

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

Public Statement

AI Index: AFR 54/077/2006 (Public)
News Service No: 299
17 November 2006

Sudan: Urgent need for effective peacekeeping to protect civilians

The Government of Sudan agreed "in principle" to a "hybrid operation" of UN and AU peacekeepers in Darfur in a meeting in Addis Ababa with the African Union, the United Nations, representatives of Security Council countries and others.

According to the communiqué issued in Addis Ababa after yesterday's meeting, "A hybrid operation is also agreed in principle, pending clarification of the size of the force...The peacekeeping will have a predominantly African character...Backstopping and command and control structures will be provided by the UN""

Amnesty International today urged all parties involved in developing this new proposal to ensure that effective protection of the civilian population is at the centre of any peacekeeping operation in Darfur.

The need for protection is all the more evident in a week when Janjawid militias have been carrying out attacks on civilians throughout Darfur. The people of Darfur urgently need effective peacekeeping that protects them against continuing gross human rights violations.

The civilian population in Darfur has lost trust in the present African Union mission in Darfur (AMIS) because of its failure to provide protection. This lack of confidence needs to be addressed.

An effective peacekeeping force requires sufficient human and material resources and a clear mandate to protect civilians throughout Darfur. In addition, the Sudanese government must be fully committed to the implementation of the mandate of the peacekeeping mission.

Furthermore, the accountability of a hybrid force needs to be ensured through clearly defined and transparent command and control structures between the UN and AU forces.