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Responses to Information Requests

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27 August 2013

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Chad: The Chadian Human Rights League (Ligue tchadienne des droits de l'homme, LTDH), including its structure, its objectives and activities; treatment of LTDH members by the authorities
Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

1. Overview

According to Agir ensemble pour les droits de l'homme (AEDH), an international NGO that has consultative status with the UN and that provides financial and logistical support to local human rights NGOs throughout the world (EURAC n.d.), the Chadian Human Rights League (Ligue tchadienne des droits de l'homme, LTDH) [translation] "is the oldest and principle organization defending human rights in Chad" and "enjoys a certain prestige at the national level" (AEDH n.d.).

The LTDH has existed since 1991 (LTDH n.d.a) and is a member of the International Federation for Human Rights (Fédération internationale des ligues des droits de l'homme, FIDH) (FIDH n.d.a) and the World Organization against Torture (Organisation mondiale contre la torture, OMCT) (OMCT n.d.a). The FIDH is an international NGO whose objective is to defend human rights as stated in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights; it comprises 164 member organizations (FIDH n.d.b). Created in 1985, the OMCT is global coalition of 311 affiliated organizations that fight "against torture, summary executions, enforced disappearances and all other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment" (OMCT n.d.b).

2. Structure

The LTDH is headquartered in N'Djamena (LTDH n.d.b; AEDH n.d.). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, the national coordinator of the LTDH provides the following information regarding the organization's [translation] "major centres":

[translation]

The direction and control board is the political body, which represents the general assembly. Its role is to ensure the successful implementation of activities, perform management control and represent the organization from a political standpoint, as well as ensure enforcement of the organization's statutes and the directions of the of the general assembly. This body meets every six months. The council office is in N'Djamena, and it meets on a revolving basis in the provinces, as there are 11 members, 7 of whom represent different communities;

National coordination organizes, plans and implements all the organization's activities and mobilizes and manages resources. As a technical body, national coordination may be mandated by the counsel to act on certain political issues; to that end, it has a permanent, salaried staff and four regional coordination offices in

Abéché (north), in Lac/Kanem (west), in Moundou (south), in Bongor (south-west) and in Sarh (far south) (LTDH 22 Aug. 2013).

The national coordinator also provided the following information regarding the structure of the LTDH at the regional level:

[translation]

We have 66 chapters in the cities and the countryside. These chapters consist of volunteer soldiers who express a need to defend human rights in their region. The chapters operate with a very light structure (President, secretary general, legal affairs officer, treasurer). They send quarterly reports to the regional coordination offices in their areas, where they are gathered and sent to national coordination for the final report. (ibid.)

According to the coordinator, [translation] "the LTDH currently has over 16,000 members throughout the country" (ibid.). The LTDH website indicates that the organization has initiated reforms since 2008, including the implementation of a professionalization process that uses salaried employees to carry out some of the organization's activities (ibid. n.d.a). According to the national coordinator, [translation] "the LTDH receives its funding from external partners or calls for proposals from international organizations. Since its creation, it has never received funding from the Chadian government or a public authority" (ibid. 22 Aug. 2013).

According to a LTDH pamphlet, the following organizations are among its partners:

- Bread for the World (Germany)
- Amnesty International (France)
- African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (CADHP)
- Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF)
- CORDAID (The Netherlands)
- National Endowment for Democracy (US)
- Front Line (Ireland)
- United Nations agencies in Chad
- International Organization for Migration (IOM)
- Governmental agency for the Francophonie
- Embassies of France, the United States and Germany to Chad (ibid. n.d.c).

3. Objectives and Activities

According to its statutes, the LTDH's objectives are as follows:

[translation]

- Informing and educating citizens about their rights and duties;
- Contributing to the promotion and defence of fundamental rights and freedoms;
- Contributing to the promotion and defence of social, economic and cultural rights;
- Fostering and ensuring the independence of the judiciary;
- Contributing to the abolition and full and final disappearance of instruments of terror and torture;
- Contributing to the protection of vulnerable groups including women, children, refugees, immigrants, persons with disabilities and other minorities;
- Fighting against all forms of discrimination and violence, especially those related to women and children;
- Striving to rehabilitate victims of human rights abuses and the arbitrary;
- Striving toward good governance and peace in Chad, Africa and the world;
- Fighting against impunity in all its forms;
- Fighting for the abolition of the death sentence;
- Contributing to the protection of the environment;
- Denouncing and intervening each time an abuse of a fundamental human rights principle is observed. (LTDH 9 Dec. 2009)

According to AEDH, the LTDH [translation] "works for both the defence and promotion of human rights" and "its national leads are actively involved in Chadian civil society's efforts to achieve true rule of law and ensure conditions of peace" (AEDH n.d.). The LTDH reports that it also manages the [translation] "legal aid and assistance offices" as part of its national coordination and regional chapters (LTDH n.d.c).

4. Treatment of Members of the LTDH by the Authorities

4.1 Treatment of Human Rights Defenders in General

Front Line Defenders, an Irish-based international foundation that protects human rights defenders throughout the world (Front Line Defenders n.d.b), states the following:

Human rights defenders in Chad suffer from the culture of impunity, absence of rule of law and political instability that is prevalent throughout the country. The extreme political repression in Chad forms the backdrop to severe restrictions on freedom of expression. (ibid. n.d.a)

Front Line Defenders adds that:

According to our sources, defenders have been subjected to threats, harassment, stigmatization, physical assault, arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, judicial proceedings and ill-treatment and torture while in detention. (ibid.)

