



**United Nations Advance Mission In Sudan  
UNAMIS**

**Press Briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland**

**Khartoum**

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Following is a near-verbatim transcript of the press briefing by Mr. Jan Egeland (1730, Monday 6 March 05, Press Room, Ramsis Building UNAMIS Offices, Garden City, Khartoum, Sudan).

**OCHA PIO:**

Good afternoon. Thank you for coming, everyone.

I am very happy to introduce Mr. Jan Egeland, the Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, who arrived in Sudan on Thursday and has been traveling around the country. He has been to South Sudan – to Rumbek, Muluaklon; Darfur: South Darfur – Nyala, Labado and Muhajariya, and returned back to Khartoum today for a meeting and he is willing to share his comments of his visit and take your questions now.

Thank you.

**Mr. Egeland:**

Thank you Dawn, colleagues.

The year 2005 should be “Sudan Year” in the international community. In the greatest country of Africa, we have a historic opportunity to make peace where there has been war for too long – in fact bringing to an end one of the bloodiest wars of our generation.

2005 is also the year where we had to stop permanently, the ongoing killings and atrocities of Darfur – possibly one of the worst ongoing conflicts in the world at the moment.

It is a make-or-break year. If we succeed, peace will not only prevail in Sudan but can also spread to other parts of Africa. If we fail, it will lead to untold suffering for a long time to come.

In South Sudan and in the North-South conflict in Sudan, we have now a historic agreement that we the international community have to help the parties to implement and to fulfill and realize. I am afraid that at the moment too little seems to be invested in building the peace that the international community was helping to get the

signatures of the parties to in January. I visited many parts of South Sudan. I saw that the people believe in the peace. Hundreds of thousands of refugees are returning to South Sudan in one of the biggest return movements in the world now of refugees and displaced. But we must confess we at the humanitarian community do not have the capacity to receive these people many of whom we have fed in temporary refugee and displacement camps for many, many years.

The UN has received only 5% of the 500 million dollars that we desperately need this year to meet the humanitarian needs in southern Sudan and to build peace for the future generation. We do not have enough money to have child combatants become carpenters and masons and tailors, we do not have enough money to feed those who return to burnt down villages in southern Sudan, we do not have enough money for the basic healthcare and education in one of the poorest places on earth.

We see in Darfur a different picture. One of the myths in Darfur is that nothing is happening and that the international community is not responding to a situation which resembles Darfur. I disagree with this image that has been created. In Rwanda the international community left in the hour of deepest needs of the people. In Darfur the humanitarian community has actually flocked into Darfur on a very impressive scale. We will soon have ten thousand employees, staff members, who courageously strive to meet the needs of a war-stricken population who are caught in the crossfire among militia groups, among government and rebel troops.

This impressive humanitarian assistance is providing much more result than many believe. The situation in the camps in Darfur is better than in the camps outside of Khartoum at the moment. The medical, educational and nutritional standards in the refugee camps in Darfur are better than in the countryside in South Sudan. But here ends the good news for Darfur – because the world is only putting an expensive humanitarian plaster on an open wound in Darfur. The killings, the atrocities, the violations of human rights are continuing. Massive rape of women is continuing. I would like to commend non-governmental partners like MSF and UN partners for shading light on this atrocious phenomenon which is the mass rape of women now in connection with the International Women's Day tomorrow.

I visited also Labado. It is a village – it is actually a town in South Darfur – that was the site of one of the most outrageous indiscriminate attacks against civilians that we have seen in recent times, I think anywhere in the world. For when we in the west celebrated Christmas, the huts were burning in the hundreds in Labado and around it. More than a hundred civilians were murdered and tens of thousands fled the area.

Perhaps one other positive element happening in Darfur next to the achievements of the humanitarian community are the achievements of our colleagues in the African Union. That is the other myths – that the African Union is not effective in Darfur. The African Union is extremely effective in Darfur per soldier and per person actually deployed in Darfur. In Labado, ninety armed men have instilled enough confidence for ten thousand of the general population to return to Labado.

Now, that African Union force has to be vastly expanded. There are now 2,100 men strong, with police, 2,200 men and women strong. There should be, in my view, five times as big. There should be as many security people in the African Union as we are

humanitarians in Darfur. The world has to help the African Union to deploy a much stronger and more muscular weight, and the African Union itself has to fulfill its promises and deploy up to the levels and expand those levels in Darfur because they are doing a great job. We should all commend the courageous soldiers and policemen in this African Union force. It is one of the few really positive and hopeful signs in the area.

I met with high government officials. I just met with the foreign minister of Sudan and I met with high SLA officials in Muhajiriya. My message to those is you are failing your people by not reaching negotiated settlement to this conflict in Abuja. We are fed up by seeing these men flying in and out month after month in negotiations that lead nowhere. In the meantime, the people in Darfur are bleeding. And those who are bleeding are not the men – it is the women and the children. You have to reach a political settlement because this is a politically-made conflict – this is not a Tsunami, it is not a natural disaster. It was made by men and it is continued by acts of man.

