

**Central African Republic Withdraws Abusive Troops**  
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### **Central African Republic Withdraws Abusive Troops**

Following Human Rights Watch's exposure of abuses against civilians by the Central African Republic's (CAR) military, the government was forced to withdraw most of the Presidential Guard, abusive elite forces, back to their barracks in the capital city of Bangui. The move came after we released a September report documenting how government troops – particularly the Presidential Guard – carried out hundreds of unlawful killings and burned thousands of homes during a counterinsurgency campaign in the north, forcing tens of thousands of people to flee their villages. Our investigation drew significant attention to an almost completely neglected crisis. Newspapers in CAR serialized the entire report, devoting special editions to the coverage, and United Nations officials and French diplomats used it as the basis of advocacy meetings with the CAR government. France, which has provided uncritical military support to the CAR military, indicated that it is reconsidering its close relationship with CAR President François Bozizé. President Bozizé was forced to admit that his army was deeply involved in serious abuses, and invited our executive director to Bangui for talks on improving CAR's human rights record. Read more: <http://www.hrw.org/doc?t=africa&c=carepu>

### **Judge Blocks Guantanamo Transfer to Tunisia**

In an unprecedented step forward, a federal judge blocked the Pentagon from returning a Tunisian national being held at Guantanamo on the grounds that he could face grave harm if sent back to Tunisia. The judge pointed to the types of abuses documented in our September 2007 report, which exposed severe mistreatment of two other Guantanamo detainees who were transferred back to Tunisia this year, despite diplomatic assurances by the Tunisian government that the two would not be harmed. As the US government steps up its efforts to move men out of Guantanamo and close the facility, we have urged Washington not to send detainees to countries where they face torture or abuse on the basis of unenforceable diplomatic assurances. Earlier this year, we exposed the torture and mistreatment faced by seven Guantanamo detainees who were returned to Russia by the United States in 2004. We will continue to press US authorities to give detainees who fear torture in their home countries the opportunity to contest their transfer in a federal court. Read more: <http://hrw.org/doc/?t=da>

### **UK Allows Iraqi Interpreters to Resettle**

On October 6, the British government announced that it will allow Iraqi interpreters and other key support staff to settle in the United Kingdom. Iraqis who worked for British forces are particularly vulnerable to being targeted by insurgents and militia groups. Over the past several months, we placed op-eds and letters in major British papers, including *The Independent* and *The Sunday Times*, contributed to several prominent television, radio, and newspaper stories, including a front-page story in the *Times*, and conducted public and private advocacy to press the government to change its policy of non-preferential treatment for employees seeking refuge. Although details of the plan and how it will be implemented are still being finalized, the move is an important acknowledgement of the UK's responsibility toward its Iraqi employees. Read more: <http://hrw.org/doc?t=mideast&c=iraq>

### **Illinois Amends Sex Offender Laws for Youths**

On October 11, Illinois amended its laws to allow juvenile offenders to be removed from the state's sex offender registry if they can demonstrate to a judge that they pose no threat to society. Juvenile justice advocates in the state told us they used our September 2007 report on the harmful impact, over-broad scope, and ineffectiveness of US sex offender laws to convince both houses of the legislature to override the governor's veto of the amendment. Our report showed how registry requirements for youth offenders, who have extremely low

recidivism rates and are often listed for non-violent offenses, are particularly damaging and counterproductive. Going forward, we will continue to urge reform of state and federal registration laws for juvenile offenders. Read more: <http://hrw.org/reports/2007/us0907/>

### **Guatemala Legislature Drops Restrictive Family Bill**

After public criticism from Human Rights Watch, Guatemalan legislators dropped their efforts to pass a bill that would have barred same-sex couples and single parents and their children from being legally defined as family. Our open letter drew attention to the potentially devastating impact of the proposal on these families, and helped mobilize civil society opposition to the bill, which most observers assumed would pass. The bill also threatened the legal status of children conceived through reproductive technologies. Going forward, we will continue to monitor and oppose efforts to pass laws that violate the basic right to a family. Read more: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/10/01/guatem16982.htm>

## **IN THE NEWS** Op-Eds by Our Staff

### **Israel Must Correct Targeting Practices**

In *Haaretz*, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes that the Israel Defense Forces, which took insufficient care to distinguish civilians from combatants during last summer's war with Hezbollah, must re-examine and correct its practices to avoid civilian deaths in the future. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/10/29/isrlpa17196.htm>

### **Repeal Abortion Ban in Nicaragua**

In the *Miami Herald*, Women's Rights Researcher for the Americas Angela Heimbürger and Media Editor Lance Lattig describe the devastating impact of Nicaragua's total abortion ban, particularly on poor women, and urge the Sandinista government to protect the health and lives of Nicaraguan women by repealing the measure. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/10/22/nicara17144.htm>

### **Freeze Burmese Leaders' Bank Accounts**

Washington Advocacy Director Tom Malinowski, writing in the *Washington Post*, urges the United States and the international community to use targeted sanctions, including freezing military dictators' global bank accounts, to respond to Burma's recent crackdown on peaceful protesters. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/10/21/burma17149.htm>

### **UK Should Press Saudi Arabia on Abuses**

In the *Guardian Unlimited*, Middle East and North Africa Researcher Christoph Wilcke urged UK officials to change their "see-no-evil" approach to Saudi Arabia during a visit by Saudi King Abdullah to London. Read more at: <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2007/10/23/saudia17154.htm>

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