

CHAD

A Hereditary Repression

Credit: André Kodmadjingar (VOA) - Protests in N'Djamena, Chad, 22 January 2018.jpg Wikimedia Commons



AGIR ENSEMBLE
POUR LES DROITS HUMAINS



TOURNONS LA PAGE
Pour l'alternance démocratique
en Afrique



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Presentation of the authors



Tournons La Page (TLP) is an international movement, bringing together more than 230 African civil society organisations supported by European organisations, whose objective is the promotion of democratic change and good governance in Africa and elsewhere. Created in 2014, the member organisations of Tournons La Page include coalitions from 10 African countries (Burundi, Cameroon, Chad, Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Niger and Togo).

In **Chad**, the Tournons La Page coalition is made up of 14 organisations, movements and activists (journalists, singers and bloggers), who advocate for the promotion of citizen participation, civic engagement, transparency and democracy in the country. It was officially launched in 2017.



The mission of **Agir ensemble pour les droits humains** is to defend and promote the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people throughout the world. To this end, within the framework of long-term partnerships, its teams support the emergence and strengthening of small civil society organisations involved with communities on the ground. Its expertise and support actions contribute to the consolidation of their capacities, promote their autonomy and support networking.

Agir ensemble is committed to protecting human rights defenders that are at risk, denouncing human rights violations and conducting advocacy actions in cooperation with local civil society actors in order to support them in this struggle at both national and international levels.

List of acronyms

CAT	Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CENI	Independent National Electoral Commission
CMT	Conseil Militaire de Transition (executive body set up following the coup)
CNT	Conseil National de Transition (legislative body set up following the coup)
CTDDH	Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights
DUDH	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
FACT	Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad
GMIP	Groupement Mobile d'Intervention de la Police
MNCT	Mouvement National pour le Changement au Tchad (opposition political party)
MPS	Mouvement Patriotique du Salut (political party of Idriss DÉBY ITNO)
ONG	Non-Governmental Organisation
ONIPED	National Independent Observatory for Monitoring Electoral Processes and Democracy
ONU	United Nations
PIDCP	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
TLP	Tournons La Page
TLP-Tchad	National Coalition of Tournons La Page au Tchad
UA	African Union
UST	Union des Syndicats du Tchad

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Executive summary

From the 1990 coup d'état to 2021, Chad was ruled with an iron fist by Idriss DÉBY ITNO, who won contested elections in 1996, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016 and 2021. In the run-up to the last elections, large-scale demonstrations were organised by civil society organisations and opposition political parties to denounce the 30-year authoritarian rule of the president. These demonstrations were severely repressed by the security forces.

On 20 April 2021, the day after the announcement of his sixth presidential victory, Idriss DÉBY ITNO was killed in a clash with the rebels of the Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad (FACT). His son, Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY, known as Kaka, then took power by force, announcing the suspension of the Constitution and state institutions for a transitional period of 18 months. New demonstrations opposed this coup and were violently repressed. **In total, between 6 February and 11 October 2021, Tournons La Page counts at least 20 deaths, 152 injuries and 849 arrests.** Imprisoned demonstrators are held in deplorable conditions and are often subjected to acts of torture.

To the best of our knowledge, all the violence documented by this report remains unpunished to this day and repression, human rights defenders continue to be subjected to threats and harassment.

The members of the Tournons La Page Tchad movement demand a return to constitutional order as soon as possible, with the organisation of free and transparent elections, the opening of investigations into the violations committed and the guarantee of the opening of civic space so that the Chadian people can finally, and for the first time since independence, undergo a peaceful and democratic transition of power.

Methodology

This report, entitled «*Chad: A Hereditary Repression*», is the result of a collaborative effort between the international secretariat of Tournons La Page (TLP), Agir ensemble pour les droits humains and the Tournons La Page Chad (TLP-Tchad) coalition of Chadian civil society organisations. Through its members, TLP has collected information, testimonies, statements and images on human rights violations in the country since the 2021 presidential campaign.

One of the objectives of this investigation is to document the number of civilians killed, injured, arbitrarily arrested or detained in Chad since the beginning of the 2021 electoral campaign, which has been particularly violent. This meticulous documentation highlights the ongoing state violence despite the transfer of presidential power from the father (Idriss DÉBY ITNO) to the son (Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY).

The aim of this work is to shed light on the course of events and the conditions in which the violence was committed. Interviews were conducted with demonstrators, violence witnesses, members of the political opposition, doctors and journalists.

Finally, through the analysis of press articles and reports from other civil society organisations, cross-checking and verification of information enabled the first-hand information gathered by the TLP-Tchad team to be completed and consolidated.

The report does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of the violations committed, but rather to demonstrate the scale and system behind the authorities' repression of the civilian population in the context of a coup. To this end, it reports, in chronological order, using a variety of evidence, an array of human rights violations committed during the year 2021.



Context

The Republic of Chad in figures and data (2018) :

- Capital : N'Djamena
- Surface area: 1.284 million km²
- 6 border countries: Libya, Sudan, Central African Republic, Cameroon, Nigeria and Niger
- Population: 16.43 million
- About a hundred ethnic groups including Arabs, Sara, Baguirmien, Peul, Hadjeraï, Kanembou, Kim, Kotoko, Massa, Moundang, Ngambai, Toubou, Zaghawa
- Religions: Islam (55% of the population), Christianity (35%), traditional religions (10%)
- Median age: 16.6 years
- Chad's economy is mainly based on agriculture, livestock breeding and oil exploitation
- 42% of the population lives below the poverty line
- 187th out of 189 countries in terms of the Human Development Index
- The literacy rate is 48% for men and 32% for women

On 20 April 2021, the day after the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) announced his re-election for a sixth term, Idriss DÉBY ITNO, who had been in power for more than thirty years, died. He reportedly died of wounds sustained during fighting between the Chadian army and the rebel group Front pour l'Alternance et la Concorde au Tchad (FACT), which had launched an offensive from Libya towards the capital N'Djamena.

On the same day, although the Chadian Constitution provides procedures to be followed in the event of the death of the head of state, Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY, son of the late president and, until then, commander of the presidential guard, carried out a coup d'état, suspended the government and the National Assembly and set up the Military Transitional Council (CMT). A Transitional Charter has temporarily replaced the Constitution and provides for the implementation of a peaceful transition of limited duration (18 months), renewable once, aimed at including the different political movements and civil society with the declared objective of enabling the organisation of free and transparent elections and the return to democratic institutions as soon as possible.



