

3.1.1 Zoe's Ark

An unusual controversy, with implications for peacekeeping and humanitarian activities in Chad, began in late 2007 and carried over well into 2008. In November 2007, a group of French citizens calling themselves “Zoe’s Ark” attempted to remove 103 children and infants from Chadian territory near the border with Darfur, claiming that the children were Darfurian refugees.

The group was arrested as they attempted to load the kidnapped children onto a plane, all of whom were later established to be the children of Chadian citizens and not from Darfur at all. The popular backlash against the group, and indeed against all international actors inside Chad, was immediate and violent. Humanitarian staff and UN personnel from Western countries were attacked, further

disrupting the already difficult delivery of humanitarian programs. The legacy of this event has been a heightened mistrust of international—and specifically humanitarian—actors and the introduction of new bureaucratic regulations designed to monitor the movement of humanitarian staff and the operation of aid programs.