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PRESS STATEMENT

From Andrew S. Natsios, USAID Administrator and Special Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan

U.S. CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE HUMANITARIAN ACCESS IN DARFUR, SUDAN

WASHINGTON, DC —The United States Government expresses grave concern over the recent escalation of the already dramatic humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Western Sudan. The United Nations estimates that 20,000 new refugees have arrived in neighboring Chad in the past two weeks, and another 30,000 crossed the border during December. There are now more than 100,000 refugees from Darfur in Chad. The conflict has displaced an estimated 600,000 people within Darfur and affected another three million. There is no humanitarian access to most of the affected population in Darfur. Significant hunger is reported, raising the prospect of a looming human catastrophe.

The United States deplores the recent bombing in Tine that continues the pattern of indiscriminate attacks on civilians, and the gross abuses of human rights that are widely reported, such as torture and rape. The United States calls upon all parties to the conflict in Darfur to facilitate immediate, safe, and unimpeded access for humanitarian organizations to all in need and to abide by international humanitarian law. The United States strongly urges the parties to agree immediately to an independently monitored humanitarian ceasefire that covers all armed groups. The United States reaffirms its commitment to addressing the immediate protection and assistance needs of those in Darfur, as well as throughout Sudan, including humanitarian cross border operations if assistance cannot be provided through Sudan. The United States looks to the United Nations to lead this humanitarian effort in Darfur, and urges the parties to the Darfur conflict to resolve their issues peacefully.

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