

## Humanitarian Conditions in Darfur: A Climate of Violence and Extreme Insecurity

By Eric Reeves  
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By way of introduction to a forthcoming overview of humanitarian conditions in Darfur, I offer here a current account of the insecurity that has long badly compromised operations of both UN agencies and International Nongovernmental (Humanitarian) Organizations (INGOs). Security conditions have been intolerable for many years now (see declaration to this effect by fourteen UN organizations in January 2007—[Appendix 1](#)); over the past year and more, however, violence has called into serious question the viability of any substantial ongoing relief efforts in the region. Virtually no international (expatriate) staff remain in Darfur, certainly not in the field or in remote locations—either for critical assessment work or to provide oversight for aid distribution. And as the [recent killing of two workers for World Vision](#) in their Nyala compound makes clear, there is no place of real safety in Darfur: Nyala is the largest city in Darfur, and yet was overrun by militia forces allied with the regime. Police reportedly looked on without acting. Threats are everywhere as lawlessness and a deliberately chaotic violence are countenanced, even encouraged by Khartoum as yet another means of waging a savage war of attrition against the civilians of Darfur for their supposed assistance to rebel groups.

Much of the violence is now beyond Khartoum's control, as it can no longer promise seized lands as reward for military service: there is none that is unoccupied or unspoken for. Opportunistic banditry has grown steadily and become a deeply debilitating threat to humanitarian operations. Fighting among Arab tribal groups has been a constant for a number of years, and has contributed steadily to instability and violence in Darfur. For example, recent violence between the Salamat and Misseriya tribes in West Darfur has been the main engine of displacement in the area around Um Dukkun, [driving 50,000 civilians from Darfur into eastern Chad](#), where resources are already inadequate (operations in Chad must work through the N'Djamena and the west coast of Africa). Within Darfur, after years of fighting, many of those who might moderate the violence within the militia groups have left, leaving only the most hardened and brutal elements working at Khartoum's behest. There are increasingly violent confrontations between rogue militia forces and Khartoum's own security forces and local police. And there is still significant inter-tribal violence involving Arab and non-Arab groups, demonstrated by the recent fighting between the Gimir and Beni Halba in South Darfur.

[For an earlier survey of violence and insecurity in the region, see "Human Security in Darfur Enters Free-fall," March 20, 2013, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=3838>]

Perhaps the most ominous portent of continuing violence is the refusal of armed Arab pastoralist groups and militias to allow African farmers to return to their lands. Radio Dabanga (<http://www.radiodabanga.org/>) has long reported on the threats and violence that face civilians attempting to resume farming their lands, or even to gather forage and wood. Militias also engage in extortion schemes, demanding from farmers in camps outrageous sums simply to use their own land and equipment. And violence directed against the displaced, in camps and even in urban environments, has dramatically increased—the July 4 attack on Nyala offering the most conspicuous evidence (for telling examples of such threats against civilians, see [Appendix 2](#)).

But if Khartoum can no longer control all the violent forces in Darfur, it can pick and choose where to respond to violence—and where not to. The regime's primary concern at present seems to be the gold mines near Jebel Amir in North Darfur, as the Sudanese economy continues to collapse for lack of foreign exchange currency. This has resulted in extremely serious fighting between Northern Rizeigat (from which *Janjaweed* fighters were heavily drawn) and the Beni Hussein, the Arab group in whose Locality the Jebel Amir gold mines lie. This violence in turn has had a massive spill-over effect. Violence in the Hashaba area (also North Darfur) last September was responsible for a great number of civilian casualties, many in the course of what were atrocity crimes. A robust patrol force from the UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), while on its way on its way to Hashaba in October 2012 to investigate events, came under extremely heavy fire from an elevated location in a well-planned ambush designed to prevent UNAMID from proceeding with its investigation (see "Violence in Hashaba, North Darfur: A brutal portent, another UN disgrace," October 30, 2012, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=3525>). This was clearly at Khartoum's behest.

Khartoum has deliberately crippled UNAMID as an effective force for civilian and humanitarian protection. Opposed from the beginning by the regime, the mission cannot begin to fulfill its UN Security Council civilian protection mandate, and indeed operates only insofar as Khartoum's security forces permit. Denial of access is commonplace, despite a Status of Forces Agreement (February 2008) that guarantees freedom of movement. More outrageously, Khartoum's militia proxies have been implicated in a number of deadly attacks on UNAMID forces—such as occurred near Hashaba and more recently 15 miles northwest of UNAMID's Khor Abeche base (South Darfur), and only a few miles off the main Nyala/el-Fasher road (seven UNAMID troops from Tanzania were killed).

