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Urge Sexual and Gender-based Violence (SGV) Programming and Prevention as Essential Elements of Humanitarian Relief in Darfur and Eastern Chad

November 20, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Room 7226
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We applaud your leadership and commitment to addressing sexual violence in armed conflict. As you continue to monitor the situation in Sudan and work to facilitate effective humanitarian operations for Darfuris displaced in Sudan, Chad and the Central African Republic, we the undersigned organizations urge you to ensure that programming for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGV) is recognized as essential and incorporated into the basic needs objectives for humanitarian operations in the region. We hope that you will make the restoration of SGV programming a priority alongside the “life-saving sectors” of protection and food security, and we believe that with U.S. assistance programming can be immediately restored to pre-expulsion levels.

Many of the 13 international aid agencies expelled from Darfur in March 2009 worked to provide comprehensive humanitarian services, including support for women and girls who have experienced sexual violence. Such attacks have been documented during the initial Government of Sudan/Janjaweed campaign in Darfur in 2003-2005, and both within and outside UNHCR Internally Displaced Person (IDP) camps since their establishment in 2004. These agencies were involved in painstaking negotiations with the Government of Sudan in order to provide SGV services, and since their expulsion SGV services have been eliminated in Darfur. The Government of Sudan controls the authorization of humanitarian operations under their domestic jurisdiction and had relentlessly obstructed the negotiation of technical agreements with these agencies in order to stymie SGV programming. The al-Bashir government continues to maintain that mass sexual violence has not occurred in the Darfur region and obstructs SGV programming in order to avoid even indirect recognition of these atrocities.

We request that you prioritize the restoration of SGV programs that were severed in March 2009 due to the expulsion of international aid agencies. These services include emergency assistance for injuries, documentation of injuries sustained during these brutal attacks, access to HIV/AIDS prophylactic treatment, pregnancy testing, and psychological and social support. Furthermore, we ask that you work to achieve the following goals:

- Humanitarian organizations must be supported by the U.S. as they renegotiate technical agreements with the Government of Sudan to incorporate SGV programs into their operations in Sudan.
- Government obstruction of SGV services must be monitored in Khartoum and on the ground: SGV services must be restored and made available to all IDP populations, including West and South Darfur where humanitarian operations function at a lower level than in North Darfur state.
- Coordination between aid agencies, camp residents and UNAMID gender desk officers is essential. The recruitment of gender desk officers must involve camp residents, and the work of gender experts should fully utilize the expertise and resources of aid agencies as well as camp residents, to ensure the establishment of culturally competent services.

As you know, the U.S. is the primary donor to the humanitarian operations in Darfur, and the recent engagement of the al-Bashir government by the Obama administration now presents the opportunity to ensure that SGV services are provided to survivors in Darfur, and across the Sudan-Chad border in Eastern Chad. We need urgent action to protect the rights of victims and to ensure the Government of Sudan is no longer able to obstruct the delivery of these essential services.

Sincerely,

African Centre for European and Peace Studies
 American Friends of the Episcopal Church of Sudan
 American Friends Service Committee
 American Islamic Congress
 American Jewish Committee
 American Jewish World Service
 Americans Against the Darfur Genocide
 Amnesty International USA
 Arab Coalition for Darfur
 Arizona Lost Boys Center
 Blue Nile
 Champion Darfur
 Damanga
 Darfur and Beyond
 Darfur Reconciliation & Development Organization
 Darfur Rehabilitation
 Darfur Urgent Action Coalition of Georgia
 Dear Sudan, Love Marin
 Defend Darfur Dallas
 Enough Project
 Equatoria Counsel of Elders
 ESCA-USA
 Freedom Bells
 Genocide Intervention Network
 Hearts of Angel for Health
 Help the Needy People of Sudan
 Human Rights Watch
 Idaho Darfur Coalition
 International Refugee Rights Initiative
 Investors Against Genocide
 Kentuckiana Interfaith Taskforce on Darfur
 Keokuk for Darfur

Lost Boys and Girls of Sudan: The National Network
 Lost Boys Face Foundation
 Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur
 My Sister's Keeper
 North Jersey Coalition for Darfur
 Nuba Growth Partnership
 Nuba Mountains International Association
 Nubia Project
 Orange County for Darfur
 Physicians for Human Rights
 Refugees International
 San Antonio Interfaith Darfur Coalition
 San Francisco Bay Area Darfur Coalition
 Save Darfur Coalition
 Save Darfur of Redding, CA
 Save Darfur Washington State
 Save Darfur: Central PA
 Shine a Ray of Hope for Darfur
 South Sudan Community
 South Sudan Women's Empowerment Network
 Southern Sudan Healthcare Organization
 SPLM
 STAND at Stanford University
 STAND at UC Berkeley
 STAND at UC Davis
 STAND UCLA
 Stop Genocide Now
 Sudan For All
 Sudan Unlimited
 Sudanese Development
 Texans Against Genocide
 Ubuntu
 United Sudanese Youth
 Voices for Sudan

cc: Major General J. Scott Gration (Retired), Special Envoy to Sudan