

COMPROMISING WITH EVIL

AN ARCHIVAL HISTORY OF GREATER SUDAN, 2007 – 2012

SECTION 1

Darfur and “Genocide by Attrition”

Part B

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Section One, Part B: Humanitarian conditions in Darfur

Preface

While it is impossible to separate issues concerning the adequacy of humanitarian operations in Darfur from the insecurity that pervades the region, it is useful to look back at the earlier perceptions, concerns, and fears of those relief organizations and UN agencies as they reported out to the international community. These reports, however, ceased almost entirely following Khartoum's March 4, 2009 expulsion of thirteen distinguished international humanitarian organizations, including Oxfam, two national sections of Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children/US, and others. At the same time, three important Sudanese national relief organizations were also shut down, including the Amal Center for Treatment of Victims of Torture. Roughly half the humanitarian capacity in Darfur was lost at a stroke, and Khartoum confiscated huge amounts of equipment and money from the expelled organizations as they withdrew.

This long second part of Section One addresses the humanitarian situation in Darfur both prior to the expulsions and in their aftermath. One analysis was written shortly after the expulsions, another looks back from two months later. Information about humanitarian conditions has subsequently become increasingly difficult to come by, particularly since the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) halted publication of its quarterly, data- and analysis-rich "Darfur Humanitarian Profiles" as a direct result of the expulsions. The last issue published reflected conditions as of January 1, 2009.¹ With the UN's silence and increasing refusal to disseminate information about humanitarian conditions there came as well pressure on INGOs to suppress information—or face expulsion. In fact, many organizations have been expelled—or have withdrawn because Khartoum's obstructionism has made their work impossible. A number of UN personnel have also been expelled, including senior officials of the UN High Commission for Refugees. The limited number of confidential reports from sources within the humanitarian community have become increasingly important—and risky.

Given the greater access to Darfuris in eastern Chad, one might think that reports on living conditions there would be more unconstrained and discomfiting of international complacency. After all, many of the Darfuri refugees have been living in the twelve Chadian camps for eight or nine years. In practice, however, we hear

almost nothing about these people; they are perhaps the most invisible of Darfur's countless victims. A survey of the reports on eastern Chad—going back to 2006—is contained in **Annex VI**, which focuses exclusively on the topic.

This part of Section One attempts to provide a “thick description” of the situation through the eyes of experienced aid workers and other observers, and provides as much information as could be gleaned from a range of sources. It begins with reports from 2007 and concludes with an account from August 2012. The selections are very heavy in citation and quotation because the history of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur is in danger of becoming hopelessly blurred. The voices here, speaking contemporaneously with the conditions and suffering they saw and heard, are a critical archival resource. Even so, they represent only a small fraction of the total amount written and archived on this crucially important subject.² Also included here are a number of public statements and reports, as well as confidential accounts from aid workers on the ground and program personnel for organizations operating in Darfur.

A particularly important resource for this topic is a 2010 study by Tufts University, “Navigating Without a Compass: The Erosion of Humanitarianism in Darfur.” Although the study has not been publicly released, I am fortunate to have received a copy of the full text and it figures prominently in these humanitarian updates and in **Annex IV** (which offers a considerably briefer compendium of reports and focuses solely on the critical period May 2009 to May 2012). The Tufts study is also discussed in a deeply researched investigation of UN performance in Darfur by the Institute for War and Peace Reporting (January 7, 2011).³ Yet again, I must acknowledge that Radio Dabanga has been an indispensable source for the details of acute humanitarian deprivation as experienced throughout Darfur, as has my friend and colleague, Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Eisa, M.D.

If issues of security cannot be separated from humanitarian conditions and capacity, we must draw the grimmest of conclusions from the August 2012 assault on Kutum and the complete looting of all humanitarian resources, including food, medicine, and fuel (critical for pumping water in this arid land). Before the great silence that befell the humanitarian community in March 2009 (again, see **Annex IV**), we could hear directly from humanitarians about the consequences of insecurity; now we are obliged to listen for voices speaking indirectly, and look for oblique signals. What we do know is shocking, and yet the desperate pleas from Darfuris for international protection and assistance continue to go unanswered.

I return again to the November 2007 perceptions of Dr. Mohamed, who was at the time awarded the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award for his work with the

Amal Center for Treatment of Victims of Torture, work that also included treatment of women and girls who had been raped. Upon accepting the award, he spoke forcefully about what a peace support operation in Darfur required in the face of “the final phase of the Sudanese government’s plan to exterminate the African tribes of Darfur.” The assessment was rendered five years ago and is based upon his own extraordinarily courageous work on the ground:

Last week I met with the leaders of 27 tribal groups. I spoke with leaders in the camps of internally displaced people (IDPs) and civil society representatives. I even met with some rebel factions. Today, I speak on their behalf. I also speak on behalf of my patients—14-year-old girls who have been gang-raped in front of their families, men and boys thrown into the fire that also burned their villages and all their possessions, prisoners who have spoken out against the government and paid for it with awful torture and mutilation of their bodies. I would like to speak to you about the situation on the ground in Darfur.[]

During the past few months, there has been an absolute deterioration in the conditions in the Internally Displaced Persons [IDP] camps. There are many people who are now out of reach of humanitarian aid. In the hospital, we are seeing more cases of malnutrition and infectious diseases we have not seen in a long time, such as polio, measles and tuberculosis.⁴

How do contemporaneous and subsequent accounts bear out these forceful words of warning?

April 4, 2007: Humanitarian responses in the fifth year of genocidal counter-insurgency

There is no respite for the people of Darfur or eastern Chad. The inadequate and weak responses from the international community do nothing to diminish the harsh realities of this still-deepening humanitarian crisis. A survey of recent humanitarian developments reveals a number of extremely disturbing trends, reflected most ominously in an excess Crude Mortality Rate well above normal (the rate of mortality beyond what would normally be expected—CMR is measured in deaths per day per 10,000 of population). And the rate may be higher than what is reflected in humanitarian data, since many areas that are especially hard-hit have been denied humanitarian access.

There are six major trends of concern:

[1] Ongoing displacement: The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs estimated that approximately 30,000 people were newly displaced in February 2007, following a January displacement figure of 50,000. There is no figure for March, but it is surely considerable. As these numbers grow, camps for internally displaced persons in Darfur are reaching or have surpassed capacity:

Camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Sudan's conflict-torn Darfur region are almost at full capacity due to a continuing influx of people fleeing violence, with 30,000 people uprooted last month alone, the United Nations reported today [March 20, 2007]. Since January 80,000 people have fled, on top of half a million others displaced in 2006. [] Last week, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that IDP camps were sheltering 50,000 to 100,000 people apiece. "We simply cannot absorb any more displaced," UNICEF country representative Ted Chaiban said on his return from a visit to Darfur.⁵

[2] Diminishing access: Access to the 4.5 million conflict-affected persons in Darfur and eastern Chad continues to diminish. A recent UN/nongovernmental aid organization study found that "access for aid agencies in Darfur dropped to 64 percent in January [2007] and 20 percent of the affected people could not be reached by any humanitarian agency. 'An average of 2.45 million people, 70 percent of the conflict affected-population, remain food insecure' [the report] noted."⁶

We catch a rare glimpse of life beyond the reach of humanitarian aid in a Reuters dispatch from Deribat (Jebel Marra), March 26, 2007. Khartoum had cut off rebel-held Deribat for five months, even as it is one of the main villages in the southeast Jebel Marra region:

After the children stopped singing and hospitable local leaders shook his hand, the magnitude of the task ahead soon became apparent to John Holmes, the UN's under-secretary for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator. Mothers with infants in their arms cried out for medicine. Others feared their children would be robbed of an education. Holmes was shown water pumps in the village, which could dry up if maintenance supplies were not flown in.

But aid groups say it is too dangerous to operate in Jebel Marra, where humanitarian workers have been targeted by militias, including an incident last year in which uniformed Arab militias [*Janjaweed*] beat four NGO workers while their international female colleague was sexually assaulted. The last two remaining aid groups left the area in August. "You can't just drop medicine from the air," said an aid worker, who asked not to be named. "We look for windows of opportunity to help out. Many humanitarian agencies have fled rural areas and this has severe consequences."

Jebel Marra—five years later—continues to be subject to a humanitarian embargo, and although we have no morbidity, mortality, or malnutrition data, such anecdotal evidence and reports as have been conveyed through Radio Dabanga are highly alarming.

[3] IDP Camp “Magnet effect”: At the same time, IDP camps are increasingly becoming magnets for food and resources, even though violence continues to be the primary “push” factor in displacement and relocation. This is true even as Khartoum seeks to close the camps, as it has since the beginning of conflict in 2003.

While [] aid workers try to also give food and blankets and other aid to those [Darfuris] in the remote villages cut off from the fighting, limited funds and insecurity means those outside the camps often get less aid than those inside. Some aid workers expressed concerns that this was attracting people who were more economic migrant than refugee.⁷

Such a “magnet effect” can distort even further local economies, and make the task of humanitarian aid delivery that much greater.

[4] Obstruction to humanitarians: Khartoum continues to wage its war of attrition against humanitarian relief—yet another instrument of genocidal destruction. While signing a recent agreement to improve humanitarian access for international

organizations (an agreement that contained some of the same provisions embodied in the July 2004 version of this “agreement”), Khartoum was at the same time actively and explicitly obstructing the work of indigenous Sudanese relief efforts:

[The Government of] Sudan temporarily *suspended 52 non-governmental organisations working in Darfur on Thursday as the new UN humanitarian chief began his first visit to the country*, hoping to win aid groups better access to the region. Jamal Youssef Idriss, from the government’s Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in Nyala, said the NGOs had been suspended from working in southern Darfur state after an investigation aimed at preventing fraud found they did not comply with regulations.⁸

The visiting UN humanitarian chief, John Holmes, quickly discovered that his high office meant nothing in the killing fields of Darfur:

Sudanese troops barred the UN humanitarian chief on Saturday from visiting Darfur’s most violence-plagued refugee camp during his first trip to the war-torn region. The convoy carrying John Holmes was halted at a checkpoint about a mile (1.2 kilometers) outside the Kassab refugee camp, and he was told he did not have the proper papers to visit the site.

“I’m frustrated, annoyed, but it’s not atypical of what happens here,” Holmes told journalists traveling with him. He said his trip had obtained all the necessary clearances from Khartoum. “This is rather typical of the kind of problem people are encountering in this kind of area. But it is interesting to see it in practice,” he said. The soldiers at the checkpoint briefly prevented a car carrying journalists from leaving after Holmes turned back from the site. The journalists were only allowed to leave after the troops took a videotape from a UN television cameraman.⁹

As Associated Press notes in this same dispatch,

Kassab, home to more than 25,000 refugees, has seen the highest level of rapes and other attacks against its residents. The camp is located in a region under tight control of the *Janjaweed* and government forces, near the town of Kutum, 60 kilometers (40 miles) northwest of El Fasher, the North Darfur capital.

The entire population of Kassab camp was displaced by the massive violence beginning August 3, 2012. Kutum was overrun and humanitarian resources and supplies were completely looted or destroyed. It is doubtful that relief aid will be restored to this area.

Despite subsequent “official apologies,” it was no accident that Holmes was denied access to this particular camp. Lydia Polgreen of the *New York Times*, one of the finest journalists to have reported from Darfur, recently filed a dispatch that gives an acute sense of the bureaucratic obstacles facing humanitarian operations:

Aid agencies say their operations are tied in endless ribbons of red tape. Rather than being chased from the country by violence they are more likely to lose heart from the endless bureaucracy—a slow death by a thousand paper cuts. “Many organizations are saying that the bureaucratic obstacles are the No. 1 problem and may be the straw that breaks the camel’s back,” said one senior aid official, who spoke on the condition on anonymity for fear of government retaliation.

The mountains of paperwork—including trips to government ministries to obtain official stamps and permissions for visas, travel permits and import tax exemptions—take up so much time that one large aid organization with operations across Darfur employs five full-time workers whose only job is to navigate the bureaucratic maze. The government signed an agreement with the United Nations in 2004 that eliminated most restrictions on aid workers. But that agreement has been repeatedly violated: a United Nations list of incidents compiled in the first two months of the year cited more than two dozen cases of workers being forced off aid flights, turned back at checkpoints or denied paperwork and visas.

Visas are issued for a few months at a time, if at all. Exit visas are required for workers staying more than a month, but these, too, can take weeks to come through and cost \$120 each. *The cost of a single worker’s paperwork can add up to \$1,000 a year.*¹⁰

“The cost of a single worker’s paperwork can add up to \$1,000 a year”: these excessive costs to humanitarian organizations, together with Khartoum’s contempt for humanitarian organizations, have consequences felt not only in Darfur, but also in South Sudan, which struggles to pull itself together after decades of ruinous civil war:

[International] Donors began meeting on Tuesday [March 20, 2007] to pledge money to rebuild Sudan after a devastating north-south civil war, but the event was overshadowed by the separate conflict in Darfur being left off the agenda... The [Khartoum] government refused to allow Darfur to be on the agenda and at the last minute cancelled a compromise meeting to be held separately on Monday, UN officials and diplomats said. Donors have already pledged some \$4.5 billion to rebuild Sudan, ruined by two decades of civil war, after a north-south peace deal in January 2005. But most of that money has not appeared and the south complains much has been redirected to Darfur.

The meeting—dubbed the Sudan Consortium—had hoped to address that issue, in addition to getting the original pledges renewed and securing fresh promises of cash. But the cancellation of the Darfur meeting meant some donors withdrew high-level participation.¹¹

Agreement on Humanitarian Access: An “Insurance Policy” Taken out by Khartoum

It has been widely reported that the Khartoum regime has agreed to facilitate humanitarian relief in Darfur. There is, therefore, a suitably signed and titled document: the “Joint Communiqué Between the Government of Sudan and the United Nations on the Facilitation of Humanitarian Activities in Darfur” (March 28, 2007). Signed by Ali Karti, Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs for the NIF/NCP regime and Manuel Aranda da Silva, Humanitarian and Resident Coordinator for the UN in Sudan, the document reiterates a series of commitments either already made by the regime, or which should go without saying in the midst of a humanitarian crisis affecting 4.5 million people.

There is little reason to believe that Khartoum will adhere to the terms of the “Joint Communiqué”; here we should recall the demise of an equivalent “Joint Communiqué” signed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and NIF/NCP President Omar al-Bashir on July 3, 2004. Why, then, did Khartoum agree to terms of reference for the humanitarian aid operations it has obstructed for more than three years? The answer came the day following the signing in Khartoum:

U.S. plans to impose tough new measures against Sudan to force it to change course on Darfur will only threaten humanitarian agreements Khartoum has signed with the United Nations and fuel violence in the region, the foreign ministry said on Thursday. US officials said Wash-

ington aimed to “tighten the screws” on Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir and have him accept an international force in the western province. *“This will have negative repercussions. It will threaten agreements that we have reached with the United Nations and the African Union,”* said foreign ministry spokesman Ali al-Sadig.¹²

Khartoum saw the agreement as little more than a kind of “insurance policy”: by promising to grant what it had no intention of adhering to over the long term, it hoped to pressure the Bush administration to hold off on a decision on sanctions. If the administration does impose new sanctions, this will be used by Khartoum as an excuse to renege on the terms of the “Joint Communiqué.” If new sanctions are not imposed, Khartoum will still do what it wishes in Darfur.

June 11, 2007: Human Security in Darfur, Part 1

The traditional “hunger gap” in Darfur is the period between spring planting and fall harvest, which typically coincides with the rainy season, the period during which flooding and washed-out roads compromises transportation through most of Darfur. This year, the US Agency for International Development reports that, “The poor harvest in 2006 resulted in an early onset of the hunger season in 2007, which began in March/April rather than May.”¹³

It was for this reason that in [May 2006, UNICEF reported](#):

Malnutrition is on the rise again in Darfur [] the UN’s children fund said Wednesday [May 2, 2006]. “We need to raise the alarm bell,” said Ted Chaiban, head of UNICEF’s mission to Sudan. “We’re losing ground. We need to stop this deterioration.”

While food supplies in most camps remain adequate, it is important to remember the approximately 1 million people in Darfur who are beyond all humanitarian reach. Many are self-sufficient, but hundreds of thousands are not. As always, children under five are particularly vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition. Further compromising of humanitarian access because of insecurity, as well as transportation difficulties caused by the rains, make it likely that malnutrition rates will rise significantly, particularly in South Darfur (home to half Darfur’s population), West Darfur, and southern North Darfur.

Humanitarian indicators and access

At the end of April 2007, Oxfam/UK, Save the Children/Spain, and Mercy Corps withdrew from the Um Dhukun area in West Darfur. Coming in the wake of violent attacks on aid workers in the area, this action immediately affected 100,000 civilians, including refugees from Chad and Central African Republic.¹⁴ Many of these people will be forced to move.