None of those responsible for any of the numerous attacks has been apprehended or identified; yet there is overwhelming evidence that they were acting on behalf of the regime's security forces (see "Killing UN Peacekeepers: A Ruthless Proclivity of Khartoum's SAF, Militia Proxies," May 9, 2013, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=3960>). More than 50 UNAMID personnel have been killed in attacks such as those near Hashaba and Khor Abeche since January 2008, and a great many more have been wounded, often severely. It is fulsome nonsense for UN head of peacekeeping Hervé Ladsous to declare that UNAMID "has the inherent robustness to deal with the situation" in Darfur (Agence France-Presse [Khartoum], [July 2013](#)); all evidence to date suggests that this a profound misrepresentation, and on a number of occasions UNAMID has been forced into a hasty retreat by forces more numerous or more heavily armed.

One measure of the failure of UNAMID, and the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) before it, is the shocking number of humanitarian workers killed, injured, and kidnapped: the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), in its most recent Aid Worker Security Database, reveals that since 2003, 47 aid workers have been killed, 139 injured and 71 abducted in Darfur. Almost half those humanitarians killed have lost their lives following UNAMID's taking over (January 1, 2008) from its weak predecessor, AMIS. These OCHA figures likely understate the violence against relief workers: there has been at least one rape of an expatriate woman working for a major international relief organization. It was not publicized at the victim's request, nor have other incidents involving sexual violence and abuse. For its part, Khartoum simply refuses to provide protection to even the most vulnerable assistance personnel.

Darfur is simply not a "consensual" environment for humanitarian efforts; no organization would enter the region under present circumstances. And yet both OCHA and the INGOs know that if they withdraw, there will be a catastrophic collapse in the provision of food, medical, water, and sanitary conditions, as well as shelter. To be sure, these are already drastically limited by insecurity, obstruction by Khartoum's security forces, and the general attrition endured by an operation now ten years old. But precipitous or even rapid withdrawal would be devastating for the more 2 million people who are dependent on assistance simply to survive. Moreover, the elimination of witnesses belonging to international organizations, even if Sudanese nationals, is a goal toward which Khartoum has moved relentlessly for years.

This has effort to make of Darfur a "black box" has entailed a number of actions:

- Denying access to human rights reporters, and tightly controlling the movements of UN officials charged with monitoring a range of human rights abuses;
- Denying access to international journalists, except under tightly controlled conditions and locations (Military Intelligence, a fearsomely efficient branch of the security services, has long taken Darfur as its particular concern);
- The continuing expulsion of humanitarian organizations on preposterous charges; thirteen organization were expelled in early March 2009, preposterously accused of "espionage." This represented roughly half the humanitarian capacity in the region according to a well-placed UN humanitarian official. And there were earlier expulsions as well as several subsequent expulsions, some of the latter highly consequential (e.g., Médecins du Monde was expelled by Khartoum from the Jebel Marra region and Darfur as a whole);

- Preventing by means of intimidation UN officials (and thus even more vulnerable INGO officials) from promulgating crucial data bearing on malnutrition levels, morbidity and mortality, and a range of other key indicators; the reports summarizing these data and providing a more global perspective on humanitarian conditions in Darfur have been repeatedly suppressed by Khartoum's officials (see "Darfur Humanitarian Overview," January 23, 2011, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=2298>).

- Delaying or refusing to grant visas for Sudan and travel permits for Darfur; additionally, equipment, medical supplies, even food has been held up gratuitously on many occasions as a way of further attenuating humanitarian capacity; following the broad expulsions of INGOs in March 2009, very substantial resources and funds were appropriated by the regime, denying these humanitarian organizations the ability to deploy them to other crisis areas in the world. It was the price that had to be paid in order to secure exit visas for all expatriate workers.

### **Current Security Conditions Affecting Humanitarian Work**

Violence in Darfur has ebbed and flowed since the rebellion began in 2003; if the first three years of the genocide were the most violently destructive, attacks on civilians and humanitarians have been continual. Minni Minawi—a Zaghawa and the only rebel signatory to the ill-fated Darfur Peace Agreement (Abuja 2006)—defected from the Khartoum regime in late 2010, producing a vast spasm of violence in eastern Darfur that has continued to expand into other regions (authoritatively documented by Claudio Gramizzi and Jérôme Tubiana, "Forgotten Darfur: Old Tactics and New Players," (Small Arms Survey, [July 2012](http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/July2012)). Unfortunately such reporting is highly unusual, and is certainly not within the capabilities of the current UN Panel of Experts on Darfur (earlier work by the UN Panel was exceptionally rigorous). Except for the extraordinary reporting of Radio Dabanga ([www.radiodabanga.org](http://www.radiodabanga.org)), we would have virtually nothing; in fact, Radio Dabanga is often the only source of information about Darfur cited by OCHA's Sudan "News Aggregator" (<http://www.unocha.org/aggregator/sources/78>); it is also cited by the UN's Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN).

