

United Nations still trying to stop genocide in the Sudan

March 12, 2007

In a report published March 12th, the UN Human Rights Council's high-level mission to Sudan said the government there should fully cooperate with the immediate deployment of a United Nations-African Union (AU) hybrid force for Darfur. Council representatives urged the president of the Sudan to end the targeting of civilians and all armed rebel movements to strictly observe human rights laws.

Despite failing to get into Darfur because of visa restrictions, the mission met hundreds of relevant people and reviewed thousands of pages of documents relating to the human rights situation in the troubled region during its month of work from 5 February to 5 March in Geneva, Addis Ababa, N'Djamena, Abeche and the refugee camps of Eastern Chad.

"The situation is characterized by gross and systematic viola-



photos above and below © EC/ECHO/Peter Holdsworth

International efforts have failed to bring an end to the conflict in Darfur, stranding refugees in camps along the border.

tions of human rights and grave breaches of international humanitarian law. War crimes and crimes against humanity continue across the region," the mission said in a 35-page report presented to the Human Rights Council, which is based in Geneva.

"The principal pattern is one of a violent counterinsurgency campaign waged by the Government of the Sudan in concert with Janjaweed / militia, and targeting mostly civilians. Rebel forces are also guilty of serious abuses of human rights and

violations of humanitarian law."

The report says the Sudanese Government "has manifestly failed to protect the population of Darfur from large-scale international crimes, and has

itself orchestrated and participated in these crimes."

Underscoring the "solemn obligation of the international community to exercise its responsibility to protect," the report details the grim situation in Darfur, highlighting that killing of civilians remains "widespread," along with the systematic use of rape and sexual violence. It also makes recommendations to the Council itself, the Sudanese Government, the various armed rebel movements and the international community.

"The Government of the Sudan should cooperate fully in the deployment of the proposed UN-AU peacekeeping/protection force without further delay," the report states. "Sudan should end the targeting of civilians in Darfur, cease all support for Janjaweed / militia forces, and proceed with the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of such forces."

The mission also called on the Government to remove all ob-

continued



stacles to the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the millions in need in the region. The UN says more than 200,000 people have been killed and at least 2 million others forced to flee their homes since 2003, while in total, some 4 million civilians need assistance to survive in Darfur, which is in the west of Sudan.

The report also calls on all armed rebel movements operating in the region to strictly observe and respect international law, and ensure the free and safe access and movement of humanitarian personnel. It also urges them to "cooperate in good faith" in the pursuit of peace.

In addition, it calls on the Security Council to take "further action" to ensure the protection of civilians in Darfur, including through the deployment of the proposed UN-AU force, while recommending that the Human Rights Council should help set up an independent national rights commission for Sudan "to address the grave situation."

Meanwhile, Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon spoke with Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al Bashir in March, and informed him of the choice made along with AU Chairman Alpha Oumar Konaré, of a UN-AU joint Special Representative and a Deputy Special Representative for the

Darfur region, as well as the force commander for the joint mission. A UN spokesperson told reporters that Mr. Ban would discuss the Darfur situation directly with the Security Council.

Militia in Darfur Surround Camp for Displaced People

In early March, hundreds of Arab militia in Sudan's strife-torn Darfur region surrounded a camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) after abducting two civilians from inside the camp, forcing the temporary suspension of humanitarian work there, according to the U. N. delegation.

Arab militiamen swept through Ardamata IDP camp in west Darfur, capturing two civilians in connection with the killing of one of their relatives, the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) said in a press release, adding the two suspects had then been taken to the Government police station but the militia refused to allow the officers to investigate.

Later, they handed the two suspects over to the Military Intelligence/Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) camp in Ardamata.

"Some 250 militiamen surrounded Ardamata camp on the

east and north side demanding a meeting with community leaders. Humanitarian operations in the camp have been temporarily suspended," UNMIS said.

Separately in south Darfur, deadly fighting again erupted between the Targem and Rezegat tribes in Yara, 40 kilometres northwest of Kass, during which three Targems were killed while in their homes.

Turning to southern Sudan, UNMIS has been facilitating a 10-day Peace, Reconciliation and Justice Conference in Raja, aimed at diffusing tension between the communities arising from militia activity and a high influx of refugees fleeing the violence in Darfur.

In related developments, a UN spokesperson told reporters in New York that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that food security in southern Sudan will improve this year.

However she added that the UN World Food Programme (WFP) estimates that more than 100,000 tons of food aid will be required by 1.3 million people, including displaced persons and refugees returning home.

*United Nations News Service
www.un.org/news*



© EC/ECHO/Ivo Freijssen