

# **Joint Public Statement by Amnesty International & Nigerian civil society organizations**

## **Darfur: Nigeria should stand up for human rights, not Sudan**

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As the human rights and humanitarian situation in Darfur, Sudan continues to deteriorate, we, Amnesty International and Nigerian Civil Society Organizations today asked the government of Nigeria to stand up for the human rights of tens of thousand of unarmed civilians, including women and children, who are being killed, injured, raped, or forcibly displaced.

Since the beginning of 2006, over 250,000 people have been driven from their homes and from places where they have sought safety, according to the UN. Since 2003, the Sudanese government has abdicated its responsibility to protect the people of Darfur, and has instead armed, funded and supported the Janjawid militias that have been responsible for most of the crimes against civilians.

The presence of troops from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement of 5 May 2006 have not stopped abuses continuing on a massive scale. On the contrary, it appears as if the Government of Sudan, at the cost of the civilian population, sees the Darfur Peace Agreement as an opportunity to further its military objectives rather than an opportunity for peace.

The peace agreement was signed by the Sudanese government and one faction of the armed opposition group Sudan Liberation Army, but was rejected by all other armed groups. Tensions continue to mount in the camps where many of Darfur's 1.8 million internally displaced people are frustrated at the lack of tangible improvement in their conditions and have lost faith in AMIS.

WE are concerned about the serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law by the Sudanese government in Darfur, and the lack of concrete action and, even more so, tangible results by the African Union (AU) leadership, including Nigeria to put pressure on Sudan to comply with the international community's decision urging an end to the circle of killings and sufferings.

WE also strongly condemn the lack of accountability for those responsible for the crimes being committed against African people in Darfur.

WE acknowledge Nigeria's role and contribution to the Darfur peace process, including its contribution of troops to AMIS, but we are deeply concerned about Nigeria's persistent refusal to speak out publicly against the human rights abuses committed by the Sudanese government. WE are also concerned that despite its influence in Africa and leadership role with regard to Togo, Nigeria is not doing enough to work more proactively with other countries such as South Africa and Egypt within the AU to tell the Sudanese government "enough is enough", and to achieve a lasting solution to the human rights problems in Darfur.

WE are concerned that Nigeria's soft stand on the killings, raping, and displacement of civilians including women and children in Darfur is inconsistent with President Obasanjo's own acknowledgement that "Africans should be their brothers' keepers", and "not in the interest of Africa." Unless Nigeria stands up for the victims of human rights violations in Darfur, its action may be interpreted as prioritising the interest of the Sudanese government over the sufferings of Africans in Darfur and its human rights obligations under the Constitutive Act of the AU.

WE THEREFORE strongly urge the Nigerian government and President Obasanjo to:

- Speak out publicly against the continuing violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Darfur;
- Work proactively with other members of the AU to tell the Sudanese government "enough is enough", and that the Sudanese government's action is unacceptable and will no longer be tolerated;
- Organize a pre AU Assembly meeting as soon as possible to build consensus among African leaders such as South Africa, Senegal and Egypt and to publicly tell the Sudanese government its action is undermining the credibility of the AU, and the organization's ability to achieve its human rights objectives;
- Prevail on the Sudanese government to move swiftly to consent to the deployment of a strong international peacekeeping force in Darfur;
- Persuade the members of the AU that it is important to strengthen AMIS including by urgently increasing the number of troops, material resources, clarifying its mandate to protect civilians throughout Darfur, and ensuring clear and transparent command and control structures, so that AMIS is able to fully implement its mandate to protect civilians;
- Insist that Sudan should not become the Chair of the AU Assembly in January given its persistent refusal to accept the international community's decision to deploy a more strengthened and effective peacekeeping force in Darfur, as it will result in a grave conflict of interests, the Sudanese government being a party to the conflict in Darfur. Also, it would seriously harm the credibility of the AU, and send a very negative signal on the expressed commitment of the AU to uphold human rights.

SIGNED BY:

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Committee for the Defense of Human Rights  
Center for Constitutional Governance  
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Constitutional Rights Project (CRP)  
Campaign for Accountable Governance through Elections (CAGE)  
Independent Advocacy Project (IAP)  
Legal Defence and Assistance Project (LEDAP)  
Prisoners Rehabilitation & Welfare Action (PRAWA)  
Nigerian Voters Assembly (VOTAS)  
West African Bar Association (WABA)  
Socio-Economic Rights & Accountability Project (SERAP)  
Women Advocates Research & Documentation Centre (WARDC)  
Women Organization for Representation & National Cohesion (WORNACO)