Mental health is notoriously difficult to measure or quantify, but Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 27 (DHP 27) notes in its section on “Protection” that the ongoing displacement caused by Khartoum’s aerial bombardment of civilian targets has “left civilians in the region highly traumatized.”¹⁵

Of particular concern were the reports of renewed air attacks on villages in the Dar Zaghawa area, North Darfur. The latest bombings have left civilians in the region highly traumatized. Many told the UN that “the biggest threat [to their lives and livelihoods] now comes from the air.” Families have fled their homes and are living in the surrounding hills and wadis, without adequate shelter and water supplies. The risk of air attacks has also caused the closure of health posts and schools. Women now collect water only at night, fearing targeted day-time aerial raids on water points. (page 13)

Despite the relentless increase in the numbers of affected and displaced persons, Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 27 offers news of extraordinary humanitarian success. Estimates that as many as 500,000 people have already been saved by humanitarian assistance seem modest. Nonetheless, the narrative of DHP 27 has a constant refrain: humanitarian access remains severely compromised and may be radically attenuated as security deteriorates further.

A greatly debilitating factor for humanitarian outreach remains the intolerably high incidence of increasingly violent hijackings of humanitarian vehicles. [] Since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement [May 5, 2006] 97 humanitarian vehicles have been hijacked and 79 convoys ambushed. [] Due to overall insecurity, humanitarian staff were temporarily relocated on seven occasions during the first three months of 2007, with an obvious detrimental effect on humanitarian assistance. [] Humanitarian operations continued to suffer from various forms of aggression perpetrated by all parties to the conflict. Between January and March [2007] 32 humanitarian workers have been temporarily detained by Government of Sudan authorities, often without

charge. The worst incident happened on 19 January [2007] when Government of Sudan Police and National Security raided a nongovernmental organization guesthouse in Nyala and arrested 19 UN and nongovernmental aid staff, using extreme brutality. (page 5)

DHP 27 also highlights an ominous and vastly under-reported trend within the humanitarian community in Darfur:

With respect to April 2006, there are now 2,400 fewer aid workers (-16%), while during the same period, the caseload of conflict-affected populations has increased by almost 550,000 people (+15%) and UN access dropped from 78% to 68%. (page 6)

There are approximately 12,300 aid workers in the region, of whom approximately 900 are international staff. It is hardly surprising that Chart 4 (“Number of People Assisted in Key Humanitarian Sectors, April 2006–April 2007”) shows significant declines in the number of people receiving food assistance and primary medical care.

Insecurity has taken a further toll, although one difficult to measure. DHP 27 notes that because of insecurity, “the World Food Program and Cooperating Partners are now almost exclusively reliant on helicopter transport to carry out food distribution and monitoring activities.”¹⁶ Helicopter transport is extremely expensive and will ultimately constrain the Darfur humanitarian budget for actual food supplies and other aid resources.

Moreover, we should bear in mind that Khartoum often denies humanitarian access for political reasons. This was the experience of both former UN Undersecretary for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland and current Undersecretary John Holmes:

Sudanese troops barred the UN humanitarian chief on Saturday from visiting one of Darfur’s most violence-plagued refugee camp during his first trip to this war-torn region in Sudan. The convoy carrying John Holmes was halted at a checkpoint about 1.2 kilometers (0.8 miles) outside the Kassab refugee camp, and he was told he did not have the proper papers to visit the site. “I’m frustrated, annoyed, but it’s not atypical of what happens here,” Holmes told journalists traveling with him. He said his trip had obtained all the necessary clearances from Khartoum.¹⁷

Again, given Khartoum's relentless war of attrition against humanitarian operations in Darfur, Holmes is correct in saying that his experience was "not atypical." On the contrary, despite the many agreements on humanitarian access that the regime has signed, bureaucratic obstacles to aid continue to abound.

Nutrition and Malnutrition

There are conflicting signals about the level of malnutrition in Darfur. Overall provision of food seems strong, as does provision of key non-food items (e.g., soap, mosquito nets, tent materials). But because of continuing violence, insecurity, and displacement, "the good harvests for those who could plant during the 2006 agricultural season have frequently been lost through theft and deliberate destruction, leaving [people] entirely dependent on external food aid."¹⁸ Nutrition for children under five, usually a sensitive barometer of overall food availability, shows disturbing signs:

Admissions for children under five years of age into Supplementary Feeding Centres (SFCs) across Darfur have almost doubled during the [current] reporting period [January through March 2007] compared to the previous three months [October through December 2006]. Similarly, admissions into Therapeutic Feeding Centres (TFCs) have almost doubled during the reporting period" (page 10).

Although these numbers correlate with the early beginning of the "hunger gap," they are cause for concern and do much to explain the consistent finding that "levels of malnutrition are consistently higher in children of 6-29 months compared to 30-59 months." Moreover, DHP 27 reports concern over "three localized nutrition surveys have been undertaken during the reporting period. Tearfund reported from Ed Daien [South Darfur] (February 2007) an alarming rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) of 21.9% and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) of 3.9%."¹⁹

Save the Children/US found a crude mortality rate (CMR) of 1.21 (deaths per day per 10,000 of affected population) during a survey in Foro Baranga (West Darfur). This is "above alert level," and indeed is approximately double UNICEF's estimate of the normal CMR for Darfur.

Individual Perspectives

For all the usefulness of data aggregated in the UN's "Darfur Humanitarian Profiles," much of the character of individual suffering is inevitably lost amidst the

report's necessarily global generalizations. Nor is the DHP data representative of more remote regions. As an important complement, the voices of returning humanitarian workers deserve particular attention. In a June 3, 2007 interview with the Yorkshire Post, Jonathan Henry, project director for Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Muhajeriya, South Darfur, spoke with blunt honesty in describing a situation he says "has worsened since he arrived in 2005":

"It is still a massive humanitarian disaster and the level of suffering has become dramatically worse. We were the only agency in Muhajeriya when I left because the other organisation had evacuated because of security." The town has come under heavy attack from government-backed forces. But as is so often the case in times of war, it is the innocent who suffer most. "When I left, 90 per cent of the patients in our 60-bed hospital were women and children under five," says Henry. []

"There's a lot of severe malnutrition, with children having lost nearly half their body weight because they can't access food, and they can't go and farm the land because it's too dangerous. We are seeing an increase in water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and respiratory infections. Malaria is endemic in Darfur, we saw outbreaks of meningitis and measles, and mortality rates are increasing."

The effects of uncontrolled violence are striking in Henry's account:

"We had staff abducted and seven were beaten despite them all wearing the MSF T-shirts." When Muhajeriya was attacked last October, its population was about 47,000, but this has dwindled to 13,000. It is a situation mirrored throughout Darfur where the number of indiscriminate attacks has escalated. "These so-called militia on camels with AK-47s and rocket-propelled grenades go into towns and torch them shooting men, women and children."

We learn a tremendous amount about Darfur's current realities from this individual perspective. Here it is also important to realize just how constrained aid workers are while in Darfur. A recent Reuters survey found:

Most aid agencies in Darfur cannot speak openly about the humanitarian situation in the violent west of Sudan for fear of jeopardising

their work or being thrown out, a Reuters AlertNet poll showed on Thursday [May 24, 2007]. *Four-fifths of those surveyed said they could not talk about who was behind attacks on civilians and aid workers in case they upset the government or suffered reprisals from militias and rebels. More than two-thirds would not discuss rape.* “Speaking about touchy issues might result in restrictions and an order to leave the country which we do not want to risk, considering many people depend upon our support,” one agency told [Reuters].

[T]wo-thirds of the 46 international agencies polled said they could not speak freely about the humanitarian situation.

This is well before the humanitarian expulsions of March 2009.

Almost all asked to remain anonymous to avoid repercussions. “All humanitarians are considered as spies against the government,” one aid worker said. “If we speak openly...we find that the government will then restrict our access to programme areas by delaying visas, travel permits etc,” another agency said. “They will also withdraw support, such as protection against bandits and searching for stolen vehicles and kidnapped drivers.”²⁰

Still, it is the direct physical threats to aid workers that most compromise humanitarian access and operations. Radhia Achouria, the UN spokeswoman who has been attacked viciously by Khartoum for speaking out on humanitarian issues in Darfur, reports that

“Incidents of road banditry and fighting between the warring factions continue to disrupt long-term planning,” [also noting that] in North Darfur state, a non-governmental organization (NGO) was forced to suspend its food distributions in the Dar Zaghawa area [North Darfur] as a result of aerial bombings by the Government and the high risk of carjackings.

“If the situation does not improve, the NGO’s suspension of activities could also affect the populations in Kutum Rural [northwest of el-Fasher], thus leaving 165,000 people without food assistance at the beginning of the hungry season,” she added.

Existence in the Camps

The ongoing human displacement that DHP 27 and other humanitarian accounts highlight becomes more consequential in light of Khartoum's determination not to build additional camps, despite the fact that current camp capacity, as UN spokeswoman Achouri observes, has often been exceeded. Another UN spokesman, George Somerwill, recently addressed the same issue, noting that "A very visible consequence of the continued displacement is the swelling population of...camps—many of which can no longer absorb any new arrivals," he added.²¹ The inevitable effect of denying people access to the camps will be to create spontaneous settlements with no humanitarian coordination, poor sanitation, no guaranteed food allocation, and little or no security.

At the same time, it is important to recognize that populations increasingly migrate to the camps because of food and aid incentives as well as a fear of *Janjaweed* attacks. Opheera McDoom of Reuters reports from el-Geneina, West Darfur that some aid workers "expressed concern that this was attracting people who were more economic migrant than refugee" (March 21, 2007).

There is also growing resignation and despair among the more than 2 million people for whom these camps have become their only homes. Some civilians have been in the camps for four years, and the camps themselves are taking on a more permanent quality. For example, bricks for housing are being made and purchased in ever-greater numbers. Yet permanence does not mean security, certainly not in the vast majority of camps, as Alfred de Montesquiou of the Associated Press recently reported from the huge Kalma camp, near Nyala (capital of South Darfur):

The seven women pooled money to rent a donkey and cart, then ventured out of the refugee camp to gather firewood, hoping to sell it for cash to feed their families. Instead, they say, in a wooded area just a few hours walk away, they were gang-raped, beaten and robbed. Naked and devastated, they fled back to Kalma. "All the time it lasted, I kept thinking: They're killing my baby, they're killing my baby," wailed Aisha, who was seven months pregnant at the time.

The women have no doubt who attacked them. They say the men's camels and their uniforms marked them as *Janjaweed*—the Arab militiamen accused of terrorizing the mostly black African villagers of Sudan's Darfur region. Their story, told to an Associated Press reporter and confirmed by other women and aid workers in the camp, provides a glimpse into the hell that Darfur has become as the Arab-dominated

government battles a rebellion stoked by a history of discrimination and neglect.

Kalma is a microcosm of the misery—a sprawling camp of mud huts and scrap-plastic tents where 100,000 people have taken refuge. It is so full of guns that overwhelmed African Union peacekeepers long ago fled, unable to protect it. It is so crowded that the government has tried to limit newcomers—prohibiting the building of new latrines, so a stench pervades the air.

Rape threatens any girl or woman leaving Kalma, despite the status of rape within many Islamic countries:

In Sudan, as in many Islamic countries, society views a sexual assault as a dishonor upon the woman's entire family. "Victims can face terrible ostracism," says Maha Muna, the UN coordinator on this issue in Sudan. Some aid workers believe the *Janjaweed* use rape to intimidate the rebels, and their supporters and families. "It's a strategy of war," Muna said in an interview earlier this year in Khartoum, the capital.

*Sudan's government is especially sensitive about such accusations and denies rape is widespread. Sudanese public opinion would view mass rape much more severely than other crimes alleged in Darfur, said a senior Sudanese government official, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation from his superiors.*²²

The realities that define life for women and girls, both in the camps and rural areas, have been well established by numerous human rights reports, and are especially conspicuous in Kalma camp:

UN workers say they registered 2,500 rapes in Darfur in 2006, but believe far more went unreported. The real figure is probably thousands a month, said a UN official. Like other UN personnel and aid workers interviewed, the official insisted on speaking anonymously for fear of being expelled by the government. []

In Kalma, collecting firewood needed to cook meals is becoming more perilous as the trees around the camp dwindle and women are forced to scavenge ever farther afield. It is strictly a woman's task, dictated both by tradition and the fear that any male escorts would be killed if the *Janjaweed* found them. []

Sheikas in Kalma said they report over a dozen rapes each week. Human rights activists in South Darfur who monitor violence in the refugee camps estimate *more than 100 women are raped each month in and around Kalma alone*. The workers warn of an alarming new trend of rapes within the refugee population amid the boredom and slow social decay of the camps. But for the most part, they added, it all depends on whether *Janjaweed* are present in the area.²³

It is hardly surprising that we are hearing numerous reports of political radicalization in the camps—particularly among young men—and of a growing influx of arms. Indeed, some believe that the camps will become the next front-line in the Darfur conflict, and that if there is a precipitous withdrawal by either aid workers or the AU, there will be wholesale massacres. This threat in turn leads to yet heavier reliance on weapons within the camps

Humanitarian Withdrawal or Suspension in Darfur

The withdrawal or evacuation of humanitarian personnel remains the ultimate threat to the conflict-affected populations in Darfur. Suspension or termination of critical aid efforts, particularly during the coming few months, will translate into cataclysmic human mortality and would leave no means of restoring the security needed to resume humanitarian operations.

For over a year, we have had warnings from humanitarian organizations and their spokespersons, and in January 2007 all fourteen operational UN organizations in Darfur signed an unprecedented open letter of concern, giving clear warning that insecurity had reached intolerable levels and that suspension of humanitarian operations was a distinct possibility. The following week, six influential nongovernmental aid organizations strongly echoed these warnings. Yet security continues to deteriorate, and the international community seems paralyzed even as it is clear that present levels of insecurity are intolerable. The effects of this paralysis are reported bluntly from the ground

One year on from a much-heralded peace deal for Darfur, aid agencies have been forced to roll back operations and are facing an unprecedented level of attacks on personnel, according to United Nations maps seen by *The Independent*. “We are on the brink,” said Oxfam’s Alun McDonald. “In terms of violent attacks on aid workers things are worse than they have ever been in Darfur. Access to the people in need is at the lowest point since 2004. It is becoming increasingly difficult to do

our job. We are still completely committed to staying but unless we see an improvement there is always the risk that the whole operation could collapse.”

The [UN’s humanitarian access maps](#) reveal the dramatic scale of the insecurity. The map dated 17 May 2006, just 12 days after the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement, shows just three areas where it was impossible for aid agencies to operate—Kulbus in northwestern Darfur, parts of the mountainous Jebel Marra region in central Darfur, and a small enclave around El Taweisha in the east.

By 13 March this year—the last time the UN produced a humanitarian access map—the amount of territory considered unsafe for aid workers had quadrupled. Swaths of north, south and west Darfur which were once seen as safe now have only limited humanitarian access. []

Delivering aid to Darfur’s displaced is becoming increasingly difficult as aid workers come under attack from rebels, Arab militias and bandits. “In the past they would stop your car and steal a satellite phone,” said one humanitarian official. “Now, they shoot to kill...The level of violence is unprecedented,” said Mr McDonald. “There are incidents every day. Aid agencies are being targeted, which wasn’t happening before the Darfur Peace Agreement. Staff are quite frequently assaulted or beaten.”²⁴

No humanitarian organization in the world would enter a situation as dangerous for relief workers as Darfur is currently. Organizations remain because they understand that their leaving would mean the withdrawal of international witnesses, thus eliminating the last vestige of protection afforded to millions of vulnerable civilians. A collapse of the AU force—a distinct possibility—or large-scale humanitarian withdrawal could signal the beginning of unprecedented human mortality, on a scale that could reach to many tens of thousands of deaths per month.

June 11, 2007: Human Security in Darfur, Part 2

Further reports of insecurity for humanitarian operations:

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has recently claimed that there is “credible and considerable progress” in Darfur. How does this square with the evidence coming from UN and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations? How well has Ban

represented the conditions on the ground? How well has he read reports and assessments from the UN itself?

