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EU Force to Chad: Include Protection for Displaced Civilians in Eastern Chad

(Brussels, 23 July) As EU Foreign Ministers discuss the possible deployment of a UN mandated EU force to Chad to protect Sudanese refugees, Amnesty International urges that the Chadian victims of internal violence are not forgotten. (See letter to Portuguese Presidency at www.amnesty-eu.org)

Around 170 thousand displaced people have sought refuge in the Eastern part of the country as a result of the violence and human rights abuse carried out by Janjaweed militia and rebel movements.

During a recent mission to Chad, Amnesty International found that displaced women and girls are in particular danger. Rape and violent assault are regularly carried out by members of militias, armed groups and even government soldiers, with complete impunity. (See examples at www.amnesty-eu.org)

“Collecting firewood or water can be a life-threatening dilemma for these women and girls since their families cannot survive if they don’t venture out of the camps and villages to fetch the basics” said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International’s EU Office.

“In light of the failure of the Chadian government to protect its citizens, it is vital that an EU or UN force has the mandate and the resources to protect these women and children as well as any other civilians at risk” he added.

An international force to Chad that has to ignore Chadian victims would be grossly neglecting the protection needs in that country and send an unacceptable signal to the local population that only some deserve protection.