News

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UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS GRAVELY CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTED WIDESPREAD ABUSES IN DARFUR, SUDAN

The following statement was issued today by eight fact-finding experts of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights:

"We are gravely concerned at the scale of reported human rights abuses and at the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Darfur, Sudan, notwithstanding the progress made in connection with another conflict in the country between the Government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army.

It is reported that the population in the Darfur region - mostly from the Fur ethnic communities of the Masalit, Dajo, Tunjur, Tama and Zaghawas - has been the victim of systematic human rights violations, committed mainly by Government-allied militias such as the Janjaweed, Muraheleen and the Popular Defence Forces. The Government is allegedly encouraging the actions of the militias in order to pursue a strategy of forced displacement of the non-Arab population of the region. Since February 2003, over 100,000 people have reportedly fled across the border to Chad, and as many as 750,000 have been internally displaced within Sudan, a country which already has the world's largest number of internally displaced persons.

According to recent reports, the situation has seriously deteriorated with scores of civilians being killed. Information received speaks of attacks against refugees and displaced persons, the rape of women and girls, abduction of children, the burning of dozens of villages, looting, and destruction of livestock by the militias. The top United Nations official in the country has described the situation as "possibly the world's hottest war", characterized by a campaign of ethnic cleansing "comparable in character, if not scale, to the Rwanda genocide".

We urge all parties in the conflict to respect civilian populations in accordance with international humanitarian and international human rights law. We affirm the absolute necessity of identifying the perpetrators and ensuring that they are held accountable in conformity with international standards".

The Experts are: the Special Rapporteur on torture, Theo van Boven; the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, Yakin Ertürk; the Special Rapporteur on racism, Doudou Diène; the Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Paul Hunt; the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Asma Jahangir; the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography, Juan Miguel Petit; the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Jean Ziegler, and the Representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons, Francis Deng. They have transmitted communications to the Government of

Sudan concerning allegations of human rights abuses in the region related to their respective mandates.

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