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Sudan: Government troop build-up in Darfur signals looming human rights crisis

Amnesty International today warned that the build-up of Sudanese troops in Darfur could lead to a human rights catastrophe in the very near future, and urged the UN Security Council to take immediate action to protect the people of the region.

"Eyewitnesses in al-Fasher in North Darfur are telling us that Sudanese government military flights are flying in troops and arms on a daily basis," said Kate Gilmore, Amnesty International's Executive Deputy Secretary General. "Displaced people in Darfur are absolutely terrified that the same soldiers that expelled them from their homes and villages may now be sent supposedly to protect them."

The organization urged the UN Security Council to exert maximum pressure on Sudan to accept UN peacekeeping troops in Darfur -- including imposing further targeted sanctions against Sudanese authorities.

The Security Council is due to meet today to discuss a draft resolution on the crisis in Darfur.

The Sudanese government has proposed its own protection plan for the people of Darfur -- a plan that reportedly involves bringing up to 26,000 government troops into the region.

"The Sudanese government's 'protection plan' is a sham and must be firmly rejected," said Kate Gilmore. "How can Sudan -- which appears to be about to launch its own offensive in Darfur -- realistically propose being a peacekeeper in a conflict to which it is a major party and perpetrator of grave human rights violations?"

On 29 July, the Sudanese government bombed villages in North Darfur, violating a March 2005 UN Security Council resolution banning offensive flights in Darfur. Armed opposition groups have also perpetrated grave human rights abuses, including attacking humanitarian convoys.

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