On 26 April 2021, the CMT appointed a civilian Prime Minister, Albert PAHIMI PADACKÉ, who was a candidate in the 2021 presidential election and had already held this position from March 2016 to May 2018. The Transitional Government, appointed on 2 May 2021, is composed of 40 ministers and secretaries of state, including 9 women and 10 members from the opposition. In accordance with the Transitional Charter, a National Transitional Council (NTC), composed of 93 members appointed by the CMT, will exercise the legislative function until the installation of an elected parliament after the 18 months of transition. An ad-hoc committee was set up on 11 June 2021 to appoint the members of the CNT. On 24 September 2021, Decree No. 502/PCMT/2021 appointing the members of the National Transitional Council was published. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the people named are members of or close to the Patriotic Salvation Movement, initially a military movement, founded in 1990 by Idriss DÉBY ITNO and which he led until his death.

Legal framework

Article 81 of the 2018 Chadian Constitution stipulates that ‘in the event of the Presidency of the Republic becoming vacant for any reason whatsoever or of a definitive impediment established by the Supreme Court to which the Government has referred the matter and which rules by an absolute majority of its members, the powers of the President of the Republic, with the exception of the powers provided for in Articles 85, 88, 95 and 96, **shall be exercised provisionally by the President of the National Assembly and, in the event of the latter’s impediment, by the First Vice-President.**

In all cases, **new presidential elections shall be held at least forty-five (45) days and at most ninety (90) days** after the vacancy has occurred.

Following the death of President Idriss DÉBY ITNO on 20 April 2021, the President of the National Assembly should have acted as interim President and organised elections before 19 July 2021. But on the very day of his father’s death, Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY dissolved the government and the National Assembly and announced a transition period of 18 months. The seizure of power by the son of the late president can therefore be qualified as a coup d’état. However, the members of the international community mostly turned a blind eye. The only public reaction came from the European Parliament on 20 May 2021, which *‘condemns the military takeover of power by the Transitional Military Council on 20 April 2021, the subsequent suspension of the Chadian constitution and the dissolution of the government; rejects the establishment by the Transitional Military Council of a charter that has not been subject to democratic consultation’*¹.

Despite the suspension of the Constitution by the Transitional Charter, the Chadian state remains subject to the various international instruments previously ratified. Chad has ratified all the major human rights conventions and covenants, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (African Charter) and has signed the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT).



Idriss DÉBY ITNO (the father)



Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY (the son)

¹ «European Parliament resolution on the situation in Chad, European Parliament. Published 20 May 2021. https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/RC-9-2021-0290_FR.html

Credits : Rama - Idriss Déby at the 6th World Water Forum- Idriss_Deby_Itno_IMG_3730.jpg - Wikimedia Commons
Credits : Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY - <https://mondafrique.com/>

Within the framework of these tools and the Transition Charter, the fundamental rights of the population are guaranteed, including:

The right to life and dignity of the human person

The article of 8th the Chad Transitional Charter states that *«the human person is inviolable. He or she has the right to respect for his or her life, physical and moral integrity, personal identity and the protection of the privacy of his or her private and family life».*

Article 3 of the UDHR states that *«everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person».* The right to life is the natural, inalienable and unconditional right of every human being to be protected against arbitrary execution.

In the same vein, Article 4 of the African Charter states that *«The human person is inviolable. Every human being has the right to respect for his life and the physical and moral integrity of his person: no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of this right».*

Personal injury

Offence against the person refers to any offence that has the purpose or effect of violating the physical or psychological integrity of another person. Articles 7 of the ICCPR, 5 of the UDHR and 5 of the African Charter thus prohibit torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. The latter constitute any measure or punishment that causes physical or psychological suffering to another person, aimed at humiliating him or her and affecting his or her dignity.

Article 2.2 of the CAT states that *«no exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture».*

The right to demonstrate and the prohibition of arbitrary arrest and detention

Article 33 of the Transitional Charter states that *«freedom of association, assembly, press and publication are guaranteed. [...]»*

Article 11 of the same Charter states that *«[...] arbitrary arrest and detention are prohibited by law».*

Article 9 of the ICCPR prohibits arbitrary arrest or detention. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention considers detention to be arbitrary when it is manifestly impossible to invoke a legal basis justifying the deprivation of liberty, when the deprivation of liberty results from the exercise of a right or freedom, or in the case of a total or partial failure to comply with international standards relating to the right to a fair trial.

Electoral processes gone awry

Idriss DÉBY ITNO came to power in a coup d'état in December by 1990 overthrowing President Hissène HABRÉ, and had a new constitution voted in April 1996, under which he was elected three months later in the first multiparty elections in the country. These elections were contested and the Constitutional Court reduced the score announced by the Independent National Electoral Commission (CENI) in favour of the new president from 47.86% to 43.80%.

Idriss DÉBY ITNO was re-elected in 2001 in the first round of elections with 63.19% of the vote, despite there being many incidents reported and denounced by opposition parties and by ONIPED (Observatoire National Indépendant de Suivi des Processus Electoraux et de la Démocratie), a collective of human rights defenders and the Union des Syndicats du Tchad (UST).

As the 1996 Constitution limited the number of presidential terms to two, Idriss DÉBY ITNO had a new Constitution voted in 2005 which removed this limit and allowed him to be a presidential candidate again. He was elected in the first round of the 2006 election with 64.67% of the votes for a third term under this new Constitution, after his main opponents decided to boycott the election, facing only four other candidates more or less allied to his party already in power.

Despite an agreement signed in 2007 with the opposition political parties initiating a democratisation process, the opponents again called for a boycott of the 2011 elections, which they described as an «electoral masquerade», claiming that the polls were marred by fraud and irregularities. Idriss DÉBY ITNO will nevertheless be elected for a fourth term in the first round with 88.66% of the votes ahead of two other candidates including his Minister of Agriculture.

The 2016 elections were similar to the previous ones in terms of suspected fraud, but the government innovated in its repression by cutting off the internet for two days and prohibiting the international media from following the elections.

These internet blackouts are still very recurrent to this day, during each episode of political or social protest. In April 2021, Amnesty International estimated that Chad had accumulated almost two and a half years of internet blackouts since the 2016 elections². After being elected in the first round for a fifth term with 59.92% of the votes, Idriss DÉBY ITNO proclaimed a new Constitution in 2018 – voted in by the Parliament and not by referendum, which provides for an increase in the presidential term from 5 to 6 years renewable once.

