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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the African Centre for Democracy and Human Rights Studies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[24 May 2018]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human Rights Situation in Ouaddaï region of Eastern Chad*

Once again, we wish to draw the attention of the Human Rights Council to the deteriorating human rights situation in the Ouaddaï region in eastern Chad. Further to our written statement (A/HRC/34/NGO/59) 1 of 15 February 2017, addressed to the 34th regular session of the Human Rights Council, we are concerned that intercommunal violence and fighting that pits nomad camel herders and sedentary farmers is in steady increase in Ouaddaï region with devastating effects on human lives and livelihoods.

At the conclusion of the Sudanese-Chadian Border Security and Development Conference held at El-Geneina (Sudan) on 24 and 25 April 2018, the Presidents of Chad and Sudan underlined “... *the need to educate the local communities along the joint borderlines on the importance of collecting unlicensed firearms and its reflection on achieving peace and security*” and they further stressed that “... *it was imperative to put in place a joint mechanism that shall remedy any rising differences between nomads and farmers and the prerequisite of involving the native administration in the process.*” The recognition of the growing crisis between nomads and farmers along the borders between Chad and Sudan from the highest authority in Chad is an encouraging signal that needs to be followed up by additional bold steps.

The ongoing intercommunal confrontations are reminiscent of the beginning of the armed conflict that destroyed the adjacent Darfur region of western Sudan. It appears that the movement of nomad camel herders from other parts of Chad into Ouaddaï region in large numbers, in what seems to be an attempt to permanently settle in this ecologically rich region, is the main reason underneath the ongoing violence. The local farmers accuse the nomads of coordinating their activities with and receiving weapon and logistical support from the notorious *Janjaweed* militiamen who are active in Darfur. The local farmers also expressed fears that the real intention of the nomads is to forcibly appropriate land, pastureland and water sources traditionally used by the Ouaddaïen farmers.

The intercommunal conflicts and violence in the Ouaddaï region is driven by ecological factors mainly the decline of pastureland and water sources in areas traditionally inhabited by the nomads camel herders as a result of prolonged drought and desertification. These natural calamities are coupled with lack of sustainable development projects to mitigate the effects of drought and desertification on the nomads. The occasional interventions by the government of Chad to protect the civilian population and to address the situation through temporary solutions fell short of meeting the needs of growing human and animal populations. Consequently, the efforts and policy of Chad to address this crisis are ineffective and need to be reviewed consolidated. However, the organised nature of the attacks, their frequency and the ineffective responses of the local authorities must be subject of further scrutiny and evaluation from the government of Chad.

The qualification of the intercommunal violence and the nomads’ attacks against the farmers in Ouaddaï region as usual confrontations in a tribal setup or their characterisation as isolated criminal activities, is over simplification of the actual situation. Underestimation of the scale and magnitude of the ongoing violence and attacks against unarmed Ouaddaïen farmers and the systematic destruction of their farms and habitats or denial of the gravity of these aggressions entail dangerous consequences. All indicators suggest that the ongoing low-scale intercommunal confrontations could develop into a full-blown armed conflict and ethnic cleansing. There are plausible fears of a substantial impact in case no concrete action is taken to nip the unfolding conflict in the bud.

Below is a non-exhaustive list of violent incidents involved the nomads and farmers in Ouaddaï region, which have been brought to our attention in the last few months:

1. Between 23 and 27 February 2018, violent intercommunal confrontations between sedentary African farmers and armed Arab herders resulted in the killing of at least 9 civilians and the injury of dozen others in Chigue locality in Ouaddaï region. The villagers who were attacked during these violent confrontations are from Tiré (Guéri District) and Kiégré and Terkéme (Bourtaye District) and the aggressors are from Oulad Malik Arab herders from Guéri and Bourtaye sub-districts. The victims that lost their lives during these confrontations are

1 <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G17/033/27/PDF/G1703327.pdf?OpenElement>

