



Chad

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2007](#)

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Chad is a centralized republic with a population of approximately 10 million. In May 2006 citizens reelected President Idriss Deby, leader of the Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), to a third term in what unofficial observers characterized as an orderly, but seriously flawed election boycotted by the opposition. Deby has ruled the country since taking power in a 1990 coup. Political power remained concentrated in the hands of a northern oligarchy composed of the president's Zaghawa ethnic group and its allies. The executive branch effectively dominated the legislature and judiciary, thereby eliminating potential challenges to a culture of impunity for the ruling minority. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of the security forces.

Fighting between the government and rebel groups continued despite peace accords signed with the United Front for Change (FUC) in December 2006 and with four other rebel groups on October 25. The October 25, 2007 agreement was not implemented. Violent interethnic conflict, banditry, and cross-border raids by Darfur-based militias also continued. Civilians were killed and tens of thousands were displaced. Approximately 231,000 Sudanese refugees who had fled from violence from Darfur, lived in camps along the border.

The government's human rights record remained poor. Human rights abuses included: limitation of citizens' right to change their government; extrajudicial killings; politically motivated disappearances; torture and rape by security forces; security force impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; lengthy pretrial detention; denial of a fair public trial; executive interference in the judiciary; arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and correspondence; use of excessive force and other abuses in internal conflict, including killings and use of child soldiers; limits on freedom of speech, press, and assembly, including harassment and detention of journalists; widespread official corruption; violence and societal discrimination against women, including the widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse and trafficking; ethnic-based discrimination; repression of union activity; forced labor; and exploitive child labor.

Rebel groups, ethnic-based militias, Darfur-based militias, and bandits committed numerous human rights abuses. These abuses included killing, abducting, injuring, and displacing civilians; attacks against and destruction of villages; use of child soldiers; and attacks against humanitarian workers.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

Security forces have committed politically motivated killings and officially sanctioned extrajudicial killings of suspected criminals, although specific information was unavailable. Security forces continued to kill suspected rebels and rebel collaborators (see section 1.g.). Use of excessive force resulted in deaths. Security forces continued to kill civilians during apprehension and while in custody. The government did not prosecute or punish members of the security forces who committed killings.

There was an unconfirmed report by a human rights observer that security forces shot and killed a prisoner in Bongor who was attempting to escape.

There were no developments regarding the following 2006 killings by security forces: the April killing by men in military uniform of a government employee; the May killing of the governor's driver in Mongo by gendarme Almardi Ahmat; and the September killing by a gendarme in Beboto of two citizens that were suspected of being rebels.

There was an unconfirmed report of one person found shot and killed after a student demonstration that police had dispersed by gunfire.

Unexploded ordnance and landmines laid by government, rebel, and foreign forces resulted in deaths (see section 1.g.).

Armed bandits continued to operate on many roads, assaulting, robbing, and killing travelers; some perpetrators were identified as active duty soldiers or deserters. Their motive generally appeared to be robbery, and some of their targets were employees of foreign assistance organizations or nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) (see section 1.g.). No action was taken against the perpetrators of numerous 2005 and 2006 attacks and killings by bandits.

Interethnic fighting resulted in numerous deaths (see section 1.g.).

b. Disappearance

There continued to be reports of politically motivated disappearances and persons being held incommunicado during the year, particularly in relation to the country's ongoing conflict (see section 1.g.). According to the NGO Human Rights Without Borders, the government created secret detention centers after the April 2006 attacks on N'djamena and at least 16 high-ranking army officers were being kept in these centers. The army officers were not released by year's end.

There were no developments in numerous politically motivated disappearances that occurred between September and December 2005, or in the 2005 arrest and disappearance of Naguili Delphine.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Although the constitution and law prohibit such practices, members of the security forces tortured, beat, abused, and raped citizens. Such practices also occurred in connection with the ongoing armed conflict (see section 1.g.). Impunity for those who committed abuses remained widespread.

Unlike the previous year, there were no reports of security forces beating journalists or human rights workers.

In January security forces in N'Djamena arrested, detained, and reportedly tortured Dabre Felix and Koulayo Jonas, who were accused of theft.

In June security forces arrested without charge, beat, and detained for one week Lieutenant Colonel Herve Nassingar.

No action was taken against security forces responsible for torturing persons in 2006.

During the year human rights organizations continued to receive reports that police and gendarmes raped women in custody.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions remained harsh and life-threatening. Prisons were seriously overcrowded, had poor sanitation, and provided inadequate food, shelter, and medical facilities. As a result of inadequate record-keeping and management, many individuals remained in prison after completing their sentences or after courts had ordered their release.

