

The following joint statement was issued today in Geneva by 15 human rights experts: Emmanuel Akwei Addo, Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan; Philip Alston, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; Doudou Dine, Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance; John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; Yakin Ertrk, Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences; Robert K. Goldman, Independent Expert on the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; Paul Hunt, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; Walter Klin, Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons; Miloon Kothari, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing; Ambeyi Ligabo, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Vernor Muoz Villalobos, Special Rapporteur on the right to education; Diane F. Orentlicher, Independent Expert to update the Set of Principles for the promotion and protection of human rights through action to combat impunity; Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous people; Stephen Toope, Chairperson of the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances, and Jean Ziegler, Special Rapporteur on the right to food.

"We are gravely concerned about the ongoing violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the Darfur region of Sudan, many of which constitute serious crimes under international law, and we call upon the international community to take effective measures to end the violations on a basis of utmost urgency. The conflict in Darfur, which Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called 'little short of hell on earth,' has already taken an untold number of civilian lives and is estimated to have caused the forced internal displacement of 1.8 million persons, as well as forcing more than 200,000 persons to flee across the border to neighbouring Chad. Despite efforts by the international community to commit troops and assistance to the region, the violence continues virtually unabated in a context of wholesale impunity, and the threat of famine is looming.

The violations in Darfur have been staggering in scale and harrowing in nature. Extra-judicial executions, rape and other forms of sexual violence, torture, enforced disappearances, scorching of villages and forced displacement of civilians have taken place in a widespread and systematic manner and continue on a daily basis. Members of civil society who have sought to address the violence in Darfur have suffered arbitrary arrests, detention, torture and ill-treatment at the hands of the security forces, typically after publishing reports of human rights violations in Darfur. If the vow that the international community will 'Never Again' stand idly by while crimes against humanity are being perpetrated is to have any meaning, now is the time for decisive action.

Even with the deployment of African Union troops, in the past nine months the number of displaced has continued to rise and attacks on civilians have persisted. A robust international solution is urgently needed, as the Secretary-General affirmed when he called upon the Security Council on 16 February 2005 'to act urgently to stop further death and suffering in Darfur, and to do justice for those whom we are already too late to save'.

Aware that the issue of how best to stop the violence and bring justice to the citizens of Darfur is now being considered by the Security Council, we strongly endorse the conclusion of the International Commission of Inquiry, appointed pursuant to Security Council resolution 1564, that the crimes committed in Darfur are of utmost gravity and require urgent and effective action to end impunity. We also endorse the statements of support for this conclusion of 16 February 2005 by the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. We urge the Security Council to act immediately to adopt concrete measures to end the violence; provide protection to civilians, assistance to those displaced internally or in refugee camps in Chad; and to ensure accountability for the serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law committed in Darfur.

We strongly endorse the conclusion of the International Commission of Inquiry that the International Criminal Court 'is the single best mechanism to allow justice to be made for the crimes committed in Darfur' and that 'prosecution by the ICC of persons allegedly responsible for the most serious crimes in Darfur would contribute to the restoration of peace in the region.' In view of the Court's potential to deter further violations, we hope that its jurisdiction can be activated without further delay. We recognize that the violations in Darfur entail an obligation not only to ensure punishment of perpetrators, but also to provide reparation, including compensation, for the harm suffered by victims.

Past Security Council resolutions on Darfur have been repeatedly violated without penalty. Strong, concrete and effective measures are urgently needed to bring to a close what is widely acknowledged to be one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world today. It is past time to send a clear message that the international community has forged a unified commitment to bring an end to serious violations of human rights and humanitarian law in Darfur and to the impunity that has enabled them to continue.

**To read the full press release, see [here](#) .**

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