



human rights *first*

THE NEW NAME OF

LAWYERS COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

November 17, 2004

Your Excellency,

As you meet this week in Nairobi in a special session of the United Nations Security Council, we urge you to take immediate action to address the continuing crisis in western Sudan's Darfur region. Further steps are urgently needed to bring security to the civilian population of Darfur and end the ongoing violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. Specifically, it is essential that a comprehensive international assistance plan be concluded for aiding the African Union with the rapid and full deployment of its mission in Darfur.

As you are aware, the African Union's Peace and Security Council (PSC) decided on October 20 to enlarge the African Union Mission in the Sudan (AMIS) and to strengthen its mandate to include the duty to protect civilians under imminent threat. The next day, Secretary-General Kofi Annan made a public appeal for the African Union to deploy its force speedily and for United Nations member states to provide urgently the logistical support needed. Yet, in the following three weeks, only 287 African Union troops have been deployed. Together with the observers and military personnel deployed earlier this year, the AMIS currently consists of fewer than 700 personnel – far short of the 3,320 member force mandated by the PSC. Moreover, at the current rate, the AMIS will not be fully deployed for several months.

Such delay is unacceptable. Indeed, there is in this delay the painful echo of the historic failure of the international community to provide urgently needed logistical support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda at a time when its rapid deployment could have saved numerous lives. We therefore urge you to act immediately to avoid repetition of those tragic mistakes in the case of Darfur and to ensure the AMIS is fully deployed by the end of this year. Such a commitment will require immediate action not only from African Union states, but also from other individual states. The United States and other countries with the greatest capacities to provide the logistical support that the AMIS will need must take the lead if the AMIS is to fulfill its urgent mission.

Furthermore, while Human Rights First welcomes the PSC's decision to enlarge the AMIS, we believe that an even larger force is needed to bring security to civilians in Darfur. Consequently, the Security Council should encourage the African Union to expand the AMIS beyond its current size. The Security Council should also endorse the strengthened mandate of the AMIS, in particular its duty to protect civilians.

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Recent events in Darfur have only served to highlight the need for rapid deployment of the AMIS. Over the last several weeks, the Government of Sudan has demonstrated a persistent failure to protect civilians in Darfur, in particular it has failed to halt attacks on civilians by its militia forces. In one recent incident alone, at least 13 women and girls from Kalma, near Nyala in South Darfur, are reported to have been kidnapped by such forces. There also have been reports of rebel attacks on civilians and civilian property. Additionally, the Sudanese police are reported to have conducted violent raids on camps for internally displaced persons in South Darfur and forcibly transferred thousands of camp residents. Such actions violate Security Council resolutions 1556 and 1564, as well as the Joint Communiqué between the Government of Sudan and the United Nations and the Memorandum of Understanding on Darfur between the Government of Sudan and the International Organization for Migration.

While Human Rights First urges you to condemn these additional violations, mere expressions of disapproval are no longer sufficient. It is essential that the currently mandated African Union force be fully deployed in Darfur by the end of this year.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mike Posner".

Michael Posner
Executive Director