Local human rights organizations continued to report on the existence of military prisons and prisons run by the Immigration Service, to which access was prohibited. It was unknown who was detained in these prisons and for what reasons they were held.

While the law provides that a doctor must visit each prison three times a week, this provision was not respected. The law authorizes forced labor in prison, but human rights organizations reported that generally it did not occur.

During the year approximately 100 inmates escaped during prison disturbances; none had been apprehended by year's end.

Juvenile males were not always separated from adult male prisoners, and children were sometimes held with their inmate mothers. Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners.

The government permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit most civilian prisons on a regular basis, and the ICRC conducted such visits during the year. In previous years the ICRC confirmed the existence of illegal prisons run by the gendarmerie, the National Security Agency (ANS), and the police, and requested access to them; however, no access was granted. The government provided the NGO Chadian Association for the Promotion of Human Rights (ATPDH) with a permanent authorization notice to visit civilian prisons at any time, without need to provide advance notice. Other NGOs, including human rights groups, were required to obtain authorization from a court or from the director

of prisons; such authorizations depended largely on the personal inclinations of those with authority to grant permission. NGOs were not allowed access to military prisons.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention; however, security forces often violated these provisions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The Chadian National Army (ANT), Republican Guard, Gendarmerie, national police, nomadic guard (GNNT), and ANS are responsible for internal security. The ANT, Gendarmerie, and GNNT report to the Ministry of Defense; the National Police report to the Ministry of Public Security and Immigration; and the Republican Guard and ANS report to the president. The Ministry of Defense is under the direction of the presidency. Officers from President Deby's ethnic group and closely allied ethnic groups dominated the ANS and Republican Guard.

The police force was centrally controlled, but exercising oversight, particularly outside of N'Djamena, was difficult. Police generally enjoyed impunity. The police force was unable to improve internal security problems, including widespread banditry and arms proliferation. The government continued to allow months to pass before it paid police force members, and corruption was widespread.

Reports of widespread defection of government troops to rebel groups continued, but estimates of their numbers were not available.

As a result of a December 2006 peace accord with the FUC, an unknown number of FUC combatants were integrated into the government military during the year.

Arrest and Detention

While the constitution and law require a judicial official to sign arrest warrants, the government often did not respect this requirement, and secret arrests occurred. The law requires both access to bail and access to counsel, but neither was regularly provided. Few detainees had the means to pay for private counsel, and incommunicado detention was a problem. Detainees were not promptly informed of charges, and judicial determinations were not made promptly. The constitution and law state that legal counsel should be provided for indigent defendants and that defendants should be allowed prompt access to family members and counsel; however, in practice this usually did not occur.

Security forces arbitrarily arrested and reportedly tortured persons, particularly those suspected of collaborating with rebels (see section 1.g.).

Police continued to arrest journalists and NGO officials who criticized the government.

There were reports that the government arrested numerous military defectors and members of their families, although specific information was unavailable.

There were no reported developments in the numerous 2006 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention.

Lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. Persons accused of crimes could be imprisoned for several years before being charged or tried, particularly those who were arrested in the provinces for felonies and transferred to prison in N'Djamena. Of the 3,416 inmates held in the country's prisons in August 2005, 1,980 were pretrial detainees.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was ineffective, underfunded, overburdened, vulnerable to intimidation and violence, and subject to executive interference. In practice government officials and other influential persons often enjoyed impunity. Members of the military continued to enjoy a particularly high degree of impunity. Members of the judiciary received death threats or faced demotion or removal from their positions for not acquiescing to pressure from officials.

At the national level, a supreme court, constitutional court, and court of appeals exist; some of their members were appointed by the government rather than elected by citizens as required by law, which weakened judicial independence. The constitutionally mandated High Court of Justice can try high-ranking government officials whose cases are submitted by the National Assembly.

There were no developments in the December 2005 case of three former ministers of livestock that were charged with embezzlement.

At the provincial level, there are appeals courts in N'Djamena, Moundou, and Abeche.

The constitution and law mandate that the Superior Council of Magistrates recommend judicial nominations and sanction judges who commit improprieties; however, continuing problems between the government and magistrates prevented any sanctions from being considered or carried out.

A five-judge judicial oversight commission has the power to conduct investigations of judicial decisions and address suspected miscarriages of justice. However, in contrast to the superior council, commission members are appointed by the president, which increased executive control over the judiciary and diminished the authority of the superior council. Parties to judicial cases can appeal to the commission.

Trial Procedures

Applicable law was sometimes confusing, as courts tended to blend the formal French-derived legal code with traditional practices, and customary law often superseded Napoleonic law in practice. Residents of rural areas often lacked access to formal judicial institutions, and legal reference texts were not available outside the capital. In most civil cases, the population relied on traditional courts presided over by village chiefs, canton chiefs, or sultans. However, decisions can be appealed to a formal court.

