
CHAD

Republic of Chad

Population: 9.7 million: (5.3 million under 18)

Government armed forces: 25,400

Compulsory Recruitment Age: 20

Voluntary Recruitment Age: 18 (lower with parental consent)

Voting Age: 18

Optional Protocol: ratified 28 August 2002

Treaties ratified (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP I and II, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182, ACRWC

Increased recruitment of children by Chadian armed forces and Chadian and Sudanese armed groups was reported in 2006 and 2007, in particular along Chad's eastern border with Sudan and from its refugee and displaced persons camps. Despite an agreement by the government to facilitate the demobilization of child soldiers, an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 children remained in armed forces and groups in September 2007.

Context

Constitutional changes in June 2005 allowed President Idriss Déby to run for a third term in office. They exacerbated tensions over governance and access to Chad's oil wealth and intensified political and armed resistance to the president.¹ Between 2005 and 2006 the two principal Chadian armed opposition groups were the United Front for Change (Front uni pour le changement, FUC), and the Platform for Change, Unity and Democracy (Socle pour le changement, l'unité et la démocratie, SCUD).² These groups launched several attacks against the government between 2005 and 2006.³ In April 2006 an FUC-led offensive on the capital, N'Djaména, sought to oust President Déby and resulted in hundreds of civilian deaths.⁴ President Déby, of Zaghawa ethnicity, was elected for a third term in office in May 2006. The elections, in which under-age voting was reported, were boycotted by major opposition parties.⁵

In December 2006 FUC leader Mahamat Nour signed a peace accord with the government that extended a general amnesty to all FUC soldiers and called for "the creation of the conditions" for the integration of FUC soldiers into the Chadian National Army (Armée Nationale Tchadienne, ANT).⁶ Following the agreement Nour was appointed minister of defence, and other FUC officials took government posts in March 2007. The government stated that it would not accept child soldiers from the FUC in the ANT.⁷

From 2006, three, at times overlapping, dimensions of conflict contributed to an emerging humanitarian and human rights crisis in eastern Chad and along the border with Sudan. These were internal armed conflict between government forces and opposition groups, inter communal and ethnically based violence in the east, and the Darfur conflict and tensions between Chad and Sudan along their common border, which led to a proliferation of arms and cross-border banditry. In addition, the Darfur conflict enabled Chadian armed opposition groups to use Sudan as a base for attacks against Chadian government forces, and Sudanese armed opposition groups, including the Justice and Equality Movement and the Sudanese Liberation Army (SLA), to seek refuge in eastern Chad.⁸ Increasingly frequent attacks by Sudanese government-backed Janjaweed militias on eastern Chadian villages resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians in late 2006.⁹ In April 2007, after attacks, allegedly by Janjaweed, on their villages, 9,000 Chadians moved to Habile camp, administered by the UN refugee agency UNHCR, for internally displaced persons (IDPs).¹⁰

Intercommunal violence between the Zaghawa and Tama ethnic groups in north-eastern Chad escalated during the second half of 2006. Fuelled by clan disputes and competition for water and grazing lands, hostilities were additionally embedded in and informed by national political dynamics. Dozens of Tama civilians were killed and thousands were displaced in attacks on Tama villages between August and November 2006. The attacks were reportedly carried out by Zaghawa militias (loyal to the president) backed by the Chadian government.¹¹ By January 2007 up to 1,500 FUC soldiers, mostly of Tama ethnicity, had taken up positions in and around Guéréda in north-eastern Chad, prompting a renewed spate of ethnic violence between the Tama and Zaghawa groups.¹²

In October 2007 a peace accord was signed in Libya between the Chadian government and four armed opposition groups, which included two factions of the Union of Forces for Democracy and Development (Union des forces pour la démocratie et le développement, UFDD), the Chadian National Concord (Concorde nationale tchadienne, CNT), and the Rally of Forces for Change (Rassemblement des forces pour le changement, RFC), a SCUD splinter group. The agreement called for an immediate ceasefire, the integration of opposition fighters into the national army and the start of a process to integrate the parties into the government.¹³ However, heavy fighting between the ANT and these groups resumed in eastern Chad in late 2007.¹⁴

