

## **New evidence for serious impact of oil-exploitation on human rights in Southern Sudan – results of a trip to oilfields**

Nairobi - After an eight-day trip to southern Sudan the German charity organisation "Sign of Hope" presents new evidence about the impact of oil exploration and exploitation on the human rights situation.

### **Oil-related violations of human rights**

During its stay in the oilfields of southern Sudan, the Sign of Hope team assessed the situation of human rights in the oilfields of Thar Jath (Unity State). The team talked to several people on the grassroots level on the impact of toxic waste on the human and livestock health situation on the local communities as well as the environment. In Rier, a village close to the newly erected refinery of Thar Jath, a young girl was complaining about the bitter taste of water there. "We do not even wash our clothes with this water, as the colours fade away and the fabrics are being destroyed," she said. The Commissioner of Koch, Peter Bol Ruot confirmed that in the year 2006 a total number of 27 adults and three children died as a result of the consumption of contaminated water. Ruot said at the moment there are up to 1,000 people have fallen sick for the same reason. The Sign of Hope panel took eight samples to investigate possible contamination of water in the vicinity of the refinery. The results of a scientific analysis will be released in the next two weeks.

According to residents of the village of Rier, they were forced by representatives of the Khartoum government - who were said to be in control of the area up to early 2008 - to leave their original village in 2005 to create room for oil companies to build facilities. The residents were evicted from their villages after short notice and were settled on nearby land. This new settlement is also called Rier, the same name as the old Rier, which has been occupied by an oil firm. Up to now, the population of Rier has not been compensated.

### **Continued presence of militias in South Sudan violates CPA**

Even though the greater Raga area is part of South Sudan, there are still pro-Khartoum militias present. This is a clear violation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the government and the ex-southern rebels of the Sudan People's Liberation Army. In Raga, the key trading post in the area, the Sign of Hope panel visited military bases of the pro-Khartoum "Fursan" militia. According to their commanders, the militia has some 1,623 fighters of which 500 up to 600 are based in Raga township. The township's residents consider their continued presence as a cause of insecurity and as a threat to the stability in the region.

The commanders still receive remuneration from Khartoum which marks a serious breach of the CPA. Sign of Hope's Deputy Director Klaus Stieglitz: "We call upon the Khartoum government to immediately redeploy these forces according to the CPA."

**PRESS RELEASE**

## **Recent Janjaweed attacks in Southern Darfur**

According to eye witnesses in an IDP camp in Boro Medina, people from Darfur have been attacked by Arab militias as recently as January. "They came at three o'clock in the morning. I heard them shooting. Then I fixed one child on my back, my second child on my chest and my third child I took by the hand and ran away. After three hours of walking I stopped in order to eat. The Janjaweed took away all of my 15 cows," said a 22-year-old woman from Maalaka near Rudom in Southern Darfur. She had spent four days on her way to Boro Medina.

The team also talked to a 25 year old mother of four children, who experienced a ground attack which was carried out by soldiers of the Sudanese Armed Forces. The attack occurred in January 2008 in the village of Joka near Buram in Southern Darfur. "They came in the late evening hours. They came on foot and on cars. They killed most of the village with their guns and especially targeted the Zaghawa people." The Zaghawa are black African tribe.

The camp in Boro Medina is inhabited by more than 2,000 Darfurian IDPs. These people are desperately lacking of food, safe drinking water, sanitation and health care. Sign of Hope distributed 125 IDP kits, bringing the total number of distributed kits in the area at 1,500 (75 tons). Each household received a kit of 50 kg maize, beans, energy biscuits, sorghum, cooking oil, sugar, powder milk, salt, plastic sheets, soap, mosquito nets, blankets and cooking pots.

## **Recommendations**

Sign of Hope calls upon the Khartoum government to ensure that the oil companies operating in Sudan fully and unconditionally protect the environment – notably surface and ground water from contamination by toxic chemicals. In addition the organisation urges oil companies to compensate those who have been displaced from their village due to clear the way for oil exploitation.

Sign of Hope is specifically asking the Government of Sudan to fully implement the security related provisions of the CPA. Klaus Stieglitz: "To this end we urge the Government of Sudan to pull the Fursan fighters out of Raga. There is no room for Fursan militia or any 'Other Armed Group' in South Sudan. In that sense, we call upon the Government of Sudan to fully implement this provision of the CPA as this step would clearly contribute to a stabilization of the security situation in the area."

Furthermore Sign of Hope urges all parties to the conflict in Darfur to issue and enforce clear orders to the armed forces and any militias under that it is prohibited to make civilians or civilian objects (including cultivated land and livestock) the target of attacks or to launch indiscriminate attacks (including burning of villages and aerial bombardments) as such attacks can amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Sign of Hope is a German-based interdenominational organisation for human rights and humanitarian assistance. The organisation has Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations.

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