

Annex 51/3

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FREEDOM IN THE WORLD

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Chad

Chad | Freedom in the World 2012

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OVERVIEW:

In April 2011, longtime president Idriss D. by was reelected with 89 percent of the vote, in an election that was boycotted by the three main opposition candidates. In February, D. by's Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party had retained its absolute majority in the National Assembly amid allegations of fraud by the opposition. The security situation improved during the year, although bandit attacks continued throughout the country.

Since gaining independence from France in 1960, Chad has been beset by civil conflict and rebellions. Hissene Habre seized control in 1982 and led a one-party dictatorship characterized by widespread atrocities against individuals and ethnic groups that were perceived as threats to the regime. In 1989, Idriss D. by, a military commander, launched a rebellion against Habre from Sudan. With support from Libya and no opposition from French troops stationed in Chad, D. by overthrew Habre in 1990.

D. by won a presidential election held under a new constitution in 1996 despite the ongoing threat of rebel violence. In 1997 legislative elections, his Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS) party won 65 of the 125 seats. International observers charged that both elections were marred by irregularities.

D. by was reelected in 2001, and the six opposition candidates were briefly detained for alleging that the election results were fraudulent. The MPS secured 113 seats in the enlarged, 155-seat National Assembly during the 2002 legislative elections, which were boycotted by several opposition parties. Voters approved the elimination of presidential term limits in a 2005 constitutional referendum, though the balloting was marred by irregularities and the government cracked down on the media during the campaign.

Security forces, assisted by French intelligence and air support, repelled an April 2006 attack on N'Djamena by the United Front for Change (FUC) rebel group. The May presidential election was then held on schedule despite an opposition boycott, and D. by secured a third term. The military, again with French support, launched a new assault on eastern-based rebel forces in September, and in November the government declared a six-month state of emergency for the capital and most of the east, including a ban on media coverage of sensitive issues. In early February 2008, a formation of some 2,000 rebel fighters attacked the capital. Although the two sides soon agreed on a ceasefire and the rebels withdrew, D. by declared another state of emergency, suspending due process rights and tightening already harsh media restrictions. Human rights groups accused the regime of extrajudicial detention and killing of suspected rebels, their supporters, and members of the Goran ethnic group, some of whom were involved in the rebel assault. The state of emergency was lifted on March 15, but fighting continued in the east during the year.

D. by and Sudanese president Omar al-Bashir had traded accusations for several years over support for rebels on each other's territory. In May 2009, the Chadian and Sudanese governments signed the latest of several accords aimed at normalizing relations. However, shortly thereafter, the Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) — an alliance of eight rebel groups that had formed in January — launched an attack on Chad from its base in Sudan's war-torn western Darfur region. Violence along the border increased over the subsequent months, and in July Chadian planes bombed targets in Darfur.

In April 2010, the government clashed with the rebel Popular Front for National Resistance near Tissi, reportedly killing more than 100 fighters. In May, former defense minister Mahamat Nouri announced the formation of a new rebel grouping, the National Alliance for Democratic Change. Members included dissidents from three groups that belonged to the UFR.

Relations between Sudan and Chad improved significantly in 2010, starting with a January agreement that led to a series of presidential visits. In February, the governments established a joint patrol of 3,000 troops along the border. Authorities reopened the border to civilian traffic in April after it had been closed for seven years. In May, Chad prohibited the head of a leading Darfur rebel group, the Justice and Equality Movement, from returning to Sudan. Meanwhile, the Sudanese authorities pressured Chadian rebel groups to leave Sudanese territory. In October, a reported 171 UFR fighters returned to Chad from Darfur.

After years of regular fighting in the region, Chad by the end of 2011 was home to some 130,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and an estimated 363,000 refugees from Darfur and the Central African Republic, according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) had been formed in 2007 to help care for and protect these civilians. Its original mandate was set to expire in May 2010, but was renewed until December 31. In February 2010, D. by requested that UN troops leave Chad, while humanitarian groups expressed concern about increased insecurity if the force were to withdraw. By December, MINURCAT had withdrawn all of its troops. The security situation in 2011 improved significantly, despite bandit attacks across the country. The UNHCR reported that 50,000 IDPs had returned to their areas of origin in 2011.

After years of delay, parliamentary elections were held in February 2011, the first in which opposition parties participated. In the enlarged, 188-seat National Assembly, D. by's MPS party won 117 seats, and 14 more seats went to D. by's allies, securing an absolute majority for the president. The most successful opposition party won only 10 seats. Citing irregularities before and during the parliamentary election, the three main opposition candidates boycotted the presidential poll in April, which D. by won with 89 percent of the vote. The Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) reported voter participation for the election at 64 percent, though African Union observers said the turnout was much lower.

In June, the rebel group Popular Front for Reconstruction (FPR) signed a peace agreement with the government. Also that month, the government signed an action

plan with the United Nations to end the use of child soldiers by the country's security forces. Chad was one of six nations listed as a violator by the UN secretary general in an annual report on children and armed conflict.

