

Somewhere to Turn?

MINURCAT and the Protection of Civilians
in Eastern Chad and Darfur

Randi Solhjell, Benjamin de Carvalho and Jon Harald Sande Lie



Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
Department of Security and Conflict Management



Security in Practice 5 · 2011

[NUPI Working Paper 788]

Publisher: The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
Copyright: © Norwegian Institute of International Affairs 2011

Any views expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. The text may not be printed in part or in full without the permission of the authors.

Visiting address: C.J. Hambros plass 2 d
Address: P.O. Box 8159 Dep.
NO-0033 Oslo
Norway
Internet: www.nupi.no
E-mail: info@nupi.no
Fax: [+ 47] 22 36 21 82
Tel: [+ 47] 22 99 40 00

Somewhere to Turn?

MINURCAT and the Protection of Civilians in Eastern Chad and Darfur

**Randi Solhjell, Benjamin de Carvalho
and Jon Harald Sande Lie**

Summary

The United Nations Mission in Eastern Chad and the Central African Republic (MINURCAT) was established to protect civilians and contribute to rule of law and regional peace in the conflict-prone region bordering Darfur. The mission was dismantled towards the end of 2010. This report, based on fieldwork undertaken in Chad in 2009, addresses the situation of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) in eastern Chad and difficulties MINURCAT encountered in its response to such violence.

Many of the SGBV cases are reported being committed when women leave camps and sites to fetch firewood, water etc. However, many of the reported cases are also committed inside the camps and sites by family members, neighbours etc. An important part of the combat against SGBV has thus been to sensitize the targeted population on harmful customs and human rights violations. This has been especially important for the various gender and women committees in the refugee camps.

A major objective throughout the mission has been to establish a national community policing, which eventually came into being in 2008 under the name of the *Détachement intégré de sécurité* (DIS). The DIS is maintaining the rule of law in the refugee camps, IDP sites and key towns within a 10 km radius. The staff has been gender-trained and all of the units have a gender focal point. Throughout the field visit, however, it was argued that the important work of DIS was being hampered by a dysfunctional judicial system. Furthermore, victims of SGBV who report their cases to the DIS are vulnerable to reprisals. All aspects of community policing had not been addressed within DIS. The only aspect that had been addressed was gender, with the consequence that the gender office carried out most of the community policing. The gender units within DIS seemed to function.

Overall, in staunch contrast to the picture portrayed to us by a number of reports which were published just before our fieldwork, we were given the impression by most of those interviewed that the security of refugees and IDPs was much better than what it had been before the arrival of EUFOR and MINURCAT.

The present research was made possible through a grant from the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the Training for Peace in Africa Programme (TfP) www.trainingforpeace.org

Introduction

The enduring conflict in Darfur has received extensive international attention. However, the conflicts and political crisis in neighbouring Chad have gone largely unnoticed, or have simply been referred to as a spill-over effect of the Darfuri conflict. Since 2005, however, it became largely evident that the governments of Sudan and Chad were fighting proxy wars and backing opposing rebel groups in each other's countries. As a consequence of the fighting, refugees from Darfur have sought protection in neighbouring Chad and the internal turmoil in Chad has caused an increase in the number of internally displaced people (IDPs). Though fighting has diminished today, the high number of refugees, IDPs and bandit groups, together with the proliferation of arms, continues to pose great security risks.

This report addresses the current situation of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against refugees and IDPs in eastern Chad. But in war and conflict situations, addressing SGBV is both a matter of security politics and an important part of the humanitarian imperative to protect civilians under the auspices of international humanitarian law and international human rights. In June 2008, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) unanimously adopted Resolution 1820. The resolution stated that 'rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or a constitutive act with respect to genocide' and is aimed at ending sexual violence in conflict. Military discipline, responsibility and training are cited as central elements for accomplishing the goals of 1820. As a follow-up of the resolution, the UNSC in 2009 adopted Resolutions 1888, on sexual violence in war and conflict, and 1889, on violence against women and girls.

These resolutions are a result of a much broader agenda to mainstream gender perspectives at all levels of the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations and peace negotiations since the adoption of UNSC Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. Resolution 1325 has received widespread popular support from women's activist groups and donor countries in order to strengthen equal rights for women to live in peace and security. A key goal in the resolution is to empower women in decision-making positions at all levels and to contribute in conflict resolution and peace processes. Nevertheless, actual implementation has proven difficult and much of the effort has taken place at the advocacy level and only to a lesser extent at the operational level.

After offering a brief overview of research procedure and background, we situate the MINURCAT operation in the context of the current political processes and humanitarian situation in Chad and the Darfur

Region, before turning to the main findings from our fieldwork. Overall, we argue that MINURCAT seemed to have been fairly successful – especially taken into account its dramatically low deployment compared to its authorized mandate – in securing areas around refugee camps and some IDP camps. This stands in strong contrast to the picture portrayed by advocacy groups only months prior to our fieldwork.

Research Procedure

The data supporting the findings in this report are based on a 10-day field visit to Chad in November 2009, covering the capital N’Djamena and eastern Chad, including Abéché, Goz Beida, Farchana and Guéréda, as well as on a previous field visit in March 2009. Information has been acquired from formal interviews and informal discussions. These included interviews and discussions with key MINURCAT and other UN personnel, including the Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) and the Deputy SRSG, non-governmental organizations (NGO’s), Chadian police, refugees and internally displaced men and women. During discussions with IDPs and refugees, the team divided into two separate groups so that the female researcher spoke with women and the male researchers with men. Central to the field visit was to capture the positions of both the central decision-makers and the realities and practice on the ground in eastern Chad. This was made possible by the logistical facilitation provided by MINURCAT, as Chad has no public infrastructure and is largely an impassable country. For the purpose of protecting informants’ security, their names are withheld.

Additional data and background information have been gathered from desk surveys of available reports and literature. These include both academic literature and blog posts¹ as well as policy/advocacy literature. It should be noted that background literature on Chad remains scarce, as goes for advocacy literature which often is more focused on Darfur and ‘the spill-over effect’ in eastern Chad.

