

Russia Wants Reuters Reporter Fired Over Darfur

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Women welcome a military convoy of government forces accompanying Special Prosecutor for Crimes in Darfur Yasir Ahmed Mohamed and his team after they arrived in Tabit village in North Darfur Nov. 20.

Russia's United Nations mission has cracked down on the leading news agency Reuters, demanding that it fire a reporter who accused Russia of withholding information about Darfur.

Louis Charbonneau's report was a piece of "dirty journalism," the mission said in a statement carried by Russian news agency RIA Novosti.

A story with Charbonneau's byline claimed that a Russian representative on the joint UN-African Union Mission was withholding information from the UN headquarters and the Security Council on the bloodshed in Sudan's Darfur region.

The story, out Monday, cited unnamed UN diplomats as saying Russian diplomat Karen Tchalian's effort distorted the facts about war-torn Darfur, creating the impression that things there were improving.

The story had comments from Tchalian and Russia's UN mission, both saying they were not aware about any complaints concerning the alleged fact-rigging.

The mission took offense of Charbonneau's claim that the U.S., France and Britain had all sought Tchalian's removal, saying the claim was misreporting that should result in the firing of the reporter and his editor.

Reuters had not commented as of Wednesday evening.

According to UN estimates, about 300,000 people have died since 2003 in Darfur, where ethnic Arab militias backed by the Sudanese government have conducted ethnic cleansing of non-Arab inhabitants of the arid region.

Russia was accused by Amnesty International of supplying arms to the Sudanese government in violation of a UN arms embargo, a claim Moscow denied.

The International Criminal Court said last week it was shelving the probe against Sudanese authorities because it was unable to advance the investigation.

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