POLITICAL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES:

Chad is not an electoral democracy. The country has never experienced a free and fair transfer of power through elections. The president is elected for five-year terms, and a 2005 constitutional amendment abolished term limits. The executive branch dominates the judicial and legislative branches, and the president appoints the prime minister. The unicameral National Assembly consists of 188 members elected for four-year terms.

The legislative elections due in 2006 had been repeatedly postponed due to insufficient equipment and staffing, and delays in voter registration. In September 2010, they were pushed back from November of that year, and finally took place in February 2011. The European Union praised the peaceful and fair conduct of the elections, despite some logistical problems. However, the opposition claimed that irregularities occurred both before the vote¹ due to the government's media dominance and the use of state resources to benefit the ruling party² and during the elections, including irregularities with electoral rolls and voter registration cards. They also pointed to CENI's official results page, which showed irregularities. A request by opposition parties to reprint voter registration cards was rejected.

There are more than 70 political parties, although a number were created by the government to divide the opposition. Only the ruling MPS has significant influence. Despite rivalries within D. by's northeastern Zaghawa ethnic group, members of that and other northern ethnic groups continue to control Chad's political and economic systems, causing resentment among the country's more than 200 other ethnic groups.

Corruption is rampant within D. by's inner circle. Despite becoming an oil producer in 2003, Chad remains one of the world's poorest nations. Weaknesses in revenue management and oversight facilitate the diversion of oil revenues from national development projects to private interests and growing military expenditures. Chad was ranked 168 out of 183 countries surveyed in Transparency International's 2011 Corruption Perceptions Index.

The constitution provides for freedom of the press and expression. However, both are severely restricted, and self-censorship is common. Broadcast media are controlled by the state. The High Council of Communication (HCC) exerts control over most radio content, and while there are roughly a dozen private stations, they face high licensing fees and the threat of closure for critical coverage. In 2008, the HCC banned reporting on the activities of rebels or any other information that could harm national unity. Radio is the most important means of mass communication, but the HCC has put the price for commercial broadcast channels to a prohibitively high \$11,000 per year. A small number of private newspapers have circulated in the capital, and internet access is not restricted, but the reach of both print and online media is limited by poverty, illiteracy, and inadequate infrastructure. In August 2010, the National Assembly passed a media bill that eliminated imprisonment as a punishment for libel, slander, or insulting the president, but created sentences of heavy fines or prison for inciting racial and ethnic hatred and inciting violence.³

Although Chad is a secular state, religion is a divisive force. Muslims, who make up slightly more than half of the population, hold a disproportionately large number of senior government posts, and some policies favor Islam in practice. At the same time, the authorities have banned Muslim groups that are seen as promoting violence. The government does not restrict academic freedom, but funds meant for the education system have reportedly been lost to corruption. In November 2011, University of NDjamena students protesting failed payment of their grants clashed with police in the capital, resulting in 150 arrests and injuries to 9 officers.

Despite the constitutional guarantee of free assembly, the authorities ban demonstrations by groups thought to be critical of the government. In September 2011, Amnesty International issued a report condemning the arrest of two students for allegedly planning pro-reform protests and demanding investigation into allegations of torture during their time in custody. The constitution guarantees the rights to strike and unionize, but a 2007 law imposed new limits on public-sector workers' right to strike. Despite those limits, public-sector workers went on strike for three weeks in October and November 2011, culminating in a deal with the government that significantly increased their wages.

The rule of law and the judicial system remain weak, and the courts are heavily influenced by the political leadership, with the president naming key judicial officials. Civilian leaders do not maintain effective control of the security forces, which routinely ignore constitutional protections regarding search, seizure, and detention. Human rights groups credibly accuse the security forces and rebel groups of killing and torturing with impunity. Overcrowding, disease, and malnutrition make prison conditions harsh, and many inmates are held for years without charge.

Clashes are common between Christian farmers of the various southern ethnic groups and Muslim Arab groups living largely in the north. Turmoil linked to ethnic and religious differences is exacerbated by clan rivalries and external interference along the insecure borders. Communal tensions in eastern Chad have worsened due to the proliferation of small arms and ongoing disputes over the use of land and water resources.

The government restricts the movement of citizens within the country. Insecurity has severely hindered the activities of humanitarian organizations in recent years. Despite relative stability during 2011, recurrent bandit attacks on humanitarian workers make access to the population difficult.

Chadian women face widespread discrimination and violence. Twelve of the 188 National Assembly members, or about 12 percent, are women. Female genital mutilation is illegal, but routinely practiced by several ethnic groups. Chad is a source, transit, and destination country for child trafficking, and the government has not made significant efforts to eliminate the problem. The U.S. State Department again placed Chad on the Tier 2 Watch List in its 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report.

2012 SCCFES

STATUS

Not Free

FREEDOM RATING

6.5

CIVIL LIBERTIES

6

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