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Extended Response to Information Request

TCD33546.FEX

17 February 2000

Chad: The human rights situation, political opposition groups and the rebellion in the Tibesti region of northern Chad

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

This Extended Response deals with the current general human rights situation in Chad, as well as with a number of related issues - the appointment of a new government, political opposition, and the rebellion in northern Chad. It should be noted that published information on the current human rights situation in Chad, particularly in the Tibesti region, is scarce in the sources consulted by the Research Directorate. The information included in this Extended Response is current to 11 February 2000. For other information on various aspects of Chadian reality, please see previous Responses to Information Requests on Chad, available on the IRB Website at <http://www.irb.gc.ca>, in REFINFO and in the IRB's Regional Documentation Centres, as well as the reports published by international human rights organizations. General information on Chad is available in a number of sources, including issue No. 175 of *The Courier - Africa-Caribbean-Pacific-European Union* (also known as *The ACP-EU Courier*), at http://europa.eu.int/comm/development/publicat/courier/index_175_en.htm and *Chad: A Country Study* at <http://lcweb2.loc/frd/cs/tdtoc.html>.

Human Rights Situation in Chad and Recent Political Developments

In a January 2000 telephone interview with the Research Directorate, the president of the Chadian Human Rights League (Ligue tchadienne des droits de l'homme, or LTDH), Dobian Assingar, stated that the human rights situation in Chad had not improved since the written statement on the human rights situation in Chad that the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (IFHR) submitted in January 1999 to the 55th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (20 Jan. 2000; see also United Nations 29 Jan. 1999). In that report, which focuses on the situation in 1997 and 1998, the IFHR and the LTDH expressed their concern about the state of fundamental freedoms in Chad (*ibid.*, para. 2). The report mentions the imprisonment of political opponents (*ibid.*, para. 3), the 1998 murder of 301 persons, which the report attributes mostly to the Chadian security forces (*ibid.*, para. 5), attacks on freedom of assembly and freedom of association (*ibid.*, para. 9), attacks directed against members of the private sector press (*ibid.*, para. 10), and the lack of an equitable justice system (*ibid.*, para. 11). The report also deals with the climate of fear and anxiety in which the Chadian people live (*ibid.*, para. 12). In conclusion, the report states that

[U.N. English version]

The two years in which fundamental rights and freedoms reached a level of degradation unparalleled in Chad's journey to democracy were 1997 and 1998. With mass forced exile of political leaders and the intellectual elite, imprisonments, arbitrary suspension of human rights defence associations and the hounding and harassment of journalists, unwarranted recourse to the judicial system by the Executive Branch for settling political scores, etc., human rights violations in Chad are grave, flagrant and systematic and can, on more than one count, be laid at the door of the Chadian authorities, who have taken no specific or effective steps to bring them to an end (*ibid.*, para. 15).

Dobian Assingar stated that there were 31 cases of summary executions in 1999 (20 Jan. 2000). The Research

Directorate was unable to find any other sources to corroborate this information at the time of publication.

Nazaire Djerakoubou, the secretary-general of the Association for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms in Chad (Association pour la promotion des libertés fondamentales au Tchad, or APLFT), stated in a telephone interview with the Research Directorate that Chad had experienced a [translation] "relative lull" in 1999 as far as human rights violations were concerned (1 Feb. 2000). According to Benoît Decq, the secretary-general of Tchad-Solidarités-France, [translation] "at the present time, the general situation in Chad is less difficult than it has been in recent years" (10 Feb. 2000). In its May-June 1999 issue, *Le Courrier ACP-UE* quotes Nadji Louhingane, a human rights activist in Chad, as saying that

[English version provided in *The ACP EU Courrier*, the English language edition of *Le Courrier ACP UE*]

"There has been something of a lull over the past few months. Violations are now perpetrated principally at detention centres and police stations. However, the destruction of roads, racketeering and the fleeing of peasant farmers and stock breeders are widespread."

