

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: AFR 54/059/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 257
5 October 2006

Embargo Date: 5 October 2006 00:01 GMT

Sudan: Human rights situation deteriorating in Darfur five months after peace agreement

Despite the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) there has been more fighting, more displacement and more uncertainty in Sudan. With the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) so far unable to protect civilians, Amnesty International again repeats its calls on Sudan to consent to the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force to protect civilians without further delay. An Amnesty International report issued today entitled *Sudan: Crying out for Safety* paints a grim picture of the deteriorating human rights situation in Darfur.

The Sudan government has recently launched the largest military offensive in over a year in North Darfur. Large scale aerial bombardment is taking place. Attacks are characterized by serious violations of international humanitarian law, including indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks and direct attacks on civilians. Often, clinics and schools -- such as one in al-Hassan on 29 July -- appear to be targeted. In a recent bombing on 27 September in Kusa Kurna near Sayah, north-east of al-Fasher, three women were killed: Halima 'Issa Abaker, and two sisters, Maryam and Hawa Ishaq Omar.

The report describes how in large parts of West Darfur, the Janjawid have almost complete control and are gradually occupying the land that was depopulated by the massive forced displacement in 2003 and 2004. Displaced people live as virtual prisoners in camps, while unlawful killings, forced displacement, abduction and rape by Sudanese government forces and the Janjawid continue.

As one Masalit man from Tomfoga in West Darfur said:

"The Janjawid drove us out of our houses. They are still there, waiting for us... If a man goes to the field, he would be beaten by them. If it was a woman -- they would do everything to women."

The conflict is spreading further into eastern Chad. Janjawid attacks on civilians in Chad directly across the border from Darfur began in late 2005 and continue still. The communities under attack have established links with the Darfur armed groups opposed to the Sudanese government, which are now recruiting from within such communities. To end attacks on civilians and to stop the conflict from spreading, cross-border attacks must be stopped now.

AMIS has been unable to effectively protect civilians, as numerous Darfuri refugees interviewed by Amnesty International in eastern Chad have testified. AMIS has proved powerless to stop attacks by the government and Janjawid, as well as failing to investigate ceasefire violations as it is mandated to do. AMIS' repeated failure to provide protection over the last years has discredited the force in the eyes of Darfuris. They look now to the United Nations to provide them the protection they desperately need.

Another refugee cited in the report told Amnesty International delegates in Chad:

"The AU is not present in the IDP camp or in Mornej, but they often come to do errands in the town. When they are present, the Janjawid do not dare to attack. The AU is not interested in the displaced. They do not take any action after we complain. When girls are raped in the neighbourhood of the camp, the AU's only action is to bring the girl back to the camp. They do not carry out any investigation into the event."

The people of Darfur have suffered immeasurably throughout the Darfur conflict. Amnesty International is calling on members of the UN Security Council and the African Union to secure the consent of Sudan to the deployment of UN peacekeepers, and to bolster AMIS' capacity to protect civilians until UN peacekeepers are deployed.

Amnesty International is calling on the government of Sudan to:

- consent to the deployment of UN peacekeepers in Darfur in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1706;
- allow AMIS to continue operating in Darfur until the UN peacekeepers are deployed;
- halt all violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the current military offensive.

Amnesty International is urging the armed groups within the National Redemption Front to:

- take all necessary measures to ensure that its forces do not violate international humanitarian law, including the obligation not to locate themselves among the civilian populations of Darfur.

Amnesty International is appealing to members of the Security Council and the African Union to:

- develop a common united position to secure the consent of Sudan to the deployment of UN peacekeepers;
- reinforce AMIS to enable it to discharge its mandate to protect civilians until a UN mission can take over.