

U.S Department of State

2008 Human Rights Report: Chad

BUREAU OF DEMOCRACY, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND LABOR

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Chad is a centralized republic with a population of approximately 10 million. In 2006 citizens reelected President Idriss Deby, leader of the Patriotic Salvation Movement (MPS), to a third term in what unofficial observers characterized as an orderly but seriously flawed election boycotted by the opposition. Deby has ruled the country since taking power in a 1990 coup. Political power remained concentrated in the hands of a northern oligarchy composed of the president's Zaghawa ethnic group and its allies. The executive branch dominated the legislature and judiciary. Despite 2006 and 2007 peace accords with rebel groups, fighting between the government and rebels continued and resulted in civilian deaths and the widespread destruction of homes and property during the year. Rebels attacked N'Djamena in February, as well as locations in the east in June. The government supported Sudanese rebels. Violent interethnic conflict, banditry, and cross-border raids by Darfur-based militias continued. Civilians were killed, and an estimated 185,000 have been internally displaced as a result of violence. Approximately 250,000 Sudanese refugees who had fled from violence in Darfur lived in camps along the border. On March 15, the European Union Force (EUFOR) in Chad, whose mandate includes protecting civilians, including internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees, and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian assistance in the east, reached operational capacity. Civilian authorities did not maintain effective control of the security forces.

The government's human rights record deteriorated in comparison with the previous year. Human rights abuses included limitation of citizens' right to change their government; extrajudicial killings; politically motivated disappearances; torture and rape by security forces; security force impunity; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest and detention; incommunicado detention; lengthy pretrial detention; denial of a fair public trial; executive interference in the judiciary; arbitrary interference with privacy, family, and correspondence; use of excessive force and other abuses in internal conflict, including killings and use of child soldiers; limits on freedom of speech, press, and assembly, including harassment and detention of journalists; widespread official corruption; obstruction of the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); violence and societal discrimination against women, including the widespread practice of female genital mutilation (FGM); child abuse and trafficking; ethnic-based discrimination; repression of union activity; forced labor; and exploitive child labor.

Rebel groups, ethnic-based militias, Darfur-based militias, and bandits committed numerous human rights abuses. These abuses included killing, abducting, injuring, raping, and displacing civilians; attacks against and destruction of villages; use of child soldiers; and attacks against humanitarian workers.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1: Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

There were reports of numerous killings of civilians by the government, militias, and rebels during the year in connection with the country's internal conflict (see section 1.g.).

Security forces committed politically motivated killings and officially sanctioned extrajudicial killings of suspected criminals. Use of excessive force resulted in deaths. Security forces continued to kill civilians during apprehension and while in custody and killed demonstrators. The government did not prosecute or punish members of the security forces who committed killings, although it established a commission of inquiry during the year to investigate abuses that occurred between January 28 and February 8 (see section 1.g.).

According to Human Rights Watch, the military killed civilians and burned villages in the Central African Republic (CAR) in support of nomadic Peuhls who drive their cattle across land used by farmers in CAR. For example, witnesses stated that on February 29, the military destroyed several villages in the area of Maitoukoulou, CAR.

On June 29, security forces used excessive force in response to a confrontation in Kouno during which supporters of Sheikh Ahmet Ismael Bichara reportedly attacked security forces. Approximately 72 persons were killed during the confrontation, including an estimated 68 supporters of Bichara and four gendarmes. Bichara had earlier called for a "holy war" against the government and declined to negotiate with religious leaders from the High Council for Islamic Affairs (a government-sanctioned, nongovernmental body). Security forces detained Bichara, and he remained detained without charge at year's end.

Security forces killed demonstrators (see section 2.b.).

There were no developments regarding the numerous reported 2006 and 2007 killings by security forces.

Unexploded ordnance and landmines laid by government, rebel, and foreign forces resulted in deaths (see section 1.g.).

Attacks by armed bandits increased during the year. Armed bandits continued to operate on many roads, assaulting, robbing, and killing travelers; some perpetrators were identified as active duty soldiers or deserters. Their targets included employees of foreign assistance organizations and NGOs (see section 1.g.).

On July 14, armed bandits between Koumogo and Sarh killed Tenebaye Oringar, a college professor. No suspects had been identified by year's end.

On July 22, near the village of Djarwaye, armed bandits attacked a vehicle, killing one person and injuring another.

On August 19, armed bandits shot at the car of General Secretary of the Ministry of Mines Oumar Abdoul Dabeh, killing him.

No action was taken against the perpetrators of numerous 2006 and 2007 attacks and killings by bandits.

Interethnic fighting resulted in numerous deaths (see section 1.g.).

b. Disappearance

There continued to be reports of politically motivated disappearances and persons being held incommunicado during the year, particularly in relation to the country's ongoing conflict (see section 1.g.).

On February 3, security forces arrested opposition leaders Lol Mahamat Choua, Ngarlejy Yorongar, and Ibni Oumar Mahmat Saleh, according to the commission of inquiry. Saleh's whereabouts remained unknown at year's end (see section 1.g.).

There was additional information regarding the case of at least 16 high-ranking army officers whom the government detained in 2006. Although in 2006 government and human rights sources reported that Colonel Ahmat Ismat had been released, his whereabouts during 2007 and 2008 were unknown. In April 2007 Colonel Abdoulaye Issakha Sarwa was released.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit such practices; however, the government did not respect these provisions in practice. Members of the security forces tortured, beat, abused, and raped persons. Such practices also occurred in connection with the ongoing armed conflict (see section 1.g.). The government took no known action against security force members responsible for such abuse.

No action was taken in reported 2006 or 2007 cases of security force abuse.

Police, gendarmes, and Chadian National Army (ANT) personnel raped women.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Prison conditions remained harsh and life threatening. Prisons were seriously overcrowded, had poor sanitation, and provided inadequate food, shelter, and medical facilities. As a result of inadequate record-keeping and management, many individuals remained in prison after completing their sentences or after courts had ordered their release.

Local human rights organizations continued to report on the existence of military prisons and prisons run by the National Immigration Service, to which access was prohibited; they also reported on the existence of secret National Security Agency (ANS) and General Directorate of Security Services for National Institutions (DGSSIE) prisons. The NGO Chadian Association for the Promotion of Human Rights (ATPDH) reported, based on the statement of an escapee, the existence of a secret prison in Koro Toro in the department of Bourkou-Ennedi-Tibesti. The Commission of Inquiry to

examine disappeared persons and other abuses that occurred from January 28 to February 8 also found that secret detention centers existed. The commission visited the detention facility in Koro Toro and found that most of the detainees were children, that two persons were in shackles, and that the detainees had not been accorded due process.

