
DJIBOUTI

Republic of Djibouti

Population: 793,000 (383,000 under 18)

Government armed forces: 11,000

Compulsory recruitment age: no conscription

Voluntary recruitment age: 18

Voting age: 18

Optional Protocol: signed 14 June 2006

Other treaties ratified (see glossary):

CRC, GC AP 1 and 2, ICC, ILO 138, ILO 182

There were no reports of under-18s in the armed forces.

Context

Djibouti had experienced no armed conflict since the signature in May 2001 of a final peace agreement between the government and the armed faction of the Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (Front pour la restauration de l'unité et de la démocratie, FRUD).¹

France provided significant amounts of aid and financial support. Some 2,700 French troops remain stationed in Djibouti under agreements signed at independence. Djibouti also hosted 1,800 US troops and was the headquarters of the US-led Combined Joint Task Force – Horn of Africa (CJTF–HOA) which supported counter-terrorism activities in the region.²

Government

National recruitment legislation and practice

The constitution stated that “the defence of the Nation and the territorial integrity of the Republic is the sacred duty for every Djiboutian citizen”. There was no compulsory military service, and the minimum age for voluntary recruitment was 18.³ A voluntary national service program, the Service national adapté (SNA), which accepted volunteers between the ages of 17 and 25, continued to operate. One of the stated aims of the SNA was to assist unqualified young people by providing them with professional training with the Djiboutian armed forces. During the two-year training, recruits were subject to military discipline and on its completion were given priority for jobs. There was no obligation or expectation that recruits would remain with the armed forces,⁴ and military training could form no more than 30 per cent of training provided. Military activities covered by the SNA included participation in operations to help the public in cases of natural or industrial disasters and activities relating to guarding military installations.⁵

Developments

During the 1991–4 conflict, both government forces and the FRUD used landmines. The government declared the country to be “mine safe” in January 2004 following a five-year de-mining program. However, in February 2004 the Minister of Foreign Affairs reportedly acknowledged that more work was needed if Djibouti were to be mine-free by March 2009. Three girls were reportedly injured by a mine in September 2004.⁶

A UN Security Council committee repeatedly reported that several countries, including Djibouti, were violating an arms embargo on Somalia by providing military support to an armed group, the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC). Djibouti was specifically accused of supplying military uniforms and medicines, which it denied.⁷ The UIC was responsible for significant levels of new recruitment and training of children in Somalia, some as young as ten, in late 2006.⁸

Djibouti signed the Optional Protocol in June 2006⁹ and ratified the International Labour Organization’s Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention 182 in February 2005.¹⁰

- 1 US Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, Background Note: Djibouti, January 2008, www.state.gov.
- 2 UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Country Profiles, Djibouti, 2007, www.fco.gov.uk.
- 3 Initial report of Djibouti to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UN Doc. CRC/C/8/Add.39, 3 August 1998.
- 4 *Journal officiel de la République de Djibouti*, Décret N. 2003-0240/PRE portant création du Service national adapté, 17 December 2003, www.presidente.dj.
- 5 *Journal officiel de la République de Djibouti*, Arrêté No. 2003-0914/PR/MDN portant organisation et modalités de fonctionnement du Service national adapté, 21 December 2003, www.presidente.dj.
- 6 Landmine Monitor Report 2006, Djibouti, www.icbl.org.
- 7 UN Security Council, Report of the Monitoring Group on Somalia pursuant to Security Council resolution 1676 (2006), UN Doc. S/2006/913, 22 November 2006.
- 8 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, UN Doc. A/61/529-S/2006/826, 26 October 2006.
- 9 Declaration on accession to the Optional Protocol, www2.ohchr.org.
- 10 International Labour Organisation, Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention C 182, 1999, www.ilo.org (iloex database).