



Chad

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2006

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Chad is a centralized republic with a population of approximately 10 million. On May 3, 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 rebellion. 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, elements of which frequently acted independently of government control.

During the year the security situation sharply deteriorated as a result of fighting that involved rebel groups, government forces, armed militias, and civilians. Fighting occurred between government forces and antigovernment rebel groups along the eastern border with Sudan and the southern border with the Central African Republic (CAR). There was some thawing of relations between Chad and Sudan by mid-year, but by the end of the year Sudan's continued support for Chadian rebels prompted the government to accuse Khartoum of seeking to replace the Deby government with an "Arab regime." Violence between competing ethnic groups and bandit attacks on civilians occurred throughout the country. By year's end hundreds of persons were killed and injured, tens of thousands were displaced, and numerous villages in the east and southeast of the country were destroyed. Up to 110,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and an estimated 230,000 Sudanese refugees lived in the eastern part of the country after fleeing the violence in Darfur. The deteriorating security environment, characterized by threats of rebel attacks, harassment of humanitarian workers, and dramatically increased vehicle theft, led to the withdrawal of all but essential UN and humanitarian nongovernmental organization (NGO) employees from the country and aggravated the already precarious security situation in the area.

The government's poor human rights record deteriorated further during the year; security forces committed numerous serious human rights abuses. The following human rights abuses were reported: limitation of citizens' right to change their government; extrajudicial killings, torture, beatings, and rapes by security forces; impunity for human rights abuses committed by members of the security forces; politically motivated disappearances; arbitrary arrest and detention by security forces; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions and lengthy pretrial and post-sentence detention; executive interference in the judiciary and lack of judicial effectiveness; official infringement of privacy rights including illegal searches, confiscation, and wiretaps; limits on freedom of speech and the press and freedom of 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; slavery; trafficking in persons; and forced labor, including the use of child soldiers and other types of forced and abusive child labor.

Armed civilian militias were responsible for interethnic killings, abuse, and torture of civilians and humanitarian aid workers, unlawful arrest and detention, burning of villages, displacement of thousands of persons, and the destruction of civilian property in areas where they operated. Rebel groups seeking to overthrow the regime engaged government armed forces repeatedly, and attacked the capital in April. Antigovernment rebel groups directed their activities against government targets while militias generally engaged in banditry and, if ethnically based (as was usually the case), in violence against other ethnic groups.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

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

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

Government agents committed politically motivated killings, and officially sanctioned extrajudicial killings of suspected criminals by security forces continued. Arbitrary and unlawful killings by security forces were widespread during the year. For example, in September, in the district of Beboto prefecture of Yamodo, a commandant of the gendarmerie killed two citizens who he suspected of being bandits. There were numerous incidents in which security forces fired on persons without sufficient cause, whether or not there was loss of life. The government did not prosecute or punish members of the security forces who committed killings.

During the year security forces killed a number of civilians who were suspected of collaboration with rebel forces (see section 1.g.).

Security forces were believed to have committed numerous killings during apprehensions or in custody.

Police use of excessive force resulted in the killing of at least one demonstrator (see section 2.b.).

On April 29, unidentified armed men in military uniform killed Mahamat Moussa, a government employee on duty in Ati. At year's end there had been no investigation of the case.

On May 11, in Mongo, gendarme Almardi Ahmat killed the governor's driver in the presence of several witnesses in the center of town. No official action was taken against the gendarme.

There were no developments in any of the 2005 killings by security forces.

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

Armed militias killed scores of civilians during the year (see section 1.g.).

Unidentified assailants and armed bandits attacked a number of NGO employees during the year, resulting in one death (see section 4).

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 NGOs (see section 4). In June, for example, a group of armed assailants kidnapped four persons in Zabi village, near Pala. The attackers demanded \$7500 to release the victims. When family members were unable to respond to the demands, armed bandits killed two of the hostages, both young boys. No investigation had been conducted on the case by year's end.

No action was taken against the perpetrators of numerous 2005 attacks and killings by bandits, including the killings of two NGO employees.

Interethnic fighting resulted in numerous deaths (see section 5).

b. Disappearance

There continued to be reports of politically motivated disappearances during the year. The NGO Human Rights Without Borders reported that secret detention centers were created after the April 13 attacks and that at least 16 high-ranking army officers were being kept in these centers (see section 1.e, Political Prisoners and Detainees).

There were no developments in numerous politically motivated disappearances that occurred between September and December 2005 in connection with alleged mutiny attempts, military desertions, political defections, and rebel attacks carried out on two military installations. There also was no information on the June 2005 military arrest and disappearance of Naguili Delphine.