Similarly, Amnesty International (AI) states that in Chad,

[h]uman rights defenders, including trade unionists and journalists, are often attacked or subjected to intimidation and harassment by government officials, including the police. In some instances, the judiciary has been used to silence them. (AI Mar. 2013, 6)

Further, Front Line Defenders states that "[l]awyers assisting victims of human rights violations and fighting against impunity have reportedly received intense threats and were labelled as "traitors" (Front Line Defenders n.d.a).

4.2 Treatment of Members of the LTDH

The following cases, which are related to the treatment of members of the LTDH by the authorities, were noted among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In February 2008, the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (The Observatory), a program jointly managed by the FIDH and the OMCT, reported that it had [translation] "been informed by reliable sources of serious threats to the safety of human rights defenders in Chad" (The Observatory 7 Feb. 2008). The Observatory indicated that these threats consisted of [translation] "attempted arrests and attacks by the security forces" and that "a defender's home was surrounded by Chadian armed forces tanks" (ibid.). The honorary president of the LTDH, the president of the LTDH, a lawyer and member of the LTDH, the president as well as a member of the Moundou chapter of the LTDH were reportedly among those who were threatened (ibid.).

The Observatory again reported in February 2008 that the lawyer and member of the LTDH below had been

[translation]

subjected to daily threats since he filed a complaint on February 14, 2008, for unlawful arrest and arbitrary detention following the disappearance of MM. Ngarlejy Yorongar and Ibni Oumar Mahamat Salehdes, leaders of the Chadian legal opposition.

The day after filing this complaint, hooded individuals went to the lawyer's home several days in a row to intimidate him. The lawyer was not home and has since been unable to retrieve his complaint. (ibid. 25 Feb. 2008)

According to the Observatory, the lawyer also received threats by voicemail (ibid.). Further information on the incident could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

In July 2008, the Observatory reported that the president of the LTDH, the secretary general of LTDH and a communications officer of the LTDH were subjected to [translation] "threats and intimidation" by the Chadian authorities following the June release of a "LTDH investigation report on human rights abuses committed during and following the attack of the rebel forces in the capital, N'djamena, in February 2008" (ibid. 24 July 2008). According to the Observatory, the ministry of human rights offices and the president of Chad required copies of the report and the minister of communication and government spokesperson blamed the LTDH on Radio Tchad for having released this report before results on the subject were made public by an inquiry commission (ibid.). The minister of human rights also contacted the president and the secretary of the LTDH to [translate] "strongly express her disapproval regarding the release of the report without their having previously informed the ministry" (ibid.). Further information on the incident could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

Sources indicate that in October 2009 the president of the LTDH was followed (ibid. 21 Dec. 2010, 169-170; ITUC 2010; AI 2010) by unknown individuals (The Observatory 21 Dec. 2010, 169-170). Sources report that the president of the LTDH had previously testified before foreign country officials regarding the security situation in Chad (ibid.; CSI 2010). According to the Observatory, on 23 October 2009, [translation] "about 10

armed men" entered the home of the president of the LTDH while he was absent (The Observatory 21 Dec. 2010, 170). Also in October 2009, government authorities allegedly met with the president and told him that they would investigate and take measures to ensure his safety (ibid.; AI 2010). According to the Observatory, [translation] "security guards spent five days in front of his residence, and he was also accompanied by police wherever he went" (The Observatory 21 Dec. 2010, 170). Sources published in 2010 reported that there had been no progress in the investigation at that time (ibid.; ITUC 2010). Information on the developments of that case could not be found among the sources consulted by the Research Directorate.

According to a UN Secretary-General's report to the Security Council regarding the protection of civilians in Chad, two members of the LTDH in N'Djamena "were allegedly arrested on 6 March 2011 and secretly detained by members of the national security agency (ANS)" (UN 29 Apr. 2011, para. 26). JournalduTchad.com, a Chadian news website, also reported that the LTDH denounced, by means of a press release, [translation] the "kidnapping, arrest and arbitrary detention" of two LTDH defenders on 6 March 2011 by the ANS, who are described as "the political police in power" (JournalduTchad.com 17 Mar. 2011). One of the two men was the president of the LTDH chapter of the 4th district of N'Djamena, according to JournalduTchad.com (ibid.). The ANS allegedly charged them with "inciting a popular uprising" (ibid.).

AI and the Observatory report that on 20 October 2012, six men in police uniform entered the residence of the honorary president of the LTDH without a warrant, claiming that they were [translation] "searching for a stolen car" (AI 2013; Observatory 30 Oct. 2012). According to AI, they searched the residence (AI 2013). According to the Observatory, the six men arrived in a police vehicle and, [translation] "having terrorized the occupants of the residence, including the wife and son of the honorary president of the LTDH, they attempted a forceful entry into the living room" (The Observatory 30 Oct. 2012). The Observatory adds that [translation] "once a crowd formed around the residence, the driver of the police vehicle, who had remained at the wheel, told his colleagues to vacate the premises" (ibid.). The Observatory noted that the honorary president of the LTDH planned to file a complaint with the authorities (ibid.). According to AI, he had not received a response to his complaint in late 2012 (AI 2013).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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