



Violence Beyond Borders: The Human Rights Crisis in Eastern Chad

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Summary

Since a December 2005 attack by Chadian rebels on Adré, a strategically important town in eastern Chad, armed groups have proliferated along the Chad-Sudan border, drawing on support from both countries and exploiting the freedom to move between them to step up their activities. Two of the primary protagonists from the Darfur conflict have been able to establish footholds in eastern Chad: Sudanese “Janjaweed” militias, some of which have committed atrocities on both sides of the border, and Sudanese rebel groups. What started as a parochial conflict in Darfur is turning increasingly cross-border and regional in scope, and civilians in Chad are caught in the middle.

With the Chad-Sudan border all but unguarded, Janjaweed militia based in Darfur are raiding deeper into Chad than ever before, exacerbating ethnic tensions and drawing ethnic groups into blood feuds that are taking on their own momentum. Sudanese Janjaweed militias have formed alliances with Chadian ethnic groups, and some joint attacks may have political or ethnic motives linked to domestic Chadian dynamics, including attempts by Chadian rebels to oust President Idriss Déby. Other attacks appear to be purely criminal; in one particularly brutal incident, 118 civilians were killed on April 12-13 in eastern Chad, simultaneous with an unsuccessful coup attempt by Chadian rebels.

While rural violence escalates, one faction of the Sudanese Liberation Army/Movement (SLA/M), a Darfur-based rebel group, has come to prey on refugee camps in eastern Chad in pursuit of its own narrow agenda. This Darfur rebel faction, linked to the Chadian government, recruited several thousand refugees from U.N.-supervised camps in Chad this March, holding them under brutal conditions. UNHCR estimates that 4,700 men and boys were recruited from refugee camps in eastern Chad into Sudanese rebel forces, risking the militarization of the refugee camps and exposing vulnerable populations to abuse. Some recruits were forced to become combatants against their will and brutally mistreated.

In the past six months, at least 50,000 Chadian civilians living in rural villages on or near the Sudan-Chad border have been forced to leave their homes due to persistent attacks by Janjaweed militiamen based in Darfur. As relations between Chad and Sudan deteriorate and insecurity along their common border mounts, civilians living in the dangerous and desperately poor borderlands of eastern Chad are in greater peril than ever.

The Chadian and Sudanese governments must take immediate action to end their support to armed groups who commit violations of customary international humanitarian law and, in particular, commit abuses against civilians. The developments in Chad demonstrate yet again the urgent need for a stronger, mobile international civilian protection force to be deployed both within Darfur and along the border with Chad. Finally, unless the Sudanese government is subjected to massive international pressure to meet the requirements of U.N. Security Council resolutions and its commitments under the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement to disarm and demobilize the Janjaweed militias it has recruited, armed, and supported, civilians in eastern Chad will continue to suffer brutal attacks, and regional stability will remain at risk.

Recommendations

To the Government of Chad

- Deploy sufficient military personnel and resources to border areas in eastern Chad including the Ouaddaï and Dar Sila administrative departments and as required in other areas to ensure that civilians are protected from further attack;
- Investigate and prosecute all those individual Chadians involved in attacks on civilians;
- Improve the living conditions and treatment of all detained rebel fighters to ensure that all those detained are treated humanely and conditions comply with all relevant international standards, including those on accommodation, access to sufficient food, water and health care as contained in the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners;
- Ensure that all members of the armed forces are instructed to respect and comply with Chad's international and regional human rights obligations and customary international humanitarian law applicable to the hostilities with rebel forces;
- Take steps to prevent the militarization of all refugee camps including by demanding that Sudanese rebel movements cease all recruitment activities within the camps and ensuring that all Chadian agencies and entities entrusted with refugee protection—including the *Commission Nationale d'Accueil et de Réinsertion des Réfugiés* (National Commission for the Reception and of Reintegration of Refugees, CNAR), gendarmes and local police and military officials—are aware of their responsibility to ensure the civilian character of the camps; and
- Investigate and prosecute those individuals held responsible for any deaths of refugees forcibly recruited in March 2006.

To the Government of Sudan

- Fully implement its obligations under the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement and its previous commitments as outlined in U.N. Security Council resolutions 1556 (2004); 1591 (2005); 1651 (2005); 1663 (2006) and 1665 (2006) to disarm and disband government-backed militia forces; and
- Immediately consent to the prompt deployment of a well-resourced U.N. force in Darfur with a robust mandate under Chapter VII to protect civilians and a rapid response capacity.

To the Sudanese Rebel Movements

- Immediately demobilize all child soldiers and end the recruitment and use of all children under the age of 18;
- Publicly declare and order all field commanders to refrain from any military activities, including recruitment, fund-raising and logistics, in both the refugee camps in Chad and the internally displaced camps in Darfur; and
- Investigate and hold to account those commanders responsible for the torture, mistreatment and killings of refugee recruits in Arkoum training camp, eastern Chad.

To the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

- Intensify professional training on refugee protection to Chadian gendarmes, CNAR agents, local officials, and all other governmental employees or representatives entrusted with refugee protection, including instruction on maintaining the civilian character of camps, and on preventing their militarization and the recruitment of their inhabitants; and
- Ensure that adequate protection staff is deployed in the refugee camps, particularly in those camps where abuses have been documented.

To the United Nations Security Council

- Take all necessary measures—including ensuring full implementation of the arms embargo in Darfur, applying further sanctions on Sudanese government officials, pledging and providing resources to the U.N. force, and passing the necessary resolutions—to ensure the deployment of a U.N. force in Darfur and

along the Chadian border on or before October 1, 2006 (following expiry of the mandate of the African Union mission in Darfur on September 30, 2006);

- Ensure that any U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing a U.N. force for Darfur calls for U.N. forces to use “all necessary means” to protect civilians, under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter;
- Support the African Union’s efforts in Darfur to protect civilians until transition to a U.N. force; and
- Call on member states to immediately fund and provide technical and logistical support, personnel and rapid response capabilities to the African Union force, and, eventually, to the U.N. mission in Darfur.

To the African Union Mission in Sudan

- Actively patrol the main roads and villages in Darfur, particularly in rural areas and in strategic points along the Chadian border, to deter further attacks against the civilian population. Request additional support and resources as necessary to ensure the Chad-Darfur border is adequately secured.

To E.U. members and other donor governments

- Immediately increase support to the current African Union force through the provision of rapid response capacity, logistical expertise, equipment, and funds;
- Immediately and publicly pledge full support to the U.N. force with all necessary resources to enable it to speedily deploy and carry out the vital civilian protection tasks that are needed in Darfur and along the Chad border; and
- Ensure immediate support to aid agencies supporting 350,000 refugees in eastern Chad to ensure their continued presence for this vital task.

Background

Long-standing tensions in Sudan’s western region of Darfur escalated into armed conflict between two Darfur rebel groups and Sudanese government forces in early 2003. The government enlisted local militias, which came to be known as the Janjaweed, as proxy ground forces against the SLA and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), rebel movements that were drawn primarily from the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups. The government of Sudan and the Janjaweed militias it armed and supported deliberately targeted civilians of the same ethnic origin as the Darfur rebels as part of

their counter-insurgency strategy.¹ Three years of massacres, summary executions, and “ethnic cleansing” left 1,800,000 Darfurians internally displaced² and another 207,000 Sudanese refugees in eastern Chad,³ the vast majority of them Fur, Masalit, and Zaghawa.⁴

Although separated by an international border, Darfur and eastern Chad share many of the same ethnic groups, and the prevailing political dynamics in each region have a direct affect on the other. Chad’s current president, Déby, and former President Hissène Habré both took power at the head of insurgent armies based in Darfur that were backed by the Sudanese government.⁵ Many Chadians took refuge and eventual residence in Darfur during those years.