[For an overview of humanitarian conditions in Darfur as of **February 2013**, drawing heavily on the reports of Radio Dabanga, see: "Humanitarian Conditions in Darfur: The most recent reports reveal a relentless deterioration," <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=3790>]

What is notable about the violence is how much of it is directed not against rebel forces, but civilians as well as UN and humanitarian officials. Much of this is carried out by militias either allied with Khartoum and its Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) or essentially tolerated as a means of ensuring that a debilitating chaos continues to define Darfur. Moreover, Khartoum acquired the services of the *Janjaweed* in a great many cases with promises of land, specifically the land of the non-Arab, or African, farmers in more fertile areas. One of the defining features of violence in Darfur has long been the refusal by Arab militia groups that served Khartoum's genocidal counter-insurgency efforts to allow displaced farmers to return to their land. In the past several years this dynamic has played out in increasingly violent ways (see [Appendix 2](#)).

### **The intersection of violence and humanitarian capabilities**

In understanding the challenges posed by violence to humanitarian efforts in Darfur, there are a number of important features defining the operating environment. It is first of all an extremely deadly place for both civilians and humanitarians. As noted above, 47 humanitarians have been killed, and 139 wounded (some very seriously). Civilian casualties to date have been staggering. And although there has been no substantial mortality study conducted in more than three years, accumulated data, when aggregated, strongly suggest that some 500,000 people have died since fighting began in 2003 (see "Quantifying Genocide: Darfur Mortality Update," August 6, 2010, at <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=2269>; this analysis incorporates and supplements the [January 2010 mortality study by the Center for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters](#) and an important research [report by "Darfurian Voices," July 14, 2010](#)).

But in addition to the killings of civilians and humanitarians, an understanding of the effects of violence on relief capacity—and needs—requires that we look at a number of increasingly dangerous trends. Providing food, clean water, shelter, sanitary facilities, adequate primary medical care, and some educational opportunities presents particularly difficult challenges in the Darfur environment. The same is

true, if for different reasons, for Darfuri refugees in eastern Chad and Central African Republic—populations that suffer from an almost total invisibility.

### [1] Denial of humanitarian access:

Throughout the conflict Khartoum has deliberately manipulated humanitarian relief efforts so as to deny assistance to civilian ethnic groups associated with the rebel movements. On December 8, 2003 Tom Vraalsen, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs for Sudan, reported in a confidential "Note" to the UN Note to the Emergency Relief Coordinator ("Sudan: Humanitarian Crisis in Darfur"):

...first-hand reports that I received from tribal leaders and humanitarian actors on the ground [indicate] that [Khartoum-backed Arab] militias were launching systematic raids against civilian populations. These attacks included burning and looting of villages, large-scale killings, abductions, and other severe violations of human rights. **Humanitarian workers have also been targeted, with staff being abducted and relief trucks looted.**" [all emphases have been added unless otherwise indicated]

Vraalsen went on to note:

"Delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need is hampered mostly by **systematically denied access** [latter phrase emphasized in text]. While [Khartoum's] authorities claim unimpeded access, they greatly restrict access to the areas under their control, while imposing blanket denial to all rebel-held areas [i.e., areas in which the civilian populations are primarily non-Arab, or African]."

Almost a decade later, the situation is all too similar. For example, large parts of Jebel Marra, a stronghold of the non-Arab Fur population and the Sudan Liberation Army faction of Abdel Wahid al-Nur (SLA/AW), have endured a humanitarian blockade for more than three years. The suffering of the people in this fertile area has been greatly exacerbated by virtually daily aerial bombardment by Khartoum's Antonov "bombers"—cargo planes carrying shrapnel-loaded barrel bombs that are without militarily useful precision. They have taken a tremendous physical toll on human beings, compromised agriculture and killed livestock, and left the people of the region thinking that there is no one who cares about their suffering and deaths. In the main they are of course right.

Throughout Darfur, whenever Khartoum believes there is military advantage to be gained by blocking, delaying, or denying humanitarian assistance for "security" reasons, it will do so.

