

**Return: Right, Need or Obligation:**  
**Can Chad Reasonably Facilitate the Return of IDPs?**

**Oliver Cunningham**  
**Case-Specific Briefing Paper**  
**Humanitarian Aid in Complex Emergencies**  
**University of Denver**  
**2012**

**Abstract**

*In 2010, the UN Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) withdrew upon request of the Chadian government (GoC). MINURCAT left under the condition that the Chadian government would ensure the security of the Chadian people, including approximately 181,000 internally displaced people (IDPs). According to the GoC, by the end of 2011, there would be no IDPs, because they would all be returned to their homes. However, continued violence, food insecurity, and political instability continue to compromise IDPs ability to return. This briefing analyzes the lessons learned from the situation of IDPs in Chad, and questions whether the goals of GoC are attainable and realistic.*

**(Keywords: Chad, internally displaced persons (IDPs), MINURCAT)**

## **Overview:**

Chad's President Idriss Déby, party leader of the Zaghawa Patriotic Salvation Movement, rose to prominence via military coup in 1990. Still in power in 2005, Déby changed the constitution to allow himself a third term as president (CIA World Factbook). In 2006, when interethnic violence in neighboring Darfur began, ethnically affiliated Zaghawa rebels from Darfur found refuge in Chad, wreaking havoc and inciting mass population displacement from eastern Chad. A vicious cocktail of instability in Darfur, interethnic violence over land and water, and increasing attacks on civilians by bandits caused the displacement of approximately 180,000 people in eastern Chad since 2006 (OCHA 1, UNHCR). The Sila and Ouddai regions, in eastern Chad, are home to nearly 95 per cent of all internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were affected by the 2006 influx of Janjaweed militia groups from Darfur (UNHCR 2011). By 2007 international aid and political agreements were implemented to redress the deteriorating status of IDPs and structural violence within Chad.

The UN Mission in Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) mandate, authorized by UNSC 1778, allowed for security and protection of civilians, human rights and rule of law, and regional peace support (UNSC 1778). Specifically, it advised and developed the Détachment Intégré de Sécurité (DIS) a civilian force designed to combat banditry and criminality in eastern Chad, ensuring the security and safety of IDPs right to return. Furthermore, a 2007 political agreement between Déby and the opposition addressed the need for fundamental shifts in governance as well as electoral reforms (ICG 2008). This accord also coordinated the deployment of the DIS to manage the security situation in refugee camps and IDP sites (ICG 2008).

MINURCAT successfully trained over 800 DIS officers by 2009 (UNSC 14 October 2009). This reduced interethnic violence in eastern Chad, although “widespread attacks against civilians, including IDPs, refugees and humanitarian workers, by bandits and criminal gangs known as ‘coupeurs *de route*’ who have acted with total impunity (IMDC 7)” were prevalent. Therefore, ensuring the security of returning IDPs remained circumspect, in fact, in 2007, 240,000 more IDPs were displaced or re-displaced by bandits and criminals (InterAction, 7). Despite this, according to the UN, more than 50,000 IDPs returned home since 2008 (CAP 44). MINURCAT’s ability to bolster local security forces compelled Déby to request termination of the mission in 2010, claiming that “national security forces that would take responsibility for the protection of civilians in eastern Chad (ISN, IMDC 20).” Déby also criticized MINURCAT for its failure to protect civilians and unfulfilled promises to build infrastructure projects (IMDC, 8). Approval of UNSC Resolution 1923 signaled the withdrawal from Chad of all MINURCAT troops and civilian components by the end of 2010.

However, MINURCAT also had several sustainable contributions to the rule of law. These included three pilot legal aid clinics in eastern Chad, logistical support for new judges and prosecutors in Abéché, and training for prison officials (UNSC Report, 5). MINURCAT also strengthened the governmental and institutional frameworks for human rights, child protection, gender, reconciliation, HIV/AIDs and mine awareness. Despite these reforms, the current situation for IDPs in Chad remains tenuous.