In 1999, former Communications Minister Moussa Dago made threats against the private press (Assingar 20 Jan. 2000; see also Djerakoubou 1 Feb. 2000). Following the August 1999 publication of an interview with Youssouf Togoïmi in the independent newspaper *L'Observateur*, Moussa Dago stated that [translation] "all legal measures" would be taken to impose sanctions against the newspaper (RSF 30 Aug. 1999; *ibid.* 28 Aug 1999). Youssouf Togoïmi is the leader of the Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad, or MDJT), a group which is currently waging an armed struggle against President Idriss Déby in the Tibesti region of northern Chad (RFI 22 Dec. 1999). In an interview with the Research Directorate, Nadjikomo Benoudjita, editor of *Le Temps*, another independent newspaper that published an interview with Togoïmi, stated that his publication too had received similar threats from the Minister, for the same reasons (11 Feb. 2000). Nadjikomo Benoudjita added that the founder and first editor of *Le Temps* [translation] "died mysteriously ... on 29 September 1999 in N'Djamena" (*ibid.* 22 Feb. 2000). However, the editor of *Le Temps* stated that the journalists had not been [translation] "excessively subjected to arrest or beatings" in 1999, although there had been some isolated cases in 1998 (*ibid.* 11 Feb. 2000).

Sources indicate that there is freedom of the press in Chad (Benoudjita 11 Feb. 2000; Djerakoubou 1 Feb. 2000; *Le Courrier ACP-UE* May-June 1999). The independent press, represented by *N'Djamena Hebdo*, *L'Observateur* and *Le Temps*, does not shy away from criticizing the government in power (*ibid.*; Decq 10 Feb. 2000). According to Nadjikomo Benoudjita, for example, *Le Temps* denounces and criticizes the government (11 Feb. 2000). A case in point: when former Chadian president Hissène Habré was recently implicated in criminal activities in Senegal, *Le Temps* wrote that the sitting president had committed more crimes than Habré (*ibid.*). However, the Déby regime is attempting to use this freedom of the press to prove that democracy exists in Chad (*ibid.*; *Le Courrier ACP UE* May June 1999). According to a former editor of *Le Temps*, Néhémie Benoudjita (a brother of the current editor), who was interviewed by *Le Courrier ACP UE*, the independent newspapers have become [English version provided in *The ACP EU Courrier*, the English language edition of *Le Courrier ACP UE*] "the democratic guarantors of a regime which is still autocratic and under which other forms of expression are extremely limited." For his part, Benoît Decq said that the independent newspapers do not limit themselves to criticizing the government alone; they also target all the armed movements (10 Feb. 2000).

According to L'Observatoire pour la protection des défenseurs des droits de l'Homme, in different parts of the country representatives of various human rights organizations were threatened and harassed by the authorities in 1999 (8 Dec. 1999). In August 1999, for example, the president of the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights (Association tchadienne pour la promotion et la défense des droits de l'homme) was apprehended and ill treated during her detention, which lasted several hours (*ibid.*). Furthermore, the president of the Nokou chapter of the LTDH was detained in January 1999 and threatened with death. He now lives in fear of reprisals because of his activities (*ibid.*). For more details on this subject, please see the L'Observatoire report at <<http://www.fidh.imagnet.fr/lobs/observ.htm>>.

It should be also be noted that according to Dobian Assingar, members or officers of opposition parties have been sued for libel and intimidated for their opinions (20 Jan. 2000). For more information on the situation of political opponents, please see the section below entitled *Political Opposition*.

Impunity is still common in Chad (Decq 10 Feb. 2000; *Le Courrier ACP UE* May-June 1999; AI June 1999) and constitutes a serious problem in that central African country (*ibid.*). Individuals responsible for human rights violations are not brought to justice, and according to Amnesty International, this fact is largely responsible for the persistence of human rights violations in Chad (*ibid.*).

