

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Sudan: Darfur - attacks against civilians ongoing**

"The government of Sudan has made no progress to ensure the protection of civilians caught up in the conflict in Darfur," Amnesty International said today. Scores of civilians have reportedly been killed and dozens of villages burnt by the government-backed *Janjawid* militias over the last few weeks.

"This is not a situation where the central government has lost control. Men, women and children are being killed and villages are burnt and looted because the central government is allowing militias aligned to it to pursue what amounts to a strategy of forced displacement through the destruction of homes and livelihood of the farming populations of the region," Amnesty International said.

During an attack by the *Janjawid* on at least 10 villages in the Tawila district between Kabkabiya and Al-Fasher in Northern Darfur, between 27-9 February, more than 80 people were killed. A United Nations Humanitarian Task Force who visited the villages after the raids described a situation of fear and devastation. There were reports that school girls had been raped.

In Western Darfur, on 6 March, the *Janjawid* with three land-cruisers and some 60 men on horseback attacked al-Kureinik, a large village east of al-Jeneina, swollen with refugees. They allegedly killed 15 villagers, all civilians, including a child. Two days later on 8 March three children were among twelve people reportedly killed in 'Aish Barra, a village west of al-Jeneina, near the Chad border.

In Gokar, not far from al-Jeneina, at least 5,000 fleeing villagers are said to be gathered with no food, shelter or medicine, while al-Jeneina itself is currently occupied by an estimated 100,000 displaced people.

The small town of Mornay is swollen with refugees, with insufficient food and medicines and no doctor; diarrhoea and fever is rife and five to 10 people are reported to be dying each day.

"The government is still severely restricting humanitarian aid in Darfur and appears unwilling to address the human rights crisis in the region. As a result international attempts, including attempts by the United Nations, to resolve the human rights and humanitarian situation in Darfur are being delayed."

The international community and the UN, who have succeeded in bringing humanitarian aid to some 30% of the displaced populations of Darfur in the past few weeks, have been unable to protect the lives and safety of the rural population. Neither have they been able to reach tens of thousands of people sheltering in rural towns or in the bush with hardly any food and shelter and no medical supplies.

Meanwhile the conflict seems to be spilling over into Chad as the *Janjawid* make cross border raids. They have reportedly killed more than 100 refugees and Chadians and looted cattle during such raids in the past few months. On 7 March 35 armed men believed to be the *Janjawid* reportedly attacked border sites and killed one man in Ouendalou, wounded another in Absogo, and stole 100 head of cattle.

Information received by Amnesty International indicates that the Sudan government is encouraging the actions of the *Janjawid*. Sudanese refugees in Chad have described the *Janjawid* attacking villages accompanied by soldiers. Often they have described attacks by the *Janjawid* wearing army uniforms. Some Sudan army soldiers have described following the *Janjawid* in attacks on villages which, they said, were clearly civilian targets. For the past year no member of the *Janjawid* has been arrested or brought to justice for a single unlawful killing.

"Sudan is in violation of its obligations under Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions that requires protected persons, including civilians, to be treated humanely, and explicitly prohibits violence to life and person, in particular murder" said Amnesty International. Article 3 applies to armed conflict "not of an international character" and applies to "each Party to the conflict". The destruction and looting of civilian property and means of livelihoods are also forbidden by the laws and customs applicable in armed conflicts not of an international character.

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