At the age of 69, Idriss DÉBY ITNO was invested by his party as a candidate for a sixth term in February 2021. For this new election, 17 candidacies were submitted but only 10 were retained by the Constitutional Court.

***AT THE AGE OF 69,
IDRISS DÉBY ITNO
WAS INVESTED BY
HIS PARTY AS A
CANDIDATE FOR
A SIXTH TERM IN
FEBRUARY 2021***

² «Chad. Internet cuts hinder freedom of expression», Amnesty International. Published 9 April 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2021/04/tchad-les-coupures-internet-une-entrave-la-liberte-d-expression/>

Of the ten authorised candidates, only seven remained in the race until the vote. The three others, Saleh KEBZABO, Ngarleji YORONGAR and Théophile BONGORO withdrew, denouncing a new «electoral masquerade» and «an obvious militarisation of the political climate»³. The latter were already candidates in 1996 and 2001. The supporters of the boycott, supported by other political leaders whose candidacy was not retained such as Succès MASRA (from the party Les Transformateurs), denounce the lack of transparency of the process and maintain that «the conditions are not met to ensure a credible and transparent election».

Opposition and civil society leaders then carried out awareness-raising and mobilisation tours for an active boycott of the 11 April 2021 elections. Marches were organised every Saturday under the slogan: «2021 A year of change».

These were immediately banned and violently dispersed by the security forces. According to witnesses interviewed by Human Rights Watch, «security forces beat demonstrators with whips, sticks, and batons,»⁴ an excessive use of force against peaceful protesters. The Defense and Security Forces also surrounded the headquarters of political parties and civil society organisations as well as the homes of leaders at the slightest threat of a gathering.

...a new «electoral masquerade» and «an obvious militarisation of the political climate»

On 28 February 2021, the home of Yaya DILLO, a presidential candidate, was the scene of a joint police and army raid. One of the opponent's 11-year-old sons and his 80-year-old mother were reportedly killed and five others were seriously injured. The Chadian Minister of Justice denies that armed men fired on the Defence and Security Forces as they arrived, killing two of them. He also denies the death of the son of the opponent.

Yaya DILLO, who was exfiltrated by relatives, believes that the authorities and the president have «added an argument that takes away all his legitimacy and credibility to lead this country. They are using army tanks - sometimes provided by the country's partners in the fight against terrorism in the Sahel - to seize power and to kill his own people, to kill the families of his opponents, his opponents themselves»⁵.

On 19 April 2021, as the FACT rebels advanced towards N'Djamena, Idriss DÉBY ITNO was announced the winner of the elections in the first round with 79.32% of the votes. He was killed the following day.



³ «Chad: Opposition politician Saleh Kebzabo withdraws his candidacy for the presidential elections», RFI. Published 1er March 2021. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210301-tchad-l-opposant-saleh-kebzabo-retire-sa-candidature-%C3%A0-la-pr%C3%A9sidentielle>

⁴ «Chad: Pre-election crackdown on opponents,» Human Rights Watch. Published 8 April 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/fr/node/378435/printable/print>

⁵ «Chad: At least two dead at the home of opponent Yaya Dillo», Deutsche Welle. Published 1er March 2021. <https://www.dw.com/fr/tchad-au-moins-deux-morts-au-domicile-de-lopposant-yaya-dillo/a-56730786>

Demonstrations repressed and a series of arrests

Throughout the year 2021, the government forces harshly repressed peaceful demonstrations organised by the political opposition and civil society organisations. Numerous arbitrary arrests as well as injuries and deaths have been reported, both in N'Djamena and in the provinces.

Since February 2021, in the run-up to the April 10 elections, numerous demonstrations have been organised, although the government has banned all marches. A coalition of opposition parties and civil society actors created the Wakit Tama collective, a name that means «*It's time*» in Chadian Arabic. The latter organised numerous peaceful marches, first calling for democratic changeover, then for the resignation of the CMT, the departure of the French army and a return to constitutional order led by a civilian.



6
FEBRUARY
2021



Civil society associations and political parties have called for a «*people's march*» to protest against Idriss DÉBY ITNO's 6th mandate. On 4 February 2021, the authorities issued an order banning the demonstration throughout the country, claiming that there was a risk of public disorder. The demonstration was dispersed by the police who fired tear gas and arrested dozens of people.



«At least 14 people arrested [including Mahamat Nour IBEDOU, Secretary General of the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights (CTDDH) and then a member of TLP-Tchad] were charged with «assault and battery, disturbance of public order and destruction of state property» and placed under a detention order in the capital, N'Djamena. Another 30 were sentenced to between two and three months imprisonment in Moundou, in the south of the country, for also wanting to exercise their rights. Some were arrested on 4 February 2021 because they were participating in a preparatory meeting,»⁶ according to an Amnesty International count.



That day, Succès MASRA, president of the opposition Transformers party, and other protesters took refuge in the US embassy in N'Djamena. On 11 February, the embassy issued a statement saying that it had «*received assurances*» from the Chadian government that the opponent «*would not be arrested if he left the embassy*» and asked him to leave⁷. He was not arrested when he left the embassy.

6 «Chad. Opponents and human rights defenders prevented from demonstrating freely ahead of election», Amnesty International. Published 9 February 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2021/02/tchad-droits-humains-empêches-de-manifester-librement/>

7 «Statement by Mr. David Gilmour, Chargé d'Affaires a.i. of the U.S. Embassy in N'Djamena, Chad», U.S. Embassy in Chad. Published 11 February 2021. <https://td.usembassy.gov/fr/declaration-de-m-david-gilmour-charge-daffaires-a-i-de-lambassade-des-etats-unis-a-ndjamena-tchad/>

13
FEBRUARY
2021

For the second Saturday in a row, civil society movements and opposition parties, at the initiative of the party Les Transformateurs, held a «march of the people's anger». Starting from several districts of the city of N'Djamena, the demonstrators were quickly dispersed by tear gas thrown by the police.



«Today, we may have done something exceptional because to be able to walk more than 7 km and kneel down and face the police, to resist for so long, when they were not shooting to make us inhale tear gas but shooting to directly injure with tear gas shells. We stayed and said to ourselves: yes, it is possible»⁸, says singer Ray's Kim.



