

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Sudan: Darfur needs a UN peacekeeping force that can provide security for civilians**

The African Union and the Darfur Peace Agreement are failing the people of Darfur, Amnesty International said today, as the UN Security Council prepared to discuss the possible mandate of a UN peacekeeping force to protect civilians in Darfur. Only a renewed and determined engagement by the UN and the international community can offer hope for an end to the people's suffering.

"The international community must admit that no solution has been offered to the suffering in Darfur -- on the contrary things are getting worse," said Kate Gilmore, Executive Deputy Secretary General of Amnesty International. "What the people of Darfur need now is an international peacekeeping force with the power to put a stop to the killings, to the raping, and to the displacement. Personal security is the basic need -- and fundamental right -- of all people in Darfur."

Amnesty International researchers have just returned from eastern Chad, where they gathered testimonies from refugees who have recently fled Darfur. The refugees' testimonies revealed that most people in West Darfur are effectively prisoners in camps and towns, with almost the entire area still controlled by the Janjawid militias.

"Once again the world at large is ignoring the conflict in Darfur, playing along with the charade that peace is in progress, when, in fact, nothing could be further from the truth," said Kate Gilmore. "There has been more conflict since the Darfur Peace Agreement was signed, not less, more displacements of people, not fewer, and more human rights violations perpetrated without any progress towards justice. And what's more, there now is a very real danger that this conflict, as it spills over the border, will continue to spread beyond Sudan."

The African Union mission in Sudan (AMIS) does not have the means -- or, frequently, the will -- to protect civilians. A refugee woman who spent two years in Mornay camp before fleeing to Chad told Amnesty International that AMIS "does not take any action when displaced people complain. Even if a woman is raped, they just take her back to the camp."

An AMIS officer, complaining about diminishing resources, told Amnesty International in despair, "We can't protect people as we ought to. It's a sham."

In north Darfur, in the Korma region, 72 people were killed over the course of five days in early July. Their

attackers were members of the Minni Minawi faction of the Sudan Liberation Army -- the only party, in addition to the government, to have signed the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA). The attackers told their victims that they were being punished for opposing the DPA. AMIS troops did not answer the victims' cries for help, nor apparently did AMIS investigate the killings -- saying that the villagers attacked were associated with a group that had not signed the DPA.

In the meantime, in direct defiance of the UN Security Council ban on offensive military flights over Darfur, Antonov aircraft of the Sudanese government continue to bomb areas under the control of those who oppose the DPA.

"The people of Darfur have a deep -- and understandable -- distrust of a peace agreement that depends primarily on the Sudanese government for its implementation," said Kate Gilmore. "If there is to be a meaningful peace in which respect is given to people's human rights, concerns about the peace agreement must be addressed."

"A UN peacekeeping force charged and resourced to provide genuine protection for civilians could offer the people of Darfur some hope for the future -- and the Sudanese government must not stand in the way of such a force being deployed."

This week, Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir reiterated his opposition to UN forces in Darfur, reportedly saying that he would "confront any UN-sponsored forces" and "fight them as Hezbollah beat Israeli forces" in Lebanon.

"Considering that 10,000 UN troops and other staff have already been authorized -- with the agreement of the Sudanese government -- to be deployed to Sudan, the President's opposition to the peacekeeping force in Darfur is incomprehensible to say the least," said Kate Gilmore.

"Far more seriously, it is an outrageous and inexcusable denial of the basic protection Darfuris desperately need and to which they are absolutely entitled."

### **Background**

The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was established in Darfur to monitor an April 2004 ceasefire between the government of Sudan and armed political groups. A mandate to protect civilians in certain circumstances was extended and reaffirmed by the AU Peace and Security Council in June 2006.

The Darfur Peace Agreement was signed on 5 May 2006 by the government of Sudan and one of the rebel factions of the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA), led by Minni Minawi (from the Zaghawa ethnic group). Other factions of the SLA, including the group with support of most of the Fur, the largest ethnic group in Darfur, and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) did not sign the DPA. Over the past three months the armed groups have split into factions and alliances which support or oppose the DPA and have fought with each other and with the government of Sudan and its Janjawid militias.

In his report to the UN Security Council of 28 July 2006, the UN Secretary-General recommends the establishment of a UN peacekeeping force in Darfur mandated to protect civilians, as well as the strengthening of the UN to enhance AMIS capacity in the transitional period leading to the deployment of such UN force.

In an Open Letter to the UN Security Council sent on 4 August 2006, Amnesty International called on the UN to deploy a force that can, among other things:

- provide security for those in camps, towns and villages;
- ensure the safe and voluntary assisted return for displaced people and refugees;
- actively monitor and verify the disarmament of the Janjawid.

The need to act promptly to curb human rights violations in Darfur is further highlighted by the spreading of this conflict in eastern Chad, where Amnesty International has recently documented killings and forced displacement of civilians by the Janjawid. (See *Chad: Sowing the seeds of Darfur*, <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engaf200062006>).

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For more information please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on +44 20 7413 5566

Amnesty International, 1 Easton St., London WC1X 0DW. web: <http://www.amnesty.org>

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