[1] “‘The security [in Darfur] is worse today than it has ever been,’ [said UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan Manuel Aranda da Silva].”²⁵

[2] “UN humanitarian coordinator [for Sudan], Manuel Aranda da Silva, said that despite the May 2006 peace accord [the Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA)], the violence and threat to humanitarian workers continued unabated.”²⁶

[3] “‘The humanitarian situation in Darfur remains absolutely critical. At any time we could face a catastrophe if the security situation gets worse than it is already,’ Simon Crittle, the [UN World Food Program (WFP)] spokesman in Khartoum, told *World Politics Review*. ‘WFP would welcome any improvement in the situation that an international force could bring.’”²⁷

[4] “Car-jackings, abductions and ambushes are hindering aid workers involved the world’s biggest humanitarian relief effort in Sudan’s violent Darfur region, a UN report obtained by Reuters on Monday [June 18, 2007] said. A record 68 aid vehicles were ambushed in the first five months of 2007 and 23 of those attacks involved abductions, the UN security report said. ‘The trend is still going upwards,’ [the report] added. ‘Altogether 77 humanitarian workers have been abducted in that way.’” []

“The report said there was a high risk of being injured in the confrontations between car-jackers and security forces or in car chases or by being abandoned without communications gear, water or protection. With roads becoming more dangerous, humanitarian workers rely for help on aircraft operated by the World Food Programme (WFP), which has enough funding to keep flying until October.”²⁸

[5] “In other developments concerning Darfur, the [UN] spokesperson reported that a UN Mission in Sudan [UNMIS] Human Rights team this week visited Kutum, Kabkabiya, and Al Kuma in the troubled western region of Sudan. ‘In Kutum, the team documented increased attacks on civilians by Arab militia and continued gender-based violence incidents at Fataborno IDP camp,’ said [UNMIS spokeswoman Rahdia] Achouri, adding that UNMIS also documented an attack by *Janjaweed* on Mutu village on 8 June [2007] resulting in two deaths.”

“Incidents of car-jacking, particularly in West Darfur and South Darfur, and temporary detention of international non-governmental organization (NGO) staff, as well as forced entry into their compounds, continue to be reported, according to UNMIS.”

“In South Darfur, insecurity continues to cause the displacement of thousands of people, causing the population at camps housing them to swell. Ms. Achouri cited the example of Al Salam camp, which had a population of 13,300 in March [2007] and now houses 28,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), ‘with reports of 5,000 IDPs still on their way...Overall, insecurity, including attacks on humanitarian workers, continues to seriously affect humanitarian access, and has a significant impact on the quality of humanitarian interventions by reducing the number of visits, affecting continuity of programmes and presence of humanitarian personnel in outlying areas.’”²⁹

[6] “The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) said today that more people had been displaced in the western Sudanese region of Darfur due to the volatile security situation. Around 2,700 newly displaced have arrived to Al-Fasher, the capital of North Darfur from eastern Jebel Marra due to the increasing insecurity there during June.”

“In South Darfur, insecurity continues to cause the displacement of thousands of IDPs to Al Salam camp and to Um Dukhum. Al Salam camp, which had a population of 13,300 in March, now houses over 33,000 IDPs, with over 2,300 IDPs still to be verified. In Um Dukhum, West Darfur, where the nutrition level was reported to be critical.”³⁰

[7] “The security situation in the southern Darfur town of Gereida [South Darfur] has not improved and militia attacks against civilians, especially women, are continuing, the United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) said today after wrapping up a four-day visit to the town. [] Gereida is a key town [and site of the largest concentration of displaced persons in the world], about 90 kilometres south of the provincial capital, Nyala. The UNMIS team found that *Janjaweed* attacks outside towns were ongoing and women were still subject to rape and harassment.”³¹

[8] “The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) reports that attacks are continuing on humanitarian convoys operated by international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country’s strife-torn Darfur region. On Tuesday [June 19, 2007], an unknown armed man shot at a vehicle in South Darfur hired by an international NGO, while

in West Darfur, two men stopped an international NGO convoy made up of two vehicles with five staff members, and robbed them of personal effects and communication equipment. Also in West Darfur, an international NGO vehicle with four staff members was carjacked on Tuesday.”³²

Reports from nongovernmental humanitarian organizations are, if anything, grimmer:

[9] “Aid workers in Sudan’s Darfur region are coming under increasingly frequent and savage attack, with June [2007] among the worst months recorded, according to a confidential security report compiled by an international charity. Thirty serious incidents took place in the last month alone—up from an average of 10 per month one year ago—as armed bandits and militia groups launched daily violent attacks.”

“The report, by a charity working in Darfur, which cannot be identified for safety reasons, reveals that 28 people working for international aid agencies were abducted, while more than 35 vehicles were either hijacked, shot at or stolen. Two people were shot dead and five were injured during attacks. In one of the most daring incidents, a convoy of 37 UN vehicles was ambushed near Kebkabiya in North Darfur. Two of the vehicles were hit by bullets and one of the drivers was injured. Three days later, 15 armed men forced their way into an aid agency compound, assaulting a guard and stealing a vehicle. Dawn Blalock, spokeswoman in Sudan for the UN’s humanitarian co-ordination body, OCHA, said: ‘Security has always been an issue but what has changed in the last year is that humanitarians are now direct targets. It is now a daily occurrence.’”

“A spokesman for Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF), which has more than 2,000 staff on the ground in Darfur, said security problems were preventing them from providing the standard of medical aid that is required. ‘It is very difficult for aid workers to move outside the camps, which means it is hard to do exploratory missions to areas where we think there is a need. The situation is very bad and is not getting better,’ he said.”³³

[10] Danish Church Aid (DanChurchAid/Denmark) declares bluntly in a July 4, 2007 dispatch: “DanChurchAid continues to work in Darfur despite the worsening security situation. 72,000 people are being

provided with access to clean water, latrines, and skills in good hygiene practices. The situation in Sudan's Western Darfur province is worsening by the day."

[11] "[Oxfam spokesman Alun Macdonald declared from Khartoum that Darfur] *'is certainly the most dangerous it has been...Every place we work has had a security incident in the last three months. If it was to get much worse, we would certainly have to consider if we can stay at all.'*"³⁴

[12] "British aid agency Oxfam said on Saturday [June 16, 2007] it was withdrawing permanently from Gereida in Sudan's Darfur region, home to the largest population of Darfuris driven from their homes over four years of conflict. *In a coordinated attack on three aid agency bases in Gereida in December [2006], an aid worker was raped, an Oxfam staff member badly beaten and others subjected to mock executions.'*"

"Despite our repeated requests, none of the perpetrators [from the Minni Minawi rebel faction] have been held to account, none of the assets stolen in the attack have been returned, and we have not received credible assurances that similar attacks would not take place if we did return,' said Caroline Nursey, Oxfam's Sudan programme manager."³⁵

[13] "Increasing violence in the western Sudanese region of Darfur has cut aid workers' access to affected civilians to its lowest level since the early days of conflict, the British charity Oxfam said. As a result, large parts of rural Darfur were now completely inaccessible for aid agencies. Humanitarian workers and operations, it added, were increasingly being targeted."

"The worsening insecurity had forced many humanitarian agencies to use helicopters. However, these tended to be limited to the larger towns and camps. 'In villages and rural areas we are often simply unable to get there,' Oxfam said. Even inside the camps, it was becoming more insecure. 'Armed men have entered the camps to harass civilians and aid workers, steal vehicles and loot equipment—all in broad daylight and without fear of getting caught,' the charity noted."

"According to the statement, attacks on civilians had forced more than 80,000 out of their homes in the first two months of 2007. 'Many of these people have had to flee for the second, third or even fourth time as they desperately seek refuge and protection,' it said. 'Many of the vast camps are already operating at capacity—some are the size of cities and shelter around 100,000 people.'" []

“The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) said another 300 displaced families had arrived in Um Dhukum [West Darfur] last week. ‘A very visible consequence of the continued pace of displacement is the swelling population of IDP [internally displaced persons] camps—many of which can no longer absorb new arrivals,’ UNMIS spokesman George Somerwill told reporters in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum.”³⁶

[14] [From an extensive interview published by the *Yorkshire Post* (UK) of June 3, 2007. Jonathan Henry, project director for Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Muhajeriya, South Darfur, spoke with blunt honesty in describing a situation he says “has worsened since he arrived in 2005”:

“*There’s a lot of severe malnutrition, with children having lost nearly half their body weight because they can’t access food, and they can’t go and farm the land because it’s too dangerous. We are seeing an increase in water-borne diseases like diarrhoea and respiratory infections. Malaria is endemic in Darfur, we saw outbreaks of meningitis and measles, and mortality rates are increasing.*”

“Henry warns the situation is becoming increasingly chaotic with many refugees flooding into already over-populated areas. Many of the camps, some spread over a 15-mile radius, consist of nothing more than a sea of makeshift tents, with no protection from the elements or local militia. ‘Many of these refugees are dispersed among bushes in the middle of the desert. They drink muddy water from pools full of bacteria that carry water-borne diseases. They have no food because they’ve had to abandon their land, they have no shelter in 50 degree heat and no health care.’”

“‘I think we’re going to be there for a while to come. But unless the agencies get improved access, it’s going to be very difficult to keep delivering this medical response. *There is massive fear and massive insecurity in the everyday lives of these people,*’ says Henry.”

Such accounts as we have are all the more important because of Khartoum’s efforts to silence these voices:

“*Most aid agencies in Darfur cannot speak openly about the humanitarian situation in the violent west of Sudan for fear of jeopardising their work or being thrown out, a Reuters AlertNet poll showed on Thursday [May 24, 2007]. Four-fifths of those surveyed said they could*

not talk about who was behind attacks on civilians and aid workers in case they upset the government or suffered reprisals from militias and rebels. More than two-thirds would not discuss rape. ‘Speaking about touchy issues might result in restrictions and an order to leave the country which we do not want to risk, considering many people depend upon our support,’ one agency told [Reuters].” (May 24, 2007)

How can Secretary-General Ban possibly discern in these numerous reports “credible and considerable progress in helping resolve this Darfur situation”? In failing to speak honestly of the terrible human suffering and destruction that are ongoing—in failing to heed the desperate pleas and anguished reports of humanitarian organizations—Ban is not facilitating diplomacy but betraying the profoundly courageous and compassionate humanitarians who have committed and risked so much.

Moreover, to elide the realities of eastern Chad from your responses to Darfur is culpable in equally dismaying ways. Certainly these realities are well reported, if not as fully as we might wish.

The UN’s Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 27 (representing the situation as of April 1, 2007) found 4.2 million conflict-affected persons and ominous developments. Because of continuing violence, insecurity, and displacement, “the good harvests for those who could plant during the 2006 agricultural season have frequently been lost through theft and deliberate destruction, leaving [people] entirely dependent on external food aid.”³⁷ Nutrition for children under five, a highly sensitive barometer of overall food availability, shows disturbing signs:

Admissions for children under five years of age into Supplementary Feeding Centres (SFCs) across Darfur have almost doubled during the [current] reporting period [January through March 2007] compared to the previous three months [October through December 2006]. Similarly, admissions into Therapeutic Feeding Centres (TFCs) have almost doubled during the reporting period. (page 10)

Although these numbers correlate with the early beginning of the “hunger gap,” they are cause for concern and do much to explain the consistent finding that “levels of malnutrition are consistently higher in children of 6–29 months compared to 30–59 months.” Moreover, DHP 27 reports concern over “three localized nutrition surveys have been undertaken during the reporting period. Tearfund reported from Ed Daien [South Darfur] (February 2007) an alarming rate of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) of 21.9% and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) of 3.9%” (page 11).

The thoroughly untenable assessment of conditions in Darfur by Secretary-General Ban (there is “credible and considerable progress in Darfur”) has echoed and re-echoed in various comments by UN officials and the leaders of the UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), which deployed in late 2007 and took up its protection mandate on January 1, 2008. Although there has been much self-congratulatory talk about diminished violence, improved access, and humanitarian successes, realities in Darfur have consistently belied these misrepresentations. More than 1 million people have been newly displaced since UNAMID took up its mandate, dwarfing the number of returnees claimed by UNHCR and UNAMID. Access—for both UNAMID investigators and patrols as well as relief workers—has never been as limited as at present; violence has dramatically increased in 2012, explosively in August.

UN and UNAMID mendacity and expedient self-celebration are major obstacles to any meaningful peace agreement for Darfur.

October 19, 2007: Darfur Adrift—A Skeptical Assessment of UN Security Council Resolution 1769

Passage of UN Security Council Resolution 1769 gives little evidence of changing a deteriorating security situation on the ground in Darfur. Some have argued that there is nothing more the international community can do. The argument is typically accompanied by suggestions that violence has diminished significantly in Darfur, and that whatever mass atrocities occurred in 2004-05 are now part of an ugly past.

Properly, the question is what the international community *wishes* to do. Certainly the implications of deploying only the forces authorized by Resolution 1769 become clearer by the day. Human rights reporting as well as that of humanitarian organizations has made clear that large-scale, ethnically-targeted human destruction continues apace, and that Khartoum has merely diversified its methods of killing. Human Rights Watch has reported recently that:

The government [of Sudan] continues to stoke the chaos [in Darfur] and, in some areas, exploit intercommunal tensions that escalate into open hostilities, apparently in an effort to “divide and rule” and maintain military and political dominance over the region.³⁸

An example of what Human Rights Watch is the attack on Muhajeriya reported on October 16, 2007 by the *New York Times* (Nairobi, with assistance from journalist in Darfur):

[W]itnesses described government [of Sudan] troops and their allied militias killing more than 30 civilians, slitting the throats of several men praying at a mosque and shooting a 5-year-old boy in the back as he tried to run away. According to several residents of Muhajeriya, a small town in southern Darfur, two columns of uniformed government troops, along with dozens of militiamen not in uniform, surrounded the town around noon on October 8 [2007] and stormed the market. Muhajeriya was a stronghold of one of Darfur's many rebel factions, but witnesses said there were few rebels there at the time and that government forces turned their guns—and knives—on civilians.

Ayoub Jalal, a mechanic, said his father was praying at a mosque when soldiers burst in. "They dragged my father and the others out of the mosque and slashed their throats," said Mr. Jalal, who was interviewed by telephone. []

"The youngest child, a 5-year-old boy, I knew well," said Sultan Marko Niaw, a tribal elder, who also spoke by phone. He said the boy's name was Guran Avium: "A soldier had shot him in the back."

The viciousness of the attack, as described by the witnesses and corroborated by humanitarian organizations working in the area, seemed reminiscent of the early days of the conflict in Darfur, when government troops and allied militias slaughtered thousands of civilians, according to human rights groups.

Thousands of people have fled Muhajeriya and are now camped around a small African Union peacekeeping base for protection. Humanitarian officials fear they could be attacked again. "We are deeply concerned for their safety," said James Smith, chief executive of the Aegis Trust, a British anti-genocide group working in the region. He said that villagers in Muhajeriya "confirmed to us that government and *Janjaweed* forces deliberately attacked unarmed civilians," referring to the Arab militias that are aligned with the government.

Solidarités, a French aid organization that distributes food in the area, said three Sudanese aid workers were killed in the attack. In a report, it also said that "many people are wounded and need medical assistance. Many houses and shops have been looted. Many families lost everything." In separate interviews, several residents said they watched soldiers cart away their property in government trucks.

The United Nations sent an assessment team to Muhajeriya last week to take photographs of the destruction and interview villagers about the attack. “All the IDPs,” internally displaced persons, “believe it was a joint government-militia operation,” said Radhia Achouri, a United Nations spokesperson.”³⁹

Additional reporting comes from Agence France-Presse ([Khartoum] October 11, 2007):

[The UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) said that “residents [of Muhajeriya] reportedly fled to neighboring villages and the surrounding areas, leaving the town, which had a population estimated at 20,000 inhabitants, completely deserted.” []

In New York, the medical humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières [Doctors Without Borders] said it had evacuated a team of 16 aid workers from Muhajeriya. [] MSF said it runs the only hospital in the town, and that the “evacuation of its team means people are urgently in need of medical care.” It said that, prior to the attack, 43 people were in-patients, including pregnant women about to deliver, 15 children with severe pneumonia and an unspecified number of malnourished children at a feeding centre. It added that another some 39 wounded people on the outskirts of Muhajeriya were seeking refuge.

The UN’s office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has estimated that approximately 45,000 internally displaced people were being assisted in and around Muhajeriya; they, too, are now without protection or humanitarian services. Amnesty International and the African Union have both reported on Khartoum’s use of aerial military assets in the attack on Muhajeriya:

Amnesty International said the attack [on Muhajeriya] was supported by an Antonov, which had been painted in white UN colours. Since 2005, Sudan has been prohibited from offensive flights over Darfur and has been criticised for painting aircraft white, [Amnesty] said. (UN IRIN [Nairobi] October 10, 2007)

Sudanese government planes bombed the town of Muhajeriya in Darfur on Monday [October 8, 2007], according to the commander of the 7,000-strong African Union force. General Martin Luther Agwai told the BBC in the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, that at least 24 people were injured in the attack on Muhajeriya. “The town was bombed,” he said, “and only the Sudanese government forces have aircraft.” (BBC, October 9, 2007)

Nor was Khartoum's brutally destructive attack on Muhajeriya the only savagery of its kind. Haskanita in North Darfur was completely burned to the ground by the regime and its *Janjaweed* militia. Haskanita is the town close to the AU outpost attacked and overrun by rebel elements in late September; Khartoum chose to make this completely unjustified rebel attack the pretext for the mass killing of civilians and for burning to the ground all buildings in Haskanita itself—after the town came fully under Khartoum's military control in the wake of the rebel attack on the AU:

A joint UN/AU inspection team, which visited Haskanita on Saturday [October 7, 2007], said: "The town, which is under the control of the government [of Sudan], was completely burned down, except for a few buildings." It added Haskanita's market had been looted and most of the town's civilian population had fled. Just a handful of townspeople had returned to scavenge for food and water.