While the law provides that a doctor must visit each prison three times a week, this provision was not respected. The law authorizes forced labor in prison, but human rights organizations did not report that it occurred.

Approximately 1,000 prison inmates escaped during the February rebel attack on N'Djamena. Some of the prisoners returned voluntarily to reduce the punishment they would have faced if apprehended; none of the others had been apprehended by year's end.

Juvenile males were not always separated from adult male prisoners, and children were sometimes held with their inmate mothers. Pretrial detainees were held with convicted prisoners.

The government permitted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to visit civilian prisons on a regular basis, and the ICRC conducted such visits during the year. The ICRC also visited illegal detention facilities under the control of the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, and the Presidency. The government denied repeated requests by the ICRC for access to the Koro Toro detention facility. The government provided ATPDH with a permanent authorization notice to visit civilian prisons at any time, without need to provide advance notice. Other NGOs, including human rights groups, were required to obtain authorization from a court or from the director of prisons; such authorizations depended largely on the personal inclinations of those with authority to grant permission. NGOs were not allowed access to military prisons.

During the year a prison development committee whose members included government, UN, and NGO members was formed to address prison conditions.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The constitution and law prohibit arbitrary arrest and detention; however, security forces often violated these provisions.

Role of the Police and Security Apparatus

The ANT, gendarmerie, national police, nomadic guard (GNNT), DGSSIE, and ANS are responsible for internal security.

The ANT, gendarmerie, and GNNT report to the Ministry of Defense; the National Police report to the Ministry of Public Security and Immigration; the DGSSIE and ANS report to the president. Officers from President Deby's ethnic group and closely allied ethnic groups dominated the ANS. The DGSSIE's ethnic composition was mixed, but its officers were primarily Zaghawas. Security force impunity and corruption were widespread.

The police force was centrally controlled, but exercising oversight, particularly outside N'Djamena, was difficult. Police generally enjoyed impunity. The police force was unable to improve internal

security problems, including widespread banditry and arms proliferation. The government continued to allow months to pass before it paid police salaries.

As of November 7, the UN Mission in CAR and Chad (MINURCAT) had trained 428 police on the protection of refugees and displaced persons as part of an effort to facilitate the deployment of the police Integrated Security Division (DIS) to reduce insecurity in the eastern part of the country. An additional 120 started training before the year's end. Approximately 100 DIS members were deployed to the east as of November.

On July 9, the minister of defense directed that all gendarme brigade commanders take a one-month training course on civil affairs, which included the topics of working peacefully with local populations and the proper role of gendarmes in law enforcement. A total of 924 gendarmes received this training.

Reports of widespread defection of government troops to rebel groups continued.

Arrest and Detention

Although the constitution and law require a judicial official to sign arrest warrants, the government often did not respect this requirement, and secret detentions occurred. Detainees were not promptly informed of charges, and judicial determinations were not made promptly. The law requires access to bail and counsel, but neither was regularly provided. Incommunicado detention was a problem, and there were reports that persons held incommunicado were tortured. The constitution and law state that legal counsel should be provided for indigent defendants and that defendants should be allowed prompt access to family members and counsel; however, in practice this usually did not occur.

On January 9, judiciary police arrested and detained Deuzombe Daniel Passalet from the local NGO Human Rights without Borders. He was released 72 hours later.

Security forces arbitrarily arrested and reportedly tortured persons, particularly those suspected of collaborating with rebels (see section 1.g.).

Security forces arbitrarily arrested a journalist and a political party leader, as well as arbitrarily detained other civil society representatives.

There were reports that the government arrested numerous military defectors and members of their families, although specific information was unavailable.

Lengthy pretrial detention remained a problem. Persons accused of crimes could be imprisoned for several years before being charged or tried, particularly those who were arrested in the provinces for felonies and transferred to prison in N'Djamena.

There were no reported developments in the numerous 2007 cases of arbitrary arrest and detention.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The constitution and law provide for an independent judiciary; however, the judiciary was ineffective, underfunded, overburdened, vulnerable to intimidation and violence, and subject to executive interference. In practice government officials and other influential persons often enjoyed impunity. Members of the military continued to enjoy a particularly high degree of impunity. The Judiciary Police did not usually enforce domestic court orders against military members or those of the Zaghawa ethnic group, to which the president belongs.

In March two colonels of the Zaghawa ethnicity forced landowner Moussa Pepe to turn over the title to his property at gunpoint. The court ruled in favor of the landowner in October; however, by year's end the decision had not been enforced.

Members of the judiciary received death threats or faced demotion or removal from their positions for not acquiescing to pressure from officials.

At the national level, a supreme court, constitutional court, and court of appeals exist; some of their members were appointed by the government rather than elected by citizens as required by law, which weakened judicial independence. The constitutionally mandated High Court of Justice can try high ranking government officials whose cases are submitted by the National Assembly. Crimes committed by military members are to be tried by a military court; however, no such courts have been established.

A special criminal court was established to try abuses committed under former president Hissein Habre.

In 2006 the government began a process to establish appeal courts in all principal cities outside N'Djamena. As of July magistrates were named to all these appeals courts. At the provincial level, there are appeals courts in N'Djamena, Moundou, Sarh, and Abeche.

The constitution and law mandate that the Superior Council of Magistrates recommend judicial nominations and sanction judges who commit improprieties; however, continuing problems between the government and magistrates prevented any sanctions from being considered or carried out.

A five-judge judicial oversight commission has the power to conduct investigations of judicial decisions and address suspected miscarriages of justice. However, in contrast to the superior council, commission members are appointed by the president, which increased executive control over the judiciary and diminished the authority of the superior council. Parties to judicial cases can appeal to the commission.

Trial Procedures

Applicable law was sometimes confusing, as courts tended to blend the formal French-derived legal code with traditional practices, and customary law often superseded Napoleonic law in practice. Residents of rural areas often lacked access to formal judicial institutions, and legal reference texts were not available outside the capital. In most civil cases, the population relied on traditional courts presided over by village chiefs, canton chiefs, or sultans. However, decisions can be appealed to a formal court.

