

## **Minority Rights Group International**

Press Release

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### **Genocide commemoration must be through action as well as words, states rights group**

At a time of global remembrance for the victims of the Nazi holocaust, 60 years on another genocide may still be in progress in Darfur, Sudan. The United Nations (UN) has announced a special session of the General Assembly on 24 January to commemorate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi death camps. Minority Rights Group International (MRG) calls for this event to commemorate genocide victims through action, by including a full working session of the General Assembly with the aim of demanding effective measures to halt continuing atrocities committed against black Africans in Darfur.

According to MRG such a working session would enable the UN Member States to clearly demonstrate their commitment and acknowledge their responsibility after a history of failure to prevent and stop genocides, including the killing of 800,000 people in Rwanda in 1994. 'Those working to prevent genocide and conflict have grown tired of grand gestures and ineffective discussion in the face of ongoing crisis', stated MRG's Director, Mark Lattimer.

In Darfur, numerous accounts have reported black African tribes slaughtered by their own government, women systematically raped, villages destroyed by aerial bombing or Janjaweed attack, and aid obstructed to refugee camps. Reliable reports received by MRG state that on 16 January 2005, the air forces and the Janjaweed militias attacked and destroyed Hamada, a village 50 km north-east of Nyala, Southern Darfur state using Antonov aircrafts. Reportedly, at least 69 civilians were killed and many were wounded during the attack, including five children.

In July 2004 the Committee on Conscience of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum issued its first ever 'genocide emergency' warning, specifying that 'acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity are occurring or immediately threatened'. Colin Powell, outgoing United States Secretary of State, announced on 9 September 2004 'that genocide has occurred in Darfur and that the government of Sudan and the Janjaweed bear responsibility, and that genocide may still be continuing'. The US Senate and House of Representatives, by unanimous vote on 23 July 2004, declared that 'the atrocities unfolding in Darfur, Sudan, are genocide'.

Action taken to date by the UN Security Council and the African Union to stop the attacks in Darfur has failed. Under the terms of the 1948 Genocide Convention UN Member States, including the US and 130 other nations, have an obligation to 'undertake to prevent and punish' the crime of genocide. UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, stated: 'This will be an important occasion, since the United Nations was founded as the world was learning the full horror of the camps, and is dedicated to doing everything in its power to protect human dignity and prevent any such horror from happening again.'

'The most appropriate tribute to the millions of victims of one genocide would be to act decisively to stop another, which is taking place now' stated Mark Lattimer.

Notes for editors:

For interviews or further information please contact Graham Fox at MRG's Press Office on 020 7422 4205 or 07870 596863 (mobile).

*Minority Rights Group International (MRG) is a non-governmental organization working to secure the rights of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities and indigenous peoples worldwide, and to promote cooperation and understanding between communities.*

<http://www.minorityrights.org>