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Technical assistance and capacity-building

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, 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.

[22 August 2013]

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

Human rights violations and humanitarian access in Sudan

Nearly 4.5 million people across Sudan remain in need of humanitarian help due to armed conflicts in Darfur, South and North Kordofan, Blue Nile, Abyei and Eastern Sudan. But despite the humanitarian crisis, access for national and international aid agencies has been denied by the authorities in many conflict regions and work permits for international staff deliberately have been delayed by Sudanese authorities. Due to official procedures non-governmental aid agencies and international organizations such as the UNHCR have been forced to scale down their relief operations.

We are especially concerned about the lack of humanitarian access in SPLM-North controlled areas in South Kordofan. As a result of the restrictions on access to South Kordofan, most of the international humanitarian response has focused on refugees in South Sudan and Ethiopia. Despite a “Tripartite” proposal of African Union, United Nations and Arab League for free and unimpeded access for relief organizations, submitted to Sudan in February 2012, until today no agreement has been concluded to ensure free access to all conflict victims in South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

We deplore that the Security Council and the international community have not insisted to force all conflict parties to guarantee free access for aid agencies and a minimum of respect regarding basic principles of international humanitarian law.

Due to the precarious security situation in Darfur’s East Jebel Marra mountains, about 70.000 displaced people have been lacking humanitarian aid since 2012. Intense air bombardments by the Sudanese Air Force have caused fear and many casualties among the civilian population and have endangered humanitarian relief operations. After an indiscriminate bombarding of villages in Jebel Marra in August 2013, more than 17,000 people have fled the massif. The bombings destroy the livelihoods of the civilian population. The air raids decimate the herds that form the backbone of the traditional economy of the region.

Ten years after the conflict in Darfur has started, for the 1.7 million refugees in Darfur life has become a living hell due to the air raids, rapes, lacking supplies for the refugees, the expulsion of foreign aid workers, the suspension of patrols by UNAMID peacekeepers and the inter-ethnic struggles. The UNAMID has failed in the protection of the civilian population due to a lack of international political and technical support and a deliberate Sudanese policy to effectively block most activities of the peacekeeping forces.

Despite peace claims by the Government of Sudan, there is no security in Darfur. Heavy clashes between Arabic or Arabized population groups have been contributing to insecure the region. More than 300 members of the Arab population groups of the Rizeigat and the Maalia were killed in the first days of August 2013 alone. The two population groups – who live in eastern Darfur as nomads – are fighting over stretches of land and over cattle. As Janjaweed-fighters, they were also involved in the genocide against at least 400,000 black African Darfuris since 2003. Today, they are fighting over the distribution of their war loot and accusing each other of "ethnic cleansing" in the conflicts over land and livestock. Darfur's ethnic militias – who were armed by the Sudanese army to take part in the genocide – are now trying to establish a state within a state, which is getting harder to control.

Despite the lack of security Sudanese authorities deliberately have been closing down refugee camps and limiting international relief efforts for displaced persons. In many camps, there is a lack of tents, food, water and medicine – because more and more refugees are seeking shelter there. Since January 2013, more than 350,000 Darfuris tried to escape the escalating violence by fleeing to western Sudan, while 50,000 sought safety in neighboring Chad. Furthermore, Sudanese authorities have been launching a crackdown on civil society organizations in December 2012. Khartoum has shut down four rights groups and revoked the registration of another. The NGOs were cultural groups, promoting diversity and democracy.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the Government of Sudan:

- To immediately stop indiscriminate bombing of the civilian population,
- To ensure free and unimpeded access for all aid agencies to civilians in South Kordofan, Blue Nile and other conflict areas,

- To stop closing down refugee camps in Darfur,
- To end the crackdown on civil society organizations.

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