



### Civilians in Darfur Remain Under Attack

This past week saw four major attacks reported in Darfur, with additional state violence throughout the entirety of Sudan. Violence in Darfur alone led to four deaths, five cases of severe injuries, and the rape of two underage girls.

In one particularly gruesome incident, three herders assaulted and raped two girls – aged 15 and 17 – as the girls were tilling their farm in El Fasher locality. The girls were held at gunpoint and raped for three hours. These girls were severely brutalized, and had to be transferred from the Tabit health center to a hospital in El Fasher 30 miles away, where they were last recorded in critical condition.

This attack was not an isolated incident, nor was it unique in its particular brutality. Women and girls are routinely targeted for vicious, hours long rapes successively perpetrated by multiple men. Displaced people who venture outside of the camps are particularly at risk, and there is a growing trend of violence against those who return from the camps to their original homes.

A similar incident was only narrowly prevented by an heroic schoolteacher earlier this week in Mershing locality, South Darfur. Radio Dabanga reports: “Three [gunmen] wanted to rape a number of young women who were working on the farm ... When the women called for help, teacher Mohamed El Zein rushed to save them. The attackers immediately killed him with three shots.” A teacher, trained and dedicated to *educating* children, had his life taken away from him as he protected children from rape by armed militants. This is the Darfur al-Bashir wants the displaced to return to.

The constant danger experienced by farmers in Darfur, especially displaced farmers returning to their land after years in IDP camps, was made clear in the North Darfur locality of Tawilla, where a group of a dozen or so herders attempted to assault farmers at work. Attacks like these are commonplace in Darfur, and becoming increasingly frequent

as the al-Bashir regime pushes its campaign of resettlement, forcing displaced persons into areas which continue to be extremely violent.

The danger of the continued presence of government armed forces in Darfur was made equally clear by an event in Kutum, North Darfur, on Friday of last week. A personal confrontation between Rapid Support Forces militiamen and an individual Army officer led to gunshots, with two children, two women and a man caught in the crossfire. Not only do the people of Darfur need to fear rape, murder, and maiming at the hands of government forces *intentionally* targeting them, they live in an environment where the mere presence of government forces is a constant risk of everyday interactions escalation into violence and death. This is the Darfur al-Bashir was the displaced to return to.

The international community must hold the government of Sudan accountable for the continued violence in Darfur. While, the al-Bashir regime continues to push its rhetoric that peace has come to Darfur and that displaced people are voluntarily returning to their original homes as a result, this is not an accurate reflection of reality. The international community must take special care to monitor conditions on the ground – and international civil society must aid in this mission – and must check the rhetoric of the Sudanese government against these realities.