

UN Security Council: Urgent action needed to end Sudan's humanitarian disaster

Thursday 7 June 2012

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

UN Security Council: Urgent action needed to end Sudan's humanitarian disaster

7 June 2012

The UN Security Council must fulfil its duty to protect civilians in Sudan and take immediate action to halt the military's indiscriminate airstrikes, Amnesty International said in a new report that highlights the need for aid organizations to be granted immediate access to conflict-affected areas in Sudan's Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states. Since violence broke out in the two states a year ago, more than half a million people have been displaced by ongoing indiscriminate airstrikes by the Sudanese Armed Forces, as well as severe food shortages compounded by the Sudanese authorities' refusal to allow independent humanitarian assistance into the areas.

Tens of thousands of refugees have fled to neighbouring South Sudan, where they face further risk of human rights abuses and humanitarian challenges. "The situation is desperate and time is running out to ensure the refugees have adequate protection and supplies during the six-month rainy season when logistical constraints in South Sudan cripple attempts to provide assistance," said Khairunissa Dhala, Amnesty International's South Sudan researcher.

"For more than a year now the UN Security Council has been slow to react and has watched this catastrophe unfold. It's time it lived up to its mandate and took action to prevent this dire situation deteriorating further. In particular, Russia and China must support a more forceful Security Council response."

Amnesty International visited eight refugee camps in South Sudan in March and April 2012, where inhabitants faced risks such as forced recruitment into armed groups and sexual violence, in addition to food and water shortages.

The report "We can run away from bombs, but not from hunger": Sudan's refugees in South Sudan released today, details how some refugees in Yida refugee camp in Unity State have waited almost 10 hours to receive one container of water or three weeks to access food rations. Amnesty International found that a large percentage of the refugees are unaccompanied minors who have fled the violence to continue their education, only to find that school facilities are struggling to operate in some camps and are virtually non-existent in others.

In refugee camps in Upper Nile State, the organization received reports of boys and young men being forcefully recruited into the armed opposition group, the Sudan Peoples Liberation Movement-North.

Girls and young women in Yida camp, many of whom arrived there on their own, spoke frankly about their fear of rape and sexual violence.

Halima Ahmed who was sheltering in Yida camp told Amnesty International:

"At night we are always afraid. Men and boys often come around and harass us. Sometimes the police chase them away. One time, in the middle of the night, a man made it into our room."

Despite the risks, Amnesty International's research found that those living in the camps have few alternatives.

"While the Sudanese Armed Forces continue committing grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan's Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states, people have little choice but to remain in these camps," said Khairunissa Dhala.

"With the onset of the rainy season, the number of refugees in the camps continues to swell, straining already limited resources. Around 50,000 refugees have arrived in the past six weeks alone and more are reported to be on their way."

Amnesty International further calls on the United Nations to accelerate efforts to pre-position humanitarian supplies for the rainy season, to strengthen education programmes and to ensure measures are in place to protect women and girls in the

refugee camps.

ENDS

Please find Amnesty International's report "We can run away from bombs, but not from hunger": Sudan's refugees in South Sudan, available at: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/info/AFR65/001/2012/en>

Please also find the press release UN Security Council: Urgent action needed to end Sudan's humanitarian disaster available at: <http://amnesty.org/en/news/un-security-council-urgent-action-needed-end-sudan-s-humanitarian-disaster-2012-06-06> and below.

A video clip on the situation of refugees in Yida refugee camp in April 2012 is available at www.amnesty.org and a picture slideshow is available at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/amnesty-international/sets/72157629999533338/show/>