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Sudan, Chad Again Pledge to Avoid Hostilities

By Reuters

TRIPOLI — Neighbors Sudan and Chad pledged to redouble efforts to end border violence being fueled by Darfur's conflict, concluding their third agreement in 12 months to end hostilities and respect each other's sovereignty.

“The problem should be addressed not by the Kalashnikov, the rocket propelled grenade or the Toyota (battlewagon),” Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi said after brokering the agreement at a mini-summit of regional leaders late on Wednesday in Tripoli.

“It is forbidden for an African to take up arms against a fellow African.”

Violence in Darfur has expanded into Chad, which accuses Sudan of supporting rebels launching cross-border attacks that have worsened ethnic tensions and triggered a flood of refugees.

Gaddafi has pressed Chad and Sudan to settle their differences as part of efforts to bring peace to Darfur, where an estimated 200,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million people have been driven from their homes since 2003.

In a summit statement issued at the end of the gathering, which was convened to advance Darfur peace efforts, the leaders of Sudan, Chad, Libya and Eritrea said Chad and Sudan had agreed not to interfere in each other's internal affairs.

“The governments of both countries are committed to respect the sovereignty of one another and not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other country, and refrain from any hostile activity against one another, and to work for full normalization of their relations,” the statement said.

The statement carried by Libya's official Jana news agency added that a follow-up committee headed by Libya and Eritrea and also including Chad and Sudan would start work immediately.

Bitterness

It did not elaborate. But Majzoub Al-Khalifa, an adviser to Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir, said “mechanisms of observation” would be set up to monitor any attempt to smuggle weapons across the frontier.

“God willing, we will transcend all obstacles and all our bitterness,” Bashir said after the meeting.

Chad President Idriss Deby said: "I wish the mechanism to apply this decision be set up as soon as possible to be able to restore confidence between Chad and Sudan."

The statement said Bashir and Deby had agreed to "implement honestly" an accord they struck in February 2006 requiring they stop insurgents setting up bases on their territories and end propaganda against one another.

In November 2006 Sudan and Chad pledged to redouble efforts to repair their frayed ties.

But relations have remained tense. Sudan's government denies accusations by Chad that it sends Janjaweed militia across the frontier and arms and directs rebels trying to overthrow Deby.

The accord was the only progress reported by officials at the end of the gathering.

The meeting had also sought to persuade the National Redemption Front (NRF) Darfur rebel coalition to meet Sudan's government to discuss joining a 2006 peace deal between Khartoum and a faction of the former rebel Sudan Liberation Movement.

There was no word on whether such a meeting took place.

Darfur's violence has been slowed only by a humanitarian operation, which aid workers warn is increasingly under threat. Washington calls the violence genocide, a term European governments are reluctant to use and which Khartoum rejects.

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