

Beat: Local

Saudi Arabia and Chad among 5 countries elected to UN Security Council

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USPA News - The United Nations (UN) General Assembly on Thursday elected the countries of Chad, Chile, Lithuania, Nigeria and Saudi Arabia to serve two years as non-permanent members on the UN Security Council, officials said after an election with no contested races. The 193-member UN General Assembly elected the five countries in one round of secret balloting for rotational seats from January 2014 through December 2015. The newly-elected members will replace Azerbaijan, Guatemala, Morocco, Pakistan and Togo, whose terms will conclude on December 31st of this year.

There was little surprise as there were no contested races this year, meaning their election was assured despite human rights groups expressing criticism at abuses by Saudi Arabia and Chad. Gambia had initially put itself forward as a candidate for the West African seat in the Security Council, but it dropped out last week in favor of Nigeria. It is the first time that Saudi Arabia, Chad, and Lithuania will serve on the UN Security Council, which takes the lead in determining the existence of threats to peace and can resort to imposing sanctions or authorizing the use of force to maintain or restore international peace and security. UN Members States are obligated to comply with its decisions. The five permanent Council members, which each wield the power of veto, are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Non-permanent members Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, the Republic of Korea and Rwanda will remain on the Council until the end of 2014. All members are required to have a representative present at UN Headquarters in New York at all times. Rwanda's election last year was controversial as reports claim the Rwandan and Ugandan governments have actively supported a rebel group known as the March 23 Movement (M23). The eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo has witnessed increased fighting over the past year between Congolese armed forces and the M23, which is composed of renegade soldiers who mutinied in April 2012. Rwanda and Uganda have both strongly denied the latest reports. "No matter what haters say [and] do; [always] justice and truth will prevail," Rwandan President Paul Kagame said on his official Twitter account after last year's election, commenting on the UN vote. "Sometimes it just requires a bit of good fight for all that..!!!" Rwanda previously served on the UN Security Council in 1994-95, which coincided with the Rwandan genocide that began in April 1994. An estimated 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slain over the course of about 100 days, following the deaths of then-Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart Cyprien Ntaryamira. They both died when their plane was brought down as it prepared to land in Kigali. "The contrast could not be sharper between that previous tenure -- when a genocidal government occupied a prized Security Council seat as its agents waged genocide back home -- and the Rwanda of today: a nation of peace, unity, progress and optimism," Rwandan Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Minister Louise Mushikiwabo said last year, adding that Rwanda's violent past would enable them to offer a unique perspective on matters of war and peace at the UN Security Council.

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