Suleiman Jamous of the Darfur rebel Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) Unity faction, told Reuters a large number of people had been killed in the town. Rebels leaders said on Friday at least 100 people had been killed. Jamous, who blamed the government for the destruction of the settlement, added: "All the villages near Haskanita have evacuated either to the bush or nearby towns. They evacuated their villages after they heard what happened to Haskanita."⁴⁰

Events such as these cannot be elided from the chronology of Darfur simply because they do not comport with the chronology of those who have opposed humanitarian intervention in Darfur.

Looking forward

Security in Darfur will be inadequate no matter what force deploys, given the lack of urgency and moral commitment defining current international responses. But surely the international community could have done better in protecting civilians and humanitarians than deploying a "hybrid" UN/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID). In thinking about the inadequacies of the force, we should recall the explicit warnings from humanitarians over the past 15 months and more. In his August 2006 briefing of the UN Security Council, former UN humanitarian chief Jan Egeland declared:

Our entire humanitarian operation in Darfur—the only lifeline for more than three million people—is presently at risk. We need immediate action on the political front to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe with massive loss of life. *If the humanitarian operation were to collapse, we could see hundreds of thousands of deaths. In short, we may end up with a man-made catastrophe of an unprecedented scale in Darfur.*

The effect of violence on humanitarian efforts has become all too clear. In an October 17, 2007 press release, the UN World Food Program reported that three of its drivers were shot to death in South Darfur. In late September 2007, the relief agency World Vision scaled back its operations in South Darfur after its staff suffered three attacks within a week, putting all non-essential staff on leave, with only approximately 85 of its staff of 325 (international and national) remaining; the organization feeds 500,000 people and runs clinics and nutrition centers. Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières, the only medical relief organization in Muhajeriya, has withdrawn. So has Solidarités, which provided water, sanitation, and food to the town's residents; a Solidarités worker was killed in Khartoum's assault of last week. On October 10, 2007 ACT-Caritas announced that it has relocated a number of international staff from South Darfur to Khartoum.

A Sudan program director for an international aid organization active in Darfur reports very recently that, “more than one major humanitarian international non-governmental organization in Darfur has faced losses of key staff because of Khartoum's [punitive bureaucratic] actions.”⁴¹ Authoritative security analyses by humanitarian organizations point to increasingly brutal forms of torture directed against aid workers, and emphasize that there is a high likelihood of attacks against any organization, including destruction of assets and serious injury to international and especially national staff. The Sudan country director for the humanitarian organization CARE International was expelled by Khartoum for communicating internally precisely such a security assessment. A spokesman for Oxfam International declared that, “the fighting between the [rebel] factions ‘are having a negative effect on aid workers’ morale and confidence; staffs are very frustrated. They are very demoralized. [] They're not able to do the work they came to do because of security problems.”⁴²

Is the Demand for Protection a “Delusion”?

If insecurity is such a conspicuous problem, what is the nature of objections to the deployment of even a compromised force such as the UN/AU “hybrid”? Here we should recall the urgent plea of humanitarian organizations last January, urgently

seeking “solid guarantees for the safety of civilians and humanitarian workers.” Although these organizations are unable for political reasons to be fully explicit, there can be no doubt that that theirs was a desperate request for precisely the sort of force that has been ridiculed by Alex de Waal as a “salvation delusion.”⁴³

In his account de Waal speaks misleadingly of Western “troops fighting their way into Darfur.” This account is a red herring and has—and had—nothing to do with the options that were seriously entertained by the only nations militarily capable of mounting non-consensual intervention. It was certainly not what humanitarian organizations, desperate for improved security, were calling for given their mandates and terms of operation.

To be sure, some argued that moral, legal, and institutional obligations to prevent genocide and other atrocity crimes obliged non-consensual deployment. This “responsibility to protect” was unanimously accepted by the UN World Summit of September 2005 and was framed to supersede claims of national sovereignty in the event of genocide, “ethnic cleansing,” and crimes against humanity. A joint letter of September 13, 2006, from “eighteen international human rights, humanitarian, and conflict-prevention organizations,”

condemn[ed] the recent violence launched by the Government of Sudan in North Darfur and call[ed] for stepped up diplomatic pressure and for the rapid deployment of a robust UN peacekeeping force.

The letter also called on the international community

to significantly intensify diplomatic efforts with the Government of Sudan while concurrently planning for the rapid deployment of an adequately funded and well-equipped UN force to protect the people of Darfur regardless of the acquiescence of the Sudanese Government.

Signatories included Amnesty International/USA, Physicians for Human Rights, Refugees International, Aegis Trust (UK), Africa Action, Sudanese Organization Against Torture (SOAT), Human Rights First, Urgence Darfour (France), Genocide Watch, and the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, among others.⁴⁴

What remains at stake is moral clarity about what the situation in Darfur demands of an international community committed to the notion of a “responsibility to protect.” Certainly there was no doubt about what had occurred. As Mukesh Kapila, former UN humanitarian coordinator for Sudan, declared in March 2004 that “there were no secrets [in Darfur],” the comparison that came to mind was inevitable:

The only difference between Rwanda and Darfur now is the numbers involved. [The slaughter in Darfur] is more than just a conflict, it is an organised attempt to do away with a group of people. [] I was present in Rwanda at the time of the genocide, and I've seen many other situations around the world and I am totally shocked at what is going on in Darfur.⁴⁵

Despite claims by Khartoum in early February 2004 to have brought the situation in Darfur under “total military control,” Kapila insisted that

[t]he pattern of organised attacks on civilians and villages, abductions, killings and organised rapes by militias is getting worse by the day and could deteriorate even further. One can see how the situation might develop without prompt [action]...all the warning signs are there.

Of course there has been no “prompt action,” and Kapila’s ominous premonition about what “might develop” has come fully to pass.

It has not been for lack of knowledge that the international community has failed to act. The failure to act—then and now—derives from a refusal to expend Western lives, or more than a very modest amount of Western resources, in halting massive, violent, unambiguously ethnically-targeted human destruction. To say otherwise now is to engage in self-exculpatory history writing: the world failed Darfur in 2004, and has subsequently failed in a wide range of ways, just as it failed Rwanda in 1993-94.

By deliberately misrepresenting the ambitions of those arguing for intervention, even for non-consensual intervention, de Waal and others have obscured the moral and political issues at stake in Darfur and convinced international actors with the power to intervene that they are right to remain inert, except for strenuous exercises in unctuous hand-wringing. Surveying the environment into which the force finally, belatedly authorized by UN Security Council Resolution 1769 must deploy, it is indeed difficult not to see the myriad difficulties and obstacles to civilian and humanitarian protection.

In the end, the delayed international commitment to deploy the force originally authorized by Resolution 1706 (August 2006) has only given such arguments as de Waal’s the features of a self-fulfilling prophecy. The disastrous Darfur Peace Agreement (May 2006), far from bringing peace or security to Darfur, only ensured that violence would escalate and that the fragmentation of the rebel movement would dramatically accelerate. Indeed, the perverse irony of accommodation is that those such as de Waal and others in the international community who have acquiesced in

Khartoum's cynical insistence on the badly flawed DPA are the ones engaging in the real "salvation delusion." The chaotic violence that we see today, which accelerated most dramatically in the immediate wake of the DPA, is the legacy of their expediency and their credulity in accepting Khartoum's commitment to any set of security arrangements.

April 5, 2008: Humanitarian and civilian insecurity grows

This analysis brings together the most substantial data and reports about the nature and scale of the current humanitarian crisis in Darfur. It also puts this information within the context of the immensely threatening environment facing aid workers throughout the region.⁴⁶ It must be emphasized that there is a highly significant gap in the humanitarian data available concerning the scale of malnutrition in Darfur. Critical data for Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and other malnutrition indicators (e.g., Mid-upper Arm Circumference [MUAC]) are simply not available, even on a confidential basis. Although some individual humanitarian workers and organizations provide anecdotal information on a highly confidential basis, their reporting is constrained by the efforts of Khartoum's "Humanitarian Aid Commission" (HAC) to prohibit the gathering and dissemination of data bearing on malnutrition. This consequential decision, made by a bureaucratic extension of the very regime that has engineered the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, deserves greater attention.

As Darfur's 4.3 million conflict-affected people head into the rainy season/hunger gap, we have almost no statistical understanding of their nutritional status. We do know that the UN's World Food Program (WFP) falls further behind every day in meeting the necessary benchmarks in transporting and pre-positioning food in anticipation of the rainy season. According to the WFP, the current shortfall in food actually in transit to Darfur is approximately 50 percent.

Military Context

Certainly Khartoum's larger determination to resolve its "Darfur problem" by means of violence remains unchanged. The most substantial evidence of its determination is the regime's brutal campaign against civilians north of el-Geneina (capital of West Darfur) in January and February 2008. A March 2008 report on this campaign comes from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and details many specific findings:

[An] investigation [was] conducted by UNAMID Human Rights into the January and *February [2008] attacks on the villages of Saraf Jidad, Sirba, Silea and Abu Suruj in West Darfur. The attacks were carried out in the context of a major military campaign which the Sudanese government launched in January 2008 in an attempt to regain control of the northern corridor of West Darfur and drive out the Justice and Equality Movement*, a non-signatory insurgent group, from the area. The investigation revealed that violations of international humanitarian and human rights law against the civilian populations of Saraf Jidad, Sirba, Silea and Abu Suruj, were perpetrated by armed militias and Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) during those attacks. []

Military attacks in Sirba, Silea and Abu Suruj (8 February), involved aerial bombardments by helicopter gunships and fixed-wing aircraft, accompanied by ground offensives by militia and SAF. Consistent information gathered by UNAMID Human Rights Officers indicated that these actions violated the principle of distinction stated in international humanitarian law, failing to distinguish between civilian objects and military objectives. Moreover, *the scale of destruction of civilian property, including objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, suggests that the damage was a deliberate and integral part of a military strategy.* Information on extensive pillaging during and after the attacks was also gathered. In addition, consistent and credible accounts of rape committed by armed uniformed men during and after the attack in Sirba were collected.⁴⁷

Perhaps the most important statement in the document is the conclusion that:

the scale of destruction of civilian property, including objects indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, suggests that the damage was a deliberate and integral part of a military strategy.

The intent of such attacks on civilians—and they have also been reported by a wide range of human rights organizations and on-the-ground observers—obliges us to consider the specific language of the 1948 UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide:

[Among the acts of genocide recognized by this Convention:] deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part.

In assessing the nature of the attacks we should also keep in mind that the UN human rights report finds that:

[c]ivilian homes, nongovernmental humanitarian organizations' clinics and offices, community centers, water structures, schools, food storages, milling machines and shops were systematically pillaged, vandalized and/or set ablaze.

Khartoum's Attitudes Toward Humanitarian Workers and Operations

For reasons of security, neither UN nor nongovernmental organizations will speak openly about the conditions facing aid workers. There is some criticism leveled against Khartoum's relentless obstruction, harassment, and intimidation of humanitarian workers and operations, but it is the rare assessment that does not evince fear of Khartoum's willingness to single out organizations and individuals for harsh treatments including incarceration and expulsion.

The severity of Khartoum's response is evident in the arrest of two senior officials of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Doctors Without Border/Médecins Sans Frontières in May 2005 after the organization published a report about the pervasive phenomenon of rape in Darfur. For emphasis, the regime's security forces also arrested the translator for Kofi Annan after the then-UN Secretary-General's interviews with rape victims in Darfur.

Another incident, in which security forces responded to a gathering of UN, nongovernmental, and African Union forces in Nyala, reveals Khartoum's willingness to deal harshly with humanitarian organizations:

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

A UN official in Darfur said: "If the people responsible for beating and molesting the aid workers and UN staff are not punished, others will think they can get away with such crimes and it will happen again. Should the security situation for international aid workers not improve

and the overall safety of our staff be assured, we will be forced to withdraw from Darfur.”⁴⁸

Such actions are consistent with Khartoum’s assessment of the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, a crisis relentlessly denied by the regime:

Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on Saturday painted a rosy picture of the humanitarian situation in Darfur saying that Darfur displaced have started voluntarily to regain their villages. Addressing the opening session of Arab summit in the Syrian capital al-Bashir said more than 350,000 Internally Displaced Persons have returned to their villages. He pointed out that the Sudanese government is now working to enforce the reconstruction programme and the return of displaced persons. He further said that the government has enlarged the circle of basic services and development projects in stable areas that include most of Darfur region.⁴⁹

At the same time, Khartoum’s hostility to the efforts and motives of humanitarian aid workers has been unrelenting, something that has been true from the very beginning of operations. In their April 1, 2008 editions, both *Al-Rai Al-'Aam* and *Al-Sudani* (prominent Khartoum-based newspapers) report that Saleh Abdalla “Gosh,”

head of Sudan’s national security apparatus, has accused foreign elements and aid NGOs of interfering in Sudan’s state security. He said that diplomats are using agents to try to collect information on the country’s internal situation, and are also trying to affect its legislative processes. He added that foreign aid organizations in Darfur are faking evidence of mass graves and fabricating Darfur residents’ stories of rape.⁵⁰

Even more ominously, *Al-Sudani* reports on Mach 26, 2008:

The Sudanese government has decided to launch an investigation against the American humanitarian organization International Rescue Committee, operating in Darfur. *A government source said that an organization official had acknowledged the organization’s ties to an international Jewish organization, to which it conveys information on the situation in Darfur, and also ties to armed organizations in several Darfur refugee camps.*⁵¹

Such mendacity poses a potentially deadly warning to the International Rescue Committee, one of the largest and most distinguished humanitarian organizations operating in Darfur and Eastern Chad. Indeed, a humanitarian source in Darfur reports that there has been a sharp uptick in Khartoum's threatening requests for the identity of those contributing to individual humanitarian organizations. Such intimidation has a longer history and is often accompanied by intense hostility:

In October [2004], Sudanese President Omar el-Beshir launched an attack on aid agencies in the region, calling them enemies. "*Organizations operating in Darfur are the real enemies,*" the president [said]. And earlier in May [2004], Sudanese Interior Minister Abdul Rahim Hussein accused a number of aid organizations of supporting ethnic minority rebels in the region, [claiming] that they "used humanitarian operations as a cover for carrying out a hidden agenda and proved to have supported the rebellion in the past period."⁵²

Reports from humanitarian workers on the ground, as well as various senior UN officials, continue to bear out the seriousness of threats to personnel and operations. The following confidential observations all come from the ground in Darfur within the last month (lightly edited for clarity):

[1] "[Khartoum's] Humanitarian Aid Commission [HAC] and national security are becoming worse and worse in their harassment and intimidation."

[2] "Humanitarian nongovernmental organizations live in constant threat of arrest or attack without repercussions. The humanitarian community is extremely beaten. People are tired and fed up, being drowned every day by all the authorities shouting at you, threatening you, obstructing you, accusing you."

[3] "Even with the right [travel] documents, people cannot get access to areas in need [of assistance], either by road or air, because of HAC and national security."

[4] "Humanitarian morale is low because of the constant failure of the UN to support them. The Joint Communiqué [supposedly enabling nongovernmental humanitarian organizations to work without impediment] is a joke; and a number of UN staff are simply not pushing hard enough for humanitarian work to be possible."

[5] "*There is a humanitarian culture of appeasement at all costs. Aid organizations wish to stay at what seem all costs, so the level of staff*

harassment accepted, and the security compromises made, are in excess of what might be found in other humanitarian aid contexts.”

Data collected in a report by the Headington Institute bear out much of what is suggested in these observations from the ground (“NGO Staff Wellbeing in the Darfur Region of Sudan Eastern Chad: Assessment Report for Interaction,” November 2007):

According to UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, attacks against aid workers increased by 150 percent between June 2006 and June 2007. Between January and October 2007, violence against aid workers in the Darfur region resulted in at least—

- 98 humanitarian vehicles being hijacked or attempted to be hijacked;
- 61 humanitarian convoys attacked, ambushed and/or looted;
- 15 humanitarian personnel injured;
- 50 humanitarian personnel arrested and/or detained;
- 118 humanitarian personnel kidnapped;
- 66 humanitarian personnel physically and/or sexually assaulted; and
- 12 humanitarian personnel killed.

