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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE THE COUNCIL'S ATTENTION

Written statement* submitted by Japanese Workers' Committee for Human Rights (JWCHR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 February 2008]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

**Human Rights Situation in Sudan -
Oil and Environment, Other Armed Groups and Armed Clashes in Darfur**

Sign of Hope wishes to draw the attention of the United Nations Human Rights Council to human rights abuses in Sudan related to the oil exploration and exploitation in Unity State, to the continued presence of other armed groups in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal and to recent Janjaweed attacks in Southern Darfur.

Oil-related violations of human rights

During its stay in the oilfields of southern Sudan, the Sign of Hope team assessed the situation of human rights in the oilfields of Thar Jath (Unity State) from February 12 to February 14, 2008. The team talked to several people on the grassroots level about the impact of toxic waste on the human and livestock health situation on the local communities as well as the environment. In Rier, a village close to the newly erected refinery of Thar Jath, a young girl was complaining about the bitter taste of water there. “We do not even wash our clothes with this water, as the colours fade away and the fabrics are being destroyed,” she said on February 13, 2008. The Commissioner of Koch, Peter Bol Ruot confirmed on February 13, 2008 that in the year 2006 a total number of 27 adults and three children died as a result of the consumption of contaminated water. Ruot said at the moment there are up to 1,000 people have fallen sick for the same reason. The Sign of Hope panel took eight samples to investigate possible contamination of water in the vicinity of the refinery. The results of a scientific analysis will be released by the end of February.

According to residents of the village of Rier, they were forced by representatives of the Khartoum government - who were said to be in control of the area up to early 2008 - to leave their original village in 2005 to create room for oil companies to build their facilities. The residents were evicted from their villages after short notice and were settled on nearby land. This new settlement is also called Rier, the same name as the old Rier, which has been occupied by an oil firm. Up to now, the population of Rier has not been compensated.

Continued presence of militias in South Sudan violates CPA

Even though the greater Raga area is part of South Sudan, there are still pro-Khartoum militias present. This is a clear violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the government and the ex-southern rebels of the Sudan People´s Liberation Army. In Raga, the key trading post in the area, the Sign of Hope panel visited military bases of the pro-Khartoum “Fursan” militia on February 11, 2008. According to their commanders, the militia has some 1,623 fighters of which 500 up to 600 are based in Raga township.

The commanders, Amir Sahid Mohammed Rea and Amir Ibrahim Adam Ishak, conceded that they still receive remuneration from Khartoum. This marks a serious breach of the CPA. The CPA states that upon signature of the agreement, the process of

incorporation of individual members of all "Other Armed Groups" into the ranks of either SAF or SPLA shall start as soon as possible. The incorporation process should be completed within twelve months from January 2005. Under the provisions of the CPA this group had to be redeployed to the North at latest by July 9, 2007. Regarding the Fursan militia in Raga, this has not been done.

The township´s residents consider their continued presence as a cause of insecurity and as a threat to the stability in the region.

Recent Janjaweed attacks in Southern Darfur

The International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur stated in its report to the United Nations Secretary General, dated January 25, 2005, that Janjaweed is an Arab militia acting under the authority, with the support, complicity or tolerance of the Sudanese State authorities, and who benefit from impunity for their actions.

Sign of Hope found credible evidence for continued Janjaweed activities in Southern Darfur. A Sign of Hope human rights assessment team stayed in the area of Raga (Western Bahr-el-Ghazal) from February 8 to February 12, 2008. During their stay in Boro Medina (also called Sa'id Bundas), which is located 100 km to the west of Raga, the team conducted interviews on the grassroots level with persons affected by activities of Janjaweed militia. Sign of Hope found reliable evidence for very recent attacks of Janjaweed fighters in the area of Buram (Southern Darfur).

According to eye witnesses in an IDP camp in Boro Medina, people from Darfur have been attacked by Arab militias as recently as January. A 22-year-old mother of three children from Maalaka near Rudom in Southern Darfur referred to a Janjaweed attack which occurred on January 18, 2008: "They came at three o'clock in the morning. I heard them shooting. Then I fixed one child on my back, my second child on my chest and my third child I took by the hand and ran away. After three hours of walking I stopped in order to eat. The Janjaweed took away all of my 15 cows," she said to the Sign of Hope panel on February 10, 2008 in Boro Medina. She had spent four days on her way to Boro Medina.

The team also talked to a 25-year old-mother of four children, who experienced a ground attack which was carried out by soldiers of the Sudanese Armed Forces. The attack occurred on January 7, 2008 in the village of Jokan near Buram in Southern Darfur. "They came in the late evening hours. They came on foot and on cars. They killed most of the village with their guns and especially targeted the Zaghawa people," she told the Sign of Hope team on February 10, 2008 in Boro Medina. The Zaghawa are a black African tribe.

The camp in Boro Medina is inhabited by more than 2,000 Darfurian IDPs.

Recommendations

The Council should call upon the Khartoum government to ensure that the oil companies operating in Sudan fully and unconditionally protect the environment – notably surface and ground water from contamination by toxic chemicals. The oil companies must conduct petroleum operations in accordance with International good oil field practice in

terms of health, safety and environmental standards. Drilling water must not be discharged in to rivers, swamps and on the ground and should be siphoned in appropriate storage tanks.

In addition the Council should urge the Government of Sudan to compensate those who have been displaced from their village to clear the way for oil exploitation.

The Council should ask the Government of Sudan to fully implement the security related provisions of the CPA. To this end the Council should urge the Government of Sudan to pull the Fursan fighters out of Raga.

In that sense, the Council should call upon the Government of Sudan to fully implement this provision of the CPA as this step would clearly contribute to a stabilization of the security situation in the area.

Furthermore the Council should urge all parties to the conflict in Darfur to issue and enforce clear orders to the armed forces and any militias under that it is prohibited to make civilians or civilian objects (including cultivated land and livestock) the target of attacks or to launch indiscriminate attacks (including burning of villages and aerial bombardments) as such attacks can amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The Council should call upon the Government of Sudan to take immediate steps to signal publicly that it is moving towards peace. Steps should include the public condemnation of human rights abuses, an end to supporting and directing the Janjaweed, and a willingness to hold officials accountable for their actions. All parties to the conflict in Darfur must stop the violence and take immediate steps to indicate that they are moving toward peace.

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