In the political sphere, in mid-December 1999, President Déby appointed Nagoum Yamoussoum as prime minister, replacing Nassour Ouado, who had served as prime minister for two years (BBC News 15 Dec. 1999; RFI 13 Dec. 1999; *ANB-BIA* 16 Dec. 1999; AFP 14 Dec. 1999). Yamoussoum is close to President Déby, and has previously held the education and culture portfolios in the Chadian government (BBC News 15 Dec. 1999; AFP 14 Dec. 1999). Immediately after his appointment, Yamoussoum formed a government of 26 members (*ibid.*; BBC News 15 Dec. 1999). The new minister of defence is Wieding Assi-Assoué (*ANB-BIA* 16 Dec. 1999; AFP 14 Dec. 1999). He belongs to the same political party as Idriss Déby, the Patriotic Salvation Movement (Mouvement patriotique du salut, or MPS) (*ibid.*). The new government consists of a coalition of four political parties: the MPS, the Union for Renewal and Democracy (Union pour le renouveau et la démocratie, or URD), the National Union for Democracy and Renewal (Union nationale pour la démocratie et le renouveau, or UNDR) and the National Alliance for Democracy (Alliance nationale pour la démocratie, or AND) (Djerakoubou 1 Feb. 2000). The UNDR had previously been part of the government, but in May 1998 its leader, Saleh Kebzabo, decided to withdraw from the government coalition of the day because he was [translation] "exasperated by the hegemonic attitude of the Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS)" (*Jeune Afrique* 13 19 Apr. 1999, 66). In the new government, Saleh Kebzabo holds the position of minister of agriculture (RFI 15 Dec. 1999).

Two issues in particular face the government: the Doba petroleum development project in southern Chad, which has been in doubt since the Shell and Elf corporations decided to review their participation in it, and the rebellion in the Tibesti region of northern Chad (BBC News 15 Dec. 1999; *ANB-BIA* 16 Dec. 1999; RFI 15 Dec. 1999). For more information on the rebellion in Tibesti, please see the section below entitled *Rebellion and the Human Rights Situation in Northern Chad*.

As far as the ethnic makeup of the new government is concerned, Ngarlejy Yorongar, leader of the Foundation for the Respect of Laws and Freedoms (Fondation pour le respect des lois et des libertés, or FORELLI) and of the political party known as the Action for the Republic Federation (Fédération, Action pour la République, or FAR; also known as the Parti Fédération), stated that in Chad, a person's membership in a particular ethnic group was not a major factor in determining whether he or she could become a member of the government: what mattered was the relationship between the individual and President Déby, as well as the individual's activism (19 Jan. 2000b). However, Nadjikomo Benoudjita stated that the individuals who hold key positions in the government belong to the same ethnic group as the President or are members of the MPS (11 Feb. 2000). [President Déby is a Zaghawa from Biltine in the Ouaddaï region of northern Chad (*Le Courrier ACP-UE* May-June 1999)]. Benoît Decq added that the major ethnic groups in Chad were represented in the government, but went on to say that President Déby made the decisions alone, in consultation with those close to him (10 Feb. 2000).

According to the president of the LTDH, the new government will not bring about any real changes in Chad (Assingar 20 Jan. 2000). Indeed, Assingar believes that the formation of a new government is [translation] "a non-event for Chadians" (*ibid.*). In its May-June 1999 issue, *Le Courrier ACP-UE* pointed out that in eight years, Idriss Déby had carried out an average of three cabinet shuffles per year. The present change of government is thus nothing new (Decq 10 Feb. 2000). Since decisions are in Déby's hands, Benoît Decq wonders whether the members of the Chadian government have any real power (*ibid.*). Nazaire Djerakoubou considers that changes will be possible only if the new prime minister is given real powers (1 Feb. 2000).

