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Front populaire pour la renaissance nationale/ Popular Front for National Rebirth (FPRN)

Origins/composition

Founded in 2001 by Adoum Yacoub ‘Kougou’, a Ouaddaïan of Goran origin and veteran of Chadian armed opposition groups, the FPRN is mostly Ouaddaïan, though it originally comprised Masalit and Tama combatants. The group gathered elements from among the early armed opposition groups to the government of Idriss Déby in the 1990s. In late 2007 it attempted to ally with the Front pour le salut de la république/Front for the Salvation of the Republic. It has officially been part of the Union des forces de résistance/Union of Resistance Forces (UFR) for some months, but has always remained largely autonomous. At its peak between May 2009 and April 2010, the FPRN had only a few hundred combatants, but many with significant military experience.

Areas of activity/capacity

Due to its Masalit component, the FPRN was initially based in West Darfur. But during the war in Darfur, again reflecting the stance of its Masalit elements, the group fought alongside the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) before being pushed by the Sudan Armed Forces to the area around Tissi, at the border between the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, and Sudan. During a raid by the UFR in eastern Chad in May 2009, the Chadian army evacuated the garrison of Tissi to protect Am Timan, the capital of Salamat region. The FPRN did not support the UFR when it was defeated in Am Dam in May 2009, instead benefiting from the army’s withdrawal to enter Chad and occupy the Tissi area, where it laid landmines to defend itself.

The FPRN tried to coordinate with other marginal armed opposition groups active at the border between southern Chad and CAR, in particular the Mouvement pour la paix, la reconstruction et le développement/Movement for Peace, Reconstruction, and Development (MPRD). Founded in November 2005, this small group is led by Djibrine Dassert, a colonel in the Chadian army and founding member of the Mouvement patriotique du salut/Patriotic Salvation Movement, the group that put President Idriss Déby in power. With a base in southern Chad, in the Nyellim Mountains, the MPRD was the main southern Chadian opposition group until its leader was captured by Chadian forces in January 2010, reportedly in the Tissi area.

It took almost a year for the Chadian army to retake the Tissi area. Some of the defeated FPRN troops that flew to Sudan through the CAR were disarmed by the Sudanese forces at the border. While ‘Kougou’ took refuge in Europe, the remaining FPRN forces are active as a small group of well-trained and highly mobile combatants operating without external support at the CAR-Chad-Sudan border.

Sources of financing/support

The FPRN and, before it was founded, the movements that merged into it tried to obtain support from Sudan at a time when Khartoum and N’Djaména still enjoyed friendly relations. Thus the available support was limited and Sudanese and allied forces repeatedly fought against FPRN components, obliging them to seek backing

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elsewhere, in particular from the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) in South Sudan. At the beginning of the Darfur conflict, the FPRN also fought alongside the SLA against Sudanese and allied forces in West Darfur, resulting in the loss of several of its leaders. The history of conflict with the Sudanese government prevented the FPRN from obtaining any Sudanese support until it joined the UFR. Thanks to this move, the FPRN, most of whose combatants had been on foot, received 50–60 vehicles. Some of these were lost, however, when the Chadian army retook the Tissi area from the movement. Its former relations with the SPLM/A make the FPRN the most likely of the Chadian armed opposition movements to find a safe haven in South Sudan, in particular in the event of North–South conflict.

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