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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL
FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

Joint written statement* submitted by World Federation of Democratic Youth, a non-
governmental organization in general consultative status and African Society of
International and Comparative Law and Interfaith International,
non-governmental organizations in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated
in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[3 February 2003]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

1. We wish to draw the attention of the world community to the silent human tragedy that engulfs the Darfur region in western Sudan. Human rights and fundamental freedoms in this part of the world have all but gone as destructive armed tribal conflicts continue without being noticed by the world community. Local efforts to put a halt to the growing crisis were frustrated by the government's lack of vision to find a viable and just national solution to save the lives of its own people. The crisis in Darfur is overshadowed by the civil war in the South, which attracts major part of international scrutiny. For more than two decades the Darfur region has been facing a terrible campaign of destruction of life and property as well as an incredible state of lawlessness and armed robbery committed against a peaceful civilian population.

2. The situation has further worsened manifolds during the tenure of the present government of General Omar Al Bashier. Since July 1989 to December 2002 it was estimated that more than 10,000 persons were killed in the three States, (Western, Southern and Northern), that make the Greater Darfur region. An equal number of persons could have perished because of conflict-induced diseases, famine and lack of safety and security while many other thousands including women and children were traumatised, wounded, disabled and maimed for life. Over 100,000 families were rendered destitute and their livelihood including homes, schools, places of worships, medical centres etc. were systematically destroyed. It is estimated that more than 500,000 head of livestock were rustled and that thousands of shops, warehouses and farms were looted. As a result of this human tragedy thousands of persons were internally displaced and currently live in precarious conditions around the major towns in the region while others - especially members of the Massaleet tribe - were forced to seek refuge in neighbouring Chad.

3. A mosaic of indigenous agrarian black Africans and migrant nomadic Arabised tribal groups inhabit the Darfur region. Although all the groups in the region have their own distinct language and culture, they have intermingled over the years and consequently developed common socio-cultural and religious backgrounds. Almost all the ethnic groups in the region use Arabic as lingua franca and practice Sunni Islam. Until 1916 the Darfur region remained an independent Sultanate reigning over a vast region blessed with fertile soil, huge water sources and rich fauna and flora. This explains the region's generous hospitality in peacefully accommodating different migrant ethnic groups who accepted to live under the Fur rule until the beginning of the 20th century when Darfur was forcibly annexed by the British colonial rulers to the rest of the country.

4. Pastoralist indigenous tribal groups of Darfur that identify themselves as black Africans such as the Fur, Massaleet, Zagawa, Tama, Berti, Tunjour, Dajou, Bergou, Bergid etc. are the prime victims of the current rampage with the lion share of the atrocities inflicted on the Fur people in southern and western Darfur regions. The crimes are mainly committed by nomad tribal gangs in particular the Rezigat tribesmen, Missiriya Jebel, Ma'alia, Beni Hussien, Mahameed, Jalawool and Beni Halaba etc. Some elements of these gangs are reportedly members of the government-sponsored and armed militias locally known as the "Murahleen", while other militias are known as *the* "Jaingaweed". To face this challenge and as a sign of lost confidence in the local government's willingness to protect them the indigenous people have developed their own militia groups for self-defence, resistance and

recovery of stolen objects and livestock. Frequent clashes between the different militia groups threaten to engulf the region into mini wars with dangerous repercussions to peace and security in other regions of the country.

5. In 2002 the conflict in Darfur reached new dimensions with sharp increase in the number and intensity of raids in different parts of the region and consequently an increase in the number of casualties among the indigenous tribal people. In April-May 2002 attacks against the area of Kabkabya and Jebel Mara massive left 101 persons dead, more than 200 wounded and thousands of livestock were rustled. It became clear that the escalation of attacks constitute part of a concerted campaign to depopulate vast areas from their original inhabitants and replace them with the invading militia groups. At least 38 villages in southern Darfur between Nyala and Jebel Mara have been evacuated from their original inhabitants. For instance two villages known as Danga and Tambasi, situated at about 70km and 80km from Nyala respectively, inhabited by the Fur tribesmen for many generations, are now being occupied by the invading nomad tribal groups. The villages were renamed into Arabic names (Um Al-Gura and Um Dawan-Ban) in a bid to conceal their real identity.

6. On 11th September 2002, the Arabised tribes in southern Darfur held a conference in Kass town under the auspices of the Commissioner of Kass province Mr. Gourashi Mohamed Abdalla. During this conference indigenous African groups were especially targeted for abuse and accusation. They were labelled as pagans, disloyal and rebels to justify new and widespread aggressions against them. An unprecedented escalation of devastating attacks against areas inhabited by the indigenous African tribes followed the convening of this conference. Between 12th and 30th September 2002 it was reported that many villages around Kass, Zalengi, Kabkabya, Jebel Mara and Nyala were attacked in more than 50 occasions. As a result of these attacks 30 persons were killed in the area surrounding Kass, an unknown number was injured and about 714 livestock were looted. In Zalengi province 2 persons were killed and about 600 livestock were looted. In Kabkabya province 17 persons were killed, 12 were injured and five villages were burned to the ground. In Jebel Mara massive 13 persons were killed including 5 soldiers. In Nyala 18 persons were killed including Police Major Bashier Frarah Khatam.

