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Chad

# **“The Déby clan wants to retain power, whatever the cost to the people”**

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**Paul Martial interviewed Zang Nézouné Mahamat, president of the Amicale Panafricaine and a long-time opponent of the regime of Idriss Déby in Chad, to understand the stakes of the "national dialogue" that has been taking place for a month in the capital, N'Djamena.**

**In what context is the "Inclusive and Sovereign National Dialogue" (DNIS) taking place?**

The DNIS is a very old demand of the democratic opposition and armed rebellions. Upon his accession to power (April 2021) by an unconstitutional form, the son of the dictator Idriss Déby Itno promised to establish this DNIS.

An 18-month transition renewable once was then put in place, led by a Transitional Military Council (15 generals who had all served under the dictatorship) headed by the son of the late tyrant, Mahamat Idriss Déby. This military transition with a civilian government including some opposition political parties is contrary to the 30 January charter of the African Union.

The junta started its reign in a brutal and bloody way, it was however recognised by Emmanuel Macron, present at the funeral of Idriss Déby Itno. Demonstrations organized by political groups, human rights associations, and trade union organizations were violently repressed (eight dead and more than five hundred arrested), their leaders were arrested.

As for the economic and financial system, it is totally disorganized. The state is unable to perform its traditional functions. Health policy is almost non-existent. Hospitals are real death chambers. Education is at its lowest level. A failure that benefits different Muslim fundamentalist organizations that distil their venom. Not to mention the embezzlement of public funds and corruption that are systemic.

**A pre-dialogue took place with the politico-military organisations in Doha, Qatar from March to August. What conclusions can be drawn from this?**

This pre-dialogue brought together 52 politico-military organizations, not always representative, the government and resource persons. An agreement was signed on 8 August, in the presence of international organisations, between the Chadian government and 32 politico-military movements. The FACT (Front pour l'alternance et la concorde au Tchad), the most important militarily, did not sign this document. The results are mixed insofar as the politico-military movements, naturally suspicious, have shown their goodwill but the government has referred all important issues to the DNIS.

**Some organizations refuse to participate in the DNIS, including the “Transformateurs” party and the Wakit Tama coalition. What are the arguments they evoke?**

Several organizations and political parties have set preconditions for their participation in the DNIS but are not opposed to it in principle. The following organizations: the Signatories of the Declaration of 19 May (10 political parties and the Wakit Tama coalition) and the “Transformateurs” party have well-founded and legitimate demands (revision of the quotas for participation in the DNIS, equal representation between the government and the real opposition, non-ineligibility of the leaders of the transition in the next elections, trial of the perpetrators of criminal acts, generalized ceasefire, release of prisoners of war on both sides).

**What role does France play in the dialogue process?**

The French government has supported the ruling junta from the beginning: financial aid, military cooperation (training and supply of equipment), overflight of FACT forces and transmission of information to the junta. The current French ambassador meets very regularly with the son of Déby and serves as his advisor. The former ambassador was present and active in Doha since the beginning of the pre-dialogue process. The involvement of the French authorities is total.

**What is your feeling about this dialogue, a simple manoeuvre to keep power or a genuine desire to renew political life in Chad?**

I am personally not very optimistic. The criteria for the designation of participants have never been made public: we have remained on a vague basis. The Presidium of the DNIS was not elected unlike the Sovereign National Conference of 1993. It is still unclear who will have the right to vote among the approximately 1,400 participants. Who will be responsible for implementing the resolutions and decisions that will be taken? How will the members of the transitional government be chosen? Will the junta leader be able to run in the upcoming presidential election?

I doubt the junta's willingness to move towards a genuine renovation and/or refoundation of political life in Chad. The Signatories of the declaration of 19 May had requested a suspension of the work of the DNIS in order to find an agreement allowing them to be associated with this meeting. This was ruled inadmissible. This demonstrates the will of the Déby clan to retain power, whatever the cost to the Chadian people.

Without a truly inclusive national consultation, nothing can restrain the governance apparatus put in place by the TMC after the unconstitutional coup of 21 April 2022.

30 September 2022

Translated by *International Viewpoint* from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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