No humanitarian organization in the world would deploy into a crisis region that had so much violence directed against relief workers. And while some organizations have withdrawn, those that remain do so only because they constitute a critical reporting presence, the absence of which would render Darfur invisible—increasingly, Khartoum’s goal. UNAMID as presently constituted is unlikely to change this.

Broader Security Issues

The nearly complete deterioration of security on the ground has compelled humanitarians to fly rather than drive to most areas in need of assistance. Not only is this extremely expensive compared with ground transport, but it is not nearly as effective. Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 30 [DHP 30] reports that

[t]hrough an increased use of air transport and locally recruited volunteers and community workers, humanitarians have been able to maintain access to the conflict-affected populations, but the quality of the operations has suffered significantly.

Here it is appropriate to bear in mind that nongovernmental humanitarian organizations, the implementing partners for the major UN organizations, report that they only have access to about 40 percent of the conflict-affected population. One major humanitarian organization puts the figure significantly below 40 percent for its own operations. This limited access results from Khartoum's complete blockade on humanitarian assistance before and during the brutal assault on the civilian corridor north of el-Geneina in West Darfur.⁵³

As noted above, according to the UN World Food Program (WFP), 83,000 metric tons of food should be pre-positioned in anticipation of the rains. Current stocks, however, are 60,000 metric tons. Similarly, to maintain food levels, 40,000 metric tons of food should be in transit at any given moment, but currently only about 20,000 metric tons are in transit to Darfur. Untenable security conditions along major and secondary road corridors have sharply reduced the ability to transport food. In a March 25, 2008 press release, WFP reported:

The incident in Darfur [in which yet another WFP driver was killed] brings to 56 the number of trucks involved in hijackings this year; 36 trucks remain missing and 24 drivers are unaccounted for. A further six WFP passenger vehicles have been stolen in Darfur this year. In October 2007, three WFP-contracted drivers were killed while transporting food to Darfur.

These numbers have grown significantly in the two weeks since this press release, and there is a grave threat that many more drivers will refuse to take on the dangerous task of transporting food.

Humanitarian organizations are already offering blunt assessments of the implications for food availability and nutrition. One large organization recently asked for UNAMID/civilian police assistance during a food distribution because the host community had threatened to prevent displaced persons from receiving food, since the host community was not also receiving food. The humanitarian coordinator reflected, "I think this sort of tension will become routine as food rations decrease."⁵⁴ Another humanitarian worker in a different part of Darfur speaks of "many locations where tensions between populations are fraught as a result of competition for services and access to water."⁵⁵

Certainly the number of people in need of food assistance will soon skyrocket, according to WFP Darfur Coordinator Corinne Fleisher:

"At the moment we're feeding 2 million people in Darfur," [Fleisher] said. "This will go up during the hunger season up to 3.2–3.3 million

and because during hunger season we also feed a bigger number of people in the villages.”

In fact, there is growing skepticism within the aid community about whether the UN’s WFP can move adequate amounts of food, especially to West Darfur and more remote locations in North and South Darfur, or if the organization can find adequate funding. Some believe that WFP’s March 2008 request for \$500 million will not come close to being reached, especially factoring in the enormous costs of air transport. Despite a one-month reprieve that came from a \$500,000 contribution by Hollywood celebrities, nongovernmental organizations are faced with what they see as a grim future:

14 international aid agencies today [March 28, 2008] warned that vital assistance to millions of people across Sudan will soon be put in jeopardy unless there is renewed commitment to provide long-term funding for humanitarian flights in the country...In Darfur alone, the 14 agencies together assist over 2 million people in areas currently only reachable by air.

The World Food Programme, which runs the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service [UNHAS], recently warned the flights could close within weeks due to a lack of funds. Donors have now pledged enough to maintain the service during April—but nothing further is yet confirmed and its future is still uncertain. The agencies called on the international community to follow up and provide further funding as soon as possible. []

The UNHAS flights are the only safe way for aid workers to reach many areas—particularly those outside the major towns, in areas where the humanitarian needs are often greatest. When fighting in West Darfur last month forced tens of thousands of people to flee their homes empty-handed, the UNHAS flights were the only way most aid agencies could reach the area.

Oxfam said over half of the 400,000 people it assists across Darfur can only be accessed by air because the roads are too unsafe. CARE warned that delivery of food and other vital assistance to 300,000 people in South and West Darfur is reliant on air transport. “There is no doubt that if these flights were forced to end or scale down, given the ongoing violence we could not continue to operate much of our work in Darfur,” warned Oxfam.⁵⁶

Oxfam is one of the humanitarian organizations most responsible for water and sanitation, both in Darfur and eastern Chad, and it is important to remember that malnutrition and a lack of potable water cause the diseases that will be the major sources of mortality in coming months. As insecurity prevents the delivery of adequate food, clean water resources, and increasingly, primary medical care, the people of Darfur will be at acute risk for diseases that become more prevalent in the rainy season, including cholera, dysentery, and malaria.

Conditions in the Camps for Displaced Persons

There are many factors bearing on the lives of those internally displaced persons living in the camps, including a dramatic upsurge in camp violence, a proliferation of weapons, loss of authority among traditional leaders, and the infiltration of camps by military personnel, including *Janjaweed* and rebel elements. Newly displaced persons often find that there is no capacity in camps they seek out. Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) reports from the Zalingei area of West Darfur:

Families fleeing into the camps to find safety and get access to assistance [] no longer receive anything from the humanitarian organizations, and for several months, it is the displaced population themselves who have been sharing their food and shelter with [the newly arriving families].⁵⁷

Due to disastrous harvests this past fall in both North and South Darfur, which together represent three-quarters of Darfur's population, civilians are moving into camps more frequently in their search for food and water. Many camps, however, cannot absorb any more people. At the same time, there are also continuing efforts by Khartoum to force displaced persons back to their villages of origin, even if they lack materials for resuming productive agricultural life and have no security from marauding *Janjaweed* and bandits. The food crisis has also reached the camps, and the UN warns that nutritional indicators in some camps are now above emergency thresholds.⁵⁸

Other concerns include the fact that more than half of Darfuri children are receiving no education, even though women and children make up over 60 percent of camp populations. Thus for hundreds of thousands of children in the camps, there is no meaningful activity or occupation. And as sexual violence against women and girls continues, and as guns increasingly become the source of authority, young

men in the camps find themselves in a setting designed for banditry—or to create future soldiers for rebel causes.

Many of the camps, especially those near major towns such as el-Fasher, Nyala, and el-Geneina, appear increasingly permanent; they are poised to become the equivalent of squalid town “suburbs,” but without many opportunities for employment. Humanitarians report that people in the camps, some of whom have been displaced for more than four years, are no longer living but merely surviving. Whatever hope existed even two years ago that the world community might provide security has been effectively extinguished.

Although UNAMID forces have modestly increased security in some areas of Darfur, there is a risk that the mission will be perceived as ineffectual as its African Union predecessor. If UNAMID cannot establish order within the camps, especially through the deployment of Formed Police Units, violence and chaos will only grow; to date, only a single Formed Police Unit (from Bangladesh) has deployed to Darfur. Large camps such as Kalma and Otash near Nyala (South Darfur) are among the most explosive and have already been the site of forced relocation of civilians by Khartoum’s security forces (October 2007). *This relocation occurred in clear violation of international humanitarian law, but met with no resistance or effective condemnation.*

October 28, 2008: Humanitarian Efforts in Darfur Face an Escalating War of Attrition by Khartoum

The UN recently issued yet another report on humanitarian conditions in Darfur, noting in a long catalog of obstruction and harassment that for more than four months the Khartoum regime refused to allow entry to 5,000 metric tons of sugar bound for Darfur. What is the role of sugar in food aid to Darfur? Why is this obstruction of particular note? There is tremendous fear within the humanitarian community of expanding malnutrition, especially among children. In a desperate attempt to sustain children under five through the rainy season that ended earlier this month, UN World Food Program and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations focused with extraordinary intensity on this most vulnerable population group. A key part of their effort was a “Blanket Supplementary Feeding Program,” using as its primary tool a specially designed “premix” of corn-soya blend, dried skimmed milk and sugar.

For those assessing the present motives and character of the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime in Khartoum, it is important to recognize that this brutal cabal knew perfectly well that an exceedingly dangerous “hunger

gap” was approaching last spring, largely coinciding with Darfur’s rainy season. The regime also knew full well the purpose of a Blanket Supplementary Feeding Program, and the key ingredients of the particular “premix” designed to sustain children, many of whom were above the emergency malnutrition threshold early in the “hunger gap.” And still Khartoum’s *génocidaires*—fully aware of the consequences of their actions—refused entry to 5,000 metric tons of sugar for more than four months.⁵⁹

This delay in releasing a large quantity of a key ingredient in sustaining the lives of young children, largely from non-Arab or African tribal populations, was a direct assault on their ability to live—it represents another in a long and continuous history of genocidal actions by the NIF/NCP regime, going back to well before the outbreak of organized rebellion in Darfur in early 2003. The present analysis focuses on some of the current features of Khartoum’s deadly war of attrition against humanitarian workers and operations in Darfur, as well as some significant antecedents that provided ample indication of what the regime is moving toward.

Scale and Key Data

As DHP 33 reports (page 3), the humanitarian stakes could hardly be higher. 2.7 million civilians in Darfur are now internally displaced—300,000 of them forced to flee this year alone according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. They are the newest victims of accelerating violence and diminishing humanitarian access in rural areas and remote camps. Another 250,000 Darfuris are refugees in Eastern Chad, surviving tenuously with more than 180,000 internally displaced Chadians. 4.7 million human beings in Darfur are now described by the UN as “conflict-affected” and in need of humanitarian assistance. Mortality rates have also been climbing since the heaviest period of the seasonal rains, although we have no official accounting and are not likely to have in the near- or medium-term. A tremendous number of these affected people were early victims of Khartoum’s genocidal counter-insurgency war; they have been badly weakened and demoralized for years, and their spirits are being crushed. They now confront even greater challenges.

More than three million people are in need of food aid, but continue to receive food rations that are only 65 per cent of the minimum daily kilocalorie diet recommended by the UN World Food Program. These cuts in rations were first imposed in May of this year: more than five long months ago. This shortfall in rations—which has inevitably increased malnutrition and mortality—is partly a result of emergency diversion of food resources to children under five. Much more

consequential is Khartoum's refusal to provide protection for convoys of the UN World Food Program (WFP), either on journeys from Port Sudan to Darfur or—most consequentially—within Darfur itself. As a consequence, in September, WFP again renewed its threat to suspend food delivery if security does not improve for its convoys:

“Should these attacks continue, the situation will become intolerable—to the point that we will have to suspend operations in some areas of Darfur,” the WFP's Deputy Representative in Sudan, Monika Midel, said. WFP spokesman Rachid Jaafar told Reuters the agency had not decided which delivery routes would be cut. “But large numbers will be affected,” he said. The WFP currently delivers food to more than 3 million people in Darfur, he added.⁶⁰

Certainly numbers tell a good deal of what is so badly hobbling humanitarian efforts. The UN reports that as of October 20, 2008, 234 humanitarian vehicles had been hijacked this year alone, 183 humanitarians were abducted, and 153 humanitarian premises assaulted and/or destroyed. Eleven humanitarian workers have been killed. Again, the vast majority of these attacks occurred either in state capitals or in main towns under regime control; the failure to take responsibility for humanitarian operations in areas under its control is but another violation of international law by Khartoum.

Unsurprisingly, the number of humanitarian organizations that are withdrawing from Darfur or seriously contracting their operations continues to grow. In addition to earlier withdrawals by a number of organizations, more recently (August) MSF was forced by insecurity to withdraw its staff from Tawila and Shangil Tobaya in North Darfur, leaving 65,000 civilians, mainly displaced persons, without any medical assistance. The extremely violent and dangerous military campaign that Khartoum launched in August also continues in much of North Darfur and eastern Jebel Marra. Confidential sources report that several humanitarian organizations have been forced to withdraw staff from Jebel Marra back to el-Fasher. The German humanitarian organization Welthungerhilfe (German Agro Action) has also been forced to withdraw from North Darfur after threats against its staff, thereby suspending food deliveries to 450,000 human beings.

At the same time, the threats of humanitarian expulsions by Khartoum are relentless and explicit. *Sudan Tribune*, which closely watches domestic pronouncements by the regime, reports:

Salah Gosh, the head of Sudan's National Security and Intelligence Services said that laws governing the work of humanitarian organizations

will be reviewed. “Any organization that does not adhere to its mandate will face accountability measures and any that refuses to sign an agreement must leave,” Gosh said at a forum organized by the ministry of humanitarian affairs. “The governments wants aid and not for these organizations to play around” he added.⁶¹

There can hardly be any doubt about the seriousness of these threats from the regime. On October 27, 2008 the MSF declared in a headline article from its website that “Sudanese authorities threaten to suspend MSF activities in South Darfur”:

MSF is extremely concerned about recent comments made by Sudanese government representatives that the aid organization’s activities in South Darfur may be suspended after October 31 [2008].

In February 2008, based on the health needs of displaced people and local residents, the Dutch branch of MSF signed an agreement with the state government of South Darfur for medical activities to be carried out through the year. The agreement was sent to Khartoum for national endorsement. For months, MSF has been engaging with the Sudanese government in an attempt to obtain the final signatures, but without success. The government has since asked MSF to reduce its personnel, to stop certain medical activities and to limit staffing numbers.

These threats against the world’s most distinguished nongovernmental humanitarian organizations and UN agencies are astonishing not simply for the fact of their being made, but because they go unrebuked. Nor are they merely threats. In a particularly telling example, the senior and highly experienced UN humanitarian coordinator for South Darfur, Wael al-Haj Ibrahim, was expelled in November 2007. His offense? He opposed [the violent removal](#) of hundreds of civilians, primarily women and children, from Otash Camp near Nyala. John Holmes, UN humanitarian coordinator, reported at the time that Khartoum used trucks protected by machine-guns, security personnel wielding rubber hoses and sticks, as well as other threats to force people to leave. These highly vulnerable displaced persons were moved to undisclosed locations, and many were never unaccounted for.

Certainly the overall effect of Khartoum’s threats, intimidations, expulsions, and orchestrated violence can hardly be doubted. An [August 8, 2008 map](#) from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reveals that virtually all of the populated areas of Darfur outside urban centers are now either totally without UN humanitarian access or have only limited access:

*In the last four years, the situation [in Darfur] has not improved. In fact, for most people, things have gotten worse. Conditions in many of the internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and in rural areas have deteriorated, and the insecurity is a major concern for ordinary people. People are living in fear. Every day is a question mark for survival.*⁶²

As Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 32 declares in its introductory overview:

The humanitarian situation in Darfur has become increasingly precarious. The combination of high levels of insecurity, poor harvests, difficulties in bringing supplies into Darfur, reduction in the quality of humanitarian services, reduced food rations, and overcrowded Internally Displaced Persons camps is truly alarming. (page 3)

And more specifically:

In June [2008], the Sudan humanitarian Country team visited South Darfur [home to approximately half Darfur's total population], and warned that limited time remained to safeguard the Darfur populations against an increasingly unsustainable situation. Although malnutrition rates are currently in line with last year's figures, the prognosis for the humanitarian situation in the coming months is extremely worrisome.⁶³

Clea Kahn (2008) finds in "Conflict, Arms, and Militarization: The Dynamics of Darfur's IDP Camps" (page 47):

[Lack of effective camp management] is more often the result of calculated attacks on those carrying out the day-to-day work of managing and running the camps. More than in any other sector, [nongovernmental humanitarian organizations (NGOs)] and UN agencies involved in camp coordination functions have found themselves closely monitored and harassed by government officials, who have subjected them to bureaucratic restrictions, accusations of inappropriate activities, and sometimes expulsions. The most visible example of this treatment was the suspension on several occasions of the Norwegian Refugee Council, in charge of coordination activities in Kalma; it eventually withdrew completely from Darfur. A growing number of prominent international NGOs followed suit, leaving many camps either without any management at all or managed by organizations with limited capacity and experience. Increasingly, these are national NGOs, which are even more susceptible to government harassment.

March 4, 2009: Khartoum expels 13 international relief organizations and closes three national relief organizations

On March 4, 2009 the Khartoum regime expelled thirteen distinguished international humanitarian organizations and shut down three important Sudanese national humanitarian organizations, including the Amal Center for Treatment of Victims of Torture in Nyala and SUDO, the Sudan Social Development Organization. This was the defining moment in the history of relief operations in Darfur. Altogether these organizations represented approximately half the total humanitarian capacity in Darfur at the time, and the consequences of this loss have continued to be enormous. Despite the immense danger to millions of civilians, the U.S. chose to offer only deeply disingenuous and expedient comments by U.S. Senator John Kerry, declaring that: “We [the US] have agreement [with Khartoum] that *in the next weeks we will be back to 100 percent [humanitarian] capacity*.”⁶⁴ In fact, humanitarian capacity shrank further with subsequent expulsions of other organizations, and the withdrawal of several other organizations for reasons of security.

