

COMPROMISING WITH EVIL

AN ARCHIVAL HISTORY OF GREATER SUDAN, 2007 – 2012

Annex IV: Darfur Humanitarian Updates 2009-2012

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Preface

Among the many disgraceful features of the international response to Darfur is the refusal to push for greater transparency in reporting on the humanitarian conditions that prevail in the region in the wake of widespread genocidal violence. Following the March 2009 expulsion of thirteen international nongovernmental humanitarian organizations (INGOs), Khartoum succeeded in intimidating the UN—particularly its recent head of mission in Sudan, Georg Charpentier—to the point that mendacity and expediency have proved the defining features of all reporting. For the INGOs that remain dare not be more forthright in their rendering of data, reports, and analyses of humanitarian conditions than the UN: they know that such forthrightness will bring about certain expulsion.

Charpentier claimed in late 2010 that “UN humanitarian agencies are not confronted by pressure or interference from the Government of Sudan.” The claim is so patently false that I find myself at a loss to account for such moral failure, given the human consequences of the regime’s relentless obstruction, impeding, harassment (often violent), and explicit denial of humanitarian assistance. Many in the UN are also shocked at Charpentier’s mendacity and have said as much to investigators, as I indicate in the analyses below. Some, such as head of UNICEF in Sudan Nils Kastberg, have publicly declared findings that stand in stark contrast to Charpentier’s claims:

Part of the problem has been when we conduct surveys to help us address issues, in collaboration with the ministry of health, very often other parts of the government such as the humanitarian affairs commission [HAC] interferes and delays in the release of reports, making it difficult for us to respond [in a] timely [manner].

Despite UN efforts to comply with Khartoum’s demand that Darfur be turned into a “black box” for data and reports on humanitarian conditions, a good deal has come emerged even since March 2009. The analyses below are all efforts to collect, collate, and analyze all available data and reporting for a particular moment in Darfur’s recent history; they are snapshots of a continuous and evolving catastrophe. Accounts that have come to me from relief workers on the ground, as well as the organizations they work for, have been treated with the highest degree of

confidentiality, and I have attempted to efface all self-identifying features of these accounts.

I have also attempted to give sharp focus to the larger issue posed by Khartoum's deliberate denial of humanitarian relief to desperately needy populations. The last text here is an academic article arguing that such denials—in the circumstances that have prevailed throughout greater Sudan—amount to crimes against humanity under the Rome Statute that is the treaty basis for the International Criminal Court (“On the Obstruction of Humanitarian Aid: Humanitarian Obstruction as a Crime Against Humanity,” *African Studies Review*, Volume 54, Number 3, December 2011).

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August 15, 2012—a view from the present moment

For the past three years the leadership of the UN and UNAMID (the UN/African Union “Hybrid” Mission in Darfur) have tried to obscure the acute threats to human security in Darfur.¹ They have done so at a time when a great deal of evidence already indicated that violence was increasing significantly and security for humanitarians and civilians was rapidly deteriorating. Even so, the UN and UNAMID have also recently been busy arguing for a reduction in the size of UNAMID, this because “security has improved in much of Darfur” and the force should reflect the “reality on the ground” (in the words of UN head of peacekeeping operations, Hervé Ladsous). The scale of this cynical mendacity, preeminently on the part of UNAMID head Ibrahim Gambari, has been especially conspicuous throughout summer 2012.

Certainly these newer large-scale episodes of violence have proved a good deal more challenging to UNAMID’s disingenuous narrative about human security in Darfur. Violence has exploded throughout the region: in the displaced persons camps and in the towns, even in the major town of Kutum. In the city of Nyala, capital of South Darfur, scores of student demonstrators were gunned on July 31 down by Khartoum’s security forces using automatic rifles. Elsewhere intense fighting between rebel groups and Khartoum’s Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has been reported as well, especially in eastern Darfur.² And various paramilitary elements, including the *Abu Tira* (Central Reserve Police, CRP), and Border Intelligence Guards—often divided along Arab tribal lines—are engaged in increasingly violent killings and looting. A well-placed, exceptionally well-informed humanitarian source on the ground reported on events of early August, and in the process highlights yet again the inextricable relationship between humanitarian operations in Darfur and security issues—and the extraordinarily vulnerability of displaced persons to violence and its consequences:

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 both been thoroughly looted.³

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 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.⁴

Agence France-Presse reported on UN OCHA's finding that “‘during the violence, the premises of five humanitarian organisations were looted. Humanitarian staff have been evacuated to El Fasher town.’ The World Food Programme previously announced that its Kutum compound was looted for about 12 hours from around midday on August 2.”⁵

These developments may prove catastrophic for hundreds of thousands of people; and yet UNAMID is largely silent or perfunctory in its comments in the wake of its own painfully weak response to events in and around Kutum. These events include violence against IDPs, overwhelmingly from non-Arab or African tribal groups.

Radio Dabanga was informed that another four displaced persons were killed and seven were wounded at the Internally Displaced Person (IDP)

Kassab camp near Kutum town, North Darfur. Since the outbreak of this conflict, in the beginning of August, a total of seven people were killed and seven were wounded. A relative of one of the victims told Radio Dabanga that three of them were shot dead by border guards inside the camp. The victims, who previously fled the camp, were returning home to recover the belongings they left behind.⁶

Following this uncontrolled violence, the best that UNAMID chief Ibrahim Gambari could offer was the “hope that the government will restore law and order in the area, fulfilling its responsibility to protect civilians and allow those recently displaced to return to their homes.”⁷ This impotent plea for protection of newly displaced persons is directed at an obdurate regime in Khartoum that has heeded no previous plea for civilian protection—in Darfur or anywhere else in Sudan.

We must wonder how well all this comports with Gambari’s recent crowing about the (highly suspicious) number of those who have returned to their homes, mainly in West Darfur. Radio Dabanga and other sources are reporting that the entire population of Kassab camp—more than 30,000 people—fled in the wake of the violence: “The witnesses added that more than 32,000 IDPs scattered and fled towards Kutum from Kassab camp. Others fled towards the areas of Ain Seerou, west of Kutum.”⁸ The same dispatch reports “pro-government militias arrested more than 300 IDPs [following three consecutive days of violence].... A number of IDPs expressed their anger and condemnation of the alleged failure of UNAMID troops to protect those subjected to raids, murders, torture and plundering for three consecutive days by pro-government militias.”

Nearby Fata Borno IDP camp was also assaulted:

Refugees from Fata Borno camp claim that pro-government militias stormed the homes of the remaining IDPs in the areas of Misri, Amrallah and Nando by night, looting properties and assaulting people. Some of the IDPs who fled the camp towards the city of Kutum were also subjected to looting and plundering by pro-government gunmen, near to the area of Mourgy on the road between Fata Borno and Kutum. The gunmen stripped the IDPs from all their belongings and their cattle after beating them severely.

In another August 9 dispatch on these developments, Radio Dabanga reports:

Representatives of the Kassab and Fata Borno camps in North Darfur, revealed on Wednesday [August 8] that the situation in both camps remains critical and over *70,000 IDPs fled so far*. UNAMID promised to

provide support to both camps within 24 hours. The head of the camps' representatives, Ahmed Bishara, demands that Tijani Sese, President of Darfur Regional Authority in Khartoum, provides immediate assistance to the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP). Bishara especially requests food and blankets. He describes the IDPs' food security as critical as humanitarian organizations' shops were looted and IDPs lost everything. Sese demands that camps' leaders work to secure the camps and that they participate in resolving the conflict.

Of course it is Sese himself—who committed to representing all Darfuris in signing the “Doha Document for Peace in Darfur” (July 2011), with its absurdly inadequate provisions for human security—who bears greatest responsibility for “resolving conflict.” Camp leaders are not the ones responsible for this avalanche of violence and its aftermath:

Witnesses from Kutum town informed Radio Dabanga that schools and government institutions remain closed. And although some shops and markets are partially open, basic commodities are scarce or lacking and the prices of basic goods rose sharply. (August 9, 2012)

If 70,000 people have indeed been newly displaced—and there is corroborating evidence for the figures cited by Radio Dabanga—this rather overshadows the optimistic UN assessment that some 38,000 people have safely and voluntarily returned to West Darfur (with some to North Darfur). About the 1,145 refugees the UN claims have returned from eastern Chad, there is particular skepticism among Darfuris on the ground and in the diaspora: where precisely are these re-settled people? The [representative for the UN High Commission for Refugees in Chad has adamantly denied any such returns](#) since March 2012.

Compromised Travel Security Affects Humanitarian Aid

Again, it must be insisted, there is a direct link between an inability to travel securely and the rapidly declining humanitarian conditions reported in camps by Radio Dabanga, especially away from the major hubs of el-Fasher and Nyala; again the problems are worst in the more remote region of West Darfur:

Abu Suruj camp: no food aid for six months

Residents of Abu Suruj camp for internally displaced people said they have not received food aid for more than six months. Witnesses said the

camps north of El Geneina are reaching a desperate situation and called for the World Food Programme to immediately intervene and deliver food aid to people in need of urgent assistance. They said the disruption of the planting season has also contributed creating a situation nearing famine, reminiscent of the Darfur famine of 1983. They call for the WFP coordinator to visit the areas to witness it for themselves. (el-Geneina [West Darfur] May 28, 2012)

Mornay camp food rations reduced by half

Mornay camp [West Darfur] residents have complained that the World Food Programme have reduced food rations by half. A camp leader told Radio Dabanga that the rations were reduced without any explanation from the WFP. He appealed to the WFP to resume full rations and remember the difficulties facing displaced people in buying food from the market, amid food shortages and high prices. (Mornay camp [West Darfur] May 29, 2012)

Camp Mornei plagued by malaria and malnutrition

Residents of camp Mornei in Central [formerly West] Darfur suffer from poor health conditions as diseases like malaria and malnutrition spread rapidly. Especially children, elderly and pregnant women suffer from the diseases. Residents told Radio Dabanga there is no doctor working in the camp and that the hospital in Mornei is not functioning well. One of the elders from camp Mornei said the hospital does not have a general practitioner and there is a lack of beds in the hospital. The farsha of Mornei said another problem is a lack of medicines in the hospitals. (Mornei [West Darfur] June 1, 2012)

Six months with no aid for South Darfur camps Residents of Mershing, Manaoshi and Duma camps for displaced people in South Darfur have received not humanitarian aid or support for over six months. Camp leaders told Radio Dabanga that around 60 percent of camp residents are suffering with continuous hunger, since food rations were stopped forcing some to go for days without having a meal. One leader said they have been complaining for months about the situation with no help coming from the international community, or any serious moves to save displaced people in the South Darfur camps. He said the camp residents have unanimously decided that if they do not get a response from the World Food Programme or the government's humanitarian aid commission within the next few days they will be forced to leave the

camps and move the population to another place where they can access food and avoid starvation. (South Darfur, June 5, 2012)

A virtually complete embargo on humanitarian aid has been imposed throughout the populous Jebel Marra region in the center of Darfur, with predictable consequences:

Residents of E. Jebel Marra suffer from deteriorating humanitarian situation

The security and humanitarian situation in the East Jebel Marra area is deteriorating. Thousands of residents are without health care. Those seeking medical treatment are forced to take a seven-day donkey ride to El Fasher. A local administrator and activist described the situation as catastrophic, during an interview with Radio Dabanga. He claims the continuous bombardments since 2003 have destroyed all water sources, forcing citizens to drink water from the craters left by the air strikes. It has been reported that the water is infected by toxic materials that pours out of the bombs. (East Jebel Marra, July 17, 2012)

Starvation in three camps of South Darfur after pull out aid organizations Children have died due to malnutrition after aid organizations pulled out of three camps, 40 kilometers outside the South Darfur capital of Nyala. Community leaders have urged aid organizations to resume health and food support in the displaced camps of Mershing, Manaoshi and Duma in South Darfur. Community leaders gave Radio Dabanga an emotional account of what happened. In the past week tens of children and several elderly people died of to malnutrition. The community leader says that starvation is the result of the aid organizations stopped providing food rations to IDPs for more than eight months. He added that since circumstances are increasingly challenging an insufficient number of health centers near the IDP camps. (Nyala [South Darfur] June 22, 2012)

Several camps Darfur do not receive food aid for four months Several camps in North Darfur have not received food aid for several months. The [tens of] thousands of internally displaced people of Zam Zam-camp in North Darfur and the camps of Jeddah and El Jebelayn close to the town of Garsila in Central [formerly West] Darfur, said the World Food Program does not enter the camps anymore to support the families most in need. Several camps in North Darfur have not received food aid for several months. (June 23, 2012)

Six children die from measles in Seraf Umra camps Six children have died from measles in over past week in Jebel, Dankoj and El Naseem camps in Seraf Umra in North Darfur. Witnesses from the camps told Radio Dabanga that the medical reports in Seraf Umra hospital indicated the cause of death as measles. They expressed deep concern at the quick spread of diseases in the camp *due to the lack of health care* and appealed to local authorities and organisations to immediately intervene to provide desperately needed assistance. (Seraf Umra [North Darfur] June 6, 2012)

Neem camp: no food aid for a year In an interview with Radio Dabanga Sheikh Said AbuBabr said the conditions are catastrophic noting that the camp residents were forced out of their homes as their villages were attacked. He said they had told the World Food Programme and the Humanitarian Aid Commission but neither have moved to take any action. He appealed to the both bodies to act immediately to save these people from hunger before the situation deteriorates further. The Sheikh also said a water crisis is increasing the suffering of camp residents, along with a deterioration in health services after the government suspended Sudan Aid, a body running the health centres across Neem camp. (Neem Camp, East [formerly South] Darfur, June 8, 2012)

Jebel Marra residents stranded with no aid access The coordinator of internally displaced person camps in North Darfur, Ahmed Atim, said the situation of civilians in Jebel Marra is becoming desperate. He said civilians are stranded with no access from humanitarian organisations including the World Food Programme. The coordinator appealed to the WFP to provide aid and relief to those affected north, west, east and south of Jebel Marra. (Jebel Marra, May 27, 2012)

Darfur in the Still Deepening Shadow of Lies (May 25, 2012)

In a May 20, 2012 interview with Radio Dabanga, the spokesman for the UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), Christopher Cycmanick, “described the security situation in Darfur as ‘*relatively calm*.’” Let us for the moment take Mr. Cycmanick at his word, and ask just what “normal” means now in Darfur—and how his appraisal of security conditions comports with recent events. Cycmanick surely speaks with the authority of his boss, [UNAMID Joint Special Representative Ibrahim Gambari](#), and his comment echoes former UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan Georg Charpentier’s January 20, 2011 assessment of Darfur: “We are seeing a ‘*trend of decreasing overall violent incidents in Darfur*.’”

The facts, however, reveal a strikingly different reality. Seven days after Charpentier’s comment, Reuters reported the following statement from UNAMID:

UNAMID spokesman Kemal Saiki confirmed the [civilian] bombing [near Shangil Tobay] 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.”*⁹

On the other hand, Charpentier’s January 2011 account and Cycmanick’s recent comments find support in assertions by [Khartoum’s Minister of Defense](#), the brutal General Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein, who in the past has pushed aggressively for forced returns of IDPs in Darfur: “Hussein...denied on Saturday [August 20, 2011] the presence of any fighting or war in Darfur.”¹⁰

Such denials fly in the face of all available evidence from non-UN sources, which supports Human Rights Watch’s conclusion—contemporaneous with Charpentier’s—that “Sudanese government and rebel attacks on civilians in Darfur have *dramatically increased in recent weeks without signs of abating*...While the international community remains focused on South Sudan, the *situation in Darfur has sharply deteriorated*.”¹¹

A magisterially authoritative report issued by former members of the UN Panel of Experts on Darfur, for one, found *inter alia* that violence against Zaghawa tribal people was so great as to be considered “ethnic cleansing.”¹² In its summary of the report, *Africa Confidential* notes that “the Darfur crisis, far from winding down as Khartoum and some press reports suggest, is worsening, with new incidents of ethnic cleansing, arms deliveries and aerial bombing.”¹³

Given Charpentier’s authoritarian control of UN discourse concerning Darfur, we should recall here his comments about access and security for humanitarian organizations: “‘UN humanitarian agencies are not confronted by pressure or interference from the Government of Sudan,’ [Charpentier said in a written statement to the Institute for War and Peace Reporting].”¹⁴ This claim has been widely and decisively rebuked by UN officials, including the head of UNICEF in Darfur, as well as by all humanitarian organizations operating in Darfur.

In light of such mendacity, we must—in asking about security in Darfur—broaden the context to include security for humanitarian organizations and personnel as well as food security for the millions of civilians for whom these organizations and the UN World Food Program are overwhelmingly responsible. Consider UNAMID’s security provisions in North Darfur in July 2011:¹⁵

Number of roads cleared for UN travel without armed escort = 0

Number of locations outside el-Fasher where international UN staff can stay without armed protection = 0

Number of international staff spending the night in deep field positions = 5 or 6

Number of locations where international staff spend the night in the deep field = 4

These are the security accomplishments of the force that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations now believes is ready to be drawn down. This is the force that the UN and African Union have concluded is doing an adequate job with its mandate of civilian and humanitarian protection.

In fact, this is a force that has failed—and failed badly, if judged by any reasonable benchmarks. The declaration by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations that a partial withdrawing of peacekeeping forces from Darfur is appropriate simply reflects an attempt to put a happy face on this failure, even as the department sees no point in funding at current levels a bloated, badly-led, incompetent, disorganized, and poorly equipped force. Such attempts again ignore three crucial concerns regarding the humanitarian situation in Darfur:

Recent Humanitarian Developments:

It is important to understand that humanitarian relief in Darfur has been relentlessly obstructed, harassed, and abused by the Khartoum regime and its local officials for more than eight years.¹⁶ One cannot discuss separately the issues of human security, the security of aid organizations, and the impact of Khartoum's relentless war of attrition against the broader humanitarian effort in Darfur. We have only to look at the obstruction of all international humanitarian relief to South Kordofan and Blue Nile to see that aid operations, and their denial, are a key part of Khartoum's military and security strategy. The pressures on humanitarian groups have been detrimental to food security in particular. More generally, incidents of rape and gang-rape have been continuously reported by Radio Dabanga, but go otherwise uninvestigated. Violence continues to surge, with aerial bombings and fighting between rebel forces and Khartoum's SAF precipitating vast civilian displacement; the security situation for the displaced and for those who "return" home—a phrase with considerable ambiguity in the context of Darfur—remains grim.

These central issues are treated in greater detail in the [full report](#). The report also includes a history of UN distortions regarding Darfur as well as an in-depth examination of UNAMID's failure to investigate the September 2010 Tabarat massacre.

