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Chad: Civilians left unprotected as brutal Janjawid attacks reach 150 kilometres inside Chad

Amnesty International today published new evidence of the Chadian government failing to act as Janjawid from Darfur and Chad carry out increasingly brutal and extensive attacks on civilians in eastern Chad.

The evidence was gathered by an Amnesty International delegation that has just returned from a two-week visit to Chad. Delegates interviewed victims of rape, torture and forced displacement, visited destroyed villages and met with the Chadian Prime Minister and other government officials. It provides irrefutable proof that the conflict and human rights crisis in Darfur has now become deeply entrenched in eastern Chad.

The delegation heard evidence of murders, mutilation, and the burning of victims alive during Janjawid attacks on Chadian villages and towns up to 150 kilometres from the border with Darfur.

"Five men who tried to run away were captured by the Janjawid.(...) They tied ropes around their necks and then to their horses and then rode their horses back and forth dragging their bodies for about five to ten minutes. Blood was pouring out of their mouths and noses. They even whipped them on their heads and bodies with their reins, until they were completely covered in blood."

Testimony of Abdelrahman Sinoussi, describing the killing of five villagers from Koloye.

At the same time, women who have fled to internally displaced person camps told delegates of an increasing number of rapes by Janjawid, with the Chadian military and police failing to patrol in or around the camps.

"We have seen a dramatic upsurge in ever more brutal attacks on civilians which have occurred further and further into Chad, yet the Chadian military and police are not even making a token effort to protect their own citizens. The government faces a real threat from the rebel forces. However, even when they have the means, they have still refused pleas for help from their own civilians," said Alex Neve, member of the Amnesty International delegation.

Preliminary findings from the Amnesty International delegation to Chad include the:

Spread of attacks on civilians by Janjawid from the border into areas well inside Chad including devastating attacks on the villages of Bandiakao, Badiya and Kerfi during the first two weeks of November, some 150 kilometres inside the country;

Intensification of Janjawid attacks on civilians since the end of the rainy season in mid September -- Amnesty International has collected the names of around 500 individuals killed in attacks in the Dar Sila region alone although the total number is much higher;

Increasing brutality of attacks including murder, mutilation and the burning of victims alive, compared with previous attacks which mainly focused on stealing livestock and food supplies or scaring inhabitants into fleeing their villages;

Growth of violence against women, including rape, in and around camps for internally displaced people with displaced men unable to accompany them out of fear of being killed and government forces refusing to patrol in or around the camps.

"First they took my child off me and threw her on the ground. Then two of the men raped me. Afterwards they left and I picked up my daughter and came back to the camp. I haven't told anyone what happened to me."

Testimony from a woman at an IDP camp near Goz Beida.

Amnesty International has gathered a number of testimonies in which survivors described the efforts they made to get Chadian military or police to come to their aid before and during attacks by the Janjawid. In some cases, assistance was promised but never arrived. In other cases, villagers were chastised and told to go back and defend their villages themselves.

"Every time there was an attack we begged and we pleaded for the military to come and help us. They were only 25 kilometres away. They never came. (...) We don't matter in this country. We aren't considered citizens of this country. They want us to die."

Testimony taken from Abakar Ramadan, Imam of Koloye.

Janjawid fighters are capitalizing on the failure of state protection -- according to the displaced, they even taunt their victims during attacks: *why isn't anyone here to protect you?* The lawlessness and impunity clearly encourages more and more attacks.

All parties to the conflict, including the Janjawid, must respect their obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular by refraining from any direct attacks against civilians. Chad is obliged under its national constitution and international human rights law to provide protection to its citizens. The government of Sudan must also take all effective measures to prevent further cross-border incursions into Chad by the Janjawid, and to disarm them in accordance with the obligations it has already entered into under the Darfur Peace Agreement.

The international community also bears a clear responsibility. Amnesty International urges the United Nations Security Council to consider measures to assist the government of Chad to discharge its responsibility to protect, for example through the deployment of an international force as may be necessary for the protection of civilians, including refugees and the internally displaced. Amnesty International's delegation met with Chadian Prime Minister Pascal Yoadimnadj, who clearly indicated that his government is open to and very much requires such international assistance.

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