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Surviving Rape in Darfur

26/9/04

Immediate and sustained action must be taken to end the persistent lack of protection for women and girls in Darfur from rape and other forms of sexual abuse!

Special measures must be adopted to ensure that the thousands of survivors of sexual abuse in Darfur will not now be abandoned to lifetime of suffering!

Hundreds of women and girls from Darfur have testified to Amnesty International of mass rape, perpetrated by members of the government-backed 'Janjawid' militia and some government soldiers.¹ Having fled the bombing and burning of their homes, witnessed the killing of their relatives and given the cultural taboo that rape constitutes in Darfur, these women and girls have shown great courage in talking about the abuse they have suffered. The safety, protection and dignity of these and other rape survivors must now be guaranteed and the perpetrators brought immediately to justice.

On 19 July 2004, Amnesty International launched a report on Sudan: Darfur, *Rape as a Weapon of War*, (AI Index: AFR 54/076/2004). The report revealed that rape was widespread and often systematic. Rape has been used by the Janjawid militia and some government soldiers² to humiliate the women, to instil fear and control them, to force them to leave their homes and thus destroy the social fabric of their communities.

¹ AI interviewed hundreds Sudanese refugees in Chad in November 2003 and May 2004 and has direct contact with sources inside Sudan.

² AI has received only one case of rape committed against women from communities thought to support the Janjawid militia by members of armed opposition groups: the attack reportedly took place in Kuala village in South Darfur.

The horror of sexual violence

In many cases the women have been raped in public, in front of their husbands, relatives or the wider community. Pregnant women have not been spared. Those who have resisted rapes were reportedly beaten, stabbed or killed. In other cases, women were tortured for information on the whereabouts of their husbands and male relatives: their faces were pressed between wooden sticks or their nails were pulled out. Their legs and arms were purposefully broken to prevent them from escaping. Girls as young as eight years old have been abducted and held in sexual slavery, some for many months.

The long-term consequences

In addition to the immediate and very serious physical and mental health effects of the act of rape, there are longer-term consequences for rape survivors in Darfur. Given the shame and stigma associated with rape, women are often reluctant to report it to any medical workers, which can lead to further complications of their injuries. At present in Darfur there are not enough trained medical workers to identify and treat survivors of rape. There are also not enough medical facilities to treat any sexually transmitted diseases that can be spread through rape. The consequences of this lack of medical support for rape survivors is severe.

Sexual violence can have serious and lasting consequences. Women whose reproductive systems have been damaged by rape may be rejected by their husbands for not fulfilling their role as 'reproducers'. Survivors of rape and their children are most likely to be ostracised by their community. A child born as a result of rape may be considered a child of the 'enemy', a

'Janjawid child' and women can feel forced to abandon the child born.

The stigma attached to survivors of rape has far-reaching social and economic consequences. Married women may be 'disowned' by their husbands. Unmarried women may never be able to marry because their communities consider them 'spoiled'. Raped women who are not able to marry or who have been abandoned by their husband are socially and economically more vulnerable in Sudan: they cannot enjoy the 'protection' or economic support that men are traditionally expected to provide.

Some refugees in Chad told Amnesty International that the bride price³ has greatly decreased in the camps. Some parents fear that it will be impossible to protect their unmarried daughters from sexual assault and thus seek to 'marry off' their daughters even earlier than is custom so to save family honour. Girls are increasingly being married to anyone who can pay a bride price, which can put the child brides at risk of abusive spouses.

The Government of Sudan's response

On 17 July 2004, the Sudanese Justice Minister Ali Mohamad Osman Yasin announced that three committees, for each of Darfur's three states and comprised of women judges, police officers and legal consultants, would investigate accusations of rape and help victims through criminal cases.⁴ Amnesty International is concerned that in the past, Sudanese who have come forward to report abuses were punished, whilst no action was taken against the perpetrators.

At the launch of Amnesty International's report in Beirut on 19 July 2004 Mohammed Bakhit, the Sudanese Ambassador to Lebanon denied the existence of rape in Darfur: "If there were cases of rape in Darfur they would not exceed two cases," he stated.

³ Paid by a man and/or his family to the family of the woman he wishes to marry.

⁴ Al had given the Government of Sudan an advance copy of its report, *Sudan, Darfur: Rape as a Weapon of War*, AI Index: AFR 54/076/2004, 19 July 2004

However, Amnesty International continues to receive new reports of abductions and sexual assault in Darfur: on 27 July, the UN reported that dozens of women and girls under 15 years of age had been raped by Janjawid militia in and around Sisi camp for internally displaced persons in West Darfur. On 1 August seven girls were reportedly attacked when venturing outside Swani camp, also in West Darfur, to collect firewood. All but one later escaped: the whereabouts of the abducted, newly married, 20 year old woman remain unknown.

