Calling for a democratic transition in the Republic of Chad and standing with the people of Chad.

RESOLUTION

Calling for a democratic transition in the Republic of Chad and standing with the people of Chad.

Whereas the people of the Republic of Chad suffered for three decades under the authoritarian rule of Idriss Deby, whose government was characterized by human rights abuses, rampant corruption, gross mismanagement of government resources, the suppression of civil liberties and fundamental freedoms, including freedoms of peaceful assembly and expression, and internet blockages;

Whereas President Idriss Deby impeded the ability of the people of Chad to change their government by violating constitutionally mandated presidential term limits in 2005, repeatedly postponing legislative elections which were last held in 2011, arresting opposition party mem-
bers and civil society activists, and organizing presidential elections that were neither free nor fair;

Whereas, from 2016 to 2021, authorities in Chad blocked or limited access to the internet for 911 days, totaling two and a half years, to impede the ability of Chadian citizens to criticize their government, organize public protests, hold their government accountable, monitor presidential elections, or access outside information;

Whereas, under the constitution of Chad, upon President Deby’s death on April 20, 2021, power should have passed to the President of the National Assembly to organize new democratic elections;

Whereas, instead of adhering to the constitution, a group of Chadian military officers installed President Deby’s son, General Mahamat Idriss Deby, as Transitional Military Council (TMC) president, suspended the constitution, and dissolved the government and National Assembly;

Whereas the actions of Mahamat Deby and the Chadian military in April 2021 constituted a coup d'etat;

Whereas security forces in Chad used excessive force, including live ammunition, against civilians protesting the coup in April and May 2021, killing at least 7 individuals, wounding dozens more, and arresting hundreds;

Whereas the African Union’s Peace and Security Council expressed “grave concern” with the establishment of the TMC and stated on May 14, 2021, its “total rejection of any unconstitutional change of government,” noting the appointment of a prime minister and “civilian-led Transitional Government” but categorically asserting that no form of extension of the transition period beyond the 18-month timeline of October 22, 2022, would be acceptable,
and calling on Mahamat Deby and members of the TMC to commit to not contesting or taking part in elections transitional authorities are responsible for organizing;

Whereas the African Union reaffirmed on August 3, 2021, the need for the Transitional Government to respect the 18-month transitional timeline for elections in October 2022 and reiterated that members of the TMC “shall not be eligible to be candidates for the elections at the end of the transition”;

Whereas the TMC released from jail approximately 300 people charged with crimes of opinion, terrorism, and harming the State in November 2021, in advance of a dialogue with armed groups in Qatar;

Whereas the TMC and several dozen rebel groups launched a pre-dialogue process in Qatar in March 2022, in advance of an inclusive national civilian dialogue in Chad scheduled for May 2022;

Whereas a peaceful and democratic Chad is essential for the stability and development of Central Africa and the Sahel;

Whereas Chad faces a dire humanitarian crisis due to threats posed by terrorist organizations and armed groups, regional instability, climate change, food insecurity, and decades of internal mismanagement and corruption by former President Deby’s government;

Whereas the April 2021 coup d’état was inconsistent with the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), which states that AGOA eligible countries must have established or are making continual progress toward establishing the rule of law and political pluralism; and
Whereas United States security assistance to Chad, which has long been prioritized over democracy, human rights, and development assistance, thereby contributing to the militarization of the former Government of Chad, should remain suspended until democratic elections are held and civilian rule is restored: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Senate—

(1) condemns the April 2021 military takeover in Chad as a coup d’etat;

(2) stands with the people of Chad in their democratic aspirations;

(3) supports the African Union’s call for transitional authorities, including General Mahamat Deby and members of the TMC, to—

(A) organize elections by October 22, 2022, in accordance with the 18-month time-frame articulated by the TMC; and

(B) commit publicly not to stand as candidates in the elections they are responsible for organizing;

(4) calls on General Mahamat Deby and leaders of the TMC to—

(A) immediately release all of those arbitrarily arrested during the April-May 2021 protests;

(B) ensure that security forces respect rights related to freedom of peaceful assembly
and expression and hold accountable security
force members responsible for excessive use of
force or other human rights abuses;

(C) publicly commit not to run in elections;

(D) abide by the 18-month transitional
timeline for restoring civilian rule via free, fair,
and peaceful democratic elections and return to
their barracks;

(E) support an inclusive national civilian
dialogue by ensuring that all parties may par-
ticipate freely and openly;

(F) commit to respecting freedom of ex-
pression, opinion, the press, and access to infor-
mation to include unimpeded internet access for
the people of Chad; and

(5) calls on the Secretary of State to—

(A) identify coup leaders and their accom-
plices and enablers working to undermine a
democratic process in Chad for consideration
for visa restrictions and targeted financial sanc-
tions where available;

(B) state publicly that those who per-
petrate human rights abuses or works to under-
mine the democratic process in Chad, including
by impeding freedoms of peaceful of assembly,
expression, or association, including related to press and access to information, will be held accountable, which could include through visa restrictions and financial sanctions where available;

(C) publicly urge TMC leaders to abide by the 18-month transitional timeline, restore civilian rule, and publicly commit not to run as candidates;

(D) monitor, discourage, and deter any effort by external parties to support the extension of the TMC’s mandate or otherwise delay or interfere with the restoration of civilian rule via free, fair, and peaceful democratic elections;

(E) coordinate with other Federal departments and agencies to—

(i) suspend non-humanitarian bilateral assistance to the Government of Chad, including security assistance, until civilian rule is restored via free, fair, and peaceful democratic elections;

(ii) prioritize support for an inclusive civilian national dialogue by ensuring the participation of opposition party members, civil society leaders, women, and youth;
(iii) prioritize support for a free, fair, and peaceful electoral process by working with electoral authorities, political party representatives, and members of civil society in Chad;

(iv) support, as appropriate, efforts to draft a new constitution;

(v) ensure that the United States bilateral policy towards Chad is fully aligned with the broader policy for the Sahel called for in the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Partnership Program Act of 2022 (division AA of Public Law 117–103); and

(vi) ensure future assistance is appropriately balanced between defense, diplomacy, and development; and

(F) direct the Department of the Treasury to use the voice and vote of the United States in international financial institutions to ensure there is a mechanism for civil society to have input into the development and oversight of programs and activities being funded, and that support provided through such instructions prioritize the restoration of civilian rule, includ-
ing through free, fair, and peaceful democratic elections.