

Statement attributable to the United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Mr. Ali Al-Za'tari

Khartoum, 25 February 2013. The United Nations Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Mr. Ali Al-Za'tari, has expressed profound concern about the safety and well-being of civilians in El Sireaf town, North Darfur. The town is crowded with some 60,000 people who sought refuge there when fighting broke out between Northern Rezeigat tribesmen and the Beni Hussein tribe following a dispute in the Jebel Amir gold mining area in early January. The renewed fighting that erupted on 21 February when Northern Rezeigat tribesmen attacked El Sireaf town has highlighted once again the vulnerability of civilians in the area.

Local authorities reported that over fifty people were killed during the fighting on 21 February and that many others were injured. Humanitarian organizations have been coordinating closely with local government authorities and with the UNAMID peacekeeping mission in Darfur to deliver urgently needed surgical supplies and to evacuate seriously wounded people.

Mr. Al-Za'tari said that he is concerned that more civilians will flee the area unless the fighting is brought to a complete halt and a lasting solution to the conflict is found. "Our joint priority with the government, UNAMID and all partners in the region is to ensure the safety and security of all civilians in the area and to provide much needed humanitarian assistance," said Mr. Al-Za'tari.

During a recent meeting with the Governor of North Darfur, Mr. Al-Za'tari stressed that the United Nations and its humanitarian partners will continue their efforts to meet the needs of all civilians affected by the Jebel Amir crisis. He highlighted the fact that humanitarian organizations have delivered over 700 metric tones of food and other relief supplies to the area in the last month and called on the authorities to continue facilitating access for humanitarian workers so that they can provide life-saving assistance to all those who need it. In response to the Governor's request for UN assistance in ensuring the success of a peaceful settlement between the two warring tribes Mr. Al-Za'tari assured the Governor that the UN will provide the necessary expertise in conflict resolution as and when requested by the Governor.

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