The law provides for a presumption of innocence; however, in practice many judges assumed a suspect's guilt, particularly in crimes involving rape or theft. Trials are public and use juries, except in politically sensitive cases. Defendants have the right to be present in court. They also have the right to consult an attorney in a timely manner; however, in practice detained persons were not always given access to counsel. The law states that indigents should be provided promptly with legal counsel, but this seldom occurred in practice. Human rights groups sought to improve this situation and sometimes provided free counsel themselves. Defendants, their lawyers, and judges are permitted by law to question witnesses. Defendants and their attorneys have access to government-held evidence relevant to their cases, except in politically sensitive cases. Defendants have the right to appeal decisions.

The Muslim concept of dia, which involves a payment to the family of a crime victim, is based on the decision of local leaders and was practiced widely in northern Muslim areas. Non-Muslim groups, which supported implementation of a civil code, continued to challenge the use of the dia system, arguing that it was incompatible with the constitution. Such groups further accused the government of supporting dia practices by permitting the existence of local tribunals.

During its August 12-15 session, the criminal court sentenced 11 current rebel leaders and former president Hissene Habre to death in absentia. Among those sentenced to death were rebel leaders Mahamat Nouri, Tom Erdimi, Timan Erdimi, Ahmat Hassaballah Soubiane, and Abdoul-Wahid Aboud. Life sentences were pronounced for 31 other rebels. The court also ordered the confiscation of the property of the condemned.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

The government held political detainees during the year, and human rights organizations were denied access to such persons.

Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies

The judiciary reportedly was not always independent or impartial in civil matters, although specific information was not available. There are administrative and judicial remedies available such as mediation for alleged wrongs.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and law prohibit such actions, but the government conducted illegal searches and wiretaps and monitored private mail and e-mail. Security forces also regularly stopped citizens and extorted money or confiscated belongings.

On February 10, security forces broke into a home in Abena and robbed three of its occupants.

During the state of emergency from February 14 to March 15, city authorities in N'Djamena destroyed at least 1,000 homes located in several different neighborhoods; many were destroyed without due process. The government stated that the homes were illegally built on government-owned land. In November a delegation of magistrates and attorneys asked the mayor to establish a

commission regarding these cases and asserted that they should be handled through civil courts. The mayor stated that the matter was not under court jurisdiction and required a political solution.

During the February rebel attack on N'Djamena, the government ordered the temporary shutdown of cellular telephone networks. The Ministry of Interior banned the use of satellite telephones by private individuals in 2006. Military and police officials conducted searches for and confiscated satellite telephones from private individuals.

There were reports of the recruitment of minors into the military (see section 1.g.).

There were occasions when police officers arrested family members of suspects.

g. Use of Excessive Force and Other Abuses in Internal Conflicts

Fighting between the government and rebel groups continued and resulted in civilian deaths and the widespread destruction of homes and property during the year. While rebel attacks and government counterattacks occurred mainly along the eastern border with Sudan, rebels also attacked N'Djamena on February 2-3. From June 12 to 17, rebels attacked locations in the east and took temporary control of Goz Beida, Am Dam, and Biltine.

A UN panel of experts found that the government supported the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), a Sudanese rebel group. The report noted open circulation of JEM vehicles and personnel in the east, most of JEM's support and resupply activities occurring in Chad, and joint ANT and JEM operations and resupply.

The February 2-3 rebel attack on N'Djamena and the government counterattack resulted in civilian deaths and the displacement of approximately 30,000 persons to Cameroon, and additional persons to Nigeria. Although most returned to the country by year's end, an estimated 14,000 remained in Cameroon.

The government declared a state of emergency from February 14 to March 15 that limited civil liberties including freedom of speech, movement, assembly, and the press. A curfew remained in place for N'Djamena and the six principal departments in the center and east of Chad from February 7 to March 15. On April 2, a government decree established a Commission of Inquiry to examine disappeared persons and other abuses that occurred from January 28 to February 8--the period before, during, and after the attack. The commission released a report on August 5 that stated that 977 persons including civilians, ANT, and rebels were killed, 1,758 injured, 34 raped, and 380 detained in N'Djamena and the provinces; however, there were no indications by year's end that the government took judicial action against those responsible. The government issued a reply to the commission's report and established an interministerial committee to look into the commission's findings.

The October 2007 peace agreement, known as the Sirte accord, remained largely unimplemented; however, more than 1,500 former members of the Chad National Concord rebel group were reportedly integrated into the military in December 2007. On August 18, an annex to the Sirte accord was signed, and at least 22 members of the Forces of Change Gathering rebel group were

subsequently integrated into the army. There was no further implementation of the 2006 government and United Front for Change peace accord during the year.

Violent interethnic conflict, banditry, and cross-border raids by Darfur-based militias continued, as did interethnic attacks on villages in the eastern part of the country. Vast areas along the border with Sudan were not protected by the government. Militias stole cattle and burned houses in unprotected villages, resulting in numerous deaths and the displacement of persons.

In 2007 the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of EUFOR and a UN police training mission, known as MINURCAT, to protect civilians and promote human rights and the rule of law in eastern Chad and northeastern CAR. At year's end EUFOR had reached its operational capacity. As of October 31, 282 of the authorized MINURCAT 350 uniformed officers had been deployed along with civilian personnel.

Killings

Government, militia, and rebel attacks and counterattacks resulted in numerous civilian deaths and injuries.

The commission of inquiry found that during the February rebel attack on N'Djamena, the government's aerial bombardment of rebel positions in civilian areas killed and injured civilians and caused large-scale civilian displacement.

On February 2, in Arded Djoumal, 25-year-old student Ibrahim Moussa Korbol was reportedly shot and killed during the attack on N'Djamena.

On February 2 and 3, gunfire and bombs from government helicopters killed numerous civilians including in the N'Djamena neighborhoods of Abena, Blabline, Chaguoua, and Diguel.

Security forces continued to kill persons suspected of collaborating with rebel forces.

On February 3, in the Mardjanedaffack neighborhood of N'Djamena, security forces reportedly killed two persons of the Ouddai ethnic group, accusing them of complicity with rebels.

On February 23, in the N'Djamena neighborhood of Farcha, soldiers reportedly arrested and beat Adam Hassan and Bineye Mahamat, who were suspected of collaborating with rebels. They were found dead the following day.

On February 6, near Farcha, soldiers reportedly killed three unidentified persons appearing to be of the Gorane ethnicity.

There were no developments in the alleged 2007 security force killing of Ahmat Sougou, who was suspected of collaborating with armed rebels.

Interethnic attacks on communities continued during the year, particularly in the east and the south.