While the law states that defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty, in practice many judges assumed a suspect's guilt, particularly in crimes involving rape or theft. Trials are public, and defendants have the right to appeal decisions. Defendants, their lawyers, and judges are permitted by law to question witnesses.

The law states that indigents should be provided promptly with legal counsel, but this seldom occurred in practice. Human rights groups sought to improve this situation, and sometimes provided free counsel themselves.

The Muslim concept of *dia*, which involves a payment to the family of a crime victim, is based on the decision of local leaders and was practiced widely in northern Muslim areas. Non-Muslim groups, which supported implementation of a civil code, continued to challenge the use of the *dia* system, arguing that it was incompatible with the constitution. Such groups further accused the government of supporting *dia* practices by permitting the existence of local tribunals. A previously formed technical committee had not resolved the issue by year's end.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Human rights organizations reported that the government held political prisoners and detainees and that they were denied access to such persons (see section 1.g.).

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, but the government conducted illegal searches and wiretaps and monitored private mail and e-mail. Security forces also regularly stopped citizens and extorted money or confiscated belongings.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports of the government ordering temporary closure of cellular telephone networks. Military and police officials continued to conduct searches and confiscations of satellite telephones, including those of NGOs, international organizations, and diplomatic vehicles.

There were occasions when police officers arrested family members of suspects, although specific information was unavailable.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts

Fighting between the government and rebel groups continued despite a peace accord signed with the FUC in December 2006 and a separate accord signed with four other rebel groups on October 25. The October 25, 2007 accord was not implemented due in part to a resurgence of fighting in eastern Chad. Violent interethnic conflict, banditry, and cross-border raids by Darfur-based militias also continued. Rebel groups, government forces, and highway bandits attacked and counterattacked, which resulted in deaths and the widespread destruction of homes and property during the year. Rebel attacks and government counterattacks occurred primarily along the eastern border with Sudan. Interethnic attacks on villages in the eastern part of the country continued. Vast areas along the border with Sudan were not protected by the government. Militias burned houses and stole the cattle of unprotected villages, resulting in numerous deaths and the displacement of thousands of persons.

On September 25, the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of a European Union force (EUFOR) and a UN police training mission, known as the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), to protect civilians and promote human rights and the rule of law in eastern Chad and northeastern Central African Republic (CAR). As of year's end few EUFOR and MINURCAT personnel had been deployed.

A state of emergency was in effect from November 2006 until May, and again beginning on October 16. The state of emergency, which was ongoing at year's end, gave security forces special arrest powers and included restrictions on movement, meetings, and the press.

Killings

Government, militia, and rebel attacks and counterattacks resulted in numerous civilian deaths and injuries.

On February 1, government and rebel fighting in Adre injured 120 persons, a third of them civilians.

Security forces continued to kill persons suspected of collaborating with rebel forces. On August 31, security forces killed Ahmat Sougou, who was suspected of collaborating with the armed rebels. No charges were filed.

There were no developments reported in the alleged 2006 security force killings of Sayam N'demra, Nandigar Mbaïoussoumta, Andre Tomboi, or Louis Mbatel.

Interethnic attacks on communities continued during the year. On March 31, attacks on the villages of Tiero and Marena resulted in hundreds of deaths, numerous injuries, destruction of homes, and the displacement of approximately 9,000 persons. There were no reported developments regarding the October and November 2006 massacres in the Salamat and Goz-Beida regions, respectively.

In October ethnic clashes between the Tama and Zaghawa tribes resulted in the deaths of 20 persons near Guereda and interrupted humanitarian services.

Abductions

On October 12, an American missionary was abducted by rebels in the Tibesti region. He had not been released as of year's end.

There were reports that the forcible recruitment of some refugees into armed groups continued, although at a significantly smaller scale than the previous year.

There were no reported developments regarding Sudanese militiamen that abducted approximately 4,700 refugees from refugee camps in the east in March 2006.

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture

Unexploded ordnance and landmines laid by government, rebel, and foreign forces resulted in deaths. The UN reported that landmines and unexploded ordnance resulted in the deaths of 22 children and injuries to 85 children.

Security forces arrested and detained numerous persons suspected of rebel activity or collaboration with rebels. The government also arrested military defectors, some of whom had joined rebel groups.

On November 30, four army officers, the sultan and governor of Dar Tama, and one additional individual were reportedly arrested in Guereda. Some of the seven were associated with the FUC, including through family relationships. The individuals were held incommunicado, and there were no reports that they had been released by year's end.

