

# Both Sides of Conflict in Darfur Dispute Findings in U.N. Report

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DAKAR, Senegal, Feb. 1 - The leader of the main rebel group fighting the Sudanese government in Darfur criticized the United Nations on Tuesday over a report that found that while the violence in the region included atrocities and crimes against humanity, it did not constitute genocide.

"When you have thousands and thousands dead, villages burned, women and children raped by the government and its janjaweed, how can you not call it genocide," Abdelwahid Mohamed Ahmed al-Nur, chairman of the Sudanese Liberation Movement, said in a telephone interview from Eritrea, where the group's leadership is based. "I don't know what the international community means by genocide, by ethnic cleansing, if not what our people have suffered."

Criticism also came from the other side of the conflict, with Sudanese government officials saying that the report was "emotional" and that there was "no evidence" to back up its claims. The government, which knew of the report before its public release on Monday, had earlier been saying that the investigation did not find evidence of genocide. But its stance shifted once the full details became public.

The details included extensive passages describing rape, attacks on civilians and other atrocities that the United Nations commission charged with investigating the violence said were committed by government forces and their allies.

Justice Minister Ali Mohamed Osman Yassin told Reuters that international attention on Darfur by the news media and foreign diplomats had distorted the inquiry.

"This made it an emotional rather than realistic investigation," he said, adding that evidence cited in the report was being "hidden from us."

The 176-page report was delivered to the United Nations Security Council last week. It said there was also evidence that the rebels committed war crimes, but added that those reports were far fewer than those against the government.

And while it found that there was no evidence of genocide, the report did not mince words in describing the violence racking Darfur, saying crimes as serious as genocide had been committed, and calling for referrals to the International Criminal Court, something the Bush administration opposes.

Human rights organizations praised the commission's work, saying the debate over whether or not the violence met the technical definition of genocide used by the United Nations had served largely as a distraction.

"I think the whole bickering over genocide or not aside, it is a very strong report," Leslie Lefkow, a Darfur expert at Human Rights Watch who is based in Amsterdam, said in a telephone interview. "It unequivocally states that there have been crimes against humanity, war crimes and atrocities. The focus on genocide is really a red herring used by the government of Sudan and others to distract from the larger issue of what has happened in Darfur."

While the causes of the conflict are complex, almost everyone agrees that at its root is a long-running dispute between settled farming tribes, which in Darfur tend to be African, and predominantly Arab nomadic herders over control of an ever scarcer supply of arable land.

About 70,000 people have been killed and two million driven from their homes in the conflict. The Sudanese government is accused of arming militias known as janjaweed, or outlaws, to fight the rebels and drive ethnic Africans from their land.

### **U.S. Presses for Sudan Sanctions**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 1 (Reuters) - The United States said Tuesday that it was renewing its push for United Nations sanctions on Sudan's oil industry to press the government to stop the violence in Darfur despite its failure to win support for the step last year.

American officials hoped the new United Nations report that found the Sudanese government and allied militia systematically abused civilians in Darfur would prompt Security Council members to take stronger action.

"The United States is now proposing to other Council members a number of elements: an accountability tribunal, deployment of peacekeepers and the imposition of sanctions, which we believe up the ante and do move aggressively to try to stop those atrocities," said Richard A. Boucher, a State Department spokesman.