 10, 2013
Abuja, Nigeria*

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate publication

President Obama's Message to the People of the Central African Republic

In recent weeks, government affiliated armed groups and independent “self-defense” militias have committed shocking and horrific atrocities against innocent civilians in the Central African Republic. The United States is actively supporting the international community's efforts to end the violence, protect civilians, prevent atrocities, provide humanitarian assistance, and help create an environment that allows constitutional and democratic governance to be restored.

In an audio message taped in Dakar, Senegal, today, President Obama sent a clear and important message to the people of the Central African Republic: that they should reject the violence currently threatening their country, and move together toward a future of security, dignity, and peace.

Transcript:

Mbi bala ala kouè. This is President Barack Obama, and today I want to speak directly to you – the people of the Central African Republic.

I know that in your lives you have faced great hardship. But I also know that you've lived together in peace – as diverse and vibrant communities, Christian and Muslim. Together, you celebrate a proud history and a land of extraordinary beauty. Together, you emerged from colonialism and achieved independence. Together, you realize that we are all children of God and that – whatever our faith – we all deserve to live in peace and dignity.

But the awful violence of recent days threatens the country you love. Innocent men, women and children have been killed. Families have fled their homes. And we know from the bitter experience of other countries what happens when societies descend into violence and retribution. Today, my message to you is simple: it doesn't have to be this way. You – the proud citizens of the Central African Republic – have the power to choose a different path.

Respected leaders in your communities – Muslim and Christian – are calling for calm and peace. I call on the transitional government to join these voices and to arrest those who are committing crimes. Individuals who are engaging in violence must be held

accountable – in accordance with the law. Meanwhile, as forces from other African countries and France work to restore security, the United States will support their efforts to protect civilians.

Most of all, every citizen of the Central African Republic can show the courage that's needed right now. You can show your love for your country by rejecting the violence that would tear it apart. You can choose peace. You can choose to live up to the rule that is at the heart of all great faiths – that we treat other people the way we want to be treated ourselves.

That is how we honor our faiths. That is how reconciliation occurs. That's how the Central African Republic can move forward – and return to a better path, toward a future where you and your fellow citizens can seek the security and dignity and peace you deserve.

Singuila.

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Other relevant information about U.S. policies and programs in Nigeria can be found on our website: <http://nigeria.usembassy.gov>.