Chad and the Protection of Vulnerable Groups

Today, there are approximately 240 000 refugees from Darfur, around 180 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) and 45 000 from the Central African Republic (CAR) in Chad.² As already noted, it is widely recognized that the conflicts in Northern Sudan and Chad are closely related and that any viable peace in Darfur is dependent on a peace agreement between the governments of Khartoum and N’Djamena (de

¹ “Making sense of Darfur” is a blog post under the Social Science Research Council (New York) found at <http://blogs.ssrc.org/sudan/>.

² Statistics provided by the MINURCAT official webpage.

Waal, 2009). This is most obvious since both of the governments are backing military oppositions in each other's countries, but there are also several other underlying and less visible issues in Chad affecting peace and security between and within the two countries. For one, while there are international efforts to reach a peace settlement in Darfur, there are no such parallel processes in Chad (Enough, 2009). This may, for instance, be due to that short-term humanitarian efforts without any internationally supported political processes in Chad can cause long-term displacement as well as unintentional support of armed elements. The ability to protect in Chad, a UN officer told us, had to be worked out with reference to the situation in Libya, Cameroon, but especially Sudan and the Central African Republic. A solution to the violence in the Darfur region could not be worked out through "national" UN missions, but required a regional approach (Interview N'Djamena, 2 November 2009). The protection efforts of the international community and MINURCAT were not made easier by the sheer size of the country. The lack of communications, infrastructure and the difficulty to run national campaigns of prevention led to the fragmentation of actions.

Furthermore, Chadian president Idriss Déby and his government have had a tendency to use military confrontation or buy off rebel groups, hand in hand with a seemingly never-ending military build-up of the security forces, according to the Enough report (2009). As most of the government's power is concentrated in the capital, they lack the ability to control the entire Chadian territory. In the words of de Wall (2009), "control of state power in Chad is all-or-nothing and is intimately and intricately linked to the political position of the [ethnic group] Zaghawa, who are a small minority with disproportionate power and wealth".³

Henceforth, the presence of militias, rebel groups and bandit groups unsurprisingly creates instability and insecurity for the population in eastern Chad, and it also poses great challenges for the operational environment and humanitarian space for the international and local personnel. The infamous militia group Janjaweed from Western Sudan present in eastern Chad is an umbrella term for the armed Darfuri groups that have received training and equipment from the Sudanese Armed Forces (Haggar, 2007:113). The domestic rebel groups share at the very least the common feature of an 'anti-Déby ideology', but alliances are fluid and marked by divisions and rivalries (Seibert, 2007:12). During the political turmoil in Chad in 2005, many key members of the government chose to join and support the rebellion against Déby (Giroux et al., 2009:4). This has caused a proliferation in

³ Blog post, 31 July 2009. <http://blogs.ssrc.org/sudan/2009/07/31/good-enough-report-on-chad/>

the number of rebel groups currently present in eastern Chad. In addition, there are increasingly problems concerning bandit groups in the area, encouraged by the availability of vehicles and money in the region due to the relatively large international presence. To take one example from Guéréda, in north-eastern Chad close to the border of Darfur, humanitarian workers can only move about with police escort and must store their cars in police compounds after dark. This is a result of weekly armed attacks and theft of vehicles, which in turn curtail the humanitarian workers' activities. Furthermore, several of the humanitarian organizations, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and other non-governmental organizations (NGO's), such as Médecins sans frontières (MSF) and Solidarités, have fallen victim of kidnapping and killings of their staff (see e.g. UNSC, 2009d:3). In sum, the operating environment is a major challenge in eastern Chad.

The bandit groups are also a result of the influx of international humanitarian staff in local societies and towns, such as Abéché, the headquarters of the UN. For instance, in Abéché the water system was ill-prepared for the arrival of aid workers and peacekeepers and their much more wasteful consumption compared to that of the host communities (IRIN news, 27.1.10). In addition, housing and food costs in Abéché reach levels often beyond what the vulnerable residents can afford. This has in turn resulted in incidents where locals have been cheering and supporting carjacking to hamper operations.

In terms of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), reports from Amnesty International (e.g. 2006 and 2009) emphasize the use of rape as a weapon of war against Darfur refugees in eastern Chad, allegedly perpetrated by Janjaweed militias. These attacks are often carried out when women leave the camps to gather firewood, fetch water or find food for their cattle. In many of the camps we were told that the only income-generating activity in and around the camp for women was to collect firewood, which could then be sold. But as the camps had become more established, less and less firewood was available in the surroundings of the camps. In Djabal, for instance, we were told that the available firewood was too far away from the camp now – about 20 km – and that one needed a donkey or a horse. This in turn was an additional risk, as it could easily attract attention and risk being stolen (Interviews in Djabal refugee camp, 3 November 2009).

A number of reports address the level of domestic violence within the refugee camps, committed by neighbours, husbands or other family members. Furthermore, the reports call attention to 'a culture of impunity' of violence against women and girls in eastern Chad. It is argued that the Chadian legal framework remains weak, that there is lack of

sufficient judicial personnel and meagre political will among local Chadian authorities to deal with SGBV cases (Amnesty International, 2009:4). Instead of formal legal structures, cases of rape and other forms of SGBV are more often dealt with in traditional dispute resolutions and negotiated settlements, according to Amnesty. In the Farchana refugee camp, we were told that domestic violence was generally settled outside the courts (“à l’*amiable*”) in accordance with traditional customs. A UN worker in Farchana told us that while rape did occur, it was seldom reported; especially in polygamous households. The reason for this was that rape and *bastonnade* were often seen by the community as occurring as a consequence of a woman’s “refusal to entertain her husband”. It is a duty on the part of the woman to entertain her husband, we were told by a Chadian NGO worker. If she complains, the community may blame the woman for refusing to accommodate her husband’s needs (Farchana refugee camp, 4 November 2009). Speaking with the UNHCR, we were also told that the aid provided in the camps could sometimes create social problems. For instance, dumping one’s first wife and taking on a new – “referred to in the meeting as “wife dumping”) – was more common in sites than in the population, as the first wife would still receive food and be provided for (Abéché, 6 November 2009).