The Seen and the Unseen in Darfur: Recent Reporting on Violence, Insecurity, and Resettlement (February 29, 2012)

Vast human agony and destruction persists in Darfur, even as it goes largely unreported by conventional news services. Girls and women continue to be raped in epidemic numbers; violent assaults on camps for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) are constant, as are murders and robberies by militia forces; civilian targets continue to be bombed and strafed by Khartoum's military aircraft; and humanitarian conditions are appalling in far too many locations. Yet given the determination of the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime to deny virtually all reporting presence, it is hardly surprising that we hear nothing of this. There has been no human rights reporting presence in Darfur for a number of years, and the [UN Panel of Experts on Darfur was eviscerated](#) when the UN acquiesced to Khartoum's demand that the Panel consist of accommodating (if unqualified) members. Khartoum has also expelled many senior Humanitarian officials, including two from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in summer 2010. The IOM, along with the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), are the organizations most responsible for ensuring safe and voluntary returns by IDPs—perhaps the most critical issue defining Darfur's future.

The rare journalist who travels to Darfur must confront a hostile bureaucracy that controls all visa and travel permits. Reporters are allowed only where Khartoum's security and intelligence services permit, and they are closely scrutinized by security forces during their entire stay in Darfur. The effects of such restrictions and travel limitations are revealed in *New York Times (NYT)* correspondent Jeffrey Gettleman's dispatch from West Darfur, "[A Taste of Hope Sends Refugees Back to Darfur](#)," February 26, 2012. Gettleman's sources generalize excessively about the highly charged issue of IDPs returning to their lands and villages, and the dispatch as a whole omits mention of many key facts bearing on the sustainability of such returns. Nowhere in the piece, for example, do we hear of an earlier "experiment" with returns that had initially been cited as successful by the UN:

[Seven] families who came back to the Guldo region [West Darfur] in the framework of the Sudanese Government's voluntary repatriation initiative were found in an extremely worrying state. Witnesses told Radio Dabanga that they were part of 25 families who left Kalma Camp (South Darfur) as a part of the Voluntary Return program. However, the journey was too dangerous, and *18 families were forced to travel back to their original camp in South Darfur*. Furthermore, they reported to Radio Dabanga that the remaining families did not receive any support

from the province of West Darfur, even though it organized the deportation. They now call for international action to save these families, who are currently in a critical state.”¹⁷

Gettleman acknowledges neither the possibility of failed returns, nor the insecurity facing displaced persons; indeed, he describes calm and security in Nyuru village. Radio Dabanga, however, finds no such conditions:

Complaining farmers from Guldo Camp (West Darfur) pointed out the deliberate destruction of their farms by shepherds [i.e., nomadic Arab herders]. According to them, the shepherds intentionally set out their cows in the farms, setting chaos and destructing their properties. *Protesters are immediately beaten up, and women are raped, making them reluctant to return to their fields.* Several female farmers reported the incidents to the local authorities, but no action was apparently taken. They now call on UNAMID and the UN to provide them with the necessary protection.¹⁸

Similarly, in January 2012, a month before the publication of Gettleman’s article, Radio Dabanga reported that a Khartoum official was selling off farming land belonging to IDPs living in a camp at Mornei in West Darfur.¹⁹ Without land, people will remain displaced. All evidence suggests that the conditions at Guldo and Mornei are far more representative of Darfur than those at Nyuru.

There are other, more consequential omissions in the *NYT* dispatch, but given the importance attached to reporting by the *New York Times*, and the wide recirculation of its dispatches, it is important to assess fully just how misleading a singular view from the village of Nyuru may be in the larger context of Darfur. As a March 2011 dispatch from the UN Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN) makes clear, the number of civilians newly displaced in Darfur exceeds the “more than 100,000” that Gettleman claims have returned to their homes.

Other gaps in reporting presence in Darfur

Reporting by international nongovernmental humanitarian organizations has also virtually disappeared. INGOs have been almost entirely muzzled by a UN leadership that refuses to acknowledge the reality of conditions in camps and rural areas. These independent organizations understand that if they do speak out, Khartoum will expel them, as it did thirteen of the world’s finest relief organizations in March 2009—roughly half the total humanitarian capacity at the time.

Even so, we know a good deal about what is not being reported, and it is deeply disturbing. A study from Tufts University issued a year ago concluded by declaring that “where humanitarian access has been maintained there have been *serious delays and blocking of key information*, for example, the failure to release regular nutrition survey reports, which contain the vital humanitarian indicators that enable the severity of the humanitarian crisis to be judged...without such data neither the government nor the international community can properly understand the severity of the humanitarian situation or the efficacy of the response.”²⁰

A central problem in reporting on humanitarian conditions over the past several years has been repeated UN acquiescence to various unacceptable demands by Khartoum: that mortality and malnutrition data not be promulgated; that conditions on the ground not be reported except through the UN; and that various obstructive requirements be followed scrupulously. As a result of the suppression of this critical humanitarian data, INGO capacities have been seriously eroded. An investigative report by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting found that “as 21 nutritional surveys were conducted since June 2009, but only seven have been released by [Khartoum’s] humanitarian affairs commission [HAC]. Six of those showed [Global Acute] malnutrition rates of between 15 and 29 per cent.”²¹

The emergency threshold for malnutrition is a GAM rate of 15 percent or greater. The same IWPR report cites the head of UNICEF in Darfur, Nils Kastberg, on malnutrition studies of children:

Nils Kastberg [said in October 2010] that Khartoum is preventing his agency from releasing reports about malnutrition in IDP camps. “Part of the problem has been when we conduct surveys to help us address issues, in collaboration with the ministry of health, very often other parts of the government such as the humanitarian affairs commission [HAC] interferes and delays in the release of reports, making it difficult for us to respond [in a] timely [manner],” he said.

And yet Georg Charpentier, the former head of UN humanitarian operations, declared to IWPR in a written statement that “UN humanitarian agencies are not confronted by pressure or interference from the Government of Sudan.” This is a shameless lie. Moreover, it is also clear that [Charpentier cynically manipulated data to suggest a lower number of IDPs in Darfur](#). Such mendacity only serves Khartoum’s purposes and ensures that humanitarian assistance will be yet further compromised and denied.

A continuing war

If reporting on Darfur is challenging, it is not impossible. February 2012 saw the publication of several important reports and updates, including the continuing dispatches of Radio Dabanga, which chronicle the continuing epidemic of rape, the acute deprivation within many Internally Displaced Persons camps, and the increasingly violent predations of the Central Reserve Police (CRP), also known as the *Abu Tira*.²² Radio Dabanga, which is continually expanding its already impressive network of sources on the ground in Darfur, is also the most reliable source for reports of aerial bombing and direct-fire attacks on civilians. Working with the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (The Hague), Radio Dabanga is essential reading for understanding Darfur in any broader sense.²³

The most important report from the beginning of 2012 comes from Amnesty International.²⁴ Among other key findings, including confirmations of aerial attacks that [I have reported on](#), Amnesty notes that:

The supply of various types of weapons, munitions and related equipment to Sudan in recent years, by the governments of Belarus, the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, have allowed the Sudanese authorities to use their army, paramilitary forces, and government-backed militias to carry out grave violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in Sudan. This ongoing flow of new arms to Darfur has sustained a brutal nine-year conflict which shows little sign of resolution.

Amnesty goes on to state that “in the last twelve months, as other developments in Sudan overshadowed international attention on Darfur, the region has seen a new wave of fighting between armed opposition groups and government forces, including government-backed militias.” This fighting “has included targeted and ethnically motivated attacks on civilian settlements, and indiscriminate and disproportionate aerial bombings that have contributed to the displacement of an estimated 70,000 people from their homes and villages.”²⁵

These findings do not inform the *NYT* dispatch, which quotes officials (UN and other) who offer claims that are simply not supported by the evidence. One UN official, for example, declares that “there are still pockets of insecurity” in Darfur. This is an extraordinarily misleading statement, for the extensive compendium of Radio Dabanga reports make clear that insecurity in Darfur is in fact pervasive. Amnesty's report puts much of the responsibility for fueling ongoing conflict where it properly belongs: with China, Russia, and Belarus. The report's conclusion about the violations of the UN arms embargo on Darfur is certainly the right one, even if

predictably and strenuously resisted by Beijing and Moscow Permanent Members of the UN Security Council:

The case of Darfur further demonstrates that it is ineffective to put in place an arms embargo on only part of a country and allow arms to be transferred to one of the parties to the conflict whom it is known will invariably transfer some of those arms to the conflict area under embargo, thereby fuelling further grave violations of international law.

What is also disturbing about this particular report is that Amnesty International (AI) is filling the role originally central to the mandate of the UN Panel of Experts on Darfur as authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1591 (March 2005). In yet another sign of UN failure in Darfur, the Panel of Experts no longer exists in meaningful form. Former true experts resigned in disgust when it became apparent that there would be no meaningful reporting presence in Darfur by the Panel.

“Urbanization” in Darfur

When speaking more broadly about Darfur, Gettleman cites what are finally bizarre comments by US senior advisor for Darfur Dane Smith:

“Darfur is ‘a quite different place from 2003,’ said Dane Smith, the American senior adviser for Darfur. He cited a telling statistic: In 2003, 18 percent of Darfur’s population lived in urban areas. Now it’s about 50 percent.”

The ironies here evidently escape both Smith and the *NYT* correspondent. If 50 percent of Darfur’s population now lives in urban areas, this is a catastrophe on many levels. For the vast populations of displaced persons that account for such a precipitous increase aren’t living “urban lives”; indeed, the vast majority are in the environs of towns only because they are desperate for security that UNAMID cannot provide. A great many of the largest IDP camps are on the outskirts of the major cities of Nyala, el-Fasher, and el-Geneina, and they are becoming more permanent by the day. There are no jobs here for most of these people, and wages are such that women must often take on grueling jobs for very low pay.²⁶ It is continuing, powerfully threatening insecurity—not economic incentives or a desire for a different way of life—that accounts for “urbanization.”

Moreover, there are many highly destructive consequences of Khartoum’s war on civilians, which has produced the mass movements to towns and indeed “changed

the demography of Darfur”—words first used in a directive from notorious *Janjaweed* leader Musa Hilal in the early phase of the Darfur genocide in August 2004.²⁷

The overall cost of the war has been analyzed by Danielle Goldberg of the Peace-building and Rights Program at Columbia University’s Institute for the Study of Human Rights, who provides a [useful overview of a study by Dr. Hamid Ali from American University in Cairo](#):

[Khartoum spent] US \$35.11 billion ... between 2003–2009 on the war effort in Darfur...[This “staggering cost” is] broken into the following: \$10.08 billion in direct military expenses; \$7.2 billion in productivity lost by internally displaced persons (IDPs), \$2.6 billion in lifetime earnings of the dead, \$4.1 billion in infrastructure damage and \$11.04 billion for military spillover and UNAMID peace keeping operations. This excludes indirect costs such as capital flight, the emigration of skilled labor, and lost educational opportunities for future generations due to insufficient data. While data related to the conflict is limited, as information is censored and classified by the government, Ali’s findings offer a valuable baseline for future research.

Ali’s extraordinary total has many implications, some of them obvious, others not—none of them considered in the account offered by the *NYT*. Such massive misallocation of national resources has contributed significantly to the current deep economic crisis in (northern) Sudan. The relatively brief economic boom fueled by oil revenues has rapidly collapsed and [the economy is now in desperate shape](#).

This has direct implications for any implementation of the terms of the Doha “Darfur Peace Agreement,” which nominally commits the Khartoum regime to a series of financial payments and capital investments in Darfur that have become simply impossible.²⁸ Even when Khartoum was still feeling flush following the signing of the Abuja “Darfur Peace Agreement” (May 2006), it made good on none of its financial commitments or reparation payments. Today’s shrinking economy will place even more economic distress on urbanized areas: unemployment will skyrocket, and there will be fewer and fewer employment opportunities for those in the camps near Darfur’s urban centers, thus breeding further anger, frustration, and despair among populations that have known nothing but “urban life” for as long as nine years in many cases.²⁹

Darfur: No Way Forward from a Dangerous and Unsustainable Situation (August 30, 2011)

As news coverage of the vast human suffering and destruction in Darfur continues to diminish, the world seems to have lost sight of what only a few years ago were widely perceived as pressing human needs and threats to survival. International reporting remains the province of disingenuous officials of the UN and UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), and Humanitarians on the ground see no real progress—certainly none that can withstand the effects of badly timed rains or this year’s anticipated poor harvest. The fighting between the regime’s forces, regular and paramilitary, and the rebel groups has diminished again, although a significant flare-up remains a strong possibility. If the rebels in Darfur and the Sudan People’s Liberation Army/Movement-North from South Kordofan were to unify, the fighting could quickly become explosive. Meanwhile, Antonov aircraft continue to bomb civilian targets; civilians in camps for the displaced continue to be victims of brutal, ethnically targeted violence, especially in West Darfur. And an epidemic of rape continues to threaten girls and women of non-Arab tribal groups.

A Darfur Peace Process?

The so-called “Doha Peace Agreement” of July 14 has—all too predictably—proved essentially worthless, changing neither the political nor the military realities on the ground in Darfur. Nonetheless, Khartoum has used the signing of the agreement as an opportunity to say that there will be no more peace negotiations, no further agreements, and no discussion of Darfur-related issues outside Sudan. An Obama administration “conference” designed to bring to Washington, DC consequential rebel factions, whose participation in any meaningful agreement is essential, was countenanced by Khartoum only after U.S. officials assured the regime that this was not a new diplomatic “initiative,” thus preserving the fiction of a completed Darfur peace agreement.³⁰

Dismayingly, there is no evidence that the Obama administration has backed away from its decision of last November to “de-couple” Darfur from the major ambitions of U.S. Sudan policy: a “senior administration official” (according to a State Department [transcript of a background briefing](#)) declared that:

the U.S. was prepared to accelerate the removal of Sudan from the state sponsor of terrorism list if the Government of Sudan did two things. One is to fully implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, and two, to live up to all of the legal conditions required under law for Sudan to be taken off the state sponsors list. *By doing this, we would*

also be de-coupling the state sponsor of terrorism from Darfur and from the Darfur issue.

The enormous significance of this decision continues to go unappreciated by many, including the editorial board of the *New York Times*. Most consequentially, the “de-coupling” of Darfur from the issue that matters most to Khartoum signaled that the regime could continue to have its genocidal way in the region: U.S. priorities were focused on self-determination referendum in the South. That this re-directed focus did not include Abyei or South Kordofan in any meaningful way reveals, yet again, international failure to see that apparently separate conflicts are in fact all part of a larger, immensely destructive center/periphery struggle. Consequentially, the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime is able to play one crisis against another in responding to pressure from the international community.

In part because of its excessive focus on the South, the Obama administration has been slow to see the implications of Khartoum’s threats both UNAMID and the humanitarian community in Darfur—specifically, the threats of expulsion. In the wake of the UN Security Council’s unanimous passage of [Resolution 2003](#) (July 29, 2011), which renewed the mandate of UNAMID for another year, an outraged Khartoum released a barrage of extremely heated official pronouncements, focusing on both the preambular language of Resolution 2003 as well as language anchored to Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. [Foreign Minister Ali Karti declared](#) that any attempt to “impose new commitments” on UNAMID would “free the Sudanese government from its commitment to accepting the [UN/African Union mission] and its deployment.” What so irked the regime?

For one thing, the document “reaffirms that there can be no peace without justice” in Darfur, a weak substitute for language reaffirming the Council’s 2005 referral of atrocity crimes in Darfur to the International Criminal Court. Even so, the language still serves as a clear reminder that justice has not begun to be rendered, and impunity continues to reign in Darfur.

The document also “expressed deep concern” over “aerial bombardment by the Government of Sudan”—something [established beyond all reasonable doubt](#) that the regime nonetheless refers to as “negative and obsolete references.” The resolution also spoke of “the deteriorating security situation in some parts of Darfur,” of the need to “lift the state of emergency” in Darfur, of the need for political prisoners to be released, and of the “need to bring to justice the perpetrators of [atrocity] crimes” and for the regime “to comply with its obligations in this respect.” As far as Khartoum was concerned, all of this was [evidence that the UN Security Council resolution had](#) “‘intentionally infringed’ on Sudan’s sovereignty.” Language in

the resolution referring to delayed visas for UNAMID staff, the denial of a radio transmitter license for UNAMID, and other logistical problems, and the Council's "demand" that "UNAMID report on sexual and gender based violence," was much more than Khartoum was willing to accept—and Foreign Minister Ali Karti rejected all of it.

Moreover, the Khartoum embassy in Washington, DC—the most prominent venue for press releases aimed at Western audiences—declared that "the resolution embodies troubling signals that the previous commitments are being unilaterally scrapped by the Council and further contains inaccurate and malicious information *that does not in any way reflect the realities on the ground.*" The NIF/NCP Political Secretary, al-Hajj Adam Yousif, declared that the "resolution was aimed at providing a cover for supporting Darfur [rebel] movements" (Sudan Vision [Khartoum], August 18, 2011).

No doubt the reference here was to the Security Council's call for "the Government of Sudan and the armed movements to contribute to the creation of the necessary enabling environment for a Darfur Peace Process that allows the systematic and sustained engagement of all Darfurian stakeholders in constructive and open dialogue." Khartoum was outraged at the implicit claim that such an "enabling environment" does not already exist, for this is critical to their propaganda campaign for the Doha Agreement and "domestication" of the peace process. Khartoum also bridled at the idea that it bears substantial responsibility for creating such an environment.

It would be foolish not to heed the threat—[made yet again on August 16 by Foreign Minister Karti](#) in an interview with the pro-regime *al-Ray al-Amm*—that UNAMID will not be able to remain in Darfur "unless according to the former agreement on its establishment between Sudan, the UN, and the AU." Sensing that the Council may be willing to speak more honestly about Darfur's realities, Khartoum is determined that there will be no further excessive characterizations or stipulations going forward, and that it does not feel itself bound by any number of Council "demands," "urgings," "condemnations," or "requests."

It is impossible to imagine that a regime so adamant, so belligerent, and so deeply imperiled will make anything resembling a just peace for Darfur. Confronting this intransigence, and unwilling to challenge the regime more broadly, the international community has yet again contented itself with rhetorical exhortation, Khartoum's outrage notwithstanding.