President Déby, himself a Zaghawa of the Bideyat clan, initially supported the Sudan government’s counter-insurgency campaign and refused to aid his fellow Zaghawas in Darfur. However, he isolated himself from many in his ethnic community with this policy. Several of the Darfur rebel groups received unofficial support from Chadian officials and private individuals in the first two years of the conflict, and a May 2004 coup attempt is thought to have been instigated by Zaghawa members of the government.⁶ Déby also came under increasing domestic political pressure in the run-up to the 2006 presidential elections over Chad’s burgeoning fiscal crisis.⁷

¹ See “Darfur in Flames: Atrocities in Western Sudan,” *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol 16, no. 5(A), April 2004, [online] <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/sudan0404>; “Darfur Destroyed: Ethnic Cleansing by Government and Militia Forces in Western Sudan,” *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol 16, no. 6(A), May 2004, [online] <http://hrw.org/reports/2004/sudan0504>; “Darfur Documents Confirm Government Policy of Militia Support,” *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, July 20, 2004, [online] <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2004/07/19/darfur9096.htm>; “Empty Promises? Continuing Abuses in Darfur, Sudan,” *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, August 11, 2004, [online] <http://hrw.org/backgroundunder/africa/sudan/2004>; “If We Return We Will Be Killed,” *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, November 15, 2004, [online] <http://hrw.org/backgroundunder/africa/darfur1104>; “Targeting the Fur: Mass Killings in Darfur,” *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, January 24, 2005; “Sexual Violence and its Consequences Among Displaced Persons in Darfur and Chad,” *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, April 12, 2005, [online] <http://hrw.org/backgroundunder/africa/darfur0505>; “Entrenching Impunity: Government Responsibility for International Crimes in Darfur,” *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol. 17, no. 17(A), December 2005, [online] <http://hrw.org/reports/2005/darfur1205>; “Sudan: Imperatives for Immediate Change,” *A Human Rights Watch Report*, vol. 18, no. 1(A), January 2006, [online] <http://hrw.org/reports/2006/sudan0106>; and “Darfur Bleeds: Recent Cross-Border Violence in Chad,” *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*, no. 2., February 2006, [online] <http://www.hrw.org/backgroundunder/africa/chad0206/chad0206.pdf>.

² “Operational Briefing on the Special Operations for Chad and Sudan,” UNHCR, May 2006.

³ Another 28,000 Sudanese refugees spontaneously settled along the Chad-Sudan border. “Operational Briefing on the Special Operations for Chad and Sudan,” UNHCR.

⁴ “Ethnicity of Sudanese refugees—Eastern Chad,” UNHCR map, January 2006.

⁵ Déby, former presidential advisor on security and defense under Habré, seized power from Habré in 1990, who had himself seized power in 1982 from President Goukouni Oueddei, his historic rival.

⁶ International Crisis Group, “To Save Darfur,” *Africa Report*, no. 105, March 17, 2006, [online] <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm?id=4027&CFID=25890784&CFTOKEN=44252525>.

⁷ Discord within Déby’s inner circle was only worsened by his handling of oil revenue from a World Bank-sanctioned oil development project that made Chad the world’s fastest growing economy in 2004, but failed to benefit more than a select few. By June 2005, when Chad’s Parliament approved a constitutional amendment allowing Déby to stand for a third consecutive term of office, many of his closest confidants had turned to armed struggle.

In October 2005, these pressures culminated in a wave of army desertions, and some in Déby's inner circle, including elements of his Republican Guard, took up arms against him.⁸ Zaghawa deserters regrouped in Darfur under the banner of the *Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie* (Platform for Change, Unity and Democracy, SCUD). Several other small Chadian rebel movements were already based in West Darfur, including the *Rassemblement pour la Démocratie et la Liberté* (Rally for Democracy and Freedom, RDL), commanded by Mahamat Nour Abdelkarim, a Chadian from the Tama ethnic group. On December 28, the RDL and seven other Chadian anti-government armed groups created the *Front Unique pour le Changement Démocratique au Tchad* (Single Front for Democratic Change in Chad, FUCD), under the leadership of Mahamat Nour.⁹ Until late 2005 there was little evidence of Sudanese government support for these groups, despite a barrage of accusations from the government of Chad, but by October 2005 relations between N'djamena and Khartoum were seriously strained. In addition to the Sudanese and Chadian military, more than a dozen armed groups were operating in the volatile border zone, including Sudanese government-backed Janjaweed militias, at least four factions of the Darfur rebel movements¹⁰ and several Chadian rebel forces. Chadian demands that Khartoum put a stop to cross-border Janjaweed militia attacks met with little response.¹¹

Tensions along the border came to a head in early December with a joint operation by Sudanese government troops, Janjaweed militias and Chadian rebels on the Changaya headquarters of SLA commander Khamis Abdullah Abaker in West Darfur.¹² On December 18, Chadian RDL rebels led by Mahamat Nour attacked Adré.¹³ Although Chadian troops repelled the RDL assault, the Sudanese government appeared to have

⁸ Among the defectors were soldiers trained by U.S. Special Forces under the Pan-Sahel Initiative, a U.S. State Department-funded anti-terrorism program. Human Rights Watch, confidential communication, April 26, 2006.

⁹ The seven other groups are the *Socle pour le Changement, l'Unité et la Démocratie* (Platform for Change, Unity and Democracy, SCUD), *Front Nationale pour le Tchad Rénové* (National Front for the Renewal of Chad, FNTR), National Council for Recovery (CNR), *Force pour le Ratissage, le Regroupement et le Redressement du Tchad* (Force for the Cleansing, Reunification and Resurgence of Chad, FRRRT), *Groupe du 8 Décembre*, CNT and FIDL.

¹⁰ These groups are known to include two factions of the SLA, headed by Minni Minawi and Abdul Wahid Mohammed Nour, respectively, JEM and the *Mouvement National pour la Réforme et le Développement* (National Movement for Reform and Development, NMRD), a JEM splinter group.

¹¹ "CHAD-SUDAN: Déby accuses Janjawid of killing his civilians, vows punishment," *IRIN*, September 29, 2005, [online] <http://www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=49294>.

¹² Human Rights Watch interview with SLA soldier who fought under Khamis Abdullah in West Darfur, Chad, May 1, 2006. At the time, the soldier was in Chadian police custody. All Human Rights Watch interviews with prisoners were conducted in a private location, out of earshot of guards. Khamis Abdullah was the deputy chairman of the SLA prior to the 2005 split between Minni Minawi Arkou and Abdul Wahid Mohammed Nour. Abdullah later aligned himself with Abdul Wahid's faction and was present at the Abuja negotiations but left Abuja well before the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed on May 5, 2006. He appears to be uncertain about his allegiance as of the writing of this report.

¹³ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, May 15 and May 22, 2006. Adré is strategic because both Déby and Habré before him seized power in Chad after successfully capturing Adré in attacks launched from Darfur.

backed Mahamat Nour's action¹⁴ and Chad declared a "state of belligerence" with Sudan on December 23.¹⁵

The Chadian government responded to the growing menace from Darfur by seeking defensive alliances with Darfurian rebel groups in order to protect the porous border, particularly the stretch south of Adré that was increasingly vulnerable to cross-border attacks—precisely where SLA commander Khamis Abdullah was strong.¹⁶ President Déby reportedly backed efforts to unite the increasingly factionalized Darfur rebels. Early in 2006, Khamis Abdullah, who is Masalit,¹⁷ joined a new rebel alliance between Minni Minawi's SLA faction and the JEM¹⁸ and agreed to help secure the border inside West Darfur in return for material assistance from Chad.¹⁹

Despite continuing to build alliances and maneuver behind the scenes, Chad and Sudan signed the Tripoli Agreement, brokered by Libyan president Muammar al-Qaddafi,²⁰ on February 8, 2006, publicly vowing to cease all support for each other's respective opposition groups and calling for African Union observers to monitor the agreement.²¹ President Déby sought to bolster his regime through arms purchases, which were facilitated in March by \$65 million in taxes on petroleum operations that came due earlier than forecasted under a revenue management program coordinated by the World Bank.²²

¹⁴ Mahamat Nour's forces are based in several camps in West Darfur, some in close proximity to Sudanese military bases. In addition to tolerating the presence of these Chadian rebels in Darfur, Sudanese government forces have also allegedly supported recruitment efforts among Sudanese Tama in order to strengthen Nour's forces. Confidential communications to Human Rights Watch, December 2005 – April 2006. See also International Crisis Group, "To Save Darfur."