ANT forces regularly conducted cross-border raids into the Central African Republic (CAR), attacking CAR armed opposition groups, looting

villages and raping women and girls. Chadian anti-Déby groups based themselves in the CAR, and Chadian bandits were involved in criminal groups attacking civilians in the northern CAR.¹⁵ Reports indicated that children in the CAR were forcibly recruited by Chadian armed groups and that the CAR armed groups recruited Chadian and Sudanese children.¹⁶

By late 2007 there were approximately 240,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad, almost all located in the east. Of these, 60 per cent were estimated to be under 18. There were approximately 45,000 refugees from the CAR in eastern Chad and approximately 180,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chad, the vast majority of whom were also located in the east. It was estimated that school-age children constituted approximately 30 per cent of the IDP population in eastern Chad.¹⁷

Government

National recruitment legislation and practice

On ratification of the Optional Protocol in 2002 Chad declared that the minimum age for recruitment into the Chadian armed forces was 18. It stated that enlistment was voluntary, and could take place only on a fully informed basis.¹⁸ The 1996 constitution stated that the defence of the country and of national territorial integrity was the duty of every citizen, and that military service was compulsory (Article 51). A national law adopted in January 1991 on the reorganization of the armed forces stated that the minimum age of recruitment into the ANT was 18, and that the minimum age for conscription was 20.¹⁹ However, the 1992 General Statute of the Army provided that a person under the age of 18 could be enrolled with the consent of a parent or guardian.²⁰ The Labour Code prohibited children under the age of 18 from undertaking any work which by its nature was likely to cause harm to the health, safety or morals of children.²¹

In November 2006 the minister of defence ordered the military leadership not to recruit children, and a memorandum was issued by the ministry stating that the recruitment of children below the age of 18 was prohibited. In February 2007 the government acknowledged that children had been associated with armed groups and forces in Chad and that the ANT might have recruited and used children.²² Following the peace agreement with the FUC, the ANT stated that it would not accept under-age FUC soldiers into its ranks.

Child recruitment and deployment

Children were known to have been recruited and used in the ANT as of mid-2007. One official told Human Rights Watch that boys between the ages

of 12 and 15 were deployed to make tea, find water, collect firewood and mind goats. Another senior ANT official stated that “child soldiers are ideal because they don’t complain, they don’t expect to be paid, and if you tell them to kill, they kill”. Recruitment of children between January 2006 and July 2007 into the ANT took place in the Salamat and Ouddai regions in the east, and in the Wadi Fira region in the north-east. Civilians were reportedly recruited en masse in late 2006 at a time of ANT losses, and included children as young as 14, who were rapidly organized into units to defend the capital, and issued uniforms and weapons. The ANT reportedly held captured armed opposition-group child soldiers as young as 13 in the same facilities as adult soldiers.²³

Militias incorporated into the ANT

In late 2006 the government incorporated village-level and ethnically based self-defence militias, composed mainly of the Dadjo clan group, into the ANT in areas where it was militarily weak, such as the Dar Sila area in south-eastern Chad. This resulted in widespread child recruitment. An agreement between the Dadjos and the Zaghawas in November 2006 stipulated that the Dadjos would provide young people in exchange for arms and training. Soldiers who appeared to be under 18 were reported in self-defence forces in Gourgour, Borot, Koloy, Modoyna, Tiero and Dogdore.²⁴

Armed groups

United Front for Change (FUC)

The FUC, concentrated in north-eastern Chad, recruited children as young as 12 on a large scale before its integration into the ANT in late 2006. More than 25 per cent of the FUC was estimated to be made up of children, including children under 15. There were confirmed reports that between January 2006 and May 2007 the FUC abducted children in the Guéréda area on their way to school or the market to strengthen their forces.²⁵ Children reportedly joined up to avenge killings of family members by Zaghawa militias, or to protect themselves in a context of armed violence and insecurity. While girls were not recruited in large numbers, the 3rd Brigade was composed of 52 women and girls. Some female soldiers had reportedly taken part in operations against ANT forces in late 2006. Girl members of the brigade said they had enlisted after being raped or to seek protection from rape by Zaghawa militias. Children were also forcibly recruited by the FUC from refugee camps in Darfur.²⁶

Following the 2006 peace agreement, FUC leader Mahamad Nour became minister of defence, and in March 2007 the first FUC officials accepted positions in the Chadian government.²⁷ By October 2007 FUC troops operating outside