Humanitarian failures

For its part, the UN humanitarian leadership in Sudan still refuses to provide any-

thing approaching adequate information about the humanitarian situation in Darfur, even as silence on the part of the UN in turn prevents International Nongovernmental Organizations (INGOs) from releasing data, information, and reports they have assembled. UN officials in New York accept the decisions that prevent dissemination of UN and INGO information about malnutrition, health benchmarks, water supplies, and a host of other critical issues. As a January 2011 Tufts University study makes clear, the suppression of this crucial information has “seriously eroded and impaired” international humanitarian capacities “to a point that leaves Darfur in a more vulnerable position now than at any other time since the counterinsurgency operations and forced displacements in 2003 and early 2004.”³¹

The few available statistics, such as those recorded in the WFP’s [February 2011 report](#) suggest areas of particular concern regarding malnutrition, but provide little follow-up information. The report states that “7 percent of resident children are severely malnourished” Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) is an extremely serious and threatening condition of food deprivation, and SAM in children requires urgent medical intervention with therapeutic and supplementary feeding. Did this occur? What do we know about this extremely distressed population of vulnerable children? If there are answers, WFP is making them extremely difficult to find.³²

Forced returns of displaced persons

Given Darfur’s invisibility and intractability, there is good reason to believe that Khartoum may be preparing to renew pressure for a campaign of forcibly returning displaced persons—particularly from the camps in which they have sought refuge back to their former villages and lands. Most of these lands are now occupied or controlled by Arab militia forces and their affiliates, including non-Sudanese Arab militias, who were given claim to these lands by Khartoum as payment for “military service.” In this context, UNAMID in its present form cannot possibly protect any significant number of civilians returning to areas where conflict over land ownership and usage is intense and likely to remain so for a long time. And yet such returns remain a key part of the near-term ambitions guiding the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime.

Notably, last summer [Khartoum expelled a number of senior officials](#) from both the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the intergovernmental International Organization for Migration (IOM); both organizations are critical to assure the safety and voluntary nature of returns, and yet the expulsions met with no meaningful resistance from the UN.

Also last summer Ghazi Salah al-Din, the current senior regime official responsible for Darfur, declared that, “the current priorities of the government’s strategy

to address the Darfur problem are first security to accelerate the voluntary, safe return of the displaced.”³³ But Ghazi was merely paying the necessary lip service in using the criteria “voluntary” and “safe”; the operative word here is “accelerate”—and by any means necessary. He was at the time preparing the way for Khartoum’s “New Strategy for Darfur,” which emphasizes “development” over “humanitarian assistance.” This “strategic shift” is not made on the basis on any needs assessment. Rather, the regime’s calculation is bluntly simple: if there is no further “need” for the massive humanitarian operation in Darfur (once the world’s largest), then INGOs and a number of UN agencies providing relief should leave. Once they do, however, there will be nothing to prevent forced returns, which will in a great many cases amount to death sentences or life in the vast and growing slum areas that have sprung up around the camp areas near el-Fasher and Nyala.

The threats that Khartoum continually issues about expelling humanitarian organizations are not to be taken lightly, especially given the precipitous and massive expulsion of 13 distinguished INGOs on March 4, 2009, which reduced overall humanitarian capacity in Darfur by approximately 50 percent. Subsequent expulsions and evacuations by other organizations have further diminished humanitarian capacity in significant ways. And the threats are continuous, serving various purposes, including warning off excessive international pressure on the regime over its campaign of ethnic destruction against the Nuba in South Kordofan.³⁴

The realities of returns for displaced persons

There has been a steady and effective push-back against premature returns, by both humanitarian organizations and UN agencies operating in Darfur. But this resistance has atrophied significantly under current UN leadership, which seems increasingly unwilling to forestall returns that will clearly be unsafe and involuntary.

In assessing the UN’s current response to the threat of forced returns, we should examine the most recent report on Darfur by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (July 8, 2011; S/2011/422). In 51, Ban refers to the “success” of returns in Darfur by pointing to the approximately 35,000 who have *reportedly* returned since the beginning of the year, although he acknowledges that assessment of “the voluntariness and appropriateness of returns” is incomplete—a considerable understatement.

Indeed, we learn from Radio Dabanga that the character of these returns is often far from successful. In a dispatch of July 26, 2011 (“Voluntary Repatriation: 7 families found in a critical state”), the news source reported that 18 out of 25 families who had left Kalma Camp in South Darfur as part of the Voluntary Return program were forced to travel back to the camp due to extremely dangerous travel conditions.

It has long been obvious that humanitarian capacity has already been stretched to the breaking point in Darfur, and fewer and fewer locations are accessible, even as UNAMID controls less and less humanitarian space in Darfur. Returns such as those reported by Radio Dabanga have little chance of receiving relief aid. One highly informed regional source has informed me that there are in all of Darfur no roads cleared for UN travel without an armed escort—not one (telephone interview, August 26, 2011). Yet according to UN humanitarian chief in Sudan George Charpentier, ““there are large areas where there are security conditions that can promote a return’ of internally displaced persons,” suggesting that there were only “pockets of insecurity.”³⁵

As for Ban’s claim of a total of 35,000 returns—during a period in which 70,000 people were also newly displaced—another extremely well-informed source in the region dismisses this figure as an entirely inaccurate census. In fact, not only is it clear from the extreme brevity of Ban’s report on returns that the UN has not thought seriously about this critical problem, but it appears that the UN has decided simply to reduce the figure for the number of displaced persons in the camps. Thus in place of the figure of 2.7 million promulgated by the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in its last “Darfur Humanitarian Profile” (Number 34, reflecting conditions as of January 1, 2009, and in line with the figures from preceding reports), the figure for the total IDP population figure now promulgated is 1.8 million.

How can this change possibly reflect realities on the ground? Determining a total number of IDPs, disaggregating the numbers of those in camps and those in mixed communities (resident and displaced), ascertaining the number of newly displaced who are actually being displaced for the first time—all of these are enormously difficult statistical challenges in the intensely hostile environment of Darfur, and given the denial of access by Khartoum. But before reducing by almost one million human beings the official figure for the number of displaced in Darfur, a great deal more needs to be done to explain this vast demographic reclassification. None of this has been provided by the UN or anyone else.³⁶

Darfur Humanitarian Overview: The Consequences of International Silence (January 23, 2011)

What has become most notable about the human catastrophe in Darfur is its invisibility, a direct consequence of the decision by senior UN officials to shut down access to information about human suffering, deprivation, and destruction in this vast region—and to acquiesce before Khartoum’s determination to expedite the return of displaced persons, even as this vulnerable population continues to grow at an alarming rate and security conditions simply do not permit safe returns. To be sure, recent international news attention to the Southern referendum has worked to obscure the situation in Darfur. But for more than a year I have [emphasized the consequences](#) of the UN suppression of humanitarian data and reports, especially those bearing on malnutrition. This information would reveal a great deal about true conditions in Darfur, but Khartoum’s actions and threats have succeeded in intimidating the humanitarian community, preeminently the UN.

I have been joined in these concerns by a consortium of seventeen distinguished human rights organizations, finally speaking out forcefully about the implications of this deadly UN silence. The groups have a decisive central claim: “There are clear signs that the situation in Darfur is getting worse. But the international community is failing to monitor and respond properly to what is happening in Darfur.”³⁷

Even more forceful in its conclusions is an extraordinary study from Tufts University (“Navigating Without a Compass: The Erosion of Humanitarianism in Darfur”), recently cited and analyzed in great detail by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR). Since the Tufts report is not yet publicly available, the comprehensive IWPR account is for the present essential in understanding the ways in which both the UN—including the peacekeeping force known as UNAMID—and international nongovernmental humanitarian organizations (INGOs) have become complicit in obscuring Darfur’s agony.³⁸ The conclusions of the Tufts study as reported are of the greatest consequence and provide a devastating portrait of callousness, deceit, and cowardice on the part of the UN and those with power to influence UN decisions. In particular, the report focuses on the impaired capacity of international humanitarian organizations and the growing levels of “malnutrition, illness and instability” in IDP camps.

IWPR supports the Tufts findings using hundreds of interviews, and on the basis of these interviews and other research, concludes that “the Sudanese government is actively preventing UN agencies which operate on the ground from accessing information necessary for compiling much needed reports on the humanitarian situation in the region.” IWPR also notes that, fearing expulsion by Khartoum—the fate of

13 of the world's finest humanitarian organizations in March 2009—"UN agencies feel they must tread very carefully."³⁹

The implications of the National Islamic Front/National Congress (NIF/NCP) regime's deliberate undermining of humanitarian efforts require serious moral and legal assessment. Given the characteristic ethnic profiles of those most in need of humanitarian assistance and the overwhelmingly non-Arab/African character of displaced populations, what is being described is "genocide by other means." These means of destruction may be subtle, given the acute vulnerability of the distressed populations—requiring no more, for example, than compelling aid agencies to struggle in determining where food and other relief supplies are most needed:

UNICEF reported early last year that as many as 21 nutritional surveys were conducted since June 2009, but only seven have been released by the humanitarian affairs commission [HAC]. Six of those showed [Global Acute] malnutrition rates of between 15 and 29 per cent, the report stated.

The threshold for a humanitarian emergency is Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) at a rate of 15 percent or higher; thus locations with a GAM rate of 29 percent are experiencing double the malnutrition threshold rate for a humanitarian emergency. Yet Khartoum has decided to suppress this data, even as it suggests an extremely serious and widespread malnutrition problem. The deliberate and consequential nature of this suppression has been made explicit by the courageously outspoken Nils Kastberg, head of UNICEF in Darfur:

Nils Kastberg [said in October 2010] that Khartoum is preventing his agency from releasing reports about malnutrition in IDP camps. "Part of the problem has been when we conduct surveys to help us address issues, in collaboration with the ministry of health, very often other parts of the government such as the humanitarian affairs commission [HAC] interferes and delays in the release of reports, making it difficult for us to respond [in a] timely [manner]," he said.

Here it is important to note the rather different view of chief UN aid official for Darfur, Georg Charpentier—Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Sudan:

"UN humanitarian agencies are not confronted by pressure or interference from the Government of Sudan," [Charpentier said in a written statement to IWPR].

This is a distinctly minority opinion; indeed, it is perversely singular, excepting the propaganda coming from the Khartoum regime that is itself responsible for the humanitarian crisis. There is overwhelming evidence of Khartoum's deliberate effort to undermine, obstruct, and compromise humanitarian assistance to a highly distressed population of more than 4 million human beings. This evidence is voluminous, detailed, and widely sourced.

In addition to the broader conclusions reached by human rights organizations and IWPR about UN responses to the Darfur crisis, there is much evidence available either anecdotally or buried within publications often only indirectly concerned with present humanitarian conditions in Darfur. We may also infer a great deal from the accounts of increasing insecurity in Darfur and the growing inability of humanitarians to move and operate freely. Even the UN peacekeeping force in Darfur, UNAMID, has been increasingly disabled by Khartoum through denial of access and flight restrictions; this is so much the case that UNAMID now cannot respond even to the most conspicuous atrocity crimes (e.g., the Tabarat massacre in early September 2010).

On this and other security issues, Charpentier is again the lead UN prevaricator. Beyond his dangerous distortions and misrepresentations, Charpentier is reported by highly reliable sources in the region to insist on the silence of all who are subordinate to him within the UN system. Because INGOs have felt unable to move ahead of the UN in reporting on realities they see and encounter (fearing individual vulnerability to expulsion by Khartoum), Charpentier's assessments—infrequent as they are—stand virtually alone as the voice of the UN.⁴⁰

These assessments are echoed chiefly by claims made by Ibrahim Gambari, the incompetent and widely despised head of UNAMID. Gambari told IWPR that "I've continually engaged the government [in Khartoum] at the highest levels to increase access to UNAMID and the humanitarian community, to ensure full freedom of movement. We are making some progress." But access continues to be severely attenuated, fewer international personnel are able to work in country, kidnapping of aid workers has increased sharply in the past two years, and violence against civilians is also increasing: there is simply no evidence for the "progress" Gambari claims. Khartoum regards him with disdain.

Even so, there are humanitarian data and reports that Charpentier and Gambari simply cannot suppress, so massive and sustained are the realities represented. In particular, Radio Dabanga continues on a daily basis to give us glimpses of the character of suffering in the camps and rural areas, and the consequences of a badly faltering humanitarian project.⁴¹

For the sheer scale of what is occurring in Darfur, perhaps our best guide is hu-

man displacement, which has been reported annually in a crude but fairly effective fashion. Displacement, typically the direct consequence of violence, is ongoing and has driven some 3 million Darfuris from their homes and lands over the past eight years; they languish either as Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), as refugees in Chad and Central African Republic, or as dependents within host families. This large-scale displacement proceeds at a rate that far exceeds returns or resettlements by those who have previously been displaced, despite claims by Charpentier that would suggest otherwise:

(a) The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimates that 317,000 people were newly displaced in 2008 (up from 300,000 in 2007).

(b) The figure for 2009 seems less certain, but the Canadian “Peace Operations Monitor” found evidence that suggested “over 214,000 people were newly displaced between January and June [2009] alone.” Given the reports of violent displacement that followed June 2009, a total for the year of 250,000 seems conservative.⁴²

(c) As of the end of November 2010, the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre estimated that “268,000 [Darfuris were] newly displaced in 2010.” This will surely rise, as the [OCHA Sudan Bulletin](#) (January 7-13, 2011) reports that the “overall number of people displaced during the December 2010 fighting in the area of Khor Abeche stands at 43,000.”

(d) These figures only partially capture human displacement in Eastern Jebel Marra, which has endured a yearlong humanitarian blockade and relentless military assaults by Khartoum. Estimates of how many have actually been displaced by violence and humanitarian distress run to the many tens of thousands, but Khartoum’s denial of humanitarian assessment makes any figure a guess. Human Rights Watch, for example, reports that attacks villages south of Soni [Darfur] on October 25, 2010 caused tens of thousands of civilians to flee their homes.⁴³

What this statistical overview of displacement strongly suggests is that since January 1, 2008, when UNAMID officially took over the civilian protection mandate from the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), well over 800,000 civilians have been newly displaced, in many cases for the second or third time. Any assessment of humanitarian conditions in Darfur simply must take account of the extraordinary trauma of violent displacement, as well as the deeply dispiriting—and dangerous—lives that most displaced people lead in camps that far too often provide inadequate services.⁴⁴

Security in the camps and rural areas

Predictably, we have no comprehensive UN or other humanitarian survey of the conditions and services within particular camps, or distressed rural areas. Nor do we have any systematic or comprehensive account of violence, civilian deaths, and the specific security conditions obtaining in most areas of Darfur. UN mortality “totals” are nothing more than the violent deaths that UNAMID is able to confirm during its highly circumscribed movements; these say nothing about the deaths that are a function of displacement and inadequate humanitarian assistance, or violent deaths in areas to which UNAMID has no access. Thus the dozens of people killed in early September 2010 at the Tabarat market do not figure in UNAMID’s total for that month, since Khartoum prevented investigation of the scene for many days. There is still no public UN report on this notorious massacre.

Most of the delays and denials of access imposed by Khartoum for “security purposes” are nothing more than the regime’s determination to keep prying international eyes from observing the regime’s actions and the often deadly consequences of antecedent violence. But despite this determination we continue to get snapshots from Radio Dabanga, which tirelessly—and ever more effectively—chronicles the realities of Darfur, in the camps as well as rural and urban areas.⁴⁵

Humanitarian realities

Despite the lack of systematic reporting on humanitarian conditions in Darfur, a range of sources, including Radio Dabanga, has also provided countless examples of particular sites of privation and inadequate humanitarian response. Some information is available from the UN and other humanitarian organizations. In its appeal for 2011 funding (January 2011 to December 2011), UNICEF reports that: “The majority of localized surveys in Darfur continue to show global acute malnutrition rates over the emergency threshold of 15%, the range seen in 2010 is 11.1% to 29.8%. The nutrition situation needs to be closely monitored in areas of conflict and food insecure areas to ensure that there is no further deterioration of the situation.”⁴⁶

What has been nowhere reported, but comes to me from an especially well-informed member of the Darfuri diaspora, is Khartoum’s new strategy of exacerbating the food crisis in the region as a means of engineering returns of displaced persons and closing down the camps—the latter an ambition of the regime since 2004, when the scale of Darfur’s catastrophe first came to be appreciated by the international community:

The dangerous trend taking place now across the IDP camps in Darfur is the Government of Sudan is using aid (food and medicine) to dismantle some camps, and to silence outspoken Darfuris in other camps. In Kalma camp, IDPs complain that the food ration is drastically reduced and pro-[Khartoum] government NGOs keep telling the IDPs that if they listen to the government officials and relocate, they can get full rations and medical care. These government NGOs have been given contracts and access to the IDP camps following a deal between [U.S. special envoy] Gration and the Government of Sudan after the government expelled the 13 INGOs in March 2009.⁴⁷

In addition to a deteriorating food situation, displaced Darfuris are experiencing shortages of drinking water, and a dangerous lack of health resources and aid. The food needs of refugees in eastern Chad and Central African Republic have all but disappeared from the humanitarian relief map.⁴⁸

Other humanitarian shortcomings are less visible, but enormously consequential. For example, no international humanitarian organization has sought a presence in Darfur with a mandate to respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV). There is now virtually no treatment for the trauma of rape anywhere in Darfur, even as there are no prosecutions for rape despite its terrible prevalence; in turn, these realities are denied by Khartoum and rarely mentioned by the UN.

In its meticulously researched study, Physicians for Human Rights chronicled in soul-destroying detail some of the devastation among Darfuri refugee girls and women in eastern Chad.⁴⁹

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. (page 5)

Mental illness is an issue that is rarely discussed and less often treated. It is a marginalized medical problem in Darfur and eastern Chad, even as the toll of living in the camps has created in many Darfuris a deep and debilitating sense of despair.⁵⁰

Forced Returns of Displaced Persons

The greatest threat to Darfuris presently surviving in the displaced persons camps is Khartoum’s ambition to “return” them to their villages, or new locations.⁵¹ This

ambition is announced clearly in the regime's "New Strategy for Darfur," which emphasizes "development" over humanitarian aid. The reason for a move to "development" is easily discerned: this becomes the key means by which returns of the displaced can be compelled, and international humanitarian workers in turn rendered "unnecessary."⁵²

Last August Ghazi Salah al-Din, the senior regime official responsible for Darfur, declared that "the current priorities of the government's strategy to address the Darfur problem are first security to accelerate the voluntary, safe return of the displaced."⁵³ But Ghazi is merely paying the necessary lip service in using the criteria "voluntary" and "safe"; the operative word here is "accelerate"—and by any means necessary.

All humanitarian and human rights reporting on security in Darfur—excepting those coming from the mendacious Charpentier—makes clear that returns at this point, for the vast majority of Darfuris, would not be safe. In a great many cases their lands have been seized by Arab militias (often from Chad, Niger, and other countries outside Sudan); in most other cases there are simply no adequate security guarantees.⁵⁴

Darfur Humanitarian Update (August 31, 2010)

The “hunger gap” began unusually early this year following the poor harvests of 2009-10. The fall harvest is still many weeks away, and its success depends on the rains as well as security at the time of harvest. At the time of writing—also the height of the rainy season—food and other humanitarian needs in many camps are acute. Deaths from malnutrition alone are likely in the thousands.

An understanding of the current political and diplomatic context is essential to any examination of the humanitarian shortfalls, rising malnutrition, and longer-term threats to human survival and welfare throughout Darfur. The recent violence at Kalma camp and the ensuing international responses are particularly revealing of this larger context.

