

Chad Military Council Suppresses Mass Demonstrations Demanding Civilian Rule

Longtime western-backed ruler was killed last month on the battlefield with FACT armed fighters, the government says.

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Global Research, May 05, 2021

Region: [sub-Saharan Africa](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Police State & Civil Rights](#)

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Thousands of people took to the streets in the two largest cities in Chad of N'Djamena and Moundou on April 27 in the aftermath of the state funeral of slain President Idriss Deby Itno, who had been the leader of this oil-rich state for more than thirty years.

The people involved in the protests were demanding the resignation of the Transitional Military Council which assumed power after the death of Deby on April 20.

This supposedly interim governing structure is led by the 37-year-old son of the former president, the military General Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno. The parliament in the country was suspended by the military council while it was announced that elections will be held within 18 months.

Members and supporters of many mass organizations attempted to march peacefully in the streets when they were attacked by the Chadian security forces. Reports are that the police and military personnel utilized live ammunition to end the demonstrations.

In the security crackdown at least six people were killed and more than 700 were arrested by the authorities. The military ruling council accused the demonstrators of violently attacking them and that they were justified in the use of lethal force.

Opposition parties and organizations argued that the Chadian constitution was violated because it stipulates the appointment of the president of the national assembly in the event of the death or incapacitation of the head-of-state. Instead after announcing the death of the Deby, the ruling military council was declared, absent of any consultation with representative bodies within the legislature.

Additional demonstrations were scheduled to take place after the April 27 attacks on demonstrations and the subsequent arrests and deaths. Nevertheless, the streets were reported to have been calm on Friday April 30 and continued throughout the weekend.

The 55 member-states African Union (AU) has expressed concern over developments in Chad. AU protocols call for the suspension of any government on the continent which comes

to power through military means. These measures are designed to prevent the assumption of power by the armed forces which had been a common occurrence in the first few decades of post-colonial African governance. Oftentimes these coups were coordinated and funded by western imperialist states seeking to maintain their influence.

Chad had been a colony of France from 1900 to 1960 when the country gained national independence. Nonetheless, Paris has maintained a military presence inside the country designed to protect its economic and security interests as the former colonizer.

An [article in Africa News](#) on the current crisis in Chad notes the role of the AU, saying:

“A team from the African Union arrived Thursday (April 29) in N’Djamena, Chad on a seven-day Fact-Finding Mission to assess the situation in country and examine ways of a speedy return to democratic rule. Following several days of internal pressure, the delegation will produce a report at the end of its mission which will enable the Peace and Security Council to adopt a definitive position on the measures to be taken. Several member countries have called for Chad to be suspended from the African Union because of the Transitional Military Council’s takeover of power. Many also estimated that this was a coup d’état, as the Constitution was not respected.”

The AU Peace and Security Council issued [a communique on April 22](#) after the takeover by the military regime noting that the regional organization:

“Recalls relevant provisions of the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance, as well as the Lomé Declaration; and expresses grave concern with respect to the establishment of the Military Transitional Council. Urges the Chadian defense and security forces and all national stakeholders to respect the constitutional mandate and order, and to expeditiously embark on a process of restoration of constitutional order and handing over of political power to the civilian authorities, in accordance with to the relevant provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of Chad, and create conducive conditions for a swift, peaceful, constitutional and smooth transition. Underscores the urgent necessity of an all-inclusive national dialogue between all stakeholders in Chad, with the aim of restoring constitutional order and calls on all Chadian stakeholders to immediately engage in the national dialogue.”

The Role of Chad in the Regional Military Strategy of France and the U.S.

Former President Idriss Deby Itno was a military person who came to power through the overthrow of his former leader Hissen Habre in 1990. Habre had been cited for human rights violations while Deby took off his military uniform in exchange for civilian clothing in order to run for political office.

As Deby was praised by Paris and Washington for maintaining stability in Chad, the government and its military forces became a conduit for French and other imperialist interests in West and Central Africa. The military forces were built into an army which principal aim was to ostensibly fight “Islamic terrorism” in the region along with suppressing its own democratic aspirations among the people.

France through its Operation Barkhane has created an alliance of West African military units which serve as frontline troops in several countries including Mali and on the border areas with Nigeria. The objective of these military alliances is to prevent attacks in Mali, Burkina

Faso, Niger and the Lake Chad Basin territories. Yet many of these Islamic Jihadist groups were initially formed and funded by the imperialist countries to fight against the former Libyan government of Col. Muammar Gaddafi during the counter-revolution of 2011.

The rebel Chadian Front for Change and Concord (FACT) was based in post-Gaddafi Libya while recently on April 11 many of its forces reentered the country after the formation of another United Nations-supported interim government in Tripoli. The aims of FACT seem to be solely centered on the removal of the Deby regime.

Reports indicate that the rebel group was in alliance with Khalifa Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA). Haftar is a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) asset who after defecting from the Gaddafi-era Libyan military during the Chadian war of the 1980s, relocated to the U.S. and was sponsored by the federal government. Haftar was flown back to Libya during the counter-revolution of 2011 where he has repeatedly sought and failed to seize power in Tripoli. Haftar has been supported by France in his unsuccessful military efforts to become the leader of Libya.

A host of rebel groups have been used in Syria, Yemen and Iraq as well to serve the interests of the U.S. and other western states. Whenever the utilization of these forces contradicts the interests of imperialism they can easily be labelled as "enemies" providing further incentives for Washington and Paris to remain in these geo-political regions under the guise of the "war against terrorism."

According to the State Department funded [Voice of America \(VOA\)](#):

"Déby presided over one of the largest and most well-resourced militaries in West Africa. His forces provided crucial support to international security efforts in the Lake Chad Basin and the Sahel, where Islamist militant groups have wreaked havoc in recent years. That is likely why Western powers such as France and the U.S. turned a blind eye to the ever-mounting accusations of human rights abuses and to his habit of suppressing political opposition.... If Déby's son does not earn the loyalty of Chad's armed forces, the region could lose a key player in the fight against Islamic extremists."

Yet Paris and Washington are not at all enthusiastic over the prospects of the ascendancy of a civilian government coming to power in Chad which is ideologically and politically opposed to France and the U.S. French President Emmanuel Macron attended the funeral of Deby and praised his role in the putative fight against "Islamic Jihadism." Macron says he supports the formation of a civilian government. However, it does not appear that France will break ties with the military transitional council pending the holding of multi-party elections.

Situation in Chad Reflects the Crisis of Governance in Post-Colonial Africa

Although there are 54 independent states on the African continent, with the Western Sahara still suffering under the colonial occupation of the imperialist-backed Kingdom of Morocco in the northern region, due to the legacy of colonialism and enslavement, the AU member-states face formidable challenges in gaining genuine independence through the control of economic and military affairs. The U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM) and France's Operation Barkhane are proof that these leading imperialist states have no interests in leaving the continent to resolve its own problems.

The struggle against neo-colonialism and imperialism must be led by the African workers,

farmers and youth. The military and police forces which are largely trained, armed and financed by the western states, cannot provide the revolutionary leadership required to bring the type of social change which can empower the masses to make the transition from peripheral capitalism and neo-colonialism to socialism and African unification.

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Featured image: Chad former President Idriss Deby killed after winning another term of office (Source: Abayomi Azikiwe)

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