### [2] Displacement of civilians:

In no area has the UN been more culpable than in offering figures for the number of displaced and newly displaced persons in Darfur. Outrageously, this is in deference to Khartoum's sensibilities. For it is precisely because displacement has correlated so closely from the beginning of the Darfur conflict with violence that Khartoum pushes to have these figures distorted downward, i.e., displacement has been overwhelmingly a product of the violence or the threat of violence that Khartoum is attempting to deny. It has been the "push factor" of assaults by militias and Khartoum's regular forces rather than the "pull factor" of humanitarian resources in IDP camps that have caused people to move. UN reporting on the critical issue of displacement since OCHA's "[Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 34](#)" (conditions as of January 1, 2009) has been consistently misleading and often simply contradictory.

But the data are available. Since early 2007, the last year of the AMIS operation, approximately **1.8 million people have been newly displaced**; the data for this staggering figure come primarily from UN OCHA and the UN High Commission for Refugees, as well as INGOs tracking displacement in Darfur. The data are aggregated, with sources, at "Taking Human Displacement in Darfur Seriously," June 3, 2013, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=4025>), with the following breakdown:

**2007: 300,000** civilians newly displaced

**2008:** 317,000 civilians newly displaced

**2009:** 250,000 civilians newly displaced

**2010:** 300,000 civilians newly displaced

**2011:** 200,000 civilians newly displaced

**2012:** 150,000 civilians newly displaced

**2013:** 320,000 civilians newly displaced as of June 1, 2013

The total for **newly displaced civilians since 2007** is approximately **1.8 million** human beings; this is figure **in addition** to the massive number of civilians displaced from 2003 - 2006. OCHA announced in May of this year that 300,000 people had already displaced during the first four months of 2013. The number has continued to grow steadily over the past three months—and yet the official OCHA figure for those displaced in camps has, incredibly, **declined**. Indeed, a timeline of OCHA figures for displacement seems to have almost nothing to do with the realities on the ground:

- OCHA weekly [Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin #34](#) (September 2, 2012):

**"1.7 million** Internally Displaced Persons registered in camps in Darfur" (this figure **reduces by 200,000** the figure of **1.9 million** first promulgated by OCHA in July 2010—see below);

- OCHA weekly [Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin #43](#) (November 4, 2012): **"1.4 million** Internally Displaced persons in camps receiving food aid (WFP)";

In the space of two months, some **300,000 people** had been removed from the category of "Internally Displaced Person," evidently because they were not being fed by the UN's World Food Program. If there is an explanation for this bizarre reduction, OCHA hasn't offered one.

- OCHA weekly [Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin #44](#) (November 11, 2012): **"1.43 million** Internally Displaced persons in camps receiving food aid (WFP)"

This November 2012 addition **of 30,000** people is the last adjustment upwards of the total figure for displaced persons (in camps and fed by WFP); incomprehensibly, this was **reduced in July 2013 to 1.18 million** Internally Displaced Persons in camps receiving food aid (WFP)"; again, this occurs against the backdrop of OCHA's announcement in mid-May 2013 that **300,000** people had already been newly displaced this year.

This statistical muddling and obfuscation is of a piece with the precipitous reduction in the number of displaced persons announced in July 2010 by former UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan, Georg Charpentier: from **2.7 million to 1.9 million**. The only "source" offered by Charpentier for this radical downsizing of an intensely distressed population is buried in a terse footnote, referring simply to work by the intergovernmental International Organization for Migration (IOM): "IOM Sudan (2009)." This was the entire citation. There was no indication of precise date, title, researchers, links, methodology, or anything that would allow a reader to understand what was signified by this reference. This is not surprising, since the IOM report was never in fact completed because of excessive difficulty in obtaining adequate data from all three Darfur states. (An inquiry I made of OCHA Sudan in March 2011 yielded no useful account of these issues; indeed, there was no mention of a role for IOM in establishing the new figure for IDPs.)

No doubt Khartoum exerted much pressure to lower the number of IDPs, thus giving credence to their claim that returns were increasingly numerous and the violence was declining. To have capitulated to such pressure, however, reflects an obscene cowardice whose consequences are now all too clear (for a fuller account of Charpentier's machinations, see "How many Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are there in Darfur?" *Dissent Magazine* [on-line], [April 28, 2011](#)).

All this is important because violent displacement is perhaps the most critical issue in understanding the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, and increasingly eastern Chad. Newly displaced civilians are often at acute risk simply because they have fled precipitously and typically arrive in locations where there is no additional humanitarian capacity and none in prospect. In short, displacement correlates very closely with violence, and in turn mortality and morbidity are closely linked to displacement.

