

PUBLIC

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14 December 2007

UA 332/07 Fear of torture

CHAD Nadjikomo Benoudjita (m), journalist, news editor of newspaper *Notre temps*

Journalist Nadjikimo Benoudjita was arrested on 14 December at around 6am by a group of more than a dozen police officers, who came to his home in the Moursal district of the capital, N'Djamena with no arrest warrant, and gave no reason for detaining him. He is in grave danger of torture.

Nadjikimo Benoudjita is the news editor of the weekly newspaper *Notre temps*. The police came to arrest him in four police cars, and apparently told his family they were taking him to the city's *Commissariat Central* (Central police station).

When his family members went to the central police station around two hours later, he was not there. According to a local human rights organisation, it seems that Nadjikimo Benoudjita was instead taken to the *Direction des renseignements généraux* (Intelligence service headquarters), next door to the presidential palace. Detainees' relatives, lawyers, doctors and human rights organisations are not allowed into this place.

Human rights organisations regularly report that people detained in the office of the *Direction des renseignements généraux* are often tortured and ill-treated there.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Independent journalists in Chad are subject to intimidation, harassment and arrest without warrant. The authorities exercise tight control over freedom of speech and of the press, in particular when they have been criticised, especially over their conduct in the armed conflict underway in the eastern part of the country. Since early 2000, Chadian armed opposition movements have waged low-intensity warfare which has been exacerbated by the spillover of thousands of refugees from Sudan in 2003 and the politically contentious 2005 constitutional changes which, in 2006, enabled President Idriss Deby to be re-elected for a third term.

On 31 October 2007, armed men broke into the property of Mikael Didama, the director of the newspaper *Le temps*, and fired several shots into his car. Mikael Didama was abroad at the time, but his family were in the house.

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

- demanding that Nadjikimo Benoudjita is treated humanely and given immediate access to lawyers of his choice and his family;
- asking the authorities to release him if he is not immediately charged with a recognisable criminal offence.

APPEALS TO:

President

Son excellence Idriss Deby Itno
Présidence de la République
BP 74
N'Djamena, Chad

Fax: +2352514501
Email: presidence@tchad.td
Salutation: Monsieur le président/Dear President Deby

Minister of the interior

M. Ahmat Mahamat Bashir
N'Djamena, Chad

Fax: +2352522139
Salutation: Monsieur le ministre

Minister of justice

M. Albert Pahimi Padacket
BP 426/5495
N'Djamena, Chad

Fax: +2352524458 / 2484
Email: justice@intnet.td
Salutation: Monsieur le ministre/Dear Minister

Minister of human rights

Mme Fatime Issa Ramadane
BP 426
N'Djamena, Chad

Fax: +2352522484
Email: justice@intnet.td
Salutation: Madame la ministre/Dear Minister

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 24 January 2008.