**As Sudan Moves to Expel UN Officials from W.Darfur for Hunger Petitions, UN Silent on Kidnappers of Pilot, Inviting More**

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August 16

The Inner City Press

*http://www.innercitypress.com/dpko8sudan081610.html*

UNITED NATIONS, August 16 -- The UN in Sudan is like a beaten spouse. It just keeps taking it and staying silent, hoping things get better. But in this case, the UN's silence hurts not only itself but those civilians the UN is charged with protecting.

After a weekend in which two UN peacekeepers were taken hostage in South Darfur, and three UN officials reported threatened with expulsion in West Darfur, Inner City Press asked UN acting Deputy Spokesman Farhan Haq about the incidents, and if the UN was finally ready to say who kidnapped its Russian pilot nearly a month ago. Video here, from Minute 8:11.

While the kidnappers' identity as government supported janjaweed militias has been widely reported, Haq said “I don't have anything further to say.” When the pilot was released, the UN said he would rest and then be interviewed as to who had taken him. But nothing has been said since.

Likewise despite reports in a newspaper in Jordan, from where the two just abducted peacekeepers come, that their kidnappers have made demands for reform of UNAMID, just as Sudanese authorities are making, Haq said the UN would say “nothing further at this time,” that the UN is “working for their safe release.”

This was the approach taken to the Russian pilot: but once released, there was no accountability for the kidnapping. Does it surprise the UN that given this impunity and the UN's silence, there are more kidnappings?

On the threatened expulsions from West Darfur -- Haq initially said they were from the Kalma Camp, which is in South Darfur -- it is reported on the UN's own ReliefWeb that one of the UN officials is being targeted because he forwarded a petition about eliminating hunger without the government's approval. Inner City Press asked, do UN officials accept that they need government approval, in Sudan or elsewhere, to forward such petitions? Video here, from Minute 11:31.

“I'm not aware that is a central issue,” Haq said, adding he would say nothing else because “discussions are ongoing with the government in Khartoum.” Like we said, the UN is like a battered spouse, getting hit, kidnapped and expelled but staying quiet, then surprised that it just keeps happening. But the UN is supposed to be protecting civilians: its silence hurts them as well. Watch this site.