

## **Darfur 2003 –**

Since early 2003, Sudanese government soldiers and their proxy ethnic militia, known as the Janjaweed, have fought rebel groups in the western region of Darfur. The government and Janjaweed strategy has been to carry out systematic assaults against civilians from the same ethnic groups as the rebels: the Fur, Zaghawa, and Masaalit. Rebel forces are responsible for some attacks against civilians, but overwhelmingly the Sudanese government and Janjaweed have perpetrated the violence.

Hundreds of thousands of civilians have died from violence, disease, and starvation, and thousands of women have been raped. About 2,500,000 civilians have been driven from their homes, their villages torched and property stolen. Thousands of villages have been systematically destroyed. More than 200,000 Sudanese have escaped to the neighboring country of Chad, but most are trapped inside Darfur. Thousands more die each month from the effects of inadequate food, water, health care, and shelter in a harsh desert environment.

Darfur is home to over 30 ethnic groups, all African and all Muslim. The Janjaweed militias – recruited, armed, trained, and supported by the Sudanese government – are drawn from several small nomadic groups who claim an Arab identity. They have used racial slurs while attacking and raping the targeted groups, who are considered non-Arab. The ethnic and perceived racial basis of the violence has been well documented by the U.S. Department of State, the United Nations, independent human rights organizations, and international journalists.

### ❖ Government-sponsored actions include:

- Inflaming ethnic conflict
- Impeding international humanitarian access, resulting in deadly conditions of life for displaced civilians
- Bombing civilian targets with aircraft
- Murdering and raping civilians

Because of substantial evidence that “acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity were occurring or immediately threatened,” in 2004 the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum declared a Genocide Emergency for Darfur. That same year, the U.S. government determined that genocide had been committed in Darfur. In January 2005, the UN Commission of Inquiry concluded that “crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed in Darfur and may be no less serious and heinous than genocide.”

## **UPDATE, 2007**

The situation on the ground in Darfur continues to deteriorate. Reports of new attacks against civilians, thousands newly displaced, humanitarian aid access declining and an increase in humanitarian withdrawals in December 2006 as a result of growing insecurity all contribute to a bleak picture for Darfur. According to Jan Egeland, the former head of UN humanitarian operations, such a scenario could potentially result in a loss of life reaching in excess of 100,000 per month.

The new UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, announced that Darfur will be a top priority for him. He traveled to the African Union Summit at the end of January to urge al-Bashir to cooperate with the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations. Out-going Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced in December that the former General Assembly president and Swedish foreign minister Jan Eliasson was appointed as a special envoy for Darfur. At the end of January 2007 a UN assessment mission visited Chad and CAR to assess possibilities for UNPKO being deployed there to stem growing violence spilling over from Sudan.

In February, Chinese President Hu Jintao on a visit to Khartoum told Sudan that it must give the United Nations a bigger role in trying to resolve the conflict in Darfur. President Hu Jintao also signed an agreement in which China undertook to build schools, a new presidential palace, reduced import tariffs on some Sudanese goods, granted a loan of 600 million yuan (US\$77.4 million; euro59.5 million) for infrastructure, and gave a grant of a US\$40 million (euro30.7 million).

There has been little progress towards the creation of a UN peacekeeping force for Darfur. Although Sudan's President al-Bashir wrote to the UN Secretary General Annan that he would agree to hybrid operation in December 2006, he gave no details on troop size or composition, or command and control. Subsequent statements by the Sudanese government make clear that UN troops are not welcome. As of April 2007, the government of Sudan continues to resist the deployment of additional international troops. In early April, five African Union troops were killed and refugees continue to flow into Chad. United States Deputy Secretary of State, John Negroponte is expected to visit Sudan and deliver a message aimed at persuading the Sudanese government to accept UN troops.

**Source: U.S. Holocaust Museum**

<http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007221>

### **Sudan's Darfur conflict**

Story from BBC NEWS: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/world/africa/3496731.stm>

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**The United Nations Security Council has approved a 26,000-strong peacekeeping force to replace the 7,000 African Union (AU) observer mission struggling to protect civilians in Sudan's western province of Darfur.**

But the exact make-up and deployment date for this beefed up force is still to be determined. In the meantime, more than 2m people are living in camps after fleeing more than four years of fighting in the region and they are vulnerable without peacekeepers.

Sudan's government and the pro-government Arab militias are accused of war crimes against the region's black African population, although the UN has stopped short of calling it genocide.

Peace talks are planned for October in Tripoli involving the government and most of the myriad rebel groups, but until the new UN-AU force deploys in Darfur the prospects for an end to violence look remote.