¹⁵ "Chad in 'state of belligerence' with Sudan: official," *Sudan Tribune*, December 24, 2005, [online] http://www.sudantribune.com/article.php3?id_article=13198.

¹⁶ Abdullah suffered a string of horrific battlefield losses in West Darfur, starting in November 2005 with a siege of his positions near Masteri, continuing with the December attack on his headquarters at Changaya and culminating in late January and early February 2006 with stinging defeats along the Chad-Sudan border between Geneina and Habila in West Darfur that cost him 600 men. Human Rights Watch interview with SLA rebel, Bahai, Chad, May 21, 2006, and intelligence officials, N'djamena, Chad, May 17 and 22, 2006.

¹⁷ Khamis Abdullah was by no means the strongest SLA rebel commander, but he was a strategically important ally because of his Masalit ethnicity and because of the importance of securing the border in Dar Masalit, the Masalit "homeland" located north and south of Adré, Chad, and Geneina, Darfur. By the end of 2005, Chadian rebel groups and Janjaweed militias were using the Masalit homeland in West Darfur as a launching pad for attacks into Chad. Confidential communications, Human Rights Watch, April - May, 2006.

¹⁸ On January 18, 2006 the Minni Minawi faction of the SLA and JEM signed an agreement as the Alliance of Revolutionary Forces of West Sudan. "Darfur rebels unite as single group," *AFP*, January 20, 2006, [online] <http://english.aljazeera.net/NR/exeres/751BE55E-F767-4A11-9405-9ADC2FE63401.htm>.

¹⁹ Confidential communications, Human Rights Watch, April - May, 2006.

²⁰ Libya has been deeply involved in Chadian and Darfur politics for decades. See Roland Marchal, "Le Soudan d'un conflit à l'autre," *Les Études du ceri*, no. 107-108, September 2004, [online] <http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/etude/etude107.pdf>.

²¹ "Sudan, Chad sign peace agreement in Tripoli," *Arabic News*, February 9, 2006, [online] <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/060209/2006020913.html>.

²² The World Bank determined that much of the \$65 million tax payment, which has been disbursed in its entirety, was spent on military hardware. An oil revenue management law designed by the World Bank and nongovernmental organizations reserves most revenue from royalty payments for priority sectors such as health and education, but indirect revenue such as taxes accrue directly to the government. If oil prices remain in the

On March 14, SCUD, the rebel group formed by Déby's Zaghawa relatives, attempted to overthrow the Déby regime by shooting down the president's aircraft, but Chad immediately named Sudan as the *éminence grise* behind the coup.²³ The following weekend, starting on March 17, individuals linked to SLA commander Khamis Abdullah conducted a major recruitment campaign in two refugee camps in eastern Chad. An estimated 4,700 Masalit refugees, many of them children,²⁴ were recruited into military service, some of them forcibly.²⁵

In mid-April, Chadian rebels launched their most serious attack yet, hoping to oust Déby prior to the presidential elections scheduled for May 3. On April 12 an FUCD convoy swept hundreds of kilometers through Chad from bases in Darfur and Central African Republic, reaching N'djamena on April 13. At least 291 people died in the fighting, including civilians, government soldiers, and rebels.²⁶ President Déby immediately accused the Sudanese government of backing the FUCD attack, which was repelled by Chadian military supported by Darfur rebels in eastern Chad,²⁷ as well as low-key French military assistance in the form of logistics and intelligence²⁸ and a warning shot ("*coup de semonce*") fired from a Mirage jet at an advancing rebel column.²⁹ Several hundred rebel fighters were detained and publicly displayed in N'djamena by the Chadian authorities, with Chadian officials claiming that more than half were Sudanese.³⁰ On April 14, Déby unilaterally severed relations with Sudan.³¹

\$70/bbl range, the World Bank predicts \$1.7 billion in tax payments will accrue to the Chadian treasury between now and 2008. Tax payments are sensitive to price fluctuations though, and oil prices in the \$40/bbl range would result in negligible tax payments. Human Rights Watch telephone interviews with economic analyst in N'djamena, New York, June 2006.

²³ "Chad security forces foil coup attempt," *Mail & Guardian*, N'djamena, Chad, March 15, 2006, [online] http://www.mg.co.za/articlePage.aspx?articleid=266818&area=/breaking_news/breaking_news_africa/#.

²⁴ In this report, the word "child" refers to anyone under the age of eighteen. The U.N. convention on the Rights of the Child states, "For the purposes of the present Convention, a child is every human being below the age of eighteen years unless the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier." Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 1, adopted November 20, 1989 (entered into force September 2, 1990).

²⁵ "UNHCR expresses alarm over continuing reports of forced recruitment in Chad refugee camps," UNHCR, May 16, 2006, [online] <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/opendoc.htm?tbl=NEWS&page=home&id=4469eba94>.

²⁶ Human Rights Watch interviews with hospital officials and international humanitarian aid workers, N'djamena, Chad, April 24 -27, 2006.

²⁷ Elements under the command of Khamis Abdullah fought alongside the Chadian military in Adré where they were apparently instrumental in turning back an FUCD assault.

²⁸ "Les rebelles sont entrés dans la capitale," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, April 13, 2006, [online] <http://archquo.nouvelobs.com/cgi/articles?ad=etranger/20060413.OBS3898.html&host=http://permanent.nouvelobs.com/>.

²⁹ "L'armée française minimise son action," *Le Nouvel Observateur*, April 13, 2006 [online] <http://archquo.nouvelobs.com/cgi/articles?ad=etranger/20060413.OBS3973.html&host=http://permanent.nouvelobs.com/>.

³⁰ Chadian military sources reported a total of 334 rebels were detained, 178 of them Sudanese nationals and 156 Chadian. Human Rights Watch interview, N'djamena, Chad, April 25, 2006.

³¹ "Sudan Given Notice of Break in Relations With Chad," *VOA News*, April 15, 2006, [online] <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-04/2006-04-15-voa18.cfm?CFID=6786502&CFTOKEN=87605429>.

On May 5, the Sudanese government and the Minni Minawi-led faction of the SLA signed the Darfur Peace Agreement. Initial optimism over the agreement, mediated by the African Union in Abuja, Nigeria, was quickly dampened by the fact that the two other Darfur rebel factions at the talks, JEM and SLA-Abdul Wahid, refused to sign. Also of concern was the potential spoiler role of the Janjaweed militias, which were not party to the instrument that envisioned their disarmament.³²

Human rights consequences of deteriorating Chad-Sudan relations on eastern Chad

The Darfur crisis and the deterioration of Chad-Sudan relations over the past nine months has had a three-fold effect on civilians:

First, the fighting between Chadian rebel and Chadian government forces has had both direct and indirect effects on civilians. While civilians do not appear to have been specifically targeted by Chadian rebel forces, there have been civilian casualties during the fighting, particularly in N'djamena. There are concerns that Chadian government forces have been implicated in a variety of abuses against civilians and captured rebels in connection with the Chadian rebel incursions.

Second, abuses by Darfur rebel groups operating in Chad, including the forced recruitment and mistreatment of Sudanese refugees in Chad, appear to be increasing and linked to the Chadian government's efforts to secure its border from further incursions from Sudan.

Third, the cross-border attacks by Sudanese Janjaweed militias based in Darfur are worsening in both scale and in nature. Not only are these attacks penetrating deeper inside Chad and displacing tens of thousands of Chadian civilians, but they also appear to be drawing on alliances with Chadian civilians and potentially affecting the relations between different ethnic groups in eastern Chad.

³² The government of Sudan, which officially represented the Janjaweed at the negotiating table, denies responsibility for and controlling influence over the Janjaweed.

Abuses by Chadian government forces in the context of the April 13 attack

On April 9, Chadian rebels based in Darfur launched attacks on Am Timan, Abou Deia, and Haraz-Manguaigne in southeastern Chad near the Central African Republic border. These attacks were precursors to a broader invasion by FUCD Chadian rebels under the command of Mahamat Nour. On April 10, the FUCD swept through the refugee camp at Goz Amer, killing a security guard and stealing communications equipment. On April 12 at 3 p.m., an FUCD column reached Mongo, 320 kilometers east of N'djamena.