In previous years retribution against the families and villages of military defectors to rebel groups included the burning of homes, arrest and torture of family members, and destruction of crops and other property.

On April 20, the commandant of the ANS arrested and beat M. Mahamat Abderaman, a suspected rebel. The government had not responded to the incident by year's end.

The 16 high-ranking army officers who were held in secret prisons after the April 2006 attacks on N'djamena were still detained at year's end.

There were no reported developments regarding the 2006 arrests and alleged torture of Brahim Almardi, Nourène Fadoul, Ahmat Mahamat, and Bechir Zam-Zam by security forces. The individuals were suspected rebel supporters.

There were no further developments in the case of Nodjitel Medard, El Hadj Abba Zene, and others who were arrested and later released in 2006 for allegedly collaborating with the rebels.

Sexual violence, including rape, was committed against women and girls. Rapes occurred during attacks on villages and also on and near internally displaced person camps.

Child Soldiers

The law prohibits the use of child soldiers; however, child soldiers were used by the ANT, Chadian rebel groups, village self-defense forces, and armed groups from Sudan operating in the border region. As in the previous year, there were reports that the army forcibly recruited children; the reports were covered by the media, which attributed them to human rights organizations and eyewitnesses.

Children were recruited from refugee camps along the eastern border by armed groups from both Chad and Sudan. For example, a UN report noted that, in January, 39 children were recruited by Sudanese armed groups from Briedjing refugee camp.

On May 9, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the government signed an agreement to identify and demobilize children in the Chadian military; however, the program was reportedly suspended in November. As of July, 425 child soldiers had been demobilized.

Other Conflict Related Abuses

Armed groups and bandits attacked humanitarian workers. The insecurity hindered the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide services, including food distribution to refugees and IDPs. During the year humanitarian vehicles were hijacked, and numerous convoys were attacked and looted. On May 24, armed bandits attacked two local employees at the World Food Program (WFP) in Biltine, where WFP supplied food to three refugee camps. On June 19, armed men attacked a convoy composed three engineers and two drivers from Oxfam and another NGO; the three engineers were injured. On December 6, a UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) driver was killed in the south.

There were reports that as many as 30,000 persons, mostly from Arab nomadic or semi-nomadic groups from the southeast, left the country for Darfur as a result of insecurity, including attacks on their settlements.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government limited these freedoms in practice and intimidated journalists and publishers. A state of emergency was in effect for much of the year and included strict press censorship provisions against reporting on the rebels, interethnic conflict, and criticism of the government's handling of internal security. Journalists and publishers practiced self-censorship.

Individuals who publicly criticized the government often faced reprisal. There were reports that the government attempted to control criticism by monitoring meetings of the political opposition, and there were reports that the government attempted to intimidate its critics.

The government owned the newspaper *Info Tchad* and influenced another, *Le Progres*, but it did not dominate the press. Government-controlled media were subject to censorship, but, sometimes criticized the government. A number of private newspapers, many of which were critical of government policies and leaders, were published and circulated freely in the capital.

Radio remained the most important medium of mass communication. The government-owned Radiodiffusion Nationale Tchadienne had several branches. There were numerous private radio stations that broadcast throughout the country, many of them owned by religious organizations.

The licensing fee set by the government's High Council for Communications (HCC) for a commercial radio station remained prohibitively high at approximately \$11,000 (five million CFA francs) per year, 10 times the fee for radio stations owned by nonprofit NGOs. The HCC monitored and censored the content of radio station programming.

In April the government issued a warning to the private radio station Dja FM following a dispute regarding previous year's taxes.

The government owned and operated the only domestic television station, but did not interfere with private channels originating outside the country.

During the year the government harassed and detained journalists. Unlike in previous years, there were no reports that rebels abducted journalists.

On January 31, in Moissala, security forces detained human rights activist and radio reporter Marcel Ngargoto, who worked for a radio station that sometimes criticized the government.

On September 12, armed men allegedly working for the security forces detained Al-Jazeera correspondent Fadoul Beneye.

On December 14, Nadjikimo Benoudjita, managing editor of the newspaper *Notre Temps*, was arrested and charged with inciting ethnic and religious hatred. He was released three days later on bail. Benoudjita had written an article that criticized President Deby and the president of France. The newspaper was closed, and publication had not resumed by year's end.

Radio journalist Tchanguiz Vatankhah, who security forces detained in April 2006, was released in May of the same year.

A 2006 government requirement under the state of emergency that all news items be submitted to the HCC for approval before publication continued until May. It was not clear if a similar requirement was enacted under the state of emergency declared on October 16.