### **How did the conflict start?**

The conflict began in the arid and impoverished region early in 2003 after a rebel group began attacking government targets, saying the region was being neglected by Khartoum. **The rebels say the government is oppressing black Africans in favor of Arabs.**

Darfur, which means land of the Fur, has faced many years of tension over land and grazing rights between the mostly nomadic Arabs, and farmers from the Fur, Massaleet and Zagawa communities.

There are two main rebel groups, the Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) and the Justice and Equality Movement (Jem), although both groups have split, some along ethnic lines.

More than a dozen rebel groups are now believed to exist. Most will attend the talks in Libya, but one key leader, Abdul Wahid el-Nur, is boycotting the talks until the conflict ends.

### **What is the government doing?**

It admits mobilizing "self-defense militias" following rebel attacks but denies any links to the Janjaweed, accused of trying to "cleanse" black Africans from large swathes of territory.

Refugees from Darfur say that following air raids by government aircraft, the Janjaweed ride into villages on horses and camels, slaughtering men, raping women and stealing whatever they can find.

Many women report being abducted by the Janjaweed and held as sex slaves for more than a week before being released.

The US and some human rights groups say that genocide is taking place - though a UN investigation team sent to Sudan said that while war crimes had been committed, there had been no intent to commit genocide.

Sudan's government denies being in control of the Janjaweed and President Omar al-Bashir has called them "thieves and gangsters".

After strong international pressure and the threat of sanctions, the government promised to disarm the Janjaweed. But so far there is little evidence this has happened.

Trials have been announced in Khartoum of some members of the security forces suspected of abuses - but this is viewed as part of a campaign against UN-backed attempts to get some 50 key suspects tried at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

### **What has happened to Darfur's civilians?**

Millions have fled their destroyed villages, with many heading for camps near Darfur's main towns. But there is not enough food, water or medicine.

The Janjaweed patrol outside the camps and Darfurians say the men are killed and the women raped if they venture too far in search of firewood or water.

Some 200,000 have also sought safety in neighboring Chad, but many of these are camped along a 600km stretch of the border and remain vulnerable to attacks from Sudan. The refugees are also threatened by the diplomatic fallout between Chad and Sudan as the neighbors accuse one another of supporting each other's rebel groups. Chad's eastern areas have a similar ethnic make-up to Darfur.

Many aid agencies are working in Darfur but they are unable to get access to vast areas because of the fighting.

### **How many have died?**

With much of Darfur inaccessible to aid workers and researchers, calculating how many deaths there have been in the past three years is impossible.

What researchers have done is to estimate the deaths based on surveys in areas they can reach.

The latest research published in September 2006 in the journal Science puts the numbers of deaths above and beyond those that would normally die in this inhospitable area at "no fewer than 200,000".

The US researchers say that their figures are the most compelling and persuasive estimate to date. They have made no distinction between those dying as a result of violence and those dying as a result of starvation or disease in refugee camps.

Accurate figures are crucial in determining whether the deaths in Darfur are genocide or - as the Sudanese government says - the situation is being exaggerated.

### **Have there been previous peace talks?**

Lots.

The leader of one SLA faction, Minni Minawi, who signed a peace deal in 2006 after long-running talks in Nigeria, was given a large budget, but his fighters have already been accused by Amnesty International of abuses against people in areas opposed to the peace deal.

The other rebel factions did not sign the deal. There has been a dramatic increase in violence and displacement since the deal was signed. Amid international threats of sanctions for those refusing to attend, most rebel groups are expected to attend talks with the government due in Libya in October 2007.

### **Is anyone trying to stop the fighting?**

About 7,000 African Union troops are deployed in Darfur on a very limited mandate. Experts say the soldiers are too few to cover an area the size of France, and the African Union says it does not have the money to fund the operation for much longer.

The recent killing of 10 AU soldiers by a rebel group in northern Darfur has highlighted the need for the new force to be deployed - but at the same time makes it harder for the AU and UN to secure pledges of troops.

The new, larger joint UN-AU force should be in place by early 2008 and be better equipped and with a stronger mandate to protect civilians and aid workers.

But until recently, Sudan resisted strong Western diplomatic pressure for the UN to take control of the peacekeeping mission and their attitude to the deployment and its mandate remains ambiguous at best.

Some say even this new 26,000 force will not be enough to cover such a large, remote area. Others point out that peacekeepers cannot do much unless there is a peace to keep. They say the fighting can only end through a deal agreed by all sides, which has yet to materialize.