On April 13, 1,200-1,500 soldiers in fifty-six pickup trucks reached N'djamena; major clashes also took place in Adré, on the Chad-Sudan border, and in the southern city of Sarh. The fighting in N'djamena lasted from 5 to 11 a.m. and included armored personnel carriers, technicals (four-wheeled drive vehicles mounted with heavy weapons) and tanks, and was concentrated in the southeastern suburbs and at the Palais des Quinze, Chad's parliament.

Further investigation is required, but civilians in N'djamena do not appear to have been specifically targeted or indiscriminately attacked by Chadian government or rebel forces during the April 13 fighting in N'djamena, with some exceptions described below. Human Rights Watch is concerned, however, by unconfirmed reports that Chadian government forces may have taken reprisal actions—including arbitrary detentions and other abuses—against civilians on an ethnic basis, both in N'djamena and other locations in Chad.

Treatment of rebel fighters

Suspected FUCD rebels who were captured during the April 13 coup attempt were held at the time of this writing at the Gendarmerie Nationale in N'djamena in a single walled compound with a dirt courtyard and two cell blocks. The detention facilities are clearly inadequate for the estimated 250 detainees who packed the courtyard and were forced to sleep hunched together in the cell blocks for lack of space to lie flat.³³

³³ Chad is a Party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 10, paragraph 1 of the Covenant provides that all persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person. Article 10, and the relevant United Nations standards applicable to the treatment of prisoners, including the U.N. Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners apply to the treatment of rebel detainees. See Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, adopted by the First United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, held at Geneva in 1955 and approved by the Economic and Social Council by its resolution 663 C (XXIV) of July 31, 1957 and 2076 (LXII) of May 13, 1977.

With the exception of two prisoners, both of whom said they were involved in a November 2005 coup attempt, Human Rights researchers did not receive or record evidence that detainees were subjected to torture or deliberately cruel treatment. Of the two who were subjected to cruel treatment, one man, who identified himself as the chief of staff of the rebels, had eight-inch-long metal pin inserted through his knee, perpendicular to the axis of his foot, which he said was inserted to keep him from escaping.³⁴ The other detainee, who identified himself as the second deputy chief of staff of the rebels, was in manacles and leg irons, and said he had been restrained in this way since he arrived on January 8, 2006.³⁵ The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Chad is a party, prohibits the infliction of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment in all circumstances, and status or alleged crime of the detainee cannot justify inhuman or degrading treatment.

Abuses by Darfur rebel groups in eastern Chad

More than 200,000 refugees from Darfur are currently housed in twelve refugee camps in eastern Chad. The refugees fled abuses by Sudanese government and Janjaweed militia forces in Darfur in 2003 and 2004. Given the proximity of the camps to the border and the fact that many members of the Darfur rebel movements have ethnic and family ties to the camps, concerns over potential rebel activity in the camps have been present since their establishment.³⁶

While it was clear that rebels had links to individuals in the camps, until early 2006 there were few overt signs that rebel groups were actively recruiting or otherwise affecting the civilian character of the camps.³⁷ However, in the context of the deteriorating relations between Chad and Sudan—and President Déby’s increasingly open policy of supporting

³⁴ The detainee also said he broke his leg trying to escape capture. It appears that the pin was inserted in his knee while his leg was in traction, and was then left in place in order to inhibit his movements. Human Rights Watch contacted a physician who said that a traction pin could serve no conceivable medical purpose in the absence of a traction apparatus. Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April 2006.

³⁵ Human Rights Watch interviews, N'djamena, Chad, April 26, 2006.

³⁶ UNHCR sent a team of experts to the camps in early 2005 to assess this potential. “Perceptions of refugee security in Chad (based on information received during ESS mission, 12-17 July 2005),” UNHCR internal document, July 2005.

³⁷ In general terms, different refugee camps have come to be associated with rebel factions or individual commanders, though affiliations are by no means static, and are determined by a matrix of ethnic, political and geographic considerations. The six northernmost camps (Oure Cassoni, Irdimi, Touloum, Am Nabak, Mile and Koundoungo) are majority Zaghawa and the southernmost six (Farchana, Gaga, Bredjing, Treguine, Djabel and Goz Amer) are in the majority Masalit; ethnicity is operational in determining camp loyalties, though it is by no means decisive. For example, SLA commander Khamis Abdullah, who is Masalit, has connections in the Masalit camps, but JEM, which draws its members primarily from the Zaghawa (Kobe clan), also has links to individuals in Bredjing and Treguine. Political allegiances are fluid in the wake of the leadership disputes inside the SLA that have produced two main factions and several sub-factions which compete vigorously for influence. This is particularly true in the wake of the May 5 Darfur Peace Agreement, which produced intense discord in some of the camps.

Darfur rebel groups in the face of threats to his government from Chadian rebels—incidents of recruitment, including of children, and mistreatment of refugees have become much more blatant.³⁸

A Human Rights Watch investigation in eastern Chad documented a serious incident of forced recruitment on March 17-19 in Bredjing and Treguine camps, as well as other abuses, linked to SLA commander Khamis Abdullah. Although these examples are unlikely to be the only examples of forced recruitment or other abuses perpetrated by the Darfur rebel movements, Human Rights Watch was not able to independently verify any other reports of forced recruitment due to time constraints.

During the March 17-19 recruitment episode, UNHCR personnel were not present in Bredjing and Treguine camps—most humanitarian workers leave the camps on weekends and weekdays after 5 p.m. This practice provides a predictable, recurring window of opportunity for Sudanese rebel groups to operate without international scrutiny in the camps—a window that was exploited to the fullest on March 17-19.

By agreement with UNHCR, Chadian gendarmes are supposed to provide security and have a 24-hour presence in the refugee camps. Human Rights Watch's investigation into the events of March 17-19 in Bredjing and Treguine camps gathered consistent and compelling evidence that the government of Chad is complicit with the activities of Sudanese rebel groups, both legal and illegal, in the refugee camps it is bound to protect. Numerous sources, including refugees, refugee camp leaders, national and international humanitarian workers, U.N. officials, intelligence experts, local and national government officials, gendarmes, and most significantly, the rebels themselves, described how the government of Chad—from the highest level to the most local—condoned, allowed and facilitated Sudanese rebel operations in the refugee camps. Eyewitnesses saw Chadian gendarmes accompany rebels into the camps during the recruitment event, and, with the help of CNAR officials, select and forcibly remove refugees from the camps. First-hand testimony described local government officials acting as facilitators, exercising the tools of the state to extend impunity to the actions of the rebels. Well-placed sources name senior figures in the Déby administration as the architects of the Chadian government policy that condoned Sudanese rebel recruitment activities and instructed local government officials to permit and facilitate those activities.³⁹

³⁸ Refugee protection is governed by the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 189 UNTS 150; and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 606 UNTS 267.

³⁹ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April-May, 2006, and telephone interviews, Chad, Geneva, and Washington, DC, April - June, 2006.

In response to concerns about refugee protection that have escalated in the wake of the March forced recruitment episode, UNHCR has contracted with the government of Chad to provide more gendarmes for each camp⁴⁰ and has undertaken extensive campaigns to educate refugees and rebels alike about the civilian nature of the camps and the dangers of militarization.

Forced recruitment of refugees

SLA commander Khamis Abdullah and his associates⁴¹ were responsible for a major incident of forced recruitment in Bredjing and Treguine camps beginning on the afternoon of Friday, March 17 and continuing until the afternoon of Sunday, March 19—a time of limited humanitarian staff presence.⁴² The camps are located approximately 50 kilometers west of Adré and have a combined population of 42,793, almost 100 percent Masalit, the same ethnicity as Khamis Abdullah.

