

# £CHAD

## @Inquiry reveals widespread army atrocities in early 1993 in southern chad's logone oriental prefecture

### 1. Introduction

Since February 1992 there have been persistent reports of mass killings and other human rights violations committed by members of the Chadian security forces in southern Chad, particularly Logone Oriental prefecture. In early 1992, the Chadian authorities deployed thousands of troops to southern Chad following the outbreak of a rebellion by an armed opposition group led by Moïse Nodji Ketté, a breakaway army officer who had attempted to overthrow the government in February 1992. The group is known as the *Comité de sursaut national pour la paix et la démocratie* (CSNPD), Committee for National Revitalization for Peace and Democracy. It is in this context that the troops have continued to carry out extrajudicial executions, sometimes, as appears to be the case in early 1993, without provocation. Civilians have been killed or had their homes pillaged and burned down because of their alleged support for the rebels.

The first reported mass extrajudicial executions of unarmed civilians by government troops occurred in mid-August 1992 in and around the town of Doba. Non-governmental human rights groups reported that more than 100 civilians had been killed, although the government insists that only 37 were killed. On 21 January 1993 at least 45 civilians were extrajudicially executed near Logone Oriental prefecture's Goré town. Further killings were reported in the weeks that followed. In February 1993 a National Conference attended by representatives of political and other organizations demanded that an independent inquiry be carried out into the January 1993 killings. The government refused, without explanation, to allow the inquiry to take place.

The government's response was in virtually every case to either deny that the killings took place or to blame rebels for either provoking or carrying them out. Consequently, members of the security forces responsible for human rights violations continue to act with impunity. However, a significant change in government policy occurred when Chadian non-governmental human rights groups reported in mid-April 1993 that government troop had extrajudicially executed more than 100 unarmed civilians on 5 April 1993. The transitional government put in place at the beginning of April 1993 by the National Conference announced that a commission of inquiry would be sent to Logone Oriental prefecture to investigate the killings. The commission's report makes very grim reading, as

summarized below, and Amnesty International is urging that adequate measures be taken to prevent a repeat of the atrocities and that those responsible be brought to justice.

## **2. Commission of inquiry unearths atrocities**

In mid-April 1993 Chadian human rights groups reported the extrajudicial execution of more than 100 inhabitants of three villages in southern Chad's Logone Oriental prefecture on 5 April 1993. Other extrajudicial executions had been reported in the same area since January 1993. Members of the *Garde républicaine*, Republican Guard, a unit of the *Armée nationale tchadienne* (ANT), Chadian National Army, which is directly responsible to President Idriss Déby, were accused by local people of responsibility for the killings.

A government minister initially described reports of the killings as "diffuse, confused and contradictory". Another minister claimed that the human rights groups had grossly exaggerated the numbers of those killed. The transitional government which assumed the running of the country at the beginning of April 1993 announced that a commission of inquiry would be sent to the region to investigate the reports. The inquiry took place from 19 to 28 April 1993. The commission was composed of eight government and security officials, including the Minister of Defence, two members of the transitional legislative body known as the *Conseil supérieur de la transition* (CST), Higher Transitional Council, two members of non-governmental human rights groups and three journalists.

At the beginning of May 1993 the two human rights groups which participated in the inquiry published the commission's findings, confirming that extrajudicial executions had occurred. Several days later Amnesty International was able to obtain a copy of the official joint report of the commission. The major difference between the two reports is that the human rights groups hold the Republican Guard almost exclusively responsible for the atrocities in the south and claim they were committed with the knowledge and on the orders of President Idriss Déby.

The commission of inquiry established that members of the Chadian security forces had been responsible for the extrajudicial execution of at least 300 men, women and children, more than 200 of them in April 1993. The village most affected was that of Kou-Mouabé where soldiers killed as many as 135 unarmed men on 5 April 1993. Soldiers reportedly travelling in Toyota vehicles commonly used in Chad by the military arrived in the village and assembled all its inhabitants in one place. The soldiers pretended to the villagers that they were about to carry out a population census. Men were separated from women and children and taken outside the village in five vehicles, only to be shot down in cold blood. Seventy of the men were confirmed dead while at least 44 others "disappeared". Members of the commission of inquiry were shown 38 graves, some of them apparently containing several bodies. The soldiers looted all the valuables and foodstuffs in the village before they left.

In nearby Doussaoudana village the commission received reports that on about 5 April 1993 soldiers killed some 18 people by cutting their throats open or shooting them. Members of the commission saw six graves, a spent cartridge and ropes used to tie the victims. Those killed appear to include prisoners who had "disappeared" after being taken from Kou-Mouabé on 5 April 1993.