Events at Kalma and other politically radicalized camps have spurred Khartoum (pushing plans long in the making) to call for a “New Strategy” for Darfur, one that entails a “domestication” of the peace process.⁵⁵ Yet the decision to relocate residents of Kalma camp—announced by the Governor of South Darfur, Abdel Hamid Musa Kasha, on August 9, 2010—has “deepened concern that ‘domestication’ will proceed in parallel with a range of coercive measures, including continued military action against the armed opposition movements in Darfur and attempts to dismantle the camps that house more than 2.5 million displaced.”⁵⁶ There has been no significant resistance by the international community to Khartoum’s initiative. Indeed, reports suggest that the African Union and Thabo Mbeki, UNAMID, US President Obama’s Special Envoy Scott Gration, and others have acquiesced, frustrated by the lack of progress in Doha and unwilling to confront a regime with the power to collapse the southern self-determination referendum (January 2011). Khartoum’s patience and refusal to negotiate in good faith have allowed the regime to prevail, and the consequences will be disastrous for Darfur.

The rebel movements, including the Liberation and Justice Movement (LJM, the only group still engaged in Doha), have all warned of the extremely dangerous implications of this new policy. The LJM has said “‘domestication’ will serve only to silence opposition and weaken the negotiating position of the victims of the war.” Civil society representatives, “whose participation in the Doha process was portrayed as a big step forward on the road to peace, have fiercely opposed it.”⁵⁷ JEM has denounced “domestication” as a “rerun of the ‘peace from within’ strategy attempted in the Nuba Mountains after the jihad of the early 1990s failed to defeat the insurgency there.”⁵⁸ This “peace from within” strategy resulted in concentration camps, brutal treatment of camp residents, forced conversion to Islam in order to receive food, appropriation of land from native Nubans, and widespread starva-

tion. Initially supported by some development personnel in Khartoum, the strategy amounted to genocide.⁵⁹

U.S. Support for the “New Strategy”

Now, with no resistance from the international community, Khartoum has begun to implement its new strategy. On August 27, 2010, *Sudan Tribune* reported that Chairman of AU Panel on Sudan Thabo Mbeki, Joint Special Representative (JSR) of the AU-UN Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) Ibrahim Gambari, and US Special Envoy to Sudan Scott Gration all “strongly support” the strategy.

Supporting a strategy so transparently threatening to vulnerable Darfuris is unfortunately consistent with US policy as determined by Gration. Recently, Gration “proposed a plan that makes the January referendum a priority, deemphasizes the ongoing crisis in Darfur, and is devoid of any additional pressures on the government in Khartoum.” Despite protests by US ambassador to the UN Susan Rice, “Gration’s plan was endorsed by almost all the other participants, including Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and will now go to the president for his approval.”⁶⁰

This US “de-emphasis” on Darfur policy is a signal to Khartoum to accelerate its “New Strategy” for the region. The regime makes repeated use of the word “development” in its document (“Darfur: Towards New Strategy to Achieve Comprehensive Peace, Security and Development”), and indicates that the international community should support this shift in emphasis from humanitarian relief. Although it is true that Darfur has remained virtually undeveloped during the twenty-one years of National Islamic Front/National Congress party rule, the regime’s idea of what constitutes “development” requires substantial glossing. What this word really signifies, in the multiple contexts in which it appears, is unmistakable: “It is a top priority for the government to re-direct the humanitarian efforts towards rehabilitation and shifting from depending on the relief to development and self-reliance.” Translation: international humanitarian organizations must leave, Darfuris must return to their villages and become “self-reliant,” and the regime will take on all security responsibilities, leaving only a short-term role for UNAMID. “Rehabilitation” and “development” are also the pretext for Khartoum’s dismantling of IDP camps, with Kalma first on the hit-list.

Implementing the “New Strategy”

Although it acknowledges that the humanitarian “crisis” in Darfur could deepen, the regime also declares that it is “important to continue efforts and direct the humanitarian activity towards resettlement of war-affected persons.” Such “resettlement” implies the return of all IDPs to their villages or to new camps, many of which

remain to be constructed. As the experience of Kalma reveals, resettlement will inevitably be forcefully or violently implemented.

At Kalma, 90,000 IDPs were confronted with violence from within and without that worked to disperse tens of thousands. Using a conservative UN World Food Program (WFP) registration figure of 82,000, the retiring UN Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian affairs, John Holmes, recently estimated that “some 15,000 [Kalma residents] seemed to have fled to Nyala town and another 10,000 to surrounding areas, including nearby Bileil camp.” According to Holmes, in his August 23 briefing of the UN Security Council on the events, both Kalma and Bileil were denied all humanitarian access from August 2 through August 18, with the exception of one brief assessment and delivery mission on August 16.

On the subject of returns, Holmes made several ominous observations:

[It is] vital that displaced populations are not threatened with violence or otherwise forcibly moved.

[The tense situation in Kalma] was further aggravated when local authorities denied NGOs and UN agencies access to the camp for 15 day after August 1, amid suggestions that they want to get rid of the camp altogether.

“[T]he situation remains tense and fragile, and there is still government talk of moving the IDPs out of Kalma and dismantling the camp.”

And “Government talk” of “moving the IDPs out of Kalma and dismantling the camp” is precisely what is being threatened implicitly in the “New Strategy,” if one reads with any care. Since 2004 the regime has been eager to return people to their lands and villages, with or without security. Although declaring that the returns will be “voluntary” and “sustainable,” there is no evidence that it has any scruples on the matter of how civilians are removed from the camps in the absence of international observation. A recent press release by the Khartoum regime (from its embassy in Washington, DC) declared:

The governor of south Darfur state, Abdulhamid Musa Kasha, has said that the government is determined to bring Kalma IDP camp under control as from Tuesday [August 24, 2010]. Speaking after talks with UNAMID, Kasha said the government will consider the camp a hostile military base if the government forces faced any resistance within the camp.⁶¹

The message to UNAMID is clear: control Kalma completely, and turn that control over to our police, armed forces, and Military Intelligence, or you will be viewed as obstructing security.

Yet too few are willing to state publicly the implications of Khartoum's policies. Human Rights Watch is a notable exception in its July 19, 2010 report, "New Deaths, Others Abuses Underscore Need for Better Access, Improved Security":

"While international attention has focused on the Sudanese elections and the referendum on Southern Sudan, Darfur remains in shambles," said Rona Peligal, Africa director at Human Rights Watch. "The new fighting and rights abuses across Darfur show clearly that the war is far from over and that the UN needs to do more to protect civilians."⁶²

To those convinced by Khartoum's propaganda or shallow analyses that the war is over, Human Rights Watch declares:

Government soldiers and allied militias targeted civilians, in violation of international humanitarian law, during clashes with rebel groups in the Jebel Mun and Jebel Mara areas of Darfur, which continued through June in some locations. Witnesses and victims of attacks reported to Human Rights Watch that government forces killed and raped civilians, destroyed homes, and bombed water supplies, forcing the displacement of thousands of civilians. The attacks included government aerial bombing in and around Jebel Mun in late April and early May. Accounts from witnesses suggest the bombs were directed at places near water where civilians gathered. In one incident on April 29, bombs reportedly killed nine civilians in Girgigirgi, a village 15 kilometers east of Jebel Mun. []

"Hundreds of civilians are dying, and peacekeepers in many cases aren't even able to reach the populations at risk," Peligal said. "The Sudanese government needs to end attacks on civilians and take immediate steps to improve the peacekeepers' access to affected areas. The peacekeepers should make access to these areas a top priority."

But access is precisely what Khartoum is denying, both to humanitarians and UNAMID. It does so by intimidation, threats, bureaucratic obstruction, contrived "security issues," and a range of other means. The denial of humanitarian access is particularly consequential, especially for the populous eastern Jebel Marra. It is also increasingly consequential for the civilians caught up in deadly violence

between Arab tribal groups. Not only is Khartoum denying both aid organizations and UNAMID access to critical locations, it is expressing an increasingly hostile attitude towards both peacekeeping and humanitarian missions.

In the wake of Khartoum's March 2009 expulsion of thirteen of the world's finest international relief organizations, this further attenuation of humanitarian reach is proving disastrous, even as Darfur becomes increasingly invisible. As a well-placed UN official declared last spring of humanitarian capacity, access, and reporting: following the expulsions "the quality of aid provision dropped precipitously...The drop in regular presence (and therefore some measure of security) and monitoring and evaluation have had serious implications for the most vulnerable."⁶³ Over the past three months, as we have moved deeper into the rainy season and hunger gap, such shortcomings are all the more telling—and reporting of humanitarian shortfalls and their human consequences is also deteriorating. For one of the most consequential effects of the March 2009 expulsions has been the silencing of those humanitarian organizations that remain in Darfur. Data and reports now rarely appear, and ones that do are not timely. The UN's "Darfur Humanitarian Profiles" no longer appear at all: UN agencies, which should be more open in revealing the conditions of Darfuri IDPs and distressed rural populations, are generally silent. This obstruction of data severely hinders effective distribution of aid by the remaining humanitarian groups in Darfur, further exacerbating poor humanitarian conditions in IDP camps.

USG Holmes declared last week that,

The level of restrictions imposed on humanitarian operations, and of harassment, threats and violence directed at humanitarian personnel, is once again becoming unacceptable. All this renders the civilians we are trying to help even more vulnerable.⁶⁴

"Once again"? When in the years since 2004 have security and operating conditions for humanitarians ever been "acceptable"? This disingenuousness should be recognized for what it is: a denial of past realities and a current accommodation of Khartoum's deliberate, ongoing harassment, obstruction, sabotage, and restriction of humanitarian aid, as well as its violent war of attrition against aid workers and peace support personnel. The regime has never abided by the agreements it has signed or committed to, either with humanitarians or with UNAMID. The February 2008 "status of forces agreement" between Khartoum and UNAMID has proved utterly meaningless, and violations have typically been accepted in silence by UN and African Union personnel.

The regime that exports huge quantities of agricultural products for profit—even as the World Food Program reports that a third of all Sudanese children are seriously underweight and malnutrition plagues all the marginalized areas in Sudan—insists in its “New Strategy for Darfur” that it be allowed to assume responsibility for humanitarian and security operations in the region.⁶⁵ History has already shown how Khartoum conceives of “security” for Darfur. As for humanitarian assistance— “[our goal is to] restructure of humanitarian operation in order to shift the focus from relief to development at the long run”—this is little more than a cover for the expulsion of international aid organizations. For all the reticence of humanitarians and UN political leaders, the truth of Darfur’s agony is all too conspicuous. That it remains so largely unspoken is at once testament to the power and evil that rules in Khartoum, and to the weak and selfish character of the international community.

For more on Khartoum’s outright hostility to UNAMID and other humanitarian groups, as well as concerns about the wisdom of mixing peacekeeping and development work, see the [full version](#) of this report. Also included is a survey of Humanitarian conditions in Darfur as of late August 2010, with special attention paid to health concerns (especially malnutrition and disease), mental illness and the trauma associated with rape and sexual violence, the growing scarcity of water supplies, and the impact of heavy rains on sanitary conditions and camp infrastructure.

The report concludes with an addendum on the extraordinary threat UNAMID currently faces in the form of Rwanda’s reaction to a UN investigation and report on the actions of Rwandan military forces in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. The report argues that these forces may be guilty of genocide, as well as war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Rwandan government has responded that “attempts to take action on this report—either through its release or leaks to the media—will force us to withdraw from Rwanda’s various commitments to the United Nations, especially in the area of peacekeeping.” Rwanda is the chief contributor of troops to UNAMID; the mission could not possibly survive the withdrawal of troops and personnel, particularly given their high level of training and modern equipment.

Humanitarian Conditions in Darfur: An Overview (Part 1) (June 18, 2010)

In August 2009, two departing leaders of the current UN/African Union peace support operation in Darfur (UNAMID) claimed that the war in Darfur was over and had devolved into a “low-intensity” security problem. General Martin Agwai, the Nigerian force commander, declared on stepping down that, “as of today, I would not say there is a war going on in Darfur,” but rather “very low intensity” engagements. “What you have is security issues more now. Banditry, localised issues.” Rodolphe Adada of Congo, the outgoing joint UN/African Union representative to UNAMID, declared: “I have achieved results in Darfur...There is no more fighting proper on the ground...Right now there is no high-intensity conflict in Darfur. Call it what you will but this is what is happening in Darfur—a lot of banditry, carjacking, attacks on houses.”

For his part, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon recently (April 28, 2010) presented to the Security Council an assessment of humanitarian conditions in Darfur guided by the following generalization: “The humanitarian operation in Darfur has been successful in stabilizing the situation in the food security, health, nutrition, and water sectors.”⁶⁶

The claims of both AU officials and the UN Secretary General are untenable and ultimately politically disingenuous. In the case of Agwai and Adada, their assessments had much more to do with an African Union political need to have “achieved results” in Darfur than with realities on the ground. And in the case of Secretary Ban, he evidently felt an obligation to placate the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party (NIF/NCP) regime in Khartoum, perhaps supposing this would further the peace process for Darfur. These comments reveal that politics have defined the security and humanitarian crisis in Darfur from the beginning, and not simply by the AU and UN Secretariat. Political calculations have informed the diplomatic behavior of the past two US administrations, the EU, and most conspicuously the UN Security Council. Still, the most consequential politicizing of the Darfur crisis derives from the ruthless determination of the NIF/NCP regime to obstruct, attenuate, threaten, and compromise the international humanitarian response to the aftermath of massive genocidal violence. This in turn has led to a commensurate effort by the regime to weaken, intimidate, and prevent deployment of the AU-dominated protection force that Adada and Agwai naively celebrate.

Despite their claims, UNAMID remains largely ineffectual in fulfilling its primary mandate to protect vulnerable civilians and humanitarian operations and personnel. Indeed, UNAMID—as many have observed—seems incapable of defend-

ing itself in situations of confrontation. Moreover, it still has not reached the force level authorized by the UN Security Council in July 2007; it lacks coordination and effective leadership at all levels; it is very poorly equipped for this difficult mission; and it confronts in Khartoum's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF), militia proxies, and Military Intelligence a ruthless and determined foe.

On many occasions UNAMID has been prevented by Khartoum from traveling to the sites of reported fighting or humanitarian distress; such actions are all clear violations of the arduously negotiated Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), to which Khartoum committed itself over two years ago. Moreover, during the past two and half years, the time during which it has functioned as a UN-authorized peace support operation, UNAMID has also seen its personnel abused and arrested by the regime's security forces; and on several notable occasions UNAMID has been seriously attacked by either the SAF or allied *Janjaweed* militia forces.⁶⁷

Khartoum's actions against both humanitarian and protection efforts are politically calculated, and carefully calibrated, to minimize the ability of the international community to observe and monitor what is occurring on the ground, especially where fighting has occurred. The regime is also determined to prevent reporting on human destruction, displacement, and humanitarian needs. Recently, for example, this resulted in a near total ban on travel requests by humanitarian organizations—even to areas in which no security threat existed, and where there are strong indications of acute human suffering and privation. To be sure, true physical insecurity remains the primary obstacle to greater humanitarian access; but much of the prevailing insecurity is either instigated or quietly countenanced by the regime.⁶⁸

UN and INGO Response to Khartoum's Intimidation

The UN humanitarian response to Darfur's massive humanitarian crisis accelerated six years ago with the July 3, 2004 signing of a "memorandum of understanding" (MOU) between President al-Bashir and then-UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The terms have been consistently violated by Khartoum, with only fitful and largely ineffective responses from the political side of the UN.

Currently the UN operational humanitarian agencies have allowed themselves to be put in a dubious partnership with the major line ministries in Khartoum, including the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, as well as the notorious Humanitarian Affairs Commission—the latter the means by which Khartoum has done so much to obstruct, harass, and compromise humanitarian efforts. Moreover, because of this partnership, UN agencies find it exceedingly difficult to promulgate independent data and reports on key humanitarian issues: malnutrition, mortality and morbidity, water supplies, primary health care. The UN has acquiesced in an

arrangement that effectively gives veto-power to the regime over any releases: if “disagreements” arise over data or analysis, these results are suppressed, even if critical to planning and the allocation of humanitarian resources.

The ultimate consequence of this suppression, as well as other efforts to obscure humanitarian realities, is that our understanding of conditions on the ground is much too limited, and permits grossly inaccurate generalizations of the sort offered, as I have noted, by the UN Secretary General in his April 28, 2010 report to the Security Council: “The humanitarian operation in Darfur has been successful in stabilizing the situation in the food security, health, nutrition, and water sectors.”

As any examination of the extant evidence will show, this claim is simply untenable and ignores the findings of the Secretary General’s own Emergency Humanitarian Coordinator, John Holmes:

The humanitarian situation itself remains with considerable need in many areas both for IDPs and for the rest of the population too. The main gaps left by the expulsion of the NGOs have been [indiscernible] but it is also clear that the quality of response and the capacity to respond in some areas and in remote areas in some sectors is not yet as good as before the expulsion.⁶⁹

Non-UN humanitarian organizations—those remaining after the large-scale expulsions of March 2009—face a different obstacle in speaking honestly about conditions in Darfur. Organizations fear being expelled themselves, and as a result, self-censorship has reached extreme levels as groups feel themselves ever more restricted in what they can say publicly. Moreover, since physical insecurity is so pervasive and Khartoum’s obstruction of assessment missions so relentless, humanitarian organizations simply know less than they did previously. Coupled with the continued deterioration of access to endangered civilian populations, organizations increasingly do not know enough of the conditions their assistance is needed to help address.

