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**SUDAN: SEVEN YEARS IN POWER -- HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS REMAIN THE METHOD OF CONTROL**

As the Sudan government prepares to mark the seventh anniversary of the 30 June 1989 coup which brought it to power, Amnesty International today condemned continuing human rights violations and called on United Nations member states to deploy human rights monitors.

One year after the human rights organization mounted an international campaign on human rights abuses in Sudan, it released a report detailing further atrocities committed by government forces, including the deliberate and arbitrary killings of villagers, the abduction of scores of children, torture and ill-treatment and incommunicado detention of suspected government opponents.

“While Sudan’s ambassadors are busy telling the United Nations (UN) that violations do not occur, the government’s security forces are rounding up suspected opponents in the capital and attacking civilian targets in the war zones of the south -- deliberately killing adults and forcibly abducting children as a tactic of war,” Amnesty International said.

“In March 1996 the government held elections -- boycotted by the opposition -- to become a civilian administration. But these elections have not made any difference to who holds power or to systematic repression as a method of securing control.”

In a typical incident in late April, government-controlled Popular Defence Force troops in the remote area of Udici abducted five children and shot two men dead. The children have not been seen since.

The abduction of children by government forces and allied militia is a growing feature of the civil war which began in 1983. Some of the children are held for ransom, some appear to be taken into domestic slavery, while others end up in government schools run like armed camps. Some children have reportedly been shot when trying to escape from these schools.

Suspected government opponents remain at risk of torture, Amnesty International said. Student demonstrators were severely beaten in September 1995 and in October 1995 a man held by security forces in the small town of Renk had a rope tied round his neck in a noose, his head covered and his hands tied, and was then beaten to make him fall over and hang himself. He managed to remain standing and so survived.

The report, *Sudan: Progress or public relations?*, also documents the failure of the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) and rival armed opposition South Sudan Independence Army (SSIA), which in April concluded a peace deal with the government, to take practical steps to protect human rights, despite pledges to do so.

Amnesty International welcomes public commitments to respect human rights made by the SPLA, but is calling on the armed group to move beyond words to action, by exposing abuses and taking concrete steps to prevent them happening again.

Despite the decision taken a year ago by member states of the UN Commission on Human Rights to create a monitoring team to investigate human rights abuses in Sudan, the team has still not been set up. Amnesty International is calling on UN member states to implement immediately this decision by setting up and adequately funding the team.

“The UN Security Council voted last month for sanctions against Sudan for its alleged involvement in international terrorism -- but member states seem unwilling to take even limited measures to combat the terror inflicted on the Sudanese people,” Amnesty International said.

## **Background**

*Sudan: Progress or public relations?* describes developments in the country since Amnesty International's 1995 campaign. Despite limited progress in some areas, such as the partial closure of a secret detention centre and the publicized release of 50 political prisoners in August 1995, the human rights situation remains grave.

The authorities are being challenged both by the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), a front of banned political parties operating out of Eritrea, and by the SPLA. The focus of many recent detentions in the north has been on persons suspected of links with the NDA.

The situation in the contested but largely SPLA-controlled region of Bahr al-Ghazal is especially grim. Cattle-owning civilians are the targets of several government-backed militia, including the Popular Defence Force (PDF), which is led by an army general. The government denies the PDF abducts children, describing attacks on villages as “traditional” cattle raids. In reality the raids are part of a deliberate strategy to destabilize areas controlled by the SPLA.

Thousands of people have fled their lands with their cattle. They have then been hit by raids by troops from the SSIA. In early March 1996 SSIA troops were reported to be among a force which killed over 50 adults and children in attacks on cattle camps in the Makuac area. Boys were hacked to death with spears and large knives.

The SPLA has made important pledges to respect human rights, making a signed commitment to the Geneva Conventions and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in July 1995. In early May 1996 a conference of its political wing endorsed a Charter on human rights, saying that it is seeking to build a strong civil society in southern Sudan. However, the armed opposition group has yet to translate these pledges into action. For example, SPLA officials have denied a raid on Ganyliel in July 1995 in which over 200 people were killed was authorised, but have failed to provide any evidence of genuine investigations.

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**For more information on Amnesty International's concerns in Sudan, to obtain a copy of *Sudan: Progress or public relations?*, or to arrange an interview, please call:**

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