### **[3] Closing of roads:**

More recently Khartoum has taken to shutting down key roads (or allowing them to be shut down), including artery roads (e.g., between Nyala and el-Fasher) and key transport roads. The excuse often given is that insecurity doesn't permit travel; the reality is that many roads have been allowed to become extortion routes, with travelers robbed or killed. Humanitarians can no longer travel without substantial escort resources, stretching further the UNAMID operation that is already far from able to fulfill its mandate of civilian protection. Often it is unclear whether road blockage is a function of insecurity, the incompetence of UNAMID in providing adequate escort to humanitarians, or Khartoum's deliberate delay of critically needed supplies. A very recent example reported by OCHA from West Darfur illustrates all too well the new norm:

Humanitarian organisations report that relief supplies for newly displaced people in Um Dukhun in Central [formerly West] Darfur are still in Zalingei and El Geneina, the state capitals of Central Darfur and West Darfur respectively due to logistical and security challenges. Most commercial transporters in the area are not willing to go to Um Dukhun citing insecurity on the roads. The UN Office for Project Services (UNOPS) has emergency shelter and non-food relief supplies for an estimated 6,000 people awaiting shipment to Um Dukhun. In addition, the international NGO International Medical Corps (IMC) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) have assorted medical and nutrition supplies to be delivered to Um Dukhun.

An inter-agency road mission scheduled to depart Zalingei for Um Dukhun on 21 July was postponed due to security and logistics challenges. Discussions are underway with the African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur to ***airlift supplies from Zalingei and El Geneina to Um Dukhun.***

Air transport is exceedingly limited and extremely expensive. The fact that UNAMID cannot provide a secure road corridor from Zalingei to Um Dukhun is all too telling. Countless similar examples could be adduced.

### **[4] Hostility of Khartoum to humanitarians and UNAMID:**

An attitude of extreme hostility and intimidation on the part of Khartoum's security forces is a means of ensuring that the UN and INGOs do not attempt to violate access restrictions or restrictions on what may be reported of humanitarian conditions. An episode from 2007 stands as emblematic of Khartoum's attitudes towards foreign "intervention," and the regime's determination to control this "intervention" by all means necessary:

Aid workers have described how they watched helplessly as Sudanese police officers dragged a female United Nations worker from an aid agency compound in Darfur and subjected her to a vicious sexual attack. Staff say they feared for their lives when armed police raided their compound in Nyala, dragging one European woman out into the street by her hair and savagely beating several other international staff before arresting a total of 20 UN, aid agency, and African Union staff. [ ]

A UN official in Darfur said: "If the people responsible for beating and molesting the aid workers and UN staff are not punished, others will think they can get away with such crimes and it will happen again. Should the security situation for international aid workers not improve and the overall safety of our staff be assured, we will be forced to withdraw from Darfur."

The latest incident came when police and national security staff stormed an impromptu party at the aid agency compound in Nyala. The UN said police beat staff with batons, with UN and aid agency personnel sustaining serious injuries. Workers at the party said the attacks were part of

a campaign of harassment. "It seemed as if they had been waiting for an excuse to get stuck into some foreign aid workers, and this was their chance," said one.

"Some of the UN guys were seriously injured. I saw a police officer repeatedly hitting one person in the face and then kicking him on the back of the head as he lay on the ground." Another said: "It has become clear to many of us here that the police and national security have been stirring up trouble in the local community by spreading rumours about aid workers and agencies. They are trying to make our work here as difficult as they can and by getting locals to resent us they can make aid operations almost impossible to run." (*The Telegraph* [UK] [Nyala], January 28, 2007)

When it comes to UNAMID, Khartoum has again made no effort to conceal its hostility. A report by the UN Secretary General (November 16, 2010) noted:

In the context of this ongoing violence, freedom of movement continues to be a serious concern for UNAMID and many of the agencies in Darfur. Since January 2009, there have been at least 42 incidents in which a UNAMID patrol was denied passage by a Government official, including incidents in which **Government officials specifically threatened the safety of UNAMID staff and equipment.** (page 3)

A particularly revealing episode by Khartoum's SAF came in the form of a response to UNAMID's effort at protecting civilians in early 2011:

UNAMID spokesman Kemal Saiki confirmed the bombing [in the Shangil Tobay area] was by "the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) air force." Later on Wednesday [January 26, 2011], a group of 200 Sudanese government soldiers in 40 vehicles arrived at UNAMID's camp in the nearby settlement of Shangil Tobay, UNAMID said. "(The soldiers) surrounded the team site's exit as well as the adjacent makeshift camp, where thousands of civilians recently displaced by the December 2010 clashes have settled," read the statement. The Sudanese army detained four displaced people at the camp, said UNAMID. "The SAF commander at the scene ... then threatened to burn down the makeshift camp and UNAMID team site, if the peacekeepers continued to interfere." (Reuters [Khartoum], January 27, 2011)

Such hateful contempt says all too much about the theater of operations for UNAMID—and the failure of the UN Security Council and the international community more broadly to support this failing mission.