**Current Progress:**

Indicative of MINURCAT’s withdrawal were certain benchmarks to be achieved by the Déby’s GoC, one of which was the return of IDPs by the end of 2012 (CAP 45, IMDC 20). According to their ambitious goals, the GoC sought to return, integrate or relocate 181,000 IDPs

by the end of the year. In order to attain this outcome, security threats and food security issues must be addressed. As of 2010, there were 170,000 IDPs living in 38 camps distributed across eastern Chad, with “little or no means of sustaining themselves, making humanitarian assistance vital” (IMDC 1). According to Act Alliance in 2011, there were 26, 044 IDPs in Koukou, 11,360 in Goz Beida, and 24,565 in Farchana refugee camps. While this only accounts for roughly half the total population of IDPs, data is not available for IDPs at Dogdoré, Habilé, Aradip, Gouroukoun, and Gassiré, along with as many as 30 other camps. In fact, current UN estimates of the number of IDPs vacillate by almost 50, 000. In 2010, the Consolidated Appeal identified 131, 000 IDPs in Chad. By 2011, despite a UN documented return of 50,000 IDPs, the sum had grown to approximately 180, 000 (CAP 2010; CAP 2011). Many of these camps also house roughly 270,000 Darfuri Sudanese refugees, 81,000 refugees from the Central African Republic (IMDC 1), and most recently Libyan refugees escaping the insurrection against Qaddafi, making accurate statistics near impossible.

To achieve the MINURCAT benchmarks, the GoC advocates voluntary return—however, despite the DIS and gendarme presence in eastern Chad, question marks remain as to the safety and security of the region. Furthermore, the voluntary nature of return is also dubious. As part of a three-year plan to develop durable solutions for IDPs in eastern Chad, “In 2011 the government called on agencies to no longer render assistance in IDP sites, and to only provide assistance when IDPs either return to their villages of origin, integrate within the community where they presently are or when they want to settle themselves anywhere else within Chad (Act Alliance 4).” Thus, IDPs are practically forced to return to their homes, regardless of safety, because they no longer receive necessary assistance. Jose Fischel, the head of office for UNHCR in Goz Beida, home of one of the IDP camps, characterizes this nebulous state—“People won’t

be forced to go home; they have a right to live wherever they want. But as long as the reasons which forced them to flee are no longer there, there is no longer a reason to consider them as IDPs (IRIN 2009).” This status change signifies that people no longer receive food, or non-food items (NFIs) but can still access services like water, education and health clinics.

This ‘gray zone’ status faced by Chadian IDPs—no longer ‘technically’ IDPs but with homes too unsafe to return to—undermines MINURCAT and other international organizations responsibility to protect (R2P) mandate. Women frequently complain that they do not feel safe returning, but do not feel safe in the camps either, due to gender based violence and lack of resources, leaving them no place to go. Another IRIN report highlighted that “Hundreds of thousands of Chadians uprooted by violence in the country's east say they can't go home unless the government improves infrastructure and health services in their towns and villages (Relief Web 2010).” This shows that neither the safety nor the infrastructure in Chad is adequate to justify return to many places in eastern Chad.

The issue of forced return is not applicable in all cases. In Louboutigue, for example, after March 2008, 3,280 persons have returned of their own volition (OXFAM 5). Returning from nearby IDP camps at Habilé and Koloma, they are benefitted by several NGOs that provide food, water, health and sanitation needs, and their security is ensured by DIS and gendarme presence.

Thus, a tripartite division exists between Chadians desire to return home, and their fear of doing so for security or resource reasons, and applied pressure from lack of access to land and lack of income-generating activities in IDP camps. The UN Refugee Agency has attempted to classify villages by color coding-red, yellow, and green- with respect to how safe it is for IDPs to return home (IRIN 2009). This is further complicated by government pressure to return home,

regardless of security, in order to meet MINURCAT benchmarks. According to a 2011 UN brief, 30,000 people in Dar Sila, a major IDP camp, do not wish to return home (OCHA 2). In Assounga, 30% of IDPs are not ready to return home. Another speculation is that MINURCAT's withdrawal will endanger refugees and compromise delivery of humanitarian aid and food to more than 250,000 refugees from Darfur, 75,000 from CAR and 160,000 IDPs from Chad (ISN). Given that only 2.8% of land in Chad is arable (CIA World Factbook), durable solutions for provision of basic needs to Chadian IDPs is essential before they are forced to return to unsafe and unsustainable environments.