Following the clashes with the police, a dozen people were arrested, and a demonstrator and a plainclothes police officer were injured.

15
FEBRUARY
2021

The opposition National Movement for Change in Chad (MNCT), together with several other parties and members of civil society, organised a peaceful march in N'Djamena. To disperse the crowd, the police fired tear gas, arrested 30 demonstrators and beat up dozens of others. Seven were released the same day but the others remained in detention for nine days without charge.

Mahamat Ahmat LAZINA, the MNCT president arrested that day, told Human Rights Watch:



«They took me to the police station in the third district of N'Djaména, and then to a police intelligence building in the same compound. They beat me. Six plainclothes police and intelligence officers hit me with sticks and repeatedly kicked me in the back.»⁹



This treatment was widespread, as another protester who was also arrested that day recounted:



«They beat me and gave me electric shocks with cables three times on the day of my arrest. They wanted me to confess, to tell them who had organised the march and who was behind the demonstrations. They also hit me several times with a whip before throwing me into a cell where I slept for eight days on the floor.»



⁸ «Chad: a new demonstration against a 6th mandate of Déby repressed», RFI. Published 13 February 2021. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210213-tchad-une-nouvelle-manifestation-contre-un-6e-mandat-de-d%C3%A9by-r%C3%A9prim%C3%A9>
⁹ «Chad: Pre-election crackdown on opponents.» Human Rights Watch. Published 8 April 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/fr/node/378435/printable/print>

20
MARCH
2021

Chadians took to the streets at the call of the Wakit Tama collective to peacefully demand justice and change at the top of the state. After violently dispersing the demonstration with tear gas, leaving ten people injured, the riot police arrested and deposited some forty demonstrators at the central police station in N'Djamena:

- Mr. Max LOALNGAR, lawyer at the N'Djamena bar, leader of the Wakit Tama coalition and president of the Chadian League for Human Rights;
- Younouss Ali YACOUB, vice coordinator of the Mouvement Citoyen le Temps ;
- Alfred Ngueita ALLASHASKO, famous Chadian rapper and member of TLP-Tchad known as N2A;
- Mahamat Nour IBEDOU, Secretary General of the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights.

All of them were released on 23 March 2021 and their cases were dismissed by the courts.



«I was hit and burned on the left thigh by a tear gas canister fired by riot police from about 10 meters away,» a civil society activist who participated in the March 20, 2021, demonstration told Human Rights Watch: «The police seemed to fire these projectiles indiscriminately. As I was being taken to the hospital in a car, a police vehicle crashed into ours. The police made us get out of the car and fired tear gas again. I couldn't breathe. One of the people in the car with me collapsed. The police hit her with a baton on her back and shoulders before taking us all to the police station.»¹⁰



¹⁰ «Chad: Pre-election crackdown on opponents,» Human Rights Watch. Published 8 April 2021. <https://www.hrw.org/fr/node/378435/printable/print>

27
MARCH
2021

A new march in N'Djamena was announced on 22 March 2021 in a press briefing by Me Max Loalgar on behalf of the Wakit Tama collective. Chadians went out to demonstrate in several towns in the country with whistles and placards with the unequivocal slogan: «No to the 6th mandate!»

In N'Djamena, riot police used tear gas to disperse the demonstrators and arrested several of them at the “Double voies” roundabout and at the Dembé market, according to Didah Alain KEMBA, coordinator of the Mouvement Citoyen le Temps and member of Tournons La Page Tchad. Among them were political opponents, journalists and members of civil society such as Yacine ABDERMAN (Reformist Party), Moussaye AVENIR DE LA TCHIRÉ, director of publication of the newspaper Abba Garde, as well as François DJEKOMBE (Union Sacrée pour la République).

The latter recounts:



«I was thrown into the police vehicle and beaten by four police officers. [I twisted my neck and my neck still hurts. One police officer slapped me twice, and another forced me to lie down on the vehicle by pressing his boots on my neck.»



The artist N2A says that he was arrested twice, on 20 and 27 March 2021:



«The police were brutal. Both times they beat me [...] They made me get into their vehicle with other protesters and kicked me with their boots. On 20 March, I also saw a police officer hitting a pregnant woman with a stick.»



In total, 45 people were injured in the ranks of the UNDR, according to its spokesperson. Succès MASRA, president of the party Les Transformateurs, counted 3 dead, 10 wounded and 40 arrests in its ranks. The prosecutor's office in N'Djamena told RFI that 9 demonstrators died from their wounds caused by bullets¹¹.

All those arrested were released later the same day.

3
APRIL
2021

Supporters of the Transformers party demonstrated in N'Djamena. On the placards were slogans against the re-election of the outgoing president, such as «No to the 6th mandate!», «No to the armed elections», «DÉBY out». About twenty people were arrested during this march¹². All were released a few hours later.

¹¹ «Chad: 27 April 2021, a Tuesday of anger and blood», RFI. Published 28 April 2021.

<https://youtu.be/IDARigOWZ6Y>

¹² «Chad: young people mobilised in the street against a sixth term for Idriss Déby», TV5 Monde. Published 3 April 2021.

<https://afrique.tv5monde.com/information/tchad-des-jeunes-mobilises-dans-la-rue-contre-un-sixieme-mandat-didriss-DEBY>

8
APRIL
2021

Younous ALI, deputy coordinator of the Mouvement Citoyen le Temps, Dinamou DARAM, then president of the Socialiste Sans Frontières party, Oumar MAHAMAT, coordinator of the Coordination Nationale des Jeunes pour le Paix au Tchad, and two others were arrested at the premises of the Socialiste Sans Frontières party in N'Djamena while attending a meeting. These leaders had met to discuss the organisation of the boycott of the elections when, at around 4pm, the police arrived - ten vehicles of the Groupement Mobile d'Intervention de la Police (GMIP) - and arrested them.

They were detained at the General Intelligence Service and released on 10 April. Oumar MAHAMAT was released on 15 April 2021.

11
AVRIL
2021

Chadian presidential election.

20
AVRIL
2021

Death of Idriss DÉBY ITNO and coup d'état by his son Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY.

24
AVRIL
2021

The Belle Vue school in Moursal, in the 6th district of N'Djaména, was the target of tear gas fire from members of the GMIP.

According to the school's administration, «*the police fired tear gas when some students were in the classroom and others in the exercise yard*»¹³. In panic, some students fled.