Annex IV concentrates on the humanitarian assessments written after the consequences of these expulsions had become relatively clear; it is not as inclusive as the compendium of accounts that follows, which reaches back to 2007 and forward to the present (August 2012). Inevitably there is considerable overlap with **Annex IV** in what follows, so for those interested only in the period of May 2009 to May 2012, **Annex IV** may be more useful (it also is ordered from most recent to oldest reports).

Very recently there has been significant further attenuation of humanitarian capacity resulting from the brutal militia attacks on Kutum town (August 3, 2012 and following), which included the looting of all humanitarian supplies and resources—including fuel for transport and sustaining motors for pumping water in the camps. Nearby Kassab and Fata Borno camps were overrun, and Radio Dabanga estimates that 70,000 people had been displaced by the several days of uncontrolled violence (August 9, 2012). It is doubtful that humanitarian capacity will be restored in this region of North Darfur. Three weeks after promising protect to both Kassab and Fata Borno camps within 24 hours, UNAMID had still provided Fata Borno with no security presence.

As the engine of human destruction and displacement continues to race, and humanitarian reach continues to contract, UNAMID has nonetheless declared that “improvements” on the ground allow for the force to be drawn down significantly (by more than 4,000 troops and police in the present phase).

The March 4 and 5, 2009 expulsions and shutdowns followed the International Criminal Court's announcement that it had issued an arrest warrant for Omar al-Bashir charging him with crimes against humanity and war crimes. Evidence suggests that the expulsions represented the regime's planned response to an universally expected decision by the ICC.⁶⁵

On top of the expulsions already announced, NIF/NCP President al-Bashir declared on March 16 that his regime was determined to remove all international humanitarian organizations from Sudan, north and south, within a year. Despite the existence of a notional "Government of National Unity" (GNU) in Khartoum, the NIF/NCP regime did not consult the Southern Sudanese leadership or its representation in the GNU about either decision. Since al-Bashir and his fellow *génocidaires* have never committed any Sudanese resources to Southern Sudan or contributed to Southern development—and refuse to implement key terms of the north/South Comprehensive Peace Agreement—it is outrageous that al-Bashir should promise to expel international aid, recovery, and development organizations from the South. The threat of countrywide expulsions stands as a direct challenge to the viability of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

Estimates vary somewhat, but these expulsions and shutdowns reduce overall humanitarian capacity in Darfur by approximately 50 percent. Other key areas in Northern Sudan will also be badly affected, including Eastern Sudan, the distressed populations outside Khartoum, and the contested areas near the North/South border: Abyei, the Nuba Mountains, and Southern Blue Nile. The impact of the expulsions is already being felt and will grow dramatically in the coming weeks. Indeed, there are already multiple reports from the ground of significant problems in humanitarian assistance, particularly limited water supplies in a number of camps and a meningitis outbreak in Kalma camp and in camps near Niertiti in West Darfur. Food distribution has also been compromised, and daily rations are reportedly being reduced in some areas. A report to the UN Security Council (March 20, 2009) by senior UN official Rashid Khalikov stressed that

UN aid officials had observed "significant signs of an erosion of humanitarian response capacity, with a concurrent impact on the lives of people in Darfur' since the 13 foreign and three domestic [humanitarian nongovernmental organizations] were expelled."⁶⁶

We do not yet know how much further "erosion" humanitarian operations will experience over the coming months, but the stop-gap measures now being put in place will soon begin to collapse or prove increasingly inadequate. As UN and humanitarian officials have stressed, the skills and knowledge the expelled organizations have regarding Darfur cannot be replaced. Following an extensive assessment

in Darfur, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes offered a blunt assessment of the stop-gap measures Khartoum has so far offered:

“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.⁶⁷

The results of the “joint assessment” have not been made public, but humanitarian workers are already speaking out:

The humanitarian situation in Darfur is growing more precarious by the day following the expulsion of major aid agencies and a call from the main rebel group for displaced people to refuse any government assistance, NGO officials warned today. The results of the joint UN-government mission to assess the gap in aid provision has not yet been published, but humanitarian workers say the supply of medicine, clean water and food has already been significantly affected, and could worsen in coming weeks.⁶⁸

Yet again, hundreds of thousands of lives in Darfur are in the balance. Whereas in the past heroic efforts by the world’s largest humanitarian operation have staved off mass starvation and widespread epidemics, Darfur now has only a highly compromised operation, which risks further reductions resulting from either additional expulsions or increased insecurity.

Indeed, other humanitarian organizations not affected by the expulsion orders will certainly leave for security reasons, and several already have. Four workers for MSF were kidnapped on March 12 and held for several days. The kidnappings occurred in regime-controlled territory, near camps for the notorious *Janjaweed*. Although the four were released unharmed, this unprecedented event appeared to be a message orchestrated by Khartoum’s security forces.⁶⁹

One senior Western official in Khartoum strongly believes that the regime is responsible for these kidnappings, as does UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, although with less expressed certainty.⁷⁰ The motive for the kidnappings could not be clearer: to create a sense of intolerable insecurity that will compel organizations to leave Darfur. This sense was precisely the effect on the three remaining national sections of MSF (Belgium, Switzerland, Spain), who are now negotiating with the regime to determine whether security will permit them to remain. With the expulsion and potential withdrawal of all five national sections of MSF (France and

Holland were expelled in March 2009), Darfur is poised to see a drastic reduction in primary and secondary medical care.

Although the ICC has received blame for what has occurred in Darfur, such an accusation ignores too much recent history. And given that history, it is not surprising that Khartoum announced on March 16 that it would expel all relief organizations from all of Sudan within a year. Senior regime officials have long held the removal of international humanitarian organizations as a goal, and their March 2009 decision to expel thirteen of the largest and most effective organizations was certainly in service of this goal. In short, the ICC arrest warrant for al-Bashir was more pretext than cause of the expulsions. As one Darfur aid official put it:

“This was in the works for a long time,” one senior aid official involved in Darfur relief said. “They [the Khartoum regime] had been waiting for a chance to strike out at these organizations.”⁷¹

The regime’s subsequent threat to remove all international humanitarian organizations within a year offers compelling evidence for the view that Khartoum had planned the expulsions in advance. Their motives for this purge are not difficult to discern: they include the desire to shut down the camps and force inhabitants to return to their homes and lands, even when security is non-existent and the inhabitants’ homes, water resources, agricultural tools, and other means of livelihood have been destroyed. The UN Integrated Regional Information Networks reports on a propaganda statement to this effect:

Sudanese [state-controlled] media have called for the closure of the camps. “We urge the concerned authorities to start seriously working out a plan to enable IDPs to return to their villages and dismantling the camps,” the Sudan Vision newspaper said in an editorial on 10 March.⁷²

Khartoum’s campaign to close the camps recalls efforts by former Minister of the Interior (and present Minister of Defense) Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein in 2004—in other words, at the height of the violence. The expulsions are motivated by Khartoum’s desire to remove the world’s eyes from Darfur, and the regime has achieved considerable success. As one aid worker put the matter, “[w]e’re very concerned that the witness effect that these organisations have on the ground will also disappear.”⁷³

Present and Near-Term Humanitarian Consequences

There is abundant evidence that in some locations humanitarian conditions are deteriorating rapidly, especially water, sanitation, and primary medical care. A March 13 situation report from OCHA evaluates the impact the humanitarian expulsions are having in Darfur, though not in other parts of northern Sudan served by the expelled organizations:

[1] “The expulsion of CARE, Save the Children US, *Action Contre la Faim*, and Solidarités threatens the distribution of food aid to 1.1 million people. With the loss of all MSF [Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières] chapters, an estimated 7,000 children who are, or will become, moderately or severely malnourished, risk not being treated. Access to targeted feeding programmes in the most vulnerable remote rural areas and IDP camps has been decreased significantly, thus increasing risk of mortality. [] The interruption of the General Food Distribution threatens the well-being of vulnerable families. This programme ordinarily provides preventive support, without which increased malnutrition will set in. Those who become malnourished will need to be treated with a reduced nutrition infrastructure.”

[2] “The expulsion of the NGOs is estimated to affect health service delivery for up to 1.5 million people in Darfur. Basic provision of health-care services, early warning, and sentinel surveillance systems relied heavily on the presence of the now expelled NGOs in a number of areas, including camps. [] The meningitis outbreak at the Kalma camp in South Darfur is a growing concern. 41 suspected cases have been reported. Nine cases of suspected meningitis have also been confirmed by the HAC [Humanitarian Aid Commission] commissioner for Nertiti, West Darfur. Three tests were positive. Some areas close to Nertiti are not accessible to HAC, and there is a high probability that there are more cases. Because of the expulsions, there is no direct access to health care, as MSF was the only medical actor in the area.”

[3] “With the rainy season approaching, replenishment of key items such as basic household items and kitchen supplies [as well as emergency shelters] to the population is essential. Most distribution must take place in one month for 700,000 people. *Of the 16 NGOs that were expelled, 11 were logistics and emergency shelter sector partners.*”

[4] “Access to adequate amounts of safe drinking water for some 1.16 million people is not assured. UNICEF estimates that only 30 to 35

percent of needs may be addressed in the coming weeks. UNICEF can deploy some staff to support in the initial 1–2 weeks, with Government cooperation. Sanitation and hygiene services have been compromised and chlorination services interrupted in many areas. Basic maintenance of structures is imperative. Trained community members could perform some of these tasks, if facilitated with the necessary equipment and support.”

“If not addressed efficiently and in a timely manner, there is an increased risk of outbreaks of hygiene-preventable illnesses, like diarrhea and cholera. Many remaining facilities such as health and feeding centers relied on water services provided by the now expelled NGOs. Re-supply of water services to such facilities is essential.”

These snapshots only begin to convey the destructive consequences—near- and long-term—of Khartoum’s expulsion of humanitarian operations and personnel. Moreover, in addition to expelling these key relief organizations, Khartoum has stripped critical equipment from the departing groups:

Crucial humanitarian assets belonging to the United Nations and NGOs have been confiscated from the expelled humanitarian organizations, including computers, vehicles, and communications equipment. (“Situation Report,” UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, March 13, 2009)

“Despite assurances given by the Sudanese Government that harassment and seizure of assets would stop, such reports continued to be received daily,” [UN Spokeswoman Marie] Okabe said, citing a report from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Assets confiscated from the organizations include computers, vehicles and communications equipment, as well as essential data, she said. (UN News Center, March 10, 2009)

[UN humanitarian chief John] Holmes added that UN and NGO staff have faced harassment at the hands of Sudanese security forces, including “intimidatory behavior.” He added that UN officials had complained about this to the government. “Assets of international NGOs have been confiscated, including in some cases United Nations assets I have to say, things like vehicles and computers, vital data for assistance to beneficiaries ... food and non-food items,” he said. Holmes said there were one or two warehouses containing World Food Program

food seized by local authorities, which he hoped would be returned.
(Reuters [UN] March 9, 2009)

Additionally, armed elements accorded impunity by the Khartoum regime have raided a warehouse of one of the expelled organizations. Associated Press reports from al-Salaam Camp (near el-Fasher, North Darfur):

Refugee camp leaders in Darfur say a dozen men broke into the warehouse of an expelled British aid group, stealing all its contents. Camp leader Adam Mahmoud told Darfur peacekeepers that armed men stormed the site early Saturday, driving off the guards with gunfire. Another leader, Ismail Braima, said the men stole cement sacks and water pipes. The area where the Oxfam-UK center once stood has been emptied of all its contents. This is believed to be the first such looting of an aid group's material since the government expelled Oxfam and 12 foreign aid groups on March 4.⁷⁴

Unfortunately, this will not be the last warehouse raided; Khartoum will continue to strip humanitarian organizations of their assets.

Asset stripping did in fact continue on a vast scale, costing humanitarian organizations many millions of dollars—money no longer available for relief efforts elsewhere in the world.

Water and Sanitation

In the coming weeks and months, we can expect to hear of a sharp increase in water shortages, which in turn greatly increase the risk of disease. The day after the expulsions (March 5, 2009) Reuters reports:

The big international agencies providing water to Kass camp in the south and Zalingei in the west have also been given their marching orders. The International Rescue Committee says each camp is home to 100,000 people. “The water is going to become an issue sooner rather than later without anyone to fill that gap, and that’s very concerning for all of us in the international community, and it really should be of grave concern to the Sudanese government,” [said Kurt] Tjossem, [IRC’s Regional Director for Horn and East Africa].

The Guardian ([Nairobi] March 5, 2009) reports in the same vein:

“What has happened [with the expulsions of humanitarian organizations] has gone far beyond our worst expectations,” said Kurt Tjossem, regional director for International Rescue Committee, which provides health and water services to 650,000 people in Darfur. “It’s chaos. We looked for other organisations to hand over our projects to but they have also been kicked out.” In Kass, for example, where there are 100,000 displaced people, all four agencies providing water services have been expelled.

Hygiene is also deteriorating. Less than half the soap required on a monthly basis is being distributed in a number of locations. Latrine maintenance is already starting to deteriorate, with extremely serious health implications. Sanitation and waste disposal are essential to avoid epidemics, but standards have already begun to slip, especially near Kass, which is in a more challenging geographic location for humanitarians.

Several of the expelled organizations had planned to distribute kits of shelter materials to approximately 700,000 households before the rainy season (June through September) to provide protection against the fierce rains, malaria-bearing mosquitoes, and the cold. Now, the UN Joint Logistics Center is prepared to distribute fewer than 40,000.

Food

The UN World Food Program (WFP), with the critical assistance of its enabling INGO partners, was able to reach as many as 3 million people in need during the last hunger gap. In the wake of the expulsions, there is no way that a population of similar size can be reached during the impending hunger gap. The UN News Center reports:

The World Food Programme (WFP)...says that four of the expelled non-governmental organizations were crucial partners who were providing 35 per cent of its food distribution capacity in Darfur, distributing food to 1.1 million people plus 5,500 malnourished children and mothers receiving supplementary feeding.⁷⁵

Indeed, food distribution has already failed in serious ways. In assessing the impact of diminished food distributions, the World Food Program expresses the fear

that “the departure of these NGOs will leave a huge gap in humanitarian access and may result in further chaos in the form of riots and population movement as poor groups move to other areas in search of humanitarian aid.”⁷⁶ Given its destabilizing potential, the threat of violence and population migrations has not received nearly enough attention. As one aid worker in Darfur remarked, “[w]e are increasingly concerned at the situation. There is a massive humanitarian gap left by the NGO expulsion. Hungry people are desperate people.”⁷⁷

Disease

A March 10, 2009 dispatch from the UN News Center reports:

The World Health Organization (WHO) warned [*that in the wake of the humanitarian expulsions*] more than 1.5 million persons would no longer have access to primary healthcare, and that immunizations would be disrupted, with the greatest threat being an outbreak of meningitis reported in the Kalma Camp that currently houses 89,000 people.

Meningitis is currently the most worrisome health crisis in Darfur, affecting not only Kalma camp but those near Niertiti as well. The populations in and around Kalma have largely not been vaccinated against meningitis, a problem MSF intended to address with a vaccination campaign scheduled to begin two days after the expulsion order. Now, there is no one to administer the vaccination program, and Kalma camp residents are denying access to regime officials in response. This is not simply stubborn defiance, as *Africa Confidential* notes in its most recent issue:

Khartoum said “more than 2,000” local aid agencies were waiting in the wings to take over the NGOs’ work. Internally displaced people in some camps were soon refusing help from the newcomers. They know that the regime, which drove them into camps in the first place, has always used some “charities” as front organisations for security operations and also for missionary work. The NIF/NCP already used “aid workers” for these ends during Darfur’s 1983-85 famine, long before it came to power, and after its 1989 coup in the South [Sudan] and Nuba Mountain war zones.⁷⁸

Associated Press reports from the highly distressed Zam Zam camp reveal another telling reason that Darfuris in the camps distrust Khartoum and its “aid agencies”: “Many refugees deeply distrust government aid and suspect that Khartoum

just wants to drive them out of the camps.”⁷⁹ In fact, senior regime officials have made numerous public statements since 2004 about shutting down the camps and forcing people to returning to their “homes,” whether they exist or not.

It is important to remember that the UN operates at Security Level IV in Darfur (Security Level V entails emergency evacuations). As a consequence, UN agencies such as the UN High Commission for Refugees and the World Health Organization cannot travel to many of the locations served by the expelled humanitarian organizations, which were often the only health providers in more remote regions, and the only guarantor (however tenuous) of security.

