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May 28, 2024

Chad: Authorities must ensure fair trial rights of detained relatives of killed opposition leader

Chadian authorities must ensure the fair trial rights of twenty-six people detained incommunicado for more than three months following an assault on the headquarters of an opposition party ahead of Chad's presidential election, Amnesty International said today.

Since the assault on the N'Djamena headquarters of the Socialist Party without Borders (PSF) by Chadian security forces on 27 February 2024, during which the party's president Yaya Dillo Djerou was killed, the 26, all relatives of Djerou, have still not been brought before a judge. Among them are three children and several

chronically ill people deprived of medical care. The relatives are being detained in the maximum-security Koro Toro prison, 600km from N'Djamena, according to information gathered by Amnesty International.

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All those detained must be immediately released unless they are promptly charged with an internationally recognizable offence and tried in proceedings that adhere to international fair trial standards.

Samira Daoud, Amnesty International Regional Director for West and Central Africa

“They have not been brought before a judge or met with a lawyer. We have no access and no news,” said a family member who wished to remain anonymous.

“For three months, the rights of the 26 people detained in Koro Toro have been and continue to be flagrantly violated. We call on Chadian authorities to meet their obligations by presenting detainees to a judge, allowing them to designate counsel of their own choosing, and detaining them in a place close to their families, in accordance with the provisions of Chadian and international human rights standards. Those in need must be able to receive adequate health care without delay. All those detained must be immediately released unless they are promptly charged with an internationally recognizable offence and tried in proceedings that adhere to international fair trial standards,” said Samira Daoud, Amnesty International Regional Director for West and Central Africa.

No investigation into assault on PSF headquarters

On 29 February 2024, the Public Prosecutor announced the death of PSF President Yaya Dillo Djerou. The authorities had accused supporters of Yaya Dillo Djerou of having carried out an attack on the headquarters of the National Security Agency on 27 February, in a bid to secure the release of the PSF's National Finance Secretary, Abakar Torabi. He had been arrested on suspicion of being involved in an

attack against the seat of the Supreme Court on 19 February 2024. These accusations are rejected by Yaya Dillo Djerou's supporters.

The large-scale military assault on the PSF headquarters on 27 February 2024 was described by the authorities as a shoot-out and by Yaya Dillo Djerou's supporters as an assassination.

On 5 March, the Prime Minister Succes Marsa stated that an "international" investigation would be carried out into the assault on the PSF headquarters. However, there is no public information on the details and status of any such investigation. In the meantime, the party's headquarters was razed, and since then the judicial authorities have not communicated on the situation of the 26 people arrested on the day of the assault.



Heavy machinery operating outside the headquarter of the Chadian opposition Party Without Borders (PSF) in N'djamena on 1 March 2024. Photo by AFP via Getty Images

Repeated crackdown on protests and waves of arrests

These cases of incommunicado detention are part of a pattern of repression against opposition supporters in Chad. From April 2021, the transitional authorities that took power after the death of president Idriss Deby have cracked down on opposition protests and made hundreds of arrests. All those arrested were sent to Koro Toro prison.

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We are calling on the Chadian authorities to immediately end these unacceptable practices and uphold the country’s human rights obligations and commitments.

Samira Daoud, Amnesty International Regional Director for West and Central Africa

On 20 October 2022, 128 protesters were killed by law enforcement officials during a protest in N’Djamena and elsewhere in the country according to a National Human Rights Commission count, while hundreds more were arrested, detained in Koro Toro and sentenced to two to three years in prison, in violation of fair trial and due process rights, as denounced by Amnesty International. In March 2023, 259 prisoners detained in Koro Toro were pardoned and in November 2023, the authorities adopted a general amnesty law for crimes committed during the events of 20 October 2022.

“Already in October 2022, following the brutal repression of a demonstration, hundreds of people were detained in similar conditions, and for several weeks, in Koro Toro. During the transition led by Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno until his election as President of Chad, we witnessed a consistent pattern of repression against opposition supporters. These cases of arbitrary and incommunicado detention are contrary to national and international human rights law. We are calling on the Chadian authorities to immediately end these unacceptable practices and uphold the country’s human rights obligations and commitments,” said Samira Daoud.