The international community's response

Individual states and regional institutions such as the African Union, the League of Arab States and the European Union, have all denounced the human rights violations in Darfur. Humanitarian relief is now reaching more people in need in Darfur and the refugee camps in Chad. Necessary political, financial and technical assistance to the African Union ceasefire observer mission in Darfur has increased and eight UN human rights monitors are being deployed to the region. However civilians in Darfur continue to be attacked, intimidated and arrested.

UN Security Council Resolution 1556 of 30 July 2004⁵ has demonstrated increased world attention to the plight of civilians in Darfur, however measures to address the appalling human rights situation remain sidelined. The resolution fails, *inter alia*, to create an international Commission of Inquiry to examine evidence of war crimes and crimes against humanity including rape and other forms of sexual abuse, as well as to investigate allegations of genocide.

The Sudanese Government must act now, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, to protect women and girls in Darfur from rape and other forms of sexual violence. Rape survivors must be given immediate and adequate care and their attackers brought to justice!

⁵ www.un.org/Docs/sc/unsc_resolutions04.html

**PLEASE WRITE TO THE SUDAN
GOVERNMENT CALLING FOR:**

- The *Janjawid* militia to be disarmed, disbanded and placed in a position where they can no longer attack the civilian population.
- Unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas and groups in Darfur.
- No member or former member of the *Janjawid* militia to be included among the police, military, camp security or humanitarian personnel in camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur.
- The immediate suspension, pending investigation, of any member of the Sudanese armed forces suspected of having committed or ordered human rights violations, including rape.
- Guarantees of safety and protection for victims and witnesses of rape and other forms of sexual violence.
- Those who have raped to be immediately brought to justice in fair trials, without the possibility of the death penalty or inhuman punishments such as amputations.

SEND YOUR APPEALS TO:⁶

Lieutenant-General Omar Hassan Ahmad
al-Bashir
**President and Commander-in-Chief of
Armed Forces**
President's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: + 249183 779977
Salutation: Your Excellency

Major-General Abdel Rahim Mohamed
Hussein
**Minister of Internal Affairs and
Presidential Representative for Darfur**
Ministry of Interior
PO Box 281
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax : +249 183 773046
Salutation: Dear Minister
Mr Mustafa Osman Ismail

Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
PO Box 873
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: + 249 11 779383 or +249 183 777268
Salutation: Dear Minister

Mr Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin
Minister of Justice
Ministry of Justice
PO Box 302
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: + 249 183 771479

Dr Yasir Sid Ahmed
Advisory Council for Human Rights
PO Box 302
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: + 249 11 770883
Salutation: Dear Sir

Mr Osman Mohamed Yousif Kubor
Governor of Northern Darfur State
c/o People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: +249 183 776432/ 771651/ 783223
Salutation: Dear Sir

Engineer Al-Hajj Atta al-Manan
Governor of Southern Darfur State
c/o People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: +249 183 776432/ 771651/ 783223
Salutation: Dear Sir

Major-General Suleiman Abdallah Adam
Governor of Western Darfur State
c/o People's Palace
PO Box 281
Khartoum, SUDAN
Fax: +249 183 776432/ 771651/ 783223
Salutation: Dear Sir

► Please raise Amnesty International's
concerns with your own Government
also – see next page ◀

⁶ If you are unable to send your letters by fax, please send your letters by post. You may also wish to send a copy of your appeal(s) to the Sudanese Embassy in your own country.

**PLEASE WRITE TO YOUR MINISTER OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND / OR
INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
STATING THAT:**

- Humanitarian personnel in Darfur and Chad must not include any member or former member of the *Janjawid* militia.
- Healthcare workers must be deployed in sufficient numbers and include female staff and be trained to identify and care for rape survivors.
- Medical treatment including psychological support, reproductive health services and treatment against sexually transmitted infections should be made immediately available, in particular to victims of rape and other forms of sexual violence and torture, in all camps for displaced persons and to those living outside camps in Darfur such as in urban areas.
- Humanitarian personnel must work with community and camp leaders to ensure that women who have been raped will be accepted back into the families and communities.
- Support to the African Union ceasefire observers must be increased to ensure they are fully deployed, supported and have access to all areas and groups in Darfur. AU monitors must receive adequate human rights training including on sexual violence.
- The UN human rights monitoring mission is fully deployed with a clear mandate and an adequate number of monitors to investigate ongoing human rights violations, including gender-based violence. Findings and recommendations must be made public.

"I was very impressed with my meeting with the women [from Darfur] ... They are very coherent and they are strong, they are real leaders."

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, on the highlights of his trip to Darfur and the refugee camps in Chad, 7 July 2004.

For more information on caring for survivors of rape, see:

Guidelines for medico-legal care for victims of sexual violence

World Health Organisation, 2003
<http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2004/924154628X.pdf>

For more information on the human rights situation in Darfur, go to:

The Amnesty International website at
<http://web.amnesty.org/pages/sdn-index-eng>

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