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CHAD: HOPE BETRAYED

Despite the repeated promises of the Chadian government, 1996 and the first months of this year have been marked by an increase in human rights violations, Amnesty International said today in its new report entitled, *Chad: Hope betrayed*, made public following the recommendation of the working group of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to keep the examination of the human rights situation in Chad in the confidential procedure for another year.

In its report, the organization points out the institutionalization of the practice of extrajudicial executions. In November 1996, a written instruction by the Commander of the Specialized Units of the gendarmerie ordered the security forces to "*eliminate any suspected thief*". This instruction received on several occasions the support of the state's highest authorities. Scores of people have been extrajudicially executed over the course of the last few months.

Only after the adoption of a resolution by the European Parliament condemning extrajudicial executions in Chad did the Chadian Prime Minister, Koibla Djimasta, announce on *Radio France International(RFI)*, that the measure was no longer in force. However, despite this, the practice of these illegal acts has not stopped. Information received by Amnesty International confirms that extrajudicial executions are continuing, in secret, after dark. At the beginning of March 1997 several bodies were found in the river Chari.

"For many years, hundreds of men and women, including Bichara Digu, a political opponent, have been killed and not one perpetrator of these violations has been brought to justice," Amnesty International said.

The phenomenon of "disappearances" has continued. The organization has received no news of four people, including Ibrahim Souleymane, who "disappeared" in August 1996 after being handed over to the Chadian authorities by the Sudanese authorities.

People continue to be held without trial, despite several protests by Amnesty International and other human rights organisations. Several people, including Job Mbaïboungue, a Gendarmerie warrant officer, and Abel Djimon, a clerk in the public prosecutor's department, have been held without charge since November 1996; they are suspected of having distributed the written instruction of the Commander of the Gendarmerie to physically eliminate those accused of theft. Amnesty International considers these detainees to be prisoners of conscience.

Scores of people have been detained without charge or trial at Faya Largeau since 1995. During its April 1996 mission, Amnesty International again raised its concerns in relation to these arbitrary arrests followed by torture and ill-treatment. Despite the assurances of the Minister of Justice that he would investigate the circumstances of the arrests and that the detainees would be released if no charges were being brought against them, these people are still detained without charge or trial.

A number of human rights defenders, including members of the movement, *Tchad Non Violence*, Chad Non Violence and the *Ligue tchadienne des droits de l'homme* (LTDH), Chadian Human Rights League, continue to be harassed by the security forces. Some, including Abdallah Issa Idriss, president of the regional branch of the LTDH at Faya Largeau have received death threats, Lazare Tikri Serge, General Secretary of *Tchad Non Violence* was attacked by members of the *Agence nationale de sécurité* (ANS), National Security Agency. He was accused by the ANS of being a spy after he refused to go with them to the Gendarmerie. In February in Moundou, Firmin Nengomngang, a member of the LTDH, was beaten with rifle butts and threatened with execution by members of Chadian security forces.

Amnesty International has received many new testimonies of routine recourse to torture and ill-treatment, including rape. This practice has increased since the order given to the security forces to kill suspected thieves. In Moundou, in Logone Occidental, at least three young women were raped by members of the security forces between September and December 1996. Three prisoners who escaped from prison at Faya Largeau told Amnesty International that during the first three months of their detention they were tied "*with chains and were not allowed outside*". Several victims of extrajudicial execution bore signs of torture.

Inhuman conditions of detention and ill-treatment after arrest are often the cause of death of detainees. In November 1996, Mahamat Ahmat Hanat was tortured to death at the Fourth District police station in N'Djaména. When the security forces realized that the prisoner had died of his injuries, they left him without explanation at the central hospital mortuary.

Amnesty International also condemns human rights abuses committed by armed opposition groups. The *Forces armées pour la République fédérale* (FARF), Armed Forces for a Federal Republic, are accused of having tortured and killed several civilians, including two women, in the two Logone regions over the last six months.

In October 1996, the organization published a document on Chad entitled, *Chad: A country under the arbitrary rule of the security forces with the tacit consent of other countries*, which criticized other governments, including those of China, France, Sudan and the USA, with regard to security and police transfers that have contributed to human rights violations in Chad. In December, the French authorities informed Amnesty International in a letter that France had ceased to supply weapons and ammunition to the Chadian army years ago and that the human rights situation had considerably improved in the country.

"French security equipment -- such as handcuffs, vehicles, telecommunications systems -- are constantly used in Chad and contributes to human rights violations," Amnesty International said.

New testimonies received by the organisation show prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, being forced to do work for the French military aid mission at Faya Largeau.

The organization calls on the Chadian authorities to take all necessary steps to build a state of law and to release all prisoners of conscience.

"The Commission for Human Rights at its next meeting in April should examine the human rights situation of Chad through the public procedure," Amnesty International said.

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