

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **Sudan: Peace Agreement must be inclusive and ensure justice for all**

As peace talks between the Sudan government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) enter a crucial phase in Naivasha, Kenya, Amnesty International has stressed that a lasting peace must be inclusive and bring justice to all.

Both sides in the 20-year civil war have stated that some form of agreement would come by year's end. The peace talks offer hope to the people of Sudan. For the last 10 months of the ceasefire nearly all civilians in the south and border regions have been able to live in peace, however fragile. "But the negotiators in Kenya must not ignore the fighting elsewhere in Sudan," Amnesty International said.

Darfur, in western Sudan, is not included in the peace negotiations to end the civil war mostly fought in southern Sudan and areas between north and south. On 16 December talks in N'djamena, Chad, between the government of Sudan and the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A), one of the armed groups opposing the government in Darfur broke down.

"While the prospects for peace have been fêted in Khartoum and the south, in Darfur the life and safety of civilians are again being held hostage by government forces, militias and armed opposition groups," said Amnesty International.

Villages in Darfur have been bombed by government planes while, over the past 10 months, government-aligned militias have been devastating rural areas with total impunity. Hundreds of civilians have been killed.

"At least four million people have fled from the conflict between the government, the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and the militias of all sides since 1983. Most still suffer in refugee camps or as displaced people in the north. Now more than 600,000 people have fled the countryside in Darfur since April to safety in towns. Tens of thousands have taken refuge in Chad. They live in dire humanitarian conditions, with little or no access to food or water, shelter or healthcare.

"A major cause of the conflicts which have shattered the lives of so many Sudanese has been injustice and marginalization. Unless these basic human rights concerns are seriously addressed it will be difficult to have a lasting peace," the organization said.

"Human rights, encompassing justice and an end to discrimination, have to be at the core of any agreement. But human rights will not arrive simply through hope and rhetorical declarations, they

need to be guaranteed and safeguarded."

Any ceasefire monitoring force must include a human rights component and be able to report abuses publicly. Monitors from all sides must be supported by international monitors.

"Because there was no human rights component in the Nuba Mountains ceasefire in place since March 2002, ceasefire monitors have helped to keep the peace but failed to preserve physical security and freedom of expression for the people," Amnesty International said.

A truth and reconciliation commission should be set up to ensure that the lessons of the past are learnt.

Justice and accountability in the future should be ensured by the formation of a national human rights commission, with members of the highest integrity, impartiality and independence from all parts of Sudan with power to investigate abuses, question government officials and members of the security services and protect complainants and witnesses.

Serious human rights violations which should be monitored in all areas of Sudan include:

- deliberate or indiscriminate attacks against civilians and extra-judicial executions;
- forced and arbitrary displacement of civilians and non-assistance to displaced people;
- maiming of civilians during conflict and torture of suspected opponents in detention centres;
- abductions and arbitrary arrests, prolonged incommunicado detention, and unfair trials;
- restrictions on freedoms of expression, association and assembly;
- discrimination on grounds of ethnicity or religion; and
- violence and discrimination against women.

"Monitoring such abuses will help to end the culture of impunity in Sudan. The people of Sudan need to know that a peace deal will guarantee their basic rights," Amnesty International added.

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