The big hope for this year is that we in the humanitarian community that responded well at the end of 2004 are joined in this year 2005 by the security force that can provide relative security so that people can have a hope to return- which they have to do soon unless we will have permanent camp situation in Darfur. 2005 must also be the year where we get a comprehensive peace agreement not only for the North-South but for Darfur.

I would like now to take any questions that you might have.

**Q:** You have been speaking of mass rapes. Did you talk with the government about this? And what is the reaction of the government.

**A:** Of course I did. I spoke to various ministers today and I spoke to the governor of Nyala in South Darfur yesterday and the day before yesterday.

What I said was the following: Sudan did not have this kind of a problem before. It is a great criminal activity and abuse against women. But it is undeniable now that it is a rampant phenomenon and hundreds and hundreds of cases are documented.

What the response is, is that some government officials now agree that this is now a reality that the world will want to end impunity which is the reality today, to work with the African Union and us to help hunt down and punish those who are responsible for these criminal acts and also to prevent future acts by protecting the women.

**Q:** You talk of rapes continuing in Darfur. Who are behind these rapes? Who are particularly enacting these rapes?

**A:** It is generally armed men and militias but I think also government soldiers have been involved and there are also many of the ethnic militias and so on.

It is very hard to know exactly who are behind these things because they happen in the early mornings, in the late evenings when women go to collect firewood or water

and so on. What we know, however, is that many men who are often armed abuse vulnerable women.

**Q:** What would you like to see from the UN emergency session that's being held today.

**A:** The UN Security Council is meeting today and the Secretary-General is conveying a message pretty similar to the message I am delivering here. The Secretary-General is outraged by the continued violence against defenseless civilians. The UN and the Security Council have received a report from the Commission of Inquiry which documented massive crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur. What I hope is that there is a strong sign of willingness in the Security Council to take action. I am a humanitarian worker; I am no political actor so what kind of sanctions or what kind of concrete measures is not for me to say.

What I lack is a political and a security muscle which is commensurate with the one we have now put in from the humanitarian side thanks to help from donors who are giving us hundreds and millions of dollars for this plaster on this open wound and through that, we avoided the massive deaths that many predicted for last year but we cannot prevent in any way the continued violence that prevails in Darfur.

**Q:** Do you think the Sudanese government could stop the rape and violence in Darfur? And if so would like to see sanctions?

**A:** I think much more could be done by everybody including the government – the central and local government – in protecting the civilian population. But I would admit that we now have a situation of many armed groups, many ethnic militias, proliferation of small arms and the war itself has now bred a culture of violence that it is not easy to end from one day to the other.

I think many government officials are sincere when they say that they would like to see an end to these atrocities but I fail to see really any decisive action to put an end to impunity. Sanctions should definitely be on the table in general against not only the government but also rebels and others. This war and this culture of violence has to end.

**Q:** You say on the table. Would you like to see it imposed?

**A:** Well, on the table means they should be considered and if they are considered they should be decided upon and then they should be implemented, yes.

**Q:** So you would like to see them imposed?

**A:** My basic feeling as a humanitarian worker is that people are getting away with murder today and they shouldn't.

Again, which sanctions; in which way; now or after a period of time, this is not for me to go into as a humanitarian worker.

**Q:** Teams from the UN and the AU cannot arrive at a precise station to find a way to get out of this ambiguous situation because everybody is denying responsibility for these atrocities which still continue.

How can they come together to help put an end to this impunity which no one wants to claim responsibility for?

**A:** I am not quite sure - but I think I understood your question. I agree with you. At the moment it seems that nobody is really responsible for what is happening in Darfur. Everybody says that somebody else is to blame.

At times it is also difficult for the women who are raped or the villages attacked or the convoys that are looted and even, at times, the aid workers who are being abducted and so on, to say precisely who is to blame for what.

For me it is been utterly frustrating, as it has been for any of my humanitarian colleagues here, to see that it continue and it continues and it continues. We are making progress in terms of feeding. We now have great statistics on nutritional rates, on education for displaced, on primary healthcare etcetera, but we are witnessing the violence in a continuing scale.

I do, however, believe that African Union forces with their activist attitude within the mandate can mean a lot. I saw that in Muhajiriya, I saw that in Labado. I think an international community which really keeps now pressuring effectively and systematically all parties, not only the government but also the rebel side, to make progress in Abuja is very important; that neighboring states behave and do not help one or the other of the parties; and that we fund the North-South peace agreement. The peace fails, North-South, because the international community sat on the fence in the greatest hour of need of those whom we try to help as they return back to South Sudan, we will also see destabilization. We can have a positive spillover from the North-South peace process to Darfur but we will also see a very bad negative spillover from the open conflict in Darfur to the North-South dimension. A lot is at stake.

**Q:** I have a small point of clarification: you said the international community has come up with only 5% of your appeal, correct? Are they to be blamed or rather the government - they are saying that the government has to do this and this, but at the same time they have to provide assistance?

**A:** The figures are very clear. In October of last year, well in advance of this crucial make-or-break year 2005, the UN asked for 500 million dollars for UN and NGO operations in South Sudan. By the first of March we had received 24 million in our accounts, which is 5%, and we have firm commitments for another 24 million dollars. Put together they make 50 million which is five plus five, ten percent.