For example, on January 2, in Benoye, clashes between nomadic herders and sedentary populations resulted in one death.

On February 5, in Batha, clashes between Nawala Arabs and Awada Arabs resulted in the deaths of 23 people.

On July 2, in Biltine, fighting between nomadic herders and sedentary populations resulted in the deaths of three persons. The Ministry of the Interior sent officials to mediate the conflict, and the government compensated the families for the deaths. There were no reports that authorities took judicial action against those responsible for the deaths.

There were no reported developments regarding the 2006 or 2007 ethnic clashes.

Abductions

On February 3, security forces arrested opposition leaders Lol Mahamat Choua, Ngarlejy Yorongar, and Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, according to the commission of inquiry. Government forces released Lol Mahamat Choua on February 27 and placed him under house arrest. Yorongar claimed that he also had been detained by the government and that he had been released on February 21; however, the commission of inquiry found contradictory testimony regarding the government's role in his detention. The whereabouts of Saleh remained unknown at year's end.

The government captured at least 135 rebels, including children, during the February attack on N'Djamena; as of June none had been brought to trial. The whereabouts of these persons were unknown at year's end.

On July 24, an American missionary who was abducted in October 2007 by rebels in the Tibesti region was released.

Recruitment of refugees and displaced persons into armed groups continued.

There were no reported developments regarding Sudanese militiamen who abducted approximately 4,700 refugees from refugee camps in the east in 2006.

Physical Abuse, Punishment, and Torture

Security forces tortured, beat, arrested, detained, and abused numerous persons suspected of rebel activity or collaboration with rebels. The government also arrested military defectors, some of whom had joined rebel groups.

On February 8, security forces reportedly arrested and beat a shopkeeper from Mardjanedaffack who was suspected of rebel activity.

On February 25, four teenagers were reportedly arrested and beaten by persons in military uniforms in Bololo. The security forces alleged that the teenagers collaborated with the rebels.

There were developments in the November 2007 arrest of four army officers, the sultan and governor of Dar Tama, and one additional individual. On May 3, the sultan was released; the whereabouts of the others were unknown at year's end.

Retribution against the families and villages of military defectors to rebel groups reportedly included the burning of homes, arrest and torture of family members, and destruction of crops and other property.

Unexploded ordnance and landmines laid by government, rebel, and foreign forces resulted in civilian deaths. For example, on August 4, ordnance reportedly left from the February 2-3 rebel attack on N'Djamena exploded, killing four persons and injuring 30 in a market.

Government and rebel forces raped civilians, according to the commission of inquiry.

On February 10, in the N'Djamena neighborhood of Abena, a group of security force members assaulted and raped a pregnant woman, causing her to miscarry.

Rapes also occurred during attacks on villages and also on and near IDP camps.

Child Soldiers

The law prohibits the use of child soldiers; however, child soldiers were used by the ANT, Chadian rebel groups, village self-defense forces, and armed groups from Sudan operating in the border region.

According to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) there were thousands of children in the ANT.

Children were recruited from refugee camps along the eastern border by armed groups from both Chad and Sudan, including JEM.

In May 2007 UNICEF negotiated an agreement with the government to end recruitment of persons younger than age 18 into the army; however, in contrast to 2007 there were no reports of the ANT demobilizing children through the program.

Other Conflict Related Abuses

Armed groups and bandits attacked humanitarian workers. Insecurity hindered the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide services including food distribution to refugees and IDPs. Humanitarian organizations temporarily suspended or limited activities due to insecurity. During the year humanitarian vehicles were hijacked, numerous convoys were attacked and looted, and humanitarian offices were robbed. According to one estimate, there were 111 assaults on aid workers, resulting in seven deaths between July 2007 and June 2008.

On May 1, armed men attacked a humanitarian convoy in Farchana and killed Pascal Marlinge, country director for the NGO Save the Children. No suspects had been identified by year's end.

In June rebels looted the offices of aid agencies during the temporary rebel occupation of Goz Beida.

On September 17, armed bandits in military uniforms stole equipment from and injured two staff members of the NGO International Relief and Development in Goz Beida.

Violence increased the number of IDPs in the country from 180,000 in 2007 to 185,000 as of August and caused thousands to flee to neighboring countries. The IDPs were largely the former residents of villages in the eastern prefectures of Salamat and Ouaddai. Some IDPs were forcibly displaced two or three times.

Although the overall number of IDPs increased, there was a significant reduction in the number of persons newly displaced from their homes during the year in comparison to the two previous years. Attacks by janjaweed-like mounted raiders from Sudan, Chadian rebels, and Chadian ethnic militias, both Arab and non-Arab, occurred. These attacks occurred mostly in the area south of the Abeche-Adre road in the Dar Assongha and Dar Sila departments, in the prefectures of Salamat and Ouaddai.

The February 2-3 rebel attack on N'Djamena and the government counterattack resulted in the displacement of approximately 30,000 persons to Cameroon and additional displacement of persons to Nigeria. Although most returned to the country by year's end, an estimated 14,000 remained in Cameroon.

The government publicly acknowledged that its resources were directed toward fighting rebel groups and armed militias and that it could not protect or provide for the growing number of IDPs and refugees in the country. The government allowed IDP access to humanitarian organizations and permitted them to accept assistance provided by these groups. Although UN and humanitarian organizations operated in the country during the year, lack of security reduced their ability to provide services to IDPs and refugees. During the February rebel attack on N'Djamena, the UN evacuated employees from the country.

According to the UN, Chadians continued regularly to move to and from Sudan. The movements reflected seasonal migration and were in response to insecurity. The UN estimated that there were 45,000 Chadian refugees in West Darfur and noted that estimates on North and South Darfur were difficult to obtain.

Section 2: Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the government did not respect these rights in practice and placed additional restrictions on the press and speech during the year, including through a state of emergency decree and revisions to the press law. Journalists and publishers practiced self censorship and many fled the country for fear of arrest after the February rebel attack on N'Djamena.

The February 14 to March 15 state of emergency included strict press censorship provisions. On February 20, the president amended the press law by decree, placing new restrictions on speech

and the press. Punishments for articles whose purpose is to cause tribal, racial, or religious hatred regarding ethnicity, religion, or regions can include imprisonment for three to five years under the law. The new law provides for increased penalties, including imprisonment, for defamation of the courts, armed forces, security forces, and public administration. Offending the president is punishable by one to five years' imprisonment and/or fines, as is publicly offending foreign, high-level government officials. Conspiring with the enemy is punishable by up to three years' imprisonment and/or fines. The law included additional requirements for launching a newspaper. Human rights organizations and newspapers criticized the new restrictions. On March 28, several newspapers jointly published a newspaper calling for a repeal of the law.