ANT control abandoned their positions in eastern Chad and returned to Darfur.²⁸

Chadian-backed Sudanese armed opposition groups

Massive recruitment took place among the refugee and IDP communities in eastern Chad by Sudanese armed opposition groups in March and April 2006. Recruitment was at times carried out forcibly, with reports of torture as a coercive means. In July 2007 the UN reported that the Chadian government alleged that more than 1,000 children had been recruited by the SLA in refugee camps in the east.²⁹ In March 2006 the G-19 faction of the SLA, working in co-operation with Chadian government officials, recruited, some forcibly, 4,700 Sudanese refugees, including hundreds of children, from the Breidjing and Treguine UN-supervised refugee camps 50 km west of Adré, in eastern Chad.³⁰ Most of these people subsequently returned to the camps. In 2006, Sudanese children were recruited from the Djabal and Goz Amir refugee camps in eastern Chad, where teachers were among the recruiters.³¹ In January 2007, 39 children were recruited from the Breidjing refugee camp by Sudanese armed opposition groups.³²

Other armed groups

Unidentified armed groups increasingly recruited children in the east during 2006 and 2007. They were known to attract new members by offering financial compensation on joining as well as monthly pay.³³ In February 2007 the government alleged that there were hundreds of children in the UFDD and claimed that a significant proportion of UFDD prisoners captured during combat in Abeche in November 2006 were children.³⁴

Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR)

In September 2007 an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 children, used in combat and non-combat roles, were identified by the UN as needing DDR from armed forces and groups.³⁵ The government and UNICEF signed an agreement on 9 May 2007 to begin the demobilization of children from the ANT and integrated FUC forces. By July 2007, 425 boys – ex-FUC members – had been released from government military installations.³⁶ However, despite promises from the government, UNICEF had by July been granted access to only one government military installation, at Mongo in south central Chad, where they identified 383 child soldiers, some as young as eight, in May 2007. Evidence suggested that ANT personnel were concealing children to prevent them from registering for demobilization.³⁷ Children who were demobilized could not be reunited with their families because of ongoing hostilities.³⁸

In May 2007 the UNHCR in Abeche organized a series of three refugee-protection workshops for local authorities, with specific reference to the need to prevent child recruitment in the east. As of July 2007 a strategy on prevention, release and reintegration of children associated with armed forces and groups was being developed by a consortium of government ministries, UN agencies and local NGOs.³⁹

Developments

In May 2006 the UN Emergency Relief Co-ordinator expressed serious concern over recruitment in and around refugee camps and IDP sites, and the increasing militarization of refugee camps.⁴⁰ In September 2007 the UN Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict expressed grave concern over the recruitment and use of children by armed groups and local commanders of the ANT; strongly condemned the continuous recruitment and use of children by armed groups, in particular the SLA, the Sudanese rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the UFDD; and urged the government to criminalize the unlawful recruitment and use of children in armed conflict.⁴¹ Chad was listed as a situation of concern in the UN Secretary-General's October 2006 and December 2007 Reports on Children and Armed Conflict.⁴²

On 25 September 2007 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1778 (2007) concerning the CAR and Chad. Its provisions established the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT), a “multidimensional presence” of UN and EU personnel, comprising police, military liaison officers and civilian personnel. Its mandate authorized the protection of civilians in danger, particularly refugees and internally displaced persons, and the facilitation of humanitarian aid and movement of humanitarian personnel in the north-eastern CAR and eastern Chad.⁴³ Up to 4,000 UN-mandated EU troops were expected to be deployed to Chad by early 2008.⁴⁴

At a February 2007 ministerial meeting in Paris, Chad and 58 other states endorsed the Paris Commitments to protect children from unlawful recruitment or use by armed forces or armed groups and the Paris Principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The document reaffirmed international standards and operational principles for protecting and assisting child soldiers and followed a wide-ranging global consultation jointly sponsored by the French government and UNICEF.

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- 27 Ibid.
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- 30 HRW, *Violence beyond Borders: The Human Rights Crisis in Eastern Chad*, June 2006.
- 31 Report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict, UN Doc. A/61/529-S/2006/826, 26 October 2006.
- 32 Report of the Secretary-General on children in armed conflict, UN Doc. A/62/609-S/2007/757, 21 December 2007.
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- 38 Confidential sources, February 2008.
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- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Security Council Working Group, 24 September 2007, above note 35.
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