Some journalists in rural provinces reported that government officials warned them not to engage in any contentious political reporting. In addition some domestic journalists claimed that the government restricted their ability to cover some events or visit certain locations and limited their access to high-ranking officials, restrictions that the government did not impose on foreign journalists.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet; however, the government reportedly monitored e-mail. Although increasingly available to the public at Internet cafes, the growth of Internet access was almost entirely through the government telecommunications company.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

Although the constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly, the government limited this right in practice. Authorities banned demonstrations they expected would be critical of the government, despite being notified five days in advance as required by law.

There was an unconfirmed report that one person was found shot and killed after a student demonstration in which police dispersed protesters with gunfire. Numerous injuries also resulted from security force use of live fire to disperse demonstrators at Bongor, Sarh, and Gounou Gaya. Security forces used excessive force to disperse a July demonstration in Moundou.

No action was taken against security forces responsible for injuries that resulted from the violent dispersal of demonstrators in 2006.

Freedom of Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of association; however, in May the government banned the formation of a union.

An ordinance requires prior authorization from the Ministry of Interior before an association, including a labor union, may be formed; however, there were no reports that the ordinance was used. The ordinance also allows for the immediate administrative dissolution of an association and permits authorities to monitor association funds.

c. Freedom of Religion

While the law provides for religious freedom, at times the government limited this right. The law also provides for a secular state; however, some policies favored Islam in practice. For example, a committee composed of members of the High Council for Islamic Affairs (a government-sanctioned, nongovernmental body) and the Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Interior organized the Hajj and the Umra.

The Islamic religious group Faid al-Djaria remained banned on the grounds that its religious customs, including singing and dancing together by men and women in religious ceremonies, were un-Islamic.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Although the different religious communities generally coexisted without problems, there were reports of tensions within the Muslim community between the High Council for Islamic Affairs and fundamentalist elements within the community. During the year there were regular meetings between key religious leaders to discuss peaceful collaboration among groups.

On March 8, the government initiated an interfaith campaign for peace with support from Christians and Muslims organizations.

There was no known Jewish community and no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

For a more detailed discussion, see the *2007 International Religious Freedom Report*.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons,

Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

Although the law provides for freedom of movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, in practice the government imposed some limits on these rights. The Ministry of Territorial Administration required foreigners, including humanitarian agency personnel, to obtain an "authorization for circulation" to travel to the eastern part of the country.

Security forces, rebels, and bandits continued to maintain roadblocks, extorting money from travelers and often beating and, in some cases, killing them.

Tension along the border with CAR continued to hinder free movement in the region.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not use it.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The number of IDPs increased from 112,000 in January to 180,000 in August. The IDPs were largely the former residents of villages along the eastern border with Sudan. Some IDPs were forcibly displaced two or three times.

Interethnic violence displaced persons. IDPs were driven from their villages by a combination of attacks by Janjaweed-like mounted raiders from Sudan, Chadian rebels, and Chadian ethnic militias, both Arab and non-Arab. These attacks occurred mostly in the area south of the Abeche-Adre road in the Dar Assongha and Dar Sila departments.

The government publicly acknowledged that its resources were directed toward fighting rebel groups and armed militias and that it could not protect or provide for the growing number of IDPs and refugees in the country. In 2006 the UN withdrew non-essential employees from the country due to threats of rebel and militia attacks in the east. While UN and humanitarian organizations operated in the country during the year, lack of security reduced their ability to provide services to IDPs and refugees.

The government did not attack IDPs or forcibly return or resettle them under dangerous conditions.

Protection of Refugees

The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, but the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided protection against refoulement, the forcible return of persons to a country where they had a well-founded fear of persecution. The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention and the 1967 protocol.

The government cooperated with the UNHCR and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers.

According to the UNHCR, as of July the country hosted approximately 231,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur, most of whom were located in 12 camps along the eastern border with Sudan. As of September there were also an estimated 44,000 refugees from CAR. There were also small numbers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Most of the refugees from CAR lived in four camps in the south. The camps faced serious water and sanitation challenges.

The government did not provide sufficient protection for refugee camps in the east, although unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that camps were attacked. However, NGO workers traveling between camps were frequently victims of carjackings and armed robberies. Insecurity in the east, including rebel and bandit attacks, hindered the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide services to refugees.

Antirefugee sentiment among citizens living in refugee-affected areas was high due to competition for local resources such as wood, water, and grazing land, and goods and services provided to Sudanese refugees that were not available to the local population. There continued to be reports that citizens attacked refugees and destroyed their wells.

There were reports that the forcible recruitment of some refugees into armed groups continued, although on a significantly smaller scale than the previous year (see section 1.g.).

