



INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM – Strictly confidential

A: Ms. Flavia Pansieri,  
TO: Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

DATE: 24 March 2015

DE: [REDACTED]  
FROM: Human Rights Officer

OBJET: Strictly confidential -  
SUBJECT:

1. My name is [REDACTED]. I am Human Rights Officer (P3) with OHCHR in its [REDACTED] Office for [REDACTED].
2. From 1st of March till 15th of July 2014, I was sent in TDY to Central African Republic (CAR) to support the Human Rights section of the Peace Mission there (MINUSCA). One of my assignments was to investigate human rights violations and assess the protection situation of civilians.
3. At the end of April, during a visit to the M'Poko IDPs camp, next to the Airport in Bangui, the person in charge of the camp ([REDACTED]) came to me to tell me that an IDP of the camp (someone she trusted and considered reliable), Mr. [REDACTED], had come to her to denounce cases of violence against children by the international military forces in charge of the surveillance and defense of the airport. I asked her to introduce me to Mr. [REDACTED] to listen to his claims and I scheduled a meeting with him on the 13<sup>th</sup> of May.
4. Mr. [REDACTED] who has been displaced from his house with his wife during the events of January 2014 in Bangui. Because of his long experience working with children, he took upon him to organize (basic) activities with the children without parental care of the camp (mostly street children who had fled the conflict zones of the city and were seeking protection and food from the vicinity with the military forces): family tracing and (when possible) reunification (one of the victims I then interviewed was one of the children he had managed to reunify with his father in another zone of the city, and another one was one he had managed to entrust to an orphanage in another neighborhood because he was bullied by the other children of the Camp and had suffered repeated beating), recreational activities (songs, little plays) and hygiene sensitization (he organized sessions with the children to cut their hair and accompanied them to the MSF hospital inside the camp when they were ill).
5. Mr. [REDACTED] came to see me with detailed handwritten reports of all its activities, such as a listing of all at risk children of the camp (70 ID sheets), family reunifications reports signed by the parents who accepted to take their child back, a detailed mapping of the types of risks faced by children (accompanied and non-accompanied) living in the M'Poko camp, but also reports of specific events of violence (verbal and physical) against children of the camp committed by militaries of the international forces.
6. Mr. [REDACTED] told me that at least three of the children he informally took care of in the camp had told him that they had had to perform fellatio to obtain food from the militaries at the different check points of the airport, and that others had said that they had witnessed similar events with other kids.
7. I reported this conversation to my supervisor in Bangui, Mr. Renner ONANA, and agreed with him on the need to keep this information confidential and to collect the direct testimonies from the children. In order to ensure the proper respect of the principle of "best interest of the child", we also agreed on contacting our colleagues from UNICEF in order to carry on the interviews with them and enable them to take care of the psycho-social and educational follow-up as well as family tracing and reunification. I therefore contacted Mr. [REDACTED] at UNICEF Bangui, who put me in touch with two members of his

MEMORANDUM - MEMORANDUM

team, Mr. [REDACTED] and Ms. [REDACTED] who accompanied me in the interviews of the children.

8. To set up the interview with the children, we had to go through Mr. [REDACTED] who had agreed to speak to the children and ask them if they wanted to speak with "people from the United Nations working to protect the rights of children". The children were, for the most part, street children, therefore extremely mobile. So we had to be extremely reactive and be able to meet the children on a very short notice, when they were present at the M'Poko camp.
9. All the interviews took place outside the camp, in appropriate and child friendly places (MINUSCA offices, the administrative offices of an orphanage, a borrowed [REDACTED] meeting room), in order to preserve the confidentiality of the children and their stories. The children were explained in simple terms the reason for our meeting and respective roles and asked if they wanted to share their story with us. No pressure was exercised on the children.
10. The interviews took place on the following dates: 19 May, 20 May, 5 June, 17 June, 18 June and 24 June 2014. Not all children victims of abuse or identified as such by their friends could be located and interviewed. The children interviewed denounced cases of abuse committed by the French, Chadian and Equato-Guineans soldiers between December 2013 and May 2014 (most of the children had trouble putting precise dates on the events due to their young age).
11. Right after each interview I would draft the report of this interview, while the information was still fresh in my mind (NB: I still have all the notes I took of the interviews if they would be of any help), and send it to my supervisor, M. ONANA, for his information on the evolution of the investigation. At the end of my investigation, I drafted a final report stating all the facts and including the names of the alleged victims, precise descriptions of the alleged perpetrators as well as the names of the interviewers (my name and my UNICEF's colleagues' names), for my colleagues' follow-up.
12. Before leaving the country, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July, I transmitted this report to my hierarchy in Bangui ([REDACTED] and [REDACTED]), the person who had been designated by my hierarchy to follow-up on my files ([REDACTED]) and the Humanitarian Affairs colleagues in Geneva and New-York (Roberto RICCI, Rachel RICO-BALZAN, Chloé MARNAY-BASZANGER and Patrick ROONEY).
13. My colleagues from UNICEF drafted their own report from the interviews. I saw the report but do not have a copy of it. It contained the same description of the facts, but with fewer details about the perpetrators and put more emphasis on the needs of the children as to psycho-social and educational support.
14. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of August, after t I had left CAR, I received a phone call on my mobile from a French police officer, Mr. [REDACTED], who presented himself as part of an enquiry team who had been sent to CAR to investigate on the allegations contained in my report. Mr. [REDACTED] wanted to interview me concerning these allegations and asked me when I would be in France to come testify at a police station. I answered the police officer that I could not answer any of his questions before having consulted with my hierarchy. I asked him how he got my report and he told me that an official letter had been sent by OHCHR to the Permanent Mission of France to the UN in Geneva with my report in attachment. When I asked him how he got my phone number, he told me that my colleagues in Bangui had given it to him.
15. Immediately after this phone call, I informed M. ONANA and MR. Roberto RICCI about it. I spoke on the phone with Mr. ONANA who told me that the police officer had come to his office to interview him and had also told him that they had received my report from HQs through the official canal of the Permanent Mission of France to the UN in Geneva.
16. Mr. RICCI put me in touch with Ms. Cecile APTEL from our Office of Legal Affairs who then told me to send an e-mail to the police officer (copying her) telling him that a formal request should be sent, through the Permanent Mission of France, to the UN Secretariat in NY. I sent this mail on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August. I understand, from what Ms. APTEL commented to me on the phone, that the French authorities followed this procedure and sent a formal request to interview me in Paris but that the Office only accepted to respond to a list of written questions.
17. Between September 2014 and March 2015 I have not heard from this case.
18. At the beginning of March 2015, I was contacted by Ms. Nicole OBERHOLZER and Mr. Muhammad ALI ALNSOUR from our Office of Legal Affairs who told me that the French authorities had sent the list of questions for me to respond to in written. I answered these questions under OLA's supervision. Further to



MEMORANDUM • MEMORANDUM

this, Mr. ALI ALSOUR asked me to draft a letter directed to the High Commissioner concerning the leaking of the report. I drafted a short memo which sent to Mr. ALI ALSOUR on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March in the morning.