

Thursday 24 April 2008

Chad

P6_TA(2008)0186

European Parliament resolution of 24 April 2008 on the situation in Chad

(2009/C 259 E/20)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Parliament resolutions of 27 September 2007 on the ESDP operation in Chad and the Central African Republic ⁽¹⁾ and 13 December 2007 on eastern Chad ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the Council Decision 2008/101/CFSP of 28 January 2008 on the launching of the European Union military operation in the Republic of Chad and in the Central African Republic (Operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA) ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1778(2007) of 25 September 2007, which provides for the deployment of a multidimensional international presence in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic (CAR) including the ESDP mission EUFOR TCHAD/RCA,
 - having regard to UN Security Council Resolution 1769(2007) of 31 July 2007 establishing, for an initial period of twelve months, an African Union/United Nations (AU/UN) hybrid operation in Darfur (UNAMID),
 - having regard to the political agreement signed between the Chadian Presidency and the unarmed opposition in N'Djamena on 13 August 2007, with a view to the reinforcement of the democratic process in Chad by all relevant Chadian political parties in the majority and in the opposition and to preparations for legislative elections scheduled for 2009,
 - having regard to the non-aggression agreement signed on 13 March 2008 in Dakar between the Heads of State of Chad and of Sudan on the fringes of the Summit of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and under the auspices of President Abdoulaye Wade (Senegal) and President Omar Bongo (Gabon),
 - having regard to the Cotonou ACP-EU Partnership Agreement ⁽⁴⁾, and in particular the chapter on humanitarian and emergency assistance,
 - having regard to the international conventions and instruments on human rights,
 - having regard to Rule 115(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. concerned that since 3 February 2008 there has been no news of Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, spokesman for the Coalition of political Parties of the democratic opposition, or of other political prisoners,
- B. worried by the arrest of ordinary supporters of opposition parties and leaders following the rebels' attempt to overthrow President Idriss Déby Itno in February 2008,
- C. whereas President Déby has used the current conflict with the armed opposition as a cover for arresting peaceful civil opposition leaders,
- D. whereas the security forces of Chad have been guilty of extrajudicial killings, torture and arbitrary arrest with impunity, and human rights defenders and journalists have continued to be at risk of detention, unfair trial and imprisonment in violation of the right to freedom of expression,

⁽¹⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0419.

⁽²⁾ Texts Adopted, P6_TA(2007)0630.

⁽³⁾ OJ L 34, 8.2.2008, p. 39.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ L 317, 15.12.2000, p. 3.

Thursday 24 April 2008

- E. whereas the Chadian President has taken advantage of the state of emergency to repeal, by order, the 1994 law on freedom of the press, and whereas international press correspondents face major difficulties in fulfilling their duty to inform,
- F. whereas the presidential decree establishing the commission of inquiry into the events of 2 and 3 February 2008 has not guaranteed the commission's independence,
- G. concerned at the security situation in the eastern part of Chad, which has deteriorated since 2006 as a result of clashes between Chadian security forces and Chadian rebels, and incursions of Janjaweed militias and armed groups from Sudan, to which banditry and attacks on humanitarian organisations must be added,
- H. whereas the solution to this crisis requires addressing its root causes in an all-inclusive political reconciliation process, backed by the population, in order to achieve peace, security and development,
- I. whereas the new Chadian Prime Minister, Youssouf Saleh Abbas, stated that he considered it a priority to implement the abovementioned agreement of 13 August 2007, sponsored by the European Union,
- J. whereas the Coalition of political Parties of the democratic opposition has responded favourably to the principle of a very inclusive government,
- K. having regard to the fresh clashes, at the start of April 2008, between the government army and the armed rebel forces in the Adé region,
- L. having regard to the negotiations embarked on in Tripoli between representatives of the Government and representatives of the rebel forces,
- M. whereas there are already more than 250 000 Sudanese refugees located in 12 camps in eastern Chad; whereas there was a further influx of at least 12 000 new refugees in February 2008, when tensions became rife in Darfur,
- N. whereas there are also over 57 000 refugees from the CAR in Chad, the vast majority of whom are located in four camps in the south of the country; whereas, in addition to these refugees, there are approximately 180 000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in eastern Chad, who have moved and continue to move internally so as to flee inter-ethnic violence; whereas the deployment of EUFOR may help create the conditions for the return of IDPs, but this return should not be rushed,
- O. whereas in view of the current humanitarian and security situation, the deployment of the EUFOR mission authorised by the UN Security Council has become essential, not least because the UN and the EU have a 'responsibility to protect' civilians in this region by all means necessary and to provide humanitarian assistance as well as security for humanitarian personnel,
- P. whereas a number of rebel groups continue to occupy part of Chadian territory and are present on both sides of the Chad-Sudan border,
- Q. whereas Chad has accused Sudan of breaking the non-aggression agreement, and of training and arming rebels to launch new attacks against the Chadian Government; whereas the Sudanese Government denies any involvement with the rebels,
- R. whereas the contact group established by the peace agreement signed in Dakar on 13 March 2008 at the Islamic Summit Conference has already had to meet in order to consider the Chadian Government's accusations against the Sudanese Government, that it has been giving backing to the Chadian rebellion,