Individuals who publicly criticized the government often faced reprisal. There were reports that the government attempted to control criticism by monitoring meetings of the political opposition and that the government attempted to intimidate its critics.

For example, on January 17, police arrested Liberal party leader Keletete Dono after a radio interview in which he criticized the government's policy regarding the internal conflict. He was provisionally released on January 25.

The government owned the newspaper Info Tchad and influenced another, Le Progres. Government-controlled media were subject to censorship but sometimes criticized the government. Beginning in February, independent newspapers Notre Temps, N'Djamena Hebdo, L'Observateur, and Le Miroir temporarily suspended publication in protest of censorship; the newspapers later resumed publication.

Radio remained the most important medium of mass communication. Government-owned Radiodiffusion Nationale Tchadienne had several branches. There were numerous private radio stations that broadcast throughout the country, many of them owned by religious organizations, including two stations affiliated with the Catholic NGO BELACD that opened during the year.

The licensing fee set by the government's High Council for Communications (HCC) for a commercial radio station remained prohibitively high at approximately five million CFA francs (approximately \$11,000) per year, 10 times the fee for radio stations owned by nonprofit NGOs. The HCC monitored and censored the content of radio station programming.

The government owned and operated the only domestic television station but did not interfere with channels originating outside the country.

The government arrested, harassed, and intimidated journalists; many journalists fled the country in fear of arrest after the February rebel attack on N'Djamena.

For example, there were reports that between February 2 and 8, uniformed men went to the homes of Laldjim Narcisse and Michael Didama of the independent newspaper Le Temps and Eloi Miandadji of the new weekly satirical newspaper Le Moustick and tried to arrest them; however, they had fled the country. The Judiciary Police had closed both newspapers in late January. Le Temps resumed publication in March.

On February 7, Zara Yacoub, coordinator of the privately owned Dja FM radio, was attacked by persons in military uniform. Two technicians were also injured in the attack. The government did not investigate the case.

In February the government suspended the work permit for French journalist Sonia Rolley, and subsequently terminated it, alleging that her reporting favored the rebels. Rolley was a correspondent for several French media outlets.

The government directly censored the media by restricting media content through laws and other mechanisms as well as closing some media outlets. Under the state of emergency the government required that all news items be submitted to the HCC for approval before publication.

On January 16, security forces closed FM Liberte and arrested its manager, Djekourninga Kaotar Lazare, for allegedly disseminating false information. Lazare was arrested after the broadcast of a petition from the Chadian Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Consumer opposing the charging of administrative fees for identity documents by the government. Lazare was released on January 18, and the charges against him were dropped. Daouda Elhadji of the Chadian Association for the Defense of the Rights of the Consumer was also detained and later released. On May 27, FM Liberte was allowed to resume broadcasting.

The government permitted the newspaper Notre Temps to resume publication during the year; however, the newspaper did not do so.

Some journalists in rural provinces reported that government officials warned them not to engage in any contentious political reporting. In addition, some domestic journalists claimed that the government restricted their ability to cover some events or visit certain locations and limited their access to high-ranking officials, restrictions the government did not impose on foreign journalists.

Internet Freedom

There were no government restrictions on access to the Internet; however, the government reportedly monitored e-mail. Although increasingly available to the public at Internet cafes, the growth of Internet access was almost entirely through the government telecommunications company.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

There were no government restrictions on academic freedom or cultural events.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Freedom of Assembly

The constitution and law provide for freedom of assembly; however, the government did not respect this right in practice. The law requires the government to be notified of demonstrations five days in advance.

On April 23, in Moundou, gendarmes shot and killed several students who were demonstrating peacefully. Although the progovernmental daily newspaper *Le Progres* reported that four students were killed, the human rights organization Tchad Non-Violence quoted a hospital source as stating 12 students were killed and 50 injured. Authorities did not investigate or take other action by year's end.

No action was taken against security force members responsible for injuries that resulted from the violent dispersal of demonstrators in 2006 or 2007.

Freedom of Association

The constitution and law provide for freedom of association; in contrast with 2007, there were no reports that the government banned the formation of a union.

An ordinance requires prior authorization from the Ministry of Interior before an association, including a labor union, may be formed; however, there were no reports that the ordinance was enforced. The ordinance also allows for the immediate administrative dissolution of an association and permits authorities to monitor association funds.

c. Freedom of Religion

Although the law provides for religious freedom, at times the government limited this right. The law also provides for a secular state; however, some policies favored Islam in practice. For example, a committee composed of members of the High Council for Islamic Affairs and the Directorate of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Interior organized the Hajj and the Umra.

The July 2007 ban on all forms of street-corner evangelization and preaching remained in effect.

On June 29, security forces used excessive force in response to a confrontation in Kouno during which supporters of Sheikh Ahmet Ismael Bichara reportedly attacked security forces. Approximately 72 persons were killed during the confrontation, including an estimated 68 supporters of Bichara and four gendarmes. Bichara had earlier called for a "holy war" against the government and declined to negotiate with religious leaders from the High Council for Islamic Affairs. Security forces detained Bichara, and he remained detained without charge at year's end.

On February 20, in Bol, Abakar Brahim was arrested by ANS personnel. Brahim was accused of mobilizing Muslims to pray for the release of Lol Mahamat Choua.

The government continued to ban Al Mountada al Islami, the World Association for Muslim Youth, the Mecca Al-Moukarrama Charitable Foundation, and Al Haramain Charitable Foundation for promoting violence to further religious goals.

The Islamic religious group Faid al-Djaria remained banned on the grounds that its religious customs, including singing and dancing together by men and women in religious ceremonies, were un-Islamic.

Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Although the different religious communities generally coexisted without problems, there were reports of tensions within the Muslim community between the High Council for Islamic Affairs and fundamentalist elements within the community. During the year there were regular meetings between key religious leaders to discuss peaceful collaboration among groups.

Rebels abducted and subsequently released a foreign missionary during the year (see section 1.g.).

There was no known Jewish community and there were no reports of anti-Semitic acts.

For a more detailed discussion, see the 2008 International Religious Freedom Report at www.state.gov/g/drl/irf/report.

d. Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons

Although the law provides for freedom of movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, in practice the government imposed some limits on these rights.

