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OHCHR – UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

Press briefing notes on violence in West Darfur

We are appalled by the latest resurgence of violence between Masalit and Arab tribes in West Darfur, in Sudan, that left at least 87 people dead, more than 191 injured and forced thousands to flee their homes. We are also disturbed by the slow progress in ensuring accountability for this and previous violence, despite repeated calls by victims and their families.

The latest bout of violence erupted on 3 April in Al Geneina town when unknown assailants shot at a group of men from the Masalit tribe, killing two and injuring one. In response, armed elements from Masalit and Arab tribes mobilized, leading to clashes between them.

By the evening of 5 April, the streets of Al Geneina were strewn with dozens of bodies, including those of women and children. These scenes recalled those seen in West Darfur following previous clashes, in late 2019 and, most recently, in mid-January 2021.

During the violence last weekend, public and private property was destroyed or damaged, including a hospital, and a UN compound. At least one ambulance was attacked and health personnel injured.

Similar to previous situations of violence in Al Geneina, the authorities failed to stop the clashes despite a robust security force presence in the town. We urge the authorities to fully uphold their role to protect the population without discrimination. In this regard, we call on the Government of Sudan to accelerate the implementation of the National Plan for the Protection of Civilians.

All tribes responsible for violence in Darfur must be disarmed and the State must be able to maintain order and ensure the rule of law, including by preventing armed civilians from taking the law into their own hands.

We acknowledge that, after the latest clashes, the authorities have taken steps to contain the situation in the area. We also welcome the Government's commitment to addressing the root causes of the violence, especially disputes over land, pasture and water resources - disputes that are at the heart of the entrenched tribal divisions. These commitments need to result in concrete actions.

Independent, impartial and thorough investigations into these acts of violence must be initiated without delay. Effective accountability processes must be established to pave the way for genuine reconciliation and lasting peace.

We note that the Sudanese Attorney General has announced that 15 prosecutors have been sent to West Darfur to investigate the recent violence. We also welcome the decision to refer 33 alleged perpetrators for trial over the clashes in January 2021, as well as the establishment of the committee set up to investigate a similar incident in December 2019.

We urge the Government to ensure prompt, transparent and effective follow-up to these investigations. All those responsible for human rights abuses must be held accountable. Grievances from both sides must be tackled after decades-long ethnic disputes stoked by the previous regime.

Our Office in Sudan stands ready to assist the Government of Sudan towards achieving accountability and justice.

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ecoi.net summary:

West Darfur: Renewed violence between Masalit and Arab groups; at least 87 individuals killed and 191 injured



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