In a report by Physicians for Human Rights (2009:21), the second most reported worry in the daily life of Darfuri women in Chadian refugee camps in Farchana was the concern for their safety and sexual violence⁴ (46,7%), after food insecurity (58,9%). According to their findings, rape cases were not reported since, as the Darfuri women argued, nothing would be done about it anyway. In their conclusion (p. 26) “the women (...) preferred to suffer in silence, since the risk of reporting outweighed any possible potential benefit”. The women also told them that they were fearful of attacks by people from the host communities. In Farchana we were also told that the rate of violence had gone down as a result of a number of joint projects initiated for the refugees *and* the local population. For almost a year, we were told, not a single case of rape had been registered. This contrasted with up to 2-3 rapes a month between 2006 and 2007.

The resource scarcity in eastern Chad, combined with the influx of hundreds of thousands of refugees from Darfur, can understandably create a hostile environment. As one woman stated (p. 28): “The Chadian people don’t like us. They yell at us and tell us not to take their wood.” In conclusion, the SGBV attacks, according to these reports, mostly take place in connection with disputes between host communities and refugees over food, water and firewood. The as-

⁴ A methodological concern here, however, is the grouping of ‘safety and sexual violence’, as safety in general is an encompassing concern.

assessment of the security situation we were given by site and camp representatives was largely echoed by NGO workers we interviewed. The security was good within the camps, but it was “not the same” outside of them. In fact, we were told that the issue outside the camps was now less a matter of individual security – such as regarding rape – and more one of “area security.” However, as it was stressed to us on a number of occasions, it was difficult to aggregate the numbers, as many cases go unreported in some sites or camps (Interviews with a group of NGOs, Goz Beida 3 November 2009) In Farchana, the camp elders complained that the security situation for women outside the camps was reminiscent of the situation they had fled from.

When talking about the security of camps and sites, the role of the Chadian army seemed to be crucial. Troop movements, we were told, had a “massive impact” on the security of the sites, causing a host of security and protection problems. Their bringing weapons into the sites as well as the ongoing recruitment of children were indicative of their lack of respect for the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps. A large military presence automatically led to violence, we were told (Interviews with a group of NGOs, Goz Beida, 3 November 2009).

MINURCAT and EUFOR in a Challenging Environment

As a response to the considerable number of refugees from the neighbouring countries and IDPs in Chad, the Security Council adopted resolution 1778 in September 2007 to authorize the deployment of a UN civilian and police operation named MINURCAT, and a European Union military force (EUFOR Chad/RCA). The mandate of the mission was and continues to be the establishment of “security conditions conducive to a voluntary, secure and sustainable return of refugees and displaced persons, inter alia by contributing to the protection of refugees, displaced persons and civilians in danger, by facilitating the provision of humanitarian assistance in eastern Chad and the north-eastern Central African Republic and by creating favourable conditions for the reconstruction and economic and social development of those areas”.⁵ But one of the problems of the MINURCAT mission, as we were told repeatedly by the mission itself, was the fact that MINURCAT was but a *contribution* to the protection efforts in eastern Chad. En route we encountered many views on the effectiveness of MINURCAT. While an NGO worker told us angrily that “MINURCAT, c’est un désastre”, a DIS commissioner told us “MINURCAT est un moteur diesel, qui roule doucement. Mais quand ça prend, ça prend...” But while the security of the camps was good with the deployment of MINURCAT, NGO workers complained

⁵ UN Security Council, Resolution 1778 (2007)

about the fact that it was easier to attend to sites further away from Farchana with the EUFOR presence. The chronic understaffing and lack of equipment of MINURCAT were again the problem.

The EUFOR was deployed as a support for the MINURCAT mission for the protection of refugees and IDPs and for the security of UN and humanitarian personnel, while the UN was preparing for deploying a military component. The EUFOR was the largest EU military operation ever deployed in Africa. In March 2009, EUFOR transferred its authority to the UN military component of MINURCAT. This was done in accordance with the UNSC Resolution 1861 (2009) authorizing a renewed mandate for MINURCAT. However, only 52% of the force authorized by the resolution (5225 military personnel) have been deployed (UN SC, 2009d:5). This was felt by many as one of the main difficulties in delivering the mandate. It was especially difficult with respect to creating the secure environment necessary for the civilian part of the mission to play its role (Interview with UN staff, 2 November 2009). And while the security in and around the camps may be improving, it is difficult to assess with certainty. The result is a lot of rumours circulating inside the camps, with people often afraid to leave the camps. For instance, in some camps we were told about refugees or IDPs who had been killed when returning home. As a result, few were willing to risk returning, in spite of the situation having become better.

The gender unit in MINURCAT was established in May 2008 with its head office in Abéché and a liaison office in N'Djamena.⁶ The main objectives of the unit are to (1) put in practice resolutions 1325 and 1820, (2) inform MINURCAT personnel on gender issues, and (3) mainstream gender activities in the mission. One of their main priorities has been to strengthen the capacity of the *Détachement intégré de sécurité* (DIS) to protect women and children, as will be returned to below. The first lady in Chad, Hinda Deby Itno, has taken a lead role in supporting the gender unit and its campaigns, in particular as to the fight against SGBV. A political will from the highest level of the Chadian government is seen as crucial, especially since the first lady has received much popular support in Chad (see e.g. Wax 2006). Furthermore, UNFPA and partners in the gender cluster have worked to develop a referral system on SGBV cases, so that response procedures are harmonized and standardized within the judicial, security, medical and psychosocial sectors.