The Ministry of Territorial Administration required foreigners, including humanitarian agency personnel, to obtain authorization to travel to the eastern part of the country.

Security forces, rebels, and bandits continued to maintain roadblocks, extorting money from travelers, often beating them, and in some cases killing them.

The activities of armed bandits and rebel groups along the border with CAR continued to hinder free movement in the region.

In June the traditional chief of Lere--near the border with Cameroon--was accused of organizing armed bandits to rob local herders and farmers. Authorities did not investigate or take action by year's end.

The law prohibits forced exile, and the government did not use it.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

The number of IDPs increased from 180,000 in 2007 to 185,000 by August.

Protection of Refugees

The law does not provide for the granting of asylum or refugee status in accordance with the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 protocol, but the government has established a system for providing protection to refugees. In practice the government provided protection against the expulsion or return of refugees to countries where their lives or freedom would be threatened. The government also provided temporary protection to individuals who may not qualify as refugees under the 1951 convention or the 1967 protocol.

The number of Sudanese refugees from Darfur in the country increased to approximately 250,000; most of these refugees were located in 12 camps along the eastern border with Sudan. The number of refugees from CAR increased to approximately 56,000. Most of the refugees from CAR lived in five camps in the south. There were also approximately 5,000 refugees of various nationalities living in urban areas.

The government did not provide sufficient protection for refugee camps in the east, although there were no reports that camps were attacked. Insecurity in the east, including rebel and bandit attacks, hindered the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide services to refugees. NGO workers traveling between camps were frequently victims of carjackings and armed robberies.

UNHCR and its partner organizations continued to express concern regarding the potential for militarization of refugee camps by Sudanese and Chadian rebels, particularly camps located close to the border. The recruitment of some refugees, including children, into armed groups continued (see section 1.g.). UNHCR relocated several thousand refugees who had fled from Darfur to Birak to camps located farther from the border. Women were raped in and near refugee camps, including by ANT soldiers.

Antirefugee sentiment among citizens living in refugee-affected areas was high, due to competition for local resources such as wood, water, and grazing land, and because Sudanese refugees received goods and services that were not available to the local population. There continued to be occasional reports that citizens attacked refugees and destroyed their wells.

Section 3: Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

Although the constitution and law provide citizens with the right to change their government, the government continued to limit this right in practice. The executive branch dominated the other branches of government.

Elections and Political Participation

In 2006 President Deby, leader of the ruling MPS, was reelected to a third term in what unofficial observers characterized as an orderly but seriously flawed election that was boycotted by the opposition. The government had dismissed appeals from the opposition, civil society, religious groups, and some members of the international community to postpone elections and organize a national dialogue. Observers noted low voter participation, underage voting, multiple voting, and other irregularities.

In August 2007 the government and the opposition coalition signed an agreement that delayed communal and legislative elections, originally scheduled for 2005, until 2009. Opposition members asserted that the government was not fully implementing the agreement. On February 11, in reaction to government abuses against opposition and civil society members after the February rebel attack on N'Djamena, opposition members from the Coalition of Political Parties for the Defense of the Constitution suspended their participation in a joint government and opposition

committee to monitor the implementation of the August 2007 accord. Opposition members rejoined the committee on May 5. During the year the government and the unarmed political opposition, with the support of the European Union, continued to work to implement the accords, including agreeing to hold a new census and create a more representative electoral commission.

There were approximately 86 registered political parties in the country. Political parties were subject to outside interference. During the year opposition leaders were subject to violence and disappearance (see sections 1.b. and 1.g.). Opposition political leaders accused the government of co-opting their most popular local politicians to run as MPS members in local elections and alleged that the military intimidated party members who refused to cooperate. Parties allied with the government generally received favorable treatment. Northerners, particularly members of the Zaghawa ethnic group, including the Bideyat subclan to which the president belongs, continued to dominate the public sector and were overrepresented in key institutions of state power, including the military officer corps, elite military units, and the presidential staff.

There were 10 women in the 155-seat National Assembly. There were six women among 40 ministers in the cabinet.

Both the cabinet and the National Assembly had diverse ethnic representation.

Government Corruption and Transparency

The law does not provide criminal penalties for official corruption, and officials frequently engaged in corrupt practices. The World Bank's 2008 Worldwide Governance Indicators reflected that corruption was a severe problem.

The Ministry of Morality is responsible for fighting corruption and carried out anticorruption seminars for government employees.

In September the World Bank ended its financial assistance for a project to support the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline. The bank stated the government did not comply with components of project agreements requiring that a substantial portion of the oil revenue be used for poverty reduction programs.

The Ministry of Morality investigated the government-owned communication utility SOTEL due to allegations of embezzlement during the year. In October President Deby removed the director and deputy director of the utility from their positions due to mismanagement.

On December 17, President Deby removed the president and vice president of the HCC due to the disappearance of 100 million CFA francs (approximately \$200,700). They had not been prosecuted by year's end.

There were no reported developments in the 2006 case of two cabinet ministers who were removed from their positions for misappropriation of government funds.

The College for the Monitoring and Control of Oil Resources published one report during the year. Identified deficiencies included corruption, the 2007 appointment of new college members who were

biased toward the government, the use of a large portion of revenues for security sector spending, mismanagement of revenue allocated to regions, some unfinished social projects, and insufficient coordination with local populations and leaders. The government took no action on the college's previous reports by year's end.

The law does not provide for public access to government information, although the government provided such access to government-employed journalists. Independent media journalists stated that they were not given sufficient access to government information.

Section 4: Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The government continued to obstruct the work of domestic human rights organizations through arrest, detention, and intimidation of their members during the year, particularly after the February attack on N'Djamena. Government officials generally were accessible to human rights advocates but were often unresponsive or hostile to their findings. Nevertheless, such groups were able to investigate and publish their findings on human rights cases.

There were two principal local human rights organizations, the ATPDH and the Chadian League for Human Rights (LTDH). These and smaller human rights organizations worked together through an umbrella organization, the Association for Human Rights.

On January 9, judiciary police arrested and detained Deuzombe Daniel Passalet of the local NGO Human Rights without Borders. He was released 72 hours later.

On February 9, in N'Djamena, Jacqueline Moudeina, the lawyer representing victims of former President Hissein Habre and president of ATPDH, received a death threat by telephone, and a military vehicle went to her house. She had taken refuge in another area of the city.