Those in the classrooms inhaled the gas and three girls fainted. A few minutes later, another GMIP motorcade consisting of three vehicles arrived and began firing again in the school compound and on the road to disperse the students. It was a stampede.

Students, passers-by and motorists tried to escape the tear gas.

This incident followed the dispersal by the police of a sit-in by young unemployed graduates at the Ministry of National Education, located near the Belle Vue school. The police mistook the students, who were doing physical exercises, for demonstrators.



¹³ «Police elements fire tear gas in the Belle vue school in N'Djaména», Chad infos. Published 14 April 2021. <https://tchadinfos.com/tchad/des-elements-de-la-police-tirent-de-gaz-lacrymogenes-dans-lecole-belle-vue-de-ndjamena/>

27
APRIL
2021

One week after the death of President Idriss DÉBY ITNO, the Wakit Tama collective organised a demonstration in N'Djamena against the military coup led by Mahamat IDRIS DÉBY, the son of the deceased president, to denounce a what they termed a monarchic succession. The police dispersed the demonstrators with tear gas and firearms. According to Didah Alain Kemba, at least 9 people were shot dead, 50 people were injured and more than 6100 people were arrested in N'Djamena and Moundou¹⁴. According to the Wakit Tama collective, many of the people arrested that day were tortured¹⁵.



One of the victims of the crackdown told Amnesty International: «On 27 April 2021, a policeman fired two warning shots in the air, then another took his gun, knelt down and pointed it at me. I thought they were tear gas grenades... I realised that my left knee was bleeding. I realised I had been shot. I was taken to hospital. Even there I was searched by the police. At the end of the evening, they came to brutalise my family and entered the living room of our house. The next day, they came back around 2am to intimidate me.»¹⁶»



All those arrested were tried and found not guilty by the Chadian courts.

28
APRIL
2021

The Wakit Tama collective organised a new march in N'Djamena against the ruling military and French interference in Chadian affairs. The rally resulted in 10 arrests and 11 hospitalisations. The events took place in the districts of Walia, Atrone and Ndjari. The police used live ammunition in the 9th district, another district where the demonstrations took place¹⁷.

¹⁴ «Provisional assessment of the demonstration against French interference in Chad and the ruling military junta», Mouvement Citoyen Le Temps. Published 21 April 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/101668744974636/posts/270876808053828/>

¹⁵ «Press Release N°006/WT/21, Wakit Tama. Published 22 May 2022. <https://urlz.fr/h6O9>

¹⁶ «Chad. Announcements of investigations into protesters' deaths must lead to prosecutions», Amnesty International. Published 1er June 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2021/06/tchad-les-annonces-sur-la-mort-de-manifestants-doivent-aboutir-des-poursuites/>

¹⁷ «Public demonstration on 28 April against the military in power and French interference in Chadian affairs», Mouvement citoyen Le Temps. Published 28 April 2021. <https://www.facebook.com/101668744974636/posts/271250014683174/>

1^{ER}
MAY
2021

Arrest and detention in the town of Koumra of the artist Mimo HAL and Ngar ALKOA, coordinator of the Association pour la Récupération des Enfants en Détresse (ARED). They had gone to the brigade to bring food to peaceful demonstrators arrested during the previous days. They were released the next day.

8
MAY
2021

A new march is organised by Wakit Tama against the National Transitional Council and France's support for it, which is violently repressed.

At least one person died from bullet wounds received during the march. 5 others were injured, including two seriously, 21 were arrested and a home was damaged by fire¹⁸.



«But the police had already occupied the place. The police started throwing tear gas and the scene lasted several minutes. It was then that a young man on a motorbike was hit by a bullet,» a witness told Amnesty International¹⁹.



11
MAY
2021

Hamza KARI, in charge of mobilisation for the Citizen's Movement le Temps, Boudalbagar cell, is threatened at his home by intelligence agents. Vehicles prowl outside his door at night. He had already been arrested by the police for having taken part in the 8 May demonstration²⁰ and was detained for 3 days before being released.

12
MAY
2021

While all civil society marches are systematically banned, a march in support of the Military Transitional Council is authorised and takes place.

¹⁸ «Chad: The National Police presents the results of the 8 May demonstration». Chad infos. Published 9 May 2021.

<https://tchadinfos.com/securite/tchad-la-police-nationale-presente-le-bilan-de-la-manifestation-du-8-mai/>

¹⁹ «Chad. Announcements of investigations into protesters' deaths must lead to prosecutions», Amnesty International. Published 1er June 2021.

<https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2021/06/tchad-les-annonces-sur-la-mort-de-manifestants-doivent-aboutir-des-poursuites/>

²⁰ «Alert», Citizen Movement Time. Published 11 May 2021.

<https://www.facebook.com/101668744974636/posts/279350317206477/>

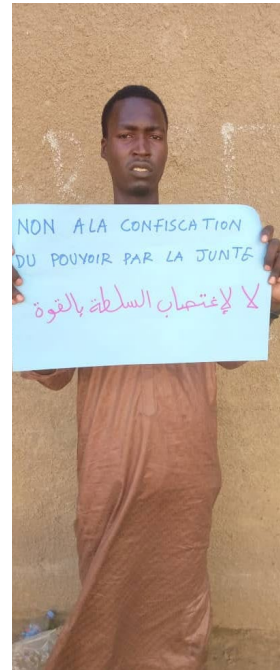
19
MAY
2021

A march was organised by the Wakit Tama collective demanding the resignation of the CMT and the departure of France. Once again banned by the authorities, the latter took measures: «the 'red berets', forces specialised in war rather than maintaining order, [...] were deployed in the capital, especially in the 6th, 7th and 9th districts which are considered to be opposition strongholds²¹».

During this demonstration, 17 people, including the President of the Reformist Party Yacine ABDERMAN SAKINE, were arrested in N'Djamena. The latter claimed to have been tortured by the police:



«he was hooded and taken to a police station he believes to be CSP N°2 where he says he was tortured before being abandoned at CSP N°12 at the other end of the city»²².



26
MAY
2021

Gilbert MORBA, a member of the Wakit Tama collective in charge of mobilisations, was abducted by unidentified armed men in a vehicle as he was leaving his consultancy in the Chagoua district of N'Djamena and taken to an unknown location. His family reported him missing. After raising the alarm, the collective was informed that Mr. Morba was in the premises of the General Intelligence Service in N'Djamena.



Gilbert Morba was released on the evening of 27 May 2021 due to a lack of evidence but his computer was retained by the intelligence services.