Other Affected Areas

Khartoum’s expulsion order also affects the work of organizations working in distressed regions of the country other than Darfur: Eastern Sudan, where malnutrition and morbidity indexes equal those in Darfur; Southern Blue Nile, one of the least developed areas in Sudan; Southern Kordofan and the Nuba Mountains, a region of serious confrontation between African and Arab ethnic groups, and a potential flash point for renewed North/South war; and the Abyei enclave, on the north/south border—another flash point for renewed war. Over 1 million people in these areas are affected by Khartoum’s actions, but no substantial data or humanitarian reporting exists to record the consequences of the expulsions here. Reuters reported on March 6, 2009 that

Senior humanitarian officials said the expulsions had left large areas of the highly-charged regions of Abyei, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, along Sudan’s contested north-south border, without any humanitarian cover.⁸⁰

Save the Children/USA and Save the Children/UK were among the organizations expelled, and the international secretary-general of the aid groups was explicit about consequences:

Save the Children—which also had its UK arm shut down this week—said the decision would have a serious impact on its work in Southern Kordofan, Abyei and other areas of Sudan, including west Darfur. “If we are forced to stop our work the lives of hundreds of thousands of children could be at risk,” the organisations’ international secretary general Charlotte Petri said in a statement.⁸¹

Similarly, Britain's Oxfam declared that its programs "that covered water, hygiene, schooling and other areas in Darfur and underdeveloped eastern Sudan, would collapse within weeks if it [Oxfam] was not allowed to return."⁸²

We should not forget the distinguished Sudanese humanitarian and human rights organizations that were shut down as the international organizations were being expelled: SUDO (the Sudan Social Development Organization), the Amal Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence, and the Khartoum Center for Human Rights Development and Environment. These organizations served hundreds of thousands of Sudanese throughout the country. SUDO says in its letter of dissolution, on the occasion of being shut down by Khartoum:

SUDO is the biggest national organization undertaking humanitarian and development assistance to the most needy and most vulnerable Sudanese people through 10 field offices in North, South and West Darfur, South Kordofan, Nuba mountains, North Kordofan, Blue Nile and Khartoum. *Our current operations provide urgent and life saving assistance to over 700,000 IDPs and poor farmers* in different parts of the country, especially Darfur. Our work is and has always been purely humanitarian and is mostly needed at this time of our country.⁸³

The contribution of these organizations and their importance to Sudan have been largely overlooked, even as Sudan can never thrive if it remains dependent upon international organizations for humanitarian and development assistance. But concerns about humanitarian self-sufficiency are simply not relevant amidst the present moment of urgent need, but it does remind us that international organizations should have been doing more to "Sudanize" their operations: the alternative now is the brutal form of "Sudanizing" contemplated by al-Bashir and the National Islamic Front/National Congress Party regime.

What Khartoum's "Sudanizing" of Aid to Darfur Means

Despite the massive crisis precipitated by Khartoum's humanitarian expulsions and shutdowns, the regime remains defiant, adamantly declaring that its decision is "irrevocable." This has been the regime's mantra since the beginning of the crisis, it shows no signs of changing. On the other hand, Khartoum's statement is matched by declarations from the Obama administration, the UN Secretariat, and the Europeans that these expulsions are "not acceptable." President Obama used the phrase early on in the crisis:

“I impressed upon the [UN] secretary general how important it is from our perspective to send a strong unified international message that it is *not acceptable* to put that many people’s lives at risk, that we need to be able to get those humanitarian organizations back on the ground,” Obama said.⁸⁴

Almost two weeks later, and three weeks after the expulsions, “irrevocable” seems to trump “not acceptable.” Humanitarian organizations, diplomats, UN officials, and Sudanese political observers indicate that the Khartoum regime is fully committed to the notion that it can “fill the gaps” left after the expulsion of aid groups through the vaguely outlined “Sudanizing” of efforts in Darfur. As the *Los Angeles Times* reports:

“We will be able to pay for [these humanitarian programs] from our own pockets,” Bashir said during a recent speech in Darfur. “When this started years ago, it was only the government that was helping the refugees. We have enough food. We can cover their needs.”⁸⁵

What will Khartoum actually provide now? Judging by the past, it will certainly not be food. To date in the conflict the regime has contributed a negligible amount of grain, and what they gave was infested with maggots. Instead, grain and other staples must be brought from abroad to Port Sudan, and then transported to Khartoum and on to Darfur. Food transportation has also seen obstruction from the beginning of the crisis. In November 2003, as humanitarian needs were growing, I noted:

Khartoum has refused to accept food aid from the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on completely spurious grounds. Claiming that US sorghum and wheat are genetically modified, the Khartoum regime denied entrance at Port Sudan to a critical food shipment. But as Khartoum well knows, the US does not export or even grow genetically modified sorghum or wheat. Some strains of other grains have been genetically modified—but not these two key staples. Extraordinarily, this was reported in Khartoum by Kamal al Sadig in *Al-Ayam*:

“In a new development on the USAID confined food crisis, the Ministry of Agriculture has reaffirmed refusal to allow entrance of the food into the country and distributing it, claiming that the food is genetically modified.” (*Al-Ayam*, November 16, 2003, issue no. 7825)

When it is not busy obstructing food deliveries and medical supplies, Khartoum has engaged in lucrative food exports, even as its own people are malnourished and living on a diet below the UN kilocalorie minimum. In August of 2008, *New York Times* correspondent Jeffrey Gettleman filed a remarkable dispatch from Ed Damer (north of Khartoum) highlighting the perversity of the national agricultural policy. Noting that Sudan “receives a billion pounds of free food from international [aid] donors, [even as it] is growing and selling vast quantities of its own crops to other countries,” Gettleman asks, “why is a country that exports so many of its own crops receiving more free food than anywhere else in the world, especially when the Sudanese government is blamed for creating the crisis [in Darfur] in the first place?”⁸⁶ An excellent question, which the international community refuses to ask with sufficient resolve, particularly given present humanitarian conditions throughout Sudan.

The details of Khartoum’s agricultural activities as reported by Gettleman reveal how ruthlessly the regime has claimed all opportunities for significant economic gain:

[Sudan] is already growing wheat for Saudi Arabia, sorghum for camels in the United Arab Emirates and vine-ripened tomatoes for the Jordanian Army. Now the government is plowing \$5 billion into new agribusiness projects, many of them to produce food for export.

*Take sorghum, a staple of the Sudanese diet, typically eaten in flat, spongy bread. Last year, the United States government, as part of its response to the emergency in Darfur, shipped in 283,000 tons of sorghum, at high cost, from as far away as Houston. Oddly enough, that is about the same amount that Sudan exported, according to United Nations officials. This year, Sudanese companies, including many that are linked to the government in Khartoum, are on track to ship out twice that amount, even as the United Nations is being forced to cut rations to Darfur.*⁸⁷

The “Unacceptable” Becomes Acceptable

The ostensible reason for Khartoum’s expulsion of international humanitarian organizations was their “cooperation with the ICC.” In fact, the regime had long been looking for an excuse to expel the organizations, and the ICC indictment provided the perfect, opportunity. Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Mutrif Siddig “*told the state SUNA news agency that the aid groups’ cooperation with the ICC had been ‘proved by evidence.’*”⁸⁸

Neither Siddig nor others had produced this “evidence” publicly, for the simple reason that it does not exist. As experience has shown, veracity is hardly a concern of the NIF/NCP regime, who even now is engaged in blackmailing the international community: *don’t push us further on the ICC arrest warrant or we will further compromise aid efforts; don’t contemplate military action or we will engage in brutal reprisals against humanitarians, whom we will declare to be spies*. It is not accidental that Khartoum’s plan—long in the making—was to expel “only” about half the humanitarian capacity in Darfur: the other half serves as a collective hostage, allowed to perform humanitarian tasks on a highly restricted basis and forced to work in an increasingly insecure and paralyzing environment. Were these remaining organizations to evacuate, the UN would be completely without the enabling partners upon which it depends: all humanitarian operations of significance would cease.

Recognition of Khartoum’s blackmail must guide policy responses regarding the regime. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton recently stated that “the real question is what kind of pressure can be brought to bear on President Bashir and the government in Khartoum [to get them] to understand that they will be held responsible for every single death that occurs in those camps.”⁸⁹ This is an extraordinarily misconceived notion of “pressure,” suggesting that accruing further responsibility for deaths in Darfur will somehow compel a change in regime behavior (“they will be held responsible for every single death that occurs in those camps”). Yet al-Bashir and other top officials already face multiple charges of crimes against humanity, for which the evidence is overwhelming. The recent expulsions themselves also constitute extremely serious violations of international humanitarian law, and are being investigated by the UN human rights office. Does Secretary Clinton think that responsibility for additional deaths going forward can alter the thinking of this genocidal regime? Rhetoric has again been substituted for action, as Khartoum certainly discerns.

The truth is that the US, the European nations, and others professing concern for Darfur failed to anticipate the likelihood of large-scale expulsions. As a result they were caught unprepared in the event. There was not, for example, any marshaling of diplomatic resources to persuade China to collaborate with other concerned nations in the event Khartoum went to extremes. Nor was there any meaningful diplomatic engagement with either the Arab League or the African Union to secure their aid in constraining Khartoum’s response.

May 14, 2009: Darfur Humanitarian Expulsions, two months on

Views of the Darfur humanitarian crisis continue to diverge sharply: it is difficult to escape the conclusion that broader political calculations ultimately drive many officials' statements and promises. Unable to respond effectively to the March 4 humanitarian shutdowns, various international actors are accommodating Khartoum for fear of further expulsions. The contradictions between these humanitarian assessments and the situation on the ground are so striking that it seems essential to use primarily humanitarian sources in discussing current conditions in Darfur in the ten weeks since the expulsions.

Even within the humanitarian community, we find startling contrasts. As mentioned above, following an assessment mission in late March UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes declared of the measures Khartoum 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.⁹⁰

Humanitarian workers made similar statements, telling *The Guardian* that “the humanitarian situation in Darfur is growing more precarious by the day” and that “the supply of medicine, clean water and food has already been significantly affected, and could worsen in coming weeks.”⁹¹

A month later, however, Holmes presented 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.”⁹²

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 Holmes’s comments do not adequately convey growing threats to water, sanitation and hygiene, gaps in primary medical care,

and longer-term food insecurity. Moreover, Holmes's claim that there is no evidence of additional mortality, when in March alone 5,000 malnourished children as well as pregnant and lactating mothers were denied supplementary feeding, is tendentious.⁹³ A recent humanitarian survey found a sharp uptick in the number of admissions of children under five to the remaining nutrition centers, indicating a general deterioration in the nutritional status of Darfur's youngest victims. In turn, vulnerability to disease derives directly from malnutrition. Many young victims no longer have access to either supplementary feeding or medical care.

Holmes's assessment is entirely too deferential to Khartoum's sensitivities, but his calculation is clear: after two months, the international community has demonstrated that it has no intention of pressing further for the return of expelled organizations, and the UN must make the best of a bad, and rapidly deteriorating situation. Recent statements by the Khartoum regime provide further context for understanding the international diplomatic accommodation. The nature of the conflict in Darfur has been referred to as a "low-intensity" one by Rodolphe Adada, Head of the Joint United Nations/African Mission in Darfur.⁹⁴ Abdalmahmoud Abdalhaleem, Sudan's permanent representative to the UN, claims that "Everything is positive. There is calmness in the region and there is no existence of hunger."⁹⁵ And where the UN "has said the expelled aid groups accounted for more than half of the aid distribution capacity in Darfur...Abdalhaleem [calls the figure] another 'big lie...The volume is 4.7 percent,' he said, referring to the amount of aid the 16 groups were responsible for."⁹⁶

To his credit, Holmes offered some notable qualifications to his upbeat account after touring Sudan in May, emphasizing that "[UN agencies] lack the capacity to continue providing necessary assistance, unless they can identify new implementing partners."⁹⁷ Holmes recognizes here that the enormous amount of work undertaken by organizations such as UNICEF and the World Food Program is dangerously unsustainable, reflecting statements made by WFP officials that their work "is an ad hoc, rapid response with limited accountability."⁹⁸

Holmes also acknowledged the ominous realities of the season:

"As the rainy and lean season [hunger gap] approach, we are still grappling with the gaps left in many areas," he added. [] "The critical test will be over the coming months. Our ability to respond in a timely and efficient manner, and fill the [humanitarian] gaps in a sustained way, will require the active engagement of all actors and a loosening of the bureaucratic impediments currently constraining the humanitarian community."⁹⁹

And as UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted in his most recent bimonthly report on Darfur to the Security Council:

While joint efforts by the UN and Sudan “can address some of the most critical gaps in aid delivery in the coming weeks,” Ban said, “the cumulative effects over time of the *removal of such a large amount of humanitarian capacity puts well over 1 million people at life-threatening risk*...The rainy season starting in May is likely to make the situation significantly worse,” Ban warned.¹⁰⁰

The catastrophe has not been realized, but is impending. There is no single gap that must be filled, but myriad. Although the effects of such massive loss of humanitarian capacity will be cumulative, this accumulation will soon accelerate. As Alun McDonald, spokesman for Oxfam/Great Britain, one of the largest and most important of the expelled organizations, recently declared: “[t]he impact of the expulsions is already being felt across Darfur, but is likely to get even worse in the coming months.”¹⁰¹

There have been expulsions of humanitarian organizations from Darfur in the past, which have sometimes occasioned more direct statements regarding the situation on the ground. For example, in December 2006,

the largest agency then working in Darfur, the Norwegian Refugee Council was expelled. Its secretary general, Tom Archer, warned: “The international community cannot continue to mince words, pretending that the hostage-taking of humanitarian operations in Darfur is not happening on its watch.” He insisted that it was time for the international community “to break its code of silence and act.”¹⁰²

Archer’s challenge was not accepted by the remaining organizations, but they were all aware of the truth of his warning. And although Holmes’s words may seem vaguely encouraging, they are based entirely on the premise that this time Khartoum will abide by its agreements, when in fact the regime has consistently violated all agreements it has signed since April 2004. Given the scale of the crisis and cumulative effect of the expulsions, Khartoum’s current measures are still “band-aid solutions.”

Ultimately, Holmes’s comments are a signal that in the ten weeks since the expulsions, the international community has come to accept them. For example, while President Barack Obama declared a week after the expulsions that such actions were “not acceptable,” he and representatives of his administration now offer vaguer, more accommodating language:

“We have to figure out a mechanism to get those [expelled international humanitarian organizations] back in place [in Darfur], to reverse that decision, or to *find some mechanism* whereby we avert an enormous humanitarian crisis,” [Obama said].”¹⁰³

Such a “mechanism” is nowhere in sight six weeks after Obama’s declaration—and more than a month after Special Envoy Scott Gration declared: “[w]e have to come up with a solution [to the humanitarian crisis] on the ground in the next few weeks”¹⁰⁴

Senator John Kerry, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations committee and also one of Obama’s representatives in Khartoum, similarly declared that “*We [the U.S.] have agreement [with Khartoum] that in the next weeks we will be back to 100 percent [humanitarian] capacity.*”¹⁰⁵ Kerry suggests that an agreement with Khartoum is meaningful and sustainable, and that rapid restoration of 50 percent of humanitarian capacity in Darfur is feasible. Neither is true. Rapid restoration of lost humanitarian capacity is not feasible; indeed, it is not even remotely possible. At the same time other areas in Sudan remain equally beyond humanitarian reach because of Khartoum’s restrictions on access: Eastern Sudan, Southern Blue Nile, South Kordofan, and Abyei. In Darfur the organizations expelled were among the very most important groups responding to the acutely vulnerable populations in the region, which number many hundreds of thousands.

There has been no moment in which U.S. characterization of the situation in Darfur has been more conspicuously false than in Senator’s Kerry claim that “*We [the U.S.] have agreement [with Khartoum] that in the next weeks we will be back to 100 percent [humanitarian] capacity.*” An “agreement” Kerry may have had, although he surely knew the history of Khartoum’s failure to abide by what it promises. To suggest that such restoration of humanitarian capacity was actually possible represents a politically driven mendacity that actually worked to encourage Khartoum in its obstruction and limitation of international humanitarian relief.

Humanitarian Realities

Genocidal destruction has now entered its seventh year: several hundred thousand civilians have died, more than 2.7 million are internally displaced, and approximately 4.7 million people have been affected by the conflict and are in need of humanitarian assistance. But beyond these incomprehensible numbers lie more immediately consequential figures. For example, we know that the UN estimates

some 700,000 people will enter the rainy season without shelter.¹⁰⁶ They will be vulnerable to the season's slashing rainfall, frequent floods, and acute temperature variations. 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 expulsions drastically reduced the availability of therapeutic treatment for these children. 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.”¹⁰⁷

What we are seeing is genocide by attrition, in which denial or compromising of relief assistance is the essential weapon.