In September 2005 authorities released and reportedly returned to service 46 air force officers who had been arrested in May 2005 and sent to the northern part of the country. Similarly, 13 to 15 army colonels who were arrested in August 2005 were released in October 2005. The Ministry of Defense announced through media that the officers had not been detained on political grounds; in the air force case the stated reason was insubordination.

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. Impunity for those who committed human rights abuses remained widespread. Security forces arrested and beat journalists and a human rights worker during the year.

On April 15, security forces detained BBC correspondent Dillah Yombirim while he was interviewing residents in N'Djamena. Yombirim was subsequently taken to a military camp, where he was detained for two hours and badly beaten before being released without charge.

On April 24, gendarmes arrested and allegedly beat Monodji Mingar Fidel, president of the Chadian League for Human Rights (LTDH). No charges were filed against him and he was released after 24 hours.

On May 9, police allegedly tortured and beat Mahamat Bichara, a payroll officer in the Ministry of Finance, who had been arrested and accused of falsifying and then removing administrative documents. Bichara was provisionally released in July pending further investigation of the case. No charges had been filed by year's end.

Also in May the chief army commandant in the southern town of Sarh arrested, detained, and allegedly tortured Brahim Kaba, Mahamat Adoum Kanassam, Kadi Saleh Togbao, and Abderahim Brahim. The traders reportedly refused to pay a bribe supplemental to commercial taxes already collected. They were not charged with any offense and were released in June.

There were no developments in the numerous 2005 cases of torture or mistreatment by security forces.

During the year human rights organizations continued to receive reports of police and gendarmes raping 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.

Unlike in the previous year, there were no reports that prisoners died from negligence.

Juvenile males were not always separated from adult male prisoners and in some cases children were held with their prisoner mothers. Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners.

The government permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit most civil prisons on a regular basis, and the ICRC conducted such visits during the year. The ICRC confirmed the existence of illegal prisons run by the gendarmerie, the 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 civil 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. Prisoners were also secretly kept in regular jails. NGOs were not allowed access to military prisons.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Although prohibited by the constitution and law, arbitrary arrest and detention were serious problems.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The National Army (ANT), Republican Guard, gendarmerie (military police force), national police, nomadic guard (GNNT), and National Security Agency (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 officials who committed human rights abuses generally enjoyed impunity. Government officials publicly acknowledged the country's growing internal security problems, which resulted in part from the inability of the national police in N'Djamena and in the regions to counter widespread banditry, particularly outside of N'Djamena, and the proliferation of arms resulting from a succession of civil wars. The government continued to allow months to pass before it paid police force members, and corruption was widespread.

The defection of government troops to rebel groups was reportedly widespread, but no data or estimates of their numbers were available. Retribution against the families and villages of defectors included the burning of homes, arrest and torture of family members, and destruction of crops and other property.

Arrest and Detention

While a judicial official is required by the constitution and law 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, which contributed to widespread prison overcrowding. The constitution and law state that legal counsel should be provided for indigent defendants and defendants should be allowed prompt access to family members and counsel; however, in practice this usually did not occur.

During the year security forces arbitrarily arrested and reportedly tortured persons, particularly those suspected of collaborating with rebels (see sections 1.c. and 1.g.).

Police continued to arrest journalists and NGO officials who criticized the government (see sections 2.a. and 4).

The government also arrested numerous military defectors and members of their families (see section 1.g.).

On May 9, gendarmes arrested 12 farmers from the town of Guite on suspicion of being rebel sympathizers and subsequently killed one of the farmers (see sections 1.a. and 1.g.).

On May 13, the chief commandant of the ANS in the southern town of Koumogo arrested Mahmat Bouba, Elhadj Mbonou, and several herders; the commandant seized the money and property of the detainees. No investigation of the case had been conducted by year's end.

In April 2005 the chief police commandant arrested Ahmat Nagrtoloum, an employee of the Ministry of Finance in N'Djamena. Human rights groups were denied access. He was charged with embezzlement in July 2005 and released pending trial. The case had not gone to trial by year's end.

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 the overcrowded prison in N'Djamena. Of the 3,416 inmates held in the country's prisons as of August 2005 (the most recent data available), 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 from judicial sanction. Members of the military, in which the president's Zaghawa ethnic group figured prominently, continued to enjoy a particularly high degree of impunity from prosecution. During the year members of the judiciary received death threats or faced demotion or removal from their positions for not acquiescing to pressure from corrupt officials. The two lawyers representing employees of an ESSO (Exxon) subcontractor who were demanding back wages had their licenses temporarily revoked. The lawyers were charged with inciting the workers to occupy Ministry of Justice offices in protest, including confining the minister of justice in his office for one day.