An integral part of the MINURCAT mission is the establishment of the Chadian police, DIS, as mentioned above. Since the military capacity in MINURCAT is only at 52% of its nominal level, DIS are

⁶ MINURCAT Briefing Note Gender Unit.

conducting much of the escort measures. They are deployed in order to maintain law and order in refugee camps, IDP sites and key towns in neighbouring areas within a 10 km radius, as well as securing humanitarian activities in eastern Chad.⁷ It is a mixed police force, consisting of more than 850 both Chadian police and gendarme officers. One of the main objectives with the DIS is to increase the number of women in the force to achieve a more gender-balanced approach to policing in Chad. As of 9 November, the force consisted of 11,5% female officers. However, few of the women have a leadership position within the units and a majority of the women occupy a position as gender focal points (*ibid.*). It should be noted that Chad is generally a male dominated culture and there are several examples of male resistance to women leadership and harassment of female personnel. Furthermore, the highly qualified and educated women are, generally speaking, less attracted to police jobs. Nevertheless, the female officers in the DIS represent a positive start and have made significant contributions to reach other women.

Protection and SGBV

Throughout the field visit, it became evident that SGBV was high on the agenda and constituted a cross-cutting issue in various operational sections of MINURCAT and UN departments, such as the human rights section, the gender unit and the rule of law unit. UNHCR produces monthly reports on SGBV cases in all of the refugee camps in Chad. The cases are tracked in order to systematize the incidents and enhance the understanding of when and where SGBV takes place. Since the onset of this type of recording and tracking in January 2009 and up until 31 August 2009, the UNHCR has reported a total of 439 SGBV cases, including 23 cases of rape and 25 rape attempts. UNHCR found that all the cases of rape outside of camps were allegedly committed by Chadians (except for one case committed by a refugee), while all the cases inside the camps, except one, were committed by refugees (family members, neighbours etc). UNHCR staff found that a high number of the cases outside of the camps was committed when women were out to gather firewood, usually on a distance of 20 to 30 km away from the camps, i.e. beyond the operational field of the DIS. Due to the sensitivity and stigma attached to this form of violence, however, there is reason to believe that there remains a certain amount of unreported cases. In addition, when cases of rape are reported, only a few victims are willing to pursue their cases in the formal legal system, if this system even exists, while the rest seeks traditional justice compensation.

⁷ MINURCAT Police presentation in N'Djamena, Chad, 29 October 2009.

In the Koloma site we were made aware of the need to avoid generic notions of women's rights and needs. As we were told, there was a need to distinguish between women who had a husband and those who did not. Those who had a husband, we were told by the representatives, were doing ok, while those who had lost their husbands were in a difficult situation. In order to subsist, they had to gather stones and straw to sell in the town nearby. Leaving the site was however a risk to take. But this distinction did not only apply to women. As we were told, the same problems applied to older men.

The reason for many problems in the camps, we were told, was tradition, but also poverty. Many rapes were caused by the difficult economic situation of women, who often were abused by their husbands. A very effective means of protecting vulnerable women against domestic abuse was helping women out of poverty. But too few programmes addressed this type of activity, a UNHCR worker told us (Farchana refugee camp, 4 November 2009).

It was widely agreed that the security in the camps has improved, although problems between camps and towns somehow seemed to have persisted. These seemed to range from acts of violence to the fact that refugees or IDPs were stigmatized and made fun of in the towns. In Gouroukoun, the camp leaders told us that they were being made fun of in the town, people shouting "no one wants you, you've been rejected". (Interviews in Gouroukoun IDP camp, 3 November 2009). Since many of the SGBV attacks take place as women leave the camps to gather firewood, there have been several efforts by UNHCR and others to reduce this risk by (1) having firewood posts within the camp areas, (2) introduce solar cookers for more sustainable and efficient energy use and (3) encourage men to participate in firewood gathering. The high consumption of firewood in the region, however, poses risks of increased conflicts with host communities as well as environmental challenges. Further, the men were generally reluctant to accompany the women as this was not perceived as a traditional male role. The solar cookers, on the other hand, have proven to be of low standard and there is a need to improve both financial support and the quality of such equipment. There is evidently large potential to improve and facilitate for solar technology in an area with a daily average of 8,6 hours of sun.⁸ Since tension between refugees and host communities as well as within the camps is often rooted in livelihood shortages, such investments could not only improve living conditions and contribute to a more sustainable development but also indirectly have an effect on the level of violence.

⁸ Climate in Chad: <http://www.worldtravelguide.net/country/55/climate/Africa/Chad.html>

There was however widespread agreement that the security of the camps had become better with DIS. However, representatives in most camps agreed that there should be more patrols. But on the whole, the feedback we got was positive. While camps previously had to rely on the military, the presence of trained police seemed to have improved the situation (Interviews in Gouroukoun IDP camp, 3 November 2009).

Taking Local Ownership?

Most of the cases reported by UNHCR were detected through the SGBV-related 'committees' in the camps, which include 'SGBV victims committee', 'women committee' and the 'leaders committee'. However, in some camps we were told that one of the most pressing issues was to get accurate information as to the scope of SGBV. And while many crimes went unreported, there seemed to be an established understanding among Chadian police officers, UN staff and agency workers we interviewed that rape was not a widespread problem, although some alarming reports had been circulating (Interview with UN Police, 3 November 2009). The research team met and discussed with some of these groups during the field visit in the refugee camps. These committees serve many different purposes, for instance dispute resolutions between refugees and sensitization among the refugees concerning domestic violence against women. The advocacy literature has portrayed a rather dramatic picture of sexual violence as a weapon of war in eastern Chad committed by armed groups like the Janjaweed. More often, however, harmful traditions such as early marriages (11-12 years) and female circumcision (FGM), and various forms of domestic violence against women and girls are the most frequent reported cases of SGBV. Our informants in the committees stated that the committees and supporting networks have played a crucial role in sensitization on SGBV. While incidents still went unreported, NGO workers in the camps told us that the situation was better now than before. A *comité de vigilance* had been formed in the camp, acting as a link between the refugees, NGO partners and the UNHCR and reporting cases that had become violent.

