

Ecumenical News International
Daily News Service
28 February 2007

German Christian NGO urges Sudan to cooperate over Darfur
ENI-07-0172

By Fredrick Nzwilli
Nairobi, 28 February (ENI)--A German Christian organization for human rights and humanitarian assistance, Sign of Hope, has called on the government of Sudan to cooperate with the International Criminal Court over indictments of Sudanese for actions in Darfur.

The ICC, which has 104 member states and is convened by the United Nations, issued the indictments on 27 February. Sudan's western Darfur province is the scene of a conflict between government-backed militias and rebel groups that has led to the deaths of tens of thousands of people.

"We call upon the government of Sudan to acknowledge the findings of the International Court of Justice and to fully cooperate with the ICC," Klaus Stieglitz, Sign of Hope's deputy director, told journalists in Nairobi on 28 February. Speaking after a four-day visit to southern Sudan, near the border with Darfur, he said: "We see the ICC indictments as possible way to ending impunity in Darfur. It's very important the government cooperates to give peace a chance."

The indictments were issued against Ahmed Haroun, Sudan's humanitarian affairs minister, and Ali Muhammad Ali Abd-al-Rahman, who was a commander of the Janjaweed militia accused of many killings in the region. Haroun has said the move against him is political and his government said it would not accept what the ICC seeks.

An ICC prosecutor said there were reasonable grounds to believe the two men bear responsibility in relation to 51 counts of alleged crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against civilians in Darfur in 2003 and 2004.

Sign of Hope said it had gathered new eyewitness accounts in an Internally Displaced Persons camp in Boro Medina, where people >from Darfur had been attacked by Arab militias as recently as January.

"They told us: 'if you stay here, we will kill you all'," a 50-year-old woman named as Hawa Idriss Adam from southern Darfur told the NGO.

Jamal Zakaria Mohammed told Sign of Hope: "On 12 January, I went back to my sorghum field when three armed Janjaweed came up. They told me: 'You belong to the blacks who are making trouble. Today will be the last day of your life'."

But while the ICC announced the indictments, Sudan said the body had no jurisdiction to try its citizens over Darfur. Human rights groups, which have welcomed the new development, say an estimated 200 000 people have died and 2.5 million from Darfur have been displaced, but the government maintains it is only 9000. [421 words]

ENI News Headlines and Featured Articles are now available by RSS feed.

See <http://www.eni.ch/rss/>

All articles (c) Ecumenical News International
Reproduction permitted only by media subscribers and provided ENI is acknowledged as the source.

Ecumenical News International
PO Box 2100
CH - 1211 Geneva 2
Switzerland

Tel: (41-22) 791 6088/6111
Fax: (41-22) 788 7244
Email: eni@eni.ch