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. In December 2005 the Ministry of Morality brought charges of mismanagement (embezzlement) of official funds against three former ministers of livestock. At year's end the National Assembly had not acted on these cases.

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. In 2005 a five-judge judicial oversight commission, similar in function to the Superior Council, began conducting investigations of judicial decisions and addressing suspected miscarriages of justice. However, in contrast to the Superior Council, the president appointed members of the commission, which increased executive control over the judiciary and diminished the authority of the Superior Council. Parties to judicial cases could 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 continued in practice to supersede Napoleonic law. 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 could be appealed to a formal court.

Defendants are presumed innocent until proven guilty, but in practice many judges assumed a suspect's guilt, particularly in crimes involving rape or theft. Cases are heard as public trials, and defendants have the right to appeal any decision. Defendants, their lawyers, and judges are permitted by law to question witnesses.

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

The Muslim concept of *dia*, which involves a payment, based on the decision of local leaders, to the family of a murder victim or other victim of a crime, was practiced widely in northern Muslim areas. Non-Muslim groups, who 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 technical committee chaired by a former foreign minister was formed to identify a solution but had not come up with any proposal by year's end.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

Human rights organizations reported that the government held political prisoners and detainees in military and immigration prisons, and that they were denied access to such prisons (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, monitored private mail through the postal service, and monitored private e-mail through the main post office server. Security forces also regularly stopped citizens and extorted money or confiscated belongings. For example, on February 24, the government summarily destroyed the residence and seized the

family goods of former army general Seby Aguid, who had joined a rebel group operating outside of the country.

During the year the government ordered the temporary closure of cellular telephone networks. The military and police officials conducted 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 (see section 1.d.).

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

During the year the country was engulfed by fighting that involved rebel groups, government forces, armed militias, and civilians. Rebel attacks and government counterattacks resulted in hundreds of deaths, thousands of injuries, the displacement of some 110,000 IDPs, and widespread destruction of homes and property during the year. Following a series of attacks by rebels and armed militia, the government in November declared a state of emergency in three eastern provinces that was ongoing at year's end.

Massacres occurred in the Salamat and Goz-Beida regions. The government, Chadian Red Cross, and human rights NGOs reported that 260 people were killed in Salamat in mid-October and 140 in Goz-Beida from November 4 to 7, and that thousands were injured in these episodes. They were committed by armed civilian militias suspected of being made up of Chadian Arabs.

Sudanese militiamen abducted approximately 4,700 refugees from refugee camps in the east on March 17-19 (see section 2.d.).

Security forces killed numerous citizens suspected of collaborating with rebel forces. For example, on March 16, in Bebo, Pen Brahim Moussa Arssimi, the chief commandant of the gendarmerie, killed Sayam N'demra, a farmer, after accusing him of having connections with rebels. There was no action from the government by year's end, although the LTDH reported on the case.

Security force members killed other security force members during the year. For example, in March the remains of Nandigar Mbaïoussoumta, a gendarme in the eastern border town of Adre, were found thrown in a well. Mbaïoussoumta had been accused by other gendarmes of being a rebel sympathizer. The prime suspect, Idriss Adoum Idriss, a chief commandant of the gendarmerie, had not been arrested by year's end.

On April 2, the LTDH reported that soldiers killed seven civilians in Beboro and three civilians in Bandouda, both eastern towns. On April 6, in the eastern town of Betogo, two soldiers reportedly killed Andre Tomboi and Louis Mbatel. The government took no action in either case.

On April 25, security forces arrested, detained without charge, and allegedly tortured Nourène Fadoul, a 17-year-old student from the Tama ethnic group, as a result of an altercation with Zaghawa students at his high school. The other students had accused Fadoul of supporting rebel leader Mahamat Nour, whose United Front for Change is predominantly Tama. There were no charges in the case.

On May 9, gendarmes arrested 12 farmers from the town of Guite who were suspected of being rebel sympathizers. One of the farmers was killed; the others were released in June, according to the Chadian Human Rights League.

Rebel attacks and government counterattacks occurred throughout the year, primarily along the eastern border with Sudan, but also along the southern border with CAR. Interethnic attacks on villages in the eastern part of the country started in late 2005. After a December 2005 attack on Adre by antigovernment rebels--described as equipped and armed by the Sudanese government--the army pulled back to reinforce key border towns, leaving vast areas along the border with Sudan unprotected. Militias burned houses and stole the cattle of unprotected villages, resulting in numerous deaths and the displacement of thousands of persons, including more than 20,000 in Koloy. In April more than 12,000 IDPs arrived at a refugee camp near the town of Goz-Beida.

On April 13, rebels attacked N'Djamena, where they were defeated by government soldiers. The fighting resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths, in addition to injuries, extensive damage to homes and property, and the temporary displacement of hundreds of families. One local hospital reported treating 45 wounded civilians, some as young as five years old.

During November an armed force on horseback--most likely a mixture of Sudanese and Chadian militiamen, or Janjaweed-- attacked 23 villages in the southeast, resulting in the deaths of 200 persons and the displacement of 10,000 persons. The attackers reportedly gouged out the eyes of some of the residents, while others were trapped and died after their homes were set on fire.

Militias also attacked and killed humanitarian workers during the year. In November, near the southeastern town of Koloy, armed men on horseback killed an employee of Doctors Without Borders (MSF), wounded a second MSF employee, and destroyed the MSF clinic and its water supply. Seven captured MSF employees were later released and returned to work in a different location in the country. Several thousand IDPs who had been resident in Koloy were relocated to Adde in the eastern part of the country.

Landmines laid by government, rebel, and foreign forces reportedly resulted in 26 deaths and 60 injuries. A large number of these incidents took place in N'Djamena, most likely the result of unexploded ordinance from the April 13 attack on the city. According to the government's High Commission for Demining, between January and August 2.5 million square meters were cleared and 224 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines and 6,900 pieces of unexploded ordinance were destroyed.

Security forces arrested and detained numerous persons suspected of rebel activity or collaboration with rebels; some were held incommunicado in secret prisons at year's end. The government also arrested military defectors, some of whom had joined rebel groups, and members of their families during the year.

For example, following the April 13 rebel attack on N'Djamena, the government arrested at least 16 high-ranking army officers who reportedly were being held in secret prisons without trial at year's end. Among those detained was Colonel Ismat, the ANS director of analysis. He was released without being charged in October and returned to service. The NGO Human Rights Without Borders, which reported that secret detention centers had been created, appealed to the government to release information on the detainees, but was unable to obtain further information. The NGO held three press conferences to publicize the names of the detainees and draw attention to their arbitrary arrest.

In March soldiers from the Republican Guard arrested and detained Nodjitel Médard, a resident of a suburb of N'Djamena, and accused him of protecting rebels in his house. During the same month the ANS arrested and detained El Hadj Abba Zene, also a civilian resident of an N'Djamena suburb, on the same charge. They were subsequently released without being formally charged.

According to LTDH, on April 14, gendarmes arrested and tortured Brahim Almardi and Bechir Zam-Zam for allegedly collaborating with rebels.

On April 20, the police commandant of Batha arrested and detained Al Hadj Annakour, Mahamat Zeine, Sakaheir, Chous Youssouf, and Bachar Djibrine. They were suspected rebel sympathizers, but were released without being charged.

In May the ANS arrested eight persons suspected of supporting the rebels, including Tadj Hamad Adano, Pierre Marabeye, Todje Issi Albert, Mbainaissem Sylvain, Adoum Bloh Mersia, Ali Amat Mahamat, Djimta Joseph, and Hassan Moksia. All were later released without being charged.

On May 26 police agent Ahamat Moussa Alguisseir arrested, detained, and allegedly tortured Ahmat Mahamat, a trader living in Ati. A businessman, Mahamat was alleged to have provided funds to the rebels. He was subsequently released without being charged.

A number of persons arrested and detained in 2005 were released during the year.

The law prohibits the use of child soldiers; however, there were unconfirmed reports that young males were recruited by security forces during the year. In October the independent press accused the government of using child soldiers and published photos of youths engaged in a military campaign in the southern town of Am Timan. In December 2005 unconfirmed reports of the forced recruitment of male youths circulated after the government began enforcing a curfew during the holidays, in particular of forced recruitment in N'Djamena and Abeche.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

Although the constitution and law provide for freedom of speech and of the press, the government limited these freedoms in practice and intimidated journalists and publishers, who practiced self censorship.

Individuals who publicly criticized the government often faced official 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. A number of private newspapers, many of which were critical of government policies and leaders, were published and circulated freely in the capital. In November, however, the government instituted a state of emergency which included strict press censorship provisions against reporting on the rebels, interethnic conflict, and criticism of the government relative to its handling of internal security.

Due to widespread illiteracy and the relatively high cost of newspapers and television, radio remained the most important medium of mass communication. The government-owned Radiodiffusion Nationale Tchadienne had branches in N'Djamena, Abeche, Moundou, Sahr, and Taya. There were numerous private radio stations that broadcast throughout the country, many of them owned by religious organizations. A new privately owned commercial radio station, Radio N'Gato, began broadcasting in July.

