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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

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.

[13 August 2020]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

Escalation of violence in Sudan's West

New massive human rights violations in Darfur have led to new displacements, ethnic tensions and more humanitarian needs. The prime victims of these violations are women and children who survived the genocide starting in the year 2003 and sought for protection as Internal Displaced People (IDP) or as refugees in neighboring countries. When they decided to go back to their destroyed villages in the year 2020 and to rebuild their life in peace, they were attacked by armed Arab nomads who took over their land during the genocide. It's a disaster for these deeply traumatized survivors of massive human rights violations, but also for reconstruction and peace in Western Sudan.

These civilians mainly were under the protection of the joint United Nations – African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), which was established in 2007. Its mandate is among others to protect civilians, coordinate humanitarian aid and to support the peace process and reconciliation in Darfur. Due to massive pressure from Sudan Government and against the will of legitimized IDP representatives, the Security Council has decided to end UNAMID. But in respect to Covid-19 the deadline for UNAMID's closure was extended to the end of December 2020. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) will take over starting from January 2021.

UNITAMS will have no mandate to protect the civilian population. With violations of human rights and insecurity increasing, it will not be a moment to end the urgently needed protection of civilians in Darfur. Several times, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres publicly has stated in debates in the UN General Assembly that the UN should not abandon the responsibility to protect of the civilian population in crisis areas. Global leaders unanimously endorsed the responsibility to protect at the 2005 World Summit. After the brutal killing of more than 400.000 people in Darfur and the displacement of 2.4 million women, men and children, the security and human rights situation in Darfur are dire. The UN Security Council should consider to further postpone the establishment of UNITAMS in order to ensure the protection of the civilian population, especially the IDP. These people fully are dependent of international humanitarian relief and access of relief workers to the IDP.

Increasing attacks by Arab militia groups have endangered security in the five Federal States that Sudanese authorities have established in Darfur region: In West Darfur more than people of the Masalit ethnic group were killed and another 60 persons were wounded, then some 500 armed Arab militia fighters attacked Masteri town July 25, 2020. They looted and burned houses, shops and parts of the local market. Some 2,500 have fled the violence to neighboring Chad, where 365.000 refugees from Darfur still are waiting to return to their home region.

In North Darfur nine people were killed and 20 persons injured, when armed militia people attacked the Fata Borno IDP camp on July 13, 2020. They destroyed more than 1,500 houses, leaving thousands once again displaced and in dire need of humanitarian assistance and security. Other violent incidents occurred in the town of Kutum on July 12, 2020. The authorities declared a state of emergency in North Darfur due to the violence. In the same week, there were several incidents and attacks by armed fighters in a dozen of Masalit villages in the area.

In Central Darfur several farmers were attacked or abducted by armed herdsmen in August 2020.

In Eastern Darfur the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have intimidated, beaten and tortured inhabitants of the nearby village Abu Karinka close to their garrison until the population staged a public protest against the human rights violations by the militiamen. The RSF militia officially was integrated in the Sudan Armed Forces in August 2019, its commander General Mohammed Hamdan Dagol (alias Hemeti) became Deputy President of Sudan's Sovereign Council. RSF is responsible for some 100 brutal attacks against civilians, farmers, IDP and towns in North Darfur and the Jebel Marra Mountains since 2016.

In South Darfur armed militiamen killed some 20 displaced farmers, including children, who visited their abandoned farms for the first times since years, and wounded some 20 others, in Aboudos on July 24, 2020. Some 3,000 people were displaced by bloody attacks on villages southwest of Kass on August 2, 2020. People of the Fallata ethnic group protested against the arbitrary detention of 35 villagers of Kass. They were arrested by RSF militiamen.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Security Council to extend the deadline of the closure of UNAMID due to insecurity and massive human rights violations in Darfur. The United Nations must ensure the protection of the civilian population.

Furthermore, the Council should urge the Government of Sudan:

- to ensure the respect of basic human rights and the security of the civilian population in Darfur,
- to end impunity in Darfur,
- to guarantee the safety of returning refugees or IDP in order to ensure reconstruction and reconciliation in Darfur,

- to support local peace agreements between settlers and herdsmen.