

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

## Public Statement

AI Index: AFR 54/072/2005 (Public)  
News Service No: 231  
23 August 2005

### **Sudan: The rights of Khartoum's displaced must be respected**

Amnesty International condemns the forced mass relocation of the entire Shikan Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp, which took place on 17 August 2005.

The organization is concerned that Shikan's residents have been arbitrarily relocated to camps without their consent, where they are deprived of fundamental human rights -- including the right to health care and education. Amnesty International calls on the Government of Sudan to take urgent measures to rectify this situation, including taking immediate steps to provide the IDPs with essential services guaranteeing their right to an adequate standard of living and making a public commitment to include IDPs in present and future decision-making processes regarding their lives and livelihoods.

At 4 am in the morning of 17 August 2005, armed police surrounded the Shikan IDP camp, located in Omdurman, Khartoum. National security forces had notified some members of the camp leadership the previous day that they would be checking the camp for stolen property, following the recent riots marking First Vice-President John Garang's death. National security forces arrived with lorries, emptying the entire camp of its residents. 500 families were moved to Thawra camp, 170 families were relocated to Al-Fatah III, and 371 families will be allotted places to return to in Shikan.

Al Fatah III and Thawra are locations lacking the most basic means of survival. Thawra, located 55 kilometres north of Khartoum, was previously a garbage dump, and lacks all essential services. Water, healthcare, and educational facilities are non-existent as the location is no more than a patch of desert. Al Fatah III is better only in that it possesses one water pump.

The actions of the authorities violated the fundamental rights of these individuals to freedom of movement and freedom to choose one's residence, as enshrined in international human rights law -- including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Sudan is a State party.

The relocation also violates the United Nations Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, which are a set of widely endorsed non-binding principles drawn from international human rights law.

According to Principle 6 (1) of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, every human being shall have the right to be protected against being arbitrarily displaced from his or her home or place of habitual residence (unless the security, safety and health of those affected so demand). The residents of Shikan were uninformed of plans to move them, and were instead rounded up into lorries in the early hours of 17 August 2005 without explanation as to the reasons why or having any possibility of challenging the decision.

The complete lack of any health, water, sanitation, or education services in the new location of al

Thawra is further contrary to Principle 18 (1) of the UN Guiding Principles which states:

*"...all internally displaced persons have the right to an adequate standard of living. (2) At the minimum, regardless of the circumstances, and without discrimination, competent authorities shall provide internally displaced persons with and ensure safe access to: (a) Essential food and potable water; (b) Basic shelter and housing; (c) Appropriate clothing; and (d) Essential medical services and sanitation."*

Articles 22 and 25(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) guarantee these rights, which are also enshrined in Article 11(1) and (2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Article 14(2)(h) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Article 27 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Sudan is a state party, also uphold these rights.

The signing of the new National Interim Constitution on 9 July 2005 gave hope that a greater respect for human rights was dawning in Sudan. But the forced relocation of IDPs from the Shikan camp represents a worrying continuation of a past trend of human rights violations, particularly with respect to the Sudanese Government's treatment of IDPs. This is also a missed first opportunity for the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to exert its influence in support of human rights in Khartoum. But the treatment of Shikan's recently relocated residents and Khartoum's remaining IDPs provide future opportunities, both for the Sudanese Government and the SPLM, to ensure the rights of IDPs are upheld in accordance with Sudan's obligations under international human rights law.

## **Background**

The events of 17 August 2005 follow a trend of similar such actions taken by the Government of Sudan as regards Khartoum's and the whole of Sudan's IDP population. Most recently, involuntary relocations took place in Soba Aradi on 14 May 2005, leading to violent clashes between IDPs and the police, mass arrests, and at least one confirmed death of an IDP in police custody. Shikan is mainly populated by southern Sudanese and Darfuris who have been forced to flee their homes due to serious human rights abuses committed during the long-standing conflict, including severe economic deprivation.

In mid-July, the Khartoum State Governor, Abdul Haleem Mutafi, entered into a verbal agreement with a consultative committee composed of international donors, United Nations and state representatives on a Terms of Reference aimed at monitoring and jointly implementing any IDP relocations. Despite these verbal promises to consult with the committee over future relocations and not to relocate any camps before the end of the current rainy season, the Governor authorised the relocation of Shikan camp without any notice either to the consultative committee or to the residents of the camp themselves. The Governor has reportedly, on past occasions, affirmed that he will never give advance notice of any IDP relocations, thereby reducing the consultation process to an empty mechanism.