#### **[5] Rape as a weapon of war:**

It is almost impossible to overstate the medical and social consequences of the continuing epidemic of rape in Darfur, which shows no signs of abating. Sexual violence, often in the form of gang rapes, leaves women and girls physically and emotionally terribly scarred; girls in particular are at great danger of fistulas and other traumatic injury. There have been tens of thousands of cases, though we will never have anything approaching a definitive census.

Rape has traditionally been a highly unusual crime in Darfur, and one to which particular opprobrium attaches to the perpetrator. Genocide has changed that, and rape now tears deeply at family and social bonds, often breaking up marriages and families, and preventing women and girls from thinking of themselves as marriageable. Attention was first called attention in a prominent way to the reality and consequences of massive sexual violence in Darfur by Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)/Holland, which in March 2005 published "The Crushing Burden of Rape: Sexual Violence in Darfur" (MSF/Holland, March 2005, <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/publications/reports/2005/sudan03.pdf>). In the wake of the report's release, Khartoum arrested and eventually expelled the two most senior MSF/Holland officials working in Sudan. The MSF report, with an extraordinary body of first-hand evidence, documents more than 500 cases of rape; this report clearly figured in Khartoum's decision to expel the organization, along with twelve others, in March 2009.

Among the large number of examples offered in the report, the sheer indifference to human life is suggested powerfully in the following:

"When my village was attacked, 30 men with guns entered in the village. Some of them found me in my house. Three of them raped me and I fell unconscious. The men locked me inside my house (straw hut) and set it on fire. I managed to get out of the house through the burning grass." (Woman, 17, October 2004, West Darfur) [The medical examination of this patient revealed that she had old burns to her left and right hands and arms; one arm was burnt from hand to shoulder. She had burns also on both the left and right side of her upper back and very extensive burns on both legs from the heels to the calves.]

And yet rape is virtually never prosecuted, and almost never reported by UNAMID—and thus not reported by the UN Secretary General in his reports on UNAMID and Darfur. The following account is typical, indeed has tens of thousands of antecedents:

"One of the three man took me away from the other women. He threatened me with his knife by pinching my chest with it. He pushed me on the ground and took off my underwear. He raped me and was repeating 'I will kill you' all the times to intimidate me." (Young girl, 14, February 2005, South Darfur)

"I was returning from the market, that day. I was walking with a group of nine women and two men. We met some armed men along the road. They took the nine women and held us under a tree in their camp. They released us after three days. During all this time, I was raped every night and every day by five men." (Woman, 30, October 2004, South Darfur) [Among the nine women, only three came to the clinic, among which two girls were 12 and 13 years old.]

For an overview of what has been reported about and what we know of this savage weapon of war, see "Rape as a Weapon of War in Darfur," March 4, 2012, <http://www.sudanreeves.org/?p=2884>. Psychosocial resources for women and girls who have been the victims of sexual violence are woefully inadequate.

Again, in his recent reports on Darfur and UNAMID, the UN Secretary General has either not mentioned sexual violence at all, or done so in the briefest and least revealing of terms. The refusal to acknowledge that rape continues at epidemic levels signals acquiescence before Khartoum's embarrassment over the issue within the broader Islamic community and makes treatment that much more difficult for medical humanitarians.

## [6] Traumatized children

There are gross deficiencies in primary health care in all three Darfur states; the number of physicians serving enormous populations is often one or two. Psychosocial services for the vast numbers of displaced are virtually non-existent, even as studies (when they were permitted) have suggested extraordinarily high levels of depression and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), especially among children. In [August 2011 the distinguished British medical journal \*The Lancet\* published](#) findings of a shocking magnitude:

Investigators of studies with medium to large sample sizes have concluded that forcibly displaced children in low-income and middle-income settings have high rates of psychiatric disorders. **Thus 75% of 331 displaced children in camps for internally displaced people in southern Darfur met diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, and 38% had depression.** [The precise date of data acquisition from **South Darfur** is not clear in the synopsis that appears on-line at present—ER.]

