



The persistence of farmer-herder violence could increase the temptation for sedentary populations in the south and centre of Chad to take the law into their own hands. In recent years, following each major outbreak of violence, many of these people have called for forming self-defence militias, particularly on social media. Far from bringing peace, such groups would risk perpetuating a cycle of intercommunal violence in these regions and further dividing Chadian society.

President Mahamat Déby should tackle the problems underlying farmer-herder conflict head on. He should seek governance and justice reform to restore the confidence of southern and central populations in the central state. He should also discourage both farmers and herders from enforcing rough justice of their own. To this end, the government could encourage reactivation of the *comités de médiation*, which proved effective in reducing clashes in the 1990s. Bringing together community representatives, these committees could enable organisation of mediation sessions at which the conflict parties can negotiate agreements. They could also make it possible to publicise reports of incidents to push the judicial authorities to prosecute troublemakers. Finally, it is essential that security forces step up patrols to prevent further violence and discourage certain groups of herders from forming permanent armed gangs.

II. An Unprecedented Wave of Farmer-Herder Conflict

A.

Rising farmer-herder violence in the south and centre of Chad is the result of decades of built-up tensions between sedentary populations and certain groups of herders, fuelled by the political exploitation of identity-based discourses, an unequal distribution of resources and the effects of climate change.¹

After oil, animal husbandry is the second pillar of Chad's economy. In 2021, the country had more than 30 million head of cattle.² The largely informal livestock sector accounted for around 30 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) and 35 per cent of its exports in 2022.³ The Arabs and the Goranes, who remain largely nomadic, the Fulani and the Hausa are the main ethnic groups in Chad who depend

¹ Chad is affected by several intercommunal conflicts and other types of violence. This briefing focuses solely on farmer-herder conflict. Southern ethnic groups include the Sara, the Mayo-Kebbi and Tandjilé. Groups in central Chad include the Mubi and Hadjarai. Ethnic groups engaged in herding include Arabs, the Hausa and the Fulani, as well as a few Gorane in the south. Crisis Group interviews, residents and traditional authorities, Bessao, Donia, Koskobo and Sandana, March 2023; Chadian transhumance specialist, N'Djamena, January 2024.

² According to the World Bank, Chad's livestock population comprised 30,612,461 head of cattle and 74,656,361 head of small ruminants (goats and sheep) in 2019. "Report on Marketing Opportunities for Livestock and Livestock products", World Bank, February 2022.

³ Livestock exports from Chad are destined mainly for coastal West Africa. "Rapport sur les opportunités de commercialisation du bétail et de leurs produits", World Bank, February 2022. "Projet d'appui à la productivité et à la compétitivité des chaînes de valeur viande et lait au Tchad (PAPCV-VL), Rapport d'évaluation", African Development Bank, 2021.

on livestock for their livelihoods.⁴ The Fulani and Hausa, however, rely on others to move their livestock from pasture to pasture, as they have become sedentary or semi-sedentary. Sedentary populations also often own livestock, which they use for agricultural work.

Like many other intercommunal conflicts in Chad, tensions between herders and sedentary populations stem from the civil strife of the 1970s and 1980s. During these internal wars, Chad's political and military leaders exploited cultural, ethnic and regional affiliations to rally supporters.⁵ The practice of appointing people to political and military posts on an ethnic basis – a remnant of this period – has contributed to growing resentment among southern and central populations. These groups feel excluded from circles with influence over the central government; in their view, these circles have been dominated by northerners for four decades.⁶

Since the 2000s, prefects and governors with a stake in the livestock industry have been appointed through ethnic and kinship ties. On several occasions, these regional authorities have mobilised the national armed forces to support groups of herders or their hired drovers in disputes with sedentary populations, undermining farmers' trust in the government and blurring the lines between these pastoralists and the state.⁷

These practices have proliferated during the transition after Idriss Déby's death, as his son Mahamat, now the elected president, has consolidated the existing patronage system and strengthened his grip on power, especially within the army.⁸ Over the past two years, it has become common for state officials to sell administrative or military posts to wealthy herd owners, giving the latter considerable state power and fuelling tensions. Meanwhile, the number of senior government officials who have bought herds as personal investments has also increased.⁹