16
JULY
2021

For the first time, the CMT allowed a Wakit Tama march but changed the route and time. The march was originally scheduled to take place on 14 July 2021. According to Wakit Tama leaders, the authorities changed the route to discourage protesters living in remote areas, so they decided to postpone it.

²¹ «Chad: Opposition's call to demonstrate thwarted by heavy military presence», RFI. Published 19 May 2021. <https://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20210519-tchad-l-appel-%C3%A0-manifester-de-l-opposition-contrari%C3%A9-par-un-important-dispositif-militaire>

²² «Press Release N°006/WT/21, Wakit Tama. Published 22 May 2022. <https://urlz.fr/h6O9>

29 JULY
& 7 AUGUST
2021

The CMT allows marches to take place without clashes in N'Djamena.



21
AUGUST
2021

The CMT authorised two political parties that are members of Wakit Tama to march, but formally prohibited the UST and the CTDDH from participating. Faced with this injustice, the initiators decided to postpone the march.

2
OCTOBRE
2021

Wakit Tama organised another peaceful demonstration to demand an inclusive military transition.



«From the early hours of the morning, the police were already deployed at the demonstration site and in some places on the planned route, as well as in front of the headquarters of the Transformers party, where some of the marchers were gathered,»²³ said Max Loalgar.



The demonstration was violently repressed by the Chadian police, causing one death and around twenty injuries, including the coordinator of TLP-Chad, Jacques NGARASSAL, who was hit in the head and torso by projectiles fired at point-blank range by a police officer.

Following this demonstration, three Wakit Tama leaders were questioned by the police on 11 November. They were Michel BARKA, Dr. Sitack Yombatina BENI and Marting Félix KODJIGA. For Didah Alain KEMBA, a member of Wakit Tama and TLP-Tchad, these hearings and this procedure only aim to intimidate the leaders of the movement²⁴.



²³ «Chad: Wakit Tama platform march 'violently' dispersed by police», Anadolu Agency. Published 2 October 2021. <https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/tchad-une-marche-de-la-plateforme-wakit-tama-violamment-dispers%C3%A9e-par-la-police/2381181>
²⁴ «Wakit Tama in the crosshairs of justice' in Chad», Deutsche Welle. Published 11 October 2021. <https://www.dw.com/fr/wakit-tama-tchad-justice/a-59473685>

9
OCTOBER
2021

On Saturday 9 October 2021, Wakit Tama called for a demonstration to denounce the management of the country by the transitional authorities. Citing «risks of public disorder», the authorities banned the demonstration, but people gathered in the capital, N'Djamena. According to Wakit Tama spokespersons, at least 10 people were injured by tear gas and 45 others were arrested during the crackdown on the demonstration.

Wakit Tama announces that legal proceedings have been initiated against five of its leaders. Michel BARKA, Dr Sitack Yombatina BENI and Marting Félix KODJIGA are facing legal proceedings, while lawyers Max LOALNGAR and Koudé MBAÏNAÏSSEM, in accordance with their status, will be subject to proceedings before the Bar Council.

11
OCTOBER
2021

Michel BARKA, Dr Sitack Yombatina BENI and Marting Félix KODJIGA, leaders of the Wakit Tama collective, were arrested and held in custody at the premises of the Coordination of Judicial Police, according to the Chadian Convention for the Defence of Human Rights (CTDDH). They were interviewed by the judicial police and then kept in custody. They were released the next day. They are accused of disturbing public order through the peaceful marches they organised.

31
OCTOBER
2021

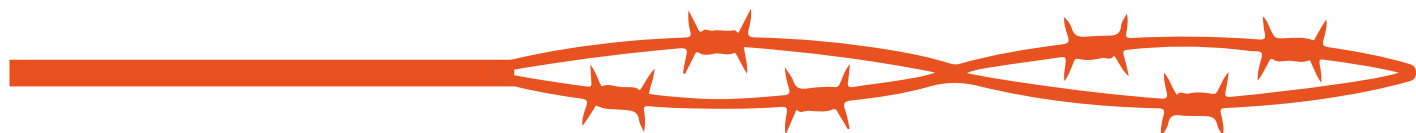
The police entered the home of Dr Sitack Yombatina BENI, a teacher-researcher and spokesperson for the Wakit Tama collective, while he and his family were at worship. They left with two laptops.

11
DÉCEMBRE
2021

After several months without a demonstration, the Wakit Tama collective is calling on citizens to gather again, this time with the agreement of the government, to protest against the national dialogue in preparation, which it deems non-inclusive and non-transparent.



Detention in Chadian prisons



In Chad, the living conditions of prisoners, including food, hygiene and sanitation, remain a major concern in all prisons. None of the prisons meet international standards. Amnesty International began its 2012 report by stating that «*Conditions of detention in Chadian prisons are so deplorable that they amount to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment*»²⁵. The situation has not changed since then, with overcrowding and poor conditions of detention being the biggest problems. According to FIACAT, in 2019, more than 7,719 people were detained in Chad's various prisons, for a capacity of 7,190 places. Some detainees can spend more than a year in detention without trial. In N'Djaména, 1,837 people are held in a prison designed to accommodate 350, an overcrowding rate of more than 524.85%. In Moundou, 467 people are detained for a capacity of 420. In Abeche, 296 people are held in a prison built for 150²⁶.

RFI revealed the existence of a secret prison at the National Security Agency in 2020 and found five former residents, two of whom agreed to testify openly²⁷. They are Versinis DINGAMNAYAL, a member of TLP-Chad and Daniel NGADJADOUM. This secret prison is said to be located opposite the Ministry of Public Works and Infrastructure.

Versinis DINGAMNAYAL says: «*When I was taken to the dungeon, I was handcuffed and chained... The prison was gloomy, black*».

Daniel NGADJADOUM tells us: «*chilli pepper in the eyes, (blows) with a stick, with an electric cable... They stick a pipe in your stomach, they open the tap at high pressure and water fills your stomach... And then they take the pipe away and step on your stomach...*»; «*chilli powder in a plastic bag and the head of the tortured person locked in the plastic bag...*»; «*and meanwhile we are starving*», he adds. Only one meal is served per day.