Political Opposition

The opposition carries little weight in the Chadian political system (*Le Courrier ACP-UE* May-June 1999). President Déby's MPS has a majority in parliament and continues to increase its control over the legislative branch (*ibid.*). In an interview granted to *Courrier ACP-UE*, Gilbert Maoundonodji, the editor-in-chief of *Tchad et Culture*, stated that [English version provided in The ACP-EU Courier, the English-language edition of *Le Courrier ACP UE*] "the opposition has never had genuine status, with means of action, freedom to move and intimidation free access to the public media. The current system in this country involves, first and foremost, a power struggle where one either sides with the strongest, disappears or takes up arms" (*ibid.*).

The leader of FAR, Ngarlejy Yorongar, was imprisoned on 3 June 1998 and released on 4 February 1999 (Yorongar 19 Jan. 2000b). For more information on Ngarlejy Yorongar's arrest, see TCD32848.E of 1 October 1999, available on the IRB Website at <www.irb.gc.ca>, in REFINFO and in the IRB's Regional Documentation Centres. According to Nazaire Djerakoubou, no other leader of a political party has been imprisoned since that time (1 Feb. 2000). In correspondence with the Research Directorate, Ngarlejy Yorongar stated that he had resumed his duties in the Chadian legislative assembly, but that he had not been paid by the government in 12 months, in an attempt to force him to remain silent (19 Jan. 2000b). In addition, parliamentary speakers sometimes refuse to allow him to address sessional debates (*ibid.*). The political police, known as the National Security Agency (Agence nationale pour la sécurité, or ANS), keep his residence under constant surveillance (*ibid.*). Yorongar claims that he is a victim of

daily harassment, which also affects the other members of his family: some of them have lost their jobs or have been removed from their duties (ibid.).

In early July 1999, the Chadian government signed a reconciliation accord with Moussa Medella, the president of the Movement for Democracy and Development (Mouvement pour la démocratie et le développement, or MDD) (United Nations 6 July 1999; AFP 4 July 1999). The MDD is one of the oldest armed groups in the country fighting against President Déby (ibid.) AFP reported that the MDD was particularly active in the Lake Chad region of western Chad (ibid.). Moussa Medella left Paris, where he had been in exile for several years, and returned to Chad shortly after the agreement with the government was signed (BBC News 5 July 1999; see also United Nations 6 July 1999). However, the agreement has not been unanimously accepted within the MDD, and the movement's secretary general, Gaileth Bourkoumandaha, has rejected it (BBC News 5 July 1999; see also AFP 4 July 1999). Gaileth Bourkoumandaha claims that he suspended Moussa Medella in June, but according to Medella, this action by Bourkoumandaha was contrary to the party's by-laws and was thus null and void (ibid.). According to Dobian Assingar, only a small part of the MDD signed the agreement with the government (20 Jan. 2000). He claims that the great majority of MDD members do not support the agreement (ibid.). The Research Directorate was unable to corroborate this information at the time of publication. Assingar could not say whether these members were being harassed by the authorities (ibid.).

In September 1999, the MDD published a press release in which it accused the governments of Chad, Nigeria and Niger of launching a campaign of terror against civilians in the region of Lake Chad (AFP 30 Sept. 1999). AFP reports that according to the MDD press release, members of the military robbed and killed farmers, shepherds and fishers suspected of being MDD sympathizers (ibid.). The Research Directorate was unable to corroborate this information at the time of publication.

In a telephone interview on 19 January 2000 with the Research Directorate, Bichara Idriss Hagggar, head of the external relations department of the National Recovery Council (Conseil national de redressement, or CNR), stated that the CNR is one of the movements in Chad that has paid the greatest price in human lives over the years. The CNR is part of Coordination of Armed and Political Groups (Coordination des mouvements armés et politiques, or CMAP) (see below) (ibid.). Bichara Idriss Hagggar himself claims to have been "persecuted" in his own country, and for the last four years, he has been forced to live in exile (ibid.). The party still has a strong presence in Chad, but has had to go underground, according to Bichara Idriss Hagggar (ibid.).