However, the UN Secretary General, US Special Envoy Scott Gration, Khartoum’s Humanitarian Affairs Commission, and other international actors claim that the enormous gaps in humanitarian coverage created by the March 2009 expulsions have been largely filled. Khartoum in particular has encouraged the work of Arab “INGOs,” and refers to them frequently in speaking about replacing lost capacity. But these Arab organizations are without significant operational capacity, and instead simply send money to the Khartoum regime, nominally ear-marked for Darfur relief. There is, unsurprisingly, no accountability, no auditing of results, and no reason not to believe that the money is simply appropriated by the regime. Nonetheless,

these Arab “organizations” are celebrated for any number of development projects in Darfur.⁷⁰

Similarly, the international community points to a number of stop-gap measures introduced into Darfur in the wake of the expulsions as actions taken to replace lost capacity. Yet as the Secretary General himself acknowledged in his [November 2009 report](#) to the Security Council, both the stop-gap measures introduced into Darfur in the wake of the expulsions as well as critical humanitarian shortages are ultimately unsustainable:

[T]he sustainability of these initial actions remains a critical issue. In remote locations, international presence has been reduced by 50 per cent, as compared to pre-March 2009 levels. The kidnapping of international aid workers has also contributed to this situation, which has led to a serious shortage of residual implementing capacity and a dramatic reduction in monitoring and evaluation capabilities in Darfur. (page 6)

This hardly sounds like a “stabilized situation,” and all indicators—especially nutrition and water—have deteriorated since last November. The Secretary General also notes in connection with a lack of implementing capacity that “[t]hese shortages have contributed to an increase in malnutrition levels, particularly in rural areas, where relief assistance is stretched beyond capacity.”⁷¹

Humanitarian Presence as Protection

The international humanitarian organizations that remain in Darfur, as well as many of those already expelled, are much more blunt than UN officials in characterizing the present situation in Darfur. Many have insisted to me in confidential communications that more than one year later, the expulsions continue to have a significant impact on people in need, not only in Darfur but in other areas in northern Sudan where there had been an INGO presence (e.g., the deeply impoverished east of Sudan). The scaling up of new operations in Darfur has been slow, bureaucratic obstruction has been relentless, and coordination has been poor. Lack of coordination, which was well-developed prior to the expulsions, has led to duplication of efforts, sharply reduced information sharing, and a badly compromised ability to organize emergency programming. The UN High Commission for Refugees and UNICEF have lost most of their implementing partners with the expulsions, and these losses have not been overcome. Referral mechanisms for victims of sexual assault have largely disappeared.⁷² This is so despite the continuing, widespread occurrence of Gender-based Violence (GBV).⁷³

Food Security and Malnutrition

Several recent reports expose Ban's assertion of a stabilized food situation in Darfur as an unsupportable conclusion. Last November, the UN World Food Program (WFP) issued an [alarming and highly detailed assessment](#) of food security in South Darfur, and found that "the food security situation has dramatically deteriorated among IDPs and mixed communities." Although WFP also reported that food consumption has "slightly improved" due to a seasonal increase of food variety, other reports on malnutrition in Darfur indicate that this "variety" did not long remain the case. The WFP report also takes note of October/November increases in food prices—increases that have continued and are now critical in assessing food security.

A [May 2010 Famine Early Warning Systems Network \(FEWS\)](#) report also offers a number of deeply ominous data and conclusions. The report finds that most of Darfur currently suffers from "moderate food insecurity," but the "most likely scenario, July-September, 2010" shows that virtually all of Darfur will be "highly food insecure." Last year's poor harvests have produced sharp and uncharacteristic increases in food prices; Figure 3 in the FEWS report suggests that food price inflation will continue indefinitely, putting it beyond the means of many Darfuris. As the FEWS report concludes, "[t]he rainy season (June—September) is expected to disrupt access to markets, further reducing grain supplies, and increase waterborne diseases and rates of malnutrition, which tend to peak in August among children under five."

Preceding the FEWS report, but containing more detailed information about levels of malnutrition, is UNICEF's "[Nutrition: Summary Issue No. 23](#)" (covering October 2009—January 2010). Of most concern is the finding that "Global Acute Malnutrition rates" (GAM) for six out seven surveys released during this period reported GAM above 15 percent [generally regarded as the threshold for a humanitarian emergency], regardless of whether the data collection occurred during or after the hunger gap."⁷⁴

The UNICEF summary also notes that the organization "endeavoured to find sustainable solutions to the [child nutrition] service delivery gaps [caused by the March 2009 decision to expel NGOs] through negotiation with the Ministry of Health and partners, in addition to continued provision of operational costs. As of the end of December 2009, UNICEF was no longer in a position to continue the full-scale financial support, and began the process of transferring financial responsibility to the MOH as part of integration of nutrition services into Primary Health Care services."

This should be seen as deeply ominous, considering that the Ministry of Health

(MOH) is one of the line ministries in the NIF/NCP regime. The MOH lacks adequate capacity and is completely dependent upon the regime for funding. We should be deeply troubled by the prospect of turning child nutrition over to the Ministry of Health, to be integrated into “Primary Health Care services.” Again and again, Khartoum has short-changed humanitarian efforts in Darfur, and certainly exerts more than enough influence to determine MOH policies and resources. There is other, less discouraging news in various sections of the report; indeed, there is even improvement reported in some areas. But since the document strongly suggests that further malnutrition and food security studies are being obstructed, delayed, or curtailed by Khartoum, we would do well to take note of its most ominous findings, including:

Levels of GAM in New Zam Zam remained higher than those reported from Old Zam Zam camp, and well above the emergency threshold. Similarly, crude mortality (1.18/10,000/day) and under five mortality (2.8/10,000/day) in New Zam Zam [both of these Crude Mortality Rates are above the UN World Health Organization’s “emergency threshold”] were higher than crude mortality (0.6/10,000/day) and under five mortality (1.0/10,000/day) reported from Old Zam Zam.

Morbidity—illness, often leading to death—is typically high among malnourished adults and children, and UNICEF reports some striking child morbidity figures for several locations. Other data give a corroborating sense of how significant a problem food security will be going forward. But amidst this deepening crisis it is important to remember that the people of Darfur are Sudanese citizens: they have every right to expect that national resources, including massive oil revenues, will be used to alleviate suffering and respond to their acute food needs.

Instead, the Khartoum regime has engaged in self-serving policies that see grain and other foodstuffs profitably exported, primarily to Arab countries. This includes huge amounts of sorghum, the very grain that is imported at enormous cost to supply the aid operation, and with significant transport challenges. The *New York Times* [reported two years ago](#) that even as food rations were being cut for the people of Darfur, Khartoum was doubling its sorghum exports. Nothing could be more revealing of the attitude in Khartoum toward the realities of Darfur—what we might well call “the politics of humanitarian aid.”

Displacement and Consequences for Humanitarian Aid

The recent increase in violent displacement of civilians from Jebel Marra and other locations has brought unanticipated stresses on humanitarian operations in a num-

ber of camps. Here it is important to remember that since UNAMID took command in Darfur on January 1, 2008, more than half a million people have been newly displaced, a great many of those very recently. As of January 1, 2010, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) estimated that there are 2.7 million internally displaced persons in Darfur; OCHA also estimated that as of June 2009 there were 268,000 refugees from Darfur (overwhelmingly in Eastern Chad). Together these two populations are almost half the population of Darfur. For estimates by humanitarian organizations about displacement in the Jebel Marra region, as well as a series of Radio Dabanga reports of widespread human displacement, see the [full version](#) of the report. The numbers also make clear that Ban Ki-moon's description of a "stabilized" situation is simply ignorant or disingenuous.

Humanitarian Conditions in Darfur: An Overview (Part 2) **(July 3, 2010)**

There can be no understanding of humanitarian conditions or humanitarian capacity in Darfur without a clear understanding of the security crisis that has intensified so dramatically over the past several of months. The same is true in eastern Chad, although with differences in the forces at work. What is notable in recent weeks is the growing outcry from humanitarian and human rights organizations in Darfur, as well as unusually strong statements from a few UN humanitarian officials, especially speaking confidentially. As it becomes increasingly obvious that the Khartoum regime is instigating, or at least deliberately tolerating, violence against humanitarians and peacekeepers, a feeling has grown among previously timid actors that there is very little left to lose by speaking out. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan, Georg Charpentier, expressed his concern in hedged, but unmistakable language:

“The steady deterioration of security conditions, particularly in the past two months, is not only affecting the population but directly targets the humanitarian community.”⁷⁵

Of course “the steady deterioration of security conditions” can’t “directly target the humanitarian community”: what Charpentier is referring to is the compelling evidence that Khartoum is supporting those who are attacking, kidnapping, and threatening aid workers.⁷⁶

Darfuris themselves have repeatedly declared that the purpose of regime-backed insecurity is to force the evacuation of humanitarian organizations. Khartoum itself has been explicit about its plans to empty the camps.⁷⁷ The member organizations of the Human Rights and Advocacy Network for Democracy (HAND) declared in a statement from Geneva (June 22, 2010) that, “Killing and injuring of UNAMID soldiers and personnel as well as the abduction of relief workers in Darfur seem to be a calculated policy to force UNAMID and the humanitarian community to leave Darfur.”

Moreover, in addition to the insecurity that Khartoum has strategically ramped up, the regime has also deliberately and unambiguously blocked humanitarian assistance to extremely vulnerable populations near the sites of recent military actions. European Commissioner for International Cooperation, Humanitarian Aid, and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva, following a four-day mission to Sudan, reported that, “Sudanese authorities had turned down 26 of more than 30 recent requests for aid road trips in South Darfur state. Flights were also being blocked, she said.”⁷⁸

She continued: “[t]he fact is that insecurity is worsening and that the populations in the camps is increasing as a result of more people fleeing more dangerous areas... Darfur must not be forgotten,” said Georgieva. Aid groups said this week Sudanese security forces blocked flights and road trips in Darfur, stranding staff and stopping food deliveries.”⁷⁹

Such insecurity also serves as a means of preventing displaced persons from returning to their homes and land—land that has often been given to or taken by Arab militia members. There are countless reports of land seizure such as those in recent dispatches from Radio Dabanga.⁸⁰

The civilians who have managed to remain in their villages—over the course of more than seven years of war—increasingly find themselves the targets of bombing attacks.⁸¹ Humanitarian projects are also targeted by bombing attacks, and following the recent military offensives by Khartoum, humanitarians report that their compounds have been thoroughly looted. Additionally, former *Janjaweed*, now recycled into the Central Reserve Police, have been reported attacking villages in North Darfur. Attacks on newly constructed water pumps have also been reported.

Given such massive insecurity, ongoing threats to humanitarian operations and peacekeeping, and escalating military violence, any overview of humanitarian conditions in Darfur must be provisional, accepting that Khartoum’s political calculations might result in actions that overwhelm existing aid capacity and further limit already severely attenuated humanitarian reach. Moreover, the same insecurity that inhibits the movement of humanitarian personnel also prevents them from speaking publicly about what they have seen: humanitarian organizations are simply too fearful to publicize data or analyses that Khartoum might find objectionable. As for UN agencies, they have severely compromised their ability to speak out or promulgate data embarrassing to the regime by aligning themselves so closely with the various ministries in Khartoum involved in responding to Darfur.

Humanitarian Assessments: Provision of Clean Water

Despite the paucity of data and comprehensive sector analyses, there are constant anecdotal reports of water shortages, some acute, in the camp areas of Darfur. Many water tables are or have been at dangerously low levels: without at least an average rainy season this year, some groundwater capacity may become fully depleted after last year’s poor rains. At the same time, traditional rainwater storage—primarily the hafir reservoirs—are suffering for lack of maintenance, typically a communal responsibility. Here again, the consequences of extremely high levels of insecurity are taking a toll on the extraordinary coping abilities of Darfuris.

We have countless reports from humanitarian organizations, human rights groups, and on-the-ground news reporting of the poisoning of water wells with corpses, animal and human. These acts make it impossible to rehabilitate the affected wells or water sources. Agricultural water systems are also often destroyed in attacks by Khartoum's regular forces and its *Janjaweed* militia allies. And Khartoum has, over the past several years, restricted supplies of fuel to camps where it is necessary for mechanized water-pumping; this has been notoriously the case at Kalma camp outside Nyala. Even if displaced persons could securely return to their villages, many would find there is not enough water for agriculture, feeding livestock, or even human survival. Yet another complicating factor is the immense water requirements for the UNAMID force that continues to deploy into Darfur. In some locations, deployment will require water that is already in short supply.

Additionally, groundwater, severely depleted because of the lack of rain last year, will become entirely depleted if there are poor rains this year. The “hunger gap”—the period between spring planting and fall harvest, largely coinciding with the rainy season—started especially early this year and many malnutrition indicators are already alarming, especially in North Darfur (see Part 1 of this analysis).

Sanitation and Hygiene

One of the most significant consequences of the March 4, 2009 humanitarian expulsions of thirteen distinguished international organizations was the loss of oversight and assessment capabilities. This is telling in water quality, where monitoring of bacteriological content has begun to fall through the cracks in some locations.⁸² Just as ominous are the many reports of breakdowns in the sanitation and hygiene regimens necessary when so many people are confined so closely together. Latrine maintenance, for example, appears to have fallen seriously behind schedule with the expulsion of humanitarian organizations, which undertook this key task as part of their mandate.

The number and movement of displaced persons adds even greater strains to already overburdened camp resources. More than 500,000 people have been newly displaced in Darfur alone since January 2008; new latrine construction to accommodate these newly displaced also appears to have fallen far behind what is hygienically necessary.⁸³ When the rains begin in earnest, the overflow from poorly maintained latrines and human defecation without the benefit of latrines will contribute to both risks of high levels of morbidity and, ultimately, mortality.

We have very little quantitative data on this important sector of humanitarian assistance, particularly data that give a sense of the overall shortcomings. But anecdotal evidence—including from organizations responsible for sanitation and

hygiene—is alarming. We might formerly have gleaned important information from the quarterly reports of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): the “Darfur Humanitarian Profiles.” But the last published Profile was Number 34 (representing conditions as of January 1, 2009); the next scheduled Profile was to reflect conditions as of April 1, 2009—only weeks after Khartoum’s expulsion of thirteen aid organizations (and the closing of three major Sudanese humanitarian and human rights organizations). We are left to draw the inevitable conclusion: the regime has intimidated the UN sufficiently that it will no longer compile and consolidate critical humanitarian information on food security, nutrition, water needs, health, agriculture, education, and child protection—important categories in the now defunct Profiles.

Primary Health Care

Many camps report wholly inadequate primary health care, both in the form of trained personnel and suitable medical resources. The expulsion of Doctors Without Borders/MSF sections from France and Holland in particular has left a huge hole in the provision of primary health care.⁸⁴

Potable water is in short supply in eastern Jebel Marra and malnutrition is rising very rapidly; most people were forced to flee their villages in February shortly after harvest, but had no ability to carry their food with them. They have entered the “hunger gap” with no food reserves, no humanitarian access, and thus no food deliveries for more than four months. Malnutrition among children under five is rising rapidly and will continue to rise without humanitarian access, making them extremely vulnerable to disease (a number of deaths have already been reported). Limited epidemiological data suggest that a measles epidemic may rapidly unfold and spread to other regions of Darfur. An outbreak of deadly meningitis is also a major concern, according to Médecins du Monde.

The International Rescue Committee—one of the most important organizations expelled in March 2009—provided programs in the areas of primary and reproductive health, environmental health (water and sanitation), and the prevention and response to gender-based violence. Notably, all the organizations that provided medical and psycho-social treatment for victims of rape and gender-based violence were among those expelled. This was no coincidence, but rather a deliberate effort to silence the humanitarian community on one of the most sensitive subjects in the Muslim world.

There are shortages of medical supplies in many areas, and an acute shortage of trained personnel, especially physicians. Hospital and clinic capacity is also dangerously inadequate in a number of camps and communities, and there are continual

reports of essential medical relief capacity that is unable to move beyond the major urban areas. It is worth recalling here that Khartoum has in the past frequently held up the delivery of medical supplies to Darfur.⁸⁵

Eastern Chad

While conflict and violence in eastern Chad and Darfur are ultimately inseparable, the international humanitarian responses have been markedly different in several respects, even if both operations confront levels of insecurity that are deeply threatening. Aid for Darfuri refugees and Chadian Internally Displaced Persons comes from the west; the aid operations for camps along the border move through N'Djamena, with Abeche serving as the eastern hub. At present, most insecurity derives from banditry, which thrives and grows precisely because of the vulnerability and substantial resources of aid workers (who have vehicles, sat phones, money, and convey food and medicine). But despite the high levels of insecurity, there is no equivalent to Khartoum's hostility to humanitarian operations in Darfur—or the deliberate targeting of aid workers and operations. Chad's President Idriss Déby is not enthusiastic about either a large refugee presence in his country or an international aid operation. But he has not engaged in the same systematic efforts to disrupt aid operations as has the regime in Khartoum. His has to date been a policy of callous indifference.

More troublingly, however, Déby refuses to acknowledge the current levels of violence in eastern Chad, and the growing threat posed to humanitarian work and the hundreds of thousands of vulnerable civilians. In June 2010 the UN High Commission for Refugees estimated that almost 270,000 Darfuri refugees remain in Chad; approximately 170,000 Chadians have been internally displaced; and there are over 65,000 refugees from CAR, mainly in the south. This population of some 500,000 vulnerable and needy civilians represents a major humanitarian crisis in its own right, and has received far too little international attention has been too often regarded as a sideshow to Darfur.

To be sure, Chad has not been overlooked by humanitarian organizations. When these organizations are not prevented from doing their work, they have demonstrated remarkable courage, resourcefulness, and success. The work of the International Rescue Committee, for example, at Oure Cassoni and Breidjing camps has been exemplary. Nonetheless, insecurity has forced several organizations to suspend their work—or at least significantly reduce staff presence—and this has left a number of vulnerable populations beyond reach. Déby's recent insistence that the only international protection force in eastern Chad (operating under UN auspices)

withdraw will certainly increase violence and instability in the coming months, and many more civilians will be left without access to humanitarian assistance.

Present forms of violence and insecurity are quite different from what was reported earlier in the crisis along the Chad/Darfur border.⁸⁶ Throughout 2007, the major threats to Darfuri refugees in Chad came from cross-border violence, village destruction, and looting by *Janjaweed* militias as well as Khartoum's regular ground and air forces. Chadian host communities have done their best to accommodate refugees from Darfur (often people of the same tribal group), but the arid nature of the land, the lack of pasturage, and the perceived favoring of refugees over IDPs in the provision of humanitarian assistance have all led to growing friction, and some of this has turned violent.

Violent banditry, however, remains the most threatening to aid operations for the displaced. Humanitarian organizations are fearful of speaking too bluntly about the security risks, worried that this will increase hostility on the part of the Chadian regime, but we have been given many clear hints of dismay over the UN Security Council decision to accommodate Déby's demand.⁸⁷

Humanitarian Issues in Chad

Food is the critical humanitarian issue in Chad. Chad and other Sahel nations face the prospect of large-scale food shortages this year with the potential for significant starvation. Yet the UN finds itself vastly under-funded for operations, including those in eastern Chad, warning that a lack of funding is threatening the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's emergency operations in Chad.⁸⁸

Because Darfuri refugee and Chadian IDP camps are perceived by unassisted populations as likely to receive adequate food rations, a "pull factor" towards the camps has been created, one that may overwhelm present humanitarian efforts. The viability and sustainability of other sectors of humanitarian relief in eastern Chad are heavily dependent on security as well as funding and organizational capacity. If insecurity forces aid organizations to curtail their activities, current levels of humanitarian provision will not be sustained, and there will be a precipitous drop-off. If large civilian populations move toward refugee and IDP camps, this will compound the problems.

Most conspicuously, such population movements will put enormous stress on water supplies, which are already inadequate in a number of camps. Water is always a scarce commodity in most of eastern Chad, and it requires enormous efforts by organizations like the International Rescue Committee, Oxfam, and the International Committee of the Red Cross to provide sufficient quantities of potable water. The trucking of water has already begun to some areas, and greater shortages of well

water loom large. Drinking surface ground water during the current rainy season is likely to become inevitable, creating huge risks from water-borne diseases.