The Convention Tchadienne de Défense des Droits de l'Homme (CTDDH) has confirmed that detainees belonging to the FACT rebellion are victims of torture and inhumane treatment²⁸. Indeed, «*some have died as a result of torture*» while others are subjected to «*the black diet: voluntary and drastic deprivation of food and water. This practice resulted in the death of 27 of them, who were evacuated from the cells at night by the guards at a rate of at least 2 per day*». The Convention also pointed out that some of the wounded who were deprived of care had wounds that became «*dangerously infected*».

This is not the first time that rebels or opponents have died in prison. As a reminder, in April 2020, 70 people were presented to the press as alleged Boko Haram members taken prisoner during the Chadian army's major Bohoma offensive in the Lake Chad basin. Testimonies claim that they were in fact peasants returning from Niger.

Some of those arrested had already disappeared during their transport to N'Djamena. Of the fifty or so prisoners who arrived in the capital, 44 died during their second night in detention: «*On the 15th, at 6pm, black smoke invaded the cell, [recounts Max LOALNGAR]. Some of them started coughing, others screaming. And at around midnight, according to the survivors, the 44 had stopped living. We had to wait until the early hours of the morning for the cell to be opened and for the macabre discovery to be made*»²⁹.

25 «CHAD «WE ARE ALL DYING HERE» HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN PRISONS», Amnesty International. Published September 2012. <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/wp-content/uploads/sites/8/2021/06/afr200072012fr.pdf>

26 «Alternative report by FIACAT, ACAT Chad and WCADP on the occasion of the review of the 2ème, 3ème, 4ème, 5ème, 6ème, 7ème, 8ème, 9ème reports of Chad on the implementation of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights», FIACAT. Published November 2019. https://www.fiacat.org/attachments/article/2795/ACHPR65_Rapport%20alternatif_FIACAT_ACAT-Tchad_WCADP.pdf

27 «ANS secret prison in Chad: detainees tell of abuse», RFI. Published on 9 November 2020.

<https://www.RFI.fr/fr/afrique/20201109-tchad-prison-secre%C3%A8te-agence-securite-ans-d%C3%A9tenu-racontent-s%C3%A9vices>

28 «Chad: FACT detainees subjected to inhumane treatment», Anadolu Agency. Published 23 May 2021.

<https://www.aa.com.tr/fr/afrique/tchad-les-d%C3%A9tenu-du-fact-victimes-dun-traitement-inhumain/2251830>

29 «Chad: LTDH denounces a crime after the death in custody of 44 people», RFI. Published 19 July 2020.

<https://www.RFI.fr/fr/afrique/20200719-tchad-la-ltdh-d%C3%A9nonce-crime-apr%C3%A8s-la-mort-en-d%C3%A9tention-44-personnes>

A black and white photograph of a man in a hoodie looking out of prison bars. The man is in profile, looking towards the right. The bars are vertical and horizontal, creating a grid pattern. The lighting is dramatic, with strong shadows and highlights. The background is dark and indistinct.

**« When I was taken to the
dungeon, I was handcuffed
and chained... The prison
was gloomy, black ».**

Versinis DINGAMNAYAL

Impunity of the Defence and Security Forces

The Chadian army, police and gendarmerie used excessive violence during the year-long Wakit Tama protests. They fired live ammunition at pro-democracy demonstrators and misused riot gear, killing at least 20 people and injuring 152.

On 1 March 2021, the UN Secretary-General stated that he *«regretted the use of violence and the resulting loss of life»* at the residence of opposition politician Yaya DILLO and urged the authorities *«to conduct a prompt and thorough investigation into the incident and to hold the perpetrators accountable»*³⁰. Two days later, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs also called on the Chadian government to *«open an independent investigation into the incident, and to guarantee freedom of assembly before the elections»*³¹.

After the exactions committed during the demonstrations following the death of Idriss DÉBY ITNO, the European Union strongly condemned the systematic repression against Chadian citizens on 27 April 2021³². On the same day, the French President Emmanuel MACRON and the Congolese President and Chairman of the African Union Félix TSHISEKEDI made a joint statement in which they condemned *«in the strongest terms the repression of the demonstrations»*³³.

On 30 April 2021, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed its concern about the violent repression and use of firearms against the demonstrators³⁴.

In May, the Chadian authorities announced that investigations would be launched. Amnesty International had called for these investigations to be independent and impartial so that they could lead to the prosecution of those responsible for killings and injuries³⁵.

Despite all the documented abuses and international appeals, to our knowledge, no prosecution, arrest or trial has taken place against elements of the Defence and Security Forces. This state of affairs reinforces the feeling of impunity of the forces of order and accentuates the feeling of insecurity for human rights defenders.

³⁰ «Daily press briefing by the Office of the Spokesperson for the UN Secretary-General: 1 March 2021», United Nations. Published 1er March 2021. <https://www.un.org/press/fr/2021/dbf210301.doc.htm>

³¹ «Affaire Yaya Dillo: la France invite le Tchad à procéder une «enquête impartiale»», RFI. Published 3 March 2021. <https://www.RFI.fr/fr/afrique/20210303-affaire-yaya-dillo-la-france-invite-le-tchad-%C3%A0-proc%C3%A9der-%C3%A0-une-enqu%C3%Aate-impartiale>