Climate change is another driving force behind farmer-herder violence in the region, which has felt the effects of global warming since the 1970s and 1980s. With more frequent extreme weather events, particularly droughts and floods, grazing

in clashes.¹⁷ In the spring of 2023, violence in several towns in the Logone Oriental province, in Chad's far south, left almost 40 people dead.¹⁸ Although the number of incidents decreased during the latest dry season, between October 2023 and May 2024, the fear of new clashes is still preventing displaced people from returning, thus disrupting agriculture.¹⁹

According to sedentary people, this violence is unprecedented, both in terms of its triggers and its targets. Coming after decades of festering resentment between the two communities, recent attacks have often been set off by minor incidents.²⁰ Moreover, while the perpetrators have traditionally directed most of the violence at men, who are generally perceived as a threat, they are now also going after women (including some who are pregnant) and children, sometimes with extreme brutality.²¹ Images of an infant shot in the head during clashes in the Monts de Lam department (Logone Oriental provincw8().1(6)-51.21ts)6.(to)4.an to(e)-1n6(i)-6so(e)-1cia()11l(i)5()8.2(6)-63.(u)7.d(e ini(ag)5((()11,(e)-1chi

stock.²⁶ For their part, sedentary herders are somewhat caught in the middle. They emphasise their lengthy coexistence with farmers. They resent being lumped together with the nomads by sedentary people, who sometimes attack them, forcing them to take up arms, too, if only to protect themselves.²⁷ The Fulani settled in Chad describe themselves as peaceful. They criticise Arab herders for eschewing dialogue to resolve disputes and for receiving support from the army and the state.²⁸

Certain groups of herders and cowhands have adopted a new *modus operandi*, using more sophisticated weapons and planning increasingly elaborate attacks, according to farmers and other rural dwellers.²⁹ Their confrontations with farmers often involve coordination among several villages and herders' camps, alsoamps

an offensive in 2021, weakening these armed groups, some of which have since withdrawn to southern Chad, facilitating the sale and circulation of the guns.

C.

The rising farmer-herder conflict – and its exploitation for political ends – have angered sedentary populations. They are increasingly vocal about the need to set up militias for communal defence, believing that the authorities have neither the means nor the will to protect them.³⁵

While such groups are not widespread in Chad, they are not new, either. In the 1980s, for example, southerners formed militias called Codos in response to the violence of Hissène Habré's regime (1982-1990). In the public sphere today, a discourse on identity similar to what those militias used has re-emerged.³⁶

These ideas are circulating on social media, particularly on Facebook and in WhatsApp discussion groups.³⁷ After the May 2023 clashes in the Guéra province and Lac-Iro

D.

The violence in southern and central Chad has seriously worsened the socio-economic situation of an already impoverished region. In the Lac-Iro (Moyen-Chari province) and Nya Pendé (Logone Oriental province) departments, the clashes have displaced masses of people, particularly to the towns of Kyabé, Donia and Goré, where the

dialogue provided space to discuss the country's major issues, its recommendations granted the transitional leaders, including the younger Déby, the right to run for president. On 20 October 2022, following this decision, thousands demonstrated in the streets of N'Djamena and several provincial towns, particularly in the south, attacking public buildings. The security forces cracked down heavily, killing 128 and arresting more than 900. Afterward, most opposition figures opted to remain silent, go into exile (as Masra did) or join the government.⁵¹

Subsequently, opposition figures from the south exploited the farmer-herder conflict to support their identitarian discourse. Armed struggle and secession dominated the discourse of the exiled opposition leader Masra. In February 2023, in a video broadcast live on Facebook and watched by more than 5,000 people, he spoke of the difficulty of reconciling the “herds of the north” and the “peanut fields of the south”, using a metaphor that reduced the complex issues of national cohesion to a north-south duality.⁵²

Grievances about governance and lack of representation in the transitional bodies further tore Chad's social fabric. In January, Masra was appointed prime minister, leaving a large part of the southern population feeling betrayed. Masra had negotiated his return from exile without involving other opposition forces. He agreed to lead a government whose key ministers came from Mahamat Déby's party.⁵³

The May presidential election, which candidates from the south demanded be annulled due to irregularities, fuelled discontent among much of Chad's population, to which the ruling elite reacted by deploying the army across the country.⁵⁴ The new government is made up entirely of members of President Déby's own party or the supporting coalition, meaning that it is unlikely to bring the country together.⁵⁵

B.

