

Genocide Emergency: Blue Nile State, Sudan

09 March 2012

In September 2011, widespread violence erupted in the Blue Nile state of Sudan. Fighting between the SPLM-N and the Sudan Armed Forces spread from South Kordofan into the Blue Nile state, located in the south - eastern part of Northern Sudan. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced since the start of the conflict. Many have fled to South Sudan and Ethiopia.

There are many similarities between the violence in Blue Nile state and South Kordofan. Both states supported the SPLM/A during the civil war. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), stopped the North-South civil war in which over two million people died, and paved the way for South Sudan's independence. After the referendum, many South Sudanese refugees made their way back home.

Under the CPA, Khartoum was required to downsize its forces in the Blue Nile state. But in the wake of South Sudan's independence the government instead increased the number of its troops in the region. The CPA also promised "popular consultations" which would give the Blue Nile state the right to determine the nature of its ongoing relationship with Khartoum after the Southern self-determination referendum. However, many of the CPA's stipulations have been violated. The Sudanese government fears that with South Sudan's secession, marginalized groups in the North could topple the government. The al-Bashir regime, therefore, has launched a campaign to eradicate all non-Arab groups before they can demand their rights.

In early September of 2011, President al-Bashir announced a state of emergency in Blue Nile. He then dismissed the state governor, Malik Agar of the SPLM/A, and shut down the SPLM/A headquarters in Khartoum. The government announced that it was appointing a military ruler for the state. The decision came after the Sudanese Armed Forces claimed they were attacked by the SPLM/A. However, Malik Agar, the former governor of the Blue Nile accused the SAF of provoking the violence by launching the first attack. Satellite imagery from the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative has identified evidence of aggression by the SAF.

Khartoum's military offensive was well planned, according to the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS). The government requested body bags prior to the fighting. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that an estimated 16,000 people have moved from Blue Nile into South Sudan. The UNHCR estimates 36,000 Sudanese refugees are living in Ethiopia. There has been a massive exodus from al Damazin, the state capital.

The Sudanese Armed Forces are using the same brutal tactics they used in Darfur. They have looted, burned down villages, raped, tortured, and detained civilians. Thousands of civilians have been killed or wounded by relentless aerial attacks. The Sudanese government is restricting humanitarian aid from entering Blue Nile state. The international media have been excluded, because Khartoum wants to launch its genocidal campaign in secret.

Genocide Watch has declared that the massacres in the Blue Nile State constitute a Genocide Emergency. In accord with our eight stages of genocide, Blue Nile state, Sudan is ranked at Stage 7 (Extermination) and 8 (Denial).

- Genocide Watch is deeply concerned about the deterioration of the situation in Blue Nile State and South Kordofan. We call upon all parties to declare an immediate cease-fire.
- We urge the government of Sudan to stop using food as a weapon of war and to allow international humanitarian access to all affected regions.
- We call upon the government of Sudan to immediately cease all aerial bombardment in the Blue Nile State. Genocide Watch recommends that a “passive” no fly zone be imposed over the Blue Nile State, in which aircraft used to bomb civilians would be destroyed on the ground at their bases by cruise missiles fired from NATO ships in the Indian Ocean.
- Genocide Watch recommends strict adherence to the terms of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.