The immense psychosocial consequences of rape for girls and women have also been documented by Physicians for Human Rights. In a devastating study ("Nowhere to Turn: Failure to Protect, Support and Assure Justice for Darfuri Women," May 2009 (<http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/library/reports/nowhere-to-turn.html>), the human rights organization chronicles the effects of what was then six years of displacement by the most ruthless means, which left civilians suffering from a wide range of severe mental disorders, particularly the tens of thousands of girls and women who have been victims of rape. In its meticulously researched study, PHR chronicled in soul-destroying detail some of the devastation among Darfuri refugee girls and women in eastern Chad:



Researchers asked women to rate their physical and mental health status in Darfur and now in Chad on a 1-5 scale with 1 being "very good" and 5 being "poor...." The study indicated a marked deterioration in self-reported mental health, where **the average score in was 4.90**. "I am sad every day (since leaving Darfur). I feel not well in my skin," explained one respondent. [ ] Women who experienced rape (confirmed or highly probable) were three times more likely to report suicidal thoughts than were women who did not report sexual violence."

We have no more authoritative—or dismaying—reporting on the medical consequences of rape in Darfur.

#### **[7] Insecurity in and around IDP camps: threatening humanitarians and displaced persons:**

In a significant indication of growing insecurity in the IDP camps (though continuous with what has long been the case), Radio Dabanga recently reported:

Pro-government militias are said to be "spread in an unprecedented way" around camps for displaced persons in South Darfur, having robbed a number of local residents by the roadside. Speaking to Radio Dabanga, witnesses said that especially residents of camps El Salam, Attash and Dreige—all located near the state capital Nyala—are affected. "A number of displaced from Dreige were robbed on Wednesday evening at gunpoint...." (Nyala, August 2, 2013)

Further examples of this ongoing, indeed increasing threat to civilians and humanitarians are included in [Appendix 2](#).

#### **[8] Destruction and pillaging of humanitarian supplies, including medical equipment and medicine, and stealing of salaries:**

Khartoum has long obstructed humanitarian operations and supplies in Darfur, thereby increasing the cost of responding and diverting funds from other areas of crisis. More recently, Khartoum-allied militias have been more directly destructive of humanitarian resources. A year ago attacks in the Kutum area of North Darfur by these militia forces resulted in the wholesale destruction of humanitarian supplies, equipment, and facilities. Fuel was also looted, an increasingly common phenomenon. An experienced humanitarian in the region at the time of the attacks reported:

"Kutum town has been overrun by Arab militia since last Thursday [August 3, 2012]...all of the INGOs [International Nongovernmental Humanitarian Organizations] and UN offices in the area have been thoroughly looted and their staff relocated to el-Fasher. All of the IDPs from Kassab IDP camp have been displaced. The markets in Kutum and in Kassab have booth been thoroughly looted." (email received August 5, 2012; also source for following two quotes)

This source goes on to note that in the case of the fighting in and around Kutum, while beginning in a personal dispute between individual members of two Arab tribal groups:

"The fighting, however, has not been between the two tribes but focused on looting the IDP camps and the INGOs and the markets in the town."

The implications of this violence have not been reported anywhere—by the UN, UNAMID, or even Radio Dabanga. But they are enormous:

"Most of the north part of North Darfur (all the way to Chad) is served from Kutum and now all [humanitarian] organizations have lost all capacity because of the looting, and I do not see the humanitarian community reinvesting in the basic infrastructure because of what has happened. This is going to cause huge humanitarian issues in Kutum and the IDP camps there. All the fuel at the INGOs was looted. This fuel is for vehicles but also for the generators to run water pumps in town and outside of town. This could turn bad, as it is the rainy seasons right now."

Radio Dabanga (Kutum, 2 August 2012) also reports eyewitness accounts of the destruction of compounds belonging to (among others) the UN World Food Program and (Irish) GOAL, as well as Kutum's market areas:

"Eyewitnesses from Kutum, North Darfur, told radio Dabanga that pro-government militias stormed the Al Gusr, Al Dababeen and Al Salam areas and the entrance of a large market. They added that the pro-government militias attacked humanitarian organizations' compounds in Kutum town."

This was a year ago; the very recent attack in Nyala, the largest city in Darfur, deliberately targeted the World Vision compound. This brazen military action suggests that there are no longer any constraints on violence by militia forces; humanitarian organizations will be compelled to respond accordingly with heightened, and inevitably limiting, security precautions.

