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Chad

Struggle continues against military regime

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In Chad, for several weeks now, and despite a repression that has already left dozens dead and hundreds injured, demonstrations have continued to denounce the seizure of power by the Transitional Military Committee (TMC), led by General Mahamad Deby - son of former dictator Idriss Deby, killed on 20 April.

On 19 May, a large-scale demonstration was to take place. The Chadian Ministry of the Interior broke its own promise and had it banned at the last moment. From dawn, the capital was cordoned off by police and "red berets", who violently dispersed gatherings with live ammunition and rounded up suspects at random. This did not prevent the most determined demonstrators, in N'Djamena, as in Bongor, Mondou or Sarh, from going out to defy the military to shout slogans and burn French flags. The day after the banned demonstration, the Minister of Higher Education of the civilian transitional government, set up by the WCL, had to flee the university where she had come to promote the new regime, after being booed and pelted by the students.

A very measured opposition

The failure of the demonstration is not only explained by the violence of the repression. While almost all Chadian opposition political parties unanimously denounced Idriss Deby's re-election to a sixth presidential term before 20 April, the two main parties, the National Union for Development and Renewal (UNDR) and the Party for Liberties and Development (PLD), which provided large contingents during the demonstrations, rallied to the new regime in the name of 'transition'. Thus, Mahamat Ahmat Alhabo, leader of the PLD, has just entered the government as Minister of Justice. For his part, Saleh Kebzabo of the UNDR has been more cautious, contenting himself with sending two of his associates into the government without getting directly involved.

For the time being, the protest is therefore led by Wakit Tamma ("The time has come"), a very broad-based collective that brings together most of the opposition forces to the CMT. It includes first and foremost the Union of Trade Unions of Chad (UST), which led many strikes in the previous period, associations of the unemployed, pensioners and unemployed students, as well as the League of Human Rights and the few politicians who hope to be able to play their card in the event of radical change, such as Succès Masra, the head of a small party but with a certain reputation because of his career as an economist at the African Development Bank and his presence in the demonstrations last February. However, this politician, presented as the leader of the protest by the Western media, limits himself to calling for "a civil-military transition process", a formula that Macron did not hesitate to use during Idriss Deby's funeral, and which says a lot about his perfect compatibility with the interests of Francafrique.

An explosive situation

From this point of view, there is not much to expect from this very measured opposition for all those civil servants, precarious workers, pensioners or young people from the working class areas of N'Djamena, "unemployed graduates", etc., who have been taking part in the demonstrations for years.

The revolt against the military junta is itself part of a series of social movements and strikes, such as that of public service workers during the winter of 2018-2019 to demand their salaries, which had been unpaid for months. The movement then spilled over into other sectors, such as Cotontchad, one of the country's main companies. A new

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public sector strike broke out last January, a few weeks before the demonstrations against Idriss Deby's 6th term in office.

More generally, the protest against misery and the phenomenal increase in inequality - all the more visible with the arrival of the oil windfall in the 2000s - has continued to grow over time. It is this situation, and not just the death of Deby and the replacement by his son, that makes the situation in Chad so explosive today.

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