

# @Opposition abuses

## The Sudan People's Liberation Army and human rights

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Formed in 1983 under the leadership of Dr John Garang de Mabior, the mainly southern Sudan-based Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) asserts it is building the "New Sudan". In 1991 it split into two factions largely divided along ethnic lines.

Since its very beginnings the SPLA, which controls most of rural southern Sudan, has been responsible for gross human rights abuses. It has detained and tortured political dissidents. Some have been deliberately and arbitrarily killed.<sup>1</sup> Conditions in SPLA prisons have been harsh to the point of constituting ill-treatment, banned by international human rights treaties.

The SPLA factions – SPLA-Mainstream still led by Dr John Garang de Mabior and SPLA-United led by Dr Riek Machar Teny-Dhurgon (re-named the South Sudan Independence Army in September 1994) – share with the Sudan Government responsibility for creating famine and massive social dislocation in southern Sudan.

The split in 1991 set each faction against each other, as well as against the government, in a bitter internecine war. Within days dissident forces, mainly drawn from Nuer communities in Upper Nile, raided Dinka villages and cattle camps killing thousands of unarmed civilians and forcing over 200,000 people to flee.

In 1992 and 1993 SPLA-Mainstream forces, mainly drawn from Dinka, raided Nuer communities in retribution. Hundreds more defenceless people were killed and tens of thousands displaced.

The ethnic violence against civilians unleashed by the split has been mirrored by killings within the ranks of each faction as suspected opponents have been purged.

Like the government, neither faction of the SPLA appears to hold many prisoners captured in combat. Some captives are given the choice to integrate into the ranks of their captors. But many others are murdered on the battlefield.

Neither faction of the SPLA has investigated fully and impartially reports of human rights abuses. Neither faction is known to have taken appropriate action to discipline human rights abusers within its own ranks. Within each faction systems of justice, which are applied on the whim of local commanders, do not meet even minimal international standards of fairness.

Amnesty International is calling on each faction of the SPLA to honour their obligations under international humanitarian law, which is as binding on them as it is on the government.

Common Article 3 of the *Geneva*



*Conventions* lays down standards for the treatment of persons taking no active part in hostilities. It forbids "violence to life and person, in particular murder of all kinds, mutilation, cruel treatment and torture".

These standards have been cruelly ignored.

Each faction should end deliberate assaults on civilians and other gross human rights abuses.

Amnesty International is also calling on both SPLA-Mainstream and the South Sudan Independence Army, as well as the

government, to accept the placement of an international civilian human rights monitoring team in areas they control and to provide the monitors with full cooperation.

Each party to the conflict should ensure that human rights safeguards are a central part of any ceasefire or peace settlement.

But respect for human rights is not something that should wait until after the conflict is over. It is the responsibility of those in authority in Sudan – whether they belong to the government or each faction of the SPLA – to start ensuring that respect now.

## **What can you do?**

**Join our campaign.**

**Contact the Amnesty International office in your country and ask how you can help.**

**For more information about Sudan, see Amnesty International's report, "Sudan: The tears of orphans - no future without human rights" (AI Index AFR 54/02/95), published in January 1995.**

SPLA-Mainstream soldier

i. Amnesty International uses the phrase "deliberate and arbitrary killing" to denote wilful killings of prisoners or defenceless non-combatants committed on the authority of an armed political group or with its acquiescence.



**An Amnesty International briefing leaflet**