Water and Sanitation

As the consequences of humanitarian expulsions continue to outstrip current “band-aid” measures, the fate of 4.7 million conflict-affected civilians grows daily more uncertain. The 2.7 million people who have been internally displaced within Darfur live in camp environments that in some cases have deteriorated seriously, especially in the areas of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). In a month, the rainy season will begin, increasing the risk of cholera, dysentery, and malaria if there is no clean water, primary health care to halt the spread of water-borne diseases, or 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 others, although we do not know because the remaining humanitarian organizations have been seriously compromised in their ability to assess and monitor morbidity, mortality, and vaccination scheduling.

One recent humanitarian survey finds, for example, that neither the remaining humanitarian organizations nor WES (water, environment, sanitation) are able to fill the massive gaps in latrine maintenance, de-sludging, and waste disposal. Some latrines are collapsing for lack of maintenance, which could promote the spread of a range of diseases in cramped camps and even some rural areas such as Kass. Water is increasingly untreated, or improperly treated, even as the lack of sanitation (particularly latrines) makes water a likely bearer of disease. Fuel for pumping drinking water is already a problem that will continue through at least the rainy season. Technical maintenance of mechanical water boreholes includes replacing parts such as faucets; such maintenance is still not nearly adequate and will soon produce severe shortages of potable water.

In some camps there is an actual shortage of water reservoirs as ground water levels recede. Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 34, representing conditions as of January 1, 2009, reported: “Ground water monitoring indicates that ground water levels are receding and ground water is gradually being depleted at some IDP and urban locations in Darfur.”¹⁰⁸ This assessment was made before the humanitarian expulsions, when plans were underway to “conduct studies to identify potential sites and designs for artificial recharge structures at vulnerable IDP locations in North and South Darfur.”¹⁰⁹ Given the massive loss of capacity for such large-scale projects, these plans will remain mere plans.

Primary Health Care

Primary health care (PHC) is the sector in which skilled professional training is most important, and which is therefore 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

[L]atest 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.¹¹⁰

Management of primary health centers by the State Ministry of Health will not be nearly as qualified or as committed as that of the expelled organizations, further attenuating meaningful humanitarian capacity.

The UN Integrated Regional Information Networks offers ([Nairobi], May 4, 2009) also offers a grim overview of the consequences of humanitarian expulsions:

In North Darfur, reproductive healthcare services have been interrupted after the closure of a Primary Health Care facility; the activities of other health facilities, serving at least 200,000 people, have also been curtailed.

In West Darfur, only 63 of 145 medical staff are providing services at 18 health facilities. [According to the Office of the Secretary-General (May 13, 2009), three therapeutic feeding centers remain closed because of insecurity and lack of capacity; for children with Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM), this is a virtual death sentence]

In South Darfur, one rural hospital in Muhajeriya and some other health facilities are closed. Five of six therapeutic feeding centres are also shut.

The shutting of therapeutic feeding centers, which typically treat children with Severe Acute Malnutrition, will certainly occasion significant mortality.

Of particular note in assessing overall PHC capacity is the expulsion of the French and Dutch sections of Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), who were enormously important providers of medical health care and among the very earliest responders to Darfur. The three MSF sections not expelled (Spain, Belgium, and Italy) are severely limited by an international staff that has been largely paralyzed following the kidnapping of three of their members on March 11 (the workers were released three days later). National staff of the remaining MSF sections are carrying on as well as possible, but the capacity of these distinguished medical relief organizations has been seriously attenuated.

Food

General food distributions for March and April were completed by the UN World Food Program (WFP), but at the time of writing (2009) there is no plan for distributions later in May and the following months, which coincide with the rainy season and the most intense period of the hunger gap. Even if a distribution is patched together, it will lack the oversight and monitoring that is required for equitable distribution. More than 1 million people will be affected, many losing access to food altogether. Current stockpiles will be stretched as far as possible, but it appears unlikely that WFP will be able to pre-position more than two-thirds of the required food prior to the onset of the impending rainy season.

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 consequences of such movement will be even more intense competition for limited food resources that may lead to violence. Again, the threat of population migrations and attendant violence has not received nearly enough attention, given its destabilizing potential. ¹¹¹

Obstacles to Meaningful Increases in Humanitarian Capacity

It should not be surprising that in addition to expelling international humanitarian organizations, Khartoum confiscated much of the material and many of the re-

sources belonging to these organizations. These included laptop computers with vital data, records, and accounts, and in some cases extremely sensitive information about victims of sexual violence. Also taken were cell phones, vehicles, and money, including bank account information. It is clear that a free hand had been given to local and national officials to take what they wanted:

Some aid workers alleged government officials were driving their vehicles, wearing their clothes and selling their laptop computers. One aid worker said even curtains from a residential compound were taken.¹¹²

Khartoum also demanded that the expelled organizations pay its national workers six months severance pay to the regime itself, not to the workers. By law, severance pay in Sudan is one month, not six: this was nothing less than extortion, leaving several organizations facing enormously consequential debts:

The extra [severance] pay-outs amount to \$11.5 million for the 13 organisations, in addition to US \$10.6 in usual termination-without-notice payments and \$20.3 million in seized assets, NGO sources said.

“They asked us to pay an exorbitant amount of money... [and said]: ‘We have your passports. Once you agree to pay, you can leave the country,’” said Jane Coyne, head of mission for Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-France, one of 13 aid agencies ordered to leave Sudan for their alleged provision of information to the International Criminal Court.

“The word I like to use is extortion. That’s all money that at the end of the day has to come from donors that would have otherwise gone for programmes in Darfur,” an aid source said on condition of anonymity. “It’s absolutely maddening that we would have to pay this and that the government is just going to get away with it. There’s no recourse. There’s no retribution. There’s no penalty for the government. There’s nothing.”

MSF International said in a statement that the Sudanese authorities had confiscated departing staff members’ passports until just a few hours before they left. This “effectively put them in a hostage situation.” Bank accounts were also frozen at times. Most of the expelled NGOs have agreed to the government’s demands so as to ensure their staff could leave Sudan and to avoid potential detention or physical attack by members of the public. Local media and government officials—as well as several speeches by the president—have repeatedly referred to NGO “spies” and “thieves.”¹¹³

Extortion, hostage-taking, illegal confiscation of humanitarian assets: this is the face of the Khartoum's "Humanitarian Aid Commission" as it confronts the desperate need for ongoing life-saving operations in Darfur. Just as serious has been the seizure of warehouses that served as staging areas for humanitarian distributions. Early in the crisis, when John Holmes felt he had the strong political backing of the UN Secretariat and Security Council, he spoke to this critical issue:

In one case, warehouses full of food supplied to the NGOs for distribution by the World Food Organization (WFP) were being held, [Holmes] said. "This is not in line with the agreements we have with the Government of Sudan, nor indeed with the any of the normal tenets of behaviour in these kinds of circumstances," he emphasized.¹¹⁴

Khartoum continued to hold such warehouses instead of turning them over to the UN Joint Logistics Center (UNJLC) for proper humanitarian use. The approximately 700,000 people who will be without shelter this rainy season are destined to suffer as a direct result of the regime's actions.¹¹⁵ The gradual return of the warehouses to UN control was deliberately destructive and has taken over two months—yet another measure of how Khartoum continues to obstruct humanitarian operations.

Given the tight annual budgets of these organizations, it is outrageous that Oxfam and MSF should find their resources for other humanitarian emergencies ruthlessly diminished by Khartoum. Together they lost

about \$5.2 million of their assets and more than \$9 million in enforced payments to local staff who lost their jobs because of the government shut-down. Aid workers, speaking on condition of anonymity, said they were concerned Sudan might redistribute their assets to organisations without the necessary experience or adherence to international humanitarian principle.¹¹⁶

As the international community belatedly pushes for unfettered humanitarian access in Blue Nile and the Nuba Mountains of South, the example of Darfur and Khartoum's war of attrition against relief operations must be borne in mind. Some would seem to believe that another agreement signed by Khartoum will have some meaning for the many hundreds of thousands who are slowly being starved to death. Such credulity, however, reflects culpable ignorance of the regime's history of renegeing on such agreements.

September 26, 2009: Darfur: What we know and how we know it

One of the most remarkable developments in the Darfur conflict over the past six years is the degree to which those on the ground and in the IDP camps are able to communicate with the outside world using email and telephone. It is also striking how much information can be gleaned from the BBC and other international news sources. Although it is difficult to assess the reliability of any single report on Darfur, in the present case these reports appear to give a well-informed if not wholly fluent account of particular developments and events—which rarely appear in UNAMID’s daily press briefings.

Radio Dabanga is particularly useful since it has come to serve as a kind of clearing house of reports from throughout Darfur. Whenever possible, Dabanga attempts to verify specific claims, and will often note that they were unable to confirm a specific report. Moreover, in general Darfuris in the diaspora have also become much more savvy in collecting intelligence and information, often making use of their substantial networks on the ground in Darfur.

Forced Returns of Internally Displaced Persons

What makes the current military offensive in Darfur so threatening is the language the Khartoum regime uses to justify its fighting (the very fighting the regime originally denied existed). Khartoum is claiming that the rationale for a continuing humanitarian presence has ended and that it is now prepared to expel forcibly from IDP camps those civilians whose only security derives from enduring the grim life within these squalid sanctuaries. The governor of North Darfur made explicit the connection between Khartoum’s military “success” near Korma and Tawila and the opportunities for the displaced to return:

The local governor, Osman Mohammed Kebir, said that the regions of Korma and Tawila had been cleared of rebels and the internally displaced in the massive camps could now return home—something the rebels and refugees themselves have rejected citing lack of security.¹¹⁷

Yet a Government of Sudan press statement of September 13, 2009 makes clear just how far Khartoum is prepared to press its propaganda campaign on the issue of returns:

Northern Darfur state government has started rehabilitation of a number of standard villages to accommodate 3,000 families returning from

displacement camps. Governor of the state Osman Mohammed Yousif Kibir said his government has availed health water education services and food supplies for the returnees. He said security and political stability in the state encourage IDPs return home.

Senior NIF/NCP political chief Qutbi al-Mahdi went further, declaring that "there is no fighting between the government army and the rebels. [] Mahdi also said that all humanitarian and security effects of the conflict had started to disappear."¹¹⁸ On September 8, 2009 the state-controlled SUNA (Sudan News Agency) reported that Defense Minister (and former Interior Minister) Abdel Rahim Mohamed Hussein was traveling to Darfur in order to "discuss issues relation to the voluntary return on the ground."¹¹⁹

Notes

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- 4 Remarks by Dr. Mohammed Ahmed: 2007 RFK Human Rights Award Ceremony.
- 5 UN News Center, March 20, 2007.
- 6 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks [Nairobi] March 19, 2007.
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- 8 Reuters [Khartoum] March 22, 2007.
- 9 Associated Press [Kassab, North Darfur] March 24, 2007.
- 10 *New York Times* [Deribat, Darfur] March 25, 2007.
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- 33 *The Independent* [UK] Steve Bloomfield, Africa Correspondent, July 6, 2007.
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- 36 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks [Nairobi] June 11, 2007.
- 37 DHP 27, page 8.
- 38 “Chaos by Design,” [September 2007](#) (see also pages 6, 22, 34, 38, 41–43, 45, 51, 53–54.)
- 39 *New York Times* [Nairobi] October 16, 2007; additional reporting by an anonymous journalist on the ground in Darfur.
- 40 Reuters [Khartoum] October 7, 2007) (Suleiman Jamous is without question the most trustworthy of rebel leaders.
- 41 Email to the author, received October 1, 2007.
- 42 Voice of America [Washington, DC] October 9, 2007.
- 43 *The London Review of Books*, November 30, 2006.
- 44 [Text of statement at Physicians for Human Rights website.](#)
- 45 BBC Interview, March 10, 2004.
- 46 This section draws on a range of materials, including the most recent UN Darfur Humanitarian Profile (No. 30, reflecting conditions as of January 1, 2008). The sources for data, surveys, and anecdotal information are diverse, both on the ground in Darfur and within the international humanitarian community. Much information was provided exclusively on a confidential basis; non-confidential information comes chiefly from reports in the public domain, or public interviews by humanitarian officials.
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- 48 *The Telegraph* [UK] [Darfur] January 28, 2007.
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- 53 At the time, the blockade denied 160,000 people all aid access.
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- 55 Email to the author, received March 14, 2008.
- 56 [Open letter from 14 aid agencies operating in Sudan, March 28, 2008.](#)
- 57 MSF press release, February 29, 2008.
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- 74 AP [al-Salam Camp, North Darfur] March 21, 2009.
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- 87 *New York Times*, Jeffrey Gettleman, "Darfur Withers as Sudan Sells Food," August 9, 2008.
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- 91 *The Guardian* [Nairobi] March 24, 2009.
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- 101 *Christian Science Monitor*, April 20, 2009.
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- 104 Agence France-Presse [Khartoum] April 4, 2009.
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- 107 OCHA Situation Report No. 4, 16 April 2009, "Expulsion of Key NGOs from Darfur," April 16, 2009.
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- 109 Darfur Humanitarian Profile No. 34, page 11.
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- 111 Eric Reeves, “Khartoum’s Expulsion of Humanitarian Organizations,” March 25, 2009.
- 112 UN Integrated Regional Information Networks [Cairo] April 24.
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- 116 Reuters [Khartoum] March 8, 2009.
- 117 Associated Press [Khartoum] September 20, 2009.
- 118 *Sudan Tribune*, September 10, 2009.



Photography credit: Brian Steidle

VILLAGE DESTRUCTION IN SOUTH DARFUR (2005)

Those arguing that the genocidal violence in Darfur had largely ended by 2004 are obliged to explain the continuing destruction represented in such photographs as these, from 2005—and of course continuing to the present in various forms.

Brian Steidle, the photographer, was a military observer (2004 – 2005) with the small African Union force that watched helplessly as the genocide continued during his entire tour



Photography credit: Brian Steidle



Photography credit: Mia Farrow

DWELLING IN A DARFUR IDP CAMP (2006)

It is to places such as this that those displaced from their lands and villages have fled, more than 2.7 million according to UN figures from the beginning of 2009; these figures have been dramatically reduced, without adequate explanation



Photography credit: Enough Project

GIRL AT AL JEER IDP SETTLEMENT (NOVEMBER 7, 2004)
Camps typically began at thoroughly unpromising sites



Photography credit: withheld by request

KALMA CAMP, JUNE 2005.

A photograph from early in the catastrophe; seven years later, much of the strength in these people has been lost



Photography credit: Mia Farrow

DONKEYS ARE ESSENTIAL ANIMALS IN THE AGRICULTURAL
LIFE OF SEDENTARY FARMERS.

A large majority have been looted, killed, or have died from malnutrition or dehydration.
It is extremely difficult to secure adequate forage.



Photography credit: withheld by request

EL-FASHER, MARCH 2004

Darfur is an extremely arid region for the most part, especially North Darfur; lines for water are a common sight, and often there is not enough.



Photography credit: Mia Farrow

THERE ARE NOW COUNTLESS ORPHANS IN THE IDP AND REFUGEE CAMPS



Photography credit: Mia Farrow

FEAR AND ANXIETY ARE DEEPLY ETCHED INTO THE FACES
OF DARFURI CHILDREN (JUNE 2006)



Photography credit: Enough Project

JANUB CAMP, NEAR GEREIDA, SOUTH DARFUR (MAY 22, 2007)
Life in the displaced persons camps is extremely hard, shelter is inadequate, and IDPs are extremely vulnerable to assault and the denial of humanitarian access.



Photography credit: Mia Farrow

CAMPS FOR DISPLACED PERSONS, AND THE STRUCTURES WITHIN THEM, ARE
EXTREMELY VULNERABLE DURING THE HEAVY RAINY SEASON



Photography credit: Mia Farrow

THERE ARE MANY SCORES OF CAMPS; A NUMBER—SUCH AS KALMA, ZAM ZAM, AND GEREIDA—ARE VAST QUITE VAST, THE SIZE OF SMALL CITIES. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO CAPTURE THE FULL DIMENSIONS OF SUCH CAMPS IN A SINGLE CAMERA FRAME, EVEN FROM A HELICOPTER.



Photography credit: Enough Project

IDP CAMP NEAR GEREIDA, SOUTH DARFUR (JUNE 2007)
Life is as bleak as it appears here



Photography credit: UN

DURING A RECENT VISIT BY UNAMID OFFICIALS, THE PEOPLE OF THE CAMPS MADE CLEAR THEIR MOST BASIC NEED—ONE INCREASINGLY UNMET



Photography credit: USAID

TOO MANY HOURS ARE SPENT WAITING FOR A TURN AT THE WATER BORE-HOLE



Photography credit: unknown

TOO MUCH GRIEF AND SUFFERING