



OPEN LETTER BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL
TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL
ON THE URGENT NEED TO PROTECT CIVILIANS IN CHAD

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8 June 2006

Dear Ambassador,

Amnesty International is greatly concerned at the human rights situation in Eastern Chad, which has seriously deteriorated in recent months in direct connection with the conflict in Darfur. I urge you to ensure that your Mission visiting Chad pay specific attention to the urgent protection needs of the civilian population.

According to our information, including field research which is still ongoing, the most disturbing aspects of the situation in eastern Chad are the attacks on civilians, the displacement they generate, and the failure of the Chadian authorities to protect the displaced and other civilians.

There is evidence indicating that members of the Janjawid militia entering from Sudan have been targeting civilians in eastern Chad in raids often carried out in apparent coordination with attacks on Chadian government forces by Chadian armed groups based in Sudan. These attacks have caused heavy loss of life and are regularly accompanied by looting. They appear to have increased in scale in recent months and are taking place with impunity. There are no indications that the government of Sudan is seeking to stop the attacks and the related abuses, and may actually be encouraging them. Many of the victims are from the Dajo, Masalit and Kajaksa ethnic groups.

Since the end of 2005 the armed conflict and the attacks on civilians have caused mass displacement all along the Chadian/Sudanese border, from Adre in the North to Tissi close to the border with the Central African Republic. Humanitarian assistance to the displaced has not been forthcoming. There are no camps for these displaced and they effectively are being left to flee further or return to danger.

The Chadian government is failing in its duty to provide effective protection to civilians, especially the displaced. Chadian government forces do not seem to be properly deployed or to intervene to protect civilians. The Janjawid apparently concentrate their attacks in areas vacated by Chadian government forces engaged in fighting Chadian opposition groups. In some areas, such as Dogdore and south of Adre, it is reported that the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) has established a presence and is welcome by the local population as a form of protection against attacks by the Janjawid.

There is reason to fear that the situation could deteriorate further, for example through mass retaliation on ethnic groups associated with the Janjawid. There are reports that Chadians, including minors, are being recruited by the SLA. Some groups are actively seeking to arm themselves in light of the failure of the Chadian authorities to protect them. Urgent action is needed to prevent a further escalation of gross human rights abuses.

I urge the Security Council to ensure that during its current visit to Chad the Security Council Mission inquires into the patterns of attacks, displacement and failure to protect civilians by the Chadian authorities, and any other aspect relevant to ensuring the protection of the civilian population. The Security Council should urgently consider how best the government of Chad can discharge its responsibility to protect and take action accordingly.

Given the interconnection between the abuses being perpetrated in Darfur and eastern Chad, the Security Council should also consider clarifying that the referral of the situation in Darfur to the International Criminal Court (ICC) includes crimes under international law that commenced in Darfur and were completed in another state and extending the jurisdiction of the ICC to cover all crimes under international law committed in eastern Chad since 1 July 2002.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Irene Khan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Irene Khan
Secretary General