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Sudan: Massive abuses of human rights and international humanitarian law in Darfur

As fighting and displacement of civilians intensifies in Darfur, western Sudan, Amnesty International is requesting all parties to the conflict to respect international human rights and humanitarian law at all times. Massive abuses of human rights in the region are documented in a new 43-page report entitled: *Sudan: Darfur: "Too many people killed for no reason"*.

In an attempt to end the escalating armed conflict in Darfur, Sudanese government forces and government-aligned militia (the "Janjawid") are threatening the lives, liberty and property of hundreds of thousands of civilians through indiscriminate bombings, killings, torture, including rape of women and girls, arrests, abductions and forced displacement.

Since the start, in February 2003, of the conflict between the Darfur-based Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the government in Khartoum, hundreds of thousands have either been displaced within the region or sought refuge across the border in Chad.

During a visit to the refugees in eastern Chad in November 2003, Amnesty International delegates recorded numerous testimonies from Sudanese refugees. They reported attacks on villages and towns by both government-aligned militia and government soldiers. The nature of the killings committed by government soldiers and by the Janjawid point to a pattern of extrajudicial executions and unlawful killings.

"There is clear evidence of cooperation between government forces and government-aligned militia. The Sudanese government should cease all support and supplies to the Janjawid or establish a clear chain of command and control over them, including making them accountable for abuses of international humanitarian law," Amnesty International said.

The Sudanese authorities have neither condemned the numerous cases of grave human rights abuses committed in Darfur, nor conducted transparent and impartial investigations into them.

"By its silence in the face of abuses, the Sudanese government is condoning or encouraging further abuses. Government forces and its aligned militia must immediately end the targeting of civilians," Amnesty International said.

Civilians seeking refuge internally or across the border in Chad have also been attacked. In

Darfur, the humanitarian crisis is growing, as access to the displaced and the victims of the conflict remains very limited for humanitarian organizations, due to insecurity and government restrictions. Humanitarian assistance to the refugees in Chad is not only hampered by harsh living conditions and the remoteness of the region, but also by insecurity. On 29 January, bombs were dropped by the Sudanese government in the Chadian town of Tina, killing at least three civilians and wounding twelve others.

Amnesty International is also calling on the government-opposed armed political groups the SLM/A and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM), and on the government-aligned militia to respect at all times international humanitarian law binding on all parties to internal armed conflicts and to respect and protect the lives and livelihoods of civilians in all areas under their control.

Amnesty International repeats its calls for urgent and unrestricted humanitarian access to Darfur, for human rights monitors to investigate attacks on civilians in the region and for an independent and impartial Commission of Inquiry into the complex human rights situation in the region. The organization is calling for the grave human rights abuses committed in the region to be addressed in any future peace negotiations on Darfur.

For the full report in English, please go to:
<http://www.web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf540082004>

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