In July 1999, IRIN reported the arrest of Michel Mbailemal, the head of the Action Committee for Liberty and Democracy (Comité d'action pour la liberté et la démocratie, or CALD). He was accused by then Communications Minister Moussa Dago of fomenting a rebellion in southern Chad (United Nations 28 July 1999).

In June 1999, the government accused Antoine Bangui, ex-minister of foreign affairs and leader of the Movement for the National Reconstruction of Chad (Mouvement pour la reconstruction nationale du Tchad, or MORENAT), a legal political party, of fomenting a rebellion in the eastern Logone region (ibid.).

In August 1999, President Déby spoke of a rebellion in Moissala (southern Chad), the native village of URD leader and National Assembly speaker General Kamougue, and alleged that the rebels had infiltrated Chali (ANB BIA 26 August 1999). However, some observers have questioned the existence of such a rebellion (ibid.). The inhabitants of southern Chad, who are [translation] "already victims of serious injustices committed by the armed forces," are afraid that the regime will use this pretext to justify "the brutal military presence" in that region (ibid.).

The Research Directorate was unable to obtain, within the time constraints of this Extended Response, details of the events mentioned in the preceding two paragraphs.

On 21 December 1999, 13 opposition groups announced, in Paris, the creation of a new alliance against the Chadian president, the Coordination of Armed and Political Movements of the Opposition (Coordination des mouvements armés et politiques de l'opposition, or CMAP) (RFI 22 Dec. 1999; United Nations 4 Jan. 2000). The Research Directorate was unable to obtain, within the time constraints of this Extended Response, the names of all the opposition groups that make up the CMAP. At a press conference, ex-President Goukouni Wedeye ^[1] asserted that given the attitude of President Déby, their only option was to take up arms (RFI 22 Dec. 1999). At the time its creation was announced, the CMAP had still not appointed members to its executive committee and board (ibid.). Bichara Idriss Hagggar stated that every organization that has joined the CMAP would preserve its autonomy (19 Jan. 2000). He added that the presidency of the new alliance would be assumed in turn by each of the members, in accordance with rules that had not yet been determined (ibid.). For his part, Ngarlely Yorongar stated that although the CMAP claims to be armed, it does not have any soldiers in the field and, indeed, most of its member organizations do not have an army (19 Jan. 2000b). The CMAP spokesman is Antoine Bangui (CMAP 12 Jan. 2000), a former minister of foreign affairs (United Nations 28 July 1999). He is the leader of the Movement for the National

Reconstruction of Chad (MORENAT), an approved political party (ibid.).

It should also be noted that Youssouf Togoïmi's group, Movement for Democracy and Justice in Chad (Mouvement pour la démocratie et la justice au Tchad, or MDJT), is not part of the CMAP (United Nations 4 Jan. 2000; RFI 22 Dec. 1999). However, Goukouni Wedeye stated that he supported Youssouf Togoïmi's rebellion (ibid.).

Rebellion and the Human Rights Situation in Northern Chad

The northernmost part of the country is still in the throes of a rebellion (Assingar 20 Jan. 2000; Yorongar 19 Jan. 2000; United Nations 4 Jan. 2000). Since October 1998, MDJT leader Youssouf Togoïmi has been waging an armed struggle against President Déby in the Tibesti region^[2] (AFP 13 Dec. 1999). A magistrate by training, Togoïmi was appointed minister of justice in the early 1990s. From 1995 to 1997, he was minister of defence and then minister of the interior in the Déby regime (*Jeune Afrique* 13-19 Apr. 1999, 66). He resigned in 1997 and, after reportedly being harassed by the authorities, he organized the rebellion in Tibesti, his native region (ibid.). In an interview granted to the weekly *Jeune Afrique*, Togoïmi, denying government claims that the rebellion in the northern part of the country was solely [an ethnic] Toubou affair, stated that [translation] "natives of all the regions of Chad are represented among our combatants. I can even give you the names of several officers who are not Toubous All these men have joined us for one and only one reason: they do not accept injustice ..." (8-14 June 1999).

