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African Union: Unite Behind Protection for Darfur

AU Meeting Should Back Protection Force for Civilians in Darfur and Chad

New York — The African Union’s Peace and Security Council should unanimously support a robust international protection force with the capacity to protect civilians in Darfur and along the Sudan-Chad border, Human Rights Watch said today in [a letter](#) to council members before they gather on Wednesday in the Nigerian capital Abuja to discuss Darfur.

“The African Union’s slogan is ‘Africa Must Unite,’ and this is exactly what AU members need to do when they meet to discuss Darfur,” said Peter Takirambudde, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. “Darfur is a critical test for the AU’s Peace and Security Council, and its members should unite behind the people of Darfur and eastern Chad rather than abusive governments.”

The AU Peace and Security Council will meet to discuss the current situation in Darfur and the Sudanese government’s reaction to a proposed hybrid AU-UN force. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed the three-stage hybrid force at a November 16 meeting in Addis Ababa. The proposal apparently includes an additional 10,000 troops under UN command along with UN technical expertise to reinforce the struggling 7,000-member African Union force in Darfur.

The Sudanese government has consistently refused to allow a UN force to deploy in Darfur, although the UN Security Council authorized such a force in August under resolution 1706 subject to Sudan’s consent. Sudan reportedly objects to the increase in troops and the shift to UN command suggested in the latest hybrid proposal.

“If Africans are serious about protecting Darfur’s people, they must stop accepting Khartoum’s denials and excuses,” said Takirambudde. “The AU should also ensure that any international force in Darfur has the mandate and capacity to effectively protect civilians and is not just the lowest common denominator.”

The AU Peace and Security Council is comprised of 15 members and currently includes Algeria, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo-Brazzaville, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda.

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