- Moukhtar Abderamane, Batoul Imeliss, Hassan Ibrahim, Abdallah Abbas, Mahamat Ali, Abdel Sadick Hassan, Ali Mahdi Alkhali et Taher Hassaballah Fidélé (reportedly disappeared person)
2. Between Thursday 30 November and Friday, 1 December 2017, at least 8 civilians, including 7 farmers and an assailant nomad herder, were killed during confrontations between Ouaddaïen farmers and armed nomads in Ab-Marga and Goundou villages in Chokoyen sub-district in Ouara area. The organized devastation of agricultural produce and harvest by the camel herders was the reason that provoked this violence.
 3. On 8 May 2017, nomad camel herders attacked sedentary farmers who attempted to prevent them from destroying their farms in Tidjéri village at about 15 km to the South of Adré, capital of Assongha District in Ouaddaï region. At least five farmers, including women, were killed in this attack and several others were injured.
 4. On 10 December 2016 armed camel herders destroyed farms owned by Ouaddaïen peasants and attacked the villagers in Tiré, Chikchika and Atilo localities near Abéché, capital of Ouaddaï region. Seven farmers were killed, and eighteen others were injured during this attack.

Conclusion and recommendations:

1. The human rights and humanitarian situation in eastern Chad, especially in the Ouaddaï region, is volatile and dangerous. It could escalate into a full-blown armed conflict between the pastoralists and farmers unless sustained efforts are made to address the root causes of intercommunal conflicts in this part of the country.
2. We encourage the government of Chad to redouble its efforts for the elaboration and enforcement of robust legal and administrative measures to deter criminal activities, including its policy to seize illegal four-wheel drive vehicles and roadsters motorcycles that are widely used for the commission of criminal activities and attacks against civilians in Ouaddaï region.
3. Violence and insecurity as well as the destruction of farms and appropriation of pastureland and water sources in the Ouaddaï region are fertile grounds for the infiltration of the *Janjaweed* elements from neighbouring Sudan in support of their Chadian kinsmen, which would eventually destabilize eastern Chad and the whole country.
4. Violence and the destruction of lives and livelihoods in Ouaddaï region could lead to the spread of hostile perceptions against the government of Chad among the local people, force the victims to look for other means to protect themselves and eventually instigate armed insurgency and encourage criminal groups like Boko Haram to get an entry point to radicalize youngsters in the region, which further threatens peace and stability in Chad and the entire sub-region.
5. There is no evidence indicating that the government of Chad supports the nomads or other militia groups in Ouaddaï region, however, its efforts to put a halt to the nomad attacks and criminal activities and interethnic fighting in Ouaddaï region are disproportionate with the gravity of the situation. Chad may not be able, with its own resources and capabilities, to protect the local population or to disarm the Chadian *Janjaweed* and nomad militia groups.
6. Chad is facing severe economic hardships and military challenges due to the presence of Boko Haram along its borders with Nigeria and Cameroon as well as the chaotic situation in Libya, which severely hindered trade with key regional and international markets. The decrease in crude oil price has particularly damaged Chad's economy, which became heavily dependent on oil revenue in recent years. Therefore, efforts of Chad to address the situation in Ouaddaï need to be internationally supported, both technically and financially.
7. To avoid a major human rights and humanitarian crisis in Ouaddaï region and Eastern Chad, the following measures merit keen attention of the government of Chad and need to be implemented as a priority:
 - 7.1. Effective control of the borders areas with Sudan and a policy to combat the proliferation of small-arms in Ouaddaï region and Eastern Chad;
 - 7.2. Introduce sustainable development projects to mitigate the negative effects of ecological degradation on the affected nomad communities;
 - 7.3. Restrict the movement of nomads and introduce measures to control cattle herds and their migration routes toward the Sudanic Savannah zones and wetlands southward, which are traditionally inhabited by farmers;
 - 7.4. Introduce effective measures to organize the expansion of mechanical farming and cultivated lands and their encroachment into traditional pastures; and
 - 7.5. Increase the number of the police force in the affected areas and arrest and prosecute all individuals accused of committing criminal acts or inciting intercommunal violence in Ouaddaï region.

*Euro-African Forum on Rights and Development and Omar Al-Mukhtar International Association, NGOs without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.