They argued that they had not previously, i.e. before they arrived as refugees in Chad, discussed or reflected on their customs and traditions. As one stated, sensitivity programmes make it possible for people to understand that their rights are being violated. They argued that a lot of the human rights violations were justified through religious practice and customs. Through gender sensitivity training in the committees, they had become aware of that a lot of their problems were related to SGBV.

On the whole, we were told in Mile, SGBV had gone down compared to the early years when the refugees had first arrived: “When sensitized to SGBV we realized that much of what was happening was not custom but actually SGBV crimes.” Another woman explained: “In the beginning, in Darfur, we didn’t understand SGBV. We didn’t understand anything. In Darfur we thought that men could do anything. Women didn’t understand anything. Now, women understand that if they are beaten etc. they can report it to DIS who can *convoque* the person, and treat it through the committee of sheikhs, and if that doesn’t work, refer it to Guéréda [the nearest *Préfecture*]. We now know that we can defend ourselves.” “You could give us millions and make us rich,” another woman told us, “but only knowledge remains forever.” The SGBV committee also emphasized that they would teach their knowledge of the harmful traditions when back in Darfur, but envisioned a problem in terms of what authority they would have coming back to Darfur and preaching: they had not received any diplomas for their training. This had already proved to be difficult in some cases where families had asked to see the credentials of the SGBV officers, and rejected their help as they had been unable to show a diploma of their SGBV qualification.” (Mile Camp SGBV Committee, 5 November 2009) This contrasted with what we were told by a UNHCR officer a few days later: Is the problem tradition, lack of education? People don’t even realize that their rights are being violated.” (Abéché, 6 November 2009).

Furthermore, as one in the gender committee in a camp in Guéréda stated (5 November 2009), though women do not have any education (including human rights knowledge), they can without doubt understand and detect security concerns. Hence, these forums for discussing their concerns with committees can facilitate for taking their security challenges to the DIS and UNHCR. In sum, such committees appeared to have played an important role in order for refugees to share experiences, as well as support to vulnerable groups and to detect protection and security matters.

It was less clear, however, if the IDP sites have developed such committee structures. The IDP women we met in Goz Beida informed us that they take their cases to the local village chief if they have security concerns, who then can take the case to the DIS. Some of the UNCHR representatives in Abéché (6 November 2009) expressed a concern that there was a lack of strategic framework to work with SGBV cases in IDP sites. They argued that Darfuri refugees were way ahead of the host communities and IDPs in terms of understanding the problems of SGBV as a protection issue and a human rights violation, and not an acceptable cultural practice.

The Détachement Intégré de Sécurité and SGBV

The DIS is in many ways unique in the UN history of peacekeeping. It is not only tasked with maintaining rule of law and security, but also building Chad's own community policing structure. Since neither the UN force nor the Chadian government have the capacity to secure the camps and sites 24-7, the DIS is in many ways fulfilling the mandate of protecting civilians. It is feared that the important work done on rule of law and protection of civilians achieved through the DIS will be lost with the withdrawal of MINURCAT. Further, the contextual challenges facing the DIS staff with armed attacks from banditry groups will be a major concern if they no longer receive back-up from MINURCAT (see i.e. IECAH report, 2010:12). Simply stated, if the DIS lacks security, it cannot be expected to maintain rule of law for refugees and IDPs.

Throughout Chad we heard complaints from DIS staff that they had too much to do with car hijackings. In Farchana, they complained that many of these incidents happened because of the negligence of NGOs who refused to follow security instructions, travelling after the curfew, or (such as the ICRC) refusing to have an escort when driving close to 100 km to visit a site (Farchana, 4. november 2009). The consequence of what DIS saw as recklessness of NGOs was of course that there was less time to attend to the security of the camps. NGOs expected to have them chase their stolen cars. In terms of training Chadian police, we were told that one of the main challenges for the UN was to recruit qualified trainers and mentors. As one of our interviewees told us, "The problem is that most countries who have qualified police don't send them. They have a security situation in their own country to handle" (interview with UN police, 3 November 2009).

Together with the camp and site 'committees', the DIS is often one of the first receivers of SGBV cases involving IDPs and refugees. Based on the eyewitness accounts and interviews from the field visit, there appeared to be in general good relations and trust between the DIS and the IDPs and refugees in the sites and camps the team visited.⁹ In a recent report by Amnesty International (2009:23), they claimed that "the UN has reported a number of "serious cases of ill-discipline" in which DIS officers have been accused of violence that reportedly led to deaths or injuries of a number of civilians (...)." As this was neither the impression nor consistent with the evidence from the field data, we took a closer look at the reference used by Amnesty. The reference (UNSC 2009d: art. 33) showed that there were only four cases of serious misconduct in which all had been dismissed and in process of a

⁹ This is a view also supported by another independent research team from the IECAH (2010)

judicial follow-up. The quote “serious cases of ill-discipline” was simply taken out of its context.

Nevertheless, from all the places we visited, similar arguments were made that the DIS’ capacity must be strengthened hand in hand with an improved judicial system. The judicial system, rather than misconduct of DIS staff, was argued as a much deeper concern, according to several of our informants, as the DIS’ work against SGBV was being hampered by the lack of a functioning justice sector. In the Farchana camp, we were told that the judicial response to SGBV was the weak link in addressing SGBV, as domestic violence was generally addressed through traditional channels (interview in Farchana refugee camp, 4 November 2009). Some argued that improving the justice sector was seen as a threat and met with resistance by several official Chadian authorities at the provincial level. This can be linked to fear among officials of the parallel training and deployment of judicial staff supported by the international community. The judicial unit in MINURCAT has employed so-called mobile courts in key eastern locations in Chad in order for cases to be tried in more neutral and formal systems. Within the traditional system, we were informed that there is no separation of power, and that the ‘sous-préfet’¹⁰ has more or less absolute power in the area. Hence, there are reasons to assume that such courts were challenging authorities in Chad, especially based on threats that staff in the mobile courts had received. The Assistant Secretary General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions at DPKO, Mr. Dimitry Titov, stated during his visit in Chad that it was important to follow up closely the work on building bridges between the mobile court systems and the traditional systems.¹¹

However, any substantial changes to the judicial system will inevitably demand long-term commitment on the side of the international community, represented by MINURCAT and the development agencies, and considerable resource allocations. Other issues are more general in kind. For instance, we were told of a certain “fear of justice” amongst refugee women. Some did not have access to justice as they feared to be discriminated if they were to face the Chadian judicial system. Instead, they were left to seek recourse in familial and community settlements. These women were left in a juridical vacuum (“*vide juridique*”). Of course, the fact that the nearest court was 120 km from Farchana did not make such recourse easier (Farchana refugee camp, 4 November 2009).