In February Jean-Bernard Padare, defense lawyer in the 2007 child abduction case involving the organization Zoe's Arc and LTDH member, received threats after he filed a suit regarding the detention of Ngarlegy Yorongar and Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh.

Unidentified assailants and armed bandits also attacked numerous NGO employees during the year, resulting in deaths and injuries (see section 1.g.).

The lack of security in the east reduced the ability of humanitarian organizations to provide services.

Despite pressure from the government, human rights groups were outspoken in publicizing abuses through reports, press releases, and the print media but only occasionally were they able to intervene successfully with authorities. There was a perception on the part of government officials that most local human rights groups were composed mainly of political opponents, which weakened their credibility with the government and some international organizations.

The government continued to obstruct the work of international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International.

On April 2, a government decree established a Commission of Inquiry to examine disappeared persons and other abuses that occurred from January 28 to February 8. The commission concluded that security forces and rebels committed human rights violations and that civilians were killed, injured, raped, and detained (see section 1.g.). The newspaper *Le Progres* reported that on June 25, uniformed persons invaded the home of the commission president, Maitre Djaibe, and shot and injured his bodyguard while trying to locate Djaibe.

Section 5: Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Although the constitution and law prohibit discrimination based on origin, race, gender, religion, political opinion, or social status, the government did not effectively enforce these provisions. The government favored its ethnic supporters and allies.

Women

The law prohibits rape but does not provide for criminal penalties. Rape was a problem; no reliable quantitative data was available. While police often arrested and detained perpetrators, rape cases usually were not tried.

Although the law prohibits violence against women, domestic violence, including spousal abuse, was common. Wives traditionally were subject to the authority of their husbands, and they had limited legal recourse against abuse. Although family or traditional authorities could provide assistance in such cases, police rarely intervened.

In previous years there were reports that family members killed women for breaking social taboos, although there were no such reports during the year. In some places girls and women may not visit the site where an initiation ceremony is to take place. If a female violates this prohibition, under traditional practices the village leaders can kill her.

The law prohibits prostitution; however, it was a problem, particularly in the south.

The law does not prohibit sexual harassment, and such harassment was a problem.

Discrimination against women and exploitation of women were widespread. Although property and inheritance laws do not discriminate against women, local leaders adjudicated most inheritance cases in favor of men, according to traditional practice. The Ministry of Social Action and Women is responsible for gender-related issues. Women did not have equal opportunities for education and training, making it difficult for them to compete for formal sector jobs.

The law does not address polygyny, but husbands may opt at any time to declare a marriage polygynous. If a husband takes a second wife, the first wife has the right to request that her marriage be dissolved, but she must repay her bride price and other marriage-related expenses.

Children

The government did not sufficiently ensure the protection of children's rights; however, it generally supported the activities of NGOs and international donors to improve children's rights and welfare. The government did not fund medical care or public education adequately beyond the primary level.

The government did not register all births immediately.

By law education is universal and free and basic education is compulsory; however, in practice parents were required to pay tuition to public schools beyond the primary level. Parents were required to pay for textbooks, except in some rural areas. Approximately half of teachers were hired and paid by parent-teacher associations, without government reimbursement. Educational opportunities for girls were limited. Most children did not complete primary education. The percentage of girls enrolled in secondary school was extremely low compared with that of boys.

Child abuse, including abuse of child herders, remained a problem. These children often worked long hours and were unable to attend school.

The law prohibits the practice of FGM; however, FGM was widespread. According to a 2004 government report by the National Institute of Statistics, Economic and Demographic Studies, 45 percent of local women had undergone excision. According to the survey, 70 percent of Muslim females and 30 percent of Christian females were subjected to FGM. The practice was prevalent, especially among ethnic groups in the east and south. All three types of FGM were practiced. The least common but most dangerous and severe form of FGM, infibulation, was confined largely to the region on the eastern border with Sudan. FGM usually was performed prior to puberty as a rite of passage.

FGM could be prosecuted as a form of assault, and charges could be brought against the parents of FGM victims, medical practitioners, or others involved in the action. However, prosecution was hindered by the lack of specific penalty provisions in the penal code. There were no reports that any such suits were brought during the year. The Ministry of Social Action and Family was responsible for coordinating activities to combat FGM.

Although the law prohibits sexual relations with a girl younger than age 14, even if she is married, the ban was rarely enforced. Families arranged marriages for girls as young as 12 or 13; the minimum legal age for engagements was 11. The law prohibits forced marriages of anyone younger than age 18 and provides for imprisonment of six months to two years and a fine of 50,000 to 500,000 CFA francs (\$114-1,140). There were some forced marriages, and the custom of buying and selling child brides continued to be widespread. Many young wives were forced to work long hours for their husbands in fields or homes.

The government and other armed groups continued to use child soldiers (see section 1.g). The UN reported that on June 27, nine children were demobilized from the gendarmerie in N'Djamena; five of the children were former FUC recruits who had been later recruited by the gendarmerie.

Several human rights organizations reported on the problem of the mahadjir, children who attended certain Islamic schools and were forced by their teachers to beg for food and money. There was no reliable estimate of the number of mahadjir children.

According to the newspaper *Le Progres*, on October 15, two boys were rescued from a Koranic teacher in Massaguet. The children appeared to have been beaten and reportedly were also chained and made to perform labor for their teacher. The teacher had not been prosecuted by year's end.

Children who were refugees or IDPs had limited access to services such as education and health care.

There were developments in the 2007 child abduction case involving the NGO *Zoe's Arc*. UNICEF reported that all of the children had been returned to their families. On March 31, the president of Chad pardoned the six French nationals involved in the case. The Sudanese and the Chadian nationals, who each received sentences of four years of hard labor for complicity, were reported to have escaped from prison during the February rebel attack on N'Djamena.

Trafficking in Persons

The law does not specifically prohibit trafficking in persons; however, traffickers could be prosecuted under statutes prohibiting child abduction, sale of children, and child labor. Persons were trafficked to, from, and within the country. Cross-border trafficking was not widespread, and internal trafficking was largely restricted to children.

Children were trafficked for forced labor and commercial sexual exploitation. The majority of child victims were trafficked within the country to work as involuntary domestic servants, herders, beggars, forced labor in the commerce or fishing sector, or prostitutes. Children from Cameroon and CAR were trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation to the country's oil-producing regions. Chadian children were trafficked to Cameroon, CAR, and Nigeria.

The majority of child trafficking occurred with parental consent; children were given by parents to relatives or an intermediary in exchange for promises of education, apprenticeships, cattle, or a small sum.