The March recruitment appears to have been linked to efforts by Khamis Abdullah to replenish his ground forces following losses on the battlefield and ahead of anticipated attacks by Chadian rebel forces. Refugees who had been forcibly recruited consistently provided the same names of the men behind the recruitment drive: Bechir Djabir,⁴³ an SLA sub-commander who appears to play an active role in recruitment efforts,⁴⁴ and his superior officer, SLA commander Khamis Abdullah.⁴⁵ A fifty-four-year-old refugee from Bredjing camp articulated the confusion felt in the camps by the actions of the top Masalit rebel, who had presumably enjoyed widespread support in the all-Masalit refugee camp:

There is a man, Khamis, who does the forced recruitment. His full name is Khamis Abdulla Abakar. [His soldiers] take people from the camps and treat them badly. Initially the people in the camps supported the rebellion but some were forced to join and they took people and now the people think it's the policy of [Sudanese president] Omar Bashir

⁴⁰ UNHCR's agreement with the government of Chad for camp security calls for one gendarme for each 1,000 refugees.

⁴¹ Khamis Abdullah's senior deputies include Abakar Tula and Adam Muhammad Said. Human Rights Watch interviews with refugees, SLA rebels, and western intelligence officials, Chad, April - May, 2006.

⁴² In November, 2005 after receiving reports of military vehicles seen at night in Bredjing and Treguine camps, UNHCR began conducting awareness campaigns about the civilian character of the camps.⁴²

⁴³ Bechir, a Sudanese Zaghawa (Wagi clan), owned and operated SOGEC, a construction company in N'djamena, until he took an SLA command under Khamis Abdullah. Bechir, who has been identified by soldiers under his command as a colonel, is widely reported to maintain close ties with the Déby regime. Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April - May, 2006.

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April - May, 2006.

⁴⁵ Forced recruits consistently mentioned Habashir Bara Abakar, or "Habashir," a Masalit, in connection with the training camp. Human Rights Watch was not able to identify or locate this individual. Human Rights Watch interviews with refugees, Chad, Bredjing, and Treguine camps, April, 2006.

to mistreat the people in the camps so that they will not support the rebellion anymore. This is part of Omar Bashir's strategy to eliminate the rebellion. Before it was always voluntary to become a rebel.

By UNHCR's count, approximately 4,700 refugees were recruited from the two camps on March 17-19,⁴⁶ most of them from Bredjing, which is situated ten kilometers closer to the Sudan border than Treguine. While UNHCR reports that some of those who joined the rebels did so voluntarily,⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch's investigation found that the recruitment drive was by nature coercive, and in some instances violent.

UNHCR has compiled a partial list of 104 refugees who were recruited but remain unaccounted for, 61 from Bredjing and 43 from Treguine,⁴⁸ and estimates that the total number of missing refugees stands somewhere between 300 and 400,⁴⁹ which, if true, might represent a sizeable addition to the SLA forces.⁵⁰

At least 100 Sudanese rebels descended on Bredjing and Treguine camps on the afternoon of March 17; one of the first recruitment stops were schools, which were still in session. Hundreds of students were rounded up and taken away that first day, many of them minors.⁵¹ Over the course of the weekend of March 18 -19, the rebels rode roughshod over Bredjing and Treguine, plucking combat-capable men and boys from markets and conducting house-to-house and tent-to-tent searches in the camps, beating those who resisted and warning fearful family members not to get in their way.

Refugees recounted how men in military uniform (or partial uniform) armed with whips and clubs rounded them up in schools, markets and in their homes. Some refugees report having been tied up, although most said this was not the case. Nevertheless, a 26-year-old teacher who was abducted along with a fellow teacher and four students on March 17 stated that he clearly understood that he had no option but to comply:

They didn't have guns but they had knives and *chicottes* [whips]. I wanted to get my things together but they said, 'Leave your things here; you're

⁴⁶ "UNHCR expresses alarm over continuing reports of forced recruitment in Chad refugee camps," UNHCR.

⁴⁷ "Sudan/Chad Situation Update 53," UNHCR, March 30, 2006 [online] <http://www.reliefweb.int/library/documents/2006/unhcr-sdn-30mar.pdf>.

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch, e-mail communication with UNHCR official in Chad, June 15, 2006.

⁴⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, U.N. official, Chad, May 23, 2006.

⁵⁰ A 16-year-old Masalit refugee who was forcibly recruited from Bredjing said that 162 refugees who had been forcibly recruited from Bredjing and Treguine, including himself, were deployed to Khamis Abdullah's base at Changaya, in West Darfur. Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 2, 2006.

⁵¹ Students are not by definition minors, as many African schools count students in their late teens and early twenties.

not taking anything with you.’ There was one of them on each side of me. They took me by the arms and said, ‘Let’s go.’ I had no choice but to go with them.⁵²

Refugees were packed into pickup trucks and taken to a *wadi* outside the camps where men were waiting with firearms. Refugees recall with remarkable consistency a long walk to Arkoum, a Chadian town 20 kilometers southeast of Bredjing, where Sudanese rebels had set up a training camp.

Upon arrival at Arkoum, recruits were informed that they were now Sudanese rebels, their mission to liberate their country. They themselves were not free to leave, though; armed guards patrolled the perimeter of the camp day and night.

Recruitment of Children

Human Rights Watch spoke with four refugees forcibly recruited at Bredjing who said they were under the age of 18. A fifth recruit was not sure of his age, but he looked to be 13 or 14 years old.

A 15-year-old refugee who was forcibly recruited from Treguine camp recalled seeing many young children at the Arkoum training camp:

I saw many kids in the training camp, some as young as 12 years old. The kids couldn’t take it so they let about 100 go, and they went back [to Treguine] on foot. They couldn’t take the lack of sleep, no water, no food, hard work. They were too young.

Human Rights Watch spoke with an SLA recruiter in Djabel camp who said there was no fixed age limit for a recruit, although 15 was the youngest a soldier could be and still be expected to fight effectively, “14 if he’s a big kid.”⁵³

SLA commander Bechir Djabir, who has been widely implicated in recruitment activities, has denied recruiting under-age refugees, and said that three recruits who had joined his forces from Djabel camp were too young to fight and would be returned to the camp.⁵⁴

⁵² Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Bredjing, Chad, May 1, 2006.

⁵³ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 11, 2006.

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 14, 2006.

UNHCR interviewed a 17-year-old boy at Djabel camp who said he had joined the SLA voluntarily, that he received training at Changaya, Sudan, and that he was deployed to an SLA camp near Adé, Chad, until he was returned to Djabel because he was under-age.⁵⁵

Refugees and other sources at both Bredjing and Djabel camp reported that teachers were among the most aggressive recruiters, which raises concerns that the teachers are violating their relationship of trust with the students, and that some recruitment may be coerced, even if it is not physically forced.⁵⁶ During the forced recruitment at Bredjing and Treguine, schools were prime recruiting grounds, and scores of refugees were seized from schools where the student population included eight-year-old children. Several refugees reported that ten-year-old children had been forcibly recruited, though such reports were not confirmed. In one case in which a refugee, forcibly recruited, was alleged to be ten years old, Human Rights Watch interviewed the individual and discovered that he was in fact twenty-five.⁵⁷

The prohibition on the use of children as combatants

Chad is a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (generally known as the Child Soldiers Protocol)⁵⁸ which establishes eighteen as the minimum age for direct participation in hostilities, for compulsory recruitment, and for any recruitment or use in hostilities by irregular armed groups.⁵⁹ Chad is obliged to take all feasible measures to prevent this occurring. Chad is also a party to the regional, African Charter on the Welfare of the Child which requires states to take all measures that no child will take direct part in hostilities.⁶⁰ Chad and Sudan are both obliged under the main U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child to protect children from all violations of international humanitarian law and assist the recovery and social re-integration of child victims of armed conflict.⁶¹

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, UNHCR official in eastern Chad, New York, May 30, 2006.

⁵⁶ Teachers were among those forcibly recruited, but others occupy senior leadership positions within the camps. Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, April to May, 2006.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Bredjing, Chad, May 2, 2006.

⁵⁸ Adopted unanimously by the United Nations General Assembly on May 25, 2000, A/RES/54/263 of May 25, 2000, entered into force on February 12, 2002.

⁵⁹ Article 4 of the Optional Protocol.

