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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
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**HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATIONS THAT REQUIRE THE COUNCIL'S
ATTENTION**

**Written statement* submitted by International Federation of Human Rights Leagues
(FIDH), a non-governmental organization 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.

[21 February 2008]

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

The Human Rights situation in Sudan

Taking note of the latest report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in the Sudan, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and its partner organisation the Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT) express their deep concern about the human rights situation in Sudan and urge the Human Rights Council to pledge full ongoing support for the Special Rapporteur mandate.

The human rights situation in Darfur in particular remains dire. A major offensive by government forces and allied militias on three towns in West Darfur in February caused massive new displacement, with UN officials counting some 12,000 fleeing across the border into Chad alone. Militias, with support from government aircraft, are reported to have looted and burned homes and killed residents. Across Darfur, the security situation is extremely poor and a total of over 2.3 million displaced persons remain vulnerable to abuses including arbitrary arrest, torture, rape, murder and forcible relocation.

Human rights violations in Sudan are by no means limited to Darfur, however. The Sudanese authorities continue to imprison individuals without charge for long periods of time, with detainees often denied access to lawyers and tortured in custody. Recent examples include the case of Amar Nagmeldin Guluk – a spokesperson for the Khartoum State branch of the Sudan People's Liberation Army who was held without charge for over six weeks following his arrest in November – and the case of dozens of individuals arrested last July amid allegations of a coup plot. Most members of the latter group were held until the end of December and several reported suffering torture, including being beaten with pipes. FIDH and SOAT are further concerned about a number of foreign nationals detained without charge in Sudan and who face the possibility of forcible repatriation to countries where they would be at risk of torture and/or persecution.

In recent weeks, the authorities also appear to have engaged in a concerted effort to further reduce the – already very limited – scope for freedom of expression in Sudan. Since early February, most major newspapers have received daily visits by officers of the National Security Service to check the contents of each edition before publication. These security officers have demanded the removal of articles about recent developments in Darfur and neighbouring Chad, along with others referring to comments made by the Dutch foreign minister during his latest visit to Sudan about the country's dealings with the International Criminal Court. On February 14, allegations in Rai al-Shaab about Sudan's role in the fighting in Chad led to an entire edition of the newspaper being blocked. In addition, security chief Salah Gosh has recently accused numerous unnamed journalists of being in the pay of foreign embassies and has announced that investigations are underway. When one columnist wrote a piece referring to Gosh's accusation, security officers ordered al-Sahafa newspaper to excise the entire article.

The kinds of abuses described thus far are facilitated by the existence of numerous pieces of legislation yet to be brought into line with Sudan's Interim National Constitution. This unreformed legislation grants sweeping powers to organs like the NSS and helps to underpin the impunity of officials responsible for human rights violations. Impunity is a particular problem in Darfur, where the authorities have still taken no serious steps to bring to justice those suspected of responsibility for abuses on a massive scale over a period of five years. In the cases of Musa Hilal and Ahmed Harun, these individuals have instead

been granted senior government posts.

Sudan is reaching a decisive stage in its history. According to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that brought an end to the decades-long civil war in the South in 2005, a national census and elections are due to take place this year and next which should mark milestones in its transition towards stability and democracy. But a lack of respect for human rights enshrined both in international law and in the Sudanese constitution represent a major obstacle to this transition. In this context, it is crucial that the valuable contribution made by the Special Rapporteur – including the vital task of following up on the work of the Group of Experts on Darfur – should continue to receive the full support of the Council.

FIDH and SOAT call on the Human Rights Council to:

- Ensure that the Special Rapporteur is provided with the human and financial resources necessary to carry out the mandate, including following up on the work of the Group of Experts

- Call on the Government of Sudan to:
 - Continue cooperating with the Special Rapporteur mandate
 - Take all necessary measures to end instances of arbitrary detention, torture in custody and limits on detainees' access to legal advice, in conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - Take all necessary measures to end restrictions on the media, in conformity with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
 - Expedite reforms to bring the Sudanese justice system and all legislation into line with the Interim National Constitution and international human rights standards, and to end the impunity of state officials
 - Allow a mission by the Special Rapporteur to Sudan and Darfur dedicated to following up on the work of the Group of Experts, with the Special Rapporteur granted full discretion over the modalities and composition of the mission
 - Cooperate with the international community to resolve the crisis in Darfur, including by: respecting ceasefire agreements; ensuring accountability for crimes perpetrated in the region, notably through a full cooperation with the International Criminal Court; and ceasing obstruction of the United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur and facilitating swift deployment of personnel and equipment associated with the force.

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