

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: AFR 54/005/2004 (Public)
News Service No: 004
7 January 2004

Sudan: Killings, abductions of children and arbitrary detention in Darfur

As the government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) sign an agreement on sharing oil and other revenues, civilians are caught up in the continuing conflict in Darfur between the government and its supporters and two armed opposition groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM).

"A lasting peace agreement in the Sudan cannot be made while the human rights abuses of the war with the south are being repeated in Darfur", Amnesty said. "While important progress has been made at the peace talks in Kenya on reaching agreement between the government and the SPLA the conflict and the humanitarian crisis in Darfur has worsened"

"Amnesty International is receiving lists of hundreds of civilians killed and villages destroyed. We now also have names of children said to have been abducted by government-supported militias".

According to UN figures, 3,000 people have already died in the conflict, most of them civilians. The Sudanese air force has bombed villages but most of the killing and destruction has been carried out by the government-supported militias known as the *Janjawid*. Over the past week, more than 200 people, mostly women and children, have reportedly been killed and scores of villages around Zalingei town in West Darfur state have been attacked over the past week by government armed forces and *Janjawid* militias. Homes were burnt and livestock and possessions looted. Some 7,000 people have had to flee their homes and are now said to be sheltering in the bush around Zalingei or heading towards Chad. Most of these displaced civilians need food and medical attention.

At least thirteen people, including children as young as nine, were reportedly abducted by *Janjawid* from Ma'un village near Kornoy on 2 January 2004. There have also been other reports of abductions of children and adults.

"These reports are a worrying reminder of the abductions that took place in Bahr al-Ghazal region west of Khartoum during the height of the conflict with the SPLA, between 1983 and 2002", said AI. "At least 12,000 people, mostly children or young men from southern ethnic groups were abducted by northern militias supported by the Sudan Government."

Since April 2003 a mass exodus has taken place from the areas in Darfur which have been attacked. More than 700,000 people have fled their homes, mostly to other towns in Darfur while over 90,000 have crossed the border to Chad. Towns in Darfur have doubled in size as a result of the intake of those displaced. Yet the Sudan government is exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Darfur by apparently allowing the militias a

free hand to raid, kill and destroy while restricting the movement of humanitarian organizations in Darfur. The international community has given aid but humanitarian organizations are largely unable to reach refugees who are in greatest need of humanitarian aid.

Scores of activists from Darfur have been arrested on suspicion of supporting the Darfur opposition. They have been held in incommunicado detention without charge or access to judicial review; many have reported suffering beatings or other torture or ill-treatment during their detention.

Amnesty International renewed its call for the immediate deployment of monitors, including an international human rights component, and a commission of inquiry into the crisis in Darfur.

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