

The Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and the Sudanese government were reported to have struck an agreement on Monday that paves the way for Darfur peace talks.

Amnesty International hopes the reported agreement marks a turning point in the human rights situation in Darfur. However, the organisation has demanded action, rather than words, to end six years of suffering for millions of Darfuris.

The military strategy employed by all sides to the conflict in Darfur has left more than 300,000 people dead and more than 2.2 million displaced. Amnesty International has repeatedly urged all warring parties to stop targeting civilians.

The deployment of peacekeeping troops by the UN more than one year ago has failed to improve the security of people in Darfur

In a new report, Amnesty International has exposed the continuing crisis facing the people of Darfur and called for the joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force (UNAMID) to be provided with troops and essential resources, such as helicopters, that will enable it to fulfil its mandate.

Despite the signing of the agreement the international community needs to redouble its efforts to protect the people of Darfur.

Promises made to the people of Darfur that they would be protected through the deployment of a peacekeeping force ring hollow; UNAMID remains chronically under-resourced and attacks against civilians, including killings, continue, said Tawanda Hondora, Amnesty International's Africa Deputy Programme Director.

Women are still exposed to rape and other acts of sexual violence. A climate of insecurity prevails and perpetrators act with impunity.

The recent fighting in Muhajeriya is the latest in a series of clashes between government of Sudan forces and armed opposition groups, which led to the displacement of thousands of civilians and left scores dead. (...)

Words alone are not enough. It is of no use to deplore violence in Darfur and deploy a force that is under-equipped, said Tawanda Hondora. UNAMID must be enabled to protect itself as well as the people of Darfur. It is simply unacceptable that more than a year after the deployment of UNAMID, civilians still live in peril.

Amnesty International has called on countries that pledged troops and other essential personnel to UNAMID to ensure that they are adequately trained and promptly deployed to Darfur. It has also called on the wider international community, and particularly the country members of the Friends of UNAMID group, China, South Africa and Egypt, to use their influence and ensure that UNAMID is immediately provided with the military equipment it urgently requires.

The USA, China, Russia, Japan, Australia, Egypt, South Africa and European Union countries,

among others, have been urged to pledge and deliver helicopters and other essential military equipment to UNAMID.

Full Report: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/international-community-fails-protect-darfur-20090217>