

Timeline of events in the Hissène Habré case

The **Wayamo Foundation** and **Konrad Adenauer Stiftung** retrace the key events that led to the conviction of former President of Chad Hissène Habré for war crimes and crimes against humanity, including torture, sexual violence and rape. He was sentenced to life in prison by the Extraordinary African Chambers in the Senegalese court system.



1982
1990

Hissène Habré is President of Chad

Habré's one-party state was characterised by widespread human rights violations and acts of ethnic cleansing. The longevity of his rule was due in part to support from France and the United States.

Hissène Habré © 2013, EAC

1990

Habré is deposed and flees to Senegal

After a rebel offensive led by Idriss Déby, Habré fled to Cameroon, and the rebels entered N'Djamena on 2 December 1990. Habré subsequently went into exile in Senegal.

2 DEC. 1990

Idriss Déby assumes office of the President of Chad

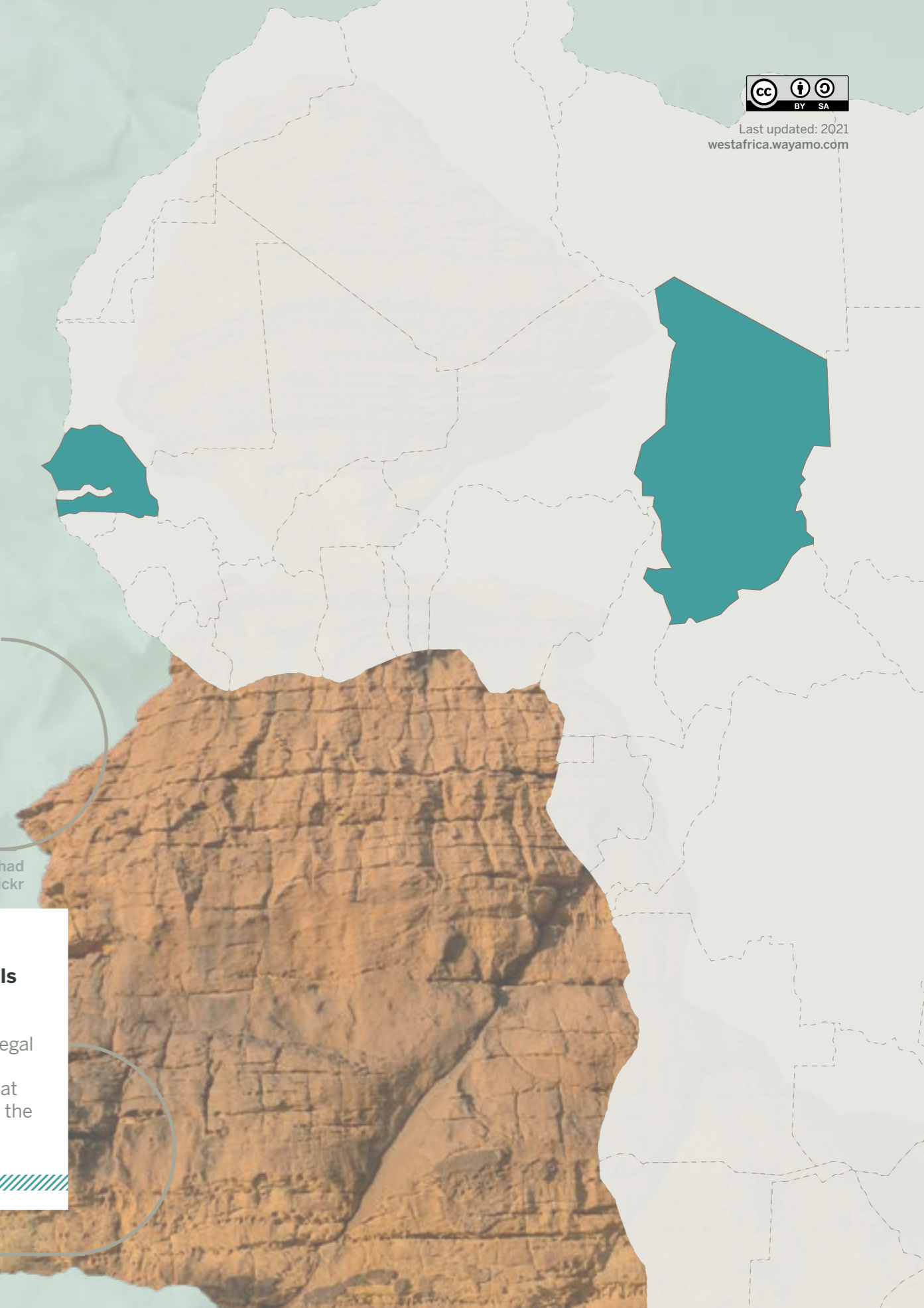
Déby won elections in 1996 and 2001. After term limits were eliminated, he won again in 2006, 2011, and 2016.

