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Repression of government critics continued; the authorities arbitrarily detained human rights defenders and civil society activists and violated the right to freedom of expression. Some protests were banned and security forces used excessive force against peaceful protesters defying the ban. Violence and discrimination against women and girls persisted. Access to food and healthcare remained precarious for a large part of the population.

Background

In the run-up to the 11 April presidential elections, a platform called Wakit Tama (“the time has come”), made up of opposition parties, unions and NGOs, mobilized to protest against the electoral process, which they considered to be non-transparent and non-inclusive. From April a Chadian armed group based in Libya – the Front pour l’alternance et la concorde au Tchad (FACT) – carried out several attacks in the north and west of the country. Before the official announcement by the electoral commission of the re-election of President Idriss Déby Itno for a sixth term, he was killed during a visit to the combat zone. His death led to the establishment of a transitional military council led by his son, Mahamat Idriss Déby.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions

In June, Baradine Berde Targuio, president of the Chadian Organization for Human Rights, was released on parole. He was serving a three-year prison sentence, having been arrested on 24 January 2020 following a Facebook post alleging that President Idriss Déby was ill. He spent nearly seven months in incommunicado detention before being charged in August 2020 with breaching national security, illegal possession of weapons, assault and battery. The conditions of his release were not clarified.

Mahamat Nour Ibedou, the Secretary General of the Chadian Convention for the Protection of Human Rights, who joined the Wakit Tama coalition in several demonstrations against the regime, suffered harassment from the judicial authorities. They summoned him several times for his participation in the demonstrations and he was arrested in March during a protest against Idriss Déby’s candidacy for a sixth term. He was released without charge after three days in detention. He was summoned again in July following a complaint lodged by the Ministry of Public Security in relation to a statement he made denouncing the conditions of detention of FACT members.

Freedom of assembly and excessive use of force

Between January and May, the Chadian authorities denied people the right to peaceful protest by systematically banning gatherings on the grounds that they were likely to disturb public order. These bans were defied by demonstrators protesting first against the electoral process and later the establishment of the transitional government. Security forces used excessive force to disperse peaceful protests.

In February at least 14 demonstrators were arrested in the capital, N’Djamena, and charged with “assault and battery, disturbing public order and destroying state property”.¹ They were released after a few days. The same month, the home of a political opponent was attacked by the security forces because he allegedly refused to respond to several summons from the courts.² According to local human rights NGOs, this attack resulted in the deaths of two of his relatives, who were inside the house.

In April and May at least 16 demonstrators were killed in N’Djamena and the southern city of Moundou during protests organized by the Wakit Tama coalition.³ Dozens more were injured and at least 700 protesters were arrested. Many of those arrested were released immediately after the protests. Several people testified that they were targeted by law enforcement officers with lethal

weapons while demonstrating. The authorities announced the opening of a judicial investigation into these incidents. A police officer who allegedly fired his weapon was suspended. Information on the progress of the investigation remained unavailable at the end of the year.

In May, a demonstration in support of the authorities was authorized by the transitional government, while one organized by the Wakit Tama platform was banned.

Women's and girls' rights

Widespread discrimination and violence against women and girls continued. In June, women protested in the streets against sexual violence and a culture of impunity for perpetrators, after the gang rape of a 15-year-old girl was filmed and shared on social media.

Girls' enrolment in secondary school continued to fall, from 31% in 2017 to 12% in 2021, according to the World Economic Forum. (Boys' enrolment in secondary education in 2021 was 25%.) This was partly due to nationwide school closures in 2020-21 because of the Covid-19 pandemic, a period during which several organizations noted an increased rate of early and forced marriage.

Right to food

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, food insecurity and malnutrition affected 5.5 million Chadians, including 1.7 million in its severe form. The situation remained precarious in the provinces where the activities of armed groups disrupted harvests and forced people to move. In addition, 1.7 million people were affected by health emergencies, including children and pregnant and breastfeeding women.

Right to health

According to the WHO and the Chadian Ministry of Health, a measles epidemic broke out in the country, with 264 confirmed cases and 15 deaths. The southern provinces were most affected and the low vaccination coverage risked a further outbreak.

At least 350,000 cases of malaria were confirmed during the year, resulting in 546 deaths, according to the National Epidemic Control Committee. Hospitals were overwhelmed by the number of cases and were not able to treat all patients because of a shortage of beds. The Ministry of Health disinfected several districts of N'Djamena and distributed impregnated mosquito nets.

As of December, Chad had recorded 6,185 cases of Covid-19 and 184 deaths. The number of vaccinated amounted to 367,000 people but only 80,663 had completed the vaccination schedule (for an estimated population of 17 million). Chad benefited from the COVAX initiative and launched its vaccination campaign in June in N'Djamena, Moundou and Abéché. In October, the WHO had reported there were 63 vaccination sites in the country.

Right to truth, justice and reparation

In August, former president Hissène Habré died in Senegal. On 27 April 2017, the Chamber of Appeals of the Extraordinary African Chambers in Dakar had confirmed Hissène Habré's conviction and life sentence for crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture, including sexual slavery, and ordered him to pay approximately US\$150 million in compensation to victims. In addition, a Trust Fund for Victims created by the AU was mandated to locate, trace, freeze and seize his property, as well as to solicit and obtain voluntary contributions from states and other stakeholders. Despite these encouraging announcements, victims had yet to be compensated by the end of the year.

A court order from 2015, which awarded reparations to be paid jointly by the Chadian state and 20 officers from Hissène Habré's regime convicted for murder and torture, had yet to be implemented, according to the victims' lawyers.

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