Although sanitation, medical services and general health conditions in the camps are generally acceptable, there are still significant shortcomings in the quality of primary health care. Additionally, IDP camp quality of life—rarely accounted for even in humanitarian reports—is extremely poor. In a recent report by Physicians for Human Rights, which offers accounts of women living in the Farchana camp, PHR investigators found that these cases,

demonstrate the effects of crimes against these women and their communities in the form of systematic attacks characterized by murder, rape, looting, destruction and burning of property, and forced displacement in Darfur, but also in Chad where sexual assaults are perpetrated with utter impunity. The nightmare therefore continues in refugee camps in Chad through the constant threat of rape (when women forage for firewood to cook their food), chronic hunger, and a lack of essential needs to support their families. Many of the women expressed the feeling that they would be better off anywhere else and even, some said, better off dead.⁸⁹

For more on mental health in Chadian camps, see the [full version](#) of this report, which concludes by noting that as the regime senses that the US and other international actors have lost interest in Darfur and have no intention of pressing hard on critical humanitarian issues, the likelihood of humanitarian collapse will continue to grow.

Civilians at Risk: Human Security and Humanitarian Aid in Darfur (January 17, 2010)

In recent months, Darfur has received much less reporting attention. Sudan's place in the news is now dominated by the upcoming April elections for national and regional offices, as well as by accounts of growing violence and instability in various regions of Southern Sudan, a vast and growing humanitarian crisis, and the challenges of ensuring that the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) survives. There is belated recognition that unless the Southern self-determination referendum—the linchpin of the CPA—is guaranteed, war will almost certainly resume, unleashing catastrophic violence throughout Sudan and destabilizing the entire region. With less than a year until the scheduled referendum, there are already many signs that the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime in Khartoum has no intention of allowing the South to secede peacefully.

The regime's duplicitous behavior in attempting to renege on the recent referendum legislation is only an especially brazen example of bad faith. But we may see another more telling example in the conduct of the April elections, which will certainly be rigged to ensure a majority great enough to engineer changes to abrogate the terms of the CPA. Elections in Darfur are likely to be the most seriously compromised in all of Sudan. Huge areas in Darfur are too insecure for either registration or voting to take place. Moreover, those in both rebel-held territory and many of the larger camps have made clear their hostility to the idea of registration and elections under current circumstances, and some of the largest camps have seen no registration at all. Numerous anecdotal reports of registration fraud have been highlighted by Radio Dabanga and other Darfuri sources.

Darfuris as a whole are divided on the question of whether or not to participate in the elections, but a clear majority among non-Arab/African tribal groups is opposed to participation at the present time. Those in the diaspora are particularly emphatic. This is in part because of a fear that registering to vote for the election may actually make permanent the effects of genocidal destruction and displacement.⁹⁰

Why are we hearing so much less about Darfur?

There are two primary answers: news organizations either cannot gain access to Darfur or do not make the effort given the extreme restrictions on movement imposed by Khartoum. Secondly, in the wake of the March 2009 expulsions, aid groups have become exceedingly reticent in speaking out about humanitarian conditions and the threats to vulnerable populations in the camps and rural areas. The fear that they may also be expelled for speaking openly and honestly about Dar-

fur's grim realities trumps the desire to give the world a compelling picture of those realities. Such self-censorship is one of the most unfortunate consequences of the March expulsions.

But there are other reasons we hear too little about Darfur's realities, including the decision by the African Union, to side with Khartoum in addressing Darfur. This has long been true of the African Union Peace and Security Council, especially under the leadership of Jean Ping. The recent report by the "African Union High-Level Panel on Darfur," chaired by former South African president Thabo Mbeki has also contributed. The report painted a picture of Darfur in which human suffering and destruction, as well as the crimes that produced them, are rhetorically diminished and factually understated.⁹¹ It ignores almost entirely UNAMID's failings, the current shortcomings in humanitarian aid, and the consequences of Khartoum's continuing flouting of the UN arms embargo on Darfur.

The Panel also recommends a cessation of hostilities and a subsequent ceasefire, but does nothing to explain how a ceasefire could be monitored or enforced with present UNAMID resources. The only recommendation of significance from this High-Level Panel on Darfur concerns the formation of "hybrid courts" in Sudan. As most Darfuris and many Sudan observers see this recommendation, it simply reflects the Panel originating purpose to create an alternative to the International Criminal Court, which has indicted President al-Bashir for war crimes and crimes against humanity.⁹²

Darfur's visibility has diminished for other reasons as well: the UN Security Council has in recent months made no meaningful demand of either the Khartoum regime or the rebels. Previous Security Council "demands" of Khartoum are contemptuously ignored. Nor has the Security Council supported chief mediator Bassolé effectively, or provided him with the resources and authority that would allow for greater progress in uniting the rebel groups and Darfuri civil society. As a consequence, instead of a single, well-supported mediation process we have a mélange of diplomatic initiatives, venues, and actors. The regime, of course, welcomes this proliferation of diplomacy, which enables Khartoum to play one plan off another, engaging in one process with the option of switching.

At the same time, North American and European civil society efforts on behalf of Darfur have found it increasingly difficult to draw attention to the ongoing crisis—now about to enter its eighth year. Energies have flagged, activists have become discouraged in some quarters, and consensus about what to ask for and what pressures to apply in seeking greater Western commitment has become more elusive. Many who have worked so hard to learn about and help Darfur have little familiarity with the history of the north/south conflict and find the current focus

on the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) a challenge to understand, in particular the threat to Darfur posed by a collapse of the CPA.

Amidst all this Darfur's terrible realities persist, and will continue to do so whatever the limitations and gaps in news reporting, despite the fearfulness of aid groups in speaking out, and whatever disingenuous efforts might be made to obscure, diminish, or ignore the extent of human suffering and ongoing destruction. Suggestions by African Union officials such as Martin Agwai (former UNAMID force commander) and Rodolphe Adada (former joint Special Representative to UNAMID) that the war in Darfur is over, that there is only "very low-level conflict," fail to represent the current situation fully or accurately. The claim by US special envoy Gration that there are only "remnants of genocide" similarly fails to convey the scale of past destruction and the immensity of the present consequences of that destruction.

For a detailed and important picture of what is occurring in Darfur, especially on the part of the Khartoum regime and its militia and paramilitary proxies, refer to the UN Panel of Experts on Darfur's October 6, 2009 report to the Security Council, the critical findings of which are included in the [full version](#) of this analysis. Particular attention is given to the regime's unwillingness "to account for its efforts to disarm and control its various auxiliary and formerly affiliated forces" such as the *Janjaweed*, as well as the consequences of Khartoum's crackdowns on those opposed to government policy.

Another report from 2009 highlights the threats to UNAMID peacekeepers. The November 16, 2009 report of the UN Secretary General to the Security Council notes that

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)

In assessing the significance and accuracy of UNAMID reports, whether on civilian mortality or security conditions, it is important to remember how fully Khartoum controls UNAMID movements, despite the freedom of movement guaranteed in the Status of Forces Agreement signed by the regime.

Beyond this, the Secretary General's report details many examples of Khartoum denying UNAMID access to IDP camps. The deliberate threat of military action

against UNAMID peacekeepers and monitors should be a shocking development, and yet is simply ignored by those such as Adada, Agwai, Gration, Mbeki and others in their characterization of the security situation in Darfur. For the threats against UNAMID are not mere words, and at least one of the deadly attacks against UNAMID (July 8, 2008) was clearly orchestrated by Khartoum.⁹³

UNAMID as presently constituted cannot address the massive security crisis in Darfur, reliably gain access to huge areas in the region, or adequately protect civilians in camps. The force itself—badly under-equipped and operating at only about half its mandated capacity—continues to be at acute risk of obstruction, intimidation, and attack. By focusing narrowly on the diminishment of large-scale violence in Darfur, those characterizing Darfur as the site of “very low-intensity” conflict, mere “remnants of genocide,” and a “stabilized” humanitarian situation are not only contributing to Darfur’s growing invisibility but also encouraging Khartoum to believe that it can move forward with its larger ambitions for Darfur.

The most ominous of these is the plan to force IDPs from the camps and back to their lands—without security guarantees, without reparations or compensation, and without long-term solutions to problems arising from competition for land, water, and pasturage. Forced returns amid present insecurity is a formula for renewed violence, and on a large scale. Insecurity would increase beyond its already intolerable levels, further compromising the work of UNAMID and any remaining humanitarian organizations.

The Threat of Forced Returns

Khartoum has long made clear its plans to shut down the IDP camps, both because they are an embarrassment as the regime faces the world community and because they justify a large-scale international humanitarian presence that observes first hand what is occurring on the ground. In turn, security threats to displaced civilians and aid groups require the presence of a large peacekeeping force under UN auspices. Khartoum wishes all of this to disappear.

As far back as the summer of 2004, plans for returns were being considered by senior NIF/NCP officials. Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein, then-Minister of the Interior and the regime’s special representative on Darfur, announced on Sudanese government-controlled radio on July 9, 2004 “that 86 percent of the Internally Displaced Persons had already returned to their villages.”⁹⁴ Hussein further declared that “it was ‘most important’ to get people to return to their villages. Each state—the Darfur region has three—had its own plan of return.”⁹⁵

Hussein’s mendacity is belied by the fact that the displaced population in Darfur, as well as the population of the IDP camps, has more than doubled since summer

2004, when the UN estimated that approximately 1.2 million people had been displaced.⁹⁶ In the past two years alone (during UNAMID's tenure) almost half a million more civilians have been violently displaced. Khartoum's plan of returns, however it is described or packaged for international consumption, is no less threatening than it was in 2004, when humanitarians were explicit about the consequences of Khartoum's ambitions:

“[Khartoum] wants the internally displaced to go home, the UN wants them to stay,” said an aid worker. “There is no food in their villages: they will go back to die.”

Humanitarian workers fear that a forcible mass return of some 1.2 million Internally Displaced Persons in Darfur could result in enormous fatalities.⁹⁷

None of this matters to a regime that is genocidal in character, and clearly saw forced returns as a means of furthering the destruction of non-Arab/African populations—destruction that was still proceeding on a massive scale by direct military means. We should not be surprised that the issue of forced returns has arisen yet again, and should see this as a key challenge in confronting Khartoum over its continued violations of international humanitarian law.

Closing the camps now would obviously compel displaced persons to move, with or without a safe destination or means of conveyance. Resettlement will be an enormous undertaking and require resources that are nowhere in sight; certainly the Khartoum regime has invested virtually nothing in the vast project of providing for safe returns and how these people will resume agriculturally or commercially productive lives. In fact, in order to secure the brutal services of the Arab militia forces, Khartoum promised many of them land that belonged to non-Arab/African populations. A number of these land grabs have now been officially registered, and any effort by the original owners to reclaim their land will spark fierce and likely violent confrontations.⁹⁸

Humanitarian Security and Capacity

Intolerable insecurity in Darfur has left a tremendous number of locations beyond humanitarian reach. Indeed, the most recent UN humanitarian access map shows virtually all of Darfur as significantly or totally insecure.⁹⁹ Even the most intrepid aid workers have been forced to curtail their movements in unprecedented ways. For example, the International Committee of the Red Cross announced in early December 2009 that it was severely reducing its operations in Darfur to “protect its staff from a spate of kidnappings.”¹⁰⁰

In expressing concerns about the sustainability of often ad hoc and provisional humanitarian actions taken in the wake of Khartoum's expulsion of thirteen international aid groups from Darfur, the Secretary General's report asserts that, "the sustainability of these initial actions remains a critical issue," citing the reduction of international presence by 50 percent in remote locations as well as the kidnapping of international aid workers, "which has led to a serious shortage of residual implementing capacity and a dramatic reduction in monitoring and evaluation capabilities in Darfur."¹⁰¹

Indeed, we should know much more about humanitarian conditions in Darfur, but the simple fact is that aid organizations, even the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), are simply not promulgating data that give us a clear indication of, for example, malnutrition rates, food availability, morbidity levels, and a statistical overview of the conflict-affected population. Any number of anecdotal reports suggest that for given locations, there are acute shortages of food, clean water, sanitation, primary medical care, and educational opportunities. But it is impossible to generalize about a conflict-affected population of 4.7 million on the basis of such reports. Vast human suffering and deprivation will remain invisible so long as Khartoum's implicit and explicit threats against humanitarian efforts in Darfur compel self-censorship by aid groups and UN agencies.

Large-Scale Renewed Violence in Darfur

Despite the views of UNAMID Special Representative Adada and UNAMID force commander Agwai, the war in Darfur is far from over, and could burst into large-scale violence at any moment. Indeed, the level of fighting between the rebels and Khartoum's Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) has been significant at various points since late summer 2009. Further, Khartoum has regularly deployed its Antonov bombers against both rebel and civilian targets; the Antonovs—retrofitted cargo planes with no real bombing targeting mechanism—are by nature indiscriminate and have killed a number of civilians in recent months. Bombing attacks in which civilians were killed or wounded, or in which livestock were lost, are simply too numerous to catalog, and are too often not investigated by UNAMID.

Fighting has also occurred on the ground in Jebel Marra and North Darfur, prompting more humanitarian withdrawals, and continuing a pattern that goes back to last September, when Khartoum engaged in a coordinated offensive directed at various areas in the proximity of eastern Jebel Marra. As an especially well informed member of the Darfuri diaspora reported at the time:

There are air and ground attacks to various areas in Darfur, mostly all around Jebel Marra...This started on last Thursday [September 17,

2009]. There is an ongoing attack through the axis of eastern Jebel Marra in the area of Kidineir [southeast of Nyertiti]. The second axis is around the southern Jebel Marra: Nyertiti, Kass, Juldo. The third [axis] is eastern Jebel Marra: Korma, Tawila, extending to Ain Siro.

The orchestrated attack is composed from government soldiers [and] janjaweed using different types of weapons. These were calm areas since 2004. The expected result: more civilian killing and displacing, putting into consideration the failure of this rainy season's harvest; more devastating famine, malnutrition, and increase in the death toll.¹⁰²

Such clearly calculated and large-scale fighting can easily escalate into fully resumed war. Yet the Darfur peace process—all that can truly end the conflict—is disorganized, internally contentious, and now competes with the increasingly urgent efforts to salvage the north/south Comprehensive Peace Agreement (2005). The peace process also remains subject to cynical diplomatic machinations. For examples, including the current US policy of accommodating Khartoum, see the [full version](#) of this report, which concludes by considering the consequences for Darfur if war resumes in southern Sudan.

Darfur Humanitarian Expulsions, Two Months On (May 14, 2009)

Views of the Darfur humanitarian crisis continue to diverge sharply, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that much of what is said—particularly by the US, the UN, the African Union, and of course Khartoum’s officials—is driven by broader and ultimately expedient political calculations. Unable to respond effectively to the March 4, 2009 humanitarian shutdowns by the regime, various actors are either contriving self-serving assessments or accommodating Khartoum for fear of further expulsions and reprisals. The contradictions between these humanitarian assessments are so striking that it seems essential to use primarily humanitarian sources, supplemented by news reports with regional datelines, in speaking of current conditions on the ground in Darfur—now some ten weeks after Khartoum expelled thirteen international humanitarian organizations and shut down three important national organizations.

Even within the humanitarian community we find startling contrasts. Following an assessment mission in late March, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes declared bluntly of the measures Khartoum had proposed in response to the accelerating crisis:

“These are band-aid solutions, not long-term solutions,” [Holmes] told a news conference on the results of an assessment of the situation in Sudan’s conflict-torn Darfur region carried out jointly by the United Nations and the Sudanese government.¹⁰³

At the same time humanitarian workers were also speaking out, saying that “the supply of medicine, clean water and food has already been significantly affected, and could worsen in coming weeks.”¹⁰⁴

Such blunt assessments no longer seem politic, so Holmes has recently offered a more benign view of the crisis:

Holmes, the UN’s senior humanitarian official, was keen to point out that, despite the recent expulsion of key international aid agencies, the humanitarian situation had not deteriorated as dramatically as many had feared. The UN and the Sudanese government have filled many gaps. “I think most of the life-saving gaps have been met but of course some services have been reduced in some places so you can’t exclude that there have been extra deaths.”¹⁰⁵

As welcome as these words will be in Khartoum, the realities of numerous reports—from the UN, humanitarian organizations, news dispatches from the ground,

and confidential communications with former aid workers and Darfuris—all suggest that there are growing threats to water, sanitation and hygiene, gaps in primary medical care, and longer-term food insecurity. Holmes’s assessment represents, instead, deferential recognition of the continuing threats to humanitarian operations posed by Khartoum, and a recognition as well that the international community has no intention of pressing further for the return of the expelled organizations.¹⁰⁶

Ultimately, Holmes’ comments are a signal that in the ten weeks since Khartoum expelled aid organizations representing more than 50 percent of humanitarian capacity in Darfur, the expulsions have gradually come to be accepted by the international community, which has acquiesced in a patching together of ad hoc and stop-gap measures that cannot begin to make up for the capacity lost. The catastrophe has not been realized, but is impending. There is no single gap that must be filled, but myriad: the effects of such massive loss of humanitarian capacity will be cumulative, but that accumulation will accelerate soon.¹⁰⁷

Humanitarian Realities

In such a highly politicized context, what can we know of humanitarian conditions in Darfur ten weeks after the Khartoum regime expelled thirteen international aid organizations, representing over 50 percent of overall capacity in Darfur? What can we say of conditions in other marginalized regions of northern Sudan (Eastern Sudan, Southern Blue Nile, Southern Kordofan, and Abyei) where the expelled organizations have played a disproportionately large role?

Despite the characteristically mendacious declarations from Khartoum that the humanitarian situation is fine, a well-placed UN humanitarian official recently estimated that even with various band-aid measures undertaken by the regime and energetic efforts by UN organizations, total humanitarian capacity in early May remained at approximately 50 percent of the pre-March 4 capacity. There has been partial replacement of what was lost; UNICEF in particular has energetically attempted to fill some of the gaps left by the expulsions, but does not possess the capacity to sustain its efforts. Aid organizations from the Arab and Islamic world that had been suggested by Khartoum as resources have failed to materialize in a significant way.

Just as consequentially, two serious security incidents since the expulsions—involving the kidnappings of international aid workers—have further reduced humanitarian willingness to serve in outlying or rural areas, dramatically curtailing access. This decline in security is perhaps the least appreciated development bearing on both quantity and quality of humanitarian assistance, and has largely negated any augmenting of capacity from other sources. Organizations are rightly fearful,

and are increasingly inclined to hunker down. If this trend continues, assistance will be available only in urban and larger camp settings; large-scale migrations of populations will occur, creating further problems, both near and longer term.

