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UN aids Sudanese official wanted for war crimes

Amnesty International has urged the United Nations not to help fugitives from international justice after a Sudanese official wanted for war crimes in Darfur was provided with a helicopter to fly to a meeting in the Abyei region.

Ahmed Haroun, the Governor of Southern Kordofan, who is the subject of an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC), was given assistance by the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) so that he could attend a meeting with members of the Missirya community in Abyei.

"It's outrageous that someone who is wanted by the ICC for crimes against humanity and war crimes is given transport by UN without being arrested," said Renzo Pomi, Amnesty International's representative at the UN.

In a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday, Amnesty International called for directives to be issued to "all peacekeeping operations and other UN offices and agencies to refrain from providing such assistance except for the purpose of facilitating the arrest of a person as required by the ICC or other competent judicial body."

On Tuesday, UN spokesperson Martin Nesirky said that "Governor Haroun was critical to bringing the Misseriva leaders in southern Kordofan to this meeting that had been arranged in Abyei to stop further clashes and killings."

Mr Nesirky did not mention the UN's agreement to cooperate with the International Criminal Court or the obligations that it has recognized that its peacekeeping operations have under international humanitarian law.

"While the efforts by UNMIS to defuse tensions and prevent human rights violations should be applauded, providing a safe haven to somebody wanted for war crimes and crimes against humanity, instead of arresting him, is inconsistent with the UN's obligations" said Renzo Pomi.

As Minister of State for the Interior between 2003 and 2005, Haroun was responsible for the Darfur security portfolio. He is alleged to have been responsible for recruiting, funding and personally arming the "Janjaweed" militia in Darfur and encouraging them to target civilians.

The "Janjaweed" militia are said to have carried out the murder, torture and mass rape of innocent civilians during a number of attacks on villages in Darfur.

Background

Under the Relationship Agreement between the International Criminal Court and the United Nations, the UN and the International Criminal Court are obliged to "cooperate closely, whenever appropriate, with each other and consult each other on matters of mutual interest" (Article 3), both are required "to the

fullest extent possible and practicable, arrange for the exchange of information and documents of mutual interest" (Article 5) and to cooperate on a range of matters with the Prosecutor (Article 18).

According to Security Council resolution 1593(2005), which referred the situation in Darfur to the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court, all States and concerned regional and other international organizations are required to cooperate fully with the Prosecutor.