

Egypt: Government Frees Detained Sudanese Refugees
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Egypt: Government Frees Detained Sudanese Refugees

Human Rights Watch played a key role in helping to stop the deportation of hundreds of Sudanese demonstrators who were violently removed from their Cairo encampment by Egyptian police. Approximately 3,000 Sudanese refugees and migrants lived in a makeshift camp for migrants and refugees, which had been the site of a three-month protest over living conditions. On December 30, 2005, around 4,000 Egyptian police surrounded the camp, fired water cannons into the crowd, and beat protestors. At the end of the melee, at least 27 people, including one child, had been killed.



Sudanese refugees living in Cairo. At least 27 people were killed when Egyptian police attacked protestors living in a refugee encampment. © 2005/Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch spoke out publicly against the brutal and indiscriminate nature of the assault and met with Egypt's ambassador in Washington. We emphasized the separation of children from their parents and the loss of key personal documents as a result of the police violence. Following the detention of hundreds of people, we expressed concern that those slated for deportation to Sudan could be at risk of persecution in that country, especially those from the Darfur region. International law prohibits the return of refugees to places where they face persecution. Based in part on our advocacy, the Egyptian government subsequently released all detainees from Darfur, along with women, children, and those who were previously granted refugee or asylum-seeker status. As of yet, there have been no deportations. Human Rights Watch continues to call for an independent investigation to determine responsibility for the police attack.

African Union Summit Rejects Sudan Presidency

African leaders attending the 53-nation African Union (A.U.) summit turned down Sudan's bid to lead the A.U. this year, announcing that Congo-Brazzaville will assume the leadership instead. Pressure to reject Sudan's bid came from leading human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, which has extensively documented Sudan's involvement in war crimes and crimes against humanity in the western state of Darfur. In a report released prior to the summit, we called on the A.U. to preserve its credibility by denying Sudan the presidency. Our research and advocacy last year helped bring the crimes committed by the Sudanese government and its militias to the attention of the International Criminal Court, which is currently conducting an investigation to prepare for trials of the accused. We will continue efforts to block Sudan's presidency in coming years, so long as the human rights disaster in Darfur continues. We are also pressing the A.U. military force in Darfur to take tougher measures to protect civilians from the ongoing violence.

Morocco: Government Vows to Stop Child Domestic Labor

Following a Human Rights Watch report documenting the tens of thousands of girls employed as domestic workers in Morocco, the government's secretary of state for family, solidarity, and social action stated publicly that Morocco was working on legislation to prohibit employment of child domestics, and creating prevention programs to target regions where the practice is most prevalent. Human Rights Watch's report documented cases of girls as young as five working 100 or more hours per week, without rest breaks or days off, for as little six and a half Moroccan dirhams (about 70 U.S. cents) a day. These girls are often exposed to physical and even sexual abuse, and denied schooling. Our report held the Moroccan government responsible for neglecting the basic labor rights of children, and made recommendations to improve labor standards and protect children from abuses.

IN THE NEWS

[Libyan Rights Reforms Incomplete](#)

Back from a recent trip to Libya, Executive Director Kenneth Roth writes in the *International Herald Tribune* that, despite government claims to the contrary, Libya has yet to take the steps necessary to free civil society and uphold international human rights.

[Long-Awaited Justice for Habré's Victims?](#)

In the *International Herald Tribune*, Souleymane Guengueng, a 2002 Human Rights Watch honoree, describes his years as a political prisoner under former Chadian dictator Hissène Habré, and pushes for the deposed leader's extradition to Belgium to face trial for crimes against humanity.

[U.S. Abuses Continue at Guantánamo](#)

U.S. Program Counterterrorism Counsel Katherine Newell Bierman, writing from Guantánamo Bay, calls on the Bush Administration to put an end to the still widespread mistreatment of detainees at the base, four years after it first opened.

[U.S. Disdain Threatens New U.N. Human Rights Council](#)

Global Advocacy Director Peggy Hicks, writing in the *International Herald Tribune*, argues that the lack of U.S. support for critical reforms threatens the creation of a new, more effective U.N. human rights body.

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