For example, we know that the UN estimates some 700,000 people will enter the rainy season without shelter.¹⁰⁸ They will be vulnerable to the season's slashing rainfall, frequent floods, and acute temperature variation. We also know that malnutrition among children under five is increasing dramatically—in part because Darfuris have entered the “hunger gap” prior to the fall harvest, in part because the therapeutic treatment of these children has been drastically reduced with the expulsions. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recently found that in March, “5,000 malnourished children under five and pregnant and lactating women did not receive supplementary food due to absence of a partner.”¹⁰⁹

Water and Sanitation

The fate of 4.7 million conflict-affected civilians grows daily more uncertain as the consequences of humanitarian expulsions continue to outstrip what are indeed “band-aid” measures. The 2.7 million people who have been internally displaced within Darfur live in camp environments that in some cases have deteriorated seriously since the expulsions, especially in the areas of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH).

Health risks such as cholera, dysentery, and malaria will skyrocket if there is no clean water, no primary health care to halt the spread of water-borne diseases, and no adequate shelter from mosquitoes. Drinking ground water or improperly treated water in the cramped conditions of the camps is a formula for medical disaster. Moreover, deadly bacterial meningitis is a serious and ongoing threat in several camps, and perhaps extends more widely. We do not know the full extent of the disease's spread because the remaining humanitarian organizations have been seriously compromised in their ability to assess and monitor morbidity, mortality, and vaccination scheduling.

Sanitation, especially in the area of latrine maintenance, is also becoming abysmally inadequate in several camps, as is water quality. Many camps are also experiencing water shortages.¹¹⁰

Primary Health Care

Primary health care is the sector in which skilled professional training is most important, and which is likely to suffer soonest as a result of Khartoum's expulsions.

Unsurprisingly, this is the area in which “band-aids” are least likely to give even the appearance of closing the enormous gap in capacity. UN OCHA reports in its April 16, 2009 “weekly bulletin” that,

Latest data indicate that less than half of the primary health care centres formerly managed by suspended NGOs are now being operated by the State Ministry of Health, and less than 40 per cent of the former population is being accessed by these centres.

Management of primary health centers by the State Ministry of Health will certainly not be as qualified or as committed as that of the expelled organizations, further attenuating real humanitarian capacity. The humanitarian expulsions have left significant gaps in nutrition, reproductive healthcare, and malnutrition treatment centers.¹¹¹ Also of particular concern is the medical treatment of victims of sexual violence—treatment that is much less likely to occur under the new humanitarian regime:

The expulsion of 13 international and three Sudanese aid agencies from Darfur in March...shut down many programs to train midwives, promote hygiene, and help women suffering from violence. It has also removed many of the experts who were dealing with and tracking sexual assaults. Getting women to report attacks has always been difficult. With trusted experts now gone, it gets even harder, UN officials say. Women may also be less likely to report attacks to government aid agencies, which are taking a larger role in treating refugees.¹¹²

The protective role of international humanitarian presence is clearly critical.

Food

A food crisis will not hit in the immediate term, but if people conclude that their prospects for humanitarian relief are greater elsewhere, they will move. The consequence often will be even more intense competition for limited food resources, and very likely violence. As I remarked in a [March 4, 2009](#) analysis of the humanitarian expulsions, the threat of population migrations and attendant violence has sizable destabilizing potential. As one aid worker in Darfur remarked, “We are increasingly concerned at the situation. There is a massive humanitarian gap left by the NGO expulsion. Hungry people are desperate people.” Given this desperation, it is impossible to predict how many Darfuris will cross the border into Chad, where humanitarian capacity may seem comparatively greater and more stable.¹¹³

Food supplies will certainly vary by region, and it is notable that West Darfur has been disproportionately hard hit by the expulsions. According to one humanitarian survey, the remoteness of West Darfur also makes it especially vulnerable. Eight humanitarian organizations were expelled or shut down in the region (seven international organizations were expelled, one Sudanese organization shut down). Khartoum's WES (Water, Environment, Sanitation) is attempting to take on the many functions served by these organizations, but is excessively dependent on a vastly overstretched UNICEF. Sooner or later food will become an immense part of the growing crisis in Darfur without a very substantial increase in meaningful humanitarian capacity.

Obstacles to Meaningful Increases in Humanitarian Capacity

The primary obstacle to increasing humanitarian capacity is the hostility to such efforts by the regime in Khartoum: it has deliberately created the present crisis with its expulsions and shutdowns. With its decision to refuse re-entry to humanitarian organizations, the regime has ensured that no augmenting of capacity will be adequate to the immense needs of the people of Darfur and other regions of Sudan. This pervasive hostility to humanitarian presence in Darfur, as well as elsewhere in Sudan, is the obverse of the regime's refusal to provide significant humanitarian relief to its own acutely threatened marginalized populations.

Further obstructionist tactics undertaken by Khartoum include extortion, seizure of warehouses serving as staging areas for humanitarian distributions, hostage-taking, illegal confiscation of humanitarian assets such as computers with vital data, and the regime's refusal to grant land to accommodate newly displaced persons.

Another major obstacle to increasing humanitarian capacity is insecurity, which more than three years ago had reached intolerable levels. Indeed, it is difficult to stress sufficiently the constraining role of insecurity throughout Darfur, and how much of the region is simply inaccessible. Not only is such insecurity prompting many humanitarian organizations to reconsider the viability of their presence in Darfur, but it acts as a deterrent to the deployment of new personnel and resources by other organizations. The UN Department of Security and Safety has privately warned that "violence toward humanitarian personnel in Darfur is spiraling out of control. The situation is untenable and people will start to leave soon."

It is also insufficiently remarked how difficult it is to begin operations in Darfur, and how dependent humanitarian organizations are upon institutional memory, local knowledge, and an understanding of the ways of getting things done under extraordinarily difficult circumstances. Lack of first-hand knowledge of security concerns and limitations will be a constraining reality for any new international

organizations. Although national workers of expelled organizations have in some cases been recruited by remaining organizations, many Sudanese fear the consequences of their association with former employers now charged, in effect, with espionage. Some have fled, gone under cover, or simply decided to leave the increasingly dangerous business of aid work.

Certainly, as UN officials privately insist, Khartoum's military and security presence is sufficient in urban areas, and other areas under their control, to prevent a great many of the attacks by hijackers and bandits. Not to engage in such prevention and protection is deliberately to put workers at risk in an attempt to limit their movements. In the current security environment, inaction is an efficient means of achieving cruel goals that are all too clear.

UNAMID and the Security Crisis

Almost two years after it was unanimously authorized by the UN Security Council, the UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) is failing in many respects, particularly in winning the confidence of the Darfuri people. Moreover, augmenting UNAMID capacity during the coming months will be extremely difficult once the rains begin. In the meantime, Khartoum has imposed restrictions on the mission's freedom of movement and has denied UNAMID access to the regime's detention facilities. Humanitarian organizations are also frequently denied access for transparently military reasons.¹¹⁴ So long as such extreme insecurity prevails (and no region is more insecure than West Darfur), it will be extremely difficult to staff and maintain a humanitarian presence.

Yet there appears a growing willingness to allow Khartoum to dictate the terms of humanitarian presence and movement in Darfur, and to allow for the collapse of significant aid projects in Eastern Sudan and the southern marginalized areas. This represents capitulation before the regime's barbarous acts and continuing defiance. In turn, political expediency has been re-labeled in ways to draw attention away from the outrageous threat of human destruction and suffering.¹¹⁵

Humanitarian Obstruction as a Crime Against Humanity: The Example of Sudan¹¹⁶

Widespread military violence, much of it targeting civilians, accelerated dramatically this past June in the South Kordofan region of Sudan, and as of September 1 it had spread to Blue Nile State. Like much of Sudan, South Kordofan and Blue Nile are a highly combustible mix of ethnic animosities, tortured history, and great numbers of heavily armed men.¹¹⁷ South Kordofan has the added misfortune of being the Khartoum regime's only oil-producing state following the independence of South Sudan on July 9, 2011. But while geographically in northern Sudan, much of Blue Nile and South Kordofan—and virtually the entire Nuba Mountains area in the center of South Kordofan—identifies with the South culturally, politically, and militarily. Tens of thousands of Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers are from the Nuba and southern Blue Nile; they refuse to be sent back to the South or disarmed—and if pushed by Khartoum, they will fight to save their lands and cultural heritage. The SPLA-North is now a distinct entity, and considers itself and its political counterpart (the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North) as fighting an aggressive tyranny in their homelands.

This is not hard to understand, particularly in the case of the Nuba. In the 1990s, during the first military action undertaken by the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party, the African people of the Nuba were nearly annihilated; hundreds of thousands were killed or displaced from their fertile lands. Though not a widely known event, there is almost no dissent among students of Sudan that this episode of ethnically targeted destruction was in fact genocide. One of its most notorious and consequential features was a total embargo on humanitarian aid to the region for much of the 1990s, even as South Sudan was the fitful beneficiary of the U.N. umbrella effort known as "Operation Lifeline Sudan." This embargo is of central concern here, given the horrific human suffering and destruction that followed directly from it.

Khartoum's more recent military offensive in South Kordofan and Blue Nile extends the offensive begun on May 20 in the contested border region of Abyei (which lies immediately to the south of South Kordofan). Only belatedly has the international community acknowledged that the incident cited by Khartoum as *casus belli* was merely a pretext and that the attack was premeditated. The same is true of the regime's assault in South Kordofan, where on June 5 tanks and military equipment began to pour into Kadugli, the state capital. Within days widespread and clearly planned military actions were under way, again pitting Arab militias and Khartoum's regular armed forces against the African populations of the region, in particular those of the Nuba Mountains.

In Kadugli there were authoritative reports of house-to-house searches for Nuba, who were then piled into cattle trucks—or summarily executed. Roadblocks reminiscent of Rwanda in April 1994, and serving the same purpose, were also widely observed. Satellite imagery confirmed the existence of mass graves, as did eyewitness accounts from the ground collected by U.N. human rights investigators (who were shortly thereafter expelled by Khartoum). The presence in Kadugli of a U.N. Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) peacekeeping team did nothing to deter violence, or even protect African Nuba people who sought protection within the U.N. Compound.

Moreover, all of South Kordofan is within reach of Khartoum’s major military air base at el-Obeid, which is just to the north. This has meant a constant aerial assault on civilian and humanitarian targets, especially in the Nuba Mountains.¹¹⁸ The aerial offensive in South Kordofan has been extensive and concerted, and the clear goal has been to eliminate the troublesome populations of the Nuba once and for all. Early in the conflict a Sudanese church group reported that many civilians “have fled to the Nuba Mountains, where they are being hunted down like animals by helicopter gunships.”¹¹⁹ The U.N. has pleaded with Khartoum for humanitarian air access, but the world body has been denied on all fronts.

One form of the assault on humanitarian access was made clear in June 15 photographs from the Nuba Mountains sent to a number of journalists and analysts. They all show Kauda, a particularly significant target because it was the location of an airstrip critical to the movement of humanitarian supplies into this remote region; it has now been destroyed following multiple intensive bombing runs. This runway had no military purpose, since the Sudan People’s Liberation Army in the Nuba has no aircraft, so its only purpose was humanitarian transport. The attack occurred, moreover, as the World Council of Churches, which has close ties to the people of the Nuba, estimated that three hundred thousand people were already beyond humanitarian reach. Many fled deeper into the hills and mountains without food, water, or shelter.

I wish to argue here that such attacks are not simply war crimes: they are crimes against humanity, and they should be acknowledged by the international community as having reached this grim threshold. Specifically, I am arguing that the systematic and widespread obstruction of humanitarian relief in Darfur, previously in the South and Nuba Mountains and now in South Kordofan and Blue Nile as well, violates international law in ways that come within the ambit of “crimes against humanity” as the meaning of the term has come to be adjudicated since its first use in 1915 to condemn the Armenian genocide and was codified by the Nuremberg Charter (August 1945). The phrase is now a term of art in international law, chiefly as it has been defined by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Although

its interpreted meaning changed very little during the Cold War years, events of the 1990s—including genocide in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia— accelerated legal discussion and international action. According to Article 7 of the Rome Statute of 1998, which provides legal authority and key definitions for the ICC, “crimes against humanity” are acts that are “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack” (United Nations 1998).

Although the specific issue of impeding or obstructing humanitarian relief is not taken up by Article 7 of the statute, a good deal of informed commentary has addressed this question on the basis of the final subheading (7.1[k]), which refers to “other inhumane acts of a similar character [i.e., besides murder, extermination, enslavement, rape and sexual slavery, deportation, torture] intentionally causing great suffering, or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.” The relevance of such language to Khartoum’s actions targeting humanitarian relief in Darfur, South Sudan, and South Kordofan has been apparent to many observers, including Christa Rottensteiner (1999), formerly of the International Committee of the Red Cross, who commented, in a nuanced and even generally conservative analysis, that the denial of humanitarian assistance can be considered a crime against humanity:

In order for the denial of humanitarian assistance to become a crime against humanity, it would . . . need to be either systematic or widespread and based on a policy. This excludes random acts of impediment of humanitarian aid that are not committed as part of a broader plan or policy. Examples would be the spontaneous looting of a warehouse containing relief goods by civilians or soldiers, or spontaneous attacks on relief convoys by a group of drunken soldiers.

It is surely the case that the actions of the Khartoum regime in orchestrating the denial of humanitarian assistance meet the standard Rottensteiner lays down. Nine years later, in the British medical journal *The Lancet* (2008), John Kraemer, Dhrubajyoti Bhattacharya, and Lawrence Gostin argued that the Burmese junta’s obstruction of humanitarian assistance following the devastating cyclone Nargis (May 2008) was a crime against humanity, as was Robert Mugabe’s obstruction of humanitarian efforts in Zimbabwe. The consequences for Burma in particular were noted by J. Benton Heath in 2011:

International humanitarian actors, when they were eventually allowed into the country, were largely confined to the city of Yangon for weeks following the disaster. The government insisted on channeling all relief

through the military, and even seized supplies distributed by residents. A group of French and U.S. naval ships waited off the coast for two weeks with food, medical supplies, water purification systems, small boats, and helicopters, which were necessary to bring aid to isolated rural areas. Eventually, unable to get permission from the government, the ships withdrew without delivering relief. The Myanmar junta also originally impeded the access of international aid personnel from U.N. agencies and nongovernmental organizations, such as World Vision, the Red Cross, and Save the Children.¹²⁰

We will never know how many people died or suffered because of the actions of the Burmese junta, which was not inclined to allow a true mortality study in the wake of Cyclone Nargis. But according to reliable estimates the total number certainly exceeds 150,000, and according to U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, “criminal neglect” on the part of the junta and “the initial delays [of humanitarian relief] could have cost tens of thousands of lives.”¹²¹

Human mortality in Darfur and other regions of Sudan has been similarly exacerbated by the systematic, widespread, and targeted obstruction of humanitarian relief—for more than twenty years. The consequences have been vastly destructive, so it is hardly surprising that Khartoum refuses to allow further mortality studies in Darfur (the last was in 2005); consequently, all assessments of total mortality must make key assumptions, especially about deaths related to violence. But the overall figure is certainly in the hundreds of thousands.¹²² By all accounts, the vast majority of deaths in Darfur after the most violent phase of the genocide (2003-early 2005) were not from violence but from disease and malnutrition. This only works to emphasize the significance of Khartoum’s criminality.

A History of Obstruction

The deliberate obstruction of humanitarian assistance has taken many forms over the past eight years in Darfur, as it had previously in South Sudan and the Nuba Mountains of South Kordofan. It is now again being deployed in Abyei, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, despite the existence of hundreds of thousands of newly displaced and acutely distressed civilians. The means of obstruction include the denial of visas and travel permits for humanitarian personnel; denial of humanitarian access to key areas for reasons unrelated to security; the halting of essential humanitarian supplies in Port Sudan; the gratuitous and incompetent testing of medical supplies; refusal to accept food deliveries on spurious grounds; the limiting of the transport capacity from Port Sudan and Khartoum to Darfur; contrived insecurity to prevent the movement of humanitarian personnel; arrests of humani-

tarian personnel as well as beatings and other threats; confiscation of humanitarian assets; and most dramatically, the expulsion from Darfur of thirteen international NGOs and humanitarian organizations, including two national sections of Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in March 2009. These thirteen organizations had represented approximately half of the total humanitarian capacity in Darfur, and the relief effort never recovered from these massive losses, despite the claims of various international actors such as the U.S. special envoy for Sudan, Scott Gration, and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The expulsions, given their implications for millions of beneficiaries, were all massive violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

Evidence of the manipulation and withholding of humanitarian assistance was apparent very early in the Darfur counterinsurgency war, which Khartoum mounted in response to rebellion by aggrieved African tribal groups. These non-Arab people had for years suffered discrimination, marginalization, and increasingly violent attacks by armed Arab militia forces. Once under way in earnest (April 2003), the campaign early on revealed an ambition not just to attack rebels, but also to destroy civilians and the civilian agricultural economy perceived by the regime as their essential base of support. Thus in early December 2003, Tom Vraalsen, the U.N. special envoy for humanitarian affairs in Darfur, declared in a confidential memo to Jan Egeland, the U.N. emergency relief coordinator, that “delivery of humanitarian assistance to populations in need is hampered mostly by systematically denied access [emphasis in original]. 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”—that is, areas overwhelmingly populated by the African Fur, Zaghawa, and Massalit peoples. So effective was this systematic denial that “present humanitarian operations,” according to Vraalsen, had “practically come to a standstill.”

In the same memo Vraalsen also spoke of “first-hand reports ... from tribal leaders and humanitarian actors on the ground” attesting that Khartoum-backed Arab militias “were launching systematic raids against civilian populations ... [that] included burning and looting of villages, large-scale killings, abductions, and other severe violations of human rights. More recently, humanitarian workers have also been targeted, with staff being abducted and relief trucks looted.” Here again, the reference to “systematic” raids against civilians can only be construed as meaning systematized on the basis of race and ethnicity and designed to destroy the livelihoods of the targeted African tribal groups. According to Article 2 [c] of the 1948 U.N. Genocide Convention, genocidal acts are acts that are “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.” But despite the ethnically targeted character of the violence

against civilians and the deliberate destruction of foodstocks, water supplies, seeds and agricultural tools, crops, and livestock, there was political hesitation in various quarters over use of the “g-word.”

Notwithstanding this political cowardice—the fear that labeling genocidal acts for what they are would require active intervention—there was no hesitation on the part of human rights groups, observers on the ground, and ultimately the U.N. Commission of Inquiry in declaring that the actions by Khartoum constituted crimes against humanity. In turn, what is most notable in assessing the regime’s counterinsurgency war is that military operations and the denial of humanitarian assistance moved in perfect concert in a campaign of destruction that clearly targeted specific ethnic groups, although the two parts of the war were rarely connected as mutually reinforcing crimes against humanity.

Seven years after Kofi Annan belatedly secured a Memorandum of Understanding from Khartoum (July 2004) that permitted the presence of international relief organizations, there are exceedingly few remaining expatriate workers, and they are confined to the several larger urban centers in Darfur. Even here they are at considerable risk—from opportunistic banditry, kidnapping, and violence, but also from severe physical abuse by Khartoum’s forces. These methods have proved effective; several organizations withdrew early on and others (e.g., the important medical relief organization Médecins du Monde) have withdrawn recently. And again, in 2009 there was a massive expulsion of thirteen of the world’s most distinguished humanitarian organizations; in 2010 Khartoum expelled essential senior aid officials, including those from the U.N. High Commission for Refugees and the International Organization for Migration—organizations whose presence is critical if displaced persons are to return with safety and dignity.