Children were also recruited, sometimes forcibly, into armed groups (see section 1.g.).

In June the subprefect of Goundi arrested several village chiefs suspected of involvement in the selling of children to herders.

On July 15, *Le Temps* newspaper reported that 108 children were being held by herders in the subprefecture of Goundi in the district of Bodo and the village of Hahimtoki.

The government authorized a local NGO, the Association for the Recovery of Children in Distress, to remove children from forced herding and provide them with rehabilitation services.

Persons with Disabilities

The law prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities. There were no laws or programs to ensure access to buildings for persons with disabilities. The government operated few education, employment, or therapy programs for such persons. The government, in conjunction with NGOs, continued to sponsor an annual day of activities to raise awareness of persons with disabilities. The Ministry of Social Action and Family is responsible for the rights of persons with disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

There are approximately 200 ethnic groups in the country, many of which are concentrated regionally. They speak 128 distinct primary languages. Although most ethnic groups were affiliated with one of two regional and cultural traditions--Arabs and Muslims in the north, center, and east; and Christian or animist groups in the south--internal migrations in response to urbanization and desertification resulted in the integration of these groups in some areas.

Societal discrimination continued to be practiced routinely by members of virtually all ethnic groups and was evident in patterns of employment, especially across the North-South divide. The law prohibits government discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, although in practice ethnicity continued to influence government appointments and political alliances. Political parties and groups generally had readily identifiable regional or ethnic bases.

Interethnic violence continued, particularly in the east and south (see section 1.g.).

Clashes between herders and sedentary populations and other interethnic violence that often concerned land use continued to be a serious problem.

Other Societal Abuses and Discrimination

Societal discrimination continued to be practiced against homosexuals.

A 2007 law provides for persons with HIV/AIDS to have the same rights as those without HIV/AIDS and obligates the government to provide information, education, and access to tests and treatment for persons with HIV/AIDS; however, societal discrimination continued to be practiced against those who have HIV/AIDS.

Section 6: Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law allows all employees except members of the armed forces to join or form unions of their choice without excessive requirements, but the authorization of the Ministry of Interior is required. The Ministry of Interior can also authorize the immediate administrative dissolution of an association. In contrast with 2007, there were no reports that the government banned the formation of a union.

In the formal sector, more than 90 percent of employees belonged to unions; however, the great majority of workers were nonunionized, unpaid subsistence cultivators or herders. The government, which owned enterprises that dominated many sectors of the formal economy, remained the largest employer.

The law recognizes the right to strike but restricts the right of civil servants and employees of state enterprises to do so. Civil servants and employees of state enterprises must complete a mediation process and must notify the government before striking. Employees of several public entities deemed as essential must continue to provide a certain level of services. The International Trade Union Confederation asserted that the law prolonged the period before a strike can occur and that the definition of essential services was overly broad. The law permits imprisonment with forced labor as punishment for participation in illegal strikes, but no such punishment was imposed during the year.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

The law allows unions to organize and bargain collectively, and the government protected these rights. Although there are no restrictions on collective bargaining, the law authorizes the government to intervene under certain circumstances.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Compulsory Labor

The law prohibits forced or compulsory labor, including by children; however, there continued to be reports of forced labor practices in the formal economy and isolated instances of local authorities demanding forced labor by both children and adults in the rural sector. There were also reports that prisoners were required to work to pay back taxes they allegedly owed.

The law permits imprisonment with forced labor for participation in illegal strikes.

d. Prohibition of Child Labor and Minimum Age for Employment

The labor code stipulates that the minimum age for employment is 14, although children may work as apprentices beginning at age 13. The government did not enforce the law. Child labor, including forced child labor, was a serious problem. The minimum employment age is not consistent with the compulsory education age.

An estimated 20 percent of children between the ages of six and 18 worked in exploitive labor in the urban informal sector according to a study published by Human Rights without Borders. Children throughout the country worked in agriculture and herding. They also were employed in the commercial sector, particularly in the capital, as street vendors, manual laborers, and helpers in small shops. Young girls worked as domestic servants, mainly in N'Djamena. A 2005 UNICEF-government survey of child domestics in N'Djamena noted that 62 percent were boys; 24 percent were between eight and 14 years of age; 68 percent were between 15 and 17; and 86 percent were illiterate.

A report by the NGO Justice and Peace Commission stated that from 2006 to 2008 local NGOs rescued more than 600 children whose families had sold them for use as herders in the southern part of the country, specifically in the departments of Mandoul and Moyen Chari.

Children who attended certain Islamic schools were sometimes forced by their teachers to beg for food and money.

Some children worked as domestic servants in the households of relatives for little compensation. Some young girls were forced into marriages by their families and then compelled to work in their husbands' fields or homes while they were still too young to do so safely.

Government forces and rebel groups recruited child soldiers (see section 1.g.).

The Office of Labor Inspection is responsible for enforcement of child labor laws and policies. That office had approximately 16 labor inspectors to cover the entire country. As in previous years, they reportedly had no funding to carry out field work and investigations.

The government did not have a comprehensive plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labor; however, the government continued to work with UNICEF and other NGOs to increase public awareness of child labor. In addition, the campaign to educate parents and civil society on the dangers of child labor, particularly for child herders, continued.

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

The labor code requires the government to set minimum wages, and the minimum wage at year's end was 28,000 CFA francs (approximately \$64) per month; however, these standards were generally ignored. The minimum wage did not provide a decent standard of living for a worker and family, although wage levels were raised during the year.

Nearly all private sector and state-owned firms paid at least the minimum wage, but it was largely ignored in the vast informal sector. In some areas there were long delays in the payment of those salaries. Salary arrears remained a problem, although less so than in previous years. Low wages among customs, police, and military officials contributed to almost daily extortion of the civilian population along all major roads.

The law limits most employment to 39 hours per week, with overtime paid for supplementary hours. Agricultural work was limited to 2,400 hours per year, an average of 46 hours per week. All workers were entitled to an unbroken 48-hour rest period per week; however, these rights rarely were enforced.

The labor code mandates occupational health and safety standards and gives inspectors the authority to enforce them; however, these standards were generally ignored in the private sector and in the civil service.

Workers had the right to remove themselves from dangerous working conditions; however, in practice they could not leave without jeopardizing their employment. The labor code explicitly

protects all workers, including foreign and illegal workers, but the protections provided were not always respected in practice.