Although the transitional authorities have taken mediation initiatives, along with security and administrative measures, to stem the surge of farmer-herder conflict, their response has been insufficient to break the cycle of violence.

After each major attack, the government has sent a delegation, usually led by the provincial governor or, in some cases, ministers from N'Djamena, on a whirlwind visit to show sympathy for the victims and provide them with financial support.⁵⁶ These delegations have enjoyed wide publicity and, when possible, brought the con-

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵²

flict parties together with the aim of quickly reaching a reconciliation agreement.⁵⁷ At the same time, the authorities have reinforced the security apparatus in certain places and removed several local officials for failing to prevent the violence.⁵⁸

Rural dwellers interviewed by Crisis Group considered these responses inadequate in several respects.⁵⁹ First, the mediation agreements signed in the aftermath of violence have not addressed the roots of the disputes, such as resource sharing among communities and the impunity perpetrators often enjoy.⁶⁰ Despite conflict parties agreeing to “make peace” when government representatives visit, the violence will persist absent efforts to tackle its structural causes. In Sandana, clashes like those in 2019 recurred in 2022, while in Mangalmé, clashes like those in 2022 happened again the following year.⁶¹ In Andoum, in the Monts de Lam department, the April 2023 violence resumed immediately after the security forces and administrative authorities had passed through.⁶²

Secondly, military reinforcements have

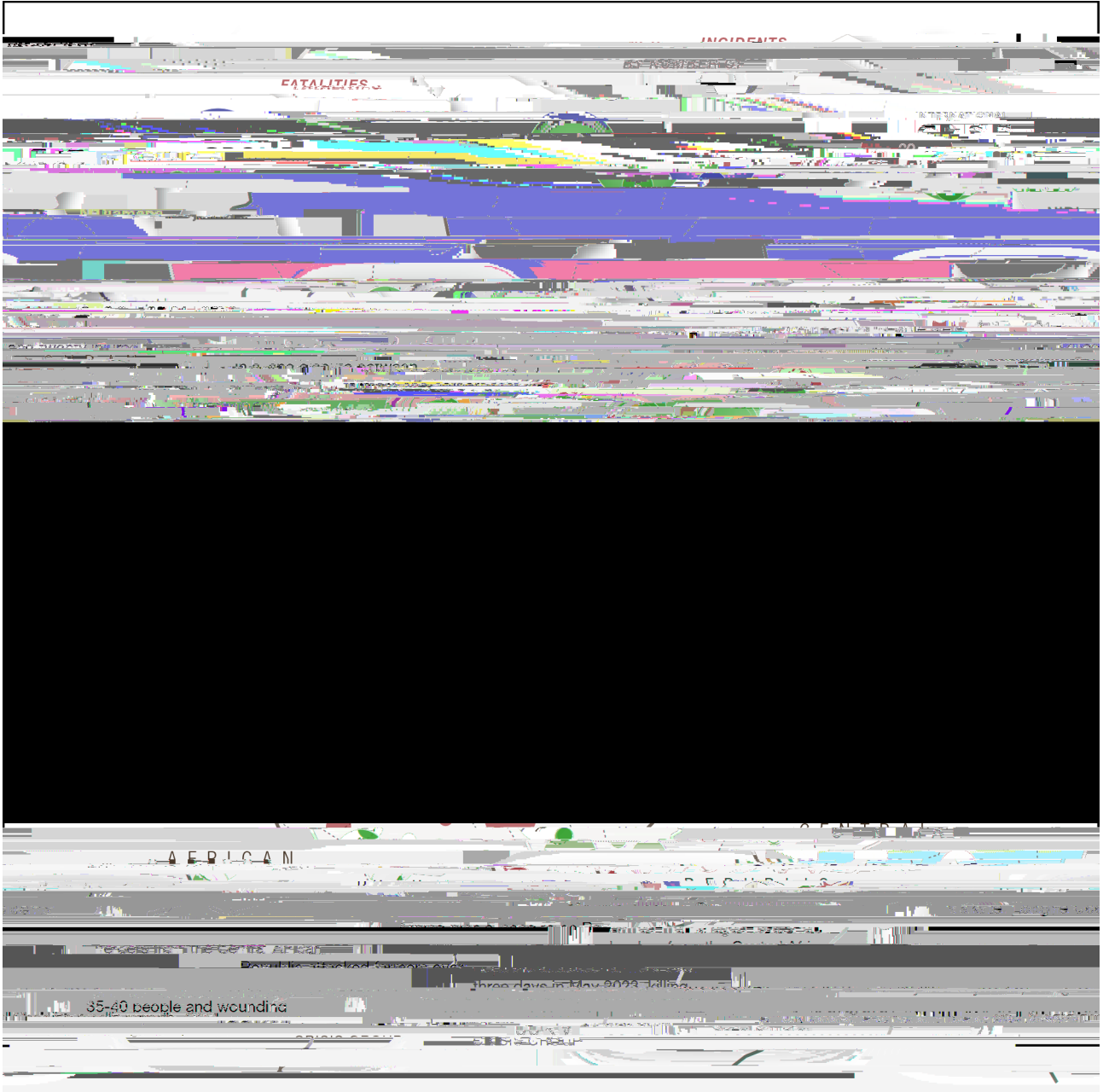
In 2021, the state established a Joint Disarmament Coordination to counter the proliferation of firearms in the country, but so far, its efforts to collect weapons have failed to curb herder-farmer violence.⁶⁷ The body, comprising elements of the national gendarmerie, the nomadic guard and the national army, has confiscated some 6,000 weapons across the country since its creation. At the same time, however, the growing tensions in the southern and central regions have exacerbated intercommunal mistrust, making all parties increasingly reluctant to disarm.⁶⁸