¹⁰ The *sous-préfet* is an administrative authority appointed by a presidential decree and represents the state in a sub-prefecture.

¹¹ 9 February 2009, reference found on MINURCAT webpage: <http://minurcat.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?ctl=Details&tabid=262&mid=533&ItemID=1268>

As MINURCAT's stay in Chad is short-term and with a pure protection mandate not intended to fundamentally reform state structures, the traditional systems are perhaps the main entry point to work with governance. As some of the NGO representatives in Goz Beida argued; "one has to acknowledge the traditional system because it works" (3 November 2009). In another study (IECAH, 2010:15), where more than 200 people were interviewed, the majority of the Chadians interviewed preferred the traditional systems and felt that traditional leaders should be trained, arguably also since the mobile courts are limited. An important task within MINURCAT's Rule of Law mandate was helping with the prosecution of SGBV crimes. Parts of this agenda included addressing SGBV through traditional courts and the Chadian justice system. These efforts, however, encountered problems, as the traditional justice system was often ill-understood ("traditional justice is complicated") and as the safety necessary to administer justice was seldom in place. Justices of the Peace themselves, we were told, were not safe (interview with UN staff, 2 November 2009).

Meeting with a DIS commissioner, we were also told of the problems experienced by DIS. While they acknowledged the importance of the help received from MINURCAT – especially the cars – a number of issues remained unresolved. Firstly, there was a lack of all-terrain vehicles. Salaries were also an issue. Furthermore, they felt they should have received more medical training. They had no means to give first aid, as they lacked pharmacy kits. Other issues on the commissioner's list were the lack of internet connection and showers. Also, their uniforms were too warm, and made them look like security guards, a policeman told us. Not until they had proper combat gear would they be taken seriously, he complained. When asked about the security inside the camps, the DIS commissioner told us that the main concern was cattle theft. People in camps and sites, we were told, go out to steal cattle. While there had been a few cases of adultery and rape, few cases had been recorded recently. Domestic violence had been high between 2004 and 2007, we were told by the commissioner, but had since gone down. A problem the DIS encountered, however, was that while they generally felt well-equipped to address most security issues within the camps, they were not equipped to deal with the rebels.

Another concern is that in the largely patriarchal society in Chad as well as Darfur where women are not allowed to talk to male strangers, the DIS has trouble in reaching the women. Hence, the female DIS staff is of crucial importance in terms of reaching the whole population in the camps and sites. The relatively high percentage (almost 15%) of women in the DIS is in many ways a success story. In interviews with UNPOL and DIS staff, the first five or so women that

started working for DIS became role models to attract more women to the force. Based on their experience, it has evidently become possible for women to both have a family and a job.

Further, both UNHCR and the DIS expressed a concern for female victims of SGBV in the immediate 24-72 hours after an incident and subsequent reporting to the DIS station in the camp or site. The victim often feared reprisals at home and had in general several insecurity issues. As a result, DIS personnel in Guéréda had in many cases shared their house and food with some of these victims for shorter periods in order to provide for their security. They suggested that a separate house should be built next to the DIS compound as a refuge for these victims. This view was also supported by UNHCR representatives.

Furthermore, as one of the DIS gender officers in Farchana noted (4 November 2009), there are also considerable challenges in making refugees and IDPs aware and familiar with their legal rights. This was especially a concern since many of the women remain illiterate. As one UNHCR representative stated: “You can’t blame culture, but the lack of education. People are not aware of their legal rights.” Or in the words of the DIS gender officer in Farchana: “When women remain illiterate, it is difficult to change their situation, especially in terms of human rights.” Her suggestion for best practice was for the female DIS personnel to wear civilian clothes and talk to women when they were fetching water or in other traditional settings where men were absent. It would also be beneficial since it would make talking to DIS personnel less conspicuous, and thus avoiding suspicions and reprisals from their communities. We were often reminded of the importance of having female police officers. In this way, they can enter into the “*milieu des femmes*”, we were told in Farchana. And women often prefer to come to other women with their problems. Hence, it became easier for women to open up and discuss their concerns in a low-key and informal manner, as well as building trust between the DIS and the refugees and IDPs.

In the Farchana camp, we spoke with the head of the DIS gender unit. “Rape has gone down dramatically,” she told us. She complained that women have many problems, but that most of them do not come out with their problems. This was exacerbated by the fact that women were often afraid of uniforms. The DIS gender unit therefore patrolled the camp in civilian and sat down with the women to chat: “The gender unit must be in civilian outfit in order for women – who are already stigmatized – to feel safe.” Elaborating further, “women can’t stand the uniform”. Others, we were told, were wary about reporting cases of SGBV as they feared that their problems would worsen as a

consequence. Often, families do not want secrets to transpire to the authorities either. Many women neither want to denounce men, as it creates further problems for them. As women no longer come to the DIS station, she told us, DIS needed to go to them. One of the most important aspects of the work of the DIS gender unit, she insisted, was to sit down and talk with the women. Most of the women in the camps struggle with a “*problème de pesanteur*” – the weight of every day life in the camps. Women felt a “*pesanteur socio-culturelle*” which came out only when female DIS officers sat down with them. Only then did they open up. They often did not want to press charges as they felt this would only exacerbate their difficulties. DIS did not press them to do so either: “We are not here to divide the refugees; we are here to *help* them live a better life.” Intervening too strongly on one side could also potentially lead to difficulties. We were told of an episode where DIS personnel were met with the requirement to reimburse a dowry if they wanted to meddle. On the importance of female officers again: in a camp nearby Farchana, “there was one case where a *chef de poste* did not let the female DIS representative take the deposition of a woman, but took it himself. He is a man who doesn’t really know gender problematique, and had already judged the woman beforehand”.

