



Hissène Habré Case

10 June 2011

Senegal: Habré Trial an 'Illusion'

After Senegalese Walkout, Victims Seek Ex-Dictator's Extradition to Belgium

Senegal's withdrawal from talks to establish a court to try the former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré was the "last straw," a coalition of his victims and human rights groups said today.

In a major change of strategy, the groups said that they were fast losing all hope for a trial in Senegal, where Habré has remained in exile for two decades, and would now press to have Habré sent to Belgium. Belgium had requested his extradition in 2005 and again in 2011.

"We would have liked to see Habré tried in Africa," said Jacqueline Moudeina, of the Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (ATPDH). "But after 11 years of delays and disappointments, this is the last straw. We have to face the facts, and the idea that Senegal would try Habré was just an illusion."

On May 30, 2011, a Senegalese delegation unexpectedly and without explanation withdrew from discussions in Dakar with the African Union (AU) on the rules for a special jurisdiction to try Habré, who is accused of thousands of killings and systematic torture in Chad from 1982 to 1990. That jurisdiction was mandated by a ruling of the Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

The delegation's withdrawal follows more than a decade of stalling tactics by the government of President Abdoulaye Wade (see annex below).

In 2000, a senior Senegalese judge indicted Habré but, after political interference by Wade, denounced by the United Nations, Senegalese courts said they had no jurisdiction to try the case. The victims turned to Belgium, and a Belgian judge, after a four-year investigation, indicted Habré in 2005. But Senegal refused to extradite him.

In 2006, Wade accepted an AU mandate to try Habré "in the name of Africa" but then spent four years wrangling over a trial budget before a November 2010 donors' meeting pledged US\$ 11.7 million to provide the full trial costs. Since January, Senegal has rebuffed successive AU plans to establish the ECOWAS-mandated special jurisdiction.

Habré ruled Chad from 1982 until 1990, when he was deposed by President Idriss Déby Itno and fled to Senegal. His one-party rule was marked by widespread atrocities, including waves of ethnic campaigns. Files of Habré's political police reveal the names of 1,208 people who were killed or died in detention. A total of 12,321 victims of human rights violations were mentioned in the files. A Chadian Truth Commission also found that Habré had virtually emptied out the Chadian treasury before his flight to Senegal.

The groups - the Chadian Association for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (ATPDH), the Association of Victims of Hissène Habré (AVCRHH), the African Assembly for the Defense of Human Rights (RADDHO), the Senegalese League for Human Rights, Human Rights Watch, Agir Ensemble pour les droits de l'homme, and the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH) - noted that Senegal had a legal obligation under the UN Convention against Torture to prosecute or extradite Habré. In 2006, the UN Committee against Torture condemned Senegal for violating its obligation and called on Senegal to bring Habré to justice.

In 2009, Belgium filed a lawsuit against Senegal at the International Court of Justice in The Hague to force Senegal either to prosecute Habré himself or to extradite him to Belgium. A ruling in that case is not expected until 2012. "With this latest unexpected and shameful maneuver, President Wade has finally dropped his mask," said Alioune Tine of the Dakar-based RADDHO. "Today, the last chance to obtain justice for the mass crimes of which Habré is accused is his extradition to Belgium. That is the legacy of Abdoulaye Wade, who calls himself a 'pan-African.'"

Chronology of Hissène Habré Case : [click here](#)

For more information on the Habré case, please visit: <http://www.hrw.org/en/habre-case>
<http://www.fidh.org/-Affaire-Hissen...>

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