For more information on the Toubous and the origins of the rebellion in northern Chad, see TCD33346.E of 13 December 1999 and TCD32167.E of 24 June 1999, available on the IRB Website at <<http://www.irb.gc.ca>>, in the REFINFO database and in the IRB's Regional Documentation Centres.

In the June 1999 interview, Togoïmi had predicted that the rebels were going to reach the capital, N'Djamena, before the end of 1999 (*Jeune Afrique* 8-14 June 1999; see also United Nations 9 Feb. 2000). However, that did not happen (ibid.; *Le Temps* 26 Jan.-1 Feb. 2000a). According to Dobian Assingar, the rebels were camping out in the mountains and coming down from them to engage the government forces in guerrilla warfare and they do not occupy any territory (20 Jan. 2000).

In mid-December 1999, the MDJT rebels launched an attack near Zoumri, in Tibesti, against government military forces which were reportedly preparing to destroy crops and houses (BBC News 13 Dec. 1999; United Nations 14 Dec. 1999). Twenty-five government soldiers were reportedly killed in these confrontations (ibid.). The Chadian government denied the loss of military personnel (AFP 13 Dec. 1999) and asserted that, on the contrary, the rebels' offensive had not succeeded and that the rebels' base, located near Zoumri, had been destroyed (BBC News 13 Dec. 1999; AFP 13 Dec. 1999).

A few days later, AFP published an MDJT press release claiming that on 21 December the rebels had killed 11 soldiers and wounded 24 others in an ambush in northern Chad (22 Dec. 1999). The Chadian government denied that any soldiers had been killed and stated instead that eight members of the military had been slightly wounded by a landmine while returning from a mission in Aozou (ibid.). In addition, the authorities asserted that the rebels did not control any part of Aozou (ibid.).

On 23 January 2000, in a press release that the MDJT sent to the newspaper *Le Temps*, the rebels claimed that 180 members of the government forces had been killed, 87 taken prisoner and 28 seriously wounded in clashes in Yebbi Bou (26 Jan.-1 Feb. 2000b). In the same release, the rebels stated that they had taken control of the city (ibid.). The government denied the rebels' assertions and minimized the importance of the confrontations, claiming that only a skirmish had occurred (ibid.). *Le Temps* indicates that no independent source has provided any further information about these events, but goes on to assert that [translation] "we can definitely conclude, however, that hostilities have resumed in the North" (ibid.).

On 9 February 2000, IRIN reported that on a Radio France International program broadcast on 7 February, Youssouf Togoïmi had claimed that the rebels had killed 25 members of the government forces during confrontations in the northern town of Zouar (United Nations 9 Feb. 2000). The government denied the loss of 25 military personnel, with the Department of Defence claiming that two rebels and one soldier had been killed in a skirmish between military forces based in Zouar and a group of rebels (ibid.).

According to the President Déby's opponents, the human rights situation in the Tibesti region is difficult (Yorongar 19 Jan. 2000b; Haggar 19 Jan. 2000). Yorongar claimed that government forces were attacking civilian populations rather than trying to put down the rebellion (19 Jan. 2000a), and that the military was practising a [translation] "scorched earth policy" by setting villages on fire (ibid.). According to Bichara Idriss Haggar, the government has also poisoned wells and killed livestock (19 Jan. 2000). On 18 January 2000, Youssouf Togoïmi

accused government forces of systematically attacking the inhabitants of the Tibesti region (RFI 21 Jan. 2000). He repeated this accusation in an interview he gave to the newspaper *Le Temps* in late January 2000 (26 Jan.-1 Feb. 2000a). The government summarily dismissed the rebel leader's accusations (RFI 21 Jan. 2000).

In a press release made public on 12 January 2000, the CMAP stated that the government was recruiting young people - mostly minors - in northeastern Chad, sending them to training camps, and subsequently using them as human shields on the roads in the Tibesti region. In addition, in early November 1999, the MDJT and two other rebel groups had accused the government of buying chemicals from former Communist countries, including Russia, in order to poison wells (ibid.).

