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Chad: Ensure security and respect for human rights in the Dar Tama region following the killings of two army officers

Amnesty International has called on the Chadian authorities to ensure both security and the respect for human rights following violent clashes and the killing on 21 October 2010 of two senior officers of the Chadian National Army, belonging respectively to the Zaghawa and Tama ethnic groups. The organization is concerned that the tension is mounting between the two ethnic communities less than two months before the full withdrawal of the United Nations Mission to the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) from the country. Amnesty International re-iterates its call to the Chadian authorities to ensure that there is no gap in the security and protection of the population in eastern Chad after the withdrawal of MINURCAT by 31 December 2010.

According to the information received by Amnesty International the incident occurred after Colonel Dongui of the Zaghawa ethnic community - and the head of the military intelligence in the Dar Tama region based in Guéréda - arrested on 19 October 2010 a farmer of the Tama ethnic community suspected of possessing firearms, at the village of Sounout in the Ouré Kouré canton near the town of Guéréda. The Tama farmer was reportedly tortured and died in detention following the ill-treatment to which he was subjected. Subsequently, Ismael Mahamat Sossal - the Commandant of the military region - and belonging to the Tama community argued with Colonel Dongui who opened fire and killed Commandant Sossal and wounded two other Tama military officers, namely Issakha Ramadane and Abdallah Taouil. In turn, the body guards of Commandant Sossal shot and killed Colonel Dongui of the Zaghawa community.

The Governor of the Wadi Fira region went to Guéréda and military reinforcements were sent there from the military bases of Tine, Am Djaras and Abéché. A number of people, including the two Tama officers who were wounded during the incident, were arrested and some transferred to unknown locations. The situation remains tense at the Guéréda military base and in the town. Amnesty International is concerned that those arrested might be subjected to ill treatment.

Amnesty International calls on the Chadian authorities to initiate an independent and impartial investigation into the death of the Tama farmer while in detention. The organization also urges the Chadian authorities to immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of those who were arrested in Guéréda in the aftermath of the shooting and promptly inform their relatives as well as facilitate access to their lawyers, family members and medical care.

Background information

Tensions between members of the Zaghawa and the Tama communities have existed for a number of years. The Zaghawa, to which President Idriss Deby Itno belongs, have accused the Tama community of supporting armed opposition groups against the Chadian Government. For instance, on 30 November 2007, Dar Tama sultan Haroun Mahamat Abdoulaye was arrested along with seven men, including army officers from the Tama ethnic community in Guéréda. The men arrested with him were Colonels Youssouf Abdelkerim Abdoulaye, Yacoub Oumar and Ibrahim Idriss Ibrahim, Abdel Aziz Moussa, Abdel-Kerim Mahamat Toraye, then Governor of the

department of Dar Tama and Ali Kaikit. All of them, apart from Sultan Abdoulaye who was released after being detained for more than six months, remain detained at Korotoro detention centre. They have been accused by the Chadian authorities of involvement in the former armed opposition group, the United Front for Democratic Change (*Front Uni pour le Changement Démocratique, FUC*). However, they have not been charged with any criminal offence. Sultan Haroun Mahamat Abdoulaye was released in May 2008 but remained under house arrest at his home in N'Djamena until he was re-arrested on 20 July 2009. He was released without charge after several weeks of detention.

The United Nations Mission to the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) closed its offices and withdrew from Guéréda in July 2010 leaving the security functions to be carried out by the Chadian Integrated Security Detachment (*Détachement Intégré de Sécurité, DIS*). On 25 May 2010 the UN Security Council decided to end MINURCAT by 31 December 2010, following the request of the Chadian Government which said that it would assume full responsibility for protecting civilians on its territory.