⁶⁰ OAU Doc. CAB/LEG/24.9/49 (1990), entered into force Nov. 29, 1999. Chad acceded to the Convention in March 2000. Article 22 provides: that States Parties (i) undertake to respect and ensure respect for rules of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts which affect the child; (ii) shall take all necessary measures to ensure that no child shall take a direct part in hostilities and refrain in particular, from recruiting any child; (iii) shall, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law, protect the civilian population in armed conflicts and shall take all feasible measures to ensure the protection and care of children who are affected by armed conflicts. Such rules shall also apply to children in situations of internal armed conflicts, tension and strife.

⁶¹ Convention on the Rights of the Child, Articles 38 and 39, ratified by Sudan on August 3, 1990 and Chad on October 2, 1990.

Torture and other mistreatment of refugee recruits

Once recruited and brought to Arkoum, refugee recruits faced physical violence at the hands of SLA commanders. Eyewitness testimony from refugees universally identified Sudanese rebels among their captors, but many recruits were very clear in stating the Chadians were present as well and helped manage the camps. Chadian Arabic differs significantly from Sudanese Arabic, and many recruits recall hearing the Chadian version spoken at Arkoum. Furthermore, some refugees recognized Chadian uniforms in the camp. “All the military were Chadian,” said one recruit.⁶²

Training involved rigorous physical exercise, including some exercises possibly intended to cause pain. One 16-year-old refugee from Bredjing camp showed Human Rights Watch researchers large wounds where the skin had rubbed off from “elbow walking.”⁶³ They boy, who was abducted on March 17 along with fourteen children from his school, also had marks on his forearms from being whipped.

A 25-year-old refugee from Treguine camp showed Human Rights Watch researchers where a chunk of flesh had been torn out of his ear with a pair of pliers—normally a punishment reserved for those caught trying to flee the camp. In his case, his ear was mutilated because he had asked for permission to leave the camp:

After fourteen days of training the suffering was terrible—there was no food, no water—and I was sick and hungry and tired so I told the camp leaders that I wanted to go, that I should not be there at the training camp. They told me, ‘If you talk like that, you will fight for sure.’ They tied my arms behind my back and buried me in the *wadi* for ten days. I was buried up to my chest. There were eight others in the same place, tied up and buried in the ground. A man named Saleh beat me with a stick and kicked me until he was tired. I was in so much pain I couldn’t sleep.⁶⁴

Coercion and physical violence were common at Arkoum, and in some cases appear to have led to the deaths of refugee recruits. One refugee, Mohammad Yahia Abakar, was mentioned by several independent sources as having died at Arkoum. Human Rights Watch spoke with Abakar’s twenty-five-year-old wife, who said that three days after her

⁶² Human Rights Watch interview, Bredjing, Chad, May 2, 2006.

⁶³ Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Bredjing, Chad, April 30, 2006.

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Treguine, Chad, May 30, 2006.

husband was abducted from Treguine camp, a refugee leader came to her home to tell her that her husband was dead:

He gave me his shirt. “I asked, ‘Where did he die? What happened?’ I wanted to see the body. [The refugee leader] said, ‘Just forget about him. He’s dead.’⁶⁵

A fifty-four-year-old refugee at Bredjing, whose intimate knowledge of SLA activities and operational structures suggested that he was connected to the rebellion, which he denied, said he knew where Abakar’s body was buried.⁶⁶ He and another refugee, who had been forcibly recruited and had escaped from the Arkoum camp, agreed on the cause of death: Abakar had been beaten to death.⁶⁷

Although consequences for being caught trying to escape were harsh, security at Arkoum was lax, especially at night, and within a month the vast majority of the refugees—probably 4,100 out of 4,700 who had been forcibly recruited—were able to escape and return to the refugee camps.

The refugee who had been in the training camp for 42 days explained the puzzling fact that the vast majority of those who had been abducted were allowed to escape by noting that those who remained were tough, capable, motivated and unlikely to be liabilities on the battlefield.

“[The rebels] want people who can fight,” he said.⁶⁸

Complicity of Chadian Authorities in Darfur rebel abuses

The responsibility for protecting refugees falls to the Chadian government,⁶⁹ but eyewitness testimony suggests that Chadian officials have been complicit in abuses by the Darfur rebels inside and outside the camps. Gendarmes are supposed to be present in the camps 24 hours a day. Several recruits in Bredjing and Treguine reported that gendarmes accompanied Sudanese rebels into the camps during the forced recruitment episode.⁷⁰ Gendarmes were also reportedly present at Arkoum. According to a twenty-

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Treguine, Chad, April 30, 2006.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Bredjing, Chad, May 2, 2006.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, 189 UNTS 150; and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 606 UNTS 267.

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch interviews, Bredjing and Treguine camps, April 29 - May 5, 2006.

five-year-old refugee from Bredjing camp, some of the officials who were entrusted with protecting the camp were actively involved in the abuses:

On the day of recruitment I went to the market. The commander of the gendarmerie was there. The people of CNAR [Chad's governmental refugee agency] and gendarmes found me there at the market. 'You're coming to Sudan,' they said to me.⁷¹

Local government officials are frequently seen in the presence of armed and uniformed Sudanese rebels,⁷² and have been reported to have aided rebel operations, including by shielding them from the scrutiny of international humanitarian workers⁷³ and by releasing rebels detained for carrying arms inside of refugee camps or petty crimes from police custody.⁷⁴

Even if the government of Chad is not complicit in forced recruitment activities as many suspect, the ability of Sudanese rebels to operate overtly in refugee camps amounts to a gross dereliction of Chad's responsibility to protect refugees. In an interview with Human Rights Watch, the SLA's Bechir Djabir, Khamis Abdulla's lieutenant, denied any involvement with recruitment activities, but he did recognize that Chad's policy toward the operations of Sudanese rebels on its territory had changed:

Before it was not easy to enter Chad, and it was not easy to enter the camps. But now it's possible to enter both the country and the camps.⁷⁵

Abuses by Sudanese "Janjaweed" and Chadian militiamen

While there have been many small-scale cross-border attacks by Sudanese Janjaweed militias since 2004, the deterioration in Chad-Sudan relations since late 2005 has had serious implications for Chadian civilians living along and near the border with Darfur.

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch interview, refugee, Bredjing, Chad, May 1, 2006.

⁷² Including by Human Rights Watch researchers, who were having tea with the *sous-prefet* of Farchana, near Bredjing and Treguine camps, when they were joined by a group of Darfur rebels. Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April - May, 2006.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch interview, international humanitarian aid worker, eastern Chad, May 16, 2006.

⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch interviews, refugees, eastern Chad, April - May, 2006.

⁷⁵ Djabir went on to suggest that this freedom of movement is an outgrowth of the working relationship that exists between his rebel movement and the government of Chad. "There is no formal agreement," he said. "But we have a strong bond with the Chadian military, and if Chad is attacked, we are obliged to respond." Human Rights Watch interview, Goz Beida, Chad, May 12, 2006.

As noted previously,⁷⁶ following the RDL attack on Adré on December 18, 2005, the Chadian military redeployed its border garrisons to Adré and Abéché, a strategy that secured the road to N'djamena, but left long stretches of the Chad-Sudan border defenseless, with disastrous results for civilians in the rural southeast.⁷⁷ The Chadian military has reshuffled units in the east several times since then, deploying soldiers to border garrisons and then withdrawing them, with no noticeable diminution in cross-border attacks. New commitments to deploy 200 troops from N'djamena to three points along the border had not been met as of this writing.⁷⁸

Human Rights Watch's research in eastern Chad in May 2006 revealed an evolution in the pattern of attacks on civilians since January and February 2006 that raises serious concerns about the potential for inter-ethnic or communal violence in eastern Chad. Whereas earlier Janjaweed attacks involved small armed groups penetrating a few kilometers into Chad and then retreating across the border, generally with the aim of stealing cattle and looting, more recent Janjaweed attacks involved more fighters ranging deeper into Chad, with some returning to Sudan and others reportedly remaining inside Chad for weeks at a time.⁷⁹

There is another new element to the attacks: the Sudanese militias have formed alliances with Chadian ethnic groups, and some of the attacks are jointly conducted. In addition to the motive of looting, some attacks may have political motives linked to domestic Chadian affairs, including attempts by Chadian rebels to oust President Déby.⁸⁰

Until recently, despite the increasing ethnic polarization of many of their ethnic kin across the border, the incidence of inter-communal violence among Chadians in eastern Chad has been relatively low. Instances of violence between Chadian Arab and Masalit communities were documented around Adré,⁸¹ but these were generally linked to individuals who forged cross-border alliances with either the Darfur rebels or the Sudanese Janjaweed militias, and Chadian authorities intervened swiftly to limit their effects. For the most part, Chadian authorities and tribal leaders of the various ethnic groups in eastern Chad have continued to live in the same villages or vicinity.⁸²

⁷⁶ "Darfur Bleeds: Recent Cross-Border Violence in Chad," *A Human Rights Watch Briefing Paper*.

