

27 March 1998

UA 97/98

**Government bans human rights organisations while activists hide in fear**

**CHAD**Members of human rights organisations, including  
Dobian Assingar and  
Julien Beassemda (also see UA 315/97, AFR 20/11/97, 3 October 1997; and follow-up  
AFR 20/13/97, 11 December 1997)

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Fears for the safety of Chadian human rights activists, including Dobian Assingar and Julien Beassemda, have intensified following the Chadian government's ban on 26 March 1998 of all activities by human rights organisations "until further notice", and the subsequent occupation of such organisations' offices by members of the security forces.

The ban has put an immediate stop to Chadian human rights organisations' plans to hold a press conference at the end of March to highlight the deterioration of the country's human rights situation. The deputy secretary at the Ministry of Interior recently accused these organisations of calling for insurrection.

Four days before the ban, members of the Chadian army forcibly entered the yard of Dobian Assingar's house in Moundou, immediately loading their guns. Dobian Assingar had previously received telephone death threats. He managed to escape through the back of his house and has now gone into hiding with members of his family. Julien Beassemda, another human rights activist, has also gone into hiding for fear of attacks against him.

Following the incident at Dobian Assingar's house, Amnesty International called upon the prosecutor of Moundou to ensure his safety and that of other human rights activists in Chad. The prosecutor then visited Dobian Assingar's house and saw that it had been abandoned. Since the gate had been broken during the attack, he asked two gendarmes to guard the house. The *procureur* later informed other Chadian authorities of the attack.

Several human rights activists have now been summoned to a meeting with the director of the *police judiciaire*, judicial police, on 27 March. Amnesty International awaits the outcome of the meeting and will keep the Network informed of any developments.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

In early March 1998, members of the Chadian security forces and armed opposition groups killed more than 100 people, mainly civilians, in a series of massacres in the two Logone regions of southern Chad. Following this, the *Collectif des Associations de Défense des Droits de l'Homme et des syndicats basés à Moundou*, the Collective of Associations for the Defence of Human Rights and Trade Unions based in Moundou, called for a two day *ville morte*, "dead town", a form of protest during which inhabitants do not go outside as a way of demonstrating their opposition to the killings of civilians. Dobian Assingar received death threats by telephone soon after the *ville morte* protest. Amnesty International believes that the above events are closely linked.

**FURTHER RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send telegrams/express/airmail letters in French or in your own language:**

- asking for information about the steps taken by the Chadian authorities to ensure the safety of Dobian Assingar, Julien Beassemnda and other human rights activists in Chad;
- calling for an immediate investigation into the forcible entry by members of the armed forces into Dobian Assingar's house and for those found responsible to be brought to justice, in accordance with international standards of fairness and without recourse to the death penalty;
- stating that the Chadian government's ban on the activities of human rights organisations is a violation of the right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- calling on the Chadian government to immediately lift the ban on the activities of Chadian human rights organisations and to guarantee the right to freedom of expression in Chad.
- expressing deep concern at the deteriorating human rights situation in Chad, and urging the authorities to take immediate steps to prevent further human rights abuses by members of the security forces and armed opposition groups;

**APPEALS TO:**

Minister of Defence and Reintegration

Monsieur Mahamat Nimir HAMAJTA

Ministre de la Défense nationale et de la Réinsertion

Ministère de la Défense nationale, N'DJAMENA, Chad

**Telegrams: Ministre des Forces armées, N'Djaména, Chad**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister**

Minister of Justice

Monsieur Abdelkerim NADJO, Ministre de la Justice et Garde des sceaux

Ministère de la Justice, N'DJAMENA, Chad

**Telegrams: Ministre Justice, N'Djaména, Chad**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Ministre / Dear Minister**

Prefect of Moundou

Monsieur Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane, Préfet de Moundou

Moundou, Logone occidentale, Chad

**Telegrams: Préfet de Moundou, Logone occidentale, Chad**

**Salutation: Monsieur le Préfet**

**COPIES TO:**

Chief of defence staff

Colonel Routouang Yoma GOLOM, Chef d'Etat-major Général

Armée nationale tchadienne, N'DJAMENA, Chad

Procureur de la République, Palais de Justice, Moundou, Chad

Dobian Assingar and Sosthène Ngargoune, LTDH/FLT, BP 108 Moundou, Chad

Le Rédacteur en chef, N'Djaména Hebdo, BP 760 N'DJAMENA, Chad

and to diplomatic representatives of Chad accredited to your country.

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.** Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 8 May 1998.