Thursday 24 April 2008

- S. whereas the readiness of the EU to act as a mediator in the conflict has been demonstrated,
- T. whereas over 4,5 million people in Darfur and eastern Chad now live in need of humanitarian aid, and the continuing fighting is hampering the operations of the World Food Programme (WFP) in eastern Chad, denying it access to some refugee camps and delaying food dispatches to others,
- U. whereas, as conflict in Sudan has spilled over into Chad, civilians in Chad have suffered human rights abuses such as burning and looting of villages in the east as well as violence against women, including rape,
- V. whereas the unstable political situation and armed conflict in Chad aggravates the situation of Darfur refugees, especially after recent threats from the Chadian Government to expel any more exiles arriving from Darfur,
- W. whereas less than 20 % of the USD 290 million requested in the 2008 Humanitarian Appeal for Chad, proposed by eight UN agencies and 14 non-governmental organisations, has been provided so far,
- X. whereas the WFP is now faced with the daunting challenge of pre-positioning six months' food supplies in the refugee camps and IDP sites before the rainy season arrives,
- Y. whereas the steep increase in food prices is another challenge faced by the WFP, which means that this agency will require even greater support in the coming months to meet food requirements in the region,
- Z. whereas protection of children must be an essential priority, and whereas Chadian children are victims of serious human rights violations such as: recruitment and exploitation by armed forces and groups, abduction for various purposes, trafficking, rape and other sexual violence, in particular against girls,
- AA. whereas only 20 % of children attend school in Chad, while an estimated 7 to 10 thousand children (under 18) are considered to be child soldiers,
1. Assures the Chadian people, and in particular the victims of the ongoing conflict, of its solidarity;
 2. Voices its utmost concern for the fate of Ibni Oumar Mahamat Saleh, of whom there has been no news since his arrest on 3 February 2008; holds the Chadian authorities personally responsible for his state of health and calls on them to take the necessary measures so that he regains his freedom without delay;
 3. Condemns the persecution and arbitrary arrest of opposition politicians and journalists; calls on the Chadian Government to clarify the situation of any opposition politicians or journalists still being detained, to deal with their cases in accordance with the principles underpinning the rule of law, to cease any arbitrary arrests and to put an end to impunity and bring to justice those responsible for human rights violations;
 4. Points out that the Chadian Government has an international obligation to notify the whereabouts of political prisoners to their families;
 5. Asks the Chadian Government to respect all international human rights instruments to which the country is a signatory;
 6. Points out that no member of parliament should be imprisoned without the prior lifting of his or her immunity;
 7. Stresses the need for politics in Chad to become more ethnically and geographically representative; underlines the fact that the Darfur crisis is not responsible for all of Chad's woes, as the humanitarian situation has only emerged in the last six years; emphasises that Chad has had its own internal domestic problems for well over four decades; denounces any attempt by the Chadian Government to use Sudan and Darfur as a smoke-screen for hiding political dissent within Chad, prolonging political unrest in the country;

