

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

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Chad: Human Rights Challenges as the UN mission withdraws

In a new report, released today, Amnesty International highlights serious concerns regarding ongoing insecurity and human rights violations in eastern Chad as an important UN peacekeeping mission starts to withdraw from the country. The report, *Chad: "We too deserve protection" – Human rights challenges as the UN mission withdraws*, highlights the fact that the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) puts at risk the relative security enjoyed by more than 250,000 refugees from Sudan (Darfur) and 170,000 internally displaced Chadians, in addition to the local population in eastern Chad. Under the terms of a May 2010 UN Security Council (SC) resolution, MINURCAT is to have fully completed its withdrawal by 31 December 2010.

The SC, at the request of the Chadian government, adopted on 25 May 2010 resolution 1923 (2010) ordering the withdrawal of MINURCAT by December 2010. The SC passed this resolution without having received from the Chadian authorities any detailed and concrete plan of action on how they intend to protect the civilian population in eastern Chad as MINURCAT starts its withdrawal. The organization considers the Security Council decision premature and dangerous and fears that MINURCAT's withdrawal could jeopardize the lives and safety of civilians living in eastern Chad.

Chadian officials have promised the SC that they will assume full responsibility for civilian protection, but have yet to make public their plans for doing so. The benchmarks that the UN Secretary-General had developed and the Security Council endorsed in early 2009, intended to be used in measuring MINURCAT's progress, have not yet been met and were clearly not applied in reaching the decision to withdraw MINURCAT. There are real concerns about the safety of civilians both over the coming six months, as UN forces could focus attention and resources on their withdrawal, as well as after the withdrawal is complete.

The Chadian authorities have not shown either the capacity or willingness to protect refugees, internally displaced Chadians and vulnerable population in the east of the country in recent years. The United Nations Security Council must remain vigilant and be prepared to reverse its decision if there is a further deterioration of the situation in eastern Chad or if Chadian authorities fail to present a concrete plan of action for civilian protection within a reasonable time.

An Amnesty International delegation spent three weeks in eastern Chad in May and June 2010. The delegation investigated a range of human rights concerns, including the likely consequences of MINURCAT's withdrawal. Delegates visited refugee camps, Internally Displaced People (IDP) sites and local villages and carried out interviews with victims of human rights violations, Darfuri refugees, displaced Chadians, camp leaders, and local authorities, as well as humanitarian workers providing assistance to vulnerable populations in the area. It is clear that the ongoing insecurity, human rights violations, and anticipated impact of the withdrawal of MINURCAT are of serious concern for people in the region.

The organization is also concerned that both the Chadian government, in making its demand for the withdrawal of MINURCAT, and the Security Council, in acceding to that demand, failed

to consult with refugees, displaced Chadians and other individuals and communities whose rights will be directly affected by this decision.

Attacks by armed men against humanitarian workers, including cases of kidnapping and car jacking, continue to be common. For instance, at least two cases of kidnapping of humanitarian workers were reported in June 2010. This could significantly restrict the humanitarian space and lead some humanitarian organizations to limit their operations or even pull out of eastern Chad. That situation would have serious consequences for the hundreds of thousands of individuals in eastern Chad who are reliant on international humanitarian assistance.

Amnesty International calls on the Chadian Government and the international community through the SC to take immediate steps to protect the human rights of the civilian population in eastern Chad. In particular, the organization recommends to:

the government of Chad to ensure that it protects all persons within its territory, including refugees from Darfur and displaced Chadians, from violations of international human rights and humanitarian law;

the government of Chad to ensure that its own security forces do not commit human rights and humanitarian law violations. The government of Chad should immediately formulate, disseminate and implement a detailed and transparent plan of action for civilian protection in eastern Chad; and

the UN Security Council to maintain a high level of engagement in eastern Chad, so as to ensure that the security situation does not deteriorate during the transition period and after the full withdrawal of MINURCAT.

Background

In January 2010, the Chadian government informed the UN Security Council by *note verbale* that it wanted MINURCAT to leave eastern Chad when its then current mandate expired on 15 March 2010. Following intense discussions with Chadian authorities the Security Council extended MINURCAT's mandate to 15 May 2010 and then further to 26 May 2010, while negotiations continued. On 25 May 2010, the Security Council accepted the request of the Chadian government and passed Resolution 1923(2010) setting out a timetable for the withdrawal of MINURCAT by 31 December 2010. MINURCAT had been established by the Security Council in September 2007. Between March 2008 and March 2009 the mission was supported by European Union troops. In March 2009, control of the military component was transferred to MINURCAT.

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