No Place for Women in the Camps?

Compared to a number of more high-profiled areas of international intervention (e.g. Afghanistan, Haiti, DR Congo and Darfur), there are far fewer international NGOs present and weaker civil society structures in Chad. As the Lonely Planet guide puts it for visitors to Chad: “Even many NGO workers dread drawing this assignment.”¹² Thus, there is a strong wish among the operational staff in Chad for advocacy groups such as Amnesty to attune the international community to the situation in the country and its regional position. However, throughout our field visit from 2 to 10 November 2009, the Amnesty report (2009) was being criticized from a wide range of international staff present in Chad, both for its methodological and factual flaws.

The picture painted by the Amnesty report is one where rape is a massive problem throughout refugee camps, in an extremely insecure environment. The report is also highly critical of the UN efforts, especially MINURCAT. However, many of the supporting quotes in the report are simply wrong, taken out of their context, or even distorted versions of UN documents. A case in point is a quote on page 23 highlighting the “serious problems” associated with DIS. The quote is taken from a Report of the UN Secretary-General, dated 14 July 2009, which highlights the positive contribution of DIS.

¹² Article downloaded September 9, 2010 at <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/chad>

The Amnesty report's exaggeration of problems, number of cases involved and collateral damage seriously undermines the reliability of Amnesty's advocacy work. It also goes to show the difficulty involved in making an exact assessment of the security situation in conflict areas. Relying on reports from advocacy groups can – as in the present case – be misleading at best. The quote referred to above and its primary sources are easy to check, however, it is much more difficult to verify the anonymous responses from refugees, actual composition of the refugees (age, sex, origin etc), and the number of interview subjects and in what situations. For good reasons, these responses should remain anonymous. But refugee camps are often a hotbed of rumours and it is important to check replies with UN and civil society staff working in the camps, and with other documentation if available. From our field visit to several of these camps, the first statement when refugee women were asked about their difficulties, the problem of rape or “SGBV” (a term used by many of the long-term displaced) that comes up. However, when going deeper into issues affecting everyday life and people's well-being, it is the holistic picture relating to the issue of livelihoods and conflicts over scarce resources like water, firewood and food that poses the greatest challenges. When speaking with leaders in the Gouroukoun IDP camp (3 November 2009), we were informed that the main concern of the displaced was food. They had too little land to cultivate, and no security when going out of the camp to work in fields further away. The provision of aid by NGOs was not seen as a viable solution either, as their mandate was of a temporary character only. Other concerns were employment and lack of activities in the camps. In the Djabal camp, we were faced with a series of complaints: lack of water, lack of food, lack of variation in the rations, lack of medical treatment. We also heard complaints about the lack of meat in the diet. No meat in the UN sanctioned rations meant that a family had to buy meat on the market. In order to do this, one either had to sell off part of one's ration, or fetch firewood to sell on the market. The result, either way, was to the detriment of single women who could not safely leave the camps, or putting women at risk since they had to go outside to fetch firewood (interview in Djabal refugee camp, 3 November 2009).

The future of refugees after a possible return home was also high on the agenda. Many feared they would be unprepared. A concern that seemed to be shared in many camps was the lack of education. As we were told in the Djabal camp, while the refugees had fled war, warlike conditions had now caught up with them in the form of illiteracy. They wanted education in order to know their rights (interview in Djabal refugee camp, 3 November 2009). This concern was also reiterated in the Koloma IDP site. As a case in point, children who obtain school diplomas in camps can make no use of them, as they are unable

to continue their studies outside the camps (Interviews in Djabal refugee camp, 3 November 2009). When talking to refugees in the camps, we often noticed a sense of resignation and general unease that were difficult to define. When we asked representatives about daily life in the camps, the answer was often that the problems in the camps were nothing compared to their homesickness: “To leave one’s own country and settle in another is very hard.” Life in the camps consisted in a lot of dead periods, we were told. A lot of waiting without any activity – income-generating or otherwise. Being a refugee entails a lot of suffering, not least the loss of dignity (Interviews in Djabal refugee camp, 3 November 2009).

Throughout our visits in both camps and sites, we were made aware of the difference between refugees and internally displaced people. Though a UNICEF representative assured us that in terms of protection there was no difference, we were told how refugees on the whole had more resources. Children in refugee camps received yellow t-shirts to play basketball, we were told. Children in IDP sites did not. Schools, too, were much worse in the IDP sites than in the refugee camps. And while these examples may seem trivial to the observer when talking about people who are in need of protection from the atrocities of war, they do seem to matter a great deal to people living through the endless monotony of camps.

