

Press Release

SOAT and FIDH Condemn Appointment of Alleged Janjaweed Leader to Senior Government Post

January 21, 2008, London, Paris - The Sudan Organisation Against Torture (SOAT) and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) condemn the decision to grant a senior post in the Sudanese government to Musa Hilal, the clan leader widely considered to be a top commander of Janjaweed militias responsible for atrocities in Darfur.

Hilal's appointment as an advisor to Federal Affairs Minister Abdel Basit Sabderat comes despite evidence gathered by human rights organisations suggesting that he played a part in recruiting and training militias, and that he was involved in several attacks on villages in 2003 and 2004. He has been subject to a United Nations travel ban and asset freezes since 2006.

"Musa Hilal's appointment will serve to further undermine the peace process in Darfur, which is already faltering following the collapse of the peace talks that began in October," said Hashim Ahmed, acting director of SOAT. *"Those suspected of playing a role in the atrocities in Darfur must be transparently investigated according to due process, not granted positions of power in defiance of the millions who have suffered and the international community. This is the latest move in the Sudanese government's efforts to foster a culture of impunity for crimes carried out by its armed forces and allied militias."*

In May last year, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for former Sudanese interior minister Ahmed Harun and militia leader Ali Kushayb for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur. But Khartoum has refused to hand them over to face trial. Instead, Harun has been allowed to continue as minister of state for humanitarian affairs and in September was appointed to a committee responsible for investigating human rights abuses in Darfur¹. In the same month, Ali Kushayb was reportedly released from custody in Sudan because of a lack of evidence against him².

FIDH and SOAT :

- Urge the Government of Sudan to immediately suspend the appointment of Musa Hilal to prove its willingness to fight against the impunity of those responsible for crimes committed in Darfur;
- Urge once again the Government of Sudan to fully cooperate with the ICC by arresting and handing over Ali Kushayb and Ahmed Haroun;
- Call upon the international community, and in particular the UN Security Council to pressure the government of Sudan to comply with the ICC arrest warrants and ensure justice is done for the victims of Darfur.

Press contact : Gaël Grilhot : +33-1 43 55 90 19

1 See FIDH and SOAT reaction to this appointment: «Sudan: a new step towards impunity», <http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article4679>

2 See FIDH and SOAT reaction to this release: «When will the insults to the victims of crimes committed in Darfur end?», <http://www.fidh.org/spip.php?article4757>