

## Catholic archbishop aids Muslim refugees in Central African Republic



Displaced persons in the Central African Republic received aid from CRS in May 2014. Credit:Kim Pozniak/Catholic Relief Services.:

Bangui, Central African Republic, Jun 16, 2014 ([Catholic News Agency](#)).- A Catholic archbishop in the violence-ridden Central African Republic recently reached out to a group of 600 Muslim refugees, saying that the love of Christ must drive the faithful to action.

“The flight of Muslims from central Africa is a grave problem. If we do not want them to associate Christians with those who have caused them harm, they need to be helped by Christians,” Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalainga of Bangui said. “We have to act quickly if we do not want our coexistence to become merely an illusion.”

In statements to the French daily “La Croix,” Archbishop Nzapalainga referenced his recent visit to 600 Muslims camped at Yaloke, a city located 100 kilometers from the capital of the Central African Republic, Fides News Agency reported.

Since December 2012, the Central African Republic has been torn apart by violence, killing thousands, displacing an estimated 1.1 million persons and leaving millions more without an assurance of food or safety.

The fighting began when Seleka rebels, comprised mostly of Muslim fighters from other countries, began to carry out acts of terrorism and violence, with individuals continuing to

loot, rape and murder even after the Seleka disbanded. Then, in September 2013, “anti-balaka” self-defense groups, many comprised of Christians, began to strike back, attacking Muslims in revenge for earlier acts of violence.

In response to the continued violence and conflict that now divides political, tribal, and religious groups in the country, the African Union has deployed 5,000 peacekeepers to the Central African Republic, and the United Nations has also pledged an additional 12,000 troops by the end of 2014.

Archbishop Nzapalainga personally drove his van as part of a convoy of humanitarian aid organized by the Catholic Church to help the 600 refugees at Yaloke. A delegation of religious leaders led by the Imam of Bangui, Oumar Kobine Layama, accompanied him.

Another car in the convoy was driven by Sister Julietta, a South Korean religious from the Congregation of Saint-Paul de Chartres who directs the Our Lady of Fatima Healthcare Center in Bangui. She was accompanied by two nurses.

During his visit, Archbishop Nzapalainga sought to bring calm to the refugees. “I am here with the Imam I welcomed into my home for five months. It's not enough to say, 'We have to live together.' Rather, we must translate these words into concrete actions.”

Upon his departure, the archbishop pledged he would return to visit soon.

“We will not abandon you,” he told them.