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

The government owned and operated Teletchad, 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. For example, on April 28, security forces arrested radio journalist Tchanguis Vatankah after he signed a press release calling for the postponement of the May 3 election to allow more room for political dialogue (see section 3). Vatankah went on a hunger strike, was held incommunicado until May 16, and was released on May 19. An Iranian citizen, Vatankah said authorities lifted an expulsion threat against him only after he pledged to keep out of politics and to step down as head of the Chadian Union of Private Radios.

On October 27, security forces arrested Notre Temps reporter Evariste Ngaralbaye after he published an article that accused the army of using child soldiers (see section 1.g.). Ngaralbaye was released after four days imprisonment.

In September 2005 an appeals court dismissed the charges against Michael Didama, the editor of independent newspaper Le Temps, Sy Koumbo Singa Gali, the editor of l'Observateur, and Caronde Djamra, a freelance journalist; the three journalists had been arrested earlier in the year for jeopardizing national security and defamation.

In December most independent newspapers began a 15-day strike to protest censorship measures introduced by the government as part of emergency measures imposed after the November rebel attacks in the east. Some radio stations joined the media protest and did not broadcast for three days. The emergency measures included a requirement that all news items be submitted for approval to the HCC before publication or broadcast to prevent interethnic violence. Journalists called the move an over-reaction.

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.

Unlike in the previous year, the government issued warnings but did not close radio stations.

Government controlled media were subject to censorship; however, at times they were critical of the government.

During the year rebel fighters abducted journalists. For example, on April 11, United Front for Change rebels in Mongo seized Eliakim Vanambyl, the editor of radio station FM Liberte. The reasons for the abduction of Vanambyl, who was released on April 17, were unknown.

Internet Freedom

The government did not restrict access to the Internet but reportedly monitored e-mail through the main post office server (see section 1.f.). 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 reports that the government restricted 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; however, they permitted demonstrations they presumed would support the government and its policies.

Throughout the year the police regularly disrupted student gatherings, and police use of excessive force to disperse demonstrators resulted in at least one death.

During a February 4 student demonstration against the lack of teachers in Pala, gendarmes shot and killed 15-year-old Issa Wardougou, who was marching with the other demonstrators toward the governor's office. No action was taken against the security forces involved.

Freedom of Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of association, and the government generally respected this right in practice. In February the government approved the reestablishment of the Chadian Association of Students, an organization that had been banned since 2004.

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. Senior government officials were predominantly Muslim, and some policies favored Islam in practice. For example, the government continued to sponsor annual haj trips to Mecca for certain government officials.

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.

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 (a government-sanctioned, nongovernmental body) and radical elements within the community. During the year there were regular meetings between key religious leaders to discuss peaceful collaboration among groups.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

February demonstrations by Muslims expressing concerns about the depictions of Muhammad in a Danish newspaper resulted in damage to several Christian properties.

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

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2006 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement Within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

Although the law provides for these rights, in practice the government imposed some limits. The Ministry of Territorial Administration required an "authorization for circulation" for foreign travelers, including humanitarian agency personnel intending to visit the eastern part of the country, due to insecurity in the region.

In 2005 the minister of territorial administration banned roadblocks throughout the country; however, elements of the 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. During the year bandits from CAR continued to enter the country and attack citizens, despite an agreement by government officials of both countries to stem insecurity along the border and seize weapons held illegally by militias, herders, and other individuals.

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

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

By year's end there were an estimated 70-110,000 IDPs in the region along the Sudanese border (and more than 230,000 Sudanese refugees). The IDPs were largely the former residents of villages along the eastern border with Sudan, particularly in the southeastern region in the vicinity of Goz-Beida.

In April attacks on the town of Koloy, which was home to approximately 20,000 IDPs, resulted in their displacement to neighboring villages, which sometimes quadrupled the villages' populations overnight. At a refugee camp near the town of Goz-Beida, more than 12,000 persons arrived in April. Some IDPs were forcibly displaced two or three times.

Interethnic violence created additional IDPs. From December 15 to 17, militia on horseback attacked civilians of the Dadjo ethnic group in the southern portion of the border with Sudan. These so-called Janjaweed attacks were widespread throughout the year, but especially in November and December. The victims were mostly non-Arabs of the Dadjo tribe in the southeast, but other non-Arab groups were targeted as well. The armed militia subsequently attacked government officials investigating the situation and refugees from the nearby Goz Amer refugee camp. Violence between Arab and non-Arab ethnic groups spread to the neighboring towns of Habile and Aradif, resulting in as many as 50 deaths. The burning of Dadjo villages near the Goz Amer camp resulted in approximately 600 to 700 new IDPs in the region.