The sedentary rural dwellers who spoke with Crisis Group said they felt a sense of injustice. Although it can be difficult for the justice system to establish individual responsibility when organised gangs attack, these people accuse the authorities of negligence, as they say the perpetrators are easily identifiable. For example, when the police arrested suspects in the 2022 Sandana atrocities, some victims recognised men who they said had been involved in 2019 violence but never brought to justice.⁶⁹

IV. Breaking the Cycle of Farmer-Herder Violence

In addition, instead of highly publicised flash visits, civil and military authorities should go on more regular missions to rural areas riven by conflict, keeping the locals as frequently informed as possible of initiatives to investigate attacks and prevent further violence. This approach would help

Appendix A: Map of Key Incidents of Herder-Farmer Conflict in Southern and Central Chad, 2021-2024



Appendix B: Timeline of Key Incidents of Herder-Farmer Conflict in Southern and Central Chad, 2021-2024

31 May 2021

Village of Doh (south)

A group of farmers attacked the village of Doh, 60km from Kumra (Mandoul province), killing five people and injuring eighteen others.

7 August 2021

Village of Boulala (centre)

A group of Arab herders attacked the Boulala farmers over land located 15km from Bokoro (Hadjer-Lamis province). At least 21 people were killed and twenty injured.

20 August 2021

Village of Tiyo (centre)

Farmers and herders clashed in Tiyo, 40km from Abéché (Ouaddaï province) due to a land dispute. Six people were killed and several injured.

19 September 2021

Villages of Tiyo, Kidji and Mina (centre)

Arab herders and farmers clashed in the villages of Tiyo, Kidji and Mina, near Abéché (Ouaddaï province), due to a land dispute. At least 27 people were killed and four injured.

22-23 November 2021

12-14 September 2022

Village of Singako (south)

Nineteen people were killed and 22 injured in violence in the village of Singako (Moyen-Chari province).

30 September 2022

Village of Kouka (centre)

Intercommunal violence resulted in the

Appendix D: Reports and Briefings on Africa since 2021

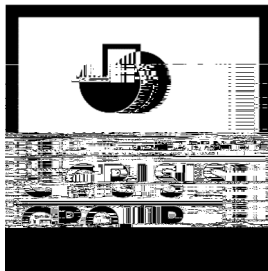
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A Course Correction for the Sahel Stabilisation Strategy, Africa Report N°299, 1 February 2021 (also available in French).

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