⁷⁷ As of February 2006, Chadian army garrisons in Madoyna, Koumou, Koloy, Adé, Aourado, Borota and Goungour stood empty. Human Rights Watch, confidential communication. See also "Darfur Bleeds."

⁷⁸ The 200 soldiers were reportedly to be distributed between Goz Beida, Koukou-Angarana and Borota. Human Rights Watch interview, U.N. official, Chad, May 22, 2006.

⁷⁹ Some people claim that Arab militiamen are settling in villages 20 kilometers northeast of DogDore, between Koukou-Angarana and the Sudan border and north of the Central African Republic border, but Human Rights Watch could not verify this claim. Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, May, 2006.

⁸⁰ Human Rights Watch interviews, Goz Amir, Chad, May 11, 2006.

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch interviews, Adré and Farchana, Chad, February 2004.

⁸² Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, January - June, 2006.

However, the security vacuum in southeastern Chad appears to be intersecting with increasing ethnic tensions and pressure on rural communities to align with the various armed groups operating in the region—whether for political or economic reasons. Humanitarian aid workers in eastern Chad agree on a figure of 50,000 civilians in the Goz Beida area that have been displaced by attacks on Chadian communities since the beginning of the year.⁸³

Although the details are still poorly understood, preliminary investigation suggests that prior to October 2005, a broad spectrum of tribes in eastern Chad banded together in a self-defense network to resist Janjaweed incursions.⁸⁴ Since October,⁸⁵ however, it appears that some Chadian Arab groups became involved in Janjaweed atrocities in Chad. Testimony from the far east of Dar Sila, from villages such as Mongororo, three kilometers from Sudan, and Daguessa, ten kilometers from Sudan, hint at a reason why these new alliances are emerging. Village leaders report having been approached by Janjaweed “emissaries” late in 2005 with promises of immunity from attack in return for per capita payments in cash and cattle. These leaders claim that the “dues” would pay for membership in the *wihida Arabia* or “Arab Union,” with the condition that members must raid and pillage alongside the Janjaweed.⁸⁶

Numerous interviews in eastern Chad have made it apparent that non-Arab tribes including the Ouaddaï,⁸⁷ Mimi and Tama have formed a kind of alliance, be it formal or informal, with Chadian and Sudanese Arab tribes. Just as Arabs are effectively immune to Janjaweed attacks, the Mimi, Ouaddaï and Tama, relatively recent arrivals in Dar Sila department,⁸⁸ are said to be immune from such attacks as well. Non-Arab tribes such as the Dajo and Masalit, whose cousins have been Janjaweed targets in Sudan, accuse the Mimi, Ouaddaï and Tama of complicity in Janjaweed attacks, charging that they help Janjaweed locate concentrations of cattle belonging to the Dajo and Masalit for rustling.

The Arab chief of Damri, a *farik* (village) north of DogDoré, 150 kilometers east of Goz Beida, confirmed that an alliance between Arabs and non-Arab tribes such as the Mimi

⁸³ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April 28 - 29, 2006.

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April - May, 2006.

⁸⁵ A policy of increasing Sudanese government support to Chadian rebel groups in West Darfur appears to date to this period, so the timing of the break-up of the prior inter-Chadian alliance—and the emergence of the new alliance in this period—is unlikely to be a coincidence.

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, May 11-13, 2006.

⁸⁷ The term Ouaddaïen is used to describe all the people living in the administrative region of Ouaddaï, especially when used in the Western part of Chad. There is however a “specific” Ouaddaï tribe, from Dar Ouaddaï, the land of “genuine” Ouaddaïens, who are the Maba. See Albert Le Rouvreur, “Sahéliens et Sahariens du Tchad,” (1962).

⁸⁸ The Mimi and the Ouaddaï immigrated to Dar Sila between 1979 and 1985 after a drought in Abéché province.

and the Ouaddaï exists, but he explained that it was motivated by a need for protection against territorial aggression on the part of the majority Dajo and Masalit tribes of the area, which had allied themselves in a bid to push the Arabs, along with recent immigrants such as the Mimi and the Ouaddaï, out of Chad and into Sudan.⁸⁹ Interviews with Chadian Arab leaders⁹⁰ revealed widespread concerns that racial enmity would lead to a violent backlash against Arabs in eastern Chad, concerns that appeared to be well founded when three Arab villagers were severely beaten, with one of them hospitalized, following a dispute with Sudanese refugees on the outskirts of Djabel camp on May 16.⁹¹

According to a Ouaddaï chief of Hille Adjïn, thirty-five kilometers west of the Sudan border, the Darfur crisis has also negatively affected Chadian Arab communities, who are uniformly perceived to be Janjaweed. He told Human Rights Watch:

I've lived here for 22 years and I've never had a problem with the *Sinyar* [local African tribe], but now they see that I'm Ouaddaï and now that means that I'm Arab, and then that means that all Arabs are Janjaweed. We're people of Islam. That's enough.⁹²

The rapid changes that are taking place in terms of ethnic dynamics might account for ever-increasing reports from victims of violence in eastern Chad that their attackers are Chadian, or even persons known as neighbors. A Dajo man present when Janjaweed attacked his village in April told Human Rights Watch that he knew his attackers:

The people who attacked are our brothers, our neighbors. Our very own friends. They've been transformed by the Janjaweed, and now they attack us.⁹³

Chadian government efforts to shore up the border defenses by distributing arms to village self-defense groups may also be responsible for increased tensions among Chadian communities.⁹⁴ Such distributions are said to have taken place in N'djamena and the eastern town of Guereda before and during the April 13 attacks, when Zaghawa citizens were armed by the government.⁹⁵ The Chadian military has also reportedly

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 2006.

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch interviews, Arab tribal leaders, eastern Chad, May 2006.

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chadian traditional leaders, Goz Beida, Chad, May 16, 2006. The Sultan of Goz Beida called all the *chefs de bloc* of Djabel camp together on May 16 to warn them that attacks against Chadian civilians—of any ethnicity—would not be tolerated.

⁹² Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 2006.

⁹³ Human Rights Watch Interview, refugee, Goz Beida, Chad, May 6, 2006.

⁹⁴ Confidential e-mail communications to Human Rights Watch, May and June 2006.

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, April 2006.

armed and organized volunteers from villages south of Bahr Azoum, near the border with Central African Republic, an area of intensive Janjaweed activity.⁹⁶

Violence was so intense in southeastern Chad, near the Central African Republic border, that more than 10,000 people took refuge in Um Dukhun, in West Darfur, between mid-May and mid-June, 2006. According to the international humanitarian aid agency Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the refugees reported that their villages in Chad were attacked, often in broad daylight, their animals were looted, along with food stocks, money and even their clothes. The MSF team in Um Dukhun treated more than 20 people with violence-related injuries, including wounds caused by gunshots, axes, and swords.⁹⁷

The Djawara Massacre of April 12-13, 2006

A major attack on civilians took place in eastern Chad on April 13, while FUCD rebels were streaming toward N'djamena. Sudanese Janjaweed militias and local Chadian villagers attacked a cluster of Chadian villages—all inhabited by the Dajo ethnic group—in Dar Sila department. The violence was concentrated in the village of Djawara, approximately 70 kilometers west of the border with Sudan. Seventy-five people were reported to have been killed within just a few hours.

