



## **ACTIONS MATTER MORE THAN WORDS: TIME TO PUT VICTIMS FIRST AFTER IMPORTANT REPARATION JUDGMENT IN THE HABRÉ CASE**

**29 July 2016** – Today’s reparation judgment against ex Chadian dictator Hissène Habré (convicted for crimes against humanity, torture and war crimes on 30 May 2016) represents a pivotal moment in his victims’ fight for justice, as reparation will help mend the terrible damage done to them under his brutal rule.

It has been reported that the court has awarded 20 million CFA (€30.477) to victims of sexual violence, 15 million CFA (€22.865) to prisoners of war, tortured and arbitrarily detained victims, and 10 million CFA (€15.238) to indirect victims.

**“No reparation award will ever repair all the harm that Habré’s victims endured but today’s judgment is a step in the right direction, a clear recognition that victims’ suffering should be redressed by more than words,”** said Carla Ferstman, director of REDRESS, an anti-torture charity which has provided technical assistance to Chadian lawyers representing victims during the reparations phase of this case.

**“Whilst his conviction was already a form of satisfaction to many victims, the compensation ordered today will provide those who still bear the scars of rape and torture, or live with the mental anguish of having lost a loved one, with a real opportunity to move forward with their lives,”** added Ferstman.

About 40,000 people died during Habré’s reign of terror as President of Chad from 1982-1990<sup>1</sup>, while many others were tortured, kidnapped and raped. Anyone perceived as an opponent was susceptible to arrest, but specific groups and communities were particularly targeted, including the population of the south, the Zaghawa, the Hadjerai, and prisoners of war.

To this day many families still do not know where their loved ones were buried. Most prisoners died in detention, either arbitrarily killed, as a result of systematic torture or due to the atrocious detention conditions, which in some cases included being held with the bodies of deceased prisoners for several days. Most women detained were raped, including a group of women who were sent to remote locations and used as sexual slaves by soldiers.

Those who survived came out with permanent physical and psychological reminders of their ordeal, details of which were recounted courageously by 69 victims during the trial before the Extraordinary African Chambers (EAC) in Senegal.

One major question that remains is how the compensation will be funded, especially given the large number of victims who participated in the proceedings before the EAC (at least

---

<sup>1</sup> Les crimes et détournements de l’ex-Président Habré et de ses complices, Rapport de la Commission d’Enquête Nationale du Ministère tchadien de la Justice, Éditions L’Harmattan, 1993, p. 97.

4,500) and given that only limited assets have been identified that could be used for reparation – including a house and two small bank accounts in Senegal.

**“All steps need to be taken to identify assets that Habré may have had that can be used for reparation, as he is alleged to have fled power with vast amounts of money and to have lived a comfortable life in Dakar for many years,”** said Ferstman. **“This is especially important, given that reparations already ordered in Chad in 2015 for crimes that overlap with the current case have not been implemented yet.”**

In March 2015, a Chadian criminal court ordered Chad and 20 former agents of the feared political police (DDS) to pay US\$ 125 million in compensation to 7,000 victims and to implement other symbolic reparations, including erecting a monument to the dead and turning the former headquarters of the DDS into a museum, but none of these measures have been implemented so far.

Under the EAC’s statute, reparations can be paid into a victims’ fund that can also receive voluntary contributions from foreign governments, international institutions and non-governmental organisations.

**“It’s crucial that Chad and the international community, particularly those who contributed towards the cost of Habré’s trial, do not abandon his victims now, when they are closer to receiving the full justice they deserve,”** said Ferstman.

REDRESS is also calling for the development of a plan to monitor the implementation of the reparation award, given that the EAC will be dissolved once all the judgments against Habré are final.

#### **Notes to editors:**

The trial against Hissène Habré is the first trial in the world in which the courts of one country successfully prosecuted the former head of state of another country and is the first universal jurisdiction case to proceed to trial in Africa. The long quest for justice for victims began in 2000, when a group of victims, inspired by the arrest in London of the former Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet, filed a complaint against Habré in Senegal, after they saw no prospects for achieving justice in Chad. Other groups of victims filed another case in Belgium the same year.

After many years of delays and political wrangling, in February 2013, the Extraordinary African Chambers was inaugurated in Dakar, Senegal, to try Habré. The trial began on 20 July 2015 and ended on 11 February 2016, after hearing dramatic testimonies from many survivors. On 30 May 2016, Habré was convicted for crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture and sentenced to life in prison.

At least 4,500 victims have applied to participate in the proceedings before the EAC, the majority of whom are organised by way of three victims associations, with the Association des Victimes du Régime de Hissène Habré (AVCRHH) being the largest.

**About REDRESS:** We are an award-winning human rights organisation based in London which works internationally to combat torture by seeking justice and reparation for torture survivors and their families. We work with survivors to help restore their dignity and to make torturers accountable. Since 1992, we have intervened in a range of leading torture cases in the UK and around the world.

**For more information or for an interview**, please contact REDRESS on 02077931777 (office) or [info@redress.org](mailto:info@redress.org) or [eva@redress.org](mailto:eva@redress.org).