The government publicly acknowledged that its resources were directed toward fighting rebel groups and armed militia and that it could not protect or provide for the growing number of IDPs and refugees in the country. By year's end the UN had withdrawn all but essential employees in the country due to threats of rebel and militia attacks in the east, aggravating the already precarious situation for IDPs and refugees in the country.

Protection of Refugees

The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status and consequently is not in compliance 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 return of persons to a country where they feared persecution, and granted refugee status or asylum. The government also provided protection to certain individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the convention or its protocol. An official national structure, the National Committee for Welcoming and Reinsertion of Refugees, handled foreign refugee matters and returning citizens who had been refugees in other countries.

The government cooperated with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees and asylum seekers. The UNHCR and the government worked together to identify safer sites for refugees from the Darfur region along the Sudanese border. According to the UNHCR, the country hosted approximately 220,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur, 200,000 of whom were located in 12 camps along the eastern border with Sudan. By the end of the year there were an estimated 48,000 refugees from CAR, including some 18,000 who arrived during the second half of the year. There were also small numbers from the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Most of the refugees in the south were living in three camps. As in the east, UNHCR and its UN and NGO partners provided food, shelter, health, educational, agricultural (vegetable gardening), and security support for these refugees. The camps faced serious water and sanitation challenges that were only slowly being addressed because of the limited humanitarian NGO presence.

The government was unable to protect the refugee camps in the east, and there were threats of attacks on camps and relief agencies during the year (see section 4). Refugees from Darfur were regularly targeted throughout the year.

According to an investigation by the NGO Human Rights Watch, SLA commander Khamis Abdullah, a Masalit, gained access to the predominantly Masalit camps of Bredjing and Treguine, facilitated by the Chad National Refugee Commission. He recruited an estimated 4,700 refugees, some voluntarily but most coercively. They were marched to an SLA training camp near the town of Arkoum. NGO observers considered it likely that the government was complicit in this event. There were Janjaweed attacks near Koukou-Angarana camp in May and on the nearby Goz Amer camp in December.

On November 25, rebels briefly held the eastern town of Abeche. In the absence of local authorities, residents attacked the humanitarian infrastructure in Abeche and looted World Food Program and UNHCR warehouses. Rebels took fuel and arms from government deposits. An early December attack on Guereda further north also affected the humanitarian community serving three camps in that area, although humanitarian workers were not directly targeted. These two events were decisive in the UN decision to declare security phase IV in Eastern Chad and remove all but the most essential expatriate and local staff.

Anti-refugee sentiment among citizens living in refugee-affected areas was high due to competition for such local resources as wood, water, and grazing land--and the provision of goods and services to Sudanese refugees that was not available to the local population. There continued to be reports that citizens attacked refugees and destroyed their wells out of frustration and fear of resource shortages.

The UNHCR and its partner organizations expressed concern about the possibility of the militarization of the refugee camps by Sudanese and Chadian rebels, particularly those located close to the border. As a result, the government agreed to move Oure Cassoni and Am Nabak camps to safer locations. However, proposed alternate locations were both insecure and lacking water sources. The government, UNHCR, and NGOs were still looking for suitable relocation sites at year's end. Refugees in at least one of the camps, however, adamantly opposed relocation, preferring to remain close to the border of their traditional homeland.

At year's end UN agencies were still operating in the country's eastern region, although their personnel numbers were greatly reduced. Expatriate staff presence was particularly low, and many functions were being covered by less experienced local staff, especially for UNHCR and UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) programs in more remote areas.

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

On May 3, 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.

Communal elections and legislative elections, originally scheduled for 2005, again were postponed by the government during the year.

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 intimidation by the military of 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 six women among 39 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

Corruption continued to be a serious problem. According to Transparency International's corruption perceptions index for the year, corruption was characterized as "rampant."

In July two cabinet ministers were removed from their positions for misappropriation of government funds after the Ministry of Morality conducted an investigation. It was unclear whether the ministers would go to trial since ministers and members of government are immune from criminal trial unless the National Assembly suspends their immunity, which has never previously occurred (see section 1.e.).

In September the College for the Monitoring and Control of Oil Resources (CCRSP) issued its second report on poverty reduction projects funded with oil revenues. It identified many deficiencies in the execution of projects, including contract delays, nondelivery of goods, poor quality of projects, lack of communication between priority sector ministries and local authorities, and corrupt practices such as double-charging for services. The government had not taken action on deficiencies identified in the CCRSP's first report in 2005.

