

Reporters Without Borders

<http://www.rsf.org/chad-two-journalists-complete-first-06-06-2013,44734.html>

Africa - Chad

Held for past month

Two journalists complete first month in detention centre

6 June 2013

Reporters Without Borders sends a message of support for journalists **Eric Topona** and **Moussaye Avenir de la Tchiré** and for the writer and blogger **Jean Laokolé**. All three are being held at a detention centre at Amsinene, on the outskirts of Ndjaména.

Topona and De la Tchiré were arrested on 6 and 7 May, respectively. Laokolé has been held since 22 March. Reporters Without Borders reiterates its call for their immediate release.

"Our thoughts are constantly with these three men and we hope to visit them during a trip to Chad in the next few days," Reporters Without Borders said. "For a long time, the authorities were able to take pride in the fact that no journalist was imprisoned in Chad but unfortunately this is no longer the case."

"As well as being intolerable for the victims, who have to languish in prison, this situation has regrettable consequences for the country's image. We do not dispute the authorities' right to prosecute these journalists within the limits of the law, but we think that holding them pending trial is excessive."

A request for De la Tchiré's release, submitted by his lawyer on 28 May, has been rejected. A request for Topona's release has been waiting for a response from the prosecutor's office since 4 June.

General secretary of the Union of Chadian Journalists (UJT) and a former employee of the national radio and TV broadcaster, Topona is charged with "endangering constitutional order."

[De la Tchiré](#), who is managing editor of the newspaper *Abba Garde* and UJT treasurer, is charged with "inciting hatred and a popular uprising." As this is a press offence, and press offences do not carry jail sentences in Chad, he should not have been placed in pre-trial detention.

In a separate case, the sentence passed on 18 September on [Jean-Claude Nékim](#) and the newspaper he edits, *Ndjaména Hebdo*, was upheld on appeal on 4 June. Nékim was given a one-year suspended jail sentence and his newspaper was suspended for three months.

On 26 June, a court is due to hear a libel suit that has been brought against Nékim by SNER, a company that carries out road-building contracts. The suit has been brought over the following two sentences:

"Owned by Daoussa Déby, the elder brother of ..., SNER has had a near-monopoly of road-building contracts for decades. It has never done anything reliably but tradition has it that this old company keeps on getting contracts on a tax-exempt basis that gives it an unfair advantage over other companies."

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