Numerous survivors described unarmed villagers being surrounded and gunned down or hacked to death with machetes by militiamen wearing blue or green Sudanese military fatigues and turbans and by Chadian civilians wearing white *boubous* (traditional garb consisting of a long shirt and pants) and turbans. At the same time, between April 12 and April 13, Janjaweed militias reportedly killed 43 others in three villages in the Djawara vicinity: Gimeze, Singatao and Korkosanyo.⁹⁸

A 48-year-old villager from Djawara recalls the scale of the violence:

I ran away but I was caught with others by a group of Janjaweed at 500 meters from the village. They took off my *hijab* [leather amulet or talisman filled with Koranic verses]. We were surrounded by Janjaweed,

⁹⁶ Human Rights Watch was not able to verify these reports but any ethnically-based arming of civilian populations is of extreme concern. Human Rights Watch confidential communication, June 14, 2006.

⁹⁷ "Over 10,000 people flee violence in Chad," *Médecins Sans Frontières press release*, June 16, 2006, [online] http://www.msf.org/msfinternational/invoke.cfm?component=pressrelease&objectid=DBFA91D1-5056-8730-D7D104FA4978F944&method=full_html.

⁹⁸ Human Rights Watch was not able to visit these villages at any length due to continuing insecurity in the region; however, reports that Singatao had been partially burned were confirmed, and Singatao, Djawara and Gimeze were observed by Human Rights Watch to have been abandoned.

more than fifty I would say, maybe one hundred. They tried to kill us with machetes and knives. I was hit on the head. At some point, the Janjaweed decided to finish us off and asked someone in the group to shoot us. The guy took his Kalashnikov and shot. Everybody collapsed. I felt that I had been shot in the arm, and I fell down.⁹⁹

A burial party of local villagers returned to Djawara on April 23, but they came under fire from unknown assailants before they could finish burying the dead.¹⁰⁰ When Human Rights Watch researchers visited Djawara village in May, they found more than a dozen dried pools of blood staining the ground in a grove of trees and scrub brush approximately 500 meters west of the village. The area was littered with bullet casings, rifle magazines, articles of clothing and amulets commonly worn as protection against bullets. Local villagers showed Human Rights Watch six graves nearby where they said they had buried a total of 25 people. Another 12 bodies had been dragged into a ditch and partially covered with straw mats, and one decomposing body was found at the foot of a nearby tree. Another 37 people were reportedly killed elsewhere in the village.

All of the victims in Djawara were men and arrows found among the bullet casings littering the ground in Djawara suggest that local villagers fought their attackers with basic weapons. Members of the Djawara village self-defense group confirmed that they fought back when their village was attacked, mostly with bows and arrows and machetes, although a few had automatic weapons. After a brief skirmish the village defenses collapsed, and the villagers were shot or hacked to death.¹⁰¹

A 29-year-old Dajo man from Djawara who was shot in the foot on April 13 and was recovering at a hospital in Goz Beida said:

The first time they attacked they took all our cattle, the next time they came just to kill us—there were no more cattle left to steal.¹⁰²

While cattle theft is widely presumed to have been the primary motive for earlier Janjaweed raids into Chad, the Djawara massacre may have been retribution for the actions of the village self-defense group or for earlier events in which Dajo villagers reportedly went across the border to retrieve stolen cattle and killed one Chadian Arab.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 11, 2006.

¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Djawara, May 8, 2006.

¹⁰¹ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, May 2006.

¹⁰² Human Rights Watch interview, Goz Beida, Chad, May 7, 2006.

¹⁰³ Human Rights Watch interviews, Chad, April 2006.

A 60-year-old Dajo man from Gimeze witnessed the attacks on April 12 and 13. He said:

It all began a few days before when a group of Janjaweed came to the vicinity of Djawara and stole eight hundred cows. The villagers chased them and took half of the animals back. Many Janjaweed regrouped and struck back a week later. There is a Janjaweed camp near Singatao, in Djambarial, an Arab village. The Sudanese Janjaweed have a good relationship with the Arabs and can mobilize them easily.¹⁰⁴

The attack was not unexpected and may have also been linked to the recent political developments. The Djawara villagers received a warning that the attack was imminent and were able to move their women and children out of the vicinity. One Djawara resident who survived the attack told Human Rights Watch that the warning was given by a young Chadian Arab woman who visited five days prior to the attack and told the villagers, “You belong to Idriss Déby’s party and you’re gonna to see what will happen to you this coming year.”¹⁰⁵

Other survivors interviewed also mentioned an alliance between the Sudanese Janjaweed and Chadian villagers and highlighted a political dimension to the attacks. A forty-eight-year-old Dajo man said:

The Sudanese Janjaweed say that they will protect those who will sign an agreement with them....Those who refused to sign are the [SLA] people. Those who signed are the Mahamat Nour people.¹⁰⁶

Whatever the motivation, the Djawara attack appears to be the worst single incident documented to date, but may be only the tip of an iceberg. Due to security constraints, Human Rights Watch was unable to fully document other attacks in the Djawara vicinity, much less further south along the border. Between April 8 and April 13, however, attacks were reported on at least twelve other Dajo villages in Dar Sila.

On June 16, MSF reported that more than 10,000 people fled attacks in southeastern Chad in May and entered Darfur. The refugees described widespread beatings and other

¹⁰⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Goz Beida, Chad, May 10, 2006

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Goz Amir, Chad, May 11, 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Dogdoré IDP camp, Chad, May 13, 2006.

abuses, including systematic looting, at the hands of unidentified militiamen.¹⁰⁷ The fact that these people sought refuge in Darfur, where widespread atrocities have been committed, suggests an acute degree of desperation about the security situation in these areas.

Escalating tensions? The attack on Koukou-Angarana

Increasing attacks near the refugee camps have also raised concerns that the refugee population could be the next target for militia attacks—or could become more involved in defensive actions. Recent events in Koukou-Angarana, a town that is adjacent to the Goz Amer refugee camp, have underlined the risk that refugees may become involved in the escalating tensions.

A May 1 attack by 150 Sudanese militiamen on Dalola, a Dajo town 80 kilometers from the Sudan border and just west of Koukou-Angarana, resulted in four dead, six wounded, and 1,000 head of cattle stolen.

Koukou-Angarana itself was attacked on May 16 by a Janjaweed militia. Two villagers were killed, five wounded and 1-2,000 cows were stolen and subsequently recovered. One Janjaweed militia man was shot dead and two were reportedly taken prisoner just after the attack.¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch obtained copies of documents allegedly found on the militiamen which indicate that they belonged to different Sudanese police or paramilitary forces known to include many Janjaweed militia members, including the Border Intelligence Guards and the police. The Sultan of Goz Beida affirmed that the Janjaweed had been helped by local Chadians before and during the attack;¹⁰⁹ however, Chadian gendarmes strongly denied this assertion.¹¹⁰

Officials at UNHCR were gravely concerned by the Janjaweed attacks against Koukou-Angarana for fear that the Goz Amer refugee camp could be attacked next. Refugees in Goz Amer streamed out of the camp on May 16 with bows and arrows and spears to join the battle against the Janjaweed. While Goz Amer is one of the most ethnically

¹⁰⁷ "Over 10,000 people flee violence in Chad," *Médecins Sans Frontières press release*. Reflecting these concerns, UNHCR reported that it moved nearly 500 Chadian refugees (of Dajo ethnicity) May 11 from unsafe areas along the Chad-Sudan border to a new refugee camp at Um Shalaya, in Sudan's far western region of West Darfur. "UNHCR opens new camp for Chadian refugees in Darfur," UNHCR, May 12, 2006, [online] <http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/news/openssl.htm?tbl=NEWS&id=446475fb2&page=news>.

¹⁰⁸ By the afternoon, when Human Rights Watch arrived in Koukou, gendarmes said that three Janjaweed had been killed; they were able to produce two sets of identity documents but only one dead body, and explained that the Janjaweed took two of their dead with them when they fled. One international aid worker said that he saw a prisoner severely beaten up by gendarmes that morning. Human Rights Watch interview with aid worker, Goz Amer camp, Chad, May 11, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 14, 2006.

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Chad, May 16, 2006.

heterogeneous camps in Chad (60% Masalit, 30% Fur, 5% Dajo, 5% others) the available evidence points to commercial motivations behind the recent raids, as opposed to ethnic animus.