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## **Sudan: Indiscriminate bombing attacks on civilians must stop**

*Bombings of civilians by the Sudanese government air planes have resumed since July 2000 in the long running war in Sudan. Amnesty International today condemned these bombings as violations of international humanitarian law that prohibits indiscriminate and direct attacks on civilians and civilian objects.*

*"The government of Sudan should immediately stop indiscriminate bombings of civilians in south Sudan, restate its commitment to international humanitarian law ( The Geneva Conventions), and international human rights law, and take all necessary steps to respect them", said Amnesty International.*

*Bombs were dropped by warplanes on civilian villages and community centres despite an order by President Omar Hassan al-Bashir to his armed forces on 19 April 2000 to stop all air bombing operations, except in self-defence and during military operations, and to "protect lives and property". This order had followed an international outcry at bombings by government jets in February and March that hit hospitals and school children.*

*During July, more than 250 bombs reportedly hit civilian objects in at least 30 separate incidents, causing several deaths, destroying property and disrupting harvesting activities and relief and humanitarian assistance in the Bahr-el-Ghazel region.*

*The town of Rumbek was bombed on 2 and 8 July, reportedly killing a young girl and a pregnant woman and injuring 23 others. Three other villages were bombed on the same day, with no major casualties.*

*On 15 July, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported that 14 bombs were dropped on the village of Chelkou in southern Bahr-el-Ghazal, injuring one woman, destroying several houses, damaging the*

ICRC's plane and closely missing its clinic. The ICRC called on the government to provide additional security guarantees.

On 2 August, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF Doctors without Borders) suspended its activities in the village of Akuem, following an air raid by government planes that almost hit the aid agency's health centre and nutrition centre serving 20,000 people and a plane carrying medical personnel. Two United Nations planes on the ground, operating under the umbrella organisation Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS), were narrowly missed by government bombing around the same time.

On 7 August 18 bombs were dropped on the towns of Tonj and Mapel, 60 km south west of Wau, a base for humanitarian facilities and a screening centre for thousands of internally displaced people. In Mapel the airstrip was bombed several times, and an OLS relief aircraft was nearly hit.

The bombings happened despite assurances given to the UN by the Government of Sudan that bombing of locations used by the UN/ OLS would not reoccur. The UN has announced the temporary suspension of OLS relief flights in the region. Humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) operating within and outside OLS also condemned the renewed bombings. On 9 August there were two more bombing raids on Mapel.

On 9 August the Sudanese government denied attacking humanitarian locations and called two days later for the UN to resume relief flights. But it also expressed the right to defend itself against cease-fire violations by the rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA).

The increase in the bombings coincided with the collapse of the Bahr-al-Ghazal humanitarian ceasefire, when SPLA forces captured the town of Gogrial. The humanitarian ceasefire had been agreed between the Government of Sudan, the SPLA and UN and relief agencies under OLS to provide food to civilians affected by the conflict. Tens of thousands of people died there from famine as a result of fighting in 1998. The government of Sudan has also frequently accused relief groups of providing arms to the rebel forces, which NGOs working under OLS denied strongly on 8 August.

*"These killings of civilians and severe violations of international humanitarian law should be investigated and all alleged perpetrators should be brought to justice in proceedings that comply with international standards of fair trial and without resorting to the death penalty and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment", said Amnesty International.*

*Amnesty International has repeatedly called on the Sudanese government and SPLA to ensure that their forces observe international humanitarian and human rights law aiming to protect civilians during armed conflict.*

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