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Sudan: African Union urged not to elect Sudan as chair

Amnesty International today warned that the African Union (AU) would compromise its reputation if it elected Sudan as chair of the AU this week.

The AU Assembly will decide on its chair for 2007 during a summit in Addis Ababa on 29-30 January.

“Electing Sudan as chair of the African Union while it defies the decisions of the AU and UN to send peacekeepers to Darfur would undermine the credibility of the AU as well as its own commitment to uphold human rights in Africa,” said Tawanda Hondora, Deputy Director of Amnesty International’s Africa Programme.

“Sudan is a key party to the conflict that AU forces are monitoring in Darfur and is responsible for committing grave human rights abuses. Thousands of people have been killed by government-backed militias. AU forces would be put in an untenable position if Sudan is given the leadership of the AU,” said Hondora.

“Sudan’s election to chair one of the main decision-making bodies of the AU would be a glaring conflict of interest that would compromise the AU’s impartiality and effectiveness.”

The objectives of the AU, as set out in its Constitutive Act, include the promotion and protection of human rights, peace, security and stability on the African continent.

“The AU already deferred a decision to grant the chairmanship to Sudan in 2005 and 2006 due to Sudanese government violations in Darfur – we hope that African governments will not change this stance, given the persistent failures of the government of Sudan to stop human rights abuses in Darfur,” said Hondora.

The Sudanese government has consistently failed to protect the people of Darfur from gross human rights violations, including mass killings, rape and forced displacement. Sudanese forces continue to act in violation of international standards of human rights and international humanitarian law in Darfur, including recently launching air attacks that killed scores of civilians.

Sudan is also continuing to support the Janjawid militias, which are responsible for continuing grave human rights violations in Darfur and eastern Chad.

Despite reported acceptance by the Sudanese government of a hybrid AU-UN force to protect civilians in Darfur, no timetable for the deployment of such a force has been agreed. Sudan has yet to demonstrate in practice its commitment to an effective peacekeeping operation.

Background

Since the current conflict in Darfur began in 2003, some 85,000 people have been killed while 200,000 have died of hunger or disease and more than two million have been displaced, mainly due to attacks by Sudanese forces and Janjawid forces armed by the Sudanese government.

Amnesty International has made a number of additional recommendations to the AU Summit regarding the human rights situations in Somalia and Zimbabwe and also regarding the trial of Hissene Habre. For more details, please see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engior630012007>

Public Document

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