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country summary

## Chad

Chad plunged into civil war shortly after it gained independence from France in 1960 and has been intermittently wracked by conflict ever since. The current round of internal conflict is in its third year and is complicated by the war in the neighboring Darfur region of Sudan. Khartoum increased its support to Chadian rebel groups based in Darfur in retaliation for Ndjamena's support to Sudanese rebels with bases in Chad. In late 2006 rebel offensives launched from Darfur nearly toppled the government of President Idris Déby, but by early 2007 Chad's security forces had managed to consolidate control over the volatile border zone. The Chadian government signed a peace accord with one of the most powerful rebel factions in December 2006 and agreed to preliminary peace terms with the four largest remaining factions in October 2007. However, the outlook for a sustained cessation of hostilities remains dim, with hundreds of combatants reported killed in renewed hostilities in late November.

The government of President Idriss Déby has failed to protect its citizens from armed violence and has been responsible for direct attacks against civilians suspected of complicity with rebel groups seeking Déby's overthrow. Militia attacks against Chadian civilians living along the border with Sudan reduced in number in 2007, but killings and other human rights violations continued to be reported.

### **Abuses in Counterinsurgency**

The Chadian government has been responsible for human rights abuses against both combatants and non-combatants during military operations against Darfur-based rebel groups. In northern and northeastern Chad insurgents wounded or captured during a rebel offensive in late 2006 were subject to summary execution and torture at the hands of Chadian government soldiers. In the southeast civilians complain of extrajudicial killings, rape, beatings, arbitrary arrests, extortion and property theft in the wake of counterinsurgency sweeps conducted by government

security forces, including government-backed militia groups. These violations have been met by near total impunity and have forced thousands of civilians into involuntary displacement, both internally and across the border into Sudan.

The recruitment of child soldiers continues, even though the government signed a formal agreement in May 2007 to demobilize children from its forces.

### **Militia Attacks against Civilians**

There were fewer militia attacks against civilians in 2007 compared to the year before, but eastern Chad continued to be violent and insecure. In March the adjacent villages of Marena and Tiero were attacked by a predominantly Arab militia; at least 200 people were killed, including women and children, and civilians attempting to flee the violence were hunted down and killed. The first wave of attackers was repulsed by a government-supported militia in Tiero, but village defenses were overwhelmed when Chadian rebel forces joined the fray.

### **Refugees and the Internally Displaced**

More than 180,000 Chadians have been displaced by violence in the past two years in eastern Chad, which also hosts 230,000 refugees from Darfur. Chadian government security forces and allied paramilitaries regularly seek recruits, including children, from camps for refugees and displaced persons in eastern Chad, sometimes by force. In 2007, recruitment activities were reported at most of the large, well-organized displaced persons camps in southeastern Chad, including Gassiré, Gouroukoum, Habilé and Koubigou.

Under the UN's Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, humanitarian assistance such as food, water, shelter and medical care should be provided in an equitable manner. However, many Arabs and members of allied non-Arab ethnic groups such as the Ouaddai and the Mimi displaced by the conflict receive almost no humanitarian aid. Part of the problem is that counterinsurgency attacks by Chadian government security forces lead many Arabs to avoid large towns where these forces—as well as authorities responsible for humanitarian assistance—are based. But even when Arabs are not geographically isolated, they rarely receive

assistance as a group. In August 2007 Human Rights Watch found hundreds of internally displaced Arabs living at levels of subsistence verging on desperation, while in nearby camps thousands of others, nearly all non-Arab, were receiving a range of services, including food, shelter and medical care.

### **The Trial of Hissène Habré**

The long-standing campaign to bring Chad's former dictator Hissène Habré to justice reached a turning point in February 2007, when Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade signed into law measures to remove the primary legal obstacles to the trial.

Habré was arrested in Senegal in February 2000 on charges of crimes against humanity and torture stemming from his 1982-1990 rule in Chad. In 2001 Senegal refused to prosecute him and in 2005 it refused to extradite him to face charges in Belgium. However, in 2006 Dakar agreed to abide by a 2006 African Union decision that Habré should be put on trial in Senegal. The 2007 legislation allows such a trial by permitting Senegal to prosecute cases of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture, even when they are committed outside of the country.

### **Key International Actors**

In September 2007 the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of an international civilian protection force for eastern Chad. The force comprises troops under European Union command working in conjunction with UN police officers as well as a UN civilian component. This EU military force is to operate for an initial 12 months, and a transition to a UN command will be assessed after six months.

The Sudanese government continues to provide safe haven and support to armed groups such as Janjaweed militias, which have been responsible for raids on Chadian border villages, and Chadian rebel groups, which for the first time in the current phase of anti-government insurgency have committed large-scale attacks against civilians.

France has been instrumental in pushing the Chadian government to take action on the problem of child soldiers and has been the driving force behind the deployment

of the EU civilian protection force, to which it has pledged a substantial number of troops. France simultaneously provides support to the Chadian military, even though it has been responsible for some of the very human rights abuses the French initiatives are designed to mitigate. France has more than 1,000 troops permanently stationed in Chad and has provided military intelligence, logistical assistance, medical services and ammunition to the Chadian military.

Like France, the United States provides military support to Chad in spite of its human rights record. American diplomats have urged President Déby to undertake voluntary democratic reforms, but the United States could exert far more pressure, given the amount of military assistance it provides. In the US 2006 defense budget, Chad was one of roughly a dozen countries to receive at least \$10 million in Section 1206 funding, intended to build counterterrorism capacity in foreign military forces. US Marines and Army Special Forces instructors organize and train brigades of elite counterterrorism commandos, some of whom have defected to the rebels. The sale of four American-made C-130 transport aircraft was pending at this writing.