On 7 April 1993 soldiers arrived on board a Toyota vehicle, registration number RT 2541 AP, in Ter village. They were reportedly in possession of a military order (*ordre de mission*) number 238 PR/92 dated 8 December 1992, and claimed to be members of an anti-smuggling brigade. They surrounded people in the village market and opened fire, apparently without provocation. One person died on the spot and two others died in a dispensary from bullet wounds. Six people sustained serious injuries.

Government soldiers have been carrying out a scorched earth policy in Logone Oriental prefecture. Some villages were reported by the commission to be partially or entirely burned, some without a human being in sight. Survivors had fled the area, some to neighbouring Central African Republic. Members of the commission met only a few women and children, usually disabled, in some villages. There were also reports of women having been raped by soldiers in the area. Virtually all the villages affected had been looted of valuables, livestock and foodstuffs, subjecting survivors to potential starvation. Indeed the commission called on the government and humanitarian organizations to urgently provide food aid to survivors.

### 3. Responsibility for the killings

The commission of inquiry identified several military units as being responsible for the carnage in Logone Oriental prefecture which is normally under the responsibility of the *Région militaire 8* (RM8), Eighth Military Region. However, the authorities have deployed other units into the prefecture since the CSNPD launched its campaign of armed opposition against the government in February 1992. Other units implicated are the *Secteur 2* (usually based in the town of Faya Largeau in northern Chad) and the *Région militaire 7*, Seventh Military Region, usually responsible for Chari-Baguirmi and Batha prefectures. The report issued by the joint commission indicated that local people held the Republican Guard responsible for many of the killings. The official report of the commission of inquiry did not confirm the involvement of the Republican Guard, although that of the human rights groups claimed the Republican Guard was responsible for most of the atrocities.

Both reports named about seven military officers who, it claimed, had been consistently accused by local people of being in charge of units which carried out recent human rights violations. The officers include Mahamat Khamis Towilé whose unit was reportedly responsible for killing more than 100 unarmed civilians in Doba in mid-August 1992. In a statement issued on 21 April 1993 in connection with a report published by Amnesty International on 21 April 1993<sup>1</sup>, the Chadian President's Office claimed that

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<sup>1</sup> *Chad: Never again? Killings continue into the 1990s* (AI Index: AFR 20/04/93)

Mahamat Khamis Towilé had been removed from his post after the killings in August 1992 in Doba. It is unclear whether it is the same commander who was still in Logone Oriental in April 1993. If this is so, it is yet further evidence that the authorities took no action to prevent further extrajudicial executions and other human rights violations by the Republican Guard.

The commission of inquiry accuses local administrative and judicial officials of incompetence, indifference, and complicity (*Incompétence, laxisme et complicité*) in connection with the violence, especially the deputy prefect (governor) of Logone Oriental, the out-going sub-prefect of Goré and the Procurator of Doba (the head of prosecutions and criminal investigations for the Doba area). It does not specify whether the officials ordered, condoned or participated in the atrocities.

#### 4. Recommendations of the commission of inquiry

The commission makes a number of recommendations in order to bring an end to human rights abuses. They include removing military officers implicated in the atrocities and the withdrawal of their military units. The military units should, it suggests, be replaced by units of the Gendarmerie, the branch of the armed forces responsible for law-enforcement rather than national defence. Those implicated in the atrocities should be brought to justice.

#### 5. Government reaction to the commission's report

The government is not known to have made the commission's report public, although it was made available in early May 1993 to people not involved in the investigation. It is unclear if and when the government intends to implement all the recommendations of the commission of inquiry. However, at the beginning of May 1993 the government announced that a number of members of the security police known as the *Centre de recherche et de coordination de renseignements* (CRCR), Centre for Investigation and Coordination of Intelligence, had been found responsible for human rights violations and arrested. Surprisingly, the CRCR was not implicated or mentioned in the commission's report and it is unclear why it was its members who were arrested. However, the CRCR is known to have been responsible for human rights violations since its formation in 1991.

On 10 May 1993 President Idriss Déby signed a decree dissolving the CRCR and replacing it with a new security service. The dissolution of the CRCR had been recommended by the National Conference. It is unclear how different the new security service will be from its predecessor, both in its functions and personnel. Human rights groups and others had been concerned that members of former President Hissain Habré's security service, the *Direction de la documentation et de la sécurité* (DDS), Directorate for Documentation and Security, had been absorbed into the CRCR and continued to violate human rights as before. The DDS was responsible for gross human rights violations, including thousands of extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture and arbitrary arrests and incommunicado detention without charge or trial in the 1980s.