Security concerns are further exacerbated by interethnic and intra-ethnic tensions, and the availability of resources. Chad has over a dozen ethnic groups, four main religions (Muslim, Catholic, Protestant, Animist), and over 120 different languages and dialects (CIA World Factbook). This diverse combination is often contentious, especially between religious factions. Adding fuel to this ethnic rivalry are the Darfuri Sudanese, members of Idriss Déby's Zaghawa people, and refugees from the Central African Republic who further provoke ethnic rivalry and resource competition. Moreover, eight of the nine main rebel groups joined forces as the Union des Forces de la Résistance (UFR) which seeks to cause more violence and problems for Déby's GoC (OXFAM 2). This inter-communal violence perpetuates instability and further undermines IDPs opportunity to return, and frequently creates new IDPs; "in November 2008, violent disputes erupted between Tama and Zaghawa around cattle stealing in Birak, which resulted in more than 50 civilian deaths and many injured. Houses were burnt and more than 700 families were forced to flee their homes towards the highly insecure border area (OXFAM 7)."

Intra-ethnic tensions, often rising from resource disparities, also factor into the precarious ability of IDPs to return. Because arable land is scarce, it is coveted by its owners, and, despite

the insecurity, Chadian IDPs have returned to cultivate their land for want of resources unavailable in IDP camps. In one instance, a woman admitted, “We are afraid to go back because the ‘Arabs’ are there and armed. Our land is now where their cattle graze” (OXFAM 6). Occasionally right of return also clashes with usufruct claims, over even legal claims to land rights. Horizontal inequalities, to use Frances Stewart’s term, deepen both inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic divisions (Stewart 2). Horizontal inequalities are aggravated by humanitarian policies as well—UN Refugee Agency classification of villages creates tension between IDPs in a competition for scant resources by dividing them on semantic, technical grounds. To a lesser extent, oil discovered in Chad could also worsen horizontal inequalities within and between ethnic groups.

Food insecurity also jeopardizes IDPs capability to return. Without a guaranteed source of food or income, IDPs lack the incentive to leave camps. However, overcrowding of camps has also led to agricultural productivity loss due to overuse, and devastation of the fragile ecological system. IDPs dependent on water and food aid from camps often forego the opportunity to return. In some cases, living conditions in the camps are better than in their homes. Moreover, recent and intense food insecurity in Chad’s 11 Sahel regions has increased demand on IDP camps to provide food. Although the 2012 CAP emphasizes durable solutions and risk reduction through soil preservation, increasing crop diversity, prevention of erosion, and natural resource management (CAP 96) these solutions are inconsequential in the face of chronic malnutrition, food insecurity and drought—“even in good harvest years one third of Chad’s population is chronically undernourished” (IRIN 2011). Therefore, resource scarcity and food security are additional obstacles preventing IDPs from returning.

**Lessons Learned:**

When MINURCAT arrived in 2007, its mandate emphasized “Security and protection of civilians” in various capacities (UNSC 1778). However, as the *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad* suggests “there was no common understanding of the protection of civilians in the context of a United Nations peacekeeping environment. Consequently, each actor on the ground had different expectations and interpretations of what protection should entail, based largely on the perspective of their organizational goals rather than on a shared understanding” (UNSC Report 13). The need for a clear mandate is essential to the efficacy of the mission; without it, vagaries and inconsistencies can leave a population as vulnerable, insecure, and unprotected from interethnic violence and banditry at the termination of the mission. A mutually shared understanding, between the GoC, NGOs, and MINURCAT, regarding the protection of civilians, engenders sustainability and durable protection. Furthermore, a clearly defined directive allows for empirical benchmarks to ensure accountability. A segue from this observation is that governments frequently make fictitious claims to enhance their legitimacy, and these “claims about refugees and IDPs do not necessarily reflect the ‘on the ground reality’” (Murphy, 13 Feb 2012).

