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Sudan: Court ruling should mark end of hostilities in Abyei

The hostilities that have caused the death of thousands of people around Sudan's oil-rich Abyei must come to an end when the Permanent Court of Arbitration at the Hague issues its ruling on the disputed border between North and South Sudan, Amnesty International said today.

Amnesty International is calling on the various parties in the Sudan government of national unity to respect the terms of the Court ruling when it is issued and not use it as an excuse to re-ignite the more than 20-year conflict.

"If the court ruling is not respected and armed militia are deployed in the Abyei area, this will probably cause an outbreak of further violence leading to civilian casualties," said Tawanda Hondora, Amnesty International Deputy Director for Africa.

Despite the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM), the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA), as well as proxy militias, have intermittently fought for control of Abyei, which divides the north and south of the country.

"Thousands of civilians have already lost their lives in disputes between the NCP and SPLM since the Comprehensive Peace Agreement was signed. Both organizations must publicly commit not to take any action that will result in clashes that can only lead to more direct and indiscriminate killing of civilians," said Tawanda Hondora.

Amnesty International calls on the parties not to arm or use proxy militia to perpetuate conflict and target communities in the Abyei area.

The organization urges the United Nations Mission in Sudan to monitor the situation in Abyei, and ensure that civilians are protected from attack and that transgressions should be reported to the United Nations Security Council.

Background

The Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague began deliberations earlier this year on the demarcation of Abyei, which is being contested by the NCP and the SPLM, the two signatories to the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) which lasted more than 20 years conflict between the north and south in which at least 2 million people were killed and some 4.5 million more driven from their homes.