7. Information we gathered indicated that in the period between 1st October 2002 and 31st January 2003 at least 160 indigenous African tribal people in the southern and western Darfur regions were killed. Identified persons were those lost their lives around the main towns of the region i.e. Nyala and Kass, which suggests that much more persons killed in remote areas were not documented. Information in our possession document to the following incidents:

1. On Monday 20th and Tuesday 21st January 2003 militiamen respectively attacked Garcila and Mugjar villages in the western Darfur State. In these incidents 27 persons were reportedly killed while 18 others were injured. An unknown number of houses were burned and livestock looted.
2. On Tuesday 31st December 2002, a number of armed Tarjam and Missirya Jabal tribesmen attacked Sinkita village about 70 Km west of Nyala town. This ordeal continued on 1st, 2nd and 3rd January 2003. In this massacre 25 persons were killed and more than 40 others were injured. Around 800 huts were burned to the ground and their inhabitants were rendered

destitute without access to basic human needs such as food, shelter and medicine. It was also reported that 4 of the village leaders are missing and believed to be incommunicado detained by the security forces.

3. On Tuesday 24th December 2002 militiamen attacked Dumma village to the north east of Nyala killing an unidentified number of people and injuring others.
4. On Wednesday 27th November 2002 armed gangs attacked Teguerai village. They killed 11 persons and wounded 8.
5. On Sunday 24th November 2002 armed groups attacked the villages of Sabunogna, Turra and Mugjar.
6. On Wednesday 13th November 2002 a group of about 300 armed militiamen attacked a number of villages in Wadi Gounda to the north of Kass, including the villages of Elayba, Wastani and Shawa. In total they killed 15 persons including a pregnant woman from Elayaba (Ms. Hanouna Abdalla Suliman). They injured 14 persons and burned down 33 houses.
7. On Wednesday 9th October 2002 militiamen attacked a convoy between Golo village in Jebel Marra and Nyala. They killed two persons including Mr. Mohamed Ibrahim Musa, a 40 years old lawyer, and injured five others.
8. On Saturday 5th October 2002 militiamen attacked Kidingeer village, 71 km north-west of Nyala town. They killed 4 persons and injured 8 others including women.
9. On Tuesday 1st October 2002 militiamen attacked the area once again killing 2 persons and injuring 2 others.

8. The official version put by the government for the current dramatic situation is that the region is victim of banditry and that outlaws commit these crimes in a remote and isolated area located in the extreme western part of the country with limited access routes. However, the manner in which the attacks against the indigenous African tribes are organised and carried out, the scale of destruction of life and property, the type of machine guns used, the number of invaders usually involved in the one incident - sometimes over three hundred men on camels or horsebacks - as well as the relaxed reaction of the local authorities including the security forces to calls for intervention by the affected groups make the government's claims that the ongoing carnage is sporadic criminal activities by bandits hard to believe. It is rather a concerted policy to depopulate vast areas of the region from its original inhabitants for the benefit of groups favoured by the government. For some time it was considered that tribal rivalries and competition over scarce natural resources in a zone of ecological decline caused by drought and desertification are the reasons behind the current situation in Darfur. Evidence we gathered indicated that the government's shortsighted policies, neglect of the region and its revival of tribal sentiments, manipulation of tribal differences and favouritism of certain ethnic groups over others are largely responsible for the current situation. A central element in the crisis is the local government's policy to redistribute land owned by the indigenous people to the nomadic tribes without regard to the traditional methods developed by the local people throughout the centuries.

9. The rampage goes hand in hand with a vicious campaign by the local authorities, national media and even top government officials to incriminate the

African tribes in Darfur and label them as bandits, disloyal or potential rebel elements. On Saturday 2nd November 2002 and during his official visit to Al Fashir, capital city of Northern Darfur State, the First Vice-president of Sudan Mr. Ali Osman Mohamed Taha warned the African tribes of Darfur of total destruction and that their region will be “pulled backward for many years” if they join the rebel Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA). These insensitive remarks added insult to injury and were used by extremist elements within the Arabised tribes as additional fuel to the already burning situation. The Vice-president’s remarks provided a further cover for further massive attacks against the indigenous tribes witnessed by the region in November and December 2002.

10. As a state member of the United Nations, Sudan is obliged to respect the UN Charter and ensure the safety and physical integrity of all the people living within its geographic boundaries. Sudan is a state party to the main regional and international human rights instruments including the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, therefore, it is obliged to respect its commitments under all these instruments. The government’s failure to put an end to the ongoing crisis, protect the population and bring peace and tranquillity to all parts of the country should not be tolerated by the international community anymore.

11. A human tragedy is imminent in the Darfur region if immediate action was not taken and that such action goes beyond the government militaristic approach to an overall human development oriented strategy to solve the problems of the region. The international community should take note of the current drastic situation and help find an urgent solution to it.