An important takeaway is that continued funding should be linked to outcomes. In the case of Chad, MINURCAT withdrew in 2010, and set objectives that Déby’s GoC was obligated to achieve, such as the return of 100% of IDPs by the end of 2011. However, repercussions of failure to meet this standard are not reflected in FTS funded Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP).

The 2010 appeal is for \$458 million to support emergency relief activities while emphasizing programs that increase self-sufficiency of displaced communities. In March 2010, the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) recognized that Chad was an underfunded emergency, and allocated \$7 million for life-saving assistance programs targeting approximately 800,000 people (CERF, April 2010, IMDC 11).

In 2011, the CAP was virtually equivalent, US \$455, 173, 291 (CAP 2011). Thus, despite policy failure, there is seemingly no accountability for the GoC to enforce or reach these targets, and goals simply rollover from one year to the next.

Perhaps an explanation for this lack of accountability is that underfunded emergencies, like Chad, do not merit much international, or donor attention. The danger of forgotten emergencies, including “studies on humanitarian needs in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Nepal, Palestine, Ethiopia, Chechnya, Indonesia, and elsewhere have consistently been ignored” (Smilie and Minear, 2005). The CERF and CAP monies, partially funded at best, are platitudes without real force or accountability. This bodes poorly for IDPs in Chad, arguably the forgotten of the forgotten.

The condition of Chadian IDPs also magnifies the precarious balance between rule of law and government sovereignty and the humanitarian obligation and responsibility to protect (R2P). When does allowing a government to rule actually threaten the citizenry? On one hand, “the Chad government is trying to reassert state authority after five years of internal disputes, change the way it runs the country and gain public support for a new national pact based on the rejection of armed struggle” (ICG 2010). On the other, rampant insecurity, and lack of basic infrastructure threaten lives and livelihoods; as one woman indicated, “Many of us have tried to return to the villages but they came back in sites because armed men are still around and there is no protection. There are many weapons out there; hidden by men on camels and horses. We are afraid to be attacked if we go back to the village” (OXFAM 6). The lesson here implies that if the government cannot assure the well-being and safety of returning IDPs, humanitarians must intervene on their behalf, as has happened in Louboutigue. Moreover, this raises the debate as to

whether MINURCAT withdrew too prematurely, and on a more theoretical note, when should intervention be withdrawn and government sovereignty reestablished.

However, on a more positive note, Chad also serves as an example of how the reduction of aid and international assistance, through the withdrawal of MINURCAT, can empower governments to break their dependence on aid and force them to fend for themselves. Déby's request for MINURCAT's departure can cautiously be interpreted as an assertion of sovereignty. UN development statistics on Chad trend towards increased stability and security, indicated by less IDPs, more returnees, and the continued presence of DIS. On the contrary, skeptics claim that "Chad's security forces will not be able to fill the security vacuum created by the withdrawal of the UN Mission (ISN)" and will only be used to guard the Chad-Sudan border.

Another lesson drawn from this case study is that IDP return is not always voluntary. In this case, Chadians returned because they were no longer considered as IDPs, and had no other place to go. This indefinite status left them without access to basic needs, and obliged them to return. However, a 2008 survey by UNHCR showed that only 30% of people assessed knew the security situation at their home (UNHCR-UNFPA). Alternatively, IDPs may temporarily return to plant crops, but in many cases, IDPs will remain permanently displaced. Duress can be a factor in coercing return, and often the right of return is lost in the need or compulsion to do so.

The most fundamental lesson learned from IDPs in eastern Chad is that, in order for IDP return to be successful, governments or NGOs need to implement durable solutions, with regard to food security, gender based violence, livelihoods and provisional needs. For Chad, despite Déby's optimistic grasp for sovereignty, humanitarian assistance still appears to be needed to provide these solutions over the long-term. Recent developments in the Sahel region project that upwards of 10 million could become food insecure in the coming months, leading to massive

internal displacement, refugee migration, malnutrition and death (IRIN 2011). Chadian IDPs exemplify the underfunded and often forgotten populations affected by complex humanitarian emergencies, and the consequences of their plight are ominous without increased intervention.