The law does not provide for public access to government information. The government provided such access to government-employed

journalists, but independent media journalists complained that they were not given sufficient access to government information. In June 2005 the government mandated that the proceedings of some ministerial meetings be broadcast on the radio or published in Info Tchad, a government newspaper. The government's low capacity to store and retrieve information continued to be a problem.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Non-governmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The government obstructed the work of domestic human rights organizations during the year through arrest, detention, and intimidation; 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 LTDH. These and smaller human rights organizations worked together through an umbrella organization, the Association for Human Rights. Their activities included observing government detention practices, assisting individuals who suffered human rights abuses, and holding public conferences and seminars addressing press freedom and arrests of journalists, relocation of residents of local neighborhoods, transparency of oil revenues, disappearances of individuals, and the socio-political situation and its impact on 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.

Gendarmes arrested and allegedly beat a human rights worker during the year (see section 1.c.).

Unidentified assailants and armed bandits attacked numerous NGO employees during the year, resulting in one death. For example, on January 12, armed bandits attacked the Catholic NGO SECADEV in the eastern part of the country and stole a vehicle. In March unidentified assailants in military uniform shot and injured Sylvia Gaya, a foreign employee of UNICEF in Abeche, during a carjacking. A November rebel attack on relief agencies in Abeche resulted in the killing of an employee of Doctors Without Borders (MSF).

Hundreds of aid workers were evacuated from the eastern part of the country due to increased hostilities between military forces and antigovernment rebel groups. Beginning in late November, nearly 500 aid workers were relocated from Abeche, the eastern city that served as a hub for relief agencies in the region, to N'Djamena.

The government allowed access to the eastern region for employees of the International Criminal Court who were investigating charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity in Sudan; however, the government continued to obstruct the work of international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International.

Belgian courts continued their investigation of crimes against humanity allegedly committed by former president Hissein Habre during his rule from 1982 to 1990. In September 2005 a Belgian court announced an indictment of Habre, who was living in self-imposed exile in Senegal. Although the government of Senegal had agreed to an African Union request to prosecute Habre, no action had been taken in the case by year's end.

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

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.

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

There were reports that family members killed women for breaking social taboos. For example, 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, the village leaders can kill her.

The law prohibits the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM); however, FGM was widespread and deeply rooted in tradition. According to a 2004 government report by the National Institute of Statistics, Economic and Demographic Studies, 45 percent of local women had undergone excision. The highest rates of FGM--90 percent or more--were among Arabs, Hadjarai, and Ouaddai. Lower percentages were reported among the Sara (38 percent) and Gorane (2 percent). 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, but 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, and sponsored a public awareness campaign during the year in the south (where FGM is widely practiced) on the health risks of FGM and the fact that the practice is contrary to law.

Although the law prohibits prostitution, pimping, and owning a brothel, prostitution was a problem, particularly in the southern oil-producing region. The law provides for prison terms of two months to two years and a fine of \$100 to \$1,000 (50,000 to 500,000 FCFA) for violations. There were no reported prosecutions during the year.

The law does not prohibit sexual harassment.

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. Illiteracy was estimated at 66 percent for women, compared to 48 percent for men.

While no law addresses polygamy, 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 the marriage be dissolved; however, she must repay the bride price and other expenses related to the marriage. In 2005 polygyny became a controversial issue between Muslim and Christian communities during debate over revision of the family code, which remained pending. Issues involved in code revision were contentious; as a result, the Council of Ministers created a committee to propose compromises on controversial issues, such as polygyny and inheritance.

Children

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

By law education is universal, compulsory, and free from ages five through 12; parents were required to pay tuition to public schools beyond the primary level. During the year free primary school education was offered for the first time since 1973; however, except in some rural schools, parents were required to pay for textbooks. Approximately half of teachers were hired and paid by parent-teacher associations, without government reimbursement. UNICEF reported in 2005 that 46 percent of school-age boys and 33 percent of girls attended primary school. Educational opportunities for girls were limited mainly because of the traditional role of young girls in doing household tasks such as obtaining water and wood. The percentage of girls enrolled in secondary school was extremely low compared with that of boys, primarily because of early marriage.

Child abuse, including abuse of child herders, remained a problem (see section 6.d.).

FGM was commonly practiced on young girls (see section 5, Women).

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 minors (defined as anyone under 18) and provides for imprisonment of six months to two years and a fine of \$100 to \$1,000 (50,000 to 500,000 FCFA). 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.

Trafficking in children was a problem (see section 5, Trafficking).

The law prohibits the use of child soldiers; however, there were reports that young males were recruited by security forces during the year (see section 1.g.).

Child labor remained a serious problem (see section 6.d.).

