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PRESS RELEASE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Office of the Spokesperson

STATEMENT BY SECRETARY KERRY

Conviction of Hissene Habre for War Crimes, Crimes against Humanity, and Torture

The United States welcomes the Extraordinary African Chambers' issuance of the judgment finding former Chadian President Hissene Habre guilty of war crimes and crimes against humanity, including charges of murder, torture, rape, and sexual slavery, and sentencing him to life in prison. This ruling is a landmark in the global fight against impunity for atrocities, including war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Habre's crimes were numerous, calculated, and grave. Beginning in 1982, his eight-year term as the president of Chad was marked by large-scale, systematic violations, including those involving murder of an estimated 40,000 people, widespread sexual violence, mass imprisonment, enforced disappearance, and torture. Without the persistence of his accusers and their demand for justice, Habre might never have faced a court of law. I especially commend the courage of the nearly 100 victims who testified, and I hope the truths uncovered through a fair and impartial trial will bring some measure of peace to his thousands of victims and their families.

As a country committed to the respect for human rights and the pursuit of justice, this is also an opportunity for the United States to reflect on, and learn from, our own connection with past events in Chad. I strongly commend the Senegalese Government, the Chadian Government, and the African Union for creating the Extraordinary African Chambers that allowed for a fair and balanced trial. Let this be a message to other perpetrators of mass atrocities, even those at the highest levels and including former heads of state that such actions will not be tolerated and they will be brought to justice.

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