

UN Department of Public Information
24 Mar 2009

The joint assessment mission to gauge the impact of the Sudans expulsion of non-governmental organizations on the countrys humanitarian situation was a first positive step to address the situation in Darfur, John Holmes, the top United Nations humanitarian official, said today, while cautioning that key tests still lay ahead.

Speaking at a Headquarters press conference, Mr. Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said the conclusions of the joint United Nations-Government of the Sudan assessment mission had been released in Khartoum. They focused on food, health, nutrition, shelter, water and sanitation, and showed the impact on the humanitarian situation in the three States of the Darfur region unless critical gaps were filled immediately or the Government reversed its decision to expel the non-governmental organizations.

Urging a reversal of the decision to expel 13 international non-governmental organizations and revoke the licences of three national ones, he said the joint assessment showed that efforts by the Government, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations to plug the gaps were and-aid solutions. The World Food Programme (WFP) was carrying out a uick and dirty food distribution programme that could last for two months; pumps for water required fuel and maintenance; sanitation sludge tanks needed to be cleaned out in order to prevent health problems; and non-food items like shelter needed to be distributed to some 700,000 people. Moreover, the upcoming rainy season could exacerbate existing problems. ()

Asked about the statement by the Permanent Representative of the Sudan to the United Nations that there were no gaps in delivering humanitarian aid as non-governmental organizations from the region would step in, Mr. Homes said there was no instant crisis. While the capacities offered by the non-governmental organizations in question could not be replaced quickly, local and regional groups could fill the gaps if financed in a sustainable manner, but that could not simply happen overnight. ()

Responding to a question as to whether the current situation was not a clear example of the **responsibility to protect**

and if no lessons of Rwanda had been drawn, Mr. Holmes warned against comparing the situation in the Sudan with the Rwanda genocide, adding that he did not himself use the word genocide. The issue of

responsibility to protect

was a preventive that was being addressed by the General Assembly. The reality was that humanitarian aid could not be provided if the Government did not cooperate. ()

Asked to clarify olitical access, he said it was a question of whether Government workers could gain access to camps. The Kalma camp, for instance, contained some 100,000 people with a hostile attitude towards the Sudanese Government. It was a question of whether the safety of Government workers there could be guaranteed. ()

Source: <http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/MYAI-7QG4JQ?OpenDocument>