

Open Letter to the African Union to Support the Protection of Civilians in the Darfur Region of Sudan

August 23, 2004

Via Facsimile and E-mail

To: African Union Member States c/o Missions to UN

CC: UN Secretary-General, H.E. Kofi Annan
Security Council Member States
President of the General Assembly, H.E. Julian Robert Hunte

Your Excellencies,

On behalf of the *Responsibility to Protect-Civil Society* Network, we are writing in support of the African Union's efforts to increase the size and mandate of the AU protection force deployed in the Darfur region of Sudan.

The government of Sudan continues to show that it is not able to protect the citizens of Darfur. Since the UN Security Council passed Resolution 1556 on Darfur on July 30, 2004, there has been little evidence of significant improvement.

Last week, UN Special Envoy for Sudan Jan Pronk "expressed concern about the lack of progress so far on the ground and at the fact that the Janjaweed militia still constitute a threat around camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs)." Mr. Pronk called the number of observers on the ground insufficient for effective monitoring, saying that thousands of monitors and forces would be needed. Amnesty International reported ongoing government intimidation. Human Rights Watch reported continued attacks on civilians by government and government-backed militia, including killings and sexual violence against women. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recently reported helicopter-gunship bombings conducted by the government of Sudan and further Janjaweed attacks.

We welcome the AU's efforts at convening peace talks, and we recognize that the government of Sudan has agreed to a Plan of Action setting forth indicators to assess their compliance with Security Council Resolution 1556. However, there are serious concerns about their willingness and capacity to provide security to IDPs and local populations. This is particularly the case if reports are accurate that the Janjaweed have been absorbed into government security forces.

The government of Sudan has rejected an expanded AU mandate or mission, claiming that it alone is responsible for protecting its civilians. This is an untenable position: if Khartoum fails to act, then the rest of the world would have to leave the people of Darfur to die. The African Union has rejected this faulty premise in its Constitutive Act, acknowledging "*the right of the Union to intervene in a*

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Member State pursuant to a decision of the Assembly in respect of grave circumstances, namely: war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.” It is clear that such grave circumstances are occurring in Darfur, and we believe that in this occasion, the African Union must assert its right to act. Indeed, the African Union, and the entire international community owe the people of Darfur protection from mass killings, rape, starvation and access to humanitarian relief from disease.

The Security Council should endorse an expanded AU peace keeping force, and insist that the government of Sudan fully cooperate. All UN Member States should maintain political pressure on Sudan and offer logistical and other support to the AU's efforts.

Sincerely,

William R. Pace
Executive Director
World Federalist Movement-Institute for Global Policy

The *Responsibility to Protect-Civil Society* Network is a group of civil society organizations dedicated to advancing the “responsibility to protect” principles; sharing information on how governments, international organizations and/or regional organizations respond to large scale threats against civilians; and promoting earlier and more effective responses to emerging crises such as ethnic cleansing and genocide. For more information, please visit our website at <http://www.wfm.org/protect/> .