

UN News Center:

Darfur town where AU peacekeepers were attacked burned down - UN

7 October 2007 - The South Darfur town of Haskanita that witnessed a deadly attack against African Union (AU) peacekeepers last weekend has been burned down, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) reported today.

Haskanita, "which is currently under the control of the Government, was completely burned down, except for a few buildings," UNMIS <http://www.unmis.org/english/en-main.htm> said today, after conducting a joint assessment mission to the area yesterday with the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

"The market area had been looted. Few civilians had returned in search of food and water," the Mission added.

The civilian population had reportedly fled to neighbouring areas of Haskanita when the first attack took place on 29 September.

The town was the site of a deadly attack on AU peacekeepers just a week ago that killed nearly a dozen people and wounded many more, with several people also reported missing.

The attack took place in the lead-up to peace talks set to begin in Libya on 27 October between the Sudanese Government and Darfur's many rebel groups in an effort to resolve a conflict that has led to the deaths of more than 200,000 people since 2003.

As part of the ongoing preparations for the talks, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Envoy for Darfur just concluded a series of meetings in Khartoum, UNMIS reported.

Jan Eliasson briefed Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol on the preparations for the negotiations, and also met with the President's Senior Assistant Minni Minawi.

The Special Envoy also met with the Joint Mediation Support Team, AU-UN Joint Special Representative Rodolphe Adada, Acting UN Special Representative Taye-Brook Zerihoun and Deputy Representative Ameerah Haq. While in Khartoum, he also met with United States Special Envoy Andrew Natsios.

Mr. Eliasson is now in Addis Ababa, where he will chair, together with his AU counterpart Salim Ahmed Salim, a two-day meeting with the Joint Mediation Support Team on the preparations for the upcoming talks. From there he will return to Khartoum for further discussions.