Idriss Déby © 2004, Wikimedia

7 MAY 1992

Truth Commission reports

The Commission of Inquiry into the Crimes and Misappropriations Committed by Ex-President Habré, His Accomplices and/or Accessories accuses Habré's regime of approximately 40,000 political murders and systematic torture.



Last updated: 2021
westafrica.wayamo.com

JANUARY 2000

Chadian victims file criminal complaint against Hissène Habré in Senegal

The complaint asserted that Senegal had jurisdiction to bring Habré to trial based on the 1984 UN Convention against Torture, ratified by Senegal. The Convention obliges states to either prosecute or extradite alleged torturers who enter their territory.

FEBRUARY 2000

Habré arrested in Senegal for the first time

Habré is placed under house arrest and a Senegalese court charges him with torture and crimes against humanity.

MAR. 2000

Abdoulaye Wade elected President of Senegal

Abdoulaye Wade © 2009, World Economic Forum

JULY 2000

Investigations in Senegal halted by President of Senegal

4 JULY 2000

Dakar Court of Appeals dismisses charges

The court rules that Senegal had no competence to pursue acts of torture that were committed outside the country.

Ennedi Plateau in Chad © 2004, Anmede, Flickr

2001

Human Rights Watch discovers Documentation and Security Directorate (DDS) files

HRW discovers files from Chad's Habré-era secret police known as the DDS. The files contain tens of thousands of documents, including daily prisoners lists and details of deaths in detention, interrogation reports, surveillance reports, and death certificates. Most significantly, the files detail Habré's direct authority over the DDS and personal involvement in hundreds of the crimes documented, including 1,265 direct communications from the DDS to Habré, about 898 different detainees. In total, the files named 12,321 victims of abuse, 1,208 of whom died in detention.

20 MARCH 2001

Court of Cassation rules Senegal lacks jurisdiction

Senegal's highest court (Cour de Cassation) upheld the decision of the Dakar Court of Appeal barring criminal proceedings against Habré. The decision was based on the absence of legislation establishing jurisdiction to prosecute foreign residents who had allegedly committed acts of torture outside Senegal.

MARCH 2001

Complaint to the UN Committee against Torture (CAT)

A coalition of Chadian victims lodged a complaint against Senegal with the UN Committee against Torture (CAT).

APRIL 2001

CAT intervenes in Habré expulsion from Senegal

APRIL 2001

International jurisdiction case filed in Belgium

A group of Hissène Habré's victims files a case against him as a step towards his extradition. Belgian law expressly included the principle of universal jurisdiction, meaning Habré could be tried for international crimes within its territory (the law was repealed in 2003, by which time the case had already moved to Senegal).

OCTOBER 2002

Chad waves Habré's Head of State Immunity

19 SEP. 2005

Belgium requests extradition

Belgian Judge Franssen issues an international arrest warrant against Hissène Habré. The same day Belgium asks for Habré's extradition from Senegal.

Judge Daniel Franssen © International Center for Ethics, Justice and Public Life

15 NOVEMBER 2005

Habré arrested in Senegal for the second time

25 NOVEMBER 2005

Indicting Chamber rules "No Jurisdiction" on extradition

The Indicting Chamber of the Court of Appeals of Dakar rules that it lacks jurisdiction to rule on an extradition request against a former head of state. Under Senegalese law, the decision thus went directly to President Wade.

26 NOVEMBER 2005

Habré placed at "Disposition" of the African Union

The day after the court decision, the interior minister of Senegal issued an order placing Hissène Habré "at the disposition of the President of the African Union."

JANUARY 2006

African Union sets up Committee of Eminent African Jurists (CEAJ)

The CEAJ rules that, as a State party to the Convention Against Torture, "Senegal is under an obligation to comply with all its provisions." Citing the CAT ruling, it added that "[i]t is therefore incumbent on Senegal in accordance with its international obligations, to take steps, not only to adapt its legislation, but also to bring Habré to trial."