[9] Although most reports of Antonov bombing attacks on civilians come from Jebel Marra (the region where the three Darfur states come together, using the former cartographic and administrative divisions), these aerial attacks occur wherever Khartoum feels it gains advantage of any sort, even indirectly, with these inherently indiscriminate assaults. In South Darfur for example, Radio Dabanga reported (March 18, 2013) that "some **4,000** people in South Darfur were displaced after having their villages 'burnt by aerial bombings by the Sudanese air force' during last week's battles." Eight villages were burned, adding to a figure that over the past ten years has grown into the thousands—villages with names, not mere abstract statistics: Tabaldia, along with Abga Radji, Hashaba, Makarin, Um Sayala, Humedah, Sonnut, and Hillet Saleh. The sheikh from Tabaldia uttered an all too common refrain: "UNAMID [must] to do its work and do not stand on the sidelines of what is happening to civilians."

Inevitably, such aerial attacks, given their indiscriminate nature, threaten humanitarians as well. For a comprehensive statistical overview of aerial assaults on Darfur from the beginning of the conflict through June 2012, see "They Bombed Everything That Moved: Aerial Military Assaults on Civilians and Humanitarians in Sudan, 1999 – 2011" (with June 2012 update): <http://www.sudanbombing.org/>.

#### **[10] Use of military aircraft and ground vehicles painted white (the color of humanitarian aircraft):**

The UN Panel of Experts on Darfur and others have reported numerous, ongoing instances of Khartoum's military aircraft being painted the same white color as that used by UN and other humanitarian aircraft. This obviously greatly increases the risk that a humanitarian aircraft will be fired at and shot down by rebel forces mistaking it for a disguised SAF aircraft. Human Rights Watch [reported in late 2007](#):

Government forces have used military aircraft painted white—the color used by UN and AMIS forces—for reconnaissance, supply operations, and attacks. At a distance, the aircraft resemble United Nations and AMIS planes and Mi-8 helicopters; sometimes they even have UN markings. Use of these white aircraft for military purposes is a violation of international humanitarian law, specifically the improper use of the United Nations emblem, and, when simulating the protected status of peacekeeping forces and humanitarian operations to conduct attacks, the prohibition against perfidy. Use of these planes puts genuine UN, humanitarian, and AMIS flights at risk because rebels might mistake them for legitimate military targets. People in desperate need of aid may flee from humanitarian flights if they cannot distinguish them from government military aircraft.

Khartoum has similarly disguised its military aircraft along the border with South Sudan, and in making deliveries of arms and equipment to the renegade rebel force of David Yau Yau in Jonglei State. Yau Yau's actions have put hundreds of thousands of civilian lives in danger, and has consumed disproportionate humanitarian resources in South Sudan that are critically needed in camps along the North/South border, where refugees from Blue Nile and South Kordofan states continue to flee in large numbers.

#### **Conclusion:**

These various threats to humanitarian efforts in Darfur are increasingly likely to produce a wholesale withdrawal of relief organizations, and perhaps the UN itself (which will in any event become increasingly bunkered down in the larger urban settings). Such withdrawal will be catastrophic for civilian populations. In the immediate wake of the killing of two World Vision relief workers (and the critical wounding of a third), there was grave doubt about whether they would be able to continue. As Radio Dabanga reported (July 14, 2013):

[WVI Emergency Communications Advisor for Africa, Michael] Arunga confirmed that his organisation is "currently making a security assessment" in and around the Nyala camps for the displaced to verify it is feasible that they return to the area. "If the security situation allows, we should be back at the camps around Nyala such as Attash and El Salam within a week," he said. "The assessment is currently ongoing. Other NGOs are also assessing safety and damages. Then they will all sit down together and assess how to move forward. Responding to concerns voiced by leaders of the displaced that the withdrawal of WVI would be "catastrophic," Arunga acknowledges the crucial nature of the relief input....

But, Arunga insisted, the "safety of its staff is 'paramount.'" If World Vision and other INGOS are unable to find sufficient security to work, this would put the immense and politically tense camps outside Nyala at immediate and extreme risk.

And yet considering the available evidence, and looking forward on this basis, the July 4 attack on the World Vision compound in Nyala is all too likely to occur again without a major change in international attitudes—presently nowhere in sight. A catastrophic withdrawal by INGOS and even UN agencies is increasingly likely. It is, then, incumbent to chronicle present humanitarian conditions in Darfur in order to see just how vulnerable these people are in the event of such withdrawal. For this forthcoming analysis, the present account of insecurity and violence is the necessary introduction.

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