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التحالف العربي من أجل دارفور
The Arab Coalition for Darfur

fidh

International Federation for Human Rights



International
Refugee
Rights
Initiative

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30 November 2011

Dear Madam Chairperson,

Re: Human rights and humanitarian situation in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Sudan

The undersigned African and international non-governmental organisations would like to update the Commission on the conflicts in the Sudanese border states of Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile and their impact on civilians, including refugees who have fled to South Sudan. **We believe it is now more critical than ever that the Commission demand that all parties to the conflict agree to a ceasefire and allow unimpeded humanitarian access to the two areas. It is also imperative that the Commission urgently authorise a fact finding mission** to Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States to assess the human rights situation, and ensure that its findings are reported to the concerned regional institutions without delay.

Following the Joint NGO Statement on Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States (24 October) and the Commission's adoption of a Resolution on the General Human Rights Situation in Africa (Res. 207 (L) 2011) at the conclusion of its 50th session in early November, **there has been a serious escalation in the conflict in the two areas that has caused new displacements and an increase in refugee flows to neighbouring states.** The most recent figures from the United Nations (OCHA Weekly Humanitarian Bulletin 11-17 November) indicate that:

- An estimated 200,000 people in Southern Kordofan have been severely affected or displaced by the conflict that is ongoing since 5 June
- Over 20,000 refugees from Southern Kordofan are now in the Yida area in Unity State, South Sudan, close to the border with Sudan
- Since September when the conflict spread to Blue Nile State, over 35,000 people have taken refuge in Ethiopia, and a further 7,000 have crossed the border into Upper Nile State in South Sudan. An estimated 1,200 people are fleeing to Upper Nile state each day from Blue Nile state
- An estimated 60,000 people remain internally displaced in Blue Nile state as a result of the conflict.

We are especially concerned by the recent spread of the conflict into South Sudan, and the impact this is having on both the civilian population in the border areas and refugees who have fled the conflicts to South Sudan. On 15 November in a briefing to the UN Security Council, the Head of the UN's

Department of Peacekeeping, Mr Herve Ladsous, confirmed that:

- On 8 November at least 4 bombs were dropped in Quffa in Maban county, Upper Nile State, South Sudan; and
- On 10 November four bombs were dropped on Yida refugee camp, Unity State, South Sudan, which was sheltering over 20,000 refugees who had fled the conflict in Southern Kordofan. Eyewitnesses reported the bombs were dropped by an Antonov aircraft coming from Sudan.

The UN Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-moon has condemned the Sudanese Government's bombing of Yida camp, and called on both governments to exercise restraint in managing border tensions and to recommit to a negotiated settlement.

The escalation of rhetoric between the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan, particularly in regard to allegations of cross border support of rebel groups and incursions into one another's territory, has heightened concerns that the two states could revert to war.

In response to these developments, the Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Jean Ping, issued a media release (attached) expressing 'deep concern at the tension at the border' between Sudan and South Sudan, and indicating that this is a matter that the AU is now seized of. He urged 'both Governments to exercise utmost restraint and to refrain from any act that may further aggravate the already tense situation on their common border.' He also reiterated the AU's resolve 'to assist the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan to address the various challenges they face'.

It is now critical that the Commission take swift action to address these developments. We respectfully urge the Commission to take up the recommendations in the resolution on the situation in Southern Kordofan and the Blue Nile States that was adopted by the NGO Forum that preceded the 50th session of the Commission. The resolution (attached) called on the Commission to inter alia:

- Demand that the parties to the conflict observe a cessation of hostilities arrangement, with immediate effect, end all military activities and attacks against civilians in Southern Kordofan State and the Blue Nile State and put a halt to the grave violations of human and peoples' rights in particular the forced displacement of civilians;
- Demand that Sudan allows international relief organisations and independent reporters immediate and unconditional access to Southern Kordofan State and the Blue Nile State in order to provide the necessary humanitarian assistance to the needy civilians in these regions; and

- Send, as immediately as possible, a fact finding mission to the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan State and to the Blue Nile State and to report its findings without delay to the concerned regional institutions.

Your consideration of these recommendations is greatly appreciated and would contribute towards preventing further atrocities on the continent. We look forward to the Commission's response.

Yours sincerely

1. African Centre for Peace and Justice Studies
2. Arab Coalition for Darfur (representing 102 Arab organizations)
3. Arab Program for Human Rights Activists
4. Darfur Relief and Documentation Centre
5. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
6. Kamma Organisation for Development Initiatives (KODI), Sudan
7. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
8. International Refugee Rights Initiative
9. Nuba Relief, Rehabilitation and Development Organisation (NRRDO), Sudan
10. Refugees International

Attachments:

- a. African Union press release (15 November) – *The African Union expresses deep concern at the tension at the borders between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan*
- b. Resolution on the human and people's rights situation in Southern Kordofan State and Blue Nile State, Republic of Sudan (from NGO Forum preceding 50th session of ACHRP, 21 October)
- c. Joint NGO Statement on Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States to 50th session of ACHPR, 24 October 2011.

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