Thursday 24 April 2008

8. Calls on all parties, and in particular the Chadian Government, to honour their commitments to lay the foundations for free and fair elections, in line with international standards, scheduled for 2009;
9. Points out that no lasting solution can be found without a genuine process of national reconciliation and of global dialogue, involving all players, with a view to a just and comprehensive peace based on the rule of law and true democracy; takes note of the intention expressed by the new Prime Minister to implement the 13 August 2007 agreement;
10. Reaffirms that a real and comprehensive, all-inclusive inter-Chadian dialogue must be convened as soon as possible; underlines the importance of bringing the rebel groups into the political process and encourages all parties, including the Chadian Government and the EU, to find ways to negotiate with the armed opposition as soon as it agrees to a full and unconditional ceasefire;
11. Calls on the African Union to facilitate an all-inclusive dialogue with a view to a comprehensive peace process and the preparation of democratic elections;
12. Calls on the EU to continue to follow up implementation of the agreement of 13 August 2007 with a view to the urgent resumption of an all-inclusive political reconciliation process respecting democratic rules;
13. Reaffirms its fundamental opposition to any attempt at taking power by force of arms; strongly condemns the continuing armed activities of rebel groups in Chad;
14. Acknowledges the usefulness of the ESDP EUFOR TCHAD/RCA mission for guaranteeing, with impartiality and the strictest neutrality, the safety of camps for refugees and displaced persons and of humanitarian organisations; regrets that, in terms of troop composition, EUFOR does not sufficiently reflect the diversity of the European Union, and calls on the Member States which have not yet done so to contribute to providing the necessary troops and *matériel* so as to guarantee its European identity; calls on the Member States and the Council to take the gender and human rights dimensions into consideration when the mission is carried out;
15. Stresses that these forces must have and use all means necessary, in full compliance with international human rights and humanitarian law, to protect civilians at risk; urges all forces involved in the conflict to observe human rights and humanitarian law, to halt all attacks on refugees, IDPs and civilians in the areas concerned and to allow humanitarian agencies to aid the suffering civilian population;
16. Reiterates its deep concern at the increasingly serious humanitarian and security situation in Chad and calls on the international community to scale up its aid to meet the 2008 Humanitarian Appeal for Chad; stresses that donor contributions are urgently required to ensure that purchases are completed in the coming months so that food reaches eastern Chad on time; underlines the fact that such funding is required at least a year in advance in order to meet such pressing needs;
17. Is deeply concerned by the negative impact of this humanitarian crisis on regional stability; suggests that an international regional conference should be convened as soon as possible to address the complexities of the relationship between Chad and its neighbours;
18. Calls, in this context, on the governments of Chad and Sudan to respect and uphold their non-aggression agreement of 13 March 2008;
19. Calls on the governments of Chad and Sudan to immediately cease all support to armed groups in Darfur and Eastern Chad, to fulfil their commitments to prevent armed groups from crossing the common border, to settle differences through political dialogue and to take all necessary measures to stabilise the current situation;
20. Calls for human rights violations, crimes against humanity, sexual violence against women and children and forced recruitment of men and children in refugee camps and IDP sites to be identified, reported, prosecuted and punished in accordance with international provisions on human rights;

Thursday 24 April 2008

21. Backs the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) tasked with supporting the Chadian courts and prisons systems and with training the 'Chadian police for humanitarian protection', which is responsible for maintaining law and order in the camps for refugees and IDP sites;
 22. Underlines the importance of a public information campaign containing clear messages so that EUFOR can sensitise not only the local population, but also NGOs, to the purpose of its presence in the region;
 23. Expresses its disappointment that EUFOR troops have not yet been deployed to the Guereda area, which is one of the more complicated regions in terms of ethnic disputes and refugee influx; is concerned that this area has been left somewhat exposed and urges that EUFOR troops be deployed as soon as possible to provide security in this dangerous area;
 24. Stresses that any solutions to the IDP problem in Chad must take into account the local population itself as well as the government; suggests that reconciliation projects should include IDPs as well as local populations;
 25. Welcomes the fact that provision is made in the 10th European Development Fund for reconstruction and rehabilitation of areas accommodating displaced persons and refugees;
 26. Underscores the fact that human rights must be entrenched within Chadian educational systems and that action plans on human rights education for primary and secondary schools must be implemented as soon as possible; notes that EUFOR could play a role in preventing children from being recruited by rebel groups by working with community leaders to sensitise them to this danger posed to their children;
 27. Asks that all children under 18 be demobilised from all Chadian National Army forces, including self-defence militias and all other paramilitary groups receiving Chadian Government support, and handed over to their families or to appropriate child protection agencies;
 28. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the African Union, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Co-Presidents of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly and the presidents, governments and parliaments of Chad, the Central African Republic and Sudan.
-