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons; however, traffickers could be prosecuted under statutes prohibiting kidnapping, 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 sexual exploitation. The majority of victims were trafficked within the country to work as

involuntary domestic servants, herders, or beggars (see section 6.d.). A 2004 NGO survey of child herders who had been returned to their parents indicated that between 1,500 and 2,000 children between six and 17 years of age may have been trafficked. Children from Cameroon and CAR were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to the country's oil-producing regions. Children from the country were trafficked to Cameroon, CAR, and Nigeria.

The law provides penalties of between 10 months' and life imprisonment with hard labor for trafficking violations, and between 10 and 20 years of hard labor in prison for the trafficking of children. No economic or financial aid for victims was available unless a court awarded damages. The Ministry of Justice's child protection department continued to cooperate with UNICEF and NGOs to combat trafficking.

UNICEF reported that 360 child herders were rescued and returned to their communities during the year.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against such persons; however, in practice the government operated few education, employment, or therapy programs for such persons, and no laws mandate that buildings be accessible to persons with disabilities. 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 the disabled.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There are approximately 200 ethnic groups, 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--Arab and Saharan/Sahelian-zone Muslims in the North, Center, and East; and Sudanian-zone 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 it continued to influence government appointments and political alliances (see section 3). Political parties and groups generally had readily identifiable regional or ethnic bases.

In the east, interethnic violence occurred in Guereda, Goz-Beida, and Oum Hadjer during the second half of the year. These clashes were mainly between nomadic and semi-nomadic groups and local sedentary populations. The total number of persons killed and injured in this violence was estimated by the government and by ATPDH as approaching 400 persons.

Clashes between herders and sedentary populations and other interethnic violence, often concerning 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, and the government generally respected this right; however, the authorization of the Ministry of the Interior is required. The ministry can also authorize the immediate administrative dissolution of an association and permit authorities to monitor association funds.

An ordinance requires prior authorization from the Ministry of the 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.

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 are no restrictions on collective bargaining, the law authorizes the government to intervene under certain circumstances. For example, workers for a private cellular telephone company were prevented by the government from starting their strike on the day they had chosen because it coincided with the president's inauguration. There are no export processing zones.

The law recognizes the right to strike, and workers exercised this right in practice. The right to strike is limited in the public sector by a decree

requiring minimum service to be maintained. While the law permits imprisonment with forced labor as punishment for participation in illegal strikes, no such punishment was imposed during the year.

In June the Union Syndicat du Travail (UST), the leading labor union, organized strikes in response to the government's failure to implement a 5 percent increase in civil servant salaries provided for in the 2005 national budget. Local media reported that the strikes were paralyzing basic public services, particularly access to medical care. In mid-June the minister of labor charged that the strikes were a destabilizing influence and called for the UST to reconsider its position. During a July 13 address to the National Assembly, the prime minister stated that the salary increase was a government priority, but that budgetary constraints resulting from military actions against rebels in April and May prevented the government from satisfying UST demands. Following another week of strikes, the UST and the government negotiated a temporary resolution, in which the UST agreed to suspend its activities for two months to allow the government to implement the 5 percent salary increase retroactive to January. The government implemented the 5 percent increase in November, but declined to make it retroactive to January.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, during the year 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 (see section 6.d.). 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

Although the labor code stipulates that the minimum age for employment in the formal sector is 14, 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, was likely to harm the health, safety, or morals of children"; however, in practice child labor, including forced child labor, was a serious problem. According to a 2000 UNICEF study (the most recent available), 65.5 percent of minors worked, including those performing domestic chores for more than four hours per day, those working within the family (herding, microcommerce, etc.), and those who were underage and working for someone outside the family.

An estimated 20 percent of children between the ages of six and 18 worked in abusive, 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 the farm owners.

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 and to bear children while they were still too young to do so safely (see section 5).

The law prohibits the use of child soldiers; however, there were reports during the year that it occurred (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. Reportedly they had no funding during the year 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 worked with UNICEF and other NGOs to increase public awareness of child labor. During the year UNICEF organized workshops in regional towns to share information on the dangers of forced child labor and the benefits of education. The training provided each town with one individual charged with overseeing the continuing sensitization campaign. In 2005 UNICEF developed a program to reduce the prevalence of young girls serving as household domestics. 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 \$56 (28,000 FCFA) per month. 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 2005 the government began for the first time to pay all its employees at least the minimum wage, and government salaries increased overall by 5 percent. However, 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 (see section 2.d.).

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.

During the year oil pipeline workers in the south protested that they had not been properly compensated for overtime work. Their case was adjudicated by the Ministry of Justice, which ruled in their favor in October. The consortium of companies responsible for construction of the pipeline accepted the Ministry of Justice decision and began retroactive payments of more than \$12 million (six billion FCFA).

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.