UNHCR and its partner organizations continued to express concern regarding the potential for militarization of refugee camps by Sudanese and Chadian rebels, particularly those located close to the border. Relocation sites for Oure Cassoni and Am Nabak camps still had not been found. Refugees in at least one of the camps, however, adamantly opposed relocation, preferring to remain close to the border of their traditional homeland.

The UNHCR and the government continued to work to identify safer sites for refugees from Darfur, although few suitable locations were identified.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Although the constitution and law provide citizens with the right to change their government, the government continued to limit this right in practice. The executive branch dominated the other branches of government.

Elections and Political Participation

In May 2006 President Deby, leader of the ruling MPS, was reelected to a third term in what unofficial observers characterized as an orderly, but seriously flawed election that was boycotted by the opposition. The government had dismissed appeals from the opposition, civil society, religious groups, and some members of the international community to postpone elections and organize a national dialogue. Observers noted low voter participation, underage voting, multiple voting, and other irregularities.

On August 13, the government and the opposition coalition signed an agreement that delayed communal and legislative elections, originally scheduled for 2005, until 2009.

There were approximately 78 registered political parties in the country. Parties allied with the government generally received favorable treatment. Opposition political leaders accused the government of co-opting their most popular local politicians to run as MPS members in local elections and alleged that the military intimidated party members who refused to cooperate. Northerners, particularly members of the Zaghawa ethnic group, including the Bideyat subclan to which the president belongs, continued to dominate the public sector and were overrepresented in key institutions of state power, including the military officer corps, elite military units, and the presidential staff.

There were seven women among 40 ministers in the cabinet. There were 10 women in the 155-seat National Assembly and two women in the 25-member national election commission.

Both the cabinet and the National Assembly had diverse ethnic representation.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The World Bank's worldwide governance indicators reflected that corruption was a serious problem.

There were no reported developments in the July 2006 case of two cabinet ministers who were removed from their positions for misappropriation of government funds.

During the year there were no reports of government action regarding corrupt practices identified by the College for the Monitoring and Control of Oil Resources in 2005 and 2006.

The law does not provide for public access to government information, although the government provided such access to government-employed journalists. Independent media journalists complained that they were not given sufficient access to government information.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The government continued to obstruct the work of domestic human rights organizations through arrest, detention, and intimidation of their members; nevertheless, such groups were able to investigate and publish their findings on human rights cases. Government officials generally were accessible to human rights advocates but were often unresponsive or hostile to their findings.

There were two principal local human rights organizations, the ATPDH and the Chadian League for Human Rights. These and smaller human rights organizations worked together through an umbrella organization, the Association for Human Rights.

Despite pressure from the government, human rights groups were outspoken in publicizing abuses through reports, press releases, and the print media, but only occasionally were they able to intervene successfully with authorities. There was a perception on the part of government officials that most local human rights groups were composed mainly of political opponents, which weakened their credibility with the government and some international organizations.

Security forces arrested Marcel Ngargoto, a radio reporter and the secretary general of the NGO Human Rights Without Borders.

Unidentified assailants and armed bandits attacked numerous NGO employees during the year (see section 1.g.).

The lack of security in the east reduced the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide services.

The government continued to obstruct the work of international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International.

Section 5 Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

While the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on origin, race, gender, religion, political opinion, or social status, the government did not effectively enforce these provisions. The government favored its ethnic supporters and allies.

Women

The law prohibits rape, prostitution, and spousal abuse, but all were problems; no reliable quantitative data was available.

Although the law prohibits violence against women, domestic violence, including spousal abuse, was common. Wives traditionally were subject to the authority of their husbands, and they had limited legal recourse against abuse. Although family or traditional authorities could provide assistance in such cases, police rarely intervened.

In previous years there were reports that family members killed women for breaking social taboos, although there were no

such reports during 2007. In some places girls and women may not visit the site where an initiation ceremony is to take place. If a female violates this prohibition, under traditional practices the village leaders can kill her.

Prostitution was a problem, particularly in the southern oil-producing region.

The law does not prohibit sexual harassment, and such harassment was a problem.

Discrimination against women remained widespread. In practice women did not have equal opportunities for education and training, making it difficult for them to compete for the relatively few formal-sector jobs. Although property and inheritance laws based on the French code do not discriminate against women, local leaders adjudicated most inheritance cases in favor of men, according to traditional practice.

The exploitation of women was pervasive, especially in rural areas, where women did most of the agricultural labor and were discouraged from seeking formal schooling.

The law does not address polygyny, husbands may opt at any time to declare a marriage polygynous. If a husband takes a second wife, the first wife has the right to request that her marriage be dissolved; however, she must repay her bride price and other marriage-related expenses.

