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Dear M. Ladsous

Re UNAMID

We write regarding the UN DPKO's management of UNAMID. We are a group of Sudanese NGOs, individuals and representatives of political parties. We urge you to please consider and act upon our concerns.

We welcomed the UN's decision to send to Darfur a peace keeping force with a Chapter VII mandate to protect civilians. Unfortunately it soon became apparent UNAMID was not fit for purpose and had little credibility with local people or the international NGOs working in Darfur. There is a wealth of anecdotal evidence that UNAMID has repeatedly failed to properly investigate alleged attacks on Darfur civilians, and has been systematically impeded and intimidated by Sudanese security services and the Sudanese authorities, in direct contravention of the 2008 Status of Forces Agreement signed by the Khartoum government.

The concerns expressed by local people and international NGOs have been reinforced by the testimony of former UNAMID spokesperson Aicha Elbasri, and by recent events in Tabit, where 200 girls and women were allegedly raped. When UNAMID personnel finally went to Tabit to investigate, they allowed Sudanese security services not only to accompany them but to film, and therefore intimidate, the local witnesses to whom they spoke.

It is apparent from testimony from UNAMID personnel that they are reluctant to stand their ground when impeded by Sudanese authorities because they know the UN DPKO headquarters and the Secretary-General will not give them sufficient backing if they attempt to interpret their mandate robustly.

Time and again when Sudanese security forces or their local proxies stop UNAMID performing its duties, and even when they attack and kill UNAMID staff, the DPKO and the Secretary-General mildly request the Sudanese authorities investigate. There is never any serious follow-up from New York, leaving Khartoum to conclude its personnel and their proxies can continue to harass, attack and kill the UN's own staff with impunity. Your reluctance to confront the Khartoum authorities in more than a perfunctory manner has led to the current situation, in which a massively expensive peace keeping force is unable to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians and investigate alleged human rights abuses.

The UN's humanitarian work in Darfur is destined to fail if the overall security environment remains such that internally displaced people are afraid to return to their homes. Moreover, this is not delivering value for money, just as it is failing the vulnerable people of Darfur.

We understand members of the Security Council have not been given the full Cooper Review Team report, following Aicha Elbasri's allegations. This only adds to the sense that fundamental problems at UNAMID are not being addressed as they should be by either the DPKO or the UN Secretary-General.

A number of questions therefore arise from the above concerns. We respectfully urge you to respond:

- Does the DPKO stand by the performance of UNAMID, and does it believe UNAMID is providing adequate civilian protection in Darfur?
- Does DPKO believe that UNAMID conducted an adequate investigation at Tabit, despite the presence of Sudanese security officers? Your office saw no reason to object to Sudanese government behaviour until this issue entered the public sphere. The Secretary-General has now asked the Sudanese regime to allow unfettered access, but those of us familiar with this situation fear there will be no meaningful follow-up, as usual. It requires sustained pressure from DPKO leadership and the Secretary-General to hold the Sudanese authorities accountable for their failure to comply with the 2008 Status of Forces Agreement.
- It appears the Secretary-General now, belatedly, concedes that UNAMID personnel are being restricted, impeded and intimidated by Sudanese authorities. What plans does DPKO have to rectify the situation?

You have repeatedly represented that security has improved in Darfur, which it manifestly has not. When the Sudanese armed forces stop bombing villages (as they did as recently as November 16 & 18 in North Darfur – Abu Gamra, Habila, Jeritawa, Andom, Abu Leha - and East Jebel Marra) the IDPs will return to their villages, and the humanitarian disaster will cease. The fact that more than two million Darfuris reluctantly remain in IDP camps, and more than 250,000 stay in refugee camps in Chad, indicates Khartoum-regime sponsored and led violence has returned to former levels.

We await your response and thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Yours sincerely

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Abdelrahman Gasim, Darfur Bar Association
Afaf Mohamed, Voice of Darfur Women
Ali Abdelatif, Founder, DAAM (Network for Coordinating Sudan Pro-Democracy Action Abroad)
Amin Hamad, Head of UK branch, National Unionist Party (NUP)
Baroness Cox, House of Lords, and CEO, Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART)
Beja Congress (Corrective) UK
Claire Budd, Nuba Now!
Communist Party of Sudan (UK)
Dalia Haj-Omar, Sudanese human rights advocate
Darfur Union (UK-DU)
Ekhlas Ahmed, Voice for Darfuri Women London
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Motaz Bargo, Secretary General, Darfur Union UK & Ireland
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Sudanese Ba'ath Party (UK)
Sudanese Front for Change (UK)
Sudanese Women's Rights Group (UK)
Sudanese Women's Union (UK)
Sudan Liberation Movement – Abdulwahid Leadership (UK)
Sudan Liberation Movement – Minnawi Leadership (UK)
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Umma National Party (UK)
Zeinab Malik, Beja Corrective

Cc Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN