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### **Sudan: Amnesty International delegation visits camp outside al-Jeneina**

The Amnesty International delegation in al-Jeneina visited an Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp at Sissi, forty kilometers outside the town of al-Jeneina.

On the way to the camp, the delegation saw several sites where villages had been burnt to the ground and that were now almost overgrown with vegetation. We saw camels, goats and cattle being grazed by nomads on land where previously villages of farming tribes had been situated. We were told that the goats and cattle were probably stolen from the burnt villages.

On the road, the delegation met a group of displaced women who had collected firewood and were walking back to their camp in Al Jeneina. Just as the delegation began speaking to the women, a nomad horseman appeared, threatening them for collecting wood on what he described as "his land". In a microcosm, it showed the current tensions between the nomadic and farming communities that had coexisted in the past.

In Sissi camp, the delegation spoke with a large gathering of male leaders as well as women. The camp currently has approximately 11,600 people from 53 villages and 106 sheiks, most of whom came to the site after their homes were brutally attacked and destroyed between December 2003 and February 2004. The delegation heard men and women describe the atrocities that had led the people to flee their villages. The IDPs told us that their villages had been bombed from the air and that the attackers included uniformed men from the army and the Popular Defence Forces.

The population seemed still traumatised by that experience and without confidence in the government's ability or willingness to protect them, although the authorities had clearly increased the number of police and police patrols in and around Sissy.

People in the camp described that they "felt under siege" and "worse than being in a prison". They said there were many *janjaweed* in the surrounding area and that the police did nothing when the armed men walked through the camp and robbed IDPs. The men claimed they could not leave the camp for fear that they would be killed; the women do venture out of the camp, for example to collect firewood, but were often whipped or beaten by horsemen.

The delegation was told that, between February 2004 and now, 76 women had been raped, including two in recent days, while out collecting firewood and eight were pregnant as a result of rape. The people did not bother to report cases to the police because they felt that the perpetrators acted with the support of the police. Instead, the majority of rape victims have moved to other camps in al Jeneina to avoid identification and stigmatization. The delegation did not find any social, medical or support services for rape victims in the camp.

En route to the camp, the delegation came across a group of about forty or so IDPs who had set up a makeshift shelter with plastic sheeting, right next to a recently established police station consisting of eighty policemen near Habila Kanare. However, the IDPs did not feel at all safe and were there only a few nights in order to harvest wild millet and collect reeds and firewood before returning to their camp in the town of al Jeneina.

Most of the IDPs originally came from villages in the Habila Kanare area, the destroyed and/or burnt sites of which the delegation had earlier. The delegation spoke to a number of women who repeated in strong terms that they were terrified; they would like to return as soon as they can to their camp in town and only ventured out because of the desperate need to get food, thatch and firewood.

All in all, the delegation spoke to several dozen IDPs, none of whom felt secure and all of whom were vehement in claiming that they did not trust the government and did not feel that the government had done enough to ensure protection of their human rights, either in the past or now.

A second delegation is currently in the town of Nyala where they met with the authorities and visited a detention centre.