Children

While the government generally supported the activities of NGOs and international donors to improve children's rights and welfare, the government had few resources to organize its own activities. The government was unable to fund medical care or public education adequately beyond the primary level. Government education policy for children and youth focused on improving classroom facilities and infrastructure.

Boys and girls generally had equal access to state-provided medical care.

By law education is universal and free, and basic education is compulsory; however, in practice parents were required to pay tuition to public schools beyond the primary level. Parents were required to pay for textbooks, except in some rural areas. Approximately half of teachers were hired and paid by parent-teacher associations, without government reimbursement. Educational opportunities for girls were limited. Most children did not complete primary education. The percentage of girls enrolled in secondary school was extremely low compared with that of boys.

Child abuse, including abuse of child herders, remained a problem. These children often worked long hours and were unable to attend school.

The law prohibits the practice of FGM; however, FGM was widespread. According to a 2004 government report by the National Institute of Statistics, Economic and Demographic Studies, 45 percent of local women had undergone excision. According to the survey, 70 percent of Muslim females and 30 percent of Christian females were subjected to FGM. The practice was prevalent, especially among ethnic groups in the east and south. All three types of FGM were practiced. The least common but most dangerous and severe form of FGM, infibulation, was confined largely to the region on the eastern border with Sudan. FGM usually was performed prior to puberty as a rite of passage.

FGM could be prosecuted as a form of assault, and charges could be brought against the parents of FGM victims, medical practitioners, or others involved in the action. However, prosecution was hindered by the lack of specific penalty provisions in the penal code. There were no reports that any such suits were brought during the year. The Ministry of Social Action and Family was responsible for coordinating activities to combat FGM.

Although the law prohibits sexual relations with a girl under the age of 14, even if married, the ban was rarely enforced. Families arranged marriages for girls as young as 12 or 13; the minimum legal age for engagements was 11. The law prohibits forced marriages of anyone under 18 and provides for imprisonment of six months to two years and a fine of \$114 to \$1,140 (50,000 to 500,000 CFA francs). There were some forced marriages, and the custom of buying and selling child brides continued to be widespread. Many young wives were forced to work long hours of physical labor for their husbands in fields or homes.

Several human rights organizations reported on the problem of the mahadjir, children who attended certain Islamic schools and were forced by their teachers to beg for food and money. There was no reliable estimate of the number of mahadjir children.

Children who were refugees or IDPs had limited access to services such as education and healthcare.

The government and other armed groups continued to use child soldiers (see section 1.g).

On December 26, in a case that attracted worldwide attention, six French citizens associated with the NGO Zoe's Arc were convicted on child abduction charges and sentenced to eight years of hard labor and substantial fines for attempting to unlawfully fly 103 children of Chadian and Sudanese origin to France; a Sudanese and a Chadian each received sentences of four years of hard labor for complicity. A bilateral treaty allowed the six French nationals to serve their sentences in France, where they were spared the punishment of hard labor because French law does not allow hard labor as a punishment. At year's end the children were being housed in an orphanage and were receiving services from humanitarian organizations and the government.

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons; however, traffickers could be prosecuted under statutes prohibiting child abduction, sale of children, and child labor. Persons were trafficked to, from, and within the country. Cross-border trafficking was not widespread, and internal trafficking was largely restricted to children.

Children were trafficked for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. The majority of child victims were trafficked within the country to work as involuntary domestic servants, herders, beggars, or prostitutes. Children from Cameroon and CAR were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to the country's oil-producing regions. Chadian children were trafficked to Cameroon, CAR, and Nigeria.

The majority of child trafficking occurred with parental consent; children were given by parents to relatives or an intermediary in exchange for education, apprenticeships, cattle, or a small sum.

The government continued to cooperate with UNICEF and NGOs to combat trafficking.

Children were also recruited, sometimes forcibly, into armed groups (see section 1.g.).

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities; however, it does mandate that buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities, and in practice the government operated few education, employment, or therapy programs for such persons. Several local NGOs provided skills training to persons with hearing or visual impairment. The government, in conjunction with NGOs, continued to sponsor an annual day of activities to raise awareness of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Action and Family is responsible for the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There are approximately 200 ethnic groups in the country, many of which are concentrated regionally. They speak 128 distinct primary languages. Although most ethnic groups were affiliated with one of two regional and cultural traditions--Arabs and Muslims in the north, center, and east; and Christian or animist groups in the south--internal migrations in response to urbanization and desertification resulted in the integration of these groups in some areas.

Societal discrimination continued to be practiced routinely by members of virtually all ethnic groups and was evident in patterns of employment, especially across the North-South divide. The law prohibits government discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, although in practice ethnicity continued to influence government appointments and political alliances. Political parties and groups generally had readily identifiable regional or ethnic bases.