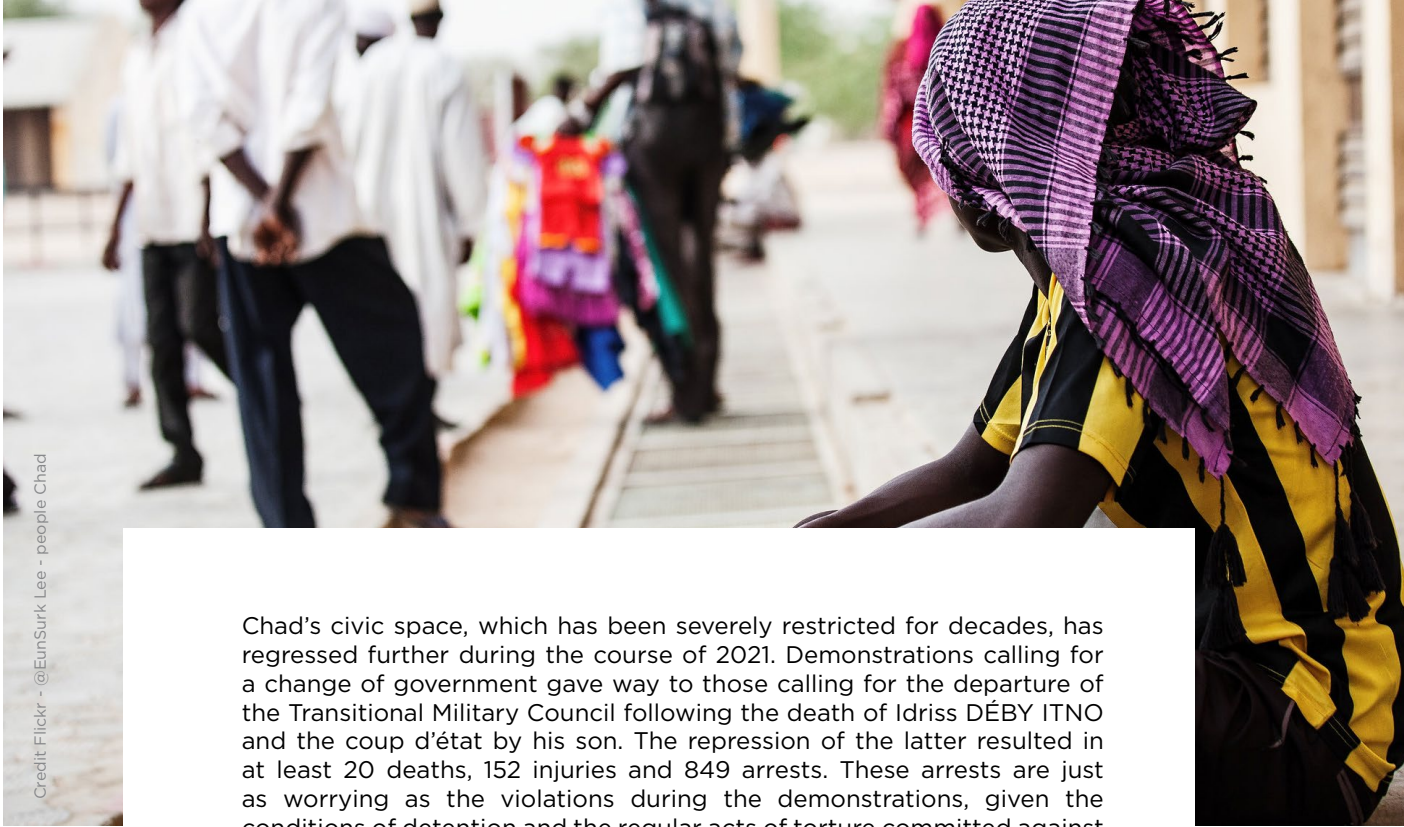
³² «Chad: Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Josep Borrell on the current situation», Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Chad. Published 27 April 2021. https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tchad/97364/tchad-d%C3%A9claration-du-haut-repr%C3%A9sentant-vice-pr%C3%A9sident-josep-borrell-concernant-la-situation_fr

³³ Joint statement by President Emmanuel Macron and Félix Tshisekedi Tshilombo, President of the Democratic Republic of Congo, Élysée. Published 27 April 2021. <https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2021/04/27/declaration-conjointe-du-president-emmanuel-macron-et-de-felix-tshisekedi-tshilombo-president-de-la-republique-democratique-du-congo>

³⁴ «Press briefing notes on Chad, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Published 30 April 2021. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=27041&LangID=E>

³⁵ «Chad. Announcements of investigations into protesters' deaths must lead to prosecutions», Amnesty International. Published 1er June 2021. <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/latest/news/2021/06/tchad-les-annonces-sur-la-mort-de-manifestants-doivent-aboutir-des-poursuites/>

Conclusion



Credit: Flickr - @EunSurk Lee - people Chad

Chad's civic space, which has been severely restricted for decades, has regressed further during the course of 2021. Demonstrations calling for a change of government gave way to those calling for the departure of the Transitional Military Council following the death of Idriss DÉBY ITNO and the coup d'état by his son. The repression of the latter resulted in at least 20 deaths, 152 injuries and 849 arrests. These arrests are just as worrying as the violations during the demonstrations, given the conditions of detention and the regular acts of torture committed against those arrested.

Although the junta seems to be easing up by authorising four rallies at the end of 2021 (while retaining control over the date and route), the situation of human rights and civic space in Chad remains worrying. The violations committed remain unpunished despite numerous national and international requests, and defenders continue to be harassed.

The international community, as is often the case in Chad, looks the other way in the name of the stability of a military regime that it considers to be a foundation for regional stability.

It is important to return to a constitutional order as soon as possible with the organisation of free and transparent elections so that the Chadian people can finally, and for the first time since independence, access democracy.

Recommendations

The Chadian authorities must:

- End campaigns of intimidation against those who express criticism, and respect and protect the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly;
- End restrictions on access to the internet and social networks;
- Conduct independent investigations into acts of torture, deaths following the repression of demonstrations and accusations of extra-judicial executions. These must lead to the conviction of the perpetrators of these inhumane acts and put an end to the impunity they enjoy;
- Restore constitutional order and organise civil elections as soon as possible in which no member of the CMT should stand;
- Develop a national human rights policy and pass legislation to protect human rights defenders;
- Train law enforcement officers on international human rights standards.

Chad's international partners - the African Union (AU), the United Nations (UN), France and the European Union (EU) - must:

- Ensure that support to local authorities focuses on supporting respect for human rights, including freedom of participation in civic life;
- Support the return to constitutional order as soon as possible and without exceeding 18 months since the death of President Idriss DÉBY ITNO, i.e. a limit set at October 2022 in accordance with the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union of 3 August 2021³⁶;
- Diplomatically and technically support press freedom, freedom of expression and the safety of human rights defenders;
- Organise systematic documentation of violations of freedom of assembly in Chad, particularly in sensitive periods of political life such as election campaigns and power transitions.

³⁶ «Communiqué de la 1016^e réunion de la PSC tenue le 3 août 2021 sur le Rapport de la Commission sur le Progrès de la Transition Politique au Tchad et le Mécanisme de Soutien de l'Union Africaine», African Union. Published 3 August 2021. <https://www.peaceau.org/fr/article/communiqu%C3%A9-de-la-1016%C3%A8me-r%C3%A9union-du-cps-tenue-le-3-ao%C3%BFt-2021-sur-le-rapport-de-la-commission-de-l-ua-sur-l-avancement-de-la-transition-politique-au-tchad-et-le-m%C3%A9canisme-de-soutien-de-l-ua-msua>



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