The physical assault on humanitarian workers is clearly tolerated by the local security forces. While much of Darfur is genuinely beyond the regime’s control, banditry and attacks are permitted in many locations where Khartoum has full military power. Since 2004 there have been hundreds of car-jackings, dozens of kidnappings, and more than 150 assaults on aid workers, a number of them deadly (it should also be noted that more than 50 peacekeepers have been killed in Darfur, some clearly at Khartoum’s behest). According to one highly experienced U.N. official who worked on Darfur for a number of years, this climate of insecurity and criminality is deliberately maintained by Khartoum as a means of threatening—and thus controlling—humanitarian operations.

Sabotaging Humanitarian Assessment

Physical intimidation and assault are not the only means by which aid work is ob-

structed. In recent years one of Khartoum's most effective weapons against humanitarian programs in Darfur has taken the form of preventing the collection, organization, analysis, and dissemination of information crucial for organizations making life-and-death decisions about how to allocate limited resources. An unreleased Tufts University study noted in January 2011 that:

Crucial information about the humanitarian situation is lacking...Where humanitarian access has been maintained there have been serious delays and blocking of key information, for example, the failure to release regular nutrition survey reports, which contain the vital humanitarian indicators that enable the severity of the humanitarian crisis to be judged. International humanitarian capacities have been seriously eroded and impaired to a point that leaves Darfuris in a more vulnerable position now than at any other time since the counter-insurgency operations and forced displacements in 2003.¹²³

Reports from the deep field, which are increasingly rare and dangerous undertakings for my sources, are adamant about U. N. complicity in this suppression of critical information, pointing particularly to U. N. head of humanitarian operations for Sudan, Georg Charpentier. Charpentier is evidently intimidated by Khartoum; he refuses to speak honestly about conditions in Darfur, including those affecting aid workers, and he has also acquiesced in the suppression of data and reports on malnutrition. Most shamefully, he has lied about humanitarian access in the region.

According to the respected Dutch news research organization Institute for War and Peace Reporting (2011), Charpentier claimed in a written statement that "UN humanitarian agencies are not confronted by pressure or interference from the Government of Sudan." This claim has been explicitly repudiated by U. N. officials speaking off the record, and it is also belied by a great many publicly reported instances (many from the U. N. itself) of "pressure" and "interference" of an extreme sort. These include the refusal to grant visas or travel permits; the confiscation of vehicles and fuel; the deliberate exacerbating of violence so as to raise the U. N. security level (and thus preclude travel to a wide range of locations); and point blank denial of road or air access to areas critically in need.

Most of what we know about Khartoum's pressure to suppress data on malnutrition and disease and about the intimidation, obstruction, harassment, and expulsion of international and domestic humanitarian operations comes from Radio Dabanga, an extraordinary grassroots network in Darfur. For its part, the U. N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), following the expulsions of March 2009, simply ceased publishing its "Darfur Humanitarian Profiles," data-rich and

comprehensive overviews of humanitarian conditions. The last report presented conditions in Darfur as of the end of 2008.

Despite U. N. silence, we know of the deaths and deprivation in Darfur; and we know that they are not accidental: they are not collateral damage, but rather the face of war as Khartoum has chosen to wage it in Darfur, in southern Sudan, and now in South Kordofan. It is cheap and immensely destructive, and it requires only intimidation of the international humanitarian presence and the failure of nations with possible leverage to compel the regime to grant unfettered access. Failure by the international community to characterize these actions as crimes against humanity has led to expedient and morally corrupt “negotiations” on the ground over humanitarian access, research, and the promulgation of information about human suffering and destruction. In seeking access to acutely needy civilians and the opportunity to assess populations, members of the humanitarian community are obliged by Khartoum’s officials to trade away various guarantees contained within the Memorandum of Understanding (Khartoum, July 2003) that established the terms of reference for relief efforts in Darfur.

Why is it important how we refer to these actions by Khartoum? I would argue that it is finally, Sudan—not Burma or Zimbabwe, horrible as they were—that is the test case for how we designate the deliberate denial of humanitarian assistance. For twenty-two years throughout Sudan as a whole, for eight years in Darfur, and for the past months in Abyei, South Kordofan, and Blue Nile, the NIF/NCP regime in Khartoum has deliberately and systematically denied, obstructed, destroyed, or attacked humanitarian facilities and personnel. These are surely crimes against humanity, and the language of the Rome Statute, if not unambiguous, provides a clear legal basis for prosecuting a number of the political and military leaders. The reality of these massive crimes should define for all nations the nature of their bilateral relationship with Khartoum. In fact, the gradual international acceptance of this ruthless cabal of men concerned only with maintaining their monopoly on wealth and power suggests just how far we remain from the ideal of international justice.

These crimes must be named, and the full legal implications of widespread and systematic denial of humanitarian assistance must be articulated repeatedly, forcefully, and with the clear threat of ultimate prosecution. Otherwise we invite similar tactics on the part of other regimes facing rebellion or civil unrest. In addition to Burma and Zimbabwe, threats exist in a number of other countries, including Syria, Chad, Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The list will grow longer in a global future that seems defined in many regions by food and water shortages, the massive proliferation of small arms, and declining economic opportunities.¹²⁴

Notes

- 1 Eric Reeves, “Darfur in the Still Deepening Shadow of Lies,” July 22, 2012.
- 2 See “Forgotten Darfur: Old Tactics and New Players,” Small Arms Survey, July 2012.
- 3 Email to the author, received August 5, 2012; this is also the source for following two quotes.
- 4 Radio Dabanga [Kutum] August 2, 2012.
- 5 AFP [Khartoum] August 10, 2012.
- 6 Radio Dabanga [Kutum] August 6, 2012.
- 7 UN News Center, August 6, 2012.
- 8 Radio Dabanga, Kutum, August 3, 2012; the UN figure for registered IDPs in Kassab is 25,000.
- 9 Reuters [Khartoum] January 27, 2011.
- 10 Hussein has also been indicted by the International Criminal Court for crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur.
- 11 Daniel Bekele, Africa director at Human Rights Watch, quoted in HRW, “Sudan: New Attacks on Civilians in Darfur,” January 28, 2011.
- 12 Eric Reeves, “Former Members of the UN Panel of Experts Offer a Damning Alternative to the ‘Official’ Report,” April 17, 2012.
- 13 *Africa Confidential*, “UN clash over Beijing bullets claim,” April 13, 2012.
- 14 Institute for War & Peace Reporting, “UN Accused of Caving In to Khartoum,” January 7, 2011.
- 15 Email from a highly authoritative source on the ground in Darfur, received by the author on July 28, 2011.
- 16 Eric Reeves, “Darfur Humanitarian Overview: The Consequences of International Silence,” January 23, 2011.
- 17 Radio Dabanga, July 26, 2011, “Voluntary Repatriation: 7 families found in a critical state.”
- 18 Radio Dabanga, July 26, 2011, “Voluntary Repatriation: 7 families found in a critical state.”
- 19 Radio Dabanga, January 27, 2012.
- 20 “Navigating Without a Compass: The Erosion of Humanitarianism in Darfur,” January 2011; unreleased, in order to protect the anonymity of researchers.
- 21 “UN Accused of Caving In to Khartoum Over Darfur,” January 7, 2011 [The Hague].
- 22 Many former *Janjaweed* militiamen have been recycled into the *Abu Tira*.
- 23 The [full report](#) contains a selection of Radio Dabanga reports that illustrate the radical insecurity that presents one of the primary obstacles to large-scale returns.

- 24 “No End to Violence in Darfur: Arms Supplies Continue Despite Ongoing Human Rights Violations” (February 2012).
- 25 This is a very conservative estimate of the number of newly displaced persons: sources on the ground and in the camps reported to Radio Dabanga that as of June 1, 2011, 83,000 people had already been newly displaced since the beginning of the year.
- 26 See “Darfur Women Take on Hard Labor,” IWPR, February 8, 2012.
- 27 *New York Times*, “Over Tea, Sheik Denies Stirring Darfur’s Torment,” June 12, 2006.
- 28 The DPA has been overwhelmingly rejected by Darfuri civil society.
- 29 For a discussion of the terrible toll the war in Darfur has taken on traditional rural agricultural life, as well as relevant Radio Dabanga reports of violence and a further explication of reporting gaps in the *NYT* article, including a discussion of UNAMID’s incompetency and unreliability as a source, see the [full report](#).
- 30 The second, if one counts the disastrous Darfur Peace Agreement of May 2006, signed in Abuja, Nigeria.
- 31 “Navigating Without a Compass: The Erosion of Humanitarianism in Darfur,” January 2011; not publicly released.
- 32 For more about the food security situation in Darfur, see the [full report](#).
- 33 Radio Dabanga, citing Ghazi’s remarks in a meeting in Nyala, August 4, 2010.
- 34 See a more detailed account of such threats in the [full report](#).
- 35 Agence France-Presse [Khartoum] January 20, 2011; I discuss Charpentier’s deliberate distortion of the situation in Darfur together with the details of the insecurity engineered by Khartoum in the [full report](#).
- 36 Refer to the [full report](#) for a detailed examination of the UN’s IDP figures as well as an overview of the dangers of forced returns, which includes a discussion of the inability to guarantee safety for returnees and Khartoum’s use of food and medical aid to dismantle IDP camps. Also included is a compendium of reports from Radio Dabanga issued between July 27-August 30, 2011, many of them bearing directly on issues discussed here, including extreme violence directed against the camps and displaced persons, deteriorating humanitarian conditions in many camps, the high rates of psychiatric disorders experienced by displaced persons, and the loss of land to Arab militia groups.
- 37 HRW, January 8, 2011.
- 38 IWPR, “UN Accused of Caving In to Khartoum Over Darfur,” January 7, 2011.
- 39 For a more complete account of Khartoum’s efforts to thwart the distribution of food, restrict aid access, and control the movements of peacekeepers, see the [full report](#).
- 40 Valerie Amos, the new UN Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs, has said little of use, offering only boilerplate commentary. See the text of [Amos’s November 9, 2010 Press Conference](#).
- 41 See the [full report](#) for a compendium of Radio Dabanga accounts.

- 42 [Peace Operations Monitor, Sudan \(website\)](#).
- 43 [HRW, "Halt Waves of Attacks on Civilians in Darfur," November 11, 2010](#).
- 44 The [full report](#) includes an assessment of Charpentier's failure to appreciate the findings of human rights investigators and on-the-ground observers regarding the chances for safe returns of displaced persons.
- 45 Refer to the [full report](#) for a representative selection of headlines and lead sentences from the past few months contrasts starkly with Charpentier's account of how "the security situation in Darfur is improving."
- 46 [UN OCHA, CAP Project Sheet Sudan 2011](#).
- 47 Email to the author, received January 17, 2011; lightly edited for clarity.
- 48 See the [full report](#) for accounts of the humanitarian situation in these two under-reported areas.
- 49 May 2009 report from Physicians for Human Rights: "[Nowhere to Turn: Failure to Protect, Support and Assure Justice for Darfuri Women.](#)"
- 50 I provide examples and a more extended discussion in the [full report](#).
- 51 Villages have in thousands of cases been burned to the ground, with all that might sustain agricultural life destroyed.
- 52 See [my analysis](#) of the "New Strategy for Darfur" published in *Dissent Magazine* (online) October 8, 2010.
- 53 Radio Dabanga, citing Ghazi's remarks in a meeting in Nyala, August 4, 2010.
- 54 Refer to the [full report](#) for a closer examination of the dangerous implications of international endorsement of the "New Strategy" as well as a concluding statement on the lack of focused international attention that is certain to sustain ongoing human suffering and destruction in Darfur.
- 55 [SAS, "Darfur Peace Process & Chronology" January 18, 2012](#).
- 56 [SAS August 2010 update](#).
- 57 [SAS August 2010 update](#).
- 58 [SAS August 2010update](#).
- 59 See the [full report](#) for further commentary on Khartoum's negotiations in Doha.
- 60 [Josh Rogin, Foreign Policy \(online\) "As tensions boil, Obama's Sudan envoy contemplates Kenya post," August 13, 2010](#).
- 61 [Sudan Embassy Press Release, August 25, 2010](#).
- 62 [HRW, July 19, 2010](#).
- 63 Email to the author, received June 1, 2010.
- 64 [Statement of August 23, 2010](#).

- 65 Jeffrey Gettleman, *New York Times*, “Darfur Withers as Sudan Sells Food,” August 9, 2008.
- 66 Report of the Secretary-General on the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (S/2010/213) page 16.
- 67 See Eric Reeves, “Attack on UNAMID Forces in Darfur: The Khartoum Regime is Responsible,” July 12, 2008.
- 68 For a more detailed account of Khartoum’s deliberate, politically and militarily calculated obstruction of humanitarian aid delivery to civilians in need, see the [full report](#).
- 69 Press release, UN OCHA, May 31, 2010.
- 70 *Sudan Vision*, “Hassabo: The AL Provides Support to Citizens in Darfur Region,” February 6, 2010.
- 71 Secretary General’s Report to the UN Security Council, November 2009, page 6.
- 72 It is no accident that all organizations that had significant medical response capability in this area were expelled, including Doctors Without Borders/MSF/Holland, MSF/France, and the International Rescue Committee.
- 73 See the [full report](#) for more on the security consequences of these expulsions.
- 74 See the [full report](#) for a more detailed assessment of UNICEF’s malnutrition and food security findings.
- 75 UN News Center, June 24, 2010.
- 76 For more on this topic, see the [full report](#).
- 77 *Sudan Tribune* [Khartoum] “Sudan to close down Darfur IDP camps in early 2010: official,” November 10, 2009.
- 78 These figures are for South Darfur alone.
- 79 Reuters [Khartoum] June 13, 2010.
- 80 See the [full report](#).
- 81 For examples of aerial attacks on civilians, see the [full report](#).
- 82 See Amira Ahmed Abdelrahman and Yassir Mohammed Eltahir, “Bacteriological quality of drinking water in Nyala, South Darfur, Sudan” *Environmental Monitoring and Assessment*, 2011, Volume 175, Nos. 1–4, pp. 37–43.
- 83 The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre found that as of May 2010, “at least 4.9 million people are displaced in Darfur, Greater Khartoum, and the ten States of southern Sudan”—Sudan’s is the greatest number in the world today.
- 84 See the [full report](#) for accounts of other medical relief organizations forced to leave or pushed to withdraw due to insecurity.
- 85 For an overview of the health implications of the expulsions as analyzed by *The Lancet*, a distinguished British medical journal, see the [full report](#).

- 86 It is important to remember, as Human Rights Watch notes, that this has long been an impoverished region on both sides of the border.
- 87 See the [full report](#) for detailed comments on the decision to draw down MINURCAT, the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad.
- 88 UN News Center, May 25, 2010; For a specific account of the current rise in malnutrition in Chad as well as a further examination of the challenges faced by food aid organizations, see the [full report](#).
- 89 PHR, “Nowhere to Turn: Failure to Protect, Support, and Assure Justice for Darfuri Women,” May 2009.
- 90 See the [full report](#) for a more detailed assessment of the elections process in Sudan as well as examples of Khartoum’s willingness to use violence to prevent peaceful expressions of opposing views.
- 91 The document of more than 125 pages has no references, no footnotes, no citations—even when treating controversial subjects such as human mortality in Darfur.
- 92 The ICC has also indicted a senior NIF/NCP official, Ahmed Haroun; a *Janjaweed* leader, Ali Kushayb; and a rebel commander.
- 93 For a detailed account of this attack, see the [full report](#).
- 94 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, July 12, 2004.
- 95 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, July 12, 2004.
- 96 As well as 200,000 refugees in Eastern Chad.
- 97 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, July 12, 2004; UN Integrated Regional Information Networks, July 13, 2004.
- 98 For examples of the threats posed by the *Janjaweed* and other paramilitary elements to returnees and those still in the camps, see the [full report](#).
- 99 Search “darfur humanitarian access map”+july+2009 at <http://www.unsudanig.org/>.
- 100 Reuters [Khartoum] December 3, 2009.
- 101 Secretary General’s Report to the UN Security Council, November 2009, page 6.
- 102 Email to the author, received September 21, 2009.
- 103 Reuters [UN/New York] March 24, 2009.
- 104 *The Guardian* [Nairobi] March 24, 2009).
- 105 BBC [Darfur] May 10, 2009.
- 106 To his credit, Holmes himself offers some notable qualifications to his upbeat account; refer to the [full report](#).
- 107 For further detail on the politicization of the Darfur humanitarian crisis, as well as a compendium of recent public statements that provide further context for understanding diplomatic response to Khartoum’s actions, refer to the [full report](#).

- 108 Report by Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on security situation in Darfur, April 14, 2009.
- 109 OCHA Situation Report No. 4, 16 April 2009, “Expulsion of Key NGOs from Darfur,” April 16, 2009.
- 110 For examples of compromised camp sanitation and water, refer to the [full report](#).
- 111 Refer to the [full report](#) for IRIN’s more detailed May 2009 overview of their consequences.
- 112 Associated Press [Abu Shouk Camp, North Darfur] April 19, 2009.
- 113 For further commentary on potential migrations, see the [full report](#).
- 114 See the [full report](#) for more detail on these restrictions.
- 115 For examples of statements ignoring the nature of the Khartoum regime and its failure to abide by UN Security Council resolutions, refer to the [full report](#), which also examines the lack of credibility of recent mortality assessments in Darfur.
- 116 Article first published in the *African Studies Review*, Volume 54, Number 3 (December 2011), pp. 165-74.
- 117 See Small Arms Survey 2011.
- 118 A continuation of the pattern I’ve analyzed and detailed for the past thirteen years.
- 119 See Sudan Council of Churches 2011.
- 120 J. Benton Heath, *Disasters, Relief, and Neglect* (2011) page 420.
- 121 BBC 2008
- 122 Mortality in Darfur has been a controversial issue for a number of years, chiefly because of the paucity of data, particularly for violent mortality. I believe the data, particularly data from July 2010 by “Darfurian Voices” (www.darfurianvoices.org), suggest total mortality of approximately 500,000 for the past eight years, from all causes, in Darfur and eastern Chad. The often cited “U.N. estimate of 300,000” is in fact a crude extrapolation from previous totals made in 2008 by then Under-Secretary for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes. It has no particular authority other than the convenience of its source. I offer a detailed analysis of extant data at www.sudanreeves.org.
- 123 “Navigating Without a Compass: The Erosion of Humanitarianism in Darfur.” Received confidentially, January 2011.
- 124 For a complete bibliography and list of references, see the [full report](#).