LTDH president Dobian Assingar stated that it was difficult to know exactly what was going on in northern Chad and that rumors were circulating about the situation (20 Jan. 2000). Regarding the situation of women, he pointed out in southern Chad, they were often raped by members of the military (ibid.). Given the rebellion in the northern part of the country, it is very likely, in Dobian Assingar's view, that such crimes are also being perpetrated in that region (ibid.).

In general, victims of human rights violations in northern Chad are leaving the country (Decq 10 Feb. 2000; Assingar 20 Jan. 2000; Yorongar 19 Jan. 2000b). According to Ngarlejy Yorongar, for example, people who flee the rebellion in the North cannot take refuge in N'Djamena, the capital, because their security there is not guaranteed (ibid.). Instead, they go to Libya, Sudan or Niger (ibid.). Dobian Assingar also noted that travel between northern Chad and the capital is very difficult because of the geography of the region (20 Jan. 2000). Benoît Decq pointed out that the northernmost part of Chad is virtually a desert, with a very small population (10 Feb. 2000). According to Nazaire Djerakoubouof, the secretary-general of the Association for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms in Chad (Association pour la promotion des libertés fondamentales au Tchad, or APLFT), travel in Tibesti is difficult because of the anti-personnel mines in the region (1 Feb. 2000).

In August 1999, President Déby sent a delegation of members of parliament and traditional Tibesti chiefs to the North to begin peace talks with Youssef Togoïmi (United Nations 9 Aug. 1999). The 47-day mission did not produce any results (ibid. 4 Jan. 2000). Togoïmi had already stated, in June 1999, that he had no intention of negotiating with the government (*Jeune Afrique* 8 14 June 1999). According to Dobian Assingar, the LTDH had recommended on two occasions that talks be held between the government and the rebels, but both attempts at mediation failed (20 Jan. 2000). The rebels do not trust the government and doubt its sincerity (ibid.). In an interview with *Le Temps*, Youssef Togoïmi stated that he was suspicious of the government and could not trust its representatives (26 Jan.-1 Feb. 2000).

IRIN, citing information broadcast by Africa No 1, the radio service of Libreville in Gabon, reported that the Alliance of Human Rights Associations (Alliance des associations des droits de l'homme) had asked government forces and the rebels to initiate talks in order to end the armed conflict in northern Chad (United Nations 4 Jan. 2000). The Alliance of Human Rights Associations also advocates the organization of a conference on the armed forces and the judiciary, and another on the problems that Chad will be facing in the coming years (ibid.). The Research Directorate was unable to obtain more details on this matter within the time constraints for this Extended Response.

This Response was prepared after researching publicly available 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 to refugee status or asylum.

NOTES ON SELECTED SOURCES

Dobian Assingar

Dobian Assingar is the president of the Chadian Human Rights League (Ligue tchadienne des droits de l'homme), an organization affiliated with the International Federation of Human Rights Leagues. Here is what *Jeune Afrique* wrote about Dobian Assingar's work: [translation] "[in 1997], he [Dobian Assingar] brought his organization, the Chadian Human Rights League (LTDH), to the forefront of the national scene on the occasion of a mediation between the government and the rebels of the Armed Forces for the Federal Republic (Forces armées pour la république fédérale, or Farf) in southern Chad, led by Laokein Bardé. Dobian Assingar was the target of an attempted assassination in October 1997. Six months later, he was wounded in a police raid on his home in N'Djamena. The LTDH under Dobian Assingar symbolizes the emergence of a civil society that is rejecting the logic of violence and organizing itself as an opposition power with the help of NGOs that are mobilizing the international community and making it more aware of the situation."

Nadjikomo Benoudjita

Nadjikomo Benoudjita is the editor of the newspaper *Le Temps*. He succeeded his brother Néhémie in that position. *Le Temps*, an independent weekly founded in 1995, has a circulation of 5,000. Four thousand copies of the paper are distributed in the capital, N'Djamena, and 1,000 are distributed in the regions, in particular in southern and eastern Chad.

