

# Sudan: World pushing Darfur peacekeeping operation to brink of failure

Report from [Darfur Consortium](#)

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New report finds peacekeepers lacking support and failing to protect civilians

(KAMPALA, July 28) The failure of world leaders to keep their promises on peacekeeping has condemned millions of Darfurians to more fear and suffering, without protection from violence, according to a new report released today by the Darfur Consortium, a coalition of more than 50 African and international human rights and civil society organisations.

The report, [Putting People First: The Protection Challenge Facing UNAMID in Darfur](#), reviews the performance of the Darfur peacekeeping force (UNAMID) in the six months since it was deployed. Based on interviews with Darfurians, experts and aid workers, it depicts a force hamstrung by lack of equipment, training and uniformed personnel, and by its own shortcomings, and concludes that many Darfurians feel no safer than they did before the force arrived.

Dismas Nkunda, spokesperson for the Darfur Consortium, said:

'The people of Darfur deserve more than empty words and broken promises. One year ago the UN Security Council stood unanimous and promised Darfurians the strongest and largest protection force ever. Today that force is just over a third deployed, lacks even the most basic equipment and is unable to protect itself let alone civilians. The international community needs to urgently bolster its support to the brave, mostly African peacekeepers. The truth is stark but simple, the international community's failure to act is costing lives.'

UNAMID currently has a little over 9,000 of the 26,000 troops promised - the majority simply re-hatted from the previous African Union peacekeepers. The force lacks helicopters and armoured vehicles and is so woefully under-resourced that some former AU soldiers have been reduced to painting their helmets blue to denote that they are now a part of a UN mission. The lack of new troops means that the current peacekeepers are unable to leave their field posts and receive the latest UN training.

There are numerous guilty parties responsible for this failure. The Government of Sudan has rejected many vital troop offers; donor nations have not pledged enough equipment; and the UN and AU have been too slow to deploy. UNAMID itself could be acting more proactively on the ground.

While UNAMID urgently needs more support, the report concludes that the force could already be having a greater impact on people's lives. It says that UNAMID could do more to prioritise key protection activities, and that inconsistent interpretation of its mandate has hampered its

impact on the ground. Although UNAMID does not have the capacity to respond to large-scale fighting, it could do more to protect people from the day-to-day violence that scars their lives - such as preventing attacks on women as they collect firewood. The report says commanders must prioritise regular patrolling in camps and rural areas, and along main roads to help facilitate the safe delivery of humanitarian aid. As soon as capacity allows, it should also maintain patrols and presence throughout the night, when much of the violence happens. In many locations, UNAMID currently patrols only in daylight hours. These activities should be coordinated with communities.

Where such activities have been carried out, the report finds they have made a positive difference. However, they do not happen nearly often enough. One Darfurian woman quoted in the report said: 'We go out to collect firewood two or three times a week and I'm scared all day. I wish UNAMID would come with us. Sometimes armed men rob us or beat us. Some women have been raped or killed. If UNAMID came with us these men would not dare to attack us.'

Recent weeks have starkly illustrated the challenges facing UNAMID troops on the ground. On 8 July, the deadliest attack on the force so far left seven African peacekeepers killed and others critically wounded. A few days later another was shot dead.

Nkunda said: 'These killings should shake us all, and the deaths of these brave African soldiers should not be in vain. Without more support, UNAMID is tragically doomed to fail. The international community must urgently ensure that the force has the equipment and troops it was promised, and the Sudanese government must cooperate fully and quickly. This is a crisis that needs open heart surgery, but instead the world only wants to apply sticking plasters. Every day's delay condemns Darfurians to yet more misery.'

Emmanuel Jal, the Sudanese musician and former child soldier, endorsed the report: 'As a citizen of Sudan, I am standing by my brothers and sisters in Darfur. I survived the 20 year war that raged between north and south Sudan, and it pains me to the core to see history repeating itself again in Darfur. UNAMID could make a real difference to people's lives - but only if the international community gives it the support that it deserves. For five long years, Darfuris have asked for one of the most basic human rights - to be protected from violence. We cannot let them down.'