

Dr. Luís Filipe Marques Amado
President of the
Council of Ministers of the European Union

20 July 2007
Ref: B692

Dear Dr Amado,

Subject : GAERC discussion of possible EU force in Chad

At the GAERC meeting on 23 July, we understand that member states will consider the possible deployment of a UN mandated EU force to eastern Chad, to improve security in the region. We are writing to you ahead of this discussion to draw your attention to the current lack of protection for civilians, and in particular women and girls, who are displaced within Chad.

During a recent research mission to Chad, Amnesty International has gathered information about numerous individual cases of gender based violence in and around camps for internally displaced persons in eastern Chad. According to victims, local contacts and humanitarian agencies, rape, harassment and violent assault are carried out by members of militias, armed groups and even by Chadian government soldiers with complete impunity – no-one has been caught or punished for these crimes. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable when they venture outside camps to collect firewood, which is vital to fulfil the basic needs of their families. Male family members often send women and girls out to fulfil this task, judging that they face a lower risk of being killed by the armed groups.

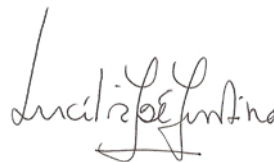
In light of the general failure of the Chadian government to protect its citizens, despite its constitutional and international human rights obligations to do so, it is vital that any EU force in Chad, and indeed the planned longer term UN operation, has the mandate and the resources to protect all civilians at risk, both refugees from neighbouring Darfur and internally displaced persons. These international forces must include human rights and gender officers, and should put in place protective measures inside and outside sites for internally displaced persons. The mandate should include the places of origin of the displaced people, and also the border with Sudan. We strongly urge you to ensure that this is specified in the conclusions of GAERC discussions on the EU force.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



Dick Oosting
Director,
Amnesty International EU Office



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