Camps also suffered from repeated fires. Lack of water and firewood made building houses of bricks difficult, leaving the straw huts vulnerable to rapidly spreading fires. More mundane conflicts, constraints and frustration about the daily life in camps may in turn lead to increased cases of SGBV and domestic violence and violence committed by the host community. In the cases documented by UNHCR (ref. internal document dated 30 September 2009), the perpetrators outside the camp were often Chadians, while refugees themselves were often the perpetrators of SGBV inside the camps. In other words, documentation for claiming it to be a weapon of war utilized by Janjaweed in eastern Chad is hard to find. UNPOL officers gave us a nuanced picture of the situation. In many cases of SGBV, the perpetrator was known, but his identity could not be divulged. In such cases, we were told, “Arab bandits” were blamed. Furthermore, the problems that dominate the statistics on SGBV are cultural practices related to early marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM) and various forms of domestic violence, rather than rape. Relevant approaches to harmful practices should run along the lines of sensitization programmes, facilitating dialogue and discussion groups. The SGBV committee (10 women and one man) in the Mile camp in eastern Chad told us that rape seems in particular to be a problem when women were outside the camps. But as one woman told us, “SGBV is not only rape, but a

number of our own customs are SGBV problems, i.e. forced marriage and female genital mutilation (FGM).” In the Mile camp, SGBV focal points were alerted if an incident happened, and oriented women towards medical services. Another woman we spoke with, told us that “FGM had been reduced due to the sensitization measures carried out by the NGOs. Because FGM is not a religious matter, but a matter of tradition and custom”. And the same applies to forced marriage, where women are the victims: “If a woman refuses [a forced marriage] she can be tied up and forced to accept the man” (Mile Camp SGBV Committee, 5 November 2009).

Final Remarks

In the present report, we have described the need for robust peace-keeping mandates which can secure the protection of vulnerable groups in conflict environments. Unlike other reports on the topic, we have argued that the contribution of MINURCAT – on the whole – albeit different from its predecessor EUFOR, was good. The safety of both refugees and IDPs had been addressed to the point where many of those we interviewed did not see it as their primary concern anymore.

But while the safety of camps and sites seemed on the whole to have been addressed, it goes without saying that incidents persisted – some grave and others less so. The ability of DIS to address them, especially cases of SGBV, had been put to the test. As we have sought to show, while some cases had been handled rather well, challenges remained, especially in terms of implementing a community policing approach to all the camps. For this to be realized, more resources and training would be needed. At the same time, we also witnessed some stellar examples of how policies to address SGBV had been implemented. DIS had made a serious contribution to the security both inside and outside of camps at the time of our fieldwork. One of the reasons why SGBV has remained so high on the international agenda may be the fact that the international community has been much concerned with it. A UNPOL officer also complained to us that “the problem is that high-level delegations arrive here and ask about SGBV, and you tell them: ‘sorry, it’s not happening; the problem here is administration of justice’. But that’s not as sexy. SGBV gets all the attention.”

That being said, we have highlighted some examples worth building on, both in training curricula and in policy development. The importance of police officers trained in SGBV matters, and patrolling the communities in civilian outfit and connecting with women in the camps is one of these. For while the effects of this work may be difficult to trace, there are some examples of success. Firewood distribu-

tion programmes, the DIS community patrolling in Farchana, and the SGBV awareness among refugees in some of the camps all constitute such examples.

Literature

- Amnesty International (2009). “No Place For Us Here’: Violence Against Refugee Women in Eastern Chad”. London: Amnesty International.
- Amnesty International & Human Rights Watch (2006). “No one to help them: Rape extends from Darfur into eastern Chad”. London: Amnesty International.
- Ayangafac, C. (2009). “Resolving the Chadian Political Epilepsy: An Assessment of Intervention Efforts”. Situation Report. Institute for Security Studies (ISS).
- de Wall, A. (2009). “Good Enough Report on Chad”. Posted on the SSRIC Blog “Making Sense of Darfur, July 31st, 2009.
- Enough (2009). “Chad’s Domestic Crisis: The Achilles heel for Peacemaking in Darfur”. Washington DC: Enough Project.
- Giroux et al. (2009). “The Tormented Triangle: The Regionalisation of Conflict in Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic”. Working Paper no. 47. London: Development Studies Institute, London School of Economics.
- Haggar, A. (2007). “The Origins and Organization of the Janjawid in Darfur”, in *Alex de Waal (ed.), War in Darfur and the Search for Peace*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Institute of Studies on Conflicts and Humanitarian Action (IECAH) (2010). “MINURCAT: Achievements, disappointments and a fragile future”. Madrid: IECAH.
- Irin news (2010). “Chad: Re-assessing the aid footprint”. 27 January 2010.
- Physicians for Human Rights (2009). “Nowhere to Turn: Failure to Protect, Support and Assure Justice for Darfuri Women”. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Seibert, B. H. (2007). “African Adventure? Assessing the European Union’s Military Intervention in Chad and the Central African Republic”. Cambridge, MA: MIT Security Studies Program Working Paper.
- Tubiana, J. (2008). “The Chad–Sudan Proxy War and the ‘Darfurization’ of Chad”. Working Paper, Small Arms Survey. Geneva: Graduate Institute of International Studies. Available for download at:
http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/files/portal/spotlight/sudan/Sudan_pdf/SWP%2012%20Chad%20Sudan%20Proxy%20War.pdf
- UN SC (2000). Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. S/RES/1325. Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, 31 October 2000. New York, UN.
- UN SC (2007) Resolution 1778 on authorizing the deployment a UN civilian and police operation, MINURCAT, and a European Un-

- ion military force (EUFOR). Adopted by the Security Council at its 5748th meeting, 25 September 2007. New York, UN.
- UN SC (2008). Resolution 1820 on Sexual Violence in War and Conflict. S/RES/1820. Adopted by the Security Council at its 5916th meeting, 19 June 2008. New York, UN.
- UN SC (2009a) Resolution 1861 on authorizing the deployment of a military component of MINURCAT to follow EUFOR. Adopted by the Security Council at its 6064th meeting, 14 January 2009. New York, UN.
- UN SC (2009b). Resolution 1888 on Sexual Violence in War and Conflict. S/RES/1888. Adopted by the Security Council at its 6195th meeting, 30 September 2009. New York, UN.
- UN SC (2009c). Resolution 1889 on Violence against Women and Girls. S/RES/1889. Adopted by the Security Council at its 6196th meeting, 5 October 2009. New York, UN.
- UN SC (2009d). Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad, 14 October 2009. New York, UN.
- Wax, E. (2006). "New First Lady Captivates Chad". Washington Post Foreign Service, 2 May, 2006. Downloaded 5 January 2010 at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/05/01/AR2006050101503.html>