

0001 hrs gmt Wednesday 29 September 1993

SUDAN: HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS AT HEART OF FAMINE

Deliberate attacks on civilians are at the root of the devastation and famine ravaging the war zones of Sudan, charges Amnesty International in a report issued today.

"Nearly three million people are displaced from their homes. This is not a by-product of war but the result of tactics integral to it. Government forces and all factions of the armed opposition Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) have been ruthless in their assault on civilians."

The current military government took power in June 1989 and intensified the six-year-old war with the SPLA. Tens of thousands of people have lost their lives as the warring parties demonstrate flagrant contempt for human life. Each has exploited ethnic ties, pitting community against community.

In the Nuba Mountains, the Sudan Government has followed a policy of forcibly clearing people from their homes and re-settling them in so-called "peace villages" under the control of the army and Popular Defence Force (PDF), a government created militia. The clearances have involved thousands of extrajudicial executions, rape and the abduction of women and children. Leaders or educated individuals suspected of being opponents by the authorities have been detained, tortured and have "disappeared".

The army and pro-government militia have also been responsible for extrajudicial executions in both towns and countryside in southern Sudan. In Juba, the largest city in the south, hundreds of civilians, government soldiers, police officers and members of other paramilitary forces "disappeared" after the military restored control following SPLA incursions and a reported mutiny in mid-1992.

After international protests, the government mounted an inquiry. This concluded that "there was no evidence of improper action by the military courts or the army".

"Yet Camillo Odongi Loyuk, a former soldier and senior administrator, and others were tortured to death after their arrest", said Amnesty International. "The authorities deny Camillo was even arrested."

Few SPLA soldiers are held by the government. Evidence suggests that SPLA members captured on the battlefield are extrajudicially executed, sometimes after torture and interrogation.

All factions of the SPLA have been similarly flagrant in their abuse of human rights and contempt for humanitarian standards. In late 1991, the "Nasir faction" of the SPLA, dominated by members of the Nuer ethnic group, massacred thousands of civilians in raids deep in the territory of members of the Dinka ethnic group regarded as supporters of the rival "Torit faction".

In April 1993, Dinka troops from the "Torit faction" retaliated, raiding Nuer lands and murdering hundreds of civilians. The Torit faction has been similarly ruthless in deliberately and arbitrarily killing deserters from its ranks. It is widely alleged that they have also tortured and killed captured government soldiers.

Amnesty International is calling on the Sudan Government and all factions of the SPLA to end their war against civilians and to honour the humanitarian principles enshrined in the *Geneva Conventions*.

"The dry season, which will begin in a few weeks time, will be a critical time for human rights", said Amnesty International. "This year the government has mounted a particularly early offensive - already fighting has forced tens of thousands of people to flee to northern Uganda.

"The human rights situation is already catastrophic. But unless the government and the SPLA address their responsibilities now to prevent human rights abuses there is serious danger it will become far worse."

Human rights violations lie at the root of the famine in Sudan. Amnesty International is urging the international community to look to the causes of the humanitarian disaster by addressing the human rights issues there.

"The work of the new UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Sudan, who recently visited Sudan, is vital. But the international community should go further and ensure that human rights are explicitly included as a central part of any internationally brokered ceasefire and peace negotiations - an essential step if respect for human rights is to be restored".

EMBARGOED FOR 0001 HRS GMT WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 1993