19 MAY 2006

CAT ruling calls for Habré to be extradited or prosecuted

The Committee against Torture also noted Senegal's obligation to "adopt the necessary measures, including legislative measures, to establish its jurisdiction" over Hissène Habré's alleged crimes.

2 JULY 2006

African Union calls on Senegal to prosecute Habré "on behalf of Africa"

President Wade declares Senegal's accession to the request.

NOVEMBER 2006

Senegal commits to revising its laws

Senegalese government spokesman El Hadji Amadou Sall says that Senegal would establish a governmental commission under the Minister of Justice to oversee the legal changes, make contact with Chad, create a witness protection program, and raise money to carry out the investigation and trial.

12 FEBRUARY 2007

Senegal passes law allowing trial of Rome Statute Core Crimes

The President of Senegal promulgates the Law No. 2007-05 amending the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to the implementation of the Rome Statute. Law No. 2007-05 allows for the trial of suspects based on the principle of universal jurisdiction and provides that offences codified in the Rome Statute would not be subject to any statute of limitations.

15 AUG. 2008

Chad court sentences Habré to death in absentia

Habré is condemned to death along with 12 others for planning to overthrow the government after a trial in N'Djamena.

OCTOBER 2008

Habré files case at ECOWAS Court challenging Senegal's jurisdiction

Habré files a case arguing that Senegal passed the laws necessary to assert jurisdiction over his alleged international crimes only after he committed them, violating his right under Article 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) to not be retroactively prosecuted.

18 NOVEMBER 2010

ECOWAS Court rules in Habré favour

The ECOWAS Court partially grants Habré's application, finding Senegal would violate the prohibition against adopting retroactive criminal legislation should Habré stand trial for international crimes committed abroad in its domestic courts. ECOWAS thus determined that Senegal could only try Habré before a judicial body with an international character.

20 JUL. 2012

International Court of Justice (ICJ) decides that Senegal must prosecute or extradite Habré

The ICJ judges hold that if Senegal did not try the alleged torturer or extradite him to Belgium, it could be held responsible for a breach of its obligations, pursuant to Article 7(1) of the Convention against Torture.

The Peace Palace in The Hague © 2011, Wikimedia

2 APRIL 2012

President Macky Sall takes office in Senegal

24 AUGUST 2012

Senegal and the African Union agree to establish Extraordinary African Chambers (EAC)

The ad hoc tribunal is established with jurisdiction to try Habré. The agreement incorporates the EAC into Senegal's judicial system and vests it with jurisdiction over the international crimes committed in Chad for the period in which Habré was in power (7 June 1982 until 1 December 1990).

19 DECEMBER 2012

Senegalese Parliament authorises ratification of the Senegal-AU agreement

3 MAY 2013

Chad and Senegal agree to grant EAC jurisdiction in Chad

The agreement grants the EAC jurisdiction to conduct investigations in Chad, as if it were Senegal. The agreement includes the right to travel throughout the country, question witnesses and visit former prisons.

30 JUN. 2013

Habré arrested in Senegal for the third time

2 JULY 2013

Habré charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture, and placed in pre-trial detention.

25 MARCH 2015

Twenty top security agents from Habré regime convicted in Chad

A Chadian criminal court convicts 20 Habré-era security agents on charges of murder, torture, kidnapping, and arbitrary detention. The court also awards 75 billion CFA francs (approximately USD 140 million) in reparations to 7,000 victims, ordering the government to pay half and the convicted agents the other half.

30 MAY 2016

Habré convicted by the Extraordinary African Chambers

Habré is convicted of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and torture, including sexual violence and rape, and sentenced to life in prison.

27 APRIL 2017

Appeals Court confirms conviction and opens African Union Trust Fund for Victims

Appellate court confirms the conviction in April 2017, awards 82 billion CFA francs (USD 153 million) to 7,396 named victims, and mandates an African Union Trust Fund to raise the money by searching for Habré's assets and soliciting contributions.

NOVEMBER 2017

Habré victims seek reparations at African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights

Seven thousand victims of the Habré regime file a human rights complaint against the government of Chad before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights. The complaint accuses Chad of failing to comply with a judgement of the Special Criminal Court of N'Djamena of 25 March 2015. The Court awarded approximately USD 125 million in compensation to 7,000 victims who participated in the proceedings as civil parties.

2020

Chad's government is yet to provide reparations ordered by its court in 2015 to 7,000 victims of grave crimes under Habré's rule.

Hands © Anmede Flickr

Place de la Nation in N'Djamena, Chad © Superyouss, Wikimedia