Benoît Decq

Benoît Decq is the secretary general of Tchad-Solidarités-France, an association founded in France in 1994. The mandate of this association is as follows: provide information on Chad and on the realities experienced by its populations; support Chadian human rights organizations; develop friendship and solidarity between Chadians and other nationalities.

The association works in close collaboration with the Chadian Human Rights League (LTDH), and publishes (on an irregular basis) a bulletin entitled TSF-Info (Decq, 10 Feb. 2000).

Nazaire Djerakoubou

Nazaire Djerakoubou is the secretary general of the Association for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms in Chad (Association pour la promotion des libertés fondamentales au Tchad), one of the major human rights organizations in the country (Djerakoubou, 1 Feb. 2000).

Bachara Idriss Hagggar

Bachara Idriss Hagggar is the director of the external relations department of the National Recovery Council (Conseil national de redressement, or CNR) (Hagggar 19 Jan. 2000). He is also the CNR's spokesman (ibid.), and is based in Hull, Québec, Canada. The CNR advocates the development of a more just, more humane and more democratic society, and to attain these objectives, it does not exclude the use of arms when diplomatic and political avenues have been exhausted (ibid.).

The CNR was founded in 1992 by Abbas Kotty, who was then in exile in Cameroon (Balencie and de La Grange 1996, 220). After the conclusion of a reconciliation accord between President Déby and Abbas Kotty, the latter returned to Chad (ibid.). However, he died in suspicious circumstances (ibid.). Leadership of the party is provided on a collegial basis by Hissène Kotty (a brother of Abbas Kotty) and Bachara Idriss Hagggar (ibid.). In the fall of 1993, the CNR became involved in an armed struggle in eastern Chad (ibid.). Today, the CNR is a member of the Coordination of Armed and Political Movements of the Opposition (Coordination des mouvements armés et politiques de l'opposition, or CMAP), an alliance formed in December 1999 among various Chadian groups opposed to the regime of President Idriss Déby (Hagggar 20 Jan. 2000).

Ngarlejy Yorongar

Ngarlejy Yorongar is the federal member of parliament for Bebedja. He is also an officer of the Foundation for the Respect of Laws and Freedoms (Fondation pour le respect des lois et des libertés, or FORELLI) and of the political party known as the Action for the Republic Federation (Fédération, Action pour la République, or FAR, also known as the Parti Fédération or Federation Party). According to *Jeune Afrique*, Yorongar opposes all the draft legislation tabled in the Chadian legislative assembly (13-19 April 1999).

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NOTES

[1] Goukouni Wedeye is a native of the Tibesti region of northern Chad (Balencie and de La Grande 1996, 211). In the 1960s, he joined the National Liberation Front of Chad (Front de libération nationale du Tchad, or Frolinat) (ibid.). In 1969, he assumed command of the Second Army and fought against the government (ibid.). He became the head of the country in 1980, but was ousted from the presidency by Hissène Habré in 1982 (ibid.). Forced into exile, he maintained some political activity (ibid.). He took a stand against Idriss Déby and in 1994 1995, he wanted to create a new version of Frolinat (ibid.). [\[back\]](#)

[2] Like other sources, Benoît Decq stated that it was very difficult to have a very precise idea of what was going on in the northern part of the country (10 Feb. 2000). According to Benoît Decq, no independent source has as yet corroborated either the information from the MDJT or the government's claims (ibid.). Nadjikomo Benoudjita too states that no checking has been done by independent sources (11 Feb. 2000). For example, the newspaper *Le Temps* receives news releases from the rebels, but cannot verify the information they contain (ibid.). It should be noted that *Le Temps* and the other Chadian media do not have any correspondents in the region where the rebellion is taking place (ibid.). [\[back\]](#)




[Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)

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