

**UNITED NATIONS MISSION IN SUDAN  
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(By Public Information Office)

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***UN rights team cancels Darfur visit over visa row***

*(Reuters; the local press)* United Nations human rights investigators on Wednesday called off a visit to Darfur after Sudanese officials demanded the removal of the U.N.'s former top rights official from the group.

The six-member team, set up last December by the U.N. Human Rights Council after fierce debate between countries defending Khartoum and others accusing Sudan of war crimes in Darfur, said it would pursue its work without entering the country.

The group had been due to arrive in Sudan on Tuesday on the second stage of a two-month mission to look into alleged abuses against civilians in the vast, arid region where experts estimate that 200,000 have been killed and 2.5 million driven from their homes in some four years of conflict.

Earlier this week Sudan's Foreign Ministry said it would not let the new U.N. team — headed by 1997 Nobel Peace co-laureate Jody Williams — into the country unless it dropped one member - Bertrand Ramcharan Guyanan who was the U.N.'s Acting High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2003-2004 and sent the world body's first rights team to Darfur.

In a statement issued in Geneva, the team made no direct reference to Ramcharan, saying only it "can no longer allow the continued uncertainty regarding visas from Sudan to impede the continuance of the mission."

The group, in Addis Ababa where it held talks with African Union (AU) and U.N. representatives and regional human rights bodies, would continue its work "and collect all relevant information from locations outside the country (Sudan)."

***Foreign ministry expresses disappointment over decision to withdraw the rights team***

Meanwhile, the local press (*AlSudani, et al*) report that foreign ministry Spokesperson Ali el-Sadiq expressed dissatisfaction yesterday following news of the United Nations decision to withdraw its rights body.

He defended the government's decision to reject the inclusion of some members to that team but said it was their hope that the rights body would not have made this latest move and pointed out that drafting a report on the situation in Darfur without touring the region itself will only be dubbed as lacking because it will not reflect the situation on the ground. This, he said, will also shade doubts on the organisation's credibility.

### ***SPLM expresses disappointment***

The SPLM has, on its part, expressed dissatisfaction over the government decision to bar the rights team from entering the country should it not replace a member in its team (*AlRai AlAam* quotes).

The SPLM deplored the fact that the government did not consult them on the decision to bar the rights team entry to the country.

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### **Commentary/ Opinion piece:**

#### ***The Ramcharan Curse***

Under this heading, Dhia-el-deen Bilal writing in *AlSahafa* warns that all does not spell well following the decision by the government to bar the United Nations rights team from entering the country and wonders whether the decision taken by the foreign ministry on the grounds that a member of the team was a persona non grata was well studied.

He wonders whether the government was trying to save face and demonstrate political willpower before letting go and all this in preparation for a more fiercer future battle.

He points out however that the government may not have timed its move well as the delegation decided to leave to prepare drafting its report which it will hand over to the rights council as scheduled.

He said that the return of the rights team will only send a negative signal that the government wanted to use its views on Ramcharan as an excuse to bar the team out from the country. The writer goes on to point out that should the other members of the team have agreed to the visit without Ramcharan then their credibility would have been at stake.

The writer intimates that the whole fiasco is a confirmation of the rumours of the conflicts simmering within the foreign ministry. He points out that the ofreign ministry was originally opposed to three members of the team, then cut that down to two and finally ended up with Mr. Ramcharan.

The writer winds up by saying that this only shows that most of the ills that befall the government are actually concocted from within its closets (internal conflicts) and not through people like Jan Egeland, Prendergaast or Ramcharan.