## **Bibliography:**

- “Appeal-Return and Integration of Displaced People and Assistance to Host Communities - TCD121” ReliefWeb. Accessed 11 February 2012 Web. 7 February 2012. <<http://reliefweb.int/node/475492>>.
- Augsberger, Richard et. al. “NGO Staff Well-Being in the Darfur Region of Sudan and Eastern Chad.” InterAction. November 2007.
- “Chad: A New Conflict Resolution Framework.” International Crisis Group. Accessed 11 February 2012. Web. 24 September 2008. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/central-africa/chad/144-chad-a-new-conflict-resolution-framework.aspx>>.
- “Chad: Between an IDP camp and an unsafe home.” IRIN. Accessed 18 February 2012. Web. 22 October 2009. <<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=86703>>.
- “Chad: Beyond Superficial Stability.” International Crisis Group. Accessed 11 February 2012. Web. 17 August 2010. <<http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/africa/central-africa/chad/162-chad-beyond-superficial-stability.aspx>>.
- “Chad: Prevailing Insecurity blocking solutions for IDPs.” IMDC. Accessed 11 February 2011. Web. 2 July 2010. <[www.internal-displacement.org/.../\\$file/Chad\\_Overview\\_July10.pdf](http://www.internal-displacement.org/.../$file/Chad_Overview_July10.pdf)>.
- “Consolidated Appeal Chad 2012.” FTS. Web. <[http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/httpCountry\\_Documents?ReadForm&country=Chad&count=10000](http://www.internal-displacement.org/8025708F004CE90B/httpCountry_Documents?ReadForm&country=Chad&count=10000)>.
- “Deployment of the Integrated Security Detachment in Chad.” ReliefWeb. Accessed 11 February 2012. Web. 27 October 2008. <<http://reliefweb.int/node/285096>>.
- “Displaced Chadians Rush home before rain.” UNHCR. Accessed 18 February 2012. Web. 6 June 2011 <<http://www.unhcr.org/4decd7176.html>>.
- “Displaced Chadians call on government to rebuild their villages.” Relief Web. Accessed 18 February 2012. Web. 15 Nov 2010. <<http://reliefweb.int/node/374886>>.
- “Enquête auprès des personnes déplacées internes à l’est du Tchad.” UNHCR – UNFPA. November 2008.
- “IDPs in Chad: Is it time to go back home?” OXFAM. Accessed 18 February 2012. Web. March 2009. <<http://www.caringforkaela.org/ingoactivities>>.
- Murphy, Craig. Personal correspondence. 13 February 2012.

“Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission to Central African Republic and Chad.” UNSC. Accessed 18 February 2012. Web. 1 December 2010. <<http://www.un.org/Docs/sc/sgrep10.htm>>.

“Sahel: Act now to avoid another crisis.” IRIN. Accessed 18 February 2012. Web. 14 December 2011. <<http://irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportid=94466>>.

“Security situation improves in eastern Chad, but concerns remain.” UN News Centre. Accessed 11 February 2012. Web. 13 May 2011. <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=38381&Cr=chad&Cr1>>.

Smillie, Ian and Larry Minear. The Charity of Nations: Humanitarian Action in a Calculating World. Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, Inc: 2004.

Stewart, Frances. “Crisis Prevention: Tackling Horizontal Inequalities.” Oxford Development Studies, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2000.

“Sustainable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons.” UNOCHA. February 2011.

“The Chad Withdrawal.” ISN. 18 May 2010. <<http://www.isn.ethz.ch/isn/Current-Affairs/Security-Watch-Archive/Detail/?lng=en&id=116320>>.

“UN humanitarian office allocates \$84 million for neglected emergencies.” UN News Centre. Accessed 11 February 2012. Web. 18 January 2011. <<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=37303&Cr=response&Cr1=fund>>.