In the east, interethnic violence continued (see section 1.g.).

Clashes between herders and sedentary populations and other interethnic violence that often concerned land use continued to be a serious problem.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Societal discrimination continued to be practiced against homosexuals and those afflicted with HIV/AIDS.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law allows all employees except members of the armed forces to join or form unions of their choice without excessive

requirements; however, the authorization of the Ministry of Interior is required, and in May the government banned the formation of a union. The ministry can also authorize the immediate administrative dissolution of an association.

In the formal sector, more than 90 percent of employees belonged to unions; however, the great majority of workers were nonunionized, unpaid subsistence cultivators or herders. The government, which owned businesses that dominated many sectors of the formal economy, remained the largest employer.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to organize and bargain collectively, and the government protected these rights. Although there were no restrictions on collective bargaining, the law authorizes the government to intervene under certain circumstances. There are no export processing zones.

The law recognizes the right to strike, and workers exercised this right. The law permits imprisonment with forced labor as punishment for participation in illegal strikes, but no such punishment was imposed during the year.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) stated that the government repressed union activity in response to a public sector strike that began in May. The ITUC reported that police occupied a union office; security forces shot at demonstrators Bongor, Sarh, and Gounou Gaya; and that the passport of a union leader was confiscated.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there continued to be reports of forced labor practices in the formal economy and isolated instances of local authorities demanding forced labor by both children and adults in the rural sector. There were also reports that prisoners were required to work to pay back taxes they allegedly owed.

The law permits imprisonment with forced labor for participation in illegal strikes.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor code stipulates that the minimum age for employment is 14, although children may work as apprentices beginning at age 13. The government did not enforce the law. The law prohibits children under the age of 18 from undertaking "any work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it was carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children"; however, child labor, including forced child labor, was a serious problem. The minimum employment age is not consistent with the compulsory education age.

An estimated 20 percent of children between the ages of six and 18 worked in exploitive labor in the urban informal sector according to a study published by Human Rights Without Borders. Children throughout the country worked in agriculture and herding. They also were employed in the commercial sector, particularly in the capital, as street vendors, manual laborers, and helpers in small shops. Young girls worked as domestic servants, mainly in N'Djamena. A 2005 UNICEF-government survey of child domestics in N'Djamena noted that 62 percent were boys; 24 percent were between eight and 14 years of age, 68 percent were between 15 and 17; and 86 percent were illiterate.

There were also credible reports that children were forced into slavery. According to a 2004 UN news service report, aid workers in the country estimated that families had sold as many as 2,000 children--some as young as eight--into a system in which they worked as child cattle herders. In some areas local authorities fined parents caught selling their children into forced labor. To avoid detection, some families worked with intermediaries to pass children from families to farm owners.

Children who attended certain Islamic schools were sometimes forced by their teachers to beg for food and money.

Some children worked as domestic servants in the households of relatives for little compensation. Some young girls were forced into marriages by their families and then compelled to work in their husbands' fields or homes while they were still too young to do so safely.

Government forces and rebel groups recruited child soldiers (see section 1.g.).

The Office of Labor Inspection is responsible for enforcement of child labor laws and policies. That office had approximately 16 labor inspectors to cover the entire country. As in previous years, they reportedly had no funding to carry out field work and investigations.

The government did not have a comprehensive plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor; however, the government

continued to work with UNICEF and other NGOs to increase public awareness of child labor. In addition, the campaign to educate parents and civil society on the dangers of child labor, particularly for child herders, continued.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The labor code requires the government to set minimum wages, and the minimum wage at year's end was \$64 (28,000 CFA francs) per month; however, these standards were generally ignored. Most wages, including the minimum wage, did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family. Nearly all private sector and state-owned firms paid at least the minimum wage, but it was largely ignored in the vast informal sector. In some areas there were long delays in the payment of those salaries. Salary arrears remained a problem, although less so than in previous years. Low wages among customs, police, and military officials contributed to almost daily extortion of the civilian population along all major roads.

The law limits most employment to 39 hours per week, with overtime paid for supplementary hours. Agricultural work was limited to 2,400 hours per year, an average of 46 hours per week. All workers were entitled to an unbroken 48-hour rest period per week; however, these rights rarely were enforced.

The labor code mandates occupational health and safety standards and gives inspectors the authority to enforce them; however, these standards were generally ignored in the private sector and in the civil service.

Workers had the right to remove themselves from dangerous working conditions; however, in practice they could not leave without jeopardizing their employment. The labor code explicitly protects all workers, including foreign and illegal workers, but the protections provided were not always respected in practice.