In May the rainy season starts - that is in two and a half months really. At that point the roads will be blocked for our movement for several more months. So if donors are waiting for the Donors' Conference in Oslo in mid-April to make pledges and then to transfer money to us in the middle of the year, they are making a historic mistake

because that money will not be perhaps effective really before the very end of the year or early next year and we will lose peace year 2005.

So my appeal to the donors is: come with your pledges – not only your pledges – come with your money now because NGOs and agencies are well under capacity in southern Sudan at the moment and combatants are not being given a peaceful alternative and refugees are not given assistance.

**Q:** About the figure of the UN people who are coming to Darfur, are they, the 10,000, soldiers or UN staff?

**A:** The UN mission has not been decided upon in a final form or shape but it will be a sizeable mission both in terms of peacekeepers and civilian staff and we believe, when it comes, it will help build peace in Sudan – especially the North-South dimension.

In Darfur, it is, however, the African Union which is our international response and therefore we need to help the African Union to succeed and build a much bigger force than the one they have in place today.

**Q:** In the south, do you think the 50 billion dollars a year to be spent in peacekeeping will better be spent for development?

**A:** If the world gives us a billion dollars, or whatever in the end it might be, for peacekeeping and no money to reintegrate the combatants or to feed the population or give education and employment opportunities, then the whole mission will be undermined. This is a clear experience from Liberia and from the Congo and elsewhere. The world has to respond with more than the peacekeeping mission.

The reverse is, in a way, the fact in Darfur. The world is responding generously to very courageous humanitarian workers but not responding with a sizeable peacekeeping or peacemaking mission.

**Q:** The UN or the Commission of Inquiry has issued a list of suspects of war crimes committed in Darfur. In the meantime atrocities and rapes continue in the region. In your opinion, don't you think that the two rebel forces and militias and the government are just using the delay from the Security Council in issuing a resolution on how to try those suspects on Darfur to continue the atrocities there?

**A:** How they think I do not know. The question is whether the delay in implementing the Commission of Inquiry's recommendations and so on is making it possible for those who abuse human rights to continue. I think that it is slowly sinking in by all those that one day they will be held accountable for what they are doing.

We are now in the year 2005. Those days are gone when you forget about mass murder and it will not be forgotten in Darfur and one day people will be held accountable. It is a vicious circle of violence now and it will be hard to break it but it is possible. The government can do more, the rebels can do more, the ethnic leaders can do much more as well and we in the international community can do much more and the African Union is all in this as a great force because it is doing a great job.

**Q:** What are the reasons for the delay in the implementation of the southern peace deal? It is quite behind at the moment. And also do you think it is endangering the peace process in the south?

**A:** I know a little bit of peace processes; I have participated in a dozen of them – in Middle-east, in Latin America, Africa and Asia. And yes, I know that it is a danger for a peace process if it loses momentum. I do not think this has lost momentum. I think there is a very clear momentum. I have spoken to the government in Khartoum and with the SPLM in Rumbek and they are committed to follow through on their agreement but they are also concerned that there are delays and they are concerned of the lack of investment in the humanitarian and development side of peace implementation. But I think we all have to believe now that the peace will be implemented as agreed because the alternative is too terrible to think through really. We have a good chance of making the peace hold and it is a very encouraging sign that returnees are now coming. We went to a place in South Sudan called Warrap where many, many trucks come everyday with returnees from, primarily, South Darfur and there are many such places. These people are now staking their lives and their futures on the peace process holding and we have a big obligation in following through on this.

**Q:** What about the reasons for the delay?

**A:** The reasons for the delay are many. I think the lack of capacity in the SPLA/M is one element, the general mistrust among the parties built up over a generation of war is another element, the complex nature of such a complex peace agreement is also another one. But I think that we will, here in Khartoum, soon see the transitional team from the SPLM. I think we will see the implementation of the peace agreement. I do think that we will see Vice-president Garang and I believe that Sudan has turned a corner in this sense. I also believe that we have seen the worst of times in Darfur and I believe, because I don't see an alternative to that, that those government officials who say that, there will not be a repeat of Labado or Hamada. As late as December and January, we saw horrific massacres and burning down of villages. We must all say this must never happen again and now our main effort must be to end the daily violence against civilians – one-in-one or in groups, that are taking place.

**Q:** What new steps or measures are being considered in respect to what happened in Democratic republic of Congo concerning sexual activities being committed by UN troops on the ground there? What steps are going to be considered to be acted on the UN troops who are going to contribute in South Sudan?

**A:** We will have extreme measures of training of the troops, holding them and all of their commanders accountable for their behavior.

If we are to have any credibility as UN forces or employees, we must be examples to others in upholding human rights and humanitarian principles and not abuse those principles that we ourselves have enacted. It's training, it's accountability, it's monitoring in a very different manner than it happened in the Congo. It has been a very costly lesson for all including the UN there.

**Q:** So are there going to be penalties?

**A:** To do a sexual abuse is an act of crime and people have already been arrested for that.

Thank you very much.