

**Rebel Chief Suspends Constitution for 3 Years**  
**By Adam Nossiter**  
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Rebels with the Seleka coalition on Tuesday arrested a man who was suspected of looting a house in Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic.

DAKAR, Senegal — The leader of the rebel group that seized power in the Central African Republic, Michel Djotodia, announced Monday that he was suspending his country's Constitution, dissolving its Parliament and initiating a three-year "consensual transition."

Residents reported a precarious calm returning to the capital, Bangui, on Tuesday with less shooting and looting than on previous days, and some markets reopening. But there were also human rights violations by the rebel group, Seleka, according to an activist there.

Mr. Djotodia, a former civil servant who joined the rebels several years ago, told reporters on Monday evening that he had found it "necessary" to sweep aside the country's political institutions while he organized elections. President François Bozizé, who fled the country on Sunday, was in a hotel in neighboring Cameroon on Tuesday deciding his next move.

Mr. Djotodia did not specify when elections would take place in a destitute country where guns have dictated political change more often than the ballot box. "He has self-proclaimed himself president," Mr. Bozizé's former spokesman, Gaston Mackouzangda, himself the leader of a political party, said by phone from Bangui.

Two columns of rebels moved into the capital on Sunday, mowing down South African and other troops defending Mr. Bozizé, a former military officer who himself came to power in a coup 10 years ago. The French newsletter *Lettre du Continent* reported that Mr. Bozizé fled to Cameroon in a helicopter from his presidential palace — now looted — with bodyguards and five large suitcases.

He was at the Hilton Hotel in Yaounde on Monday, according to Cameroonian security sources, who also said discussions were under way with the authorities in Cameroon about his final destination. The hotel refused to confirm his presence.

Mr. Djotodia said he was keeping in place the opposition prime minister, Nicolas Tiangaye, who was forced on Mr. Bozizé under a failed peace agreement in January.

Reached by phone in Bangui, Mr. Tiangaye defended the new order, and blamed Mr. Bozizé for the downfall of the previous deal.

"I don't think one could call it a coup d'état," said Mr. Tiangaye, who is the country's leading human rights lawyer. "There was an armed confrontation, the president fled, and there was an institutional void. So, the military victor filled the void. Bozizé refused the accords that precipitated the end of his regime. He alone is responsible."

Residents of Bangui circulated gingerly through streets where stores had been looted, looking at the rebel patrols with wariness, said Thierry Khonde, the coordinator of the Journalists' Network for Human Rights and program director of a Bangui radio station. "They are looking at them with a certain disdain," he said.

There were reasons for the caution.

"There isn't really respect for the human person," Mr. Khonde said. "They are entering some houses, and looting everything. Some houses, they are going into three, four times. I've seen houses that have been sacked and burned; they are forcing their way in."

Mr. Mackouzangda, the former presidential spokesman, said the rebels had carried out "a hammer-blow against democracy," though critics say that Mr. Bozizé's government was not known for its attachment to democratic principles, either. Mr. Mackouzangda suggested that the country had been on the path toward peace when the rebels came in. "The agreement has given way to a coup," he said.

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