

PUBLIC

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05 February 2008

UA 32/08 Incommunicado detention/Fear of torture

CHAD Lol Mahamat Choua (m), leader, *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et le Progrès (RDP)*
Ngarlejy Yorongar (m), leader, *Front d'Action pour le Renouveau (FAR)*
Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh (m), leader, *Parti pour les Libertés et le Développement (PLD)*
Wadel Adbelkader Kamougué (m), leader, *Union pour le Renouveau et la Démocratie (URD)*

The four opposition party leaders named above were arrested on 3 February in the capital, N'Djamena. The authorities have not revealed their whereabouts, though they are believed to be detained in the Palace of the President (*La Présidence*). They are at grave risk of torture.

They were arrested two days after armed opposition groups attacked N'Djamena. No legal justification has been given by the authorities for their arrest. On 5 February 2008 a presidential spokesperson told Amnesty International that they "cannot confirm whether these four people have been arrested".

On 4 February during an interview with Radio France Internationale, the minister of energy and mines, General Mahamat Ali Abdallah, said, "If someone is arrested, of course, it is not by coincidence, because there must have been clear and objective evidence which shows that there was complicity, understanding with the mercenaries". By "mercenaries" he meant the armed opposition.

A number of military officers and civilians were arrested after an April 2006 attack on N'Djamena by armed opposition groups. They were alleged to have either been involved in, or have had knowledge of, the attack. Despite several requests from local and international organizations, the authorities have refused to disclose the men's whereabouts or even say whether they are alive or dead.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Since early 2000, armed opposition movements have waged low-intensity warfare which has been exacerbated by the arrival of thousands of refugees from Sudan in 2003, and President Idriss Deby's changes to the constitution, which removed the limit of two terms in office from presidential candidates: this enabled him to be re-elected for a third term in 2006.

On 31 January 2008, armed opposition movements launched a major offensive on N'Djamena. Heavy fighting lasted three days. Hundreds of civilian casualties have been reported and thousands of people have fled the capital to neighbouring Cameroon. A UN-sponsored military force has halted its deployment to eastern Chad, where it was supposed to contribute to the protection of the civilian population and facilitate provision of humanitarian assistance.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in French, English or your own language:

- asking the authorities why the four men (naming them) have been arrested and what has happened to them;
- urging them to ensure that the four are given immediate access to the to their lawyers, families and any medical attention they may require;
- urging them to release the men unless they are to be charged with recognizable criminal offences and brought promptly to trial in accordance with international fair trial standards.

Please also send appeals to France and to other UN Security Council State Members:

- asking them to use their influence to ensure that the government of Chad immediately reveal what has happened to the four men and why they have been arrested, and promptly inform their families, legal representatives and the international community;

APPEALS TO:

Chad

President

Son excellence Idriss Deby Itno
Président de la République
Présidence de la République
BP 74
N'Djamena
Tchad

Fax: +235 252 21 39

Salutation: Dear President Deby

France

President

M. Nicolas Sarkozy
Président de la République
Palais de l'Elysée
55-57 Rue du Faubourg Saint Honore
75008 Paris Cedex
France

Fax: +33 1 47 42 24 65

Salutation: Dear President Sarkozy/Monsieur le Président

Foreign Minister

M. Bernard Kouchner
Ministre des Affaires étrangères et européennes
37 Quai d'Orsay
75351 Paris Cedex 07
France

Fax: +33 1 45 51 60 12

Salutation: Dear Minister/Monsieur le Ministre

United Nations

H.E. Ambassador Ricardo Alberto Arias
President of the UN Security Council
Permanent Representative of Panama
866 U.N. Plaza , Suite 4030
New York, NY 10017
USA

Fax: +1 212 421 26 94

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

COPIES 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 18 March 2008.