

Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

UN DEPLORES SAVAGE ATTACK ON AID WORKERS IN DARFUR

(New York, 21 September 2007): On 20 September, a convoy of two World Vision International (WVI) vehicles with eight people on board was ambushed in South Darfur near Bulbul Timisgo, a small village on the main road between Nyala and Kass. The vehicles were clearly marked as humanitarian transport.

Two WVI staff were shot in the head, and a third in the arm. The remaining staff suffered minor injuries caused by glass fragments and shrapnel. On the request of the non-governmental organization (NGO), the United Nations arranged for medical evacuation. Upon arrival in Nyala, two of those shot were flown to Khartoum for medical attention, while one was treated in Nyala due to the severity of his injuries. The other five World Vision staff were treated and released. All have survived the attack.

“This is a horrifying and brutal attack on aid staff who are working to save the lives of Sudanese people,” said John Holmes, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. “We call on the Government of Sudan to act with all speed to identify those responsible and ensure that they are held accountable for their crime,” he added.

Clashes among rival Arab tribes in this area in 2007 have caused significant levels of destruction and displacement. The area is also beset by banditry and violence.

World Vision, one of the world’s largest NGOs, provides a wide range of relief assistance in South Darfur, with projects in food aid, nutrition, water, education, sanitation, and agriculture, among others. They employ several hundred staff there.

Attacks against relief workers increased by 150% from June 2006 to June 2007. Since the start of the year, some 98 vehicles have been hijacked, some 105 staff were temporarily taken hostage, more than 66 humanitarian personnel have been physically or sexually assaulted, and 61 convoys have been ambushed and looted. Those responsible are groups of armed men whose origins are often hard to ascertain with certainty. In other words, those who have come to help the population are increasingly targeted themselves.

In 2007, the aid community has sought \$1.25 billion for humanitarian action in Sudan, including \$652 million for Darfur.