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Chad: Escalating violence means UN must deploy, but be adequately resourced

Amnesty International warned today that the lack of technical support for peacekeeping forces in Chad, Darfur and the Central African Republic is endangering people's lives and setting the international community up to fail in its efforts to resolve the ongoing human rights and humanitarian crisis in the region.

"The escalation of violence in Chad underlines the urgent need for a UN force to deploy to the eastern part of the country immediately," said Tawanda Hondora, Deputy Director of Amnesty International's Africa Programme.

A UN force for Chad and Central African Republic, known as MINURCAT, was meant to deploy in November with a mandate to protect civilians, with support from the European Union force known as EUFOR.

Over the last few days, fierce fighting between the Chadian national army and armed opposition movements resumed along the Chad-Sudan border.

Despite this upsurge in violence, the deployment of EUFOR troops is being delayed due to lack of ground and air transport equipment. This mirrors the problems being faced by the joint UN-AU forces being deployed in Darfur, who are also woefully under-equipped for the job they have been tasked with.

"Not even one helicopter has been offered by any EU country to support this force, which is ostensibly being sent to try to protect the lives and safety of hundreds of thousands of extremely vulnerable civilians in Chad," said Hondora.

"The lives of thousands in eastern Chad, Central African Republic and Darfur are being put at risk because of a failure of UN member states to pledge and deliver ground and air transport equipment so necessary for them to carry out their peacekeeping work safely and effectively."

Since 2005, thousands have died in the conflict in eastern Chad and about 200,000 in Darfur. Hundreds of women and girls have been raped. Entire villages have been plundered and burned to the ground. Over 170, 000 people now live in camps for the internally displaced scattered across eastern Chad, while more than one million live in such camps in Darfur.

"How are peacekeeping forces in eastern Chad, Central African Republic and Darfur to protect civilians in accordance with the original timeframes for deployment if they are not adequately resourced?," asked Hondora.

"Words and hand-wringing are not enough. The international community must now demonstrate its sincerity in trying to solve this ongoing crisis by putting its money where its mouth is and

providing the necessary equipment to the forces being sent to protect civilians in extremely dangerous and difficult circumstances."

Background information

A total of 240,000 refugees from Darfur have fled attacks by the Sudanese Armed Forces and Janjawid militias and armed opposition groups on villages in Darfur since 2003. They shelter in 12 refugee camps in Chad and are almost completely dependent on humanitarian aid.

Starting in 2005, mass attacks and forced displacement spilled over from Darfur into Chad as Janjawid and their local Chadian allies plundered villages and killed local farmers. There are over 180,000 Chadians now sheltering in settlements in and round refugee camps in eastern Chad.

On 25 September 2007, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 1778, authorising the establishment in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central African Republic of a UN operation (MINURCAT), alongside a European military operation.

According to this resolution, under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, EURFOR has the mandate to contribute to the protection of civilians.

Public Document

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