

Commissioner Chris Patten
DG External Relations
Rue de la loi 200
1049 Bruxelles

23rd April 2004

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to express my concern about the worsening conflict in Sudan. The situation there has been described by the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Sudan as the world's worst current crisis and the UN Secretary General has himself expressed "grave concern" about the scale of the human rights abuses in the Darfur region of the country.

Whilst the UN Commission has sent a fact-finding mission to Sudan, it has yet to gain access to Darfur, which makes it difficult to estimate the full scale of the atrocities there. Nonetheless, the fact-finding mission has reported that Government-supported militias "have operated with total impunity and in close coordination with the government of Sudan" and that "the pattern of attacks on civilians includes killing, rape, pillage, including of livestock, and destruction of property, including water sources."

Besides the brutality of these crimes in themselves, a serious consequence has been the more than 100,000 people who have fled the region and who are seeking refuge in neighbouring Chad.

Given the violence of this war and the severe human rights violations taking place, and in the hope that the Rwandan genocide not be repeated, I urge the Commission to urgently put pressure on the Government of Sudan to halt the actions of the militias and to disband them. The Commission should also seek to ensure that humanitarian workers are given unimpeded access to the Darfur region; that national reconciliation is promoted; and that an independent international commission of inquiry is set up to identify crimes committed by all sides.

I look forward to hearing what action the Commission is taking on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Caroline Lucas MEP