

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

30 April 2010  
AI Index: AFR 20/007/2010

### **Possible withdrawal of MINURCAT from eastern Chad from May 15 onwards also sets worrying precedent for Democratic Republic of Congo**

#### **What is MINURCAT?**

MINURCAT is the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad.

MINURCAT was established by Security Council resolution 1778 (2007) on 25 September 2007 in consultation with the authorities of Chad and the Central African Republic (CAR) in order to contribute to the protection of civilians; promote human rights and the rule of law; and promote regional peace. With the adoption of resolution 1861 (2009) on 14 January 2009, the Security Council authorized the deployment of a military component of MINURCAT to follow the European Union military force, known as EUFOR. The transfer of authority between EUFOR and the military component of MINURCAT took place on 15 March 2009.

(Source: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurcat/>)

MINURCAT has been deployed to eastern Chad and the Central African Republic to protect and enable humanitarian assistance to at least 250,000 Sudanese refugees and 170,000 internally displaced people that have sought shelter in the area. Its mandate includes protection of civilians; promotion of human rights and the rule of law; and the promotion of regional peace.

#### **Has MINURCAT had any effect?**

Attacks on humanitarian workers and civilians, which reached alarming levels in the last months of 2009, have reportedly decreased as MINURCAT soldiers have been able to carry out patrols in a number of sensitive areas they had not been previously able to cover.

In addition to the military component of MINURCAT there is also an important civilian component that provides training to judicial personnel, includes human rights monitors and implements programs to support the rule of law.

MINURCAT also supports the work of the Integrated Security Detachment, *Détachement intégré de sécurité* (DIS) - a police force composed of Chadian officers. The DIS mandate is to provide security in and around refugees camps and sites for internally displaced in eastern Chad.

A National Human Rights Framework is being prepared by MINURCAT and its Chadian partners including the Chadian Ministry of Human Rights.

#### **What is MINURCAT's current status?**

In January 2010, the government of Chad sent a *note verbale* to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) requesting it to not renew the mandate of the United Nations Mission to the Central African Republic and Chad.

Following this request, the UN Secretary-General sent a Technical Assessment Mission to Chad to discuss the issue with Chadian authorities.

Chadian officials who met the UN team are reported to have confirmed the government's insistence that MINURCAT's mandate not be renewed when it initially expired on 15 March 2010.

Following discussions with the Chadian authorities, the United Nations Security Council renewed the mandate of MINURCAT for two months until 15 May 2010.

There is clearly a lack of strong political will from a number of influential members of the UNSC for a continuation of MINURCAT with its current mandate and resources.

The government of Chad already announced that an agreement has been reached with the UN to reduce the number of troops from over 3,800 to 1,900 from 15 May onwards and to conclude the full withdrawal of MINURCAT by October 2010. Under this proposal, which still needs to be formally discussed and decided by the UNSC, MINURCAT would no longer have the mandate and resources to protect the civilians in eastern Chad after 15 May 2010.

### **Why has the Chadian government requested troop withdrawal?**

It is not clear why the Chadian Government requested the withdrawal of MINURCAT. Officially, the Chadian government said that MINURCAT did not achieve its objectives and that its deployment was very slow. However, the Chadian Government has always been reluctant for the deployment of a military component to a UN mission in eastern Chad.

It could also be related to the recent 'normalization' of relations between Chad and Sudan and the upcoming local, legislative and presidential elections in Chad in November 2010 and April 2011 respectively.

### **What is the human rights situation in eastern Chad?**

There are 170,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) and 250,000 Sudanese refugees from Darfur in eastern Chad as well as hundreds of thousands of vulnerable local people.

Human rights abuses including rape and other violence against women, recruitment of child soldiers and other concerns continue in the midst of ongoing insecurity in eastern Chad. These attacks are carried out by members of Chadian and Sudanese armed opposition groups, members of the Chadian security forces and other armed elements.

Other serious human rights abuses take place during clashes between ethnic groups. Those responsible for carrying out these abuses enjoy almost total impunity. The withdrawal of the UN mission from the region will only serve to reinforce this pattern, as Chadian authorities lack both the capacity and the will to tackle impunity, in the east and throughout Chad.

### **What will happen if MINURCAT withdraws from eastern Chad?**

If MINURCAT is forced to withdraw, the level of violence, insecurity and grave human rights abuses in eastern Chad and northern Central African Republic will almost certainly increase substantially. Even with recent improvements, conditions in eastern Chad remain precarious for the hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees and displaced Chadians who are living there in camps. A premature UN exit would expose them to further human rights abuses.

It is very likely that a number of humanitarian agencies that are assisting refugees, IDPs and the local population in eastern Chad would be forced to close some or all of their programmes

if MINURCAT were to pull out. The security vacuum left behind by the UN withdrawal would make it too dangerous for many to continue their operations. This would leave hundreds of thousands without essential humanitarian assistance and facing increased security risks due to the absence of an international presence.

### **What is the Chadian government doing to protect people?**

The Chadian government has the right and duty to protect its own population and other persons living on its territory but for many years it has shown itself unable and unwilling to do so with respect to eastern Chad.

Demanding that MINURCAT leaves in these circumstances may contravene Chad's national and international human rights obligations. A UN withdrawal from Chad will almost certainly mean that the smaller but sorely-needed UN presence in the neighbouring Central African Republic will have to pull out as well.

Without MINURCAT's support and training, the DIS would be unable to effectively protect civilians in eastern Chad.

### **What is Amnesty International calling for?**

Amnesty International is calling on the UN Security Council to ensure that MINURCAT's mandate is renewed on 15 May 2010, and that it includes protection of the civilian population.

MINURCAT should also have sufficient resources, including troops, to be able to effectively implement its protection mandate.

### **What countries have contributed troops to MINURCAT?**

#### **Military personnel**

Albania, Austria, Bangladesh, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Croatia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Ghana, Ireland, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Mongolia, Namibia, Nepal, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Poland, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Togo, Tunisia, United States and Yemen.

#### **Police personnel**

Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Finland, France, Guinea, Jordan, Libya, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, Portugal, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Togo, Turkey and Yemen.

(Source: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/minurcat/facts.shtml> )

### **What are the implications of the MINURCAT withdrawal on the UN force in the Democratic Republic of Congo?**

Amnesty International is concerned about the worrying precedent that would be set if MINURCAT were to be forced to withdraw before the benchmarks established by the UN have been met.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) the government has requested a complete MONUC withdrawal by June 2011 thus putting the safety of its own population at grave risk. Amnesty International has appealed to the DRC government to reconsider its request and instead discuss with the UN and other international actors how to overcome the many protection challenges that remain, especially in the war-torn east of the country.

Amnesty International fears that a withdrawal of the military component of the UN mission, MONUC, would compromise the security of civilians in the DRC, and would lead to an upsurge

of violence against civilians.

In 2007 the UN Secretary General proposed a number of benchmarks and preconditions which needed to be met before any large-scale MONUC withdrawal could be considered. They included stabilization of sensitive areas, completion of the disarmament and demobilization of armed groups, and creating national forces respectful of human rights and the rule of law, with the capacity to defend the people of the DRC. To date, none of these has been satisfactorily achieved.

If both of these UN missions were to leave their areas of operations prematurely, Amnesty International fears that the human rights and humanitarian crisis in the two very troubled regions of Africa will deteriorate sharply.