

Ref.: AFR 20/005/2011

H.E. the Permanent Representative

21 April 2011

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INTERNATIONAL**



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Open letter to all members of the Security Council

Protection of civilians in eastern Chad: Security Council must “remain actively seized of the matter”

Dear Ambassador,

Amnesty international is concerned that more than 260,000 refugees from Darfur, 160,000 internally displaced Chadians and the local population remain at risk in eastern Chad after the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) at the end of 2010. Consequently, the organization calls on the Security Council to take effective steps to ensure that the safety of refugees, IDPs and all civilians living in eastern Chad remains an active part of its agenda and that the Council remains actively seized of the matter, including through an efficient monitoring and reporting mechanism.

There have been some positive developments with respect to the situation in the region, including the normalization of relations between Chad and Sudan, which has reduced some of the volatility in the area. However, the lack of solutions to lingering political crises and conflict in Sudan and the Central African Republic remains a threat to the fragile stability in Chad and the respect and protection of human rights. In addition, the ongoing situation in Libya could have an impact on the tenuous improvements in Chad. There have been reports of thousands of people from Libya, including Chadians who had been living there, having crossed the borders into Chad. A further potential source of instability in Chad is the fact that Chadian and Sudanese armed opposition groups, including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), remain active in the region.

Serious human rights violations including rape and other forms of violence against women, the recruitment and use of child soldiers, and attacks against humanitarian workers, continue. On 12 February 2011, Amnesty International published a report on recruitment and use of children by armed forces and opposition armed groups in Chad and called on the Chadian authorities, Chadian and Sudanese armed groups as well as the United Nations to take effective steps to ensure that the rights of children in eastern Chad are protected. In his February 2011 report on children and armed conflict in Chad, the United Nations Secretary-General denounced the ongoing recruitment and use of children by members of the Chadian National Army and Chadian and Sudanese armed groups including the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The Secretary-General also expressed concerns about the fact that cases of rape and other forms of sexual violence including among the refugee women and girls continued to be a widespread phenomenon in Chad. Members of the Chadian security forces and armed opposition groups responsible for such acts continue to enjoy impunity, while victims are left without assistance.

One of the challenges the United Nations is facing in Chad is the lack of information on the situation in remote areas of eastern Chad. MINURCAT human rights section played a key role for instance in the monitoring and reporting mechanism of Security Council Resolution 1612 (2005). This important function has been seriously affected by the withdrawal of the UN mission. The UN country team understandably has limited capacity to effectively continue to perform this task at the same level and ensure that grave human rights violations, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, are effectively monitored and reported. When the Security Council adopted Resolution 1923 (2010) regarding the withdrawal of MINURCAT by the end of December 2010, it also decided to “remain actively seized of the matter”. The Security Council should assume its responsibility in ensuring that the Chadian authorities effectively protect all civilians living in eastern Chad.

The Government of Chad has now assumed full responsibility for the security of civilians and humanitarian workers in the region. As part of its strategy to ensure the protection of civilians in the eastern part of the country, Chad agreed with Sudan in January 2010 to put in place a joint force of 3,000 troops to patrol their common border and to cease any support to their respective armed opposition groups. The joint Chad/Sudan force is still operational in eastern Chad in April 2011. Chad also promised to reinforce the capacity of the Integrated Security Detachment (*Détachement Intégré de Sécurité*, DIS), a Chadian police force with a specific mandate to provide security in and around refugee camps and IDP sites, facilitate movements of the humanitarian actors in the area and ensure the protection of the humanitarian operational zone. The United Nations, through UNHCR and UNDP, announced in March 2011 that it will continue to provide financial support to the DIS activities.

Information is limited with regards to the actual capacity and effectiveness of the Chad/Sudan joint force that patrols the border between the two countries to prevent cross borders attacks by their respective opposition armed groups and of the DIS and other Chadian security forces to protect civilians in eastern Chad. It is important to ensure proper monitoring and reporting of activities conducted by all armed and non armed actors in eastern Chad with respect to the protection of human rights in the area.

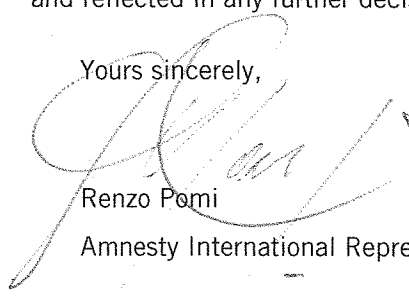
Amnesty International urges that the Security Council remain ready and prepared to reconsider its decision to withdraw MINURCAT at any time by remaining actively seized of the situation in eastern Chad. For that purpose, it should be periodically informed on the situation in the area and be ready to react quickly to any deterioration. In order for the Security Council and the UN as a whole to take well-informed decisions on the matter, it is essential to have independent and reliable information. There is therefore an urgent need for an independent international monitoring presence that would be able to report on human rights violations and abuses committed in eastern Chad as well as on the social and political developments in the area.

Amnesty International therefore asks the Security Council to adopt the following measures:

- Express support for the creation of a fully-mandated office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Chad. The office should be well-resourced in order to conduct activities related to the respect, promotion and protection of human rights in all parts of Chad and ensure that victims of human rights violations and abuses have access to justice and perpetrators do not enjoy impunity. In particular, the office must maintain a strong presence in the eastern part of the country;
- Encourage donor countries, UN agencies and the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund to support the work of the OHCHR office in Chad, financially and otherwise;
- Encourage other UN agencies and donor countries to provide technical, logistic and financial support to other initiatives directed at protecting civilians and improving the respect, protection and promotion of human rights in Chad.

Amnesty International hopes that these recommendations will be considered by the Security Council and reflected in any further decision or other action regarding Chad.

Yours sincerely,



Renzo Pomi

Amnesty International Representative at the United Nations